NO. 90

The Newsletter

The Region

Second Life at the Roof of the World

The Focus

SEANNET: The First Five Years

The Network

Humanities Across Borders

International Institute for Asian Studies

IAS

Contents

In this edition of the Focus

SEANNET: The First Five Years

Paul Rabé and
Rita Padawangi

The Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network SEANNET marks five years since its establishment at IIAS with core funding from the Henry Luce Foundation in New York. In this issue's Focus, the principal investigators of the six SEANNET study sites, Surabaya, Manila, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Mandalay, reflect on what they have learned about their cities through the neighborhoods they have been studying in the past five years. Their research provides a different kind of epistemology of the city in Southeast Asia, through the methodological lens of what happens at the micro-urban, neighborhood level. Their findings will help to frame the development of a new urban pedagogy, based on the distinctiveness of urbanization and social life in Southeast Asia.

The Henry Luce Foundation has confirmed funding for a second and larger phase entitled "The Southeast Asia Neighborhoods 2.0: Communities of Learning, Research and Teaching Collaborative", which will be led from the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

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 multisectoral 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

We are introducing a new recurring page on IIAS Publications. In addition to showcasing our latest books, this page will offer authors space to discuss their research and writing experiences, and to provide some background on their publications. In this issue, we start with an interview with Paul van der Velde, who, as an IIAS veteran, has shaped the IIAS Publications Programme from its beginnings. Paul is leaving IIAS by the end of this year (page 52).

On pages 44-45, Paul and Martina van den Haak look back at ICAS 12, the first-ever ICAS conference held entirely online, and the challenges that came with it. With Paul's departure, his tasks as ICAS Secretary will be taken over by Martina. She has been taking care of our international conferences for years with formidable commitment.

Pages 46-47 contain a photo essay on the Humanities Across Borders programme. It explains how the results of the first phase of HAB form the basis for its current second phase. In this phase, 20 universities are brought together in a consortium, building alternative accredited humanistic curricula for university teaching.

You will find our announcements on page 50 and information about our fellowship programme on page 53, along with *Fellows in the Spotlight*. The IIAS research programmes and other initiatives are described in brief on pages 48-49.

iias.asia

International Institute for Asian Studies

A Stronger Post-COVID IIAS

Philippe Peycam

With this note, I would like to share with our readers how IIAS, as a team, is emerging from the COVID 'congelation' period to turn into a stronger and more capable organization than it was even before the pandemic struck.

In an earlier note, I stressed how the time of the strict confinements in the Netherlands was a period when all our colleagues were scattered in their respective homes, with no convivial space possible for them to meet or interact except for virtual online gatherings. During that trying time, we began to set about a new model of internal communication and discussions around thematic working groups. The system consisted in dispatching members of the team around a number of "services" dispensed by IIAS. This led us to further refine the list of operational "functions" of the Institute as follows: Communication & Dissemination, Research (facilitation), Education (facilitation), Network & Community Development, Capacity Building, and Civic Engagements.

From our respective homes, we began to hold meetings around these themes. As we got used to these new formats of exchange, we realized that what was at first a rather artificial mode of interaction became a new mode of inclusive participation in our internal decision-making processes. To this end, we sought to mobilize everyone to become a key part in this new mode of engagement.

With the slow physical reopening of the Institute, we are continuing with that model, now strengthened by regular staff meetings. Within our team, there is now a common recognition of the critical importance of each of these broad functions of IIAS. We also recognize a natural need to address them collectively, especially because of their close interconnection with each other. This function-based participatory model is now taking hold and is leading to a new way to envision IIAS' future plans and operations.

One thing that transpired from our discussions is, indeed, the recognition that, as members of the team, we could not just operate in isolation and that some of IIAS' most known initiatives could serve as catalysts for other associated projects to follow. In fact,

each of the Institute's programmatic services or functions corresponds to one or two of what I would call "flagship project(s)." These include the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), the Newsletter, the IIAS International Fellowship Programme, the Humanities Across Borders (HAB) initiative, and many more.

The emergent working configuration is, therefore, built around autonomous yet overlapping programmatic and operational clusters with colleagues capable of functioning at their own tempo whilst exchanging with each other. All of this is done with the shared knowledge that each cluster is closely dependent on the others. For an institute seeking to operate as an open clearing house for academic endeavors "on, in and with Asia in the world," this dynamic means that many of IIAS' traditional projects can consolidate whilst acquiring a broader spectrum of action.

ICAS 12 played an important role in this evolution. The all-online event which ran for five days between August 23-28 and welcomed 1500 participants online served as the dynamizing occasion that helped IIAS and its team lift themselves out of COVID. Of course, we all missed the chance to gather in the exceptional environment of Kyoto with our partners at Kyoto Seika University and the usual cohorts of ICAS contributors from the five continents. The energy and vibrancy found in every previous ICAS was nonetheless there, tangible. Not only was the event a success, proving that, even virtually, a remarkable number of colleagues and partners sought to take part in the unique ICAS experience. The event had another positive impact as well, this time for the IIAS team. For one full week, all the Institute's members were mobilized. They were inspired by the ICAS core team, who often sat at their desks from very early in the morning until very late at night. As a collective brought back to in-person group life, we felt the need to physically re-populate the office building, to work, and to be together.

On this occasion, the other IIAS initiatives that had been virtually consolidating before the ICAS 12 event also came to light, showing how IIAS was once again ready to embrace a new context, even when inter-regional travel remains very difficult. *The Newsletter* previous issue

(#89), which appeared right during ICAS, under the editorship of Paramita Paul and Benjamin Linder, is one example of IIAS' resilience.

Following ICAS 12, an inspiring team-scale exchange over the role of the Newsletter and its multiple ancillary communication and dissemination activities was held. Paramita and Ben presented a number of new activities and communication formats that will be gradually introduced. A follow-up meeting, focusing this time on books – book prizes, book talks, book reviews, book series – is to be planned shortly. Likewise, we recently initiated a cross-section discussion on ways to revamp the IIAS fellowship programme to better respond to the changing academic scene. This development will also be gradual, but it will eventually be presented to all the IIAS followers. In a similar vein, the experience of successfully running an ICAS convention online has become an occasion to collectively reflect on the model of these big academic events going forward. Last but not least, the Humanities Across Borders (HAB) and Southeast Asia Neighborhood Network (SEANNET) programmes, hampered for a long time by the impossibility for people to meet "on site," benefited tremendously from the ICAS platform for advancing their agenda. In both cases, new steps have been or are being taken to further institutionalize their pedagogical model across their respective consortiums.

All of these internal IIAS developments are very much works in progress. The collective self-assessment process they require will take the time that is needed to come to full fruition. Moreover, new layouts and consolidations not only call for discussions among IIAS members but also with our partners in Asia, Europe, and beyond. Indeed, so much depends on our capacity to re-imagine "Asian Studies" together in an always more collaborative, locally situated, globally connected, multi-centered fashion.

In the end, I am confident that IIAS will come out stronger from the COVID crisis, with its mission clearer and the instruments of its engagement more effective to reach always more people and partners. I will report again on these changes in due course.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

Dutch Colonial Film on our Laptops

A Hundred-Year Journey

Sandeep Ray

In 1999, while employed at a documentary company in Boston, I first watched Vincent Monnikendam's *Mother Dao,*[1] a film assembled from Dutch footage shot in colonial Indonesia. I knew something about early cinema by then, having worked on ethnographic film archives in the Smithsonian, but this material – seamy, gorgeous, and disturbing all at once – was unlike anything I had seen. That initial shock never left me.
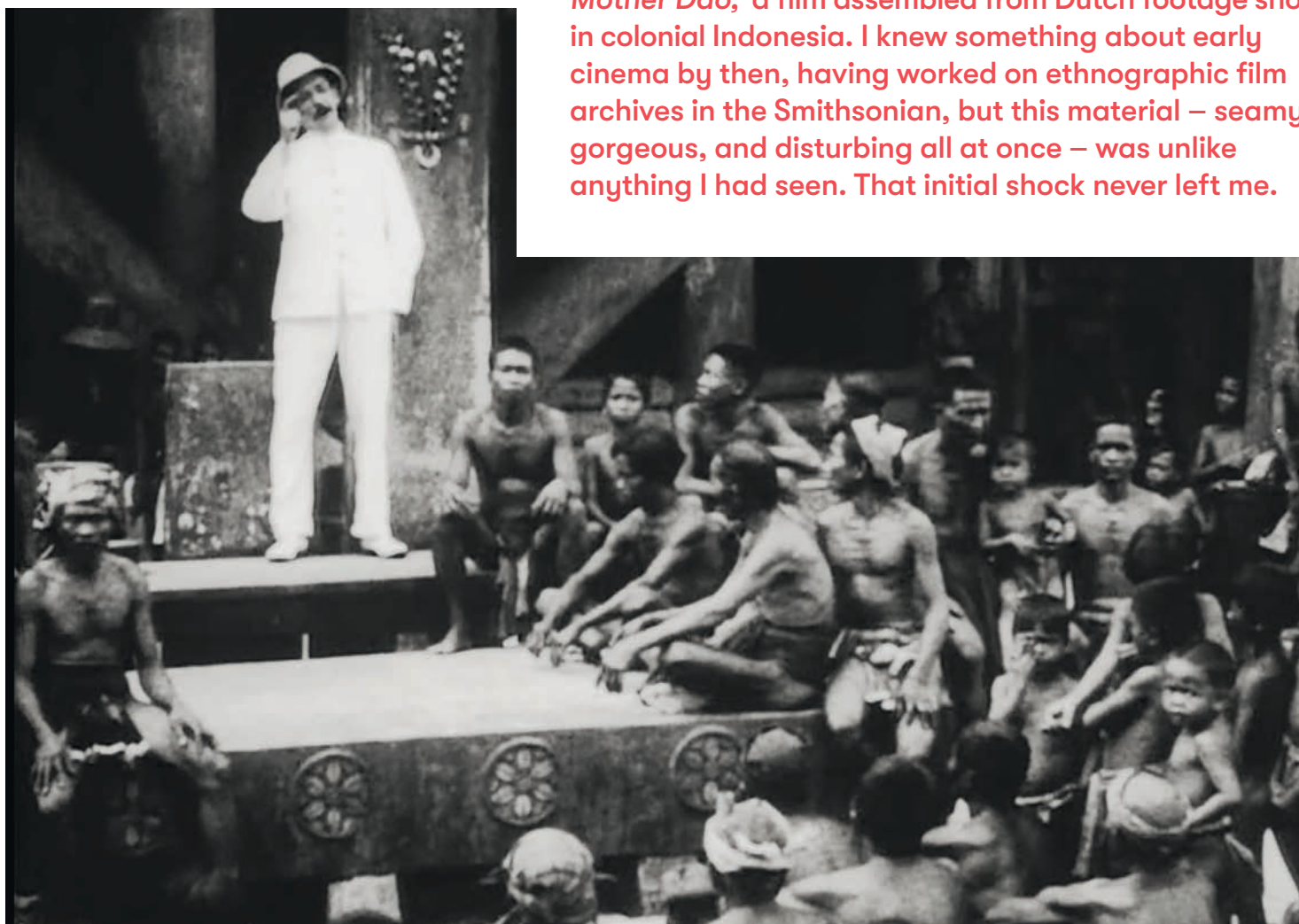

Fig. 2: Scene from the film *Mother Dao.*

Today, students of Asian Studies, even those with a passing interest in colonial cinema, would know that the Dutch produced a staggering number of films in the Netherlands East Indies. Much of that frenetic filmmaking took place during the second and third decades of the 20th century. It was meant for their public, far away, often unaware of ground realities, viewing the films in lecture halls and theatres in Amsterdam, Leiden, and Rotterdam. They received their government's version of conditions and events in the colony. The issues covered in these short films ranged widely: agriculture, healthcare, urban planning, infrastructure, arts and crafts, transmigration, and religion, among others. The contents and depictions are often problematic, especially if we apply a contemporary lens. I use the term *staggering* without exaggeration. A rough tally will indicate that the several hundred films produced during this period is comparable to the number of productions by British colonial authorities in all of their colonies. We know much about those British colonial films, of course, thanks to colonialfilm.org.uk, that wonderful website established in 2010 that links films, archives, academic papers, and other useful information in an open, easy-to-use platform. In contrast, our knowledge of the Dutch films has been limited, though this has gradually changed. Recent online access granted by archives in the Netherlands has brought much of their collections to our fingertips. These "dark treasures," as archivist Nico de Klerk once called the short films, are finally seeing blue light.

About a decade after my initial exposure to the material, I looked for the original footage from which *Mother Dao* had been edited, but I hit a dead end. The material was hard to come by. Facebook groups like *Indonesia Tempo Doeloe* ("Indonesia's Olden Days") posted low-quality clips from time to time, often with a soundtrack dubbed over; the driving emotion seemed to be nostalgia, not colonial critique. If one bought the 2010 biography on J.C. Lamster – a dyed-in-the-wool colonialist army man turned pioneering filmmaker – one would get a DVD of several of his restored films with bonus narration tracks. But that was the extent of access from Singapore, where I was studying. To see more films, I had to travel to the archive, to two of them actually: the Eye Filmmuseum's rustic research office in Vondelpark, Amsterdam and the newer gleaming Beeld en Geluid tower in Hilversum. Upon arriving, I had expected to get my hands dirty, rifle through dusty cans of old films and embark on an original, hitherto under-explored project of cataloguing the material I knew must exist somewhere. I could not have been more wrong. Every film was available on their intranet systems. Grateful, I wrote the following in the Beeld en Geluid public blog: "Before I could harbor any illusions of pioneering work, I realized that I had already been preceded by an army of film restorers, archivists and annotators who had meticulously created this astounding digital repository."

My task suddenly easier, I began a long sabbatical of watching films and taking notes, trying to unpack their historical and ethnographic significance. I spent a good part of 2012 and 2013 in those repositories.

It was a solitary, cavernous existence, sitting in rooms with monitors, viewing silent black and white footage produced by various agencies with different agendas. But the footage was mesmerizing. If Monnikendam had given us a sampler, I now saw that there were hundreds of titles covering a vast area – Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and several outer islands of eastern Indonesia. I learned that it was through a preservation and digitization program launched in 2007 called "Images for the
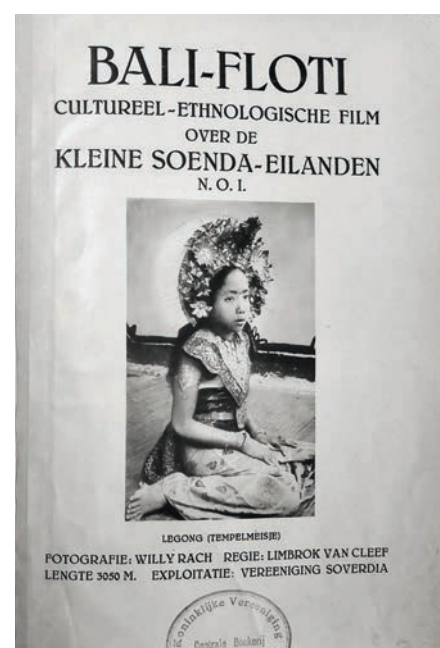
Fig. 3: Booklet for the film *Bali-Floti*
(Archived in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam).
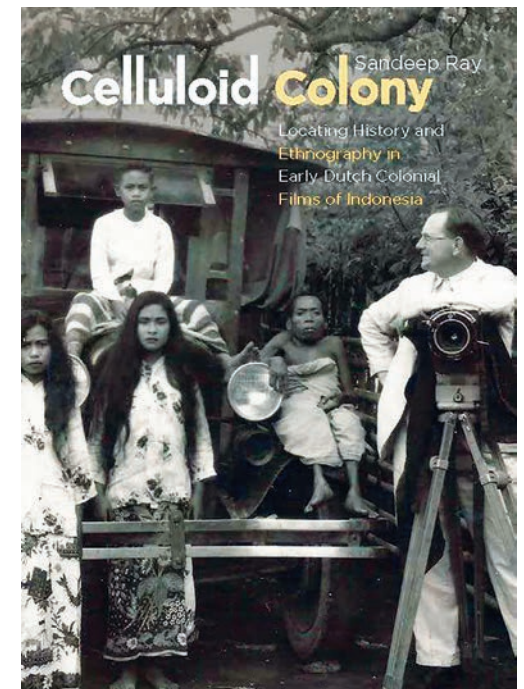
Future" that a vast amount of footage from the original inflammable nitrate film was being made more widely accessible. But they still had to be viewed on the premises.

Scrupulous documentation notwithstanding, scholarship on this specific collection was limited. I looked elsewhere, reading up on the broader discourse on non-fiction film from the colonial era. The historiography of colonial propaganda cinema, a substantial global undertaking in the early 20th century, has come to be recognized as an area of study only in recent decades. Most film scholars, it turns out, were simply not interested in early non-fiction film – colonial or otherwise. Deploring this state of affairs, a new, exciting body of work emerged from academics who criss-crossed the disciplines of film studies, history, and anthropology. Books on British, French, and German colonial cinematic efforts were published. Yet these particular Dutch colonial films remained under the radar. Even the arresting comment by Susan Sontag after watching *Mother Dao* – "Who would have thought that out of anonymous documentary footage from Indonesia in the first decades of this century, taken by the Dutch authorities, a contemporary Dutch filmmaker could make a film that is both a searing reflection on the ravages of colonialism and a noble work of art?" – did not send researchers rushing to the Netherlands. Sontag was incorrect in calling the footage anonymous. After all, it had mostly been accounted for. But she was right in the sense that even though we could locate the makers, nobody really knew about them. My university professors in Michigan, and then in Singapore, doyens of Indonesian Studies, had not heard of these films. Why had they never sparked a wider interest outside of a handful of dedicated Dutch scholars? This begs the question: were they perhaps similar to other films of the same genre and not worth studying? While a touch pessimistic, it is not unreasonable to ask. Having looked at them closely, I would like to explain why I think they are in fact worth studying.

There are two key differences between the Dutch East Indies films and films produced by other colonial systems. Although colonial production in the East Indies began in 1912, well after filming had already started in Africa by German and French operators, and in the Philippines by American cameramen, the scale and scope of the Dutch production was colossal – significantly higher than from any other colony. The Dutch colonial government and its corporate affiliates continued the funding of informational films about the colony for almost two full decades. It is noteworthy that even though the makers of these films came from different backgrounds – government workers, private production companies, independents, and evangelists – there was a general uniformity in their styles over the two decades (1920s-1930s). This was

a strength. The films in this collection are typically slow and deliberate. They often hover over close details of technical processes, cultural performances, and depictions of nature. There is an unhurried, observant, and stately feeling. There are title cards that explain the scenes, but they tend not to be interruptive or word-heavy, as was often the case in British Empire newsreels. It is this generally less subjective approach and quotidian aesthetic that makes the collection stand out.

But why were the Dutch films stylistically different? An important factor contributing to this unhurried, less 'pushy' approach of societal depiction might be that the Netherlands had remained neutral during World War I. Scholars have pointed out that in the United States and many European nations, it was the heightened cinematic push during World War I – to create compelling narratives conducive to effective propaganda – that gave rise to the structure of post-war documentary films. My conjecture is that the aim to make documentaries in order to create

> **It is this generally less subjective approach and quotidian aesthetic that makes the collection stand out.**

a more dramatized narrative that would have wider appeal, is precisely what *took away* from the ethnographic strength of American-influenced documentaries in the 1920s. Staying outside this narrative propaganda 'loop,' the Dutch became better ethnographers.

This austerity with the Dutch Colonial Institute's (*Vereeniging Koloniaal Instituut*)[2] simple instructions to not make "popular" films produced an untampered authenticity. Even though Dutch cameramen did not capture a comprehensive image of their colony, and there were huge omissions in their depictions of society, class, and politics, the films were rarely embellished or sensationalized. They tended to be slower and had non-complicated or absent plots – perhaps too dull for the excitement that was sought from documentaries. This might explain the early disinterest in studying this material. The films were less scintillating, lacked strong central characters, and so film historians ignored them. And yet, in their ordinariness, they often managed to capture
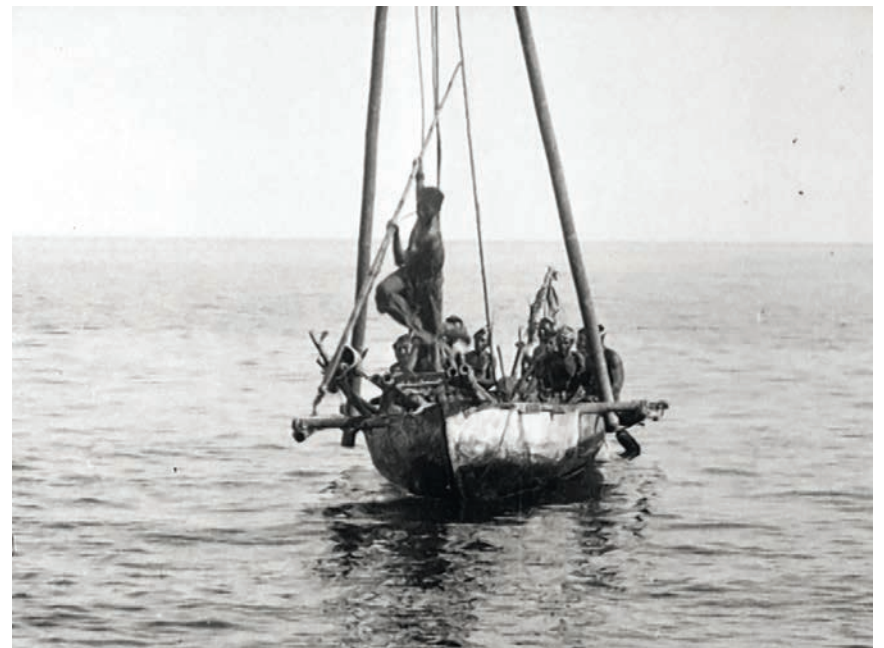

Fig. 4: Still from whale hunting filmed by Willy Rach in 1923.

moments and sequences that were perhaps richer in cultural texture.

Additionally, some of the Dutch colonial filmmakers may arguably have been somewhat anti-propagandistic in their filming, uncovering aspects of colonial rule that did not flatter the Dutch government. This makes for unique archival documentation in the context of the colonial encounter. The Ethical Policy of 1901 set into motion programs to document the efforts towards "the elevation of the people." The Colonial Institute in Amsterdam saw film as a useful way of providing both evidence of the state of the colony, as well as a means to persuade civilians in the Netherlands to take pride in developing the East Indies. While this is not unlike the contents of the several propagandistic films European filmmakers made in response to their "civilizing mission," considering the level of detail in the Dutch material, one is clearly exposed to a far more descriptive, intimate, and seamier side of colonialism. The Dutch cinematic simulacrum of the colony, often motivated by either a liberal-political or a paternal-evangelistic outlook, resulted in the need to be somewhat introspective and expository. The scenes are often meant to generate sympathy as much as they are meant to show progress. We are exposed to a more detailed impression of native life. While some have value in what they preserve of lost ways, much of it helps us glimpse into the hardships created by colonial systems. While I argue for their value in helping us to reimagine and better understand the colonial encounter, I warn viewers that there are no smoking gun scenes, no unusual indictment of colonial rule. One must consider, however, that much of the colonial oppression was systemic and widespread and not limited to acute violence. This material reveals that.

Thus two broad factors, the sheer abundance and diversity, along with a markedly different approach to filmmaking, make this footage worth the deep dive. I can only assume that it was the prior lack of access to this material that had prevented scholars from researching them. This archive, which we can view on our smartphones today, has survived almost a century of atmospheric exposure, remained undamaged through two world wars, and been relocated several times. Most are from completed works, some from outtakes preserved in different archives over the decades. Starting around 2016, the films have been made available online. Logging onto the Eye Museum's website can take viewers to a very troubling, subjective, yet rich viewing of Indonesia's colonial past. There is something there for everyone – nostalgists, art historians, anthropologists, and dyed-in-the-wool anti-colonialists.

Sandeep Ray is the author of *Celluloid Colony: Locating History and Ethnography in Early Dutch Colonial Films of Indonesia* (NUS Press, 2021). He is Senior Lecturer in Southeast Asian history at the Singapore University of Technology and Design, where he also heads the Non-Fiction Film Lab. Email: Sandeep_ray@sutd.edu.sg

Fig. 5: Poster for *Ria Rago*, "a film of actuality" (Courtesy of University of Westminster Archives).

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Notes

1 *Mother Dao*, Dir: Vincent Monnikendam, Nederlandse Programma Stichting, 1995.
2 This institute is known today as the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT), or Royal Tropical Institute.

On the Evacuation of Kabul and the Global Reach of America's Wars

Noah Coburn

Much of the world watched in horror in late August as the U.S. military evacuated over 125,000[1] civilians in the period between the collapse of the Ghani administration and the final departure of the last American troops on August 30. During this period, the scenes of chaos from Kabul airport were shocking for many. Thousands of Afghans, along with American citizens and other internationals, crowded airport gates, waving documents. Nearly 200 were killed in a suicide bomb attack on August 26.

Fig. 2: Book cover for *Losing Afghanistan: An Obituary for the Intervention* (Photo courtesy of Noah Coburn and Stanford University Press).

There are sure to be many analyses written in the coming years about how the Taliban advanced so quickly, how the Afghan government seemed to crumble overnight, and how the United States was so poorly prepared diplomatically for the events that preceded the evacuation. Yet, a simpler question remains which helps illuminate the nature of the U.S. war in Afghanistan: how was it that the United States government seemed unaware of the number of people who needed to be – and were qualified to be – evacuated? As the New York Times asked in the middle of the evacuation, "Given the resources and risk the United States is putting into the evacuation, how can the government not know how many people it is planning to fly out?"[2]

On one hand, there were far more U.S. citizens in the country than the embassy seemed to expect, but the far greater number of those looking to be evacuated were Afghans who had worked with the international community. These

included people who had worked either directly for the U.S. government, as sub-contractors with companies receiving U.S. government funds, as well as on grants or programs receiving U.S. funding. However, there was no clear picture of how many of these contractors and others existed. This is despite the fact that the U.S. approach to war has become increasingly contractor-centric. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Defense Department has spent $14 trillion dollars,[3] half of which has gone directly to contractors. In the most recent years of the war in Afghanistan, the U.S. government has employed three contractors for every single U.S. military personnel on the ground in the country.

Despite this, the U.S. government does not maintain a database of contractors that work for it, so it does not know how many contractors there were, where they were from, or how long they had worked for the U.S. government. These numbers matter, for

example, because to qualify for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), Afghans were required to work for the government for twelve months, but how many Afghans had actually worked for the U.S. government for twelve months?[4]

The Department of Defense does count the number of contractors that work for it every quarter, which is more than most of the other departments in the U.S. government that were involved in the war in Afghanistan, including the Department of State and USAID. Even the Department of Defense numbers, however, are not particularly helpful because while they track the number of contractors from quarter to quarter, they do not consider how many of those contractors were hired or fired during a specific period. So when the Department of Defense reports 10,000 contractors one quarter and 10,000 the next, it does not actually consider whether these are the same 10,000 contractors or if they are actually 20,000 contractors.

Nepali subcontractors and the global war

Even without a central database, there were ways to create better estimates, and these are illustrative of what the war in Afghanistan became. Consider a perhaps similar case, the number of Nepali contractors in Afghanistan. Nepal was not directly involved in the conflict, but still sent contractors to work in Afghanistan.

Nepalis, recruited into the British Imperial Army since the beginning of the 19th century, now play a pivotal role in the provision of private security around the world. Major international compounds in Kabul, including the American and British embassies, but also small, local NGOs relied primarily on Nepalis to support their local security presence. Despite this, however, the Nepali government made no real effort to track the number of Nepalis in Afghanistan. There was no Nepali embassy in Afghanistan, and while Nepalis were asked by the government to register before going to Afghanistan, this was routinely avoided by Nepalis who would travel first to the United Arab Emirates or another Gulf country and transfer onto a flight to Afghanistan. Even counting the number of visas handed out to Nepalis by the Afghan government is not helpful, since many Nepalis were flown on private contracted flights directly into U.S. bases, bypassing Afghan immigration.

When I first attempted to do a survey of the number of Nepalis who had been to Afghanistan in 2015-2016, several experts estimated that there were around 5,000 Nepalis who had worked there. However, as I conducted interviews with Nepali security contractors and others, I attempted to develop a more accurate accounting. To do this, I took the list of the top contracting companies in Afghanistan and, through my interviews, developed an estimate for the number of Nepalis working for each company at one time. There were dozens of companies on

the list, with the companies at the top of the list employing 300 or more Nepalis at a single time. This did not include the several hundred unemployed Nepalis living in labor camps in Kabul who were actively seeking employment. In fact, when tallying these numbers, it became clear that at any one point between 2009 and 2013 there had been over 10,000 Nepalis in Afghanistan. While the number in the country decreased after 2013, the turnover rate of many workers who spent between three and six years in the country, so ultimately at least 50,000 Nepalis had participated in the war in Afghanistan.

Failures of accounting, failures of accountability?

The fact that the war in Afghanistan became an increasingly contracted affair helps disguise both the scope and scale of the human impact of the war. Tens of thousands of civilians came to Afghanistan to participate as contractors, and tens of thousands more Afghans were hired as subcontractors. During the height of the U.S. surge in Afghanistan (2010-2011), there were 100,000 contractors working just for the Department of Defense and a similar number of U.S. military personnel for a one contractor to one soldier ratio.[5] However, when U.S. troop levels began to decline, contractor numbers dropped more slowly, resulting in a ratio of three contractors for every soldier in recent years.

When the Ghani government collapsed, many of these contractors turned to the U.S., hoping to be evacuated. The most recent publicly available data in early 2021 show that at that point there were 18,000 Afghans who had applied for and were waiting for U.S. Special Immigrant Visas. The evacuation seemed scaled to support this number of Afghans. However, this number did not take into account the fact that in recent years, it took three to six years for a SIV to be processed.[6] This meant that the

Afghan contractors who were most at risk were unlikely to apply for the visa, since it was unlikely that it would be processed in time to save them. At the same time, others felt that other opportunities might arrive: why spend three years waiting for a visa that might not come? All this resulted in the fact that tens of thousands of Afghans were technically eligible for the SIV, but had not applied for it, and the U.S. government had no good way of actually tracking this number.

The shifting visa requirements further complicated the issue. In August, just two weeks before the collapse of the Afghan government, a new designation was announced by the Department of State called "Priority 2."[7] This included "Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or non-governmental organization." Additionally, U.S. politicians, activists, and others rightly put pressure on the U.S. military to also consider evacuating those Afghan activists, journalists, scholars, and others who had worked on human rights issues.

All of this resulted in the thousands of Afghans who crowded the Kabul airport and felt they were eligible for evacuation, and a U.S. government that seemed incredibly unprepared for the scale of the evacuation. Most ended up left behind, and this included international contractors as well: by late August, the New York Times reported that over 350 Nepalis were seeking to be evacuated from Afghanistan still.[8]

The U.S war in Afghanistan was no small affair. The U.S. government attempted to minimize the costs of the war, both economically and in terms of the number of U.S. soldiers killed, by essentially outsourcing much of this work to both Afghan and international contractors. The long-term result was that the war in Afghanistan became a global war, including not just members of the NATO coalition but contractors from countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and dozens of other countries. Much of this was invisible

since these contractors were quietly hired and fired. Many are now moving on, searching for new wars to work on.[9] But for most of the Afghan contractors, who did the actual work of the war, they remain left behind.

And in those chaotic, violent moments of the evacuation at Kabul airport, a war that has largely been invisible, became, briefly, visible.

Noah Coburn is a socio-cultural anthropologist at Bennington College (United States). His research focuses on political structures and violence in the Middle East and Central Asia. Recent publications include *Losing Afghanistan: An Obituary for the Intervention* (Stanford University Press, 2016) and *Under Contract: The Invisible Workers of America's Global Wars* (Stanford University Press, 2018).
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Notes

1 https://www.europenowjournal.org/2020/10/11/landmine-clearance-displacement-and-interdisciplinarity/
2 https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/24/us/politics/afghanistan-evacuations-kabul-airport.html
3 https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2021/ProfitsOfWar
4 Later, this requirement was raised to two years, before being reduced back down to a year.
5 https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44116.pdf
6 https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs-working-with-americans-in-afghanistan
7 https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/
8 https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/world/asia/nepal-afghanistan-gurkha.html
9 https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/searching-for-the-next-war-what-happens-when-contractors-leave-afghanistan/

Fig. 3: Flying out of Kabul circa 2014, airport to the left (Photo courtesy of Michael Foley on Flickr, reproduced under a Creative Commons licence).

Fig. 1: A host club decked out for Valentine's Day (Image by the author).

Selling Intimacy under Post-Industrial Capitalism

An Ethnography of Japanese Host Clubs

Ruby Fitzsimmons

There are over 15,000 hosts in Japan, who bring millions of yen a year into the ailing economy by providing emotional and physical (but not sexual) intimacy to women – you can feel like a princess for the night, if you have the means. According to both domestic and foreign media, they are all conniving, exploitative low-lives, conning naïve women out of sometimes tens of thousands of yen, and even forcing some into prostitution. What follows is a snapshot of how Japan has responded to the changing needs of female consumers in today's post-industrial capitalist economy, which has come to rely increasingly on the sale and purchase of emotion, feeling, and affect. Host clubs are but one – lucrative – player in the global traffic of human emotion.

Host clubs: where romance and capitalism collide

Otoya, a 22-year-old who had been in the host club industry since he was 19, pursed his childish lips in concentration, flicking his dyed brown hair off his face and fiddling with the sparkling stud in his ear. Dance music pulsed around us, making it all but impossible to hear – all the better to make a customer lean in close. At the table next to us, a heavily made-up host in a slim-fitting grey suit gesticulated wildly to a woman erupting in peals of high-pitched laughter. At another table the most popular host in the club was gazing with rapt attention at the screen of his customer's bejewelled iPhone, nodding earnestly as she talked. One would be forgiven for thinking this is a bar full of couples. But it is all, quite literally given the constant plumes of cigarette smoke snaking their way up towards the mirror tiled ceiling, smoke and mirrors. "When people say hosts sell dreams, it's because we're entertainers. Like Disneyland and Mickey Mouse – Disneyland is the land of dreams, and Mickey helps people to dream. But not everyone can go to Disneyland, so

they come here." Otoya placed his hand on my leg reassuringly: "I'll be back in a second, okay?" He hurried over to fondly greet a smiling young woman waiting for him on another sofa.

At the most basic level, hosts are young men who provide pseudo-romance (*gijirenai* 疑似恋愛) to multiple women for sometimes exorbitant amounts of money. A visit to a host club in itself is not expensive, about £30 for an hour – but this does not include drinks, which are only sold by the bottle with a huge markup. The club where I carried out the bulk of my research charged £80 for a bottle of alcohol that would cost £10 in a supermarket. This is what makes bills jump; women compete for their favourite host's attention by buying more bottles of alcohol, and it is this system of picking favourites that is the lifeblood of the host club. The first visit resembles a speed-dating event: you talk to a new host every 10-15 minutes, and at the end of the hour you are encouraged to choose one to invite back to your table for a longer conversation. From then on, he is your *shimei* (指名), or designated host; whenever you go to the club, he is the one you talk to. It is a permanent relationship. It relies on a host not just being

attentive to his customer's likes and dislikes, but also on his ability to mould himself into what she is looking for that evening. He is responsible for her emotional wellbeing and enjoyment for the hour or two she is in the club.

Understanding the dynamics of the *shimei* system and the relationships forged within allows a deeper understanding of why women spend so much on hosts. They have the ability to make you feel like you are in a long-term relationship with someone who knows your likes and dislikes, how to make you smile, and how you like to be talked to, but with all the poorly concealed looks, sexual tension, and flattery (all perfectly timed, of course) that comes with a first date. Hosts peddle pseudo-romance to their customers, pretending to harbour genuine feelings of affection, even love, for them for monetary gain. This business strategy is known as *irokoi* (色恋), "sweet words and behaviour used to make the customer believe she is his [the host's] girlfriend." One host I asked confirmed, "It's when you say things like 'I like you so much' to a customer even when you don't." They are the walking, smooth talking, besuited typification of emotional labour, which "requires one to

induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."[1]

Although many are quick to scorn or pity regular customers for paying for a romantic fantasy, both my own and others' research found that most women are fully aware of the nature of the industry. They are under no illusions that their *shimei* actually has feelings for them. The overarching narrative of host club patronisation, that women are helpless victims, does nothing to credit the agency of women, and is testament to how entrenched the black-and-white rhetoric of victimisation/ exploitation versus free choice is in discussions of sex and sex-related work.

Contrary to popular, Western belief, hosts are not male escorts. Like everyone employed in the *mizu shobai* (水商売, adult oriented entertainment industry), for all their flirtatious banter and professions of love, they are not paid for sexual acts (within the host club at least – it is perfectly possible to organise a dalliance outside of working hours). They are paid for their ability to create a fantasy, an illusion of intimacy. Indeed, a lot of hosts, including some of my own interviewees, say that their job is *yume wo uru* (夢を売る): "to sell dreams." And some women prostitute themselves to obtain these dreams: the majority of customers are indeed sex workers.[2] Explanations – or, more accurately, speculations – about women's motivations abound. The general consensus is that Japanese women, sex worker or otherwise, desperately need respite from the subjugation and chauvinism of their male partners. Host clubs are presented as a simple case of role reversal, where women can finally be the beneficiaries of the servitude they are expected to provide. During my month of fieldwork in Osaka, almost all of my informants, not only hosts but men and women who were employed in other parts of the sprawling adult entertainment industry, were quick to correct my assumption that women's interactions with hosts acted as an escape from the emotional and physical tolls of their jobs as hostesses and sex workers. It was, they argued, much more nuanced:

"A woman [who doesn't go to host clubs] goes for the first time. She ends up getting really into it, but doesn't have enough money, so she ends up working in the sex industry so she can see her host and make him the highest ranking in the club."

I set out armed with a research question: why do women go to these clubs? What emerged was a commodity chain, where romance was constantly bought and sold, women and men exploiting and being exploited, all under the watchful eye of post-industrial capitalism, created by the coupling of affective labour with the commodification of care and intimacy.

Consumption of the "chivalrous" West

Few countries consume the West with as much ardour as Japan. One of the most successful imports has been romance – along with baseball, Disney, and Tommy Lee Jones. From the hordes of mainly white male English teachers to the Hollywood-produced rom-coms showing across the country's cinemas and televisions, the message is clear: romantic relationships are about sentiment, declarations of love, and 'the chase.' Western notions of what heteronormative intimacy entails have struck a particular chord with young women, who have had more time and inclination to engage with the West through foreign travel, language learning, and interracial relationships.

The 1990s saw a considerable proportion of women advancing into the workforce. Unlike previous generations – Japanese women have always been active members of the labour force – for those in the 1990s it was less about necessity and more for 'individualistic' reasons such as to "make money to use freely," "save money for the future," or "to broaden perspective and make friends."[3] This new affluence, both monetarily and in terms of personal growth, led to a "profound questioning of domestic

Japanese expectations concerning the female life course,"[4] as many began to interact with the West further than 10 years of compulsory English language education would take them. We can frame this within the so-called 'consciousness gap,' with men clinging to a dogged desire for stay-at-home wives, whereas women increasingly wish for a "partner" with whom to share housework, interests, and values. The fetishisation of (white) Western men is a mainstay of Japanese media, where they appear as sensitive, ladies first gentlemen, shining beacons of egalitarianism to brighten the dark shadow of their Japanese counterparts' sexism. Many women who seek eroticised internationalism subscribe to a binary of a regressive, chauvinistic Japan versus the sophisticated, liberal West. They often frame praise for foreign men against derision of Japanese ones.

Fanning the flames of this Occidentalist fantasy are the numerous societal constraints that have rendered many men unwilling or, crucially, *unable* to lavish the same attention on their partners that foreign men supposedly do. Japanese men are supposed to be breadwinners, devoting their time to their company rather than their partner's needs and desires. In Japan, there are still few ways to be a man, and forsaking one's personal life working until the last train and drinking with colleagues (rarely willingly) is part of the narrow definition of masculinity. The corporate culture that is essential to the maintenance of a masculine identity has led to the absence of husbands from the home, as well as to men who have few interests outside of work, creating 'one-dimensional,' unresponsive partners. Hosts, on the other hand, embody the so-called "Three C's" – comfortable, communicative, cooperative – that women are now said to desire, providing a personal(ised) connection and cultivating a type of intimacy that is not generally forthcoming from the average man.

From the moment you enter a host club [Fig. 1], you are the recipient of unwavering attention. After being led from the darkened lobby, where the top three ranking hosts beaming down at you from framed photographs, you enter the main club to a chorus of *"irrashaimase!"* (いらっしゃいませ, "Welcome!"). You do not do anything for yourself. Hosts pour your drinks and whip out a lighter the minute they spy a cigarette being produced from a handbag. They escort you to the toilet and wait for you outside, proffering a hot hand towel when you emerge. They hand you a blanket if you are wearing a short skirt to preserve your modesty. Otoya once tenderly removed my make-up when I had drunk too much to negotiate the removal of false eyelashes, and sent a helper host out to buy me a pack of cigarettes. If you do not finish your bottle of alcohol, a charm with your name written on it will be attached to the bottle, and it will be kept on a shelf ready for your next visit [Fig. 2]. These highly stylised acts of thoughtfulness, which continue until your *shimei* says goodbye to you outside the club when you leave, are a breath of fresh air – or smoke-filled, cologne-laden air – for women, particularly those in the adult entertainment industry, who not only provide the same service to men, but are relentlessly sexualised while doing so. Being given a blanket so people cannot peek at

your underwear is likely to mean a lot to a woman who has spent the evening with a businessman's hand on her thigh.

In this regard, it is easy to see why a hostess or sex worker might spend her earnings in a host club. After an unproductive evening spent sloping around Sōemonchō, the beating heart of Osaka's sex trade, having been constantly leered at, one of my field notes read: *I've never been so conscious of being an object of men's gaze. It makes me feel dirty and I want my boyfriend.*

Host clubs – where acts of what for many Japanese women represent non-Japanese expressions of romance and intimacy are replicated to an almost comical degree (I am after all capable of hailing a taxi myself) – can therefore be seen as being born from a desire for cliched romance that alludes a lot of Japanese men. As Otoya confirmed, "I don't think host clubs would be so popular if Japanese men were more into this sort of [kind] treatment."

Romantic consumption in the service economy

I want to see you.
I had so much fun with you tonight!
I'd be happy if you came [to the club].
You can't come tonight?
When can I see you?

These are some things hosts have said to me in person and over text message. They do not quite capture the subtleties of Japanese, especially the connotations of my doing them a favour by visiting the club, but they are pertinent examples of the emotional labour hosts perform – and, indeed, the essence of this type of labour is one's ability to perform. Otoya told me "of course" he messages his customers every day, and although he said that mostly they just talk about "this and that," the point is that exchanges between a host and his customers are often akin to real romantic relationships; surely one of the marks of a long-term relationship is sending your partner a picture of your new haircut for their estimation (as a host from a different club did). Their service or "performance" (as one interviewee described it) is tailored to each individual. Every host I asked admitted to changing his personality based on the customer. When I asked a former host acquaintance why he left the industry, he replied wearily, "I got tired of being fake." The work that hosts engage in is the ultimate form of the commercialisation of intimacy, requiring deep acting and considerable effort to manipulate one's own and others' feelings.

The modern service economy is predicated on the sale of "a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship."[5] Take the annual Christmas advert assault, for example: although supermarkets are advertising turkeys, Christmas puddings, and Prosecco by the bucketload, what they promise is warm smiles, grinning relatives, and a general feeling of fuzzy wellbeing and camaraderie. The expansion of services to include emotion and affect on their roster is most often seen as a result of the demographic changes accompanying late modernity, where people have come to rely increasingly on those outside

the home for the affective services previously inside it. Much of the work done on affective labour is predicated on the argument that women are the only ones exploited to provide emotional labour for the consumption of men. Hosts not only confound this assessment but complicate the situation by relying heavily on *fuzokujo* (風俗嬢, female sex workers) to make money. As it neatly encapsulates the pseudo-romance they sell as well as the stylised romantic interactions that take place in the club, emotional labour is a useful analytical lens through which to view the intimate performance of hosts.

A broader approach which encompasses the multitude of affective services on offer in today's economy comes from Michael Hardt, who use the term affective labour to describe labour which produces and manipulates emotions. He sees affective labour as one face of immaterial labour. Its products are not tangible goods, but "a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community."[6] Although the products of affective labour are intangible, they often mix with material labour. Hosts flatter and seduce, but their money is ultimately made by how many bottles of alcohol they are able to sell through this immaterial labour, hence why their target customer base is female sex workers, who make enough money to improve the host's all-important ranking. This is where the affective commodity chain comes into play.

