

The Newsletter



ICAS 11
16-19 July 2019
Leiden,
the Netherlands



The Focus

Informal connectivity in transnational shadow exchanges



Humanities
across
Borders



From the Director

- 3 The IIAS Miracle

ICAS 11

- 4-9 ICAS turns 21
10-11 The French Academic Network for Asian Studies (GIS Asie)
Myriam de Loenzien and Catherine Bastien-Ventura
12 Me, Asian?!
Judi Mesman
13 The best of the best: The 2019 ICAS Book Prize (IBP) dissertation competition
Alex McKay
14-15 Asia with salsa and samba: Asian studies publications in Portuguese and Spanish
Claudio Costa Pinheiro

Africa-Asia

- 16-21 Presenting at 'Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge'

The Study

- 22-23 Parindra's loyal cadres. Fascism and anticolonial nationalism in late colonial Indonesia, 1935-1942
Yannick Lengkeek

The Review

- 24-26 Selected reviews from newbooks.asia
27-28 New titles on newbooks.asia

The Focus

- 29-30 Informal connectivity in transnational shadow exchanges
Guest editor: Tak-Wing Ngo
31 Central Asia: borders, peoples and connections
Olga Adams
32 Eurasian integration at borders between China and post-Soviet countries
Ivan Zuenko
33 Bazaars at crossroads. What they reveal about informality, globalization and capital mobility
Hasan H. Karrar
34 Cross-border trade and the 'market' along the Karakoram Highway
Alessandro Rippa
35 Shuttle trade at China's borders
Eva P. W. HUNG
36 Cassava and timber trade along the Cambodia-Vietnam border
Sango Mahanty
37 Brokered connections between South China and the world
Heidi Østbø Haugen
38 Global trade and circulations in the Northern Bay of Bengal
Samuel Berthet

The Region

- 40-43 News from Australia and the Pacific
44-45 News from Northeast Asia
46-47 China Connections
48-49 News from the European Alliance

The Network

- 50-52 Reports and Announcements
53 IIAS Fellowship Programme
54-55 IIAS Research, Networks and Initiatives

The Portrait

- 56 The Language of Dress
Textile Research Centre, Leiden

In this edition of the Focus 29-38**Informal connectivity in transnational shadow exchanges**

Tak-Wing Ngo

Transnational networks play a key role in the global flow of resources. Yet the regulated activities of trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), migration, and related activities constitute only a portion of all transnational exchanges. The rest is undertaken in the shadows. Every day, vast networks of people and organizations shuffle goods, money, and humans across the globe's borders. Unsurprisingly, owing to their obscure nature, the assortment of border exchanges, the diversities of brokering practices, and the variations in informality have not been fully studied. Our joint project, presented in this Focus section, seeks to address these issues by re-examining transnational informal exchanges across Asia and Eurasia from a bottom-up perspective.



The Newsletter is a free periodical published by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). As well as serving as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond, The Newsletter is also a window into the Institute.

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a global Humanities and Social Sciences institute and a knowledge exchange platform, based in Leiden, the Netherlands, with programmes that engage Asian and other international partners. IIAS takes a thematic and multi-sectoral approach to the study of Asia and actively involves scholars and experts from different disciplines and regions in its activities. Our current thematic research clusters are 'Asian Heritages', 'Asian Cities' and 'Global Asia'.

Information about the programmes and activities of IIAS can be found in the Network pages of each issue of The Newsletter.

In this issue

IIAS has been celebrating its 25th year of existence during this past year, and is wrapping up the 'festivities' with ICAS 11 (16-19 July), which is returning to the Netherlands where it had its first instalment in 1998. Reminisce about the first 10 editions of ICAS (pp.4-7) and be informed about this current 11th edition, including all the special events being organised during the week (pp.8-9). The ICAS Book Prize is bigger and better than ever; in addition to its existing 5 language prizes and English Dissertation Prize (p.13) it now includes yet another language edition: Spanish/Portuguese (pp.14-15).

On page 50, attention is given to the IIAS Winter School 2018, held at the Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City: 'Delta cities: rethinking practices of the urban'; and on the following page you will find a report from our Humanities Across Border initiative, 'An inter-community dialogue on rice as a site of knowledge and meaning'.

IIAS research programmes, networks and other initiatives are described in brief on pages 54-55. Information about the IIAS Fellowship programme can be found on page 53, and our latest announcements on page 52.

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.

Postal address
PO Box 9500
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Colophon
The Newsletter
No. 83 Summer 2019

Managing editor:
Sonja Zweegers
Guest editor for The Focus:
Tak-Wing Ngo

Regional editors:
Weilin Pan (SASS)
Florinda De Simini ('L'Orientale')
Ilhong Ko (SNUAC)
Edwin Jurriëns and Andy Fuller
(Asia Institute of The University
of Melbourne)
The Review pages editor:
Wai Cheung

The Network pages editor:
Sandra Dehue

Digital issue editor:
Thomas Voorter

Graphic Design:
Paul Oram
Lava

Printing:
EPC, Belgium

Submissions
Issue #84: 15 July 2019
Issue #85: 1 Dec 2019
Issue #86: 15 March 2020

Submission enquiries
iiasnews@iias.nl
More information:
iias.asia/the-newsletter

Free subscriptions
Go to: iias.asia/subscribe
To unsubscribe, to make changes
(e.g., new address), or to order
multiple copies: iiasnews@iias.nl

Rights
Responsibility for copyrights and
for facts and opinions expressed
in this publication rests exclusively
with authors. Their interpretations
do not necessarily reflect the views
of the institute or its supporters.
Reprints only with permission from
the author and The Newsletter
editor iiasnews@iias.nl

iias.asia



International
Institute for
Asian Studies



The IIAS Miracle

Philippe Peycam

On the eve of the 11th edition of ICAS, which is proving to be an exceptional event for Asian studies in Europe and beyond, we are getting ready to receive nearly 2,500 participants, scheduled into nearly 550 panels and roundtables and other forms of collaborations of all kinds. I cannot help but be amazed at the huge contrast that exists between the tiny organisation of 20 or so members and the global-scale transformative initiatives that it produces. Since I have been working at IIAS I have regularly witnessed the surprised expressions of our visitors when they see the contrast for themselves. People always expect to encounter a much larger staff (and building) at the IIAS offices at Rapenburg 59. In addition, when in Asia, my interlocutors are often astonished to know that IIAS is actually headquartered in Europe, in the small city of Leiden, albeit surrounded by an academic environment of high significance, that of Leiden University. This is what I call the 'IIAS miracle'. It is primarily built on two solid foundations: its highly committed staff and its unique institutional set-up.

One distinctive aspect of IIAS is the internal chemistry that prevails in its midst. Every one of us works on a specific task or project basis – editing the Newsletter, running the book reviews, coordinating the Urban Studies activities, managing the fellowship programme, overseeing the finances, running the secretariat, leading special initiatives like ICAS, the Humanities Across Borders or The Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network, etc. Yet, thanks to an open-door policy, not just limited to the people working in the Leiden building (we have colleagues actively collaborating elsewhere, especially in Asia), people at IIAS are used to some kind of fluidity and solidarity that makes each of us highly flexible and versatile. This is perhaps what the Dutch mean with the 'polder spirit', a culture in which highly independent people gather together around projects or ideas of larger, common significance. At IIAS, the common purpose is the life and growth of the institute itself. Everything of importance for the organisation must be at some point of its elaboration endorsed by the team. This environment, free from unnecessary hierarchies or formalities, makes it propitious to collective mobilisations and a spirit of shared responsibility. People of course retain their individuality, if not their idiosyncrasies. IIAS is in fact a collection of strong personalities.

The other 'miracle' aspect of IIAS has to do with its unique, hard-to-reproduce, institutional set up. IIAS is an academic structure, established in the Netherlands in 1994 with funding from the Ministry of Education, designed to support a new generation of scholars, 'experts' and citizens aware of and interested in Asian developments, through a new model of collaboration in regional and international studies around themes transcending disciplinary, institutional and national boundaries. The birth of IIAS was indeed the result of an unusual convergence of interests and visions at a particular time. It corresponded to a period in the Netherlands when a number of intellectuals and scholars seeking to move beyond the colonial-era and cold-war style of Area Studies and its narrow, silo-shaped character, could convince their Ministry of the need to support a totally innovative model of operation. As an academic organisation, IIAS's mandate is flexible so long as it can act as a facilitator and also a transformative agent in the processes of knowledge development in and with Asia, within a globally connected world.

A national-global programme with its own budget and agenda, IIAS was primarily conceived as a research, teaching and public service facilitating mechanism. One that seeks to foster mutually beneficiary collaborations, recognising that Asia and the major trends emanating from this world region would have implications for the world over, and indeed for the Netherlands. The name of the institute itself - 'international' - shows an early desire to transcend boundaries, endowing the institute with an extraverted, versatile agenda. IIAS thus operates as a network-based platform equipped to engage with, and impact upon, contemporary Asian and global trends, enabling at the same time Dutch/European scholars and institutions to partake in them.

IIAS's main features are its adaptability and its capacity to work with very different partners. This has led to a few signature projects facilitating new research and pedagogical trends (rather than strict research), while promoting a cross-sector dissemination of knowledge and the constitution of unusual networks:

- An international postdoc fellowship programme framed by three interdisciplinary themes (Heritage, Cities, Global), facilitating dialogue between researchers working on different countries and regions of Asia (and beyond), in relation with advanced studies institutions.
- A free-of-charge periodical serving the Asia studies community globally: *The Newsletter* (with a global readership of over 50,000), containing editorial collaborations with Asian partners.
- International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS),

IIAS staff. Back row (left to right): Thomas Voorter, Aarti Kawlra, Wai Cheung, Sandra van der Horst, Amparo de Vogel, Xiaolan Lin, Mary Lynn van Dijk, Paul Rabé, Rita Padawangi. Front row (left to right): Sandra Dehue, Heleen van der Minne (ret.), Willem Vogelsang, Paul van der Velde, Sonja Zweegers, Erica van Bentem, Martina van den Haak, Annemarie van Leeuwen, Philippe Peycam. Missing from photo: Elske Idzenga and Aafke Hoekstra.

a network-based multi-sector trans-disciplinary platform on 'Asia Studies' through biennial mega conventions, and facilitation of inter-regional platforms and events, like the African Association for Asian Studies (A-ASIA).

- A European inter-institutional brainstorming and advocacy collaborative platform: European Alliance for Asian Studies (EAAS) of which IIAS is a founding member.
- A number of research-led educational and service initiatives under three clusters:
 - Critical Heritage Study** analysing the politics of culture and identity by state and non-state social actors, through: (a) in situ community-grounded roundtables; (b) a Double-Degree MA program on 'Critical Heritage in Asia and Europe', with Leiden University, National Taiwan University and Yonsei University.
 - Urbanisation Processes** in Asia and beyond, interaction urban-rural, through: (a) the coordination of the multi-sector Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA); (b) the support of the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET) initiative recognising the role of urban communities in city-making processes (with support from the Henry Luce Foundation).
 - Global Connections Asia in the World**, through: (a) the coordination of an African-Asian local-global civic-academic platform on alternative humanistic pedagogy: 'Humanities Across Borders' (with support from the Andrew Mellon Foundation); (b) the facilitation of an Asia-Africa 'Axis of Knowledge' platform, and the support of new similar axes: 'Latin America-Asia' and 'Indian Ocean Studies'.

The IIAS 'miracle' can be compared to that of an act of local-global craftsmanship: from a small office in Europe to often far-away local partners, a team engaged in devising collaborative projects and activities that embrace Asian-global trends, recognising the need to effectively diversify modes of knowledge processes, both geographically and epistemologically, taking seriously the locally embedded experiences in Asia, Europe and beyond. By constantly experimenting with the ways in which these local-global interactions are articulated, IIAS seeks new approaches of inter-regional collaboration that can both support and transform regular academic configurations.

When in Leiden for ICAS 11, you will encounter the 'miracle' of IIAS yourselves, and I recommend that you visit the IIAS office on Rapenburg 59, to see the modest space where it all happens.

Philippe Peycam
Director IIAS

ICAS turns 21

Paul van der Velde

Globalisation was the buzz-word in the 1990s. From the first year of its creation in 1993, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) was a promoter of the internationalisation of Asian studies. Its periodical 'The Newsletter' (initially called the 'IIAS Newsletter') quickly established itself as the communication channel in the very fragmented field of Asian studies. We took 1500 copies with us to the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) annual meeting in Washington in 1995. At the end of the meeting everybody was carrying our free tote bag plus the interdisciplinary, cross-regional message it carried. Clearly there was a new kid on the block.

The IIAS delegation learned a lot at the meeting. Amongst other things: we were practically the only non-Americans; the venue of the meeting was an anonymous chain hotel that lacked any connection to Asia; and the exhibition area was dominated by US publishers. However, the scale of the conference with 200 panels and a thousand participants was impressive, and so too were the manifold interactions and smooth organisation of the meeting. In sum, it worked well, but we missed the international aspect.

It was not difficult to convince our European colleagues to join us at the next AAS meeting in Honolulu in 1996. We participated with a strong delegation of European Asia scholars and at a meeting of the AAS board we presented a preliminary copy of the *Guide to Asian Studies in Europe*. It was hard for them to believe that Western Europe had at least as many Asia scholars and institutions researching Asia as the US did. Then Secretary-Treasurer, John Campbell, concluded our conversation by saying: "For the first time we know whom to call in Europe".

Since I was tasked to deepen IIAS' contacts with the US I paid a visit to the AAS Secretariat in Ann Arbor. I pitched the idea of an international conference in Leiden in 1998 to further internationalise Asian studies in a cross-regional and multidisciplinary way. To make a long story short: the AAS, six European Associations for Asian Studies, and the European Science Foundation Asia Committee, collaborated for the first edition of ICAS. It took place near Leiden in 1998.



Creative Commons: Anna / Flickr.

Leiden 1998

ICAS 1, Leiden, 25-28 June 1998

Nearly one thousand participants gathered during this convention. We named it a convention because we brought people together with an interest in Asia. The meeting was the first of such a size in the context of Asian studies in Europe. Twenty five percent of the sessions transcended the usual boundaries between disciplines, between nations studied, and especially between the geographic origins of the presenters. This was pointing in a new direction. The venue was a convention centre near Leiden, where a plethora of other public activities took place, such as a film festival, dance performances, a journalist forum on the Eurasian Century, music performances and an exhibition on Pakistani truck art.

Quoting one of the participants: "The greatest value of ICAS was that it did allow a greater mixing of Asian, North American and European scholars than we have experienced at any previous such gathering. This was of course one of the aims of the convention and we hope that its unqualified success will be sufficient incentive to attempt a 'repeat performance' in future. We are all greatly impressed with the con-vention – its venue, its scope, the excellence of the organisation, the diversity of activities and the range of scholars who attended".

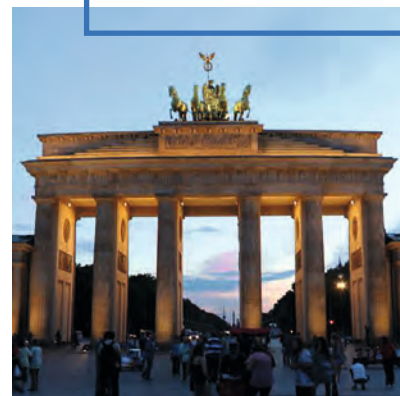
We think of this convention as a platform at which Asian, American and European Asianists can study problems of interest to all

J. Campbell and W.A.L. Stokhof,
co-chairs programme committee ICAS 1 Leiden



Example of Pakistani truck art. Painting by Yusuf and Sons.

Berlin 2001



Creative Commons: R.J.Hughes / Flickr.

ICAS 2, Berlin, 9-12 August 2001

The second instalment of ICAS took three rather than two years to come about, which was partly due to the Millennium Bug alarming everyone at that time. No less than 14 associations in the field of Asian studies were involved in its organisation, and it took place in five buildings of the Free University in the middle of Berlin. The IIAS enabled, with its 'The IIAS Connects You', conference participants the possibility to check their e-mail and provided free access to the Internet, which must have been a relief for many in the post-millennium era. By this time practically all academicians were online, which certainly increased the connectivity amongst them.

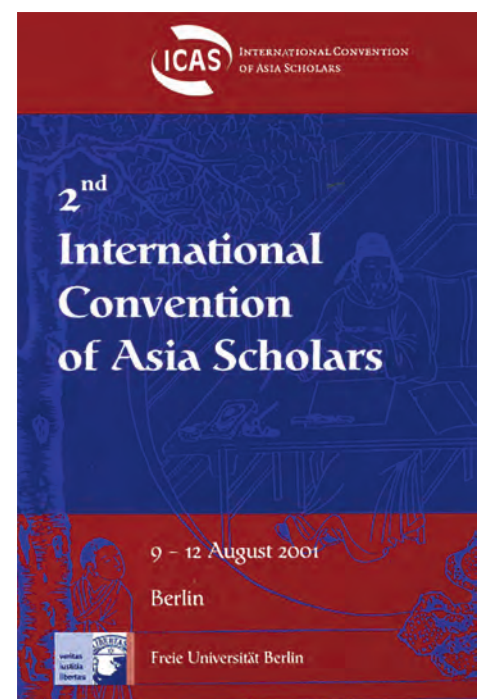
If I had to single out one of the keynote speeches of all ICAS editions it would certainly be the one given by Wang Gungwu, one of Asia's most important public intellectuals. He is best known for his explorations of Chinese history and for his writings on the Chinese Diaspora (albeit not a term he himself likes to use). His keynote was about 'Divergence and Dominance. Challenges to Asian Studies'. Wang characterised the development of Asian

studies and mentioned the risks, but also the opportunities, of the different ways in which Asian studies is performed in present times. In 2018, in the first part of his autobiography *Home is not Here* (NUS University Press) he reflects on family, identity, and the ability of the individual to find a place amid historical currents that have shaped the world. He will certainly broach the topic of Asian studies in the second part of his autobiography (forthcoming) and he will doubtlessly evoke new horizons that will put the field of Asian studies in a new cyclical perspective.

Wang Gungwu attended a meeting of all organising parties in Berlin, where two important decisions were made that had a decisive influence on the future development of ICAS. The first was the decision to organise ICAS in Asia, every two years, in cooperation with a local host. This not only to further increase Asian participation, but also to connect to the Asian city in which it was being held. The second decision was to establish a permanent ICAS Secretariat, to be hosted by IIAS in Leiden, in order to facilitate and safeguard the concept of a cross-disciplinary and cross-regional approach to Asian studies. In short, to guarantee the continuity of the ICAS process and assist the local hosts in the organisation of ICAS.

This truly interdisciplinary conference opened up whole new, intriguing insights and knowledge for me

Kati Kuitto,
co-organiser ICAS 2



Singapore 2003



Creative Commons: Andri Leo / Flickr.

ICAS 3 brought ICAS to Asia for the first time. With a significant presence of scholars from Asia, it hopefully helped in a small way to break down a few silos and build new bridges for Asia research

Allan Chan, organiser ICAS 3

ICAS 3, Singapore, 19-22 August 2003

The organiser of ICAS 3, Alan Chan of the National University of Singapore, reminded us of another aspect of globalisation. "The planning of the Convention took an uncertain turn when SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) brought international travel almost to a complete standstill". ICAS 3 at the Raffles City Convention Centre was the first big meeting allowed to take place in Singapore once SARS had abated. Attendance was fortunately barely affected. With more than a thousand participants, gathering in more than 250 panels, ICAS 3 not only showcased the vitality of Asian studies in Asia itself, but also proved that the intuitive decision to move ICAS to Asia was completely justifiable.

It enabled a direct connection to the Asian environment not only in the convention centre itself, but also to explore the many attractions multicultural Singapore has to offer. Alan Chan noted: "ICAS serves an important function in promoting Asia research and in providing a forum for scholarly exchange and collaboration. We are indeed pleased that we are able to bring ICAS to Asia for the first time". It would not be the last time, as the next three editions also all took place in Asia. Being there offers an ideal breeding ground to refine long-standing theories and to develop new, more Asia-informed ones.



In particular, the time-space compression experienced in Asian countries in their radical reforms in the past decades offer a unique opportunity to study some of the most important present-day issues. These include questions of institutional change, social transformation, market reform, ethnic conflict, environmental hazard, national security,

urbanisation, migration, political control and resistance, social marginalisation, inequality, to name but a few. All these questions were clearly present in the first book of abstracts, which the participants found in their neatly designed ICAS 3 conference bag along with the programme book.



Creative Commons: Aaron Feen / Flickr.

Shanghai 2005

ICAS 4, Shanghai, 20-24 August 2005

At the end of the opening ceremony in Singapore, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) presented Shanghai as the venue for ICAS 4. This video presentation started a tradition, which goes on till the present day. The fact that Shanghai would be the next venue should be seen within the wider context of new developments in China at that time. The People's Congress had decided that



Shanghai conference venue. Photo by ICAS.

more should be invested in the humanities and social sciences, which had hitherto been dealt a step-motherly treatment.

ICAS 4 took place in the headquarters of the Communist Party in Shanghai, in a building that resembled an enormous cake, which had been a present from Stalin to the people of Shanghai (when I revisited the city in 2013 tall skyscrapers completely dwarfed the building). We used an annex with marble floors, with more than enough rooms to accommodate 250 panels. Wang Ronghua, the President

ICAS is the largest gathering of scholars in the humanities and social sciences not only in China but also in Asia

Wang Ronghua, President of SASS

of SASS, stressed the close cooperation with the municipality of Shanghai, which translated itself in a state of the art dinner and a magnificent trip along the Huangpu river, passing the neon-lit Bund. For the first time the convention was given a general theme. SASS fittingly chose 'The Future of Asia'. Since it was a closed meeting, 'sensitive' topics such as 'AIDS without Boundaries' and 'Bad Girl Writing' could also be freely discussed.

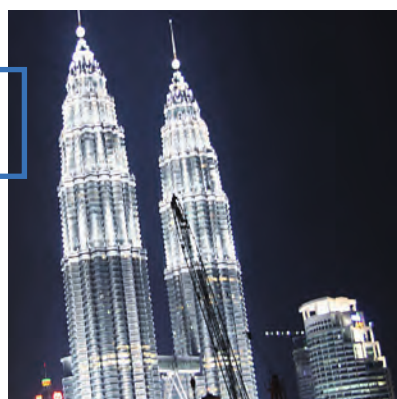
During the opening ceremony the winners of the first ICAS Book Prize (IBP) were announced. This new initiative by the ICAS Secretariat was taken to create by way of a global competition both an international focus for publications on Asia (academic English-language books on Asia in the humanities and social sciences) while at the same time increasing their visibility worldwide. In contrast to other prizes in the field of Asian studies the IBP is both trans-regional and trans-disciplinary with an international reading committee. The first edition of the IBP saw 40 submissions; its eighth edition in 2019 has just witnessed more than 400!

During ICAS 4 we also published the first ICAS supplement to the *IIAS Newsletter* (now *The Newsletter*), entitled 'Publishing in Asian Studies'. In it, publishers, editors and writers reflected on how to increase the visibility of Asian studies by developing a wide range of activities.

Kuala Lumpur 2007

ICAS 5, Kuala Lumpur, 2-5 August 2007

The Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON) and the Institute of The Malay World and Civilization (ATMA) of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) teamed up to organise ICAS 5, for which the theme 'Sharing a Future in Asia' was selected. The Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia wrote in his welcome word: "The hosting of ICAS 5 is very timely, held at a defining moment when we are embarking on a new path and transforming the country's higher education system to make Malaysia the regional centre for educational excellence". ICAS 5 coincided with the celebration of 50 years of independence, which furthermore connected to the Visit Malaysia Year 2007. In cooperation with the city of Kuala Lumpur a circular bus line connecting places of cultural interest was launched, and still operates till this very day.



Creative Commons: Andrew Lawson / Flickr.

ICAS is the Olympics of Asian studies

Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, organiser ICAS 5

ICAS 5 took place in the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC). The nearly forty exhibitors at the ICAS Book Fair had no reason to complain both in terms of visitor numbers and spectacular vantage point, as the centrally located exhibition hall had a clear view of the

famous Petronas Twin Towers. The Book Fair had already been a fixed feature of ICAS since the beginning, but in Kuala Lumpur it matured.

The organiser of ICAS 5, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin summed it up perfectly: "ICAS 5 is the place where researchers of all categories, from various fields, coming from all over the world, but all interested in Asia, convene, interact and build networks to share their research findings and personal experience". This was clear impetus for the ICAS Secretariat to keep ICAS travelling through Asia, each time drawing special attention to the local dynamics of the country and region in which the convention was held.

In Kuala Lumpur it was the first time that the number of grouped panels (individual abstracts that are thematically grouped by the organisers, on a trans-regional and trans-disciplinary basis) was double the number of organised panels and roundtables. This combining of organised and grouped panels resulted not only in an ideal mix of top down and bottom up contributions, but it also yielded an amalgamation of many different paradigmatic approaches, which give ICAS its signature vibe.

The second ICAS supplement to the *IIAS Newsletter*, 'Academic Publishing Today' addressed the challenges and pitfalls of getting a book published. For the first time e-books



ICAS Secretary Paul van der Velde at ICAS 5 in Kuala Lumpur.

were highlighted and a new IAS initiative 'New Books Asia' was launched: an online platform to browse the newest Asian studies titles and read/contribute the latest book reviews (<https://newbooks.asia>).

Daejeon 2009



Creative Commons: Blue July / Flickr.

We have so far been too neglectful of the value of Asian identity. Time has come to re-evaluate the entire inheritance of all of humanity within the context of the Asian Continent Civilisation as whole

Young-Oak Kim, keynote speaker at ICAS 6

ICAS 6, Daejeon, 6-9 August 2009

When the ICAS Secretariat visited Daejeon in 2007, we first met with former Prime Minister Hung Gu Lee in Seoul. He graciously offered to be the Honorary General Chair of ICAS 6, a move that proved to be extremely instrumental in bringing ICAS 6 about. Sang Jik Rhee, local host at Chungnam National University, was the main organiser; he ingeniously put together no less than eight sub-committees to streamline the process. They decided on a general theme 'Think Asia', with a wink to an everyday supplement in the *Korean Times* entitled 'Think English'. The ICAS Secretariat visited the Daejeon Convention Center, which was still under construction at that time. It stands on the former site of the 1993 World Exhibition, and one can still observe some highly peculiar constructions that survived, in what is now called Expo Park.

Although the financial crisis erupting in 2008 had an impact on the organisation, sponsoring and attendance of ICAS 6, there were still nearly one thousand participants. They had to 'endure' three keynote speeches by an American, European and Korean representative. The latter was the famous and popular Korean philosopher Young-Oak Kim who was riding the waves of Asian values: "The Eurocentric historical view of the world can

no longer hold itself as a model of universally valid values". His speech was delivered in Korean and simultaneously translated into English; it lasted nearly two hours! Befittingly, yet surprising us all, he concluded his talk by singing David Bowie's *Changes*.

All participants received two free copies of the brand new ICAS Publication Series. No less than eight volumes were concurrently launched during an event where more than fifty editors and authors were present. The books were based on contributions to ICAS 4 and 5. From five hundred submitted papers roughly one hundred were selected by the General Editor of the series. These were arranged along thematic lines and given a working title.

A senior and junior editor were asked to supervise the process of collegial review. This meant that everybody had to read the contributions by all the other authors. It resulted in a very rigorous reviewing process, experienced by all contributors as an innovative and rewarding way to review books.

The ICAS 6 supplement to the *IAS Newsletter*, 'Choice in Academic Publishing', opens with the following words by Marie Lenstrup: "All academics, by the nature of modern academe, must be both authors and readers. To the familiar invocation to 'publish or perish' we could add another to 'read or rot' or as publishers might be tempted to put it, to 'buy or be damned'."



Performance and registration at ICAS 6. Photo by ICAS.

Honolulu 2011



Creative Commons: Marcus Jebett / Flickr.

Both the AAS and the ICAS Secretariats had to work full speed to deal with the unprecedented number of submissions. AAS took care of all panel submissions, and ICAS put together no less than 350 panels based on an inflow of 2500 individual abstracts, mostly from Asia.

An impressive 5,000 participants gathered in the Honolulu Convention Center from 31 March to 3 April 2011 making it the biggest meet in the field of Asian studies so far. The reception was sponsored by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the East-West Center and the Confucius Institute. It was a memorable meeting, which kicked off with the welcome reception on the Great Lawn at the Hilton Hawaiian Village and Beach Resort & Spa overlooking the Pacific. The Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble on Japanese drums entertained the participants while a fireworks display further added lustre to the gathering.

The gaiety of the reception was understandably tempered by the 11 March Tōhoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami on the east coast of Japan. A Japanese princess was present at the official opening of the joint meeting and thanked the inhabitants of Hawai'i and those present on behalf of the Japanese people for their support.

Nearly 800 panels were included in a programme book as thick as the phone book. It was more than triple the size of our regular conferences and a large number of them were in the category 'Border Crossing and Inter-area'. A bewildering variety of topics were discussed ranging from 'Literary Monsters and Demons' to 'Global Representation of China' and 'Women in Asia' to 'Media and the Message'. In the main lobby of the Convention Center there were continuous

musical performances, and for the first time a professional photographer was engaged who made a colourful impression of this memorable meeting, sending out a clear signal to the outside world that Asian studies is a thriving and vibrant community.

Our joint gathering was from the outset both a risk and a challenge but it paid off in many respects, foremost in terms of attendance. More than 2,000 scholars hailing from Asia set in motion further internationalisation of Asian studies and triggered the annual AAS-in-Asia meetings, which started in 2015. The ICAS Book Prize received a massive 200 submissions, prompting the reading committee to put in place Accolades, so as to recognise a larger subset of titles, including 'Publishers Accolade for Outstanding Production Value', the 'Edited Volume Accolade' and 'Teaching Tool Accolade'.

ICAS 7, Honolulu, 31 March – 3 April 2011

During ICAS 4 (Shanghai, 2005) a delegation of AAS board members and the ICAS Secretariat had suggested the idea to organise a joint AAS-ICAS 'meet'. It took a while before we agreed on a location, yet eventually Honolulu rose on the horizon as the obvious choice. After intensive negotiations an agreement was signed in Philadelphia in 2010. Since it was the 70th birthday of AAS the theme was 'Celebrating 70 Years of Asian Studies'.



AAS and ICAS share the common goal of transcending boundaries between disciplines, nations, and geographic origins of scholars of Asia

K. (Shivi) Sivaramakrishnan, AAS President



Creative Commons: Andrew Moore / Flickr.

Macao 2013

The hosting of ICAS 8 is testimony to our commitment of achieving excellence in higher learning

Wei Zhao,
Rector University of Macau

ICAS 8, Macao, 24-27 June 2013

The rich cultural heritage and the strong historical legacies connecting East and West made Macao an ideal place to host ICAS 8. Who would have ever dreamed that ICAS would take place at The Venetian Macao, the fourth biggest structure in the world, primarily a casino, shopping mall and hotel.

ICAS 8 was organised by the University of Macau and the Macau Foundation. The 1200 participants representing 600 institutes of higher learning gathered in more than 350 panels. Within these panels, new ideas and research findings were discussed, not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. Holding the convention in Macao reminded us yet again of the importance of holding ICAS in Asia. The conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools used in social sciences and humanities have derived almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their limitations are increasingly apparent, especially in Asia, with its long traditions of organising social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementing rule. With Asian countries emerging to become

prominent players, there comes a point when we recognise that the region has something to offer in the development of (social) knowledge. ICAS offers a platform to facilitate this process.

The city of Macao played a central role in discussions on urbanism and heritage. The panels and roundtables on these subjects were attended not only by academicians, but also by government officials, museum curators, NGO activists, journalists, business leaders, and members of the general public. It was a rare opportunity during which scholars and practitioners across different continents and regions gathered together to explore local and global problems.

ICAS 8 had several firsts. It witnessed the first meeting of the ICAS International Council, now

a well-established advisory body composed of academicians, representatives from civil society and previous ICAS organisers from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America and North America. From its inception ICAS benefitted from their inputs and it has certainly widened the global reach of ICAS. During its first meeting Lloyd Amoah, Secretary of the newly founded Association of Asian Studies in Africa, presented the plan for what would in turn become the conference 'Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge', which took place in Accra (Ghana) in September 2015 with the support of the ICAS Secretariat and the University of Ghana. The second edition of the 'Africa-Asia conference' took place in September 2018 in Dar es Salaam with the University of Dar es Salaam acting as a host (find a small selection of presentations from this 2018 conference presented in this current Newsletter issue). Nearly 400 researchers, craftsmen and artists gathered in nearly 100 panels. Its next edition will be announced in the near future.

Another first was the reporting on the conference in cooperation with the Macau Daily Times. Every day Sonja Zweegers, Editor of *The Newsletter*, cooperated with local journalists to produce a daily supplement reporting on what was taking place, and coming up, at ICAS 8 (<https://issuu.com/iias/docs/icas8-newsletter>).



Volunteers at ICAS 8. Photo by ICAS.



Creative Commons: Anton Mili / Flickr

Adelaide 2015

This is the first time that interculturality has been given such prominence in Australia. ICAS 9 seeks to harness international expertise on interculturality in Asia (...) This will be another way in which Asia expertise can help shape public policy in unexpected and positive ways

Gerry Groot and Purnendra Jain, organisers ICAS 9

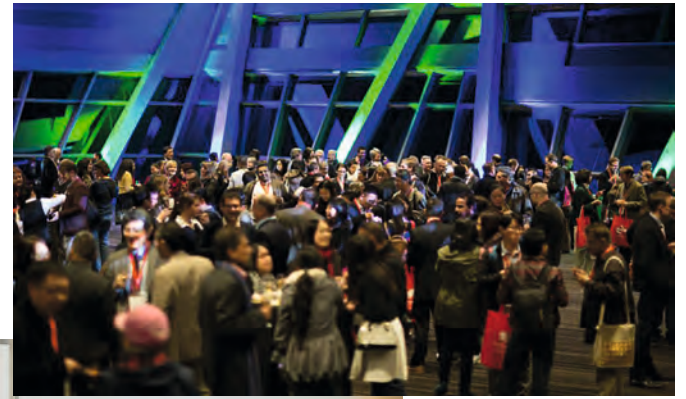
ICAS 9, Adelaide, 5-9 July 2015

When the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) informed us that ICAS belonged to the top five percent of conferences world-wide in terms of numbers we decided on a franchise experiment. Four Australian cities showed an interest, but Adelaide's bid was the most all-encompassing: three universities (the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia), the city of Adelaide, the Adelaide Convention Bureau, the state of South Australia and the International Convention Management Services Company, had worked closely to bring the bid together. And so, the city on the southern coast of Australia, with a tradition of strong ties with Asia, was selected as the location for ICAS 9.

After negotiations with the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) during its meeting in Perth in 2014, several of its regional associations decided to have their biennial meetings coincide with ICAS 9. This was a way to guarantee sufficient numbers of participants in a place, not without reason, coined 'down under'.

At ICAS 9 the ICAS Secretariat launched a new format: the Book and Dissertation Presentation Carousel, which gives participants the opportunity to present their research findings in a concise way for those interested in the topic. It proved to be a very fruitful format for both presenters and audience and it has become a popular fixed feature of the convention. The young doctors pitching their dissertations found it an easy way to come into contact with interested publishers. The latter in turn were quite happy to get in touch with prospective authors. This win-win situation has brought and will bring about many happy marriages between publishers and authors.

The issue of *The Newsletter* published shortly after ICAS 9 asked the question: Who is the New Asia Scholar? Content was based on interviews conducted and contributions

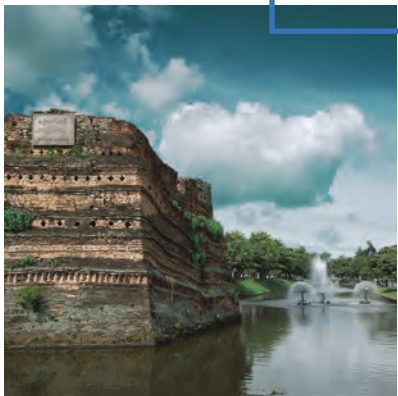


commissioned during the meeting in Adelaide. ICAS is a fitting platform to ask such a question because it has the greatest diversified cross-continental representation. One of the most obvious observations is that Asian studies is now more and more being produced in Asia. New ideas and research findings are discussed not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among Asia scholars who live in Asia. In approximately 20 articles ranging from 'The new Asia scholar's role in Asian/area studies' and 'A China scholar working in China', to 'Navigating our culturally interconnected world' and 'Africa and the unmasking of Asia', we are beginning to see the contours of this New Asia Scholar.

In retrospect, the meeting was an important one for Adelaide because it brought fresh

knowledge and perspectives on Adelaide's relations with Asia through the exchange with a wide range of top researchers in, to name but a few fields: urban development, social and economic transformation, migration and connectivity, history and cultural heritage. 'Interculture Adelaide' was one of the platforms where this was made specific. It brought together scholars, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the idea of interculturality, broadly defined as a set of cultural skills supporting openness and adaptivity. Also from a financial point of view ICAS 9 was beneficial for Adelaide. The Adelaide Convention Bureau later estimated that ICAS 9 injected 5 million Australian Dollars into the Adelaide economy.

Chiang Mai 2017



The emergence of the ASEAN community in Asia is a hope for economic, political and socio-cultural connectivity as well as a challenge for policymakers and the grassroots

Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, organiser ICAS 10

ICAS 10, Chiang Mai, 20-23 July 2017

After a decade it was high time to return to Southeast Asia. The RCSD at Chiang Mai University in Thailand requested the opportunity to organise the 10th edition of ICAS in connection with 50 years of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and to hold it back to back with their Thai Studies conference. According to the organiser of both conferences, Chayan Vaddhanaphuti: "The emergence of the ASEAN community in Asia is a hope for economic, political and socio-cultural connectivity as well as a challenge for policymakers and the grassroots. ASEAN in Asia is, thus, one of the central themes of this conference". As a result, Surit Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of ASEAN, was invited to speak at the opening ceremony, where he made a passionate plea for democratic values and academic freedom.

His speech closely connected with the ICAS Keynote Roundtable 'Upholding Democratic values in Southeast Asia: Intellectual Freedom and Public Engagement'. Two Southeast Asian historians and a social rights activist from Thailand addressed the situation of democratic deficit prevailing in most Southeast Asian countries by focusing on the social and political roles they play as actors

and witnesses of ASEAN's recent history. More than three hundred participants joined in the lively discussions chaired by IIAS Director Philippe Peycam. This format proved fruitful and is also planned for future editions of ICAS because it embraces a multitude of voices and views and is apt for a meeting such as ICAS.

This multitude of voices should also be present in the ICAS Book Prize (IBP). ICAS and the IBP can be regarded as one of the ways to facilitate the confluence of localised 'connected knowledges' and also the decentring of the landscape of knowledge about Asia. From the start, the IBP has had a broad interdisciplinary basis - Social Sciences and Humanities - instead of the traditional geographic or disciplinary compartmentalisations. The diversification of the IBP's language basis, in collaboration with partners and sponsors from other language areas than English, was realised at ICAS 10: the ICAS Book Prize was extended to include Chinese, German, French and Korean language editions.

The Film Screenings organised by the Center of Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) of Kyoto University were a reflection of Southeast Asia's rich ethnic and cultural landscape, and an outcome of CSEAS' Visual Documentary Project, which aims at examining everyday life in Southeast Asia through documentary filmmaking and stimulating the dialogue with ASEAN countries. No less than thirty documentaries varying in length from 15 to 70 minutes were presented with titles ranging from *Ageing in Bangkok* to

Burmese in Thailand and *Lives Under The Red Lights to Silence of the Summer*.

ICAS 11 in Chiang Mai was memorable in so many ways. The venue was massively impressive, the Ratilanna Resort catered the most beautiful and delicious Lanna-style receptions and lunches, and Akkanut Wantanasombut together with Rhinosmith Design co. created the most stunning overall design of any ICAS yet! Not to mention the twenty thematic exhibitions in traditional wooden structures, showcasing a wide variety of local projects, including, for example, 'Salween Local Research Display: bringing the Village to the Conference'. Local researchers from villages along the Salween River, which flows through Thailand, Myanmar, and China, have been conducting research into the social and environmental issues related to the river; they displayed the outcomes of their research to start conversations with academics, professionals, activists and others from all over the world. To finish it off a real market place with a wide variety of local quality produce stood at the entrance of the convention centre. Many participants took craft items home along with fond memories of an exceptional ICAS.



ICAS 11, Leiden



Above: Leiden University Academy Building.

And that brings us to this year's ICAS meeting. Nobody could have predicted that it would take 21 years before ICAS would return to its place of birth. Has it fully grown up? By no means. There is still a world and more to explore for this fledgling. Yet we have learned a lot over the past 2 decades and hope to bring our combined experiences to this meeting on our home ground.

Asia and Europe. Asia in Europe.

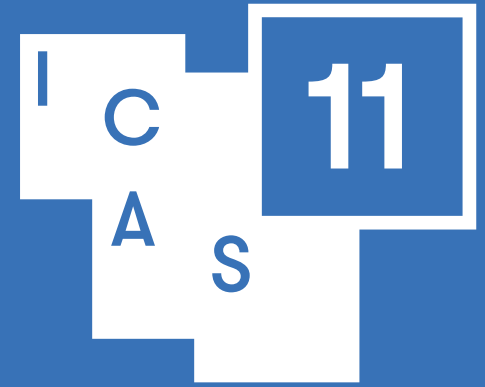
Considering the location, the theme of this year's ICAS is 'Asia and Europe. Asia in Europe'. And to make it more of a European affair, we reached out to some friends of ours who we collaborate with more frequently, and asked if they would join us in this endeavour. We were

delighted when GIS Asie (French Academic Network for Asian Studies) agreed to come on board as co-organisers and incorporate their own biennial conference into the ICAS programme. They are also the main sponsor of the French-language ICAS Book Prize (read more about GIS Asie on pp.10-11 of this issue).

Holding the convention in Leiden means that the ICAS team is not only performing its regular secretarial tasks, but also those of co-organiser, together with GIS Asie and local host Leiden University. From the outset, we knew this would mean more work for us, but we had no idea of what was to come. Compared to our usual 1000-1200 participants, this edition will be welcoming more than 2200 attendees to Leiden this summer! They hail from 75 countries and represent all conceivable fields of research within the Asia-related Humanities and Social Sciences, Civil Society and the Arts.

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

'Leiden Asia Week' and ICAS pre-events start on 13 July



Universiteit
Leiden



GIS
ASIE



International
Institute for
Asian Studies

Connecting to the host city (and country)

As we do for every edition of ICAS, we like to connect with the city where it is being held. So too this time in Leiden. Leiden University is our local host, housing the event in its buildings and sponsoring the attendance of a very large number of scholars. The City of Leiden has also proven to be very generous; it is a main sponsor and has helped us deal with much of the bureaucratic elements of organising such an event. Many of the ICAS activities will take place outdoors or in other public venues, so that more of the city's residents and business owners may enjoy and profit from this sudden influx of more than 2200 visitors. See more about these activities below.

The academic programme of ICAS 11 is also bigger than ever; it includes close to 550 panel sessions, roundtables, and book /PhD presentations. The programme will commence on 16 July with a festive parade through the streets of Leiden, which will lead the participants to the Hooglandse Kerk where the convention's opening will take place. The attendees will be greeted by music from the pipe organ as they file into the gothic church, after which they will be welcomed by a number of representatives of the university, organisers and the city. During the ceremony we will be announcing the winners of the ICAS Book and Dissertation Prizes, and presenting them with their awards.

The Book Prize is bigger and better than ever, and now includes yet one more language edition: Spanish/Portuguese. We will wrap up the formal procedures with an extraordinary performance, brought to us by Henri Tournier and Enkhjargal Dandarvaanchig, in which they combine Western, Indian and Mongolian musical elements.

As you make your way between the two main ICAS venues, Kamerlingh Onnes and Lipsius, you may choose to take a short walk along the Rapenburg canal, or instead you could walk through the Pieterskerkplein (Peter's Church Square) at the heart of the ICAS area, where you will come across our Food and Cultural Market. At this market, especially organised for ICAS, but open to the public as well, you will be able to enjoy a selection from Dutch and Asian cuisines, and be entertained and informed by a number of artisans performing age old Dutch traditions, such as clog crafting, liquorice making and 'ship in bottle' building. There will be musical elements such as a vinyl DJ on a *bakfiets*, and perhaps even a martial arts performance. The market will be operational everyday between 16-19 July, from 12pm-8pm (although we will wrap up earlier on the Tuesday when all ICAS participants will be making their way to the ICAS opening ceremony). This means that you can have lunch and dinner at the market if you choose, or at least a drink after the last panel, which ends at 18.45.

Additional activities during ICAS 11

The two main venues of ICAS 11 (Lipsius and Kamerlingh Onnes) will be hosting an exhibition area for the ICAS Asian studies book fair (the full list of over 30 exhibitors can be found on the conference website). Here you will find Asian studies-related publishers, institutes and service providers exhibiting their wares. In addition, a good number of acquisition editors will be present to connect with potential authors. ICAS has in the past facilitated many a happy meeting and new publication!

Public activities

Quite a few of our planned activities will cater for the public as well. They include (complete details available online):

- the ICAS 11 Film Festival, curated by Roshni Sengupta (IIAS Fellow and Lecturer at Leiden Institute for Area Studies). The films and documentaries will be on show in Lipsius room #019, with a special viewing at Trianon cinema on 18 July.

- 'Masterpieces from the collection', an exhibition at the University Library.
- 'China 1979 - A giant awakens', a photo exhibition by Paul van Riel in the Sijthoff Cultural Centre.
- 'Divine Encounters', a photo exhibition by Hans Kemp, at Leiden City Hall.
- 'Humanity's End as a New beginning: World Disasters in Myths', a photo exhibition by Yuriko Yamaguchi in the former University Library at Rapenburg 70.
- 'Heritage on the Move', a photo exhibition by Leiden Global, in Kamerlingh Onnes, C-hallway.
- 'Out of Asia: 2000 years of textiles', an exhibition at the Textile Research Centre.
- 'The IIAS Academic Freedom Space', meeting place for discussions on academic freedom, at the Sijthoff Cultural Centre.

Please be advised that you will have to register online for a few of these events: <https://tinyurl.com/ICAS11CP>



Above: Trianon cinema. Far left: Leiden City Hall. Courtesy Wikimedia. Left: 'Heritage on the Move', a photo exhibition by Leiden Global.



ICAS can seriously change your orientation

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary

The market will not be the only lunch venue during ICAS 11. Kamerlingh Onnes and Lipsius both have a university restaurant, and we have also teamed up with a large number of cafés and restaurants in the immediate vicinity where ICAS participants will be made to feel welcome. Our decision to spread out the lunch options across various establishments fits in with our recurring wish to have as many local businesses as possible reap the benefits from ICAS.

Distances in the Netherlands are very small when compared to basically any other country in the world. Where most people would not bat an eye at commuting everyday for an hour or more, the Dutch just might. Commutes in the Netherlands are more commonly a 20-minute bike ride! But what this means is that you should not restrict your visit to Leiden, you can easily expand your experience into the rest of the country, where the furthest national destination is probably no more than a 2-hour train ride away! Think of all the world famous museums in the Randstad cities, not to mention the stunning Kröller-Müller museum in the Hoge Veluwe. And what about the ingenious Delta Works in Zeeland, or *Afsluitdijk* further north? Both structures are evidence of the famous Dutch resourcefulness and engineering. And make sure to enjoy Dutch *stroomwafels* and sample *Jenever*, the juniper-flavoured liquor from which Gin evolved. Get on a boat for a canal ride, or sail across the *IJsselmeer*. In short, please do enjoy all the Netherlands has to offer!

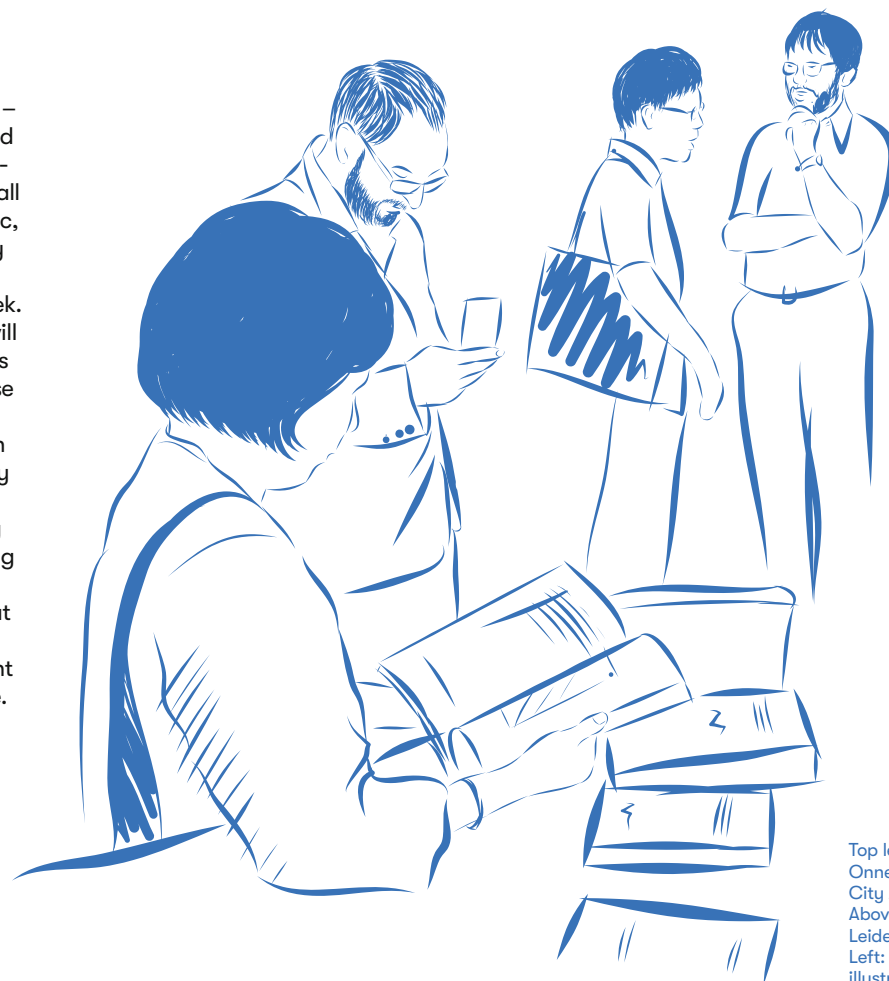
Looking forward

For the first time ICAS will end with a blast – so make sure to stay till the very end! The grand closing party will take place at the City Auditorium (Stadsgehoorzaal), a beautiful concert hall in the middle of Leiden. There will be live music, karaoke, drinks, bites, dancing, and hopefully some really good unwinding and celebrating after a productive and inspiring convention week.

The location of ICAS 12 (to be held in 2021) will be unveiled during the opening ceremony of this current convention. We will maintain the surprise for now, but rest assured we will again make sure to link the conference to the city/country in everyway possible. ICAS is never simply a purely academic endeavour – it is creating, sharing and collecting knowledge, it is network building and facilitating new partnerships, it is learning from those beyond academia (such as civil society and practitioners), it is recognising great research, publications and effective projects, it is showcasing the arts, it is enjoying time spent with like-minded people, and it is so much more.

We hope you will all join us at the next instalment of the convention, but for now, we look forward to welcoming you to Leiden for ICAS 11 this summer. Though with this being the Netherlands – how the weather will be, nobody knows!

Paul van der Velde ICAS Secretary, IBP General Secretary, and IIAS Publications Officer icas@iias.nl



Top left: Kamerlingh Onnes. Top right: Leiden City Auditorium. Above: Lipsius Building, Leiden University. Left: Asian Book Fair, illustration by Paul Oram.



Above left: Hortus Botanicus Gardens. Above right: Textile Research Centre workshop. Right: The Asia Library. Far right: The International Institute for Asian Studies on the Rapenburg.

Exclusive events for participants

For a complete list of all side-events organised for exclusively ICAS 11 participants please visit the conference site, but a quick overview includes:

- ICAS 11 curated visits to the Asian Library.
- Canal boat ride between the two main conference locations.
- Breakfast meeting and personal tour with curators at the National Museum of Ethnology.
- 'Introduction to Japanese painting conservation', visit to the *Restoriant* studio at the National Museum of Ethnology.
- 'Asia in Leiden city walk', in conjunction with Brill publishers.
- 'Walking tours: Historical Leiden and Leiden's Alms Houses', by Cicerones.
- Lectures and workshops at the Textile Research Centre.
- '430 years challenges in Asian botany', lecture by director P.J.A. Kessler, at the Hortus Botanicus.

Please be advised that you will have to register online for a few of these events: <https://tinyurl.com/ICAS11CP>

In its role as home of the ICAS Secretariat, the offices of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) will also be opening its doors to all interested parties.

Throughout the ICAS week there will be a number of exhibitions and demonstrations at the IIAS building at Rapenburg 59. They include an ICAS Retrospective including a Book Prize Exhibition, the Photo Contest Exhibition 'IIAS 25 years', a representation of 'Me, Asian?!' (see page 12) and a Chinese calligraphy demonstration followed by workshop.



