

NO. 92

The Newsletter



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Mongolia's
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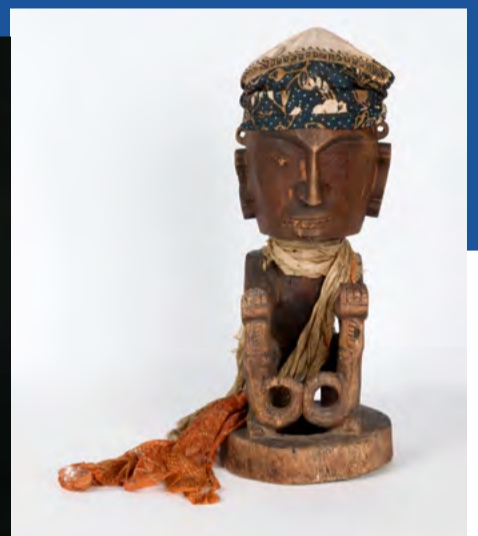
Clues of Provenance

Klaas Stutje and
Jona Mooren



Recent years have seen a critical reevaluation of the history of museums, as well as a call to 'decolonize' them. In March 2022, the Netherlands-based NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD/ECR), together with the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) and the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (RMA), presented the results of the initiative Pilot project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPOCE), which focused on the development of a methodology for provenance research into colonial collections. Where do objects in collections with a history in the colonial past originate? Under what circumstances were they acquired and how did these objects change meaning over time and place, and to whom?

The contributions in the Focus section of this issue of The Newsletter are based on the results of this research project, or have been written on similar provenance topics. They discuss a variety of objects, from Acehese figurative drawings to a Sri Lankan cannon. They also address different historical processes of heritage formation: from a history of absence, to histories of forgetting and alienation. The articles underscore the importance of the changing significance of objects, and the different power relations within which objects were 'exchanged' in local, colonial, transnational, and international contexts.



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.

On The Network pages

A selection of 94 articles presented at the twelfth edition of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in Leiden in 2021 is now available in open access in the Amsterdam University Press Conference Proceedings Series. For more information, turn to page 49, where you will also find our other announcements, including a new addition to the Dual Degree programme, and a Call for Papers for the Tenth Conference of Iranian Studies (ECIS10).

On page 48, Paul Rabé introduces River Cities as Method (RCM), a new working group under the umbrella of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA). Spearheaded by IIAS in collaboration with partners worldwide, RCM seeks to revitalize urban rivers and the ecological, social, cultural, and economic systems linked to these rivers. It welcomes applications from teams of local scholars, scientists, and activists. Also on page 48, Satya Patchineelam, principal investigator of RCM's pilot project 'Xingu River', tells us the story of this river from its own perspective.

Gregory Bracken provides us with a brief sketch of his editorial process on our Publications page, 'Print Journeys', in which we ask authors and editors to share writing experiences (page 44).

You will find information about our fellowship programme on page 45, along with two 'fellows in the spotlight'. A brief description of the IIAS research programmes and other initiatives may be found on pages 46-47.

The Newsletter is a free periodical published by IIAS. As well as being a window into the Institute, The Newsletter also links IIAS with the community of Asia scholars and the worldwide public interested in Asia and Asian studies. The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse, and continues to serve as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

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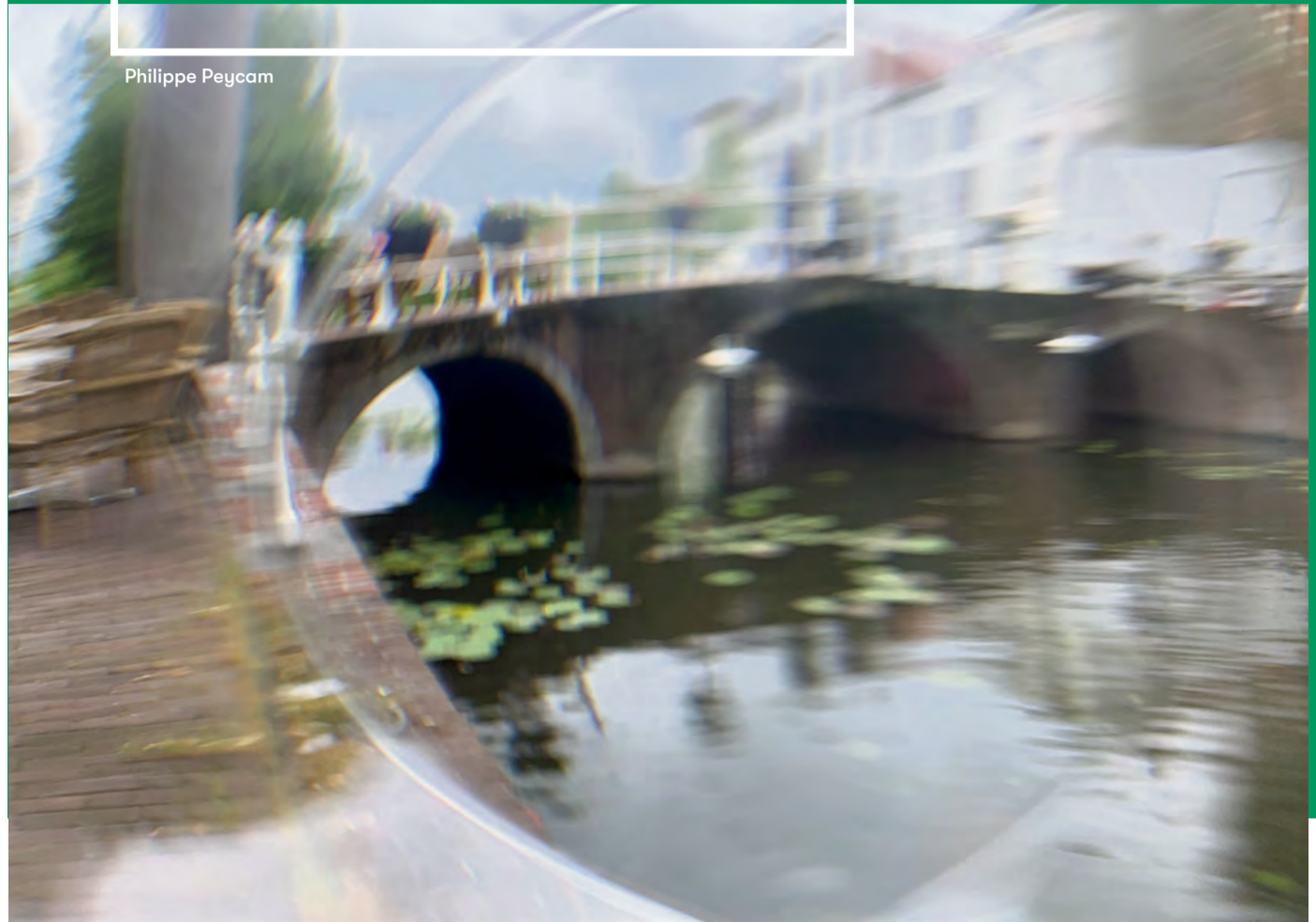
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IIAS as a Bridge

Philippe Peycam



The increased polarization of the world – as seen in the growing competition between China and the USA and their respective spheres of influence, now augmented by the appalling Russia-Ukraine conflict and the noticeable trend towards disengagement vis-à-vis the West/“North” among many countries of the Global South – paradoxically offers a Europe-based international academic organization like IIAS a unique opportunity to make an enhanced meaningful contribution to global, inter-regional, and inter-cultural dialogue.

In fact, we see a clear opening for IIAS and its close partners to reinforce its position as a substantial “bridge,” facilitating academic, scientific, and intellectual cooperation between Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, and Europe whilst seeking to engage more closely with academic and non-academic communities at local, situated levels.

This can be achieved by mobilizing institutions and individuals as partners from the five world regions. IIAS and

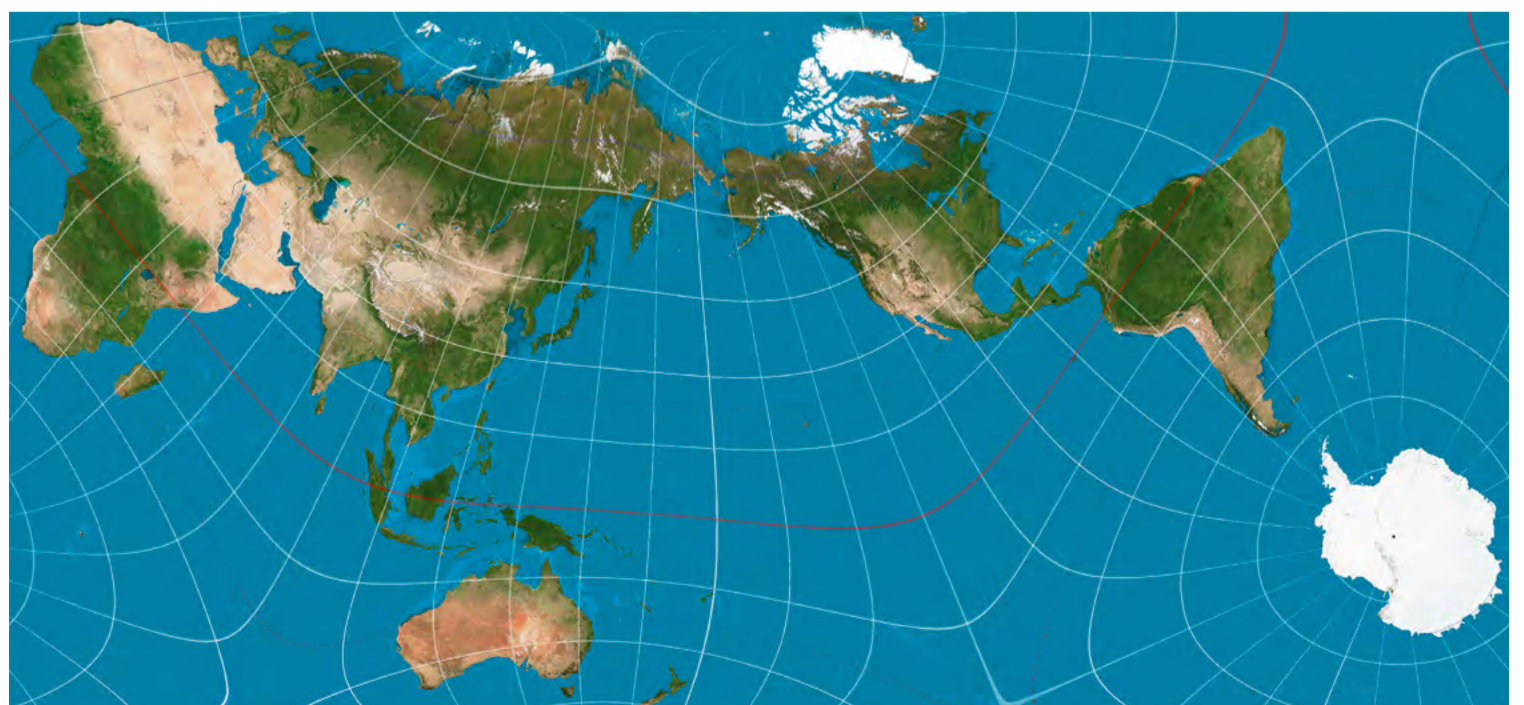
its host institution, Leiden University, are actually well placed to take a multifaceted approach that can support targeted projects in humanistic scholarship, all done in collaboration with partners and communities in those regions. This must be done in an inclusive, non-hegemonic, collaborative fashion, one built on long-term commitment and trust.

IIAS, in particular, represents one of the world’s largest global platforms on scholarship pertaining to Asia. This is notably reflected in *The Newsletter*, its Fellowship Program, and the International Convention for Asia Scholars (ICAS) initiative. These well-known international academic “services” have been reinforced by substantively innovative network-based projects: the unique local-global experiential civic-pedagogical initiative *Humanities Across Borders* (HAB), with its consortium of 20 university-public education “ecosystems”; *Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge* (A-A), the first Africa-based inclusive network of its kind; the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network

(SEANNET), together with Singapore University of Social Sciences, which links urban communities and universities as collaborative clusters in the Southeast Asian sub-region.

The combination of these initiatives, among others, all built over the long term, have established IIAS as a recognized, reliable, respectful partner. In this capacity, we continue to facilitate global-local South-South-North collaborations for many scholars, social actors and institutions in different parts of the world. That it emanates from a “Northern” geographic and societal context makes its role all the more meaningful, particularly in these times of mistrust and fragmentation, of competition and abuse. These efforts are built on long-cultivated inter-personal relationships. They may not just be appreciated for their inherent worthiness but for the potential they hold to be further mobilized and sustained, hopefully with Leiden University’s support and that of our other key partners.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS



Recreation of the AuthaGraph map projection, originally invented by Hajime Narukawa in 1999. Image reproduced under a creative commons [license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) courtesy of [Wikimedia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AuthaGraph).



Над Бабьим Яром памятников нет.
Крутой обрыв, как грубое надгробье.
Мне страшно.

Мне сегодня столько лет,
как самому еврейскому народу.¹

No monument stands over Babi Yar.
A drop sheer as a crude gravestone.
I am afraid.

Today I am as old in years
as all the Jewish people.²

Fig. 1 (above left): Soviet POWs in the ravine at Babi Yar are levelling the ground over the mass grave of those killed in the action after the walls of the ravine were blown up with dynamite. Photograph by Johannes Hähle, 1941. (Photo courtesy of the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung).

The Memorycide of Babin Yar

Elena Paskaleva

I grew up behind the iron curtain in the 1980s. In Bulgaria, we learned at school that our freedom should never be taken for granted. Thousands of Russian soldiers died fighting for our right to be free. We were sworn as pioneers at the monuments commemorating their sacrifice. Our lives were organised around celebrations and manifestations attesting our deep gratitude for the Russian heroes. At the start of each school year, we brought flowers to the Monument of Aliosha. Yes, we referred to these heroes, cast in bronze according to the canons of Socialist Realism, by their first names. They were not a token of anonymous and distant memory; their bodies and armour stood guard of our daily lives. We identified with their valour and heroism. Ideology and sculpture went hand in hand. The remembrance of the Second World War was kept alive by constant reminders of the battlefields on which the Russian soldiers lost their lives for our liberation. Books, films, posters, all told countless personal stories of idealistic young men and women who perished in the name of Communism.

Jews were shot dead in a three-kilometre ravine situated in the outskirts of Ukraine's capital Kyiv. Before the German invasion in September 1941, some 160,000 Jews resided in the city and constituted approximately 20 percent of its population. By the time the Germans occupied Kyiv, about 60,000 Jews remained. The majority of those who stayed behind included women, children, and the elderly; most of them were ill, malnourished, and unable to flee.

In early September 1941, two large explosions and fires shattered the city and destroyed the German headquarters. Many German soldiers and officials were killed in the engulfing flames. Although the explosions were caused by mines left by retreating Soviet soldiers, the attacks were framed as a pretext to murder the Jews who still remained in Kyiv. All Jews were requested to collect their belongings and head – at gunpoint – towards the outskirts of the city, genuinely believing that they were about to be evacuated. Once at Babin Yar, the victims were forced to take off their clothes and walk into the ravine, where they were subsequently shot by special killing squads. Those

who survived the gunfire were buried alive. The walls of the ravine were blown up with dynamite. SS men searched and looted the belongings of the murdered Jews in early October 1941.

By the end of 1943, another 150,000 victims – including Jews, Ukrainian civilians, Roma, Russian prisoners of war, and physically and mentally disabled people from a nearby psychiatric hospital – were murdered by the Nazis and buried at Babin Yar. Near the end of the Second World War, the German soldiers forced Soviet prisoners to exhume the remains of the dead and to destroy the evidence of the killings. Some bodies were smothered with gasoline and burnt, after which a thin layer of earth was shovelled over them. The site was bulldozed to cover up the war crimes.

Even by the 1950s, Babin Yar was not recognized by the Soviet Union as a site of mass murder. Any attempts to erect a monument commemorating the thousands of victims remained futile, shrouded in the local population's antisemitic sentiments following the pogrom against the Jews of Kyiv that broke out in September 1945.

The targeted policy of forgetting and destroying the memory of the mass executions at Babin Yar even resulted in the physical obliteration of all material traces and human remains that could be found on the site. In 1952, the local city council

decided to fill the edges of the Babin Yar ravine with industrial waste. The geology of the site and its proximity to the city made it an ideal place for the disposal of brick residues from adjacent factories. The bricks were used for the construction of post-war socialist Kyiv. In the following years, Kyiv would become one of the largest cities of the Soviet Union with a population reaching 2.6 million people by 1989, surpassed only by Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg).

On 13 March 1961 a dam collapsed at the industrial waste site built at the Babin Yar ravine. In the subsequent flooding, 145 civilians died in several residential areas of Kyiv. Parts of the city were cut off, and the military had to use boats and army vehicles to rescue the survivors and provide food supplies. All information about the tragedy remained classified under the Soviet authorities.

The mass killings of Jews and the flooding disaster continued to be largely unknown when, later in 1961, the Russian poet Evgenii Evtushenko⁴ (1933–2017) published the poem *Babi Yar*, which turned the toponym into a synonym for genocide. The elegy was a form of protest against the Soviet authorities' refusal to remember all victims. Its opening line – “No monument stands over Babi Yar” – encapsulated the decade-old painful memory of the massacres and the total absence of a commemorative marker. At the same time, the poem vehemently denounced the antisemitism that had spread throughout the Soviet Union during the post-war period:

I am
each old man here shot dead.
I am / every child here shot dead.
Nothing in me
shall ever forget!
The 'Internationale',⁵
let it thunder
when the last antisemite on earth
is buried for ever.”

The sentiments resonated with many intellectuals across Russia and beyond. Dmitri Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony (subtitled *Babi Yar*)⁶ is based on Evtushenko's poem.

Following much deliberation, several artistic competitions were initiated after 1965 to erect a monument in memory of all Soviet heroes who died defending the motherland. The Russian word for a memorial (*pamiatnik*) derives from the word for memory (*pamiat*). However, in the case of Babin Yar, the memory itself is being obliterated, and the term acquires the connotation of *memorycide*, the deliberate destruction of all traces of the minorities who lost their lives in 1941. The envisaged monument was in line with the Soviet regime's agenda: the attempted eradication of the living memory of Ukraine. The suffering at Babin Yar was caused not only by the killings and

The intensity of these images is so powerful that even today I can visualize not so much the imposing monumentality of their carefully sculptured bodies but the determination on their faces while dying being shot by the Nazi enemy.

Pioneers greet each other by raising their right hand to their face and saying “*Vinagi gotov*” (“Always ready”). Ready for what? To die for the motherland? To serve the Communist party? To fight for freedom? I never really understood the essence of my pledge but I was proud to profess it. It gave me a sense of belonging. I was part of a wider fraternal brotherhood in which everyone would readily sacrifice their lives for freedom.

My peers in Ukraine would have been raised with the same ideological narrative. Now they die fighting for their country. Their enemy is not the Nazi villain portrayed by *Mosfilm*.³ It is the very essence of the absurd, concocted story, carefully crafted and narrated by *Mosfilm*. They are fighting the Russian soldier. The memory of the Second World War has been reappropriated by the Russian propaganda machine as a powerful credo used as a weapon of war. The memory of the mass killings and destruction has been transformed into the killing of memory itself.

What happened at Babin Yar?

Babin Yar (Babi/Babyn Yar in Russian), meaning “the ravine of the old woman,” is one of Europe's largest mass graves and the scene of the biggest mass killing of the Holocaust. Within 48 hours on 29–30 September 1941, nearly 34,000



Fig. 2: A large banner in the centre of Kyiv (Photo from the author's personal collection, 2017).



Fig. 3 (above left): My visit to Babin Yar in 1985. From left to right: my pen friend's mother, my grandmother, me, our Jewish fellow traveller, June 1985 (Photo from the author's personal collection).

Fig. 4 (above right): With my grandmother at the editor's office of *Dunavska Pravda*, 2 Feb 1978 (Photo from the author's personal collection).



lootings of SS soldiers but also by local Nazi collaborators such as militias and civilians.

A tribute to Soviet soldiers featuring their strong athletic bodies was finally built in July 1976. Its monumental scale represented the alternative narrative of heroism and did not portray the thousands of weak and starving women and children who were massacred at Babin Yar throughout the 1940s. The commemorative text referred to the thousands of civilian victims without indicating that the vast majority of them were actually Jewish and that others belonged to the Roma minority. The official narrative stressed that the atrocities at Babin Yar were committed against the Soviet people in general and against the citizens of Kyiv in particular.

My visit to Babin Yar in 1985

I come from Bulgaria, a close ally and satellite state of the USSR. When I was growing up in the 1980s, we were encouraged to have pen friends from across the Soviet Union. The friendship between the two nations played a major role in the ideology of the communist regime. We started learning Russian as a second language at the age of ten. Our knowledge about the fraternal peoples of the USSR was carefully crafted by communist propaganda. On Fridays, Bulgarian state television relentlessly broadcasted Russian films about the Second World War. The heroic exploits of Russian soldiers, their courageous endurance, and the victory

over Nazi Germany were exemplary. In the childhood imagination of my generation, the benevolent bravery of the Russian heroes was beyond a shadow of a doubt. The war monuments commemorating their valour were adorning the envelopes of our Soviet pen friends. We were receiving postcards of their cities with selected war memorials that were potent reminders of the great sacrifice of all Russians in the Second World War. Twenty-seven million people lost their lives.

My first pen friend was from Kyiv. As part of my communist upbringing, my grandmother, who was a journalist working for the local newspaper *Dunavska Pravda*,⁷ took me on a trip to Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia in 1985. Such organized tours were closely controlled by the state, and the itinerary was in accordance with party guidelines. Very few people could be "approved for travel" beyond the borders of Bulgaria at the time, and I was in a privileged position.

Kyiv was the first stop after our three-day train journey across Romania and Moldova. The city was dazzling with lights; the hustle and bustle of its wide avenues were overwhelming. We stayed only for two days but I vividly remember the glistening golden domes of Kyiv's orthodox cathedrals and the city's verdant parks. Yet, the only place that we actually visited was Babin Yar. Unfortunately, my pen friend was staying over with family out of town, so I could not meet her. We were welcomed by her mother, who took us kindly on a trip to Babin Yar. The memorial site mattered to her.

An elderly Jewish lady from my home town was travelling with us. She had come to Kyiv to see Babin Yar. Although she did not have any direct family members who had perished in the mass killings, this was a personal pilgrimage with a deep significance for her. She was a Holocaust survivor.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Babin Yar was recognized as a site of genocide. That marked a break from the Soviet rhetoric of forgetting. The appropriation of the physical space for commemorative purposes has resulted in more than 30 smaller monuments erected by the minority groups who lost their lives at Babin Yar. Their striving for symbolic recognition is reflected by numerous (sometimes failed) initiatives and organized pilgrimages to this contested site. Yet, until present, there is still not a single unifying monument that reflects the historical vicissitudes of the 20th century. In turn, the site of Babin Yar has become the physical representation of memorycide, the proliferation of a victimized memory, in which the act of memory itself has been victimized.

In an interview for the Associated Press in 2007, Evgenii Evtushenko recollected his first visit to Babin Yar: "I was so shocked," he said. "I was absolutely shocked when I saw it, that people didn't keep a memory about it."⁸ It seems that the opening line of his epic poem from 1961 – "No monument stands over Babi Yar" – is still valid, perhaps now more than ever.

The War in Ukraine

On 1 March 2022, the site of Babin Yar was struck by Russian missiles and shells as part of the ongoing military invasion of Ukraine. The indiscriminate attack hit the Babin Yar Holocaust Memorial complex and resulted in the deaths of five people. However, the menorah monument and the newly built synagogue, one of Babin Yar's most iconic memorials, reportedly remained unscathed. The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is of Jewish descent and lost relatives in the Holocaust,

defined the attack as being "beyond humanity." In the words of Zelensky, Russia is trying "to erase our history, our country and all of us."⁹

The murders and war atrocities perpetrated at Babin Yar continue more than 80 years after the initial killings of innocent and vulnerable civilians. The targeted Russian policy of forgetting is not aimed at double memorycide, the physical destruction of people and their memory. It has gained another inhumane dimension that goes beyond Soviet-conceived narratives of antisemitism. In a reverse memorycide, Putin is invoking the painful – and at the same time heroic – memory of de-Nazification to justify his violent acts of war against a sovereign country. Putin's distortion of history and his acts of delusion aim to discredit the independent nation of Ukraine and the ongoing struggle for freedom of all Ukrainian people.

In a highly polarized world that is slowly coming to grips with the long pandemic, the falsification of history is not a new tactic. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has divided governments and institutions among its former allies and has challenged the longevity of fraternal friendships. By employing strategies of democide and genocide towards Ukrainian civilians, Putin has redefined the very essence of painful memory. Unfortunately, world leaders have failed to unite beyond the phrase "Slava Ukraini!" ("Glory to Ukraine!"), which has cost uncountable lives and the massive destruction of livelihoods.

The tranquillity of the Ukrainian capital that I've witnessed, its lavish green parks and avenues, have been transformed into a barren cityscape of war devastation. Continuous news coverage with live correspondence across Ukraine seems pervasive. Unlike the scarcity of reporting from 1941, and unlike the attempts of Nazi SS units to cover up war crimes, we do know exactly what is going in Kyiv in 2022. However, the inert logic of world conventions and peace pacts has proven utterly inefficient in solving the pressing issues of today's war.

In 2007, Evgenii Evtushenko referred to his tribute to Babin Yar as "human rights poetry; the poetry which defends human conscience as the greatest spiritual value."¹⁰ It is perhaps high time to re-evaluate our ritualized commemorative practices and to give a prominent voice to our human conscience in support for Ukraine.

Elena Paskaleva is Assistant Professor in Critical Heritage studies at Leiden University. She teaches graduate courses on material culture, memory and commemoration in Europe and Asia. Dr. Paskaleva is also the coordinator of the Asian Heritages Cluster at the International Institute for Asian Studies. E-mail: elpask@gmail.com



Fig. 5 (above): The Ukraine Independence Monument in the centre of Kyiv (Photo from the author's personal collection, 2017).

Fig. 6 (right): Student demonstration in support of Ukraine, The Dam Square Amsterdam, 2 March 2022 (Photo by the author, 2022).



Notes

- 1 The opening lines of the *Babi Yar* poem by Evgenii Evtushenko from 1961. Source: <https://stihipoeta.ru/5389-babiy-yar.html>
- 2 *The Collected Poems 1952–1990* by Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Edited by Albert C. Todd with the author and James Ragan (Henry Holt and Company, 1991), pp. 102–104.
- 3 Russia's largest film studio. It produced most of the Soviet-era war films.
- 4 Also spelled Yevgeny Yevtushenko.
- 5 The title of the Soviet anthem.
- 6 Op. 113 in B-flat minor is an hour-long work for bass soloist, men's chorus, and large orchestra that is laid out in five movements, each a setting of the Evgenii Evtushenko poem.
- 7 A provincial newspaper, *The Danubian Truth*, named after the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (Russian "Truth"), the official organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1918 to 1991.
- 8 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/01/yevgeny-yevtushenko-russian-poet-babi-yar-dies-84>
- 9 <https://twitter.com/cbsnews/status/1499025532532531202>
- 10 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/01/yevgeny-yevtushenko-russian-poet-babi-yar-dies-84>

Dynamics of Thai-Dutch Couples' Spatial Mobilities

Gender, Aging, and Family

Panitee Suksomboon Brown

There has been migration from Thailand to Europe since the late 1970s. Such flows predominantly occur through cross-cultural marriages between Thai women and European men. As a result of these cross-border marriages, women form the majority of Thai migrants in Europe. In recent years, Thai women and their Western husbands increasingly reversed the flow, moving from Europe back to Thailand. Consequently, this “both-ways” migration pathway is highly gendered, such that about 80-90 percent of Thai migrants to Europe and North America are women, and 80-90 percent of Westerners settling in Thailand are men.¹ The particular case of the Netherlands is no exception.



Fig. 1: Sai's fruit farm in Nakorn Rachasima, Northeastern Thailand (Photo by the author, 2020).

Gender and “both-ways” migration pathways

Since the 1970s, many factors have facilitated Thai women marrying Dutch men: globalization, the advent of information technology, the expansion of international transport, global mass tourism, economic difficulties in Thailand, and increased labor demand in the service sector in urban Thailand. In the past few decades, the reverse flow of Thai-Dutch partners moving back to Thailand has also become discernible. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of Dutch migrants in Thailand due to the blurry boundaries in distinguishing between a tourist, an expat, and a migrant. However, the staff who works at the Dutch Embassy in Bangkok estimates that there were around 20,000 Dutch migrants in Thailand in 2020. Generally, census surveys show that 192,000 foreigners from Western countries resided in Thailand in 2002, increasing to 260,000 in 2010, with 75% of them male.²

Studies on marriage migration have considerably emphasized the border-crossing of migrants, particularly women, from the Global South to the Global North. In the cases of Thai-European marriages, researchers

have examined the flow of Thai women to Europe, their adjustment and integration in the receiving country, and their maintenance of transnational relations with those left behind. The reverse flow of Thai women and their spouses back to Thailand has received little attention. This article elucidates the Thai-Dutch couples' spatial mobility from the Netherlands to Thailand, which is shaped by uneven global socio-economic forces, gender, aging, and changes in the couples' family lives.

Motivation of Thai-Dutch spouses' mobility to Thailand

In 2020, I conducted in-depth and open-ended interviews with 12 Thai women and six of their respective Dutch male partners. All 12 women had resided with their Dutch spouse in the Netherlands for periods between five and 31 years before moving back to Thailand. The women and their Dutch husbands have been living in Thailand between three and 12 years.