What is the effect of all this affect?

Mr. Harada, seemingly baffled by my entire project, took a drag on his cigarette. I was conducting our interview in a busy family restaurant, but he was unconcerned by the obvious discord between the subject and setting. With the air of someone whose patience is wearing thin explaining something to a child, he told me:

"No you've got it wrong, women don't go to host clubs because their boyfriend doesn't treat them nicely. They go to a host club and get really wrapped up in it, so turn to sex work so they can earn more money for their host. 80% of host clubs customers are sex workers. They go because the host is like their boyfriend."

I have been offering possible explanations behind the patronisation of host clubs, attempting to paint a picture of the draw of the intimate and affective services on offer there. In doing this, I hope to have made it clearer why a woman might get attached to a host, to the extent that she is willing to prostitute herself. In this final section, I talk about the affective commodity chain that host clubs are a part of. In this chain, romance, emotion, and affect are the commodities, which constantly flow around the post-industrial capitalist economy in general, and the sex industry in particular. In the context of host clubs, women use men (hosts) for their emotional and affective labour, and are in turn used by them for money. Hosts wield such labour skilfully enough to manipulate women into then selling their own affect to manipulate their customers, in order to earn enough money to continue being exploited by hosts. It is this idea of being *willingly* exploited – few women are actually coerced into the sex industry by hosts – that irrevocably shows us the power of affective relationships. Kana, one of my interviewees, told me that hosts implore a customer, "I can't be Number 1 without you …" and other such statements, which lead her to consider working in the sex industry in a way that makes her think she has reached the decision independently.

The emotive power of affective labour is more applicable, I think, to customers who are not already employed in the sex industry when they

start going to host clubs. They enter the industry out of feelings for their *shimei* and to support him – as we all want to do for those we love. Once they are in the sex trade, these reasons are likely to combine with occupational stress, which are alleviated by the soothing attention of one's *shimei*. Therefore, the chain is kept going by the constant give and take of intimate affect. From what I learned during my fieldwork, I see this group of women as being motivated by the pseudo-romance on offer to enter into the affective commodity chain. My concept of willing exploitation is a caveat that applies to the structure/agency debates plaguing discussions of commercialised sex work. To be sure, women are emotionally manipulated into spending their money on a host, but for the most part the decision to enter into the adult entertainment or sex trade to win his affections is a conscious one – a more complicated situation than free choice versus victimisation.

Hosts can provide the personal(ised) connection that some women are looking for in times of evident frailty in long-term relationships and marriage. They can therefore be seen as a reflection and extension of an economy built on the exchange of emotions and relationships. Post-capitalism has gone beyond the provision of service and is now characterised by the demand for authentic and intimate *experiences*. "The experience economy is all about trading in what makes the heart beat faster,"[7] as people have become sated with actual things and long to experience rather than own. Japanese female consumers are able to rent the experience of a contrived romantic relationship for the night. Hosts manipulate women out of sometimes hundreds of thousands of yen, but are themselves exploited by their clients who demand their intimate performance. Those who work in the sex economy, some of whom do it to finance their host club visits, are then exploited by their own customers, who in turn provide women with the money to spend in the club. We can see then that it is not a clear-cut binary of exploiter/exploited in the name of post-industrial capitalism; rather, it is a cycle, like an ouroboros eating its own tail. It is outside the remit of this article to explore the affective relationships at work in the sprawling male heteronormative side of Japan's sex and sex-related trade. But from the side I have been considering, capitalism, with its assurances of personalised service and authentic experiences, has created a constant feedback loop of paid-for intimate practices.

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> Few countries consume the West with as much ardour as Japan. One of the most successful imports has been romance – along with baseball, Disney, and Tommy Lee Jones.

Fig. 2: Unfinished bottles of alcohol. Each bottle has the customer's name on a label hanging from the neck – another example of calculated thoughtfulness which personalises the experience. The teddy bears on the left are ornaments which fit in with the Japanese ideal of *kawaii* (かわいい, "cuteness and innocence") (Image by the author).

Notes

1 Hochschild, A. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling.* California: The University of California Press, 7.
2 There are two distinct categories of sex work in Japan: the *mizu shobai* and the *fuzoku*. The former does not include penetrative sex, but is still a form of prostitution. I will refer to both as sex work, and women employed in them as 'sex workers.'
3 Iwao, S. 1993. *The Japanese Woman: Traditional image and Changing Reality.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 164.
4 Kelsky, K. 2001. *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams.* Durham: Duke University Press, 87.
5 Hochschild, A. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling.* California: The University of California Press, 198.
6 Hardt, M. 1999. "Affective Labor." *Boundary 2* 26(2): 96.
7 Ogilvy, J. A. 2002. *Creating Better Futures: Scenario Planning as a Tool for a Better Tomorrow.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 36.

Reaching Tibet

Anglophone Protestant Missionaries and the Chinese Civilizing Mission

Jeff Kyong-McClain

There is a long-running trope in the English-speaking world of Tibet as a land of mystery and spiritual depth tragically smothered by Chinese Communist rule. Less well-known is that, especially prior to 1949 and the full arrival of the Cold War in East Asia, many (perhaps even most) sectors of Anglophone society publicly supported – with varying degrees of nuance, to be sure – Chinese rule in Tibet. Why, in an era of growing enthusiasm for national self-determination, and considering their own biases against the Chinese people and their governments, was this the case?
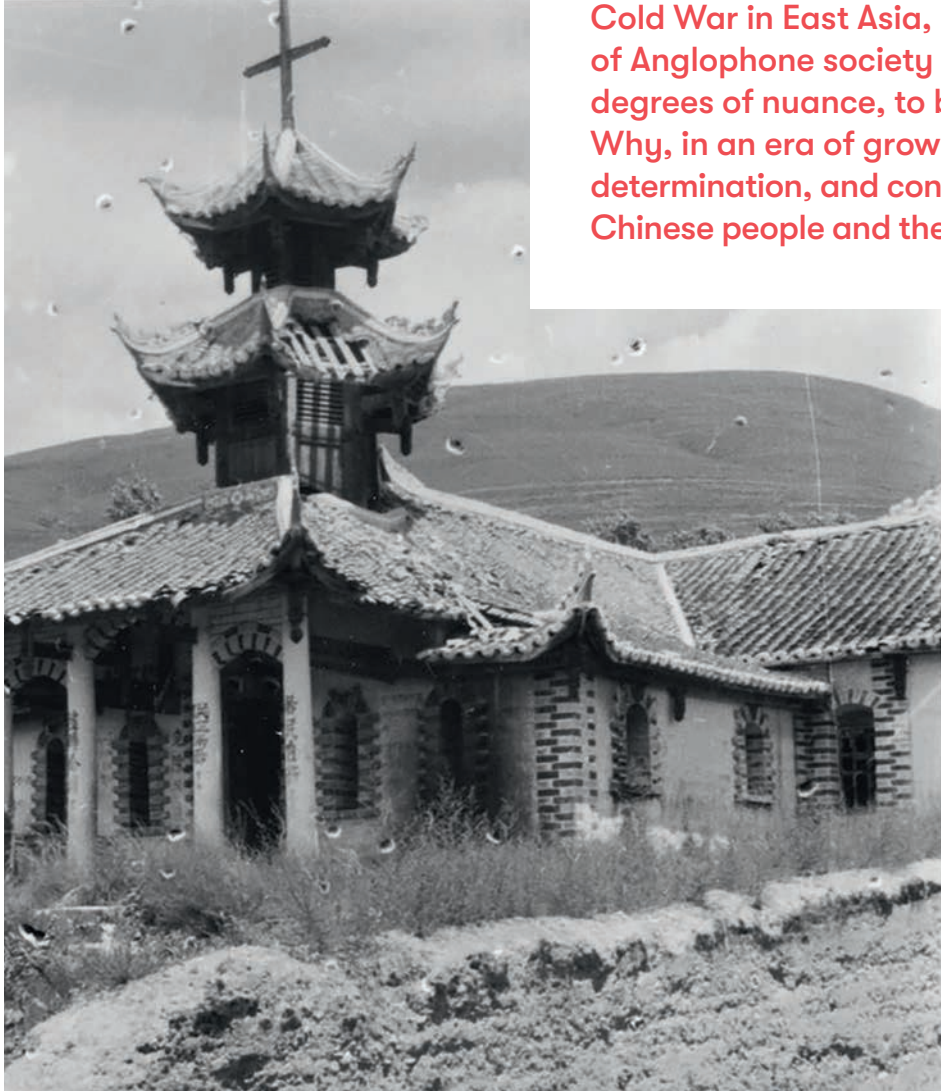

Fig. 1: Church in eastern Tibet, ca. 1941. (Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library)

This brief essay cannot address all of the possible answers to this question, but it will offer a partial answer by drawing attention to one significant group consistently advocating for Chinese rule of Tibet: Anglophone Protestant missionaries in China. When reading the public writings of these missionaries, one notices two major rationales for their support for Chinese rule. First, many held some notion of a hierarchical scale of civilizations, in which the Chinese were more civilized than Tibetans and therefore had a legitimate claim to conduct a civilizing mission. Second, the more pragmatic view was that since Chinese authorities were almost always more tolerant of Christianity than were Tibetan ones, Chinese rule would be beneficial for evangelistic goals.[1] In what follows, I present examples of Anglophone Protestant missionary writing on the matter from three sources: (1) articles from a newspaper written for and by missionaries in southwest China and eastern Tibet, (2) selections from an academic journal published in Chengdu but distributed internationally, and (3) examples from books published in the West that were intended for popular consumption.

Early assessments in the *West China Missionary News*

A good source for missionary attitudes on many topics related to what is now often known as "southwest China" is the *West China Missionary News* (WCMN), the longest-running English-language publication in the region,

published without significant interruption in Sichuan Province between 1899-1945. Although the readership was, by design, quite narrow – active missionaries in the region, most of whom, notably, entered the southwest by traveling up the Yangtze from Shanghai and were first of all missionaries to China (i.e., not to Tibet) – one can get from it a good sense of the perspectives of missionaries on the ground. The following are three telling examples from the last years of the Qing Dynasty and around the time of the Republican Revolution.

The first significant mention of Tibet in the WCMN occurred in 1903, under the heading "Tachienlu Notes" (Tachienlu is a town now known as Kangding).[2] The article was simply a note about the conditions for missionaries living in and around Tachienlu. The author states that the region can be quite pleasant, with its many mineral baths, fresh air, and good apples. On the other hand, he also notes that the peaches are bad, and that the region is entirely lacking in modern medicine. Still, all things considered, he concludes by encouraging more missionaries to follow him to the Sino-Tibetan borderlands. This earliest account, thus, promoted a vision of eastern Tibet as a frontier, an open space with ample natural resources, but not yet fully integrated into the modern world or the mission.

Subsequent writers in the WCMN, while not denying certain idyllic features, also noted a major problem in the region: Tibetans. A term that regularly appears in the WCMN to describe the Tibetan people is "lawless," which is often placed in direct contrast with Chinese "order." Most often, the largest portion

of blame for the lawlessness was put at the feet of the "lamas." As one missionary put it, the lamas were "a low, demoralized, sensual, avaricious class, whose only care is to think out ways and means to get the possessions of the laity turned into the monasteries for their own use."[3] In light of perceived lama depravity, the author goes on to say that God is using the Chinese generals to "open up this country, not only to Chinese rule and commerce, but also the preaching of the gospel." Here we see clearly articulated the view that Providence was leading China to rule the region, and that Chinese rule would dethrone the corrupt lamas of Tibetan Buddhism and bring in their place Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization.

A similar take is articulated a few months later in the WCMN by China Inland Missionary Robert Cunningham (1883-1942), who managed a congregation in Kangding. Cunningham likewise celebrated the advent of Chinese rule in eastern Tibet, suggesting that the Chinese government armies were nobly fighting against savagery.[4] Further, according to Cunningham, in stark contrast to the superstitious lamas, the Chinese officials modeled modern secular authority. He noted, for instance, the "entire absence of all false worship … not a single stick of incense" when Chinese authorities established government offices in the region. Thus, for Cunningham and other early missionary observers writing for the WCMN, the strengthening of Chinese authority in the region was obviously to be welcomed.

Missionary scholars consider the case

In 1922, a group of southwest China-based missionary scholars and explorers gathered in Chengdu to form the West China Border Research Society and publish its eponymous Journal (JWCBRS). Eventually, the JWCBRS gained international attention and was distributed to most major university libraries in the Anglophone world. The first issue of the JWCBR articulated the Society's goal: to promote all types of academic research "in the hill country and among the tribes of West China" and to offer "a service for ourselves, for the Chinese, for the world" (noticeably, not for the "tribes" themselves).[5] Although many articles involving Tibet were without overt political or religious implications (for example, there are frequent essays on geological features, though these too might imply future mineral extraction), those that did touch on these issues suggested that, overall, Tibet was an intriguing but primitive place, and in need of Chinese civilizing rule.

The very first paper presented to the Society set the tone on this matter. In "Journey into the Hoefan Valley," Canadian Methodist missionary T.E. Plewman described his encounters with Tibetans and Qiang as he traveled in northwest Sichuan.[6] Although

many of the Tibetans he encountered were, he admitted, quite friendly, he nonetheless believed that a significant number of them were "opium sots" and/or "bandits." Regarding those Tibetans who had thrown off Chinese overlordship, he wrote, "their independence had not brought them happiness," as lawlessness prevailed when Tibetans were left to govern themselves. In the end, he does not think China can manage to re-conquer the region immediately, but in time, he says, it is the only possible good result.

In J.H. Edgar's (1872-1936) essay, "Geographic Control and Human Reactions in Tibet," Edgar (who lived longer than most missionaries in eastern Tibet) fulsomely praises the Tibetan people for their resilience in the face of such adverse geographic conditions, but he also argues that they have no means to advance until another nation takes the reins and opens them up to the modern world.[7] Edgar believed that the Tibetans were a civilized people: he compared them favorably to the less civilized, in his estimation, Pacific Islanders and Australian Aborigines. Nevertheless, he also argued that Tibetan civilization, such as it was, was only barely held together by a destitute theocracy, ruled by abusive "priests and magicians." Edgar concludes his essay with this: "No land may shut her doors and live for herself. Men must free themselves from fortresses and backwashes. They must profit by other controls and be guided by customs and laws which have met with universal approval. No nation will be free to remain backward, and Tibet will not be neglected." After considering several candidates to do the opening, he settles on China to be the most likely and the most preferable.

In another article, Edgar approaches the question of Tibet from a missionary perspective, arriving at much the same conclusion: China should open Tibet.[8] Edgar notes the awkwardness of this point in light of his thesis that an "enlightened world conscience" now calls for weaker groups to have "self-determination." But, he wonders, what would independence actually mean for Tibet? Better, he thinks, for Tibetans to become an "interesting constituent in the world's greatest human amalgam" – that is, China. From a missionary perspective, Edgar argues that "Lamaism" has always and will always staunchly resist Christianity, whereas Chinese authorities are relatively open-minded. As such, he concludes, missionaries should count themselves fortunate that "more than half of Tibetan population is not directly under the Lhasa hierarchy."

Bringing it all back home

Although the WCMN and JWCBRS surely reveal common attitudes among Anglophone missionaries in the region, perhaps of wider import, in terms of influence, were the books written by the missionaries for their publics back home. Here, we briefly survey four such volumes, showcasing their tendency to mix a Chinese civilizing mission with the practical benefit of Chinese rule for missionaries.

David (?-1912) and Robert Ekvall (1898-1983), a father and son working as missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, provide a good example of the thinking on the matter. A.B. Simpson, the founder of the Alliance, once famously declared that Tibet would be "the last land—before the Lord returns," thus putting a target on it for Alliance missionaries. David Ekvall was one of the first to respond to Simpson's call, basing himself in Gansu, a province famous throughout history for connecting Central Asian cultures with China. In his 1907 book, the elder Ekvall wrote, "'Ten Tibetans, nine thieves,' is not only a current saying, but one pregnant with truth."[9] He believed that all Tibetans were "semi-savages" when contrasted with the "decorous" Chinese, but he saved particular scorn for the "grossly immoral" lamas of the Labrang monastery: "what must be the moral filth of this bee-hive of useless drones! … [gold cannot hide the] wickedness of these lazy know-nothings and do-nothings." Compared with his father, Robert Ekvall was considerably more moderate. Nonetheless, he too accepted a civilizational hierarchy with China on top, describing Taozhou in Gansu as "a city where Chinese culture and learning, Moslem keenness and trading ability, and Tibetan wildness were

THE PROVINCES, SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS AND OUTER TERRITORIES OF CHINA

Fig. 2: Map of China from the prominent missionary strategy text, *The Christian Occupation of China* (China Continuation Committee, 1922), accepting all of the Qing Dynasty domains as properly a part of the modern Chinese nation.

all mingled."[10] The younger Ekvall, like many of the more conservative missionaries, did not evince much interest in politics overall. His focus remained squarely on evangelization. Still, on that basis alone, he approved of the "religious tolerance of the Chinese" compared to Tibetans who, he regretted, tended to throw Christian tracts right back at the missionaries.

Seventh-Day Adventist Clarence Crisler (1877-1936) took a similar view in his posthumously published volume. Crisler, who was primarily based in Shanghai, but traveled to the region, noted that Chinese rule in eastern Tibet benefitted his mission: "The formation of Sikang [the new Chinese-run province] has been followed by several changes that may in time prove favorable to our mission advance... a considerable number of administrative and cultural improvements have gradually been displacing the former rule by the Tibetan lamas of this eastern third of ancient Tibet."[11] Crisler went on to declare that Chinese rule in eastern Tibet was an example of "the Lord opening doors," and he noted that the more territory China controlled and the less Lhasa did, the better for Christian evangelism.

The examples of the Ekvalls and Crisler might both be said to represent the conservative wing of the Christian mission, but much the same sentiment towards the question of Chinese rule over Tibet was expressed from more liberal corners as well. For example, in the YMCA's wartime publication, *China Rediscovers Her West*, the editors began: "Because of its isolation, China's great West was largely neglected and forgotten by other parts of the country. But it is being rediscovered: its history, its culture, its immense agricultural and industrial potentialities, and, above all, its human and spiritual resources for national defense and reconstruction."[12] The volume was primarily intended to drum up support in the Anglophone world for China's war efforts against Japan. The resources, both human and natural, of China's West were seen as key to that effort. So, Canadian missionary R.O. Joliffe (1874-1959), wrote: "Today, [we must see Central Asia] not as an independent unit but as an integral part of the great Chinese family,

it gives of its vast resources in a supreme effort to preserve the nation, to resist the enemy, and to build the great new China that is to be." George Fitch (1883-1979), a YMCA Secretary with 30 years' experience in Shanghai, compared China's western frontier to the American one: "The Days of the 'Golden West' were the most romantic period in America's history. Today much the same romance is being enacted in China," suggesting a wide-open space, ready for Chinese settlers to exploit. Few of the contributors made much of the people already living in the area, but D.S. Dye (1888-1977), echoing Edgar's sentiment, closed out the volume by explaining to his Anglophone readership that not only was the integration of China's West necessary for the war effort, but that the Christianization of Tibet would ultimately be wholly dependent on Chinese control of the region.

Thus, we can see that prior to 1949, among Anglophone Protestant missionaries active in China and eastern Tibet, there was little disagreement: Chinese rule of Tibet would benefit both the Tibetans and the missionary enterprise.

Conclusion

Outside the main line of this essay, but worthy of note, is that prior to 1949, it is also not hard to find examples of politicians and intellectuals in China who admit to taking some amount of inspiration from foreign missionary activity in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands. Anthropologist Chen Zongxiang (b. 1919), for example, used Western missionary work in eastern Tibet as a model, urging Chinese educationalists and medical crews to move to the region in order to "transform the Tibetans into a modern society" by mimicking "the educational crown of Xikang," the missionary medical school in Ba'an.[13] Another anthropologist, Xu Yitang (1896-1953), was struck by the power of Christianity for nation-building, and he urged China to unify all the people (and especially those of the southwestern borderlands) by creating a new national religion that would use a blending of Confucianism

and Christianity as its base.[14] The Chinese Christian church, during the war with Japan, also followed missionary educational models as they set up Border Service Stations. These were partly funded by the government in Chongqing to help bring the region into the national fold, much as the YMCA volume urged.[15] It would be a great exaggeration (and Eurocentric and ahistorical) to say that Anglophone Protestant missionaries were somehow responsible for early 20th-century Chinese nationalist views of Tibet. Nonetheless, it is probably not too far off to see missionaries and Chinese officials and intellectuals as operating in a kind of mobius band of influence, where missionaries were inspired by features of the spread of Chinese civilization (be it Confucian or modern nationalist) vis-à-vis primitive Tibet, and they, in turn, inspired Chinese colleagues.

Anglophone discourse about Tibet significantly shifted after 1949. Quite suddenly, the "semi-savage" nature of Tibet seemed not nearly as threatening as did the specter of global communism. Missionaries, like so many other sectors of Anglophone society (including business and political ones), abruptly took a decidedly pro-Tibet and anti-China turn. This obviously Cold War development should not, however, obscure the fact that, prior to 1949, decades of missionaries strongly supported the Chinese civilizing mission in Tibet. Most Protestant missionary writing on the matter was clear: Chinese rule was preferable, both in terms of assumed civilizational hierarchies and as an aid to the advance of the missionary project in the region. One way of looking at it might be to admit that the "Pedagogy of Imperialism"[16] was a very successful pedagogy, indeed, such that by the early 20th century, the line between teachers and students was becoming blurred, all accepting the naturalness of the emergence of modern, capitalist nation-states from the foundation provided by a traditional empire.

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Notes

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Some Personal Observations on the Western *Échec* in Afghanistan

Willem Vogelsang

"We give them schools, hospitals, democracy: Why don't they love us?" I don't remember where I read or heard this quotation. I may have picked it up when listening to an exasperated Western observer in Kabul. But it does express exactly what I want to discuss in this brief article, namely the difficulties and challenges of communication between the Afghans and non-Afghans in the mountains, deserts, and cities of Afghanistan between 2001-2021.

Fig. 1: A happy young boy in Pul-i Khumri, North Afghanistan, offers a mock salute to a Dutch officer a few years after the defeat of the Taliban (Photograph by the author, 2005).

anti-modernist movement that had turned against the communist-led government in Kabul. The countryside had won against the city. The Taliban, led by village mullahs who for decades had been pushed aside by the successive regimes in Kabul, stepped to the fore and tried to unite the country under the umbrella of Islam.

The Taliban were mostly Pashtun, the main ethnic group in Afghanistan. The organization quickly moved across much of the country, at first especially in the south and southeast, where the Pashtuns constitute the dominant population. Kabul, with its mixed ethnic composition, fell to the Taliban in 1996. Soon after, they dominated much of the country. By the middle of 2001, only a few pockets of resistance in the northeast of the country remained. When on 9 September the Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massud was killed by followers of Osama bin Laden, at that time the guest of the Taliban, the future of the anti-Taliban resistance was in serious doubt. The Taliban seemed fortified. Two days later, however, the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington changed it all, and by the end of the year the Taliban leaders had been bombed out of Afghanistan, and the survivors found refuge in Pakistan. Osama bin Laden was only discovered in his Pakistani hide-out in early 2011, and Mullah Omar died in Pakistan in 2013, although his death was not revealed until two years later.

I n May 2002 I returned to Afghanistan after an absence of almost twenty years. The first time I visited the country was in mid-1978, when I worked at an archaeological dig at Old Kandahar in the south of the country. Following the campaign, I had the chance to travel up north and see more of the land. Looking back, it was a weird time, and little did I – and, more importantly, the Afghans themselves – know what tragedies still lay in store for them. A coup in April 1978 had inaugurated a regime led by local communists, who quickly embarked upon wide-ranging modernist policies aimed at transforming the country: a redistribution of land, a cap to the bride price, a new national flag, subtle and not-so-subtle sneers towards the mullahs and Islam in general, and a realignment of foreign policy towards the Soviet Union.

The relative peace in Afghanistan following the Saur-Revolution, as the communists that came to power in 1978 called their bloody coup, soon came to an end. When in the spring of 1979, I wanted to return from Kabul to Europe. I was stopped halfway through Afghanistan at Kandahar when the first massive uprising erupted against the communist regime, in the western Afghan city of Herat. This revolt marked the start of a civil war that would continue for more than 40 years. At first a local conflict, it soon turned Afghanistan, to quote one of my Afghan friends, into the cesspit of international relations and tensions – the land of dogs and stones, as the Persians used to call this unfortunate country along their eastern marches.

But when I finally left the country in early 1979, via a roundabout way across southern Pakistan and southern Iran, I had no idea what would happen. The Soviet invasion of Christmas 1979, in support of the communist regime in Kabul, changed it all, and Afghanistan became the hotbed of the Cold War. I returned in 1982 as a freelance journalist to report on the ongoing war between the Soviet-backed communist regime in Kabul and an ever-spreading uprising in the countryside by groups that called themselves the Mujahedin ("those fighting a jihad"). I spent some three months in their midst, my otherwise blond hair dyed black with Polycolor to distinguish me from a Russian, wandering from near Kabul some 500 km to the south, towards Kandahar, until I found myself back in Pakistan in the border town of Quetta. It was the first time I was in the middle of an actual, physical shooting war. I experienced the strong comradeship among the fighters. They took me with them in sometimes utterly amateurish attacks on military outposts of the government and the Soviets. I also remember how easy it is to be sucked into the black-and-white thinking of "we are good, they are bad" – a feeling of absolute freedom, no nuances, but so dangerous. I also recall the villagers, some of whom were actively assisting the Mujahedin, others being forced to do so. And I sometimes vividly recall some of the horrors I came across. Many of my experiences from those days would colour my interpretation of recent Afghan history. I think I can understand a bit of the mentality of the Taliban fighters, of the local villagers caught between opposing forces, of the vicissitudes of war, and of the importance for any armed group to have a clearly defined enemy.

Watching Afghanistan from Holland

I returned to the Netherlands in the autumn of 1982. Many years followed: I got married and wrote a PhD. I had children, a mortgage, hamsters, and all the rigmarole of a 'settled' life in Leiden. In the meantime, the Soviet forces left Afghanistan in 1989. No one knows how many Afghans had died in those ten years; figures range from 500,000 to two million. Some six million people had fled the country. But the Soviet withdrawal was not the end of the Afghan nightmare. One of the main strengths of the Afghan resistance against the Red Army had been, paradoxically, its fragmentation and division. The regime in Kabul and the Soviets could not talk with, or bribe, any organization that could speak on behalf of most of the resistance groups. The lamentable result was that by 1989, the country rapidly descended into chaos when the many Mujahedin organizations, by lack of a common enemy and following the destruction of anything resembling a central state, turned against each other and started to fight a bitter war with ever-changing alliances between warlords, ethnic groups, followers of particular Islamic movements, and proxies of neighbouring states. Some 20,000 people were killed in Kabul alone, as a result of endless mortar attacks.

The carnage only came to a temporary and partial end when a conservative Islamic group from the south of the country, under the general heading of the *Talib-an* ("religious students") under Mullah Mohammad Omar, rose to power with the assistance of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence. Basically, the Taliban constituted the epitome of the

Back to Afghanistan in the 21st century

In early 2002, having crossed the Khyber Pass, I spent some days in Jalalabad, an Afghan border town between the Khyber and Kabul. I walked around in the bazaar; only a few months previously, some foreign journalists had been shot and killed by fleeing Taliban somewhere west of the town. Stories still circulate that this killing was carried out on the orders of Mullah Baradar, who is now the acting first Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban regime, often regarded as a moderate leader. People were all staring at me. I don't remember meeting any other Westerner in town. But in a tea house I spoke, in my rudimentary Dari, with a group of young men, and they were full of the optimism that I would observe all across the country in the months that followed. They were outspoken about the Taliban, whom they were very glad to be rid of. They were also convinced that life was going to be much better, and that America would rebuild the country, pour in lots of money, and make sure that they could binge watch lots of Bollywood films. I don't remember them talking about schools, hospitals, or even democracy.

Mind, I was keenly aware that these young people, as everyone else I would meet in Afghanistan, were the ones who wanted to talk with me, and vice versa: when I was looking for a taxi, I tended to watch what the driver and any other occupant of the car were wearing. Dress is everything, as the reader may know. But what impressed me that first afternoon in Jalalabad was the fact that these youngsters were openly expressing their animosity towards the Taliban, who, as they told me, for many years had stopped them from listening to

music, watching films, flying kites, or doing anything that would bring some fun into their lives. Their existence had been as bleak as the utterly boring Taliban dress.

In the weeks that followed, I went to Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i Sharif. Everywhere there was the same feeling of optimism and confidence in the future. So, what happened in the years that followed? How could a country, apparently full of hope and optimism, supported by some 130,000 foreign military (around 2010) and an endless shower of foreign aid, succumb to the same Taliban that ruled the country to such disastrous effect prior to 9/11?

This is a question that has recently been discussed at length in the media, and will be discussed for years to come in academic and military circles. After all, hardly a year passes without yet another publication about the (in)famous "Retreat from Kabul" in January 1842, when a British-Indian army of some 16,000 soldiers and camp followers was annihilated in the mountain passes between Kabul and Jalalabad. How could it happen that on 15 August 2021 the Taliban simply walked into Kabul, after having pushed aside – all over the country, and within a month or so – the Afghan army, which comprised some 300,000 men with Western training and weaponry. How could this happen? How could the USA, with all its military potential, be defeated by a bunch of teenagers on their motorbikes?

Much has been written recently about the reasons behind the Taliban advance and the defeat of the elected Afghan government and its foreign sponsors. Yes, the latter were demoralized after the American surrender to the Taliban on 29 February 2020. But what about the Afghan army itself? One argument says that the government forces were Western trained, meaning there was an emphasis on complicated and integrated warfare, as well as a focus on preservation (protection) of the forces. Such an army then had to confront an ill-assorted but fanatical Taliban guerrilla movement that was not hampered by any Rules of Engagement. This is the theme of what has become known as "asymmetric warfare." Others point at the role of Pakistan and its hidden (and not-so-hidden) assistance to the Taliban. And in many recent articles, attention is drawn to the Western emphasis on democracy that was parachuted into the country. Was Afghanistan ever ready for our 'religion' of democracy? We also read about the enormous corruption in Afghanistan, promoted, it is often suggested (not without foundation), by Western politicians who think that money can solve any problem.

We furthermore read about the Western presence from the outset being limited in time; the foreigners could not stay forever, while the Taliban had the time.

I am sure that all of the above observations make sense, and that all of these factors, and there are many more, contributed to the defeat of the democratically elected government in Kabul. The effects of this defeat, first of all for the Afghans, but also for this part of Asia and for the rest of the world, are still unknown. I can only wish that the almost 40 million people of Afghanistan can one time live in relative peace with their human rights upheld.

Intercultural encounters, mutual misunderstandings

What I want to present below, however, is my own interpretation of the defeat of the mainly Western, foreign presence in Afghanistan. Please bear in mind that my ideas are based on my own, subjective observations made particularly between 2001 and 2011, when I was last in the country. In those ten years, I worked in various capacities (i.e., military, diplomatic, and otherwise) in various parts of Afghanistan. Between 2008 and 2011, I served as cultural advisor for the Dutch forces in Uruzgan, in the (Pashtun) south of the country. My main point, as I will try to outline below, is that the massive encounter between the Afghans on one side, and the enormous influx of foreign forces, advisors, and NGOs on the other, was hampered by a lack of understanding, on both sides, of each other's position and frames of mind. In the case of Afghanistan, geopolitics of course played an important role, and so did many of the other arguments listed above, but it was the failed interaction between Afghans and non-Afghans, in my opinion, that led to the fall of Kabul on 15 August of this year.

But to return to my story. In those ten years (2001-2011), I witnessed enormous progress being made in Afghanistan – in health care, in education, and even in the now much-maligned state building initiatives and the introduction of democracy. At the same time, I noticed, as said before, a huge gap between, on the one hand, the Afghans – and please bear in mind that not every Afghan, man or woman, is the same – and, on the other hand, the amalgam of foreigners that descended upon the country, sometimes with the best of intentions, sometimes just doing their job. While for most Afghans any foreigner, especially when in military uniform, was the same, for many foreigners any man in a *shalwar kamiz*

Fig. 3: Author with his interpreter and two bodyguards in autumn 2008, Uruzgan (Photograph courtesy of the author).

was likewise identical. Stereotypes abounded: the foreigners were rich, the Afghans were wild and badly in need of (Western) civilization.

Against such a background, and in the context of a seemingly endless war, communication was extremely difficult. Yes, interpreters can translate words, but what do these words really mean? What is their connotation? I was often reminded of the famous, although rather slated words of Rudyard Kipling: "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." I know, times have changed, and after all, what is East, and what is West? But certainly in a world where almost everyone thinks they speak some sort of English, efficient and correct communication remains key, and miscommunication is rife. When my Dutch friends told their Afghan counterparts that they were in Afghanistan to help build up democracy, I could almost hear some of the elderly Afghans cringing and thinking: we lost our friends and family in the 1980s fighting some People's Democratic Republic from wherever. Are you Dutch trying to turn the tide back? And where is Holland anyhow? Do you mean Poland?

Communication is also more than trying to interpret the words of your partner. It is also about knowing your own background, preconceptions, and prejudices in the context of trying to understand the other. Know yourself, *gnothi seauton*, is, I think, a basic principle in any form of communication. You can only truly understand the other if you know yourself. And in Afghanistan, did we know ourselves? Did we know what we were doing? To be frank, I was never sure why we were there in the first place. And were other

(Western) foreigners equally confused? I am sure that they were. And if many of us did not know, how could we instill confidence in our Afghan partners? How could we formulate policies that were of such importance for the future of their country? In Uruzgan we were frequently confronted with a dilemma: whether we should support the Afghan state and its institutions, or whether we should focus more on security and stability. Would we in all cases support the governor, appointed by the central government, or would we in some cases support local leaders, who were not elected but had a traditional, armed, and staunchly anti-Taliban following? Instructions from The Hague would emphasise the importance of state (and democracy) building, while us poor guys doing the actual work and trudging through the dust of Uruzgan[1] were inclined to support an approach that would focus on good relations with local leaders. But how to frame this dilemma in any discussions with the Afghans? How could we have a meaningful discussion without being clear ourselves of what we wanted?

On the other hand, our Afghan partners were hampered with very much the same problem. Did they always fully realize and comprehend what they wanted from the foreigners? Did they really understand these foreigners from far-away countries? What were their own ideas, preconceptions, and prejudices? How could a young man from Uruzgan, who had never known anything but war, and who had been made district chief after his father had been accidentally shot by Australian forces, start to understand this blond bloke from the small town of Medemblik in the north of the Netherlands, which does not even have a regular railway connection?

Communication is always a hazardous undertaking, and misunderstanding is always a risk lurking around the corner. But when a large number of foreigners from many different countries and backgrounds descend upon a country with a completely different set of norms and values, with an almost alien history, an ancient and deeply-rooted religious foundation, and with so many people traumatized by years of war, then effective communication becomes extremely difficult. The outcome was not determined in the Presidential Palace in Kabul, in the White House in Washington, or the Binnenhof in The Hague, but in the plains and deserts of Afghanistan. Perhaps the Taliban won not because of their courage, determination, common objectives, or shared *kaffir* ("nonbeliever") enemy, but mainly because they could communicate more efficiently with many of the other Afghans.

But however difficult, we have to keep trying to communicate, even with those we came to regard as our enemies. Perhaps the Afghan war has told us something about ourselves. At some point, we will have to sit together, drink tea, and try again.

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Notes

1 "The Dust of Uruzgan" is the title of a song by the Australian Fred Smith. The lyrics and melody still haunt me.

Fig. 2: A meeting of village elders in the district of Derawud in southwestern Uruzgan, southern Afghanistan. Two of the founders of the Taliban movement, Mullah Omar and Mullah Baradar, both lived and worked in this district before moving to Kandahar and setting up their organization (Photograph by the author, 2009).

The Study

Olympic Dreams and Traumata

Looking Back at *Tokyo 2020*

Torsten Weber

Fig. 1 (left): "Tokyo 1964, Tokyo 2020" banner at Tokyo's Haneda Airport (Photo by the author).

Fig. 2 (above): Poster by Japanese Communist Party demanding the cancellation of the Olympics and Paralympics (Photo by the author).

Fig. 3 (left): Anti-Olympic protest in front of the Japan Olympic Museum (Photo courtesy of Barbara Holthus).

On 8 August 2021 at 10.19 p.m. local time, the Olympic flame was extinguished in the new National Stadium in Tokyo. This marked the end of historic Games: the first time ever that they were postponed for a year, and the first time ever that they were held (almost) without live spectators. The fact that Tokyo is also the first city in Asia to host the Games twice was eclipsed by the pandemic, as were Tokyo's and Japan's original ambitions to repeat the success and emotions of Tokyo 1964. Back then, Japan had impressed the world with, among other things, the high-speed Shinkansen bullet train, live satellite broadcasting, and its unbeatable women's volleyball team. Those Games had injected new self-confidence into its nation after the destruction, defeat, and isolation left in wake of World War II.

The myth of zero risk games

"1964 once again" was one of the mottos with which the organizers wanted to get the Japanese into the Olympic mood since the successful bid for *Tokyo 2020* in September 2013 [Fig. 1].[1] In the midst of the pandemic, however, the references to the first Summer Olympics in Asia 57 years ago were less interest than the daily updated infection figures in Tokyo and all of Japan: there were 1359 (Tokyo)/4223 (Japan) new infections on the day of the opening ceremony, and this number more than tripled to 4066/14472 by the day of the closing ceremony.[2] Shortly before the start of the Games, Tokyo had extended its state of emergency. On the day of the closing ceremony, a state of emergency was in place in six prefectures, with a quasi-state of emergency in 13 others. The 7-day incidence per 100,000 inhabitants on the closing day was 196 in Tokyo. In Tokyo's neighbouring Olympic prefectures, this number had risen to 126 in Kanagawa (sailing, baseball, softball, football), to 106 in Saitama (football, basketball, golf), and to 100 in Chiba (surfing, fencing, wrestling, taekwondo). On the opening day, the numbers had still been as low as 69 in Tokyo, 37 in Kanagawa, 31 in Saitama, and 30 in Chiba – making this a median increase of over 200 percent. Among the participants in the Olympics alone, the number of infected people had risen to 553 by the final day.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide and Olympic Minister Marukawa Tamayo declared that "the increase has nothing to do with the Olympics." They agreed with International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, who had promised before the Games that there would be "zero risk for the Japanese people." Bach was ridiculed for this, also because he initially spoke of "Chinese" instead of "Japanese people." Was he already thinking about the next IOC

playground, the 2022 Olympics in Beijing? Was *Tokyo 2020* just a stopover on the seemingly endless journey of the IOC troop, led by Bach, that rakes in billions in profits at the expense of the local hosts and population?

Criticism of 'Olympic aristocracy'

Bach had already come under heavy criticism in the weeks before the opening because he wanted to hold on to the Olympics at all costs, despite an increasing number of people in Japan being opposed to holding the Games during the pandemic. In May 2021, an *Asahi* opinion poll revealed that 83 percent were against holding the Games amidst the ongoing pandemic [Fig. 2]. Only 14 percent supported the decision by the government and IOC to hold the Games this summer. In due course, (now former) Prime Minister Suga's popularity plummeted to a historic low of 33 percent shortly before the opening ceremony in July and fell to 29 percent after the Games in August. During the Paralympics in early September, Suga announced he would retire from his posts as leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Prime Minister. This political damage occurred despite the success of the Japanese athletes and despite the fact that the local hosts had defied the IOC's urging to allow spectators after all. Bach had invoked a supposedly special Japanese culture of resilience and perseverance in an attempt to persuade the Japanese side to allow spectators into the stadiums and other sports venues.

Bach's attitude earned him the nickname "Baron Von Ripper-off," who, together with the IOC, "has a bad habit of ruining their hosts, like royals on tour who consume all the wheat sheaves in the province and leave stubble behind".[3] The Japanese translation of "Baron Von Ripper-off" as *bottakuri danshaku* (ぼったくり男爵) went viral on social media.

When Bach arrived in Japan in early July, protesters outside his luxury hotel demanded that he go home. Instead, Bach went to Hiroshima to spread his message of the Olympics as a celebration of peace. Bach did not heed the government's recommendation to refrain from non-essential travel, nor did he comply with the 14-day quarantine mandatory for others entering the country. On top of that, the IOC refused to cover the costs for the security measures in Hiroshima of about 3.8 million Yen (30,000 Euro), leaving the city of Hiroshima to pick up the tab.

Nevertheless, the critique of "Olympic aristocracy" and Olympic "celebration capitalism"[4] in Japan remained the weak movement it had been from the beginning. Already in 2013, an anti-*Tokyo 2020* movement consisted of a handful of protesters. But against the background of the pandemic, opposition to the Games continued to rise and was joined by the national union of doctors, nurses, and newspapers, as well as celebrities such as Olympic swimmer Matsumoto Yayoi and Rakuten founder Mikitani Hiroshi, who called the plans to hold the Olympics amidst the pandemic a "suicide mission." Within weeks, 352,000 people signed a petition to cancel the Olympics, organized by lawyer-activist Utsunomiya Kenji, who presented the petition to Tokyo's governor Koike Yuriko in May. Nevertheless, anti-Olympics demonstrations rarely drew more than several dozen people [Fig. 3 and 4]. In Greater Tokyo, even the largest demonstrations saw less than 0.001 percent of the area's more than 30 million people participate. As Sonja Ganseforth writes, the core of the demonstrators was primarily concerned with making a simple statement: showing "the difference between zero and one."[5] Public protest against social or political grievances remains the preserve of a tiny minority in Japan, even if the Games have ensured that media coverage has made demonstrations more visible than before.

A push for human rights?

Indeed, some of the strongest criticism of *Tokyo 2020* and the IOC came from outside of Japan. And as ever, the Japanese decision-makers grudgingly caved in to pressure from abroad (外圧 *gaiatsu*): among others, the President of the Organizing Committee Mori Yoshiro, opening ceremony music composer Oyamada Keigo, and creative directors Sasaki Hiroshi and Kobayashi Kentaro resigned or were fired because of sexist comments, bullying of classmates with disabilities, and Holocaust mockery, respectively. In all cases, pressure came from international media and organizations, including the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Although the decision-makers reacted relatively quickly, the question remains as to why such discriminatory statements and views, some of which have been publically known for years, are apparently not an obstacle to occupying prominent positions in Japanese society. What mechanisms are at work that do not prevent this from happening in a pluralistic and democratic society like Japan? Or is it possible that the majority of Japanese society lacks awareness of human rights, diversity, and inclusion? Former Japanese diplomat Tanaka Hitoshi wrote after one of the scandals: "Japan is only now learning how important human rights are."

For decades, people have talked and written about Japan's "lost decades," referring to Japan's weak economic development – especially in comparison to South Korea and China – after the country's economic bubble burst in 1989. Does Japanese society now also have to admit that it has lost decades in terms of equality, diversity, internationalization, and human rights? Who within Japan is able to explain current international debates and standards to the Japanese society? When will international experience abroad and multilingualism – prerequisites for knowing and understanding the world outside of Japan – stopped being seen as a flaw and a career brake, rather than as a plus? Appreciating

international experience and intercultural competence should be a matter of course in a country that courts recognition from abroad like hardly any other highly developed industrial country – be it through Nobel Prizes or international mega-events such as the Olympics or World Expositions (which is scheduled to be held in Osaka in 2025, a record third time in Japan after World War II).