The French Academic Network for Asian Studies (GIS Asie)

International promotion of Asian studies

Myriam de Loenzien and Catherine Bastien-Ventura

This summer, the French Academic Network for Asian Studies (GIS Asie) will be co-organizer of the 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), together with the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) who hosts the ICAS Secretariat at its offices in Leiden, and Leiden University, this edition's local hosts. This major event will offer scholars an opportunity to gather and share their research, publications, and projects. It will enable them to meet with other scholars, publishers, specialists, and members of civil society. In many respects, the involvement of GIS Asie in this convention reflects the current challenges and opportunities faced by the promotion of Asian studies in the French and broader European context.



Below: Ph.D. thesis Prize ceremony award at Maison de l'Asie, Paris January 2019.

In this article, we explore these challenges and opportunities. They include first and foremost the bringing together of Asia scholars. To attain this goal, GIS Asie establishes strong and sustainable relationships between institutions. It organizes major international conferences every two years, but also more frequent meetings and regular activities. In line with this general orientation, specific actions are carried out in favor of and with the active participation of young scholars, who are expected to play a key role in the future of Asian studies. Through these multiple activities, GIS Asie intends to act as a significant operator in area studies.

A network based on sustainable relationships

In the French institutional landscape, the French Academic Network for Asian Studies is a "Groupement d'intérêt scientifique" (GIS), which is a formal agreement between public research institutions and higher education institutions. Based on this strong institutional basis, all relevant research centers can participate. GIS Asie brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, working on all Asian countries.

Currently, the 23 members of GIS Asie include 8 universities, 11 research and training institutions, 2 research institutes and one

foundation. Leaning on this institutional agreement, 29 research centers participate. Among them, 24 are located in France, 5 are in Asia and 1 in Belgium. Due to the specificity of the French institutional landscape, a large number of the research centers located in France are concentrated in Paris and surrounding region. However, GIS Asie is keen on promoting the activities of research centers located in various parts of the country, and includes members in the two big cities of Lyon and Marseille, as well as in smaller cities like Angers.

We estimate that the French Academic Network for Asian Studies includes approximately 80% of all scholars interested in the field, representing more than 1,000 individuals. There is a great diversity of their profiles regarding their topics, disciplines and geographical region of interest. Their works concern all social sciences and humanities, ranging from history, literature, anthropology, and linguistics to geography, economics, demography, geography and political sciences. Their research potentially concerns all areas of Northeast, Southeast, South and Central Asia. This network is supported by a technical and administrative team from the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), which plays a crucial role in the preparation, management and organization of all activities. CNRS is the largest governmental research organization in France, and the main stakeholder of GIS Asie.

A network in Europe and in Asia

Established in 2013, in the French academic landscape, GIS Asie remains open to collaborations with institutions from other countries active in the domain of Asian studies.

Membership is open to universities and research institutes in France but also abroad, primarily to French-speaking institutions. The first and unique non-French full member to date is the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Belgium, which joined the network in 2017. This high ranking university, with more than 30,000 students, teachers and permanent staff is active mainly through the activities of its East Asian Studies research center (EAST), established in 2016 and which benefits from a strong expertise in social anthropology.

The network of GIS Asie extends beyond the boundaries of Europe, as it also includes 5 French research centers in Asia (Unité Mixte des Instituts Français de Recherche à l'Étranger, UMIFRE). They include the French Center for Research on Contemporary China (CEFC) located in Hong Kong (China), with two regional branches, one in Beijing (China) and one in Taipei (Taiwan); the Institut Français de Recherche sur le Japon at the Maison Franco-Japonaise in Tokyo (Japan); the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC) in Bangkok (Thailand); the Centre for Social

sciences and Humanities (CSH) in New Delhi (India); the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) in Puducherry (India). These centers work under the joint administrative supervision of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). They benefit from resources and permanent staff. They provide support to establish, maintain and develop collaborations with academic communities in Asia. They also host senior and junior researchers who attend on a short term basis.

Since 2018, and in collaboration with GIS Asie, these centers conduct a scientific research programme entitled "Sustain Asia", which contributes to the reflection on social and environmental resilience in various national and local contexts characterized by rapid economic growth and limited resources, in countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand. First results from this work in progress will be presented in several panels at ICAS 11.

GIS Asie also participates in the European Alliance for Asian Studies, a cooperative platform which brings together competences and expertise on Asia and Asian studies in Europe. Currently, institutions from 14 countries participate in this Alliance, including other consortia such as the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS). An institutional roundtable at ICAS 11 will discuss the challenges facing these institutions,

whose sizes, means and historical contexts are heterogeneous. Through its participation, GIS Asie fosters collaborations between universities and research centers across Europe, discusses institutional programs and realization, facilitates communications and promotes the visibility of scholarly excellence. At ICAS 11, it will be convening roundtables on the participation of European institutions in the field of Asian studies.

Organizing major international events

The 11th edition of ICAS, inaugurated in 1997, will also be the 7th International Conference organized by the French Academic Network for Asian Studies since 2003. The organization of a biennial international congress is at the forefront of GIS Asie's activities, with the aim to increase visibility of Asian studies and foster exchanges between scholars.

GIS Asie benefits from an extensive experience in organizing large scale international congresses. Previous international Asian studies conferences organized by GIS Asie clearly met the needs of many scholars, as witnessed by the increasing number of participants over the years, reaching more than 900 people in 2017 in Paris. The conference to be held in Leiden will exceed this number, with approximately 2000 participants expected to attend. GIS Asie certainly plays a significant role in this endeavor, thanks to the support of its stakeholders and sponsors. The resources mobilized by GIS Asie will enable numerous scholars to benefit from a funding scheme to supplement their resources in a period when financial means are scarce.

The involvement of GIS Asie in the preparation of ICAS 11 includes multiple scientific and organizational aspects. As members of the scientific committee, the director and the deputy director of GIS Asie evaluated all 346 panels and roundtables submitted, each of them including 3 to 6 presentations.

The ICAS Book Prize involves publications in several languages. This year, for the second time, GIS Asie will be sponsor and secretariat of the ICAS-GIS Asie Book Prize, which will honor outstanding works in the French language. Among 36 submitted books, 7 have been shortlisted by the reading committee chaired by the GIS Asie director. The 1st edition of this prize took place in 2017 and the award was presented during ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It honored Marine Carrin's book entitled "The Language of the Gods. Santal Ritual Discourse Between the Oral and the Written". This book was a result of the author's thorough investigation into the history and culture of the Santals, a tribal group who lives in India, and more broadly in Eastern South Asia.

GIS Asie, in collaboration with its partners participating in ICAS 11, will also seize the opportunity to enhance contacts between scholars, editors, journals and associations working on Asia. Besides scientific work, it will support the participation of prominent artists who share their love for Asia in their own peculiar way. This will be part of the enjoyable moments of what should become a memorable gathering.

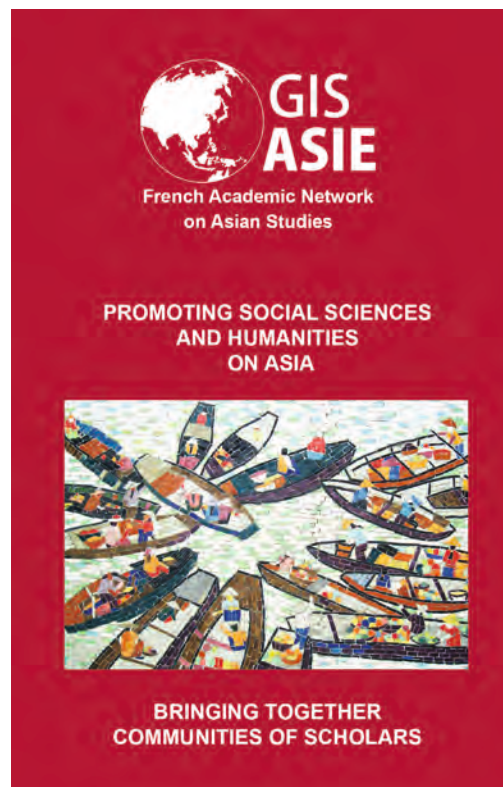
Preparing the future of Asian studies

Young scholars, including doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows and young researchers in search of a permanent position, not only hold invaluable and often firsthand knowledge of their area of specialization, but their work and career will also shape the future of Asian studies. For this reason, supporting and promoting their research work is at the forefront of GIS Asie's goals and activities. It takes various forms.

Young scholars are encouraged to seize the opportunity of ICAS 11 to present and discuss their work with a large international audience. GIS Asie fosters their participation by offering financial support specially geared towards young scholars. In previous editions of GIS Asie's international conference, young scholars have played a major role, taking part in panels and contests.

Besides financial support, special sessions will be organized to promote outstanding work done by doctoral students. Among them, the awardees of the GIS Asie 2018 PhD prize are offered an opportunity to present their work. Overall, more than 60 candidates from all social sciences and humanities disciplines who defended their doctoral dissertations in 2016 or 2017 in France and Belgium participated. The selection committee chaired by GIS Asie's deputy director included 106 reviewers. Twenty candidates were shortlisted and three joint prizes were awarded. The winning works illustrate the diversity of topics, disciplines and geographical areas in Asian studies: David Serfass' thesis "The Collaborating Government of Wang Jingwei: Aspects of the State of Occupation during the Sino-Japanese War, 1940-1945" is at the crossroads of China's modern state and Japan's Empire; Clemence Jullien's thesis "From the Slum to Hospital: Anthropology of Reproductive Health in Rajasthan (India)" is based on an ethnographic fieldwork in a public hospital and several slums; Juliette Cleuziou's thesis "Marriages, De-marriages and Re-marriages: Ritual, Gender and Kinship in Contemporary Tajikistan" explores social and ritual roles of women in urban and rural areas. Each winner received 2000 euros, earmarked for the publication of their work. The awards ceremony, which took place in the historical salons of the Maison de l'Asie in Paris, was preceded by a lecture delivered by Prof. Ben Kiernan from Yale University. In his brilliant presentation about "A World History of Genocide", Prof. Kiernan offered the audience a broad perspective on mass violence and crimes against humanity in Asia and in other regions.

Young scholars also initiated and organized one-day workshops in 2018. The first one was entitled "Young Researchers in the 'Publish or Perish' Competition"; the second one dealt with "Networks, Exchanges and Interactions in Asia" and benefited from additional funding from the Campus Condorcet program. Each workshop gathered some forty scholars in Paris and was an opportunity for young researchers to present their work, express their views and concerns, and learn from each other and from senior researchers. In addition to these workshops, meetings with invited senior fellows are regularly organized to give young scholars the opportunity to present their ongoing work. In 2018, such meetings were organized with Prof. Sumathi Ramaswami, cultural historian of South Asia and the British Empire at Duke



Above: leaflet of GIS Asie, 2019.
Right: Members of GIS Asie, 2019.



University in the United States, and Prof. Yoshida Toru, political scientist at Hokkaido University in Japan.

Since 2013, young scholars also directly participate in GIS Asie's governance. Their activities are coordinated by a specific steering committee, consisting of 6 to 8 young scholars who participate in the regular meetings of GIS Asie's scientific committee. They therefore take part in the decision process regarding the activities of the network, and benefit from the support of GIS Asie administrative and technical staff.

Funding scholarly events and organizing specific meetings

GIS Asie membership provides full access to all activities and funding schemes. GIS Asie also supports major conferences organized by its member teams. In 2018, beneficiaries included the International Association for Tibetan Studies, whose 15th Conference is taking place in July 2019 in Paris; the 25th European Conference on South Asian Studies, which operates under the auspices of the European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS); and the 12th Journées du Réseau DocAsie, which gathers librarians and archivists specialized in Asia.

GIS Asie support of conferences is complemented by the dissemination of information regarding potential funding for scholars in the social sciences and humanities. Throughout the year, GIS Asie broadcasts information on ongoing calls and support programs through its website. It participates in meetings with national, European or international funding agencies in order to advocate for Asian studies and to discuss

possible orientations prior to launching calls. As an example, meetings were held in 2018 with the French National Research Agency (ANR), the main funding source for research activities in France, as well as with members of the European Union's framework program for research and innovation (Horizon 2020). All this information is accessible through the website, which was renewed in January 2018, and through the monthly newsletter sent to all interested parties.

Fostering area studies

Area studies have a specific place in the field of social sciences and humanities, to which the French Academic Network for Asian Studies aims to contribute by both focusing on Asian studies and also collaborating with consortia working on other geographic areas. Since 2016, thanks to the support of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), GIS Asie has benefited from the expertise of a specialist in international relations who works simultaneously for 2 other consortia, one on Africa (GIS Afrique) and the other one on the Muslim Worlds and the Middle East (GIS Moyen-Orient et Mondes Musulman). This creates a synergy and 'good practices' are replicated between the consortia. The 3 consortia on area studies also conduct some common activities. For instance they will organize a summer school in 2020 on digital humanities for the area studies, which will aim at exploring new technologies and skills, as well as their impact on research topics in various contexts.

This dynamic across area studies is expected to develop, as GIS Asie will install itself at the new Condorcet Campus in the northern part of Paris in September 2019. This new location dedicated to research and training in research in humanities and social sciences will be home to 100 research teams, including the GIS Institut des Amériques, another consortium that is a prominent institution for American area studies in France. Our network will also benefit from the many services and equipment offered by this brand new infrastructure.

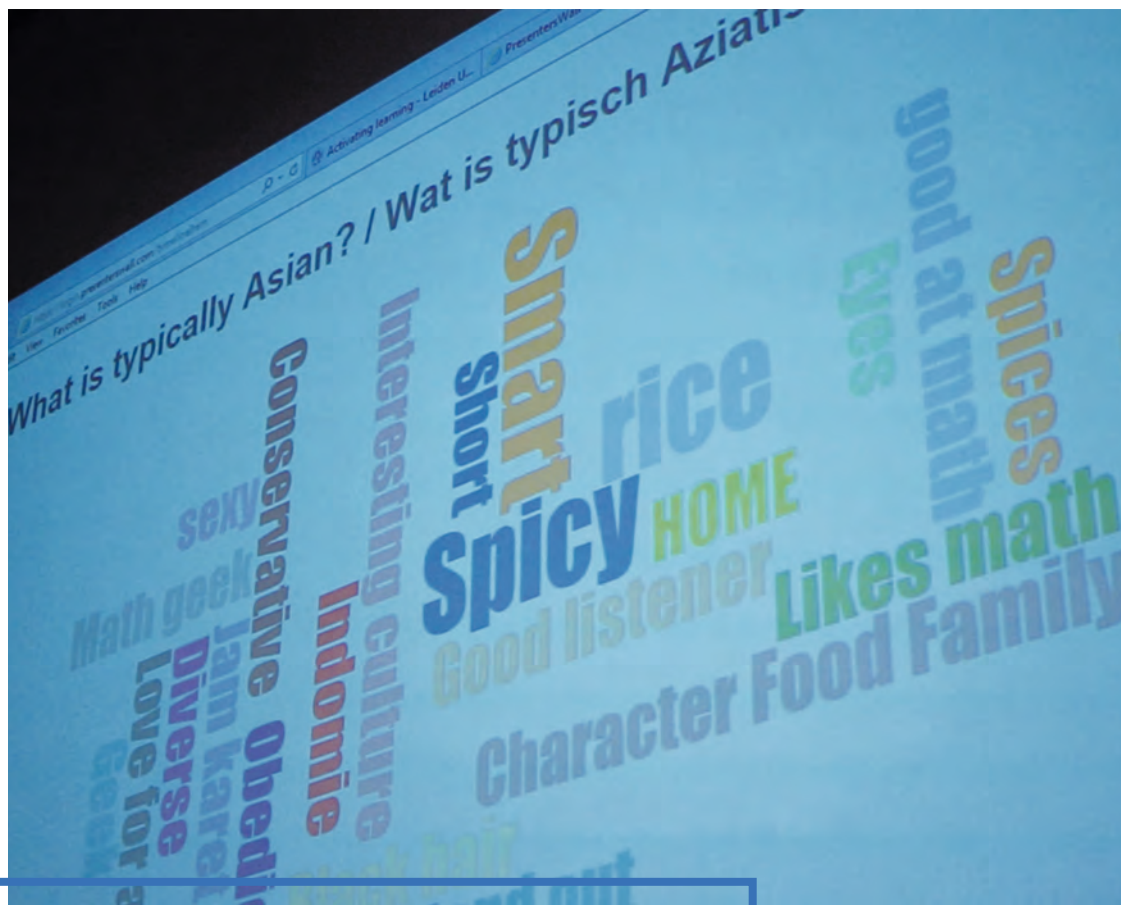
As a major event embedded in a whole range of activities, ICAS 11 is therefore a great opportunity for the French Academic Network for Asian Studies and its partners, to advance and enhance the international promotion of Asian studies.

Myriam de Loenzien
Deputy Director of GIS Asie

Catherine Bastien-Ventura
International Cooperation Officer
of GIS Asie



Above: Left: Young researcher seminar on "Networks, exchanges and interactions in Asia", EHESS Paris, September 2018.



Me, Asian?!

An event series exploring Asian identities in a European context

Judi Mesman

What happens when you open up the University for young adults with an Asian background living in a European city to discuss what it means to be Asian in Europe? This is what a team of Asia enthusiasts at Leiden University College The Hague set off to find out when they started the event series 'Me, Asian?!' in September of 2018. Little did they know that seven evenings was all it took to create a multi-ethnic Asian community that is too legit to quit.

Event series Me, Asian?!

The Dutch city of the Hague historically has many Indo-European inhabitants, has a vibrant China Town, is home to a large community of Hindustani-Surinamese people, houses many international students from Asia (e.g., Indonesia, India, Bangladesh), and hosts the embassies of all the largest Asian countries. A significant part of these Asian populations consists of young adults ready to make their mark on society. Nonetheless, there is very little public discourse about the position of Asians in the Netherlands, or even in Europe. As per the stereotype, most Asian minority groups quietly go about their business without causing much of a fuss or drawing attention. And if on rare occasions Asian minorities are the focus of attention, it is often through the eyes of the majority rather than through their own. The event series Me, Asian?! was conceived to provide a platform for expressing their points of view of life in a Dutch world, and to lay the foundation for the co-creation of agendas for community action and research with respect to Asian cultural identities in the European diaspora.

The organizing team consisted of LUC academics whose work and personal histories tie them to Asia: Minjung Cho, Ajay Gandhi, Jay Huang, Jyothi Thrivikraman, Maja Vodopivec, and myself. Dutch writer of Indonesian descent Gustaaf Peek was invited to moderate the events, adding a

provocative perspective to the series. Each event centered around a specific theme related to the 'Asianness' framed within larger topics such as cultural memory, cinema, literature, visual arts, mindfulness, and parenting. The events were announced in higher education newsletters, social media, and through Asian cultural organizations, and each was attended by about 30-50 people. The participants were mostly of the target group of young adults with an Asian background, but also some young-at-heart older Asian participants, and some non-Asians with an interest in Asian themes. Across the series that ran from September 2018 to May 2019, a total of more than 150 people participated in one or more of the events.

Stereotypically Asian?

The series title 'Me, Asian?!' was intended to reflect the wide variety of Asian identities that people might experience, including variation in the extent to which they identify as Asian in the first place, ranging from not at all or hardly (Me, Asian?) to very strongly so (Me, Asian!). Indeed, identities were at the core of many of the discussions. During the first event, as a fun warm-up, we engaged the audience in a tongue-in-cheek 'How Asian are you?' test, featuring elements that actually or stereotypically distinguish Asians from others. Test items addressed things like rice and spicy food consumption, math abilities,

physical height, the ability to do an 'Asian squat', and collectivistic interpretations of pictures. With a great deal of hilarity, but also a healthy dose of competitiveness, the participants rose to these challenges. When discussing the test scores, it became clear that most participants had hoped to score high on 'Asianness'. Some test items reflected certain Asian regions more than others, and these sparked some (light-hearted) objections in those who clearly felt more Asian than their test scores showed. The test items served as a fertile breeding ground for discussions about what Asian is and what it is not, and illustrated the heterogeneity of Asian populations.

Interestingly, once those discussions about differences between Asians had taken place during that very first event, commonalities rather than disparities were discovered and emphasized. Across the events that

followed, a keen sense of kinship developed between individuals from very different Asian backgrounds. Shared experiences came to the fore when we discussed cultural memories in small groups. The importance of language, family, and food in cherished memories that are tied to cultural heritage were unanimously acknowledged. Touching, funny, and sometimes painful memories were shared that each in their own way reflected what an Asian heritage means to people. Questions about the intergenerational transmission of Asian cultural identities were raised in various discussions. How did our own parents give us a sense of being Asian? And to what extent do we want to pass on our Asian heritage to our children? Why do we sometimes care more about preserving our distinctiveness while we sometimes just want to blend in?

Status of the Other

Identity questions were also prominent in the four events that included panel discussions, with Asian filmmakers, Asian writers, Asian parents, and Asian visual artists. These events were among the more popular ones in terms of both attendance and rating in the online evaluation survey that was sent to all participants after the sixth event. The success of the panel-based events was at least partly due to the interactive nature of these events, and personal stories shared by the panel members. These stories clearly resonated with the audience, and sparked lively discussions aimed at digging deeper into the nature of Asian identities. Various panel members reflected on the ways in which the ethnic majority imposes identities on the Asian minority that are sometimes perceived as ill-fitting and insincere. One writer raised an issue of making a compromise between what she would like to write about, and what her publisher thought the readership wanted. She related how her publisher had asked her to just write about her migrant past, suggesting that readers would only be interested in that part of her experience. Another writer decidedly rejected any possibility of making such compromises. One Asian visual artist objected to frequently being asked why she used her Asian heritage in her art, whereas, for example, a Dutch artist would never be asked this question. Another artist questioned the entire identity formation process, and suggested destroying identities rather than forming them. Where is the boundary between proudly carrying the Asian identity and exploiting the Asian identity as an artist, and perhaps reproducing in such a way certain stereotypes about what it means to be Asian? When others have already decided what is Asian, how to assert our own definition what is Asian in the face of stereotypes and prejudice?

The Asian identity was also often linked to a sense of having to be better, to do better, to prove oneself. This feeling fits with the stereotype of Asian tiger parenting, with its highly demanding and sometimes harsh

approach to raising children ('for their own good'), focused on achievement. Even though these elements were recognized by the panel of parents as well as by many participants, there was also appreciation for the support and love that – even if not expressed in words – was experienced as underlying the strict parenting practices. Needing to achieve and be better than others is not only related to an Asian upbringing, but to the often vulnerable status of being an immigrant and a minority as well. As one of the visual artists said: "you can be a loser in your own country, but not in another country". As a 'guest' one has to prove worthiness, show skill and ability so that the host country is willing to accept one's presence. Even if you are not technically a guest, but born in the Netherlands, the sense of being regarded as a guest is often palpable, most clearly reflected in the question 'where are you really from?' that many of us have all heard uncountable times. Our Asian appearances in the European context invariably make us the Other who is regarded at best as interestingly exotic, and at worst as unacceptably alien. The status of Other was experienced as painful by some participants, but as a source of pride and activism by others, with the latter approach providing an inspiring perspective to those expressing the former.

Sharing food, creating community

Exchanges of perspectives and openness to seeing things from different points of view was a central feature of the series. An open and accepting atmosphere created by the organizers was crucial to the process of sharing feelings and opinions and was established almost from the get-go. This was certainly also due to the socializing opportunity after each event, with free drinks and delicious Asian snacks in our student-run bar at Leiden University College. When we entered the bar after the first event, and people saw and smelled the Asian foods, one of them exclaimed 'I was expecting bitterballen, but this is much better!' (bitterballen are a very Dutch snack commonly served at social events). During food and drinks, participants socialized and met new people. In fact, the online evaluation survey showed that the vast majority of participants had met new people during the series. Indeed, people who had come in alone ended up talking to others over sushi, and duos becoming foursomes over dumplings. The importance of sharing food for the creation of a community can not be overestimated.

The event series ended up exceeding our expectations and inadvertently led to the founding of an informal Asian community empowered by familiarity and recognition. The comforting feeling of being 'amongst ourselves' and not having to conform to what it means to be Asian through European eyes was frankly liberating. The sense of kinship that so readily developed between individuals from a diversity of Asian backgrounds was uplifting and created a feeling of strength and agency that deserves to be fostered. Accordingly, there is great enthusiasm for a follow-up, both among the participants and the organizers. Inspired by the success of Me, Asian?!, we predict that the question mark will be dropped from the follow-up series title.

Judi Mesman

Professor of the Interdisciplinary
Study of Societal Challenges,
Dean of Leiden University College
j.mesman@luc.leidenuniv.nl

Me, Asian?! at ICAS11

A short documentary about the Me, Asian?! series will be presented at the ICAS preconference event at Leiden University College in the Hague on Monday 15 July 2019. To register for this pre-event, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/ICAS11pre-event>

During the ICAS week (16-19 July) there will be a public exhibition of the 'Me Asian?! Visual Archive' at the IAS offices on Rapenburg 59. The exhibition will be opened by Belle Promchanya on 16 July, 11:00-11:30. <https://www.instagram.com/measianluc>

The best of the best

The 2019 ICAS Book Prize (IBP) dissertation competition

Alex McKay

One of the many academic attractions at ICAS 11 will be the announcement of the winners of the International Convention of Asia Scholars Book Prize (IBP) and the IBP Dissertation Prize Awards. The aim of these Awards is to create an international focus for academic works on Asia, thus increasing their worldwide visibility, and since their inception in 2004 they have become probably the most prestigious publication prizes in the world of Asian studies. Both the Book and the Dissertation Awards are organised around broad interdisciplinary bases (Humanities and Social Sciences) rather than traditional geographic or disciplinary compartmentalisations.

The process

The Dissertation Prizes were open to all recent PhD candidates awarded doctorates after June 2016 (with a certain latitude to allow for the processes involved) and who submitted their dissertations to the competition before October 2018. Since that time the Dissertation Judging Committee members, overseen by ICAS Secretary Dr Paul van der Velde and myself, have been assessing the qualities of each submission.

Longlists of 10 dissertations in each of the two categories, the Humanities and the Social Sciences, were posted online in March 2019. From those Longlists, Shortlists of five dissertations in each category have now been selected (see <https://icas.asia/en/icas-book-prize>). The two category winners, selected from the Shortlists, will be announced at ICAS 11, as will the winners of Judging Committee Accolades in each category.

The Accolades draw attention to dissertations that, while not judged the best overall in their discipline, are none-the-less of considerable quality in important areas. At ICAS 11 in Leiden there will be four Accolades in each category, namely a Specialist Accolade; Ground-breaking Subject Matter Accolade; Most Accessible and Captivating Work for the Non-specialist Reader Accolade; and a Chairman's Accolade. Those dissertations chosen by the Committee for Accolades may or may not be featured on the Long or Shortlists, and the Chairman's Accolades in each category are specifically selected from outside the Longlist.

The achievement

Given that, according to Professor Google, less than 60% of doctoral candidates actually complete their PhD (within a decade), the award of a doctorate is a considerable achievement for any individual and their dissertations usually testify to the enormous amount of research work that has gone into them. Given the great variety of dissertation subjects within the Humanities and Social Sciences categories, comparing the quality of these works might seem almost impossible. But the best dissertations do stand out. They inform with their research, stimulate with their arguments, convince with their conclusions and shine with their enthusiasm. While no two judges will ever entirely agree on the best dissertations in any subject area they will certainly recognise a dissertation with those qualities as being a contender for the Awards.

As I previously noted (*The Newsletter* 76, 2017, p.42), the "question of what is an award-winning dissertation is of course a matter of interpretation by the judges. But clearly the best dissertations will have the primary merit of originality, along with scholastic qualities such as depth (and breadth) of research, evidence of intellectual quality, clear and sophisticated arguments, good organisation and presentation of evidence leading to significant conclusions liable to be of interest to the wider field, a consistent and properly considered theoretical and/or methodological framework, and of course it must include due acknowledgement of sources and proper presentation of bibliography, notes and associated scholastic apparatus. They will also have the minimum of typographical errors

and the standard of writing and use of English language will be of a good standard." (Here I should add that while the competition to date has been open only to dissertations in English, we hope to include at least French-language dissertations at ICAS 12 in 2021).

The IBP Awards for the best Dissertation in the Humanities and the best Dissertation in the Social Sciences were instituted with the intention of recognising outstanding doctoral submissions; and just as the ICAS Best Book Awards in those categories recognise the work of established scholars (including private scholars), so do the Dissertation Awards recognise the best work of up-and-coming scholars. The Award winning dissertations – and many of those on the Long and Shortlists – invariably attract the attention of academic publishers, and in due course result in monographs based on the original theses. To be long or shortlisted, is in itself a considerable compliment, as it is to receive one of the Accolades that acknowledge dissertations with particular specific qualities worthy of recognition.

The submissions

The 2019 ICAS 11 Dissertation competition has attracted just over 150 submissions, almost evenly divided between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. That compares favourably with the 126 submissions to the Chiang Mai ICAS 10 competition two years ago. Again we have attracted dissertations from more than 90 universities in just over 20 countries. Around 20% of the submissions are recognised by inclusion in the Longlist and

Accolades, with those shortlisted representing (approximately) the top 7% of submitted dissertations.

One aspect of the process is the insights it gives into areas and subjects that are currently the focus of cutting-edge doctoral research. In terms of nation states, 34 submissions primarily deal with China, 28 with India, 13 with Japan and 11 with Indonesia. Afghanistan, Oman, Vietnam, and (perhaps surprisingly) Singapore, were all the subject of only one dissertation. But more than a dozen submissions dealt with trans-national regions, cross-border issues between two or more states, or with diasporas and migrant labour. Furthermore, there were nine dissertations concerning Asia as a wider region. Central Asian studies, however, were a notable omission, attracting only one submission, and with opportunities for research in the Central Asian 'Stans' rapidly improving, we can hope for an increase in dissertations on this region at ICAS 12.

In terms of subjects, there was a considerable breadth. The popularity of studies concerning more than one culture or nation pointed to recent tendencies in academia to recognise that nation-state borders do not demarcate precise boundaries between cultures and peoples. It also points, perhaps, to the growing Asian diaspora in the Western world and the increasing tendency of Asian students to carry out doctoral study in the West, and for Western students to be attracted to Asian universities. Such tendencies must surely lead to greater inter-cultural understanding, not least in its expression in academic works.

Along with that tendency to study wider cultural areas or areas of cultural interaction, studies relating to museums and to educational issues show a considerable growth. A number of dissertations analysing the impact of Christian missionaries in disparate contexts pointed to something of a revival of that field, albeit viewed through contemporary rather than 'Orientalist' lenses. Reflections on contemporary, or near contemporary issues – such as the 2011 Bangkok floods or the suicide of Tamil Nadu farmers – were also popular. The lack of environmental studies noted at ICAS 10 has been reversed, with the environment (in various contexts) being the subject of a number of submissions. Film studies are much reduced, but those in areas such as gender, organisational studies and the construction of national identities, remain constant.

Upholding standards

Naturally there are excellent dissertations that are not featured among those chosen for the various IBP Lists and final Awards/Accolades. That is a testament to the high standard of so many entries and there is no doubt that many of those not recognised by us will also be the basis for future monographs of considerable impact in their field. In an era where maintaining academic standards faces enormous challenges, the IBP Awards are an important contribution to upholding and advancing those standards.

Alex McKay Chair of the IBP 2019
Dissertation Reading Committee
Dungog@hotmail.com



2017 Dissertation winners in Chiang Mai at ICAS 10 (Tutin Arganti presenting to Gauri Bharat, and Alex McKay presenting to Lisa Hellman)



Asia with salsa and samba

Asian studies publications in Portuguese and Spanish

Claudio Costa Pinheiro

“Participating in the jury of a book prize can be an enlightening and amusing experience!” Those were the words of ICAS Secretary, founder and General Secretary of the ICAS Book Prize (IBP), Paul van der Velde, which convinced me to join the jury for the IBP awarded in 2017. And he was not lying. It was thrilling to unwrap the steady flow of packages coming in from all over the world and to slowly paint a picture of the international status of English language publications on Asia. In the end, I had a pile of 352 books standing in my office – including both Humanities and Social Sciences titles. Then I received the next invitation, for an even greater challenge: *Can Sephis help ICAS to include Latin American publications on Asia in the IBP?* We took on the challenge and succeeded! But in fact we went further than that, as you shall see below.



Left:
Participants of the workshop,
9–11 November 2016,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Diversifying voices

So, in 2019, the IBP for the first time includes a prize for best publication on Asia in Spanish or Portuguese. Including this language prize was somewhat of a natural development for the ICAS Book Prize. The IBP was inaugurated in 2004; at that time it accepted only English-language titles, but in 2017 new language prizes were added to the list: Chinese, French, German, Korean. In 2021, Japanese and Russian publications will be the newcomers, and plans for 2023 include further language additions. This is part of a policy to amplify Asian voices, to decentre Asian studies and to show that there are also vibrant academic traditions in Asian studies alongside the one in the English-speaking academic world. ICAS-IIAS' commitment to decentre Asian studies speaks to the heart of Sephis' mandate to promote South-North-South academic linkages. This is not the first time Sephis-IIAS-ICAS have joined forces. In 2012 we together started developing the Asian studies in Africa network and association and since 2016, the Latin American Platform on Asian Studies – which has had meetings in Rio de Janeiro (Sephis-UFRJ, 2016), Chiang Mai (ICAS 10, 2017), Lima (ALADAA, 2018) and will continue in Leiden (ICAS 11, 2019) and Mexico (WCAA-Colegio de Mexico), in October 2019.

Asia in Latin America¹

One year before launching the call for publications in Portuguese and Spanish, Sephis organised a survey to map Brazilian books and unpublished academic dissertations on Asia, released between 2013 and 2018. On the ground, two undergraduate

students helped to identify all monographs, organized volumes, and unpublished PhD and Master Dissertations with Asia as an area of study or as a research theme.² Though priority was given to the Humanities and Social Sciences, the survey was not blind to any work largely related to Asia – including fictional literature, publications of migrant communities, religion and spirituality, etc.

This initiative had a clear focus and wide objectives: mapping part of the Latin American intellectual production on Asia was a strategy to access authors and publishers, and to connect academic communities separated by national, geographical and linguistic divides. The overall output of this survey revealed positive and negative aspects. It identified a very active scene, with almost 140 publications and more than 330 dissertations addressing contemporary and historical issues in Human and Social Sciences, focusing on Asian regions and sub-regions, and their connections with Latin America and with the Global South. Eventually, logistical issues led us to decide to not include dissertations for the first edition of the Portuguese/Spanish IBP; nevertheless the process of comparing published books and unpublished academic writings proved useful: a) to understand priorities of the local publishing industry, b) to analyse how it diverges from the scientific production in the field, and c) to develop strategies for connecting Asian studies in Portuguese/Spanish and academic communities.

A negative conclusion was recognizing that the Brazilian publishing industry is helping to reinforce inequality. It largely ignores local and regional intellectual production

on Asia, has limited participation in promoting science, and endorses gender imbalance. One-third of the Brazilian publications on Asia are translations; some are relevant works on history, economics and society of Asia, while a big chunk is made up of low-quality literature that frames Asia as a cultural asset, such as ‘the art of war for executives’ and the like. A large proportion of the titles that are produced locally fall within the International Relations camp, which basically reproduce hegemonic itineraries of the field and are largely incapable of reflecting on how the agendas of diplomacy, development and international cooperation concerning Asia are influenced by specificities of Brazilian (or Latin American) history and positionality. On yet another level, comparing ways in which Asia has been framed by the Brazilian publishing market and academia, gives a good sense of how Brazilian society ignores local intellectual thinking.

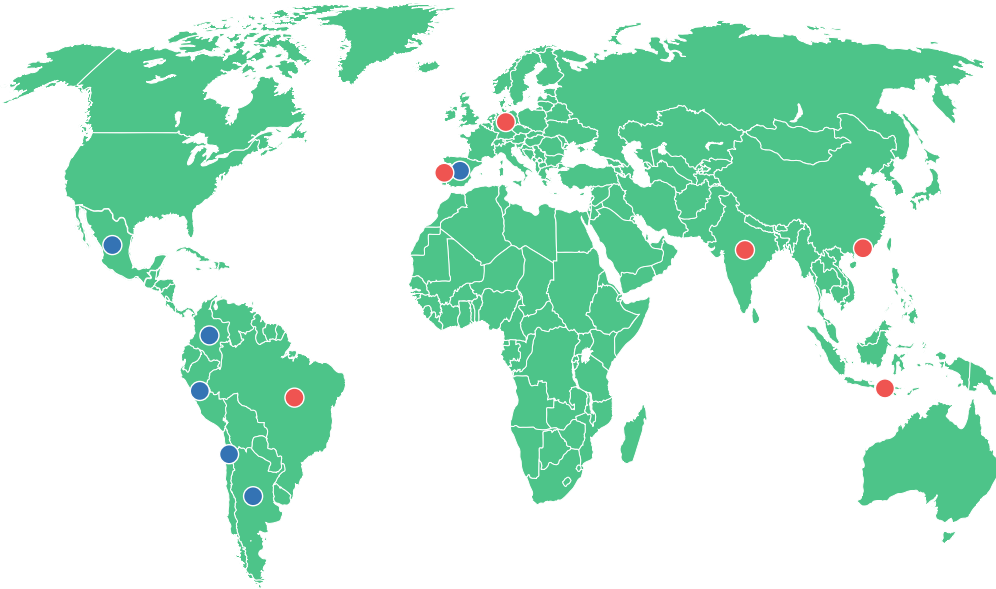
While Brazilian scientific production on Asia displays diversity and inclusiveness, actual publications tend to reinforce repetitiveness and exclusion. Unpublished research texts cover a large variety of themes, historical periods, regions (including Laos, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, ASEAN etc., and comparisons and connections with Africa and Latin America), and show a balanced division of gender in authorship (47% female vs. 53% male authors). Unfortunately, most of these works remain unpublished – exceptions are by universities or small publishers dependent on public funding. The Brazilian publishing market, on the contrary, continues gender imbalance (35% female versus 65% male authors), shows disregard for scientific

production as a source of autonomous thinking, and concentrates on a narrow set of themes/regions (China, the BRICS countries, and emerging development).

The submissions

Although this survey can only show a partial picture of Latin America's thinking about Asia, it is still very enlightening, especially when contrasted with the books submitted to the IBP 2019 Portuguese/Spanish. It helped to develop strategies for making the prize more visible to a large arena of publishers and authors. The Call for Submissions circulated widely through websites, social media platforms, web lists etc. The main universities, research clusters, journals, gatekeepers dealing with Asia in the Portuguese and Spanish speaking academic circles were proactively contacted, sometimes even by telephone. The process involved the intensive participation of scholars and institutions from Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa and the US. Interestingly, though not surprising, we received more responses from Latin American scholars and institutions after circulating the call through European and North-American networks. The call on the Sephis page of one particular social media platform received six thousand views in three weeks!

The gratifying reward for this huge amount of work was, firstly, that the IBP 2019 Portuguese/Spanish collected the second highest number of submissions – second only to English!³ We received almost 70 books from 12 different countries (from Latin America, Europe, Asia and Oceania). Secondly, the



Top Left: Geographical origin of all the books submitted to the ICAS Book Prize in Portuguese and Spanish languages. Below: Selection of titles.



process of mapping this literature made more visible the peculiarities of Portuguese and Spanish academic environments concerned with Asian studies.

The submitted books reveal that there is still a way to go for consolidating a field of Asian studies in Spanish and Portuguese-speaking scientific arenas, including the promotion of intra-lingual and inter-lingual intellectual communities. Publications sooner tend to display national (or regional) isolated cells of Asian studies, scattered through Latin America, Europe and Asia itself, than an organic epistemic community of scholars and institutions operating in dialogue. The existent connections are grounded in national scientific communities (sometimes framed by priorities of funding agencies) or regional scholarly traditions (trusting on networks of alumni), structured around themes like European colonialism in Asia, developmentalism, etc. In practical terms, though scholars circulate and have their works debated at academic events and published in academic journals or books, the literature shows a timid degree of both intra-lingual and inter-lingual citation, an observation also bounded by geographic isolation. Investigations developed by Colombian scholars do not naturally or easily appear as references in the Mexican, Chilean or Spanish literature on Asia – even if they all speak and write in Spanish. The same is true for Brazilian scholars quoting Macanese or Timorese authors and publications. Even in interactions between Brazilian and Portuguese academic communities, where dialogues on Asia are longstanding and vivid, the debate is largely restricted to themes connected to

Portuguese colonialism. The lack of dialogue is even more remarkable if we look at inter-lingual academic communities; Brazilians do not refer to Mexican literature, Colombians to Macanese, and so on.

Publications in Portuguese and Spanish exhibit an interesting distinction. Spanish language books find themselves in a solid scenario; not all Spanish-speaking national and regional institutions are well connected, yet the situation does display a stable scenario with high quality publications. Books are produced by either established universities (such as El Colegio of Mexico, the Autonomous University of Mexico, or the Autonomous University of Madrid) or commercial publishers with a focus on Asia (such as Bellaterra in Barcelona). In comparison, Portuguese-language publications reveal a much more scattered scene with not one big publisher concentrating on Asia; for example, the IBP 2019 submissions in Portuguese were limited to up to three books per publisher. Contrary to Spanish titles, the works in Portuguese show a remarkable geographical range: we received books from Brazil, Portugal, East Timor, India and Macau. This does suggest though that the Portuguese-speaking academic community on Asian studies emulates the Lusophone community and the Portuguese colonial past – in terms of its structure and most popular themes.

Judging the prize

Sephis effectively took the curatorship of the prize as an opportunity to promote connections in the field of Asian studies in Portuguese and Spanish languages and

academic environments. These efforts were combined with the development of the intellectual capacity of students, with promoting dialogue between scholars, institutions, and with building shared curricula for giving consistency to Latin American capacity on Asian studies.⁴ We developed strategies to face the disconnectedness between (and within) these academic communities. First, we opted for a single bilingual jury, able to evaluate all publications in both Portuguese and Spanish, in Human and Social Sciences. Our reading committee consisted of Prof. Dr. Lia Rodriguez de la Vega, Professor at the National University of Lomas de Zamora and at the University of Palermo (Buenos Aires), and recently appointed international president of the Latin American Association of Asian Studies, ALADAA; and Prof. Dr. Patricia Souza de Faria, Professor at Rio de Janeiro Federal Rural University and president of ALADAA Brazil. The committee was well aware of the lack of integration between and within Spanish and Portuguese academic communities and helped to conceive of strategies to promote intellectual dialogues between disconnected academic communities of Asian studies.

As for awarding prizes, one of the main preoccupations was to identify which publications best reflected the potency and peculiarities of the intellectual production of those academies of Asian studies. The reading committee was given total autonomy to decide which publications to reward, and together with the President of the Book Prize, they proposed new categories of accolades to reward publications that helped to strengthen connections between Asia and Portuguese and Spanish-speaking academic institutions.

Challenges ahead

Starting with a positive aspect; Portuguese and Spanish speaking publications on Asia, especially in Latin America, show the progressive tendency to dissociate 'expertise on Asia' from an Asian 'ethnic background'. This is particularly remarkable when compared to publications and the field of Asian studies at large, where an "ethnophilic paradigm" still operates very strongly.⁵ Take, for example, the growing presence of students of afro-descent in Brazil engaging with Asian studies.

A number of challenges stand ahead of us in our attempts to better integrate Portuguese and Spanish-speaking academic communities in the field of Asian studies. This is particularly challenging for peripheral academic circles from East Timor, Ecuador, Surinam, the Caribbean, etc., where publications face difficulties in circulation due to the costs. In fact, Sephis was approached by several authors and publishers with interesting titles for the prize, but not enough resources to meet the postal costs. So how do we boost and give visibility to small publishers? How do we create better mechanisms of visibility and distribution of Spanish/Portuguese publications on Asia? Can we develop consistent policies of translation?

To confront some of these challenges, Sephis is joining ALADAA and other academic institutions in Latin America and Europe to discuss strategies to overcome structural issues in promoting the field of Asian studies in the region and in Portuguese and Spanish languages at large. One initial step has already been accomplished as the ICAS Book Prize helps to give visibility to local production on Asia that would otherwise have difficulty to circulate and to be known. Further steps are coming soon: the Latin America-Asia Panel at ICAS 11 (18 July 2019), the WCAA meeting at El Colegio de Mexico (16-18 October 2019) and the forthcoming 'Latin American Conference on Asian Studies' in Rio (September 2020).

Being shortlisted or even winning a prize brings these authors and publications onto the global platform of Asian studies offered by the multilingual ICAS Book Prize. Specialists and the interested public can find all the ICAS Book Prize submissions for all languages online (<https://icas.asia/en/icas-book-prize>) and in the IBP 2019 publication, which will be posted on the ICAS website and distributed in hardcopy after the Book Prize ceremony on 16 July during ICAS 11.

Claudio Costa Pinheiro is ICAS International Board member; Professor of Asian and African Studies at Rio de Janeiro Federal University; Chairman of Sephis Programme; International Scholar at the University of Cologne (2017-19); Visiting Professor at Nelson Mandela University (2019-23) c.pinheiro@saphis.org

Note of thanks

I am thankful to Dr Paul van der Velde, Profs. Lia Rodriguez de la Vega and Patricia Faria, for their inputs; and my student-assistants, Andressa Braz and Laís Marçal for the work on the survey. In the Spanish-speaking academe, Profs. Amaury Garcia (Colegio de Mexico) and Ignacio Villagran (University of Buenos Aires), Blai Guarne (University of Barcelona), Ricardo Sulamavia (Catholic University, Lima). In Macao, José Sales Marques (President of the Institute of European Studies of Macao) mobilized a wide network of scholars and publishers including Rufino Ramos, Antonio Monteiro, Yao Jing Ming, Ana Nunes, and others. In Timor, Keu Apoema (editor and scholar, Timor and Brazil), circulated our call for submissions and we got approached by a number of Timorese scholars willing to collaborate and engage. Publishers not only submitted their titles but spread the call among their peers – Catarina Madeira (Tinta-da-China, Lisbon), José Luiz (Editorial Bellaterra, Barcelona) among many others. Scholars and institutions from all over Latin America, Europe and Asia, were very supportive of this initiative and helped to distribute the call for submissions and encouraged colleagues and friends to apply and engage.

Notes

- 1 I produced an analytical article about the English language publications on Asia, published between 2015 and 2017, and submitted to the IBP in 2017: Costa Pinheiro, C. 2018. 'Lendo a Ásia no mundo de hoje: políticas editoriais e produção de conhecimento' [Reading Asian in today's world: editorial politics and knowledge production], *Afro-Asia Journal* 57(1):123-150. Salvador: Bahia Federal University.
- 2 Andressa Braz and Laís Marçal are finishing their undergraduate studies on History at Rio de Janeiro Federal University. Both now conduct authorial research on politics of scientific production on Asia in Latin America – Braz observes the disconnections between Spanish and Portuguese speaking academic literature and Marçal analyses Mexican research and publication agendas concerning Asia through the *Asia y Africa Journal*, 1966-1980.
- 3 English received about 400 books, Portuguese and Spanish 66, followed by Korean with 53, French with 36, Chinese with 29, and German with 20.
- 4 It included organizing three seminars (between August 2018 to May 2019), some publications and an undergraduate course on Asian Studies, taught simultaneously at three universities in Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, UERJ and UFRRJ), aiming at grabbing the attention of young students to the possibilities of researching Asia from Latin America.
- 5 Costa Pinheiro, C. (Forthcoming 2020) 'Asian studies and the ethnophilic paradigm', *Asia y Africa Journal*.

Presenting at 'Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge'



It was with great pleasure that the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) could once again serve as the principal facilitators of the Second Edition of the International Conference 'Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge' in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 20-22 September 2018. The honour of being associated with this major effort alongside the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASIA) and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), stems from a continuing commitment to collaboration beyond boundaries of any kind, a collaboration that must include academic, cultural, public and social actors from the two most populated and dynamic 'southern' regions (or continents) of the world, Africa and Asia.



The conference was an extraordinary event, enjoyed by so many, both new and familiar participants, and supported by first-time and long-standing partners. The cooperation provided by our local hosts at UDSM was truly exceptional, and the conference would not have been quite so gratifying, let alone possible, without them.

More information about the previous two conferences, including programmes, speakers, the platform, organisers, etc. can be found on the website <https://africasia.org>.

The previous issue of The Newsletter included a small selection of commentaries sent to us by attendees, who like us agreed that the meeting in Tanzania was a uniquely

stimulating and thought-provoking collaborative event. This issue presents you with an assortment of papers presented at the conference, just to give you a glimpse of the great range of topics discussed. We hope you will join us and present your research at the third 'Africa-Asia conference'. Dates and location will be announced soon!

Patriarchy and the representation of women in Africa and Asia

Catherine Olutoyin Williams

An increase in awareness for women's liberation, and changes in practices concerning family relations (domestic violence), education, and media advocacy with respect to the representation of women, have as yet failed to yield the desired results in Africa and Asia, mainly because of the resistance to change that is firmly entrenched in patriarchal ideologies handed down through socialization as an undocumented memory of the people. This reality for the vast majority of women in Africa and Asia was described by Lynne as "the timeless truth of women's lives".¹

Socialist feminists argue that oppression of women is rooted in class structure, unpaid labour, sex and reproduction.² African women have always been noted for their salient activities such as procreation, child care and collective preparation of the young ones for communal co-existence. Oppong identified seven roles played by women in Asia: parental, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community and individual.³ Yet, specific economic and cultural issues leave most women at the mercy of men. These women are in many cases confined to the four walls of the family home, in which their activities are restricted to procreation and household chores. Within African and Asian societies, being married is a sign of respectability, whilst single mothers, unmarried and divorced women are stigmatized. Many women struggle to attain economic independence, and socio-cultural and political encumbrances steeped in patriarchy put women in a position of bondage. In a patriarchy, authority is exercised by the male head of the family and inheritance occurs through the male children. Patriarchies define the constructs of masculinity and femininity, and as a practice they foster the political differences between freedom and subjugation.

This paper, presented at the second 'Africa-Asia' conference (Dar es Salaam, 2018), explores issues raised in the memoir by Mukhtar Mai, *In The Name of Honour*, in the



Portrait of Buchi Emecheta. Artwork in batik for "Head Above Water", by Marina Elphick.

biography *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal el Saadawi, and in Emecheta's autobiographical *Head Above Water*.⁴ It looks at how women are represented and treated, and at the values that are placed on the girl child. The discourse is foregrounded in Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theory and post modernism within a patriarchal and socio-cultural context.

Female subordination in Africa takes intricate forms grounded in patriarchal tradition and culture. Though education is accessible to women in Nigeria, culture still subordinates women. After her father's death, Emecheta's brother sold their mother to a relative, so he could afford a 'khato siliki' head scarf for his coming-of-age dance festival. Emecheta left her violent husband when she was just twenty-two even though she had 5 young children in tow. She successfully moved on and eventually obtained an Honours Degree in Sociology from the University of London, yet even so continued to wish that her irresponsible husband had fulfilled his societal role as the head of the family. At one time, to secure accommodation

for herself and her children, she had to lie about her marital status because no landlord would readily rent an apartment to a single mother.

Within the contexts of both *Woman at Point Zero* and *In The Name of Honour* the future of the girl child is highly compromised as her existence relies on the benevolence or malevolence of the males who cross her path. These females' wellbeing, essence and happiness are entirely dependent on the mood and disposition of their male companions, whether father, brother, uncle or husband. The men in *Woman at Point Zero* are gainfully employed, while the women are mainly confined to the home. Firdaus, the protagonist of *Woman at Point Zero* was married without her own consent to a man old enough to be her father, while Mai in *In the Name of Honour* was sacrificed in an act of honour revenge, for a crime allegedly committed by Mai's 11-year-old brother against the local Mastoi Baloch clan. She was dragged into a shed, gang raped by four 'upper class' Mastoi males, while her relatively lower class and certainly less powerful family members helplessly awaited her release. Patriarchy, the driving force behind Mai's Pakistani village's traditions and class divisions that guide daily activities led Mukhtar Mai to conclude in her memoir, that "A woman is nothing more than an object of exchange from birth to marriage, according to custom she has no rights" [p.28]. In despair, and as tradition would expect from her to restore her family's honour, Mukhtar was ready to commit suicide, but her mother persuaded her not to. She rose to the challenge and sought redress in the court of law. With the assistance of local and international activists and journalists she eventually received monetary compensation, awards and recognition, but her rapists have remained unpunished by law.

In most communities in Africa and Asia, there exists a great preference for male children. Saha & Saha illustrate how women are not accepted and do not receive proper regard from their husband's families until they give birth to a male child.⁵ Buttressing this fact, Firdaus (in *Woman at Point Zero*) commented that when a male child dies, the father will beat the mother, eat his supper and go to bed, whilst the death of a female child attracts no violence [p.18]. Firdaus was beaten for the death of a male child, as she had failed to provide the expected high level of health care and nurturing for the male child. Supporting Firdaus' account of going hungry alongside her mother, whilst her father ate in

times of food shortage, Cain demonstrates how females in South Asia are discriminated against with regard to the allocation of food and healthcare within the family.⁶

Violence as a tool of control in patriarchal societies is evident in the three texts. Firdaus was battered by her husband, forced into prostitution, and was continuously on the move in her attempts to escape violence and abuse. Eventually she committed murder in self-defence, and was hanged for her crime. In this biography, Saadawi depicts men as unscrupulous and hypocritical bigots who sexually exploit defenceless women. The men in Mukhtar Mai's autobiography, *In The Name of Honour*, have little or no regard for women; they are exposed to the whole world as predators who use rape as a means of punishment while hiding under the protective arm of patriarchy and religion. Emecheta presents her male characters as simple-minded opportunists who take advantage of the patriarchal society to exploit, cheat, oppress and dominate their women.