Reaching the life stage of retirement is one of the most important factors triggering the Dutch men's decision to move to Thailand. As a result of the relatively cheaper cost of living in Thailand, those who requested an

early retirement already calculated that the pension they have received, ranging from 1000-2000 EUR per month, is enough to allow their comfortable lifestyle in Thailand. They prefer the warm weather, vibrant atmosphere, and easy-going lifestyle in Thailand. The popularity of Thai tourism and the Thai government's policies to promote tourism have led to enclaves in which businesses cater to the demands of foreigners.

The different age gap between the Thai-Dutch couples influenced the Thai wives' initial hesitation to return home. When they first arrived in Thailand, the Dutch were between 57-70, while the women ranged from their late 30s to early 50s. Having resided in the Netherlands for years or even decades, the Thai women to some extent became familiar with the Dutch way of life, were able to secure their occupation, and gained social networks with Thai female friends. The women did plan to move back to Thailand ultimately, but they did not anticipate doing so quite so early. Nevertheless, the women envisioned that living in Thailand would enable them to provide day-to-day care to their elderly parents. Moreover, they agreed to return to Thailand in order to fulfill the gender role of being a good wife and a dutiful daughter.

For instance, Pear (46 years old) finished her education in vocational school and worked as a staff member at the Municipality in Nakorn Pathom prior to her marriage migration. Her Dutch husband, Adriaan, is 66 years old. In 2000, she holidayed in the Netherlands and met her Dutch husband through the latter's uncle. After a two-year long-distance relationship, she migrated to the Netherlands. Adriaan was employed as a factory worker and had two children (aged 31 and 40) from a previous marriage. Pear worked as an office cleaner and eventually received a permanent contract. She also built up good relations with many Thai women and frequently had parties with them. Upon

learning of Adriaan's decision to move to Thailand, she was reluctant to undertake such mobility, but they did move in 2016. After arriving, they constructed their house in the same neighborhood as Pear's mother in Nakorn Pathom in order to facilitate daily care and visits.

Economic motivations

The phenomenon of return migration is often portrayed as the movement of retired and aging migrants, and this does apply to many Thai-Dutch couples. This study reveals that, in addition, Thai-Dutch couples also move to Thailand searching for economic betterment and new opportunities. The 2008-2012 economic crisis in Europe was the most severe economic recession since the Great Depression. Some Thai women and their Dutch partners were unemployed during that period. With gradually growing labor demands in the Asian market, they envisioned more economic opportunity in Thailand. The life history of Nok is an example. Nok (39 years old) and her Dutch husband Jaap (57 years old) have been married for 12 years, and they have two daughters (aged five and seven). They moved back to Thailand and have been living in Thailand for three years. Nok migrated to the Netherlands in 2007 to pursue her Master's degree in hotel management. While there, she met Jaap. After five years in the Netherlands, Nok and her two daughters followed Jaap to India since he was offered work as an engineer in the petroleum industry there. After living in India for four years, they returned to the Netherlands. Because of the economic recession, many employees in the company were laid off, and Jaap was unfortunately one of them. He was finally hired as a freelance consultant and sometimes made trips to Asia. They thought that moving to Thailand would be more convenient for him to do business trips to Malaysia and Brunei. They chose to reside in Krabi, Nok's home province. As Krabi is a well-known tourist site for foreigners, Nok applied her experience in hotel management and took cooking courses in Bangkok. Then, she opened a restaurant to sell Western foods and drinks in Krabi.

The fluidity and difficulty of transnational mobilities

Relocation to Thailand should not be regarded as unidirectional or permanent. After their relocation to Thailand, many Thai-Dutch partners sometimes made a trip to the Netherlands for two or three weeks. Because many of them sold their houses in the Netherlands or terminated their rental contracts, they were likely to stay at their family's and friends' residences. It should be noted that the longer they stayed in Thailand, the less often they made a trip to the Netherlands, as they felt to some



Fig. 2: Sai's house and fruit farm in Nakorn Rachasima, Northeastern Thailand (Photo by the author, 2020).



Fig. 3: Krabi Province, Thailand (Photo by the author, 2020).

extent uneasy about bothering their family and friends by staying with them. Only two couples interviewed still keep dwellings in both Thailand and the Netherlands.

While the majority of the Thai-Dutch couples interviewed enjoyed their relocation to Thailand, a few of them encountered difficulties adjusting. Sometimes, after relocating to Thailand for many years, it was not as they imagined it would be or as they had experienced during their previous holidays back to Thailand. In such cases, they considered moving back to the Netherlands, as was the experience of Daan (67 years old) and Ploi (60 years old), who had been married for 29 years. They had met while Daan was on holiday in Thailand in 1989, when he visited the restaurant where Ploi worked as a waitress. After continuing a long-distance relationship for two years, Ploi and her daughter, born from a previous marriage with a Thai man, migrated to the Netherlands in 1991. Daan had separated from his Dutch wife. While residing in the Netherlands, Ploi worked as a waitress at a Thai restaurant and later as a factory worker in an electronics factory. After many years of working as a train driver, at 57, Daan felt burnt out, and decided to take early retirement. They moved to Thailand in 2009, but Daan ultimately wanted to return to the Netherlands: "After living here [in Thailand] for nearly 12 years, I started to feel bored. When you take an annual holiday to Thailand, you are like a tourist. To earn a daily living in Thailand for many years is rather different. It is also difficult for me to adjust to living with local Thai neighbors." Recently, they planned to sell their residence in Thailand and wished to move back to the Netherlands. However, they had to remain in Thailand since it was very difficult for them to sell the house during the time of the Covid-19

pandemic and the economic recession. If overseas travel were less restricted, they would consider making a short trip to the Netherlands and would stay for a few months with Ploi's daughter. They expect that this trip would bring Daan the feeling of refreshment. If they could sell their house in Thailand, then they could afford to buy a residence in the Netherlands, and their wish to return to the Netherlands would be fulfilled.

Marital conflicts and separation between Thai-Dutch spouses that happened after their relocation to Thailand resulted in the Dutch husband's mobility back to the Netherlands. For example, Sai (46 years old) is originally from Nakorn Rachasima and graduated from vocational school. Her Dutch husband, Jasper, is 56 years old. Sai has a 23-year-old son from a previous relationship. Sai met Jasper when he was holidaying in Thailand in 2001. They first met at an internet café in Bangkok, where Sai worked as a cashier. Afterwards, they kept up a long-distance relationship for two years before marrying. Sai migrated to the Netherlands with her son in 2003. Sai and Jasper ran their own business providing booth rentals for exhibitions in the Netherlands. When the economic recession hit their business and sent them into debt, they decided to move to Thailand, where Sai owned land: "We started to build two houses and to grow fruit trees on the pieces of land we bought in Thailand under the supervision of my brother in Thailand [in 2010]. We moved to Thailand in 2012. Jasper and I lived in one house and my son stayed with my mother in another house in the same compound."

Sai earned an income from being an informal property agent and selling the fruit from her own farm. After seven years of residing in Thailand, Jasper felt very lonely as he had no occupation, only stayed home,

and totally relied on Sai financially. He asked Sai to move back to the Netherlands with him, but she refused. She had put a lot of effort and investment into the fruit farm. She also needed to care for her elderly mother. They started to quarrel quite often. He decided to move back to the Netherlands alone in 2019. They were separated, but they still contact each other sometimes.

After living in Thailand for many years, some Dutch husbands, particularly those older than 70, expected to stay and die in Thailand. They anticipated relying on their Thai wives for care in their old age. None of them mentioned their adult children or relatives in the Netherlands as potential resources for support as they aged. This illuminates their experience of uncertainty in terms of receiving care in the later stages of life. For instance, Arjan and Nang, who are 73 and 49 years old, respectively, returned and have lived in Thailand for 11 years. Nang graduated from secondary school, originates from Nakhon Ratchasima, and has one 22-year-old daughter from her previous marriage with a Thai man. Arjan was previously married to a Dutch woman, has three adult children (now with their own children), and later got divorced. Arjan and Nang first met each other in Belgium in 2003, when Nang travelled there under a tourist visa. After maintaining a long-distance relationship for a year, Arjan arranged a long stay visa for Nang to migrate to the Netherlands. After marriage, Nang was a housewife and Arjan worked as a government official in the military. When Nang had resided in the Netherlands for five years, and Arjan was 62 years old, they moved to Thailand: "Many male foreigners are likely to be much older than their Thai wives. When I get older, I expect Nang to give me daily care. If Nang unfortunately would pass

away before me, I am not sure if I could rely on my in-law. I want to live the rest of my life and die in Thailand. I reserved my grave-to-be in the cemetery at one church in Nakorn Rachasima."

Thai-Dutch couples' spatial trajectories at the intersection of gender, aging, and family

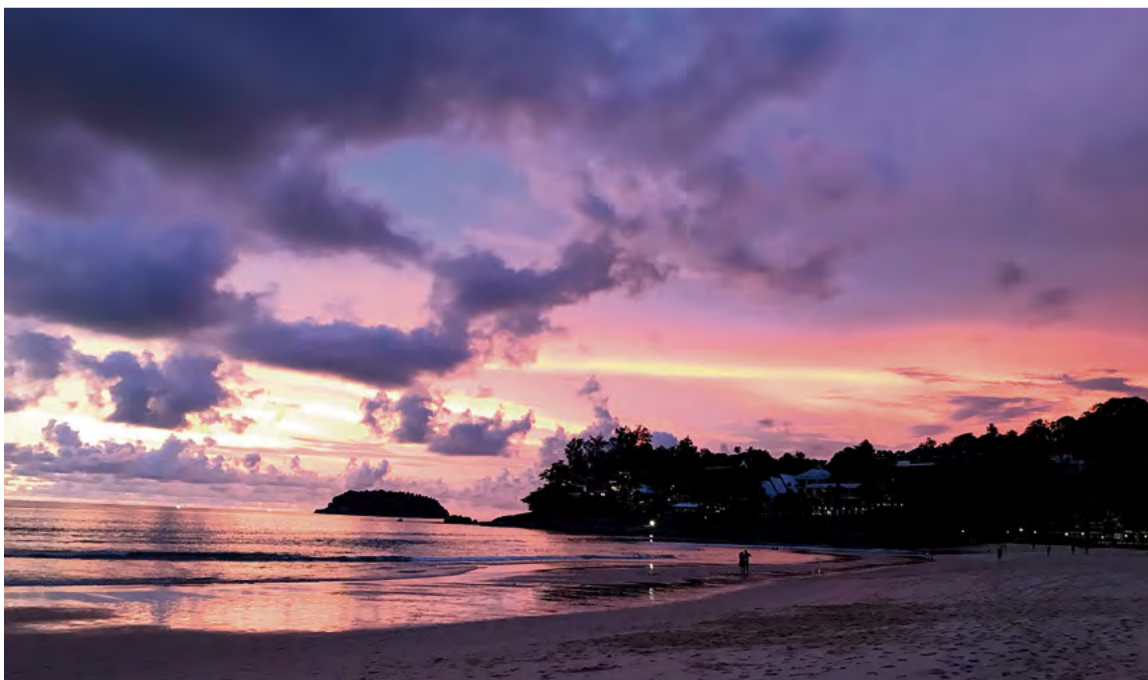
The cases of Thai-Dutch transnational marriages and their movements from the Netherlands to Thailand underline the interplay between gender, aging, transitions in family life, and the unequal socio-economic global forces that shape transnational spouses' perceptions and practices of mobility. The Thai-Dutch couples' relocation to Thailand should not be regarded as merely a unidirectional movement from the Netherlands to Thailand during a supposed sedentary stage. Instead, this article challenges the existing stereotype of sedentariness in Thai-European marriage migration. In other words, the geographical movement to Thailand of these transnational couples does not signify the ending of their mobility and permanent settlement. Rather, their trajectories of mobilities also encompass the continued moving back and forth between Thailand and the Netherlands as well as the local process of daily spatial movements, all of which are shaped by the gender roles of being a wife and a daughter. After relocation to Thailand for multiple years, a few Thai-Dutch couples experienced marital difficulties or encountered the difficulty of adjustment in residing with the local Thai people. This changing of family life influences the possibility of moving back to the Netherlands. Nevertheless, some Dutch husbands reaching old age preferred to remain in Thailand until the last stage of life. All of these elements shape the transnational partners' perceptions and practices of mobility and stasis in global, local, and day-to-day contexts.

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Notes

- 1 Statham, P., Scuzzarello, S., Sunanta, S., & Trupp, A. (2020). Globalising Thailand through gendered 'both-ways' migration pathways with 'The West': Cross-border connections between people, states, and places. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(8), 1513-1542.
- 2 Lafferty, M. & Maher, K. H. (2020). Transnational intimacy and economic precarity of Western men in Northeast Thailand. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(8), 1629-1646.

Fig. 4: Phuket Island, one of the most popular touristic places in Thailand (Photo by the author, 2021).



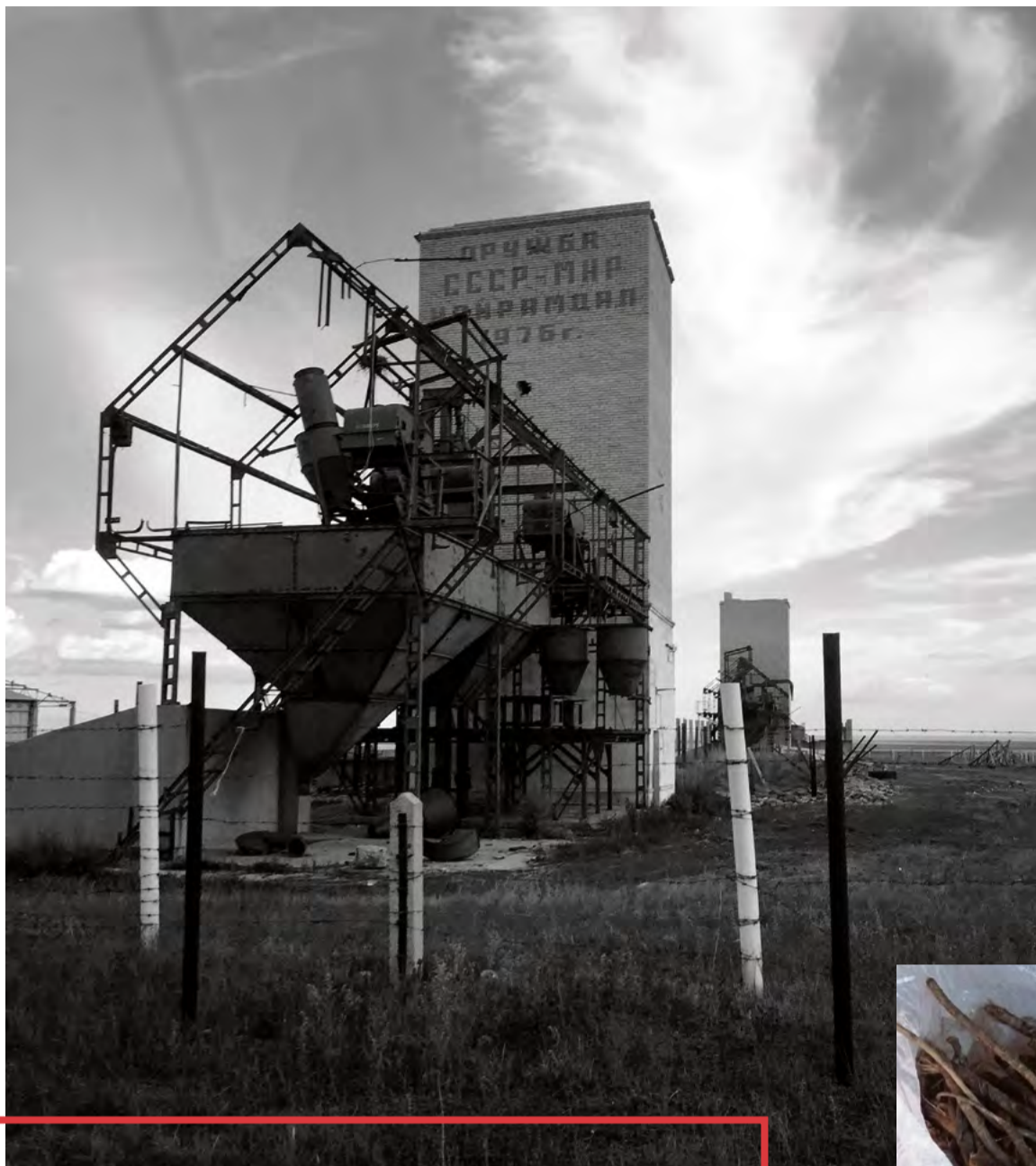


Fig. 1 (left): Magtaal's socialist infrastructure, incl. its hot water, electricity and wheat sieving facilities (pictured here), was completely stripped for scrap metal in the post-socialist transition (Photo by the author, 2017).

Fig. 2 (below): Dried (not fresh) Fang Feng plant root hidden away in a shed in Magtaal until it is taken by a trusted driver to the urban centre to send to China (Photo by the author, 2017).



Collateralising Mongolia's Wildlife

Hedwig A. Waters

Since the collapse of Mongolia's socialist republic in 1990, Mongolia has been plagued by chronic cash dearth. Both on the state and everyday levels, this has resulted in the common practice of financing livelihoods through credit, enabled through collateralising the products of the environment. This article argues that, particularly in rural Mongolia, general conditions of post-socialist stagnation combined with the expansion of microcredit have deepened the illegal wildlife trade as a subsistence and credit-repayment strategy. The mutual imbrication of consumer debt and wildlife extraction is illustrated through the emergence of the illegal trade in Fang Feng, a Chinese traditional medicinal plant, which is currently burgeoning across eastern Mongolia.

Throughout the 90s and over the last two decades, the illegal wildlife trade – “illegal” because many of these resources are nominally protected under Mongolian environmental legislation – has ballooned in rural Mongolia as a reliable subsistence strategy for the poor. Although conservationist reports have now for more than two decades been documenting the unsustainable, post-socialist increases in the harvesting of diverse species – namely, antelope, gazelle, deer, bears, wolves, marmot, falcons, and more – from public land,¹ anthropologists have only recently substantiated these trends with ethnographic reports of the burgeoning deer antler and pine nut trades. During my doctoral fieldwork in Magtaal between 2015 and 2017, diverse residents estimated that up to 80 percent of the local population was involved in the illegal extraction, sale, and export of

Fang Feng each fall. Many of these same residents were variously involved in the tenuously-legal export of Asian carp, wolf, antelope and hay in other seasons.

Consumer bank debt has played an important role in the expansion of the Mongolian illegal wildlife trade. The expansion of financial services to previously ‘unbanked’ populations has often been internationally lauded as an effective and noble development strategy because it increases the poor’s access to banking technology (e.g., credit used to fund start-up microbusinesses). However, as astutely noted by David Graeber in his bestselling *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, credit relations have often been morally justified through framing both debtor and creditor as equally-capable in choosing the terms of the contract and accessing resources to honour it. Since both actors

are ‘equals,’ the logic goes, the relationship is ultimately beneficial for everyone and if one actor is unable to pay back, then it is their own culpability.² But these narratives discount the larger economic circumstances that determine a person’s economic agency and access. In contexts like rural Mongolia, where individuals generally have few funds or economic opportunities (not to mention knowledge about contract negotiation), bank credit can quickly lock people in near-permanent indebtedness.

The result is an indirect economic disciplinary mechanism highly reminiscent of Graeber’s discussion of the historical function of colonial taxation. By placing a taxation demand quantified in colonial currency on an unruly population, the sovereign circuitously forces it to adapt to state-controlled markets, devising methods and adapting cultural behaviour to create goods and services tradable for coinage (2011: 229-230). In Mongolia, after the rapid expansion of banking and credit instruments to both the urban and rural population in the early 2000s, many people found themselves without the funds to pay back their bank loans. In turn, there has been a sheer explosion in anthropological scholarship documenting the many strategies undertaken by Mongolians to navigate this now-commonplace experience of “living from loan to loan” within “webs of debt.”³ Whilst urban Mongolians might manage debt exigency by selling or pawning assets (like cars, apartments or iPhones), the rural poor often do not possess this option. Rather, in the following, I describe the emergence of the common post-socialist practice, repeated on both the national and everyday levels, of subsidizing under-financed livelihoods through bank debt maintained by offering up Mongolia’s diverse resource wealth.

Fixing the back seam with the front seam

Prior to 1990, Mongolia was a socialist country with a centrally organised economy that was internally constituted by many top-down industries with near-universal employment. Once the Soviet Union began to fall, Mongolia began a fairly peaceful transition to a market democracy. At the time, international development and economic bodies recommended a programme of “shock therapy” – the rapid and widespread liberalisation of the economy – which, it was argued, would initially lead to high poverty but, over the long term, would encourage creative enterprise, leading to growing businesses, taxation revenue, and stable growth. During the same period, the first Prime Minister was anxious to safeguard the fledgling government’s economic independence, focusing policy attention on minerals as an asset that could be leveraged quickly. In 1991, the state’s industry was privatised, and its assets (like machinery, animals, etc.) were distributed to private citizens. In 1997, a highly-liberal Minerals Law was passed to attract international mining investment.

Keynesian economists have noted that developing countries that initially engage in protectionist policies have had greater long-term economic growth due to their ability to foster their fledgling industry until it becomes globally competitive. In contrast, rapid market liberalisation imposed austerity-like conditions on already struggling populations, arresting business growth.⁴ In Mongolia, the privatisation of state assets was followed by punishing inflation of over 300 percent in 1992. This decreased the value of any private assets gained by citizens through the privatisation of state industry and caused a spike in poverty. Unable to create reliable income surpluses, the government grew dependent on foreign aid throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and, since the 2010s, on foreign borrowing.

In 2011, Mongolia’s bet on minerals (copper and coal) temporarily paid off. A commodity price boom in China and massive mineral purchase jolted its economic growth into the fastest growing economy in the world. However, this deepened the country’s dependence on mining income, and Mongolia

It is September 2017 in Magtaal, Mongolia’s easternmost township thirty kilometres from the Chinese border, and there is not a soul to be seen. For four months over the summer and the beginning of fall, the ground surrounding Magtaal is dry enough, but not yet frozen, to facilitate the uprooting of *Saposhnikovia divaricata*, a plant coveted and renowned within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) under the name “Fang Feng” (防风). All the activity happens behind the scenes and out of town – around 6:00 A.M., a flurry of motion loads residents into busses heading to the open countryside; and, at around 7:00 P.M., another flurry announces their return. Since the country of Mongolia began the transition from a socialist to a market democratic state in 1989, many remote Mongolians, like Magtaal’s roughly 3000 residents, have struggled to find reliable formal employment. But, once the border to China opened to regular traffic in the mid-90s, these largely-unemployed, rural populations learned that decent income could be made by sweeping the steppe landscape for wild-growing resources in demand by Chinese buyers. Thus, on this September day, in the words of one resident, everyone “from the age of six to grandmothers in their sixties” was out in the open countryside gathering Fang Feng from the steppe.

went into a recession over the following years as commodity prices dropped, having been unable to translate mining revenue into long-term growth. A crucial point here is that underground minerals and fossil fuels are not a form of sustainable surplus income. Business enterprise usually involves the creative invention of a new product, which can be innovatively put together and sold at a surplus on inter/national markets. But revenue made from already-present resources which are merely taken out of the ground can be better described as the “reshuffling of a country’s portfolio of assets,”⁵ the exchanging of an asset from one form (resource) into another (cash) without the creation of new surplus.

During my fieldwork, informants used a Mongolian adage to describe this process of constantly moving around or converting assets, not to create long-term returns or growth, but to merely keep the lights on: “to take from the back seam to fix the front seam.” An individual who is currently down on their economic luck might mend a tearing front seam by taking thread from the back of their clothing, navigating the situation to temporarily maintain their public image without fixing the underlying problem. Since the mining boom in 2011, the Mongolian government has become increasingly dependent on the issuing of government bonds onto foreign markets to refinance previous government debts. Such a tactic effectively moves cash around to pay off immediately-outstanding payments, but without paying off the debt principle. This economic model is only possible because of the country’s mineral wealth, which acts as a form of collateral: converted into a temporary payment in boom times or used as an asset-guarantee during dearth.

Rural cash dearth and new entrepreneurialisms

In post-socialist Magtaal, everyday citizens mimic the state’s example through new entrepreneurialisms. During socialism, the residents of Magtaal were employed in a centrally-organised agricultural state farm that functioned according to a paternal model, providing for the material needs of its workers. But when the state farm was dissolved in 1991, all of the workers became instantly unemployed and, even though it has now been roughly 30 years since socialism, two-thirds of Magtaal’s remaining 3000 residents remain so. Since the transition to a market democracy, the Mongolian government has taken a hands-off approach to its rural citizens: cutting welfare, reducing government jobs, and decreasing its regulation of formal business with the goal of encouraging the growth of private enterprise. This strategy has been effective in its immediate intent: rural residents have invented a series of entrepreneurial strategies to access needed cash.

The most common entrepreneurial strategy is using the resources of the “commons,” broadly defined, to make money in China. In September 2017, at around 7:00 in the evening after all of Magtaal’s Fang Feng gatherers had already returned to town after a day’s work, I sat with Amina, a 42-year-old Fang Feng picker, in her apartment as she explained to me how the plant gathering craze started. Amina was born in the 1970s during the state-farm era into a family of eight siblings that took care of and pastured with the farm’s animal herds. Immediately after the collapse of the state farm, her family moved out into Magtaal’s countryside, living from and caring for the herd animals they now owned. In this initial post-socialist period without any employment options, many of Magtaal’s residents would go to the infrastructural remains of the state farm, sweeping it for any property (e.g., furniture, clothing, etc.) or picking from the still-growing wheat fields.

When the border to China slowly opened in the mid-90s, however, it instantly provided access to a market to which the cash-starved citizens of Magtaal could sell their products. During this period, a plethora of cross-border entrepreneurialisms emerged that focused on leveraging the difference between the

borders: individuals either became “suitcase traders,” traveling to China to buy cheap consumer goods and sell them at marked-up prices in Mongolia; or they procured in Mongolia anything they could lucratively sell in China. By the late 90s, the now-abandoned infrastructure of the state farm had become a public commons that residents routinely stripped for scrap metal to sell. During this period, Amina and many other residents moved to urban centres to try and improve their livelihoods, whilst those who remained behind, like Amina’s siblings, gradually expanded their resource-extraction from the socialist infrastructure to the natural environment.

In the early 2000s, a Mongolian company decided to export fish from a lake in Magtaal, hiring seasonal labour from China. Two of these labourers realised after entering Magtaal that the open countryside was awash in untouched, “organic” Fang Feng plants, highly lucrative for TCM on the Chinese market. They hatched a plan: they would source money in China and approach a local well-known Mongolian to become a “changer” – the Mongolian term for “middleman,” which comes from the English word “(ex)change.” This changer informed the local populace that the Chinese labourers were willing to buy Fang Feng roots at a kilo price if residents went out on their own, gathered the plant’s roots, and brought them to him. At the time, since many Magtaal residents had no cash and were low on food, the changer would offer an advance of either food goods or cash. Using the advance to go out into the countryside, individuals would then pay the loan back to the changer in gathered Fang Feng.

In 2004, Amina, who had been living in Mongolia’s capital city unable to advance her career beyond being a cleaner, moved back to Magtaal to discover that her entire extended family was participating in Fang Feng procuring. Even though, in the previous decade, wildlife extraction and trade had become increasingly prohibited according to Mongolian environmental legislation, the ongoing lack of other job opportunities meant that residents felt they had no other choice. Amina was also unable to find formal employment, joining her family members to create large picking parties that could effectively sweep the steppe for large hauls of Fang Feng. By the time of our interview in 2017, Amina and her family had already been illegally gathering the plant for over a decade, earning their yearly incomes every summer and fall by selling their bounty to Chinese-funded changers.

Debt-fare instead of wel-fare

The second entrepreneurial cash avenue that Magtaal residents increasingly became dependent on was bank-based debt. In the early 2000s, Mongolian urban-based consumer banks expanded their activities into rural areas, offering short-term loans to residents to either finance a start-up business idea or fund a consumer desire. Because in the post-socialist privatisation period all of the state farm workers had automatically received the ownership deeds to their socialist-era flats, each family in Magtaal had a form of collateral they could easily use to access a bank loan. Considering the ongoing cash dearth and lack of formal employment, many residents eagerly participated in these offerings.

For those formally employed in Magtaal, bank debt provides a supplement to their income. During my fieldwork, the Mongolian government, stressed by ballooning deficits, did not increase the salary of government workers (e.g., teachers, doctors, bureaucrats) for several years and often did not pay salaries on time. To navigate this instability and the shrinking value of their salaries vis-à-vis inflation, many formal employees took out bank loans when they needed extra cash. In 2009, after working full-time as illegal Fang Feng procurers for five years, Amina and her husband started formal jobs in the local school as a cleaner and night watchman, respectively. In 2017, Amina’s daughter started university and, to pay the tuition, Amina took out a ‘salary loan’ from the bank: a loan that



Fig. 3: Local residents often travel in groups of trusted friends and family members to sweep the countryside for resources. Here, a group of berry procurers enjoy their day’s haul (Photo by the author, 2017).

uses her formal salary contract as collateral, paying a lump sum upfront that is then slowly deducted with interest from her monthly salary. When I met her, Amina’s standard salary was 125 USD per month, but, after receiving the loan, she was receiving 20 USD per month for two years until the loan was paid off. A local bank worker I interviewed in 2017 confirmed that of the roughly 600 formally employed workers in Magtaal, around 90 percent of them had ongoing salary loans.