As Robin Kietlinski writes, "Japan has essentially been lobbying, bidding, preparing for, or hosting the Olympic Games almost constantly since the 1930s," including bids for 1984 (Sapporo), 1988 (Nagoya), 1998 (Nagano), 2008 (Osaka), 2016 and 2020 (both Tokyo).[6] And despite Japan's sour experience with Tokyo 2020, the next Japanese city is preparing its next Olympic bid: Sapporo, where this year's Olympic marathon events took place, is set to apply to host the 2030 Winter Games. Should its bid be successful, the city in the far north of Japan would win the bid for the third time after 1940 and 1972. The 1940 Winter Games, of course, did not take place because of World War II, just like the 1940 Summer Games, which the IOC had awarded to Tokyo in 1936. Tokyo would have been the first city outside Europe and America to host the Games in 1940. At that time, Japan was already deeply enmeshed in the war against China. It had occupied Manchuria in 1931, founded the puppet state of Manchukuo there in 1932, and left the League of Nations in 1933. While preparations for the 1940 Olympics were underway, Japanese soldiers massacred tens of thousands of civilians in the Chinese capital of Nanjing ("Nanking Massacre"). It was not until July 1938 that the IOC, the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC), Tokyo, and the Japanese government agreed to officially return the right to host the Games to the IOC. "Tokyo 1940" never took place and, therefore, went down in history as the Phantom Olympics.[7] Unlike the omnipresent references to 1964 in Japan's public sphere in the run-up to Tokyo 2020, the history and legacy of the forfeited Games of 1940 was largely ignored or downplayed.[8]

Japan's Olympic traumata

While not hosting the 1940 Games was due to actions of aggression by Japan, the postponement of Tokyo 2020 was hardly Japan's fault. Consequently, the old guard of Japanese politicians, symbolically led by the longest serving Deputy Prime Minister in Japanese history, Aso Taro (in office 2012-2021), prefers to blame higher powers for Japan's Olympic traumata. Aso spoke of "cursed Olympics every 40 years:" the Phantom Olympics in 1940, the Boycott Olympics in 1980,[9] and the Corona Olympics in 2020. Of course, the pandemic cannot be blamed on Japan, but the handling in Japan has been problematic from the start. Instead of taking the situation seriously, the problem was ignored until the 2020 Games were finally postponed in March 2020. The next day, the Japanese government suddenly admitted that there was a problem with the pandemic in Japan after all. When the infection figures briefly dropped in the summer of 2020, the Japanese government launched its "Go To Campaign," with which travel across the country and restaurant visits were subsidized by up to 50 percent. In the short term, this benefited hotels and restaurants, as well as the population eager to travel. In the long term, it benefited the virus. To be sure, the lurching course of the Japanese government has not exactly helped to convince the population how best to deal with the pandemic. This also applies to the decision to hold the Games this summer. "The hosting of the Olympics and the world gathering in Tokyo has given the wrong signal to the population," says Barbara Holthus, a sociologist at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo and main editor of Japan Through the Lens of the Tokyo Olympics.

Legacies of Tokyo 2020: gold, debts, infections

What will remain as the legacy of the Corona Olympics and how will the Games be remembered? The sporting successes are undisputed – and were to be expected for the Japanese team. In the new events of surfing, climbing, skateboarding, karate, baseball, and softball alone, Japanese athletes won 14 medals. In total, Japanese athletes won 58 medals, including 27 gold. Both are new Olympic records. A total of 20 new world records were set at Tokyo 2020 as well. But were the competitions fair, beyond the usual suspicions of doping? In an interview with the Japanese edition of Newsweek, JOC board member and Olympic medalist Yamaguchi Kaoru criticized the Games as "dangerous and unfair." Because of the COVID-19 contact restrictions, foreign athletes lacked proper training opportunities upon arrival in Japan while "the Japanese athletes got to practice and prepare as normal before the big day." This "host nation advantage" was further strengthened by the fact that – given the strict rules regulating the athletes' stay and movement – foreign athletes had less time to overcome jet lag and, above all, to get used to the inhospitable climate, which proved disadvantageous for long-distance travelers and those not used to a subtropical summer with 80% humidity. In the men's marathon, which had been specially moved to the supposedly milder climate of Sapporo, only a third of the runners finished the race due to the high physical stress caused by the humidity. This was also a new Olympic record.

More than the sports, evaluations of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic legacy will probably be dominated by the pandemic and the financial costs. Experts estimate that the postponement by one year and the loss of revenue (e.g., from ticket sales) cost at least 4 billion Yen (31 million Euros). The total cost of the Games is now estimated at up to 25 billion Euros, yet another Olympic record.[11] Who else will have to foot this bill but the Japanese taxpayer? Not included in these figures are costs for the prolonged and worsened situation due to the spread of COVID-19. By excluding the public and banning public viewing, the Olympics-induced rise in infections may have been kept in check to some extent. But many Japanese took advantage of the loopholes at the torch relays through Japan and at the outdoor running and cycling tracks, such as the Olympic walking and marathon events in Sapporo. There, people stood close together to cheer on the runners and walkers. The very decision to hold the Games and allow tens of thousands of athletes and officials into the country for the Games may have encouraged parts of the population in Japan to not take the COVID-19 restrictions too seriously. If the IOC and JOC have the confidence to hold "safe and secure" Games with tens of thousands of guests from abroad, then surely having dinner with a few friends or drinks with colleagues cannot be too dangerous?

The pitfalls of Japan's safe and secure-ism

"Safe and secure" (anzen anshin 安全安心) has probably been the most used expression in the Japanese public in connection with the Tokyo Olympics in recent weeks and months. It is not surprising that a study by the Mitsubishi Research Institute (MRI) found that most Japanese named as their desired Olympic legacy "the safest society in the world, where both the population and visitors feel secure."[12] However, respondents did not state this goal after the outbreak of the pandemic, as one may expect. Instead, this was the top response in all six surveys conducted by the MRI from 2014 to 2019 – that is, prior to the pandemic. Anzen anshin is part of the consciousness of many Japanese that has contributed to making Tokyo one of the safest mega-metropolises in the world. At the same time, however, the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in March 2011 has revealed the emptiness of this slogan in the face of real crisis.

Comparing the triple disaster and the pandemic, Okada Norio, an expert in disaster prevention research at Kwansei Gakuin University, warns that the awareness and preparation for disasters in Japan is not sufficient. "The central government is too far away from many crisis frontlines, too bureaucratic, slow, and passive," Okada says. "Another problem is that politicians and scientists are reluctant to communicate problems to ordinary people or to share important information with the public."[13] At least regarding the ongoing pandemic, the reluctance of scientists to communicate the seriousness of the situation to the Japanese public seems to have been less of a problem than the willingness of the Japanese government and Olympic stakeholders to admit how dangerous the situation really is.

In the long run, comparisons with Japan's handling of the triple disaster may not seem too far-fetched. Japan's pandemic-related death toll surpassed 15,000 shortly before the opening of the Games in July and rose to 16,373 on the day of the closing ceremony of the Paralympics. It looks set to overtake the official death toll of the triple disaster of 2011 (19,747) before the end of 2021. The current number of COVID-19 related deaths in Japan is much lower than death rates per capita in countries like the United States, Russia, and Germany. But it is considerably higher compared to other countries in the region that implemented similarly rigorous immigration policies to control the pandemic, including South Korea (2,315), Australia (1,036), and New Zealand (27).[14] The initial branding of Tokyo 2020 as 'Recovery Games' to show the world that Japan had overcome the shock and damages of the triple disaster had been criticized even before the outbreak of the pandemic: instead of supporting the people and areas that had been affected most, the massive Olympic budget took away resources needed for rebuilding the destroyed areas, preparing for future disasters, and promoting sustainable alternatives to nuclear energy. In his bidding speech at the IOC meeting in Buenos Aires in 2013, then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo famously claimed that the situation in Fukushima "is under control" and that Tokyo was "one of the safest cities in the world, now ... and in 2020."[15] Eight years later: different Prime Minister, different crisis, similar rhetoric. Which lessons has Japan learnt from the triple disaster?

Lasting impact of diversity and inclusion?

In a country where being different is often associated with disruption and potential danger, an exaggerated sense of anzen anshin may also obstruct social inclusion and diversity. The opening and closing ceremonies, however, gave a stage to people with disabilities, multinational backgrounds, and different ages in an unprecedented way. In a display of gender-balance and racial awareness, basketball player Hachimura Rui, whose father is from Benin, carried the Japanese flag at the opening ceremony together with female wrestler Sasaki Yui. Moreover, the Olympic flame in the National Stadium was lit by no other than female tennis player Osaka Naomi, whose father is Haitian, and who is a prominent supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement. It is to be hoped for Japanese society that this spirit of diversity and inclusion was not extinguished together with the Olympic flame at the closing ceremony two weeks later.

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Fig. 4: Anti-Olympic protest near the Olympic Stadium on the evening of the closing ceremony (Photo courtesy of Felix Lill).

Environmental Governance and Activism in a Democratic Regime: Discourses from India

Abhishek Koduvayur Venkitaraman

India's transition from a poor, drought- and famine-ridden country to one of the world's booming economies has been a tough one. Many developing countries like India now face the challenge of making their cities both ecological and economically sustainable. Such cities must continue to tackle and channelize the aspects responsible for poverty and growth offered by urbanization; at the same time, they need to mitigate the negative impacts of urbanization so that the cities can cope with the future scale of urbanization, considering their own limitations and capacities. There is a need to restructure and reexamine the existing institutional and policy structure in the multi-hierarchical environmental governance regime of India.

Fig. 1: 32nd anniversary of the Bhopal Disaster. Rallies and parades, in commemoration of the dead and as a protest for justice. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons License courtesy of Iris Janssens /Bhopal Medical Appeal on Flickr.

Environmental policies in India and their historical discourses

In Article 48 of the Directive Principles of State Policy,[1] it is stated that every state shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife. Article 51-A further emphasizes the duties of citizens of India to protect and improve the natural environment. The popular discourse around environmental governance in India suggests that such governance has emerged as a response to global initiatives, and that external discourses have influenced the regime. However, this negates the long-term vision of Indian policymakers themselves. An alternate discourse has been that social movements in India have acted as a driving force behind demands for governance. Scholars like Kohli accede this opinion and state that societal forces have contributed prominently to the evolution of governance in India.[2]

The National Planning Commission of India was instituted in 1950 with economic development as its primary objective. Its first task was to prepare "Five-Year Plans" (FYP) for fulfilling this intended aim. In its nascent stage, the FYPs focused more on development rather than environmental management. However, the fourth FYP (1969-1974) made special mention of the need for environmental protection, and it stressed the importance of both environmental and economic concerns. In 1972, speaking at The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), Indira Gandhi famously observed, "Environment cannot be developed in the condition of poverty, the major cause and effect of global environmental problems. Hence the new development paradigm is growth with equity, stability and sustainability." This speech further highlighted environmental concerns.[3] In the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984, environmental activism in India increased drastically. This was a landmark event in the environmental history of India. The inadequacy of the existing governance structure in preventing the disaster – and the inadequacy of legal and administrative procedures pertaining to victims – stirred people's awareness towards environmental negligence (Fig. 1).This was one of the major factors contributing to the formation of The Environmental Protection Act of 1986 in tandem with the formation of a central authority: the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), now the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). This was followed by numerous legislations and acts to further strengthen environmental policy and law in India. Along

with the previous policies, the MoEF also launched the National Environmental Policy (NEP) in 2006.

The 2006 NEP was drafted to fill in the gaps that still existed in India's approach to the environment, and it built on previous policies instead of negating them. The main objective of the NEP is to improve environmental conditions while fostering the economy of the nation. It also endorses recognition of environmental concerns within development activities. However, while the regulatory mechanisms for environmental governance in India have meticulous statutes and regulations, implementation and monitoring capabilities are weak. This is due to the segregation of duties when it comes to environmental policymaking between national, state, and local governments.[4] In addition, environmental governance also involves a multitude of different actors: state institutions, international organizations, and civil society groups (e.g., NGOs, universities, community organizations, etc.). The gap between government mechanisms and citizens is often bridged by intermediary organisations like think tanks, which are pivotal agencies for lobbying and addressing challenges in policy making.[5] There has been a recognition that civil society organizations can contribute to creating discursive, inclusive spaces for people to debate policies that concern them. In India, they are intermediary spaces acting as channels for ongoing dialogues. These organizations may be funded and organized by the state, or affiliated to the state, and they serve as places where citizens are invited for their contributions. The Centre for Policy Research (CPR) is one such think tank located in New Delhi, which focuses on developing policy opinions and provides advisory services to governments. It also disseminates information on policy issues via various channels.

Environment, urbanization, and the democratic regime

According to a recent report in *The Economic Times*, India is one of the worst performers on the Global Environmental Performance Index. It is among the bottom five countries on the list, plummeting from 141st in 2016 to 177th in 2018,[6] according to a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum. India is at the bottom of the list in the environmental health category. Many of the country's environmental concerns stem from its urbanization problems.

The problem of urbanization is very critical in India. India accounts for nearly 16 percent

of the world's total human population, with only 2.5 percent of the world's total geographic area.[7] The percentage of urbanization in the country has also increased rapidly over the years. Currently, India's urban population is about 377 million people, which is almost 30 percent of the total population. The urban population of India will reach nearly 600 million by 2031.[8] This rapid urbanization in India has transformed the urban landscape, thereby leading to several environmental problems. It is expected from these projections that Indian cities will suffer from severe environmental degradation and unhealthy living conditions. Often, cities in a developing country have informal and complex governance structures with multiple tiers of governing institutions. In India, the government is a type of federal structure, comprising many institutions at various tiers of governance. In India's federal structure, the provisioning of urban services rests primarily at the central and state levels, with urban local bodies having little control beyond implementation.[9] The governance in Indian cities is marked by a complex arrangement of laws, which involves municipal and non-municipal institutions with tangled jurisdictions.

Whether or not the democratic regime has a direct and influential impact on India's environmental laws is yet to be properly evaluated, given that India faces challenges because of its political, economic, and social-cultural diversity. It is not easy to tackle the magnitude of challenges which India is currently facing. There have been various success stories, such as the Delhi government's initiative to replace petrol and diesel in public vehicles with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). This was driven by public interest litigations and a public campaign for clean air and health, which gathered momentum in the later part of the 1990s. Following this, the Supreme Court issued several judicial mandates to ensure the implementation of the initiative in Delhi.

Nevertheless, India's transition to sustainability still has a long way to go as compared to Western counterparts. The country has elaborate regulations on many environmental aspects but monitoring and enforcement capabilities remain weak. To ensure public participation in the policy process, civil society must be considered as a functional feature of a democracy, and its participatory role must be defined in the draft plans to institutionalize its activities. Civil society groups can play an important role in environmental education, thereby bridging the gap between the state and individuals.

Therefore, civil society in India has huge potential to mitigate the environmental issues due to increasing environmental problems.

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The Newsletter No. 90 Autumn 2021

News from Australia and the Pacific
Rejuvenating Connections between Tibet
and Indonesia through Artivism

Regional Editor
Edwin Jurriëns

The Region

17

Rejuvenating Connections between Tibet and Indonesia through Artivism

For *News from Australia and the Pacific,* we ask contributors to reflect on their own research 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 courses, while identifying related interests and activities of fellow academics in the field. Our contributions aim to give a select overview of Asia-related studies in Australia and beyond, and to highlight exciting intellectual debates on and with Asia. The style of our essays is subjective and informal. 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 our region. In the current edition, we focus on the theme of "Rejuvenating Connections between Tibet and Indonesia through Artivism."

Articles are edited by Edwin Jurriëns (edwin.jurriens@unimelb.edu.au) from the Asia Institute at The University of Melbourne, https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/asia-institute

Politics of the Unseen: Visual Practice, Spirituality, and Resistance in Contemporary Indonesia

Edwin Jurriëns

The biennial Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) conference, the largest gathering of experts working on Asia in the southern hemisphere, was hosted by The University of Melbourne in 2020. Due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the event could not take place on campus on the planned dates in July 2020. Using a flexible approach in response, the organisers reshaped the conference into a series of online panels and roundtable discussions throughout the remainder of the year. One of the events was the roundtable webinar "Politics of the Unseen: Visual Practice, Spirituality and Resistance in Contemporary Indonesia."

The webinar was organised by Wulan Dirgantoro (School of Culture and Communication) and Edwin Jurriëns (Asia Institute) and sponsored by the Faculty of Arts' Indonesia Strategy Engagement Group (ISEG) from The University of Melbourne. In the roundtable discussion, four leading Indonesian creative practitioners examined the intimate connections between art, spirituality, and social empowerment in contemporary Indonesia. The panellists explored the possibilities and challenges of personal and communal agency through a renewal of traditional knowledge in the present as well as in the context of "future Asias" (the key theme of the 2020 ASAA conference). Rather than making a priori distinctions between the modern and the non-modern, the speakers provided on-the-ground observations from various locations and multiple historical, social, political, and cultural perspectives.

Gustaff Hariman Iskandar from the independent art collective Common Room Networks Foundation (est. 2006) in Bandung, the capital of West Java, discussed the ongoing creative collaborations between his urban collective and the indigenous Kasepuhan Ciptagelar community in the rural Mount Halimun Salak National Park area in West Java. Since 2013, their projects have focused on the participatory mapping of customary land and cultural space, indigenous land rights advocacy, forest and water management, food sovereignty, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the utilisation of internet technology and digital media for rural development.

The presentation by literary author and Macquarie University lecturer Intan Paramaditha was about the Cipta Media Ekspresi (CME) arts and culture initiative (est. 2018). This initiative provides grants to women artists and researchers from various parts of Indonesia, particularly from relatively isolated or marginalised communities. Paramaditha asked, "What is gained and at risk when cosmopolitan feminist subjects interact and collaborate with women who articulate their agency through different means and paths detached from the global discourses of feminism?"

The third presenter was Naomi Srikandi, theatre director and co-founder of the women art worker organisation Peretas. The word *peretas* translates as "hacker," but the name is also short for *perempuan lintas batas* ("women crossing boundaries"). Peretas seeks to facilitate creative opportunities for women by organising research projects, book publications, public discussions, and the annual event *Peretas Berkumpul* ("Peretas Get-Together"). Srikandi explained how one of Peretas' collaboration partners, the women's grassroots organisation Institut Mosintuwu, has been using culture, local knowledge, and spirituality as means to promote peace and justice in Poso, Central Sulawesi, an area hit by prolonged religious conflict after the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime in 1998.

Above: The Dalai Lama with Arahmaiani (Photo courtesy of Arahmaiani).

In this edition of *News from Australia and the Pacific*, we give space to the artistic statement by our fourth panellist, Arahmaiani. The statement has been translated from Indonesian into English by Wulan Dirgantoro. With her activist art projects, Arahmaiani attempts to promote a deeper historical understanding about Buddhist cultural heritage and living traditions in Indonesia that counters the narrow religious-nationalist causes and discourses of increasingly militant Islamic groups. This includes collaborations with monks from the Buddhist Lab monastery in the Kham region of the Tibetan Plateau. Arahmaiani's "artivism" not only unearths the cultural connections between Tibet and Indonesia, but also the interrelations between art, religion, gender, and nature.[1] We believe her ongoing visits to and collaborations with Australian universities confirm not only her self-proclaimed status of "nomadic artist" but also the highly productive and inspiring cross-fertilisations between art, academia, and activism.

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Notes

1 See also Wulan Dirgantoro, *Feminisms and Contemporary Art in Indonesia: Defining Experiences* (2017, Amsterdam University Press) and Edwin Jurriëns, "Gendering the Environmental Artivism: Ekofeminisme and Unjuk Rasa of Arahmaiani's Art," *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia* 4(2), October 2020.

Second Life at the Roof of the World

Arahmaiani

Fig. 1: Arahmaiani with nomad in Tibet, 2014. (Photo courtesy of Arahmaiani).

In 2010, I was invited to participate in an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in Shanghai, China. The exhibition of contemporary Indonesian artists was curated by Jim Supangkat (Indonesia) and Biljana Ciric (China), who selected my work *Flag Project* for the group exhibition. The work is a long-term, community-based artwork that I started in 2006. It started with a collaboration with Pondok Pesantren Amumarta in Yogyakarta, and I continued this work with other communities. For the group exhibition, I proposed to continue this project with other communities in China so that the public could understand the intention and concept behind a "community-based art project." At the time, such an artmaking method was not yet much practised in China.

The curators agreed with my proposal and assisted with looking for more information, as I wished to work with marginalised or disaster-affected communities. Biljana mentioned the recent earthquake in the Qinghai Plateau in Tibet; the earthquake occurred about two months before I arrived in China. The community still struggled in the aftermath of the earthquake. Although I had never been to the area, the situation reminded me of a similar experience working with earthquake-hit communities in Yogyakarta. After checking the affected area's condition, my assistant Li Mu agreed to accompany me there, so we eventually left Shanghai for Yushu Prefecture in the Kham area.

Foreigners and Tibetans from other areas were not allowed to enter without a permit because this area was considered politically and economically sensitive. Kham was the birthplace of five Dalai Lamas, and there was a long history of resistance. Moreover, scientists called this area "the future of China" due to its wealth of natural resources. Before leaving for Yushu, I was asked by the museum to sign some waiver statements in case I would get into trouble in the area!

To cut a long story short, I met with a group of monks from the Jiegu monastery in Yushu to gather information about the difficult post-earthquake recovery. I could see how people were still living in tents, and many buildings were in ruins. Chinese police and military were also still doing their recovery works. However,

the Jiegu monastery head told me that I could get into serious trouble if the authorities discovered that I was a foreigner, so he advised me to go to another monastery in a remote area. That was the beginning of my introduction to and collaboration with the Lab *gompa* ("monastery") and its community.

The logistics of this project were not easy, and I always needed a translator for communication. Moreover, scientific terms around environmental issues were not easy to explain, as there were no references from a local perspective. This was why I learned about Buddhism and the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism at the Sera Jey Monastery in India. This also allowed me to study the almost forgotten cultural heritage in Nusantara, the Indonesian archipelago. Many Indonesians have forgotten the close connections between Tibet and Indonesia during the Sriwijaya Kingdom (7th-12th century). During the 10th century, a Buddhist monastery in Muara Jambi (Sumatra) had a strong reputation among the Buddhist monastic community. The temple was considered a continuation of the Nalanda monastery tradition, the first Buddhist temple

in India, so many monks from China and India would come to study there. One of them was Atisha Dipankara Srijnana (982-1054) from India, who came to study with the local master Dharmakirti. After he finished his studies, he went back to India to become a teacher. Atisha eventually made his way to Tibet and, to introduce the new teachings, founded the Kadampa school – the predecessor of the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) school. Atisha's name is now famous as a leader for Mahayana Buddhism's reform in Tibet, where his teachings are still practised today.

I was fortunate to have the support of the head of the Lab monastery, Lama Kadheng Rinpoche. Eventually, I received permission from the local government to work there on the condition that I would not receive external funding, which meant that I had to pay for my trip and all the associated costs. Nonetheless, I felt that it was my calling, and I could not refuse it. Even though friends reminded me about the dangers that I would face, I stood firm in my wish to work and help there, even without any pay and facing serious risks. I realised that the situation would require innovative and creative

approaches and problem-solving strategies that would not add to the existing problems.

This calling was also steered by another reason: the Tibet Plateau's importance for regional and global environmental sustainability. The Tibet Plateau is known as the "Asian water tower." This water source for more than 1.3 billion people who live on the Asian continent is threatened by droughts caused by global warming. This place is also known as "The Third Pole," or one of the most extensive ice surface areas on the planet, together with the North Pole and the South Pole. The ice and glaciers in this area are melting fast, causing regular floods and landslides that have claimed many victims in various Asian countries.

The environmental project began when I returned in the summer of 2011. For the first step, we implemented waste management because so much rubbish polluted the whole village. Even the rivers were full of waste, especially plastic! When I proposed managing the waste during my first visit in 2010, the suggestion was not taken up. Monks are at the top of the hierarchical system in the Tibetan community, so my suggestion was

Introduction to Arahmaiani's Second Life

Wulan Dirgantoro

Arahmaiani Feisal's (b. 1961) art practice has represented Indonesian contemporary art on the global stage. Across nearly four decades of artmaking, art and activism are consistent themes in her body of work. The artist's works have evolved from her time as an art student pushing the boundaries of creative media in the 1980s to global recognition from the 1990s with a select group of other Indonesian contemporary artists, including Nindityo Adipurnomo (b. 1961), Heri Dono (b. 1960), Mella Jaarsma (b. 1960), and Agung Kurniawan (b. 1968).

Arahmaiani's works could be seen as a connecting point of gender activism in and beyond the Indonesian art world. Indonesian visual artists have worked alongside cultural and political activists during and after the authoritarian New Order era (1966-1998),

yet this partnership often just scratched the surface to enact change. Indeed, notable Indonesian activist artists such as the Taring Padi collective, the late Semsar Siahaan (1952-2005), Moelyono (b. 1957), and Alit Ambara (b. 1971) have attempted to raise social consciousness through artmaking and direct actions. Yet, Arahmaiani's recent projects seek an alternative way of making change through a more inclusive and empathic approach.

The following translation charts the recent trajectory of Arahmaiani's artistic practice from Indonesia to Tibet. The artist's ongoing projects in Lab village in the Yushu region of Tibet are impactful for their focus on the environment and local communities. Yet, the seed for this idea came from a closer place. Following the devastating earthquake that shook the city

of Yogyakarta in 2006, the artist worked together with an Islamic boarding school, Pondok Pesantren Amumarta, as a way to rebuild the traumatised community. The artist worked with the students at the boarding school. They held discussions to raise awareness of the importance of environmental issues, from replanting the earthquake-destroyed land around the school to the benefits of organic farming. As a result, according to the artist, the school can now sustain their environmental curriculum by producing eco-friendly products that supplement the school's income.[1]

Arahmaiani's engagement with various local communities speaks of connectivity within and beyond the boundaries of the nation. Her projects in Tibet deal with processes of belonging outside normative citizenship. Her nomadic trajectory of continuously making herself at home through different collectivities has shaped her worldview and art practices as mobile and mutable.

The artist's initiative in Tibet triggered a series of community projects. Together with the monks from Lab monastery and community members from 16 villages, they have initiated waste management, mass tree planting, clean

water projects, and yak coops over the last ten years. In addition, the artist has focused on participation and transversal dialogue to rebuild ecological awareness within the communities.[2] The artworks that have emerged during her time in Tibet, such as *The Memory of Nature* (2013-present) and *Shadow of the Past* (2015-present), have attested to the potential of art and creativity to affect social and environmental change.

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Notes

1   Conversation with the artist, 11 April 2019, Melbourne. For a more critical discussion on environmentalism and the Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, see also Kristina Grossmann, "Green Islam: Islamic Environmentalism in Indonesia," *New Mandala*, 28 August 2019.

2   See interview with Arahmaiani and 15th Lab Kyab Gon Rinpoche about the project in Peter Hylands, "Arahmaiani in Tibet," *Creative-i magazine*, Creative Cowboy, April 2013, pp. 18–28.

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News from Australia and the Pacific
Rejuvenating Connections between Tibet
and Indonesia through Artivism

Regional Editor
Edwin Jurriëns

The Region

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not easy for them to accept. Of course, I could understand their perspective, but I also had a strong reason to ask the monks to help because there was no support from the government for solving environmental issues. After the Lama had framed my arguments in line with their belief system, the monks finally agreed to be involved.

One of my assistants, a monk called Sonamrinchen, told me that, initially, the community was startled to see that the monks were collecting rubbish; they thought that the monks had gone crazy! However, after an arduous start, the first project ran smoothly, and the villages also joined in. Our following project was planting trees for preserving water. This time I did not face much opposition because a tree-planting project had already been initiated by the 13th Lab Kyabgon Rinpoche, in 1914. He predicted that tree planting was an action that would be needed in the future. He even built a mother tree temple for the first tree that he planted. Even before the project was approved and supported by the Chinese government in 2015, we had managed to plant more than 230,000 trees. In 2017, we received an award from an environmental organisation for our success in planting trees on "the roof of the world."

For the next project, I proposed the reintroduction of a nomadic lifestyle, a natural and traditional way of life, and a return to organic farming and barley planting. These changes were needed for ecological balance, safeguarding food security, and healthy living. I had seen that everyday food and drinking water were all processed items from China. The local community did not produce their food; even the water they consumed was bottled water, despite the area's reputation as a place of water sources. I asked the monks to look for water springs around the Lab village, and I was astonished because they discovered more than 250 water springs!

Situated over 4000 metres above sea level, only a limited number of tree and plant species can grow in the area. Pine and poplar trees, planted in 1914, used to grow quite well. Nonetheless, when I started to work there, those trees were beginning to show signs of decay. So, we experimented with alternative planting techniques, and we managed to grow apple and walnut trees. We also developed winter protection techniques to have a greater variety of vegetables. Eventually, the activities in the Lab village attracted the attention of neighbouring villages who also wanted to be involved.

In 2015, when the government started to support the environmental project, 16 villages had joined. We also tried to revive elements of the nomadic lifestyle by starting a "Yak Bank." At the start of the project, the nomadic lifestyle was almost extinct because most young people did not want to live as nomads.

They wanted to move to urban areas to get a "successful" life; the nomad lifestyle was considered out of date and non-profitable. This project was not easy to conduct because it required much money to supply the expensive yaks. Therefore, we started with a loan of 37 yaks for one nomad family, so they could start reviving the nomadic tradition and reconnect with the land.

Our last project was the most critical, namely water management. The water was to be used for daily activities and as an alternative energy source in the village. The Kham area is crossed by three large rivers: the Yangtze, the Mekong, and the Yellow River. With assistance from Chinese alternative energy and water management experts, this project is now running smoothly. As a result, villagers can consume healthy and clean local water for various needs. They also enjoy alternative energy that they produce independently, a method they were previously not aware of.

The focus points of this long-term project are education about nature, targeting the younger generation in the monastery and the outside villages, and women's empowerment. In addition, an alternative communal market is planned as a place where organic products or crafts can be sold among community members. One of the most important educational premises is a collaboration between the monastic community and the common people for handling everyday problems. This used to be outside the monastery tradition, in which worldly life was to be avoided by the monks.

The experiences and knowledge I gained while working with the Tibetan communities have given me insights into the connections between life and creativity. This connection is closely related to my learning about the culture and beliefs that developed in Indonesia a long time ago. While we can still see the biggest Buddhist temple in the world – namely the Borobudur temple in Central Java – as an example of the interrelation between Sriwijaya and Medang (Mataram) Kingdoms (8th-11th century), and the remains of the Buddhist temple in Muara Jambi, Sumatra, the majority of Indonesians are not aware of their history. I also recently became aware of the history of the Eloprogo area, an area of confluence between two rivers (Elo and Progo) near Borobodur, where Buddhist monks practised their meditation. It is believed Atisha also spent some time at this site. However, the culture and teachings related to these temples have mostly been forgotten.

This knowledge pushed me to research and explore what is left from the past culture and what is still practised in Indonesia, especially in Java and Bali. Even though the monastery traditions that I witnessed and experienced in Tibet are no longer practised, I could still find related localised culture and philosophy in

Java and Bali. For example, I met with a small Tibetan Buddhism community, which started in Java about 30 years ago. It began with the arrival of a Tibetan Lama named Dagpo Rinpoche, who initiated Tibetan Buddhist teaching in Indonesia. In 2020, they opened a Gelugpa branch of Tibetan Buddhism in Batu, Malang (East Java). There are many interesting aspects of these past cultural practices, and they are connected to what is happening in Indonesia and the world today.

The first aspect is the syncretic principle, as, in the past, Buddhism was deeply connected with Hinduism and Animism. Pluralism was supported by shared values from different beliefs in different cultures. Furthermore, there was an awareness and ability to appreciate differences as positive and enriching, as reflected in Indonesia's national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"). Given the current global condition where various cultures and belief systems are often enmeshed, I believe that such pluralist values are still highly relevant to be learnt and practised.

The second important point is the teaching of the Bodhisattva that stated, "may all beings be free from suffering." This teaching is based on compassion, the basic principle of Buddhism. Bodhisattva's teaching uses reason and logic to formulate the specific link between good intention, wisdom, and action as a basis for humility and considerate actions. It is also strengthened by another important principle, namely, a tradition of non-violence. In Indonesia today, many people are no longer interested in pursuing the principles above; they prefer materialist and

individualist lifestyles. They perceive violence as a normal part of everyday life. This problem can be traced to many issues throughout Indonesian political history, especially to violent acts by those in power or those who want to control or gain profit from power. Violence and greed are rarely questioned, except by the people negatively affected, such as certain minority groups, women activists, or traditional communities.

Finally, another important historical reference relates to the position of women. A historical symbol of the highest knowledge and wisdom was *prajnaparamita* ("transcendental wisdom"), which was depicted through the figure of a meditating woman. It represents a balance between feminine and masculine energy or the interconnected balance of opposite fields in the universe. The principle of equality requires deep understanding, not a simplified black-and-white approach. Such understanding can become a positive force, urging people to understand the interconnections between nature, the elements, and the inhabitants. It can give people a greater understanding of the connections between the heart and the mind and about the principles of life.[1]

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Notes

1 This essay was translated from Indonesian into English by Wulan Dirgantoro at The University of Melbourne.

Fig. 2 (left): Monks collecting garbage in Tibet.
Fig. 3 (above top): Solar panel project, Kham Tibet.
Fig. 4 (above): Community member working in vegetable garden in Tibet.
(All photos courtesy of Arahmaiani).

Solidarity with Myanmar in Northeast Asia

Ilhong Ko

The global community has stood witness to the Myanmar military's coup d'état of February 2021, the subsequent resistance of the Myanmar people against the undemocratic actions of the junta, and the violence that has since been perpetrated by security forces towards demonstrating Myanmar citizens. International outrage and condemnation of the military junta has followed, and calls for solidarity with the Myanmar people have been heard throughout the world. However, amidst the continuing pandemic, global interest in the situation in Myanmar has waned over the past few months.

Articles are edited by Ilhong Ko (mahari95@snu.ac.kr), HK Research Professor, Seoul National University Asia Center.

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.
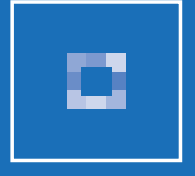
In this installment of *News from Northeast Asia*, we examine South Korean and Japanese responses towards recent events in Myanmar, with particular focus on efforts that have been made to encourage solidarity with the Myanmar demonstrators and how they have been received by the general public. In "Virtual Solidarity with Myanmar in South Korea through Hashtag Activism," Jungwon Huh of Seoul National University Asia Center explores how social media has played a critical role in

the formation of South Korean solidarity with Myanmar citizens. The fact that South Korean reactions to the events unfolding in Myanmar, rather than the events themselves, may have more heavily influenced online responses for solidarity with Myanmar citizens demonstrates the importance of active and vocal support for the pro-democracy movements in Myanmar. *Youth Action for Myanmar* (YAM) has played an essential role in organizing such needed support for Myanmar citizens. Mya Kay

Khine of Seoul National University, who is a member of YAM, introduces the various efforts undertaken by this organization in "2021 Spring Revolution and Activities of Myanmar Youth in South Korea." Of all countries of Northeast Asia, Japan has the longest history of engagement in Myanmar in the modern era. It is also the greatest contributor of Official Development Assistance to Myanmar. In "Japanese Society and Myanmar: Past Engagements, Present Responses," Inaba

(Fujimura) Mai of Kwangwoon University traces the deep relationship between the two countries, as well as the interactions that have been taking place between Japanese citizens and Myanmar residents in Japan as a result of the current events in Myanmar.

Virtual Solidarity with Myanmar in South Korea through Hashtag Activism

Jungwon Huh

Social media has played a critical role in the formation of international solidarity with Myanmar citizens in protesting the Myanmar coup. Due to this, the military junta has prosecuted journalists, and assaults on non-governmental media in Myanmar continue to take place, with the Myanmar military government blocking Twitter, Instagram, etc. However, the citizens of Myanmar and journalists have been braving blackouts and crackdowns to make sure that the world stays focused on what is happening in the country. For example, on June 14, Cape Diamond, a journalist covering Myanmar for global media outlets, tweeted the link to a Human Rights Watch report covering violence by the country's military. Within hours, more than 2,000 quoted tweets and retweets, mostly in the form of hashtags, were circulated throughout the world.

In South Korea, solidarity with Myanmar in the form of hashtag activism has been strong. Many Koreans have expressed ongoing, enthusiastic support for the Myanmar civil disobedience movement. One way of delineating South Korean civil society's solidarity activities supporting the Myanmar civil disobedience movement is by analyzing Google search trends and social media trends.

An analysis of Google searches on Myanmar within South Korea, prior to and after the Myanmar coup, shows that search numbers peaked on the day of incident [Fig. 1]. The second spike occurred the day after the first massacre on March 4, when at least 39 people were killed. The third spike dates to March 29, when the military killed more than 100 anti-coup protesters in Myanmar. After doing so, military generals threw a party to celebrate Armed Forces Day, angering many Koreans. On April 10, Myanmar security forces killed over 80 citizens with rifle grenades in an infamously violent incident, and Google searches for Myanmar spiked once again.

The spatial patterning of Google searches on Myanmar within South Korea reveals that, of all the provinces and major cities, the city of Gwangju witnessed the highest number of searches. This is significant because Gwangju is where a pro-democracy movement was suppressed by the military junta in 1980, during which hundreds of citizens were killed or went missing. It appears that the current demonstrations taking place in Myanmar, protesting the coup and the military's violent crackdowns, are not something that the people of Gwangju can ignore. Noting the similarities between the May 18 Gwangju Democratic Uprising that arose 41 years ago and the ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement in Myanmar, Gwangju citizens have been voicing solidarity with Myanmar citizens and carrying out various activities to support the Southeast Asian country's pro-democracy movement.

In terms of social media, 877,068 data points were collected for the period spanning from January 1 to July 31, 2021. The data points include tweets, YouTube and Instagram uploads, and news articles, with tweets accounting for 98% of these data points. Interestingly enough, the pattern for peaks in social media interest in Myanmar was found to differ from the patterns for Google searches [Fig. 2]. This may be because Google searches tend to represent the seeking of information by the public, whereas social media posts represent people's reaction to events and opinion forming.

Tweets about Myanmar increased by 1800%, compared to the same period of the previous year. Interestingly enough, the number of social media posts was higher on Myanmar on March 7, a day after the South Korean President Moon Jae-in talked about the Myanmar situation, compared to the number of posts from March 4, when the first massacre of Myanmar demonstrators took place. President Moon had written on social media that "The use of violence against the people of Myanmar must stop now. There

should be no more loss of life." The peak in social media interest in Myanmar remained strong for several days, possibly fueled by events such as the show of solidarity that took place in Gwangju every Saturday in March by more than 100 civic organizations. March 22 witnessed another peak of interest. Events that preceded this peak include the March 12 public demonstration by Buddhist monks and Myanmar activists, who marched from Myanmar's embassy in Seoul to the office of the UN Human Rights Council, where they prostrated themselves. That same day, the Ministry of Justice announced that special stay permits would be given to Myanmar nationals on humanitarian grounds.

The patterns present in the Google search trends and social media trends indicate that South Koreans have consistently shown interest in the Myanmar fight for democracy, but there have been fluctuations in the degree of that interest. An interesting fact revealed though the analysis is that the degree of interest shown by Koreans has been heavily influenced by statements made by the Korean government, public figures, civil organization protests, as well as the tragic violence by the military junta.

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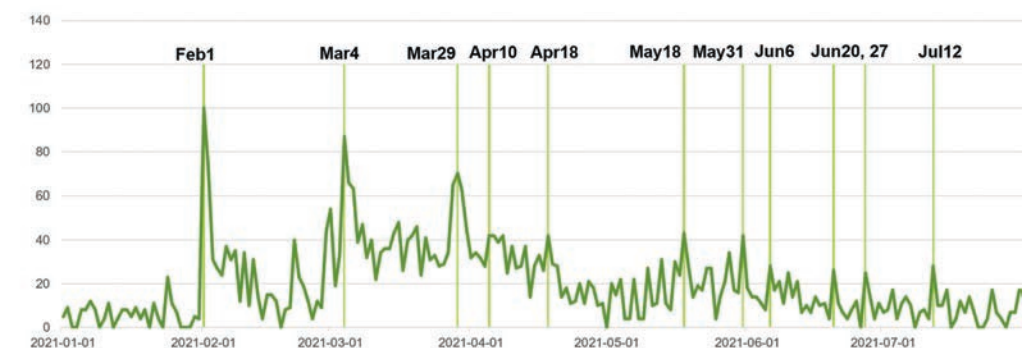Email: jwhuh@snu.ac.kr
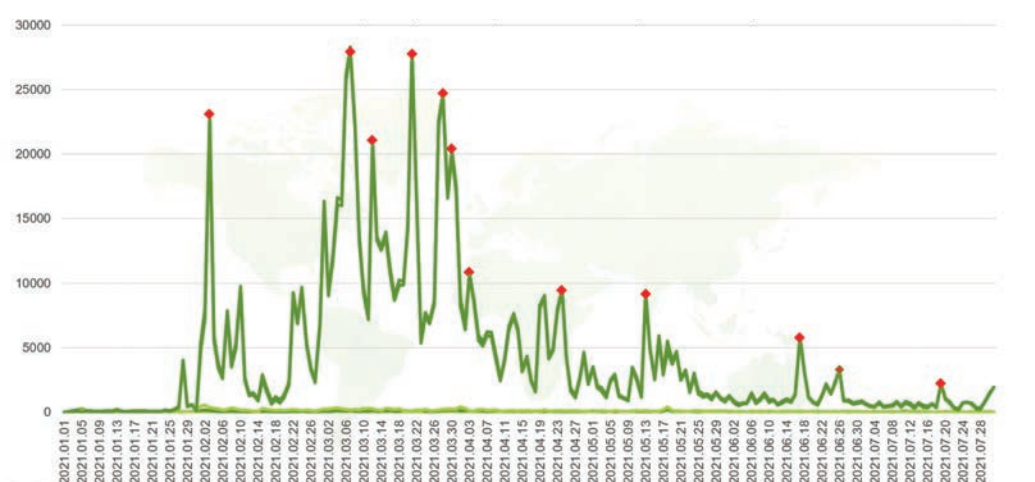
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 1: Graph showing the Google Search Trends for Myanmar from users based in South Korea (Jan 1 - July 31, 2021).
Fig. 2: Graph showing the Social Media Analysis Trends for Myanmar from users based in South Korea (Jan 1 - July 31, 2021 - Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, News).

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News from Northeast Asia
Solidarity with Myanmar in Northeast Asia

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2021 Spring Revolution and Activities of Myanmar Youth in South Korea

Mya Kay Khine

Youth Action for Myanmar (YAM) is an organization formed by Myanmar youths residing in South Korea. Formed just after the military coup in Myanmar with the intention to support the pro-democracy movements of Myanmar citizens, YAM was founded by several Burmese international students studying in South Korea with help from the Korea Committee for Overseas Community Organization (KOCO). YAM members have been participating in various activities and events supporting the pro-democracy movements in order to let the world hear the voices of Myanmar citizens.

YAM has organized a series of on-going protests since March. Silent protests have taken place every weekend in Insa-dong, Seoul, a key tourist attraction. Donations received from passersby at these protests are, in turn, donated to the pro-democracy movements in Myanmar. Every week, protests also take place in front of embassies in South Korea. At protests in front of the Thai embassy, Indonesian embassy, China embassy, and many more, it is possible to hear participants speaking out against the military junta.

In addition to protests, YAM has undertaken a variety of other activities to support Myanmar's pro-democracy movements and to garner interest from the Korean public. There have been interviews with various broadcasting stations. YAM has visited universities as well as elementary, middle, and high schools to give talks about the situation in Myanmar. YAM has often been invited to events hosted by religious organizations to speak out for Myanmar. Members have met with political leaders online for discussions and have been involved in several campaigns in collaboration with other NGOs. It can therefore be said that YAM members have been almost everywhere in South Korea in order to deliver the voices of Myanmar citizens, who are suffering under the military junta. To keep delivering the news about Myanmar to the world so that its citizens will not be forgotten is one of the key missions of YAM.

Fig. 1: Protest in front of the Chinese Embassy. The picket reads "The Chinese government should stop sitting on the sidelines regarding the Myanmar military coup" and "Stop cooperating with the Myanmar junta that massacres its citizens"(Photo courtesy of Yun Waddy).

The situation in Myanmar has recently changed as a result of the sudden surge of COVID-19. The situation has become worse day by day. The third wave of COVID-19, which hit Myanmar in July, put the country into renewed turmoil. In July, the per capita death rate in Myanmar surpassed that of Indonesia and Malaysia, becoming the worst in Southeast Asia. The dramatic increase in the number of infections and deaths caused great concern, particularly because public hospitals are now mostly closed: doctors and other staff have joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, refusing to work under the military junta's rule.

This unfortunate concurrence of events has contributed to the deterioration of the situation in Myanmar. The number of people who have died as a result of the virus cannot be counted, and the author and other members of YAM have had close relatives pass away due to lack of medical treatment. The military cannot handle the situation well because the citizens of Myanmar have no trust in them. Moreover, they are banning the sale of medical equipment, such as oxygen concentrators, to civilians who are not supported by the military junta. COVID-19 is thus being used by the military junta as a weapon to suppress those who stand against them.