Catherine Olutoyin Williams
Tai Solarin University of Education
Ijagun Ogun State Nigeria
wiliamsco@tasused.edu.ng

Notes

- Lynne, S. 1987. *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*. London: Virago.
- See for example, Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Oppong, C.M. 1980. *A Synopsis of Seven Roles Status of Women: An Outline of a Conceptual and Methodological Approach*. World Employment Working Paper. Geneva International Labor Force (94).
- Mukhtar, Mai. 2006. *In The Name of Honour*. New York: Atria Books; El Saadawi, N. 1983 (English translation). *Woman at Point Zero*. London: Zed Books; Emecheta, B. 1986. *Head Above Water*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Saha, K.B. & Chatterjee, U. 1998. 'Reproductive Rights in Contraceptive Practices', *Health for the Millions* 24(5):31-2. New Delhi: Health for the Millions Trust.
- Cain, M. 1984. 'Women's status and fertility in developing countries: son preference and economic security', *World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 682; Population and Development Series No. 7*. Washington DC: World Bank.

Nigerian medicine entrepreneurs. Field encounters in Guangzhou

Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo



Left: Mr A stands by his medicine display shelf. Above: The provision store where Mr B sells O-T-C medicine and other items

The growing presence of Africans in China has received much scholarly attention, with most agreeing that the city of Guangzhou attracts the greatest number of African migrants.¹ Despite the unresolved debate about the size of this population, there is nonetheless the shared view that Nigerians are in the majority.² According to the Nigerian Consulate in Guangzhou, there were approximately 70,000 short visits from Nigeria in 2014, and a slightly higher number in 2015. Close to 400 Nigerians had a residence permit in Guangzhou in 2017. However, the official figure is most likely an underestimation because the vast majority of Nigerians residing in the city are undocumented, and many do not register with the Nigerian Consulate.

This article, previously presented at the Africa-Asia conference in Dar es Salaam, describes my field encounters with two undocumented Nigerian medicine entrepreneurs in China, which took place during my doctoral research. Their experiences as medicine traders in Guangzhou is uniquely useful in providing a lens through which to observe how migrant entrepreneurship is being deployed to survive and negotiate the intersecting problems of unemployment and healthcare inaccessibility in China.

Healthcare inaccessibility facing Africans

African migrants experience poor access to healthcare services in Guangzhou. The barriers they encounter have institutional, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Some empirical studies documented that racism and visa issues are involved.³ Other scholars explored the problem of distrust that Africans have for Chinese physicians.⁴ In comparison with internal Chinese migrants, Africans in Guangzhou experience more problems, including longer waiting hours, high cost of care, poor treatment and a lack of comfortability with healthcare workers.⁵ Extant studies suggest that in response to the problems faced African migrants resort to strategies such as self-medication, obtaining healthcare from in-training African doctors, recruiting the help of friends with Chinese language competency when visiting the hospital or merely seeking medical attention in the country of origin or a third country.⁶

In reaction to the poor accessibility to healthcare, two Nigerian migrants established a medicine trade business. With claims that they were answering a 'divine call' to help co-migrants solve, manage and cope with health challenges in the Chinese city, their endeavour was also clearly an opportunity to make a living and/or survive in a context where employment opportunities are limited.

Encountering Nigerian medicine traders

The first time I met Mr. A., a 42-year-old Nigerian, it was at Guangyuan Xi Lu (market), where he was delivering a medicinal concoction to Nigerians late at night, for the price of RMB 20 (USD2.89) per small cup. In many major markets and motor parks in Nigerian cities, the sale of this medicinal concoction, known locally as *paraga*, is commonplace.⁷ However, I did not expect to find the same practice in faraway China. I introduced myself and Mr. A agreed to meet me later, at some location outside Yuexiu District, which is when I also met Mr. B. for the first time. Unlike Mr. A., Mr. B. trades in a wide array of Nigeria-imported daily needs goods and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, alongside herbal concoctions. Mr. B. dispenses herbal mixtures from large bottles that contain roots, leaves and fruits. Some of the mixtures, which Mr. B called 'wash' because of their potency to cure "everything unhealthy inside the human body", were laced with alcohol.

Along with many other undocumented Nigerians in the city, both medicine traders established a base outside Guangyuan Xi Lu because of the deepening intensity of police crackdowns on undocumented foreigners in African-dominated sections of Guangzhou. According to the two medicine traders, it has become "less safe to live and work" in Baiyun and Yuexiu Districts.

'Divine call', livelihood and modes of medicine trade

Both Mr. A. and Mr. B. traced their involvement in the medicine trade to a prophesy that a Nigerian 'Man of God' (one of "the most popular priest in Nigeria") had delivered to both of them. They both interpreted the prophesies as 'divine calls' meant to redirect them towards the medicine trade business. Concealed beneath the divine calls, however, were other push factors into medicine trade. One, both of them have previously failed to establish successful businesses, including in transnational trade, which is a major livelihood path for many Africans in Guangzhou. Two, they identified a gap to fill with regard to the healthcare situation of Africans in Guangzhou. They recognised a lack of culturally appropriate healthcare services in the city and felt that Nigerians were experiencing poor health as a result. Besides, they believed that the cost of healthcare was prohibitive for many Nigerians, so a business that provided cheaper alternatives became necessary.

Mr. A. and Mr. B. operate in both similar and different ways. Two main points of similarities: reliance on 'flyers' and client selectivity. Both entrepreneurs rely on 'flyers', circular migrants who make regular trips between Nigerian and China, transporting ingredients and other goods needed to sustain the medicine

business in Guangzhou. On client selectivity, Nigerians are their main customers, but they also service other African migrants. Chinese people are excluded from their clientele, as selling to them could lead to trouble. Avoiding trouble is crucial to self-preservation for an undocumented migrant.

Their modes of practice also differ in many ways. Firstly, as mentioned before, Mr. A. only sells traditional medicines (single item model), while Mr. B. incorporates OTC drugs and daily needs goods (plural item model). Secondly, the previous experience they bring to the medicine trade, differs quite a bit. Before arriving in China, Mr. A. had sold traditional medicines in Nigeria and had learned about herbs from his grandmother whom he claimed was a healer. Conversely, Mr. B. brought no prior knowledge of herbs or healing to his medicine trade. Thirdly, unlike Mr. B. who relies on instinct to give prescriptions, Mr. A. emphasises diagnosis before prescription. As I observed while at his shop, Mr. A. asks diagnostic questions and sometimes even directs clients to go for laboratory tests to ascertain the problem. Insisting on a diagnosis is how he legitimises himself as a professional. Finally, Mr. B. usually offers a one-off service, where clients buy whatever drug they need in normal exchange relations. Mr. A.'s approach, on the other hand, is more personalised and intimate. Depending on the ailment and the amount involved in the curing process, Mr. A. may begin by referring a client to the medical lab for a test, recruit his Chinese girlfriend to translate the lab report, then proceed to his private in-house chapel to pray over medicinal concoction, using Christian and African traditional symbols and materials. He might take the same concoction to the famous Sacred Heart Catholic church in Yide Lu for a special prayer, after which he delivers it to his client. This is clearly a more complex modality of healing practice when compared with the one-off approach of Mr. B.

Conclusion

The involvement of African migrants in trade-related activities is preeminent in 'Africans in China' studies. In Guangzhou specifically, the range of livelihoods that characterise the entrepreneurial engagements of Africans is not well known. Beyond the sphere of trade in, and exportation of, manufactured commodities, scholars have not beamed a spotlight on the medicine trade that caters to the needs of fellow migrants. This is what I have attempted with the two medicine traders that I met in Guangzhou, while researching the settlement experiences of Nigerians in the city.

More research should be done to understand the extent and context of African migrant medicine trade in China. Considering how the instrumentalisation of religion shows a pathway to entrepreneurial success, we have an opportunity to explore the concept of 'health entrepreneurship' in the transnational moment. The prospect of linking migrant health

entrepreneurship to the issue of syncretic healing is also enormous. Overall, despite the structural and legal impediments they experience, the stories of Nigerian medicine entrepreneurs demonstrate the willingness of undocumented African migrants in China to integrate in their adopted community, while also improving their socioeconomic situation.

Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo
Department of Sociology,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
oluwatoyinkudus@gmail.com

The doctoral research on which this article is based was supported by the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA), the African Humanities Program (Dissertation Completion Fellowship), and the Small Grants for Thesis Writing awarded by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). However, the statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author. Many thanks go to Eunice Kilonzo and Tade Oludayo for reviewing versions of this essay.

Notes

- 1 E.g., Bredeloup, S. 2012. 'African Trading Post in Guangzhou: Emergent or Recurrent Commercial Form?', *African Diaspora* 5:27-50; Castillo, R. 2014. 'Feeling at home in the "Chocolate City": an exploration of place-making practices and structures of belonging amongst Africans in Guangzhou', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 15(2):235-257; Lyons, M. et al. 2012. 'In the Dragon's Den: African Traders in Guangzhou', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(5):869-888.
- 2 Idem; Bodomo, A. & Pajancic, C. 2015. 'Counting beans: some empirical and methodological problems for calibrating the African presence in Greater China', *Journal of Pan African Studies* 7(10):126-144.
- 3 E.g., Hall, B.J. et al. 2014. 'Africans in south China face social and health barriers', *Lancet* 383(9925):1291-1292; McLaughlin, M.M. et al. 2014. 'Improving health services for African migrants in China: A health diplomacy perspective', *Global Public Health* 9(5):579-589.
- 4 McLaughlin, M.M. et al. 2015. 'African Migrant Patients' Trust in Chinese physicians: A social ecological approach to understanding patient-physician trust', *PLoS one* 10(5):e0123255.
- 5 Bork-Huffer, T. 2016. 'Healthcare-Seeking Practices of African and Rural-to-Urban Migrants in Guangzhou', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44(4):49-81.
- 6 Lin, L. et al. 2015. 'Overcoming barriers to health-care access: A qualitative study among African migrants in Guangzhou, China', *Global Public Health* 11(9):1135-47.
- 7 Oluwadiya, K.S. 2010. 'Taking alcohol by deception: an analysis of ethanol concentration of paraga, an alcoholic herbal mixture and factors associated with its use among commercial drivers in an urban centre in Nigeria', *Injury Prevention* 16(Suppl 1):A189-A190.



Value orientation of Chinese anthropologists conducting research in Africa

GAO Liangmin

Walter Pon's parents were among the first Chinese to settle in downtown Johannesburg. Now in his seventies, he manages the family business and 'heart' of Johannesburg's first Chinatown, 'Sui Hing Hong', a big supply store which opened its doors in 1943. Photo by Rom Dittgen, submitted to IAS Photo Contest 2014. All rights reserved.

With more and more Chinese heading to East Africa to live and work, many of them are puzzled by Swahili appellations. For example, the Chinese are often referred to as 'Mzungu', which in Swahili means 'white' people or 'person who is lost'. The use of the term closely relates to the historical and sociocultural changes in East Africa, and is thus of interest to Chinese anthropologists, especially those engaged in ethnographic research in East Africa.

My identity in East Africa

When I was conducting fieldwork in Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda, local people would always call me Mzungu, especially in rural areas. For example, when my German friend and I visited Rwanda in March 2017, a Rwandan friend said: "you are both Mzungu". My German friend quickly responded: "You are wrong. Gao is not Mzungu at all, right? Gao is from China". The Rwandan friend was astonished and stated: "You are both Mzungu and both whites!"

The Swahili word Mzungu has two meanings. First, the term refers to European whites, especially European colonizers and settlers. Second, Mzungu means people who get lost in the village. In the beginning, I thought I fell into the second category, but later I learned that locals called me Mzungu because they viewed me as white. During and after the colonial era, local people came to adopt the black and white dualism to identify outsiders' identities. Based on this historical context, some East Africans, especially in rural areas, call anyone with a skin colour different from their own, a Mzungu.

On the other hand, the historical context also dictates that Asians are as a group generally referred to as 'Indians'. In the 6th century AD and earlier, 'Indians' living in East Africa were not just from India, but also

from Pakistan and Sri Lanka. As India was a British colony before independence in 1947, many Indians came to East Africa with the colonizer during the colonial era. Because Indians proved to be good at business, local people would often call them *Dukawalla*, which in Swahili means shopkeeper. Clearly, 'the Indian' in the history of East Africa cannot represent 'the Asian'. Nowadays, Asian people living in East Africa also include Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, etc. Interestingly, the Chinese community in East Africa call local Pakistanis and Indians: the *Yin-Ba* people (印巴人, Yin: Indian, Ba: Pakistan).

We have not really been able to identify a Swahili name for specifically the Chinese who are living and working in East Africa. Although Tanzania and China forged a friendship in the 1970s, communications between the countries have always been primarily political and limited to high-level contacts; interactions on a more personal level have been scarce. Only in recent years have we noticed locals start to use the word *Mchina* to refer to the Chinese.

Encounters in Africa: who is the Other?

Chinese-East African interactions have been growing in recent years, especially in the trade area; not just between governments, but also face-to-face on a more personal level. With these new connections many new issues are inevitably emerging, and previous narrative models cannot address these kinds of challenges. For example, even though the Chinese in Tanzania are neither Mzungu nor 'the' Asian people of East African history, Tanzanians do still frequently refer to them in this manner. This remains an example of a lack of mutual understanding, and obviously does not match with the level of economic activity between China and Africa. Simultaneously, the Chinese are also frequently considered to be neo-colonialists in Africa.¹ This short

essay uses the key anthropological concept of 'the Other' to explore this question further.

The concept of the Other was introduced by anthropologists who worked in the service of colonial projects. In the colonial context, some anthropologists directly served the colonists and did their research in order to satisfy the European curiosity toward the colonial world. Although Western anthropology has in the meantime already criticized the concept, it has really never satisfied Chinese anthropologists like myself who conduct research in Africa or other developing countries, because Chinese anthropology has always been based on a very different premise.

Most of the early Chinese anthropologists did their research in only China; certainly none ventured into Africa. Even now those numbers are limited. They faced much criticism by their European and Japanese colleagues. Edmund Leach, for example, claimed that endogenous research is not anthropology, since anthropologists 'should go abroad'.² However, anthropologists like Edmund Leach, originated from countries such as Great Britain, with relatively small geographical areas and biodiversity, mostly homogeneous culture and ethnicity, and a history of colonial interactions in Asia and Africa. The concept of 'the Other' came quite naturally for them.

On the other hand, Chinese anthropologists found within their own borders a huge biodiversity and geographical expanse, with no history of colonising other lands, housing a vastly heterogeneous population; in all, this gave them little impetus for foreign travel. Fei Xiaotong, a well-known Chinese anthropologist, famously put forward the concept of *Diversity in Unity* (多元一体) in China's cultural context.³ Some of his peers conducting their research in Africa and other developing countries then worked with ideas of *We/Us* (我们), *Together* (在一起) and a *community of common destiny* (人类命运共同体). Clearly, the concept of the Other was not relevant for their epistemology.

Further possibilities: from the Other to cultural sharing

I would suggest, for three reasons, that Chinese anthropologists adopt the value orientation of 'cultural sharing' (文化分享) rather than 'the Other'. First, China has never colonized any country, but some areas of China have been colonized by many western countries in the past. Chinese people can understand deeply the tremendous suffering caused by colonialism and poverty. Second, both of the concepts, *Diversity in Unity* and *community of common destiny*, are rooted in Chinese culture. These two concepts have shaped Chinese people's ways of communicating with other people. Third, anthropologists always acknowledge and value the cultural diversity and cultural relativism of communities. The idea of cultural sharing aligns well with this anthropological tradition. By adopting the idea of cultural sharing, I believe that the future of China-Africa relations will be bright, with a lot of possibilities for cooperation.

GAO Liangmin
Department of Sociology,
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
glimdix@126.com

Notes

- 1 See for example, French, H.F. 2014. *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa*. New York: Knopf; Juan, P.C. & Heriberto, A. 2013. *China's Silent Army: The Pioneers, Traders, Fixers, and Workers Who Are Remaking the World in Beijing's Image*. London: Allen Lane.
- 2 Leach, E. 1982. *Social Anthropology*. London: Fontana Press.
- 3 Fei Xiaotong. 1993. *East Asian Social Studies - Human Studies in China*. Beijing: Peking University Press (费孝通: "东亚社会研究 - 人的研究在中国", "北京大学出版社", 1993年。)

African topographies in India: (in)visible heritages, African prints and contemporary art across the Indian Ocean

Pedro Pombo

The Indian Ocean is recognized as a space of circulations and interactions. If Asian communities are well known for having settled in East and Southern African coasts for centuries, African circulations are equally significant for the cultural landscapes across the Indian Ocean. This essay discusses an ongoing research that aims to understand the contemporary presence of Africa in India interrelating three main locations: the (in)visible presence of plural Afro-Indian communities, the production of African print textiles by Indian companies and contemporary art projects that critically engage with African migrants in Indian metropolis. Intending to associate fields of research that are apparently disconnected, this research establishes dialogues between legacies of the past with contemporary Afro-Asian connections.

In a contemporary context, objects and things became central to the new discourses about Asia and Africa, and production, consumption and even the afterlife can elucidate the “relation between commodities and subjects” across continents.¹ This has left aside intersections between the heritages of the past and the possible cultural crossings of the present. Renewed flows of circulations trigger localized social and spatial interactions with ‘African’ spaces in Asian cities at different scales, from neighborhoods to buildings, such as the famous Chunking Mansions in Hong Kong or the African spaces in the Chinese city of Guangzhou or the Indian city of New Delhi. Correspondingly, the practices of circulation have significantly changed, connecting distinct locations without progressive cross-cultural processes and re-enacting imaginaries of the ‘other’.

Recommending disciplinary crossings, I propose enquiring about the possibilities of widening critical engagements with histories of Afro-Indian fluxes and the ways in which past heritages have been simultaneously informing the present and erased from contemporary discourses. While the recent African migrant communities in Guangzhou, Hong Kong or New Delhi have been understood as connected to economic trends of Asian presence in Africa, it also translates the permanence of circulations across the continents and the formation of Afro-Asian communities. At the same time, the contemporary production of African prints in India, which has been overshadowed by the economic relevance of Chinese production centers, translates the survival of old maritime networks of trade and kinship along extremely dynamic contexts of Asian and African independences. Finally, art projects that engage with a contemporary presence of African migrants in India are crucial to uncover racial discourses and imaginations that co-exist with heritages of the Bandung spirit of Afro-Asian solidarities.

Triggering conversations across geographies and times, African presences in India become visible through three interconnected conceptual frames: Carto/graphies [mnemonic traces, geographies and their uses and meanings], Archiv/ing [material traces, representations of past and future heritages], and Icono/graphies [visual traces, artistic expressions].

Carto/graphies - mnemonic traces

This conceptual frame investigates spatial memories in the Indian Ocean through a critical deconstruction of colonial and postcolonial maps. Engaging with notions as cartography, location, territory or scale, it acts as surveying alternative maps across two layers: spatial templates and social geographies.

Historical port cities, which were fundamental nodal locations intersecting maritime networks with coastal landscapes and hinterland politics, and diverse geographical and cultural identities counterbalance contemporary maps. Temporarily dislocating postcolonial nation-state boundaries around the Indian Ocean serves as an exercise of questioning alternate geographical logics and designations: does using the old Arabic expression ‘Sea of Zanj’ to the Western Indian Ocean change our perception regarding the place of Africa and Middle East in maritime networks? Are coastal landscapes and the monsoon system more illuminating than land based maps to read connections across the oceans?

These interrogations also translate ideas of plurality that render visible how African origin populations have settled and built cultural environments in extremely diverse ways and through contrasting historical situations. While in the Western Indian Ocean archipelagos we assist processes of creolization, in South Asia and the Persian Gulf Afro-Asians have been assimilated to local social structures under the terms of Habshi and Siddi, in Iran, Pakistan and India, or Kaffir, in the case of Sri Lanka.

In this wider map, India is a particularly fertile location to recognize the diversity of African presences and complicate concepts of slavery and bounded labor in the Indian Ocean. In the Konkan, Deccan and Gujarat regions African military troops were highly regarded, some of them gaining prominence as rulers and builders. Simultaneously, African origin communities settling on the subcontinent’s coastal regions became deeply connected with Sufi movements or with the natural landscape. This diversity of social contexts requires interconnected researches and approaches.

Using cartographic templates allows the overcoming of geographical and chronological limits to inquiry how past circulations of Africans across the Indian Ocean relate with the 1951 Bandung conference and Afro-Asian solidarity movements, contemporary migration circuits to cities as Guangzhou, Hong Kong and New Delhi and with concepts around the Global South. In this way, space, geography and their cartographic representations act as mnemonic archives of pluralized histories of exchanges that need to be registered in relation and interconnectivity.

Archiv/ing - material traces

Material and visual heritages are powerful repositories of history and culture. One of the possible searches for African presences in India, and broadly in South Asia, is to interconnect scattered traces of different scales and contexts, as well as the lexicons and representations of past heritages, in order to think what, and how, can be perceived as future legacies. One of the advantages of this conceptual frame is to circulate among diverse materialities: small scale shrines for spirits of deceased African slaves in Kochi, the *Kappiri Muthapan*, the impressive Janjira Fort, on the coast of Maharashtra, Sufi dargahs and devotion rituals performed by Siddi communities, representative buildings as the Siddi Saiyyed Mosque in Ahmedabad, urban aesthetic languages of port cities as Surat, Diu or Kochi or materialities as mobile as cotton textiles.

As contemporary inheritances of centuries of trade that sustained Western India’s textile production, ‘African prints’ are being produced in Ahmedabad, Surat or Bombay exclusively for African consumption. The long history of Indian textiles in Africa, commonly disconnected from this contemporary production through an excessive focus on the late colonial period, is alive in India, one of its oldest production centers, as well as in the more recent production centers in China, mainly Guangzhou province, where African migrants build communities and businesses. Titled as Mozambique Fabric or Capulana, Dashiki, Kanga, Kente Print or simply African Wax, these African textiles made in Asia prove that cotton cloths are not material traces of past histories but the medium where future heritages are literally drawn. The African continent, as a center of decision and consumption, has an active role in Asian economies while Afro-Asian circulations translate the contemporary mutations of centuries old networks of aesthetics in material and visual cultures.

African prints made in India constitute an archive that will discuss with other material testimonies, as decorative arts across the Indian Ocean and architectures and urbanities of port cities that embody

disparate “elsewhere”² that constitute the Indian Ocean landscapes as archives of Afro-Asian circulations.

Icono/graphies - visual traces

Integrating broader landscapes of artistic flows connecting Asia and Africa, several art projects in India become sites of enquiry of submerged histories and the actual complex realities of African migrants in the country. The interdisciplinary research project *Coriolis Effect*, by the New Delhi based arts collective Khoj, the photographic series *African Portraits* by Mahesh Shantaram or the installation *Dwelling Kappiri Spirits* by Gabriel Lester for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2016 are among recent practices that deal with the presence of Africans in India across time. While these works direct us to reflect on the representation of an African blackness, they also act as a mirror reflecting the Indian society. To confront these, and others, contemporary representations³ with past depictions of Asians of African origin, archives of imagery, representations and social locations,⁴ means to connect historical processes and their remnants with the contemporary circumstances and to build new cartographies of Africa in India while knitting apparent disjunctures between the past and the present. This conceptual template also incentivizes a critical reconsidering of past iconographies and the search for silenced and obliterated visualities in a diversity of mediums such as songs, craft traditions or cultural landscapes.

Possible mappings

Instead of focusing on one particular field, connecting diverse layers where links between the African continent and India have been made visible or left unseen allows us to understand relations and frictions amid materialities, visual cultures, and discourses.

In a broader perspective, these inquiries dialogue with larger geographies of Afro-Asian relations and critically tie disparate locations of memory that inhabit the Asian space in order to think what future heritages can be imagined departing from the contemporary realities. Searching for African presences in India equally means to uncover additional archives, modes of registering heritages and traces that, sometimes literally, are weaved throughout locations, material structures, sounds or personal lives. Patterns and colors, words and images are powerful and rich sites of research, and following the cyclic monsoon winds might lead to Afro-Asian worlds that have been sedimented in the estuaries of historical narratives and changing coastal landscapes.

Pedro Pombo, Goa University
ASC-IIAS Fellow 2018
pedromanuelpombo@gmail.com

Notes

- 1 Jones, M. 2017. ‘Junk Aesthetics from South Africa, Brazil and India: Re-Evaluating the Object’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43(5): 997–1010, p.997.
- 2 Meier, P. 2016. *Swahili Port cities. The Architecture of Elsewhere*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 3 For photography books on Afro-Asians see Ehsaei, M. 2017. *Afro-Iran*. Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag; and Sheth, K. 2013. *A Certain Grace. The Siddi: Indians of African Descent*. New Delhi: Photoink. For documentaries on Afro-Iranian communities see the documentaries by Behnaz Mirzai (<http://www.afroiranianlives.com>) and Dingomaro, documentary by Kamran Heidari from 2017 (<http://kamranheidari.com/ali-aqa>). On Indian Siddi, see *From Africa to India. Sidi Music in the Indian Ocean Diaspora*, film from 2007 by Amy and Nazir Jairazbhoy (<https://tinyurl.com/FAT1-vid>). On Kaffirs in Sri Lanka, see *Kaffir Culture*, short documentary from 2009 by Kannan Arunasalam (<https://vimeo.com/7234191>).
- 4 As, for example, the online exhibition on the African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World, organized by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and New York Public Library; <https://tinyurl.com/adiow-NYL>



Kangas in the Chavda store, Stone Town, Zanzibar. Chavda kangas are among the most famous in Zanzibar and are produced in Bombay, India. Photo by the author, 2018.

Political imagination in African and South-Asian legal history: a reappraisal

Tara Weinberg



This piece, first presented at the Africa-Asia international conference in Dar es Salaam in 2018, was inspired by the possibility of encountering transcontinental conversations about law and history at the conference. African legal history, as a loosely defined field, has been primarily concerned with the relationship between law and colonialism. African legal history was part of the pursuit ‘for African voices’ within African history as a whole since the 1970s. This goal felt imperative for scholars of colonialism, for whom legal sources offered a means to reconstruct the lives and social worlds of Africans, whose stories had been erased by colonial rule and colonial scholarship. Out of this work emerged accounts of domination, invention and agency.

In consulting this work as a doctoral student, a key question emerged for me: what are the possibilities and limits of reconstructing political thought through court cases? While earlier generations of legal historians have debated this issue, new intellectual histories from Africa and economic histories from South Asia suggest the time is right for a reappraisal. This piece puts into conversation some recent interventions in South-Asian and African legal history to consider how one might write histories of black South Africans’ political imaginaries of land during the 20th century.

The challenge: an example from South Africa

‘Communal land’, ‘private property’, ‘quitrent tenure’, ‘land in Trust’, ‘chiefs’ land’ and ‘Crown land’. These are all terms associated with the history of land conquest, acquisition, dispossession and reclamation in 20th century South Africa – and in many

other former colonies. But do they capture how black South Africans conceptualized, managed and regulated land over the course of the last century? Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern asks what we see and occlude when we use only conceptual categories developed from histories of Euro-American property forms.¹ Here is an example to illustrate the challenge.

Founded by lawyer and African National Congress stalwart Pixley ka Seme, the Native Farmers Association (NFA) bought and sold land to hundreds of black farmers in South Africa in the early 20th century. The NFA purchased land in 1912, one year before South Africa’s notorious 1913 Land Act, which made it more difficult for black South Africans to own land in the form of titles. In promoting the NFA, Seme encouraged black land buyers to see “the importance of economic interests in land and the advantage of individual land tenure over and above communal or tribal tenure.”²

One group of black farmers who bought land from the NFA comprised 25 people from the Free State province, accompanied by Chief Maitse Moloi. For several years Seme had known the group members, all of whom had put money towards the purchase. But Seme signed the deed in the name of Chief Moloi alone. When Moloi defaulted on the payment, the contract was broken, as he had been the sole purchaser listed. Everyone lost out on land. Seme argued that the land buyers were all members of Chief Moloi’s tribe, stating “I know that an individual member of a tribe has no right to land, there is no individual tenure.”³ The land buyers opposed this interpretation, arguing they had bought their land in the name of a group, not in the name of Chief Moloi – and all the other group members had paid up. Seme’s approach seems to contradict his earlier advocacy of individual land tenure. When it suited him he was sympathetic to a narrow view of African land tenure, common to colonial administrators and anthropologists of the

time: communal land under a chief. There was no room for forms of land tenure that complicated the binary of individual titles and communal land.

From biographies and newspaper editorials we know about Seme’s approach to land. But what about those who bought or rented from the NFA? What debates took place about land amongst NFA members? The broader question, which animates my work as well as other legal history, is how we can reconstruct a history of political thought about land law and property.

African legal history as social history

Writing against histories of colonial legal ‘enlightenment’ vs. local ‘tribal’ customs, from the 1980s onwards, historians of Africa have portrayed law as an arena of struggle, where power and inequalities were played out and/or contested. Legal histories of Africa have focused on the rich insights into everyday life offered by court records.⁴ This scholarship has revealed the social engineering behind colonial legal regimes and foregrounded the legacy of colonial violence and inequality.

However, African legal history based on court records has been a little constrained by debates about oral vs. written law (playing into a dichotomy entrenched during the colonial era). How do we write histories of what people understood and imagined beyond the binaries of individual vs. communal, written vs. oral, official vs. customary etc.? If we fail to tackle such divides, Partha Chatterjee’s words will ring true: “if the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain modular forms already made available to them by Europe and the West, what do they have left to imagine?”⁵

One way out of this impasse has been to study political thought through traditions that are dynamic, dialectical and contested. This has involved focusing on the moral economies of civic virtue and political community that Africans have debated in vernacular language texts.⁶ Another attempt to move beyond the dichotomy between the ‘colonized’ and the ‘colonizer’, has been to focus on ‘intermediaries’ who served as direct employees of the colonial state. But what about ‘intermediaries’ who were not only ‘cultural-brokers’, but also members of a whole group of economic and social ‘entrepreneurs’? Here studies from South Asia on intermediaries and economic legal history might be useful.

Intermediaries and political economy in South Asian and African legal history

Fascinating work is emerging in South Asian legal history on intermediaries and capitalism. Just two examples are Mitra Sharafi’s work on Parsi legal culture and Ritu Birla’s study of Marwari family firms. There is also recent African scholarship which intersects with this approach – for example, Fahad Bishara, Bianca Murillo, Parker Shipton, Benjamin Lawrance, Liz Thornberry and Bonny Ibwahoh.

Ritu Birla argues that colonial administrators, like some legal historians, tried to impose a story of ‘status’ to ‘contract’ on Marwari family firms in India. But even in those (supposed ‘contract’) moments of legal regulation of family firms, the colonial government was forced to acknowledge and incorporate aspects of indigenous capitalism into the colonial economy. By doing so, the government legitimated a space in which family firms could negotiate for the kinds of practices that served their interests.⁷

Mitra Sharafi argues that just because Parsi litigants and legal professionals became ‘consumers of colonial law’ does not mean they automatically absorbed a colonial mentality about law. Without downplaying the violence of colonial law, Sharafi offers a complex picture: though Parsis who engaged the colonial legal system conceded at times to colonial frameworks of law, they then went to work amending, and at times deconstructing those frameworks.⁸

In South Africa, as in India, the first generation of ‘struggle’ historians focused on lawyers as liberation leaders – Nelson Mandela being the most obvious example. In writing histories of liberation movements in South Africa we may have missed other stories about the law. Work on South Asia suggests the possibilities for writing histories of black lawyers in South Africa as figures who translated between various forms of vernacular law and colonial law – and also vice versa. Sharafi’s work raises another interesting point, which she herself acknowledges: “How did lawyers present the outside actor (state, business etc.) to their own communities, in a context where we get plenty of sources on how these players presented communities to the state, but not the other way around.”⁹ This problem requires thinking theoretically and methodologically. It might involve looking at vernacular sources or oral histories, in addition to court records. It might also involve a difference in attention and scale. It might need to center certain actors – like the land buyers in lawyer Pixley ka Seme’s schemes – and decenter others, such as Seme himself.

Why are there few legal historians of capital in Africa of the sort we see on South Asia or the Indian Ocean – histories of imperial agents, transnational markets, legal or merchant intermediaries? Part of the reason may be that African economic history flourished during the 1970s, a period dominated by neo-Marxist explanations of how the West underdeveloped the Third World. Another explanation may be that there remains a strong (and important) inclination within African history to hold colonial powers accountable for legacies of inequality they have wrought. There seems less space for the stories of figures who, like Seme, qualify as neither hero nor villain. Yet newer work by African scholars, who have taken up similar themes to their South Asianist counterparts, points in productive directions.

So, to come back to Pixley ka Seme’s land purchases. What ideas about land or property were black farmers developing at the time of the land purchase in South Africa? How can we trace them through court records, and beyond, to the pages of vernacular language newspapers and the memories and discourses of contemporary land claimants? This is a challenge I intend to take on – but it is one made easier by conversations across Asia and Africa.

Tara Weinberg
PhD Candidate,
University of Michigan
taramw@umich.edu

Notes

- 1 Strathern, M. 1999. ‘Divisions of Interest and Languages of Ownership,’ in Strathern, M. (ed.) *Property, Substance and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things*. New Brunswick: Athlone, pp.136–158.
- 2 Article 3(b) of Memorandum and Articles of Native Farmers’ Association, quoted in Ngqulunga, B. 2017. *The Man Who Founded the ANC: A Biography of Pixley Ka Isaka Seme*. Cape Town: Penguin Random House South Africa, p.149.
- 3 Seme’s affidavit, NTS 3440, 56/308 (National Archives of South Africa).
- 4 Mann, K. & Roberts, R. 1991. *Law in Colonial Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- 5 Chatterjee, P. 1996. ‘Whose Imagined Community?’, in Balakrishnan, B. (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*. Verso, p. 216.
- 6 See for example, Steven Feierman, John Lonsdale, Derek Peterson and Emma Hunter on East Africa; Carolyn Hamilton and Isabel Hofmeyr on South Africa.
- 7 Birla, R. 2009. *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture, and Market Governance in Late Colonial India*. Duke University Press.
- 8 Sharafi, M. 2014. *Law and Identity in Colonial South Asia: Parsi Legal Culture, 1772–1947*. Cambridge University Press.
- 9 Sharafi, M. 2018. personal communication.

Practice of collaborative action research to link Asia and Africa

Takayoshi Kusago

Development experts have suggested that we rethink the conventional economic growth model.¹ One of the reasons for this may be that economic growth does not necessarily assure the increase in people's subjective well-being.² Another is related to growing concern over the worldwide environmental destruction and natural disasters related to climate change.

Adverse effects of the conventional development model and natural catastrophes led to the world agreeing on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs consist of seventeen goals including economic well-being, education, health, gender, diversity, and a wide range of environmental aspects. SDG-11 sets targets on the realization of sustainable cities and communities. Thus, we need to find a practical approach and prompt action at the community level to accomplish this goal. In this study, we focus on sustainable community development. Mainly, we pay close attention to a unique tool called Jimotogaku created in Minamata, Japan, to revitalize rural communities. We explain the background, concept, and process of the Jimotogaku method and share a collaborative action research project applying the method in a community mapping program for youth in Bhutan. We discuss the potential use of both the Jimotogaku method and collaborative action research to make more rural communities viable and sustainable across Asia and Africa, meeting the overarching goals laid out by the SDGs.

Collaborative action research for community development

Social sciences deal with various issues such as poverty, community revitalization, access to education and health services, ethnic conflicts and discrimination, and so forth. However, solutions to tackle these problems are not always straightforward. Instead, they require an understanding of the characteristics of each society, since these issues are deeply rooted in the complexity of social and economic systems influenced by different factors. A theoretical work could help us grasp the causes and impacts of social issues, yet it won't provide us with solutions. Action research plays a significant role in finding remedies as it has been

developed to improve the quality of human-related services such as community activities, social welfare, healthcare, and education.³ In particular, we consider collaborative action research (if researchers and stakeholders work as a team) as a useful tool to design and implement practical research activities to solve a particular social problem.

Creation of the Jimotogaku Method to revitalize local community in Japan

Minamata Disease involves an organic mercury poisoning; it was first discovered in and named after Minamata city (Kumamoto prefecture, Japan) in 1956. It was caused by industrial wastewater dispatched by a chemical factory (Chisso) into the ocean. Minamata city's reputation was tainted by the disease, and further depopulation occurred due to a rapid increase in rural-urban migration incurred by modernization. Local people simply perceived the demise of their communities as 'fate'. A former city officer in Minamata was concerned for the future of the local communities, and in the 1990s he invented the Jimotogaku method to change local people's mindsets toward their communities from a negative to a positive.

He tested the method by bringing visitors from big cities to Kagumeishi, a rural community in Minamata, and asked local people to guide them. While walking through the neighborhood, the visitors enjoyed discovering things they had not seen or heard before and were impressed with the local way of life, shown to them by the local guides. Conversely, the local guides were surprised to learn that the visitors from urban areas were 'positively impressed' with local resources, traditions, and culture, which they simply took for granted. The local guides gradually recognized that they had not been 'left behind' and they enjoyed revitalizing their community. The adoption of the Jimotogaku method, motivated the residents to start thinking how to make use of their valuable resources to improve their well-being. For instance, a local women's group was formed, and this group started a food-catering business based on a philosophy of local products for local consumption. The Kagumeishi village received the highest award in 2005 from Japan's central

government for reviving its local community. Over the last two decades, the Jimotogaku method has been gradually spreading in rural communities across Japan.⁴

Experimental pilot in Bhutan

In Bhutan, youth unemployment is a serious issue, and rapid migration flows from rural to urban areas have been on the increase. This migration trend could hamper Bhutan's social and economic development path envisioned by Gross National Happiness (GNH). An integrated project of community mapping and the Jimotogaku method was designed and implemented by the NGO, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), and Kusago Laboratory at Kansai University. The Jimotogaku community mapping program's unique feature as a collaborative action research method is how it creates a friendly interaction between visitors and local stakeholders. This two-way interaction program aims at bringing mindset-changes of both visitors and stakeholders. For visitors, working on the community mapping with local guides changes their perceptions of rural communities because the mapping exercise allows them to explore rich local resources: people, nature, and the local way of life. On the other hand, for local stakeholders, the community mapping exercise helps them to rediscover the value of their community and potential uses, by interacting with the visitors.

The Jimotogaku community mapping program was conducted in Kuzhugchen, a small rural village in the district of Thimphu. 8 Bhutanese students, from primary school to college age, participated in the pilot program, and two local people joined as local guides. The two-day program began with a briefing at Kuzhugchen Middle Secondary School; the youth participants were shown the process of mapping, how to approach local people and were given interview sheets, resource cards, stationary, and cameras. After the briefing session, the participants were divided into two groups of four; one pre-identified local guide was assigned to walk with each group. On the first day, the participants took a community walk, exploring community resources like plants, cash crops, houses, people, and the natural environment. With the help of the local guides, the participants came to better understand the community and learned to identify valuable resources, of which villagers themselves took little notice. On the second day, using the photos taken and information gathered during the community walk, hand-made local resource maps were created and presented to local residents. We conducted pre- and post-program surveys with the youth participants and the results showed evident and encouraging results: many participants changed their views toward the rural community from negative to positive. Also, some showed an interest in activities for rural development.

A unique feature of the Jimotogaku community mapping program is to have a two-way feedback session between the student participants and local. In Kuzhugchen village, after the student presentation, the residents started a discussion about a local temple mentioned in the presentation. They came to the conclusion that they did not realize how precious and valuable their local resources are. The first program was limited in scale, but the method was clearly shown to be a useful tool to motivate people and communities to become active in viable and sustainable community development.

Potential of collaborative action research across Asia and Africa

In the context of sustainable community development, a conventional growth-centered development approach tends to look down at rural communities as old-fashioned, when compared to urban communities. With a growing negative perception of their own community, the Jimotogaku method can be a powerful mindset-change tool. It could even create a chance for local people to be creative in designing the community's future by interacting with visitors from outside.

The Jimotogaku method, an action research tool, has some potential to empower stakeholders by discovering their social, economic, cultural, political and environmental resources. The method can be regarded as a practical research tool, which not only expands local people's knowledge, but also encourages them to maintain and cultivate a locally grown sustainable way of life.

A week-long training program (part of a JICA Local Government Reform training program), including the Jimotogaku method module, was designed by the Kusago Laboratory and implemented in Minamata for government officers in charge of local development from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. The positive responses from the participants to the module showed the potential of the Jimotogaku method to change mindsets and empower bottom-up sustainable community development in African countries.

We also need to look at the potential and challenge of collaborative action research. As for the potential, it could change the conventional way of research collaboration from experts-driven to stakeholders-centered. As a result, we could empower both collaborating researchers and practitioners /stakeholders. Researchers could widen and deepen their understanding of a social issue from multiple angles, which enhance the link between theory and practice. Stakeholders become equipped with alternative ways to examine the problems they face, recognize strength and weakness, identify local resources, and so on. In other words, collaborative action research could assist continuously evolving communities and institutions to make our society better. If we challenge and overcome such obstacles, collaborative action research could help us to lead people-driven sustainable community development through co-learning and co-creation across Asia and Africa.

Takayoshi Kusago

Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University,
Osaka, Japan
tkusago@kansai-u.ac.jp

Notes

- 1 Kusago, T. 2007. 'Rethinking of Economic Growth and Life Satisfaction in Post-WWII Japan – A Fresh Approach', *Social Indicators Research* 81(1):79-102.
- 2 Easterlin, R. 1974. 'Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot?', in David, P.A. & Reder, M.W. (eds) *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*. New York: Academic Press, pp.89-125.
- 3 Herr, K. & Anderson, G.L. 2005. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. Sage Publications; <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452226644>
- 4 Yoshimoto, T. 2008. *Jimotogaku wohajimeyo* [Let us start neighborhood study method]. Iwanami Junior Shinsho.



Parindra's loyal cadres

Fascism and anticolonial nationalism in late colonial Indonesia, 1935-1942

Yannick Lengkeek



Fig. 1: Parindra's leadership, including Volksraad member Soekardjo Wirjopranoto (front left), are greeted by 'Wirawans' during Thamrin's funeral on January 12, 1941. Source: Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), Photo Archive, 33357

In 1945, with the horrors of the Second World War still very much around him, George Orwell made the following observation in his essay *Notes on Nationalism*: "It is important not to confuse nationalism with mere worship of success. The nationalist does not go on the principle of simply ganging up with the strongest side. On the contrary, having picked his side, he persuades himself that it is the strongest, and is able to stick to his belief even when the facts are overwhelmingly against him."¹

The last sentence of this quote contains an important element: the nationalist persuades himself, which implies that, at least at times, he loses faith in his project – the (independent) nation-state – in pretty much the same way an entrepreneur might lose hope in his pursuits while building an enterprise. Top-down approaches to political history, nationalism, and intellectual histories focusing on the genesis of ideas and worldviews often presuppose an inevitability and seemingly 'organic' development that most probably did not appear to historical actors in their times. Granted, some nationalists were veritable zealots who worked tirelessly to make their dream come true. But many others, no less tireless and diligent, in all likelihood went through periods of doubt, especially when circumstances seemed dire. The pragmatists within nationalist movements, on the other hand, may have looked at nationalism as a means to an end, such as long term benefits and a better future for themselves and their families. For them, the national community was not just a matter of imagination and infatuation, but a strategic step towards furthering their personal interests. Nationalists were, therefore, a diverse cast of characters from all walks of life brought together by the appeal of the same idea, but not necessarily driven by the same motivations. And of all the nationalists, it is likely that the pragmatists from the upper ranks of any given nationalist movement were most aware of the need for self-persuasion – persuading themselves, but also persuading followers who became tired, frustrated, and disillusioned.

Tilting at windmills: Soetomo and the nationalist milieu between 1935 and 1942

In late colonial Indonesia during the second half of the 1930s and the early 1940s, only the pragmatists within the nationalist movement still stood a realistic chance of pushing their agendas. The nationalist 'hardliners', including Indonesia's president-to-be, Sukarno, were exiled, arrested, or otherwise silenced by the mid-1930s. From then on, only so-called 'cooperating' nationalist parties, such as *Partai Indonesia Raya* (Parindra; Great Indonesia Party) and the more left-leaning *Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia* (Gerindo; Indonesian People's Movement) that accepted Dutch authority and were willing to articulate their interests through the Colonial Council, the *Volksraad*, were granted the right to exist. Any open demand for independence

[*kemerdekaan*] was considered dangerous and had the potential to provoke fierce countermeasures from the Dutch colonial government. As a consequence, leading members of Parindra, most notably Soetomo, the party's founder and a well-known pioneer of Indonesian nationalism ever since the 1910s, replaced demands for *Indonesia merdeka* with invocations of a 'glorious Indonesia' [*Indonesia moelia*]. Soetomo envisioned the path to glory as a process of moral and spiritual ennoblement for all Indonesians, which was to be achieved through discipline, unity, and harmonious collaboration. On the other hand, arguments and dissent – the hallmarks of any truly democratic society – did not rank very highly on Soetomo's list of desirable attributes. While he was without a doubt an enthusiastic modernizer who embraced the virtues of material progress and dedicated his life to the tremendous task of promoting education for his compatriots, his traditionalist values stood in sharp contrast to his modernist outlook.

Fascism in Indonesia: a blind spot?

One dark and rarely acknowledged aspect of Soetomo's political activism, throughout the 1930s until his untimely death in 1938, was his sympathy for Fascism, National Socialism, and other far-right and authoritarian movements the world over. From the viewpoint of Europeans, who typically frame the rise of fascism and authoritarianism in the 1920s and 1930s with the sociocultural dislocations caused by the First World War and amplified by the Wall Street Crash of 1929, fascism was a particularly belligerent permutation of ultra-nationalism and irredentism. Such movements existed all over Europe, and scholars tend to highlight their reactive nature, pointing out that fascism needs to be understood within the larger historical context of the interbellum period in Europe. This Eurocentric understanding of fascism dominated research until the early 2000s, when a small handful of publications slowly started to look at fascism's broader entanglements. But even now, in 2019, it is still safe to say that research on fascism is woefully Eurocentric. How can we explain the emergence of fascist activism in Japan, China, Egypt, the Middle East, or India?

The academic literature clearly shows that fascism, which was for a long time perceived as an ideology too specifically European and chauvinistic to be appealing for colonized peoples, was very much part of a global wave during the interwar years. The most innovative aspect of my work on fascism, apart from pointing out that Indonesia has a tradition of paramilitarism that precedes Japanese occupation (a point I shall return to later), is that it paints a more nuanced portrait of Indonesia's path to nationhood. Much valuable research has been done on the genesis of Indonesian nationalism, but none of it engages with the obvious philo-fascist views of some Indonesian nationalists, including Soetomo. Why is it that so much academic literature has been produced on political Islam and communism in Indonesia during the 1920s and 1930s, while fascism has no place in hallmark publications on Indonesian nationalism?

One obvious point is the 'European bias' of fascism that I pointed out earlier. For similar reasons, it was only recently that non-European countries, besides Japan, were identified by scholars as players in fascism's global political arena. In the case of Indonesia, however, we also need to include factors specific to the country and its historiographical tradition. In hindsight, the arrival of the Japanese in March 1942 overshadowed any previous attempts at building a paramilitary infrastructure and militarizing larger parts of Indonesian society. As a consequence, magisterial works on Indonesian (para-) militarism, such as Robert Cribb's *Gangsters and Revolutionaries* and Benedict Anderson's *Java in a Time of Revolution* generally skip the period of 'cooperative nationalism'

by jumping from the defeat of Soekarno in 1934 straight to the landing of the Japanese in 1942. If we follow the historiographical mainstream, Parindra was an upper-middle-class party that was seeking pragmatic arrangements with the Dutch and only

radicalizing as the prospect of Japanese occupation drew nearer,² hoping that Japan would liberate the Dutch East Indies from foreign rule once and for all – which, as we know, was a dream that was soon to disappoint. Yet, this is only one part of the story, and once we pay closer attention to Parindra's grassroots activism and its youth organization *Surya Wirawan* [Sun of Heroes], a different image emerges.

'Doing fascism' in late colonial Indonesia

As photographic materials promoted in the party's own journal *Soeara Parindra* [Voice of Parindra] repeatedly show, Parindrists and the young men who served in their 'scout organization' *Surya Wirawan* had a particular weak spot for open displays of unity and strength, and would use the Roman salute, or more specifically, a version of the salute that is closest to the Nazi version, with the arm in a straight line. Some contemporary observers were quick to note that Parindra was using this rather unusual salute, which set them apart from other Indonesian political parties at the time. While the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB; *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*) had an active branch in colonial Indonesia, its membership was predominantly European or of mixed Dutch-Indonesian (Eurasian) descent. It was rather striking to see Indonesians perform the Nazi salute. Newspaper articles from the period 1935-42 remark on Parindra's bizarre practice, but it was only officially banned in 1941, as colonial authorities became increasingly uneasy about the prospects of a Japanese invasion. As early as 1937, members of Parindra – who claimed they did not adopt this form of greeting as a sign of fascist sympathies – used what they referred to as the *groot saluut* [great salute] or *saluut tehorat* [most honorable salute] during public meetings. Looking at the source material and the reports, one can hardly speak of shyness or an attempt at keeping this provocative practice a secret.

In 1941, Mohammad Husni Thamrin, the party's most vociferous spokesman and a particularly active member of the Colonial Council, died of a severe illness, five days after he was put under house arrest by the Dutch colonial authorities. This punishment was imposed on Thamrin after allegations of him harboring pro-Japanese sympathies and planning to subvert Dutch colonial rule magnified to the point where they could no longer be ignored. Through his tragic death under forced arrest, Thamrin became a martyr not only for Parindra, but for Indonesian nationalism at large. As Jan Anne Jonkmann, president of the *Volksraad* from 1939 until 1942, put it in his memoirs: "Thamrin was buried like a prince. The interest and sympathy of the Indonesians were overwhelming."³

What was curious about this ceremony, however, was the way it was 'staged' as a ritual of national unity. One of many photos taken during this curiously militaristic ceremony shows the party's leadership, headed by Soekardjo Wirjopranoto – an influential

... a strategic step towards furthering their personal interests.

Parindrist and, like Thamrin, a member of the Colonial Council – marching through ranks of Surya Wirawan members performing the Nazi salute (see fig. 1). Additional newspaper material shows that not only the party's youth organization, but also the upper ranks of the party used this particular salute deliberately.⁴

Two years earlier, in 1939, a similar bizarre large-scale ritual was performed during Parindra's second party congress in Bandung (see fig. 2). Since a range of honorable Dutch guests, among them the *Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken* [Governor-General's advisor for 'native' affairs], G.F. Pijper, attended the event, we can say with absolute certainty that this newly acquired 'taste' for fascist imagery did not go unnoticed. However, Dutch authorities did apparently not see any reason to be concerned. The official reports compiled by the colonial intelligence services, most notably the *Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst* [Political Intelligence Department], show no traces of concern about this fascist-style demeanor. The colonial press seemed to be more on the alert,⁵ but it was only in 1941 that the Dutch colonial government finally banned the salute in response to the German invasion of the Netherlands a year earlier. All along the way, Parindra maintained that the party "did not adopt [the salute] out of a particular sympathy for Hitler and his Nazis."⁶

Anticolonial nationalism, fascism, and the global context of the interwar period

What does the use of this salute tell us about the party's attitude towards fascism? And what role did Parindra's youth organization, Surya Wirawan, play in the party's larger plans? As early as 1932, Soetomo voiced his opinion that the Indonesian nationalist movement had to "recruit 'kasatrijas' [ksatrya; knight] for the sacred and noble duty: the freedom of the fatherland and the people".⁷ While Surya Wirawan emerged in the larger context of Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scout Movement, which turned into a global success story both in Europe and beyond, the innocent veneer of youth education could not hide the more radical ambitions that lurked beneath. As Pujo Semedi put it, the 1930s were a period of "scout radicalization" in Indonesia,⁸ and Surya Wirawan was at the forefront of this process. In 1936, Soetomo officially called for the transformation of Surya Wirawan into a militaristic youth organization modeled on the example of the scout group *Nationale Jeugdstorm*, established by the Dutch National Socialist Party.⁹ George L. Mosse, an eminent scholar of fascism, described the mobilization of (predominantly young) men in Fascist Italy in his book *The Image of Man*: "Mussolini's new man [...] was to be inspired by the war experience, and indeed he lived in a state of permanent war. The constant wearing of uniforms, the marches, the emphasis on physical exercise, on virility, were part of the battle against the enemy."¹⁰

Seen from that perspective, Surya Wirawan can be studied alongside other fascist-inspired anticolonial youth organizations, such as the so-called Blue Shirts in Egypt or China or Hindu-nationalist youth units that laid the foundation for today's *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) in India. After a series of (nonviolent) clashes with the authorities, the party had to officially admit that Surya Wirawan was no longer just about campfires, scouting, and singing songs. When Thamrin, during Parindra's first party congress in 1937, declared that "Surya Wirawan is the 'bibit' [seed] that will make Parindra even stronger in the future",¹¹ he was hardly thinking of raising a new generation of devoted pacifists. And, in fact, it was only a year later that the party stated in public that "Surya Wirawan is not a regular scout organization, but a defense unit, based on the military model."¹²

Another influential Parindrist, the journalist Soedarjo Tjokrosisworo, shared these ideas and espoused militaristic ideas shaped by the fascist 'role-model' in an article written for the Indonesian-language newspaper *Soeara Oemoem*. Complaining about the 'lack of character' of his fellow nationalists, he urged his compatriots to get inspired by European men of 'great character', including Hitler and Mussolini. After quoting one of Soetomo's letters and praising the virtues of self-sacrifice, he ended his appeal to his fellow countrymen by citing a phrase by Baltus Wigersma, a Dutch National Socialist affiliated with the NSB: "There is no people corrupt enough to be totally devoid of national feelings."¹³ Apart from name-dropping fascist leaders and activists in newspaper articles and conferences, Tjokrosisworo became well-known as a gifted organizer for Parindra in Central Java, where he was heavily involved in shaping Surya Wirawan's militaristic curriculum.