For the informally employed – e.g., suitcase traders or resource procurers – bank loans were often used in an attempt to segue into a small business. In the late 2000s, local banks started offering several government-subsidised loans with the explicit aim of funding local start-ups, which were eagerly received by the residents. In hindsight, participating business owners told me that they had heard that taking out loans was how Mongolians were now supposed to ‘participate in modernity’ and the post-socialist economy. In the subsequent period, many new businesses popped up in Magtaal: vegetable-growing collectives, grocery stores, bread bakeries, cake shops, and computer businesses. However, in a town that suffers from cash dearth (thereby limiting how much consumers can buy) and also has few residents (ergo limiting the number of consumers), any market niche is quickly saturated – a small town can only have so many bakeries – with many of these businesses proving only meagrely profitable.

Thus, despite the best intentions of residents, the wider context of cash dearth, low formal salaries, and high unemployment prevented them from using bank loans as an avenue to financial freedom. In such contexts, bank loans with interest stipulations often lock people in chronic indebtedness, because they cannot be used to increase familial income but rather as replacements for government welfare, inflation-adjusted salaries, or formal employment.

Resources for debt (interest)

These conditions of protracted bank indebtedness – which include the added pressure of interest, requiring the return of more money than originally received – is only tenable because many Magtaal families supplement their incomes through illegal wildlife proceeds. Indeed, similar to their activities after the state farm collapse, changers benefit from local cash dearth and economic pressure because they offer cash advances, providing a quick and uncomplicated source of timely money at moments when families are struggling.

For example, in May 2017, Amina was approached by a local changer who had recently decided to participate in the upcoming Fang Feng season and had heard about her reputation as an effective picker. At the time, her various bank loans had stacked to the point that she had also received a high-interest loan from a moneylender to pay for food and her son’s school clothing. The changer offered Amina an advance of 417 USD (almost four times

her monthly salary). This would allow her to quickly pay off the moneylender loan to relieve economic pressure, but it also obligated her to work for him in the coming summer to pay back the advance. Amina agreed, and by the time I interviewed her in September, she happily retold how she had already procured enough in the season to not only pay back the advance but also to significantly reduce her ongoing bank loans. “There is no one in Magtaal with enough money,” she explains. “Those with government jobs all have bank loans, and those without jobs all are running around fixing the front seam with the back seam.”

At the Mongolian government level, fixing the front seam with the back seam describes the nation’s post-socialist struggle to make reliable profits, relying instead on trading its underground assets into money to finance borrowing. At the Magtaal township level, a very similar dynamic is afoot. There are only two economic flows that transit Magtaal, which residents rely on, juggle, and shift between to maintain their lives. First, there is a flow of consumer debt from Mongolia’s urban centres, which is legal yet laced with interest stipulations. Second, there is a flow of illegal, cross-border yet interest-less, direct cash for wildlife from China. Because participating in Mongolia’s formal economic system entails mortgaging one’s future – being locked into cycles of debt through underpay or unemployment – residents are indirectly encouraged to participate more in illegal, cross-border, Chinese-originating flows. Faced with the economic disciplinary mechanism of bank interest, local residents have little choice but to participate in those economic opportunities that have no interest burdens, taking more and more wildlife from the environment to fulfil bank requirements. Here, too, residents, unable to economically thrive within the post-socialist market democratic system, collateralise the environment to fund their debts.

Hedwig A. Waters was an IAS Fellow from Feb 2021 to Jan 2022. She received her PhD in Social Anthropology from University College London in 2019. The material in this article is part of and is expanded upon within her upcoming book in the Economic Exposures in Asia series with UCL Press. Email: hedwigaw@gmail.com

Notes

- 1 Most notably the Silent Steppe reports written in 2006 and 2018, respectively.
- 2 Graeber, D. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House.
- 3 For an overview, see the UCL Emerging Subjects blog series on ‘Debts and Loans’: <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/mongolian-economy/2016/04/06/blog-series-on-loans-and-debt/>
- 4 Hamm P., King L.P., Stuckler D. 2012. Mass Privatization, State Capacity, and Economic Growth in Post-Communist Countries. *American Sociological Review*, 77(2): 295-324.
- 5 Stevens, P., Lahn, G., Kooroshy, J. 2015. *The Resource Curse Revisited*. London: Chatham House.

Poison in the Air

The 1890 Influenza Pandemic in Singapore

Kah Seng Loh and Li Yang Hsu

The 1890 pandemic was Singapore's first recorded influenza outbreak. It reportedly "prevailed almost everywhere,"¹ yet historians know virtually nothing about it. In the aftermath of the pandemic, falling ill with influenza was not an uncommon experience [Fig. 1]. For sufferers, the illness imbued familiar everyday objects with new and unpleasant meanings. It also left a deep imprint on people's memories.

We place these social experiences and memories in context by tracing the history of the pandemic, from its origins and spread to its aftermath. This offers us a new perspective on Singapore's response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The differences between the two outbreaks are obvious, but less so are the "lessons," if any, that we can learn from the 1890 crisis.

Arrival at the wharf

The 1890 influenza pandemic arrived in Singapore in the third week of February and lasted until the start of April before disappearing quite abruptly – a duration of six to seven weeks. The quarantine system on St John's Island, which inspected inbound ships for signs of infectious disease, was undeveloped and undermanned at the time. It did not take precautions to thwart the entry of influenza into Singapore. The bulk of quarantine work during the year took place between September and December, mainly to quarantine sea passengers suffering from cholera and smallpox.²

During the pandemic, the Acting Principal Civil Medical Officer wrote in his report to the Colonial Office: "In Singapore I am of the opinion that the disease was introduced by ships, probably by the wharf coolies being infected by contact with persons on board ships suffering from the disease, or working in the air of ships that had become charged with the Influenza poison."³ The report was submitted to the Colonial Office nearly half a year later. It described the illness as characterised by high fever (up to 40 degrees Celsius), severe headaches, back and muscular pains, and intense bouts of coughing, with some patients describing how their heads were "splitting open."

Singapore then became the conduit for the spread of influenza to Penang (where the first case was reported in the first week of March) and Malacca (the first week of April). Unlike in Penang, where the outbreak was traced to coolies opening cases of piece goods in the local bazaar, the Acting Principal Civil Medical Officer pinpointed the Singapore outbreak to have occurred among the wharf workers. Singapore's was an unsurprisingly severe outbreak, as the coolies "live together in a large building in a very overcrowded condition."⁴

The Straits government did not make influenza a notifiable disease, as was done during the 1918 influenza pandemic. It did not release the complete official numbers of cases and deaths, though there were some statistics on the monthly death rate. Both the government and the Municipal Commission stated that the number of direct deaths from influenza was very small, though the complications that resulted were more serious. The Acting Principal Civil Medical Officer estimated the death rate to be no more than 0.5 percent, due to the "attenuated condition" of the imported virus; when it occurred, death was due to pneumonia or the poor health of debilitated coolies.⁵

The Municipal Commission, which oversaw the administration of the town, added that

The 1890 influenza pandemic – which a medical official called a "poison" arriving from the ships – was Singapore's first major outbreak. From the wharf, the pandemic spread quickly to hospitals, houses, and schools, and it affected all social groups. A public memory of the outbreak survived in the aftermath sustained by newspaper articles and the promises of miracle cures. The 1890 pandemic provides interesting comparisons with the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore, while also sounding a note of caution on the lessons we may draw from history.

most fatalities were old people or others suffering from "cardiac or pulmonary affections," adding, "Although not of itself a fatal disease, yet its influence in increasing the death rate during an epidemic is remarkable."⁶ Unfortunately, we have little information on the complications, too, other than the figures of 800 admissions and 150 deaths due to respiratory illnesses in the Straits Settlements that year.

We do have the Registrar-General's submission that the greatest number of monthly deaths in that year occurred in March. In most years, this was apparently among Singapore's healthiest months, but in 1890, there were 661 deaths at the height of the influenza pandemic. The corresponding mortality figures for February and April 1890 were 420 and 598, respectively, with a monthly average of 546 for the year.⁷ This suggests that, conservatively, influenza was responsible for about 120 deaths.

To hospitals and schools

The colonial records tell us little about the spread and trajectory of the pandemic

in Singapore as a whole. Medical reports continued to focus on the zymotic illnesses the government had long tracked: bubonic plague, cholera, and smallpox. The exception was the government hospital records, which were the few official sources of information on an acute disease that broke out and ended suddenly. The government did not possess records on how or how far influenza was spreading in the community. On the other hand, hospital records must be regarded with scepticism, for many people did not seek treatment in hospitals, which also did not prevent the outbreak from spreading quickly into the population.

In the General Hospital (GH), two cases of influenza were admitted to the European wards during the year; both subsequently recovered. Four cases were admitted to the Native (Asian) wards, who also recovered. As these were small numbers, we can infer they were the severe cases, whereas most patients suffering from a mild infection did not seek help at the hospital. By contrast, there were 46 cases of mild influenza admitted to the Police ward of the GH. In addition, the hospital noted, "the bulk of the cases of bronchitis, febricula (a mild fever)

and rheumatism were admitted at or about the time of the prevalence of influenza."⁸

The strongest evidence of uncontrolled spread was the large increase in the number of total admissions to the Prison Hospital, from 695 in 1889 to 1000 in 1890, with the first admission made on 8 March. The actual number attributed to influenza was only 136, mostly during this month; among them were six Europeans. Three patients later died from pneumonia caused by influenza, including an English soldier. These admissions to the Prison Hospital were only the tip of the iceberg, with half of the 1000 prison inmates reportedly suffering from influenza that year. The prison authorities reported that "hundreds of slighter cases were treated among the prisoners in the prison, the patients being put on light work."⁹ In general, the prison hospital did not admit sick prisoners unless their illness prevented them from working.

Infections were also reported in the hospital for women's sexually transmitted diseases and in outdoor dispensaries, suggesting the spread of the disease into the surrounding municipal area. Surprisingly, the Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), a major hospital originally built for Asian paupers in Singapore, treated a mere four cases of influenza. It claimed to have avoided an outbreak of influenza among its patients, but this seems doubtful.

As the disease was not made notifiable, it was difficult to prevent the spread of infection to the general population. We do not know exactly how the "poison" spread beyond the wharves, as the colonial and municipal records are patchy on the matter. The Acting Principal Civil Medical Officer felt that women were less affected than their husbands, as they resided in well-ventilated homes most of the time, though this would not apply to women who did not dwell in such good homes or those of lesser means. Working-class Asian women in the town typically lived in shophouses, which had poor air circulation, or wooden houses.

But the spread of influenza inside the Prison Hospital suggests that there was little resistance to its penetration into an unprepared general population. On 8 March, the *Straits Times* reported that "there is scarcely a Chinese house in the district of Teluk Ayer street where one or more is not suffering from the disease,"¹⁰ including a Chinese Municipal Commissioner, his family, and servants. This charts a path of infection from the wharves to the streets of

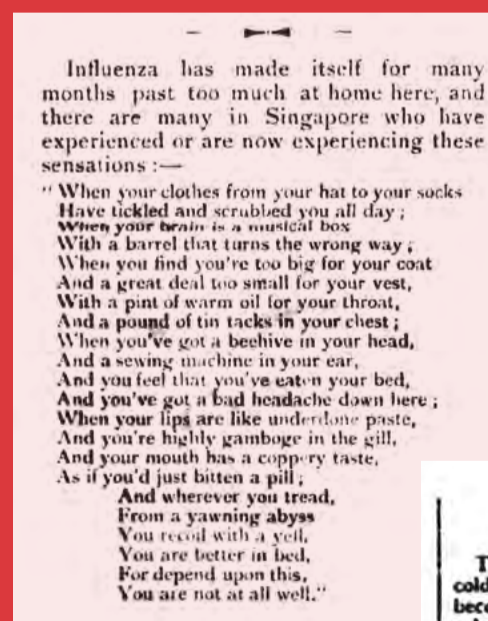
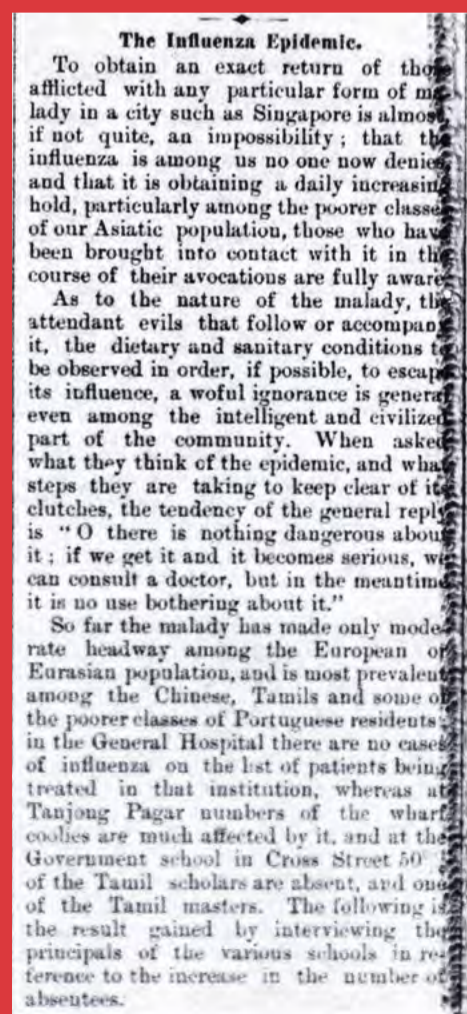


Fig. 1 (left): *The Straits Times*' report on the 1890 pandemic, 11 March 1890 (Source: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/stweekly18900311-1.2.45>).

Fig. 2 (left): A poem on being ill with the flu, *Singapore Free Press*, 5 April 1892 (Source: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/singfreepresswk18920405-1.2.14>).

Fig. 3 (below): An advertisement for Chamberlain's Cough Remedy, *Singapore Free Press*, 22 September 1898 (Source: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/singfreepressb18980922-1.2.34>).



densely-populated Chinatown within walking distance, where the coolies lived. Three days later, the newspaper deemed that “Influenza seems to be getting still more prevalent in Singapore, especially among the Asiatics.”¹¹

The paper carried a lengthy report on the same day, criticising the “woful [sic] ignorance” of even the educated public. The report surmised that the pandemic was spreading unevenly among the social classes and ethnic groups of the municipal population, with poorer and Asian groups being more heavily affected: “So far the malady has made only modest headway among the European or Eurasian population, and is most prevalent among the Chinese, Tamils and some of the poorer classes of Portuguese residents [...] whereas at Tanjong Pagar [near the busy port area], numbers of the wharf coolies are much affected by it.”¹² However, the article also found increased absences of pupils in Singapore’s leading schools. This provided an insight into influenza’s movement across different demographics – among students and within their families. At the Tamil School at Cross Street, some staff and as many as half the students were absent due to “bona fide influenza.” St. Anthony’s Mission School seemingly “got it bad” as well, reporting a similar proportion of student absentees. By contrast, in the Anglo Chinese School, only a fifth of the boys were absent from class, alongside a quarter of the boys at the mission house. At the other extreme, schools such as Raffles Institution Girls School, Raffles Boys School, and St. Joseph’s Institution reported no outbreaks, showing the unevenness of experience (or lack of reliable data) across Singapore. Thus influenza also spread to the upper echelons of Singapore society, as it was mostly the better-educated and higher-income residents who had children and were able to send them to good schools. The bulk of the immigrant Asian population was single or had no children.

Another report in the *Straits Times* traced the outbreak earlier to late January, with allegedly over 200 influenza cases occurring across all the ethnic groups. It alluded to under-reporting of the outbreak, with a large number of patients not seen by Western-trained doctors but by “the native so-called doctors.”¹³ Some patients among the latter group (or those who self-medicated) used an herbal remedy called *Kroma susu* (possibly a drink, as *susu* is milk in Malay). This was allegedly “a common weed” commonly used for treating influenza and asthma.

For a sufferer inclined towards Western medicine, a London-based company called F. Comar & Son advertised the product Abergier’s Syrup and Paste, as a “world-famed and marvellous medicament” for influenza and other respiratory afflictions.¹⁴ Chamberlain’s Cough Remedy remained popular in Singapore as a treatment for “coughs, colds, croup, whooping cough and influenza” into the new century.¹⁵ So did Dr. Williams’ “pink pills for pale people,” sold as a “cure-all” for a princely sum of eight dollars for half a dozen bottles.¹⁶ It was still in use at the time of the 1918 influenza pandemic and thereafter.

The appearance of these commercial products, often replete with glowing testimonials from “consumers,” takes us into the realm of social history and memory. They showed an awareness of influenza and the persistence of fear in the community. During the pandemic, a writer to the *Straits Times*, with the moniker “A Stitch in Time Saves Nine,” was worried that the influenza would be followed by a cholera outbreak, which allegedly had happened in previous influenza epidemics.¹⁷ Sustained in part by personal concerns and in part by commercial motives, a strand of social memory survived the pandemic. This differed from the official stance in the years after the outbreak.

Aftermath: inactivity and memory

As soon as the pandemic diminished, the 1890 outbreak was virtually forgotten by the government. The medical reports of the Straits Settlements noted sporadic cases of influenza in the ensuing decades, but there were no major plans to deal with a disease that had become endemic. Once again, our main source of information from the colonial government is the medical establishment. In 1891, two cases of influenza were treated in the GH. Two years later, the *Straits Times* stated that “Whole families have been stricken” by a mild strain of local influenza, though this was something the government failed to report.¹⁸

This happened again in 1895, with outbreaks occurring in England, Spain, and Singapore. The Singapore outbreak was purportedly a severe one, affecting the various ethnic groups; complications were not uncommon. The Straits Registrar-General claimed that there was no outbreak of epidemic disease to explain the year’s

relatively high death rate. But a letter to the press by “L.” noted that “The influenza epidemic is right among us,” striking down “Many heads of department.”¹⁹ The disease, the author said, “is no respecter of persons.”

Finally, in the middle of 1897, between the months of June and September, the colonial administration reported a mild but fairly large outbreak of influenza. This transpired among the police force, with 443 patients seen at its outpatient department, with many personnel visiting the department two or three times each. This was a prevalent outbreak, affecting policemen from all stations but especially those from the Orchard Road and Kandang Kerbau stations within the town area. It was also a mild outbreak, with few reports of complications except for slight bronchitis and pain in the limbs for several days. Only four patients had to be sent to a hospital, requiring only “a few days in barracks” for a full recovery.²⁰ The quarantine station on St John did not report any influenza that year.

In the following year, another mild outbreak took place in the Prison Hospital, resulting in 73 cases in March and April. There were no further official reports of influenza events until 1908, when one patient was admitted to the European ward and three were admitted to the Native ward of the GH. The next influenza outbreak was the global pandemic of 1918, which also struck Singapore. There were sporadic deaths from influenza in this period: in 1905, a young Chinese male between 25 and 35; in 1914, a Chinese male above 55; and in 1915, a Malay male.

The 1890 pandemic did not nudge the Straits government nor the Municipal Commission to change their policy on infectious disease. Neither side was keen to take charge of the control of epidemic disease in the town area. In 1894, after a long-running debate with the colonial government, the Commission became the main authority responsible for the control of epidemic disease in the Municipality. One of the pressing issues was to enforce the notification system, as people frequently did not report cases of dangerous infectious disease to the authorities.

But the following year, the President of the Commission Alex Gentle argued against reforming the system: “Singapore has suffered very little from epidemics of recent years, and to establish an elaborate and costly system of espionage in the hope of the early detection of cases of disease, is ...uncalled for and might prove mischievous as tending to alienate an Asiatic population from European methods and to confirm them in their habits of secrecy and distrust.”²¹ Gentle’s statement is remarkable in two ways: he not only depicted effective notification to be a form of “espionage” that harmed the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, but also ignored the significance of the influenza pandemic just five years earlier. Influenza had not been made a notifiable disease in 1890, allowing it to spread widely among the classes and ethnic groups of Singapore. The Municipal Commission’s stance on notification would have repercussions for Singapore’s response to the 1918 influenza pandemic, when influenza was made a notifiable disease in the Straits Settlements.

Lessons of history?

The 1890 outbreak offers some interesting insights into the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic 130 years later. The differences between these two events are plain to see. Unlike the Singapore government’s robust policy in the current crisis, the colonial response was virtually non-existent. In 1890, the infection spread quickly beyond the wharf coolies to the community, with the hospitals unable to stem the spread. The pandemic affected all social classes, ethnic, and age groups, albeit unequally. Such was symptomatic of a busy entrepôt port that did not halt its business and social activities. This, in turn, reflected the economic priorities of the colonial government and the role of Singapore as an entrepôt.

By contrast, the present government has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in more purposeful ways. It has calibrated the degree of social distancing and range of public health restrictions in response to

evolving circumstances. Nevertheless, at the time of writing (December 2021), Singapore continues to probe a way out of the pandemic after nearly two years of restrictions. It is still premature to conclude that the current response has singularly been more successful. Perhaps the better question to ask concerns the balance of public health and socio-economic costs of the response.

The 1890 pandemic was also quickly forgotten by the Straits government. Even when the global influenza outbreak reached Singapore in 1918, the colonial government did not refer to the earlier event. By contrast, in the current pandemic, the present government initially used the 2003 SARS outbreak as a frame of reference for its response. Influenza did not change colonial policy on epidemic disease either. The status quo prevailed, including the ineffective notification system. As David Arnold notes in the case of India, it is difficult to draw lessons from history when the 1918 influenza outbreak produced little noteworthy change there.²² Yet, people in Singapore did not forget the “poison” of 1890. As the newspapers continued to carry reports (and advertisements) on influenza, they helped keep the subject alive in locals’ minds. The “lesson” from Singapore, then, might be that social memory is an important part of public health in shaping people’s attitudes and behaviour during influenza outbreaks.²³

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NO SECRET ABOUT IT.

A Freemason’s Candid Confession.

MR. JOHN BIRD is a master builder at Durban, Natal, he is also a prominent member of the Inanda Lodge, No. 1192, of Freemasons. It was with the object of gaining some special information that a reporter called upon Mr. Bird, and he got what he wanted as will be seen, for the latter made no secret about the remarkable way in which Dr. Williams’ pink pills for pale people had cured him of chronic rheumatism.

Mr. Bird has a large amount of outdoor work to do in the course of his business. He had been working on a roof one day in a drizzling rain, and felt the rheumatism for the first time after he got home that evening. The pains gradually increased, and every night seemed to get worse and worse. Many a night had he lain awake twisting and turning, and unable to get a moment’s peace from the agony. The pain seemed located in his legs, and particularly in the knees and joints, and so bad did it become that he was obliged to keep to his bed for a week, and every night he had hot fomentations applied to his legs. He tried cold bandages, L. t. baths, and all kinds of things recommended by different people; he also consulted doctors and used medicines of various sorts, but he could never get any permanent relief and lived in constant agony for many months.

It was while in this state that he was advised to use Dr. Williams’ pink pills; a lady told him she was deriving great benefit from their use, and recommended him to try them. He did so with the result that the first bottle brought him relief, and six bottles completely cured him.

The case of Mr. John Bird, as recorded above, was first made public in the *Natal Mercury* on the 7th April, 1898. Three years afterwards Mr. Bird was again asked to give an account of his health. “I am in first class form,” said he, “and have never had a return of my old enemy (rheumatism) since Dr. Williams’ pink pills cured me in 1898. My faith in those wonderful pills is as strong as ever, and I have recommended them to many.”

It is not claimed for these pills that they are a “Cure-all,” but by their action on the blood, purifying, and at the same time strengthening it, they have, as testimony proves, cured numbers of cases of rheumatism, sciatica, lumbago, neuralgia, indigestion, liver and kidney troubles, the disorders of women, and the after effects of influenza, colds, and fevers. Sold by chemists and storekeepers generally they are also obtainable direct from the Dr. Williams’ medicine company, 36 Robinson road, Singapore, one bottle for a dollar and a half or six bottles for eight dollars post free. As a remedy for nervous debility, early decay, and as a tonic for young and old of both sexes they have an unrivalled reputation among all classes of society the world over.

Fig. 4-5: A “personal account” of the benefits of Dr. Williams’ “pink pills for pale people,” *Straits Times*, 13 December 1903 (Source: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19031213-1.2.13>).

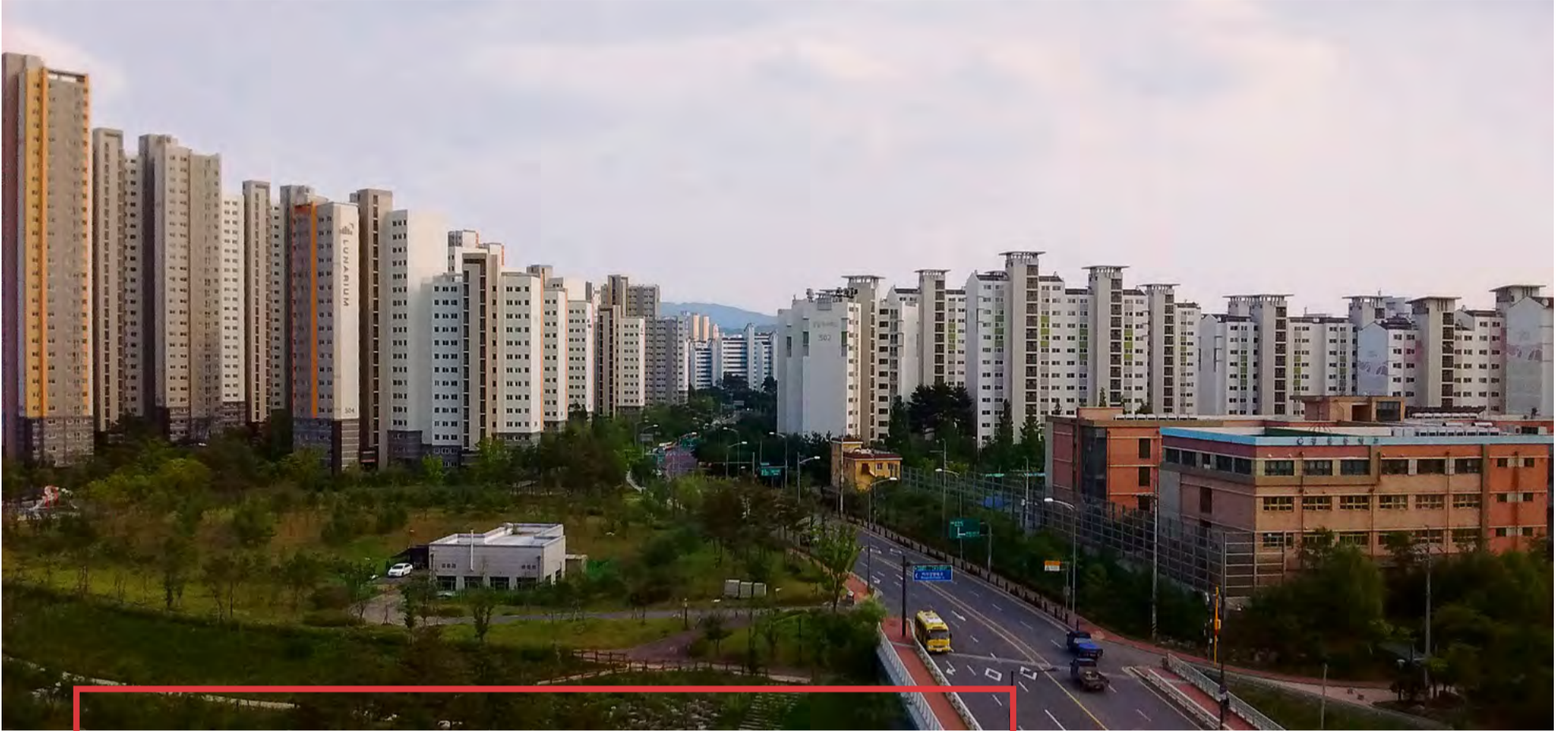


Fig. 1: Room with a view: residential buildings seen from “my” home in Hanam. In the foreground, the park zone meandering through the neighborhood towards the left side for kilometers (Image by the author, 2019).

From Hanok to Today's Apartment

How Standardized South Korean Homes Provide Residents a Free Hand

Andrea Prins

At first sight, their massiveness is most outstanding: Korean apartment blocks. Their white-gray silhouettes loom everywhere, in urban areas [Fig. 1] and also close to the beautifully wooded mountainsides. It is easy to despise those blocks as repetitive ugliness. However, the apartments are extremely popular. Having lived in the flats myself, I discovered why: they are not only rooted in centuries-old housing traditions but also offer smart solutions for today's cohabitation – in South Korea and far beyond.

A bed covered with a bright blue spread, a mirror, a closet, some chairs on a wooden-like floor: my home for the coming weeks. Behind the sliding window, the evening sun colors the nearly identical neighboring apartment blocks pale orange. “Normally, this room is my mother's *pied-à-terre*,” explains my host Yeon-Ho Choi, a young man in his twenties employed by the multinational Lotte Corporation. My room's annex bathroom is near the entrance. In addition, the flat consists of my host's bedroom, his studio, and a second bathroom. Situated between “my” and his rooms is the living area. The surrounding Hanam district – with its 255,000 inhabitants – is brand new. Sales were frantic: downtown Seoul is only 60 minutes away by subway. The apartment itself is anything but special. But that's exactly why I'm here. In the summer of 2019, I lived with different hosts in Greater Seoul to study those flats, and I spoke with residents and architects about housing habits. What makes these repetitive flats so popular?