Myanmar citizens in Korea are also facing difficulties. After the military seized control of the country, many withdrew their savings from bank accounts because they did not trust the junta. As a result of the cash shortage and banking crisis that followed, Myanmar students, in particular, have faced delays in payment of tuition fees and monthly allowances from home, leading to financial difficulties. In addition, the suspension of shipping line operations has meant that document submissions (e.g., for college, work, etc.) have inevitably been delayed, often leading to rejections from jobs or colleges. YAM has therefore organized a scholarship program to help students ease their financial burden. Sponsored by the organization Together with the World (세상과 함께), YAM was able hand out scholarships to more than 70 Myanmar students in July 2021.

Although necessary to demonstrate a rejection of the military regime, the time spent participating in YAM activities as been a costly expenditure for many of its members. However, an indifference towards the situation in Myanmar will inevitably bring about a sense of guilt. YAM members, therefore, have no choice but to walk a tightrope, juggling a sense of guilt and the need to secure time for their personal lives. Unfortunately, this has often led to mental health problems. The stress felt by YAM members has been alleviated somewhat by the strong support that South Korean citizens have been showing for democracy in Myanmar. In participating in various movements as a YAM member, the author met many Koreans who had great interest in Myanmar's situation and came to join YAM in its movements and campaigns. For the Myanmar citizens who are fighting against the powerful military, this support from Korean citizens is a great encouragement indeed. The fact that Myanmar voices for democracy are heard by someone gives strength and the will to continue fighting until victory is achieved. One of the key reasons for YAM's existence is to ensure that these voices are heard, in pursuit of democracy.

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Japanese Society and Myanmar: Past Engagements, Present Responses

Inaba (Fujimura) Mai

There is a well-known Japanese children's book, also made into a film, called Harp of Burma by Michio Takeyama. First published as a series in a magazine in 1947, shortly after Japan's defeat in World War II, the book is set in Myanmar at the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Its main character is a Japanese soldier. The work is so well known that just mentioning "Myanmar" evokes the book's title for many Japanese. As such, it can be said that the relationship between Japan and Myanmar is built on war.

General Aung San, known as the founding father of Myanmar and the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, worked alongside the Japanese fighting the British army during his time as an officer of the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Although General Aung San later engaged in armed struggles against the Japanese, the training of Myanmar's independence forces by the Japanese military would later contribute to the formation of a close relationship between Myanmar's military and Japan. Myanmar's military anthem (which can be found on YouTube) provides an interesting example. The anthem's melody is popular in Japan and is often played as background music in pachinko parlors, revealing the close and unusual relationship between Japan and Myanmar's military. Currently, Japan is also the greatest contributor of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Myanmar. In 2019, Japan's ODA contributions to Myanmar totaled 189.3 billion yen, including loans, grants, and technical cooperation. With the exception of China, which does not disclose information about aid contributions, Japan is the largest contributor to Myanmar. It is perhaps for this reason that the current Japanese government has put very little pressure on Myanmar's military under the pretext of an "inflow of Chinese capital" to the country.

However, there is growing discontent among Myanmar residents in Japan regarding Japan's ambiguous stance towards Myanmar's military. Currently, there are 35,000 Myanmar people residing in Japan. This is roughly eight times the number of residents compared to a decade ago. In the 1980s, the majority of residents were foreign students, but after the 1988 military coup, more people fled Myanmar as a result of government crack-downs on pro-democracy movements, and the number of Myanmar refugees bound for Japan rapidly increased. Moreover, after 2013, as the number of "technical trainees"[1] and laborers increased, young people in their twenties came to make up the majority of the Myanmar population in Japan.

The military coup of February 1st, 2021, was widely reported in Japan. On February 3, about 1,000 Myanmar residents in Japan gathered in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo to protest against the coup. Protestors demanded the release of detained government officials – including the country's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi – as well as the reopening of the National Assembly following last year's general election, which saw the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) win a landslide victory. The protestors also aimed to raise awareness among the Japanese public of the use of violence and the lack of concern for human rights on the part of Myanmar's military. They urged the Japanese government to take a more committed stance. Protests and demonstrations were also held at the Japan Myanmar Association, the United Nations University, and in smaller cities throughout the country [Fig. 1].

The reactions in Japanese society to the desperate actions of its Myanmar residents were diverse, but what stood out most were the cold responses. Statements critical of the movement, such as those that protested the 'import' of Myanmar's fight to Japan, opposed the fact that foreigners were protesting in Japan, or, fearing cluster infections, objected against protests during the Coronavirus pandemic, began appearing online. Perhaps as a response, protestors began giving speeches and shouting slogans not only in Burmese but also in Japanese. Protest leaders would appeal in Japanese: "Put international pressure on the Myanmar military." Protesters would then respond ("We beg you!") and bow in the Japanese style. One protestor even appeared wearing a placard that read, "Despite the Coronavirus disaster, I must protest, and I apologize to all Japanese citizens." Protestors also posted messages on Facebook and Twitter asking for sympathy from the Japanese public.

Protestors have also been oppressed. Technical trainees have been warned at work that they would be fired if found to have participated in protests, and there are also examples of workers having been asked about and criticized for their protesting. Nevertheless, Myanmar residents of Japan are not surrendering. In order to spread awareness of the ruthless actions of the military and police in Myanmar, many young people are working in solidarity with the "Digital Resistance," sacrificing sleep to share photos and videos of conditions in Myanmar with the world through the Internet.

Despite the inhospitable reaction of much of the Japanese public, there are some citizens who support the protests. For instance, one group of Japanese conducting business in Myanmar used crowdfunding to raise 15 million yen in three weeks to provide food and medical supplies to poor households. Civic organizations are also very active. On March 4, a non-profit organization, Mekong Watch, and the AYUS International Buddhist Cooperation Network together submitted a joint request to the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism. This request demanded an investigation into sources of funding to Myanmar's military, including ODA, and other business activities related to the military. Thirty-two organizations involved in the Myanmar pro-democracy movement also participated in submitting this joint request.

The Korean public, with its history of winning democracy through a fierce democratization movement, quickly offered solidarity to the citizens of Myanmar following the military coup. The Japanese public, on the other hand, has often been apathetic to issues abroad. In particular, discriminatory views and a lack of empathy towards the rest of Asia continue to be major problems for Japan. Establishing solidarity between Japanese citizens and the Myanmar residents of Japan is essential in order to successfully appeal to both the Myanmar military and the Japanese government. Under the current circumstances, unfortunately, this seems unlikely.

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Notes
1   The goal of the foreign technical trainee system is to support foreign nationals who have acquired skills and knowledge in Japan so that they can contribute to economic development in their developing home countries. However, the system suffers from several problems, such as poor working conditions and delayed wages.

Fig1: Myanmar residents in Japan protesting at Osaka Castle Park on Feb. 7, the first Sunday after the military coup. (Image provided by Takeda Hajimu, reporter at The Asahi Shimbun.

News from the European Alliance for Asian Studies

The articles on the "News from the EAAS" pages in this edition represent the desire to study transregional entanglements across Asia and beyond. The first contribution is on the "Shaping Asia" network, coordinated by Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (Bielefeld) and Christiane Brosius (Heidelberg). The second introduces the newly funded research collaboration "Heritage as Placemaking," headed by Sabin Ninglekhu (Kathmandu), Sasanka Perera (Delhi), Stefanie Lotter (London), and Heidelberg. The last section assembles recent research and teaching initiatives on and with Nepal at Heidelberg, including digital documentation and research-based teaching that bridges comparative work on urban transformation in Nepal, India, and Germany. The EAAS pages have been compiled by Christiane Brosius and Axel Michaels, who joined the European Alliance of Asia Scholars (EAAS) for the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) at Heidelberg University in 2015.

Fig. 1: "Historical" photo studio specialised on
1920s and 1930s Shanghai, Sinan Mansions,
French Concession, Shanghai (Photo by
Christiane Brosius, 2017).

Shaping Asia: Connectivities, Comparisons, Collaborations

Christiane Brosius, Claudia Derichs, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, and Ursula Rao

Set up in 2018, the network initiative 'Shaping Asia: Connectivities, Comparisons, Collaborations' seeks to push humanities and social science research on Asian societies and cultures more radically beyond a methodological nationalism and localism. The initiative takes on broad new themes, concepts, and methods in order to better understand interconnections within and beyond Asian societies and cultures, today and in the past. Asian Studies requires profound knowledge of languages, historical sources, and cultures, which,

unfortunately, has often inhibited trans-regional scholarship. Through building new transnational collaborations and encouraging interdisciplinary relations, this network would like to radically broaden the scope of knowledge production. 'Shaping Asia' takes up the challenge of jointly grasping complex connectivities that shape (or have shaped) dynamics across Asia in diachronic and synchronic perspectives. This way, it aims at coming to terms with Asia's positioning and circulations in a globalised world. The network encourages scholarship on various Asian historical trajectories, regions, and locales, based on the command of Asian languages and intimate ethnographic knowledge of cultural, political, and religious particularities. This rigorous research is additionally mostly obtained through prolonged field studies, which further sustains and deepens the field. This combination of approaches and aptitudes contributes to theorising 'from the Global South', in which connectivities and comparisons are taken seriously in scholarly cooperation.

Funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and – to a lesser extent – by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the network is comprised of scholars from 16 German universities. Currently, the main locations of activity are the Universities Bielefeld, Heidelberg, Humboldt (Berlin), and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle). Our international partners are at the National University of Singapore, the University of Tokyo, Jawaharlal Nehru University, IIIT Bangalore, the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi, and Kathmandu University. We hope to further expand the network and would like to invite colleagues interested in this initiative to get in touch. We are particularly grateful to IIAS and The Newsletter – an organ with a long tradition of publicising trans-regional research – to afford us this space to provide an overview of a few key ideas that ground our research collaboration. After a short theoretical introduction, we would like to highlight our work through a short description of two exemplary projects: 'Knowledge production and circulation' and 'Making of new infrastructures'.

Connectivities, comparisons, and collaborations

Scholars of critical area studies,[1] transcultural studies,[2] and postcolonial enquiries[3] have helped overcome the confines of established academic cultures and colonial traditions of studying Asia within nation-states and along culturalist boundaries. We follow this path to study multiple entanglements and positionalities across larger spaces, and currently work on topics of urban transformation and placemaking, gender and religion, knowledge production and circulation, and the distribution of new infrastructures.[4] Our projects trace continuities and connectivities between countries and traditions, as well as focus on ruptures and inequalities.[5] They seek to better understand connections and power asymmetries between regions, intellectual trajectories, and political cultures. The term 'connectivities' – as opposed to 'connections' – draws attention not just to the connection between two entities, but also their potential entanglement and the transformation that

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News from the European Alliance
for Asian Studies

Regional Editors
Christiane Brosius and Axel Michaels

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Fig. 2: Wall painting during Delhi Street Art Festival in the urban village of Shahpur Jat, South Delhi (Photo by Christiane Brosius, 2014).

behaviour. Their roll-outs in different social, physical, and cultural terrains leads to many practical difficulties. These are solved through *adaptations*. This project studies the kind of adaptations adopted in India, Pakistan, and China that permit new technologies to become an integral part of everyday relations. The second focus area studies the variable implementation of standardised measures for coastal protection measures in South and Southeast Asia. In order to enhance climate resilience, many countries embrace international collaborations and build dams and sea walls using imported technologies in order to contain mobile substances, such as water. The group will consider the *orchestration* achieved by the deployment of standard solutions as well as explore limits and resistance to such homogenization. The third focus area researches international *cooperation* and co-finance in (cross-border) infrastructures. Pushed predominantly by China, there are new efforts to use investment in infrastructure as a means to increase inter-Asian connectivity. Other countries, like Korea and Japan follow suit. This project investigates co- or foreign-funded infrastructure projects in the border regions between South, East, and Southeast Asia. It considers the evolving compromises and frictions that accompany investments in energy or logistical systems that affect several states.

As wide-ranging as our projects are, the initiative 'Shaping Asia' provides a methodological framework that is vital for understanding the inter-Asian connections, ruptures, and similarities in transregional dynamics.

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results from the contact. The concept of relationality increasingly impacts research in the humanities and social sciences. However, this must also include attention to disconnectivities or erasure.

The focus on interconnectedness confronts us with important methodological challenges.[6] Why, how, and what should we compare? The questions remain unsettled and are at the centre of methodological discussions of this network, which organises dialogues between scholars educated and working in different countries in Europe and Asia, as well as between people trained in different disciplines and familiar with different countries. Our collaborations force us to reflect on our assumptions and on the limits of particular theoretical or empirical claims.[7] Building comparison into our research helps establish but also critically rethink what we consider as being different and similar, and helps conceptualise and demarcate specific or unique constellations.

We are committed to fostering more and broader collaborations. For this reason, the network 'Shaping Asia' includes collaborations as one of its three main methodological pillars. On the one hand, we acknowledge that researchers profit greatly from sharing and collaborating, also by using forums such as the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS, Heidelberg), the European Alliance of Asia Scholars (EAAS), the Global Asia Initiative (Duke University), and the Asia Research Institute (NUS, Singapore). On the other hand, we posit that the modalities of collaboration need to be an object of academic inquiry and scrutiny as well. After all, knowledge production and circulation has been shaped and is shaped by striking power differentials, by academic extractivism,[8] and by blatant silencing. The modalities through which knowledge is and can be co-produced require self-reflexivity and different forms of dialogue. To elaborate, we will delineate a selection of topics of inquiry that our network partners attend to.

Knowledge production and circulation

Collaboration embedded in this comprehension of knowledge production has started in a number of projects currently funded in the 'Shaping Asia' network initiative.

One thematic current that embraces a couple of projects is 'knowledge production and circulation.' In this current, scholars draw from large areas of research (e.g., postcolonial critique) while proposing novel avenues based on their strengths and addressing their shortcomings. Asia is conceived of as a region in which (post)colonial domination and the manifold ways in which it has been studied are linked to the very nature of knowledge production and circulation.

The quest for a fundamental reappraisal and reorganisation of knowledge production is a demand that the network strives to service. With a better understanding of the assumptions behind the (re-)production of knowledge about the world, and with the suggestion of alternative ways of producing and circulating it, chances to shape the world in more constructive and inclusive ways increase. Here, these alternative ways of shaping the world are taken to be relational, situated, and empowering. Collaboration evolves by way of different actors in Asia reflecting on how the views of the world are structured in the overall organization of knowledge generation, learning, and knowledge dissemination.[9]

The 'knowledge' current aims to trace scholars' attempts to uncover, support, and develop forms of knowledge considered to be relevant. Along this vein, it is imperative not to ignore the tacit ways of knowing and knowledge transmission that are carried out in everyday human actions. The projects in said current give primacy to conscious, reflexive dealings with knowledge in the quest to uncover how Asian actors seek to actively influence their sociality and culture. Following this principle, one of the projects addresses Muslim women in Asia who use their acquired religious knowledge in various professional activities – or for professionalization in a certain field, as it were. At the juncture of work and beliefs, businesses catering to the needs for halal products, for instance, are growing. One´s faith and religious knowledge informs one's professional ethics. Muslim women often apply the principles of shared religious knowledge and societal norms in their practical professional life. The project aims at mapping the intersecting field of religious knowledge and Muslim women's professionalism in Asia, providing, among other benefits, a platform to discuss how Muslim women express their connection with

religion while engaging in various occupations. It maps the multiple creative fields in which religious knowledge is at the basis of Muslim women's pathways to professional fields in the global economy, in the realm of social activism, education, welfare, and the like. It researches how faith, identity, piety, and notions of belonging are articulated by women in their professional lives.

Making of new infrastructures

Investment in new infrastructures contributes significantly to the current rapid transformation of Asia. The 'Shaping Asia' network also supports projects interested in the recursive processes by which new investments shape the social texture of Asian societies and vice versa. We propose comparison as an ideal tool to map contrasts and similarities across different countries and understand the role of inter-Asian relations. We study parallels and differences in local experiences of new techno-developments as they occur on the ground and the role of political culture and power dynamics for framing their implementation. The three focus areas consider (1) the way new digital systems for the management of populations are situationally adapted to different localities in Asia, (2) the streamlining effects of global engineering solutions for costal protection in South and Southeast Asia, and (3) the character of international collaboration in trans-border infrastructure projects.

Acknowledging the negotiated character of building infrastructures, we focus on three types of adjustments that permit new developments to settle into a place and shape actors' engagement with the evolving consequences. Situational *adaptation* helps universal forms to be fitted to local contexts; *orchestration* is an ongoing process of mainstreaming that tries to bring in line diversity with the needs of standard solutions; and *cooperation* helps to implement complex projects that require coordination between multiple stakeholders. Each project will lead the theorizing of one of these social dynamics.

The first focus area considers local negotiations of digital solutions. In an effort to improve the management of resources and populations, Asian countries are pioneering new digital solutions for streamlined delivery of services and stringent surveillance of

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Left: Heritage, religion
and ritual at Vaishali,
India (Photo by Sasanka
Perera, 2018).

Heritage as Placemaking: the Politics of Solidarity and Erasure in South Asia

Christiane Brosius, Stefanie Lotter,
Sabin Ninglekhu, and Sasanka Perera

The project 'Heritage as Placemaking' investigates how places are made beyond their material construction through the formation of lasting bonds and shared care. We ask, what unites diverse, and at times ephemeral, communities in enabling or hindering the making of meaningful places with which future generations identify? The project focuses on large and medium-size cities as well as pilgrimage towns in North India and Nepal to capture how heritage placemaking constitutes an imagined, performative, physical, and geographical reorganization of space

South Asia offers a politically and intellectually potent site for this study because of the ubiquitous interrelation of religious practices, socio-cultural hierarchies, ruptured notions of citizenship, and the accelerated forces of globalisation. Rather than understanding heritage-making solely as the conservative affirmation of a past status quo that preserves and restores original history, we see heritage placemaking as a constant process of formation and association that is deeply entangled in politics. The investment into collective futures is possible through forms of commoning and through evoking the commons to claim and manage shared resources.[1] Studying the collective acting upon place allows us to explore subtle forms of 'everyday resistance' as well as the competing and complementary roles of state, market, and civil society. As such, our joint research projects explore the formative forces that enable heritage as well as those that hinder and erase it. Through critical attention to the politics of built, practiced, and performed heritage, the project examines how communal interests are steered and redirected through authorization, leadership, political will, natural or man-made

crises, or simply through the loss of interest in connectivity to and ownership of the past. We ask how and why solidarities (re)form or fall apart over the ability to root and take care of the remains of the past. We aim to understand what brings and holds people together in their aspiration to leave an intentional mark for a time beyond their own.

'Heritage as Placemaking: The Politics of Solidarity and Erasure in South Asia,' funded by the Swedish Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, is a partnership between four research institutions: Social Science Baha (Nepal), South Asian University (India), SOAS at University of London (UK), and Heidelberg University (Germany). Through thematic research groups, the project explores the importance of commoning – that is, solidaric practices of collaborating and sharing – in vernacular and performative heritage with Christiane Brosius and Monica Mottin at the Heidelberg Center of Transcultural Studies. Brosius will explore how neighbourhood life or civil society activities relate to a particular communal, arcaded architecture (sataḥ or phalcā) to socialise or mobilise, exhibit, trade, play, or perform. Mottin's work focuses on performance, exploring layers of local, national, and global interpretations of Sita's birthplace in Janakpur, through ritual and theatre.

The team at the South Asian University (Delhi) consists of Sasanka Perera, Darshana Ashok Kumara, and Thirangie Jayatilake. The project sets out to document changes and transformations within transnational pilgrimage networks. Janakpur will also feature in this study that centers on the experiences of pilgrims who transit in groups through space. By studying the engagement of pilgrims with sites such as Janakpur, Varanasi, Lumbini, Ayodhya, and others, the work will shed light on the discrepancies between the rooted

experience of place that Mottin studies and the fleeting engagement with place that Perera explores. Perera and Kumara will concentrate on Sri Lankan pilgrims in Nepal and India to explore their religious interpretations of the sacred landscape and their interaction with pilgrimage sites, local communities, and the nation-state. Jayatilake will contribute to this discourse the dimension of virtual placemaking, exploring the material and discursive creation of pilgrimage circuits and digital spaces beyond the state's tourism efforts and local realities.

Heritage-making's bureaucracy, lived gendered experience, activist formations, and selective historicity are investigated at the Social Science Baha in Kathmandu by Sabin Ninglekhu, Monalisa Maharjan, and Binita Magaiya. Ninglekhu will study heritage bureaucracy at work at the pilgrimage sites, counterbalancing Jayatilake's work while also contributing insights into the bureaucracy at the project's sites in the Kathmandu valley, highlighting heritage governance and governmentality. Complementing Brosius' work on the public life and erasure of arcaded platforms, Maharjan studies communal water spouts (dhunge dhara/hiti) as sites of heritage activism as well as of gendered spatialisation. Erasure and loss of heritage are at the heart of Magaiya's study of ruins and their communal interpretation.

Finally, at SOAS, University of London, Stefanie Lotter and Emiline Smith will engage with the discourses of both development and repatriation, which reposition heritage in the contemporary decolonisation discourse. Lotter will work in collaboration with Magaiya on the conscious erasure of heritage through local and national agents. She will also work on the history of 50 years of international development collaboration in Bhaktapur, where heritage protection, destruction, reconstruction, and ownership have become increasingly contested. Emiline Smith will lead on questions of ownership of heritage

by contributing a criminological perspective on heritage theft. With a collaborative study on movable objects and the repatriation discourse of stolen, lost, and rediscovered artefacts, her study adds insights into the entangled nature of placemaking.

Through the project 'Heritage as Placemaking,' we open the field of heritage studies in South Asia to enquiries that evolve around questions of 'whose heritage' and 'whose rights.'[2] Together, the project team aims to create a better understanding of dynamic solidarities amongst different communities invested in the making, the upkeep, and the erasure of living and lived heritage. To this end, the project explores communal resourcefulness, political will, and bureaucratic attention critical to forming solidarities and making place for the future.

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Above: Performance of religious chanting at an arcaded platform in Cyasal, Patan, Nepal (Photo by Christiane Brosius, 2019). Right: Public interest in the Bajracharya rituals as the pinnacle at Kasthamandapa is established in Kathmandu, Nepal (Photo by Binita Magaiya, 2021).

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Christiane Brosius and Axel Michaels

The Region

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Studying, Documenting, and Teaching Nepal's Cultural Heritage

Christiane Brosius, Axel Michaels, Rajan Khatiwoda, Astrid Zotter, Manik Bajracharya, Simon Cubelic and Arunava Dasgupta

Several initiatives at the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS)[1] – based at Heidelberg University and with the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences – bring together a particular research focus and expertise on Nepal from a transcultural, interdisciplinary, and internationally networked perspective. The projects mirror the broad and yet carefully entangled focus on digital humanities, on heritage documentation and critical heritage studies, as well as on urban transformation and state-formation in South Asia. They bring to the fore the productive cooperation across national boundaries. Nepal is a particular case because it has a long history of religious monuments and documentary texts that reflect and shape social practices up to the present day. Evidence extant in architectural structures, inscriptions, and documents is especially dense from the medieval period onwards and continuing into the present.

Due to having remained largely untouched by both Muslim conquest and British colonial rule, in Nepal Hindu kingship and its related forms of rule and social organization continued thriving long after they ceased elsewhere on the South Asian subcontinent. Its geopolitical location as a high-altitude and hard-to-access country between the Indian and Tibetan/Chinese cultural spheres favored Nepal as a repository and archive on the one hand, but also as a contact zone where external influences and local developments were negotiated in unique ways. Here, we present glimpses on four interdisciplinary initiatives that engage Nepal in larger fields of current research – ranging from the digital documentation of built and performed cultural heritage in the Kathmandu Valley to the exploration of urbanization in South Asia: (1) the Nepal Heritage Documentation Project (NHDP); (2) the Documents on the History of Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal (Documenta Nepalica) project; (3) the Anthropology of Inscriptions project; and (4) a multilateral partnership that combines research and teaching about urban transformation in Kathmandu, Delhi, and Heidelberg.

Preserving heritage digitally: The Nepal Heritage Documentation Project (NHDP)

NHDP, substantially supported by the Arcadia Fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, was started in 2018. It provides an open access approach to extensive heritage documentation in Nepal, with a particular focus on the Kathmandu Valley and West Nepal. In Germany, the NHDP is run collaboratively by the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS) and the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (HAdW). Key partners and representatives in Nepal include the Saraf Foundation of Himalayan Traditions and Culture and the Department of Archaeology of the Government of Nepal. NHDP's first commitment is to historical monuments that are spread across the Kathmandu Valley. These monuments still play important roles in active social and religious habitats, be it in the old towns of Patan, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, or Bhaktapur, or in more remote places (beyond the Kathmandu Valley) like Nuwakot, Jumla, or Solokhumbu. Most of the heritage sites documented are impacted by massive transformations in the city fabric, be this related to the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes, to gentrification or informal densification, through encroachment or erasure. Others are affected by changing infrastructures (e.g., roads, airports) and changing trade patterns. Thus they reflect heritagisation and urbanisation processes that can be witnessed across Asia and beyond. NHDP aims at documenting the historical and anthropological 'biographies' of such monuments as well as their current states and uses.

NHDP is even further enriched by the spirit with which many researchers and institutions have shared their (mostly unpublished) material related to tangible and intangible heritage. This includes close interaction with the impressive data collection of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT)

as well as ties with the digital and open access John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art. Moreover, the legacies and support of architects, architectural historians, and researchers (e.g., Niels Gutschow, Wolfgang Korn, Ulrich von Schröder, Bruce Owens and Carl Pruscha) further thicken the fabric of NHDP's database, the Digital Archive of Nepalese Arts and Monuments (DANAM).[2] All of DANAM's content is available to the public for free and can be accessed online. Its visual and textual materials are transferred to Heidelberg University Library for sustainable storage in its repositories of research data, heidICON[3] and heiDATA.[4]

Datasets include structured information about the monuments' histories. This is comprised of architectural, art historical, anthropological, and historical data; descriptions of monuments in English and Nepali; photographic documentation of monuments, objects (e.g., sculptures), and inscriptions; architectural details and measurements together with site plans, elevation drawings, and location maps; and maps of ritual processions and other thematic entries for heritage walks. These digital heritage walks, sometimes visualized in short videos, connect a set of particular architecture types, such as monasteries, arcaded rest-houses, or water architecture across the urban or rural space. They present selected thematic narratives that evolve around a particular procession through a neighbourhood, also bringing in a timeline of change, detailed documentation of rituals and routes. Moreover, NHDP aims at transferring the findings to wider publics, for instance, by explaining how tangible and intangible heritage are condensed in 'heritage focus areas' – e.g., palace squares or special city quarters – to highlight the social, religious, and historical connectivity of sites across a particular locale instead of promoting individual sites as if they were contained and isolated places.

Over its running time of eight years, NHDP aims to document and inventory more than 1500 monuments, 2200 inscriptions, and 7000 objects, producing around 23,000 photographs and 1900 architectural drawings. Beyond this, it also highlights the unique intangible cultural heritage associated with the structures: rituals, festivals, and other historical, social, and religious events and practices. Thus, DANAM comprises four databases: an architectural monument database, an art objects database, a historical database with inscriptions, and an anthropological database. The last of

these is crucial for the understanding and documentation of intangible heritage and how it is intrinsically connected to built structures in Nepal.

NHDP's team consists of architects trained in heritage documentation (Bijay Basukala, Bibek Basukala, Anil Basukala, Thomas Schrom), archaeologists (David Andolfatto), Indologists and historians who sometimes also work as anthropologists (Bharat Maharjan, Pankaj Nakarmi, Rajendra Shakya, Ravi Shakya), photographers (Yogesh Budhatoki), IT experts (Ashish Gautam, Bishwo Shah), geographers (Elias Michaels), an administrator in Nepal (Roshan Mishra), and a chief administrator in Heidelberg (Radha Malkar). The team is led by Christiane Brosius, an anthropologist specialising in visual and media ethnology in urban India and Nepal, and Axel Michaels, an ethno-Indologist specialising in South Asian rituals and religions, as well as Rajan Khatiwoda, an Indologist who coordinates the documentation work.

One example shall be sketched to highlight NHDP's work: the Bhīmasena Mandira,[5] located at the northern end of Patan Durbar Square in Lalitpur's historic city. It serves as an exemplary case because its documentation not only created awareness and motivation to initiate the post-earthquake renovation process in 2018 but is also assisting its actual restoration work through the systematically recorded information in the DANAM. For example, the elaborated maps and plans drawn and published under the NHDP have been used by the local government and other institutions during the rebuilding process. The temple, dedicated to the deity Bhīmasena, was not destroyed in the 1934 earthquake but sustained heavy damaged during the 2015 earthquakes. Its carvings are remarkable, such as in the principal façade of the first floor or the struts supporting the broad overhanging roofs, displaying images of different deities. Bhīmasena is a mythological character of Hindu mythology, worshipped as the god of trade in Newar society. The temple is lively, much frequented, and considered one of the 'eight jewels' on Patan Durbar Square. Constructed during the early Malla era (ca. 1200 CE), it was reconstructed in 1627 and 1681 CE by King Siddhinarasiṃha and King Śrinivāsa Malla, respectively. Smaller and larger rituals are still taking place here, underlining the the complementary relation of built and ephemeral heritage, its relevance for local residents rather than for tourists.
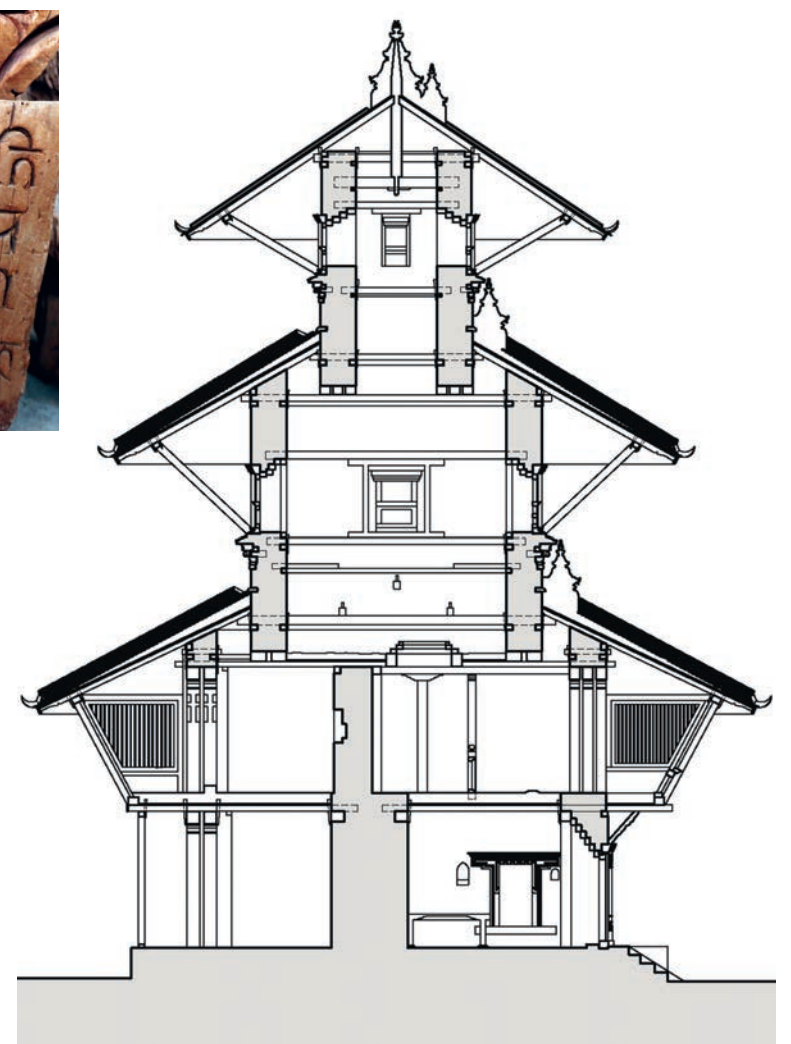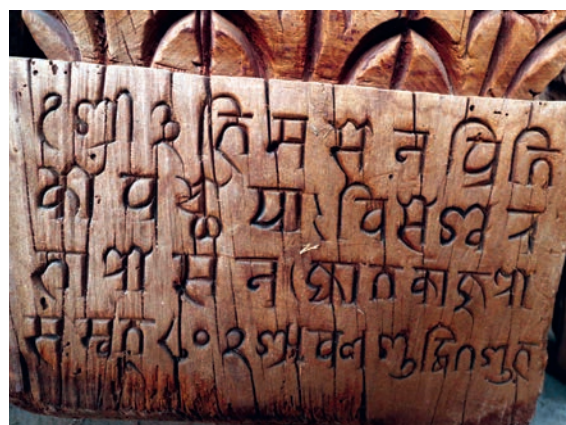
Fig 1 (above): Bhimasena temple, current view, scaffolded for renovation (Photo by Yogesh Budathoki, 2019).

Fig. 2 (right): Historic photograph of Bhimasena temple by Bourne and Shepherd, ca. 1970.

Fig. 3 (above right): Strut inscription from 1682 CE (NS 802) (Photo by Yogesh Budathoki, 2019).

Fig. 4 (far right): Section drawing of Bhimasena temple by Anil Basukala (September 2020).

Fig. 5 & 6 (top left): Book covers: *The Muluki Ain of 1854* and *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India*

Fig 7 (top centre): A ritual vessel (*kalaśa*) with an inscription. The vessel is said to contain the Newar deity Buṅgadyaḥ (Photo by Monalisa Maharjan, 2021).

Fig 8 (top right). Micchu Bāhā, statues of Lokeśvara and other deities, with stone inscription (Photo by Yogesh Budathoki, 2019).

Fig 9 (right): Roofscapes of Lalitpur's heritage city center (Photo by Christiane Brosius, 2019).

Cataloguing and editing documents of pre-modern Nepal (Documenta Nepalica)

From the late 18th century on, Nepal experienced a rapid and extensive increase in the production of paper documents serving the needs of the growing administrative and legal apparatus of the emerging nation-state formed in the wake of the conquests of the Shah kings of Gorkha. The huge corpus – unique for South Asia and still extant in public and private archives throughout the country and abroad – includes hundreds of thousands of documents and offers a true kaleidoscope of officially administrated life. It seems as if each human activity and every settlement, however remote it may have been, was captured by paper. The material spans from royal edicts (land grants, regalia, caste regulations, tax rules), court decisions, and documents for the organisation of religious institutions and festivals to trivial blurbs, such as orders to feed buff instead of dog meat to tigers in the royal zoo; from reports of Nepalese envoys about military facilities in British India to complaints about irregularities in issuing gambling licenses.

The development of digital methods and tools to make this wealth available in the form of a catalogue, and in scholarly editions and translation is a pioneering work. The philologically treated texts form the basis for tackling larger research questions including the legitimation and affirmation of rule, political unification and nation building, Hinduization, the textualization and codification of law, or the development of elite cultures.

The centre-piece of the academic endeavour is an open access and freely accessible data-base, called Documenta Nepalica.[6] It features a catalogue with metadata for documents held by public institutions and private holders. The lion's share within these data sets, whose number is growing steadily (currently over 60,000), are those that have been documented under the earlier Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) and which have been worked on in cooperation with the National Archives in Kathmandu, the German Oriental Society, and the State Library of Berlin. Documents selected on the basis of the researchers' thematic foci are hosted as xml-coded digital editions compliant with the standards of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). The digital infrastructure, which has been designed within the project using open source programs and data formats and is programmed by Oliver Hellwig, features further components, providing tools for textual processing and analysis. The editions can be linked to a bibliographic database and a glossary of technical terms, both of which are collaboratively fed. Names of persons and places tagged in the digital editions feed into the ontological database with the aim to make the information retrieved from the documents reusable in broader ontologies, controlled vocabularies, and the semantic web.

The latest addition to the digital architecture is the development of a lemmatizer that is trained to analyse the texts morpho-syntactically and thus contributes to the study of the lexicography and grammar of the still under-researched Nepali language. In a substantial number of cases, the data of Documenta Nepalica and NHDP are cross-referenced.

The project started under the lead of Axel Michaels in 2014, as a research unit of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. With teams in Heidelberg and Patan, it consists of the researchers Manik Bajracharya, Simon Cubelic, and Ramhari Timalsina; the deputy project leader Astrid Zotter; the head of the editorial program Christof Zotter; and the cataloguers and editors Rabi Acharya, Pabitra Bajracharya, and Yogesh Budhathoki.

The Research Unit publishes the print-on-demand series "Documenta Nepalica – Book Series" by Heidelberg University Publishing. The first volume – *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India* – is edited by Simon Cubelic, Axel Michaels, and Astrid Zotter (2018) and contains contributions by Diwarkar Acharya, Manik Bajracharya, Rajan Khatiwoda, Gisele Krauskopf, Timothy Lubin, Charles Ramble, Alexander von Rospatt, and others. It aims at exploring and rethinking issues of diplomatics and typology, the place of documents in relation to other texts and literary genres, methods of archiving and editing documents, as well as the role they play in social, religious, and political constellations. The second volume – *The Muluki Ain of 1854: Nepal's First Legal Code* (2021)— is the first comprehensive translation of a foundational legal text for modern Nepal. It covers almost every aspect of public, criminal, private, and religious law, ranging from the organisation of the state and courts to murder and other delicts, the workings of the caste system and the joint family, matters of purity and penance, customary law, widow-burning, and witchcraft. As such, the Mulukī Ain is a unique source for the place of traditional Hindu jurisprudence in South Asian legal cultures.

Connecting written artefacts to social practices: the anthropology of inscriptions

This project aims at investigating the crucial role that inscriptions – mobile and place-bound, graffiti or other publicly displayed media of written communication – have played (and still play) for the construction of spaces, belonging, collective memory, and varieties of value in the Kathmandu Valley. A selected corpus of inscriptions has been documented, catalogued, edited, geo-referenced, and published at the digital platforms of the NHDP and the Research Unit "Documents on the History of Religion and Law of Premodern Nepal." Besides a description of the inscriptions as text- and image-bearing objects, socio-religious practices connected to the inscriptions are also documented. A special focus is on inscriptions related to religious sites and the processional chariot of the Newar deity of Buṅgadyaḥ, also referred to as Karuṇāmaya or, for Hindus, the Rāto (Red) Matsyendranātha. By drawing on methods from visual anthropology and philology, the inscriptions are studied from an interdisciplinary and transtemporal perspective: as images and texts, as sediments of past meaning and sites of contemporary struggles, as historical objects embedded in monument sites, but also as literate practices through which ritual and festive activities are connected to heritage scapes. Thereby, the project wants not only to contribute to a better understanding of the linkage between tangible and intangible heritage, but also to interrogate the concept of cultural heritage by opening it up for local notions from the past and present. The project team, headed by Christiane Brosius and Astrid Zotter, includes Simon Cubelic, Rajan Khatiwoda, Monalisa Maharjan, and Nutandhar Sharma.

Studying the city: entangling cities across South Asia and Germany

How can knowledge about urban trans-formation in globalizing cities be shared and invested in critical and self-reflexive teaching tools across diciplines and institutions of higher education in the so-called Global South and Global North? The themed partnership "Urban Transformation Urban Placemaking: Learning from South Asia and Germany," funded by the German Academic Exchange service (DAAD), explores the ways in which cities reflect and stimulate cultural, social, economic, and political lifeworlds across time and space. It also aims to develop curricula about these dynamics. The research considers the transforming nature of public urban spaces and practices related to cultural heritage, neighbourhoods, and everyday life as a resource of knowledge co-production and collaborative socio-cultural practices. The project members pay attention to this demographic condition, but go deeper and beyond quantitative dimensions to jointly investigate and develop research-based teaching toolkits. The aim is to enable institutions of higher education to respond to the ways in which cities in South Asia and Germany transform and what can be learnt from their often substantial changes. With this, young generations of students will be trained in the humanities and social sciences as well as art and design, to shape socially responsible and sustainable career paths by means of handling future-oriented questions and methodological challenges related to the 'Urban Age.'

The network pays particular attention to the study of urban responses to the interconnectivity of natural and man-made crises in cities (e.g., earthquakes, climate change, migration, endangered heritage, and cultural diversity). A focus on placemaking – that is, how people shape their urban habitats and everyday worlds in cities – is especially promising for such an approach. Thematically seen, the comparative lens on Delhi and Kathmandu contributes to a conjunctive understanding of intra-Asian urban transformation without reducing the cities to the often attributed stereotypical 'chaos.' Across the wide spread of Kathmandu and Delhi, the multi-layered physical and social fabric of the city is characterized by distinctive sites of of urban life and heritage, such as the mansions (*havelis*) in the historic town of Shahjahanabad in Delhi or the Buddhist compounds (*bāhāḥ, bāhi*) and arcaded rest houses (*phālca; pāti*) in the old cities in Lalitpur and Kathmandu. In Delhi and the Kathmandu Valley, many of the erstwhile traditional neighbourhoods have been steadily giving way to new public spaces, gentrification and 'modernisation,' the idea of neighbourhood, the design of heritage areas, suburban areas, and even slums. The old transforms in terms of its apparent relevance and usefulness while new populations bring in new aspirations, sensibilities, living narratives, and practices of placemaking. In comparison, Heidelberg's emphasis on becoming a "knowledge city," including the university, a range of museums, a professional landscape of software technology, small and middle-size businesses, but also experiences of cultural and ethnic diversity, helps considering how cities are managed and shaped by diverse agents and objectives.

Structurally and methodologically, the three partners each bring a particular regional and disciplinary expertise: Delhi's School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) contributes with urban design and mapping methods for people-oriented 'open cities,' questions of ownership of and belonging to the city; Kathmandu University provides knowledge on community and memory, the training of art practice and curation as a socially responsible and responsive practice; and the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS) invests digital and ethnographic methods and an emphasis on critical heritage studies.

Project members include Sujan Chitrakar from Kathmandu University's Department of Art and Design, Arunava Dasgupta from Delhi's School of Planning and Architecture's department of Urban Design, and Christiane Brosius from the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University.

For more information, please see https://spacetoplace.org.

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Notes

1 See the Spring 2019 issue of *The Newsletter*: https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/asia-europe-transcultural-perspective-new-heidelberg-centre-asian

2 https://danam.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/danam

3 https://heidicon.ub.uni-heidelberg.de

4 https://heidata.uni-heidelberg.de

5 https://danam.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/resource/3b68c5ca-e64a-11e9-b125-0242ac130002

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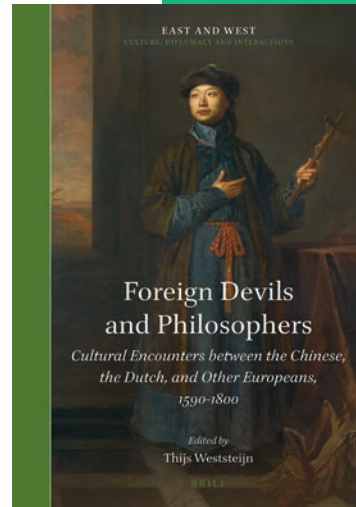
Foreign Devils and Philosophers

Alíz Horváth

The history of foreign exchange involving the Chinese and other people in Asia and beyond constitutes a relatively well-researched theme in the existing scholarship. Sino-European relations, in particular, have been extensively studied by a number of renowned scholars, such as Kenneth Pomeranz, Bin Wong, Jonathan Spence, and Leonard Blussé, among others, largely from the perspective of politics, trade, and religion.

Cultural aspects, on the other hand, constitute an emerging, and hitherto less studied, area in the relevant existing literature. Some exceptions include Timothy Brook's *Vermeer's Hat*, which uses specific artifacts as starting points for broader discussions on transnational encounters, as well as Jürgen Osterhammel's *Unfabling the East*, which takes a more intellectual historical approach to study the European Enlightenment's encounter with Asia. *Foreign Devils and Philosophers*, edited by Thijs Weststeijn, constitutes an ambitious project aiming to refine received assumptions about the mechanisms of Sino-European encounters through the lens of cultural history. To a certain extent, the collaborative and highly diverse characters of the book resemble the three-volume *Asia Inside Out* series (edited by Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue), which also takes a somewhat unusual approach by zooming in to the significance of specific concepts, moments, and even years in history to shed light on their role in the shaping of Asia – although the latter focuses predominantly on Asian (and not Asian-European) circumstances.

In general, Sino-European relations in the early modern period are often studied through the operations of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and its British version, as well as through the missions of the Jesuits. These appear in the present volume as well, but less as protagonists and rather as platforms, for the most part providing a sort of 'stage set' for more specific and narrowly defined analyses to facilitate a more nuanced and diversified understanding of the nature of Sino-European (particularly Dutch) encounters.