With the threat of a Japanese invasion looming larger and larger on the horizon, the colonial authorities slowly realized that Parindra and Surya Wirawan were far more than the 'cooperating' organizations they claimed to be. In 1941, even an author writing for *Nederlandsch-Indië*, the journal of the staunchly conservative *Vaderlandsche Club*, acknowledged that "Indonesians take European organizations which were instruments of Hitlerism as a role model. Indonesians learned about Nazism from the mouths of European 'teachers', hence they learned it from people who, from an Indonesian point of view, were highly respectable."¹⁴ This analysis is, in many respects, typical of the way Dutch observers in the 1930s and early 1940s looked at these trends among parties like Parindra.

An underestimated threat

Earlier in the 1930s, a Javanese, European-educated nobleman called Notonindito set up a short-lived party which he unambiguously named *Partai Fascist Indonesia* [Indonesian Fascist Party]. The very brief history of this party – apart from many important impulses

that have opened my eyes to the possibility of a serious fascist 'hype' among certain strands of Indonesian nationalism – has been presented by Indonesian scholar Wilson in his book *Orang dan Partai Nazi di Indonesia*. Press coverage on Notonindito's party shows that colonial observers did not take his party seriously for a variety of reasons. One of them was that fascism was considered to be too 'European' to take roots in Indonesia.

Only a few years later, we can observe similar reactions to Parindra and Surya Wirawan. Either their attempts to stage fascist-style parades and create an aura of grandeur to compensate for their lack of hands-on political bargaining power were ridiculed, or they were brushed aside in accordance with the biblical creed 'forgive them, for they know not what they do'. Only on the verge of the Japanese invasion did contemporary observers, including the Dutch authorities, become more aware of the dangers that lay at the heart of Parindra's self-aggrandizing, belligerent ideology. When the Japanese landed on Java in May 1942, they were eager to absorb Surya Wirawan into their military apparatus. Surya Wirawan was renamed *Barisan Pemuda Asia Raya* [Greater Asia Youth Corps] and trained to serve Japanese interests. However, *Partai Indonesia Raya* (Parindra), the party that was so eager to pave the way for Indonesia's 'liberation' from Dutch colonial rule, was eventually banned as the Japanese military established total control over the archipelago. With the party banned, its militant youth organization, originally designed to fight for a 'glorious Indonesia', became the instrument of yet another foreign oppressor.

The 'birth pangs' of paramilitarism

Fascism, very much like the contemporary far-right, had a global appeal and took root in the most diverse geographical and sociocultural settings. While it was undeniably a child of the social and political dislocations in Europe after the First World War, its appeal – the promise of national regeneration through an explosive mixture of mass-militarization, authoritarian leadership, and mobilizing the public on a large scale – was truly global. In the last decade of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, some nationalists oscillating between traditionalism and modernism, such as Soetomo or Tjokrosisworo, were fascinated by the aura of Europe's new 'strongmen'. This sympathy for fascism rarely went hand in hand with a deep understanding of fascist ideologies in Europe. In fact, the writings and speeches of politicians and intellectuals associated with Parindra suggest that their knowledge of European fascism was rather shallow. Fascism was, therefore, not simply 'transferred' to Indonesia, but rather appropriated in a variety of ways. This perspective stresses the agency of

anticolonial nationalists who sought to use fascist imagery and basic concepts to reinvigorate the nationalist struggle in Indonesia after the crushing defeat of the 'non-cooperating movement' under Sukarno in 1934. While parties like Parindra had little room for manoeuvre under the vigilant eyes of the Dutch colonial authorities, its leadership drew from the 'fascist repertoire' in an attempt to boost the morale of party members and to create an aura of grandeur and success.

The last seven years of Indonesian nationalism under Dutch rule, from 1935 to 1942, were more about surviving than they were about thriving. If, to use the opening quote by George Orwell once more, the nationalist "persuades himself that [his side] is the strongest", we have to understand that this self-persuasion could take on many forms. As the history of the interbellum shows, fascism was considered by a wide range of nationalists across the globe to be a viable path to energize ailing nationalist sentiments and to create cohesion. The trajectory of Indonesian paramilitarism during the decolonization war and the postcolonial period reveals that this problematic heritage of mass-militarism was to become a constant companion of Indonesian history up until this very day. The afterlife of Indonesian nationalists flirting with fascism deserves further scrutiny, as it was much more than just a by-product of Japanese indoctrination. Indonesia's vibrant culture of paramilitarism was, in my opinion, the brainchild of nationalists trying to strike a new, perilous path during the bleak interwar years.

Yannick Lengkeek

University of St Andrews; winner of the IAS National Master's Thesis Prize in Asian Studies 2018. This article is based on his thesis "Neither Show nor Showdown: The 'Fascist Effect' and Cooperative Nationalism in Late Colonial Indonesia, 1935-1942" y1217@st-andrews.ac.uk

Notes

- Orwell, G. 'Notes on Nationalism', in Orwell, G. 2000. *Essays*. London: Penguin Books, pp.300-317, see p.301.
- Susan Abeyasekera's important work on *Partai Indonesia Raya*, particularly her dissertation, has looked at the party's ambivalent political moves. Fascism, however, was not a part of her analysis – in fact, the word, apart from a few isolated references to pro-Japanese sympathies and provocative statements made by leading Parindra politicians, is woefully absent from her account. See Abeyasekera, S. *Relations between the Indonesian Cooperating Nationalists and the Dutch, 1935-1942* (PhD diss., Adelaide, 1972).
- Jonkman, J.A. 1971. *Het Oude Nederlands-Indië*. Assen: Van Gorcum, p.214.
- See Imam Soepardi (ed.) 1941. *Kenang-Kenangan M.H. Thamrin*. Surabaya: Pustaka Nasional, pp.20, 29 and 37.
- See for example, 'De Parindra is democratisch: Haar Jeugorganisatie gebruikt echter een weerzinwekkende groet,' [Parindra is democratic: However, its youth organization uses a repulsive salute], *Het Volksdagblad*, 29 March 1939.
- Overzichten van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers (IPO) 23, 7 June 1941, p.855.
- Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Library Collection Algemeen Rijksarchief (AR) D 60, P.I.D., Berichtgeving en rapport, A.W. Soentoro No. 106/S.
- Semedi, P. 2015. 'Pramuka: Scouting Days of Fun', in Robinson, K. (ed.) *Youth Identities and Social Transformations in Modern Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, pp.113-129, see p.116.
- Soeara Parindra 1, October 1936, p.9.
- Mosse, G.L. 1996. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.160.
- ANRI, AR D 63a, Verslag van het eerste congres der Partij Indonesia Raya (Parindra), gehouden te Batavia van 15 t/m 17 Mei 1937.
- Poeze, H.A. (ed.) 1994. *Politiek-Politoneele Overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indië: Bronnenpublikatie Vol.4, 1935-1941*. Leiden: KITLV Press, p.222.
- IPO 3, 16 January 1937, pp.38-40; the book mentioned is Wigersma, B. 1934. *Het Wezen van het Fascisme*. Bussum: Van Dishoeck.
- IPO 36, 6 September 1941, p.1272.

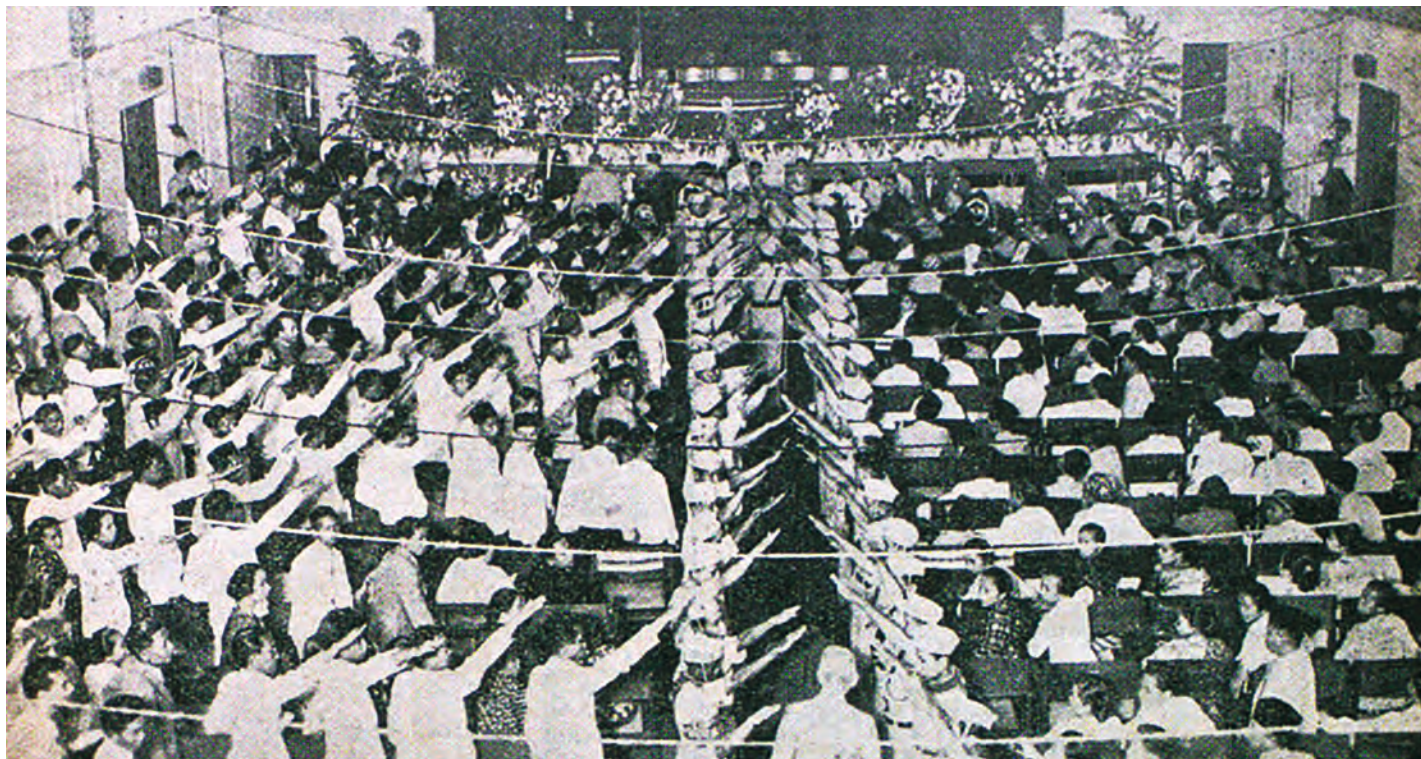


Fig. 2: Photo of the second party congress of Partai Indonesia Raya (Parindra), 1939. Source: Soeara Parindra 4, 1 (1939).

Down and Out in Late Meiji Japan

Martha Chaiklin

The word 'muckraking' does not appear once in *Down and Out in Late Meiji Japan*. This is somewhat surprising, given that James Huffman's earlier books focused on the press in Japan and the time period defined in the book title aligns exactly with the American Progressive Movement, whereas the inspiration for the title, George Orwell's *Down and Out in London and Paris* (Victor Gollancz, 1933) relates events from 1928. Muckraker was a term used (in reference to a character in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) to label journalists devoted to exposing the corruption of politics and the social ills of industrialization. Although in use since the 1870s as a pejorative to the press rather than the agricultural compost raker of its origins, it was popularized in a speech by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 and taken as a badge of honor by those so designated. It would have been interesting to know if Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair and their ilk influenced the efforts of Yokoyama Gennosuke, Suzuki Umeshirō, Matsubara Iwagorō and the other journalists Huffman references for insight into the poor, but perhaps that would have been a different book, a shift in focus from 'nameless' destitute people to journalists.

Moreover, given that this book is a work of history rather than investigative journalism, Huffman is not a muckraker either. But nevertheless, his goals are not too far from those journalists of the past: expose the underside of a society. In that much of the scholarship of this period focuses on how Japan successfully industrialized, it is not only a fresh perspective, but an important one to fully evaluate just how that industrial success was achieved. Huffman seeks 'to understand how it felt to live the life of a *hinmin*, or poor person' (p. 2) and explore how modernity impacted their lives. To examine the lives of those made 'voiceless' (p. 2) through

illiteracy and indifference, Huffman relies heavily on the muckrakers, or as he prefers, 'poverty journalists' of late Meiji Japan, heavily supplemented with literary diaries, government papers, social commentaries and academic analyses. The results of Huffman's explorations have shined light on those underexposed parts of Meiji society. Importantly, he shows that these people did not fit neatly into stereotypes such as victim or criminal, that they were not entirely defined by their poverty but lived in constant 'tension between visibility and invisibility' (p. 97). Where he really departs from the views of muckraking journalists is in the way that he seeks not just to document the misery, crime, and disease of poverty but also to show the joy the destitute managed to make even in their difficult circumstances because there were not always powerless victims without agency.

In order to accomplish this, Huffman like the muckrakers, largely focuses on the urban poor, which he suggests made up between 12 and 20

per cent of urban populations. As the author explains, many of these poor are migrants from rural villages. He therefore does not spend too much time parsing where they came from, and while he acknowledges the presence of *buraku* (an outcaste class), he does not dwell on these kinds of differences, instead narrating as many individualized stories as possible to emphasize the humanity of subjects that are often equated with animals.

The down and out of Meiji Japan are examined in eight content chapters, of which the first six focus on the city, and the last two on the country. In Chapter 1, the scene is set by describing the pull of the poor to the city and the built environment in which they resided. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the working lives (because even beggars do work of a sort) of the underclass looking at the labor through the manufacture of, for example, textiles and matches, and those in the building and service professions like carpenters, rickshaw pullers and masseurs. Chapter 4 is on family life,

noting that the perception in the Japanese media and among the public of the nuclear family unit as the norm was not born out in the reality because the largest number of migrant workers were men, and divorce and disease were prevalent. Written as a comparison, Huffman's description of rural poor is admittedly skeletal and sweeping rather than specific, because its true intent is to elucidate the urban poor rather than ponder the conditions of the countryside. Huffman argues that the strong community ties extant in the countryside alleviated some of the harshest aspects of poverty. The final content chapter completes the system of migration out from Japanese rural communities by examining the emigration of agricultural workers to Hawaii. He notes the similarities between the migration patterns to cities in which, the migration was largely of single men but diverge because the emigrants were able to improve their economic status much more rapidly.

Clearly and objectively written, the book only fails in being accessible to a general audience through Huffman's decision to use Japanese terms like *hinmin* (the poor) or *kasō shakai* (underclass) for ideas that can adequately be expressed in English. Huffman clearly has deep empathy for his subjects, which is only partially explained by his accounting of his own impoverished rural childhood in rural Indiana in the introduction. In using an interdisciplinary approach, Huffman has married individuals to a systemic examination so that the stories appear simple on the surface but underneath are contained deep questions about the nature of poverty. It is an indicator of the state of academics that Huffman felt that he had to justify his choice of topic as a 'middle-class white American' (p. 21). Some historians are inspired by their personal histories, but most of us write about dead people, who otherwise could tell no tales. The down and out of late Meiji Japan were fortunate in having James Huffman as a spokesperson.

Martha Chaiklin
Hosei University, Japan



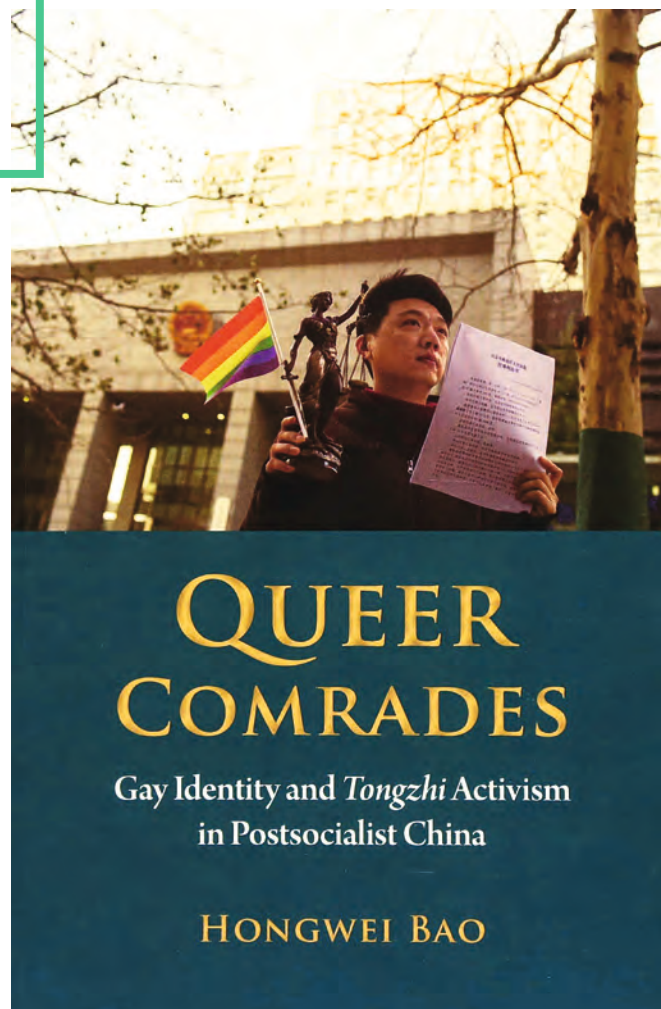
Queer Comrades

Travis Kong

Reviewed title:
Queer Comrades: Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postsocialist China

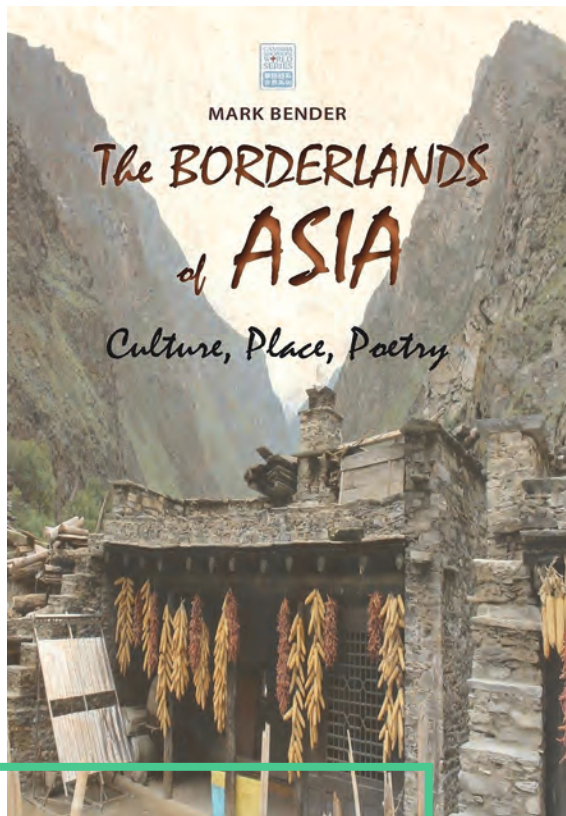
Hongwei Bao. 2018.
Copenhagen: NIAS Press
ISBN 9788776942342

Hongwei Bao's monograph offers an excellent example of an examination of gay identity and activism in contemporary China from a cultural studies perspective. It draws from queer theory, feminism, Marxism, and postcolonial and critical race studies for its theoretical lens.



More specifically, driven by a leftist politics, Bao brings queer theory and Marxism into dialogue to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexity and fluidity of non-normative male sexual identities: *tongxinglian* (同性戀), *gay*, *tongzhi* (同志), *ku'er* (酷兒), MSM. He examines the challenges and potential of a radical gay politics against the backdrop of China's socialist legacy and contemporary postsocialist reality, which is infused with nascent capitalism, neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism.

Inspired by Judith Halberstam's 'queer methodology', which uses various methods to produce knowledge on subjects who have been excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour, Bao brings together medical records, published diaries and films, as well as interviews, ethnographic accounts and personal anecdotes in his analysis. Moreover, he is no detached researcher, but rather a passionate and engaged ethnographer. Bao was born and grew up in China, self-identifies as gay, studied in Australia for his PhD, and has taught at various universities in China and Europe. He is now teaching in the United Kingdom. He was well aware of both the privileges and limitations of his research position as insider and outsider when he was in conversation with queer communities in China, conversation that took place primarily during his field trips to the country over the 2007 and 2009 period. With his distinctive and sometimes witty writing style, Bao illustrates the 'structure of feelings' of the kaleidoscopic



The Borderlands of Asia

Simon Wickhamsmith

Reviewed title:

**The Borderlands of Asia:
Culture, Place, Poetry**

Mark Bender. 2017.

Amherst, NY: Cambria Press
ISBN 9781604497973

It is very rare that a book is published which, rather than presenting new insights into an old topic, actually presents and defines a new topic. Mark Bender's *The Borderlands of Asia* is such a book. It seeks, for the first time in, I suspect, any language, to present the poetic traditions of the peoples who live at the edges of Asia, in Northeast India, Myanmar, Mongolia and the areas of southwestern China, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia and Gansu. In so doing, Bender

and his translators have produced a book of vital cultural importance, a glimpse into cultures which are too frequently passed over in favor of the dominant cultures of the region.

As an expert on China's minorities, and a translator from the Nuosu dialect of Yi, Bender is well placed to guide the reader on this most unusual journey. In his long and detailed introduction, he divides his comments into three

sections. The first, "Landscapes and Lifeforms" addresses the interaction of human beings with the environment they inhabit, through brief historical and topographical observations. The differences between these four key areas may be great, but it is the relationships which exist and develop there, each a changing lifeform of its own, which characterise the cultures in general, and the literatures in particular, of the people who partake in these relationships.

Bender's second section, "Juxtapositions," presents a comparative look at some of the connections between these poetries. This analysis opens up issues relating to how environment can be understood, both by the reader of these poems as well as by their authors, in the globalized twenty-first century. One of Bender's concerns in putting this book together has clearly been to address the sometimes fraught and difficult dynamic which increased globalization produces, and to suggest ways in which this can more effectively be negotiated. The comparisons he makes here offer some elegant and productive ideas through which a reader unfamiliar with such poems might approach them, but they ask us also to go deeper into our own experiences and assumptions, and to question how we ourselves are living in our own corners of the world.

In the final section, "Poets in Places," he gives a brief introduction to the state of poetry in each of the four areas covered by the book, and to some of the poets featured. The placement of this section at the end of his introduction allows the poets to find their natural place within the environment of the book, as those who are gifted with the power to give voice to the land and its inhabitants, as individuals charged with a responsibility and a calling, and not as the kind of literary "figures" to whom we are more used in the west.

I should declare my own professional interest in this book. I have been translating Mongolian poetic literature for more than ten years, and over that time have developed connections with many of the country's leading writers. So it was with particular interest that I read the poems by Mongolian and Inner Mongolian writers. The work of the three Inner Mongolian and six Mongolian poets represented in the book shows well the primary themes of environment and culture which form the kernel of much Mongol poetry. Although I initially felt the lack of Mongolian-language poems by Inner Mongolian poets, I realized that this omission brings up the necessary question of sinification, as it does elsewhere among the texts. Yet the fact that even the translations of poems written originally in Chinese feel Mongolian (at least to me) challenges my

own assumptions surrounding issues of authenticity, and the relationship between language and culture in disputed regions. The inclusion of several generations of Mongolian poets, moreover, shows how constant is the voice of their poetry: even D.Urianhai, much of whose work is characterized by a postmodern sense of experimentation and philosophical play, remains for the purposes of this volume what he perhaps is at heart - a traditional poet of Mongolia's grasslands.

What for me is a ready-made comparative framework, then, that between Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, can be shifted to other areas of crossover, as suggested by the "Juxtapositions" section of the introduction. The choice of poems reflects the rich diversity which exists at the margins of Asia, and it shows also the ways that land affects the human heart, how the world of spirit touches us, unseen and imperceptible. And while even American nature writers like Annie Dillard or Mary Oliver conjure up the spiritual in their work, the sensitivity exhibited here is remarkable - not necessarily better or deeper, perhaps, but remarkably different, striking as when struck and surprised by a falling twig, and touching too, as when reaching out in the dark to encounter velvet. These are poems whose unusual nature comes as much from the physical and spiritual environments in which their writers write, as from the minds of the writers themselves.

Bender has enlisted a fine team of translators to assist with this book and, while readers (and fellow translators like myself) will generally find something somewhere to criticize, I find these to be readable and frequently very beautiful translations. The annotations provided for most of the poems are helpful in understanding specific points of culture and linguistic usage, and together with the biographical information for poets and translators and a set of fourteen photographs at the back of the book give the reader sufficient context within which to enjoy the poems.

Scholars of Asia and those more broadly interested in literature and culture owe Mark Bender and Cambria Press a debt of gratitude for producing this fine and timely book. These poems reflect the relationship between humans and the natural environment in ways which a thousand protests, a thousand academic papers, or a thousand laws passed by even the most progressive of legislatures could never hope to reproduce. They should be better known, read widely, and learnt by heart.

Simon Wickhamsmith

Rutgers, The State University
of New Jersey, United States

queer culture in China today. The book, he says, is a journey into queer China with him as tour guide.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part (Chapters 2–4) concerns the genealogy of *tongzhi* identity in contemporary China. Bao delineates the usage of the terms *tong* (meaning 'same') and *zhi* (meaning 'ideal' or 'aspiration'), which exist separately in classical Chinese literature, but were first used in combination in 1911 to mean 'comrade', a term signifying a revolutionary and political subjectivity and widely used in Republican and Maoist China. However, the term was later reappropriated to signify a sexual subjectivity ('queer'), first in Hong Kong (1989–), then in Taiwan (1992–) and later in postsocialist China (1992–). By tracing the genealogy of *tongzhi* identity from a political subjectivity (*tongzhi* as comrade) to sexual subjectivity (*tongzhi* as queer), Bao differentiates it from other sexual identities such as the older, traditional (and often stigmatised) *tongxinglian*, the transnational and multilingual 'gay', and the radical and subversive *ku'er*. He is also critical of the normalisation process of *tongzhi* as law-biding, well-educated, model sexual citizens. Bao does not merely treat *tongzhi* as an identity, but uses it creatively as an analytical framework to examine 'subject, power, governmentality, social movements and everyday life in China' (p. 4). By putting the two meanings of *tongzhi* together as 'queer comrades', he advocates for queer Marxist analysis that queers the political subject of comrade while simultaneously underscoring

the radical and political potential of being queer (Chapter 3). Particularly fascinating is Bao's mapping of the sexual geography of Shanghai, with the city's transnational gays located in trendy bars, young, educated *tongzhi* in local and community-organised activities (e.g. sport, karaoke, dining), and older, often stigmatised *tongxinglian* in dance halls, public parks, and toilets (Chapter 2). He also discusses how conversion therapy (turning gay people straight) can be seen as an affective project, as well as a postsocialist technology of the self that violently rejects homosexual desires, and delineates the way in which the victims of such therapy have suffered as they struggle to become 'proper' sexual citizens (Chapter 4).

Part 2 of the book (Chapters 5–7) focuses on the media and cultural queer activism. Bao first discusses China's leading queer filmmaker and activist, Cui Zi'en, and the way in which he uses digital video films as a form of queer activism (what Cui calls 'digital video activism') (Chapter 5). Like Bao, who uses queer Marxism to perform his cultural analysis, Cui uses queer Marxism to direct his films. Both men embrace a socialist and Marxist vision and imagine a radical queer politics in contemporary China. In Chapter 6, Bao discusses younger queer filmmakers (e.g. Fan Popo, Shitou, Mingming) and examines the ways in which they organise queer film festivals, travelling from Beijing and Shanghai to Guangzhou and engaging with different local queer communities, for example. In response to government intervention (e.g. sudden forced closures by the police), these

organic intellectuals adopt a guerrilla style of festival organisation, with contingent screening plans in place, resulting in the creation of fleeting queer public spaces for screening, exchange and interaction. Whilst these two chapters focus on queer activism advanced by the queer intelligentsia, Chapter 7 discusses a concrete case of confrontation between the police and a group of cruising gay men over the use of a public park in Guangzhou, showing how some gay men make use of social media to reclaim their sexual citizenship. Whether discussing intelligentsia or ordinary people, offline or online activities, queer film festivals or daily cruising behaviours, Bao presents a picture of *tongzhi* in China as constituting an ephemeral counter-public – or heterotopia in Foucauldian terms – that captures the radicalness of queer activism in China today.

Queer Comrades is original and theoretically engaging, weaving textual analysis with ethnographic accounts and personal anecdotes. It is extremely accessible and easy to read and digest. The book makes two major contributions. The first is to cultural studies. The book is an exemplar of an interdisciplinary work in both theoretical (speaking to different fields and disciplines such as cultural studies, media studies, gender and sexuality studies, sociology, anthropology, and China studies) and methodological terms (combining textual and socio-materialistic analysis). In conjunction with Bao's leftist orientation, his proposed queer Marxism is particularly useful for rethinking the radicalness of gay identity,

politics and activism in contemporary China. His use of cultural studies lessens to some extent the tension between textual and social-materialistic analyses that is deeply rooted in the humanities and social sciences. In addition to Bao's proposed directions for future research, including overcoming the male basis of *tongzhi*, going beyond urban and Han ethnocentrism, and examining the role of new media in identity and community formation, I would add social-materialistic analysis and critique of the state and the family and the role they play (both enabling and restricting) in shaping the contours of *tongzhi* identities, practices and politics.

The book's second major contribution is to queer Asian studies, a slowly emerging discipline that is critical of the hegemonic Western understanding of non-Western and non-normative genders and sexualities. Queer Asian studies scholars have examined the complex diasporic, trans-national/regional and hybrid forms of Asian queer identities, practices and cultures under the forces of globalisation, cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism. Bao has critically engaged with these scholars (see his list of other scholarly works on pages 25–28 and 205–206). His work fits firmly within queer Asian studies (or more specifically queer Chinese studies), offering a timely intervention that critically engages with Western theories in order to 'reimagine and reshape queer, China and Asia' (p. 206).

Travis Kong

The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Beyond 'China-in-Africa' Narratives

Yoon Jung Park

Reviewed title:

African-Asian Encounters: New Cooperations and New Dependencies

Arndt Graf and Azirah Hashim (eds). 2017.

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
ISBN 9789462984288

African-Asian Encounters draws readers' attention to a broad range of engagements between African and Asian countries, addressing the monopolization of China-in-Africa narratives in both media and scholarly works. With a range of studies examining previously obscured interactions, activities, and migration flows – including linkages between Vietnam and Angola, South Korea and Rwanda, and Asian artisanal gold mining in Cameroon, as well as African student and professional athletes in Malaysia and the Philippines – the volume opens new doors of inquiry into the effects of continued global encounters.

A much needed antidote

African-Asian Encounters is one of a number of new publications and broader research endeavors, which aim to address and counter the dominance of 'China-Africa' on the academic landscape. This book and another forthcoming edited volume¹ originate from a series of conferences organized by the Africa's Asian Options (AFRASO) research project of Goethe University in Frankfurt in partnership with local host universities. The book is based on a selection of papers from the first AFRASO conference, which was held in collaboration with the Africa-Asia Development University Network and the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue at the University of Malaya, and focuses on the establishment and evaluation of new forms of African-Asian cooperation.

In addition to the AFRASO publications, Routledge has also recently published *The Routledge Handbook of Asia-Africa Relations* (Raposo, Arase, and Cornelissen, 2018) and Palgrave Macmillan published *Migration and Agency in a Globalizing World. Afro-Asian Encounters* (Cornelissen and Mine, 2018). Taken together, these publications provide a valuable and much needed antidote to the continued reign and distorting dominance of 'China-Africa' literature in the broader fields of China Studies, Africa Studies, Global Studies, and South-South discourses. In addition to introducing readers to a wide(r) range of actors and a diversity of engagements between Africa and Asia, the continent-to-continent pairing brings greater balance to what has always troubled me (even as one of the early scholars in the still growing China-Africa sub-field) about the asymmetrical pairing of the China (a country) and Africa (a continent).

While there are still an infinite number of topics worthy of further research in the study of China-Africa, *African-Asian Encounters* serves as a reminder that the narrow focus on China's engagements in Africa obscures a multitude of actors, encounters, and different ways of conceptualizing these. In this volume topics range from African youth in Malaysia (Röschenthaler, chapter one) and African students and professional athletes in the Philippines (Rehal, chapter eight) to Chinese and Koreans involved in artisanal and small-scale mining in Cameroon, Vietnamese contract workers in Angola, and South Korean civil society actors in the Rwandese

countryside (see below for more on these). One section of the book does, in fact, cover the 'Chinese Factor', which is impossible to ignore in many African countries; this section includes a chapter on Confucius Institutes (Hartig, chapter three), another on civil society interactions (Mageza-Barthel, chapter four), and the chapter on Vietnamese and Chinese labor flows to Angola. Chapter six, by Engel, is a bit of an outlier as it examines Indonesia's South-South cooperation strategies with only sporadic mention of Africa.

Some unevenness

As with most edited volumes there is some unevenness. In a volume such as this, which is based on a global conference of international participants from a wide range of scholarly disciplines (and attendant research methodologies) writing about a diversity of topics, one has the sense of strolling through a large art museum with various types of art (Impressionist, Abstract, Portraits, Still Lifes, Landscapes, etc.) from different periods. As with the art museum, some pieces are more to one's taste than others; some resonate, while others are not as approachable or comprehensible. One small example of the latter, for me, would be the tables in chapter two, which, for anyone without some statistics background, are essentially illegible.

Edited volumes such as this really depend on the introductory and concluding chapters to really tie the book together thematically and/or conceptually. In my view, this is unfortunately the greatest downfall of the book. The Introduction is a missed opportunity to really lay out all of the Africa-Asia scholarly activities recently undertaken – by AFRASO; by the Stellenbosch/Doshisha (Cornelissen and Mine)-led efforts; and by the Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASiA) group with support from the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the International Congress of Asian Studies (ICAS) – in order to make a stronger case for this more balanced way of examining, continent-to-continent, relations and engagements. While the Introduction starts with a critique of the limitations of the dominant China-Africa frame, the authors don't go far enough. The book also lacks a conclusion, which, again, could have been a chance to tie the disparate chapters together.

'Other' Asian actors in Africa

That said, I found most of the chapters to be chock full of new material and fascinating insights. As a migration scholar, I was particularly drawn to the chapters that focused on various Asian actors in Cameroon, Rwanda, and Angola as well as the two chapters that covered African students and athletes in Malaysia and the Philippines, so the remainder of this review will focus on the migrant-centered chapters. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I learned in these chapters. For example, I had no idea that there were so many South Koreans engaged in mining in Angola (chapter two by Nguiepjou and Runge) and development activities in Rwanda (chapter seven by Nauta and Lee).

And Groger and Klump's chapter (five) was the first I had heard of the Vietnamese contract workers in Angola. Part of my ignorance of these 'other' Asian actors in Africa may well stem from the very dominance of the 'China-in-Africa narratives' that this volume addresses. Confusion also arises from the general sense in most of Africa that any person from Asia (including this Korean American reviewer) is seen and described as 'Chinese'. That said, it is interesting that Nguiepjou and Runge's research indicates that locals in Cameroon were, in fact, able to differentiate between the Korean and Chinese migrants involved in mining activities. It is also significant that most of these Asian actors are relative newcomers to Africa, having arrived in significant numbers after 2000, indicating that, perhaps, the literature has not yet caught up with these new(ish) developments. The arrival of more and more actors from other Asian countries in Africa will hopefully begin to dispel these instances of mistaken identity/identification and general conflation with China/Chinese.

South Korean state and independent actors in both Cameroon and Angola, as described in chapters two and seven, are clearly working at setting themselves apart from the Chinese (as well as other actors). Some of the themes that arise in the China-Africa literature are mirrored in this volume, such as, for example, the African government responses to various Asian actors or the South Koreans playing up their lack of colonial past with African partner countries (just as the Chinese do). But many of the details uncovered by the research described in these two chapters, including Korean development and business practices, the marketing of the controversial *Saemaul Undong* program, Korean government initiatives for Africa's development, and Korea-Africa Forum meetings, help to put the China-Africa engagements in greater perspective and provide further evidence that we have entered a multipolar world. Similarly, the fascinating details of Vietnamese-Angolan relations, Vietnamese construction entrepreneurs and migration brokers, and the complex (and quasi-legal) processes of Chinese companies selling their labor migration quotas to Vietnamese labor contractors do much to dispel narrow China-Africa narratives. This chapter may, in fact, be the first publication to 'out' these sorts of practices in Africa and provide details into the mostly hidden but surprisingly large flows of Vietnamese workers to Angola.

African travelers

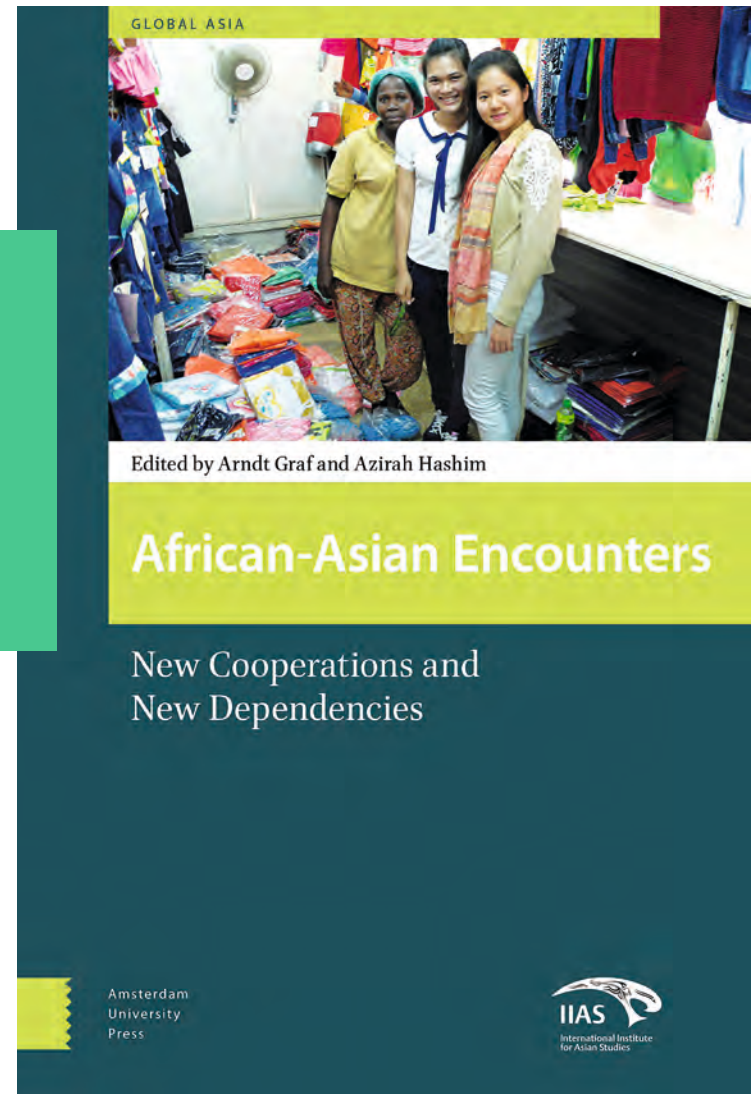
The two chapters that focus on Africans in Malaysia and the Philippines also offer fascinating insights into flows that have not been much discussed in the broader literature. Both Röschenthaler's and Rehal's discussions about African students in Malaysia and the Philippines, respectively, add to the growing body of work on African migrants in China. Both reveal changes in the flows and trajectories of international students to new, non-Western, non-traditional education destinations as well as some of the problems with these international education programs. Röschenthaler, in particular, provides incredibly rich and thick descriptions of the African students based on her ethnographic work in Malaysia including the students' encounters with racism and their survival strategies in an increasingly unfriendly setting reminiscent of the work of Haugen and other scholars of Africans in China.² Rehal's discussion of the semi-professional and professional African footballers and track & field athletes, while not as richly detailed, introduces readers to new actors. These mostly young African travelers are exploring non-traditional paths to non-Western destinations that have, until relatively recently, remained relatively unstudied.

In all, the edited volume is a welcome addition to the small but growing field of literature that returns the gaze to the wider Africa-Asian relations, in the spirit of Bandung, looking beyond the dominance of the 'China-in-Africa' narratives and bringing our gaze to a multiplicity of smaller but nonetheless important new Asian actors and engagements with a range of African countries.

Yoon Jung Park
Georgetown University,
United States

Notes

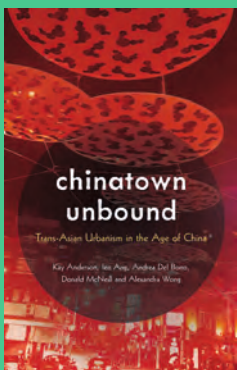
- 1 Anthony, R. & Ruppert, U. (eds) (forthcoming) *Re-thinking African-Asian Encounters: Changing Realities – Changing Concepts*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 2 Haugen, H.Ø. 2012. 'Nigerians in China: A Second State of Immobility', *International Migration* 50(2):65-80; Haugen, H.Ø. 2013. 'China's recruitment of African university students: Policy efficacy and unintended outcomes', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 11(3): 315-334.



Asian Studies. Newest Titles. Latest Reviews.

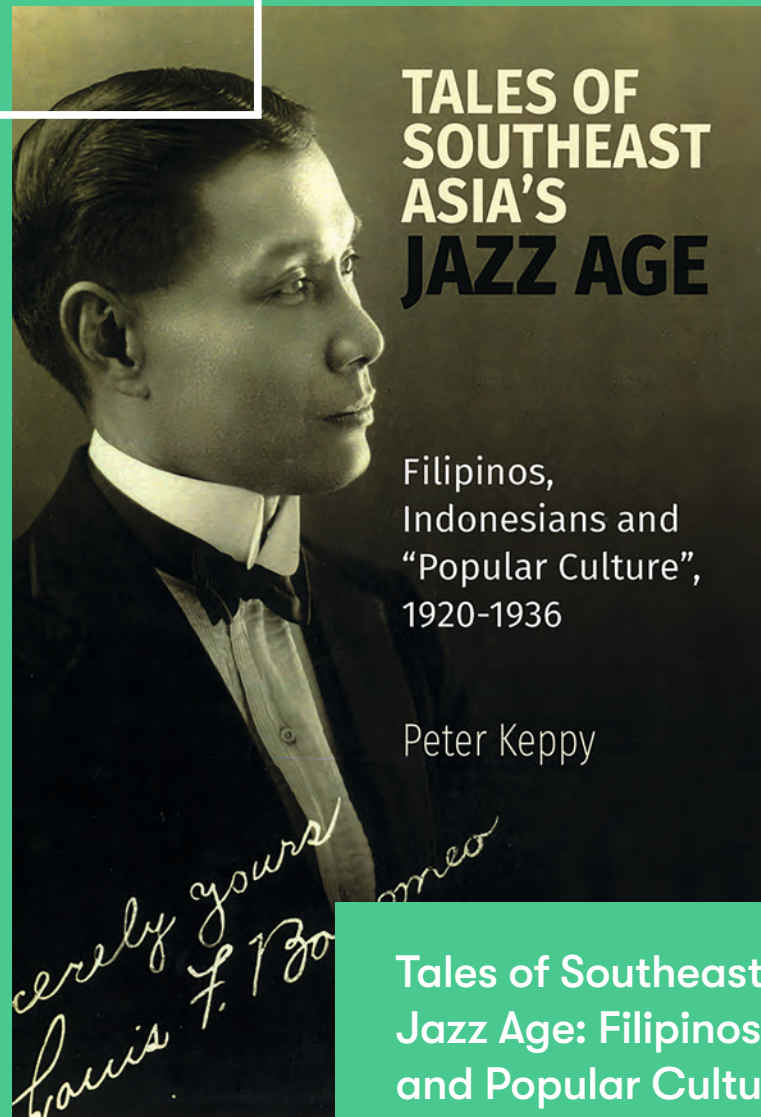
newbooks.asia

Visit newbooks.asia to browse the newest titles in the field of Asian studies. If you would like to review any of the available titles, of which you will find a selection below, please submit a review request through the website or send an email to our editor at newbooksasia@ias.nl



Chinatown Unbound: Trans-Asian Urbanism in the Age of China

Kay Anderson et al. 2019.
Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
ISBN 9781786608987
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/chinatown-unbound>



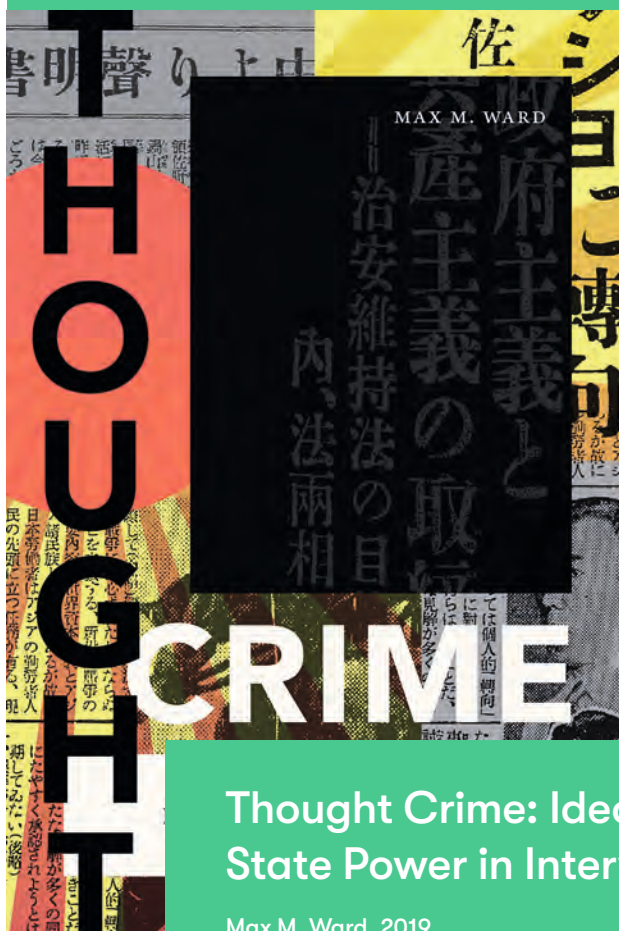
TALES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA'S JAZZ AGE

Filipinos, Indonesians and "Popular Culture", 1920-1936

Peter Keppy

Tales of Southeast Asia's Jazz Age: Filipinos, Indonesians and Popular Culture, 1920-1936

Peter Keppy. 2019.
NUS Press
ISBN 9789813250512
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/southeast-asia-jazz>



Thought Crime: Ideology and State Power in Interwar Japan

Max M. Ward. 2019.
Duke University Press
ISBN 9781478001652
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/thought-crime>



The Other Milk: Reinventing Soy in Republican China

Jia-Chen Fu. 2018.
University of Washington Press
ISBN 9780295744032
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/other-milk>



The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong

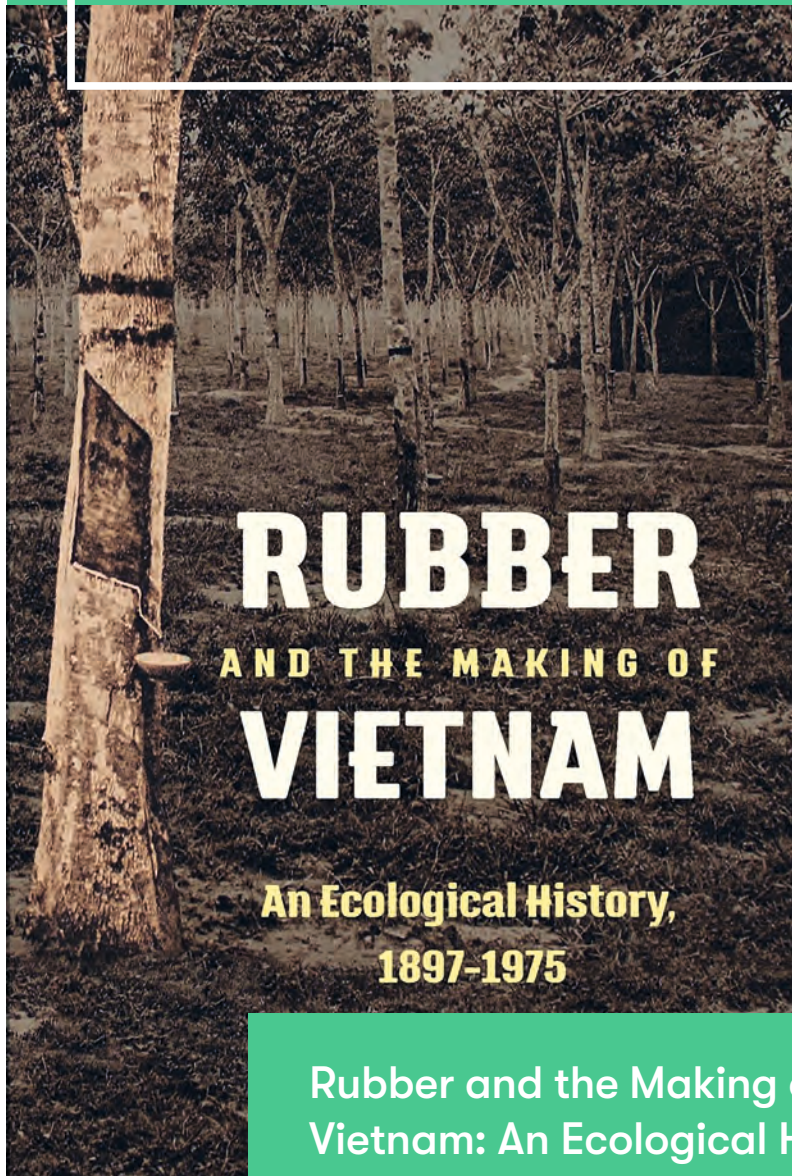
Ngok Ma and Edmund W. Cheng (eds). 2019.
Amsterdam University Press
ISBN 9789462984561
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/umbrella-movement>

More new titles on page 28

Asian Studies. Newest Titles. Latest Reviews.

newbooks.asia

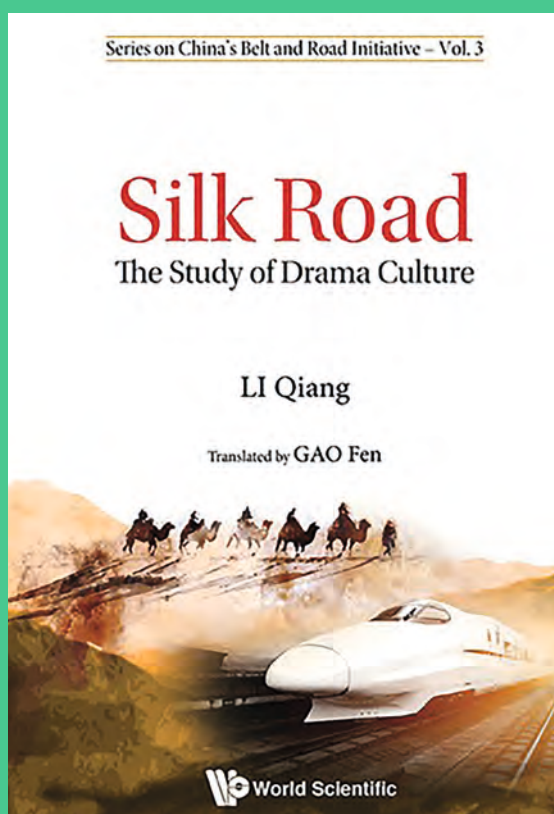
Visit newbooks.asia to browse the newest titles in the field of Asian studies. If you would like to review any of the available titles, of which you will find a selection below, please submit a review request through the website or send an email to our editor at newbooksasia@iias.nl



Rubber and the Making of Vietnam: An Ecological History, 1897–1975

Michitake Aso. 2018.