Hanoks: more than a romantic tradition

Two years earlier, my partner and I traveled through South Korea. Call it a professional deformation, but I can't resist looking at architecture, even in holidays. So all over the country we visited *hanoks*,

the traditional, seemingly unpretentious houses made of wood, clay, paper, straw, and tiles. This article does not discuss their sophisticated heating system and their perfect climate adaptation,¹ but instead concentrates on floor plans. As a building type, *hanoks* appeared during the late fourteenth century on the Korean peninsula.²

Unless inhabited by the noble class, *hanoks* had but few, relatively small rooms. The open, south-oriented *daecheong maru* – “hall with wooden floor” – is a collectively used living space [Fig. 2]. In winter, wooden panels hung in front of the opening to convert the open hall into an interior space. Intimate rooms are located on both sides of

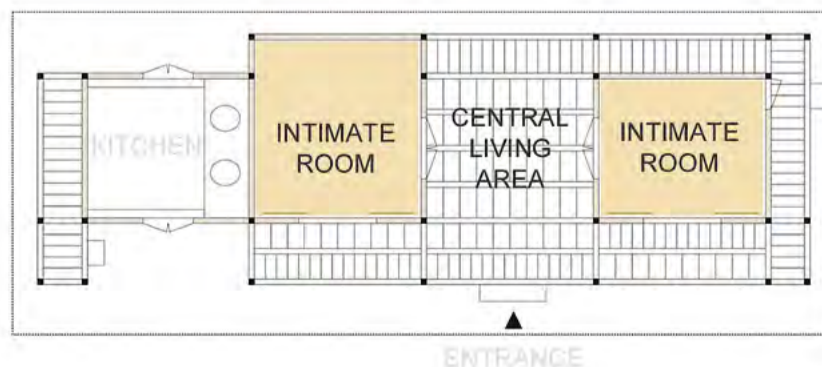


Fig. 2: Schematized floor plan of a typical *hanok*: two intimate rooms on both sides of the living area, and photos showing the exterior and the “hall with wooden floor” (Images by the author, 2021).

the *daecheong maru*. *Hanoks* only recently experienced a revival, not only as residential homes, but also as restaurants, offices, and guesthouses. My real discovery occurred near the construction site for a typical, large-scale housing project. Billboards usually show renderings of people happily lounging in their perfect home, but this time floor plans were presented. The eye-opener: the flats-to-be had a centrally located living area with smaller rooms on either side, just like the *hanoks*. So the traditional spatial structure of the *hanoks* seems to be vivid in today's serial mass housing.

The Apartments Republic

The rebuilding of the capital, once destroyed in the Korean War, was followed by a period of rapid urban extension. Since 1970, one type of serial mass housing predominates: elongated in form and 15 to 20 stories high.³ From conversations with residents and Korean architects,⁴ I understood that there are many reasons for the ongoing popularity of the mass housing blocks. The government provides excellent schools and stores nearby, and even suburbs located far from the city center are conveniently accessible by (public) transport. Following the successful regeneration of the Cheonggyecheon





Fig. 4: Versatile use of space: one of the private rooms in a contemporary flat is used for serving a tea ceremony (Image by the author, 2019).

River in downtown Seoul, each new housing development has a lively park area, where people can stroll, play, and exercise. Unlike similar building types in Europe, these developments are not neighborhoods for marginalized populations, but for the well-to-do middle class. Other researchers, too, have wondered why the now-prosperous South Korea clings to the construction of repetitive ugliness. In 2007, geographer Valérie Gelézeau published *The Republic of Apartments*⁵ about Koreans' astonishing love for their standardized apartment blocks. Gelézeau concluded: the force behind the mass construction of standardized flats is a cleverly forged alliance between government, influential family conglomerates who control the big construction companies, and the middle class. In other words, standardization is not seen as an inevitable consequence of mass production, but as a strength which guarantees a predictable product of generally accepted value. However, there are even more reasons for the flats' popularity.

Living in a three-bay condo

"My home is rather ordinary. I guess it's not interesting to you," says Heeja An (44), one of my interviewees as we sit in a trendy café. At that time, I had just moved to my second home-stay. My 'research-by-dwelling' is expanded by critical analysis of floor plan typologies, literature study, and conversations. When my interviewee – an associate research fellow at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism – sketches

her home, the typical so-called "three-bay condo"⁶ emerges: a room with bathroom, the centrally located living area, and a second cluster of rooms with bathroom [Fig. 3]. My interviewee lives there with her brother and sister. The way they co-inhabit the place does surprise me: the sisters share a room, the brother has one for himself, and the third room is a studio.

Family size is currently changing in South Korea: statistically, a couple now has an average of less than one child.⁷ "Another remarkable trend is that young families often settle with their aging parents," explains one of my hosts. "The grandparents then move to the space next to the entrance, the young family inhabits the other rooms." The central living area is used jointly and simultaneously acts as a buffer between the private spaces of the old and young family members. While sharing a household, a certain degree of privacy is maintained. Certainly, this trend is partly due to high housing prices, but additionally it shows that this apartment type is very suitable as a multi-generational home. The room near the entrance is also the ideal accommodation for a guest – this was also "my" room in two of my home stays – or a home office. The location of this room ensures both a connection with the other residents and privacy. Of course, the three, nearly equally large rooms can also serve as three independent private spaces.

Standardized homes lead to standardized living, or so goes the lesson taken from European postwar mass housing.⁸ But the South Korean standard flat actually allows residents to live in *different* ways

[Fig. 4]. Given the surprised reactions of my interlocutors to this conclusion, this versatile use may be an unintended, but nonetheless extremely valuable, by-product. One and the same floor plan consisting of equivalent private spaces and a common living area is suitable for multiple adults, multi-generational housing, and families. This conclusion is significant for (Western) countries, where one mainly builds hierarchically configured floor plans: a large living room, a master bedroom, and some small bedrooms.

Housing in Europe: built immobility

Instead of the one- or two-room accommodations that were common some 150 years ago, the northwestern European middle class of the 19th century invented homes with distinct chambers.⁹ This idea of rooms tailored to one function (e.g., "living room," "master bedroom," or "bedroom") was not broadly questioned during modern movements.¹⁰ Consequently, until today, most floor plans are designed according to this functional idea. Furthermore, they exclusively fit the concept of living as a nuclear family, while today more and more people live together differently. Of course, Korean housing cannot be applied one-to-one to other countries. And I do not want to advocate a massiveness, which does not pay any attention to urbane or rural surroundings. Yet, the floor plan of the three-bay condo is an example of affordable housing in which

people can live together in different and changing ways. The use of rooms is not fixed, but can easily be adapted: homes as "free space" rather than built immobility.

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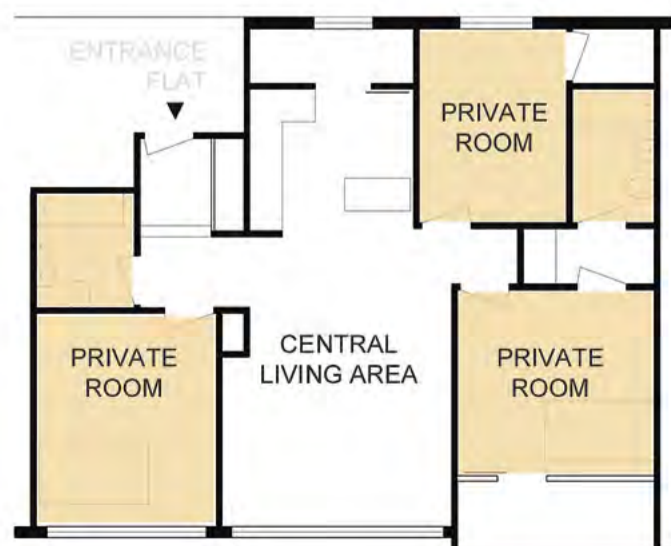


Fig. 3: Floor plan of a typical three-bay condo: the clustered private rooms – highlighted yellow – and the centrally located living area. The interior photo shows one of "my" rooms, which has the potential to be a *piéd-à-terre*, a bedroom, a study, or a temporary home of a guest, grandparent, or recently divorced friend (Images by the author, 2021).





Fig. 1: China Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant (Photo by the author, 2019)

Culinary Dakwah

Hui and Chinese Muslim Restaurants in Malaysia

Hew Wai Weng

In 2015, I dropped by “China Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant,” a Hui restaurant in Bangi, a Muslim-majority suburb near Kuala Lumpur. While watching the live demonstration of Hui making noodles, I talked to Said Pan, the restaurant manager. His brother Hassan Pan, originally from Lanzhou in Gansu, came to Malaysia to open his first restaurant in 2013. His business has increased since then, as his restaurants have been very popular among middle-class Malay Muslims. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, it had more than 30 branches across cities in Malaysia.

Chinese Malaysians who have converted to Islam. Today, most Chinese Muslims in Malaysia are the third or fourth generation of non-Muslim Han Chinese migrants from the southeastern regions of China; many of them are converts. Meanwhile, many contemporary Hui migrants in both countries come from the northwestern part of China, especially the Gansu Province. As in Mandarin Chinese, many overseas Hui prefer to identify themselves as *zhongguomuslimin* (中国穆斯林 Chinese-national Muslims), while local Chinese Muslims call themselves *huarenmusilin* (华人穆斯林 ethnically Chinese Muslims). In English, though, the common use of “Chinese Muslims” might cause some confusion, as some Hui restaurants also label themselves “Chinese Muslim” (in English) but refer to the *zhongguomuslimin* restaurant. Despite cultural and religious affinities, as well as their close relations, there are certain significant differences between Hui migrants and local converts that make Hui and Chinese Muslims two different yet closely related groups. Such differences are reflected by their dialects, food, cultural celebrations, religious upbringings, citizenships, and so on. For example, most Hui Muslims do not celebrate Chinese New Year, yet such celebrations play an important role in identity formation when it comes to Chinese Muslims in Malaysia.

Eating places in Malaysia and elsewhere have drawn scholarly attention, as they provide tangible and lively examples of various social issues, including middle-class consumption, ethnic interaction, and religious

practices. The halalization of local Chinese food, the cuisine brought by Hui migrants – and the adjustments made to accommodate local taste and Islamic requirements – define what constitutes “Chinese halal food” in Malaysia. The quest for ‘multicultural’ and halal consumption among urban middle-class Muslims has contributed to the recent growth Hui and Chinese Muslim restaurants in Malaysia. Such restaurants are sites of identity manifestation, culinary *dakwah*, halal consumption, and ethnic interactions in Malaysia.

Sites of identity manifestation

Over the last decade, there have been mushrooming restaurants run by Chinese converts, including Mohammad Chow Kitchen, Mohammad Chan Restaurant, Sharin Low Restaurant, Homst Restaurant, Adam Lai Restaurant, Chef Amman Teoh Restaurant, and more. Most restaurants use the owners’ names as their trademarks – a combination of an Islamic name with a Chinese surname to vividly manifest both their ‘Chineseness’ and ‘Muslimness.’ Two of the most popular ones are Sharin Low Restaurant and Mohammad Chan Restaurants. Each of them has many

Bangi, a middle-class Muslim neighbourhood, has many Chinese halal restaurants; some are run by Hui migrants, such as Xin Jiang Restaurant, Salam Noodle, and Hot Meal Bar. Others are run by local Chinese converts, such as Mohammad Chan Restaurant and Haslinda Sim Restaurant. All these restaurants claim they serve halal and authentic Chinese Muslim food. Some of the restaurant owners also see food as a medium of *dakwah* (Islamic preaching), a trend which I understand as culinary *dakwah*. But what is ‘authentic’ Chinese Muslim food? Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as Chinese Muslim cuisine, as regions, not religious affiliations, primarily define Chinese foods. Hence, Chinese Muslim food means halalized Chinese food of any type. Halal – literally meaning “permissible” – might entail different meanings for different people, but put simply in the context of Chinese halal food, it refers to Chinese food without using pork, lard, or any other non-halal ingredients. Many Chinese foods in Malaysia have their origins in Southeastern China (especially Cantonese and Fujian traditions), with many local inventions. However, new Chinese migrants, including the Huis, brought new additions over the last decade. Hui restaurants offer a mixture of Northwestern Chinese and Xinjiang dishes, yet repackaged as “authentic Muslim cuisine from China.” Their signature dish is Lanzhou pulled noodle (*lamien*), best known as “mee tarik,” a new term that Hui migrants have brought into Malay vocabulary.

It is essential to clarify the different meanings between Chinese Muslims and Hui Muslims in this essay. I use Hui mainly to refer to Chinese-speaking Muslims from China, while Chinese Muslims refers to



Fig. 2: Localized fusion lamien dishes - golden curry lamien and fried lamien (Photo by the author, 2019)



branches across cities in Malaysia. Claiming itself as a family-style seafood restaurant, Sharin Low Restaurant mainly serves Cantonese-style cuisine – from roasted duck to steamed fish, from butter prawn to pepper tofu. The restaurant’s interior and exterior designs are vividly red and green, with decorations such as Chinese Islamic calligraphy. Mohd Chan Restaurant offers a much more extensive menu, which includes everything from roasted duck to wanton noodle, dim sum to dumpling soup, Cantonese-style cuisine to local fusion. It also serves some ‘non-Chinese’ dishes, such as Indian chicken curry and Malay sambal fish.

Besides restaurants run by Chinese converts, many Hui migrants from China have also opened restaurants in Malaysia, making Lanzhou *lamien* a popular dish. Hui involvement in the restaurant business is crucial to both their economic survival and the maintenance of their collective identity. Overall, there are at least four different categories of Hui restaurants. The first is a home-based private restaurant that primarily serves Hui Muslims living in Malaysia. The second is a small-scale restaurant, mainly run by a student-turned-businessperson. The third type is a larger-scale chain restaurant, mainly run by Hui migrants with some food business experience

in China. Two examples are Salam Noodle and Chinese Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant, both of which now have multiple branches in Malaysia. Finally, the fourth type comprises local branches of Hui restaurant chains based in China that are expanding their business overseas, such as Al-Amber Restaurant and Qing Fang Restaurant (closed down during the pandemic).

Established in 2015, Al-Amber in Kuala Lumpur claims it serves “Silk Road” Muslim cuisine, referring to halal Chinese cuisine from the northern parts of China. Today, there are three branches of Al-Amber in Malaysia. In 2019, Al-Amber partnered with Air Asia to promote Lanzhou – the airline’s new destination – by highlighting its signature dish, Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle. While claiming to serve “authentic Muslim cuisine from China,” some of these restaurants also include new cuisines and adapt local Malaysian flavours in their menu. For example, during Chinese New Year, Al-Amber serves Yeesang, a popular local Chinese festive dish. The food menu of another establishment – Chinese Muslim Authentic Heritage Pulled Noodle Restaurant – also exemplifies such adaptation. Besides serving ‘authentic’ dishes such as Lanzhou noodle, Ziran mutton, Xinjiang lamb skewers, and potato beef rice bowl, it also creates localized fusion dishes such as golden curry mee tarik and fried mee tarik.

Sites of halal consumption

Many Chinese and Hui Muslim restaurants are located in middle-class Muslim neighbourhoods, such as Bangi, Shah Alam, Kota Damansara, and Taman Tun Dr Ismail. The owner of Sharin Low restaurant shares with me the key reason behind the success of his business: “There are many middle-class Malay now. They have money to spend. They want to eat authentic and good Chinese food [...] Most of the chefs in our restaurants are Chinese. We want to make sure our food taste like real Chinese food, even without using pork and lard.” Indeed, there are increasing demands for cultural diversity within the Islamic framework among segments of urban middle-class Malay Muslims. The popularity of Chinese-style mosques, Chinese Islamic calligraphy, Muslim tours to China, and Chinese halal food reflects many Malay Muslims favoring cultural diversity, yet this does not necessarily support religious pluralism. Instead of seeing Islam as a ‘Malay

Fig. 3 (above): Al-Amber Restaurant (Photo by the author, 2019)

Fig. 4 (right): Sharin Low Restaurant (Photo by the author, 2013)

Fig. 5 (below): Mohammad Chan Restaurant (Photo by the author, 2013)



religion,’ they view Islam as a religion for all humankind. Therefore, appreciating Chinese culture acknowledges the universality of Islam and becomes their subtle way of preaching Islam among non-Muslim Chinese Malaysians.

Indeed, these restaurants are sites of culinary *dakwah*. Both Sharin Low Restaurant and Mohd Chan Restaurant run Chinese New Year celebrations. They serve free Chinese halal food to the public. They host cultural performances like lion dances and maintain information booths with booklets on Islam in Chinese and English. As Sharin Low told me, “Chinese like to eat, and that is why we think that food can be an effective medium of *dakwah*.” With the tagline “Islam for all – We create, we educate, we provide,” the owner of C.A.T. Wok Street Food Restaurant has initiated a project called “*Dakwah through Food*.” Some Hui migrants also cited religious consideration for doing business in Malaysia. For example, Yahya Liu, who runs Salam Noodles Restaurant, explained to me why he left China and moved to Malaysia: “In China, our restaurant in Shenzhen relied on non-Muslim customers, and we had to serve alcoholic drinks. The money we thus earned is not halal [...] My brother and I decided to move to Malaysia, as it is a Muslim-majority country, and we can sustain our business without serving the alcoholic drink. Malaysia is also a better place for us to learn and to practice Islam.”

Not surprisingly, many Chinese and Hui restaurant owners perceive their restaurants as places that foster cultural interaction and social inclusion, bringing together Malaysians and non-Malaysians regardless of ethnicity and religious affiliation. In some ways, these restaurants resemble other eating places such as *kopitiam* (Chinese coffee house) and *mamak* stalls (Indian Muslim eateries), functioning as sites where

people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds get together. However, as I observed, many of the customers in Hui and Chinese Muslim restaurants are Malay and Chinese Muslims. In addition, there has been increasing pressure by religious authorities for these restaurants (especially some *kopitiam* owned by non-Muslim Chinese) to apply for official halal certification in recent years. Many Hui and Chinese Muslim restaurants have the official halal logo, but some do not. Some owners believe that the naming of the restaurant – using an Islamic name or clearly stating it is a Chinese Muslim restaurant – is enough to convince Muslim consumers that the foods they serve are halal.

From dimsum to roasted duck, from Lanzhou *lamien* to Xinjiang lamb skewers, Chinese halal foods have gained more popularity among Malay Muslims in Malaysia, indicating consumers’ quests for multicultural yet halal consumption. With the increasing number of Hui migrants and Chinese converts who prefer to maintain their identity, such demands have led to the mushrooming of Hui and Chinese Muslim restaurants. Some restaurant owners also see their restaurants as sites of culinary *dakwah*, suggesting food as a subtle way to preach Islam among non-Muslims. Such culinary changes reflect a broader trend of Muslim consumption: valuing cultural diversity while prioritizing Islamic principles. It is a trend in which urban space, market forces, and religious observances intersect.

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Bernard Fall

A Soldier of War in Europe,
A Scholar of War in Asia

Nathaniel L. Moir

Over the last fifty years, a lack of analysis on Bernard B. Fall (1926-1967) and his scholarship has been a significant gap in the historiography on the First Indochina War (1946-1954) and the Second Indochina War (1955-1975). Since the Vietnam War ended, the failure to recognize how military force cannot compensate for the lack of a politically attainable goal remains prevalent. As Fall once remarked, “A U.S. Marine can fly a helicopter better than anyone else, but he cannot give a Vietnamese farmer an ideology to believe in.” In much the same way, a Russian pilot will not be able to convince Ukrainians that political reconciliation is possible. Rather, Russia’s unprovoked invasion has made its political legitimacy impossible to maintain with every passing day that Russia continues to destroy the Ukrainian people and their country.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 evokes a failure to learn the many lessons Bernard Fall sought to convey in critiquing American operations in Vietnam in the 1960s and as France sought to control Indochina in the 1950s. Among his contributions was Fall’s demand that policy-makers recognize the primacy of political legitimacy over military force. He noted this tendency to over-rely on military power in 1962, writing: “To win the military battle but lose the political war could become the U.S. fate in Vietnam.” He believed that no invading force could possess sufficient military power to compensate for its political standing if that force lacked political legitimacy among the society it sought to control.

Born in Vienna in 1926, Bernard Fall was a Jew whose family emigrated to France after the Anschluss of Austria in 1938. When he was 16, Nazi forces murdered his parents in Vichy-held France, at which point he joined the French Resistance in 1942, *Forces Françaises De L’Intérieur* (FFI) in 1943, and the French army in early 1945. After WWII, he became a research analyst for the War Crimes Commission during the Nuremberg Trials. In 1952, he moved to the United States as one of the first scholars in the new Fulbright International Study Program. In 1953, Fall traveled to Indochina to conduct research on the Viet Minh for his Ph.D., which he completed at Syracuse University in 1955. At that point, he quickly became one of the foremost scholars on warfare in Southeast Asia after World War II. He is most well-known for his books *Street Without Joy: Insurgency in Indochina* (1961) and *Hell in A Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (1966).¹

An Early Scholar of War in Indochina

Among the many factors that distinguished Fall from other contemporaries was his first-hand analysis of France’s war in Indochina (1945-1954) and his analysis of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s (DRV) formation and administration of northern Vietnam after September 2, 1945. His first book, *The Viet-Minh Regime*, was the first analytical study of the DRV written in English when it was published in 1954.² In the years after 1955, Fall continued to evolve and develop as an analyst of political warfare. He eventually became a leading scholar among journalists and other intellectuals assessing U.S. policy during the early stages of the Second Indochina War in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

After 1963, individuals in the West who read the translated works of *The Collected Writings of Ho Chi Minh*, Vo Nguyen Giap’s *People’s War, People’s Army*, and Truong Chinh’s *Primer for Revolt* did so through the lens Fall provided them as editor of these collections.³ Finally, as opposition to American involvement in Vietnam intensified after 1965, American students and international readers learned more about Vietnam and U.S. policy in Southeast Asia through a book Fall co-edited called *The Viet-Nam Reader: Articles and Documents on American Foreign Policy and the Viet-Nam Crisis*. Fall, along with co-editor Marcus Raskin, collected and published this book in early 1965. *The Viet-Nam Reader* was a notably non-partisan collection, and it provided readers with a balanced range of political views as the early anti-Vietnam War movement began to emerge in the United States.⁴

Among academics writing about the Vietnam War today, it has become obligatory to include at least one bibliographic reference to Fall’s books. However, this simple but respectful acknowledgment underestimates the importance of his scholarship. To be sure, Fall’s work is difficult to categorize because of the interdisciplinary approach to Vietnamese studies he developed. Yet, this quality also indicates that he offered a new approach to writing about warfare after World War II. For example, Fall adopted an area studies approach to Asia when this field was only emerging. He also wrote about international relations with a directness found in political science but infused his analysis with historical context and cultural analysis of Vietnamese society. Finally, as a recognized expert in his day, he was adept at incorporating colourful anecdotes that enlivened his thoughts on policy, guerrilla warfare, and global politics.

Fall’s analysis of Vietnamese revolutionary warfare also had a pragmatic element. He incorporated his extensive knowledge of military tactics, techniques, and procedures – gathered from his time-fighting in the French Resistance and French army during

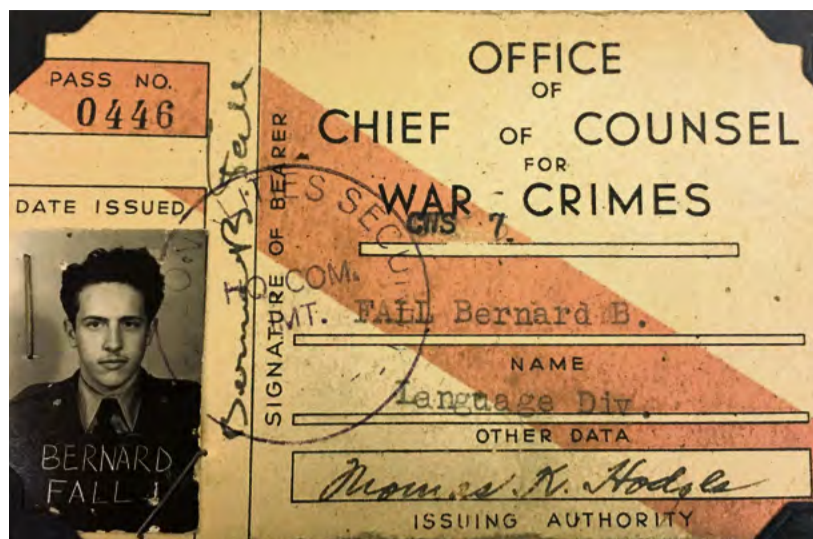


Fig. 1 (left): Office of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes ID Card. Fig. 2 (below): Fall in Indochina, 1953. Fig. 3 (bottom): Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, 1962

All photos are courtesy of the Bernard Fall family and used by permission.

World War II – in almost all of his writing. His ability to write for the average reader was another notable characteristic. He wrote dozens of articles for numerous journals that included *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *Current History*, and popular outlets ranging from the *Saturday Evening Post*, *The New York Times*, and others. As a result, and as a public intellectual, he was recognized by U.S. personnel and other journalists as a scholar who knew France’s war against the Viet Minh first-hand. Understandably, this provided significant legitimacy to his critiques of American policy when it escalated its operations in Vietnam.

Fall’s Relevance Today

In 2022 and in the future, readers will benefit from learning more about Fall’s influence and how his scholarship may increase our understanding of political warfare. Even a quick study of his writing reveals its relevance to war in Ukraine, Afghanistan, or elsewhere. As indicated earlier, he emphasized how administrative control over local populations mattered far more than military power. This administrative focus – which the Viet Minh and National Liberation Front forces prioritized in their Maoist-inspired revolutionary warfare – gave them an edge over stronger military forces arrayed against them. As Fall put it, “When a country is being subverted in an insurgency, it is not being out-fought. It is being ‘out-administered.’”⁵ His scholarship, thus, provides instruction for those seeking to understand how comparatively weak forces can undermine stronger military forces.

In another historical case during Fall’s career, he reflected on how a brutal, illegal, and unprovoked land invasion of one country of another created a chain of events leading to other wars. The invasion referenced here was the Korean War which resulted from vast miscalculations. In an echo resonating today, the North Korean invasion of its neighbour directly resulted in renewed German military rearmament as Chinese and Russian threats to the global security order increased. In a compromise to permit, if not support, German rearmament in 1951, France demanded that the United States guarantee its position in its colonies in Indochina. In exchange, France would remain committed to collective defense through a proposed European Defence Community united against Russian and Chinese encroachments. Fall began to recognize how, in 1951, the security guarantees the United States provided France began to pull the United States further into the failing French reoccupation of Indochina.

Thus, as one war began, it primed the furnaces for another.

Ultimately, readers who are new to his work will find much on insurgency and revolutionary warfare that is critically relevant to the conduct of warfare today. Among those looking for an evolution in military history, Bernard Fall’s writing is valuable because he wrote about the political and social dimensions of warfare as it functioned within a Vietnamese society enduring the broader Cold War. Tragically, Fall died in February 1967 when he tripped a landmine while on patrol with U.S. Marines in Thua Thien Province, near the Vietnamese city of Hue. He was 40 years old. However, for readers who seek to understand how supposedly “weaker” forces confronted and defeated more powerful military forces – similar to the current war in Ukraine and other conflicts – few authors explained this phenomenon in the 20th century as comprehensively as Bernard Fall.

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Fig. 1: *Unscientific Storytelling* workshop with public school children on theatre and science (Photo courtesy of *Unscientific Storytelling*/Deepak Srinivasan).

Performance as 'Process' in Public Engagement

Deepak Srinivasan

As a facilitator of processes, I have often pondered a question: *What constitutes a creative professional?* Around 2005, after changing directions from a formal background in Environmental Science and Neurobiology, I turned to visual-narrative media like theatre. I felt the need to explore theatre tools in order to develop alternative engagements due to a fractured sense of intimacy with my city of birth, Bangalore (now Bengaluru). My initial experience with urban theatre groups led me to be critical of the competitive, celebrity culture permeating many media forms. Instead, a strong sense of social consciousness, collaborative creation, and community engagement was induced through my time with an urban theatre group called *Rafiki*. Gradually, I was introduced to a large but fragmented network of alternative theatre groups and practices in India.

based on form and medium as output. Research and facilitation are often cast prior or external to art production, used to develop inspiration or as art pedagogy. Furthermore, community artists are perceived to be hierarchically beneath artists who work with a defined form or commercial output. Conceptual art and mixed media movements that historically began as critiques of aesthetics, meaning, form and politics stand usurped by capitalist, elitist forces who determine funding, visibility, and trends. Casting process-driven commentaries as "outreach" – and not as art itself – is partisan to market-driven notions of art. For the past 16 years of my practice, I have switched between denying and reclaiming the label of an artist. These have both been my way of responding to working on the fringes of conventional art networks.

My work has evolved through cultural research and community facilitation, yielding different layers of output which emanate from converging processes. First, such work facilitates inclusive, participatory, creative communication tools within various community contexts, from children who are school dropouts to collectives working for the rights of street-based sex workers. These processes manifest as periodic workshops or culminate in a public presentation. Second, my work uses storytelling and performance processes that lead to creating interactive performances in public parks and controlled public zones (e.g., museums). These projects work to critique contexts of learning and postcolonial hangovers in designing museum experience. Third, my work engages with the city and its neighbourhoods as a living practice of visible and invisible histories and experiences, by unravelling and

In 2008, I initiated a free public space movement called *Theatre Jam* as a critique of proscenium-centric performance processes and of the lack of accessible public spaces to perform. Meeting every first Sunday of the month, this self-organising, eclectic network of theatre, dance, music, and photo artists offered workshops, performances, and activities in public areas and parks located in different neighbourhoods across the city. This urban practice is still kept active as *October Jam* by the media collective *Maraa*, with whom I worked back then.¹

Around the same time, as a response to the rapidly changing public sphere of Bengaluru, I had begun a modest engagement with citizen-led urban activist networks, specifically around the loss of avenue trees for urban development and around themes of escalating gender violence in public and private contexts. While participating in and observing street protests, I could not help but notice that the human-rights centric social justice discourse developed by NGO workers and urban activists elicited a weak and unsustainable public response. Somewhat disheartened at this disconnect between urban development issues and the public of neoliberal India, I chose to pursue introspective cultural activism using theatre, storytelling, community media,² and (later) design thinking. My engagement with community spaces grew and allowed the development of creative tools that aided a new emergence of relationalities and culminated in the role of an educator in a design school in 2009. Over the past decade, this work has developed into what I consider 'Critical Practice' with a social design focus.