The book clearly avoids the oversimplification of the dynamics of Sino-European encounters and provides plenty of information with regard to the key actors of these processes. It thus offers a great inventory of knowledge about the concrete individuals and the characteristics and content of available primary sources. However, the strength of the volume is also its most challenging segment: it is an illuminatingly informative book, particularly for specialists of the field, but in certain essays, the amount of detail provided by the authors may make it difficult for readers who are less knowledgeable about the topic and the time period to follow the flow of the pieces. This issue becomes particularly apparent in the case of specific actors who are not always introduced sufficiently in the essays, implicitly expecting a fairly profound familiarity with their significance.

The book is complemented by an abundant appendix with the translation and transcription of the key primary sources used in the chapters for reference, although some authors embedded fully translated texts into their own essays, which somewhat disrupts the otherwise consistent structure of the book.

That said, the volume constitutes a rich contribution to the field and, using cultural products and ideas as instruments and platforms, it sheds novel light on various (hitherto rarely examined) aspects of early modern foreign encounters. Due to the fairly large time frame covered by the volume, as well as the clear emphasis on chronology in the organization of the chapters, perhaps adding some explicit concluding remarks to reflect on the overarching changes over time would have helped connect the otherwise highly revealing and fascinating dots discussed in the chapters. However, the diversity of methods, sources, and perspectives, which are well-aligned with the complexity of the overarching topic at hand, makes the book relevant to a broad range of scholars interested in Chinese and European history, transnational perspectives, the history of international relations, and early modern cultural history in general.

This review has been abridged for the print issue. To read the full version, visit https://www.iias.asia/the-review/foreign-devils-and-philosophers

Alíz Horváth, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

"The Dutch delegation led by Van Hoorn dines with a Chinese viceroy." Pieter van Hoorn visited the Imperial Court of China in 1662-1663. (Source: Jacob van Meurs, c. 1670) Courtesy Wikimedia.

Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in China

Kim-kwong Chan

This edited volume is a collection of eight papers from a conference by different experts of this field, including the editor's own contribution. The editor, Michael Clarke, also wrote a comprehensive introduction to situate these eight chapters within China's socio-political context of terrorism.

This volume examines many topics: the social unrest of Xinjiang's predominate Uyghurs since China's 'Peaceful Liberation' of this region in 1949, China's joining of the Global War on Terrorism after 9/11, the formulation of anti-terrorism policies and regulations targeting the Uyghurs vis-à-vis domestic terrorists activities, the development of foreign policies to protect China's interest of the Belt Road Initiative, and the globalization of Uyghurs' 'terrorist' involvements in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This volume intends "(i) to map and understand the nature of the threat posed to China by terrorism; (ii) to provide an up-to-date account of how that threat is perceived, understood and responded to by China; and (iii) to provide insights into the effects of terrorism on China's domestic and foreign policy" (p.13). It also makes suggestions for Chinese policymakers to re-think their current anti-terrorism policies in light of the analysis made by the contributors' chapters.

Because there are not many Uyghur terrorist cases – neither in China nor abroad – a few cases are often repeatedly mentioned by various contributors in their respective chapters, with perhaps similar details released by state authorities or by experts with little verification. However, such redundancy in some of the chapters is unavoidable, as the primary data available for researchers are extracted from this limited batch. Several contributors also raise doubt about the authenticity of some of these cases – i.e., whether they are bona fide terrorist activities or just general grievances voiced and enacted by those who happen to be Uyghur. There is strong evidence to suggest that the authorities have exploited such cases to justify the establishment of a comprehensive 'national security' governance starting with Xinjiang. Furthermore, some contributors cast doubt on the 'terrorist' nature of some of the groups listed by the Chinese authorities. An interesting example is the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which was officially unlisted as a terrorist organization by the United States in November 2020, as the group has had virtually no function for many years.

This volume has raised an important issue, one which speculates the intentions of Chinese policymakers: does the Chinese state develop anti-terrorism policies to address the issue of terrorism – be it real or imagined – as stated in official documents, or does the Chinese state use the few seemingly terrorist activities as a rally point to launch comprehensive national security measures to deal with the long-term socio-political grievances expressed by the Uyghurs? As for the former, the current policies seem unable to achieve their intended purpose; as for the latter, since the publication of this volume, the state has built more 're-education/vocational' facilities in Xinjiang, allegedly with capacity for a million. The authorities have also implemented one of the most comprehensive personal surveillance and real-time biometric tracking system in the world, covering over 10 million people in Xinjiang.

Although this volume focuses on terrorism and counter-terrorism in China, the policies which China developed seem to have parallels with other policies against other dissident groups, such as so-called cults like Falungong or Church of Almighty God. There are similar 're-education/vocational' schools specially built for those ex-cult members as well. These are meant to direct members away from religious extremism, just as similar schools in Xinjiang seek to eradicate religious extremism from the Uyghurs. Also, the Sinicization measures implemented in Inner Mongolia and Tibet – e.g., increasing the teaching of Han language as opposed to local ethnic minority languages – echo the language policy implemented upon the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. According to official justifications, this is all done to prevent possible separatism and terrorism for the goal of national unity. The National Security Law implemented in Hong Kong since July 2020 as a counter-measure against the prolonged social unrest movements by Hong Kongers – politically interpreted by the authorities as terrorism and separatism – also resembles regulations seen in Xinjiang. This volume raises important topics about the governance of China on national security and threats through the lens of terrorism, yet it also reaches beyond the theme of terrorism and counter-terrorism into a much wider field for further exploration. As such, this volume is a must for serious students of China's governance.

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Kim-kwong Chan, Hong Kong

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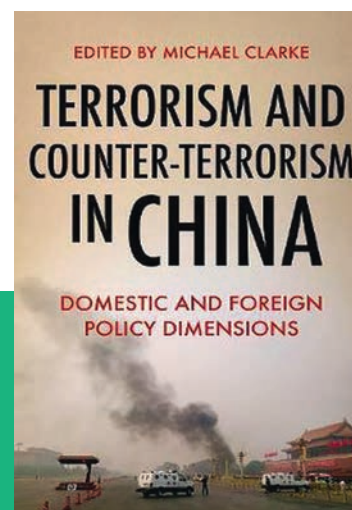
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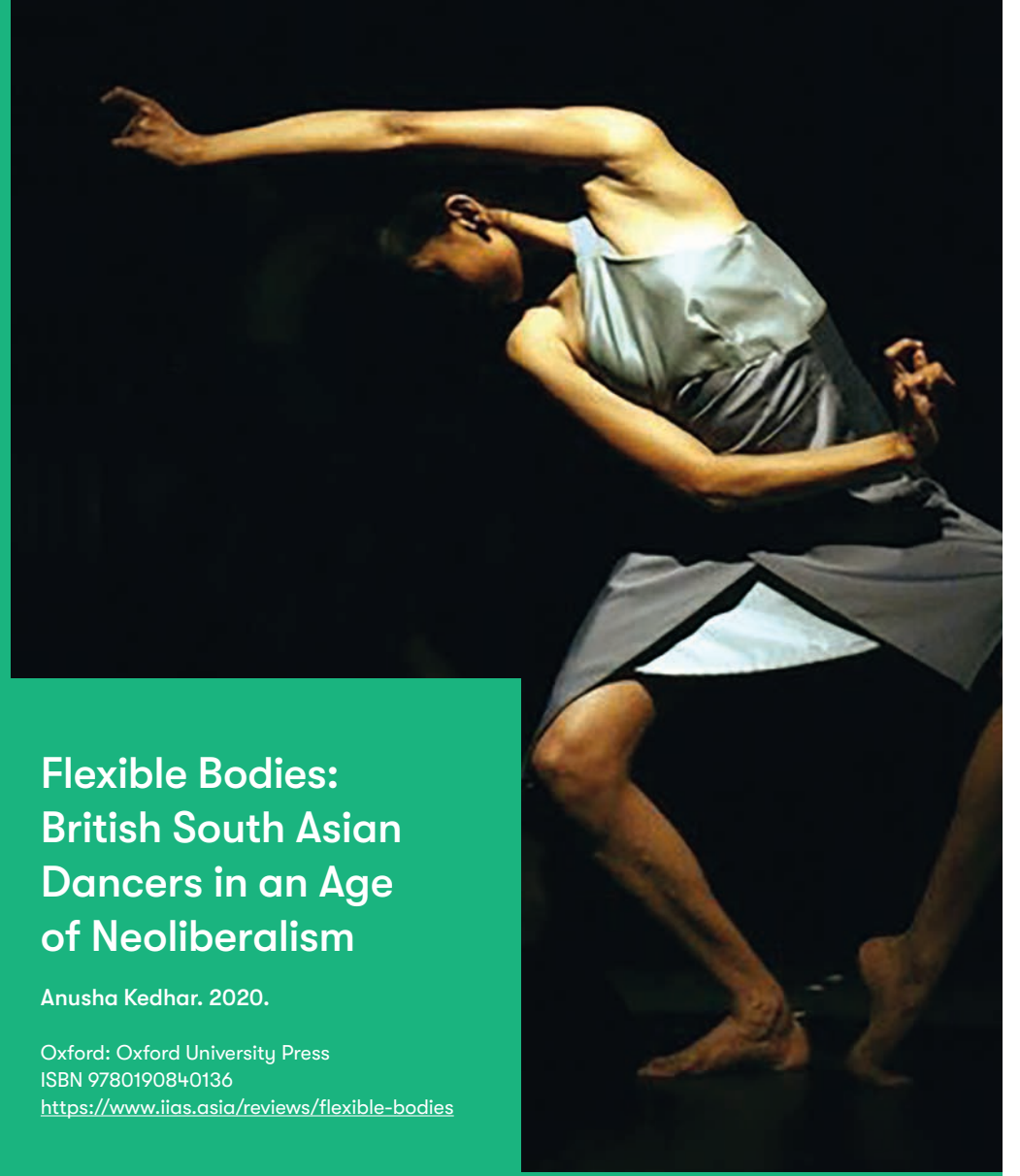
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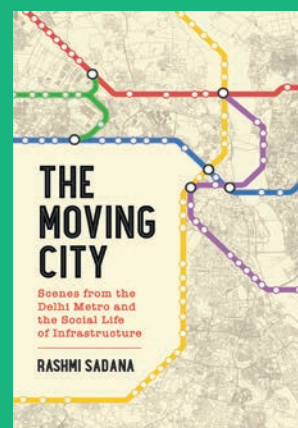
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SEANNET: The First Five Years

Paul Rabé and Rita Padawangi

This Fall, we mark five years since the establishment of the *Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network* (SEANNET), a network established at IIAS with core funding from the Henry Luce Foundation in New York to better understand cities in Southeast Asia through the lens of city neighborhoods.

Fig. 1 (above): A community meeting for the festival preparation at Dance House in the neighborhood of Nang Loeng, Bangkok.

Fig. 2 (right): SEANNET partners discovering the Escolta neighborhood. Part of the SEANNET workshop in Manila, 2019. (Photo by Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt).

Fig. 3 (left): Suggestions for the neighbourhood at the Chiang Mai local forum on 20 July 2018 (Photo by Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt).

Fig. 4 (right): Sketch of Masjid Jamik Peneleh done by Jonathan Irwan during a public sketching activity, in which residents from the neighboyrhood of of Kampung Peneleh in Surabaya, passers-by, and the sketcher interacted through art to construct temporal social spaces. (Photo by Muhamad Rohman Obet, 2019). This image was first posted on the SEANNET blog announcing the release of the sketchbook Peneleh Dalam Sketsa, available for free PDF (with watermark) download.

In this Focus section, we and our SEANNET partners reflect on the first five years of SEANNET, but we also look forward to the next phase, for we are very happy to announce that the Henry Luce Foundation has confirmed funding for a second and larger phase, entitled the *Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network 2.0: Communities of Learning, Research and Teaching Collaborative,* or "SEANNET Collective" for short. Whereas SEANNET 1.0 was led from IIAS, SEANNET Collective will be led from the Singapore University of Social Sciences, with Rita Padawangi as the overall coordinator.

The expansion of the network comes at a critical time for cities in Southeast Asia, as is explained in more detail in the "Significance of SEANNET" section below. Not only is the coronavirus pandemic altering the life of millions (as in the rest of the world), but political turmoil and insecurity reigns in many countries of the region, which tends to affect poor urban dwellers the hardest.

In what follows, the co-coordinators of SEANNET 1.0 introduce the objectives and approach of the network, expand on the larger trends mentioned above, and invite the principal investigators of the six SEANNET 1.0 study sites to reflect on a central question: *"What have you learned about cities in general, and your city in particular, through the neighborhoods you have been studying in the past five years?"* Each team has approached this question differently, and this Focus section brings their voices together in the form of seven essays and accompanying images that appear after this introduction.

About SEANNET

SEANNET supports the development of contextualized knowledge about urban life in Southeast Asia. The program aims to provide an epistemology of the city that is different from conventional top-down ("expert-subject" oriented) studies. It does so by unearthing new, multi-disciplinary knowledge about cities in Southeast Asia and re-assessing them through the methodological lens of what happens at the micro-urban, neighborhood

level. The local research and findings will help to frame the development of a new urban pedagogy, in the form of Southeast Asia-specific urban theories and methodologies that can be applied both inside and outside the classroom.

In studies of "Asia," Southeast Asia is often eclipsed by its larger neighbors (i.e., China, Japan, and India), which have traditionally commanded more attention from scholars. Moreover, many of the urban theories in Southeast Asian research and university curricula are still based on classical Western theories of the city, which do not capture the distinctiveness of urbanization and social life in the region. SEANNET was established to address these gaps and more. In the process of uncovering this "new knowledge" about cities in the region, SEANNET seeks to bridge theory (institutional knowledge) and practice (sites of knowledge) to bring about transformation on the ground in both institutions and communities.

IIAS' regional partner in SEANNET (and lead partner in the second phase under SEANNET Collective), Singapore University of Social Sciences, represents this emphasis on bridging theory and practice: as the newest autonomous university in Singapore, SUSS distinguishes itself from other traditional research-driven universities by adopting an applied educational approach in its curriculum design and teaching, with special attention to community-based learning.

In seeking to institutionalize this field-based approach, SEANNET engages in partnerships with multiple research centers and universities in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States that have a similar mission, as well as with the IIAS-based Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) and Humanities Across Borders (HAB), both of which share this vision to effect social change through new knowledge creation.

To help achieve its goals, SEANNET seeks to shape and empower a community of early career scholars and practitioners working on and/or from Southeast Asia, who will contribute to the growing body of social science and humanistic knowledge on Asian cities.

Six historic neighborhoods in five countries were selected as case studies during SEANNET 1.0: Thingaza Chaung in Mandalay (Myanmar); Wua Lai in Chiang Mai (Thailand); Nang Loeng in Bangkok (Thailand); Ward 14 in Phú Nhuân district in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam); Escolta Santa Cruz in Manila (Philippines); and Kampung Peneleh in Surabaya (Indonesia). In each project site, SEANNET consists of a team of local researchers, which is headed by a local and international principal investigator, with ties to local universities, communities, and non-governmental organizations. In the second SEANNET phase, under the SEANNET Collective, at least six additional project sites will be added with the aim to eventually cover all countries in Southeast Asia.

The significance of SEANNET

SEANNET responds to several important underlying trends in Southeast Asia, which have huge implications for the lives and livelihoods of ordinary residents in urban neighborhoods in the region. The first trend is a new "developmentalism" that threatens to physically wipe away many neighborhoods and their residents in the name of highest and best land uses. The second refers to the globalization of institutions of higher learning, which threatens to figuratively erase these same neighborhoods and residents from urban studies curricula. A third and more recent development is the COVID-19 pandemic that places constraints on research, teaching, and learning which require close contacts with residents and communities. As SEANNET teams were already in place before 2019, they have been able to document the significant impact of the pandemic on social and economic life in their neighborhoods.

A new urban developmentalism

We use the term "developmentalism" to refer to a tendency of city and national governments to disproportionately invest in economic development and prestige projects at the cost of other priorities, particularly public goods with social and environmental objectives. Cities, and especially national capitals, are often the canvas for large infrastructural and real estate projects, with inadequate provisions for social or environmental amenities. In the search for maximum profits or city beautification (which aids in city marketing for future investments), older and/or poorer neighborhoods in Southeast Asian cities are increasingly making way for new developments, either immediately or in the medium term through gentrification. As these neighborhoods face market pressure, their social fabric and very identities are put under severe strain.[1]

This is the fate befalling several of the SEANNET neighborhoods. In the study site of Nang Loeng, in one of the oldest areas of Bangkok, the construction of a nearby metro station is leading to intense redevelopment pressure. This has already displaced many tenants and certain cultural activities, which previously made use of open spaces in the area. As the Nang Loeng essay in this Focus makes clear, the neighborhood is now the setting for competing cultural events—those driven mainly by various outside organizations aiming to put the neighborhood on the tourist map and to better "market" the area, and those with the genuine participation of residents aiming to use local social, cultural, and human capital in an effort to attract the support of allies in their struggle to remain in the city as a vibrant community.

In Phú Nhuân district in Ho Chi Minh City, redevelopment pressure is less immediately threatening to the residents—and even represents an economic opportunity for some—but nevertheless also risks having a big impact on the social fabric of the community as a whole. As a result of upgrading of the banks of the neighboring Nhiêu Lôc-Thi Nghè canal, the canal zone in Ward 14 now forms a bustling commercial space. Furthermore, as the neighborhood becomes increasingly sought-after, it faces pressures in the form of new real estate developments, such as apartments for sale and houses and offices for rent, including short-term rentals for Airbnb. The SEANNET Ho Chi Minh City team hypothesizes that the increasing land values contribute to reframing what a neighborhood means today in Vietnam.[2]

Corporatizing institutions of higher learning

If redevelopment pressure is a direct threat to neighborhoods in Southeast Asian cities, then the effects of the growing corporatization of institutions of higher learning in the region represent a more indirect but perhaps equally existential threat. The growing commercial direction of many universities brings with it several linked developments, such as the hollowing out of public universities (and classical education programs aimed at "student citizens") in favor of privately-run corporate universities (catering to "student consumers"), as well as the growing importance of university rankings and an intense competition to publish.[3] Universities worldwide are cutting or scrapping their humanities and social science programs as students become increasingly skills-oriented, and this is certainly the case in Southeast Asia. The result is that the main entry points for studying everyday lived realities in the region's cities—through ethnographic methods in anthropology and sociology, for example—are rapidly dwindling. Cuts to history departments, cultural studies, and the arts further reduce entry points for better understanding and valuing community life. Such cuts in the arts, humanities and social sciences perpetuate technocratic perspectives of managing cities, as students are directed to become a labor force in profit-driven industries that shape cities as collections of entrepreneurial projects to accumulate profit. This direction contradicts the need to cultivate students with empathic understanding of the social and cultural lives of cities. With decreased knowledge about urban community life will come a longer-term lack of appreciation for this vital part of the city, leading to further invisibility and political neglect, or worse.

In the essay of the Surabaya team, Adrian Perkasa (local principal investigator for the Kampung Peneleh neighborhood), makes a strong case for an ethnographic approach when he writes that "careful study and engagement with local residents," based on "sincerity and compassion," are necessary to "better understand the current urbanization processes at work and the ways in which local populations are resisting urban "supersizing" when these effectively lead to the destruction of the local social fabric." The Chiang Mai team shares a similar sentiment, as Komson Teeraparbwong writes in his essay about the need to have a keen eye on the world of the neighborhood, to be attentive to the small scale in order to learn about the whole. These principles and values are under threat in the model of the new corporate university, which is very likely to promote the kind of technocratic, top-down "citadel expertise" that Perkasa objects to in his essay because it is presumed to be more time-efficient.

The impact of COVID-19

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 presented a shock to SEANNET neighborhoods as much as it did to the SEANNET teams themselves. Pandemic-related social restrictions meant that SEANNET 1.0 could not complete its scheduled in-person workshops in 2020 as previously planned. SEANNET 1.0 eventually obtained a no-cost extension from the Henry Luce Foundation to continue until December 2021, though even in 2021, SEANNET has had to continue with online-only meetings and local initiatives in the neighborhoods.

For our neighborhoods, the pandemic has proven to be a double-edged sword. The sudden collapse of the tourism economy, disruptions to the schooling of children, and the curtailing of many livelihood opportunities and businesses have produced unemployment and misery for many households. On the other hand, the pandemic has also provided evidence of community self-help and solidarity in many of the SEANNET neighborhoods.

As the essay by Jayde Roberts, international principal investigator for the Thingaza Chaung neighborhood in Mandalay illustrates, in the face of Myanmar's military junta banning unofficial distributions of oxygen tanks, residents placed boxes of disposable masks and even oxygen tanks in front of their homes, accompanied by signs that invited passers-by to "donate if you have extra, take if you have need." In Bangkok, the pandemic opened up spaces for local initiatives, as community leaders, with the help of external community architects, organized small initiatives to "help vulnerable residents to cope with the impact of the pandemic," including community kitchens and food and medicine to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

In their own words: "what have we learned about the city through the neighborhood?"

The seven essays in this Focus section reflect seven very different perspectives on a central question for SEANNET after the end of the first phase: "What have we learned about cities in general, and our cities in particular, through the neighborhoods we have been studying during the past five years?"

Given the decentralized nature of SEANNET, each team has considerable freedom to determine its approach to its study site. In SEANNET 1.0 these approaches reflected the backgrounds of the principal investigators, the composition of each team, and the reality on the ground. This diversity is captured in the present set of essays.

In the first essay on Kampung Peneleh in Surabaya, Adrian Perkasa, a historian by training, observes that the traditional methods used by historians to gather information about their subjects (principally the use of archives) were largely ineffective in Peneleh due to the limited availability of written records. Instead, the SEANNET team resorted to experiential, dialogical, and ethnographic methods to unearth new knowledge about Peneleh directly from residents. These methods included organizing old photo competitions, public mapping, sketching activities (together with a local group of sketchers), and community-engaged research. To build the trust of residents and make contacts, the SEANNET group invited local student team members to live in the neighborhood for extended periods of time. Perkasa's essay ends with a call for urban studies scholars to learn from spontaneous settlements in cities and to be open to reflexive thinking and the "non-linear narratives" of cities.

The second essay, by Tessa Maria Guazon, Alma Quinto, and Nathalie Dagmang on the Escolta Santa Cruz neighborhood in Manila, is a similar heartfelt call to look at a city differently, through the daily lives and struggles of its residents, and to deploy tools of community engagement to build trust and get closer to the target group. In the Escolta case, these residents are a community of homeless women who try to keep their "spots" on the streets by maintaining good relations with fellow street dwellers and vendors, building owners, and loyal customers. At the same time, they have more tenuous relations with the authorities, in the form of local politicians, the police, the clearing operation squad of the city government and the social welfare department. The "city" for the Escolta study team is a place shaped by continuous tactics and negotiations. It is a place without permanence or property. In their efforts to unearth these daily struggles for a "right to the city," the Escolta SEANNET team emphasizes listening and reciprocity, building relations of trust, recording narratives and life stories, and organizing collaborative workshops with the homeless women.

Another site where a SEANNET team has studied the competition and constant negotiation for space is in Ward 14 of Phú Nhuận district in Ho Chi Minh City. The essay by Marie Gibert-Flutre describes the use of "rhythmanalysis" as a critical method to investigate various uses of local space in the neighborhood and, in so doing, to uncover the (micro-)power relations that shape and reshape daily activities. The use of rhythmanalysis by the Ho Chi Minh City team represents one of the first times that the technique has been applied systematically in an "ordinary" neighborhood of a city of the global South, and it yields several specific insights. One of these is the very dynamic time dimension in the use of space. As the Escolta SEANNET team also found in Manila, local spaces are continuously negotiated and renegotiated by users. Nothing is permanent, as, for example, when vendors and street food hawkers (and the homeless) take over the same space at different times of day and night. A second insight is that there is no simple opposition between the formal and informal economy, as we need to distinguish between different degrees of

informality. A third insight is that if we think of a neighborhood as a place of belonging, this belonging takes place unequally: whereas some actors have 'strategies,' others have to make do with 'counter-tactics.'

For the Bangkok study team looking at the neighborhood of Nang Loeng, impermanence and the struggle for a right to the city are also familiar themes. In their essay, Boonanan Natakun and Napong Tao Rugkhapan describe a community ostensibly very different from the homeless women in Manila and the roaming vendors and temporary restaurants in Ward 14 of Phú Nhuận district. Nang Loeng is a well-established neighborhood in the historic heart of Bangkok, populated by families of former palace servants. However, these elite connections and Nang Loeng's reputation as a center of traditional arts and culture are not protecting the neighborhood from growing redevelopment pressure unleashed by the construction of a nearby metro station and transit-oriented development hub. In the face of these transit plans, and the temptation for landlords to cash in on these market developments, Natakun and Rugkhapan observe how the community has resorted to "weaponizing" its local cultural practices as a tactic to claim housing security. Meanwhile, the authors also analyze how external actors, including state officials, local authorities, local educational institutions, and the Civil Society Tourism Network, are getting involved to help the residents generate income from tourism, with varying degrees of participation from the community members.

Just over 700 km to the north, another historic urban neighborhood in Thailand is also fighting to preserve its identity. By deploying its heritage and cultural assets as strategies to protect the community from market forces and land speculation, its community also seeks to earn a living from its heritage. In two essays from Wua Lai in Chiang Mai, Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt, Komson Teeraparbwong, and Pranom Tansukanun describe how the historic village of silversmiths has found itself—for better or worse—at the center of tourism promotion initiatives, such as the Saturday walking street and a city government-designated "Conservation Area for Thai Art, Culture and Identity." The SEANNET team has studied the

differing approaches of two local Buddhist temples (wats) in this identity struggle: on the one hand, a more centralized model to develop and organize local silver crafts-manship for the benefit of tourism (Wat Sri Suphan) and, on the other hand, a more decentralized model, where residents are able to propose and manage cultural heritage projects in collaboration with the monks (Wat Muen San). As architects, the methods of the SEANNET Wua Lai team focused on reading and learning about the neighborhood through mapping, observing, sketching, and conducting interviews. Collaboration between students from Chiang Mai University and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville in France has resulted in joint workshops and design studios.

In the final essay, written by Jayde Roberts, principal investigator of the Thingaza Chaung team, we turn to a neighborhood in Mandalay, Myanmar that has, more than the others, been rocked by external events. Residents of Thingaza Chaung, a low-lying neighborhood near the city center, are currently living in the aftermath of a coup d'état and subsequent civil unrest, as well as a serious coronavirus pandemic. These events have made SEANNET workshops in the neighborhood impossible and have also complicated the research efforts of the SEANNET team. However, the turmoil has helped to bring into focus a "hidden-in-plain-sight social infrastructure" (nalehmu) that has served the ordinary people of Myanmar well during decades of authoritarian rule, civil war, and humanitarian crises, as in recent months, when people have largely had to fend for themselves. This people's infrastructure is informal but systematic. It enables neighborhood residents to help each other and create a sense of place and belonging. Roberts illustrates this social infrastructure in action through the example of Sabbath day practices in Thingaza Chaung during the rainy season retreat in the Buddhist calendar.

Conclusion: "who is a neighborhood?"

One of the fundamental questions SEANNET partners have grappled with since the start of the network is "What is

a neighborhood anyway?" After years of discussion within the SEANNET teams and among the network partners, a conclusive answer is still elusive. In part, this is because there are many terms to describe a neighborhood in most Southeast Asian languages—both informal and formal—and none of them feels complete. Moreover, what formally constitutes a neighborhood turns out to be very different across countries, and even within countries. Each country has an official or administrative definition, but the state's categorization of a "neighborhood" rarely matches what people themselves perceive to be characteristics of their own neighborhoods.

The six essays in this Focus section illuminate many different aspects of the neighborhoods that were the study sites in SEANNET 1.0. What they have in common is that they all point to what is perhaps the missing piece of the puzzle: their people and the ties their residents have to one another. None of the six neighborhoods could be imaginable as entities without the people in their midst. Several of them are facing an existential crisis precisely because external pressures are threatening these social bonds.

In an article for a special issue of SEANNET and Asia Research Institute papers to appear next year,[4] Erik Harms (principal investigator of the Ho Chi Minh City team) concludes that:

There is no such thing as a neighborhood. But neighborhoods are everywhere. Neighborhoods are regularly described as things, but we cannot touch them. We typically understand neighborhoods as places, but we can neither see them nor find their edges. The more you stare at a neighborhood, the more it seems impossible to see it… In order to more properly understand the neighborhood… [we need to] take the social seriously. [We need to] place people and their relationships at the center of a project to develop a working understanding of the neighborhood. Instead of asking, 'What is a neighborhood?', [we should] ask, 'Who is a neighborhood?'

Echoing this sentiment, the Manila SEANNET team speaks for the other neighborhood teams when it concludes that "Our research allowed us to shift our focus from neighborhoods as geographically bound units towards an understanding of 'neighborliness,' or what we and our women partners call 'attitudes of being neighborly.'" It is this contribution that SEANNET—in its initial phase and its continuation as SEANNET Collective—makes to the field of urban studies: to study cities calls for one to engage with the people, in order to better understand the patterns and processes of urban life and its spaces.

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Together, Dr. Rabé and Dr. Padawangi are the joint coordinators of SEANNET.

Notes

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Fig. 6: Nathalie Dagmang, Manila researcher, stands next to one of the partner women vendors of the Manila Escolta study site in 2019, introducing SEANNET partners to the work-life conditions of the women street vendors. Behind her, someone makes a purchase from a vendor (Photo by Boonanan Natakun).

Understanding the City from Below

Kampung Peneleh, Surabaya

Adrian Perkasa

Being involved in the SEANNET program brings many privileges for the present writer. Trained as an historian in the undergraduate level, I have an opportunity to leave the parochialism of this discipline. When enrolled in a course called *Indonesian Urban History*, I was only reading the perspective usually taken by urban planners, governments, or the authorities on the city. In general, they tend to view the urban, especially its settlement, as in need of development, improvement, and even demolition to give new space for more modern forms. On the other hand, having lived in several cities in Indonesia, I hold an understanding that there is something beyond that perspective.

Fig. 1: The Old Photo Competition of Kampung Peneleh. The exhibition was held during the celebration of the Independence Day of Indonesia. Many national emblems such as the red-and-white flag surrounding the reprinted photographs (Photo by Kurnia Manis, Community Architect of Surabaya, 2018).

With the community-engaged research model in SEANNET, our group explores different approaches to study urbanism, especially in the neighborhood context. Work with the urban sketchers to draw meaningful spaces and activities in local residents' everyday lives is one example. This activity actually ignited from the idea of the youth who got involved with our research team. However, the sketch drawing program was not only conveying the image of the neighborhood as an important part of the city and inviting more residents to participate; methodologically, drawing itself has potential to be a way of describing the lives we observe and with which we participate. This essay seeks to explore the advantages (and challenges) of the community-engaged research model from our team's experience studying the urban from the neighborhood. Finally, it suggests that the flexible research model, which accommodated the ideas from below, will be more beneficial for the residents than a rigid, structured, and top-down research model.

What we read before

Kuntowijoyo, a prominent Indonesian historian, wrote in the 1990s on the importance of urban history in Indonesia. In his day, almost all of the professional historians in Indonesia paid more attention to rural regions than urban areas. However, he believed that there are abundant historical sources to write urban history. And these will be upsurging as the cities develop. He also pointed out that the historian could capture the process of urbanism to differentiate his or her works with other scholars studying the city. There are at least five major topics in urban history to study: the city's ecology, socio-economic transformation, social system, social issues, and social mobility.[1]

The most important reading for the course was *Surabaya, City of Work: A Socioeconomic History, 1900-2000* by Howard Dick. Naturally, it is essential because our university is located in that city. Compared to other works on the history of Surabaya, this book enjoyed popularity not only in urban history courses, but also among students in sociology and urban planning departments. For a historian or someone who loves history, Dick recounts the ups and downs of Surabaya's 20th-century destiny in a series of lengthy, comprehensive, analytic chapters on government, industry, land usage, and commerce.

He characterizes Surabaya's birth and expansion against the background of its hinterland, giving particular attention to the physical and historical conditions that favored the city over other metropolitan centers on Java. He contends that by the end of the 19th century, Surabaya had emerged as the leading port and most populous city of Java, owing to its privileged access to the interior via the Brantas and Bengawan Solo rivers, as well as to its uniquely sheltered harbor, which made Surabaya far more appealing a port than either Batavia or Semarang. Surabaya evolved into Indonesia's leading commercial center and one of Asia's most vibrant and cosmopolitan ports. This was the result of Dutch Colonial policies, particularly the Cultivation System, the Agrarian Law, and the railways built in the second half of the 19th century, which tightened links between the city and its hinterland.

Surabaya was the biggest city in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century. With a population of about 150,000 people, it was even bigger than Jakarta. Surabaya rose to prominence in the early 20th century as a result of the processing and transportation of sugar and other agricultural commodities from East Java. The worldwide market was undercut by the 1930s crisis, sending the city into an economic and demographic depression. The city's economic slump was exacerbated by Japanese occupation, followed by a revolutionary struggle for freedom during the 1940s. In the decolonization period (1960s), Jakarta thrived as Indonesia's political capital, while Surabaya remained stagnant as a commercial center.[2]

Indeed, in some chapters, Dick also discusses the existence of *kampungs* (neighborhoods) to some extent. He explains how the *kampung* residents rejected the ideas of the Surabaya municipal government in the 1920s. The government aimed to introduce several improvement projects, such as waste disposal regulation and the installment of clean water facilities. The residents disapproved of the city government's interventions, which they felt were very burdensome. Although this disapproval was not shown in the form of a physical contact or a clash between the residents and the government, it still needed to be settled. *Kampung* people even called the municipal government (*gemeente* in Dutch), *gua minta:* a pun in Indonesian that literally means the "cave" that "begs" because their only job is to beg or take money from the people.

Dick's narrative on that issue sparked me to conduct research in 2017. Compared to the *kampung* improvement program, which was initiated in the post-independence period (1945-), the people in several Surabaya *kampungs* felt the improvement projects in the colonial period were better and more beneficial. Many such projects are still in use today. For example, many *kampung* people still use public bathrooms that were constructed during the colonial period. The closed gutters or sewage systems built on each side of *kampung* roads were considered another positive outcome. The residents believe that the system could prevent their *kampungs* from flooding. In addition to that, they saw that the colonial intervention paid more respect to the several sacred sites in the *kampungs,* while the post-independence projects tended to neglect their existence.[3]

Collecting historical sources related to *kampung* improvement programs was the first and most crucial step. In doing this, we relied on oral history of the *kampung* residents. Oral history, the interviewing of live people about their previous experiences, is one of the most important tools in the historian's toolbox for researching the very recent past. In principle, there is no better way to acquire an understanding of events in living memory than to speak with those who saw or participated in them. People interviewed, unlike written sources, may be asked precise follow-up questions about their experiences and opinions, depending on what the historian wants to investigate or uncover. Interviewing live historical participants may help us remember a critical truth that underpins all excellent works of history: history is a narrative about real people, with all the depth and nuance that human reality implies.[4]

Nevertheless, many urban planners found Dick' *Surabaya* more useful for them perhaps because it is in line with Louis Wirth's idea on the history of the city. Wirth believed that history is a linear and progressive unfolding of the liberating power of reason and science. According to Wirth, at the beginning, there was a neighborhood or a community before the emergence of a society. Moreover, the neighborhood as a traditional type of social organization would go away as society became increasingly secular, impersonal, and metropolitan.[5] The narrative of Surabaya history provided by Dick is similarly written in a linear way and gives no place for the role of

men nor women in it.[6] The urban planners of Surabaya treated historical facts in this book somewhat like physicians use medical records to cure their patients.

Indeed, Wirth's ideas on urban planning remain influential in urban studies research. According to Wirth, the urban mosaic (e.g., personal and social disorganization, role conflict, and the lack of consensual values in the city) can be cured by rational planning. Thus, Wirth argued that planners are the best analysts of empirical reality and logical consistency. Wirth is also well-known for his advice on planning at the regional, metropolitan scale rather than the small-scale, neighborhood level. He advised planners to investigate the area over which such urban institutions as hospitals, schools, churches, theaters, and clubs are patronized by the people of the hinterland. According to Wirth, "Some believe that the hope of our social order lies in the return to the local ties of neighborhood. The trend of our civilization, however, has generally been sensed to lead in the opposite direction. There can be no return to the local self-contained neighborly community except by giving up the technological and cultural advantages of this shifting, insecure, and interdependent, though intensely interesting and far-flung, community life, which few would be willing to do."[7]

What we are doing in SEANNET (2017-Present)

Almost all of the SEANNET project objectives are opposite to Wirth's basic assumptions. In its proposed methodology, the program sets out to question the everyday nature of urbanization processes in Southeast Asia from the specific perspective of its cities' neighborhoods. The notion of neighborhood refers to both built and social environments. If the city at its smallest, most local level disappears, this will have profound consequences for Southeast Asian societies as a whole, not just for their cities but more broadly for their national and regional developments as well. Careful study and engagement with the local residences of neighborhoods are therefore necessary to better understand the current urbanization processes at work and the ways in which local populations are resisting urban "supersizing." Such supersizing effectively leads to the destruction of local social fabric. In addition to that, the story of neighborhoods in several cities in Southeast Asia (including Surabaya) will not only consider resistance and resilience among communities and their residents, but also how bottom-up innovations can impact and effectively change policy strategies at the top.

Embarking on this research, we first delved into archival sources to gather any information about Kampung Peneleh, the neighborhood in Surabaya selected as a SEANNET case study. However, it was not an easy task to collect documents related to that neighborhood in the archive offices. In most countries, an extensive archive service makes the historian's job much easier. Actually, this is a relatively new

phenomenon, and the survival of records from the distant past has often depended on chance rather than competent management. The situation is exacerbated in the case of personal and ephemeral documents in the hands of ordinary people, such as small company account books, neighborhood associations' minute books, daily personal communications, and the like. Neither municipal record offices nor national archives cast as broad a net as this, but the recovery of daily material is critical if historians are ever to fulfill their frequent goal of giving voice to the people rather than the authorities. This is a job for historians with a local emphasis everywhere, and interesting discoveries are sometimes discovered by trainee researchers.[8] Because most individuals are unaware that they have material that may be historically important, historians cannot wait for papers to be brought forward; instead, they must engage directly with the community and go out in search of them.

Owing to those circumstances, we followed the new urban pedagogy for South-east Asia, which is mentioned in the SEANNET proposal. This is a methodology that is experiential, dialogical, and ethnographic. At the experiential level, we tried to dig up any historical sources in Kampung Peneleh by responding to the residents' needs and aspirations. The first moment when we could assist them was during their *kampung's* celebration of Indonesian Independence Day. Indonesian Independence Day is celebrated from the big cities to the tiniest towns and villages throughout the archipelago's more than 16,000 islands. Across the nation, vibrant parades, ceremonial military processions, and many patriotic, flag-waving rituals take place. Schools begin preparing weeks ahead of time with marching practice to fine-tune the military-style processions that will eventually jam all major roadways. Shopping malls provide special seasonal discounts and festivities. Each town and community creates its own outdoor music, games, racing, and eating competitions by erecting tiny stages. Besides participating in several contests in Kampung Peneleh, we also introduced a brand-new competition in this neighborhood, the Old Photo Competition [Fig. 1].

Photographs are more often found as illustrations in historians' writings than as cultural products needing critical analysis in their own right. In the Old Photo Competition of Peneleh, we only began this initiative with the intention to create a sort of community archive through the collection and compilation of old photographs from local residents. We define "old" as any photograph produced at least five years ago. There were 55 images submitted in total, and most of them were created around the 1960s and 1970s. The contents of the photographs were diverse. They included the renovation of the main mosque in the neighborhood, family events (e.g., weddings, children's circumcision, etc.), and more. Copyrights of the photographs remain with the owners, and we only asked permission to reprint the photographs for an exhibition during the celebration of Independence Day.

Other activities our team did with the local residents were mapping and sketching. For the former, we collaborated with the Arsitek Komunitas (ARKOM/Community Architects) in Surabaya to conduct participatory mapping with Kampung Peneleh residents. For the latter, Urban Sketchers Surabaya was the main partner of our team. They helped conduct public sketching sessions. As suggested by a number of works, drawing serves many purposes as it differentiates and helps us in comprehending our multifaceted environment. It may also allow us to discover – either through our personal experience of seeing, observing, and documenting or through the shared experience of looking at another's drawn record of an event – by using signs and symbols, mapping and labeling our experience [Fig. 2 & 3].

A somewhat long-term strategy is critical in obtaining information from local people. The presence of the research team in the field on a regular basis, as well as participation in community events, is critical as a sign of sincerity in gaining a better knowledge of the *kampung*. As time passed, the study team understood how important it was to recognize the individuality of each sub-neighborhood. The strategy for each Rukun Tetangga (RT) and each Rukun Warga (RW, a region made up of multiple RT) must be carefully considered, depending on the requirements and characteristics of each RW and RT. RT and RW are sub-neighborhoods, although they may have distinct personalities depending on resident groupings, kampung location, historic places, access, and facilities.

Sincerity and compassion are the most essential characteristics that each team member must possess and exhibit while doing community-engaged research. The study team must really care about the well-being of the area and be honest in their desire to learn about it. This is not about romanticizing community-engaged research; rather, concern for the well-being of the area and the genuineness of researchers are fundamental requirements for long-term engagement in the community. Intense contacts with community members need reciprocity of intents, which is returned by the community comprehending the study. Such connections allow for the expansion of knowledge-building from and by communities.[9]

What we (tentatively) conclude

At this point, we are inclined to repeat the historian Theodore Roszak's ideas on the failure of technocracy or top-down approaches in studying urbanism. Roszak coined a term that he called "citadel of expertise."[10] In their citadel, the experts, including urban studies scholars, have created a new mythology in the name of science. They have a sophisticated methodology called systems analysis. According to Roszak, systems analysis represents an extension of scientific techniques into the essentially spontaneous realms of

community development. This analysis distracts people's attention from their real problems of existence. In the guise of liberating urban community from myth, religion, and ritual, the urban technocracy just replaces the old ones with a new set of quasi-religious symbols and rituals. These act as masks, concealing the real purpose of life. Forcing people out of town, for example, becomes an urban renewal project.

In the perspective of urban history, we are in line with Richard Sennet's idea on the non-linear narrative of cities. According to Sennet, cities do not build linearly over time: their shapes twist and turn as historical events alter the ways people live in them. Urban studies scholars can learn from numerous spontaneous growths in small-scale urban units. In small projects, the researchers can work reflexively.[11] We, as a group of researchers at SEANNET in Kampung Peneleh, always try to explore the unforeseen. We engage with local residents about what is to be done in the near future. We carefully evaluate our steps to prevent the dangers of research blueprints that serve only our side rather than serving the local interests.

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Notes

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Fig. 2 (right): The board members of the neighborhood association of Peneleh, senior residents, and youth discuss the plan to make a map of Kampung Peneleh together with the Universitas Airlangga's students and community architects and fig. 3 (far right): The resulting map.

(Both photos by Kurnia Manis, Community Architect of Surabaya).

Fig. 1. A plan of the reduction of Manila and Cavite, 1764. Reproduced under a Creative Commons license, courtesy of The Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library on Flickr.

Shadow Neighbourhoods

The Street Dwellers and Vendors of Escolta Santa Cruz, Manila

Tessa Maria Guazon, Alma Quinto, and Nathalie Dagmang

The Manila research team for the Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET) considered how urban redevelopment and gentrification alter the configuration of neighbourhoods. Our essay title suggests the complex relationships between formal and informal systems and structures in the city and how they frame and mediate exchanges between social groups.[1] These groups include ourselves as researchers, who were initially outsiders to this specific neighbourhood context.

We did our first site visits to Escolta in late 2016 and proceeded to work with our women partners from early 2017 through the middle of 2020. These women are 'neighbours' in Escolta who occupy various spots on the sidewalk fronting commercial shops as well as areas beside an estuary. This corner of Plaza Sta. Cruz was a busy thoroughfare, situated at the intersection of a church, a commercial bank, fast food restaurants, and jeepney transport points. While we became acquainted with a number of women from our early site visits, our main collaborators were seven women who were third- and fourth-generation residents of Sta. Cruz, the district where Escolta is located. These women managed to keep their 'spots' in Escolta by maintaining informal concessions with fellow street dwellers and vendors, building owners, and their *suki* ("loyal customers"). These relationships also included tenuous ones with authorities, whether local politicians, police, the clearing operation squad of the local city government, or staff of the social welfare department. We were interested in how these negotiations shaped this neighbourhood of women, one formed around strategies and tactics of neighbourliness and attitudes of being neighbourly. We eventually surmised that theirs is a neighbourhood beyond ownership, a neighbourhood beyond property.