University of North Carolina Press
ISBN 9781469637150
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/rubber-vietnam>



Silk Road: The Study of Drama Culture

Qiang Li. 2019.

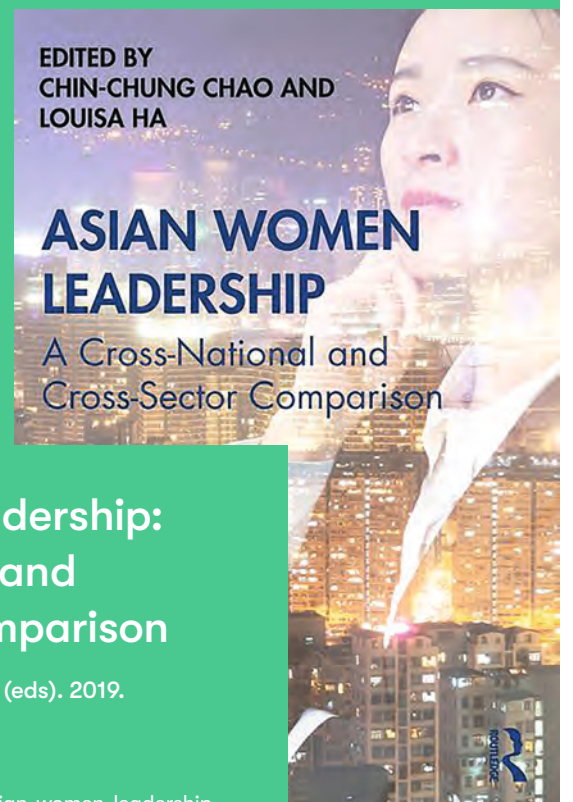
World Scientific Publishing
ISBN 9789813202955
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/silk-road-drama-culture>



Beyond Imperial Aesthetics: Theories of Art and Politics in East Asia

Mayumo Inoue and Steve Choe (eds). 2019.

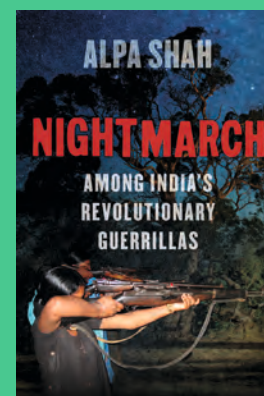
Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789888455874
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/beyond-imperial-aesthetics>



Asian Women Leadership: A Cross-National and Cross-Sector Comparison

Chin Chung Chao and Louisa Ha (eds). 2019.

Routledge
ISBN 9780367133115
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/asian-women-leadership>



Nightmarch: Among India's Revolutionary Guerrillas

Alpa Shah. 2018.

Hurst and Company
ISBN 9781849049900
<https://newbooks.asia/publication/nightmarch>

More new titles
on page 27



Above: A trader in Kashgar (Rippa 2013).

Informal connectivity in transnational shadow exchanges

Tak-Wing Ngo

Transnational networks play a key role in the global flow of resources. Complex webs of inter-state, inter-city, inter-firm, and inter-personal networks have been created, activated, and established to foster long-distant connectivity. Yet the regulated activities of trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), migration, and related activities constitute only a portion of all transnational exchanges. The rest is undertaken in the shadows. Every day, vast networks of people and organizations shuffle goods, money, and humans across the globe's borders. While operating in the shadows, these transactions are substantial and crucial for domestic, regional, and global economies. Unsurprisingly, owing to their obscure nature, the assortment of border exchanges, the diversities of brokering practices, and the variations in informality have not been fully studied. Our joint project, presented in this Focus section, seeks to address these issues by re-examining transnational informal exchanges across Asia and Eurasia from a bottom-up perspective.

Contending connectivities

In recent years, the most eye-catching politico-spatial project seeking to re-define the historical geography of global capitalism is the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative put forward by the Chinese government. OBOR is a state-initiated project aiming to construct cross-continental and cross-regional connectivity. This intriguingly compares with neoliberalism, which has hitherto been the main driving force of globalization. Unlike the neoliberal, market- and firm-driven logic, OBOR ascribes a transformative role to statal and inter-statal institutions in fostering

regionalism; up to now, most mega-scale cooperative projects have been initiated by states or state-owned enterprises.

Yet long before China promulgated the OBOR project, vast networks of cross-border exchanges had already been established across Asia, Eurasia, and Africa. Such exchanges in the form of trade and resource flow were largely carried out beyond state control, and are hence seen as belonging to the realm of the shadow/informal economy. The scale and scope of these shadow operations are no less breath-taking than OBOR. The reach of the networks is equally mind-boggling. They

stretch from Guangzhou to Bangkok, Dubai, Istanbul, Nairobi, and Accra; from Yiwu to Khorgos, Almaty, Dordoi, and Cairo; from Kashgar to Sost, Gilgit, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, and Kabul. They are formed by a vast number of entrepreneurs, money brokers, and migrant labourers sojourning between different productive and distributive centres. Our comparative studies find that shadow exchanges differ in their type of networks, degree of coordination, and nature of transaction. There is a rich diversity of operations that extends beyond our available conceptual categories.

These transnational shadow exchanges constitute a kind of globalization from below. Ironically, when challenging the market-driven logic of neoliberalism, OBOR's state-led approach to high-end globalization is in itself confronted by informal connectivity created by rhizomatic networks of individuals and groups. How the three logics of globalization – firm-driven, state-led, and network-based connectivities – interact, therefore opens a new agenda for scholarly enquiry.

Continued overleaf on page 30

Continued from page 29

Characterizing shadow exchanges and informality

Unlike the regulated, legally enforceable, contractual exchange in the formal economy, shadow exchanges are often based on interpersonal networks and trust. Because of that, there is a tendency to characterize cross-border shadow exchanges as a kind of informal activity. While we agree with the informal nature of shadow exchanges, our findings suggest that this requires some qualifications because informal connectivity exhibits several distinctive characteristics.

First, the nature of actors. In contrast to neoliberalism and OBOR regionalization, the active agent in this globalization from below is neither business firms nor the state. Rather it is the shadow traders and their networks, acting either individually or in syndicates. Second, the problem of marginality. Shadow traders are not necessarily people who live in the social margins. Rather than having no choice but to take up unprotected work, they often engage in informal operations with deliberate intention. They do so because state regulations oblige them to conduct their trading activities informally in order to take advantage of the grey areas in border control.

Third, organizational sophistication. The activities carried out by traders are often described as 'petty' or 'shadow'. Such description conveys a connotation of something casual, haphazard, and small scale. In actual practice, many of those so-called petty/shadow activities are highly organized, routinized, commercialized, and market-oriented. A large variety of operational mechanisms can be found in adapting to local circumstances. In the most extreme cases, networks organized in the form of syndicates exhibit an exceptionally high degree of sophistication in co-ordination. They oversee the trade flow, respond to market signals, co-ordinate sourcing and distribution, arrange transportation, and co-opt/manipulate border control. In essence, they behave like well-established business firms, but remain informal in the sense that they still rely on networks and trust rather than legally binding contracts in their transactions.

Fourth, resilience. While individual traders have only limited mobility, financial resources, and market awareness, they can be organized into an operation network and act in a coordinated way. Within this network, individual traders come and go, join and exit the network, in a casual and informal manner. But the network itself is stable and resilient, with an elaborate division of labour. Finally, political connection. The informal network in transnational exchanges typically links state and non-state actors. Since official discretion in the selective enforcement of border control plays a key part in the shadow trade, reciprocity between border guards and traders becomes a routine exercise. In extreme cases, rents extracted from local checkpoint networks are siphoned to higher authorities, and even go to the ruling parties in some regimes.

Brokering practices and checkpoint politics

Given the large variety of informal networks and brokering practices, the question arises: What mechanisms are governing transnational shadow exchanges? Our inquiry suggests that different brokering practices are shaped by forms of mobility, types of borders, local political economies, and checkpoint politics. In particular, we compare the commonalities and peculiarities in the institutional setup and regulatory mechanism of checkpoints in different regions, analyse the strategic interactions between the state and non-state actors during their negotiation on selective passage, and explore the key role played by checkpoints in shaping the brokering practices and the coordination of transnational informal exchanges.

The border checkpoint is a political institution common to most nation-states. It is the prime establishment responsible for regulating trans-boundary movements. However, unlike other state institutions, border

checkpoints have received little scholarly attention. This is surprising given the expansion of research on borders in recent years. While many observers have recognised the complexity and dynamism of borders, few have looked at the instrumental role played by checkpoints in shaping border dynamics.

By checkpoint politics we refer to the material and power exchanges among state and non-state actors in negotiating the selective permeability of borders through state-controlled gateways. Put differently, a checkpoint is where state power meets the informal economy. Brokers rely on colluding state gatekeepers for preferential passage and information on border control. In return, gatekeeping officials count on brokers for the coordination of movements through the checkpoints in an orderly manner. It is a delicate symbiotic relationship, characterized by periodic tensions and conflicts.

The negotiation of passage is thus a key activity of checkpoint politics. It is predicated upon skilful manipulation of precarity in terms of space, time, and agency. Skilled traders and brokers alter their paths of movement in response to frequent changes in the control routines, customs fees, import/export bans, or crackdowns at various points of border entry. In addition, they synthesize and synchronize different junctional dates, timetables and schedules, including timetables of trains and shipments, rosters and work shifts of border guards, the rhythmic flow of people and goods, predicted moments of official crackdowns on smuggling and suitcase trade, and so on. Synthesizing the disjunctive information and assessing the potentiality of risk will enable experienced brokers to navigate their border passage successfully.

Besides timing and location, the organisation of brokerage also forms part and parcel of the strategic negotiation. Brokers adapt their activities and movements to circumvent possible blockage at checkpoints. One typical example is the dispersion of traders in the form of suitcase couriers. Goods are split into small quantities before the checkpoint, and then re-assembled after individual couriers carry them through customs. In contrast, smugglers of illegal goods such as hard drugs will avoid checkpoints altogether.

Contributions to this Focus

The first four essays in this Focus concentrate on connectivity in Central Asia and Eurasia. Olga Adams presents a historical overview of the emergence of Central Asia – a place where the idea of national borders came late as an artificial management of spatiality. The contradictory interests in the construction of supra-national and state-specific development goals have made the newly established Eurasian Economic Union difficult to respond to OBOR strategy as well as cross-border shadow trades. This is followed by an analysis by Ivan Zuenko, who describes how traders manipulate different border checkpoints between China and the Eurasian Economic Union to their own advantage through informal practices. This

has resulted in a peculiar co-existence of cooperationism and protectionism within the Union, which allows traders and local officials to monetize their access in the form of 'administrative rent'. In the next essay, Hasan Karrar discusses the nature of bazaars in Central Asia. The proliferation of the bazaar economy is predicated upon the mobility of merchants, merchandise, and capital across international borders. Karrar reminds us that during this globalization from below, bazaars form a pivotal point in constructing trading networks, maintaining elite ownership in rent-generating marketplaces, and revealing the trajectories of global capital flows. In a similar vein, Alessandro Rippa reflects on the idea of the 'market' in his study of the trans-Karakoram trade. In contrast to the reified concept of the market under neoliberalism, the actual market is constructed through repeated encounters among traders, border guards, and government officials. Echoing the concern about contending connectivities, Rippa's research seeks to explore how processes of state expansion, incorporation, and consolidation can occur in a transnational context in which illegal, illicit, or informal practices are at the same time sanctioned and protected locally.

The next three essays explore the nature of informal networks and their relations to checkpoint politics. Eva Hung compares the shuttle trades in southern and north-western China. She discovers major variations in the way checkpoint control is exercised. Such variations in turn lead to the different organizations of shuttle trade in Shenzhen and Khorgos, which Hung distinguishes as 'organized informality' and 'institutionalized informality' respectively. In her case study of the Cambodia-Vietnam borderland, Sango Mahanty underlines the similarities as well as differences in the organization of illicit transactions for two commodities: cassava and timber. She shows that shadow exchanges are actively facilitated by state actors, including local authorities, the military, and state-connected elites. While performing a regulatory role, checkpoint staff receive routine payments from traders, which are then distributed to various stakeholders through established mechanisms and practices. Extending the focus to trans-continental connections, Heidi Haugen talks about her group project in studying the role of entrepreneurial brokers who navigate between formal and informal institutions across China and Africa. In particular, she finds that informal export to Africa is intimately linked to formalized trade from China to other parts of the world.

Finally, the essay by Samuel Berthet takes us back in history to look at the roots of transnational connectivity. In his case study of the Northern Bay of Bengal, he finds the place to be a multi-centered space where multiple negotiations and intermediations took place. In the centuries-long history of trade and exchanges, the networks, waterways, and paths had to be renegotiated every year. In his words, the various cycles shaping the

Below: Market in Kashgar, Xinjiang, West China. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license, courtesy of ChiralJon on Flickr.

topography, local transport technologies, and changes in the political economy underline the co-substantiality of early modern, modern, and contemporary history in a non-linear and non-sequential manner.

Research activities

A series of activities, including workshops, conference panels, and joint publications have been organized to explore different issues relating to the research theme. They have taken (or will take) place in different parts of the world, including:

- First international workshop 'Cross-border Exchanges and the Shadow Economy', Leiden, 14-15 December 2015
- Conference panel on 'Politics of Gateway: Borderland Politics Beyond the Checkpoints', Asian Borderlands Research Network Conference on Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities and Flows, Kathmandu, 12-14 December 2016
- Second international workshop 'Shadow Silk Road: Non-state Flow of Commodity, Capital, and People across Asia and Eurasia', Hong Kong, 25-26 May 2017
- Conference panel on 'Moral Economies of Charity and New Entrepreneurialism in the Borderlands', Asian Borderlands Research Network Conference on Borderlands Spaces: Ruins, Revivals and Resources, Bishkek, 13-15 August 2018
- Conference panel on 'Border Security and Bordering Practices: De-bordering, Re-bordering, and Co-bordering', Conference on Global Asia in Interdisciplinary Perspectives: Sustainability, Security, and Governance, Singapore, 16th- 17th November 2018
- Third and forthcoming international workshop 'In the Shadow of the New Silk Road', to be held during the 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 11), Leiden, 16-19 July 2019

During the forthcoming workshop at ICAS 11, four consecutive panels will take place on 18 July while an expert meeting involving business leaders, diplomats, and other practitioners will take place in the morning of 19 July 2019. The workshop will be organized under the title 'In the Shadow of the New Silk Road'. It will address the issues of securing trade routes, regulating transnational exchanges, and institutionalizing grey governance for shadow activities.

Some initial findings can be found in Tak-Wing Ngo and Eva P.W. Hung (eds) 2019. Special issue on 'Checkpoint Politics in Cross-border Exchanges', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(2). Further findings will be published in Eva P.W. Hung and Tak-Wing Ngo (eds) *Shadow Economies across the New Silk Road*, Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming; and Eva P.W. Hung and Tak-Wing Ngo. *The Shadow Economy in Greater China*, Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming.

Tak-Wing Ngo University of Macau, twngo@um.edu.mo



Central Asia: borders, peoples and connections

Olga Adams



Below: Big Almaty Lake, Kazakhstan. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license, courtesy of Martin de Lusenet on Flickr.

Central Asia is, in sum, a multi-everything region. Multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, certainly multi-cultural. Almost any interaction here for centuries has been inter-cultural, inter-civilizational even. Ethnically and culturally diverse, it has for centuries practiced what today is termed ‘intercultural communication’, if not always willingly. Here nomadic and settled (oasis) cultural types communicated, cooperated and clashed. ‘Temporality’ and ‘spatiality’ as analytical concepts are now actively introduced into traditional International Relations theories. However, surprisingly, they are not new for Central Asia. The nexus of two above-mentioned major cultural types has been providing the backdrop for development of this vast area for thousands of years, and temporality and spatiality were the basic principles upon which development there was based.

Considering this and the longtime overall position on the sidelines of global international system, artificial separating of space has not been in great demand in Central Asia. The interconnectivity, cooperation, mutual accommodation and frequent flare-ups were all played out in an area where the concept of borders – artificial managing of spatiality – was a late arrival, introduced by external and often hostile forces. Resources crucial for survival – fresh water, fertile soil and abundant grasslands – were in inconsistent supply. The two socio-cultural organizations reacted differently – nomads explored the vast expanses of the steppe, including the high-altitude meadows that eventually became integral parts of seasonal destinations for some nomadic tribes (Dhungar, Kazakh, Kyrgyz). The ‘oasis mentality’ urged people to stay put and find ways to accommodate if not assimilate newcomers, acclimating to ethnic diversity and, over time, developing elaborate ways to stockpile against hard times. The Emirate of Bukhara, the Khanate of Khiva – flourishing theocracies – developed versatile cities, science and literature. Nomadic societies – ‘non-sedentary polities’, which were more limited in their economic development since they were dependent on biologically restricted means, i.e., their livestock – experimented with more fluid social structures, a more precise configuration of which is still a subject of debate among specialists, especially with new archeological discoveries that present evidence of much more elaborate forms of economic and social relationships that previously thought.

The fabled Silk Road traversed thousands of miles over inhospitable terrain from one populated settled area to another, passing thousands of kilometers (or miles) of steppe or desert with travelers hoping for a respite and recharge at yet another stop where they might have to navigate yet another set of customs utilizing all their practical diplomacy skills. This approach is now undergoing a revival with *Eurasianism* as its philosophical core. While it refers to the original trade route’s experiences in connecting diverse locations and peoples, its modern version has to deal with a multitude of new issues.

Spatial and temporal characteristics of Central Asian life were interrupted in the

modern times with introducing the concept of formal borders. ‘The Great Game’ of the 19th century, waged between the Russian and British empires, brought outside interests – and accompanying military forces – to Central Asia. Suddenly, things that previously mattered little – like formally defined borders – were introduced. This spatial separation was further reinforced by the Russian empire’s expansion into Kazakh steppes and establishment of farming outposts. “For the first time in the history of Central Asia, a sedentary farming civilization pushed into the realm of nomadic culture [in Kazakhstan] and expanded into another farming culture’s realm – in Tashkent and Ferghana oases”.¹

In the early 20th century, newcomers’ presence became formalized with the establishment of a new sociopolitical construction – the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics – that once again brought major changes to the region’s differing lifestyles. Centuries-old economic and cultural relationships were propelled into the realm of impersonal and detached from tradition (at least in theory) social connections of a new type. Together with uniting and leveling off the cultural differences the Soviet period disrupted intraregional spatial features. The new republics’ borders – even though they were more of symbolic (‘administrative’) nature – cut through established communities and patterns of exchange. For over 70 years there have been three actors in any cross-border exchange – two (or more) local participants and ‘the Union’s center’ serving as a middleman and arbiter. Sometimes this framework functioned reasonably smoothly, if only at keeping problems under control rather than looking for sustainable solutions (i.e., the Ferghana Valley at the junction of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), but oftentimes decisions were made without paying much attention to ‘local conditions’. This created issues that would come to the fore after the fall of the Soviet Union, and independent republics as actors in the new supra-regional system of international relations would have to start looking for solutions. The Aral Sea ecological disaster provides one example.

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was another traumatic event. The accumulated experience and adjustments made for

‘Soviet’ conditions became irrelevant, and re-establishing communications between neighbors – now newly independent – proved to be a formidable challenge. With economic woes, nationalist and xenophobic flare-ups threatening to engulf the whole area in armed conflict, one of the solutions suggested by Kazakhstan’s first President Nazarbayev in the mid-1990s was the *Eurasian theory*. It was first developed in the early 20th century by an eclectic group of thinkers who explored the links between geographic conditions, ethnic composition and cultural patterns. The doctrine remains contested, and nowadays is prone to political manipulation. However, Mr Nazarbayev proposed it as a platform for “cooperation of the equal partners to reach the shared goals of economic prosperity” within the region. The perceived attempts by Russia – a participant in the Eurasian Economic Union, and seen by many as its ‘anchor’ – to widen the agenda to include issues ‘adjacent’ to purely economic tasks, are treated with suspicion, and at times like this dialogue slows down.

The Eurasian approach is not ideal, but it has been instrumental for tentatively addressing supra-national and state-specific development goals. Successful communication across borders remains crucially important in present-day Central Asia. It is illustrated by the fact that Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a Department of All-Asia Cooperation and a Department of Eurasian Integration. Many a transborder issue in Central Asia has multiple actors and contradicting interests at play, as illustrated by the demarcation of the Caspian Sea borders (tentative agreement reached in 2018 after 26 years of negotiations), so finding a way to balance them is crucially important. This balance is bound to increase in importance as the ‘One Belt-One Road’ strategy is beginning to advance. An unencumbered and transparent flow of goods lauded as a hallmark of the OBOR approach depends a lot on Central Asian inter-state cooperation in building cordial enough relations and the necessary infrastructure for that flow, and addressing the ‘shadowy’ issues of cross-border exchanges. The Republic of Kazakhstan’s Military Doctrine points out “the potential for conflicts in Central Asia due to variety of factors: instability in Afghanistan, tense socio-political situation in the region, unresolved border and water-sharing issues,

economic, religious and other contradictions with the mechanisms for their rectifying still lacking. Drug trafficking and illegal migration have gained transnational character”.

A few recent examples – such as closing down Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan border crossing points for a few weeks in the fall of 2018 or continuing tensions on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border (portions of which remain riddled with land mines) – illustrate the difficulties in finding common ground. According to ‘The Diplomat’, “the regional integration promised by the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) – Nazarbayev’s idea in the first place – is discredited by the perception that relationships between its Central Asian members can turn on a dime”. The Law on ‘State Borders of the Republic of Kazakhstan’ – one of the first ones promulgated in the early days of independence – states that “establishing and maintaining relations with neighboring states, regulating the activities in border areas (including related to water resources) and in the international transborder logistics areas within Kazakhstan’s territory is governed by the security goals of the Republic of Kazakhstan and international security, mutually beneficial all-round cooperation with neighboring states, principles of peaceful, non-violent resolution of border issues”. Four other Central Asian states have something similar in their codes of law. The legal foundation is here, but opening and maintaining a dialogue on cross-border issues requires visionaries, indeed. Considering that, besides their function as formal ‘dividers’, borders may very well be lines that separate what is different, but not incompatible, this task – shared by the whole community of Central Asian states – is bound to increase in importance.

Olga Adams
Moscow State University,
oyadams_98@yahoo.com

Notes

- 1 Bogaturov, A. (ed.) 2011. *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya v Tsentral'noi Azii: Sobytiya I Documenty* [International Relations in Central Asia: Events and Documents], p.28. Moskva: Aspekt Press

Eurasian integration at borders between China and post-Soviet countries

Ivan Zuenko

At our current stage of world history where the dominant trend is towards global economic development, we see the paradoxical coexistence of two divisive tendencies: first, further international cooperation and integration, and second, anti-globalism and protectionism. This state of affairs bears particular significance for post-Soviet countries, on the one hand motivated to recover their Soviet-period economic ties through the use of common infrastructure, while at the same time actively engaged in the development of their respective national identities and anti-colonialism discourse. Despite the popularity of this discourse amongst politics and intellectuals, ideas of multinational integration still dictate foreign policy in most post-Soviet countries, even towards those who are still regarded in public opinion as a threat, such as China. Moreover, governments in post-Soviet countries conduct concrete integrative measures, including forming of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Therefore, a complicated picture emerges of cross-border activities (both formal and informal) that is yet to be fully explored.

At our current stage of world history where the dominant trend is towards global economic development, we see the paradoxical coexistence of two divisive tendencies: first, further international cooperation and integration, and second, anti-globalism and protectionism. This state of affairs bears particular significance for post-Soviet countries, on the one hand motivated to recover their Soviet-period economic ties through the use of common infrastructure, while at the same time actively engaged in the development of their respective national identities and anti-colonialism discourse. Despite the popularity of this discourse amongst politics and intellectuals, ideas of multinational integration still dictate foreign policy in most post-Soviet countries, even towards those who are still regarded in public opinion as a threat, such as China. Moreover, governments in post-Soviet countries conduct concrete integrative measures, including forming of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Therefore, a complicated picture emerges of cross-border activities (both formal and informal) that is yet to be fully explored.

The 'birth' of a new border

Integration processes really do change the dynamics and characteristics of cross-border activities. A good example can be witnessed in the case of the border between China and EAEU. The Union was founded in 2015 on the basis of a previously existing structure – the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, with enlargement by adding Kyrgyzstan and Armenia the same year. It formed a 7000-km border between China and three EAEU countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), which at the same time became the border between just two custom spaces. There are no customs between EAEU members, and the cargo from China shipped into EAEU via any checkpoint on the border can be transited to the Russian or the European market without any customs procedures in EAEU territory. However, because the EAEU does not possess a singular customs body, the customs clearance is conducted by different customs services of individual EAEU-member

states. This coexists with the fact that conditions of economic and institutional development of, for example, Russia and Kyrgyzstan are very different as well.

This has created a situation for shippers of Chinese cargos where they can choose the route for shipment (via Western China and Kazakhstan or via the Sino-Russian border and then via Trans-Siberian Railway), as well as to 'choose' a customs service: Russian or Central Asian (Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani). Of course, they choose the more profitable and easy way. In such conditions, EAEU Central Asia became a key corridor for transcontinental traffic, because of its geographical location and its commitment to developing logistical infrastructure. As a result, the amount of transit traffic from Asia to Europe, via Kazakhstan, has already exceeded analogous traffic via the Russian Far East. A similar trend has emerged with regard to Chinese goods for the Russian market. Previous preference for Chinese goods to move via the borders of Eastern Russia, has now seen the preferential border checkpoints moving to the west, on the border between China and Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan. Some commodities are officially intended to be sold at the local markets despite the fact that, according to the statistics, an increase of imports from China to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan surpass its needs. For example, the current volume of imports of Chinese clothing and footwear to two Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), with a total population of 23.5 million people, are close to the figures for imports to Russia with a population of 146 million people.

Shadow Silk Road

How does this happen? Central Asia's increasing connectedness and its rising role in transiting Asian goods to European markets seems to be regarded as an example of how the 'New Silk Road' linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative works. However, analysis of customs statistics of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan shows that there are critical divergences, so that one of the main (or maybe even the most important) reasons for cargo shippers to choose Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan instead of Russia is increasing possibilities



Billboard in Chinese characters near Nizhneleninskoe, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Russia: 'Buying Soya Beans' (photo by Ivan Zuenko).

for implementing various illegal, semi-legal, or informal schemes. (In Russian, which is a lingua franca for all EAEU countries, they are called 'black' or 'grey schemes'). It became possible due to the weak political institutions in Central Asia and specific conjugation of circumstances, according to which Central Asian countries received a flow of goods much bigger than they could expect judging by local economic development.

What kind of shadow practices can be witnessed on this 'new border'? In the case of 'black schemes', we speak about smuggling when commodities enter the country without customs clearance or paying fees, and when customs service officers accept bribes for turning a blind eye. In the case of 'grey schemes', the most wide-spread practice is when commodities with a high tax ratio (for example, clothing, footwear and leather goods) are cleared as cheap commodities. Cargo shippers cut their expenses and officials receive kickbacks, whilst the national budget suffers a loss.

There are also a vast quantity of various informal practices of moving cargo across the border, which help cargo shippers to avoid paying custom duties. These practices are common amongst so-called 'shuttle traders' and people who are hired to move the commercial cargo across the border under the pretense of their personal belongings. These people are called *pomogai* [helpers] or *kemely* (from English 'camels') or *kirpichi* [bricks], across the various parts of the border between Russian-speaking post-Soviet countries and China. The participation of officials in these practices is indefensible, albeit minimal due to the lack of leverage of officials when (and if) formally, no law is broken. *Pomogai* business is based on the practice of shuttle trade, where people living on the borderlands routinely travel to the nearest foreign town to buy cheaper things for themselves, which the state cannot ban. We can see it in the case of the free trade zone Horgos, presently the most successful hub for shuttle trade using these informal practices on the EAEU-China border. It lies on the Sino-Kazakhstani border, and gives visitors from both countries visa-free access to duty-free shops.

Of course, all these schemes did not suddenly appear when the EAEU was formed; they were pre-existing. But the Eurasian integration into the framework of the Union created conditions in which these shadow practices began to flourish in the EAEU countries with a common border with China.

How cooperationism can coexist with protectionism

The main beneficiaries of these practices are shippers and local officials who monetize their access to the 'administrative rent'. And these benefits clearly are the result of the Eurasian integration. But locals are against the idea of further multinational integration and cooperation. Take the case of Horgos, for example; local people engaged in the

shuttle trade business would not be happy with further Chinese integration, or the liberalization of cross-border procedures. Their practices would become redundant and they would lose their livelihoods. Progressing even further down the path of inter-state integration and cross-border liberalization could lead to border officials losing their advantage of influential status, and thus losing their 'administrative rent'. In other words, an official in Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan understands that the integration of his country into the EAEU is good for him, because the flow of Chinese commodities for the lucrative Russian market is now passing through his office, and he gains an opportunity to obtain both legal and illegal incomes; but at the same time he understands that the removal of the border, customs clearance, and other points of state regulation will make him unnecessary and he will no longer accrue any income.

This dualism of interests makes the position of the states in post-Soviet Central Asia double-edged; on the one hand they support integration within the framework of the EAEU, and welcome the efforts of China to promote integration within the Belt and Road Initiative. On the other hand, their practical measures can be contrary and even clearly protectionist. It is particularly the case with regard to China, which, being much more populated and economically developed than most post-Soviet countries, is generally regarded as a 'threat'. This conclusion can easily be made upon analysis of the media and fieldwork materials.

This duality can also be seen in cross-border 'infrastructure' built by Russia at 'hotspots' of Sino-Russian regional cooperation; for example, at the Pogranichny–Suifenhe economic cooperation zone in Primorsky Krai, and on Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island (an island near Khabarovsk shared between Russia and China). In Pogranichny, where the Chinese have constructed a large-scale shopping center and a 354-room hotel, local Russian authorities built an Orthodox Christian chapel commemorating St George the Victorious, patron saint of the Russian Army and a symbol of struggle against pagans. On Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island there is a chapel dedicated to St Victor of Damascus, a homage to all Russian soldiers killed while defending far-eastern borders. These chapels are the first structures that Chinese partners can see entering Russia territory. The choice of patron saints is not arbitrary, and it sends a clear message to all those involved in cross-border activities: cooperation is limited, and maintaining the status quo is the most desired result of this cooperation, at least for Russia and other post-Soviet countries. This is a status quo that allows senior authorities to benefit from the integration agenda, shadow practices to flourish, and ordinary people to feel safe from Chinese economic and demographic expansion.

Ivan Zuenko
Russian Academy of Sciences,
zuenko@ihaeffe.ru

Bazaars at crossroads

What they reveal about informality, globalization and capital mobility

Hasan H. Karrar



Kara-Suu bazaar, southern Kyrgyzstan
(Photo by author).

Bazaars were once considered particular to so-called traditional societies, especially in Asia, and were expected to transition to modern markets as national economies developed. But despite steady economic growth in the latter half of the twentieth century, bazaars have continued to proliferate. That they continue to do so makes them uniquely suited to study state-society dynamics. My fieldwork in Central Asia—and the Karakoram high mountain region of north Pakistan—illustrates how bazaars reveal informal relations in the commercial realm, elite ownership of rent-generating marketplaces, and horizontal networks between traders. Bazaars also offer a window into globalization; besides who and what moves, how borders are negotiated by traders nuance our understanding of transnationalism. Finally, bazaars offer unique perspectives on how global and regional political economies manifest at the grassroots level.

Geographic crossroads

The onset of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the mid-nineteenth century, popularly known as the Great Game, brought a stream of Europeans to Central Asia: as envoys and spies, cartographers and explorers, artifact-seekers and adventurers. While ‘Central Asia’ was then a shifting category—variously encompassing regions that today fall within Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—Central Asia was seen as a geographic crossroads linking West Asia and Russia on the one hand, and the Qing and British Indian Empire, on the other. Many European sojourners left detailed accounts of their travels through the region. A central feature of their accounts was the bazaar, which was both a ubiquitous public space, and accessible to visitors (some of whom only had a faint understanding of the communities they were visiting). Unsurprisingly, in these writings, the bazaar was a place of curiosity, and uniquely characteristic of local, Asian societies.

By the middle of the twentieth century, however, the Asian bazaar had lost most of its earlier exotic appeal. This was specifically the case in Central Asia, which saw the imposition of Chinese and Soviet command economies; socialist ideologies sought to modernize so-called backward and localized means of production. More generally still, across Asia, the bazaar was a remnant of what Western social sciences were describing as traditional societies. In part, the reasons were geopolitical. They stemmed from the end of the Second World War, and the European impetus to decolonize, in no small part resulting from US impatience with lingering colonial rule in Asia.

But here too there was an ideological framing under the rubric of modernization theory. Modernization theory categorized bazaars as places of unregulated, personalized exchanges. (This view of the bazaar was not dissimilar to how bazaars had been viewed by nineteenth century travelers). Following

decolonization, it was assumed that with the development of national economies, bazaars would be replaced by the modern market. Unlike bazaars, markets were purportedly rational institutions: prices were fixed, information circulated evenly, interpersonal relations between seller and buyer were inconsequential. Following a linear Rostovian model, anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously envisioned the bazaar-to-market transition following the arc of national economic development in Asia.¹ This was the bazaar at another crossroad: it was a holdover from traditional economies, assumed to transition to its modern form, the market, as national economies grew.

But this was not the case. On the contrary, beginning in the 1980s, bazaars proliferated: in China, in Central and South Asia, and generally, across the continent even as national economies diversified and grew. The growth of bazaars mirrored population growth and growing national economies. While there was a rise of a formal market in each of these regions—regulated capital flows adhering to state regulation—these did not preclude the proliferation of bazaars. My research in Central Asia, China and the Karakoram mountains of north Pakistan, demonstrates how bazaars are informal spaces yet uniquely globalized, and how they offer insights into twenty-first century capital flows. While my field research has traced commercial network and connectivity infrastructure from China’s Xinjiang region into Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, my conclusions should corroborate similar processes unfolding elsewhere in Asia.

Informality

Bazaar trade is informal for three reasons. First, even though the trade is licit, it is largely unaccounted in state bookkeeping. In the bazaars I study, most of the merchandise is Chinese-made apparel or light-manufactured items for household or office use (in Central

Asia, Turkey is a distant-second country of origin).² But while bazaar trade contributes substantially to the national economy—in Kyrgyzstan, the undocumented bazaar economy may actually be larger than the documented economy—it remains outside national statistics. Second, these bazaars are informal institutions because of elite control. This control enables rent to be siphoned to an entrenched elite or bureaucracy for whom steady revenue consolidates their authority. Hence the bazaar is an informal rent-generating institution tailored to benefit a small stratum within society. Third, the bazaar is informal in how it consolidates horizontal networks, such as between sellers who might be from the same clan, laborers from the same village, buyers and sellers who build a relationship over time.³

This informality—undocumented exchanges, elite control over sectors of the economy, horizontal networks—can be traced to the 1980s, a pivotal decade in China and the Soviet Union. “To get rich is glorious”, Deng Xiaoping’s axiomatic phrase was true not only for reform-era China, but the Soviet Union under perestroika, too. In this new economy, hard currency was the medium of exchange, in what Gordon Mathews poignantly described as “a world of cash”.⁴ By the 1990s, the regional elite were creating niches in the new economic landscape: as patrons of the new markets in Central Asia; as transporters and logisticians in Xinjiang; and as service providers along Karakoram villages. While a shadow economy in the form of a black market had previously existed, the new profit-making ethos opened spaces for individual traders; beginning in the late 1980s, Chinese (both Han and Uyghur), Kyrgyz, Kazakh, as well as Pakistani and Russian traders enjoyed opportunities for trade. Trading groups were organized around kin or clan networks; in 1990s Central Asia, the same informal networks served as a safety mechanism during precarious economic times. While the proliferation of a bazaar economy was only one part of the complex macroeconomic changes in Central Asia (currency reform, FDI, SOE reform, privatization, trade liberalization), it was undergirded by informal relations.

Globalization

In its most basic form, the Central Asian bazaar economy rested on the ability of merchants, merchandise and capital to move across international borders. Consider Dordoi bazaar in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Dordoi is the second largest wholesale bazaar in Central Asia with about 20,000 outlets. An estimated 60,000 people are said to work in Dordoi. In data tabulated from 200 open-ended interviews with bazaar traders in 2013, I learned that more than a quarter of the people had traveled outside of Kyrgyzstan

for business (almost all of them to China). Additionally, 77% of the merchandise was of Chinese origin. Although traders are usually reluctant to talk about money, payments traveled in the opposite direction. Information flowed readily too. I have spoken with scores of traders who make an effort to keep up with the latest fashion trends, whether through the Internet or by paying attention to ‘top shelf’ items at destinations like Istanbul. The bazaars I study are buyers’ markets; shoppers survey the market before making their purchase. Clearly, the Geertz framework of the bazaar representing localized exchanges was not applicable for Central Asia’s large bazaars. Finally, it is worth underscoring that the sellers are independent traders. Typically, in the Central Asian bazaar each outlet represents a stand-alone business, notwithstanding the fact it may enjoy the support of informal kin or clan networks.

The mobilities I describe were not unrestricted; conversations with traders reveal how recurrent border closures and new tariff regimes actually are. Both affect traders’ bottom line. The ‘grassroots globalization’ (or ‘globalization from below’) in trader mobility rested on the ability of traders to negotiate border checkpoints. Often, the circulation of goods and the movement of cash was seemingly in violation of state regulations; simultaneously, it can also be considered a negotiation of border checkpoints, that were cognisant of how authority was localized in particular chokepoints, and how it could be negotiated. This then was not a borderless world, but one where individuals required knowledge of how to negotiate state regulation.⁵

Capital mobility

Finally, besides what they reveal about informality and globalization, bazaars illustrate trajectories of global capital flows. Consider Afiyatabad, a non-descript border market in Pakistan’s Karakoram mountains. The Karakoram Highway runs through Afiyatabad, and 75 kilometers later it joins the Chinese road network at the Pakistan-China border. After 2013, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was mapped onto the Karakoram Highway, which subsequently became one of six economic corridors under the Belt and Road Initiative, and its flagship project.

While the volume of cargo from China passing through Afiyatabad has increased sharply since 2015—container trucks barrel through the bazaar all day—traders complain they are worse off now. The reason: a new border regime clamping down on local cross-border peddling, which had previously sustained commerce in the small bazaar and injected small volumes of cash into local household economies. Standing in Afiyatabad amidst closed shops as containers roll past, the bazaar suggests that the Belt and Road Initiative moves investment capital between increasing distant locales—or ‘pivot cities’, in China’s policy lexicon—thus transforming bordering for communities for whom cross-border mobility was essential. Hence, what is promised as benefit-for-all or win-win in Belt and Road globalizing narratives ends up bypassing the very people on the frontlines of the new geographies of connectivity.

Hasan H. Karrar

Lahore University of Management
Sciences, hkarrar@lums.edu.pk

Notes

- 1 C. Geertz. 1963. *Peddlers and Princes: Social Development and Economic Change in Two Indonesian Towns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 2 H.H. Karrar. 2017. ‘Kyrgyzstan’s Dordoi and Kara-Suu Bazaars: Mobility, Globalization and Survival in Two Central Asian Markets’, *Globalizations* 14(4):643-657.
- 3 H.H. Karrar. 2019. ‘Between Border and Bazaar: Central Asia’s Informal Economy’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(2).
- 4 G. Mathews. 2011. *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 5 Ngo, T-W. & Hung, E. 2019. ‘The Political Economy of Border Checkpoints in Shadow Exchanges’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(2).

Cross-border trade and the 'market' along the Karakoram Highway

Alessandro Rippa



Below: Pakistani traders at a bazaar in Kashgar (Rippa 2013).

Pakistani traders in China's Xinjiang often carry trading goods on the daily bus between Tashkurgan (China) and Sost (Pakistan). Far from informal, this form of un-taxed suitcase trade is rooted in trans-national networks of traders, relations with border guards, and a profound understanding of the rules governing 'the market' in this context. But what is this 'market' to which small-scale Pakistani traders often refer to? I argue that for Pakistani traders in China the market is neither simply based on trust, social relations and the continuous flow of information, nor does it correspond to the global, culture-free market economy. Those two models do not exist in separation, but rather both contribute to the construction of an idea of market that is inevitably trans-local and transnational, but that is also rooted in a set of relations that must be continuously performed on the two sides of the border. I contend that this approach is analytically more useful in the analysis of small-scale cross-border trade than any attempt to individuate different topologies of trade, or any analytical framework that revolves around notions of formality and informality.

The big mosque: small-scale Pakistani traders in Kashgar

It was Ali who introduced me to the big mosque, shortly after he arrived in Kashgar for the second time late in the summer of 2012. The big mosque was the nickname that Ali and a few of his fellow traders from Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan's northernmost region, had given to the Sahar Hotel. The Sahar was a cheap hotel in a central part of Kashgar, Xinjiang, where many Pakistani traders – mostly Pashtun and Punjabi from 'down country' – stay. "You see, they always wear their shalwar kameez, always pray", Ali told me as we walked into the hotel. "There's even a prayer room in the hotel, it's like being in Pakistan".

The Sahar hotel was, indeed, quite an interesting discovery for me, and became a frequent destination for my daily strolls through Kashgar during the following months of fieldwork. Several rooms of the hotel were permanently occupied by import-export companies advertising fast and secure shipment of goods between Pakistan and China, either via the Karakoram Highway or via sea, through Karachi and Guangzhou or Shanghai. As we sat in his room, Ali walked me through the different steps involved in his business. In the following days, and over his next visits to Kashgar and a couple of meetings in Rawalpindi, I witnessed first-hand the complex network of contacts, commodities, logistics and technologies that Ali makes use of in the course of his many ongoing transactions.

On a normal day in Kashgar, Ali would visit at least one of the city's bazaars – or as he put it, "check the market". There he would visit clients who still owed him money from previous deals as well as fellow traders and shopkeepers to see if there was anything they might need. He would note down current prices and ask about new products that were selling well, and that he could find cheaper in Pakistan. All along, he would remain in

contact with partners, suppliers and clients from both China and Pakistan through his mobile phone. While in 2012 he used Skype, Viber, Facebook and WeChat with a similar frequency, already by 2013 most of his business transactions were carried out exclusively via WeChat. Through it, Ali could send pictures and videos of particular commodities to his suppliers in Pakistan or show them to potential clients in Kashgar's shops.

Back in Pakistan, Ali repeated many of these operations, travelling time and again from his hometown to Gilgit, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Quetta, with occasional visits to Karachi. As is often the case with transnational merchant communities,¹ traders such as Ali operate within a larger network of contacts stretching across multiple locations. As I came to realise when walking Kashgar's bazaars with Ali, or sitting in traders' shops for long afternoons, as well as through days across markets and fairs in Gilgit, Urumqi, and Rawalpindi, this network was far from stable. Not only because players, commodities, regulations and technologies that constitute this network changed relentlessly, but also because the relations between these different actors were in constant evolution. 'The market', as I came to understand it, was always taking different shapes.

Shadow economy, infrastructure, and checkpoint politics

It is an established anthropological argument that patterns of exchange, by establishing and reinforcing relationships between different actors, are also generative of particular communities and of the boundaries between them.² Traders along the Karakoram Highway thus make it their business to keep themselves well-informed: from season to season they follow the fluctuations of the prices of goods in the

bazaars of Kashgar and Rawalpindi. They are always quick to relay news to their friends through Skype or WeChat, and good relations with local officials ensure that they get wind of any new regulation that might soon be implemented. These particularly unstable relations, between traders, commodities, and the regulatory landscape through which they operate, are defining elements of the lives of traders along the Karakoram Highway that I described through the local notion of 'the market' in a Special Issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, based on an IAS workshop held in Leiden in December 2015. This 'market', I have argued, is productive of social as well as spatial relationships, and conducive to various forms of mobilities. Let me now quickly explore some of the literature upon which the article was based.

Inquiries into illicit economies have often looked at borderlands as prominent spaces of lawlessness and shadowy exchanges. Abraham & van Schendel,³ in their seminal work on the subject, identify the borderlands as spaces where activities that are legally banned but socially accepted often take place. They term such activities 'licit' and as opposed to what states consider to be legitimate or 'legal'. Recent works on everyday life at the borderlands of China have indeed remarked on the fluidity of such categories in the context of cross-border exchanges.⁴ This literature emphasises how the state is often complicit in the emergence of particular shadow economies in trans-national contexts, partly through its investment in particular infrastructure through which such exchanges take place.

There is a vast and varied collection of literature that looks at infrastructure as technologies of state territorialisation, that is, the ways in which state power claims and extends control over its national space through a number of ordering practices and technologies. A powerful example, in the Chinese context, is Emily Yeh's work on the Tibet Autonomous Region in which she sees

development in the Chinese context as a form of territorialisation.⁵ Development here is both a material and embodied process; one that aims at the transformation of both the landscape – through infrastructure – and subjectivities.

The question that emerges for me against this background is, how do such processes of state expansion, incorporation, and consolidation, occur in a trans-national context in which illegal, illicit, or informal practices are locally sanctioned and protected?

These two approaches are seldom addressed together as they implicitly seem to point towards two opposite directions: one challenging state power, one making a case for its consolidation. Yet building on both debates, the recent Special Issue edited by Tak-Wing Ngo & Eva Hung reflected on the very material spaces in which state and non-state actors negotiate particular exchanges.⁶ In showing the limits of the concept of informality, contributions to the issue provided a number of case studies detailing the variety and complexity of shadow operations in a number of transnational contexts.

The market

My contribution centred on Ali's experience. Moving from his ability to navigate the so-called bazaar economy in Kashgar, to his lengthy experience in dealing with state actors in both China and Pakistan, I defined the notion of 'the market' as experienced by small-scale cross-border trade along the Karakoram Highway. For Ali and his fellow 'China traders' the market is not something that simply exists, something to which they relate to and engage with. Rather, it is something that traders continuously make and perform, through regular contacts and virtual relations. Rather than being understood as fixed and objective, categories and notions such as that of the market need to be analysed in their discursive historical developments as well as in their contextual and contingent interactions through ethnographic methods. In the context of the China-Pakistan border trade, the market is performed through repeated encounters between traders, border guards and government officials. Such performances cut through social groups and create legitimacy across a wide spectrum of actors. My argument is that this approach to the study of trans-Karakoram trade is more useful than an analysis centred on the notion of shadow economy or the conceptual pairs 'licit-illicit' and 'formal-informal'. While notions of informality or shadow economy mainly refer to the nature of the trade, such classifications risk overlooking the complex set of practices that underpin its existence. By moving from Ali's experience and his understanding of the market, the article brought such practices to the fore and thus accounted for the fluidity of the market and of the roles that different actors play in it.

Alessandro Rippa,
University of Colorado Boulder,
alessandro.rippa@colorado.edu

Notes

- 1 Marsden, M. 2015. *Trading Worlds: Afghan Merchants Across Modern Frontiers*. London: Hurst & Company.
- 2 Sahlin, M. 1972. *Stone age economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.
- 3 Abraham, I. & van Schendel, W. 2005. 'Introduction: The Making of Illicitness', in Schendel, W. & Abraham, I. (eds) *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Border, and the Other Side of Globalization*, pp.1-37. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 4 See, for example, Saxer, M. & Zhang, J. (eds) 2017. *The Art of Neighbouring: Making Relations Across China's Borders*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; Karrar, H. 2013. 'Merchants, Markets, and the State', *Critical Asian Studies* 45(3):459-480.
- 5 Yeh, E. 2013. *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 6 Ngo, T-W. & Hung, E. 2019. 'The Political Economy of Border Checkpoints in Shadow Exchanges', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(2).

Shuttle trade at China's borders

Eva P. W. HUNG



Shuttle trade is ubiquitous along state borders all over the world. Since the Chinese government has relaxed its border control to allow its citizens to travel to other countries relatively freely, hundreds and sometimes thousands of petty traders can be seen shuttling goods across the borders between mainland China and its neighbouring regions. While shuttle trade is generally conducted on a small scale by individual traders, mostly based on friendship or family networks, and hence characterized by informality, the entire chain of operation is effectively organized. We differentiate between shuttle trade in Southern versus North-western China: the former exhibits 'organized informality', the latter 'institutionalized informality', owing to the configuration of checkpoints.

Organized informality and shuttle trade in Southern China

On a bright sunny morning in March, a group of elderly gathered under the footbridge outside Fanling train station. Cartons of a variety of packaged foods piled up on the sidewalk: packs of ramen and kimchi, tins of cookies, bottled juices, and the like. A middle-aged woman was busy giving instructions on dispatching the goods. She helped one elderly man to stuff his backpack full, gave him a note and ordered him to go. Others chattered among themselves while waiting patiently for the woman's order to do the same. The woman's husband sat farther down the street, keeping an eye on the group's activities as well as the loads of cartons stored at the open space nearby. When he noticed that the cartons on the sidewalk were all emptied, he quickly unloaded more cartons from the open storage for the woman to distribute. The woman, meanwhile, made frequent phone calls to check on those who set off earlier. Upon receiving their messages, she ordered the others to stuff their trolleys and backpacks with various types of goods and one by one she sent them off. Almost two hours passed and the first elderly man came back. He rested for a while and packed his backpack for a second time. A day's work ended in the afternoon when all the goods had been dispatched. (March 2015, Hong Kong)

Everyday a colossal flow of people can be seen shuttling goods across the border from Hong Kong to Shenzhen, the special economic zone of China. At the height of 2014, the Shenzhen Customs estimated that

there were more than 20,000 shuttle traders crossing the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border daily. As a special administrative region, Hong Kong practises 'Two Systems', distinguishable from the 'One Country' of China in both political and economic arenas. What is often unheeded in this formula, however, is that the territory also maintains a different customs status from that of China. Hong Kong, as well as neighbouring Macao, is a free port. There is no customs tariff imposed on imported goods, and the Hong Kong government collects an excise duty on only a few items. Under the existing regulatory regime on the Hong Kong side, as long as the goods are not contraband, counterfeit items or taxable commodities such as petroleum, liquor, and cigarettes, traders are free to take any quantity across the border. On the China side, by contrast, incoming items are subject to duties and excise, unless they are meant for 'personal use and within a reasonable amount'. It is this provision that presents a grey area for the proliferation of shuttle trade. In principle, a whole container of goods can be split up and delivered by numerous carriers, each carrying an amount below the dutiable limit. A form of 'crowdsourced smuggling' thus results. While each individual transaction is isolated and based on loose connections, the entire chain of operations is indeed well co-ordinated in terms of sourcing, couriating, distribution, and so on. We characterize this complex form of shuttle trading as 'organized informality', which exhibits a combination of organizational competence and informal networks.

The field observation described above is but just one form of this organized informality, which does not involve 'trade' in the strict sense since there is no exchange of money in the selling and buying of goods. Instead,

Above: Shuttle traders lining up to cross the Khorgos checkpoint, China (Photo: Eva Hung)

it resembles an informal courier service engaging in logistics delivery. Goods are entrusted to the couriers to carry across the border. As such, personal networks based on trust must be deployed to manage the couriers to ensure that goods are delivered intact. However, when the courier operation is carried out on a large scale and involves syndicates, a closed personal network cannot provide the required number of couriers. An open network of recruitment becomes necessary. To deter couriers from going astray, their personal information is recorded. It is also widely believed that underground gangs are involved in this operation.

There are, however, also genuine shuttle traders – those who 'buy' the goods and 'sell' them across the border. The so-called 'milk ban' imposed by the Hong Kong government in 2013 to limit the quantity of infant formula carried by anyone leaving Hong Kong provides the opportunity for any border-crossers to act as occasional traders. Because of the continuing high demand in China, it is easy for the commuters to buy two cans of infant formula and immediately sell them once they cross the border, facilitated by the availability of 'buyers' ready to pay and collect the cans. The price difference neatly covers their transportation costs and other minor expenditures. On the other hand, the self-employed professional traders are people making a living out of the trade. They 'buy' from the shops located at the border towns and 'resell' at designated collection points across the border at specific prices. On the surface both the occasional and professional traders engage in trading, since there is an exchange of money in the process. In practice they are also 'couriers' playing an indispensable part in aiding the behind-the-scenes networks to circumvent checkpoint controls. While the traders are not organized by the networks, the operations are nonetheless highly organized. Similar emphasis on 'shuttling' rather than 'trading' can also be found in the organization of petty cross-border trade in North-western China.

Institutionalized informality and shuttle trade in North-western China

Close to the Chinese border of the Khorgos free trade zone, hundreds of Chinese shuttle traders – most of them lower class ethnic Kazakh minorities – gathered just across the street from the Chinese immigration and customs

checkpoint. Separated by a red ribbon line, they queued up along the border fence, carrying with them cartons of foods of foreign brands – noodles, pasta, biscuits, chocolate, and even frozen chips. Some had also with them small appliances. An elderly security guard was keeping the line in order. Every 15 minutes or so, he ordered a few at the front of the line to proceed. Once given the green light, they rushed across the street and quickly vanished into the checkpoint building. (August 2018, Khorgos)

The Khorgos free trade zone, located at the border between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, officially opened in 2012, has been hailed as a key link on the new Silk Road between China and Central Asia. It is designed as a visa-free zone – visitors from Kazakhstan have to pass through Kazakh border controls, while those from China pass through Chinese checkpoints at the edge of the Chinese area. The shops inside the zone are mostly operated by Chinese businessmen selling cheap Chinese products catering Kazakhstani shoppers. There are also duty-free shops of foreign products, catering mostly to the Chinese shoppers. According to regulations, visitors to the zone can purchase duty-free products up to 8,000 yuan (USD1,272) per day.