Creative professionals such as artists have, over time, created their specialisations

re-presenting histories and memories using mixed media (which also respond and evolve with the process). Fourth, my work uses body and narrative to facilitate actors and oneself through autobiographical, psycho-cultural presentation in the public domain.

Based on these principles, I will briefly introduce three different projects that reveal various layers of community facilitation, public space engagement, and creative expression.

Performance for interaction: *Unscientific Storytelling* (2010)

As a faculty member at Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore (now *Srishti-Manipal*), I led a small group of students through a learning context titled *Design for Dialogue*. The larger project hoped to facilitate community experiences and develop performative interventions for a local, government-funded planetarium event, for which Srishti was commissioned to design. My students and I developed *Unscientific Storytelling*, a process that worked with layers of memories and histories imprinted in our culture around the context of 'School and Science' [Fig. 1]. A final performance was designed using documentary film and theatrical improvisations that would interact with a live audience.³

Working with the premise of stiff post-colonial impositions of science in schools – where "content-feeding" supersedes "context-creation" – the process of dialogue created workshops that allowed young, school-going children to understand their learning through creative tools.⁴ As artists, we delved into our own school experiences and developed an alternative layer of storytelling about scientists like Newton and Galileo and their personal struggles. Often told only as super-achiever biographies accompanied by a list of inventions and dates, the humans behind their science are often poorly depicted in Indian schools. A project theme titled *Scientists of the East* explored a few early Indian scientists' work, philosophy, life, and social context. Much of this history is poorly archived. Two of my student collaborators, Gauri Sanghi and Rajasee Ray, further helped develop a parallel exhibit, *Scientist Saloon*, where school children could dress up as a scientist and conduct experiments of their own. Such a performative intervention at a public gallery allowed young visitors to be relieved of being constantly reprimanded for touching exhibits. It enabled them to have a sensorial and contemplative experience of the material and context with which they had come to engage.⁵ As contemplation on notes and experiences in the process, a final artist's book was produced.⁶

Performance for dialogue: *The Draupadi Project* (2012-2015)

Bengaluru *Karaga* is an urban ritual-procession held by a traditional community, and it marks the city's geo-cultural sites. I was born in 1979 in this city, to parents whose families were naturalised here for a couple of generations. Yet, the *Karaga* remained relegated to the traditional old city, whereas modernising citizens lost their connection to this quasi-urban public ritual. *Draupadi*, the primordial goddess revered by the *Tigala* community, is also the female protagonist of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. The male head-priest of the *Tigala* community cross-dresses and is said to be possessed by the spirit of *Draupadi*. He leads the procession through the streets of the old city, while a reverent, yet festive atmosphere with food, music and other activities take place.

Since 2007, I have been interested in mapping the interwoven histories and memories of neighbourhoods in Bangalore/Bengaluru. This period witnessed a peak in conservative-traditionalist politics, antagonistic towards women adopting Western liberalism through their attire. Growing public and state resentment



Fig. 2 (left): Image from a photo-art series that made geo-cultural references to Bengaluru's Trees. (Photo courtesy of The Draupadi Project/Deepak Srinivasan).

Fig. 3 (below): Still from the film *Desidero 7*, a visual-commentary that featured The Draupadi Project (Photo courtesy Nicolas Grandi).



Fig. 4 (right): *Hasivu Kanasu* performance still (Photo courtesy of *Hasivu Kanasu*/Deepak Srinivasan).

Fig. 5 (below): *Hasivu Kanasu* performance still (Photo courtesy of *Hasivu Kanasu*/Deepak Srinivasan).



against communities of transgender women and cross-dressing men also escalated during this time. As an anomaly, the *Karaga* procession stood as an instance of permissibility and reverence for a male priest crossdressing in public. This thought triggered the need for a series of live performances, where I donned the character of Draupadi and spoke to the city's public on the streets. Conversations organically arose around topics like gender, courtship, violation, and changing cityscapes.

Initiated in 2012, the project has since evolved and traversed through theatre, film, and photography, adapting to different contexts of gender, desire, sexuality, and ecology [Fig. 2-3]. My interests in myth and memory have also subsequently expanded beyond the geo-cultural to also include queer readings of such material.⁷

Performance as catharsis: *Hasivu Kanasu/Hunger Dreams* (2014-2017)

My interest in communities emerged from a desire to democratise public space, to encourage public expression, and to reclaim 'publicness.' As a facilitator, I have used theatre tools to aid a development of personal and political perspectives for marginalised groups (e.g., labour, gender, sexuality) and to contextualise learning experiences for young adults. These contexts would be conventionally categorised as emerging from social development frameworks. However, my deep intent has been to explore cultural and psychological transits.

Hasivu Kanasu was a community theatre project that ran from 2014-2017, in collaboration with *Sadhana Mahila Sangha*, a Bengaluru-based collective that works to secure the legal rights of street-based sex workers [Fig. 4-5]. Initiated by Rumi Harish and D Saraswathi, artist-activists from Karnataka state, they began collecting oral history narratives of sex workers to ultimately craft a three-act proscenium text. Saraswathi, a renowned Kannada writer and thinker, evoked subtle aspects of being human through her script. It gently prods the audience about the societal absurdity of exoticising or dehumanising women who perform sex work by revealing their everydayness, aspirations, and philosophy of living.

Working with non-actors – women volunteers who doubled as field activists for *Sadhana Mahila Sangha* – and allowing them to find the artist within by working with stories from their own communities was a deeply moving process for me.⁸

My primary, visible role in this process was to facilitate a dramatisation of a textured script, but I wanted to reach into the actual being of participants such that they became aware of their internal dialogue and shifts while working with the text and the medium of theatre. I designed workshops to understand body, movement, voice, and improvisation, without the rigid imposition of the script's directions alone. This allowed the participants to explore their inner being. Due to long colonial and postcolonial histories and legal-cultural battles over women's bodies and agency, South-Asian beingness for women – especially sex workers – had many imbibed and hidden layers that required unravelling. As an artist interested in the histories of gender, art, culture, and eroticism, I feel that postcolonial delinking of sex work from artistic practice – and compartmentalising and shaming women's bodies – has led to extreme social repression as well as to subsequent violations of women's rights and safety in private and public domains. For women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, creative storytelling practices allow both intimacy and distance from experiences of familiarity.

To give a glimpse into the process, I cite an experiential moment here from one of the residential workshops. As a core process, we designed three-part residential workshops in rural terrain, where participants felt comfortable and familiar (most of them spent earlier years in rural environments before encountering harsh urban realities). Each day began with a walk into nature, and

reconnection with the ecological landscape brought memories of childhood back to the women. One participant with an agricultural background began identifying herbs and medicinal plants. Another deftly trekked up a rocky hill, having grown up in the central rural landscape of Chitradurga district in Karnataka. The landscape evoked knowledge systems lost or buried in the women, all of whom were Dalit.

With respect to the script, narratives that are deeply personal can trigger further victimisation. Hence, it was important to work not just with the text they knew so well, but also with their body, as holding in experiential memories. Participants got to explore movement, character development, and storytelling in the pursuit of self-expression and catharsis.

As one of the participants, Satya, quipped in Kannada, right after their first show in December 2014, "Since 1990, we stood on the streets with placards, voicing the violation of rights of our women by state and society. An apathetic Bengaluru would barely take note! Not a single passerby came over to dialogue with us, let alone be an ally. Today, in 2014, an audience of over 600 experienced our stories and bodies as art and artists, and they sat through, engaged for over an hour! This is all we wanted from this city, and what we waited for, for 25 years!"⁹

The troupe of six participants named itself *Prakriti Kala Thanda* (Nature's Talent Troupe). Between 2014-2018, the group performed at a few national theatre festivals and urban conferences on gender and urbanism.

By outlining these projects, I am hoping to share my creative and community media process, which has avoided planning a product output. I use performance as a medium to unravel personal and collective identity, to challenge external and internal constructs, and to allow new emergence. I have hoped to delve into the criss-crossing of lived experience of traditions and modernities, psycho-social layers of gender, and the resultant production of space.

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Notes

- 1 October Jam, curated by Maraa: <https://www.maraa.in/arts/festivals>
- 2 Srinivasan, D (Dec 2010) *The Aesthetics of Participation*, 'Ready to Change? An experimental forum on Cultural and Social Innovation', hosted by Bunker, Ljubijana. Video of presentation: <https://vimeo.com/18987805>
- 3 Excerpts from the final *Unscientific Storytelling* performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbrDO-0JY8Q>
- 4 Children's workshop documentation video from *Unscientific Storytelling*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgkpHXXGJl8>
- 5 *Scientist Saloon* documentation video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcyG1FvdpzE&t=1s>
- 6 This artist's book is available online: <https://issuu.com/gaurisanghi/docs/unscientificstorytelling>
- 7 Srinivasan, Deepak. 2020. "Exploring Gender in South-Asian Cultural Memory through Artistic Process." *World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research* 76(5-7): 383-406. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2020.1778341>
- 8 Digital English documentation of the process with translated text of the script and an interview of participants: https://issuu.com/cosmiccloud/docs/hasivu_kanasu_merged-pdfux-add-blank (Translated from Kannada and produced by *Sadhana Mahila Sangha*, Bengaluru).
- 9 Local press report (in Kannada Language) that carried a detailed review of the theatre piece and the issue it handled: <https://www.facebook.com/events/454021241475583/permalink/456479247896449/>. The performance seemed to orient local journalism towards sensitivity rather than sensationalism.

CinemAsia Film Festival: 2022 Edition

Doris Yeung

I am Doris Yeung, founder and director of the board of CinemAsia film festival, the gateway to Asian films and filmmakers in the Netherlands for last 18 years. Since 2003, CinemAsia's has helped Asian voices and stories be heard and represented in the Netherlands and Europe through our annual film festival. We also pursue this mission through our educational programs such as FilmLAB, which creates and exhibits Asian diasporic films and trains filmmakers, media creators, and cultural workers to promote Asian visibility in Dutch and European film and media.



Fig. 1: CinemAsia group photo (Photo courtesy of CinemAsia, 2022).

As a lifelong member of the Asian diaspora – having moved from Hong Kong to America and then to the Netherlands – I started CinemAsia film festival in 2003 to address the lack of accurate and visible representation of Asians in the Netherlands and to challenge ingrained stereotypes of Asians through awareness in film and media. This passion for fair and equitable representation in media stems from being mentored as a student by the late Linad Mahbolot, the founder of Visual Communications and Los Angeles Asian Pacific film festival. Mahbolot was a Filipino-American filmmaker/activist whose lifelong work was to put Asian faces and voices in American media. Her mission has borne fruit after 40 years, with structural progress in putting Asian faces and stories in mainstream American films and media.

In the Netherlands and Europe, I still see the struggle for accurate portrayals of Asians in the media – if and when there are any portrayals at all. The film and television roles available to Asian actors in Europe have historically been limited to offensive Asian stereotypes such as the exotic temptress, sweet submissive geisha girl, geeky computer nerd, or Asian restaurant owner/take-out boy. But in 2022, times are changing, as diversity and inclusion are the topics on everyone's minds. Yet there is also backtracking, such as the rise of anti-Asian hate during Covid-19, with incidents of racial stereotyping, discrimination, and even violence against Asians worldwide. Film and media changes how we perceive each other in this world.

This is why organizations like CinemAsia are important. They enable us to tell our own stories of our communities to counter these stereotypes. They help us connect with others to increase understanding within greater society. If Asians do not speak up against these stereotypes and prejudice, then the oppressive power structures that created and perpetuated them risk being maintained.

CinemAsia is not only a festival showcasing the best of worldwide Asian cinema. It is also a platform to empower Asians to create and represent their own narrative and image. Since 2006, CinemAsia has made 35 short films about the Asian-Dutch diaspora through its FilmLAB program. These are voices and stories that are seldom heard or seen in mainstream Dutch society. In order to have a voice and place in the greater

community, Asians have to be seen on the small and big screen as much as possible. To do so, we create, exhibit, and distribute our own stories of the Asian diaspora, as no one else is going to do it as authentically as our own selves. Diaspora cinema is representative cinema.

After 18 years, CinemAsia is still one of the only platforms that connects the Asian diaspora with Dutch society. It is the longest-running cultural and community organization with this mission in the Netherlands. A representative and culturally aware community is the sign of a progressive and equitable society. It is our responsibility to educate and inform the new generation against outdated stereotypes and behaviors, especially if they are to be part of an increasingly heterogeneous and integrated world.

I am proud to have seen CinemAsia grow from an idea to a reality with help of the many colleagues, filmmakers, volunteers, and supporters, all of whom have helped us grow through the years. Please help us continue our work in creating and exhibiting Asian stories in film and media and in training storytellers and cultural workers to represent Asian voices in the Dutch and European media landscape. We are always looking for interesting partners and collaborators. Please visit our website or find us on social media.

Website: www.cinemasia.nl

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Fig. 2: Doris Yeung, founder of CinemAsia, speaking at the opening ceremony (Photo: Narutai Riangkruar, 2022).

Film Curation, Collaboration with Partners, and Panel Discussions

Jia Zhao

CinemAsia 2022 was a very special learning-by-doing experience for me as the festival's new artistic director. It also marked the return of festival after a brief Covid break, and now is a moment when we can look back upon what has been achieved and consider what else we would like to achieve together in the future.

This time, over 30 films were selected to form a balanced mixture of films by upcoming and established directors from East and Southeast Asia. Both the present time and the history of Asia are being represented in these works, and each reflects upon the shifting landscape of the world. The mission of CinemAsia is to present and discuss "Asian perspectives" through films and film collaboration, instead of merely offering an "Asian showcase." Thus, as important as the film selection was, our curation also included a panel discussion entitled "Placing Asia on the World Map" as well as extended Q&A sessions with the directors of the films *Mein Vietnam* and *So Long, My Son*. These activities facilitate and deepen the understanding of cultural contexts through interactions between audience and film professionals.

The panel "Placing Asia on the World Map" was a successful event divided into two parts. The first part featured the panelists



Fig. 1: Panel "Placing Asia on the World Map", held at CinemAsia with Anne Sokolsky, Chair of Taiwan Studies at IIAS and Leiden University (Photo: Narutai Riangkruar, 2022).

Bo Wang, Tushar Madhov, Meiske Taurisia, and Professor Anne Sokolsky. The discussion focused on changes and trends in the media landscape, against the backdrop of the economic rise of Asia in the last decades and streaming services as the game-changer for original content production and distribution worldwide. Panelists raised interesting points about colonialism in the Asian context, as well as how more collective initiatives for cultural collaboration could contribute to bypassing political borders between Asian countries. In the second part of the panel discussion, the experiences, achievements, and lessons of film collaborations between

Europe and Asia were shared between panelists Corinne van Egeraat, Lorna Tee, Liu Xuan, Daan Vermeulen, Meiske Taurisia, and Erik Glijnis, all of whom are film producers/distributors based in the Netherlands and Asia. It was interesting to acknowledge the difference in financing films in Asia versus Europe: European filmmaking mostly relies on and benefits from public funding systems, which can sometimes also be rigid and less flexible, whereas Asian film producing relies on a more fluid system of equity financing. The panelists also noted that the level of financing from Asia has increased to the

point that Asia is now an equal partner to Europe. In addition to financing, films with collaboration between Europe and Asia can also benefit from sharing and exchanging expertise and creativity from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The first collaboration with IIAS was a rewarding experience for me. It is a partnership where storytelling and anthropology, the film industry and the academic world, form an organic and meaningful synergy that contributes to the impact of the event. CinemAsia would definitely like to broaden and deepen the spectrum of such events in the coming editions, by including, for example, retrospectives of selected master directors and more cross-disciplinary panel discussions.

In addition, FilmLAB is also an important part at CinemAsia. This time we had seven selected film projects that were pitched to a professional panel – consisting of Gwyneth Sleutel, Claire Zhou, and myself – for feedback. I was impressed by the brave and personal stories the young filmmakers brought forward. For next year, we would like to extend this initiative and collaborate with equivalent European and Asian platforms. We hope to make it a go-to place for young filmmakers of diverse cultural backgrounds related to Asia. Through CinemAsia, they can network and connect to professional resources in Europe and Asia, and they can learn from established international filmmakers and producers. Moving forward, we also hope to collaborate with academic entities like IIAS for, among other things, script research and script development.

Jia Zhao, Artistic Director of CinemAsia.
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Fleeting Intimacy: A Reflection on the Social Functions of Film Festivals

Darunee Terdtoontaveedej

One of the founding principles of CinemAsia is to give a platform to express and celebrate the Asian LGBTQ+ experience. The festival does this through a diverse selection of films and complementary programmes, highlighting the different aspects of the queer Asian experience. CinemAsia was founded in 2003 as an Asian LGBTQ+ film festival in Amsterdam, and over the years it has grown into a full-fledged pan-Asian film festival.

Through a spontaneous decision and the need to reconnect with my own roots as a queer person who has grown up in the West, I have served as the LGBTQ+ programmer within the festival since 2018. In this role, I have experimented with organising several community-led events, and I have learned a lot along the way. Each event opened up new challenges that came with our ever-changing society, especially in its current state – that is, with the pandemic still in place, the atrocities in Ukraine and elsewhere, and the looming recession. This fleeting state of our world gives rise to different needs for our communities, but also raises questions regarding how a film festival such as CinemAsia can better serve our community and stay relevant while remaining true to ourselves.

This year, the festival is back under new leadership and with a new vision, after two years of absence due to the pandemic and funding cuts. The film selection included five LGBTQ+ films (out of 33 total feature films), exploring different aspects of our sexuality. Some of these films also challenged the often problematic representations in Asian cinema, where much of the industry is still dominated by cisgender, heterosexual men.

The LGBTQ+ film selection included: (1) the politically charged *Secrets of 1979* (Taiwan) by Zero Chou, with an in-depth introduction



Fig. 1: "Reading My Panties Workshop" with Lu Lin, co-hosted with Dona Daria (Photo courtesy of Sen Yang, 2022).

by Taiwanese film expert I-hsuan Hsieh; (2) *Dear Tenant* (Taiwan) by Yu-chieh Cheng, which opened up discussion about prejudices in Taiwanese society that persist despite marriage equality; (3) the bittersweet *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy* (Japan) by Academy Award winner Ryusuke Hamaguchi; (4) the 20-year anniversary 4K remastered version of the gay classic *Lan Yu* (Hong Kong/China) by Stanley Kwan, followed by a reflection on the state of queer lives in China in the past 20 years; and (5) the transgender film *Midnight Swan* (Japan) by Netflix series director Eiji Uchida, including a programme organised together with TranScreen (a transgender film festival)¹ and Studio/K (our venue partner)² to discuss the stir caused by the film within the queer community, to critique the problematics of transgender representation in media, and to highlight the need for inclusive and collaborative production in film industries across the globe.

Aside from showcasing Asian films, CinemAsia aims to foster and support the Asian queer community. This is evident in the LGBTQ+ Community Programme, which focused on opening up safe spaces for connection and healing. This was

especially important in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused two years of blatant discrimination, isolation, and, for some, being far from home due to border closures. For these reasons, three activities were organised: (1) the *Queer Mental Health and Self-Care Workshop*, co-hosted by Chinese diasporic LGBTQ+ organisation OUT&ABROAD³; (2) *Reading My Panties Workshop* with artistic researcher Lu Lin, co-hosted by the organization Dona Daria⁴; and *Queer Asian Tea and Tai-Chi: Community Gathering*. The two workshops created a safe environment to discuss taboo subjects, especially within the Asian cultural context. Meanwhile, the gathering was aimed at creating a free space for those who might be searching for an offline community, simply to gather and connect. It also sought to identify the community's needs and opened with a public group tai-chi exercise.

Over the years of building spaces within CinemAsia, I have come to realise the importance of collaboration and partnerships, especially during times in which financial resources are limited. After all, we are all striving to reach the same goal – a world in which we can all coexist freely

and equally – and there is still a long way to go. Within the intimacy of the setting of the community events, there was empathy and camaraderie. There was a drive to continue to strengthen the Asian LGBTQ+ community and to lead the future generations. There was a desire to come together and provide support for each other, also in solidarity with those who may not be able to do so.

We are only at the beginning of a greater change.

Darunee Terdtoontaveedej is a curator and cultural programmer based in The Hague. Trained as an architect at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, and later as a designer at Design Academy Eindhoven, Terdtoontaveedej specialises in cross-disciplinary collaboration. E-mail: darunee@cinemasia.nl

Notes

- <https://www.transcreen.eu/en/>
- <https://studio-k.nu>
- <https://outandabroad.nl>
- <https://www.donadaria.nl>

Asia and Asians in Australian Politics and Society

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 “Asia and Asians in Australian Politics and Society” – an especially timely topic as Australia held a national election on May 21.

Each author, broadly speaking, examines the extent to which Australia is embracing its place in Asia and its Asian-Australian communities. Professor Jia Gao examines the continuing lack of representation of Asian Australians in parliament. Associate Professors

Claire Maree and Jay Song show that this lack of representation remains in other aspects of contemporary life in Australia and that anti-Asian racism has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Professor Andrew Rosser looks at the continued difficulties Australian business has engaging with Asia due to a lack of networks, capabilities, and partnerships. Cathy Harper makes an argument that more than ever, Australia needs to embrace the Asian communities existing within it and throughout the region.

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Representation of Asia in Contemporary Australian Politics, Media and Everyday Life

Claire Maree and Jay Song

According to the latest figures from the Bureau of Statistics in 2016, the Asian-born population in Australia accounted for 10.4 percent of the total population.¹ This raises a range of issues in regard to the representation of Asian Australians in politics, the media, and other key areas of everyday life. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has seen a resurgence of racist remarks by right-wing politicians and growing anti-Asian sentiments and violence in public space. As Australia shut its borders to and from international travel in an attempt to stop the virus entering Australia, many Chinese – or Chinese-looking – migrants and international students, who were misconstrued as a source of the virus, became the target of racially-motivated violence. Due to the ongoing national border closures, many international students were forced to continue their studies offshore and online for two consecutive years.

In 2020, a group of researchers affiliated with the Gender, Environment and Migration (GEM) Cluster at the Asia Institute of the University of Melbourne in Australia examined various aspects of the representation of Asian Australians in the context of contemporary Australia. The collaborative work was published as a Special Issue of *Melbourne Asia Review* in March 2021,² and it includes an examination of issues relating to political under-representation and media portrayals of Asian Australians as well as the state of Asian-Australian studies.

Many would wonder about the definition of “Asian Australians.” Unlike Asian Americans, a widely-used term which also has an established field of study in sociology, media, literature, and cultural/racial studies, the history of Asian Australians is relatively short compared to analogous groups in the Americas or Europe. We use the term “Asian Australians” in reference to a diverse population comprising individuals who have migrated from the Asian region. The term is widely accepted

and used in Australian social, political, and cultural discourses. Many Asian Australians we included in our studies are first-generation immigrants or international students who just arrived in Australia. Furthermore, many Asian Australians elected to the Australian parliaments are of mixed heritage that includes both Asian and European ancestries. As the demographic composition of the Asian-born population in Australia changes, our definition may change over time going forward.

One key issue is the ongoing, well-documented lack of representation at all levels of public life. A lack of diversity on the small screen is paralleled in the political domain, where Asian Australians are under-represented in federal and state parliaments. Only 3 candidates with Asian ancestry were elected in the 2019 federal election. Difficulties in the pre-selection process can be an obstacle to greater engagement of candidates from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.⁴ Based on interviews



Fig. 1: Melbourne's Chinatown at night (Image reproduced under a Creative Commons licence courtesy of Russell Charters on Flickr).



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The Asia Institute

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



Fig. 2: Melbourne's Chinatown (Image reproduced under a Creative Commons licence courtesy of Michael Coghlan on Flickr).

with Australians of Indian origin – some of whom had been successfully elected to office and others not – Surjeet Dhanji recommends that Australian political parties should address the “representation gap,” initiate programs to close that gap, and harness the talent of those currently underrepresented.⁵

Although underrepresentation occurs at the level of politics, the pandemic has resulted in the continued hyper-visibility of Asian Australians, as manifested in increased anti-Asian racism. Hyper-visibility refers to the ways in which minoritized groups are over-represented in overwhelming negative ways. Qiuping Pan and Jia Gao, for instance, indicate widespread experiences of racism against Chinese immigrants.⁶ The most common manifestation of such racism

involved racial slurs and/or name-calling. Such incidents are also heavily gendered, with women lodging 65 percent of the COVID-19 Racism Incident Reports between April 2–June 2, 2020.

The relationship between the state and society has changed over the course of the pandemic. State responses to the global pandemic at a local level have direct and indirect consequences on minorities, especially Asian migrants in Australia. In order to understand changing state-society relations during and after the pandemic, trust in both the government and different media sources is an important area to study. In this regard, Wonsun Shin and Jay Song's online survey of 432 Asian Australians illustrates how much they have relied on

traditional media (e.g., mainstream TV) and how little they relied on ethnic language programmes.⁷ In spite of anti-Asian racism, the survey respondents showed a high level of trust in Australian governments. Others reported that Asian Australians are more likely to be anxious and worried due to COVID-19, and they have experienced “twice the drop” in work hours as other Australians.⁸

Asian Australians are highly diverse and constitute a fluid group that is being constructed and reconstructed by interactions among its members in an increasingly complex, mediated society. Studies on Asian Australians, therefore, require an intersectional and multi-dimensional approach to fully understand the challenges and opportunities of engaging with the fastest-growing population in Australia. One such example of an intersectional approach on Asian Australians taken by members of GEM examines sexual citizenship. This approach illustrated how gender, sexuality, and ethnicity influence Asian migrants' experiences in post-marriage equality Australia.⁹ The authors point to the necessity of critical reflexivity for the study of migration in contemporary societies.

As stated earlier, Asian migration to the Americas and Europe has a longer history, and studies on Asian diasporas are already an established field. Even though the field is relatively new in the Australian context, the nature of contemporary transnational Asian migration to Australia – from the arrival of Europeans to a hub for cosmopolitan highly skilled Asian migrants – has greater implications for scholars not only in migration and ethnographic research, but also gender, media, and inter-cultural studies.

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Notes

- <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0-2016-Main%20Features-Cultural%20Diversity%20Article-60>
- <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/edition-5/>
- <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/157b05b4-255a-47b4-bd8b-9f715555fb44/TV-Drama-Diversity.pdf>
- <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/the-missing-indian-australians-in-politics/>
- <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/the-under-representation-of-asian-australians-political-order-and-political-delay/>
- <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/australia-needs-to-embrace-asianness-as-part-of-australianness-to-end-racism/>
- <https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/what-our-survey-found-about-effective-covid-19-communications-in-asian-australian-communities/>
- <https://csrm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/experience-asian-australians-during-covid-19-pandemic-discrimination-and>
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13621025.2021.1981827?journalCode=ecst20>

Better representation of Asian Australians in politics is needed more than ever

Jia Gao

With a federal election looming in Australia, the representation of ethnic minorities in the country's politics will be almost certain to come under the spotlight again. Asian Australians have long been a topic of analysis and debate because of Australia's anti-Asian past and the new politics of ethnic representation. Analysts and observers, including myself, will devote special attention Chinese-Australian candidates and how the communities will vote in the coming election, after years of being suspected of being the fifth column of Chinese communists and having their loyalty to Australia openly questioned.

In my 2020 book, *Chinese Immigration and Australian Politics*,¹ I examine how, on the surface, Chinese Australians have been so active that many new groups and associations have been created and party politics-related activities – both pro-Labor and pro-Liberal – have been frequently held in the community. As a result of their high levels of social activism and political participation, there has also been a recent upward trend in electoral participation by Chinese Australians. There were 21 candidates of Chinese origin in the most

recent federal election in 2019, after only six ran in 2016, seven in 2013, three in 2010, and seven in 2007.

The surge in the number of preselected candidates of Chinese origin – and the activities of such candidates – have, however, been mistaken and misused by some as evidence of alleged Chinese interference in Australian politics and public life. After the 2019 election, the push to counter China's interference in Australian affairs, as well as anti-Chinese sentiments, have escalated to an unprecedented level. Many sections of the Chinese-Australian communities feel threatened when some counter-spy and -espionage measures have been widely implemented. What has made the situation worse is that Sinophobia has permeated public discourse by unethical media outlets in the country, creating even more racial stereotyping and bias than before.²

As a long-time observer of the fast-growing Chinese-Australian community, I can see that there is a great deal of misconception and mistrust, both in terms of the facts and the way they are interpreted, in the many hostile comments made by politicians, journalists, and critics. Fear has long been part of the psyche of European

settlers in Australia, and China has long been seen as a peril in the Australian imagination. This round of Sinophobia is, however, different and characterised by a mistake of believing that many activities by Chinese Australians are driven by geopolitics, or that they are guided by China's ruling communist party. Many networking activities of Chinese-Australian businesspeople, which have been promoted by Australian government bodies and businesses, are seen as signs of China's meddling in Australia's domestic affairs.