Escolta is a street corridor connecting the districts of Quiapo and Santa Cruz in Manila. It used to be a thriving commercial strip linking the Pasig River to the walled city Intramuros, and to busy Chinatown, Binondo.[2] Manila flourished as a port city from the galleon trade between 1565 and 1815 [Fig. 1]. Even then, Escolta housed warehouses and *bodegas*

for commercial goods.[3] The city was heavily bombed during the Japanese occupation, and Escolta fell into ruins. It had a brief revival in the 1950s and 1960s but fell into dereliction in the 1970s, when Manila was overshadowed by rising commercial districts, primarily those in Makati City and Quezon City. The late 1990s saw efforts in reviving and revitalising Escolta, with the local city government eyeing it as a crucial commercial development corridor. This occurred alongside campaigns to conserve and reuse historic buildings in the area. There were also plans in the early 2000s for Escolta

to adopt a mixed-use development plan, which did not materialise. One of the more well-known urban redevelopment projects of this period was *Revive Manila*, conceived by Manila mayor Lito Atienza from the early 2000s to 2007.[4]

Escolta had long been the focus of an architectural conservation campaign by heritage advocates, as several of its postwar structures were either being demolished or had become derelict.[5] Around 2013 onward, Escolta and other areas in Metro Manila saw a revival through art and cultural events, trendy shops, hip coffee bars and restaurants, bazaars, and

street parties. These drew crowds interested in 'happenings,' exhibition openings, architecture photography, and art-related events. In Escolta, these centred around the First United Building, which houses a small historical museum, several offices for design start-ups, a space for the art laboratory *98B*, a ground floor with booths selling artisanal and vintage products, a coffee shop, a bar, and even a barber shop.[6] At present, Escolta remains a commercial area, albeit less busy compared to other commercial zones in Metro Manila. Most of its buildings remain offices and storage for business. Structures on the fringes of Plaza Sta. Cruz, however, continue to fall into disrepair.

Our practices as educators, cultural workers, and artists inform our interest in the mobilisation of arts and culture in development campaigns. While similar to the local festivals and events organised by the Manila City government's cultural office, the programs that happened in Escolta unwittingly yet effectively cloaked state and business interests with campaigns for heritage advocacy and local culture promotion, making them seemingly removed from local politics and dominant business interests. These development strategies are often deployed for revitalising derelict areas in inner cities and inform recent trends of transforming old neighbourhoods into so-called cultural hubs, a widespread phenomenon across cities in Southeast Asia.

Fig. 2. Map activity, marking sites in Escolta and areas of Manila where our women partners previously lived and worked, April 2018.

Neighbourliness amidst uncertainty

Our cooperation with our women partners yielded new ways of understanding life on the streets of Manila. Our research allowed us to shift our focus from neighbourhoods as geographically bound units towards an understanding of 'neighbourliness,' or what we and our women partners call "attitudes of being neighbourly." Early studies of Philippine culture identified kinship structure as the primary unit of socialisation in Philippine society. Jocano situated the importance of the family and kinship structure in an agricultural socioeconomic formation, wherein farming becomes "a nuclear-family affair, with the members as the basic working unit."[7] Residence also provides an understanding of kindred relations: households within neighbourhoods have nuclear families, related by kinship to residents of adjacent dwellings. There were no fixed physical boundaries for neighbourhoods, however. Rather, "it is the quality and intensity of social relationships" that define a household or individual as *kapitbahay* or *kaingod* (neighbours).[8] Torres describes the neighbourhood as "the most effective segment of the rural society where collective responsibility and a social member gains from his labor in kind by sharing in the harvest of rice, for example ... [thus] normative reciprocal obligations for production are implicit between kinsmen," while outsiders are not expected to do the same.[9]

A lay person's understanding of neighbourhood would be houses adjoining each other. The Tagalog word *kapitbahay* literally means a house linked to another or houses near each other. The proximity of housing units or residences is dictated by social class, hence the variation in neighbourhood clusters or configuration: *looban* is a term often associated with inner city slums; a "compound" is a plot of land with houses for relatives or extended family members; a "village" or a "subdivision" can refer to suburban housing developments, to middle-class housing outside the metropolitan core, or to gated communities in the city. Neighbourhoods in the city are managed through associations whose officers are voted for by residents. Housing projects by the government for military and employees in active service are often configured around blocks. These are considered neighbourhoods, too.

During our visits to Escolta, we conversed with, listened to, recorded, and reflected on the lives of our women partners, which they mostly conveyed through narratives and life stories. Our research is grounded in six workshops we designed and facilitated: from our earliest planning workshop as a research group in 2017 to the more recent nutrition and hygiene workshop we had with children in 2019. Our planning workshop addressed concerns regarding cross-disciplinary research in local communities, the conduct of site visits and field work, and the forms of ethnography we wanted to engage. We noted that our primary aim was to mobilise the tools and methods of art to interrogate and analyse the dynamics between culture and urban development as well as the relationships between creative groups, artists, artists collectives, the state, private agencies, lobby groups, and local communities.

The research initially had three smaller projects, which centred on issues of homelessness, precariousness, inclusion, and collective agency. Only two of these pushed through. In 2018, we had a walking tour of Escolta, which included a family history and mapping workshop at the local YMCA led by Alma Quinto. We also hosted a cookout,

Fig. 3. Official Zoning Map District III, City of Manila, City Planning and Development Office. (Photo courtesy of Manila City Hall).

which included a timeline and personal history workshop at a cafeteria in Escolta led by Nathalie Dagmang. We had preparatory sessions for the local action workshop at the local YMCA in 2019, followed by the country action workshop with members of the different SEANNET research teams in the same year. In March 2020, we worked with children on a workshop about nutrition and hygiene at the *Museo Pambata* (Children's Museum). We consistently began our workshops with a review of SEANNET's research goals, previous activities and interactions, and the levelling of expectations. The workshop method allowed us to work at a scale that was small and flexible, open to greater interaction and intimacy that would have otherwise been difficult on a larger scale. We knew we wanted to move away from the 'city as laboratory' approach and explore how a grassroots approach can lead to deeper engagements with urban communities.

We asked what it meant to be neighbourly under precarious and uncertain living conditions. How are neighbourhoods formed in the absence of property? In one of our workshops, a partner named Susan insightfully claimed that they know that changes in the city are inevitable, but that all they want is for their voices to be heard. She hoped "to be part of whatever change will happen in Escolta" (*Sana ay kasali kami sa anumang pagbabagong mangyayari sa Escolta*).[10] The workshops themselves became significant platforms for these women's narratives, and for our part, a crucial methodology of learning about the life ways of marginalised communities in cities.
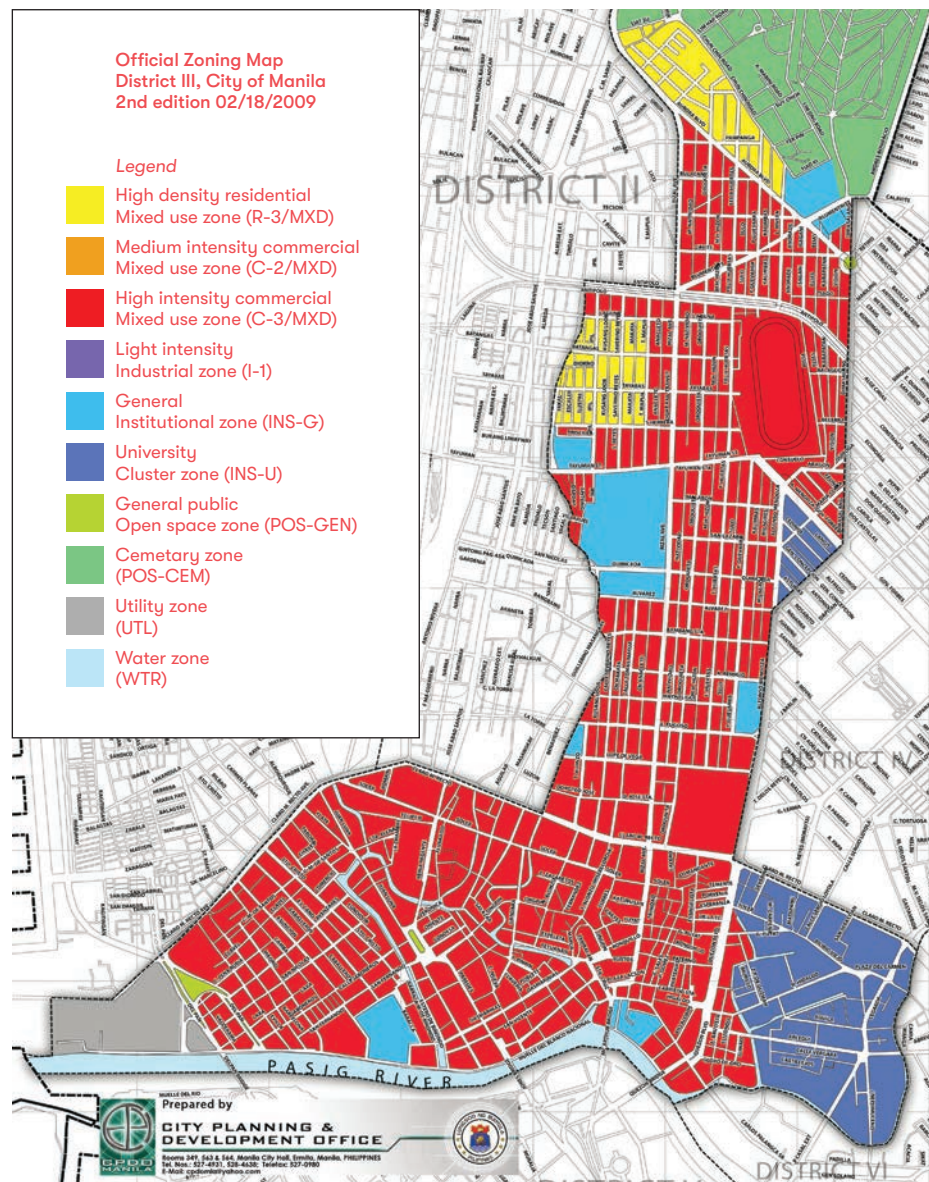
Harnessing the imagination: narrative, immersion, and participation

Our women partners shared their life stories in the family tree workshop by narrating family histories, describing their daily routines, and reflecting on how their changing fortunes led to their lives on Escolta Street. Similar to this was the timeline workshop from the cookout, where discussions of changes in the city seemed to echo the upheavals in their lives: uncertain livelihood, illnesses, and the theft of their belongings, among other dire events. In one of our conversations, we asked whether they felt they belonged more to the city during the convivial atmosphere of the street parties and weekend markets that took place in Escolta from 2013. Their answers were tentative, as their lives for the most part were ingrained in the day-to-day exchanges they have with workers from Escolta: their suki or those who patronise their goods and services, the manager who requested they look after the environs of a bank or building owners who allow them to set up shop by entrances, to mention a few.

The precarious nature of their lives on Escolta Street illustrates the uneven nature of development and gentrification. The drive to revive Escolta is propped up by the inevitable erasure of communities who barely survive the demands of an increasingly globalised world. This "world of disjunctive flows," as Appadurai described it "precipitate[s] various kinds of problems and frictions in different local situations."[11] Yet Appadurai noted that this globalised world also supposes and propels

the "role of imagination in social life... a faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs of collective life emerge."[12] We aim to situate our research in these imaginations of collective life. We want the narratives of our women partners to be "at the heart of our [research] field" and not merely be regarded as "voices from the margin."[13] Hence, the emphasis on how they understood their lives on the streets: they used the word *namamangketa* ("living on the street") to describe their way of life. *Namamangketa* as well as the vernacular terms used to refer to their relationships to each other as neighbours, surfaced in later sessions of our series of workshops.

Listening and reciprocity were crucial to our exchanges with them. If research can indeed be mobilised to imagine and realise a more emancipatory way of life, we heed the call to focus on how our women partners "understand and experience [...] development concepts."[14] This is the path we look forward to pursuing for the project's second phase. It is a practice that interrogates existing forms of knowledge and expands the collaborative possibilities of grassroots understandings of the city.

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Notes

1 The title suggests that 'shadow neighbourhoods' exist in complementarity to their formally organised counterparts; rather than use 'neighbourhoods in/under the shadow' which suggests them to be 'at risk or in danger,' we wanted to highlight the collective agency of neighbours in mediating their survival in precarious conditions. While marginalised and rendered invisible, they assert their presence through these negotiated positionalities.

2 See Doeppers, Daniel F. August 1972. "The Development of Philippine Cities Before 1900" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31:4, 769-792.

3 See Tremmel-Werner, Birgit. 2015. "Manila as Port City" in *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila, 1751-1644:Local Comparisons and Global Connections*. Amsterdam University Press, 267-290.

4 I discussed Revive Manila and its public art commissions in "Public art, urban renewal, and the fabrication of a national history: The Revive Manila program and the New Manileño campaign" in *Transforming Asian Cities: Intellectual impasse, Asianizing space and Emerging translocalities* edited by Nihal Perera and Wing Shing-Tang, London and New York: Routledge, 51-64.

5 Some buildings were overseen by caretakers while others were occupied by informal settlers. A few more were already demolished to make way for new construction, or the repurposing of lot areas into paid parking spaces or vehicle cleaning services. Yet there are also buildings that continue to function as commercial and private offices.

6 'Hola Escolta' was launched in 2013 with the aim of "bringing vibrancy back to Escolta and making it a tourist destination once more." (Editorial, Manila Bulletin April 30).

7 Jocano, Felipe Landa. 1969. *The Traditional World of Malitbog*. Quezon City: CDRC.

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9 Ibid, 491.

10 Susan Soriano, May 2018. These reflections are possible foremost through the work of our women partners from Escolta: Soledad Peña, Susan Soriano, Gilda Descartin, Arlene Garcia, Carmelita Montemayor, and Brenda Abella.

11 Appadurai, Arjun. 2000. "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination" in *Public Culture* 12:15, 5.

12 Ibid, 6.

13 Carlvaho, Marcus Bau, Diaconescu, Ilinca, and Walker, Julian, eds. 2020. "Introduction" in *Urban Claims and the Right to the City: Grassroots Perspectives from Salvador da Bahia and London*. London: University College London Press, 1.

14 Ibid.

Fig. 4. Escolta map and directory designed for the Escolta Block Party in 2016, 98B Collaboratory.

Performing and 'Rhythming' the Neighbourhood 24/7

Methodological Learnings from Ward 14, Phú Nhuận, Hồ Chí Minh City

Marie Gibert-Flutre

Constantly in motion, Hồ Chí Minh City (HCMC) neighbourhoods are typified by an unprecedented superposition and entanglement of different social practices, "but they have nothing to do with any overall orchestration or any mass coordination of routine across the city."[1] Our research goal was to unpack and understand this everyday performance that can be compared to a routinized urban ballet.

Fig. 1. Photo of Kiến Thiết market. (Photo by the author, 2017).

It's 11 AM in Ward 14 of Phú Nhuận district. The local market is in full swing [Fig. 1]. The local traders lure passers-by, and the waste collectors struggle to make their way through the goods-laden alleys. The customers are regulars: residents of the neighbourhood who come on foot, but also from neighbouring districts who come by motorbike to do their food shopping. Street vendors put away their goods while others set up temporary shops. They stay on the doorstep for a few hours, sometimes less, in an incessant ballet. District officials and local police watch from a distance and sometimes participate in spontaneous discussions. They don't seem to care too much about the presence of street vendors, despite the official neighbourhood rules posted on their booths. The atmosphere is very lively, and arguments are rare. In an hour, most of the street stands will have changed. Temporary restaurants will have replaced the clothing and household goods vendors.

While our team of researchers and students from the SEANNET project was still debating how to define a "neighbourhood" in a Vietnamese city, as I entered Ward 14 of Phú Nhuận once again, the answer became clear: the neighbourhood is performative. It is perpetually reinvented through the interplay of various social uses. Just as it is a key scale for public authorities to manage and control the city, so too is the neighbourhood a key scale for urban dwellers to live and perform their "cityness." And, if the neighbourhood was a never-ending social performance, I was eager to learn the underpinning codes of its choreography.

Between acquaintanceship and the city at Large: the neighbourhood as a field of forces

The popular Vietnamese saying "selling siblings who live far away to buy neighbours who live next door" (*Bán anh em xa, mua láng giềng gần*) illustrates the social significance of the neighbourhood in local city life. A neighbourhood is indeed a key place of social encounters that help one to find one's own place in the metropolis. As such, the neighbourhood plays the strategic role of a launch pad at the interface of the domestic life unit (as a place of acquaintanceship and social belonging) and the city at large. It can be seen both as an intimate place of social encounters and a field of expression of social forces, which is practiced – and thus performed – on a daily basis. As such, neighbourhoods generate many local centralities in their city. They invite to produce a place-based geography of the city that has long provided for cosmopolitan diversity and in which populations in their diversity are able to assert their agency in city-making.

Acknowledging that "the drama of co-presence and co-existence" unfolds in the everyday,[2] our study was mindful of avoiding a totalizing theory of the everyday: "everyday people are not always a unified, organized group but in urban settings involve a variety of people with different tactics and understandings."[3] Thus, our Phú Nhuận

neighbourhood analysis centres on dwellers, sellers, and anonymous passersby in all their diversity, providing a grounded and ethnographic perspective on local power relationships in the metropolis. Our attention to daily rhythms challenges representations of the local neighbourhood as simply a "place of belonging:" it suggests that this belonging is not guaranteed to all city dwellers on a 24/7 basis, but constantly has to be negotiated and renegotiated, even for access over short periods.

With a plethora of competing urban practices, neighbourhoods are also places of daily frictions and confrontations. Multiple claims to limited space ensure that tensions run high, especially in urban contexts where public spaces sustain the livelihood of a large part of the population, as in Vietnam. In this competitive context, constant spatiotemporal negotiations are needed to gain access to space in which to perform the activities required to secure one's livelihood. At the same time, most metropolitan areas of the Global South engage in an active rewriting of the rules of public space by arbitrating on which spatial practices can be considered legitimate. In this context, informal street vendors are among the most precarious urban actors. The literature on the competition for public space primarily focuses on the strategies of various stakeholders to gain access to urban amenities.[4] Our research aims to add a temporal approach to the study of the power relations that constantly shape and reshape everyday usages in neighbourhoods.

Rhythm(analysis) as a critical method

In his writings generally, and in his *Elements de rythmanalyse* (1992) in particular, Henri Lefebvre describes the study of daily rhythms as the gateway to a political reading of the city. In recent years a great deal of empirical research has taken up Lefebvre's conception of rhythms.[5] Within the SEANNET program, I mobilized rhythmanalysis as an analytic lens for investigating the political dimensions of how patterns of small, local, often overlooked behaviours are structured in metropolitan neighbourhoods. Envisioned as a praxis, it invites the researcher to consider the concrete conditions of social life that emerge from the ways in which different categories of city dwellers interact in the neighbourhood.

This approach highlights the value of ephemeral uses of local space. Like space, time is anything but a neutral container for social life: "time-sharing" is the "product" – in Lefebvre's sense of the term[6] – of unequal everyday negotiations, intertwined with the more commonly studied negotiations pertaining to spatial access. Thus, understanding the politics of the everyday and the unequal capacity of various urban actors to access valuable timeslots in public spaces requires us to scrutinize the temporal organization of a place throughout the day, every day, and to delve into the local sociopolitical meanings of time-based transactions.
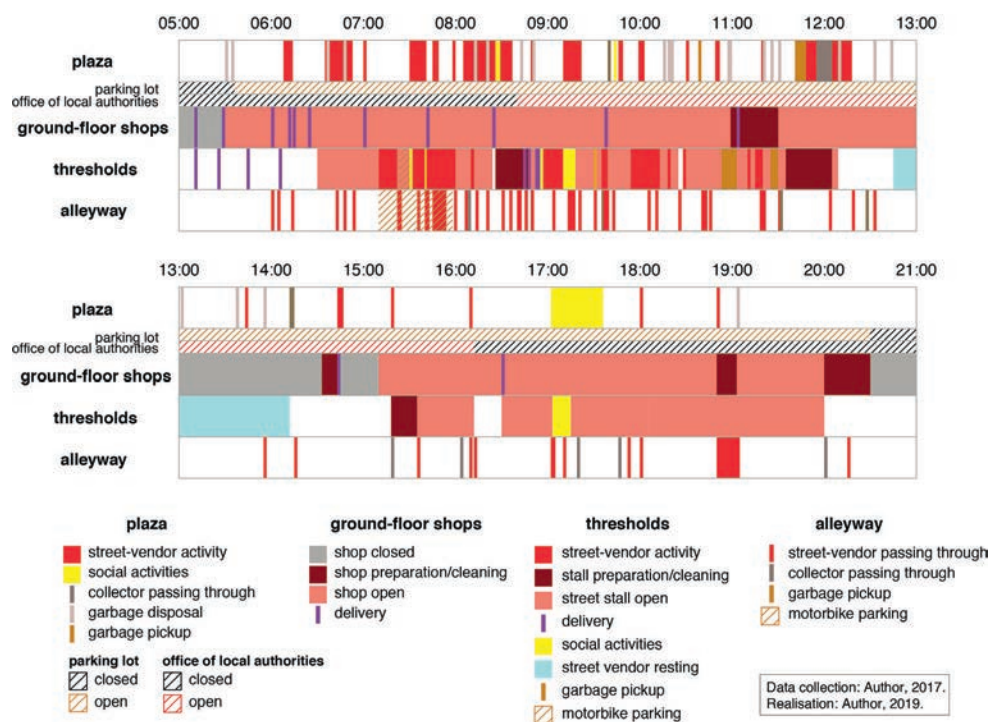
Fig. 2. The 'urban tempo' timeline: identifying patterns. (Designed by the author).

This conception of rhythmanalysis implied a mixed-methods approach with (1) a preliminary draft of the data collection protocol, (2) on-site physical surveys, (3) systematic temporal observations over the course of a full day (including photography), (4) the production of a timeline representing these observations visually, and finally (5) in-depth interviews.[7] Together with my team of SEANNET students, I collected our rhythmanalysis data by means of systematic observation, from 5 AM to 9 PM on weekdays during summer and autumn 2017. Each of our field observations was formatted for use with UrbanTempo, a package I designed in the R programming language and software environment. The package contains computer code to automatically plot urban temporalities from our observational data. Ultimately it produces an 'urban tempo' timeline, which provides the basis for further critical analysis [Fig. 2]. Specifically, this timeline allows the viewer to grasp at a glance the 'sequential versatility' in the uses of metropolitan space at the local scale, and to adjust it following interviews. Unlike traditional, large-scale metropolitan cartography, the timeline draws attention to hitherto overlooked and unseen dimensions of the everyday metropolitan experience. On the basis of these preliminary visual results, we selected 30 interviewees. These were mainly people who engaged in direct social interactions during their time at the market. This allowed us to clarify not only the status of people in the neighbourhood, but also their capacity to negotiate their presence there for longer or shorter and during more or less valuable periods of time.

Evidences from Phú Nhuận

With its 10 million inhabitants, HCMC is an emerging and rapidly changing metropolis of Southeast Asia. In this context, local land conflicts – from obstacles in major projects to daily frictions in the use of public space – are multiplying and have become central to the recalibration of power, requiring constant arbitration. The first major source of land conflicts is the historically unplanned and informal urbanization process of HCMC: unclear tenancy status and dwellers with mixed administrative titles continue to pose challenges for the metropolitan authorities. As another result of unplanned urbanization, HCMC is characterized by very tight plot divisions and high population density: on average, the inner city is estimated to house around 28,000 people/km², peaking at 50,000 people/km². Morphologically, this can be traced to the ubiquity of close-knit alleyway neighbourhoods (known as *hẻm*), which are still home to around 85% of city residents and give the city its socio-spatial identity.[8] These low-rise neighbourhoods are made up of freestanding and attached shophouses – called "tube houses" for their narrow shape – lining endless networks of alleyways just a few metres wide. This exceptionally dense network was mainly born of pragmatic moves by city dwellers during times of uncertainty over the past 60 years.

Ward 14 of Phú Nhuận illustrates the many layers of identity in the city's historical development. Its local identity is linked to the Catholic community, who settled in the area in the 1950s following their escape from the communist regime in northern Vietnam. Many local families have lived in the area for several generations and are still active in the Catholic community. Despite its high population density (around 11,000 people in 14 hectares), the ward is relatively wealthy by HCMC standards; residents are disproportionately employed as government officers.

Although Kiến Thiết is a small market at the metropolitan scale – it does not have a covered market hall, for instance – it serves as a commercial hub and a nerve centre of the neighbourhood. In the morning and late afternoon, commercial activities cover most of the small plaza opening onto Đặng Văn Ngữ street, along the mid-rise Kiến Thiết building (which gives its name to the market), and the adjacent main alleyways as far as alleyway 525 Huỳnh Văn Bánh. These activities occupy four distinct types of spaces: the ground floors of shophouses, where fruits and vegetables or clothes are typically sold; the thresholds of some shophouses, directly on the public space of the alleyway, where temporary stalls have been established; the centre of the alleyways, where street sellers stop to serve customers; and the central plaza itself, which is put to different uses over the course of the day. These four types of space are shown on our "urban tempo" timeline [Fig. 2].

A rhythmanalysis of the Kiến Thiết local market: time tradeoffs and unequal capacities of negotiations

Our rhythmanalysis reveals that the temporal succession of activities throughout the day results from constantly renegotiated and reiterated local agreements, in which each urban actor has a different degree of negotiating power. On the basis of our 30 interviews, we were indeed able to distinguish four types of actors, classified in terms of their capacity to negotiate and assert their position, from the local authorities and local landlords – who appear to be the real "masters of time" in the neighbourhood – to the temporary vendors and the most precarious ambulant traders who are unable to settle in locally during the valued hours of the day.

The first actors in the Phú Nhuận ballet are the local representatives of the Vietnamese state, who are responsible for enforcing the law locally. Visual propaganda is a classic way for the state to assert its local authority in organizing time and space: displays about regulations are ubiquitous. Despite these local infrastructures of power, however, our study of local rhythms also reveals a certain flouting of the state: many local rules are openly violated, starting with the fight against street trade.

The neighbourhood level in Vietnam reveals the institutional flexibility of the regime locally. Local representatives work at the interface between the state and the local: their loyalty and obedience are not only directed towards the People's Committee, for they also see themselves as spokespeople of their community.[9] This duality is illustrated by the expression "power of straw, stone responsibilities" (*quyền rơm vạ đá*), as their local status gives them very little leeway in either legal or budgetary matters. As many local residents of Ward 14 are in fact employed as government officers or are retired army executives, they have the capacity to negotiate directly with the local state representatives to express and assert their interests.

Owning a permanent shop on the plaza or in an adjacent alleyway allows landlords, the second category of actors, to make the most of the strategic reputation of the marketplace. First, they can operate their business during the most strategic hours of the day without having to negotiate with the local authorities. Moreover, whether they are traders themselves or not, most landlords take advantage of their thresholds by informally renting them to other vendors, who are attracted by the central location. Some even rent out half of their ground floor. The price depends on the location, but more importantly on the time slot. The morning hours are the most valued and thus the most expensive: according to our sources, the average price is around 50,000 VND (around US$2) per metre for a full morning (although specific times of year, such as the weeks prior to the New Year celebrations, are even more expensive). This allows itinerant vendors to secure access on a daily basis. Some can afford to pay for a full morning, whereas others will rent a space just once or twice a week for a few hours. These vendors negotiate directly with the landlord, outside the framework of the law, and the process is not regulated. This example would suggest that local landlords are the true 'masters of time' in the neighbourhoods, distributing informal – and costly – trade permits for a limited time at their discretion and on their own financial terms.

While local landlords can choose their own 'strategies' to put a price on their properties, temporary vendors, the third category of actors, deploy different 'tactics' to secure their ephemeral access to the plaza. Time is a key asset in this regard: the longer they have known the local landlords and frequent the space, the more trust they gain. In return, temporary vendors are protected by their financial deals with the local landlords, and the authorities are often willing to leave them be, as their stalls usually occupy the house thresholds only. They can also secure access to electricity or water if needed (potentially for an extra fee). Most explained that spending a few morning hours in Kiến Thiết market was more profitable than owning their own shop in a less central area of the city.

The last category of local actors we identified consists of precarious ambulant traders who are unable to settle in one place during the valued hours of the day, even for a short period of time. As a consequence, we came across them only during the relatively worthless midday hours, in front of the curtains of closed shops. This last example illustrates the radically different value a space may have depending on the time of day and the unequal access afforded to marginalized parts of the population, such as rural migrants.

Implications: addressing the politics of the everyday in the neighbourhood

Our operationalization of rhythmanalysis offers several insights into the daily life of a Vietnamese neighbourhood. First, it highlights the social complexity of the neighbourhood, beyond the simplistic idea of a homogenous and tight community. Indeed, if the neighbourhood is in essence a place of belonging, this belonging takes place on an unequal footing, affording 'strategies' to some, while others have to make do with counter-'tactics.'[10] As our empirical analysis shows, the costs and burdens associated with an individual's negotiating power are unevenly distributed. In this sense, rhythmanalysis is a promising means of investigating everyday socioeconomic inequalities from

the novel perspective of time sharing in the city. Second, fine-grained observations throughout the day revealed different degrees of informality and require us to go beyond the simple opposition between the formal and informal economy. Third, such a methodology and attention to time-sharing provides a nuanced understanding of time-sharing norms in the Vietnamese authoritarian context. By drawing attention to the notion of time sharing, our case study shows that, even under a centralized authoritarian government, power is embodied in "a web of conflict-ridden relations."[11] It therefore offers a heuristic model of "power effects" in highly multifunctional ordinary public spaces, where traffic, trading functions, and economic production coexist with social and domestic life, all subject to great temporal versatility.

Moreover, Vietnam is still considered a developing country of the Global South and, as such, remains largely excluded from global theoretical frameworks in urban studies. In our study, we challenge this status by refining and operationalizing the conceptual tool of rhythmanalysis in an ordinary neighbourhood in Ho Chi Minh City, which contributes to the development of a cosmopolitan theoretical framework from the perspective of the 'Southern turn.' But, as a cosmopolitan framework, rhythmanalysis can only achieve its full potential through fruitful comparative case studies, be it in other Asian or other metropolitan contexts, in more or less dense urban settings, under different political regimes, and through a focus on other kinds of public spaces. To this end, the standardized 'urban tempo' timeline is intended to facilitate further comparative studies.

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Notes

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Fig. 1: Photo of
Sala Chalerm Thani.
(Photo by Manop
Sritulyachot, 2017).

Nang Loeng, Bangkok

Precarity of Heritage, Precarity as Heritage

Boonanan Natakun and Napong Tao Rugkhapan

Over the past decades, due to its charms as a bastion of quickly disappearing Thai cultures, Nang Loeng has been subject to multiple technocratic interventions by various actors (e.g., universities, government agencies, and advocacy groups), all under the same benevolent banner of heritage preservation. In parallel, as Bangkok expands its underground railway into the inner city, Nang Loeng is designated as one of the new stations. The construction project raises the alarm among the current tenants who, having learned of eviction cases elsewhere, fear for their own future. To this end, they turn to their cultural assets and experiences gained from their interactions with technical experts, weaponizing heritage as a claim towards housing security.

This essay explores the complex relationship between heritage and housing

In this essay, we recount a story of Nang Loeng, a 'living' historic neighbourhood in central Bangkok, as it struggles to chart its own future in the midst of inner-city redevelopment. Located close to a once-suburban royal palace, Nang Loeng is home to families of former servants who worked in the palace in the early 20th century. Their land belongs to the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) and a handful of landed elites. As Bangkok began to urbanize, the landlords constructed shophouses upon their land, later renting them to Chinese merchants. As such, today's Nang Loeng is known for its rich cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, from food to artisan crafts, from traditional dance to vernacular shophouse architecture.

precarity in Nang Loeng. First, we review the unintended impact of underground construction. While the official goal was to alleviate automobile traffic and promote densification through transit-oriented development (TOD), landlords seized the opportunity to evict tenants and redevelop their properties. Bangkok's Chinatown is a case in point. Perceiving the looming threat, the residents of Nang Loeng came together to make their voices heard. To do so, they have relied on art activism as a tactic to bring attention to their cause. Equipped with knowledge from the experts, the residents mobilize their cultural heritage as resources to negotiate within the climate of precarity. The seemingly harmless appearance of art allows the tenants to communicate their plight. While the tenants argue that their cultural heritage is being endangered by redevelopment pressures, it is their housing tenure that is, in fact, equally under threat.

The changing face of historic Bangkok

Like most major cities in Southeast Asia, Bangkok is notorious for its traffic congestion. Decades of ineffective land control have produced a sprawling metropolis of over ten million residents without proper mass transit systems. To address the issue, the Thai Government dusted off their transport masterplan, revisiting the possibility of turning Bangkok into a rail-oriented city. Beginning in the early 2000s, downtown Bangkok has

welcomed a few lines of urban rail, the Green, Blue, and Purple lines, with a few more to come. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the city government, has responded enthusiastically to the vision of a denser Bangkok, stipulating – perhaps prematurely – upzoning around all transit stations, in the hope of growing a larger residential population in the city and therefore reducing automobile trips. The language of TOD has entered Thai planners' discourse as a cure for the city's infamous traffic.

In addition to the downtown core, three stations were constructed in Bangkok's historic district and its adjacent areas in 2017-2018, with a few more underway. While the general public celebrates their newfound mobility, the megaproject has spawned unintended consequences, particularly in the abrupt transformation of the old town's fabric. Much of the historic district is owned by the government and a handful of landed elites. The government sees this as an opportunity to promote beautification projects towards the larger goal of urban tourism. Similarly, private landlords seize the opportunity to evict tenants and redevelop their properties. Stories of eviction abound. For example, the Ong Ang canal, one of

Fig. 2: Live chorus show in front of Sala Chalerm Thani in 2018. (Photo by Manop Sritulyachot).

Bangkok's three historic moats, was long known for its toy markets. Over the decades, merchants encroached the canal, setting up their semi-permanent stalls. However, in 2016, with too short a notice, the occupiers were forcibly removed, literally overnight, to pave way for the Ong Ang Canal Revitalization Scheme, a recreational waterfront project inspired by Cheonggyecheon in Seoul. A short distance from Ong Ang was Prom Mahakan, a low-income community that inhabited one of Bangkok's last remaining historic forts. After decades of bitter battles with the city government, the residents were finally removed, again quite forcibly, under BMA's pretext of constructing a public park.[1] Far from isolated incidents, these cases were part of BMA's conscious attempts at touristifying Bangkok's historic core into a clean, tourist-friendly urban landscape.

Similarly, landlords with properties within the radius of transit stations exploit the opportunity to evict their tenants in hopes of more lucrative redevelopment. Chinatown is a case in point. Luen Rit, a textile shopping area of well-to-do Chinese and Indian merchants, managed to negotiate their tenure with their landlord, the CPB, a major landowner in Bangkok and Thailand. By contrast, the smaller and more humble Charoenchai saw their housing contracts terminated overnight. Against the romantic tableau of Bangkok as a "city of neighborhoods" as depicted in various tourism media, the city is equally a city of elite landlords, each of whom owns large pieces of land and has different landlord-tenant relationships. As the mass-transit masterplan is now in full swing, inner-city residents view their fate with great apprehension. Nang Loeng is one such example.

The changing face of Nang Loeng

As a neighborhood in the larger transit masterplan, Nang Loeng will be home to a new transit station, and is thus seen as a possible medium-sized TOD. While the construction project has yet to start, many residents have begun to feel the impact. The most obvious is from the most unprivileged residents staying near the Buddhist temple, Wat Soonthorn Dhammathan. A considerable number of small timber shacks located in the areas around the temple have squatted in the land of the CPB, the neighborhood's major landowner. Many of the tenants have been forced to relocate, thus offering new development opportunities. Another case was the renovation project of Sala Chalerm Thani in Nang Loeng, an iconic timber cinema, erected in 1918 [Fig. 1]. When the lease contract of the cinema was terminated, the landlord came to renovate the theater. The renovation is now complete, waiting for a new investor and a new lease of life. Before the renovation, the front court of the theater was used as a venue for local cultural activities.

Fig. 3 (above): A day-time intervention workshop, 2019 and fig. 4 (right): a night-time dance performance, Wat Soonthorn Dhammthan area, 2019. (Both photos courtesy of the authors).

Today, the locals have to move their events to either the market or the temple.

As mentioned above, various actors have been involved in organizing cultural events and activities in Nang Loeng, including state officials, local authorities, local educational institutions, and the residents themselves. All aim to promote local tourism and to conserve local culture. Civil Society Tourism Network (CSTN), a non-profit, local tourism alliance, is a good example. CSTN has helped the residents organize tourist activities, such as walking tours and bike tours. These are to generate incomes directly for the locals. As an entertainment district in the 1960s, Nang Loeng's historical heritage has also attracted local and international artists. Such artists come to organize a variety of artistic events. These events recognize both the tangible and intangible assets of Nang Loeng, including architectural heritage, local authentic cuisine, traditional dance performance (*Chatree* play), and cultural spots such as the Dance House, the Nang Loeng Artist House, and the Narasilp House (a 70 year-old local workshop making *Khon*[3] costumes). A series of local cultural events are driven by both the locals themselves and also by the other key outside actors [Fig. 2]. Some are genuinely collaborative and some are claimed to be participatory.

Apart from the self-organized cultural events, a group of community architects and their networks have come to energize the local cultural practices in Nang Loeng with their professional creativity, knowledge, and expertise. The ad hoc collaboration uses different tactics and resources to convey local concerns, anxieties, and struggles through various kinds of artistic performances. At this point, social, cultural, and human

capital stand at the forefront to encourage community activism. The Buffalo Field Dance Festival (BFDF) was a good example, demonstrating how local tactics were carried out to express local attitudes, hopes, and concerns towards their livelihood through creative cultural events. From 2017-2019, the BFDF was organized at the end of each year, inviting both Thai and international artists to stay at the neighbourhood for a week and prepare their dance performance at various important spots around Nang Loeng. From time to time, the BFDF became more complicated and organized with wider networks of artists, academics, and residents, both within and outside Nang Loeng. The latest BFDF was in December 2019, where local workshops were organized during the daytime to engage ordinary residents [Fig. 3]. These workshops investigated local assets and emotions of the locals towards their livelihoods. Dance performances by Thai and international artists, along with some interventions co-created between invited artists and local people, were shown at night as a highlight of the festival [Fig. 4].

The COVID-19 pandemic has also opened up new spaces for local initiatives. The community leaders and the community architects have organized small initiatives to help vulnerable residents cope with the impact of the pandemic. For example, community kitchens were founded to feed the unemployed and patients [Fig. 5]. Moreover, a testing station was set up to help all Nang Loeng residents who have received minimal support from the government. Networking to obtain immediate help and support are crucial in the present critical moment. A couple of outside organizations including NGOs, civil society

groups, and educational institutions have given assistance to Nang Loeng. A Facebook page, *Community x Covid-19*, has additionally been set up by community leaders to reach out and communicate with their wider networks. Practices have evolved from being passive recipients to becoming active doers, organizing local COVID-19 patients' information and managing foods and medicine to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

Situated in the old Bangkok areas where economic activities, living environments, and public infrastructure and services are inadequate, Nang Loeng has limited financial and environmental resources. However, it still has plenty of local resources, including architectural heritage as well as social, cultural, and human capital. These community capitals are collective assets that can attract the public's attention. Most cultural events funded by the local authority and state officials are always full of participants from both local and outside areas. In this sense, the local residents, now savvier, seem to know exactly how to keep their neighbourhood lives in the spotlight by participating in the state's promotion of old Bangkok tourism. On the other hand, local-initiated cultural events are not always full of participants. This may be due to the specific purposes of such events, which are likely to be activism. The BFDF is a clear example in which the community architect group with active Nang Loeng residents works collaboratively towards the presentation of the local pressures, thoughts, and aspirations.

Urban precarity will continue to put Nang Loeng residents to the test, as they will have to face various kinds of urban intervention and redevelopment plans and projects. However, with local resources, which the locals know best from learnt tactics and input from their network, Nang Loeng can continue to maintain its cultural activities as local weapons. The residents are able to fight for their right to the city in Nang Loeng, the neighbourhood where they were born, live, and struggle to endure.

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Fig. 5: Community kitchen. (Photo courtesy of the Community x Covid-19 Facebook page).

Notes

1   Herzfeld, M (2017), The blight of beautification: Bangkok and the pursuit of class-based urban purity, *Journal of Urban Design*, 22:3, 291-307, DOI: 10.1080/13574809.2017.1294976
2   One of the oldest folk dance-dramas originated in the Southern Siam, which gained popularity later in the Central plain of Thailand since the late Ayutthaya era.
3   A classical Thai masked performance playing a series of Ramayana epics.

Collective Actions and Heritage of the Neighborhood

Wua-Lai, Chiang Mai

Pijika Pumketkao-Lecourt

The accelerated growth since the 1990s of Chiang Mai, the economic capital and tourist center of the northern region of Thailand, has erased many urban legacies. The development of mass tourism and speculative construction have contributed to a profound transformation of the spatial and social landscapes of the old urban neighborhoods. Fearing a loss of local identity due to urban and social changes, local people have initiated a number of collective actions to promote their local heritage as a resource for surviving in an era of globalization.

The city of Chiang Mai has recently adopted a conservation approach that is in line with the international systems of heritage identification promoted by UNESCO. In 2015, Chiang Mai University, in collaboration with the municipality, created a tentative list: an inventory of monuments, sites, and cultural landscapes for inclusion on the World Heritage List. In 2017, the city was registered in the Creative Cities Network in order to highlight the local know-how and traditional craftsmanship of local communities, and to include them in 'sustainable' urban development. This trend in heritage conservation has been driven by citizens and local experts, who take into account the diversity of urban heritage on its two sides, tangible and intangible. Moreover, this heritage approach reflects the local people's recognition of ordinary urban heritage, which has historically been excluded from official heritage definitions proffered by the national authorities. It also shows the increasing power of citizen movements to defend the "heritage of community" (*moradok chumchon*) that has developed in Thailand since the 1990s.[1]

The residents of Wua-Lai, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Chiang Mai, have participated in such citizen movements to protect their local cultural and urban assets. This neighborhood is well known for its silver craft skills, inherited from Tai Shan silversmiths who immigrated from the Salween river valley in Shan State to Chiang Mai, the former capital of Lanna Kingdom, in the 19th century and settled outside the ramparts to the south of the royal city.[2] In the first half of the 20th century, almost every household in this neighborhood had their own workshop for producing silverware. The common products were household goods and prestigious items for ritual and ceremonial occasions, including silver bowls (*salung*) and elaborated silver plates and trays.[3] Since the 1960s, Chiang Mai has been promoted as a center of domestic and international tourism of the Northern region. Wua-Lai was branded as the "Silver Village," where customers can come into direct contact with producers. By the mid-1980s, following the government's economic policy, a center for export-oriented craft production was created at San-Kamphaeng village, situated 13 kilometres east of the city. The development of the new artisan center caused the decline of Wua-Lai's crafts trade in the 1990s. Moreover, the craft market became more competitive; many marketplaces were developed in the city center, such as Night Bazaar and Tapae Walking Street. Another major threat was the absence of successors to many Wua-Lai silverware producers. Today, there are only a few young people who are willing to learn and practice the production of silver crafts.

In response to the economic decline, the residents of Wua-Lai have initiated a number of collective actions and projects for reviving their livelihood, but also for protecting and transmitting their unique craft skills. We found that they often developed economic regeneration projects (e.g., weekend craft markets, community enterprises, etc.)

in relation to heritage projects and the construction of neighborhood identity. Based on the recent research conducted within the framework of SEANNET, this essay focuses on the collective projects run by the residents of Wat Muen-Sarn, one of the three groups of dwellings in the neighborhood of Wua-Lai. Through the analysis of heritage practices and discourses, I scrutinize how the residents use local cultural and urban assets in contemporary projects.