An informal shuttle trade in the form of 'crowdsourced smuggling', which aims to circumvent checkpoint controls and evade duties and excise imposed by the Chinese government, is similarly organized here. A young officer patrolling right outside the immigration building described the traders as 'human camels', which illustrates how the nature of the operation is more about shuttling than trading goods. Cartons of goods are distributed to the traders to carry across the checkpoint. However, in contrast to the case in Hong Kong where goods are usually dispatched and stuffed in backpacks or suitcases, traders in Khorgos carry a whole carton of goods by hand. Use of trolleys are explicitly prohibited. According to the officer, all the goods belong to one business, and the traders are mostly retirees or the unemployed residing in the adjacent city. For every trip they could earn about 60-70 yuan (USD10). "Hard-earned money", he said. Compared to the shuttle trade in Hong Kong, which exhibits a form of organized informality, the operation in Khorgos is not only organized but also institutionalized, as can be seen in the checkpoint arrangements.

Checkpoint politics

Because of the sheer number of people crossing the Hong Kong-Shenzhen border daily, border checking is largely impersonal. At the Hong Kong side, border checks are minimal, if not nominal; border guards mostly turn a blind eye to the traders unless they go too far. At the Chinese side, occasionally there are crackdowns on the trade and Customs officials are obliged to detain a certain number of couriers/traders to meet enforcement quotas. Even with insider information, the operating networks still need to deploy various strategies to tackle and get round this.

In contrast, the Chinese checkpoint in the Khorgos trade zone heavily regulates the shuttle trade, not by detaining the traders and confiscating the goods, but by making sure the trade is conducted in order and does not cause any disturbances to other visitors. First, the immigration checkpoint at the Chinese side separates the traders from the ordinary shoppers. The elderly security guard watching over the queue also works to control the flow across the checkpoint. Second, trolleys are prohibited to minimize any chaotic occurrences. And third, there is also the unofficial rule that traders are only allowed between 10:00 a.m. and 13:30 p.m. In fact starting from noon onwards there are much fewer traders and the queue becomes much shorter. Seen in this light, the border checkpoint indeed interplays with the traders to shape how the informal trade takes place.

Eva P. W. HUNG
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong,
evahung@hsu.edu.hk

Cassava and timber trade along the Cambodia-Vietnam border

Sango Mahanty

While cassava cultivation in Cambodia and Vietnam is keenly promoted by governments and donors, timber is usually illegally sourced and transported. When we calibrate commodities according to their legality, however, we can overlook similarities between frontier market networks. In this piece, I share some insights from my recent paper in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia* about shadow economies and how they operate in borderland frontiers.¹ By comparing networks for two commodities that are usually placed at very different positions on the legality spectrum – cassava and timber – I show that networks for resource-based commodities can have as many similarities as differences. By grasping these ambiguities, we can better understand the opportunities and constraints for intervention in frontier markets.

Shadow economies are networked, economic exchanges that fall outside formal state regulation. Although we often focus on the illegality or criminality of specific shadow economies, I have found that illicit transactions are commonplace across a wide range of resource-based commodities in frontier regions such as the Cambodia-Vietnam borderland (see map below). I compared the commodity networks that circulate cassava (*manihot esculenta*) and illegally harvested timber. Selected for their large volume of trade and economic significance, I traced these commodities from their production in Cambodia through border crossings to buyers in Vietnam. In both networks, state actors are crucial in mediating resource access and facilitating cross-border trade. Furthermore, shadow transactions are endemic to diverse resource-based commodity networks in frontier regions such as those along the Cambodia-Vietnam border.

Comparing timber and cassava networks

Timber and cassava have some distinctive characteristics in this border landscape. Access to Cambodian timber is mediated by diverse state actors, such as local authorities and the military, as well as state-connected elites. Cutting and transporting timber out of still-forested regions of Monduliri involves a range of local actors as well as migrant labour from other parts of Cambodia. Once extracted, the timber is transported in cars and trucks through a range of checkpoints across the Vietnamese border, a process that involves Vietnamese middlemen, as well as Cambodian and Vietnamese border authorities. Once it is across the border, timber is shipped to domestic workshops in Vietnam, as well as ports and international buyers, often bringing provincial and national state actors into the mix. Social network analysis shows that the most connected actors in this network are timber transporters, Khmer middlemen,

Vietnamese buyers and the Khmer military, while timber transporters, middlemen, buyers and Vietnamese and Khmer border officials are the most strategically positioned. The following historical overview helps to contextualise these roles further.

Timber extraction was important to this borderland before and during French colonisation. In the 1960s, forests served as a refuge for insurgents, as a revenue source to fund fighting during the Khmer Rouge period in the 1970s, and as a base for Vietnamese troops in the 1980s. By the time of the 1991 peace agreement and the scaling back of external post-conflict support, timber continued to fill an important revenue niche. As Le Billon describes, an intricate interplay of factional interests meant timber exploitation became a key mechanism for capital accumulation by private as well as high-ranking government and military actors, who “were able to extract large benefits for turning a blind eye, protecting, or even organizing these activities”.² Unsurprisingly, the military has remained one of the most cited and connected actors in the timber network.

Although Cambodia enacted regulations to control timber extraction in the 1990s, illegal extraction continued apace – its role going beyond personal enrichment to one of sustaining Cambodia’s neo-patrimonial

politics. With the upgrading of border checkpoints under the Asian Development Bank’s Greater Mekong sub-region initiative,³ checkpoint personnel came to occupy an influential place in these transactions. Those most cited in this study were the Vietnamese border military and the Cambodian border police, who facilitated cross-border timber flows in return for personal benefits, and who also channelled revenues to higher levels of government in both countries.

In contrast with timber, cassava has a more recent history in this border region, experiencing a boom since the early 2000s. The cassava variety grown in this area has a high starch and cyanide content, which suits processing rather than local consumption. Cassava production has targeted Vietnamese processing industries, which in turn service Chinese markets for stock feed, starch and biofuel. Cassava appeals to farmers with few assets and/or insecure landholdings, as it requires low capital investment to commence production, its cultivation methods are easily learned and the stems readily shared and planted. At the time of my research, the crop was widely cultivated by smallholders in Monduliri and Tbong Khmum, targeting the cross-border market. In this network, local officials and state-connected elites are influential in mediating land access. Middlemen and transporters are also well connected, given their role in aggregating cassava in a locality and organising cross-border transport. As with timber, border officials on both the Vietnamese and Cambodian side mediate cross-border flows. The network analysis also revealed that Vietnamese traders and processing factories have an influential role in driving trade.

Although the two networks differ in many specifics, the frontier setting of Monduliri means that cassava and timber have some important intersections. Cassava is often the first crop planted on newly-cleared soils (see Fig.3), creating an inexorable link between forest clearance and frontier cassava. Indeed, an important end game in the case of both timber and cassava, beyond the immediate revenues associated with the commodities themselves, is the securing of land. Certain shared categories of actors – particularly state actors – are therefore significant at the initial stages of both networks, notably village, commune, district and provincial authorities and state-connected elite landowners.

The second point of intersection is at border checkpoints, where Vietnamese military and Cambodian border police are crucial actors. These checkpoint staff receive routine payments from traders taking timber or cassava through their posts, which are then distributed through established mechanisms

and practices among the different agencies represented at particular checkpoints. Border payments of this kind are explained by both timber and cassava traders as an integral cost of doing business, and are managed, albeit grudgingly, as part of trading practices and sale price. For example, one Vietnamese timber trader said that he regularly under-reports his timber load to recoup his lost revenue:

“Any kind of timber can cross the border; however it is expensive. We increase the number of logs we take through to compensate for the expenses ... For example, *Huong* [*Pterocarpus* spp. or rosewood]. If the papers show there is one unit, you actually import three ... the hidden fees take 15-20% of the sale price.”⁴

His account shows that timber traders perceive and deal with payments to checkpoint staff as an operating cost, rather than a barrier to the movement of goods. Similarly, to transport cassava, traders consistently reported checkpoint fees of about US\$50 per truck on the Cambodian side of national and international checkpoints and less for smaller scale crossings, with a further US\$10 on the Vietnamese side. Depending upon the strength of their relationships with border officials, these payments are either made through an agent, involving additional agent fees, or directly by the trader.

Although local and border officials engage in many informal practices, their presence within the network has a regulatory basis. Their opportunities for rent seeking has been strengthened by land regulations and interventions to strengthen trans-border trade. Finally, there was evidence that revenues not only enrich border officials, but also flow upward to senior officials and, in Vietnam, to provincial governments, highlighting the broader and systemic political-economic role of these networks.

Conclusions and implications for governing borderland commodity networks

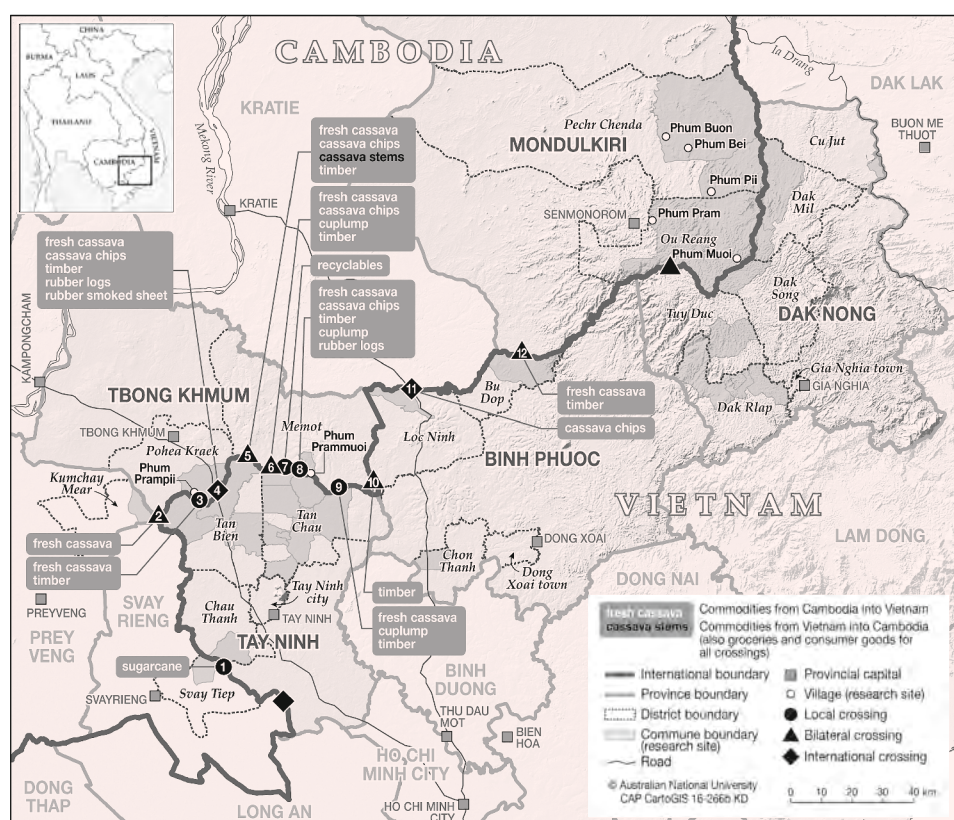
Although timber is a more highly regulated and lucrative commodity than cassava, both trading networks have important commonalities. The two networks coalesce around actors that mediate access to forest resources and land, and that facilitate border crossings. Each of these intersections points to the systemic role of state actors in these resource-based market networks operating in a frontier landscape.

These findings raise important implications for how we govern and intervene in frontier markets and cross-border trade. Rather than an unfortunate by-product of efforts to open up regional trade, I show that shadow economies are actively facilitated by nodal state actors that operate across several commodities. Interventions to influence shadow economies therefore need to work with a deep knowledge of these underlying network configurations and critical actors. Without it, interventions may either strengthen the hand of such actors, for instance giving them greater regulatory power without increasing their accountability, or be ineffective, as was the case with Cambodia’s timber crackdown of 2016.

Sango Mahanty Australian National University, sango.mahanty@anu.edu.au

Notes

- 1 Mahanty, S. 2018. ‘Shadow economies and the state: A comparison of cassava and timber networks on the Cambodia-Vietnam frontier’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49(2):193-215; DOI:10.1080/00472336.2018.1545917
- 2 Le Billon, P. 2000. ‘The Political Ecology of Transition in Cambodia 1989-1999: War, Peace and Forest Exploitation’, *Development and Change* 31:785-805; <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00177>
- 3 Asian Development Bank. 2011. *Greater Mekong Subregion Cross-border Transport Facilitation Agreement: Instruments and Drafting History*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- 4 Interview, Tay Ninh, May 2015



Above: Study sites. Source: author's data and ANU CartoGIS.

Brokered connections between South China and the world

Heidi Østbo Haugen

Chinese transnational engagements represent one of the most far-reaching socioeconomic developments of our times. Chinese global engagements have been studied mainly through features of their input (high labor supply, capital surplus, quest for international recognition, etc.) and output (foreign direct investments, trade, diplomatic achievements, etc.). Considerably less is known about the processes between these end-points – the distinct ways incentives translate into concrete transnational linkages. The ERC Starting Grant project **BROKEX: Brokering China's Extraversion**, launched this year, will fill specific gaps in knowledge concerning how China's international integration advances.¹ We use brokerage as an opening wedge for examining the diverse logics that produce informal and formal, licit and illicit transnational connections from China.

Corporate brokers as frontier workers

Corporate brokers, such as KPMG, Deloitte, and McKinsey, commonly present the following narrative about Africa and China: Westerners should hurry to exploit the opportunities on the continent before the Chinese get it all. "Africa is the world's last frontier market, and Western firms need to start taking advantage of its tremendous potential, as Chinese firms already are", Signé states.² The quote depicts the African continent as a frontier to be capitalized on by outsiders, void of indigenous actors, its internal diversity and long history of global integration neglected. Against this problematic geopolitical representation, the multinational consultancy firms offer Western companies guidance to operate in markets characterized by informality.

A quintessential broker

The interaction between China and African countries alluded to above commonly advances through the mediation by transnationally connected individuals. One such broker was a Chinese man who had taken the name Mike. He solicited customers among the many Africans who had moved to the Pearl River Delta for short or longer periods. Mike displayed none of the effortlessness in dealing with different groups commonly associate with brokers. Skillful brokers are often able to deflect tense situations by employing humor, display empathy with several parties in a transaction, and identify creative ways to resolve entrenched conflicts. Mike, by contrast, seemed ill at ease both when interacting with other Chinese people and with African clients. Short, balding, and dressed in the kind of dark clothes typically worn by middle-aged Chinese men, his looks were inconspicuous. Yet, his presence was easily noticed because he sweated profusely and seemed constantly flustered. Furthermore, he was prone to wantonly delivering provocative and inappropriate statements.

While socially awkward, Mike was an agile businessman. As he navigated between formal and informal institutions, he expected opportunities for profit to be fleeting. Upon getting to know African traders through his employment in a logistics company in 2001, he started to offer them surplus stocks of shoes from manufacturers in the Pearl River Delta. The factories produced for European

and North American markets, but deliberately manufactured surplus stocks for sales to other parts of the world. After the 2008 financial crisis, factories also saw European and North American companies default at greater rates than before. Mike helped them sell products these customers failed to pay for, bridging formal and informal economies.

The shuttling of surplus stocks was tiring and yielded dwindling profits. When I first met Mike in 2014, he had largely abandoned this trade. Instead, he brokered between undocumented immigrants in China, local landlords, and the Public Security Bureau. He assisted migrants with expired visas in leaving China, charging hefty fees. As China's immigration control tightened, the risks he faced increased and the work got more difficult. He explored a range of other options, including brokerage of marriages and escorts. In 2016, he told me he had found a brokerage opportunity that suited him perfectly: helping clients from Central Asia and Eastern Europe illegally export wealth via China. His workdays were spent in the airconditioned interiors of banks alongside a handful of foreigners who like him facilitated informal and illegal transactions. Knowing how slow the wheels of academic publishing turn, he comfortably imparted details about the currency export with me. He reckoned that the business would soon be cracked down upon, and he was already scouting for new brokerage opportunities in the interstices between the legal and illegal.

Dilettante brokers and social networks

As brokers, multinational consultancy firms and people like Mike have in common that they are professional brokers – their core business is to find and fill spaces between other actors. However, many brokers, if not most, connect others only occasionally and under particular circumstances. As Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh remark in relation to migration brokerage: "While some are professional brokers, others are dilettantes—amateurs who become involved in recruitment by accident or as an effect of their social position. As such, a broker is not a fixed identity and must be considered in relation to location, time and power".³

Social science research on brokerage commonly takes the shape of social networks

as its starting point, and focuses on how actors positioned at the intersection between groups operate. This is the perspective adopted by the most cited scholar on brokers, Ronald Burt. Some people are 'bridges' in social networks, positioned to create connections between otherwise separate groups. Burt asserts that when there are few bridges across a gap between groups, actors in the middle have much to gain from taking on a brokering role.⁴ Effective brokers create new connections between groups and profit from trust within them. This analysis takes sets of social relations as its point of departure. Scholars who study social relations in China, by contrast, have focused as much on how relationships are forged as how they are utilized. This provides analytical tools for understanding brokerage as contingent events, as discussed next.

Relationships understood from China studies

Studies of *guanxi*, i.e., connections or interpersonal relations, place the formation of strategic connections at the center of analysis. *From the soil* by Fei Xiaotong (orig. 1947)⁵ – a classic text in the Chinese social sciences – analyzed how people work to achieve and maintain their desired amount of social connectivity. Descriptions of *guanxi* emphasize that flows of wealth and feelings in relationships are often mutually enabling: emotions entail material obligations, and material exchanges incite feelings.⁶ The commonly used expression 'pull *guanxi*' articulates the mediated nature of social influence, whereby a chain of relationships is activated until it reaches the person one intends to influence.⁷ As favors are extended, they induce debts that are repaid with future favors. Familiarity must be established before resources can be exchanged for mutual benefit. Such familiarity may be bred where no prior foundation exists, or it can be supported through shared characteristics, such as kinship, place of origin, and educational history. Irrespective of their bases, relationships can only subsist by being actively cultivated and maintained.⁸

The literature on *guanxi* has been focused on China and the Chinese diaspora, but the relevance of its methods and conceptual frameworks is potentially broader and extends to transnational brokerage across ethnic boundaries. The BROKEX project approaches *guanxi* practices as historical and cultural adaptations to broader contextual circumstances. Accounts from China in the post-reform era document how *guanxi* networks have proliferated in some domains, yet declined in others. The ways *guanxi* practices emerge, transform, and disappear suggest that they are historically specific – they are not some quintessentially Chinese phenomenon that can be pitted against detached individualized Western relations.

Upcoming explorations of China's extraversion

The analysis of transnational brokerage from China will use *guanxi* scholarship as a perspective from which to further develop analytical frameworks for understanding brokerage as a general social phenomenon. Through ethnographic case studies, BROKEX will generate data on how actors maneuver to attain positions from which they can engage in brokerage. The project was designed and inspired by studies of formal and/or illicit exchanges in Sino-Africa trade. During the ten-year period I conducted such research, I became increasingly aware of how informal export to Africa is intimately linked with formalized trade from China to other parts of the world.

In BROKEX, a group of postdocs and PhD students will study transnational connections that touch ground in China's Pearl River Delta in the medical industry, academia, and real estate. These industries are not associated with 'shadow exchanges'. However, just as informal exports from South China to African countries had close links to the formal sector, informality may be important in unexpected ways in other case studies. By directing attention towards transnational relationship formation, we will explore how light and shadow interact.

Heidi Østbo Haugen University of Oslo,
h.o.haugen@ikos.uio.no

Notes

- 1 ERC research project *Brokering China's Extraversion: An Ethnographic Analysis of Transnational Arbitration* (funding ID 802070).
- 2 Signé, L. 2018. 'Capturing Africa's high returns', Brookings Institution op-ed, originally published by 'Project Syndicate': <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/capturing-africas-high-returns>.
- 3 Lindquist, J., et al. 2012. 'Opening the black box of migration: brokers, the organization of transnational mobility and the changing political economy in Asia', *Pacific Affairs* 85(1):7-19 (p.8).
- 4 Burt, R.S. 2005. *Brokerage and Closure: an Introduction to Social Capital*. Oxford University Press.
- 5 Fei, X., et al. 1992. *From the Soil. The Foundations of Chinese Society. A translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 6 Kipnis, A.B. 1997. *Producing Guanxi: Sentiment, Self, and Subculture in a North China Village*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 7 Yang, M.M.H. 1994. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- 8 Yan, Y. 1996. 'The Culture of Guanxi in a North China Village', *The China Journal* 35:1-25.



Above: Day laborers with trolleys help traders transport goods out of Guangzhou's wholesale markets (photo: Jørgen Carling).

Global trade and circulations in the Northern Bay of Bengal

Samuel Berthet

In 2004, the '10 Truck Arms and Ammunition Haul' in Chittagong exposed the smuggling activities between the Bay of Bengal and North East India. The similitudes with the earliest case of weapon smuggling reported by the British administration during the mid-nineteenth century is telling of the continuity of circulations outlawed by changing political and economic regimes, in the shadow of both states' borders and international agencies' interventions. Trade from South West China to the India Ocean, Nicobar and Maldives islands and further, has always been part of the social and cultural fabric of the Northern Bay of Bengal (NBB). Vernacular songs, stories, architecture, food and dress, lifestyles and languages, are witness to mutual and multiple borrowings, in which circulation has played a central role.



Above: Fishing boats south of Cox's Bazar. (c) Nazir Uddin Mahmud Liton.

Circulation against borders

Falling in line with, or in reaction against, the contemporary political situation, scholarship concealed those legacies of circulation, reinforcing the political discourse of ethno-nationalism. Focusing on transport technology and mobility, forced and free, allows us to look across and beyond present political borders and periodization. Those are a precondition to study the active participation of a space, in the Braudelian sense, in the making of world-systems. Rather than marginal, the Northern Bay of Bengal appeared as a multi-centered space where various levels of negotiations and intermediations took place, triggering a dense knowledge network of connected segments with loose and changing, but compatible ends. The study of mobility and exchange in the NBB draws a continuum of multi directional circulation, branching out and in, cutting across topography and polities, dotted with disputed nodes, often at the intersection of rivers or waterways and land itineraries, rather than linear routes and borders drawing orderly cells clearly delineated with repelling edges.

The design and implementation of linear borders in the NBB was complemented by a cadastral land regime and social engineering via the census in British India-Burma. It ascribed a non-sustainable fixity and monolith identity to both land and people. These aspects have been scrutinized, documented and theorized in an expanding academic corpus. The role of circulation linking the hilly regions to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean, allows a wider reading beyond the ethno-nationalist discourse.

Roadless tracks

In 1915, after the Abhor expedition, Sidney Gerald Burrard, former surveyor general for India, wrote: "The Karakoram and the Hindu Kush have presented great difficulties to earlier surveyors and their forms have only been represented on maps by field workers after much hardship and privation. But in some ways the mountains of the North-East Frontier are more difficult than those of the North-West. They are pathless, tractless and covered in places by thick jungle."¹

Portuguese cartographer Pedro Reinel published a portulan map of the African coast

(c.1517), the Red Sea, Sri Lanka Indonesia, and the southern tip of the Malaysian peninsula, north and south of Malacca. The coastline of the Bay of Bengal remained outlined, bare of any mention of ports. Six years earlier the Portuguese Estado da India seized Malacca and started sending expeditions to Bengal to ensure the continuance of rice supply for their newly conquered emporium. Bengal supplied rice across South Asia, but also to the main emporium between the Bay of Bengal and further east to the islands of Sunda and even the Moluccas. The ships set sail from Chittagong, called Porto Grande by the Portuguese. After his visit in 1606, Pyrard de Laval considered Chittagong to be the wealthiest port of the Orient. The dresses of its inhabitants tell about a highly affluent lifestyle. During the seventeenth century, duties were estimated to amount to a third of the value of the goods entering Bengal, largely compensated by the profits to be made.

Studies of trade in Bengal focused on the Ganga, underrating or bypassing the one which transited from the Brahmaputra-Meghna river system, and the Karnaphuli. The former is well documented (vernacular, Persian and European sources). The latter is known indirectly, but drew a very important volume of the trade from the kingdoms of the Himalayan regions, the foothills and the adjacent plains. In the early years of the 16th century, Thomas Pires noted that the rich kingdoms inland such as Tripura, Koch and Assam depended on Bengal as an outlet for their goods. Tibbetts' study of pre-European Arab, Persian and Turkish navigational treaties in the Indian Ocean highlighted the precise mapping of the coast from Coromandel to Bengal in contrast to the one from Chittagong to Pegu, the trade between these two areas being possibly left to local mariners.²

The eastern part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system remained vaguely depicted in European cartography. Well into the eighteenth century, the convergence of the main South East Asian rivers and the Lohit-Zayu (still considered by upper Assam's communities as the main tributary of the Brahmaputra) remained symbolized by a mythical Chianmay lake. It sat in the eastern edge of the Himalaya, in a manner of an eastern twin to the Mansarovar lake.

Topography: the impossible anthropocene?

Trade and exchanges in the NBB took place via roadless networks, whose access was conditioned by freezing winters in the mountains, flooding rains during the monsoon with rivers at times shifting a few kilometers off course, but also by shallow coastal waters crossed by hundreds of rivulets and channels. The topography was subject to extreme seasonal variations. The trading networks linking South West China, Himalayas, Upper Burma, Arakan, North, East and North East India to the Indian Ocean, moved through seasonally accessible passes, changing waterways, and monsoon dominated sea voyages.

Every year waterways and paths needed to be renegotiated. Riverine, estuary and coastal forms of transportation required specific technologies adapted to shallow draft and strong currents, relying on detailed knowledge of the topography, currents and wind. This scenario gave an edge to local polities and freebooters who could easily escape via the innumerable creeks, rivers and channels thanks to swift shallow draft vessels capable of landing directly on the beaches.

While traveling from Bengal to Central Tibet via Assam and Bhutan, Estêvão Cacela writes in 1627: "There are sixty and more of those (choquis or duty station) on those rivers up to Azó (Hajo). The journey went on by the Ganges' arms, very fresh and very pleasant, of excellent water, and lined with countless villages, where everything abounds. Azó is the main city and the capital of the kingdoms of Cocho, wide countries very populated and very rich". The plains and large valleys were seats of powerful and often warring states such as the Ahom, Arakan, Tripura or Manipur kingdoms. Their control over the territory followed the mandala pattern rather than linear borders, and was limited by densely forested steep hills, the marshlands, and water bodies. The NBB remained mostly on the edges of the expanding empires. The kingdoms of the plains entertained alliances with smaller and competing chiefdoms of the hills, which controlled the passes connecting one valley to another. The most contested area of the NBB remained Chittagong, and its strategic

estuarine interface between the land and the sea. While seizing the city was a challenge, control over the territory around the port city, crisscrossed by multiple channels, hills, islands and creeks, was next to impossible.

Overlapping circulation regime

After the East India Company gained administrative powers over provinces of Bengal, a gigantic tax evasion set in, using an advantageous interpretation of trading agreements. During the nineteenth century, the development of steel shipbuilding started to make up for timber's scarcity. Insurance companies also favored steel over wood. Vernacular ships were decommissioned, only to almost immediately resurface as a smuggling medium in networks still linking the interiors of the Patkai Hills with the Bay of Bengal, further down to the Andaman seas, and even to the Chao Phraya delta.³

The fleet of shallow draft vessels with the capacity to sail along the coast, up estuaries, and to land directly on the beaches, retained their advantage. They played a pivotal role both in the domestic economy, particularly for fishing, and in networks still active in the NBB: cross-border exchanges where drugs, weapons and human trade assumed significant dimensions.

The slave trade in Arakan, Bengal and Manipur originates from at least the early seventeenth century, reflected in folk literature and culture. The new focus on land routes, including corridor policies such as the Belt Road Initiative, and the geo-political instability on the Bangladesh-Burma border, have favored its revival. Human trafficking operates using wooden trawlers and according to patterns of circulation established earlier than shipping lines. Prior to the latest Rohingya crisis, around fifty thousand people were believed to be trafficked every year just from the South-East Bengal coast alone, mainly between Cox's Bazar and Teknaf, towards Thailand. Shadow corridors appear as the continuation of former circulations in a new political and economic regime.

In the context of corridor projects such as the BRI, the history of mobility and circulations sheds a different light on coastal regions and supposedly landlocked regions between South West China and the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta. In 2002, Van Schendel highlighted the consequences of the geographical divide, bringing forth the concept of *zomia* in reference to regions at the intersection of East, South and South East Asia.⁴ He demonstrated how regions at the intersection of those area studies, almost all of which fall in the NBB, fell into oblivion. The next step is to bridge the periodization divide. The various cycles shaping the topography, the corresponding vernacular transport technologies, and changes in the political economy in the NBB, draw a nonlinear and non-sequential history, underlining the co-substantiality of early modern, modern and contemporary history.

Samuel Berthet Shiv Nadar University
berthet.samuel@protonmail.com

Notes

- 1 Burrard, S.G. 1915. 'The Identity of the Sanpo and Dihang Rivers', *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 47(4):259-264, see p.259; www.jstor.org/stable/201464
- 2 Tibbetts, G.R. 1971. *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the Coming of the Portuguese*. Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, p.470.
- 3 Dzuvichu, L. 2010. "Opening up the Hills?" *The Politics of Access along the Northeast Frontier of British India, 1866-1942*, PhD thesis, Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- 4 van Schendel, W. 2002. 'Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia', *Development and Planning D: Society and Space* 20:647-668, see p.652.

2017 Impact Factor 0.700



china INFORMATION

mc.manuscriptcentral.com/CIN

facebook.com/ChinaInformation

[@cin_tweets](https://twitter.com/cin_tweets)

Special issue on marginalization in China (vol. 33, no. 2)
 Guest edited by *Lida V. Nedilsky and Joseph Tse-Hei Lee*

- Marginalization as creative endeavour
Lida V. Nedilsky and Joseph Tse-Hei Lee
- Ethnic minority empowerment and marginalization: Yi labour migrants outside China's Autonomous Regions
Xinrong Ma
- The empowerment of rural migrant *lalas*: Contending queerness and heteronormativity in China
Tingting Liu
- Non-legalistic activism from the social margin: Informal workers with pneumoconiosis in Shenzhen
Lulu Fan and Kenneth Tsz Fung Ng
- Governing the poor in Guangzhou: Marginalization and the neo-liberal paternalist construction of deservedness
Wen Zhuoyi and Ngok Kinglun

Read the articles at our website: journals.sagepub.com/home/cin

China Information is published three times per year in March, July and November by SAGE Publications and edited by Tak-Wing Ngo at the University of Macau.




JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY ASIA

Recent Special Issues

Two Decades of Reformasi in Indonesia: A New Illiberal Turn? (Vol. 49, No. 5, 2019)

Precarity in 21st Century Asia (Vol. 49, No. 4, 2019)

Checkpoint Politics in Cross-border Exchanges (Vol. 49, No. 2, 2019)

Party-State Governance and Rule in Laos (Vol. 48, No. 5, 2018)

Crisis, Populism and Right-wing Politics in Asia (Vol. 48, No. 4, 2018)

Who Governs and How? Non-State Actors and Transnational Governance in Southeast Asia (Vol. 48, No. 2, 2018)

Malaysia and China in a Changing Region: Essays in Honour of Professor Lee Poh Ping (Vol. 47, No. 5, 2017)

Interpreting Communal Violence in Myanmar (Vol. 47, No. 3, 2017)

Military, Monarchy and Repression: Assessing Thailand's Authoritarian Turn (Vol. 46, No. 3, 2016)



2017 Impact Factor 1.581

journalofcontemporaryasia.wordpress.com

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

澳門大學 UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU UNIVERSITY OF MACAU


The Journal of Contemporary Asia is an established refereed publication. It appears 5 times a year and is edited by Kevin Hewison (University of Macau).



NEW! 2019 Book Releases

Range of Topics from Pop Culture to History

Offer your students well-rounded courses on current trends in Asia with our extensive scope of Asia-focused publications.
 Explore the whole range of AAS books at <http://bit.ly/AASPublications>



Association for Asian Studies



#AAS2020

Sheraton Boston Hotel & Hynes Convention Center

BOSTON

2019
 0 ANNUAL
 CONFERENCE
 2 BOSTON
 0 MARCH 19-22



Call for Proposals are NOW OPEN
 Submission Deadline: August 6, 2019 5PM EST

For more information, visit:
<https://bit.ly/2020AAS>

moussons

Social Science Research on Southeast Asia
 Recherche en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est

NUMBER **33** NOW AVAILABLE



Recherche en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est
 Social Science Research on Southeast Asia

A set of 7 ARTICLES by

- Maaïke Matelski
- Marion Sabrié
- Helene Maria Kyed
- Eben Forbes
- Julien Debonneville
- Olivia Killias
- Laurent Gédéon
- Louise Pichard-Bertaux
- Bernard Sellato

BOOK REVIEWS

PUBLISHING, SALES & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Presses Universitaires de Provence
 29, avenue Robert Schuman, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France
 Ph.: 33-(0)413553191 - Fax.: 33-(0)413553180
 E-mail: pup@univ-amu.fr
 Website: <http://www.univ-amu.fr/service-commun-presses-universitaires-damu>

MOUSSONS, c/o IrAsia, Maison Asie Pacifique
 3, place Victor-Hugo - 13003 Marseille, France
 Ph.: 33-(0)413550723
 E-mail: irasia-moussons@univ-amu.fr



Jardin du Pharo - boulevard Charles Livon - Marseille - France
 Tél. : +33 (0)4 91 39 65 01 - Fax : +33 (0)4 91 52 91 03
www.univ-amu.fr

History, human value and place-making in Timor-Leste

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. In the current edition, we explore history, human value and place-making in Timor-Leste.

Articles are edited by Edwin Jurriëns edwin.jurriens@unimelb.edu.au and Andy Fuller fuller.a@unimelb.edu.au, from the Asia Institute in Melbourne arts.unimelb.edu.au/asiainstitute



Why destination marketing matters. Reflections on tourism in Timor-Leste

Sara Currie

Between 2011 and 2016 I conducted my doctoral research in Timor-Leste. During my final year in-country, I worked as a consultant for The Asia Foundation, where I implemented the findings of my research to develop Timor-Leste's tourism marketing strategy and new destination brand. Across those five years, I was asked the usual tourism questions, their nature dependent upon the experience of the asker. Those who had spent only weeks or months in the country asked me, "What's the tourism potential here?" Those with more experience in tourism tended to probe more deeply and would ask, "I can see there's tourism potential. What do you feel are the main issues that are preventing tourism from growing?" And finally there were those who, like myself, had spent years working in Timor-Leste and for whom the answers to the first two questions were abundantly obvious. This group asked the more difficult question: "We know the potential, we know the barriers – do you think tourism in Timor-Leste can succeed?"

Above: Images from a presentation which provided the basis for Timor-Leste's new destination brand. The complete presentation can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/mockTL>.

In responding to this sort of question I always found myself caught between the need for honesty and the desire for optimism. My doctoral research had confirmed that the country has great potential for tourism. Timor-Leste is blessed with incredible natural assets, including one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world, alongside culture, history, friendly people and a tropical climate. It's only a one-and-a-half-hour flight from Denpasar, Bali.

At the same time, the weaknesses in the tourism product are significant – cost, accessibility, poor infrastructure and a hospitality industry that is still in its infancy. Access to medical facilities, mosquito-borne disease and crocodiles add further problems, while the nation's poor destination image continues to have a negative impact. However, the challenges to tourism in Timor-Leste are not entirely dissimilar to other Asian nations, certainly those with a post-conflict history such as Sri Lanka or Cambodia. Yet the most recent statistics suggest that Timor-Leste welcomed fewer than 40,000 leisure travellers in 2017,¹ a tiny number compared to near neighbour Bali, which received over five million tourists in the same year.

When I first arrived in 2011, Timor-Leste was enjoying what many called a 'false tourism economy', thanks to a sustained UN presence. The UN workers themselves provided a boost to the economy and domestic tourism, as well as created a steady flow of friends and family visiting from abroad. It was a captive audience of 'ideal' tourists. UN workers usually spoke the language, had their own vehicle and a local phone, and were accustomed to Timor-Leste's level of service. Exorbitant prices were not prohibitive, given their international salaries. Since the withdrawal of the UN in 2012, however, tourism numbers have steadily declined. Many bars and restaurants that opened during the UN boom have failed, due simply to insufficient patronage. While the government talked passionately about how 'real' tourism would fill the UN void, very little was done to encourage this.

This is where my doctoral research, conducted with the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Timor-Leste, and The Asia Foundation, found its place: ultimately, we hoped to develop a marketing strategy and destination brand to grow tourism and to replace the 'false tourism economy' with 'real tourism'. But, what began as simply a marketing strategy to grow tourism evolved across my five years in-country. Instead of pondering the issue, "Can tourism succeed?" the more pressing question became, "What would success in tourism actually look like for Timor-Leste?" Would it be simply 'number of visitors'? More and more travellers, at any cost to the natural environment and local lifestyle? Or was there a more sustainable model we could achieve?

Indeed, with global tourism arrivals now over a billion per annum and countries such as Iceland, Spain and Italy struggling with what is now commonly termed 'overtourism', it is difficult to justify a marketing strategy that simply targets continuous growth. Today, as concerns about the environmental and cultural impacts of tourism increase, more destinations are acknowledging that a handful of affluent travellers is better than many cash-strapped tourists.² Places that were once keen to attract travellers 'at any cost' are now, understandably, becoming more selective.

My research included conducting interviews with many stakeholders in Timor-Leste, and not surprisingly it uncovered a diversity of opinions. For the then Minister for Tourism, the focus was on growth – any type of tourist, any age, from any country – so long as they came. He explained: "Let's say 28 million tourists to Thailand. If I can get 5%-10% of Thailand tourism that's a big number for us. Let's say seven million tourists to Indonesia; if I can get 10% that's also a big number." But for a diverse mix of stakeholders from NGOs, education and the private sector, the priority was on the quality of tourist and on avoiding the negatives and pitfalls of 'overtourism'. Despite five million tourists per year and strong tourism revenue,

the 'Bali model' of development was seen as undesirable. As one local stakeholder, working for an environmental NGO told me: "We are afraid that the complaints of the Balinese will repeat here in the future. The real owner of the resources will become the everlasting observer, watching other people come and take their resources and leaving them with nothing."

Destination marketers hold considerable power, not only over tourists, but also over the destinations they promote and the people living there. Responsible destination marketing creates a representation of place that includes expectations about the nation and its people, and the type and volume of tourists it may seek to attract. For young nations such as Timor-Leste, tourism marketing represents both an opportunity and a risk.

The tourism marketing strategy and destination brand we developed for Timor-Leste, with its focus on sustainability and an honest representation of the country, was well received by all stakeholders.³ It is now up to Timor-Leste, its leaders and its people, to decide the manner in which they proceed. I still ponder the question I've been so often asked, "Can tourism in Timor-Leste succeed?" and grapple with the need to balance honesty with optimism, or hope, in answering it. If the government can turn words into action, then most definitely it can. But this requires those at the top, who currently hold the power, to truly invest and support sustainable tourism, and to start taking concrete, well-planned action towards developing it. Timor-Leste does have incredible potential as a destination for tourism. But realising that potential requires strong leadership, sound policy and, most importantly, coordination between government and the many diverse stakeholders who can contribute so much to the destination's future.

Can tourism grow? Definitely. Can this be done in a way that benefits the people of Timor-Leste and respects its environment? Only time will tell.

Sara Currie is a marketing consultant, and former advisor to the Ministry of Tourism and the Office of the President, Timor-Leste. She is an Adjunct Research Fellow at Swinburne University. saracurrie@swin.edu.au

Notes

- 1 Find the 2017 Survey of International Travellers from The Asia Foundation online at <https://tinyurl.com/TAF2014TL>; the summary of the 2017 survey is available from The Asia Foundation upon request.
- 2 *Travel Megatrends 2019: Undertourism Is the New Overtourism*, Skift, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/skift-utot>
- 3 A mock brand presentation can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/mockTL>, which provided the basis for Timor-Leste's new destination brand.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

The Asia Institute

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.



Place-making and the Timor-Leste Nation-Building Project

Angie Bexley and Maj Nygaard-Christensen

If the tendency in anthropology and area studies has been to move away from associations between 'the field' and bounded communities, political processes in Timor-Leste have been marked by attempts to demarcate the boundaries of, and to define the place, that would become 'Timor-Leste'. Or put differently, while anthropological debates have abandoned "the common sense idea that such things as locality and community are simply given or natural" and instead turned "toward a focus on social and political processes of place making",¹ such processes in Timor-Leste have often revolved around making essentialist claims about what constitutes Timorese national identity.

The chapters in our 2017 volume, *Fieldwork in Timor-Leste: Understanding Social Change Through Practice* (NIAS Press), go to the heart of these tensions. Initially, our aim with the volume was to collect chapters that reflected on ethnographic fieldwork practices in the country. What emerged from this process, however, were not only reflections on the fieldwork process itself but also a critical engagement with some of the preconceived ideas about what kind of place Timor-Leste is, and which also challenged the ethnographic or historical research of the contributing authors. The volume therefore also offers a series of attempts to unravel or destabilise some of these understandings of Timor-Leste and its history. Together, they highlight the contestations and deliberations that have been symptomatic of the nation building process itself.

David Hicks and Andrew McWilliam offer a window into Timor-Leste at different points in

time both through analyses of traditional power structures and political systems. David Hicks' chapter offers a personal account of fieldwork in Portuguese Timor (1702-1975), and his efforts to renew relationships with informants after several decades in a community now busy transitioning into a market economy. Hicks further highlights how the transition to independence has been accompanied by a shift in perceptions of tradition, previously surrounded by secrecy and shame, to a local re-engagement with tradition, encouraged by the broader project of nation-building. Andrew McWilliam's chapter reflects on the serendipitous nature of identifying a 'field' over time, through a mix of chance and opportunity and, in the early years of independence, supported by the broad popular willingness of people to "reflect on the tumultuous events of the recent times and challenges of rebuilding".

An analysis of undocumented decapitated Timorese skulls found in the Coimbra Museum of Portugal offers a different perspective of Portuguese Timor. The archival void surrounding their history led Roque on a search for what he terms "archival traces"

resulting in extensive fieldwork in public and private archives. While Portuguese sources assessed the skulls as representative of exotic indigenous warfare practices in which Portugal played no part, Roque's research demonstrates the complication of Portuguese colonial dichotomies, and also inspires a rethink about Timorese history and engagement with external political projects more broadly.

Douglas Kammen and Judith Bovensiepen's contributions both challenge the divisions of urban and rural Timor-Leste, often accompanied by associated divisions of 'modernity' and tradition, urban being the focus of analysis of conflict, crises, and politics, and rural being the site of study for community, tradition, and resilience. Through extensive archival research, Kammen traces contemporary understandings of Timorese rural societies to the making of administrative boundaries and divisions during Portuguese colonialism and challenges the meaning of it as a bounded community, an understanding which further underpins contemporary accounts of 'revival of tradition'. He takes the smallest unit, the *suco* (village level administrative unit) and challenges the meaning as a relatively bounded community, an understanding which underpins contemporary accounts of 'revival of tradition'.

Through combined ethnographic and historical research, Judith Bovensiepen demonstrates how inter-party struggles were based on existing political disputes, which had in turn also been shaped through engagement with Portuguese colonial administration. She shows how official as well as international and academic narratives that pit pro-integrationist and pro-independence supporters against each other often overlook the complexity of how allegiances and alliances came into being.

Maj Nygaard-Christensen and Pyone Myat Thu contest the idea of Timorese conflict as either externally generated or purely domestic in nature. Thu's chapter does this by examining the local dynamics of tension in rural Baucau districts, which arose through Indonesian resettlement programs under occupation. Thu narrates the experience of conducting fieldwork in an environment characterised by deep distrust and encourages us to pay attention to "what is left unsaid, as much as what is said". Nygaard-Christensen's chapter shows how local political dramas that have filled the post-independence years, and at first sight only seem to confirm Timor-Leste's fragility, were often co-produced by the massive international presence the country has hosted after independence.

The final three chapters by Angie Bexley, Guteriano Neves and Amy Rothschild offer examples of how positionality impacts upon ethnographic research and directs our attention in the field. Arriving in Timor-Leste initially as an Indonesian speaker, Bexley came to understand the multiple meanings

of Indonesia for young Timorese, from pop culture to politics, which disrupted monolithic representations of Indonesia. Young Timorese were excluded from the new nation-state and their connections to Indonesia dubbed them the 'Supermi Generation' by the nation's elite – a reference to Indonesia's instant noodles and implying a lack of strength and leadership. They were subsequently denied a legitimate stake as citizens in the new nation-state.

Neves reflects on the challenges faced by Timorese scholars researching their own society, including issues relating to access and never 'exiting' the field. He demonstrates how a level of engagement with state politics is not restricted to urban elites, as remote rural communities are also intensely invested in state politics and the politics of international aid. Rothschild's analysis highlights the tensions surrounding Timorese history-making and also examines notions of ownership among foreigners working in Timor-Leste. The starting point of her analysis was her failure to gain access to a field site she had hoped would shed light on Timorese memories of violence during the occupation. She not only raises the question of who has the right to grant or disallow access to particular sites, but also demonstrates how 'local' projects of history-making in a new nation such as Timor-Leste are intensely entangled with international ones.

Timor-Leste has been marked as much by contestation and rupture as it has been by consensus and continuity. The emerging areas of study in post-independence Timor-Leste do not simply replace 'continuity' with a focus on 'rupture', but rather highlight the ambivalences that have characterised Timorese engagements with, for instance, tradition, foreign influences, and colonial heritage and emphasises the heterogeneous ways in which our informants relate to those. Through focusing on moments of crises, claims to community and the social production of historical, social and territorial categories, researchers are inspiring analytical engagements of how the nation has been socially produced, contested and understood and continue to question the categories through which we have come to understand Timor-Leste.

Angie Bexley is Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Children's Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University
Angie.Bexley@anu.edu.au

Maj Nygaard-Christensen is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Aarhus University
mnc.crf@psy.au.dk

Notes

- 1 Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. 1997. *Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. University of California Press, p.6



Top left: 'Recovering Lives' (2008) produced by Culture Kitchen, a collaboration between Indonesian, Timorese and Australian artists.
Above: This is a detail of the top-left image.



Remembering terror and activism in the city

Vannessa Hearman

Above: Motael Church, the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Timor-Leste. In 1991 a group of young independence activists demonstrating against the Indonesian occupation took sanctuary in the church. The Indonesians stormed the church and shot activist Sebastião Gomes, which would eventually lead to the Santa Cruz massacre. Photo: Vannessa Hearman.

In October 2017, Timor-Leste's National Centre of Memory (Centro Nacional Chegal, CNC) designated sites of historical memory in Dili, the country's capital, as part of a project titled 'Dili City of History' [*Sidade Istoriku*]. The CNC was formed in 2017 to deal with the legacies of past violence and human rights abuses, mostly committed during Indonesian rule from 1975 to 1999, that were documented by the country's truth commissions. Many of the sites are former military and police headquarters where the Indonesian security forces detained and tortured East Timorese accused of supporting independence.

The Indonesian invasion of 7 December 1975 transformed Dili from the then Portuguese Timor, formerly described in travel accounts as being a sleepy backwater of some 14,000 people, into a military operations centre.¹ Portuguese statistical reports showed the territory's population in 1974 to be around 635,000.² The Indonesian army assumed control over many former Portuguese installations, continuing to use some in much the same way as the Portuguese had, such as the Balide Comarca (the city's prison) and the Lahane hospital. Other buildings, however, were repurposed into

becoming killing and interrogation sites of East Timorese civilians, and soldiers fighting in the Falintil forces (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste, Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor). In July 1976, East Timor was 'integrated' into Indonesia as its 27th province, but remained closed to visitors until 1989, as Indonesia fought to defeat the pro-independence forces. As well as operating detention and torture sites, the army introduced new security and surveillance systems, including the prevalent use of spies and informants.

The displacement of an estimated 108,000 East Timorese over the course of the Indonesian occupation,³ contributed to inward migration into Dili. Suburbs such as Kuluhun, Becora, Bemori and Santa Cruz swelled with migrants from districts such as Baucau, Los Palos, Bobonaro and Viqueque, escaping military persecution in the rural areas. Some youths who migrated to these suburbs were drawn into the clandestine movement in opposition to Indonesian rule. The guerrilla movement active in the rural areas of East Timor, so symbolic of the struggle against Indonesian rule, relied on the communication and supply links maintained by the clandestine network. Memoirs by East Timorese activists Constancio Pinto and

Naldo Rei recount aspects of this work, such as in the couriering of letters, cassette tapes and photographs between the armed resistance and the outside world, and the protection of Resistance leaders such as Xanana Gusmão in Dili's safe houses.⁴ There is much still to be documented of how the clandestine youth lived in and used this city as a site of activism.

My research project on the sea voyage in 1995 of the only asylum seeker boat to have reached Australia from East Timor, has led me into discussing with my interviewees their experiences of living in Dili in the 1980s and 90s. The passengers of the boat, the *Tasi Diak* [Good Sea], were young people who were born and had grown up during the Indonesian occupation – some whom had survived the 1991 Santa Cruz Cemetery massacre in Dili when the army killed 271 people at a funeral march. The interviews I have carried out in the past two years with them suggest that life in the city was not only about being in the grip of terror. The city's residents chafed against the authority of the Indonesian army and a network of informants, and expressed their dissatisfaction through low-level civil disobedience such as stone throwing and harassment of Indonesian settlers and public servants. Despite the threat of repeated detention, youths threw stones at Indonesian security forces and kept a close eye on the *mau'hu*, a term used locally to refer to pro-Indonesian East Timorese spies. The research is still currently underway, but these life stories seem to suggest that, in their activism, youths involved in the clandestine movement took advantage of certain characteristics of the city. High population density and mobility in particular suburbs enabled them to pass by unnoticed, and they monitored the security situation by hanging out in public places.

After Dili's near destruction at the hands of the Indonesian army and East Timorese militias in 1999, the East Timorese government and private sector have refurbished many former Indonesian administration buildings. Dili is a rapidly changing city. Historical sites are under threat of disappearing due to redevelopment and changing land use. The Hotel Turismo, a historic hotel built in the 1960s where pro-independence youths had protested for independence was included in the CNC's list. But it was demolished in 2010, rebuilt without preserving any original features and renamed.⁵ The Indonesian Embassy's new Cultural Centre has erased traces of the old Dili regency police headquarters (Polres) where East Timorese were routinely detained.⁶

In some instances, buildings have been repurposed, rather than destroyed, as were Indonesian era monuments. In 2009, the Indonesian Integration Monument and its surrounds were turned into the 5 May Park, commemorating the historic 1999 agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN to hold the independence ballot. The CNC has printed a coloured map showing its historical sites and conducts tours for students, such as to Gusmão's former hideout in Cacauidu. The East Timorese non-government organisation, Youth for National Development (JDN) runs historical walking tours for visitors to Dili. The CNC's Historical Sites project strives to preserve the historical memory embodied in the city's physical structures, as did the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPNC)'s recording of Portuguese era architectural legacy some years earlier.⁷ In a time of rapid change and high population mobility, interviews with the city's residents, past and present, deepens our understanding of how the urban setting provided opportunities for youth to come together and become politically active.

Vannessa Hearman is a historian and senior lecturer in Indonesian Studies at Charles Darwin University, Australia.

Notes

- 1 Briere, E. 2004. *East Timor: Testimony*. Toronto: Between the Lines, p.84.
- 2 Joliffe, J. 2001. *Cover Up: The Inside Story of the Balibo Five*. Melbourne: Scribe Publications, p.46.
- 3 CAVR. 2013. *Chegal! The Final Report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR)*. Jakarta: KPG in cooperation with STP-CAVR, p.502.
- 4 Pinto, C. & Jardine, M. 1996. *East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance*. Boston: South East Press; Rei, N. 2007. *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor*. St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press.
- 5 Murdoch, L. 13 March 2010. 'Heartbreak goes on at the hotel that has had more than its share', *Sydney Morning Herald*; <https://tinyurl.com/SMHDiliHotel>
- 6 Centro Nacional Chegal! 2017. *Dili Sidade Istoriku: Da Memoria a Esperanca map*. Dili: Centro Nacional Chegal!. See also Chegal! Final Report, p.2204.
- 7 Miranda, F. & Boavida, I. (eds) 2015. *Património Arquitectónico de Origem Portuguesa Dili*. Dili: Direcção Nacional Património Cultural.