My analysis has shown that many critics are reversed in what a succession of Australian governments has been doing over recent decades in using migration schemes to sustain the country's socio-economic development. The reckless ‘othering’ of the Chinese has failed to consider Australia's post-war historical shift towards Asia and the merit-based migration system that has been developed and implemented since the 1990s. Both the strategic shift and the merit-based migration system have not only transformed the economic structure and the demographic composition of Australia, but importantly have also changed established patterns in the distribution of employment opportunities, wealth, and political influence in Australia.

Australia's immigration selection criteria have been progressively developed to emphasise the importance of qualifications, skills, business experiences, and financial capacity. As a result, more Chinese migrants are from mainland China as it has become a key producer of most tradable goods. The immigration regime has also resulted in the Chinese-Australian community being a few years younger than the median age of the total Australian population. They have become better educated and qualified in comparison with portions of the Australian population, and many of them are also financially better off than previous generations, making it possible to set up and run more businesses. Australia's high dependence on trade with China, as well as tourism and international education, have placed many Australians of Chinese origin in a position to capitalise economically. It is fair to say that these changes had been welcomed since the mid-1990s – before the recent Sinophobia – as Chinese Australians

not only meet Australia's need for more skilled labours, but also bring other benefits to the country.

All of the above changes have added a new and unfamiliar dimension to Australian politics, aggravating the long-brewing resentment of many Australians towards those of Chinese origin.

This negative sentiment has been exacerbated by other related issues, such as the activities of some ethnic Chinese buyers in Australia's housing market and their strangely enthusiastic interest in community and network-building activities. The latter is beyond the comprehension of many non-Chinese Australians, as they are unable to imagine the need of Chinese Australians for networks. Many also question the donations by Chinese Australians to political parties, but almost no one challenges the parties that accept these donations.

After several years of particularly xenophobic sentiment in Australia, questions have been raised in regard to the future of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in Australia. Specifically, many Asian Australians are now wondering whether they could buy a house without upsetting others, and to what extent their children can academically perform well without facing discrimination. Ordinary Asian Australians want to know when Australian society can once again become as tolerant as before and when it will accept the reality of its ethnic diversity.

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Notes

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Fig. 1: Senator Penny Wong speaking at the Australian National University (ANU) in 2017 (Image reproduced under a Creative Commons licence courtesy of a Wikimedia Commons user).

Why expert Asia-related analysis is more important than ever, in Australia and the region

Cathy Harper

The eastern Melbourne suburb of Box Hill perhaps represents the future possibilities of Australia's place within Asia and its relationship with its Asian Australian communities. It's well-known for its concentration of Asian diaspora communities, particularly Chinese. It's about half an hour from central Melbourne by car or train, located near a major highway and train station, with high-rise hotels and a large shopping mall. It's also one of the State government's designated metropolitan activity centres. Official statistics show that more than 35 percent of residents report Chinese ancestry compared with a national average of 3.9 percent. Top countries of birth of Box Hill residents (other than Australia) are China, Malaysia, and India. The residents of Box Hill are generally younger and more educated than the national average.

It's one of the places where Australia's immigration and other policies are being manifested in everyday life. As Professor Jia Gao argues in his essay for this section, the merit-based migration system has "not only transformed the economic structure and the demographic composition of Australia, but importantly has also changed established patterns in the distribution of employment opportunities, wealth, and political influence in Australia."

However, in the words of Professor Vedi Hadiz, there remains a lack of appreciation for the complexities of Asia and the

nuances in Australia's connections with Asia.¹ Australia's challenge in and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic is to find a new narrative² that aligns its national imperatives with a vision for how it relates to its region.

England and New Zealand continue to be major source countries of migrants to Australia, but the proportion of those born overseas who were born in China and India has increased since 2011 from six percent to 8.3 percent, and 5.6 percent to 7.4 percent respectively. International students in Australia are part of this picture. International education is, depending on the measure used, Australia's third or fourth biggest export, behind coal, iron ore, and natural gas. Over the past two decades, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia, Korea, and Vietnam have been the main source nations of international students in Australia.

But serious analysis of Asia and Asia-related issues in Australian news and other media remains marginal. For example, 2022 research by respected think tank the Lowy Institute found that 53 percent of foreign news stories in Australia's mainstream media about COVID-19 were about the experience in the US and UK. Southeast Asia accounted for only five percent and South Asia 1.5 percent. Research published in 2021 by academic Wanning Sun, found that tabloid media in Australia resorted to Sino-phobic positions in reporting on China's efforts to contain COVID-19. Very recently, some media outlets owned by News Limited

appear to be supporting unsubstantiated claims by a federal government minister about Beijing's claimed preferences in relation to Australia's upcoming federal election. A 2018 study by Deakin University – which examined media coverage of issues related to multicultural Australia – found that more than a third of stories reflected a negative view of minority communities. A 2019 report by Media Diversity Australia found that 75.6 percent of television news and current affairs presenters, commentators, and reporters were Anglo-Celtic.

Australia needs to support serious research, analysis, and discussion within Australia and from Asia, with a diversity of voices and perspectives, about the major challenges it and its neighbours face. How can Australia – and other nations in the region – better manage great power competition between China and the US? How can Australia improve its relations with Southeast Asian nations?³ How can democratic decline be mitigated?⁴ What can business do to help sustain human rights?⁵ What is the state of Islam in contemporary politics?⁶ How does politics influence culture and identity through regulating language learning?⁷ These are issues that affect all of us.

Domestically, can Australia help overcome a surge of Sinophobia and anti-Asian racism related to COVID-19 by addressing the nation's continuing lack of "Asia-literacy"? How can the conspicuous lack of Asian-Australians⁸ in Australian parliaments⁹ be overcome?¹⁰ How can we better harness the cultural and economic potential of Asian diaspora communities in Australia?¹¹

Melbourne Asia Review, published by the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne, gives voice to experts across the region, including in languages other than English. It 'translates' research into context relevant to current, developing challenges. As the region and the world adjust to the cleavages wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we

need serious consideration of what our region could and should become.

The reality – as exemplified by the Melbourne suburb of Box Hill – is that Asia and Australia are more deeply intertwined than ever before, both between nations and within them. Australia and the region need to better articulate forward-thinking ideas based on evidence, research, and considered analysis that will deeply influence the nature and trajectory of Asia and Australia and their diverse communities.

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Notes

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Australian Business and Economic Engagement with Asia

Andrew Rosser

Australian government policy-makers have long asserted that Asia is a source of economic opportunity for Australia, especially for Australian businesses seeking to internationalise their operations.¹ Neither growing geopolitical tensions between Australia and China in recent years nor the economic dislocation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have altered their thinking in this respect.

Despite this situation, however, few Australian businesses have so far established a significant presence in the region. In recent decades, Australian mining and agricultural companies have exported vast amounts of primary commodities to the region, including iron ore, coal, gold, petroleum, wheat, and beef, contributing to Australia's wealth and prosperity. But Australian businesses have made little direct investment in the region, preferring instead to put their capital into countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

In a series of recent reports on Australia's economic relationship with Asia, the business advisory firm PwC has observed that Australian businesses "are looking offshore for growth but are largely ignoring the world's fastest growing region."² Few are planning to expand into the region.³

To address this issue, PwC, the Business Council of Australia (a leading business representative organisation), the Asia Society (a prominent think tank), and the University of Sydney's Business School collaborated between 2019 and 2021 on a program of research and consultation aimed at examining "how Australian companies can increase their presence and position in Asia to ensure [Australia's] continued prosperity and deliver progress for future generations."⁴

Their key findings were published in April 2021 in a report entitled *A Second Chance: How Team Australia Can Succeed in Asia*. Although not an official government report, *A Second Chance* was launched by Dan Tehan – Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment – indicating some degree of government support for the project.

The new agenda outlined in *A Second Chance* has five main elements. The first, "Adopt a 'Team Australia' approach", calls for greater collaboration between Australian business, government, and academia in the pursuit of greater economic engagement and business success in Asia. The second, "Playing to our strengths", advises that Australian policy-makers and corporate executives need to know Australian business' "capabilities and comparative advantages well and identify markets and sectors where [Australian business is] most likely to get ahead." The third, "Learn to navigate a more complex China", asserts that Australia needs to maintain the best possible economic relationship with China in the context of emerging tensions in the bilateral relationship due to geopolitical factors and fundamental differences over human rights and democracy. The fourth, "Reboot Asia literacy," posits that Australia needs a deeper understanding of Asian cultures, politics, societies, and economies, not just in general but particularly in corporate boardrooms where Asian expertise and experience is limited. New appointments to corporate boards are thus needed. The final element, "Champion our rich Asia talent" calls on Australian business to harness the market knowledge, networks, and language skills of Asian Australian communities and the Australian diaspora to gain better access to lucrative Asian markets.

This agenda thus represents an attempt to grapple not just with the difficulties for Australian business created by Australia's deteriorating relationship with China, but also with two other stark realities as well.

The first, which is acknowledged only implicitly in the report, is that Asian markets are in many cases characterised by government-business relations that are personalistic and political in nature and dominated by predatory and authoritarian elites.⁵ These characteristics make it difficult for Australian businesses to compete given legal obligations to avoid bribery and corruption and the fact that many Australian businesses find it difficult to develop the local relationships crucial to success. In earlier reports, PwC has argued that many Australian businesses have little idea how to do business in the region.⁶ The solution proposed in *A Second Chance* is to harness the networks and market knowledge of new corporate board members who have Asia expertise and experience as well as members of the Asian-Australian and Australian diaspora communities who are connected to the region through family, social, and business linkages.

The second reality is that foreign investors operating in Asia – particularly ones from other Asian countries – often work in close collaboration with, and have extensive support from, their home country governments. As *A Second Chance* points out, such a partnership-based approach "has served countries like Singapore and Japan well in securing major investment and other commercial opportunities in Asia."⁷ Operating without strong government support, Australian business has been at a competitive disadvantage. For Australian business to compete more effectively in Asia, *A Second Chance* contends, Australia needs to replicate this collaborative model.

The agenda outlined in *A Second Chance* is innovative in these important respects. This does not mean it will succeed, however. Its realisation depends on other key parties getting on board: the Australian government, corporate shareholders, academia, Asian-Australian communities, and the Australian

diaspora. In launching *A Second Chance*, Minister Tehan said that he looks forward to working with PwC and its collaborators on implementing the report's recommendations.⁸ But it remains to be seen whether the Australian government and other parties will ultimately play their part. Even if they do, the resulting assemblage may be insufficient to make up for decades of conservatism, disinterest, and laziness within the Australian business community and to address the stark realities of Asian markets noted above. It may be that the Asian economic opportunity will, as PwC has put it, simply pass Australian business by.⁹

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Notes

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Digital Humanities in Northeast Asia

Ilhong Ko

A common feature of the academic landscape of Northeast Asia since the turn of the millennium has been the emergence and establishment of Digital Humanities (DH) as a key field of research. Although the trajectories of development may differ from country to country, it is clear that Digital Humanities can only flourish when certain elements come together. These elements include government policy, large-scale funding, institutional support, digital infrastructure, an atmosphere of interdisciplinary and convergent research, the academic freedom to propose alternative research paradigms, innovative and tenacious researchers, solidarity building and the active sharing of ideas through the formation of research societies and conferences, and academic posts that make it possible to educate and nurture the next generation of researchers.

In this installment of *News from Northeast Asia*, we present an overview of Digital Humanities research in Northeast Asia that touches upon all of the above-mentioned elements.

In “One Among Many: Digital Humanities in China,” Jing Chen of Nanjing University addresses the issues surrounding the introduction and development of Chinese Digital Humanities. Although these issues are seen to have arisen from the unique context of Chinese academia, they will also resonate with DH researchers of other Northeast Asian countries.

The achievements of Taiwanese Digital Humanities are presented by Chijui Hu of National Changhua University of Education in “From Digitization to Digital Humanities: The Development of Digital Humanities in Taiwan.” Here he traces the steps that led to the construction of digital humanities platforms such as the DocuSky Collaboration Platform. The features of the DocuSky Collaboration Platform, which are introduced in detail, well illustrate the innovations of Taiwanese DH researchers.

The remaining two contributions – dealing with Digital Humanities in South Korea and Japan, respectively – shed light on the

foundations that have sustained this new field of research from two different, but equally important, perspectives. In “Trends and Challenges in Korean Digital Humanities,” Intae Ryu of Sungkyunkwan University introduces the Korean government’s past policies that established the digital environment in which Digital Humanities could take root, as well as the current administration’s policies that will hopefully ensure the sustainability of this field of research.

Finally, in “Recent Developments in Digital Japanese Studies,” Paula R. Curtis of The Terasaki Center for Japanese Studies

discusses the efforts of researchers who have been active in hosting events for the sharing and dissemination of research results and who have also come together to create community spaces for Japanese Digital Humanities. Her analysis of the increasing importance of digital-related research in job postings for East Asian Studies illustrates that the future of Digital Humanities in Northeast Asia is bright indeed.

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One Among Many: Digital Humanities in China

Jing Chen

Since 2009, the year that “Digital Humanities” was translated into Chinese as *shuzi renwen* (数字人文) by Professor Xiaoguang Wang, the field of Digital Humanities has come to receive more and more attention from scholars in mainland China. For example, the first research center for Digital Humanities was established at Wuhan University in 2011. The first Digital Humanities (DH) course came to be offered at the History Department of Nanjing University, the first translated book on DH was published in Beijing, and the first peer-review journal on DH was launched by Renmin University of China. In 2019, the first annual national conference was organized and held by the first national association of DH. Every year, more than a dozen conferences related to Digital Humanities have come to be held across the country. Reports on Digital Humanities have also featured centrally in newspapers – not only in key academic newspapers like *Chinese Social Science Today* (中国社会科学报) but also popular media outlets such as *The Paper* (澎湃). So what do Digital Humanities bring to Chinese academia, and how do scholars benefit from Digital Humanities?

Digital Humanities facilitate, first of all, a transformation of the research model from “institute-driven” to “research-oriented.” In the dawn of Digital Humanities in China, most projects were financially and strategically supported by institutes or governments. This is because the high cost of developing

databases made it difficult for individual scholars in the early 2000s to develop or maintain digital projects without major financial support; the hardware and software for Digital Humanities were also unaffordable for the individual scholar. To ensure their stability and sustainability, DH projects required a host and, therefore, in order to avoid the fate of disappearing, it was unavoidable that projects were primarily driven by the interests of institutes rather than of researchers. Also, it was not easy to directly integrate DH projects into the research of individual scholars. This situation gradually improved as some of the projects completed the digitalization process and moved one step further, allowing researchers to dig deeper into the value of its contents.

Second, in relation to the role of digital technology and tools in humanities studies, scholars are trying to explore the theoretical foundations of Digital Humanities from various perspectives. The value of digital technology is under constant debate in China, and its reconceptualization is a key issue. The common misunderstanding about DH among Chinese scholars concerns how the humanities can benefit directly and quickly from the application of digital technology. Many scholars still hold that digital technology (or Digital Humanities) is more about the innovation of tools or methods, as opposed to being about asking new research questions. They also often assume that DH research projects are primarily about the use of quantitative

methods for studying data. The value of qualitative studies in DH, such as media studies or visualization-related studies, is rarely recognized or even noticed by humanities scholars.

Third, the barriers within and between disciplines, which acted as a serious obstacle in the early stage of Digital Humanities, are slowly disappearing. On one hand, the majority of DH projects are based on the databases and archives of digitized historical documents that are specific to a sub-discipline due to the requirements of funding and hosting. On the other hand, DH practitioners, including creators and users, have research needs that go beyond disciplinary boundaries. If individual scholars lack data analysis skills, they have to collaborate with other experts to conduct cross-disciplinary projects, especially when they involve substantial data processing and advanced digital technologies. Another obstacle is the failure of academic institutions to recognize cross-disciplinary research outcomes. It is hard for scholars to break disciplinary boundaries when they are nested in disciplinary fields and institutional units. They still have to conduct research that is recognized by evaluative systems that are usually unfriendly to new forms of digital humanities research. This is especially the case for individual scholars that are not part of research groups.

Last but not least, cyberinfrastructure has become a key concern of scholars after witnessing, for many years, the repeated construction of projects with the same content. Huge amounts of time, money, and effort have been wasted during these cycles of reproduction. Moreover, many databases are emerging from China at present, but it is not easy to be certain that they command enough resources to remain active, nor that their data will be utilized effectively in research by scholars with the required skill sets.

In the beginning of her essay “The Humanities, Done Digitally,” Kathleen Fitzpatrick asks a question: Are the Digital Humanities singular or plural? This article raises a similar question, but places it in a global context, considering the diversity of approaches to humanities on a worldwide scale. To be sure, in a global context, no single unified definition of Digital Humanities is possible, even if one would desire it. Amidst this plurality of concepts and practices, the scholarly context of Digital Humanities in the Greater China region is starkly different from that of academic communities elsewhere. This is partly due to the unique features of humanities data in Chinese, especially for texts, and also due to the context in which Digital Humanities was introduced, debated, and developed. More importantly, since around the early 2010s, Chinese scholars have been increasingly active in carrying out these discussions online, on WeChat. There are numerous public accounts (known as *gong zhong hao* [公众号]) on WeChat, the most popular social media platform in China. These accounts – akin to blogs that incorporate interactive functions – are devoted to the sharing of electronic resources for research and relevant academic events. These often attract a large following among younger academics, and they have gradually been shaping digital humanities fields and communities.

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Notes

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From Digitization to Digital Humanities: The Development of Digital Humanities in Taiwan

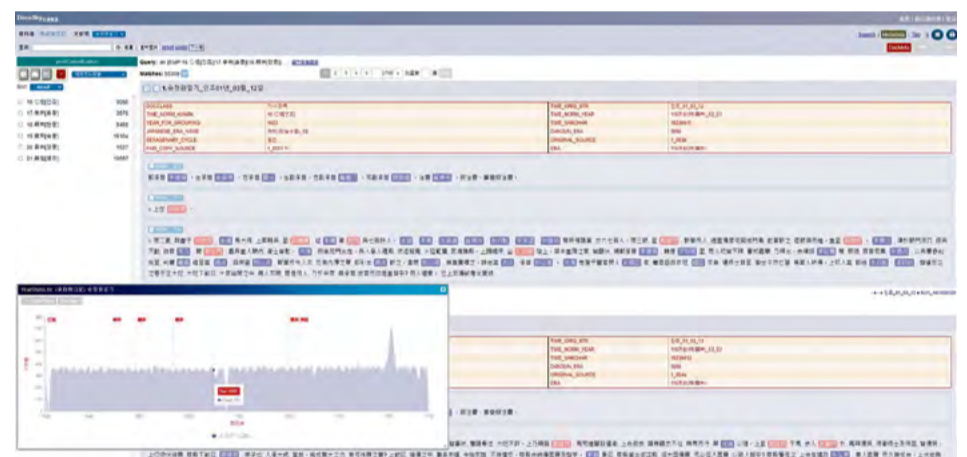
Chijui Hu



Fig. 1 (top left): The front page of DocuSky; the chart illustrates the work flow of DocuSky. Source: <https://docusky.org.tw>.

Fig. 2 (below left): Taiwanese Association for Digital Humanities (TADH) logo. Source: <http://tadh.org.tw/en/>.

Fig. 3 (below): The tools in DocuSky include text analysis, DocuXml format converters, text mining, visualization tools, and GIS. Source: <https://docusky.org.tw>



The development of Digital Humanities in Taiwan is founded on decades of research in digital archives, including various works such as research tools, databases, and models. In the 1980s, several institutes and universities in Taiwan worked to achieve substantial progress in archives digitalization. From 2002 to 2012, the National Science Council of the Taiwan Government (NSC, which was renamed the Ministry of Science and Technology in 2014) conducted the National Digital Archives Project (NDAP).¹ This government support allowed many academic institutes, libraries, universities, and private institutions to digitize large amounts of archives, photos, scriptures, artifacts, maps, and video data. Based on these digital data, Digital Humanities researchers in Taiwan have been able to use these materials for many fields of research and innovation.

One of the achievements of NDAP was the construction of many databases in the early 21st century. However, these databases were built for institute-based researchers and experts, and so their main function is to retrieve and browse; their main principle was not only high precision but also high recall. As a result, users may find it difficult to identify the context of the data, merely ending up with many results from the database. Through an innovative process, a context discovery system was invented by the Research Center for Digital Humanities (RCDH) of National Taiwan University (NTU), which was led by Professor Jieh Hsiang. Using post-query classification methods, users can identify not only what was retrieved but also the inter-relationships among documents and the collective meanings of a sub-collection.² The basic assumption is that documents in a collection should have well-structured metadata, which is important for post-classification of a sub-collection. When the full text of the content is also available, more sophisticated analytical methods such as co-occurrence analysis can also be deployed.³

The context discovery system is, however, a closed database of sorts, making it difficult for users to add additional data or metadata into the database. In addition, the tools in the system were developed exclusively for the data of the system. This means the Digital Humanities tools are tied up with the system and that users cannot use them for their own data. This is why attempts are being made to move towards the development of a Digital Humanities platform. One of the goals of Digital Humanities platforms is to provide humanities researchers with the ability to integrate research material without the help of software engineers. Researchers can deal with the research data by themselves and upload it onto the platform; they can analyze, mark up, and reorganize metadata or produce statistics of that metadata; they can also visualize the uploaded data using the Digital Humanities tools embedded in the platform. The benefit of such a scheme is that researchers can save much time and effort, and the resources can be made much more accessible.⁴

There are several institutes in Taiwan committed to developing Digital Humanities platforms, examples being the DocuSky Collaboration Platform of RCDH,⁵ the Digital Analysis System for Humanities (DASH) of the Academia Sinica Center for Digital Cultures,⁶ and the CBETA Research Platform (CBETA RP) of Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts.⁷ CBETA RP is connected with the Buddhist digital canon of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Texts Association (CBETA), which is a full-text database of high-quality Chinese Buddhist sutras. Not only is it possible to read and search sutras through the CBETA RP; it is also possible to analyze the terms of the result and present the results through different kinds of charts using the tools of the platform. DASH connects with several data repositories. Users can mark up the text and then calculate authority terms and N-gram statistics or conduct term co-occurrence

analysis; results are demonstrated through visualization tools in charts, word clouds, social analysis graphs, and maps. DocuSky was created by Dr. Hsieh-Chang Tu of NTU, and it is managed by Professor Jieh Hsiang. With the core format called DocuXml, many converters in DocuSky can be used to convert different format data into DocuXml. In other words, .txt, .xlsx, MARKUS⁸ tagging files, or the text from many repositories (e.g., CBETA, CTEXT,⁹ KANRIP0,¹⁰ RISE,¹¹ or Wikisource¹²) can be converted into DocuXml with a couple of clicks. DocuXml can be used to build a personal database in DocuSky, and researchers can use the tools in DocuSky for tagging, metadata managing, adding relationship information for social network analysis, or even creating GIS layers using the webGIS tool called DocuGIS. The DocuXml upload in DocuSky lets users undertake analysis through the post-classification function of metadata and tags. Moreover, authors of DocuXml files can authorize RCDH to make their databases public through the DocuSky model to share their achievements with the world. From context discovery systems to a personal Digital Humanities platform, the main purpose is to make the connection between tools and databases more flexible and to allow users to operate and use the database designed by themselves more freely.

The formation of the Digital Humanities community in Taiwan was spearheaded by RCDH, which held the 1st International Conference of Digital Archives and Digital Humanities (DADH) in 2009. Since then, DADH has become an annual meeting for Digital Humanities scholars from Taiwan and overseas. With the increasing number of scholars studying Digital Humanities in Taiwan, the Taiwanese Association for Digital Humanities (TADH)¹³ was formed in 2016. TADH, which formally became the organizer of the DADH annual meeting in 2016, has grown to become an important organization for the study of Digital Humanities in Taiwan. TADH also became a constituent organization

of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO) in 2018, officially joining the international Digital Humanities research community as a research partner. Moreover, the *Journal of Digital Archives and Digital Humanities*, published by TADH, has become a place for Digital Humanities scholars to publish their research. Through the association, annual meeting, and journal, the development of Digital Humanities research in Taiwan is expected to become more plentiful and diverse in the future.

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Notes

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Trends and Challenges in Korean Digital Humanities

Intae Ryu

The application of digital technology to humanities research has been taking place in South Korea for the past two decades. The building of the “Joseon Culture Electronic Atlas” in 2004 and “The Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty DB” in 2006, which aimed to expand the outreach of Korean studies using web technology, are the representative examples of Korean Digital Humanities in its seminal stage. Computer technology had been used in South Korea since the 1980s to support humanities research, but, ironically, it was the financial crisis of 1997 that provided the impetus for the “digital turn in the humanities.” Faced with the task of rebuilding a tattered economy and providing a new strategy for economic development, the Kim Dae Jung government initiated large-scale public employment schemes and promoted a strategy of nurturing Cultural Technology (CT). The former provided the human resources that helped lay the foundation for Digital Humanities in South Korea. The latter supported the establishment of a new research trend that paved the way for “digital content” production in the field of the humanities.

It is against this historical backdrop that the distinctive trajectory of Korean Digital Humanities must be understood. In South Korea, the discourse on Digital Humanities began in the 2010s, but discussions were mainly focused on the production of digital content. It is only more recently, with the active introduction of overseas case



Fig. 1: South Korean President Moon Jae In speaking about the “Digital New Deal” initiative. Image courtesy of the Presidential Security Service, Republic of Korea.

studies and the accumulation of domestic case studies, that the wider community of humanities-based researchers (and not just those involved in producing digital content) has begun to show greater interest in Digital Humanities.

More recently, the “Digital New Deal” initiative of the current Moon Jae In government (represented by the “Digital Dam” project) has played a significant role in escalating interest on Digital Humanities amongst researchers. The government agenda for the transition to a data-centered society has influenced humanities research policies as well as the research environment. For example, the funding scheme outlines of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of Korea, the main funding body for humanities research, have begun to place importance on the application of digital technologies or data related methodologies. From the standpoint of researchers who depend on

state funding, such a government stance cannot be ignored.

The importance placed on coding and programming within South Korean society has also played an important role in ushering in the digital turn in the humanities. The new generation of researchers, well-versed in computer and web technology, has adapted well to the digital environment, actively applying digital approaches to humanities-related research. In fact, there is a growing perception among young researchers that academic activities should expand to include data construction, analysis, and visualization, which require interdisciplinary and convergent approaches, rather than being limited to traditional methods of publication. Such a trend can also be consistently observed in the workshops, colloquiums, and seminars of recent years.

The transition from “Humanities” to “Digital Humanities” should not be regarded simply as a change in research methodology. In terms of the technological environment, it entails a transition from analog to digital; in terms of communication media, it entails a transition from books to data; in terms of the actor, it entails a transition from an approach dominated by a human actor to one involving collaboration with non-human actors. In this sense, the expansion of interest in digital humanities can be understood as part of a greater cultural movement, in which changes in the technological environment have brought about social, economic, and political changes, which in turn have transformed the academic environment. Just as a typhoon cannot be recognized when standing amidst the deceptive calm of its eye, we may unknowingly be in the midst of a great turning point.

The disciplines of the humanities are also experiencing a crucial period of transition in South Korea, and currently there is more bad news than good news. The merging of humanities-related departments due to a decrease in the university population, the reduction of government financial

support, a decrease in academic posts, and society’s general lack of interest in the humanities are collectively seen to represent a “crises in the humanities.” Fortunately, Digital Humanities can play a crucial role in fostering a new humanities research culture by absorbing the social changes caused by the technological environment, which may also act to increase the resilience of the current academic environment. As such, it is hoped that South Korea will also witness, in the near future, the establishment of an institution similar to that of the Office of Digital Humanities (ODH) under the National Humanities Foundation (NEH) of the USA, which can take charge of the management and development of the field of Digital Humanities.

Indeed, although the Korean Association for Digital Humanities (KADH), established in 2015, has spearheaded the dissemination of Digital Humanities research through various activities, it is nearly impossible to expect such a research organization to undertake a more active role when long-term government assistance is absent. In particular, a government-sponsored institution that can support and centrally manage the numerous small-scale Digital Humanities projects that are centered around universities, institutions, and research groups across the country, and which can also be consulted when developing the results of Digital Humanities research for educational or commercial purposes, is urgently required. It is only when the government implements policies that represent a full-fledged move to improve the overall situation of humanities research in South Korea – rather than those merely focused on supporting a small number of digital humanities research groups – that Korean Digital Humanities can hope for a sustainable future.

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Recent Developments in Digital Japanese Studies

Paula R. Curtis

Over the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has invigorated discussions of the so-called “digital shift,” bringing new visibility to the significance of online and open-access resources for research and teaching. Though Digital Humanities (DH) as a field has been active and evolving over the last several decades, its intersections with conventional modes of scholarly engagement and pedagogy are still occurring in fits and starts across different disciplines and geographic specializations. In North America, which hosts the vast majority of Asian Studies programs, we are still seeing that East Asian languages, including Japanese, have been slow to gain representation in digital educational and research offerings despite an overall growth in interest and demand.

Though occasional presentations on digital Japanese Studies have been held at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and other conferences over the last decade, a 2016 University of Chicago workshop – *The Impact of the Digital in Japanese Studies* – was among the first to explicitly address the topic. While in attendance, the 13 presenters and the audience of scholars, librarians, and data science professionals emphasized the need to centralize efforts to build a digital Japan community, leading to a Japanese Language Text Mining Workshop held at Emory University in 2017. This event was attended by 25–30 participants and funded by the Japan Foundation. The original 2016 presenters subsequently met again at a 2018 workshop to discuss the progress of their work and brainstorm future directions for digital Japan scholarship.

These gatherings underscored the need to actively create community spaces for digital scholarship in Japanese Studies, particularly in more accessible and inclusive ways. This led to the creation of the Digital Humanities Japan initiative, which hosts a scholars’ database, a mailing list, and a wiki on Japanese digital tools, tutorials, and publications. The DH Japan project will hopefully continue to grow.