Sacred place and craft: resources for collective action

Buddhist temples (*wat*) are central to the social and spiritual life of villages and urban neighborhoods in Thailand. Many residents in the vicinity of Wat Muen-Sarn regard themselves as *sattha wat Muen-Sarn*, a grouping or collective of the people owing a common allegiance to Muen-Sarn temple. They also call themselves *chaoban wat Muen-Sarn* ("villagers of Muen-Sarn temple"). The *wat* is, therefore, closely linked to social identity and to the sense of belonging to a neighborhood. It asserts the existence of a group of householders as a social unit. Furthermore, beyond the religious sphere, the temple plays a key role in community life. It is a meeting place for neighborhood residents. Most of the collective activities take place at the temple: neighborhood committee assemblies, polling stations, festival ceremonies, and more.

Based on the multifunctional and social character of the temple, the neighborhood committee – a group of residents and monks – also uses the temple to host a community museum. During the 2000s, they started to inventory and collect old masterpieces of silverware and lacquerware in the neighborhood. The abbot (*chao awat*) supported the project by helping to promote it and convincing residents to donate their families' heirlooms. A collection of silverware and lacquerware is now displayed in a vacant building of the temple. In this way, the family legacies are transposed into the community museum and thus become a shared heritage and marker of neighborhood identity, providing a focus for local pride. The museum also displays information panels telling a 200-year history of Wua-Lai. These recount the displacement of people and craftspeople from Shan State and Sibsongbanna for repopulating and rebuilding the city of Chiang Mai after 18th-century guerrilla warfare. The historical narrative stresses the importance of Wat Muen-Sarn temple as the anchor point of Wua-Lai villagers and silversmiths who immigrated from the Salween river valley in Shan State.

This historic narrative seeks to connect the past of Wat Muen-Sarn and Wua-Lai with the history of the old Kingdom of Lanna (1259-1884), highlighting the historical value of the neighborhood. The museum's exhibition narrative also emphasizes some ancient

artisanal techniques that the craftspeople of Wua-Lai inherited from Tai Shan silversmiths. We thus see the effort made to promote artistic expression and the cultural value of silverware and lacquerware in a mixed Burmese-Lanna style, which are typically excluded from official inventories of national heritage.

At the northern side of the community museum is the Silver Art Gallery Sutthajito [Fig. 1]. The construction of the art gallery was launched in 2002. The neighborhood committee mobilized donated funds for the construction. They stimulated the sense of cooperation and willingness to contribute to this project through the Theravada Buddhist concept of merit (*bun*) and the long-standing practice of Northern Thai society of collaboratively constructing sacred structures for their neighborhoods. Based on the concept of merit, the residents and devotees of the temple saw the donations as acts of "merit-making" (*tham bun*). They donated money and material goods and worked together to build the art gallery. About 43 silversmiths and monks of Wua-Lai contributed their skills to the construction. They also created wall decorations in low relief, depicting the history of Wua-Lai villagers' immigration from Salween river valley, scenes of daily life in the past, silver craft production, and ritual ceremonies of the villagers. In this way, the textual narrative presented at the community museum was illustrated in image.

Furthermore, this art space was made sacred by the presence of three sculptures, each depicting a venerated monk (*kruba*) of Chiang Mai and Wat Muen-Sarn, as well as by a low relief mural representing 12 sacred stupas of the Northern region. Hence, the sacred and the secular are combined in one place. The realm of the sacred infuses and legitimates the craftsmanship and history of the ordinary neighborhood. This sacred art gallery stands today as an emblem of Wat Muen-Sarn. Many tourists from the Wua-Lai Saturday Market and Walking Street come to appreciate the fine craftsmanship in a spiritual atmosphere.

The neighborhood committee based their projects on the following elements: shared identity, sacredness, customary concepts and practices, local attachment, sociable places, shared purposes, strong relations among neighbors, co-operative practices, and partnership. These elements allow for the reproduction of belonging and sociability that create the potential for collective action.[4] In developing their projects, the neighborhood committee of Wat Muen-Sarn acts as a network consisting of a variety of entities. First, the residents created a strong partnership with monks. The residents were able to propose and manage the projects in accordance with their respective expertise and occupation (e.g., curator, professor, artisan, historian, silver shop owner). Meanwhile, the monks displayed a strong willingness to engage in the neighborhood's activities, especially the abbot's assistant, a young

monk who graduated in Buddhist Studies for Community Development from the Mahamakut Buddhist University. Second, the neighborhood committee widened the partnership to include other civil society organizations in the city. They developed a community-based tourist project with two other craft neighborhoods in Chiang Mai, proposing a visit to the community museums, the artisans' workshops, and local craft shops of the community enterprise. Their aim was to create a supplementary income for the residents and artisans, to raise the visibility of the neighborhood's craft products, and to promote the ordinary heritage of their neighborhood. However, this project is at present disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The collective actions of Wat Muen-Sarn allow us to learn about the autonomy of citizens in conducting neighborhood-based projects, as well as their ability to use and adapt urban resources and deep-rooted cultural practices for contemporary projects. This study also provides insight into citizen movements in the urban heritage field from the neighborhood level. It will be interesting to continue observing the network of neighborhoods and civil society organizations, the way in which the Wat Muen-Sarn neighborhood connects local heritage issues with broader ideologies, and movements that circulate in the city. This is especially so in the context of Chiang Mai's increasing momentum as a heritage city, from the "Chiang Mai City of Crafts and Folk Art" project to the "Creative Cities Network" of UNESCO. This could allow us to learn more about the circulation of ideas, knowledge, ideologies, and urban issues in the city and beyond.

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Notes

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An Architectural Approach to Studying the Neighborhood

Wua-Lai, Chiang Mai

Komson Teeraparbwong

In an architectural approach, we "read" and "learn" about the neighborhood by mapping, by visiting for sketch observations, and by conducting measurements and interviews. Through SEANNET's pedagogy with students covering roundtable sessions and many workshops as in-situ investigations, it has been an interesting process over the four years of the program.

Fig. 1 (above): Monks at Wat Mern-sarn learning about silver-making (Photo by the author, 2019).
Fig. 2 (right): Sketches illustrating domestic living within wooden houses done by a group of 6-8 students at the 2018 workshop (Photo by the author, 2018).

The Wua-Lai neighborhood has a reputation for "silver-craft" skills, and the area is well-known as a "silver-smith village." This has created a strong image for the neighborhood. Wua-Lai residents carry out their crafts and trades within the neighborhood's traditional area, identifiable by its numerous timber houses and shop-houses representing the characteristics of Lanna[1] architecture. However, the inhabitants have also drawn attention to the increase in land and property speculation, which affects the neighborhood's social structures, cultural values, and identity. The community craftsmanship center was established through local initiative to preserve the local skills and knowledge, as well as to promote the image of the area as the "Silver Village" of the past. All of this strives to keep alive the ties of kinship and history.

Regarding the transformation of neighbor-hoods and the city as a whole, Chiang Mai has faced accelerated urbanization over the last five decades, following the national economic development objective to develop Chiang Mai as the "second city" of Thailand. The promotion of tourism and other new developments bring more pressures to transform the Wua-Lai neighborhood, which is located in between the new commercial town in the east and the university town in the west. Since the 1960s, following the government's policy to promote Chiang Mai as a main touristic hub in Northern Thailand, Wua-Lai was set to run the Saturday Walking Street,[2] which brought in numerous tourists and a new socio-economic image of the neighborhood area. The recent transformations to the urban landscape, as well as the destruction of the neighborhood's morphological patterns, have raised much public awareness of local cultural heritage. The city government has designated the neighborhood as a "Conservation Area for Thai Art, Culture and Identity." This designation comes with initiative-building regulations that aim to protect its urban and architectural characteristics.

During the SEANNET work, we found that temples play an important role in the promotion and conservation of local crafts, as well as in the transmission of local craft knowledge. The abbots and monks have run local actions and projects together with the active neighborhood inhabitants and craftspeople. All of this is done in connection with tourism development authorities in Chiang Mai.

There are two objectives in the team's investigation. The first one aims to understand the forms of organization among neighbors, in terms of both cooperation and competition. Do both temples within the area (i.e., Wat Sri-Suphan and Wat Muen-Sarn) develop the same form of organization and role within the local neighborhood? The second objective deals with the relationship between the neighborhood and the contemporary urban condition of the city: how has mass tourism in Chiang Mai led to the revival of local craft production?

The study has been conducted through the two neighborhoods at the heart of this district, namely Wat Sri-Suphan and Wat Muen-Sarn. We discovered that Wat Sri-Suphan developed its structure of learning and organizing the local silver-craftsmanship for the benefit of tourism, especially with the Saturday Walking Street event. They formed the "2-hour-silver-making" workshop for tourists, who love to create their own small silver gifts. Also, there are performances and tours around the area. Thus, the Saturday Walking Street event became their main vehicle for the neighborhood's socio-economic survival. We called this the "Sri-Suphan Model" [Fig.1]. In contrast, the Wat Muen-Sarn neighborhood has a less active and less temple-centered structure, where the members of neighborhood are more relaxed and easier to talk with. Through ordinary heritage mapping, our research demonstrated how the two temples (Wat Sri-Suphan and Wat Muen-Sarn) took on distinct roles in the neighborhood. This helped us better understand two different models of a "temple-oriented neighborhood" – i.e., the former as a center-oriented and the latter as a network.

By considering the local neighborhood and its ordinary heritage context as an asset for learning, we regard the Wua-Lai neighborhood as a laboratory for teaching.

We adopted an interdisciplinary analysis based on architectural, urban, and socio-anthropological approaches that have been developed from the French-Thai Student Workshop,[3] thereby suggesting new methodological approaches to neighborhood and urban studies. The lessons learned from the neighborhood became the basis for our pedagogical approach in response to the series of workshops. This led to the new idea of "a forum within a forum" where the students organized workshops within the neighborhood forum. Thus, the integrated interplay between the residents and students, enables local voices as well as the voices of students involved in the work of measuring local heritage houses, to be heard. It also reflects the need of the silver village to sustain its craft-heritage status and to respond wisely to future economic challenges and the changing urban condition.

At the heart of the intensive workshop[4] in Chiang Mai, the students were assigned to conduct a survey of inhabited space. Each group comprised between five and eight students. The students explored a neighborhood and made sketches of the timber houses that were selected by the teachers, who had received the homeowners' permission in advance to access these houses. Then, there was a transitional stage that brought the students from the urban to the domestic scale, measuring the wooden houses (of silversmith masters) around the neighborhood. Its realization allowed the students a new way of reflecting upon and imagining their study project.

The survey becomes "a tool of under-standing" the neighborhoods' essences. It is our intention to get the students into the reality of a residential area, allowing them to understand the complexity of the building structures, their specific materiality (in particular wood), the uses, and the context to which it responds and maintains with the outside, the garden, the street, and the neighborhood.

Moreover, the exercise allows the students to observe, to look at the world of the neigh-borhood. Drawing by observation is, then,

a way of connecting students with the owners of a property in pursuit of understanding it. Observation leads to identifying the "details of architecture," naming and comparing them little by little. It enables students to discover the logic of forms and the material reality of architecture. Guided by the eye, manual drawing and sketching help the students to develop a specific spatial intelligence, which fully functions as part of the training for architectural practice. Unlike photography, the intelligence of the eye as an extension of the brain makes it possible to select and prioritize the data to be represented and illustrated.

In order to allow the establishment of a comparative inventory of the forms of the habitat of Chiang Mai (e.g., plans, sections, elevations, site plans, perspective views), each student appropriates the place and chooses what he or she wants to represent. It is a subjective exercise, and the purpose is precisely to learn to prioritize [Fig. 2]. For example, it can be done through the position of the section, the representation of certain pieces of furniture, the choice of perspective views. The survey of a living area allows them not only to develop architectural knowledge but also to link this knowledge to an ethnographic investigation. This means understanding how people inhabit a place full of history and symbols. The sociological approach to interviewing, meanwhile, allows students to determine a great deal: who lives there, the family connections or kinship ties between the inhabitants, how the plot or house has been divided over time, how much of the work is done on site, and how inhabitants live in the neighborhood (e.g., which schools, markets, and temples are attended). As architects, students need to understand these human relationships on the scale of the habitation, the plot, the street. This gives them essential information to develop the architectural project to come.

The recording of these data is a precious tool for understanding spatial organization, the succession of thresholds and limits (concrete, brick, wood, or plant), which considerably enriches the transition from public space to private space. The cross-sectional drawing of this subtle entanglement of plants, architecture, and furniture is a valuable source for understanding these domestic transitions in relation to spatial proportion, the scale of everyday living, and the human dimension. During this SEANNET project, these types of surveys have formed the basis of an inventory of socio-spatial situations, which today tend to disappear rapidly.

The pedagogy workshop lets us try to realize and become aware of the neighborhood's quality, which has evolved through time in relation to the inhabitants themselves. Also, it informs the students within the workshop, to rethink how we might keep these living quarters alive through various possibilities. The project has uncovered architectural information within the neighborhood and among local people representing their reality of the neighborhood (i.e., residents, artisans, and monks). Many drawings and documents about tangible and intangible aspects of the Wua-Lai neighborhood are reviewed and re-interpreted to illustrate how we learn from this neighborhood, and how we will continue to do so in the next phase of SEANNET.

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Notes

1 A period after Teak Industry in Northern Thailand during 1910-1960.
2 The Saturday Walking Street is an evening-night market by closing Wua-Lai main road temporarily on Saturday between 18.00-22.00. The event organized by the municipality together with Silver-makers neighborhood within the area since 2005.
3 A workshop organized in December 2018 in Wua-Lai, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
4 An ongoing workshop every December of each year (before COVID-19).

'Hidden-in-plain-sight'
The Presence of Social Infrastructure in Thingaza Chaung, Mandalay

Jayde Lin Roberts

In March 2021, two months into the most recent and increasingly violent coup d'état, local residents across Myanmar set up small roadside tables with basic foodstuffs under signs marked *"po yin hlu, loh yin yu"* ("Donate if you have extra, take if you have need"). As COVID-19 spread and the State Administration Council (SAC), the post-coup military government, dismissed public cries for medical assistance and even banned non-SAC distributions of oxygen tanks, residents placed boxes of disposable masks and even oxygen tanks in front of their homes, again with signs that invite passers-by to donate if they have extra and take if they have the need. These locally initiated direct actions are part and parcel of everyday life in Myanmar. They have constituted *ayut* (places) that cohere into socio-spatial units which could be labelled as neighborhoods.

Fig. 1: Volunteers from Aleybaung South Ward collecting donated dishes with custom-made carrier (Photo by May Thu Naing, 2018).

Rather than the occasional outpouring of mutual aid after natural disasters, Myanmar's social webs of improvisation serve as the hidden-in-plain-sight social infrastructure[1] that has enabled survival through four coup d'états and six decades of military rule after the country gained its independence from the British in 1948. Under Generals Ne Win (1958-1960 and 1962-1988), Saw Maung (1988-1992), Than Shwe (1992-2011), and now Min Aung Hlaing, the instigator of the 2021 coup, authoritarianism has been the norm. Everyday Myanmar people, like marginalized populations in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere, "tend to function as much as possible outside of the boundaries of the state and modern bureaucratic institutions, basing their relationships on reciprocity, trust, and negotiation rather than on the modern notions of individual self-interest, fixed rules and contracts."[2] These tactical improvisations, however, are not merely "undisciplined" informal practices that dissolve into nothingness once a transaction is complete. As AbduMaliq Simon has argued, when people work with each other across different territories, relations, and spheres of belonging, these "conjunctions become an infrastructure" which is radically open and often invisible but constitutes more than ephemeral intersections because each action "carries traces of past collaboration and an implicit willingness to interact with one another in ways that draw on multiple social positions."[3]

Building social infrastructure through Sabbath day practices

This essay focuses on the collaboration for Upoutnei (Sabbath Days) in Thingaza Chaung, the study area for the SEANNET Mandalay team.[4] It reveals how local residents build and maintain a social infrastructure that is informal but systematic and helps to create place and a sense of belonging.

Every year before Vassa, the annual rainy season retreat observed by Theravadin Buddhist monks, community and religious leaders in Thingaza Chaung hold meetings to discuss how they will host senior monks from the 26 monasteries within the Chanthagyi Kyaung Taik (Chanthagyi Monastic Complex) during the 13 days of Sabbath from Waso to Thadingyut (approximately July to October).[5] The Chanthagyi Monastic Complex grew around the Chanthagyi Stupa [Fig. 2], which was built long before the founding of Mandalay in 1857 by King Mindon, the penultimate ruler of the last Burmese dynasty.[6] The residents who live in the six wards that surround the large monastic complex worship at the Chanthagyi Stupa. Like other Burmese Buddhists, they also maintain a symbiotic socio-spiritual relationship with monks, who are seen as "fields of merit." The laity provide daily alms as well as other necessities for the monks (*hpon-gyi*, literally "men of great merit"). Through this support, the lay person can accumulate the good merit (*hpon-kan*) that is required

for a better rebirth. In Myanmar culture, the rainy season is seen as a special period for cultivating merit, and the residents of Thingaza Chaung organize special community-based alms giving during these three months.

In the planning meetings, community and religious leaders negotiate the number of senior monks to be invited for each Sabbath Day in each ward. These leaders are not ward level officials but respected members of the community. Once the decision has been made collectively, no ward can alter the number of monks to be invited, and the leader of each ward announces the decision in their respective Dhamma Halls, a community space for religious and social gatherings. In 2018, for example, Aleybaung North Ward was allowed to invite four monks for the first Sabbath and then three monks for the remaining 12 Sabbath Days. Shwelaunggyi and Shwelaungnyunt Wards were each allowed to invite two monks per Sabbath Day. After the number of monks per ward is announced, residents negotiate who will serve as the lead donor for each of the 13 Sabbath Days. They then publicize the list to the entire ward.

The different wards in Thingaza Chaung organize their Sabbath Day donations differently. In Shwelaunggyi Ward, local men start at their Dhamma Hall and march around their area while ringing a gong to collect donations of uncooked rice. This occurs the day before Sabbath in order to donate (*hlu*) the rice on Sabbath Day. In Aleybaung South, Shwelaungnyunt, and Hledan Wards,

volunteers from the Community Men's Groups walk around to collect cooked dishes in baskets suspended from shoulder poles [Fig. 1]. They use custom-made carriers wherein each donated dish is placed in identical metal bowls that rest neatly in the metal basket.

In Aleybaung North Ward, the Community Women's Group organizes a more festive procession that starts at six o'clock in the morning, which includes not only women but also young men and children. In this ward, the number of dishes is precisely calculated to provide enough food for the number of monks invited and the number of households participating in Sabbath Day. All of the participants carry metal circular platters with small metal bowls to receive the donations of prepared dishes. Once each platter is full, the dishes are delivered to the Dhamma Hall and transferred to larger containers so that the small dishes can be washed and sent back out for more donations. The women, men, and children ring gongs and march through the streets and alleyways in their own ward as well as adjacent wards where the Women's Group has been invited [Fig. 3]. Former neighbors who moved out of Aleybaung North due to marriage or other reasons welcome the opportunity to support their old neighborhoods and ask to be included in the Sabbath Day donation rounds. In Hledan Ward, the local organizers expanded their area for soliciting donations to include friends living in Aleybaung South because Hledan, as the smallest ward, does not have enough households to generate a sufficient collection of food for the monks.

In all wards, the procession ends at their respective Dhamma Halls. Here, as the dishes arrive throughout the morning, community leaders and volunteers categorize the different dishes according to type and apportion them equally for the invited monks. The senior monks are then served some special dishes such as *mohinga* (Burmese rice noodle and fish soup) and later escorted back to their monasteries with a large selection of food for other monks in their monasteries. In addition, the lead donor of each Sabbath must prepare food for the volunteers and community members who practice the Eight Precepts for Sabbath. Community members are served after the senior monks have taken their meals. Sometimes, lead donors also offer soap, cold drinks, and snacks to the volunteers and participants. Anyone who passes by and expresses interest in the event is welcomed into the Dhamma Hall to partake in the ceremonies and share the food as well as the gifts of soap and other items. When all of the food has been served, the organizers and volunteers wash all of the dishes and clean the Dhamma Hall. Sabbath Day concludes around 10:30 in the morning.

These annual holy days, which take place for 13 consecutive weeks and are organized by six adjacent wards to honor senior monks from 26 different monasteries, require systematic coordination. Buddhism is a hegemonic force in Myanmar that has both united and divided

Fig. 2: Ward boundaries as described by local residents. Current maps at the municipal level do not match maps at ward levels (Map created by May Thu Naing and Kathy Khine).
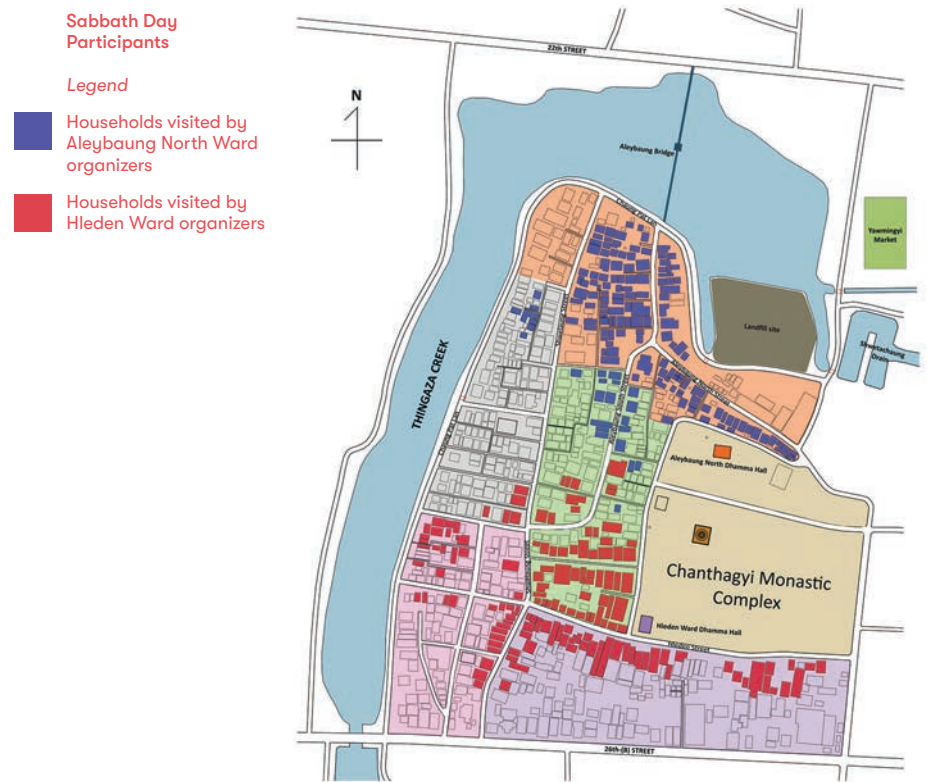

Fig. 3: Houses visited during Sabbath Day Alms Procession (Map created by May Thu Naing and Kathy Khine).

local, regional, and national populations. At the scale of townships, the administrative level above wards, the desire to appear more devout has led to ward-level competitions expressed through the number of senior monks hosted, the types of dishes served, and the general liveliness of Sabbath Day events. The women in Aleybaung North proudly described how their *shwegyisanwinmagin* (Burmese semolina cakes) are known as the most delicious in the area and how residents in neighboring wards come over to their Dhamma Hall to "eat for free." This effort to outperform each other is largely friendly and jocular but requires regular management to keep peace within the township. This is done every year through the pre-Vassa meetings, wherein community and religious leaders can reach a mutually acceptable agreement that is then honored in practice.

This level of accountability is uncommon in Myanmar's state-society relations. Governance reform between 2011 and 2021 struggled to increase trust in the municipal and national governments. Most people approached laws and policies with scepticism, often only complying with regulations if compelled by force. In contrast, the rules established through the pre-Vassa annual meetings are respected throughout Thingaza Chaung and foster a lively order during the 13 weeks of the rainy season. This social order is also notable because it both maps onto and transgresses administrative ward boundaries. As described above, the women in Aleybaung North take their procession into adjacent wards: Shwelaunggyi and Aleybaung South. Meanwhile, the organizers in Hledan

collect donations from Aleybaung South and Shwelaungnyunt Wards. Some of this transgression is unsurprising, as neighbors who face each other along a single street often associate with each other even if their homes fall in separate administrative zones. The red houses along Shwelaung Street belong to two different wards but work together for collecting special dishes for the monks.

Other lapses, however, reveal relationships that would be subtle – if not hidden – without ethnographic attention to fleeting practices such as Sabbath Day processions. The women of Aleybaung North visited all of the houses in purple even though some of these families technically belong to the Shwelaunggyi and Aleybaung South Wards and should be more loyal to their own Dhamma Halls. This collaboration across ward and Dhamma Hall boundaries is significant because religious practice is a central determinant of social belonging in Myanmar, subject to both praise and censure. As giving food to senior monks is held in the highest esteem, the purple households in Shwelaunggyi Ward likely enjoy communal recognition for their good deeds and would suffer no negative consequences if they donated twice, to the collection efforts of both Shwelaunggyi and Aleybaung North Wards.[7] Adherence to traditional Buddhist social norms is still very strong in contemporary Myanmar. These boundary-crossing networks show how people-to-people relationships can transcend more constrained administrative definitions of belonging and encourage accountability through collaboration.

Streets and Dhamma halls as social infrastructure

The 13 Sabbath Days of Vassa are not celebrated in every ward or township in Myanmar. In Yangon, the country's largest city, none of the SEANNET researchers have seen donation processions during the rainy season but we have seen similar collaborative efforts for other holidays. In all cities, neighbors come together to celebrate Kahtein, the festival at the end of Vassa when the laity donate the Eight Requisites to Buddhist monks, and Thadingyut, the festival when residents line their streets with colorful lights and candles to welcome the Buddha and his disciples. For these and other Buddhist holidays, self-organized street and ward committees plan for the celebrations by setting up temporary pavilions on their streets [Fig. 4]. They solicit donations by broadcasting Buddhist chants and shaking aluminium donation bowls that clang with the sound of coins. They also invite venerable monks to give Dhamma talks and hand out *mohinga* and other free food to residents in the neighborhood and anyone who happens to walk by. These activities transform the street into a shared living room of sorts, where neighbors sit and chat in the pavilions, where volunteers cook and distribute the mohinga, and where children run around enjoying the festivities.

Similarly, residents who live near Dhamma Halls use these spaces to celebrate different holidays and hold community events. As the halls are generally small, activities spill out onto the street, once again creating an open, shared space where local residents and visitors are welcome. As permanent structures, however, Dhamma Halls are generally more regulated, and non-Burmese Buddhist populations such as long-resident Muslims have felt excluded.[8] Nonetheless, these temporary but periodic celebrations that reconfigure the streetscape create and maintain a social and spatial infrastructure. They encourage neighbors to negotiate the various requirements and inconveniences of hosting the event, such as blocked streets, the noise of pre-recorded chants broadcasting from early morning until late at night, the social expectation to volunteer to cook or clean up, and sharing in the cost of hosting the event overall. Through these periodic negotiations in specific locations, the neighbors generate a place, a sense of neighborhood that coheres but remains open to renegotiation. Their collaboration for one festival sows a seed of willingness for future cooperation, weaving together a relational infrastructure predicated on people and place.

This "people as infrastructure" is not free from coercion or abuse. In the context of Myanmar, six decades of authoritarian rule has left its residents with few choices but to fend for themselves, whether that

means collecting special meals for monks or ensuring neighbors have enough to eat under a coup-induced state of emergency. The above analysis is not a naive celebration of local initiative as resilience nor a dismissal of state failures. Rather, it seeks to highlight the systematic quality of collaboration that not only produces successful Sabbath Day celebrations but maintains community relationships from year to year. This systematic, locally organized, and long-term collaboration could be conceived of as a basis for a mutually negotiated form of local governance, one that might engender a participatory democracy which has eluded Myanmar despite the promotion of free and fair elections.

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Notes

1 Jayde Roberts and Elizabeth Rhoads, "Myanmar's Hidden-in-plain-sight Social Infrastructure: *Nalehmu* through multiple ruptures," *Critical Asian Studies*, in press.
2 Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 59.
3 AbdouMaliq Simone, "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg," *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 408.
4 The research team consists of May Thu Naing, Kathy Khine, Myat Soe Phyu, Hsu Lai Yee, and Zwe Pyae.
5 Most of this ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken by May Thu Naing with assistance by Kathy Khine, Hsu Lai Yee and Zwe Pyae between April 2018 and February 2019. This essay is based on May Thu's fieldnotes and discussions with team members.
6 The date for the founding of the original Chanthagyi Stupa has yet to be verified but Myat Soe Phyu, a Mandalay team member, found a source written by Ashin Taesaniya, a venerable monk, that the stupa has stood in Thingaza Chaung since 833 C.E.
7 We were not able to ascertain this detail during fieldwork in 2018.
8 Dhamma Halls are complex and sometimes contested spaces. Further analysis is presented in "The Secular/Religious Construction of Neighborhoods in Mandalay, Myanmar: *Dhamma-youns* as Infrastructure" in an upcoming special issue of *The Asia Pacific Viewpoint* presented by SEANNET. In Yangon, *dhamma-youns* have been vulnerable to governmentality, and research to date suggests that the military junta has used these spaces to force compliance with their vision of a Burman Buddhist nation-state.

Fig. 4: Temporary pavilion set up for Kahtein (Photo by author, 2008).

ICAS 12: A Retrospective

Martina van den Haak
and Paul van der Velde

On Tuesday, 10 August 2021, we are sitting in the IIAS office in Leiden, the Netherlands, looking at each other and wondering whether everything is ready before sending the access codes for the ICAS 12 Academic Platform to the participants. In the past couple of weeks, the ICAS 12 panel participants have carefully prepared their presentations and have either uploaded it or recorded it within the platform. Now the time has come to make it available to their ICAS 12 colleagues. A rich database of more than 1000 presentations was available to be explored in the two weeks before ICAS 12 officially opened on 24 August.

Once the decision was made in April to organize ICAS 12 fully online – the ongoing pandemic made it impossible to organize ICAS 12 live in Kyoto as originally planned, and even a hybrid conference proved to be too optimistic – the ICAS Secretariat in Leiden worked together intensively with Kyoto Seika University, our local partner in Japan, to present an immersive online ICAS 12 experience.

Beyond presentations: the ICAS 12 Cultural Platform

After the launch of the Academic Platform on 10 August, we were proud to present the Cultural Platform on 20 August, which was meant to evoke the city of Kyoto itself. Participants would enter a beautifully designed Kyoto-style floorplan with different buildings to explore [Fig. 1]. Although we could not wander around Kyoto and the conference venue itself, the multiple 3D art galleries on the platform effectively approximated the experience of being at an exhibition. Entering the first exhibition space

(Visual Arts Meets Research), participants could walk around and explore two projects lead by faculty members of Kyoto Seika University – namely, WADAKO: Stories of Japanese Kites and Washi: From Mulberry to Manga, the Art of Paper in Japan. The second exhibition space featured graduation works by students of Kyoto Seika University, which were produced in the faculties of Japanese Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textile, Printmaking, Video & Media Arts, Illustration, Graphic Design, Digital Creation, Product Communication, Interior Goods and Design, Fashion, Architecture, Cartoon Art, Comic Art, and Character Design. Beyond these virtual exhibitions, the platform also included the ICAS 12 Hidden Talent Gallery, a special space in which colleagues could showcase other talents beyond their academic field. The result was a rich variety of music, dance, fashion, poetry, manga, food, arts and crafts, and other performances.

There was so much going on in the Cultural Platform that it was difficult to discover all of it. Think, for example, about the vast selection of 32 documentaries included in the ICAS 12 Film Festival, which was curated by Dr. Mario Lopez

of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Titles ranged from Ambon: A Return to Peace to Golek Garwo, from Mlabri in the Woods to The Father I Knew 2020.[1] This film festival edition also showcased a selection of short animated films bringing out issues of social relevance, which were created by students of the Graduate School of Film and New Media, Department of Animation, Tokyo University of Arts.

The publishers and institutes of our Asian Studies Exhibitor Gallery also found a place in our Cultural Platform. Several booths could be visited to learn about the latest books, products, and activities in Asian Studies. Participants could also gain more insight about publishing during two How to Get Published sessions, which were led by editors from Brill. Other features of the Cultural Platform included the Poster Gallery, where participants presented their latest research as a poster of which some were also accompanied by a short explanatory video; the Networking space, where participants could virtually gather with the Kamo river in the background; the Photo Booth, where participants could take a selfie to add to the Crafting a Global

Picture mosaic; and the Explore Kyoto! Bus, where participants could explore and learn more about Kyoto. Not to be missed was also the Catch-Up Cinema, where one could view recordings of the live events that one had missed earlier in the conference, and which also presented a rich collection of short video clips of (Japanese) cultural performances and activities. The selection ranged from noh play (Japanese original dance with drama) to sado (tea ceremonies), from zazen (meditation with temple chief priests) to kamishibai ("paper play" stories) specially created for ICAS 12.

The Live Events Stage featured a range of events and performances during the breaks. It started with the official opening speeches. Following this, a keynote symposium occurred, in which Prof. Oussouby Sacko (President of Kyoto Seika University), Prof. Juichi Yamagiwa, and Prof. Shoichi Inoue discussed the importance of locality and crafting a global future based on the diversity of nature and culture. Besides live performances, the Live Events Stage was also a space where experience was shared. There were several interviews: the rapper Moment Joon shared his experience as a Korean immigrant in Japan

and how it influences his music. Cameroon-born, Japan-raised cartoonist René Hoshino discussed his manga work; and Marty Gross enlightened us about his Mingei Film Archive Project, which aims to restore, enhance, and preserve films and recordings documenting the history of Japan's Mingei Movement and its ongoing legacy in the world of contemporary ceramics. Participants could also enjoy a variety of performances, which even brought some people in Kyoto on the dancefloor during the opening concert by Millogo Benoit, who has been working between Japan and Burkina Faso since 2007. One could also relax and appreciate the beautiful sounds of the piano during a concert by Dr. Masafumi Komatsu.

Another essential element of ICAS is the ICAS Book Prize.[2] This edition honoured publications in Chinese, English,[3] French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish, and it also included a prize for the Best Article on Global Hong Kong Studies. With nearly 1000 submissions, the Reading Committees did a tremendous job singling out the winners. During the ceremony, we made a trip around the world to hear from Secretaries of the various languages, each of whom introduced the recipient(s) of their respective edition's IBP Award [Figure 2]. Winners happily reacted in a short video clip to this wonderful news. The ICAS Secretariat would like to thank the IBP Secretaries, Reading Committees, and the IBP sponsors and partnering institutes for supporting the nine language editions and article prize.

Perhaps the most important building in the Cultural Platform was, of course, the *Live Sessions* space. By entering this room, you would be taken to the Academic Platform, where on 24 August we finally kicked off five days of live sessions. 1500 participants from all over the world gathered online in more than 300 sessions, structured along 13 main themes, to exchange and discuss their latest research [Figure 3]. We were also happy to work with *Engaging for Vietnam* for the second time,[4] which included a large number of Vietnam-related panels in the ICAS 12 programme. The one-hour live sessions were programmed in a 12-hour/day schedule to cross the different time zones. The sessions consisted of short recaps of each presentation, followed by a longer period of lively discussion, exchange, collaboration, and Q&A. The International Academic Forum (IAFOR) in Japan coordinated all sessions in Zoom and arranged for each session to be supported by a technical moderator to assist the participants as needed.
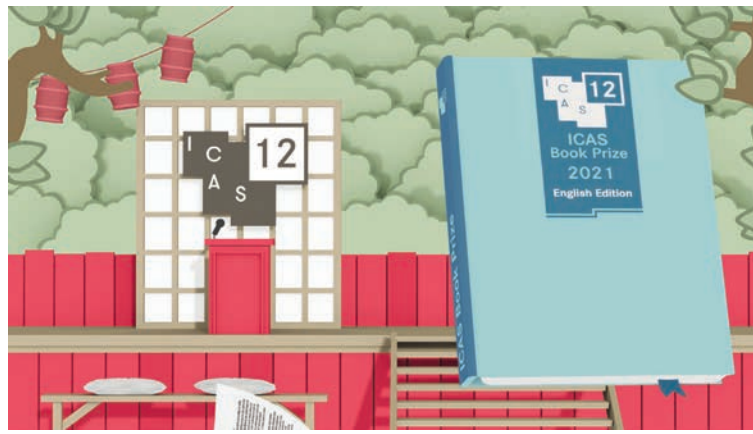
Fig. 2: Virtual presentation of the ICAS Book Prize 2021 Awards Ceremony.

Fig. 4: The ICAS Secretariat Team Leiden, rendered in manga-style illustration (Image courtesy of the artist Kae Amo).

If more time was needed for further discussion after the allotted hour passed, we were happy to offer break-out rooms in which participants could talk in a more informal setting.

Our conference format – pre-recorded presentations made available before the official ICAS 12 conference dates, coupled with live sessions focused more on discussion and exchange – aimed to break through the online fatigue of sitting in hours-long sessions. We hoped to create opportunities for a more in-depth discussion of research. Also, participants who were unable to attend the live sessions would still have the opportunity to view the presentations, as these would be available until 15 October, long after the formal conference concluded.

The five days of live sessions and other activities flew by. Before we knew it, we had reached the last event of ICAS 12 on Saturday, 28 August. It was time to sit back and enjoy *kyogen* – traditional Japanese comic theatre. For the closing speeches, we joined two different parts of the world again, Japan and the Netherlands. With great enthusiasm, Prof. Oussouby Sacko expressed his insights from Kyoto on the intensive and wonderful week full of fruitful exchanges, discussions, making new connections, and reconnecting to new and old friends. After his inspirational talk, we moved to Leiden, the home base of the ICAS Secretariat.

Colleagues, partnerships, and gratitude

This ICAS 12 was the last edition in which Dr. Paul van der Velde acted as ICAS Secretary and General Secretary of the ICAS Book

Prize, as he will be retiring on 1 November 2021. Because the ICAS Secretariat team also had to stay in Leiden given the impossibility of traveling to Japan, we experienced ICAS 12 from our computers, just as our participants did [Figure 4]. Nevertheless, we became aware that, even online, we could bring the ICAS community together and bridge research across different regions, disciplines, and time zones. We successfully brought together junior and senior scholars from more than 70 different countries. Our warm thanks go to Paul, founder of the ICAS spirit. His creative, imaginative mind and his way of lifting barriers made ICAS 12 into what all participants experienced this August. Although this was Paul's last ICAS in his official position, he will continue to be connected to IIAS, notably by becoming a Senior Fellow. Martina van den Haak, who intensively worked together with Paul on six ICAS editions, will be succeeding him as ICAS Secretary and ICAS Book Prize General Secretary. It has been a wonderful ICAS journey together, and we at the ICAS Secretariat will keep the ICAS spirit alive. Thank you Paul!

Special thanks also to our ICAS 12 partner, Kyoto Seika University, and all of their partnering institutes. We are grateful for the rich, varied programme they created. Thanks in particular to Prof. Oussouby Sacko, Dr. Shuzo Ueda, Dr. Manabu Kitawaki, Ms. Hiroko Iguchi, the Academic and Cultural Committee, and all supporting staff for their hard work in bringing Kyoto to the ICAS 12 participants. During our weekly online meetings, we together crafted the ICAS 12 experience, and we appreciate them taking on the adventure with us. Even though the experience was virtual, we hope that the participants got a touch of the Kyoto vibe by navigating the Academic and Cultural Platforms. We do hope that, someday soon, there will be an opportunity for all to visit this wonderful city in person.

Feedback and the future

The richness and diversity of the different researches presented at ICAS 12 have not gone unnoticed. We are therefore happy to announce a new ICAS project. Amsterdam University Press (AUP)[5] has approached us to participate in their new Open Access Conference Proceedings Series. ICAS 12 participants will be invited to submit their paper to be considered for the *ICAS Proceedings*. In this experimental phase, a maximum of 50 papers will be selected. This offers participants the opportunity to publish their work in an accessible and widely distributed forum.

After ICAS 12 concluded, we invited the participants to provide us with their feedback in a survey. Hearing back from participants is always important to see how things can be improved in future. As this was the first-ever online ICAS, the firsthand experiences of our ICAS 12 participants are even more important for us, as these give us an understanding of

what worked and did not work and thereby help us plan for the future. For example, should we continue ICAS online, or is there still a need to meet each other in person when possible? Nearly 1/3 of our participants made the effort to submit the survey. In general, the responses were very positive. The overall ICAS 12 experience was rated with a 7.7/10. With so many participants, there are of course different opinions and needs. Most appreciated the format, but there were also those who prefer the more traditional in-person format of longer sessions with full presentations and a short Q&A. Suggestions were also made to improve the online format further. Although the online ICAS 12 experience was much appreciated, there are also some downsides to an online format. Some participants mentioned that they were unable to fully engage themselves in the conference. Because they were not physically attending the conference, many participants were thus not free from their other obligations at home (e.g., teaching, meetings, family care, etc.). Also, the different time zones made it difficult to attend all sessions one might have liked to join. Despite this, 65 percent indicated that they would be interested in a future online edition of ICAS. However, there also exists a large desire for in situ meetings. 90 percent mentioned that they would prefer the next ICAS to be an in-person conference. With this online ICAS 12 adventure and the feedback sinking in, we will keep a close watch on different developments worldwide regarding the pandemic effects, but also new evolutions in the field of (online) conference organisation. The time has come for us to think about the next ICAS. The future will show us how, where, and when ICAS 13 will take place.

For an impression of ICAS 12, please see our aftermovie at www.icas.asia
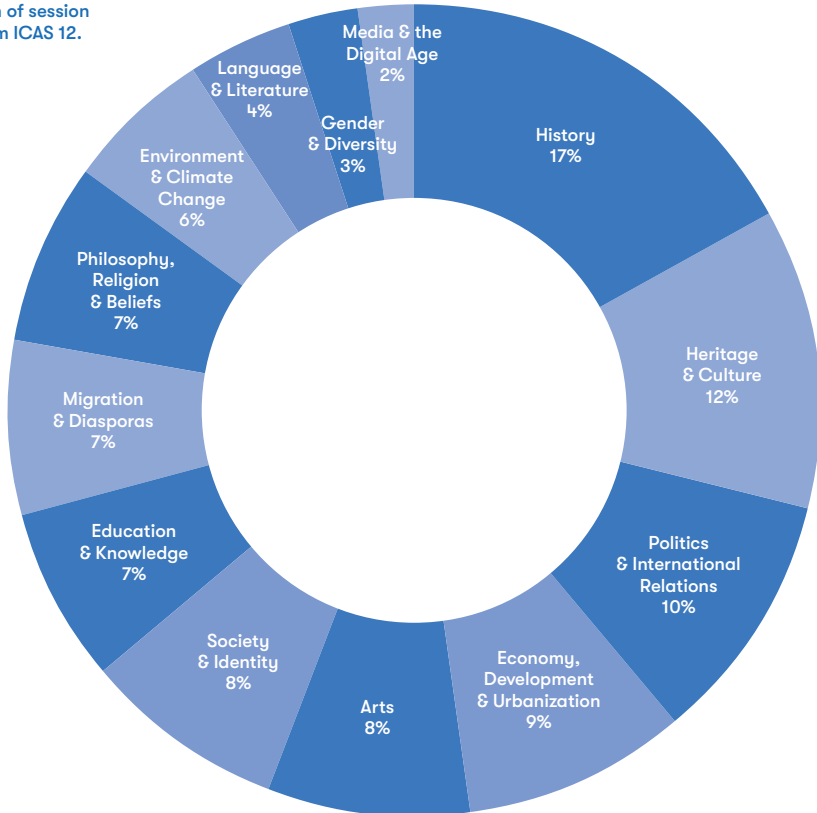
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Notes

1 Aye Chan, the young Burmese filmmaker behind *The Father I Knew 2020*, passed away in an accident after granting us permission to screen her work. The ICAS 12 Film Festival was thus dedicated to her.
2 See article ICAS Book Prize The Newsletter 89 Summer 2021: https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/nearly-1000-submissions-nine-languages-ninth-2021-icas-book-prize-edition
3 The English edition also included a dissertation prize.
4 In 2019, Engaging With Vietnam organized their EWV 11 conference in conjunction with ICAS 11.
5 The three IIAS Publications Series – Asian Cities, Global Asia, and Asian Heritages – are also published by Amsterdam University Press, as is the forthcoming methodologies series from Humanities Across Borders (HAB).

Fig. 3: Distribution of session themes from ICAS 12.

Media & the Digital Age 2%
Language & Literature 4%
Gender & Diversity 3%
Environment & Climate Change 6%
Philosophy, Religion & Beliefs 7%
Migration & Diasporas 7%
Education & Knowledge 7%
Society & Identity 8%
Arts 8%
Economy, Development & Urbanization 9%
Politics & International Relations 10%
Heritage & Culture 12%
History 17%

"The live sessions and ability to watch pre-recorded presentations on our own time was nice. So many great sessions to choose from. All the cultural and art offerings and films were fantastic!"