The changing nature of resistance: East Timor on the international stage

Hannah Loney

On 7 December 1975, Indonesia launched a full-scale land, sea and air invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. It took several years, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of civilian lives, before Indonesian forces gained control over the territory. On 26 March 1979, the Indonesian Government declared East Timor 'pacified' and established the militarized state structure that would administer the territory until 1999. There were a number of shifts in the policies governing the administration of East Timor, but Indonesian rule largely relied upon the constant and pervasive presence of the military, and the government's ability to minimize international awareness of the situation there.¹ Even with these features, many East Timorese remained committed to the idea of national self-determination, yet the shape and form of their opposition changed across the twenty-four-year period. My book—*In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor*—explores women's experiences of, and participation in, the development of a culture of resistance in East Timor.²

In 1989, the Indonesian President Suharto visited East Timor and declared the territory to have 'equal status' with other provinces. Despite this declaration, the Indonesian military's presence remained high, and security forces responded heavily to growing public expressions of discontent. At the same time, links were being fostered between East Timorese students studying in Indonesia and Indonesian pro-democracy activists around a broader movement for democratisation and political change. The common enemy was Suharto's regime and the common rhetoric was the developing language of universal human rights. The nature of the East Timorese resistance changed too, as a new generation of East Timorese who had grown up under Indonesian rule began to express publicly their opposition to the occupying regime. From a leftist inspired national liberation movement, the East Timorese resistance began to appeal more directly to the international community and became increasingly adept at utilising the language of human rights to frame their concerns.³ These developments were particularly important for the way

in which East Timorese women engaged with, and contributed to, a broader politics of resistance.

Several events within East Timor signalled a shift in the nature of opposition towards peaceful yet more public expressions of defiance that were increasingly aimed at an international audience. The violent repression of these protests by Indonesian forces, paradoxically, had the effect of accentuating their visibility and potency in international networks. The visits to the territory of Pope John Paul II on 12 October 1989, and US Ambassador to Indonesia, John Monjo, on 17 January 1990 precipitated large, peaceful public demonstrations, which were followed by violent crackdowns by Indonesian forces.⁴

The most well-known of these protests was the Santa Cruz demonstration, which took place in Dili on 12 November 1991 after a funeral procession for a young student, Sebastião Gomes.⁵ Indonesian security forces lined the streets while demonstrators – including many women – marched from the Motael Church to the Santa Cruz cemetery. Along the way, banners were unfurled calling for the United Nations to intervene in East Timor, pledging support for the resistance leader Xanana Gusmão, and advocating for East Timor's right to national self-determination. Once the protestors reached the cemetery Indonesian forces opened fire, killing an estimated 270 young people. Many hundreds of others were detained or disappeared in the military crackdown that followed. The massacre was captured on film by a foreign journalist, who was present for the planned visit of a Portuguese

parliamentary delegation. The footage was smuggled out of the territory in the days following, and subsequently broadcast on television stations around the world. These events marked a watershed moment in East Timor's modern history, and permanently changed the way that the international community perceived the Indonesian occupation.

The clandestine resistance continued to grow throughout the 1990s, with many young East Timorese taking great risks to deliver information to international solidarity networks and to hold demonstrations when foreign delegations were present in the territory. These changes to the nature of the East Timorese resistance were also impacted by mounting tensions in the Indonesian political landscape. The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98 produced high rates of unemployment, and rising food prices exposed the corruption and economic mismanagement of the Suharto regime, leading to mass protests across the country. The popular *Reformasi* movement, which used as its rallying cry the condemnation of Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism (*Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme*, KKN), triggered the resignation of President Suharto on 21 May 1998 and the subsequent collapse of the New Order regime.⁶ The new Indonesian President B. J. Habibie introduced far-reaching reforms that dismantled many of the foundations of the former regime. These measures provided the space for civil society to organise in Indonesia and, although to a lesser extent, opportunities for public discussion also became available in East Timor.

Human value, human rights and gender equality in Timor-Leste

Sara Niner

Gender equality and its feminist rationale are based on individual human rights while in customary or communal societies everyone's status and rights are relational to others in their community. Communities are made up of 'partible' persons or 'dividuals' without individual interests or rights. Women or men cannot have equal rights and their privileges depend upon their social status. While the idea of the partible person in customary societies has been challenged by the long-term influences of colonialism, Christianity and capitalism, it does go some way to explaining the lack of traction for gender equality in customary societies.¹

The island of Timor is a bridge between the Malay and Melanesian worlds, meaning the original languages and cultures in Timor reflect both forms of sociality. This diversity and the mixing of matrilineal and patrilineal ethnolinguistic groups makes understanding gender relations in Timor-Leste more complex. External influences make this more so. Centuries of Portuguese colonialism and Catholic proselytising was abruptly replaced by a brutal 24-year military occupation by neighbouring Indonesia (1975-1999), which was immediately followed by the interventions of UN peacekeepers and the international aid sector. Each regime imposed gender values and relations with little recognition of what previously existed because of an assumption of cultural superiority.

In my research, I have sought to discover how the gender relations of the indigenous societies of Timor shifted and adapted to foreign influences over the centuries, and how they resist or absorb the more recently introduced imperative of gender equality. 'Traditional' or customary societies are perceived as incompatible with introduced, modern ideas of citizenship, democracy and equality, yet, "the complex entanglement of social relations based in precolonial systems with those of colonialism, Western

education, new economic forms and Christian adherence belies this simplistic division into intrinsic and introduced".²

Violence against women or sanctioned relational behaviour?

A Melanesian woman is imagined as acting in terms of the interests of others rather than her own individual ones.³ Strathern explains that Melanesian women were willing and even connive "to go against their own interests" because of their outlook as a partible person embodying "the interests of others".⁴ This provides insight into women all around the world tolerating domestic violence; limiting their individual welfare for the sake of keeping families together and not creating further discord in extended families or clan groups. There are other reasons too, but this is a central concern. Domestic or gendered violence can be explained in this complex way everywhere in the world, but particularly in customary societies where individual rights cannot be assumed, such as in Timor-Leste.

Indigenous gift exchange or trading in women?

In customary Timorese society marriage exchange and relations between the families or clans of the bride and groom are regulated by practices referred to as *barlake*, which today feature in an estimated half of all marriages.⁵ A series of gift exchanges which signify the formal transfer of a bride spiritually to the clan house of her husband's family, often defined in western terms as dowry and bride price, are described by feminists as dehumanizing to the level of a purchased object or a commodity manifesting in the control and abuse of women.⁶ Today, *barlake* is often blamed for the high levels

of domestic violence in Timor-Leste. In pre-1975 Portuguese Timor condemnation of *barlake* was not from feminists, but the Catholic Church. Using a similar rationale, they preached that the human soul transcended the material world and that a soul and a gift could never be equal or exchanged.⁷ One of the major issues in the debate over *barlake* is the nature of the gifts exchanged and whether they can be considered a payment for the bride.

Writing about Melanesian society in Papua New Guinea, Strathern describes similar exchange practices that mediate gender relations where gifts embody the labour and personhood of the maker. Exchange gifts are not mere material, like a commodity, but the embodiment of those offering it. Keane explores the ontological assumptions that underpin the conflicting understandings of ritual gift exchanges in nearby Eastern Indonesia.⁸ He argues that westerners see exchanges as immoral, akin to slavery, because they assume that the people and 'things' exchanged in these practices are equal, based on their own culture of capitalism and "the alienating effects of commodity exchange". Yet gifts should never be construed as a payment, but are a symbol of the person offering it.

Writing about Timor-Leste, Silva takes this one step further, arguing that those unable to provide the gifts cannot achieve full personhood and therefore can be treated much like slaves. Husbands unable to provide the required gifts to their bride's family are expected to reside with their wife's family and labour for them in perpetuity.⁹ This explains why women in customary societies support *barlake* as their only claim to personhood or human value, with rights to recourse if they are treated unfairly or abused in husband's household.¹⁰ This can be construed as a local customary version of a regime of human rights based on 'citizenship' of a clan society, although status remains relational. The dark side of this is the treatment of those unable to gain status as slaves, which has a long history in Timor. The informal adoption of poor children among extended families who are treated like indentured servants has resulted in contemporary cases of the physical abuse of children.¹¹

The local Timorese women's movement members are the only ones fully equipped to work in this 'gap' between cultures

because they are the only ones who know how to navigate between the modern and customary. These are the women who oversaw the inclusion of the gender equality clause in the constitution and the introduction of the domestic violence law with the collaboration of international feminists. These acts of solidarity are the foundation on which to build gender equality.

Sara Niner is an interdisciplinary researcher and lecturer in Anthropology with the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. She is the course Director of the Masters of International Development practice.
Sara.Niner@monash.edu

Notes

- 1 Macintyre, M. 2017. 'Introduction: Flux and change in Melanesian gender relations', in Macintyre, M. & Spark, C. (eds) *Transformations of Gender in Melanesia*. Canberra: ANU Press, pp.1-21.
- 2 Ibid., p.5.
- 3 Ibid., p.6.
- 4 Strathern, M. 1988. *The gender of the gift. Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- 5 Niner, S. 2012. 'Barlake: an exploration of marriage practices and issues of women's status in Timor-Leste', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 11:138-153. Globalism Research Centre, RMIT: Melbourne
- 6 Rubin, G. 1975. 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in Linda Nicholson (ed.) 1997. *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. Routledge, pp.27-62.
- 7 Silva, K. 2018. 'Marriage Prestations, Gift Making and Identity in Urban East Timor', *Oceania* 88(1):127-147.
- 8 Keane, W. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and fetish in the mission encounter*. University of California, pp.197-222.
- 9 Hicks, D. 2012. 'Barlake: Compatibility, resilience and adaptation: The Barlake of Timor-Leste', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 11:124-137. Globalism Research Centre, RMIT: Melbourne.
- 10 Ibid., Niner 2012.
- 11 Niner, S. 2017. 'Reflection on the special gender stream: 2017 Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference', *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 10(2):275-279.

Within this changing political climate, several women's organisations were established in East Timor. Drawing upon the opportunities provided by political developments in Indonesia and the associated capacity for civil action, these organisations facilitated a number of public forums for East Timorese women to come together to share their experiences of violence and suffering. As my interviewees described, these gatherings were a source of inspiration for many of the participants, and proved critical in both affirming and deepening their commitment to independence. They were also demonstrative of a pronounced shift in the nature of opposition to Indonesian military occupation. Combined with a spirit of shared survival and resistance, international attention to the brutality of Indonesian rule after the Santa Cruz massacre and the changing political climate in Indonesia, paved the way for East Timor's transition to independence. My examination of women's experiences of the changing, and increasingly international, dimensions of the East Timorese resistance sheds new light upon the intersections between the local and the global in East Timor's independence struggle, as well as the gendered dynamics of agency, violence and resistance.

Hannah Loney is a Gilbert Postdoctoral Early Career Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her book, *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1975-1999*, was published with Sussex Academic Press in 2018.

Notes

- 1 Fernandes, C. 2011. *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives: Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism*. Sussex Academic Press.
- 2 Loney, H. 2018. *In Women's Words: Violence and Everyday Life during the Indonesian Occupation of East Timor, 1975-1999*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.
- 3 Webster, D. 2013. 'Languages of Human Rights in Timor-Leste', *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 11(1):5-21.
- 4 See CAVR. 2013. 'Part 3: History of the Conflict', *Chega! The Final Report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR)*, Vol. 1. Jakarta: KPG in cooperation with STP-CAVR. <http://chegareport.net/Chega%20All%20Volumes.pdf>
- 5 See '11: The Santa Cruz Massacre', in Pinto, C. & Jardine, M. 1997. *East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the East Timorese Resistance*. Toronto: Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data, pp.188-99; and 'Chapter 7: The Santa Cruz Massacre', in Rei, N. 2007. *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, pp.48-53.
- 6 See Aspinall, E. & Fealy, G. (eds) 2010. *Soeharto's New Order and its Legacy: Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch*. Acton: ANU E Press.

Right: The grave and memorial of Sebastião Gomes. Photo: Vanessa Hearman.



The Tumen River Area. Building a new paradigm of multiculturalism and cooperation for Northeast Asia is its borderlands

Ilhong Ko

The Tumen River Area has a dual identity. Located where the borders of China, North Korea, and Russia meet, the area's peripheral nature played an active role in the establishment of ethnic Korean communities in the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the 21st century, the area has gained a new identity. It acts as a gateway between China and South Korea, and China and North Korea, and is therefore one of the few places in the world where ordinary Koreans from the North and South may unknowingly brush shoulders with one another. This dual identity, as both the borderlands and a key hub of Northeast Asia, provides the Tumen River Area with an ideal background against which a new paradigm of multiculturalism and cooperation in Northeast Asia can emerge.

In this issue of News from Northeast Asia, we examine the efforts that are taking place in the Tumen River Area to establish such an atmosphere of multiculturalism and cooperation.

In 'Tumen River Forum: providing a platform for peace, prosperity, and harmony in East Asia', Xu Yulan of Yanbian University introduces the goals of this forum and its

outline. The role of the Tumen River Area in establishing new strategies for multilateral economic cooperation is addressed by Yanbian University's Quan Zhenan in 'New opportunities and strategies for multilateral economic cooperation in the Northeast Asia region'. Finally, the way in which the ethnic Korean authors of the Tumen River Area have found a way to arrive at true multiculturalism and reconciliation

is examined by Jin Hu Xiong, of Yanbian University, in 'Contradictions, communication, and reconciliation between the ethnic Koreans of the Tumen River Area and the South Korean people'.

Ilhong Ko Research Fellow,
Seoul National University Asia Center;
Regional Editor of News from
Northeast Asia mahari95@snu.ac.kr

Tumen River Forum: providing a platform for peace, prosperity, and harmony in East Asia

Xu Yulan

The Tumen River Forum, launched in 2008, is an international academic forum co-hosted by China's Yanbian University and the Republic of Korea's Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies. The purpose of this forum, which will usher in its twelfth annual session this year, is to uphold multiculturalism in East Asia, by focusing on practical issues, by seeking consensus, and by enhancing cooperation. The forum endeavors to build up a collaborative and innovative platform where intelligentsia, political leaders, and business elites can come together to discuss international cooperation in the Tumen River Area.

As the geographical center of Northeast Asia and a nexus of its cultures, the Tumen River Area is greatly important in terms of its geographical advantages and potential for significant development. Regional joint efforts are essential in order to utilize the area's advantages and potential for increased competitiveness. It is believed that by enhancing mutual understanding, the countries of the wider region will be able to build up an environment of sound cooperation, characterized by win-win cooperation and openness, and construct a community of shared cultures and economy marked by harmony, economic integration, and cultural inclusiveness, which features the Tumen River Area at its core.

Over the past decade, the Tumen River Forum has played a key role in boosting cultural exchanges in this distinctive region, creating a peaceful and collaborative environment, and promoting regional

harmony and common prosperity. The forum's eleven successful annual sessions have been attended by many distinguished scholars from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the United States, Russia, and Mongolia. Buoyed by the multicultural atmosphere that characterizes the forum, these scholars have freely exchanged the results of their research and have engaged in extensive, in-depth discussions over the pressing problems concerning regional cooperation and development in the area, in addition to providing perspectives and advice for the overall development of the area. The key themes for the forum in 2017 and 2018 were, respectively, 'International exchanges and cooperation in the Tumen River Area: towards a community of a shared future' and 'Review and outlook: pathways to common prosperity in the Tumen River Area.' The forum has also set up close strategic partnerships with participating universities and research institutions from the above mentioned countries.

The Tumen River Forum has come to exert an increasing academic and social impact. It is now an important platform supporting and enhancing regional collaboration and exchanges, featuring sub-forums on philosophy, economy, literature, culture, etc. To expand the scale and scope of regional collaboration, the forum has also recently set up two roundtables. One is a roundtable for officials, entrepreneurs, and scholars, focusing on regional economic cooperation; the topic in 2018 was 'The Development of Wangqing in the New Era'. The other



Above: Participants of one of the sub-forums of the 2018 Tumen River Forum (Image provided by the organizers of the Tumen River Forum). Below: Official photograph of the participants of the 2018 Tumen River Forum. Image provided by the organizers of the Tumen River Forum.

roundtable, entitled 'China-DPRK scholar's dialogue', centers on regional political collaboration and is attended exclusively by scholars from China and the DPRK. In 2018, the two topics addressed at this roundtable were 'DPRK's tourism and China-DPRK tourism cooperation' and 'China-DPRK cooperation and peaceful development of Northeast Asia'. The 2018 roundtable was attended by five scholars from China and five scholars from the DPRK, the latter of whom were all based at Kim Il-sung University.

The Tumen River Area, bordered by China, DPRK, and Russia, and acting as an important hub of exchange in human resources between China and South Korea, provides an ideal background against which discourse on multiculturalism in Northeast

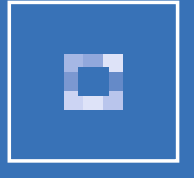
Asia can develop. Ultimately, the Tumen River Forum aims to provide a platform where a new paradigm of 'Northeast Asian multiculturalism' can emerge and concrete efforts for its continuation can be shared.

Xu Yulan Professor of the Department of Journalism and Deputy Director of the Center for North and South Korea Studies, Yanbian University ylxu@ybu.edu.cn

Notes

- 1 The key themes and session themes of the Tumen River Forum from 2008 to 2016 can be found at the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS) webpage; <https://tinyurl.com/kfasSFT>

SNUAC
Seoul National University Asia Center



The Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) is a research and international exchange institute based in Seoul, South Korea. The SNUAC's most distinctive feature is its cooperative approach in fostering research projects and international exchange program through close interactions between regional and thematic research programs about Asia and the world. To pursue its mission to become a hub of Asian Studies, SNUAC research teams are divided by different regions and themes. Research centers and programs are closely integrated, providing a solid foundation for deeper analysis of Asian society.

New opportunities and strategies for multilateral economic cooperation in the Northeast Asia region

Quan Zhenan

Due to geographical proximity and different conditions of economic development and endowed resources, the interdependence of elements of production (such as resources, labor, capital, and technology) is considerable in the Northeast Asia region, with its huge market and great potential for further development. In other words, the economic conditions for multilateral economic cooperation are clearly present. Economic cooperation in the region, however, continues to be led by bilateral investment and exchange (China-Japan, China-Republic of Korea (ROK), China-Russia, and China-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)); multilateral economic cooperation is extremely limited.

One of the key elements responsible for this weak multilateral economic cooperation has been the Cold War structure that continues to leave its mark on the region, the conflict between the two Koreas being the main reason for the continuation of this Cold War structure. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 1953, the Korean peninsula has continuously witnessed conflict between the DPRK and the US-ROK Military Alliance and the US-Japan Military Alliance. Territorial conflicts between China and Japan, Korea and Japan, and Russia and Japan, along with differing viewpoints on historical issues (such as the Japanese colonial occupation of the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese invasion of China) have also resulted in discord within the region. As a result, security arrangements have yet to be firmly established. At the same time, the US has been able to utilize its military alliances with the ROK and Japan, as well as the strong dependence that the economies of China, the ROK, and Japan have on the US economy, to maintain its strong influence in the region.

Recently, however, the region has come to experience significant changes. In April 2018, the DPRK government proclaimed that its 'Economy-Nuclear Parallel Development Policy' had fulfilled its historic task, and that the capabilities of the party and the entire state would now be focused on an 'Economic Development Policy', the aim of which is to establish a socialist economic system. Based on economic theory, the examples of successful economic development by developing countries, and the nature of its endowed resources, it is clear that in order for the DPRK, with its small-scale economic system, to achieve sustainable economic development, the nuclear issue must first be resolved, UN sanctions must be lifted through improvement of international relations, and exchange and cooperation with the global economic system must be strengthened. Given that the DPRK's motivation for nuclear development is to ensure the security of the regime, there is plenty of reason to believe that once the regime's security has been ensured, the DPRK will achieve denuclearization and focus on economic development. Indeed, following Kim Jong Un's 2018 New Year's address, attempts were made to improve international relations by holding summit meetings with China, the ROK, and the US.

Bordering the Tumen River Area, the DPRK is located in the center of Northeast Asia. In the instance that sanctions are lifted and relations with the ROK improved, allowing the DPRK to open its borders and reform



Above: The North Korean city of Namyang, located on the other side of the Tumen River from the Chinese city of Tumen, as seen through a tourist monocular. Picture taken by Ilhong Ko.

its markets, then it will become possible to establish a land route (consisting of roads and railways) connecting the Korean Peninsula, the Northeast region of China, Russia's Far East, and Mongolia. With the development of infrastructure, such as highways and high-speed trains, travelling between the aforementioned regions in a single day would become possible, resulting in the formation of a huge international market. The opening of the ports of Najin, Chongjin, and Wonsan would also act to provide Japan with a gateway to the Northeast region of China and Mongolia. What makes the DPRK attractive for investors is not only its labor force and natural resources but also the size of the market and its potential for long-term growth, both of which are also dependent on the formation of a wider international market (at the core of which is the Tumen River Area) and its active growth.

It is therefore clear that multilateral economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is dependent on an improvement of international and military relations throughout the wider regional sphere, as well as economic integration. As such, the DPRK's efforts towards change represent a valuable opportunity that must not be wasted; the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the replacement of the armistice agreement with a peace treaty must be achieved in order to ensure the stability of the region and to open the doors for multilateral economic cooperation. In addition to this, attempts must also be made to establish the framework and institutions that will allow multilateral economic cooperation to take place. The integration of China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) and the ROK's 'New Economic Map Initiative' can be an example of this, resulting in the formation of a Trans-Eurasia trade route that can facilitate the smooth exchange of elements of production and goods. Multilateral economic cooperation should particularly be focused on that which is beneficial to all parties involved, such as tourism, energy, regional development, environmental protection, and sustainable growth.

The Tumen River Area, due to its geopolitical location within the Northeast Asian world, presents an ideal backdrop against which such new efforts and strategies for multilateral economic cooperation may manifest themselves. The area also has the potential to become an incubation ground for a new system of labor division, a new type of value chain, and the development of a platform for ecommerce that may contribute to the development of the region's small businesses. Ultimately, this might also lead to the realization of a FTA between China, the ROK, and Japan. As such, it is possible to argue that the Tumen River Area may be one of the places where the key to long-term peace, prosperity, and multilateralism in Northeast Asia may be found.

Quan Zhenan
Professor and Director of College of Economics and Management, Yanbian University
qzn9292@163.com

Contradictions, communication, and reconciliation between the ethnic Koreans of the Tumen River Area and the South Korean people

Jin Hu Xiong

Many ethnic Koreans from the Tumen River Area have made a second home for themselves in South Korea. In 2014, there were approximately 400 thousand ethnic Koreans from China residing in South Korea. Prior to 1988, they mainly came to the 'motherland' to visit relatives and were met with warm greetings and showered with gifts. However, the ethnic Koreans from China soon came to realize that South Koreans were willing to spend heavily on traditional medicinal ingredients from China, such as deer antler, and stimulated by the transition to a market economy that was taking place in China at the time, they began to regard South Korea as a place where money could be made by selling illegally smuggled traditional medicinal ingredients. This phase, from 1988 to 1990, is known as the 'medicine peddler phase' of ethnic Korean migration. Following this phase, the ethnic Koreans from China began to (illegally) provide much needed labor for the South Korean economy, but it is only from September of 2003 that they gained the right to remain in Korea as legal economic migrants. This is, in short, the historical background of the 'Korean Dream'.

The experiences of these ethnic Koreans in South Korea are represented in the novels of authors from the Tumen River Area, published

in literary journals such as *Yanbian Literature*, *Doraji*, and *Jangbaeksan*. The early novels that deal with the 'Korean Dream' present a relatively negative view of South Korea, as a place responsible for taking away wives and breaking down happy and peaceful families, eventually bringing about misfortune to the local community. In reality, however, much more was achieved than lost through the 'Korean Dream'. So what may have led to the formation of such a demonic image of South Korea in these early novels? Differences in the cultural consciousness of the two groups, stemming from differences in ideology and the socio-political system, may have certainly played a part. However, the limited experiences of these ethnic Korean writers in South Korea must also be taken into consideration. For these writers, South Korea was a place where they worked as low-wage employees (or even as illegal immigrants) and it is likely that they would have come into contact and experienced friction with people at the bottom of the South Korean social ladder.

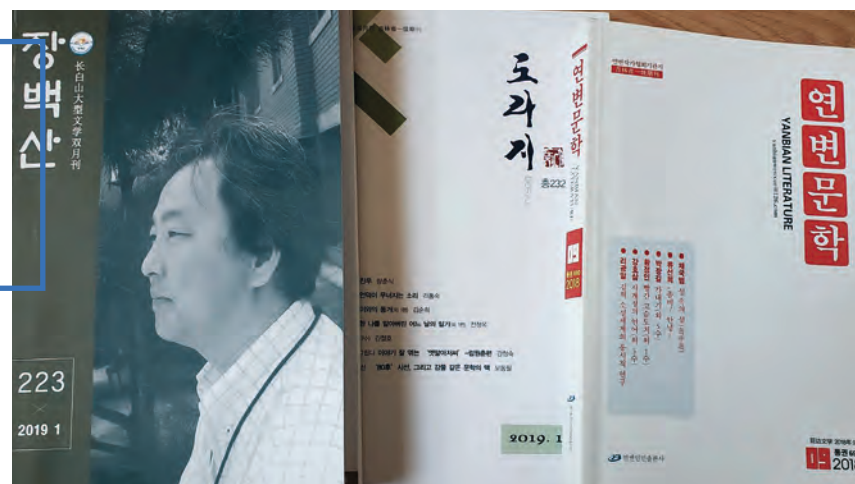
More recently published novels dealing with the 'Korean Dream', however, have aimed to overcome the contradictions between the ethnic Koreans of China and the South Korean people. These novels are full of considerations on the issue of 'ethnic identity' and contain a great deal of love and humanism. They also

show that the authors from the Tumen River Area have come to arrive at the understanding that both groups share a mutual agony and are now able to show sympathy for the South Korean people as well. In particular, through reflections upon their own ethnic community, the ethnic Korean authors have come to form a philosophy that maintains that only based on self-esteem, self-love, and self-reinforcement will it be possible to reach true equality and frank dialogue, and co-exist in harmony with the South Korean people. It can therefore be said that the horizon of novels by the ethnic Korean authors of the Tumen River Area is further expanding.

Upon reading *Korean Dream* by the ethnic Korean Chinese author Hye-sun Lee, the South Korean novelist Wanseo Park voiced frankly that "it is painful to see that we are sometimes perpetrators or in the position of being the one that oppresses and exploits". This shows that the image of the South

Korean people depicted in the novels of ethnic Korean Chinese authors provides much inspiration not only to the ethnic Koreans of the Tumen River Area but also the people of South Korea. The governments of China and South Korea should also take note of such images. For the South Korean government, in particular, it is imperative that they obtain (through these novels and other forms of media) an understanding of the experiences and mindsets of the ethnic Koreans of the Tumen River Area and how they perceive the South Korean people, for this has important implications for future interactions and reconciliation between the peoples of the two Koreas, which will hopefully take place in the future.

Jin Hu Xiong Professor of Korean Language and Literature, Center for North and South Korea Studies, Yanbian University Hxjin525@ybu.edu.cn



Above: The major literary journals publishing works by ethnic Korean authors of the Tumen River Area: (from left to right) Jangbaeksan, Doraji, and Yanbian Literature.

Asian studies in China's academies of social sciences: an introduction

Wellin Pan

In his progressive vision of a general Chinese history, the phenomenal Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao in 1901 claimed the modern period of China would be characterized by a transition from 'China of Asia' [*yazhou zhi zhongguo*] when "the Chinese intensively engaged and competed with various peoples of Asia" to 'China of the world' [*shijie zhi zhongguo*] when "the Chinese united with all the Asian peoples in their negotiation and competition with the Westerners". It came as no surprise that the Chinese President Xi Jinping quoted Liang in his recent keynote speech at the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations.¹

As argued by contemporary scholars, regions are imagined constructs that have historical specificity and reflect the existing international structures. In the case of Asia, it was first created as a regional construct to rethink political action and organization during the twentieth century course of anti-imperialism and nation-state formation in the West Pacific and Indian Ocean. The rise of the modern scholarship of Asia in China was a response to China's frontier and identity crises from the mid nineteenth century to the WWII era. After 1949, Asian studies in China also bore as much strategic importance as the area studies in other countries. The best example is the development of Asian studies in the Chinese academies of social sciences.

Although modeled on the Soviet-style Academy, the Chinese academies of social sciences were established after 1978, when the Soviet influence had faded away and China re-embraced the world.

Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's reform and opening up, underlined the significance of academic achievements to China's course of modernization. Under his leadership, state and provincial level academies mushroomed in the capital and each provincial seat. As government affiliated research institutes, all academies play both roles of academic research and advisory function to the party-state. Hence, their research agendas are tightly bound to the missions of particular ministries, and the foreign analysts have learnt to observe China's policy-making system through these 'important windows'. This also smoothens their recent transformation into 'think tanks with Chinese characteristics'.

In addition to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 7 out of 29 provincial-level academies have specialized institutes for Asian studies, largely in response to their geographical proximity to relevant Asian countries and sub-regions. As a result, the academic definition and scope of Asia and

its sub-regions reflect the geopolitical dynamics as well as China's major interests and concerns. Prior to 1978, attention was given to Asian countries with either historical ties with China or belonging to the Communist bloc. In the 1980s, country surveys and comparative studies of economic development were emphasized, as China endeavored to learn from the 'East Asian Miracle'. Since the 1990s, regional security and cooperation as well as sustainable development have become the common themes for the pursuit of a more integrated Asia. As China craves for a more substantial role in Asia, more academic resources have been poured into the studies of China's national strategies and new regional/sub-regional orders.

Besides this introductory piece, three scholars from different academies are invited to reflect on the development of their own institutes and their own research. It is the editor's wish that these articles will offer the audience 'windows' to how China envisions herself in Asia and the world.

Wellin Pan Adjunct Postdoc Fellow, CGA, NYU Shanghai; Assistant Professor, Institute of China Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences
pwl@sass.org.cn



South Asian Studies at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences

Lan Deng

joined the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (YASS) in 2000, when the YASS Institute of South Asian Studies was formally established and the then President of India, Kocheril Raman Narayanan, visited us. In the initial stage of my career, I was awarded a valuable opportunity and granted a scholarship to pursue my further studies and conduct fieldwork at the School of International Studies (SIS) and the Center of Economic Studies and Planning (CESP) of the School of Social Sciences (SSS) in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, as visiting fellow and full-time student from 2002 to 2005. Yet, my own career pursuit is in alignment with the overall commitment of YASS to become a high-end think tank with international influence especially in the fields of South Asian and Southeast Asian studies.

When Premier Zhou Enlai and Prime Minister Nehru met for the first time in 1954, they discussed the possibilities of opening airlines and motorways between China and India. The YASS scholars are the successors, promoters, practitioners and innovators of their ideas. As early as the 1960s, scholars at YASS started to conduct research on India and South Asia. In the late 1990s, China and India called for regional cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) and met with positive responses of the other two. The four countries later signed and put it into action the 'Kunming Initiative'. After rounds of Track-II conversations, this cooperative mechanism was upgraded to Track-I channel, known subsequently as 'The Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM EC)' in 2013 in both Joint Statements of China and India and China and Bangladesh.

Responding to the constant changes both home and abroad, YASS continuously promotes the institutionalization of South Asian studies. In 2000, three years after its launching, the Center of South Asian Studies was upgraded

to the Institute of South Asian Studies. In 2003, the Yunnan Society of South Asian Studies was established. As the first local-level society of South Asian studies in China, it is built on the capacities of research and administration of our institute. In 2006, YASS was rebranded as the Yunnan Academy of Southeast and South Asian Studies. The newest addition to its research capacity is the establishment of the Chinese (Kunming) Academy of South Asian and Southeast Asian studies in 2015. The state-level institutes such as Institute of Indian Studies and Institute of Bangladesh Studies came out of the shell as well. I was transferred to the Institute of Indian Studies and have served as its deputy director since 2016.

Compared with other research institutions of South Asian studies in China, the strengths of YASS have lain in the regional and sub-regional cooperative studies. Apart from our long-term focus on the BCIM cooperation, we have widened our research scope by monitoring other multilateral sub-regional cooperative mechanisms, such as 'The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative', 'The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC), 'The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership' (RCEP) and emerging free trade zones in the region.

Considering Yunnan's geographical proximity to and historical links with the region in perspective, we have also expanded our work into Indian Ocean studies. A number of books are published and a few state and province sponsored projects are conducted on such topics as the geopolitics and geo-economics, maritime and non-traditional securities as well as the economic and social development



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.

Notes

- 1 The English translation of Xi's sentence is "China today is more than the country itself; it is very much a part of Asia and the world". See 'Full text of Xi's speech at opening of CDAC', 16 May 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/BaRP-full> (retrieved 29 May 2019).

in the region. The Research Association of Indian Ocean has been set up to facilitate the networking of concerned scholars.

On the one hand, focusing on the national strategies and heated issues, our institutes have carried out research and provided policy consultation, on such topics as relationships among South Asian countries and major powers, regional security, international politics and relationship between neighboring countries and China. On the other hand, country-wise research has always been emphasized in the South Asian studies in China. Nowadays, all of the eight South Asian countries have been covered by different specialists. The *Series of South Asian Studies* and the *South Asian Annual Report* have run for almost 20 years, alongside the policy briefings and scholarly monographs published from time to time. In the future, the fundamental research on history, religion and culture should not be ignored, while the applied research continues to be emphasized. The in-depth research on individual countries will be further strengthened.

Last but not least, YASS has been seeking for active engagement and partnership in the region by hosting the China-South and Southeast Asian Think Tank Forum (2013-2019) and signing Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with major South Asian research institutions, as well as launching joint projects.

Lan Deng Associate Research Fellow and Deputy Director, Institute of Indian Studies, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences; Chinese (Kunming) Academy of South and Southeast Asian Studies
dorothy858@126.com

Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: a retrospective

Lei Tang

In the winter of 1963, before visiting the African countries, Premier Zhou Enlai submitted 'A Report on Strengthening Research about Foreign Countries' to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which had been formerly endorsed by the Central Foreign Affairs Leading Group. In the report, Zhou proposed to strengthen research on foreign affairs by establishing institutes of area studies in response to the changed international status of China as a big country with the world's attention. This report was approved by Chairman Mao on 31 December 1963. After that, area studies in China took off.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is a case in point. It was originally the Philosophy and Social Sciences Division under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, formed in June 1955. It was during the 1960s and 1970s that CASS gradually took shape and developed its capacities in Asian studies. The main body of Asian studies at CASS today is composed of a number of administrative offices and institutes founded prior to its very own establishment and

now generally associated with international studies. For example, the Institute of West Asian and African Studies was established in 1961. In 1965, the Research Institute of Soviet Union was established and later became part of the CPC Central Foreign Liaison Department and finally absorbed into CASS in the early 1980s.

After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the Chinese government resumed its promotion of research on humanities and social sciences and proposed new development agendas of area studies. A number of new institutes were added after the establishment of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1977. They included the Institute of Japanese Studies (1978); the Institute of South Asian Studies (1978), renamed the Institute of South Asian and Southeast Asian Studies in 1986; as well as the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies.

In 2006, CASS restored the Academic Division system [xuebu zhi 学部制] and established five divisions to cover Literature, History and Philosophy [wenshizhe 文史哲], Economics [jingji 经济], Sociology, Politics and Law [shehui zhengfa 社会政法], International

Studies [guoji yanjiu 国际研究] as well as Marxist Studies [makesi zhuyi yanjiu 马克思主义研究]. While bits of Asian studies can be found across all the divisions, the main institutes are in the Academic Division of International studies, namely the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies, the Institute of Asian Pacific Studies (renamed as the National Institute of International Strategy in 2011), the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, as well as the Institute of Japanese Studies. These institutes cover the regions North, South, Southeast, West, East and Northeast Asia. Besides the research institutes, there are more than a dozen non-entity research centers of Asian studies, which coordinate interdisciplinary and trans-institutional research. The latter includes the Gulf Research Center, the Research Center of Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific Areas, and the Korea Research Center. In March 2002, with the support of the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS), the CASS Center for Asian Studies was established to promote Asian studies at CASS through funding projects and international exchanges. The CASS Center is one of the 18 Asian research centers the KFAS has sponsored in Asia with two-thirds of them in China.

Today, CASS has become China's largest, most influential and comprehensive academic organization. It undertakes the dual roles of academic research and governmental think tank. Hundreds of researchers here are engaged in research on regional and international issues, and about one hundred

of them are engaged in Asian studies, with 40 scholars in the Institute of Japanese Studies alone. On the one hand, the researchers are engaged in basic academic research, including organizing and compiling comprehensive introductions to the latest developments in different areas in Asia on a large scale (all Asian countries have their respective introductions), and hosting such research reports as *Central Asian Yellow Book*, *Annual Report on Development in the Middle East and Africa* and *Japan Blue Book*. On the other hand, they also provide policy advice to the government and write reports for internal circulation.

CASS has more than 80 national academic journals. The ones related to Asian studies are *World Economics and Politics*, *West Asia and Africa*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia Pacific Studies*, *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies*, *Japan Studies*, *Contemporary Korea*. It supervises more than 100 national-level academic associations, including the Chinese Association of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Association of Asia Pacific Studies, Chinese Association for South Asian Studies, etc. It owns five national-level publishing houses. Through these academic institutions and platforms, CASS also plays the important role of organizing and promoting Asian studies across the country.

Lei Tang Associate Professor and Secretary General, Center for International China Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
tanglei@cass.org.cn

Building global cities in Asia. Shared experiences and challenges.

Wei Tang

In order to explain the global influence of cities like New York, London and Tokyo, the theory of global city is proposed, which in turn becomes the developmental vision and reference point for leading cities in major developing countries. The rapid moving up of the Chinese cities in the global city rankings has aroused great interest among researchers. It becomes a focus of attention at my home institute, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, to study the internal logic and developmental path of the global cities in China, especially in comparison with the archetypical ones and the other emerging ones.

Recently, I have begun to examine the strategic planning and related policy instruments of the leading cities in the BRICS countries, namely Shanghai, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Sao Paulo and Moscow. I started my field study in Mumbai and New Delhi, because I think China and India share the most common experiences and challenges among all BRICS countries. When comparing the emerging global cities of China and India, I couldn't help noticing their similar trajectory of development: to reform the domestic system in accordance with the requirements of the international economic system, to upgrade the industrial structure with much emphasis on producer services and to renew the urban space through gentrification. Obviously, all of these institutional adjustments and policy instruments are responding to the fast globalization, which is particularly promoted by neo-liberalism and informatization. Though the degrees of achievements vary in these leading cities, the global city policy indeed brings significant economic growth and higher ranks in the world city system. Thus, these leading cities have been turned into emerging global cities.

However, the institutional setting, resource abundance, infrastructure and cultural atmosphere of the emerging global cities in China and India are quite different from those of New York, London and Tokyo, which are considered the archetypical global cities. The former all have long histories,

profound humanistic traditions and huge populations. Different races, castes, tribes, strata and communities coexist, presenting unimaginable complexity. The impact of the 'global city policy' on these cities with such complexity deserves examination.

The global city policy has brought huge changes, particularly in the social structure, which is far different from the current archetypical global cities. There are not only high-end professionals in high-end producer services, but also the employees who provide everyday services to the professional class; there are not only a large number of formal manufacturing workers in large-scale manufacturing industry, but also a large influx of immigrants to the fairly large-scale informal economy. As a result, unlike the polarization of income distribution caused by occupational structures in New York and other global cities, the number and proportion of high-end professionals in those of China and India are relatively limited, while manufacturing, low-end service sector and informal economy are so large that a very small number of professionals are at the top of income distribution while a large number of them are at the bottom. In between, there is a certain percentage of the middle class. The layers are typically pyramidal.

The key to the difference between the archetypical and emerging global cities lies in the urbanization stage of developing countries. The surges in population have made the cities unable to meet the basic needs such as housing and transportation, resulting in outbreaks of urban diseases, traffic congestion, pollution and social disorder. The industrial upgrading policy further made it impossible for cities to generate enough job vacancies, resulting in the fast expansion of informal economy and the spread of slums. This is particularly evident in the case of India. The mushrooming of new townships on the outskirts of the cities leads to a substantial



Above: Coexistence of formal and informal economy in Dharavi, India: A food factory in the slum producing cookies for the local big hotels (10 December 2018).

reduction in farming land and let the cities sprawl beyond any limitation. This is observed in both cases of China and India.

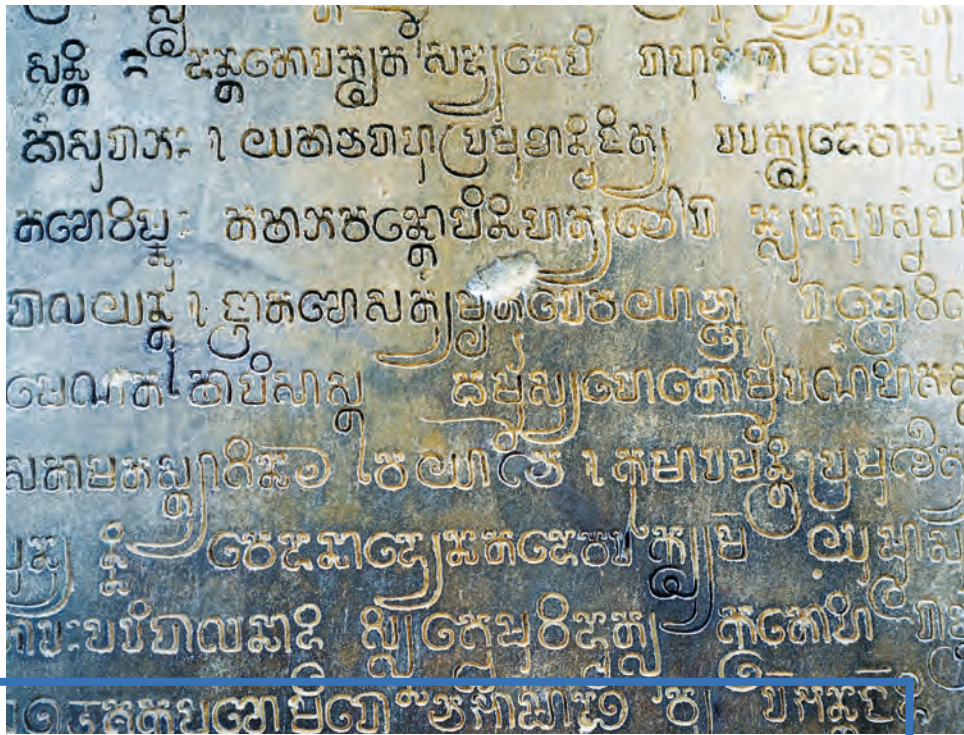
Hence, when orchestrating global city policies, the emerging global cities have to maintain a balance: to safeguard the social welfare for all stakeholders, especially the poor and the vulnerable groups; to coordinate the industrial upgrading and the domestic labor market; to enact urban preservation and renewal; as well as to better integrate the global development system into the existing urban system.

Unfortunately, with the outbreak of the financial crisis and the reversal of the world economic cycle, the emerging global cities, as they are so dependent on the world market, become more vulnerable. Thus, when seeking world-class influence, emerging world cities need to not only rethink the profound implications of globalization for their own development, but also to examine their own development strategies from the perspective of internal integration and complexity.

Compared with other emerging global cities in the BRICS, especially India, Shanghai has achieved considerable success in becoming a global city under the national reform and opening-up strategy. It is the rising node in the global city system. It also serves as the

engine of China's modernization and the bridgehead for China's going out strategy. In the global city theory, Asia's global cities like Tokyo and Seoul are considered as nation-led while western cities like New York and London are market-led. It is well understood that Shanghai falls into the nation-led type, and even more so than Tokyo and Seoul. Efficient public services supplied by the state, such as labor, healthcare and education, matter much in the process. Besides that, the informal governance based on a household registration system and local social network, which are indeed of Chinese characteristics, has effectively decreased the negative impact of global city practices. Thus, for any emerging global city in the BRICS to succeed in its global city policy, it must appropriately deal with the inherent complexity of its own development stage.

Wei Tang Associate Professor, Institute of International Relations, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences
tangruc@126.com



Writing the histories of South and South-East Asia

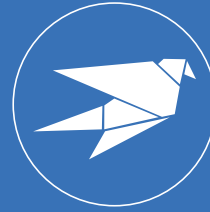
Perspectives from two newly launched European projects

Florinda De Simini

The year 2019 has seen the launch of two collaborative projects financed by the European Research Council, both of which will study still largely unwritten aspects of the institutional, social and religious histories of medieval South and South-East Asia. These are the ERC Starting Grant project ‘Translocal Identities: The Śivadharma and the Making of Regional Religious Traditions in Premodern South Asia’ (SHIVADHARMA) and the Synergy Grant project ‘The Domestication of Hindu Asceticism and the Religious Making of South and South-East Asia’ (DHARMA). As the titles themselves strongly suggest, the two projects are deeply interrelated with respect to their methods and chronological focus, while also sharing some of the sources on which their research is founded. At the same time, they both entail, at various levels, the involvement of a new member of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (EAAS), namely the Università degli Studi di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’, which in the coming years will thus be among the most active research centres for the study of the medieval history of South Asia in Europe.



Above: Inscription from Cambodia.



European Alliance for Asian Studies

The European Alliance for Asian Studies is a co-operative platform of European institutions specialising in the study of Asia. The aim of the Alliance, established in 1997, is to bring together the varied competences and expertise on Asia and Asian Studies found in Europe, strengthening this rich and unique tapestry of academic endeavour found in this region. The Alliance, moreover, facilitates a multi-level communication channel between its members, while it sets out to raise public awareness on the scholarly excellence they offer to the benefit of their constituencies and national and transnational environments.

The Alliance represents a community of institutions sharing a desire for transparency, collegiality and solidarity beyond national, institutional or disciplinary boundaries. It encourages collaborations, synergies and intellectual emulation among European academic institutions involved in Asian Studies and in collaboration with partners from Asia and the rest of the world.

The Alliance seeks to build high-quality border-transcending research, teaching and public services, including scholarly networks within Europe and beyond. It also encourages linkage between academic and non-academic actors, aiming to develop a model of how Asian studies in European academia could respond to political, economic and heuristic shifts and contexts.

The Alliance is not intended to merge the respective institutes, or blur their individual strengths, but rather to provide a framework for co-operation. Partners in the Alliance use the multiplicity of approaches, expertise and connectivities present in the network to strengthen research, teaching, collaboration and outreach.

Such a dynamic network works on various scales of expertise: (1) institutions based on policy-oriented research and competence; (2) institutions that seek to apply their Asia expertise beyond single locations and university frameworks, and (3) institutions combining research and teaching Asian Studies with an emphasis on humanistic and linguistic knowledge.

Members of the Alliance

As of 1 July 2019, the European Alliance for Asian Studies includes:
– the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS), Heidelberg;

- the Center for East Asian Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (CEAO);
- the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies (CESEAS), Lund University;
- the Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia (CRIA), Lisbon;
- the Department of Asian Studies, Palacky University, Olomouc;
- the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne;
- the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra;
- the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg;
- the Groupement d’Intérêt Scientifique Études Asiatiques (GIS Réseau Asie), Paris;
- the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden;
- the Institut Roman de Studii Euro-Asiatice (IRSEA), Bucharest;
- the Institute of the Middle and Far East, Jagiellonian University, Krakow;
- the Institute of Studies on Asia, University of Torino;
- the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Copenhagen;
- the School of Oriental and African Studies, London;
- the Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”;
- the University of Vienna.

Website

The new Alliance website, www.asiascholars.eu intends to mirror the spirit of participation and sharing of its members, providing information on conferences and calls for proposals (grants, summer schools, fellowships, positions). The website disseminates information on open access, enabling members and the public at large to construct and share knowledge and data. It is a unique vehicle to learn from the partners’ developments, their plans and their expertise.

Secretariat

The contact address for the Alliance is the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden.
Please contact dr. Willem Vogelsang, w.j.vogelsang@iias.nl for further information.

The article below introduces the main research foci of the two projects and the institutional networks involved; inaugurates a regional section in The Newsletter that will be devoted to the research activities carried out by members of the EAAS; and emphasizes the contribution offered by the University of Naples ‘L’Orientale’ within this framework.

Trends in historical research

Recent decades have seen the emergence of different trends of scholarship that are radically changing our understanding of the premodern history of South and South-East Asia, a macro-region that had important economic, political and cultural ties starting from the fourth century CE. The main paradigm change perhaps lies in the acknowledgement, as straightforward as it has been controversial, that history and a historical consciousness also existed in those areas before the colonial era, and that ancient and medieval textual traditions in Indic and South-East Asian languages, in whatever literary form they come, can and must also be studied as historical sources, even though we have nothing that closely resembles the genre of historiography as it has been defined in the

European scholarly tradition. As Daud Ali wrote in 2012, such a premise—namely that what we call ‘medieval India’ (roughly the sixth to the fourteenth century) has a tradition of historical writing—would have been “barely thinkable just fifty years ago”.¹

The academic study of such history started more than 150 years ago, mainly with the pioneering efforts of mid-nineteenth century scholars who embarked on an enterprise to survey, collect and publish the voluminous bodies of inscriptions from that vast geographic area that Pollock has recently called the ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’,² which spans twelve modern countries in South and South-East Asia and encompasses a wide range of regional languages. Inscriptions from these areas are often the primary if not the sole means to investigate the history of the institutions, administration and economic systems of the medieval states, as well as the their processes of state formation. Yet scholars are still far from achieving a full comprehension of these factors, which have often been disregarded in light of the greater emphasis that has traditionally been placed on the study of the philosophical, literary and doctrinal facets of these cultures. Moreover, the objective difficulties encountered in the surveying and editing of inscriptions—due to their number,

state of preservation and internal variety— continues to make this immense heritage of cultural and historical information difficult to access and study in a comprehensive way.

Our historical understanding of South Asia's past has also suffered as a consequence of the colonial process of the 'textualization' of its cultures,³ which has often turned them into purely textual objects accessible solely through transmitted texts, to the detriment of the study of material evidence. At the same time, this emphasis on textuality does not apply to all of the transmitted texts available from this area, as the first generations of scholars focused predominantly on the impressive bulk of literature in Sanskrit, the trans-regional language whose use flourished throughout the whole area. Recent years have also seen a shift of focus towards those equally old and refined textual traditions, such as for instance the ones transmitted in the Dravidian languages of South India, that have evolved side by side with the cosmopolitan Sanskrit culture and interacted with it on many levels. For medieval South and South-East Asia, just like their contemporary counterparts, were areas of many languages and regional traditions, the emergence of which can be observed as one of the major cultural phenomena of medieval and early modern times.

The DHARMA and SHIVADHARMA projects

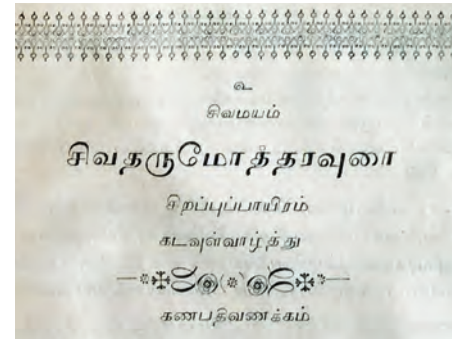
Hinging and expanding on these trends in research, the SHIVADHARMA and DHARMA projects aim at painting a broader picture of the histories of medieval institutions and societies. Each project does so by promoting better integration of textual sources with their material and archaeological contexts, as well as the systematic study and editing of inscriptions, while also focusing on regional developments and interaction with trans-regional phenomena. The final goal is not only that of increasing the amount and quality of information that we have about the histories of the regions we study, but also that of contributing to a profound change in the way we understand this past, thus creating a more defined methodological framework for medieval history in this macro-region.

The SHIVADHARMA project is a five-year Starting Grant project (December 2018 to November 2023) awarded to Florinda De Simini of the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. It aims at attaining a historical understanding of a certain highly translocal phenomenon — broadly speaking, Śaivism, or the 'Śiva-Dharma' in Sanskrit — through its interactions with the local communities of South Asia. Śaivism is one of the main components of contemporary Hinduism and, historically, has been one of the chief vehicles of knowledge production and social mobility in South and South-East Asia.⁴ Spreading from the Gangetic plain to the entire macro-area in question from the sixth century onwards—due to its strong connections with political powers and cultural elites—it adapted to the local contexts encountered on its journey, giving rise to a network of regional traditions that in some cases are still alive today and continue to represent an important identity factor in such areas. The lens through which this phenomenon is being researched, in the framework of the SHIVADHARMA project, is that of the constitution and trans-regional spread of a normative literature addressed to medieval Śaiva communities. Such literature is precisely labelled Śivadharma, and contains little theology, being chiefly concerned with the daily business of its vast lay Śaiva audience. Being composed primarily in Sanskrit, it spread quickly throughout South

Asia and adapted to its local contexts, fuelling the composition of translations into local languages, commentaries and compendia, as well as being reused in the composition of other normative texts and referred to in inscriptions, thus leaving a lasting impact on local Śaiva traditions. The Śivadharma was thus an important agent of trans-locality in medieval and early modern times, and its study offers a vantage point in investigating the dynamics inherent in the history of Śaiva traditions and their processes of regionalization. The regions considered in this study are: Nepal, the Deccan area (with connections to the Andhra coast), the north-eastern area of the Bay of Bengal (present-day West Bengal and Odisha), Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The chronological scope of the project is not only limited to medieval developments, but extends to include the phenomena of cultural adaptation that characterized the eighteenth century, emphasizing the continuity rather than the disruption between medieval and early modern times. Moreover, by focusing on the trans-locality of a phenomenon, this study shifts the emphasis to networks and mobility, stressing the high dynamism that in fact characterized medieval polities and textual transmission. All of the project's output, from editions and translations of texts in Sanskrit and Tamil to editions of inscriptions in Sanskrit and Kannada, as well as the study of iconography and manuscripts, will eventually converge in a multidisciplinary database that, as we intend, will serve as an instrument of learning not only for specialists of Indology but also for historians in general.