In 2019, AAS held its first “Digital Expo” to highlight advances in digitally-inflected Asian Studies research and teaching; the event included work by five scholars of Japan. In June of 2019, six Japanese scholars made a special effort to bring their knowledge to the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) at the University of Victoria, one of the premier digital humanities training venues. They offered a week-long course, “Digital Humanities for Japanese Culture: Resources & Methods,” which was attended by 11 participants, including graduate students, tenured faculty, and librarians. The course covered topics such as the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF), the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), crowdsourced transcriptions, and more, helping to fill instructional and networking gaps keenly felt in North America and other areas outside of Japan.

Although AAS 2020 was canceled, the 2021 conference saw a significant increase in the number of Japanese DH-related presentations, with six on-demand sessions and at least five panels in which a digital Japan-specific topic was presented. The virtual DH Japan Meeting-in-Conjunction was attended by over 30 people.

In June 2021, Paul Vierthaler (a specialist in Chinese literature at William & Mary)

and myself were invited to run a four-day virtual course, *East Asian Studies and Digital Humanities*, for the University of Pennsylvania’s Dream Lab program in DH training. We covered a wide range of subjects at the introductory level from the perspective of East Asian Studies. We explicitly stated that we would prioritize graduate students and contingent faculty applicants. Nevertheless, our applicant pool was still nearly three times larger than the 25 participants we could accept, and over one-third were Japan-focused. Because we held the course virtually, we had participants from as far as Korea, the Czech Republic, and Chile. The great international demand for East Asia-focused digital education, particularly at the introductory level, signals the growing relevance of this field and the gap students and faculty face between demand and supply. We will hold another introduction to EAS DH course in June 2022. Given the incredible number of applicants from overseas, we will continue to offer it virtually. Also on the horizon is another Japanese-language text mining workshop from Digital Humanities Japan collaborators, which will be conducted at the University of Chicago in June 2022.

Despite challenges for obtaining training in Digital Humanities through East Asian Studies, a large number of academic job advertisements list digital studies as a desired field. Thus far in the 2021–2022 academic job cycle (July 2021–March 2022), among postings specifically seeking specialists in some aspect of East Asia, a total of 56 positions have included the term “digital,” with 26 specifying a desire for “digital humanities.” Other relevant phrases include “digital technologies,” “digital pedagogy,” and “digital media,” among many others. Of these 56 posts, 18 ads seek a specialization in Japan and the digital, with 20 such ads for generalist East Asia positions (that could include Japan). With four months remaining in the annual job market cycle, these numbers already exceed the 2020–2021 academic year,

which featured 33 “digital” ads, eight of which were Japan-focused. Harvard University’s Japan Digital Research Center and Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies have previously hosted a digital Japan postdoctoral researcher, with two fellows taking up the role over the past several years. This year, the University of Texas at Austin is offering two postdoctoral positions at their newly-established Japan Lab, specializing in history and literature, respectively. The creation of the Japan Lab marks new institutional investment in Japan-centric digital studies in the Anglophone world, the first of its kind at a public university.

As for digital resource development, in partnership with Michael Emmerich of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), work is currently underway to build a new online platform for resources in Japanese Studies known as Japan Past & Present (JPP). This is a collaborative venture with UCLA and Waseda University, sponsored by the Yanai Initiative. JPP will serve as a central hub for digitally-accessible Japanese Studies materials in a variety of languages. In the future, it will sponsor events and projects related to Japanese Studies as well.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the acceleration of digital activity over the last two years has generated new opportunities for community building and scholarly exchange in virtual spaces. We would be wise to leverage these changes to advocate for expanded support in the intersecting fields of Japanese (and East Asian) Studies and Digital Humanities at the institutional level and to continue building an infrastructure that allows us to share knowledge, offer educational opportunities, and promote interdisciplinary and international collaborations.

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Reimagining the Littoral through Development Regimes and Local Contingencies

This collection unpacks the multiple trajectories of coastal transformations in the past and the present, with a focus on the different claims made by state and non-state actors to naturalize the coast as a space of flows for greater connectivity, economic growth, and future prosperity.

It looks at the varied local responses to the different development imaginaries employed by colonial and postcolonial India and contemporary China as they embark on large-scale coastal redevelopment and infrastructural projects. By doing so, the contributions seek to nuance existing narratives of displacement and dispossession; to interrogate the multiple meanings of coastal transformations for public and private stakeholders, technocrats, and coastal communities; and to foreground the diverse, uneven, and contradictory nature of these phenomena.

Far from producing homogeneity with modernizing effects, our case studies collectively show that centrally-funded, large-scale infrastructural projects have to be situated within their glocalised contexts and authoritative knowledge regimes about modernity, development, or heritage building. In this way, we shed light on how different groups of social actors and networks – Hindu nationalists,

Chinese fishers, African fishers and traders, Kutch coastal dwellers, and South Indian artisanal and mechanized fishers – appropriate, contest, and co-produce imaginaries of development and, in the process, make the coastal space legible for themselves.

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A Bridge over Ancient Waters

Devika Shankar

Separating India and Sri Lanka, the shallow waters around the Palk Strait are perhaps best known for a chain of shoals that have featured prominently in geological writings and religious traditions. As a result, technological interventions around this strategically important region have had to grapple, time and again, with the cultural dimensions of these shoals. If the perceived sanctity of these shoals has appeared to facilitate technological interventions in some cases, it has emerged as a serious obstruction in others. In 1871, shortly after the Suez Canal was inaugurated, members of the Council of the East India Association met in London to discuss the possible construction of another canal further east in the Palk Strait.¹ At a time when steamer traffic in the Indian Ocean had increased considerably, members of the association took turns to highlight the significant gains to be made by cutting a shipping channel between India and Ceylon. They also highlighted the ease with which this could be achieved. In all, it was calculated that such a channel would reduce a return journey between Bombay and the eastern Indian Ocean by almost 720 miles, leading to a 4% reduction in time and expense.²

Through the course of the late 19th century, however, as Ceylon's booming tea industry increasingly began to depend on the migration of indentured labor from southern India, the colonial state became less interested in deepening the divide between India and Ceylon. Instead, it

began to explore ways to bridge the physical distance between the two through the construction of "a railway line over the sea."³ From its inception, those lobbying for the line drew connections between the proposed railway bridge and the limestone formations, known as Adam's Bridge, that had been considered hindrances to navigation. The bridge would be partly built on the shoals themselves, and legends surrounding these formations would also help draw investments toward the project. While Adam's Bridge appears in Islamic and Buddhist accounts as well, its apparent associations with the bridge in the Hindu epic the *Ramayana* would gain prominence in this process. A number of news reports began their analysis of the proposed bridge by recalling the episode in the epic where Hanuman, the monkey god, builds a bridge across the Palk Strait to rescue Sita. When a part-ferry, part-railway line was ultimately inaugurated in 1914, colonial officials similarly used the occasion to emphasize the bridge's mythical past, quoting passages from the *Ramayana* and assuming the names of characters from the epic. With the opening of this line, senior officials proclaimed, history was now following in the footsteps of mythology.



Fig. 1: Map of Sri Lanka, depicting Adam's Bridge and surrounding areas in the upper left (United Nations Map no. 4172 Rev.3, March 2008)

Though the bridge was only partly completed and the railway line never quite became the grand success that its promoters had envisioned, these invocations of mythology would have far-reaching consequences. For instance, when the Indian government began to revive plans for a shipping channel through this very area in the final decades of the 20th century, some Hindu groups rose in protest, insisting that the shoals were inviolable due to their associations with the ancient bridge mentioned in the *Ramayana*.⁴ A century earlier, that tradition had been narrated repeatedly in order to

facilitate a colonial public works project by endowing it with much-needed grandeur. In the hands of 21st-century Hindu nationalists, it turned into a historical fact that would serve to prevent further infrastructural interventions. The line between fact and fable, which had begun to dissolve in the first quarter of the 20th century under colonial rule, has collapsed in recent years, to such an extent that in 2017 the Indian Council of Historical Research agreed to conduct archaeological excavations to investigate whether the shoals are indeed man-made structures. In the meantime, all plans to construct a shipping channel by dredging these shallow waters have been abandoned.

The pivotal position occupied by the Palk Strait as a possible bridge between India and Sri Lanka, but also as a central node between western and eastern Asia, demonstrates the multiple ways in which transnational and regional linkages have been both imagined and executed historically. At the same time, the recurrent invocations of mythology to both enable and disable infrastructural interventions in this region at different points of time highlight the extent to which local contingencies have shaped this process in particular ways.

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Notes

- 1 'Plan to Cut a Channel for Ships between India and Ceylon', April 26th 1871, *The Times of India*.
- 2 'Plan to Cut a Channel for Ships between India and Ceylon', April 26th 1871, *The Times of India*.
- 3 *The Harbour of Colombo, Ceylon and a Railway to Connect Southern India with Colombo*, A. M. and J. Ferguson, 1897
- 4 'Sethusamudram Project Launched', 3rd July 2005, *The Hindu*.



CMI CHR. MICHELSEN INSTITUTE



Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary.

Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University has made extensive efforts to promote Asian studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects.

Chr. Michelsen Institute

Based in Bergen, Norway, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) is an independent research institute on global development and human rights.

The French Institute of Pondicherry

L'Institut Français de Pondichéry (IFP) or The French Institute of Pondicherry is a research center under the joint supervision of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

Challenging State Representations from Coastal Environments in the Gulf of Kutch, Western India

Chandana Anusha

Burry land-water spaces have long generated fiery contests along the South Asian coastline, unsettling and reconfiguring the very definition of the coast. I focus on one such contest in the Gulf of Kutch, Western India, against the Arabian Sea, where India's largest private port has been under construction since the 1990s. Celebrators of the port present it as a model for high-tech port building, a beacon for India's entry into the 21st century. Opponents present the megaport as activating rampant destruction of the Indian coastline, as representing an industrialized noose around India's neck. The Gulf of Kutch has thus emerged as a prominent theater of contest between nature conservation, small livelihoods, and mega-development.

The multi-commodity port project stretches over 6000 hectares. It needs vast tracts of coastal land for oil tankers, warehouses, containers, and a whole host of logistical operations to handle gigantic volumes of trade. Government-led cartographic efforts to designate coastal land as "wasteland," therefore, have been crucial to the creation of the port enclave. A spectacular intertidal zone has been classified as government wasteland. This unique zone stretches five kilometers from sea into land. During the maximum high tide, seawater comes five kilometers inwards into land, creating this unique intertidal

zone. The state government maps it as swampy and dirty. But the same intertidal area also hosts India's second largest mangroves, which are breeding grounds for fish, fodder for livestock, and fuelwood for coastal dwellers. Beyond this intertidal area, stretches with seasonal vegetation – where goats, sheep, and cattle grazed – are also classified as government wasteland.

Such legal and geographic classification of the coast as wasteland visually erases diverse lives and livelihoods. It makes possible coastal acquisition for the megaport project. Port developers are thus able to justify their existence on the grounds that the port is productively transforming degraded wasted spaces – watery intertidal areas as well as dry areas – into a thriving hub of global international trade. Thus, since the very beginning of the port project, local coastal dwellers have experienced how government actors shape and mediate industry's appropriation of land.

It is no wonder, then, that after 20 years of living with these transformations, the dwellers are suspicious of government activities to officially represent the coast. As recently as August 2018, the government was attempting to remap the Kutch coastline. An important part of this remapping was holding a public consultation with stakeholders who were directly impacted by coastal remapping. The goal was to fix the boundaries between different spatial units of the coast. Government officials

swooped into Kutch to hold a meeting with the coastal dwellers to confirm whether the provisional maps they created matched local visions of the coast. In this public meeting, a range of coastal dwellers – fishers, farmers, livestock keepers – came together to challenge state-led bureaucratic conceptions of coast.

They were outraged by the reductive representations offered of the coast in the provisional government maps – the reduction of dense mangrove clusters to fixed lines, the reduction of the coast to swamp. "You've shown the mangroves in a line, like people standing in line and waiting for a public toilet!" exclaimed an elderly livestock keeper. "You've marked the full coast as swamp, not all of it is swampy!" argued another farmer. For them, the coast was much more than the intertidal area for fish and marine animals. It included habitats for sparrows, trees, seeds, and cows. They demanded the inclusion of these organisms within the official representation. Furthermore, they challenged how the government had represented fishers' natural landing places – spaces where fishers parked their boats. Whereas the government sought to fix the fishers' landing places through tiny red dots in the intertidal area, the fishers argued that landing places exceeded their confinement to the red dots. These places changed every season, with winds and waves.

In collective local imagination, watery intertidal areas that were leveled and reclaimed for port development between 1996–2012 refused erasure from formal maps.

The dwellers thus articulated an organic, dynamic, and holistic understanding of the coast, against state attempts to narrow it into a static strip of land against sea. Weaving together a vibrant community of human and nonhuman beings, the local coastal imaginations come together momentarily to show that the coast is greater than the sum of its parts, and although the port has radically transformed coastal life, coastal death is not preordained.

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Fig. 1: Fishing in the intertidal port ecologies of Gulf of Kutch (Photo by author, 2017).

What Does a Fishing Harbor Do to Fisheries? A Note on Pazhayar Harbor

“We [artisanal fishers] have lost our space [the beach landing site], firstly due to the construction of this fishing harbor in Pazhayar village of Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, India. We were then slowly pushed out of this harbor by the mechanized trawlers and ring seine crafts.” This lament came from Saravanan (pseudonym), a Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP) boat owner. Left with no space, he states that they have been forced to park their crafts on the banks of the Buckingham Canal, a mile away from the shore and near the mangrove forest. Their pleas to the bureaucrats and local politicians to construct wooden platforms for landing goods also fell on deaf ears.

This particular case study forces us historians and anthropologists to ask critical questions regarding the underbelly of infrastructural expansion. Such expansion has been instrumental in selling modernist dreams about liberal equality, progress, and economic growth while reproducing unevenness, power, and economic deprivation amongst the fishing communities. As Appel, Anand, and Gupta have argued in the context of Michigan's racial politics, "infrastructure is a terrain of power and contestation."¹

The frenzied race for expanded investments in megaprojects and the reliance on increasing techno-scientific complexity as a means to "leverage the future" have only deepened existing societal inequalities.² By drawing on some of these critical interventions, this paper will sketch the differentiated experiences of the artisanal and women fishers who are caught in the violence of the physical and social detritus created by different capitalist projects, disembedded from their existing social and ecological contexts and drawn into cycles of indebtedness and resource conflicts.

Pazhayar village is located on the mouth of river Kollidam at the northern end of Kaveri Delta (Kaveri is an Indian river flowing through the states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka), creating a natural harbor with an estuary rich in biodiversity. It was once an artisanal fishing village where the customary governance (caste/ur panchayat³) took care of the coastal commons and fisheries' management. The advent of the fishing harbor in the 1980s paved the way for Pazhayar fishers to expand their capacity through trawling and shrimp farming. Given the promise of an interconnected world, greater economic growth, and prosperity, the then-government of Tamil Nadu utilized World Bank aid to expand the capacities of

the harbor so that it could accommodate the growing complexities of financial and managerial operations as well as the integrated management and development of fisheries, shrimp farming, and aquaculture.

Some fishers – mostly the rich fishers who have the capacity to mobilize credit and the new generation of young educated youths – visualized development in the form of the modernization of fishing fleets and the construction of physical infrastructures like the fishing harbor, breakwater, and fish processing plant. Through this they aspired to be a part of the global economy of fish trading. However, our ethnographic research has revealed that the rhetorical positioning of the fishing harbor as a "technocratic ideal" tethered to foreign trade by the state and rich fishers has only worked to conceal the latent tensions between different groups of coastal communities.

Over the last decade, the ring seine⁴ fishery has contributed to the diversification of crafts and gears, absorbed reserve labor power from the nearby agrarian regions, and supplanted the mechanized trawler fishers from the control of the harbor.⁵ The use of this technology has particularly targeted the artisanal fishers' control over species and fishing zones. Moreover, with the coming of big traders who possessed superior capacities to procure fish in large quantities, advance contracts, and bankroll huge volumes of credit, the women fish vendors were caught in a disadvantageous position and forced to become laborers at the processing plants. Due to these simmering conflicts between artisanal, trawler, and ring seine fisheries, the Tamil Nadu state government found a short-term solution and enforced a ban on the ring seine fishing practices in 2021. However, the law and order approach of the state has failed to address the "splintering effects of infrastructural systems"⁶ on the fishermen's livelihoods and coastal environments. Far from being universally beneficial and homogenous, such systems pushed certain social actors and practices into an unending crisis situation.

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- 1 Appel, H., N. Anand, and A. Gupta. 2018. Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure. In N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel (eds.), *The Promise of Infrastructure* (pp. 1-40). Durham: Duke University Press.
- 2 Harvey, P., C.B. Jensen, and A. Morita. 2017. Introduction: Infrastructural complications. In P. Harvey, C. B. Jensen, and A. Morita (eds.), *Infrastructures and Social Complexity: A Companion* (pp. 1-22). Oxon: Routledge.
- 3 Ur Panchayat is a traditional village council different from the legislative elected village representatives.
- 4 A fishing gear which targets pelagic species.
- 5 Bavinck Maarten. 2020. The Troubled Ascent of a Marine Ring Seine Fishery in Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 55, Issue No. 14.
- 6 Marvin, S. and S. Graham. 2001. *Splintering Urban Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. Routledge.



Fig. 1: Medium sized trawl boats parked at Pazhayar harbor (Photo by the author, 2021).

Moving Beyond a Single Story of Chinese Distant-Water Fishing (DWF) in West Africa

Hang (Ayo) Zhou

When responding to a question – “Do you think the Chinese presence in the Gambian fisheries industry is positive or negative?” – local informants provided varying answers. Whilst a local vessel captain praised that “the Chinese [...] are giving us many opportunities to make money,” a longtime fish dealer rebutted him categorically by stating that “small market workers become out of business.” What this short vignette indicates is the heterogeneity in local actors’ perceptions and experiences of the Chinese Distant-Water Fishing (DWF) in West Africa, a region to which China dispatched its very first DWF fleet in 1985. This heterogeneity is, however, often overshadowed by the dominant tendency within existing analyses to reduce maritime interactions between China and West Africa into “a single story.” This single story condenses China into a homogenous entity and situates all of its engagements with Africa within a timeless and placeless spatial realm, depriving the African coastal actors of agency.

The fishing sector accounts for two percent of West Africa’s GDP, with numbers going up to 13.5 percent in the case of Senegal. In the past decade the region has witnessed a rapid expansion of Chinese activity: 89 Chinese vessels (out of 153 total foreign vessels) are authorized to fish in Guinea Bissau alone.

Granting Chinese and other foreign players access to fishing grounds was never a simple economic proposition. It takes on geopolitical significance and embodies the

Fig. 1: Porto do Alto Bandim, the main fishing port in Bissau currently under renovation with the support of Chinese foreign aid (Photo by the author, 2022).



different constellations of African political and economic interests. One question that deserves discussion is whether the growing competition for fisheries’ resources equipped the coastal African countries with greater bargaining power and independent decision-making to forge agreements with foreign actors? Here, any understanding of agency needs to be further unpacked to examine whether these agreement negotiations served only elite power interests or whether they were instrumentalized to introduce developmental transformations in the fishing sector. This is a particularly relevant question to pose as China’s effort to access fishing resources often included the provision of other coastal or fishing-related infrastructures, such as the construction of the Alto do Bandim fishing port in Bissau.

At the other end of the spectrum of African agents are the local fishery actors, including fishermen, fisherwomen, traders, vendors, and agents operating in ports and on-shore markets. These people are among the first to face the direct consequences of the resource crunch due to the growth of foreign industrial fishing. While it would be simplistic to assume that the relationship between artisanal and industrial fishers is naturally conflictual

with binary representation of industrial fishers as “evil” and small-scale fishers as “pristine,” such characterizations continue to dominate current narratives of the Chinese DWF in West Africa. Unfortunately, this position prevents us from developing an empirically-grounded understanding of the manner in which local fishery actors interact, negotiate, and cope with the Chinese fleets.

Instead of ascribing the “victim” identity to local fishers, this article argues that it is worthwhile to explore the human and social dimensions of conflicts and collaboration between Chinese industrial fleets and small-scale fishers in coastal West African countries. Particular attention should be given to the agency of the latter as they learn to live with the former, both at sea and on land. The production of catch by Chinese fleets depends upon the participation of local business partners and laborers on boats (often themselves with fishing experience); yet little is known about who these workers are and what their motivations and experiences are of working on Chinese fleets. Adverse weather conditions and the need for daily supplies also force the Chinese fleets to dock sometimes at local harbors. We again know surprisingly little about the socioeconomic interactions

between local fishing communities and Chinese crew members on the shore. Do the latter seek to secure a minimum level of social acceptance from coastal hosts? Has their presence created any economic and material benefits for coastal communities, and if so, how are they structured and distributed? The degree of reception and patterns of interaction are unlikely to be solely dictated by the Chinese side of the equation. They also depend upon local conditions, including, at the very least, power, gender, and socioeconomic dynamics in West Africa.¹

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Notes

- 1 This work was supported by funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 802223 *Transoceanic Fishers: Multiple Mobilities in and out of the South China Sea – TransOcean – ERC-2018- StG*).

The Maritime Reorientation of China in the Indian Ocean

Xuefei Shi

China’s distant water fishing industry has been under heavy scrutiny recently, sparking considerable controversy over its social, ecological, and geopolitical impact. In 2018, a 10-year investment of 2.7 billion USD from China into fisheries in Madagascar, endorsed by the then Malagasy president, stirred backlash from both Madagascar’s technocrats and international civil society. The deal was called off eventually, but it raises an acute question about Chinese fisheries’ interest in the Indian Ocean, an ocean highway plagued by overfishing, littoral underdevelopment, and maritime insecurity.

Chinese transoceanic fishing fleets and their bases – aquacultural farms, seafood brokers, and logistic companies – play an important role linking the aquatic food chain between Madagascar and its surrounding waters. By identifying their origins, modalities, and trajectories as well as the distribution of seafood produce, this paper not only seeks to shed light on China’s blue footprint in this ecologically vulnerable area, but also to question assumptions regarding the presence of Chinese fishers as being an outcome of the expansion of state capitalism. Instead, I foreground the importance of a historically-grown Indian Ocean network without much involvement of the state, thereby complicating the overarching narratives of state development.

This novel perspective allows a shift from the current state-centred perspective to a people-centred perspective on distant water fishing. It questions the nature of overfishing as a Capitalocene morbidity that not only endangers the sea but also alienates the



Fig. 1: Malagasy fishing boats (Photo by the author, 2022).

life of common fishers. In the past years, Chinese fishing fleets have transformed Madagascar’s seascape, facilitating the dispossession of local marine resources while inserting them into the global market via an “underwater” network intertwined with the larger interests of state and capital. Zooming in on Chinese fishing fleets’ development practices through the lens of a living Sino-Malagasy maritime space helps to illuminate the scale of China’s impact in Africa’s seas.

Furthermore, the focus on the fishing and maritime industry in Madagascar answers to a “seablindness”¹ in mainstream studies of China-Africa relations, of the Maritime Silk Road, or of China’s global expansion, which are typically land-focussed. Incorporating the role of Chinese seabound migrants in the *longue durée* of Asian fishers’ transoceanic mobility across the Afrasia sea² (i.e., the Indian Ocean) echoes to a

maritime reorientation in anthropology that re-evaluates not only the relationship between land and sea but also the sanitizing role of development projects.³ In the case of the Indian Ocean, which has been always at the crossroads of ancient and modern maritime worlds, the recent Indo-Pacific conceptualization has again brought this ocean to the forefront of the geopolitical chessboard. Yet, its littoral regions are poorly developed in comparison with the busy maritime transport and marine resources it provides, especially on its western (African) side. This situation owes much to the region’s peripheral position in the colonial world system and on the edge of the Eurasia. Such a European- and continental-centered system is now being challenged by the revival of lateral commercial flows from China and India to Africa, via the localized maritime links across

the Indian Ocean. This is a controversial, inadequately defined form of extraction,⁴ but it is still a promising “catalyst” that may “finally haul Africa from underdevelopment and poverty.”⁵ However, as the case of Madagascar shows, the development of Sino-Malagasy space not only rewrites the thalassology of the Indian Ocean⁶ but also reveals its problematic entanglements into present-day enclosures of local resources.⁷

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Notes

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- 2 Vink, Markus. “The Afrasian Mediterranean: Port Cities and Urban Networks in the Indian Ocean World.” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no. 3 (2011): 405–16.
- 3 Roszko, Edyta. “Maritime Anthropology.” in L. Pedersen and L. Cliggett (Eds.). *SAGE Handbook of Cultural Anthropology*. 2021. London: SAGE
- 4 Chari, Sharad. “African Extraction, Indian Ocean Critique.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114, no.1 (2015): 83–100
- 5 Walker, Martin. “Indian Ocean Nexus.” *The Wilson Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2008): 21–28.
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Clues of Provenance:

Tracing Colonialism and Imperialism through Museum Objects

Klaas Stutje and Jona Mooren

How to research the history, origin and meaning of museum objects that were acquired in colonial times and contexts? In March 2022, the Netherlands-based NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD/ECR), facilitated by the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) and the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, published 50 detailed provenance reports about the history of 65 museum objects that were acquired in colonial Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In this Focus edition, we invited a few researchers, some of whom were affiliated with the project, to share their fascinating provenance reports and provide insight into the theoretical backgrounds and considerations in this burgeoning field.



Where do objects in old ethnographic collections, and other collections with a history in the colonial past, originate? Under what circumstances were they acquired at the time, and how did they arrive in museums and heritage institutions, far away from their places of creation and use? In what ways did these objects change meaning and significance over time and place, and to whom?

In recent years, the responsibility to know and research the provenance of colonial collections has been emphatically felt. This is part of a critical reevaluation of the history of old (ethnographic) museums and a call to 'decolonize' them. This renewed interest stimulates – and is being stimulated

by – active efforts of formerly colonized countries (e.g., Nigeria, Senegal, Republic of Benin, and Sri Lanka) to repatriate lost heritage. Well known is the Nigerian effort to retrieve a large collection of 3000 objects looted from the Kingdom of Benin in 1897 by British troops, better known as the "Benin Bronzes." For Indonesia, an important milestone was the return in 2020 of a ceremonial dagger, a kris, of the renowned Prince Diponegoro. It was promised by the Dutch government in the 1970s but never effectuated until the kris was recently identified through provenance research.

In the Netherlands, the uneasy presence of large collections with an acquisition history in the colonial era led to the

installation of two advisory bodies: one committee chaired by Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You, which consulted about new Dutch restitution policies and claim procedures in 2021. Among other things, it advised the unconditional return of cultural objects that were acquired against the owner's will, should the source country request restitution. The other initiative was a research pilot that focused on the practical aspects and theoretical considerations concerning provenance research: the Pilot project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPROCE).

Fig. 1 (above): One of the studied objects in PPROCE: An Acehnese drawing of a mythical bird. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-1429-134a.

Fig. 2 (left): Cover of the final report of PPROCE, available online at <https://www.niod.nl/en/publications/clues-PPROCE>.

Continued overleaf



Fig. 3: One of the studied objects in PPROCE: A conquered flag from the Sulu Sultanate, southern Philippines. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Inv.no. NG-MC-1889-84-4).



Fig. 4: One of the studied objects in PPROCE: A golden *Kastane* or *sabre* from the Kandyan Kingdom, Sri Lanka. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Inv.no. NG-NM-560).

This pilot – launched in 2019 as a government-sponsored initiative of the NIOD/ECR, the NMVW, and the Rijksmuseum – focused on the development of a methodology for provenance research into colonial collections. Publishing the report *Clues: Research into provenance history and significance of cultural objects and collections acquired in colonial situations*,¹ it also made recommendations regarding the organization and professionalization of structured provenance research.

The emphasis in this project was on objects from Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and research took place in close consultation with partners in these countries. The results of this project were published in March 2022, and they are publicly available on the webpage of NIOD/ECR and the partaking museums. Dr. Gunay Uslu, State Secretary for Culture and Media in the Netherlands, expressed her admiration for the research in this project and is committed to strengthening the collaboration to redress injustice, for example through restitution. She announced that she will set up an independent expert committee for this purpose.

A number of the contributions in this Focus section of The Newsletter are based on the results of this research project (the articles of Mirjam Shatanawi, Marieke Bloembergen, and Alicia Schrikker), or are written by colleagues from Switzerland and Indonesia working on similar provenance topics (Adrian Linder and Sri Margana, respectively).

An important theoretical starting assumption of the project was that provenance research, given the nature of the material and the historical context of colonialism, could – and should – be more encompassing than strictly focusing on the ‘origin’ of an object and lineages of previous ownership. Important are the socio-political lives and changing significance of the objects, and the different power relations within which the objects were ‘exchanged’ in local, colonial, transnational, and international contexts.

Provenance research, in this approach, builds on the historiographical tradition of microhistory. According to founding scholar Carlo Ginzburg, microhistory involves the researcher, in the manner of a detective or psychoanalyst, studying surviving traces, minute details, unique clues that provide a deeper insight into the past. It is particularly concerned with groups that are underrepresented in the archives and have barely been given a voice. Focusing on small units of research – such as an event, a community, an individual,

or in our case a museum object – helps to “ask large questions in small places.”²

In the following contributions of this Focus section, each author discusses the provenance and micro-histories of one or more objects. The contributions not only discuss objects of various natures – from an Acehese figurative drawing (Mirjam Shatanawi) to a Sri Lankan cannon (Alicia Schrikker) – but also address different historical processes of heritage formation: from a history of absence and disappearance (Sri Margana), to a history of forgetting (Adrian Linder), and a history of transformation and alienation (Marieke Bloembergen).