"It was really well organized and interactive. The event platform's design was exquisite and engaging. I was impressed by the amount of films, online exhibitions, and activities offered in a remote format. It felt like a real experience."

"I really appreciate the wide variety of disciplines and topics that are showcased as it opens one's mind in wider ways."

Humanities *Across* Borders

Aarti Kawlra

'Humanities *Across* Borders' (HAB) is an educational cooperation programme, co-funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York, which aims to create shared, humanities-grounded, inter-disciplinary curricula and context-sensitive learning methodologies at the graduate and postgraduate levels. Twenty universities in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas contribute time and resources to this unique and innovative venture. The HAB partners are now in the process of signing a joint agreement that will bring them together in a vibrant international consortium, committed to building new humanist capacities at the inter-institutional level, including thematic projects, syllabi, and joint classrooms with other continents. This new phase (2021-2026) builds on the groundwork laid during the first phase of the programme, under the title 'Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World' (2016-2021). As HAB enters into this exciting next chapter, we present a series of photographs from the first five years alongside a brief reflection on what what was accomplished, where we are now, and what the future has in store.

Humanities *Across* Borders commenced as a collaborative programme in October 2016 with 15 partner institutions in Asia, West Africa, Europe, and the United States to jointly explore the possibility of developing a humanist model of civically grounded education. We focused on pedagogical experiments, using a variety of collaborative formats of academia-societal engagement, sustaining institutional partnerships, and expanding the network. We paid specific attention to academic practice in higher education, i.e., the mindset and norms that guide us within the university and the relational elements that bind (or divide) us. What we have learned from this exercise is that there is an urgent need for dialogue across disciplinary, geo-political, and socio-economic borders and the co-creation of knowledge along the academe-society axis.

In the past five years, we have nurtured and worked with dynamic individuals functioning from open 'border-crossing' spaces that are linked to or nested within universities in the network. Loosely structured to allow for informal, inter-sectoral interactions, these spaces functioned as a common meeting ground for different civic players, including scholars.

The idea behind this approach has been to generate new and dynamic iterations of *inclusive* knowledge, in non-restrictive formats of dissemination and reception, over a sustained period. This way, HAB has sought to develop new and relevant content, drawn from lived experience and the testing of different collaborative arrangements – intra-regional partnerships and multi-university thematic clusters – for teaching and learning in a globally connected, yet locally situated way.

The numerous HAB projects carried out around the world emphasized direct engagement with human experiences, forms of knowledge embedded in orality and cultural ecologies of everyday knowledge production and transmission. We identified four universally held 'sites of knowledge and meaning' – *Food, Place-making, Craft, and Words-in-use* – as entry points for dialogue between academia and artists, local practitioners, gender and environmental activists, and other civil

society actors. Through this process, various teaching resources have been developed in each of these projects, featuring trans-disciplinary knowledge, co-produced with civic partners. They contribute to the growing repository of HAB cross-border pedagogies, which will serve as the foundation for HAB's curriculum development phase to be implemented in the coming years.

Among the key outcomes of the first phase of the Humanities Across Borders initiative are:
- HAB's collaborative, critical, and context-attentive *situated learning*[1] *methodologies* and the *HAB accession cards*, a digital storytelling tool and thematic archive with shared access (https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/accession-cards).
- *HAB Consortium* of partner institutions, currently in the process of signing a shared agreement
- *HAB Manifesto* that articulates our shared pedagogical values of critical thinking, deep listening, and immersion

Humanities *Across* Borders curriculum development

HAB's work of building and sustaining a collegial spirit among globally dispersed partners has not been without its challenges. A major setback has been the tightening grip of authoritarian regimes over freedom of expression in university campuses, classrooms, and syllabi in many countries. Among the systemic challenges we have faced is the relative conservatism of many academic institutions and the perpetuation of a singular, dominant model of the "modern university."[2] At the end of HAB's first phase, however, we can say that we now rely on a solid network of dedicated individuals, educators, and administrators keen to implement the pedagogical and institutional objectives of HAB.

Given the new circumstances of work and life under the Covid-19 pandemic, we have now set in place a new strategy based on the principles of subsidiarity and decentralization. Four anchoring institutions have been identified in the four main world

regions where HAB is represented. Deploying the four sites of universal meaning – food, place, craft, and words – as entry points for re-thinking methodological frameworks and working with experiential pedagogies has proved that embedding teaching within local realities was not only possible but highly desirable and also timely for many partners seeking access to global resources and connections. Such experiments have opened substantive dialogue and interactions outside the classroom beyond usual disciplinary, organizational, and structural entrapments.

We are now taking this approach forward by developing the four themes as interrelated syllabus tracks within the HAB collective curricular framework. Four key partner institutes have been identified at the operational level, one on each continent, each coordinating one of the four syllabi tracks: for *Place*, Ambedkar University, India; for *Food*, Leiden University College, the Netherlands; for *Craft*, University of Ghana, Africa; and for *Words*, Kenyon College, USA. The four coordinators from these institutes were selected by due process and will devote part of their time to HAB work on behalf of the whole network.

Our goal in the first phase was to demonstrate that an alternative, humanist, local-global approach to teaching and learning in higher education is not only possible but also viable in an environment in which the humanities and all humanistic knowledge are endangered species. Seeing a full-fledged accredited educational program among HAB members represents the ultimate goal of HAB's effort toward institutionalizing its curriculum model. We aim to accomplish this through internal evaluation procedures and the creation of defined HAB standards. We anticipate that the HAB Accreditation Committee (AC), to be set up, will be responsible for developing criteria for membership at the individual, departmental, and institutional levels. It will help define and refine operational criteria for the alternative humanist model of education articulated in the HAB Manifesto.

Working with institutions along the South-South-North axis has proven to be an extremely powerful way to collaborate. One reason is that universities from the

South find themselves generally more exposed to societal boundaries and resource uncertainties. Another reason is that the level of global entanglement existing in higher education – in terms of students and faculty populations, and also in terms of the subjects covered – makes it necessary for institutions from the North to show the same level of knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the South as it is for the South towards the North.

The trans-regional discussions along the four HAB themes have yielded interesting comparisons, connections, and collaborations across the network. At the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12, August 2021), organized and hosted jointly by IIAS and Kyoto Seika University (Japan), HAB scholars shared field experiences to co-create didactic tools, syllabi, and teaching resources. The HAB roundtables on food, indigo, rice, intersectional pedagogies, and place-making are examples of the creative interactions and sustained relationships that have been forged with partners since 2016. It is these very collaborations that will sustain and bolster our shared vision of education as we move forward into the second phase of Humanities Across Borders.

Aarti Kawlra, Academic Director, Humanities Across Borders at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).
https://www.iias.asia/programmes/hab
https://humanitiesacrossborders.org

Notes

1 The program draws upon, but is not limited to, Lave and Wenger's idea of learning as a social process within a community of practice. Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
2 This model has "laid claim to universality through the regular, carefully orchestrated opening and closing of doors." Reinhold Martin, *Knowledge Worlds, Media, Materiality, and the Making of the Modern University,* Columbia University Press, NY, 2021.

We envision a university that reclaims its rightful civic role and responsibility at the confluence of multiple nodes of knowledge exchange. We propose to create border-crossing spaces within and outside universities where academics, students, and communities learn from, and act and work with, each other, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition.

"Preamble," HAB Manifesto

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 cosmopolitism 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 concerned 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 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).

Call for Papers

For the (hybrid) conference 'Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West', Leiden/online, 25-26 April 2022. Deadline: 17 Dec 2021 (see page 50).

www.iias.asia/events/care-self-iii
www.ukna.asia
Coordinator: Paul Rabé
p.e.rabe@iias.nl
Clusters: Asian Cities; Asian Heritages

SEANNET is a community of scholars and practitioners with an interest in cities in Southeast Asia through the prism of the neighborhood. Supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, NY (2017-2021), case studies are carried out in six selected cities in Southeast Asia (Mandalay, Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Surabaya). In the second phase (2022-2027, also supported by the Henry Luce Foundation), SEANNET will be led by Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), and the number of case studies and activities will be

Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

expanded. SEANNET seeks to engage the humanistic social sciences in a dialogue with urban stake-holders as co-contributors of alternative knowledge about cities. This is done through a combination of participatory field-research, in-situ roundtables, workshops, conferences, publications and new forms of pedagogy developed in collaboration with local institutions of learning. Our second ambition is to help shape and empower a community of early-career scholars and practitioners working on and from Southeast Asia. The SEANNET research teams comprise international and local scholars, students from local universities, and civil society representatives, all working together with the neighbourhood residents.

www.ukna.asia/seannet
Coordinators: Paul Rabé p.e.rabe@iias.nl and Rita Padawangi Singapore University of Social Sciences ritapadawangi@suss.edu.sg
Cluster: Asian Cities

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD)

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD) is an interdisciplinary network that brings together natural, medical and social scientists to explore the implications of environmental and social change for public health in China and beyond.

www.iias.asia/programmes/forhead
Coordinator: Jennifer Holdaway
j.a.holdaway.2@iias.nl
Cluster: Global Asia

FORHEAD
健康、环境与发展论坛

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
e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: Asian Heritages

Humanities *Across* Borders

Supported by another five-year grant cycle from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we plan to institutionalise 'Humanities Across Borders' (HAB) as a collaborative model of higher education within our network of university partners in parts of Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. We are now in the process of signing a Consortium Member's Agreement to further the vision set out in the jointly drafted pedagogical Manifesto, whose preamble is as follows:

"*We envision a university that reclaims its rightful civic role and responsibility as a confluence of multiple nodes of knowledge exchange. Our goal, as educators and institutions, is to identify and explore the expansive variety of modes and contexts of acting in, and on, the world. We propose to create border-crossing spaces within and outside universities where academics, students, and communities learn from, and act and work with, each other, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition.*"

In the coming years, we will organise ourselves into a membership-based consortium, expand the programme's outreach, and formalise and apply HAB's in situ or place-based methodologies to real-world societal and ecological concerns by developing a common curriculum, implemented in a trans-regional setting. By disseminating HAB's locally situated yet globally connected approach to teaching and learning - through the consortium's website and online repository, publications, conferences, and pedagogical events - we hope to encourage other institutions in the global South and North to join our efforts.

In this issue, see page 46-47 for a photo essay on the Humanities Across Borders programme.

Follow the stories on the Humanities Across Borders Blog
humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog
www.iias.asia/hab
Clusters: Global Asia; Asian Heritages

Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge

'Africa-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.iias.asia/networks/africa-asia
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.

7th ABRN conference 'Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences', Seoul, South Korea, 23-25 June 2022. Registration will open in January 2022.

www.asianborderlands.net
Coordinator: Erik de Maaker
maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: Global Asia

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The current joint research programme between IIAS-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.

www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia
Coordinator: M. Amineh
m.p.amineh@uva.nl, m.p.amineh@iias.nl
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 IIAS, 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 in Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish; and for PhD Theses in English. Twelve conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden. ICAS 12 was organised together with Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and took place entirely online).

www.icas.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 IIAS, 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

Lecture Series: Itinerant Heritage

Interdisciplinary lectures on objects from the colonial age, looted art and the illegal trade of cultural goods

Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS) at Heidelberg University. Winter Semester 2021/2022

In the 2021/2022 winter semester, the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS) at Heidelberg University is hosting a lecture series on the topic of itinerant cultural heritage. The focus of the interdisciplinary lectures is tangible and intangible cultural goods of different kinds that move dynamically between different cultures and forms of intercourse. For example, it deals with stolen art, or illegally traded collectables. The lectures – in English – will reflect approaches from anthropology and archaeology, art history, criminology, museum and area studies. Starting on 26 October 2021, they will be livestreamed Tuesdays from 14:00 to 16:00.

The convenors of the lecture series are Prof. Dr Christiane Brosius, professor for visual and media anthropology at the HCTS, and Dr Carsten Wergin, anthropologist and associate professor at the HCTS. "With the series we have foregrounded the mobility and fragility of cultural goods that move in the field of tension between different socio-cultural, political, economic and ecological forces. The focus is, inter alia, on how people engage with their cultural heritage in view of climate change, migration, urbanization, nationalisms or colonialism," Christiane Brosius explains. Carsten Wergin adds: "With the concept of 'itinerant heritage' we highlight the dynamics and mobility of cultural goods – in time and also in space. We are interested in how, and with what consequences, social actors claim cultural heritage for themselves, imagine, transform or critique it."

Above: Mural, Rajasthan.
(Photograph by Christiane Brosius, 2010).

The curtain-raiser for the lecture series on 26 October will be given by anthropologist Prof. Dr Haidy Geismar from University College London (UK) with a lecture on digital cultural heritage. Eight more lectures follow, from November to January 2022, exploring further forms of itinerant cultural heritage with respect to theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges. Besides lectures on handling plundered art from Africa or museum objects acquired during colonialism, the programme also includes sessions on the illegal worldwide trade with cultural goods and the ecological and political-nationalist dimensions of cultural heritage. The final lecture on 1 February 2022 will be given by Prof. Dr Wayne Modest, Director of Content at the Museum of World Cultures (Wereldmuseum Rotterdam) and director of the Research Center for Material Culture in Leiden (Netherlands), on cultural heritage and its colonial history in the Caribbean.

The speakers include internationally acclaimed experts from Australia, Britain, India, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States. The lecture series "Itinerant Heritage: Tracing Transcultural Dynamics and Mobilities" is being organized in cooperation with the Flagship Initiative "Transforming Cultural Heritage" and the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies of Heidelberg University.

For the livestream link email:
clare.harris@hcts.uni-heidelberg.de

For the lecture series 'Itinerant Heritage' go to: www.uni-heidelberg.de/itinerant_heritage_lecture

Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences

7th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network

Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ) Research Center, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea, 23-25 June 2022

The 7th Asian Borderland Research Network (ABRN) conference focuses on three key themes – technologies, zones, co-existences – that aim to generate broader debate and intellectual engagement with borderland futures. Panels and papers will offer critical reflections on these key themes both theoretically and empirically.

The conference is organised by the Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ) Research Center; International Institute for Asian Studies; and the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN).

Registration will open in January 2022. Fees are as follows, with special rates for (PhD) students:

Early bird (before 1 March):
€ 125 / (PhD) students € 70

Regular (before 15 May):
€ 150 / (PhD) students € 90

On-site:
€ 175 / (PhD) students € 110

Information and registration
www.iias.asia/events/borderland-futures-technologies-zones-co-existences

Humanities Across Borders: A Methodologies Book Series

The Humanities Across Borders (HAB) book series aims to trigger discussions on the relevance of normative, top down, and institutionalised standards of knowledge production and transmission in the academy. As conventional models and modes of understanding lose their capacity to explain the human condition in the new global era, the multitude of voices, lives, locales, and journeys emerge as windows into the past and present to give a fresh, more expanded meaning to the Humanities.

Comprising monographs as well as edited volumes, the HAB book series focuses on methodological experiments and reflections across disciplinary, institutional, ideological, national, and sectoral borders. The series will:
- Interrogate prevailing, often dominant, conceptual frames and categories.
- Posit uncommon entry points to inquiry that bear meaning in the everyday lives of people and are relevant for interrogating wider global issues.
- View quotidian knowledge-practices as valuable sources of experiential knowledge (and pedagogies) unfolding over time and space.

- Encourage dialogue 'across borders', in the spirit of inter-cultural scholarship and educational justice.
- Seek collaborative institutional and/or programmatic arrangements that re-invigorate the civic embeddedness and global connectedness of university-based curricula.

Series Editors
Aarti Kawlra, IIAS, the Netherlands,
Philippe Peycam, IIAS, the Netherlands

Editorial Board
Wendy Singer, Kenyon College, USA
Tharapi Than, Northern Illinois University, USA
Dzodzi Tsikata, University of Ghana, Ghana
Paul van der Velde, IIAS, The Netherlands
Françoise Vergès, France

Actively Seeking Proposals
The series welcomes scholarly monographs and edited volumes in English, by both established and early-career researchers.

For questions or to submit a proposal, contact the Publishing Director Irene van Rossum. Email: i. vanrossum@aup.nl

Website: www.aup.nl/en/series/humanities-across-borders

Call for Papers

Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West. The Care of the Self III

A two-day hybrid conference. Leiden, the Netherlands/online, 25-26 April 2022

We invite the submission of paper abstracts of maximum 300 words by 17 December 2021. Selected papers will be presented as work in progress and should consist of previously unpublished material. At the event you will receive feedback from convenors, fellow participants, and audience members. A selection of papers will then be made into a book.

This conference forms part of the Care of the Self project which has been investigating human agency in society, taking Michel Foucault's concept of the care of the self as its point of departure. The project's focus on citizenship and human rights in Asia and the West (and comparisons between them) is one of its unique selling points.

This event is intended to be multi-disciplinary, with contributions from (but not limited to) anthropology, architecture, geography, history, philosophy, political science, religious studies, social science, urbanism, etc. The point of departure is citizenship in Asia and/or the West. Papers should deal with current or imminent challenges to citizenship with regard to (among other things) the built environment, climate change, increasing inequality,

the rise of Big Data, Covid-19 and its responses, etc. Papers are free to propose their own definition of citizenship, and those that make comparative analyses between, within, or across the themes listed below will be particularly welcome.

Finally, this conference will be a hybrid event, meaning that while we strongly encourage participants to join in person in Leiden, should this not be possible then arrangements will be made to accommodate online participation by successful applicants. We would prefer, however, for people to attend in person, as this makes the initial peer-review process so much stronger.

This conference is organised by Delft University of Technology (Netherlands), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), and the International Institute for Asian Studies (Netherlands).

Deadline for submissions: 17 December 2021

Detailed information about the programme and submission guidelines can be found on our website: www.iias.asia/events/care-self-iii

For questions, please contact Ms Xiaolan Lin of the UKNA Secretariat at IIAS: Email: x.lin@iias.nl

Climate Strike on Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (Photograph by Nurul Azlan, 2019).

The Study

The Focus

Would you like to reach 50,000 readers worldwide?

Call for Submissions to *The Newsletter*

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a Humanities and Social Sciences research institute and knowledge exchange platform based in Leiden, the Netherlands. It takes a thematic and multisectoral approach to the study of Asia and initiates programmes that engage Asian and other international partners. *The Newsletter* is a free periodical published by IIAS, and the premier Asian Studies forum for scholars and experts alike to publish research essays and reviews. *The Newsletter* bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse and provides an exceptional opportunity to share work with our 50,000 readers worldwide. Pertinent and provoking, *The Newsletter* encourages discussion and interaction.

The Tone

We are currently inviting submissions for issue #92, to be published in June 2022. We welcome four types of contributions:

The Study

These are research essays of 1400-1700 words (for one-page articles) or 2500-3600 words (for two-page articles) on any topic in Asian Studies. Please include 2-3 images with your submissions.

The Focus

Each issue of *The Newsletter* includes a special section called "The Focus" that compiles multiple articles on a particular theme. The Focus is put together by an external guest editor. If you would like to propose a theme for a Focus section, please contact the editorial team.

The Review

For the print edition, we typically select book reviews from our reviews website. To write a review for the website, please browse available titles at https://www.iias.asia/the-review.

New section - The Tone

Be the first! The Tone will feature works of creativity and curation. While this includes traditional museums and exhibitions, we increasingly encourage contributors to think in broader terms about artistic output: film and literary festivals, street art, digital media, musical recordings, crafts, and more. Articles in this section can be written by the curators/artists themselves or by a third party. To pitch an article for The Tone, please reach out to the editorial team.

Find more information about submission procedures and style guidelines here: https://www.iias.asia/contribute. For examples of previously published issues, please use the link below: https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter.

Research essays for The Study in issue #92 should be submitted by 1 March 2022. All article submissions, Focus and Tone proposals, and any other enquiries can be sent directly to the editorial team at thenewsletter@iias.nl.

Paramita Paul, Chief Editor of The Newsletter, IIAS

The Review

Guest Blogging Opportunities at IIAS

IIAS connects knowledge and people, contributing to a more integrated understanding of Asia today by focusing on relevant themes and issues together with scholars and practitioners throughout the world. In this spirit, we have created The Blog, an online platform where people like you can freely and safely discuss topics in your field. Maybe you have an informed comment on timely issues and events happening in the world. Maybe you want to share interesting stories from your fieldwork diaries. Maybe you would like to convene a group of colleagues to weigh in on a special theme. The Blog is a place for all this and more – swift but deliberate, informal but rigorous, critical but welcoming.

Drop us a line at thenewsletter@iias.nl to share your ideas, conversations, and research findings with our worldwide audience and networks. In particular – but not exclusively – we solicit individual or group contributions about Asia in the world, critical heritage studies, and urban developments. We welcome both singular, one-off contributions as well as extended series.

The Blog has already launched with a collection of conversations about diplomacy in Southeast Asia. You can read and comment on them here: https://blog.iias.asia

The Blog
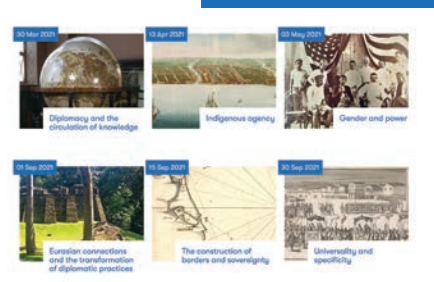
To submit an article visit us at: www.iias.asia/contribute

To contribute to our blog email us at: thenewsletter@iias.nl

The Story of IIAS as a Publisher

A Conversation with Paul van der Velde

Mary Lynn van Dijk

From its inception in 1993, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) has been active in publishing a wide variety of academic book series, promotional material of all kinds, and its flagship Newsletter that reports on what is happening in the field of Asian studies worldwide. IIAS Publications Officer Mary Lynn van Dijk talks to Paul van der Velde, who has been involved in publications at IIAS from the very beginning.

What was your position at IIAS when you started in the 1990s?

As Head of Communications, I was responsible for IIAS' academic publications, but also for ancillary publications such as guides, reports, yearbooks, lecture series, and public relations in general. The founding director of IIAS (Wim Stokhof) and I teamed up and brainstormed a lot on how we could stand out in the totally fragmented field of Asian Studies. We agreed that we should have an attractive quarterly publication in newspaper format, which should be distributed for free to all interested parties worldwide. I became the editor of the periodical you are presently reading and was responsible for the first 17 editions and a variety of supplements. Three years after its first issue, the newsletter had reached a worldwide circulation of 25,000 hard copies, and it was also available online from its inception.

How did you set up the Publications program?

Setting up *The Newsletter* and its international editorial board took up a lot of my time. Needless to say, an academic institute should also be active in publishing its and others' academic output. First, we concentrated on what our fellows were working on, which resulted in Yearbooks containing fellows' articles and also a Working Papers Series. Furthermore, we mounted an IIAS Lecture Series, which contained the speeches of politicians and Asia scholars held at the IIAS. Their printed versions were handed out to the participants at the end of the meetings. Furthermore, as a facilitating institute, we wanted to give an idea of who

was doing what in the field of Asian Studies. This led us to publish the *Guide to Asian Studies in the Netherlands*, the *IIAS Guide to Asian Collections in the Netherlands*, and also the *IIAS Internet Guide to Asian Studies*.

After years of working with a number of different publishers (e.g., Curzon, Brill, Kegan Paul International, etc.), we eventually thought the time was ripe to concentrate our publications into a single dedicated programme. Our proposal to start two series primarily on contemporary Asia was embraced by Amsterdam University Press. That AUP's books were distributed in the United States by University of Chicago Press and across Asia itself was an important factor that led to our decision.

When were the IIAS Publications (Monographs and Edited Volumes) and the ICAS Publications (Monographs and Edited Volumes) started?

After we were convinced that Asian Studies would be one of the spear points in AUP's publication policy, we signed the contract. Whereas all previous IIAS books had been hardcovers, we shifted to much cheaper paperbacks in order to increase the accessibility of our academic output. This was the beginning of the IIAS Publications Series (2007-2013) and the ICAS Publications Series (2006-2012), both of which consisted of monographs and edited volumes. To test the grounds, Josine Stremmelaar, at that time Executive Manager of IIAS and ICAS, and I co-edited *What About Asia? Revisiting Asian Studies* (2006) on the occasion of the retirement of Wim Stokhof as IIAS director.

I was appointed General Editor of both

series. Much more important were the Editorial Boards of these series which consisted of Asian Studies scholars such as Carol Gluck, Prasenjit Duara, A.B. Shamsul, and Wim Boot. With them and their contacts, I was able to set up both series in a reasonably short time span. The IIAS Publications Series served as a channel of publication for the many fellows visiting IIAS. The topics of the books reflected the kind of research being supported by IIAS during those years.

When were the current four series – Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, Global Asia, and Humanities Across Borders Methodologies – started?

Every now and then institutes such as ours change directions. Under the present-day director, Philippe Peycam, IIAS streamlined its research-led activities around three broad themes: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, and Global Asia. Each of these "clusters" became the basis of a book series at AUP. Humanities Across Borders is a recent addition, and the first volume in its series is expected in 2022.

So far, 32 volumes (on average five per year) have been published with titles ranging from *Shadow Exchanges along the New Silk Roads* and *African-Asian Encounters: New Cooperations and New Dependencies* to *Beyond Bali: Subaltern Citizens and Post-Colonial Intimacy* and *Ideas of the City in Asian Settings*. The series editors of each of the series (Global Asia: Tak-Wing Ngo; Asian Cities: Paul Rabé; Asian Heritages: Adèle Esposito and Michael Herzfeld) play an important role, both in encouraging new submissions and in deciding whether submitted manuscripts fit in the series.

They have been very successful, judging from the number of books which have been published and the 17 books which now are in various stages of production. Also not unimportant, these books have been widely reviewed in major Asian studies journals worldwide. Book series are the global currency of our academic economy. Our new series from Humanities Across Borders, with appealing working titles as *Rice* and *Indigo*, will add a long overdue pedagogical and methodological dimension to our IIAS publications.

What would you consider your legacy at IIAS in terms of publications?

This is the most complicated question you can ask me because I cannot separate my work as editor from the many projects I have been involved in at IIAS over the past 30 years. They are all intertwined. I hope to have contributed to establish IIAS as one of the drivers of Asian Studies publishing, from books to *The Newsletter*. I derive most pride from having been (co)instrumental in the creation of the conditions under which what I labeled the New Asia Scholars can thrive. They all have a transregional, multidisciplinary, and multilingual approach to Asian Studies, an approach with concomitant academic attitude which lies at the heart of IIAS and ICAS.

Paul, many thanks for giving this insightful overview of the publications activities of IIAS from its foundation to the present day and beyond.
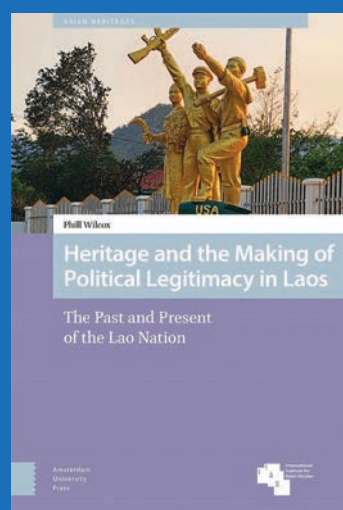
Mary Lynn van Dijk,
IIAS Publications Officer.
Email: m.l.c.van.dijk@iias.nl

IIAS Book Series with Amsterdam University Press
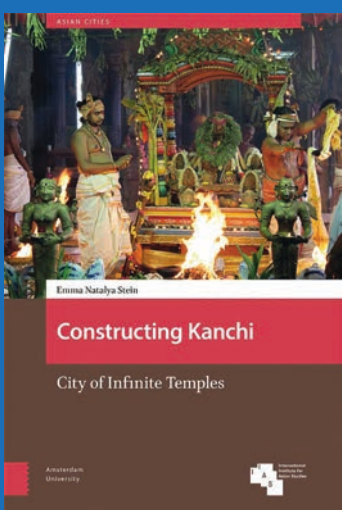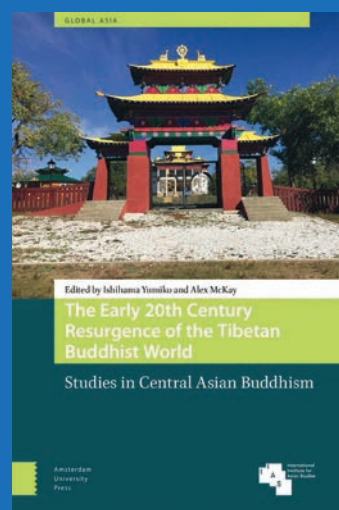

Asian Cities

Series Editor: Paul Rabé
Most Recent Title: *Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples* by Emma Natalya Stein, 2021

Asian Heritages

Series Editors: Adèle Esposito and Michael Herzfeld
Most Recent Title: *Heritage and the Making of Political Legitimacy in Laos: The Past and Present of the Lao Nation* by Phill Wilcox, 2021

Global Asia

Series Editor: Tak-Wing Ngo
Forthcoming Title: *The Early 20th Century Resurgence of the Tibetan Buddhist World: Studies in Central Asian Buddhism* by Ishihama Yumiko and Alex McKay (eds.), 2022

Humanities Across Borders (Methodologies)

Series Editors: Aarti Kawlra and Philippe Peycam
This newest book series will launch its first title in 2022. See this issue's "Announcements" section (Page 50) for more information.

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the Spotlight

The International Institute for Asian Studies annually hosts a large number of visiting researchers (research 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

Mohammad Tareq Hasan

IIAS Research Cluster: Global Asia
1 April 2021 – 31 Jan 2022

Home Institute: Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

An open time at IIAS

My fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) started amid the COVID-19 pandemic. But fortunately, many preventive measures have been gradually lifted since I arrived in Leiden. In a way, this allowed me to settle into the new rhythm, and my life in Leiden started at a comfortable pace.

At IIAS, I am primarily writing a monograph that ethnographically explores an expanding neoliberal context in Bangladesh, where a rapidly growing Ready-made Garment (RMG) sector and an expansion of industrial work opportunities combined to produce a shift in the labour regime from subsistence to wages. The monograph that I am preparing presents a situation where corporate international trade agreements, a new neoliberal state regime, and a growing textile market have enabled establishing a new class of Muslim female workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Based on over 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a garment factory and among the garment workers of Dhaka, this monograph sets out to represent *why people in this system do the things they do*, imagining the industrial scene in Dhaka as a total system and analysing how this was historically constituted, transformed, maintained, and reproduced over time.

Leiden University's incredibly vast library resources are a treasure in this writing process. I have found a few ethnographies on pre- and post-independent Bangladesh that I did not find in original prints in Dhaka. In addition, the Fellowship allows me to interact with people from diverse academic backgrounds through seminars, presentations/discussions, and writing groups. Contacts with other current and ex-fellows of IIAS have enriched my social and intellectual experience in the Netherlands. Adding to this further, the most welcoming IIAS staff have made my stay in Leiden a bit easier in every possible way.

In addition to the academic opportunities, experiencing Dutch culture and nature is a value in itself. On the weekends, weather permitting, I travel to other cities, which is a rewarding cultural experience. While the pandemic restricted movement across Europe to some extent in 2021, such restrictions left me with an opportunity to explore the Netherlands a bit more. Nonetheless, I plan to visit some other European cities and take advantage of the Schengen Area in the coming months.

Like the other Dutch cities, Leiden is great to walk through or to explore by bike. Walking through the parks and by the canal every day refreshes my tired mind. A walk through Haarlemmerstraat, bookstores in Breestraat, and the many stalls at Leiden's Street Market along the canal have been incredible. *A stroopwafel* (Dutch syrup waffle) from the stalls is a treat and gives a little more energy to walk a bit longer. In the evenings, Plantsoen, a city park along the canal, is the place where I can get some quiet time.

It has been a unique opportunity for me to be here at IIAS. I can term this Fellowship period as an 'open time' – nothing is expected of me other than doing what pleases me academically. IIAS is an ideal institution to host post-PhD scholars as it provides time and resources for publishing and building a career in academia. Having all the support, but nothing that can distract me from writing, has made my stay at IIAS an incredible experience. Overall, the IIAS Fellowship has offered a quiet time and stimulating intellectual environment to explore new ideas that will guide my entire academic journey in the future.

Rafael Abrão

IIAS Research Cluster: Global Asia
1 Sept 2020 – 30 Aug 2022

Home Institute: Federal University of ABC (UFABC), São Paolo, Brazil

The Belt and Road Initiative: challenges and opportunities to Latin America

It was a perfect moment to arrive in the Netherlands in September 2021. Considering that almost all Covid restrictions were gone, I was able to enjoy the end of the summer. I was born and raised in Brazil, and this is my first time working abroad and experiencing a new culture. Leiden is a lovely place, and I quickly fell in love with the city's historic centre and lifestyle. I have also explored local culture, visiting other cities such as Utrecht, Nieuwegein, Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam.

It feels like I'm taking a big step in my career. Having the opportunity to conduct my research in a diverse work environment such as IIAS is, of course, the most valuable point in this first international experience that I am having. If you wonder what brought an Afro-Latino Brazilian researcher to Asian Studies, it is pretty straightforward. The geopolitical interactions between Asia and Latin America are usually underestimated, which caught my attention in the first place. Most Asia researchers tend to look to other regions, thereby neglecting the relevance of China to Latin America and Latin America to China. My research at IIAS aims to partially cover this gap, at least where it concerns China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is an effort to consolidate China's influence in Asia, Africa, Europe, and, more recently, also Latin America. China has advanced its presence in the region through investments, financing, and expanding its companies' activities. Since 2018, Latin American countries have been officially invited to join the initiative, and Chinese officials have labelled the region as a natural extension of the BRI. My project looks at the challenges and opportunities of the BRI to Latin America under the guidance of Prof. Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, who is the coordinator of one of the BRI projects at IIAS.

Here, in Leiden, I have the chance to discuss and widen my perspectives by interacting with other researchers and discovering a wide range of new sources. I plan to use the IIAS and Leiden University facilities, including the Asian Studies collection at the library, to expand my knowledge of China. Getting in touch with other investigators based in the Netherlands is also part of the plan—not only from Asian Studies but also from the Department of Latin American Studies at Leiden University and other institutions. During my stay, I hope to contribute to the academic and cultural environment of IIAS by adding a Latin American flavour.

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 of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.

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.

Information and application forms: www.iias.asia/fellowships

Museum of Material Memory

Aanchal Malhotra

The Museum of Material Memory is a crowdsourced digital repository of material culture from the Indian subcontinent, tracing family history and social ethnography through heirlooms, collectibles, and objects of antiquity. Through the intimate act of storytelling, each essay reveals not just a personal history of the object and its owner, but leads to the unfolding of a generational narrative spanning the traditions, cultures, customs, conventions, habits, languages, geographies, and history of the vast and diverse subcontinent.

It was during my masters' thesis at Concordia University (Montréal) that I would come to understand the intimate relationships that humans share with objects, particularly heirlooms whose origin may lie in geographies that are inaccessible, both physically and temporally. In the year 2013, I embarked on a cross-border research project, trying to archive the objects that had migrated with refugees during the 1947 Partition of India. The intention was to understand whether the notion of belonging to a particular land can be imbued within an object carried from that land, even though the land itself now remained on the other side of a border. Over time, this research coalesced into a book published in South Asia as *Remnants of a Separation* and internationally as *Remnants of Partition*. This method of excavating personal history through material culture found resonance even with many who had no history of Partition. Gauging this interest, I co-founded the Museum of Material Memory with a friend, Navdha Malhotra, who works in the social impact space, in September 2017.

With the exception of physical museums, there are few places where the life and materiality of an object of age is celebrated. The inherent misfortune of mundane objects, unlike those which may be either monetarily valuable or visibly precious, is that they are often underappreciated. Too often, the stories connected to them are forgotten to time. These are the objects that find their way into the virtual shelves of our Museum – an ordinary patina-lined utensil in a grandparents' kitchen, a framed photograph of a distant ancestor, perhaps a notebook, or even a box that holds trinkets. The Museum of Material Memory, thus, invites South Asians from around the world to submit short essays and photographs – either through our submission page or via email – on aged objects they may find in their possession. We have expanded beyond the theme of Partition that initially inspired the project, and the Museum now welcomes objects predating the 1970s and originating anywhere in the subcontinent or its diaspora.

In the folds, crevasses, edges, and lingering smells of old objects live the tangible links to a past that the writer may never have known of, or to family members they may never have met. The process of oral history and familial interviewing embodied in each essay also ensures that the objects can act as multi-generational emblems, encouraging active conversations, and the writing often becomes a deeply emotional exercise. After receiving a submission, we work closely with the writer to develop the narrative further. The final piece, therefore, is a result of extensive collaboration, detailing not only the physical and tactile nature of the object, but also highlighting generational memory and collective history.

For the subcontinental region, where borders are still fraught with contention, resulting in a history that often remains unreconciled, this humble archive aims to be a borderless platform for conversations extending beyond nationality, citizenship, religion, ethnicity, and caste. To that end, the Museum is both digital and crowd-sourced to retain accessibility. But most importantly, it is a space where material culture acts as a democratic medium to tell the stories of a shared history.

Fig. 1 (main photo): The *bonti* passed down the generations of women in Kasturi Mukherjee's family (Photograph courtesy of Kasturi Mukherjee).

Fig. 2 (inset above): A British Indian passport belonging to Rajita Banerjee's great grandfather (Photograph courtesy of Rajita Banerjee).

Fig. 3 (inset left): The chequebook from 1947, belonging to Saba Qizilbash's grandfather (Photograph courtesy of Saba Qizilbash).
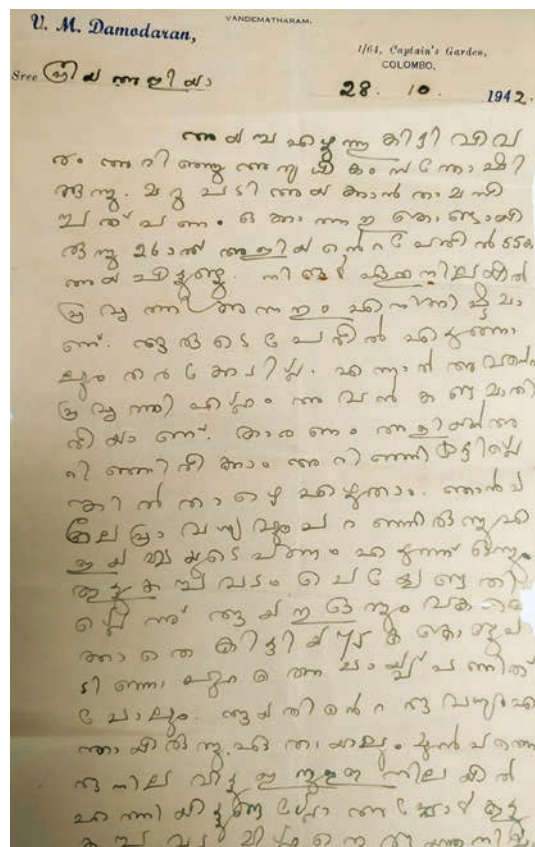
Fig. 4 (above): A letter sent from Ceylon to Kerala in 1942 by Amit Pallath's grandfather (Photograph courtesy of Amit Pallath).

Fig. 5 (right): Sahiba Bhatia's heirloom Princess Mary Gift Box from WW1 (Photograph courtesy of Sahiba Bhatia).

An ideal example of this is a piece titled *The Bengali Bonti*, where Asansol-based Kasturi Mukherjee writes about "a kitchen instrument that is used in Indian households to peel, chop, shred, slice and dice items, especially in the states of Bengal, Assam, Orissa." The piece narrates how a woman at the bonti is a quintessential part of Indian, particularly Bengali, iconography. Mukherjee traces the matrilineal history of the particular instrument, from her great grandmother's kitchen to her own [Fig. 1]. No one could have anticipated the overwhelming response to this story. Once it was published, highly nuanced memories began to pour in from across the subcontinent, including what the *bonti* was called in different regions: *Pankhi* or *paniki* in Odisha, *danti* or *dranti* or *data* in Punjab, *chulesi* in Nepal, *kathi-peeta* in Andhra Pradesh, *hasiya* in Uttar Pradesh, *haansu* or *pehsul* in Bihar, *pasuli* in Chhattisgarh, *paushi* or *vili* in Maharashtra, *aruvamanai* in Tamil Nadu, *nopak* in Assam, *daa* in Sylhet, *chirava* in Kerala. We also learnt how particular ones were used for particular things like fish, meat, only a certain kind of vegetable or fruit and even coconuts, and never interchangeably. The object appeared emblematic to so many people's lives in

different parts of the region, and the collective tapestry of their responses affirmed the purpose with which we had begun the project.

The submissions to the Museum are divided into various categories, including Household Items, Textiles, Photographs, Jewellery, Documents & Maps, Heirlooms & Collectibles, and Art & Books. However, the stories of widely different objects can live together within a single category. For instance, Documents & Maps includes the story *My Great-Grandfather: A British Subject by Birth* by Kolkata-based Rajita Banerjee. By way of a British Indian passport, Banerjee writes about how travel documents and modes of identification were issued in the 1930's to those under colonial rule in India [Fig.2]. Also included is Lahore-born, Dubai-based Saba Qilizbash's *Aghajan's Cheque Book*, which discusses the treasured document from the Imperial Bank of India, carried by her grandfather from Srinagar, India to Lahore, Pakistan after a ten-month imprisonment in New Delhi, following the 1947 Partition [Fig. 3]. The chequebook was bequeathed to Saba at her wedding day. In a third story, Kerala-based Amit Pallath's *News from Ceylon: 1942* describes a letter addressed from his grandfather to the family in Thrissur,

Kerala from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where he stayed and worked for almost eight years sending money back home [Fig. 4]. The letter highlights the hardships felt by migrant workers during the British rule: "Food is rationed and I receive 3 *naazhi* a week." One *naazhi* was approximately 200 grams.

At times, what is considered a mundane object by a family can reveal itself to be a rare and important artefact from history, as in the case of Indore-based Sahiba Bhatia. In *Souvenir from the Trenches of World War One*, she discovers her grandmother's brass jewellery box to be Princess Mary's Christmas Gift Box given to "every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front" in 1914, including the nearly 1.5 million soldiers from undivided India sent on behalf of the British Empire [Fig. 5]. Bhatia found out that her grandmother had inherited this box from her mother, whose adoptive father was a buyer and seller of military equipment for the British. He had procured this Christmas Box as a valued artefact of the time. Around the same time that this submission was made to the Museum, I was working on a book partly set in World War I and had done significant research on the Princess Mary Christmas Box. Thus, the final published piece is a collaborative text between Bhatia and

myself, where she offered a personal perspective on the artefact, and I, a historical one.

In the Jewellery category, which remains our most popular, we often receive submissions for objects that look near identical but unravel deeply different histories. On first glance, the substantial pair of silver anklets in Delhi-based Prabhdeep Singh Matharu's *A Spared Pair of Payal* and Sri Muktsar Sahib-based Khushveen Brar's *Heirlooms from Faridkot* look as though they could have been fashioned by the same jeweler [Fig. 6 and Fig. 7]. However, Matharu's story begins in 1949 in Kapurthala district, with the anklets traveling to Delhi with his grandparents. Upon their death decades later, amidst a division of family wealth, Matharu's mother is moved to pay more than these anklets were worth in order to retain the last traces of her mother-in-law. Meanwhile, Brar's matrilineal story extends to the 1920s in Faridkot, where her great-grandmother inherited the anklets as a part of her trousseau, subsequently passing them down the generations. In both cases, the jewellery bears an identical interlinked design, oxidizing with the passage of time, and is similar in weight and length. Despite the unique contexts, both families consider the weight of the past to have settled into these anklets.

While the virtual world may seem impersonal to some, we believe that our efforts at the Museum not only offer a personal corridor into the past, but also inculcate within our readers and writers a deep sense of nostalgia and pride for their personal histories and memories, which can, when threaded together, represent collective histories and memories.

Aanchal Malhotra is an oral historian and writer based in New Delhi. She is the author of *Remnants of a Separation* (2017), published internationally as *Remnants of Partition* (2019), and co-founded of the Museum of Material Memory in 2017. To submit to the Museum, email: hello@museumofmaterialmemory.com

Fig. 6 Prabhdeep Singh Matharu's mother wearing the silver payal (Photograph courtesy of Prabhdeep Singh Matharu).

Fig. 7 Khushveen Brar wearing the heirloom silver anklet (Photograph courtesy of Khushveen Brar).