The use of tools furnished by recent developments in the field of Digital Humanities also lies at the core of the DHARMA project. Since this is a 'Synergy' project, which means that it involves a cooperation between various European institutions (cf. infra for details), research within the framework of the DHARMA project aims to be broad not only in scope, but also in terms of the quantity and diversity of the source materials that will be examined and the expertise involved. The historical questions at the core of this enterprise concern the complex interplay of state, society and religious institutions in the period spanning from the sixth to the end of the thirteenth century in selected regions of South and South-East Asia. In order to tackle this issue, the project will focus on the emergence of 'Hindu' ecclesiastical foundations known in Sanskrit as āśramas and maṭhas, monastic establishments that also evolved into centres that offered services to the community and participated in the administration of local revenue collection. The research also involves the study of Brahminical settlements and the patronage offered by elites for the foundation and maintenance of temples. Among the various primary sources considered in this study, inscriptions play a major role, both because these contain the most relevant information on the subject, and because one of the aims of the project is that of collecting, editing, translating and publishing online, in a database called the 'DHARMA-base', broad corpora of inscriptions from medieval South and South-East Asia in order to render more available and easily searchable a body of primary materials that is still only very patchily published, if not completely inaccessible. The testimony of inscriptions is matched with that of specific textual traditions (notably the normative literature of lay communities, as well as Sanskrit and Old Javanese belles-lettres) and with archaeological studies in order to portray the great complexity of the historical period under investigation.

The DHARMA project is based on a synergy between three Host Institutions that will each host a Principal Investigator. These are the



Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in Paris (PI: Emmanuel Francis), which is also the corresponding Host Institution; the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Paris (PI: Arlo Griffiths); and the Humboldt Universität (UBER) in Berlin (PI: Annette Schmedchen). This synergy extends to include the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' as a partner institution in two out of the four 'task forces' that structure the project. Such task forces are the main research units into which the DHARMA project is organized, and each is assigned to one of the PIs or scientific coordinators of the project, although the division is not strict and there will be strong cooperation between the various areas. Three such units follow a regional criterion: Task Force A, 'The Tamil-Speaking South of India', coordinated by Emmanuel Francis, will cover the editing and study of relevant sub-corpora of Tamil inscriptions from the fourth to the thirteenth century. Task Force B, 'From the Deccan to Arakan', coordinated by Annette Schmedchen, encompasses the study and publication of selected corpora of inscriptions in Sanskrit, Kannada and Telugu from the Deccan, the region of Andhra, Odisha, Greater Bengal and Arakan (sixth to twelfth century). This research area will also contribute a survey of the entire Barind region (north-western Bangladesh), and thus cooperate with the archaeological campaigns that are already active at the site of Mahasthan (Bangladesh). The University 'L'Orientale' will also contribute to Task Force B, with research on medieval Kannada epigraphy. Task Force C, 'South-East Asia', directed by Arlo Griffiths, will cover the publication of inscriptions from the two areas corresponding to modern-day Cambodia and Indonesia. The work of this task force will also include archaeological campaigns at the sites of Prasat Neak Buos and Prasat Khna, in north-eastern Cambodia, and at the site of Bumiayu in South Sumatra, while at the same time involving the investigation of prescriptive literature in Old Javanese. The only non-regional task force is Task Force D, 'Other textual sources', coordinated by Dominic Goodall (EFEO) and Florinda De Simini, which will study textual sources in Sanskrit—mainly those produced by Śaiva traditions—relevant for the history of medieval religious institutions, as well as the testimony of court poetry (kāvyā) in Sanskrit and Old Javanese.

A network of European centres — and far beyond

The institutional networks established to pursue this endeavour go far beyond that of the official Host Institutions of the two projects. The SHIVADHARMA project, though located at only one Host Institution, is at the same time based on a consortium between the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' and two minor beneficiaries, namely the University of Bologna, which is mainly responsible for the Digital Humanities sector and the construction of the Śivadharma Database, and the EFEO. The latter does not contribute from its seat in Paris, but from its centre in Pondicherry, India, where local scholars, coordinated by

Dominic Goodall, have been hired to work through primary materials on the spread of the Śivadharma in the Tamil-speaking South, as well as on the Sanskrit tradition of these sources. The dissemination of EFEO centres in South and South-East Asia also makes it possible for the DHARMA project to extend its network beyond the European consortium and employ scholars to conduct on-the-ground research in Cambodia and Indonesia, with the EFEO centres of Siem Reap and Jakarta as the main partners of local institutions for the archaeological research planned in those areas. The Pondicherry centre of the EFEO is also involved in the DHARMA project in order to conduct research on texts, inscriptions and iconography with a focus on Tamil Nadu and South-East Asia.

Besides the institutionalized networks, countless cooperations are planned for both projects with scholars affiliated with various other centres (such as Leiden, Oxford, Budapest, Tokyo, Kyoto), which will allow for the integration of various types of expertise and reinforce ties between centres and scholars.

Future challenges

The recent experiences of these and other projects indicate that, in the contemporary academic milieu, collaborative research on topics in Asian Studies is one of the few viable options for pursuing ambitious scholarly achievements and attracting consistent grants. While we face a visible shrinking of the space that Asian Studies — and the Humanities in general — is allotted in university departments and academic institutions, the ability and will to join forces and cooperate on innovative research projects is one strategy that is helping us to stem this tide and bring our studies to the forefront. From this point of view, super-institutional organizations such as the EAAS, which try to address and coordinate scholarly and political trends in Asian Studies, can thus substantially contribute to creating fruitful connections and cooperations that will benefit the field.

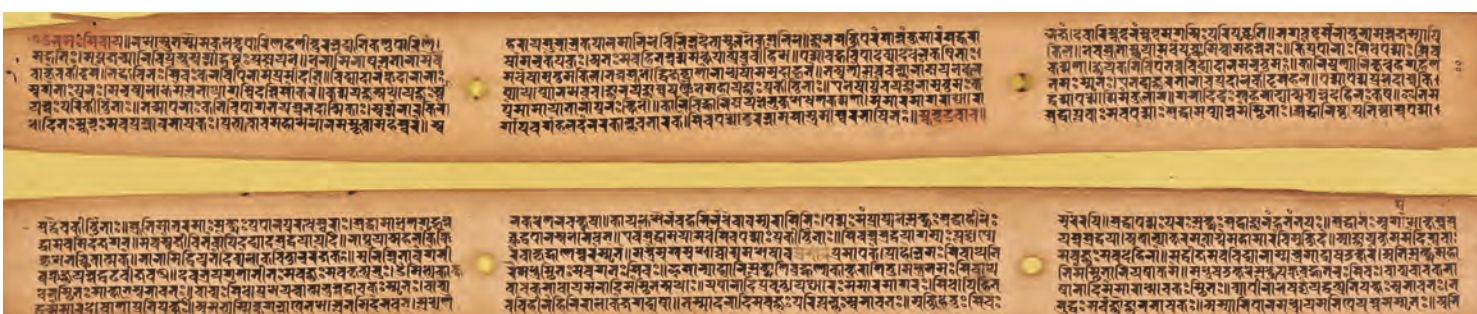
Another idea that lies at the core of these two projects, as illustrated in the previous lines, and which has both scholarly and institutional repercussions, is that we have to be ready to take up the challenge of gradually transgressing the boundaries imposed by area studies, and being able to enter, on solid grounds, the trans-disciplinary debates on the main subjects at stake. This step is proving to be essential for experts in the many fields grouped under the umbrella of Asian Studies as a means to obtaining a deeper understanding of their disciplines as well as securing a greater relevance for their topics in the contemporary academic discourse. Some voices have already raised this issue, but we are still far from a solution. In a world that places an increasing relevance on 'global histories', we still see too little effort being made to get 'the other side' of the globe involved.

Florinda De Simini
University of Naples 'L'Orientale',
florindadesimini@gmail.com

This article is a revised version of a presentation given during the last meeting of the European Alliance for Asian Studies, 30-31 May 2019, Jagiellonian University, Krakow.

Notes

- 1 Ali, D. 2012. 'Indian Historical Writing, c.600–c.1400', in Foot, S. & Robinson, C.F. (eds.) *Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 2: 400–1400*. Oxford University Press.
- 2 Pollock, S. 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India*. University of California Press.
- 3 Almond, P. 1998. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge University Press.
- 4 For a broad historical picture based on primary materials, see: Sanderson, A. 2003. 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers (Part I)', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 90(1):349–462; and Sanderson, A. 2009. 'The Śaiva Age: The rise and dominance of Śaivism during the early medieval period', in Eino, S. (ed.) *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, pp.41–349. Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo.



Top right: Front page detail of the Tamil commentary on the Śivadharma corpus. Above: Nepalese manuscript of the Śivadharma corpus.

Delta Cities: Rethinking Practices of the Urban

IIAS Winter School
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
10-15 December 2018

Huê-Tâm Jamme and Oviya Govindan



Above: Exploring the maze of canals in the Mekong Delta. ©Vu Anh Thu.

In the morning of 10 December 2018, nineteen graduate students from thirteen different countries met at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University (HCMUSSH) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to participate in the in-situ graduate school co-organized by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), HCMUSSH, and the 'Engaging with Vietnam' initiative. What brought them together was a strong research interest in the social, economic, cultural, and environmental consequences of living in a constant connection to water, in coastal or deltaic environments.

They were about to enjoy the unique experience of discovering, observing, and understanding the Mekong Delta, a region with which most of them were not particularly familiar, under the guidance of three leading scholars with complementary perspectives on the deltas of the world: Dr David Biggs, History professor at the University of California, Irvine (USA), author of *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta*; Dr Debjani Bhattacharyya, History professor at Drexel University (USA), author of *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta*; and Dr John Abgbonifo, Sociology professor at Osun State University (Nigeria), author of *Environment and Conflict: Place and the Logic of Collective Action in the Niger Delta*.

Water as the 'ground' for rethinking urbanism

The conceptual challenge driving the in-situ graduate school was to make water the 'ground' for rethinking urban practices. In the global context of climate change, water has come to be conceptualized first and foremost as a threat against which human beings have to protect themselves. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the world's population live in either deltas or in estuaries. These regions are considered most vulnerable to sea level rise, yet they have the highest urban development rates in the world, and they concentrate the majority of resources and economic opportunities, especially in countries of the Global South. Architects and engineers transform water-based landscapes with an imperative of fortification and resilience, with dykes and cement, thus solidifying and fixing in time and space what had originally been malleable, fluid, and constantly changing at the rhythm of seasons and tides. How can we change our approach to human settlements and urban development in light of delta cities' experiences, where people and places thrive in a relationship with – and not against – water? Can we bridge the water-land divide by adopting a 'watery' perspective? These are some of the questions the group was invited to ponder as they discovered the Mekong Delta together.

Understanding space by traveling through it

Any tourist would have envied the students' program. They first traveled to Long Xuyen, capital of An Giang province, in the heart of the Mekong Delta. Over the course of three days and four nights, their journey also brought them to the cities of Chau Doc and Can Tho. They had a chance to visit several Khmer pagodas, one Muslim mosque and many Buddhist temples, as well as the Oc Eo archeological site, Can Tho's floating market, and an industrial zone. They drove between places, walked through villages, climbed up the Nui Sam mountain, and went on boat explorations in the maze of canals. They tasted the finest fish specialties the region has to offer and let the sounds, smells, and rhythms of the delta shape their experience. However, one should not underestimate the educational value of traveling with a group of specialists from a range of disciplines – urban planning, environmental studies, history, anthropology, sociology – reading the same landscape, but with different lenses. Every meal was a chance to learn from each other's research and background while sharing observations, experiences, and knowledge. Every bus ride was an opportunity to raise questions as they came to mind. Why are some canals straighter, longer, or higher than others? Why are some houses on stilts while others are not? Every field trip was an invitation to discuss and reflect on the readings the conveners had carefully selected prior to the school, and on the occasional lectures delivered throughout the trip – sometimes on hilltops, at pagodas, on buses, or at conference halls. The collaborative nature of learning was emphasized throughout, as participants were encouraged to learn from people they met on the road or from guest speakers.

Themes and learnings

The conveners exposed the students to the theoretical frameworks they had developed in their research. Dr Biggs suggested reading the Mekong Delta's landscape as the Vietnamese people conceive it, i.e., as neither human made

nor natural: "nature is what you make of it". Dr Bhattacharyya suggested a framework she has developed and used extensively in her research in the Bengal delta – that of property rights – to understand the slipperiness of making property claims in a context where the lines between land and sea are continually shifting. Based on his research in the oil-rich and conflict-ridden Niger delta, Dr Abgbonifo's approach was to pay attention to the power dynamics embedded in the different ways in which people access the delta's resources. Three major recurring themes emerged from these frameworks.

The first theme was seeing and perceiving water as a constitutive part of the landscape. Common understandings of human settlements tend to forget and ignore water, whereas its presence can be perceived everywhere in an environment such as the Mekong Delta: in the rust on the corrugated metal of the stilt houses; in the humidity in the air; in the wetness of the clay on the riverbeds; and so on. Why have we forgotten to see water around us? How might we stay attuned to its presence? Such questions allowed participants to experiment with the concept of wet ontologies.

Secondly, delta-based thinking is a way to stay attentive to the continuities between land and water as opposed to seeing them as distinct entities. In other words, a recurring theme of this workshop was to develop a sensibility that takes the blurry lines and boundaries between land and water seriously. To 'think with the delta' means being able to surface the continuities between the seemingly fixed categories of rural/urban, land/water, fixity/mobility, river/ocean, industrial/natural, and so on. Ultimately, it means being open to seeing newer rhythms and orders that would otherwise be cast away as unplanned, chaotic or illegal.

Thirdly, it soon became apparent that the landscape is a layered palimpsest, where each layer has multiple sets of meanings, at times in contradiction with each other. A seemingly peaceful stretch of rice paddy fields is in fact highly political. It is the result of centuries of conflict and negotiations: between indigenous populations and colonizers; between different

ethnic and religious groups; between different countries fighting for the border; between agriculture- and industry-based approaches to economic development. Altogether, the themes that emerged from the graduate school shed light on the importance of interdisciplinary thinking about the connections between land, water, and people – by definition a multidimensional issue.

Creative learning

The in-situ graduate school ended where it started, at HCMUSSH in Ho Chi Minh City, for a one-day workshop. In groups of three or four, the students presented a number of structured outcomes of their visits and observations to their peers, the instructors, and a few outside guests. While the choice of presentation topic was entirely open, the groups had to comply with one strict presentation rule: no PowerPoint. The final workshop was in the same spirit as everything else in this in-situ graduate school from its inception: lively and cheerful, yet intellectually ambitious and creative.

At the end of the week, both students and professors had humbly learnt from each other outside conventional academic formats. What made the learning process unique was the fact that the graduate school allowed each participant to develop their observations in a collaborative and experiential manner. In the end, the participants had become collegial peers with overlapping research interests, if not friends. None of this would have been possible without the discrete, but infallible, organizational support from Mrs Martina van den Haak from IIAS and Dr Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau from HCMUSSH. Everyone went back to their research sites – ranging from an industrial landscape in India, to heavily urbanized Shenzhen, to the streets of Saigon – with new perspectives on delta cities, climate change, and social relations as shaped by water. They also brought back with them sweet memories of a unique learning experience.

Huê-Tâm Jamme and Oviya Govindan
Winter School participants.

An inter-community dialogue on rice as a site of knowledge and meaning

Dharitri Narzary

Humanities across Borders Workshop
Kokrajhar, Assam, India
5-6 January 2019



The two-day workshop in Kokrajhar (5-6 January 2019), organised by Ambedkar University Delhi in collaboration with IAS and INTACH (Delhi), initiated a dialogue between (four) different communities on the tradition and experience of growing rice. This workshop was planned in the context of the IAS initiative Humanities across Borders (HaB) that aims to share human experiences, with an objective to document and record the changing aspects of contemporary societies, and to use them as pedagogical tools.

Background

My best memories associated with rice from childhood include walking through the lush green paddy fields to catch fish in the shallow waters, collecting leftover paddy strings post-harvest for keepsake and jumping on the mounds of rice hay in the winter sun. But the first opportunity to 'think' about rice in a concrete way came when HaB accepted the two panel proposals on rice submitted by me along with two colleagues, Surajit Sarkar and Erik de Maaker, to the Asian Borderlands Conference in 2018. The panel participants shared their experiences of working with rice in Northern Thailand, West Africa, Central and Northeast India; it inspired the subsequent Kokrajhar workshop, intended to initiate a dialogue on rice as a site of knowledge and meaning.

Context and intent

While 'rice as food' brings rice growing communities together, the complexity lies not just in the cultivation of rice, but also in the ways in which rice figures as a vehicle of shared meaning and self-identity construction. The crucial role rice has played historically in building civilizations and in the formation of powerful states cannot be overlooked, even as the colonial perception of 'rice as a food-crop' continues to dominate the global narrative on rice. With the influence of science and technology on agricultural practices, particularly in the western world, the importance of 'embedded knowledge' still prevalent among rice-growing communities across the world has gained new significance, calling for writing new histories focusing on cartographies of rice in a global context.¹

The workshop aimed to help community members realize the significance of sharing knowledge about rice, and its relevance in

sustaining livelihoods in the region. Reflecting on Japanese self-identity construction through rice over time, in her book *Rice as Self* (1993), Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney says that rice, when used as a metaphor to think about oneself ..., often prompts people to think about who they are in relation to other peoples.² Significantly, the workshop in Kokrajhar explored lesser-known aspects of the socio-cultural dynamics of rice cultivation in Assam and the relevance of an inter-community dialogue mediated by scholars and other local stakeholders in the field.

For nearly two decades, during the Bodo movement for separate statehood (Bodoland), Kokrajhar was a major conflict zone; the ethnic conflicts have had serious implications for inter community interactions. Kokrajhar is home to many indigenous communities who share common socio-cultural attributes and historical experiences. These communities, having co-existed for generations, developed an understanding for each other's ecosystems. For generations, the traditional method of wet rice cultivation has been practiced, with negligible mechanisation, but environmental changes have made growing rice a challenging job for them all. The communities have a rich oral tradition and knowledge-practices around rice, often articulated in the form of culturally embedded narratives.

The workshop was one way of bringing together different community members residing in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) areas of Kokrajhar district, to share their ideas, knowledge and experiences of engaging with rice cultivation. The idea that a 'dynamic knowledge repository' based on generational transmission of community knowledge can be a useful and effective pedagogical tool contributed to conceiving the dialogue based workshop. It also allowed members of different communities to reconnect using oral narratives around a common object, rice, they identify with closely, and engage in a meaningful discussion touching upon larger issues of livelihood,

challenges and socio-cultural dynamics in a transformed space and time. This workshop was to become a space for developing ideas for rethinking university curricula in collaboration with local communities engaged in rice-cultivation using HaB's methodological entry points of food, practice, word and place.

Setting the stage

The most challenging task was to bring different community members onto a single platform, considering the sensitive atmosphere in and around the district of Kokrajhar. Fortunately, it was made possible as an insider, as much as I was an outsider of having lived outside, to identify with objectively. Of the four communities (Boro/anglicised Bodo, Rabha, Rajbongshi and Santhal) invited, the Santhal participants failed to show up (even after confirming). All participants worked as fulltime rice farmers, except for one retired government employee, who continued to be engaged with rice cultivation. There were two local (female) observers invited, one a physics teacher at the Kokrajhar Government College, and the other a state government employee.

The format of the workshop was kept informal and the auditorium hall of the Kokrajhar Science College, with plastic chairs arranged in a semi-circle, provided the desired ambience for a friendly discussion. Displayed in front of the group were tools and implements used for rice cultivation, along with samples of paddy collected during the pre-workshop field visit. This is where I saw the long stemmed *baodhan* (also called *Bawa*) for the first time, having heard of it innumerable times in folktales during my childhood. Not grown on a large scale anymore, *baodhan* is unique in its appearance and considered flood resistant due to its height. This mode of interaction instantly generated the required interest to engage the participants. The first day of the workshop focussed on the material artefacts of rice, their names in different dialects, specific and general uses, importance in traditional methods of rice cultivation and why some varieties of rice have disappeared from the fields. The free-flowing discussion also included local knowledge about seeds, methods of sowing, soil quality, required amounts of water, the timing of sowing, transplanting (*khatia/kotia*) and preservation. The rich conversations opened new queries that continued over lunch where we tasted the distinct flavour of rice as a staple to a traditional Boro meal at the famous Aai Hotel (Mother's Hotel).

After lunch we visited the village of the Boro participant, Satyendra Brahma, a 40 minute ride from Kokrajhar by tuktuk, on a road passing through open fields and green vegetation. As it was harvest time, we were able to see on our arrival the innovative ways of winnowing, and the simple handmade bamboo tools. It was here that we were shown the indigenous method of seed preservation called *majili*; seeds are preserved in straw, layered and woven tightly to keep them insulated safely from the elements. This traditional method was common in the area until most farming households started instead to use plastic or tin containers, which protect well against rodents but unfortunately damage the quality of seeds due to the temperatures created.

The second day of the Workshop began with a visit to the house of the Rajbongshi resource

person, Debeshwar Rai, just 10 minutes from the venue. The aim of the visit was to see the way in which rice plays a central role in the everyday life of women in a rice-farming household. This is more so during harvest time (winter), which is celebrated in the *bhogali bihu* festival (*Domashi* for the Boro) by preparing varieties of sweet and savoury rice treats. The visit was most rewarding in terms of understanding the community engagement and collective organisational spirit that plays a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge. The take away from the visit was that rice is central to knowledge production at a familial and community level, and the meanings associated with rice articulate the socio-cultural nuances not directly evident to the outsider.

The second half of the day was the concluding session, in which the resource persons and observers met again at the venue to sum up the workshop. I must say it was an intense session with serious discussions on issues related to land, labour and cost of rice cultivation in present time. The discussion also revealed the social dynamics that exist between different communities vis-à-vis rice, e.g., how they perceive each other as a community and why there is disparity between farming communities. The memory of *maibra* rice ball (sticky rice ball) that we used to carry while playing after school became vivid while discussing the disappearance of the indigenous rice varieties, which were replaced by the government-introduced hybrid ones, particularly the *Ranjit* variety, grown by almost all farmers since a decade or so. As a high yielding variety it is economical and appears to also have a better taste than many other hybrid varieties; followed by *Gopal Bhog*, which is scented and by name suggestive of a divine food from West Bengal. Such shifts are happening amidst complex socio-cultural contexts as representative of community negotiation at multiple levels. This has caused the disappearance of most local and indigenous varieties like *Jwsa/joha* (scented), *phoolpakhri* (mix coloured), *maima* (proto type), *Asu/Ahu* (for security/as dependable type), *mai dulut* (round type), which are now grown primarily for occasional consumption, thus making them very expensive for consumers as well as for the cultivators. The common problems and challenges faced by all farmers in the region, range from shrinking farm land, to costly labour, erratic rain and flood situation, no government support for seed purchase, disinterest in farming activities among the younger generation, and, most importantly, the conflict between cultivating high-yielding varieties introduced by state and market agencies vs cultivating indigenous rice varieties. The latter, embedded as they are in community-based knowledge practices, can resist being subsumed under discourses of 'culture' or 'sustainable development' only when communities themselves value rice as self.

Outcome/Next Steps

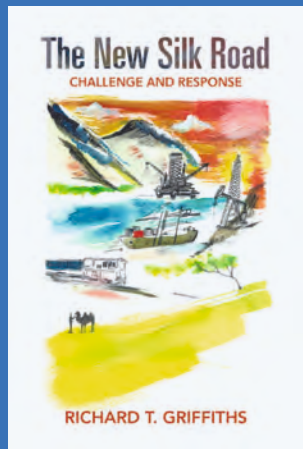
Upon reflection, we realised that the workshop had offered us with themes for further exploration with other colleagues in the HaB network. Vernacular naming and classification of terms related to rice varieties, tools, techniques and cultivation practices, seed conservation and sharing, rice snack cultures, rice beer, and so much more. The question of the developmentalist agenda through state intervention in rice practices in India's north-east, intersects with the bordering regions of northern Thailand and Myanmar. Finally, the issue of the commercialisation of rice has implications for seed sovereignty, and has triggered the idea of creating a community based seed bank as part of Ambedkar University Delhi's project under the HaB, as one of the concrete outcomes of the workshop.

Dharitri Narzary
Ambedkar University Delhi
dharitri@aud.ac.in

Notes

- 1 Bray, F. et al. (eds) 2015. *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories*. Cambridge University Press.
- 2 Ohnuki-Tierney, E. 1993. *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*. Princeton University Press.

New Publication



The New Silk Road. Challenge and Response

Richard T. Griffiths

HIPE Publications, ISBN: 9789492439055
Release date: May 2019
Also available as e-book and paperback.

<https://ias.asia/news/new-book-new-silk-road-challenge-response>

In 2013 China's Belt and Road Initiative reawakened public attention to the issues of trade and transport. At the same time it stoked fears about China's true intentions. This book examines developments in the lands lying between China and Europe. Richard Griffiths asks the question: what if China was not alone in funding new infrastructure or in facilitating trade, nor even the first? It answers the question: who has been building the 'New Silk Road'?

'This important book contributes to a more informed and better grounded distinction between what is "real" and what is "dream" in the Chinese BRI rhetoric, and provides us with an excellent platform to a deeper understanding of current and future Silk Road narratives.'
Prof. Claes G. Alvstam, Professor Emeritus Economic Geography, University of Gothenburg.

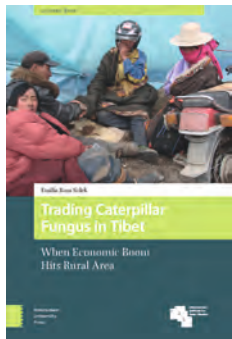
'This really deep, engaging, critical and challenging book offers diverse examples of the flexibility of China's initiative of "Belt and Road" ... and demonstrates the interconnectedness.'

Richard Griffiths, a brilliant and wide-ranging scholar, marches briskly through China, Central Asia to Europe and back. A glorious read.' Prof. Alexey Maslov, Professor, Head of the School of Asian Studies, Russian National Research University 'Higher School of Economics.

Richard Griffiths is an economic historian with a BSc (Econ) from Swansea and PhD from Cambridge. Currently he directs the 'New Silk Road' research project at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden. Previously he has been a full professor in Leiden University, the European University Institute in Florence and the Free University, Amsterdam. He has also taught for 20 years in the MA European Studies programme in Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. He has published widely on 19th and 20th century topics including European integration, economic development and international trade arrangements.

New titles from Amsterdam University Press

Buy now on www.aup.nl



Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet. When Economic Boom Hits Rural Area

Emilia Roza Sulek

Amsterdam University Press
Series: Global Asia / ISBN: 9789462985261
Release date: 16 July 2019

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789462985261/trading-caterpillar-fungus-in-tibet>

Caterpillar fungus, often called the Himalayan Viagra, is the subject of the latest commodity boom changing the economic fates of Tibetan pastoralists in China. This expensive medicinal resource made a spectacular market career in East Asia after the outbreak of avian influenza and SARS. Growing demand for this 'wonder drug' created attractive income opportunities for people on the Tibetan plateau where this fungus is endemic. Tibetan pastoralists engaged in this new 'gold rush' and turned from subsistence-oriented yak and sheep breeders living in a cash-poor environment

into local economic elite. This book tells a story of successful pastoralists high on the Tibetan plateau who take advantage of the economic boom in the Chinese market to accomplish their own goals. They emerge as far more sophisticated actors than most outsiders would give credit to before reading this book.

Emilia Roza Sulek born and educated in Warsaw, received a Ph.D. from Humboldt University of Berlin, has been a visiting fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden and teaches at the Universities of Zürich and Bern.



The Umbrella Movement. Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong

Ngok Ma and Edmund W. Cheng (eds)

Amsterdam University Press
Series: Global Asia / ISBN: 9789462984561
Release date: 24 May 2019

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789462984561/the-umbrella-movement>

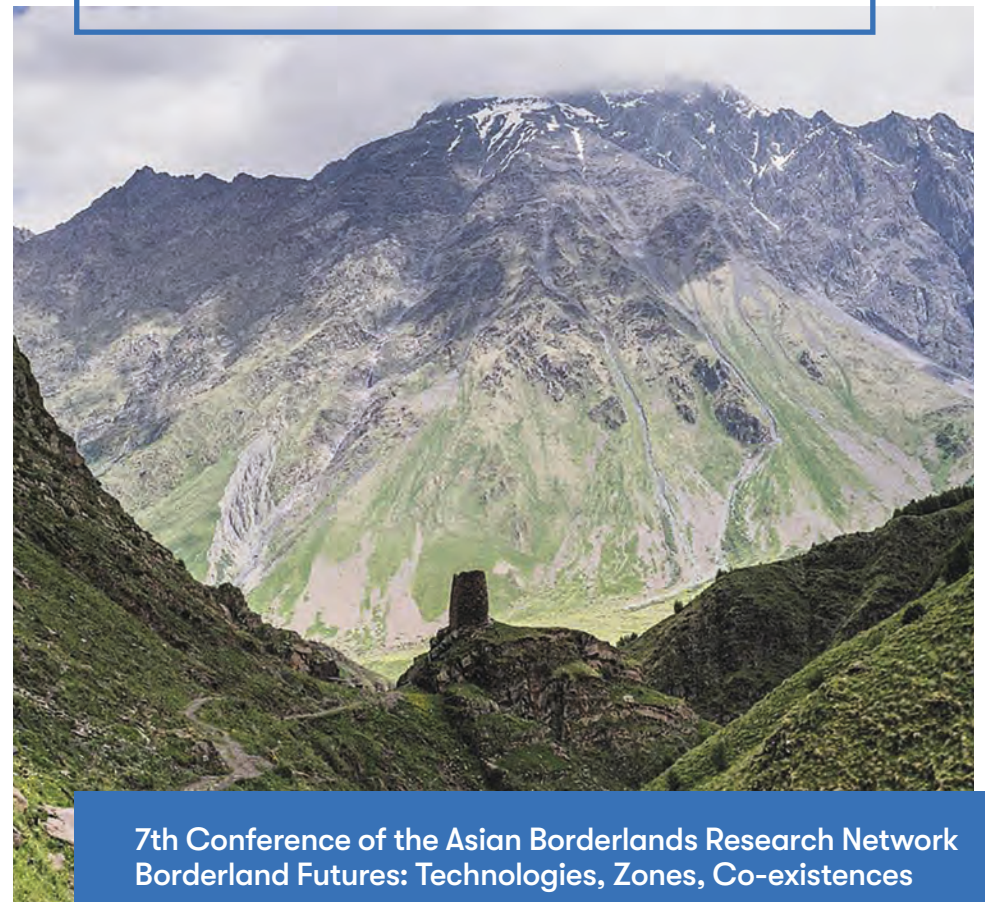
This volume examines the most spectacular struggle for democracy in post-handover Hong Kong. Bringing together scholars with different disciplinary focuses and comparative perspectives from mainland China, Taiwan and Macau, one common thread that stitches the chapters is the use of first-hand data collected through on-site fieldwork. This study unearths how trajectories can create favourable conditions for the spontaneous civil resistance despite the absence of political opportunities and surveys the dynamics through which the protestors, the regime and the wider public responds differently to the prolonged contentious space. The book offers an

informed analysis of the political future of Hong Kong and its relations with the authoritarian sovereignty as well as sheds light on the methodological challenges and promises in studying modern-day protests.

Ngok Ma is Associate Professor at the Department of Government and Public Administration, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Edmund W. Cheng is Associate Professor at the Department of Public Policy, City University of Hong Kong.

Call for Papers Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences



7th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences

Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ)
Research Center, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea
25-27 June 2020

Call for papers deadline: 30 September 2019
<https://asianborderlands.net>

We warmly invite submissions from scholars working on borderlands in Asia from various disciplines and career stages. The 7th Asian Borderland Research Network (ABRN) conference focuses on three key themes: Technologies, Zones, and Co-existences

In the past decade, Asian borderlands have experienced intense ruptures and unparalleled connectivity across diverse communities and geographies. The re-opening of frontiers has unleashed a development frenzy, evident in new railways, road networks, import/export zones, trading ports, markets and casinos. At the same time, peace building has opened new possibilities for reconciliation, resolution, and readiness for shared futures. Bonds can be strengthened across borders

to make space for respect, recognition, and co-existence. Nevertheless, anxieties over security and sovereignty trigger concerns over unregulated mobilities, the prevalence of shadow economies, the abuse of military force, and resource and trade wars. Borders are thus being reconsidered and reinforced in parts of Asia, creating new uncertainties and precarities for communities living in borderlands.

Parallel programme

In addition, the 7th ABRN marks the historic occasion of the 70th Korean War commemoration, which offers a unique opportunity for scholars to discuss a future of peaceful co-existence across the Korean Peninsula and beyond through a parallel programme.

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the spotlight

The International Institute for Asian Studies annually 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. Meet our fellows at www.iias.asia/fellows



Theara Thun

Bangsāvatār: the evolution of historiographical genres in colonial and post-independence Cambodia

“I have spent almost seven years collecting and studying Khmer texts, especially the chronicle manuscripts (*bangsāvatār*), which were popularly used prior to the 1970s by Cambodian scholars and Buddhist monks to recount their collective past events. These manuscripts, particularly those produced between the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, represent ideas and perspectives related to cultural and political values, intellectual exchanges, and clashes of knowledge among French and Cambodian scholars during those years.

A monograph based on my PhD dissertation, the project is the first critical study that focuses on the relationship between local texts and figures from the pre-colonial years until the post-independence period. Through uncovering more than ten rare Khmer chronicle

manuscripts drawn from archival collections in Cambodia, Thailand, France, and Japan, it aims to break a new ground by exploring the scholarship produced by local intellectuals that have been under-studied and by presenting the significance of their scholarly engagement within Cambodian and Southeast Asian textual cultures and intellectual history. One of its key findings suggests that the coming of French colonialism and colonial-era historiography had led to the emergence of different schools of thought among local intellectuals, including those who actively engaged in translating French and Thai scholarship into Khmer.

IIAS is an ideal place to work on this monograph because it offers a very important platform for interacting with other research fellows from all over the world as well as researchers and faculty members of Leiden University. This interaction not only allows me to learn new perspectives useful for my project but also connects me with a wider network of scholarly community of Asian studies. The rich collection of sources related to Malaysia and Indonesia in the Asian Library of Leiden University provides a unique opportunity for me to explore scholarship on manuscript cultures in the other parts of Southeast Asia and to draw connections to the case that I explore in Cambodia. Another reason I like IIAS is its location in Leiden, where I enjoy exploring the city's beautiful landscape by jogging around at the weekend and easily travel to Paris and other parts of Europe to conduct archival research and participate in conferences.



Cha-Hsuan Liu

The Absolute Sincerity

“Currently I teach Multicultural Society, Health in Society, and Generations of Youth study at Utrecht University. This year, I am spending part of my time at IIAS as an affiliate fellow on the development of a research project. My previous research investigated the adequacy of healthcare provision for migrant groups and minorities, with a special focus on the Chinese minority in the Netherlands. It contributes to the development of theory and knowledge to mitigate health inequalities between ethnic or social-cultural groups in a multicultural society. The ancient Chinese physician, SUN Simiao (581–682AD), emphasised that a great physician should provide appropriate care to all with no discrimination. This ideology of the Absolute Sincerity has inspired me to further support healthcare professionals gain awareness of the discrepancy between the majority and the vulnerable groups.

Studying the diversity and disparity in healthcare involves multi- and interdisciplinary knowledge, such as modern medicine and healthcare provisions, public health, health psychology, health/medical anthropology, social policies, and cultural sociology. Despite the different types of research conducted, western researchers often tend to cite ‘cultural differences’ as the cause when health services cannot meet the needs of members of a minority. This proposition of ‘culture as excuse’ has motivated me to take a closer look at the subject matter, from three angles: the non-culture-specific factors at play, health beliefs, and the ‘cultural healing’. The concept of ‘cultural healing’ is especially interesting for further research. Supported by IIAS, I am cooperating with a senior researcher at Academia Sinica Taiwan to explore the opportunities of developing an international research group for the study of ‘cultural healing’ within the IIAS cultural heritage theme.

While modern medicine is generally accepted as the main healing method for mental and physical illnesses, many members of our societies still rely on ‘cultural healing practices’ in daily lives. Throughout history, cultures and societies have developed practices and attitudes that support individual wellbeing and social harmony. These ‘informal’ healing practices and attitudes towards health and treatments reflect both individual and collective beliefs on health and wellbeing. They are part of the cultural heritage of a society that shapes the relationship between people, as well as that with ourselves. In this context, a healthy life means not only the absence of illness, but also a balance with the self, society and the environment. Researchers in the health care arena often overlook this dimension, which is especially important within the polyethnic societies or states.

The hours I spend at IIAS – away from the intensity of teaching obligations – help me greatly to work out dissimilar ideas for such research, even though it is currently still in its conception phase. The stimulating IIAS lectures and activities open unexpected windows and doors, helping me to understand the world from different lenses. My resolution for the coming year is to link scholars worldwide and to write articles on the topic of the cultural healing under the inspiration and the support of IIAS fellows and staff.

IIAS Fellowship possibilities and requirements



Apply for an IIAS fellowship

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



Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Collège d'études mondiales de la Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.

Application deadlines: 1 March & 1 October



Apply for an IIAS-ASCL fellowship

The IIAS-ASCL joint fellowship is intended for researchers specialising in Asian-African interactions.

Application deadlines: 15 March & 15 September



Apply for a Gonda fellowship

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.

Application deadlines: 1 April & 1 October



Information and application forms:
www.iias.asia/fellowships

IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

IIAS research and other initiatives are carried out within a number of thematic, partially overlapping research clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents and built around the notion of social agency. In addition, IIAS remains open to other potentially significant topics. More information: www.iias.asia

IIAS research clusters

Asian Cities

This cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with their issues of flows and fluxes, ideas and goods, and 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 uses of culture and cultural heritage practices in Asia. In particular, it addresses a variety of definitions associated with cultural heritage and their implications for social agency. The cluster engages with a broad range of related concepts and issues, including the contested assertions of 'tangible' and 'intangible', concepts such as 'authenticity', 'national heritage' and 'shared heritage', and, in general, with issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage.

Global Asia

Asia has a long history of transnational linkages with other parts of the world, thereby shaping the global order, as much as the world at large continues to shape Asia. The Global Asia Cluster addresses contemporary issues related to Asia's projection into the world as well as trans-national interactions within the Asian region itself. In addition IIAS aims to help develop a more evenly balanced field of Asian Studies by collaborating in trans-regional capacity building initiatives and by working on new types of methodological approaches that encourage synergies and interactions between disciplines, regions and practices.

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)



The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) is an inclusive network that brings together scholars and practitioners engaged in collaborative research and events on cities in Asia. It seeks to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. The emphasis is on immediate problem solving as well as on the identification of long-term, transformative processes that increase the scope for the active engagement of people in the creative production and shaping of the city in Asia. The UKNA Secretariat is at IIAS, but the network comprises universities and planning institutions across China, India, Southeast Asia and Europe. Its current flagship project is the Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET).

<https://www.ukna.asia>
Coordinator: [Paul Rabé](mailto:Paul.Rabé@iias.nl) p.e.rabé@iias.nl
Clusters: [Asian Cities](#); [Asian Heritages](#)

SEANNET is a four-year project (2017-2020), supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation (New York, USA) that seeks to develop a multi-disciplinary body of knowledge on cities in Southeast Asia through the prism of the neighbourhood. Through case study sites in six cities (Mandalay, Myanmar; Chiang Mai and Bangkok, Thailand; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Manila, Philippines; Surabaya, Indonesia), SEANNET seeks to engage the humanistic social sciences in a dialogue with urban stakeholders as co-contributors of an alternative knowledge on cities. It seeks to achieve this through a combination of participatory field-research,



Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

in-situ roundtables and workshops, academic conferences, publications, and new forms of pedagogy developed in collaboration with local institutions of learning. The second ambition of SEANNET is to help shape and empower a community of early career scholars and practitioners working on and from Southeast Asia. To that effect, SEANNET research teams in the six neighbourhoods comprise international and local scholars, students from local universities, and civil society representatives, working together with neighbourhood residents.

<https://www.ukna.asia/seannet>
Coordinators: [Paul Rabé](mailto:Paul.Rabé@iias.nl) p.e.rabé@iias.nl
and [Rita Padawangi](mailto:Rita.Padawangi@suss.edu.sg) Singapore University of Social Sciences
ritapadawangi@suss.edu.sg
Cluster: [Asian Cities](#)

IIAS supports the work of the Indian Medical Research Network, which aims 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 middleclass Indians and Europeans.

www.iias.nl/indianmedicine
Coordinator: [Maarten Bode](mailto:Maarten.Bode@uva.nl) m.bode@uva.nl
Cluster: [Asian Heritages](#)

Indian Medical Research Network



Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe



Initiated by IIAS, this programme involves Leiden University in the Netherlands, two Institutes at National Taiwan University in Taiwan and one at Yonsei University in South Korea. Discussions with other possible partners in Asia are ongoing. 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 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.

www.iias.asia/programmes/critical-heritage-studies
Coordinator: [Elena Paskaleva](mailto:Elena.Paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl) e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: [Asian Heritages](#)





Humanities across Borders: Asia & Africa in the World

Co-funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York, USA) this new IAS programme (2017-2020) for global collaboration on humanistic education is carried out by a consortium of twenty-three leading institutes in Asia, West Africa, Europe and the United States, and their local partners in Asia and Africa. Its goal is to mobilise the development of a global consortium of universities and their local partners interested in fostering humanities-grounded education. Its substantive vision is that of an inclusive and expanded humanities. To this end, the program will initiate methodological interventions in teaching and research to surpass narrow disciplinary, institutional and ideological agendas. The programme facilitates border-crossing meetings, workshops and other collaborative pedagogical formats in its partner geographies. Jointly conducted, these events aim to shape a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education across borders.

Follow the stories on the [Humanities across Borders Blog](https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog)
<https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog>

www.iias.asia/hab
 Clusters: **Global Asia**; **Asian Heritages**

Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge

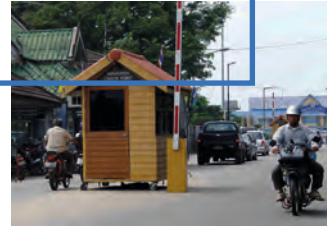


A'frica-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge' is an inclusive transnational platform that convenes scholars, artists, intellectuals, and educators from Africa, Asia, Europe, and beyond to study, discuss, and share knowledge on the intricate connections and entanglements between the African and Asian world regions. Our aim is to contribute to the long-term establishment of an autonomous, intellectual and academic community of individuals and institutions between two of the world's most vibrant continents. We aspire to facilitate the development of research and educational infrastructures in African and Asian universities, capable of delivering foundational knowledge in the two regions about one another's cultures and societies. This exchange, we believe, is a prerequisite for a sustainable and balanced socio-economic progress of the two continents. It is also an opportunity to move beyond the Western-originated fields of Asian and African area studies—something that would benefit Asian, African and Western scholars alike.

www.africasia.org
 Cluster: **Global Asia**



Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)



This network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. The concerns are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilisation and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns. ABRN organises a conference in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. The 7th ABRN conference, *Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences*, will take place in Seoul, South Korea, 5-27 June 2020. The Call for papers deadline is 30 Sept. 2019. See page 52 of this issue.

www.asianborderlands.net
 Coordinator: **Erik de Maaker**
maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
 Cluster: **Global Asia**

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The new joint research programme between IAS-EPA and the Institute of World Politics and Economy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing is entitled *The Political Economy of the Belt & Road Initiative and its Reflections*. It aims to investigate the policy, policy tools, and impacts of China's Belt and Road Initiative. By focusing on China's involvement with governments, local institutions, and local stakeholders, it aims to examine the subsequent responses to China's activities from the local to the global-geopolitical level in the following countries: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Hungary, the West Balkans, and Russia. The first research-oriented meeting with fourteen scholars from China and the Netherlands will take place during ICAS 11 (16-19 July 2019, Leiden, the Netherlands).

www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia
 Coordinator: **M. Amineh**
m.p.amineh@uva.nl; m.p.amineh@iias.nl
 Cluster: **Global Asia**



Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies

The Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies brings together people and methods to study the 'Indian Ocean World', aiming to co-organize conferences, workshops and academic exchanges with institutions from the region. Together with IAS, the Centre facilitates an inclusive and global platform bringing together scholars and institutions working on connections and comparisons across the axis of human interaction with an interest in scholarship that cuts across borders of places, periods and disciplines.

www.iias.asia/programmes/leiden-centre-indian-ocean-studies
 Cluster: **Global Asia**

The New Silk Road. China's Belt and Road Initiative in Context

The International Institute for Asian Studies has recently started a new project of interdisciplinary research aimed at the study of the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government, with special attention given to the impact of the 'New Silk Road' on countries, regions and peoples outside of China.

www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad
 Cluster: **Global Asia**

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)



With its biennial conferences, International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest global forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. Founded in 1997 at the initiative of IAS, ICAS serves as a platform for scholars, social and cultural leaders, and institutions focusing on issues critical to Asia, and, by implication, the rest of the world. The ICAS biennial conferences are organised in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from 60 countries. ICAS also organises the biennial 'ICAS Book Prize' (IBP), which awards the most prestigious prizes in the field of Asian Studies for books and PhD theses in English, Korean, Chinese, French and German (more language editions are planned for the future).

Ten conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejeon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, and Chiang Mai).

ICAS 11 will be held in Leiden, the Netherlands, 16-19 July 2019.

Website: <http://www.icas.asia>
 IAS/ICAS secretariat:
 Paul van der Velde icas@iias.nl





The Language of Dress

Textile Research Centre, Leiden



Top left: A ceremonial bicorne hat worn by Dutch member of Parliament, Laurens de Groot, in the early 1920's.
Top right: Woman's kaftan from Fez, Morocco, made out of a Japanese obi (1950's).
Below left: An ikat from Sumba, Indonesia, brought back to the Netherlands by a Dutch official in the 1920's.
Below right: Pair of bridal lotus shoes, late 19th century, China.

All photos Courtesy Textile Research Centre, Leiden.

Dress is a silent language, full of meaning and nuances that come in all shapes and sizes, colours and textures. It is a language with many variant forms, different vocabularies and sometimes complicated grammatical rules, which are all, as with every language, constantly changing. Dress is a language that we all speak, but communicating with dress is not always straightforward and may lead to misunderstandings. We do not all speak the same dialect!

And dress is not limited to garments. It also includes hairstyle, body modifications, footwear, jewellery, make-up and so much more. Dress is a highly diverse field of study that helps to explain how we communicate, not with words, but with our appearance. What does it mean when a man wears a suit and a necktie, or when a woman covers her face with a veil? Why has there been a recent surge in tattoos? And how do people react when they see a man with a set of nose-rings? Why do some people prefer to wear cotton garments, linen, or even hemp? And why do some of us don hideous jumpers at Christmas? Dress is also a resource for historical and archaeological observations. Which dress language did people speak hundreds, or even thousands of years ago? Why was the Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun, entombed together with some two hundred garments, including over a hundred loin cloths? Why are some Chinese men and women starting to wear typically Han-style garments – is it simply to say that they are Chinese and want nothing to do with Western style clothing? There are more questions than answers!

The Textile Research Centre

The Textile Research Centre (TRC) was established in 1993 with the express aim of studying and teaching on the subject of textiles and dress and presenting the subject to a wider audience. For many years it was housed at the National Museum of Ethnology, until in 2008 it moved to its own premises, along the Hogewoerd in the centre of the old textile town of Leiden. Since then it has grown rapidly, with twice-yearly exhibitions at its own gallery, an ever expanding library, a still growing number of lectures, workshops, and courses, with visitors every day from all over the world, and supported by a steady stream of interns

and volunteers, many of whom are attached to Leiden University. But apart from its in-house expertise, its main asset certainly is its collection of garments and textiles from all over the world, and from all ages.

In 1997 the TRC started with a small collection of textiles and garments as a teaching tool while working with students from Leiden University. Since then the collection has grown to nearly 25,000 items, but its function as a teaching and handling collection has remained the same. In order for the collection to reach as wide an audience as possible, the TRC is constantly adding more information and photographs to its database, which is accessible online (<https://trc-leiden.nl/collection>).

As part of its collaboration with the London based publishing house of Bloomsbury, the TRC is expanding its collection of hand and machine embroidery, which forms the basis of a special TRC project, namely the *Encyclopedia of Embroidery series*. The first volume was *The Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World* (published in 2016 and the recipient of various awards). The second volume, *The Encyclopedia of Embroidery from Central Asia, the Iranian Plateau and the Indian subcontinent* will be published in late 2019, followed by other volumes on European, sub-Saharan African, American and East and Southeast Asian embroidery.

The TRC Collection

The TRC Collection is one of the few public collections that looks at the whole world of textiles and dress, rather than, for example, focussing on (Western) high fashion items, art historical aspects, or the 'ethnic' garments from one particular part of the world. Instead it takes a more holistic approach. It looks at textiles and dress from a wide range of angles inherent to the objects themselves, within the framework of the basic question as to why people use or wear the garments that they wear. In other words, the collection focusses on the basic elements of the 'language of dress': the fibres and dyes used, the production methods, the cut and shape of the garments, their decoration, the producers and the wearers, and how these items link in with each other and with different groups around the globe.

The TRC has been actively engaged in collecting and studying and presenting a wide range of textiles and garments from Asia. Some

sub-collections stand out. The TRC houses a wide and very diverse collection of items from Afghanistan; a large part of the collection was assembled during various fieldtrips in the country between 1978 and 2011. Most of these items date to the latter half of the 20th century and represent the main groups living in the country, including Baluch, Hazara, Nuristani, Pashtun, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek groups. Many of the TRC's Afghan items were on display in a TRC exhibition entitled *Well-Dressed Afghanistan*, which was held at the TRC in 2010/2011. The same display is also one of a series of TRC online exhibitions.

Another Asian/Middle Eastern sub-collection is that of *badla*. This name refers to the use of a narrow, flat metal thread (plate, lamella) to create various knotted effects. It can be found, with different names, in India, southern Iran and Egypt. The Indian pieces in the TRC collection include items made for the home market (notably saris) and for export, such as a *badla* overdress for an Omani Bedouin woman. In the TRC *badla* collection there is also a special item, namely a 1920s European flapper dress made from two Egyptian shawls decorated in the *badla* manner.

A third sub-collection that should be mentioned is that of Chinese lotus shoes. Since 2007 the TRC has been building up an assemblage of these minute shoes worn by mainly Han Chinese women up to the early 20th century. The collection not only includes a range of shoes from different parts of the country, but they also represent different occasions, such as weddings, funerals, burials, and so forth. In addition, items relating to the production of lotus shoes, including a range of tools, are included in the collection. Many of these shoes were on display in a TRC exhibition (2012/2013) about decorative and protective footwear, and are also included in yet another TRC online exhibition.

TRC exhibitions

Apart from expanding its range of online exhibitions, the TRC also organises two to three temporary and actual exhibitions per year, and for the organisation of many of these the assistance is given by interns and students from a range of educational institutions, who in this way acquire practical experience in handling textiles and setting up displays.

Exhibitions in the TRC Gallery have ranged from African *kanga* (2009), decorative footwear, including the Chinese lotus shoes (2010), Afghan dress (2010), through Chinese *cheongsam* (2011), African dress (2014), and garments from Yemen (2015), to more technical exhibitions, about the history of embroidery, about weaving and about textile printing.

In addition, exhibitions from outside are set up at the TRC to encourage textile crafts in general. These exhibitions covered the subjects of lace (2014) and that of weaving with 16-shaft (also 2014), and also displays and workshops set up together with Taiwanese indigo dyers and weavers (2016), with Indonesian weavers (2017), with Taiwanese basketry weavers (2018) and with the UNESCO indigo printer, Georg Stark (2018). The craftspeople are encouraged to sell items at the TRC during the exhibitions in order to support and publicise their work.

This year the TRC set up an exhibition about 500 years of velvet production and velvet clothing, and is based on the TRC's extensive collection of fifteenth century (and later) velvets and velvet garments. In the summer of 2019 the TRC is organising the *Out of Asia: 2000 Years of Textiles* exhibition, to coincide with the 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars. There is, in sum, plenty to talk about, with the silent language of dress.

Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood
director Textile Research Centre
info@trc-leiden.nl
<https://www.trc-leiden.nl>