The papers

In the first paper, Sri Margana reconstructs the history of *Keris Kyai Hanggrek*, a Javanese ceremonial dagger that was donated around 1819 to the Dutch King William I by Pakubuwana IV, the Susuhunan of Surakarta, Central Java. Sri Margana highlights that in Javanese cultural perception, the *kris* was not just a diplomatic gift but an animated protector of those who carried it. The fact that the *kris* cannot be located today is therefore a serious matter.

In her paper, Mirjam Shatanawi writes about the collecting practices of army officer G.C.E. van Daalen, focusing on an Acehese sword *sikin panjang* and two pencil drawings depicting the mythical creature *Buraq* from his collection. Her provenance research provides insight into how high-ranking officers acquired objects, against the backdrop of varying degrees of pressure and violence, and how this military way of collecting is still visible in museum collections from Aceh today.

The third article, by Marieke Bloembergen, takes us to the eighth-century Buddhist shrine Borobudur in Central Java. Bloembergen discusses the fate of 19th- and 20th-century tokens from this temple – heads, statues, and reliefs – that were carried away in colonial times and are being kept in museums worldwide. Focusing on 14 Buddha heads in the collection of NMVW that “probably” originate from Borobudur, Bloembergen shows the richness of stories held by these heads, and how lush their lives can be. These are stories that transcend the interests of institutes, nations, and states; as Bloembergen argues, research into these objects cannot be restricted to national or bilateral forms of collaboration, but rather requires international coordination.

The research by Adrian Linder into the history of a human skull leads us from the

Baroque Palace of Friedenstein in Gotha, Germany, to the lives of Anang and Andreas in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. Following the lives of these individuals, we learn about the collection of human remains in general, about repression and extreme violence in a colonial context, and about processes of forgetting and remembering.

The final paper is by Alicia Schrikker, who reflects on the socio-political biographies of six Sri Lankan objects in the Rijksmuseum. Schrikker argues that provenance research of objects with a colonial history must not solely revolve around the question of when and why an object ended up in a Dutch collection, but should also recognize the layered histories and meanings of objects through time and space.

Together, these contributions demonstrate the richness and multifaceted character of this burgeoning field. Hopefully, in the coming years, many more objects will be researched in a similar manner so that knowledge about the colonial era will increase and diligent restitution can become common practice.

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Notes

- 1 https://pure.knaw.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/496442096/RAP_PPROCE_FinalReport_ENG_v10_202203.pdf
- 2 Charles W. Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 1.



Fig. 5 (above left): One of the studied objects in PPROCE: A Korwar or ancestral statue from West Papua. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-2432-3.

Fig. 6 (above right): One of the studied objects in PPROCE: A kris from Sultan Hamengkubuwono IV of Yogyakarta. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-360-1481a.

Fig. 7 (below right): One of the studied objects in PPROCE: A Letter of the Sultan of Madura presented to the Dutch King William I. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-360-8080-1.



Fig. 1: Kris from Sunanate of Surakarta, ca. 1768-1820. Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Inv.no. RV-360-8082. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/651065>

Zaal, designed by L.J.C. van Es, was built as a special gift from the people of the Dutch East Indies at the wedding of Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Hendrik in 1901. The money used to build the Indische Zaal was collected from community donations in the Dutch East Indies from various circles when, in 1898, Queen Wilhelmina's marriage plans were announced. The fundraiser raised 150,000 guilders.

The construction of the Indische Zaal offers a long and interesting story in itself, and it can be told separately. This article only talks about some cultural objects from Java that are still stored – or have been previously stored – in the Indische Zaal. One of them is the Keris Kyai Hanggrek from the Surakarta palace in Central Java (Kraton Kesunanan Surakarta), which was placed in the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden (King's Cabinet of Curiosities). A kris is a distinctive ceremonial dagger, often associated with Central Java, but also produced in many other regions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia more widely.

The story of Keris Kyai Hanggrek is alluded to by Rita Wassing-Visser in her book *Royal Gifts from Indonesia: Historical Bonds with the House of Orange-Nassau (1600-1938)*.¹ Wassing-Visser writes that the kris in question had been transferred to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (now Museum Volkenkunde, part of the National Museum of World Cultures [NMVW]) in Leiden, never to be found there again. Many krisses can be found in Dutch museums, along with other classical artifacts from colonial countries. There are hundreds throughout the Netherlands, and most of them are in NMVW Museum Volkenkunde, as can be seen in the museum's online catalogue [Fig.1]. Only some of them are on display. These krisses came from various places in Indonesia and arrived at this museum in different periods.

The history of krisses in Dutch royal possession goes back to the 18th century. The first Dutch ruler who had an interest in cultural objects from colonial territories was King and Stadhouder William IV (1711-1751). He was influenced by his consort Princess Anne of England, who was very interested in science. He asked Van Imhoff (1743-1750), Governor General of the VOC in the Dutch East Indies, about the possibility of the VOC helping to collect various species of animals and plants as well as other objects. This request was heeded, and the collected objects became the early occupants of what later became the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden. In this collection were also three golden krisses, among which was a kris from the Kingdom of Gowa, South Sulawesi.

At a time when relations between France and Holland were deteriorating, William V, the son of William IV, began to feel uncertain regarding the future of his country. Therefore, he began to save some of the heirlooms in his cabinet by sending them to Germany, entrusted to his daughter who married a prince there. He then asked for asylum in England when the French army occupied the Netherlands in 1795. The krisses in his collection were also evacuated to Germany when French troops occupied Holland. After Napoleon was defeated and the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was installed in 1815, the heirlooms returned.

According to Rita Wassing-Visser, by the time of King William I's death in 1843, there were 22 krisses from various regions in Indonesia in his Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden. One of these was Keris Kyai Hanggrek.

Seeing the kris from an historical perspective

Critical studies of colonial objects with a historical approach can produce useful knowledge, not only about the object itself but about human history in general. Knowledge about the kris usually focuses on the technical aspects of manufacturing, treatment, model, and function of the

weapon, and also on the various mythologies attached to it. In many Javanese manuscripts, “Tosan Aji” is a prominent term to refer to various traditional weapons made out of iron. Likewise, modern studies of krisses have been widely carried out. These studies generally discuss the “dhapur” (design) and its philosophical values. However, there is still little study of krisses from a comprehensive socio-historical perspective.

In Javanese material culture, the kris is considered an animated object that has certain philosophical and cultural values. In this case, a unique symbolic interaction occurs between humans and the objects they create. Krisses are given (usually masculine) human names, decorated, cared for, and not infrequently placed in high/sacred positions as heirlooms. Thus the history of the kris is the history of the symbolic interaction between humans and the kris itself.

Not every kris has an important value in history. The interesting thing about a kris as a property is that it can change owners for various reasons. Therefore, the kris can be a connector from one life story of to another. Even if a kris ends up in a museum as an object of display, at least it has carved out its own history. The itinerary of a kris from one owner to another can traverse a broad historical journey that can include stories between regions, nations, and even the world. In other words, tracing the historical journey of a kris can reveal a history of human relations in the world.

Tracing history through artefacts may reveal important historical clues that are not revealed in archives and documents. This method can be applied to various other types of artifacts that have undergone quite a long journey as part of human-object interactions. Writing history with this approach has been introduced by Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum London, in his best-selling book, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*.² The book presents the history of humanity through the stories of 100 objects in the collection of the British Museum – objects that have been made, used, preserved, and disposed of by people.

Tracing the journey of Keris Kyai Hanggrek

The Keris Kyai Hanggrek had been in storage since 1818 and was kept until 1883. The origins of Keris Kyai Hanggrek takes us back to the early period of the formation of the Dutch East Indies colonial state and to the colonial scientific expeditions commissioned by King William I (1772-1843). He sent scientists such as C.G.C Reinwardt (1773-1854), C.L. Blume (1796-1862), and P.F.B. von Siebold (1796-1866) to the Dutch East Indies to collect various objects and artifacts that could fill collections in museums and scientific institutions to be established in the Netherlands. These objects represented the cultural richness of various ethnic groups in the archipelago, but also advances in the spheres of health, pharmacy, and natural history.



Fig. 2: Drawing of A. J. Bik of a statue of the goddess Prajnaparamita, near Candi Singasari, 1822. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. RP-T-1999-198. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-T-1999-198>

The Missing Kris

An Early Provenance Research of the Loss of the “Keris Kyai Hanggrek”

Sri Margana

Around 1818, Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV, the ruler of the Central Javanese kingdom of Surakarta, sent a ceremonial kris (“Keris Kyai Hanggrek”) to the Dutch King William I as a token of gratitude and friendship. It was said to carry protective powers for those who held it. And indeed, in 1818, the kris protected the crew of the *Admiraal Evertsen* ship against a terrible shipwreck. But where is the kris today?

In the center of The Hague, the Netherlands, there is a very beautiful old building, built in the 16th century. The building is Paleis Noordeinde, one of the palaces of the King of the Netherlands. Although this building is located thousands of miles from Indonesia, it has a very close relationship with Indonesia and always reminds us of the historical relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Indeed, the history of relations between the two countries has been marked by conflict and hostility. However, in this building is stored a memory that reflects the deep love that the Indonesian people (Dutch East Indies at that time) held toward Queen Wilhelmina (r. 1890-1948), the highest ruler

of the Dutch kingdom in colonial times. Part of the building in question is a large room called the Indische Zaal (or the ‘Indies’ Room).

Queen Wilhelmina had never been to the Dutch East Indies, but her name was very popular with the people of those territories. So many celebrations were carried out by the people of the Dutch East Indies on important days related to her life: her birthday, her coronation as Queen, and her marriage. Indische Zaal is a special room that was built with an interior design that reflects the diversity of the Indonesian cultural community, whose main walls and ceilings are made of wood filled with carvings from Kudus and Jepara. Indische



Fig. 3: Watercolour painting of disembarking crew of the sinking ship Admiraal Evertsen in 1818, near island Diego Garcia. Artist Q. M. R. Ver Huell, Collection Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, obj.nr. P2161-94A. <https://mmr-web.adlibhosting.com/ais6/Details/collect/98999>

In 1815, a committee was formed that with the young German researcher C.G.C. Reinwardt, the botanist Willem Kent, and painters such as Adrianus Johannes Bik (1790-1872). They had to collect rare objects about the natural history of the archipelago. The committee departed for Java in October 1815 and arrived in Batavia in April 1816. A.J. Bik had the task of drawing all of the objects that were collected. Shortly thereafter, his brother Jannus Theodore E. Bik (d. 1868) joined the team, followed later in 1817 by Antoine Auguste Joseph Payen (1792-1853), a painter born in Brussels, Belgium. Payen was sent to the Dutch East Indies specifically to draw natural landscapes and the daily life of the people in the Dutch East Indies. His paintings were intended to complement the Indies Art Gallery in the Netherlands. In 1826, Payen returned to Brussels and spent most of his time painting based on the sketches he had made while in the Dutch East Indies.

During the six years of conducting various researches in the Dutch East Indies, many artifacts were collected, including a statue of Prajnaparamita from the Singosari royal site in Malang, East Java [Fig. 2]. The number of items that were collected caused problems in terms of transportation. All of the objects and manuscripts were sent to the Netherlands on eight ships, but only four ships were able to sail safely to the Netherlands. The four other ships sank on the way.

The first shipment of objects began in September 1818, comprising a natural history collection that also included a living elephant and tiger. Unfortunately, this ship never reached the Netherlands and sank at sea. The second shipment was made in January 1819 and made it safely to the Netherlands. This cargo later became the main filler of the Natural History Museum in Leiden.

The third ship, named the *Admiraal Evertsen*, suffered the same fate as the first. When it reached the Indian Ocean island Diego Garcia in 1818, the ship sank. Fortunately, the ship's crew was rescued by an American ship, *The Pickering*. One of the crew members who survived this shipwreck was a member of the scientific committee that was sent to Batavia with Reinwardt in 1816, namely C.T. Elout (1767-1841). The story of the sinking of the *Admiraal Evertsen* was written by Q.M.R. Verhuell in a book entitled, *Herinneringen van een reis naar Oost Indie* [Fig.3].³

This accident destroyed the main objects collected by Reinwardt, as well as letters, reports, and notes concerning the research and collection of these objects. However, there were still some objects that were rescued – namely, some colourful illustrations of various natural objects made by A.J. Bik and an heirloom weapon from Surakarta. The heirloom was the Keris Kyai Hanggrek given by Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV (r. 1788-1820). When C.T. Elout visited Surakarta, he met Pakubuwana IV. The Sunan of Surakarta strongly requested that he bring the kris back to the Netherlands as a present to King William I. At that time, Elout objected because there were many krisses in the King's collection, but the Sunan of Surakarta insisted. He had already promised the gift in an earlier letter – sent when he succeeded his father's throne in Surakarta – as a token of gratitude and friendship. Finally, Elout agreed to bring the kris to the Netherlands.

After arriving in the Netherlands, Elout handed the kris to King William I with all the stories and traumatic experiences incurred during the delivery of the heirloom from Surakarta to the Netherlands. King William I received it with pride, even though it was not the first kris he had. William I valued the kris very highly and kept it combined with the other krisses as a sacred family heirloom in the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden.

King William I was very pleased and amazed, not only because of such a beautiful object but also because of the story of the amazing journey and shipwreck. It was the only object that survived the accident. Therefore, King William I asked to be given a clearer picture of the kris. However, because the record about this kris had also disappeared, this request for details could not be immediately granted. Elout then asked the Resident of Surakarta to meet Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV, to tell him about the incident, and to ask for further information about the kris. According to an oral statement from the Susuhunan of Surakarta, who is also known as a poet, the kris was named Kyai Hanggrek. It was forged in 1643 by a master named Yasa, who served Sultan Agung of Mataram. The *dhapur* (design) is called Lara Stuwa, and the prestige is called Melela. The gold ring that is wrapped around the wooden *tajuman* is called Mendak Parijata, with a *warangka* of Tambala wood and a *Suasa sarong* (cover).⁴

The disappearance of Keris Kyai Hanggrek

My curiosity about Keris Kyai Hanggrek began in 2018, when I was asked to be a speaker at a seminar on krisses at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts of Surakarta. Along with my other activities in the Netherlands, I later took the time to come to the NMVW Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden to see first-hand the Keris Kyai Hanggrek listed there. The online catalogue of the museum does not contain any photos. In Rita Wassing-Visser's book, it is stated that the kris was "not found."⁵ My visit to see this kris was also in vain: the museum staff who were there were also unable to explain the absence of the object with inventory number RV-360-1474. This makes my search for the kris deadlocked.

I only received instructions about the disappearance of the kris at the end of 2021 from a curator of Insular Southeast Asia at the National Museum of World Cultures. The curator indicates that Keris Kyai Hanggrek was indeed registered in the museum database, with number RV-360-1474. The number 360 indicates that the kris was part of the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, part of which was transferred in 1883 to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, a predecessor of today's NMVW Museum Volkenkunde. The curator concluded that the kris, in reality, never entered the museum.⁶ Because part of the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden was also transferred to what is now the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in 1883, it is most likely, according to the curator, that Keris Kyai Hanggrek went to Amsterdam and not to Leiden. Earlier research in 2017 – conducted to locate another missing kris, Keris Kyai Nagasiluman, which belonged to Prince Diponegoro – led to the conclusion that five of six krisses in the Rijksmuseum that originate from Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden could not be identified. In other words, the curator concludes that Keris Kyai Hanggrek is certainly not in Leiden, and probably also not in Amsterdam.

This conclusion is, of course, very surprising to me, as it suggests that there has been serious negligence in the handling of cultural objects in the Netherlands. This is similar to the Keris Kyai Nagasiluman belonging to Prince Diponegoro, which was lost for decades and was only relocated in 2017 and returned to Indonesia in 2020.

Conclusion

Indonesian krisses in the Netherlands have a variety of origins and causes, but there are some common threads that can be drawn from this phenomenon. First, the krisses represent the political and cultural relations of the two nations. The kris became a liaison as well as a symbol of the political and human bonds between the two different nations, especially among the elite. However, tracing the journey of Keris Kyai Hanggrek from Surakarta to the Netherlands leads us to a colonial imperial project, which was built for the sake of absolute control and conquest. This project was not only carried out for the sake of science but also in pursuit of cultural colonialism – from the personal interests of William IV and V to the imperial project carried out by William I. The kris was transferred to museums as an object of study and academic inquiries. It was exhibited to the public to arouse various cultural, economic, artistic, and scientific interests. If the study is carried out further, it will be seen how the recitation of the kris by Dutch orientalist began to emerge. They encouraged Javanese intellectuals to be able to explain more broadly and deeply about the ins and outs of the kris. From this colonial interest grew literacy about krisses by Javanese scholars.

On the other hand, from the Javanese side, the gift to the colonial rulers by the country's elite at that time was full of symbolism, which was not always easily understood by the Dutch. In the case of Keris Kyai Hanggrek, Elout said that Pakubuwana IV was a bit forceful so that the kris could be delivered to the King of the Netherlands. However, from Pakubuwana IV's perspective, crossing the ocean was not an easy task, considering that the previous ship carrying the objects of the archipelago had sunk in the sea. For Pakubuwana IV, who insisted Elout to carry the kris, it was perhaps not only a gift but also a protector for those who carried it. While Elout considered his survival pure luck, in Javanese culture and belief, an heirloom could produce a supernatural power, and Keris Kyai Hanggrek was indeed the only object that survived the fateful event.

The disappearance of Keris Kyai Hanggrek – in the process of its transfer from its original repository in The Hague to Leiden or Amsterdam – shows that serious negligence has occurred in the handling of these colonial objects. This is, of course, the responsibility of all the institutions mentioned in the transfer plan. The research to recover this valuable object is urgently needed so that this kind of negligence does not become a permanent defect of the institutions, which are responsible for the conservation of historical objects.

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Notes

- 1 Rita Wassing-Visser, *Royal Gifts from Indonesia: Historical Bonds with the House of Orange-Nassau (1600-1938)*, House of Orange-Nassau Historic Collections Trust, The Hague, Zwolle: Waanders Publisher, 1995
- 2 Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, Deckle Edge 2013.
- 3 Q.M.R. Verhuell, *Herinneringen van een reis naar Oost Indie* (1836)
- 4 Rita Wassing-Visser, *Royal Gifts from Indonesia: Historical Bonds with the House of Orange-Nassau (1600-1938)*, House of Orange-Nassau Historic Collections Trust, The Hague, Zwolle: Waanders Publisher, 1995
- 5 Rita Wassing-Visser, *ibid.*, see, the footnote 15 of chapter II.
- 6 The Museum's database states that RV-360-1474 was 'afgevoerd, Jan-01-1883' [disposed, January 1, 1883], and not 'vermist' [lost].

By Force of Arms

Collecting During the Aceh War

Mirjam Shatanawi



Fig. 1 (above): Frits van Daalen, 1909. Photograph K. Karsen Jr. Collection Leiden University Library KITLV 7810.

Fig. 2 (right): Sikin panjang, 19th century. Collection Rijksmuseum NG-2004-47.



Gotfried Coenraad Ernst van Daalen, also known as Frits van Daalen, was a high-ranking military officer of Indo-European descent in the Royal Dutch East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger or KNIL) [Fig. 1]. Already notorious during his lifetime, he owed his infamous reputation to the brutal campaigns he headed in Aceh during the first years of the 20th century. What is less known is that he was also an avid collector who assembled collections for a wide range of museums in both the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. Today, these objects are dispersed over more than a dozen museums, libraries, and archives in Jakarta, Amsterdam, Leiden, Rotterdam, Breda, and Cologne.¹ For the PPROCE project, the provenance of two objects was further investigated.

One of the objects under investigation was an Acehnese sword, a *sikin panjang*, that is currently in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam [Fig. 2]. The sword has a decorated sheath, the blade is damascened (featuring *pamor*), and it has a decorative crown (*glupa*) of gold adorned with plant motifs filled in with blue and green enamel. In other words, this is a weapon of high aesthetic quality, which was probably made in the period before the Aceh War. The Rijksmuseum acquired it in 2004 from the bequest of Theodorus A.W. Ruys (1904-1989), a Rotterdam shipowner, and assumed that it might have belonged to Van Daalen. That assumption was easily confirmed. Among specialists, it is known that Van Daalen owned a private collection of weapons, which his heirs loaned to the Museum of the Royal Military Academy in Breda after his death, and which they subsequently sold to various parties. An investigation of the Breda museum's archives indeed brought to light a list of Acehnese weapons from the Van Daalen collection, including one with the same inventory

number that is still inscribed on the sword, and even a photograph of the sword on display at the museum's premises [Fig. 3].

Equally relevant, however, was finding out how Van Daalen acquired the *sikin panjang*, especially since earlier research has shown that he obtained many objects directly "in the field" – in this case, the battle fields of Aceh. Two military campaigns in particular provided him with the opportunity to assemble systematic collections: the 1901 exploratory mission to the Gayo region and the extremely violent campaign to conquer the Gayo and Alas regions in 1904. The latter military expedition also had a scientific purpose, as the official report explains: "the goal is to get scientific results too, as far as the military aims and the difficult circumstances in which the column has to operate will allow [...] finally a very complete and extensive report on the Alas people, who were entirely without description until now, will be brought out."² To this end, a botanist of the 's Lands Plantentuin in Buitenzorg (the present-day Kebun Raya Bogor) came along to collect specimens of plants and insects; cartographic mappings of the terrain were carried out; and a mining engineer collected specimens of the ground. The specimens were sent to the Plantentuin as well as the Rijksherbarium in the Netherlands (these are currently held by Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden). Van Daalen took it upon himself to collect ethnographic objects and manuscripts. The objects were distributed to museums in Batavia, Leiden, and Rotterdam, and the manuscripts were sent to Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), the renowned scholar of Islam. Archival sources show that Van Daalen started to collect in the early 1890s, shortly after his arrival in Aceh.

The outcome of the research carried out for PPROCE was that it cannot be determined how exactly the sword was

The vast majority of objects from Aceh in Dutch museums came there through the hands of the military. This fact is related to the long period of the Aceh War (1874-1914) that was followed by continued popular resistance. The following is an analysis of the collecting practices of army officer G.C.E. van Daalen (1863-1930), which provides insight into how high-ranking officers acquired objects, against the backdrop of varying degrees of pressure and violence. An overarching question is what it means that almost all collecting was done by military staff and in the context of conflict and resistance to colonial rule.

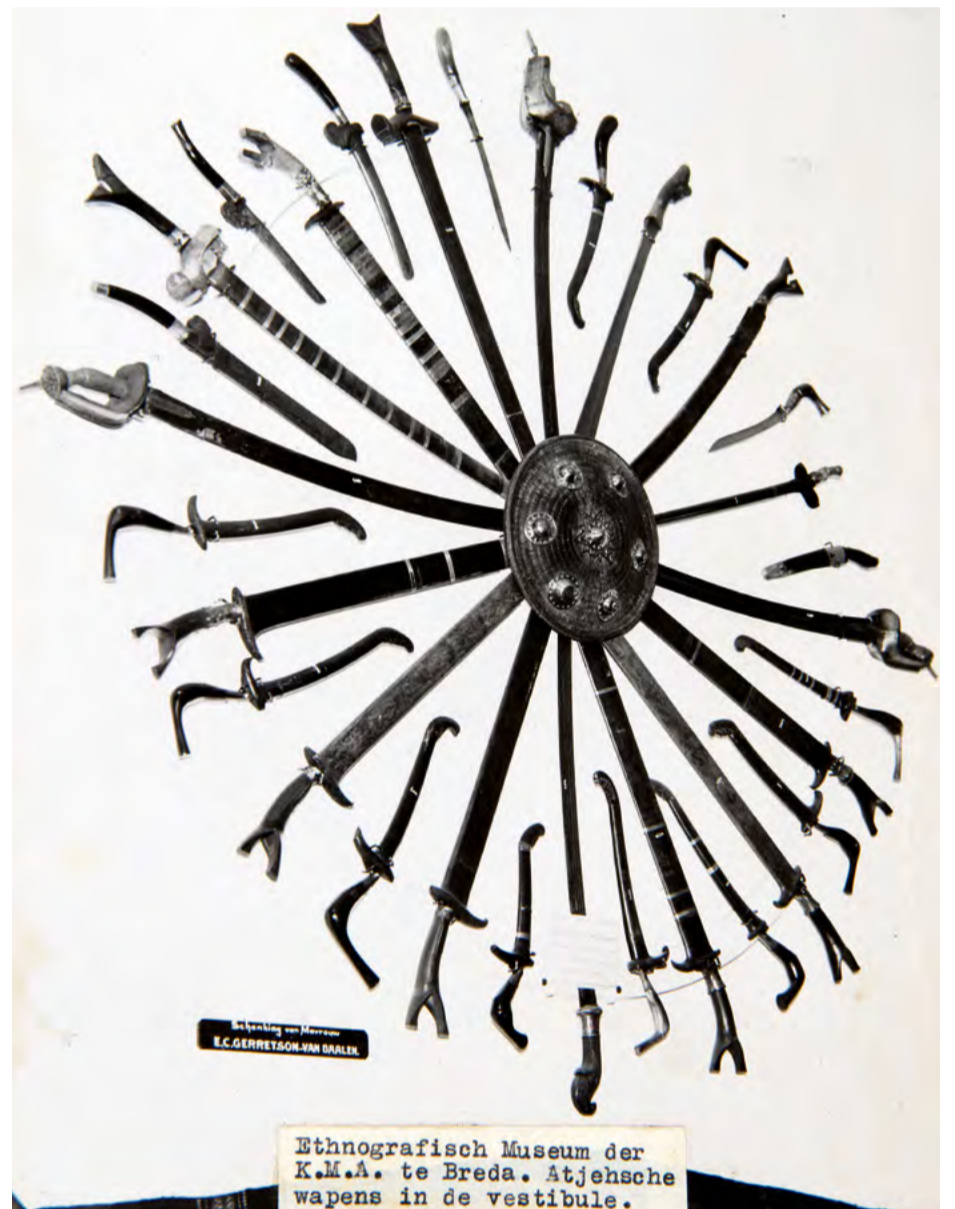


Fig. 3: Display of the Van Daalen collection in the Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Military Academy in Breda, c. 1938. The *sikin panjang* is in the bottom right-hand quadrant with number 4373. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen RV-11996-1.

acquired. This is because Van Daalen wrote only in general terms about the weapons he obtained, so only rare and unique items in his collection can be identified. The *sikin panjang* that is now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, although of high quality, has no unique appearance nor striking features that testify to its individual history, which makes it more difficult to identify in written sources. However, a general picture of how Van Daalen acquired weapons can be sketched. The KNIL did not have official guidelines until 1928, but in practice looted weapons had to be handed over to the highest commander in the field, who would keep them at the disposition of the government. That Van Daalen did not always keep to this informal rule is clear from letters he wrote to his wife Betsy. For example, on 4 July 1896 he wrote about a battle in the village of Anagalung: "At around 4:30 am we drew up to the place, the first shot was fired at 4:45 followed by the assault and hand-to-hand combat in the *benteng* [fortress] and at 5 am it was all over. It was an interesting thing, that battle, all quite dark and no

sound other than the cracking of gunfire and the yelling of the natives. Not surprising given that the Acehnese left in our hands 110 dead bodies and two little boys of five and six years old with minor injuries. Naturally several weapons were captured of which I have three fine specimens."³

According to fellow officer Harko Schmidt (1879-1953), Van Daalen habitually confiscated looted weapons to add to his collected items: "During a battle under his command, a lieutenant captured a golden shafted lance and asked Van Daalen if he could keep this weapon as a souvenir. Van Daalen took the weapon with an ice-cold stare, handed it over to an orderly standing behind him and said: 'if anyone is entitled to this weapon, it is me'. And the lance went to the museum. With the troops, the 'iron' general therefore had the name that in his eyes everything was '*gua punya*' [mine], but that was not known there – and Van Daalen thought it unnecessary that people knew – that all such loot was sent to the museums."⁴

The research disclosed that, in addition to spoils of war and other 'finds' during

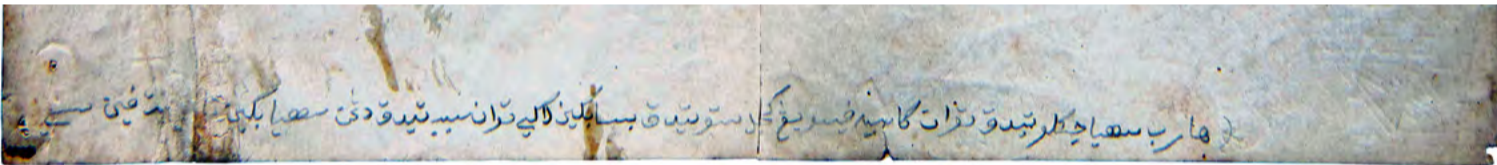


Fig. 4 (above): Teuku Teungoh, drawing of Buraq, pencil on paper, 1903-1904. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen RV-1429-134.

Fig. 5 (below): Reverse of the drawing, on which the imprisoned Teuku wrote a plea for help directed to the civil commander. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen RV-1429-134.

military operations, Van Daalen also acquired weapons by purchasing them from Aceh contacts. In correspondence with Snouck Hurgronje, he writes about high-ranking members of the nobility selling precious weapons and manuscripts to him, making it clear that sometimes pressure was necessary to get things “out of their hands.”⁵ Occasionally, he commissioned blacksmiths to make a new weapon, if it was a rare type that was not otherwise available. It is clear, however, that the objects that Van Daalen obtained through purchase tended to be unusual and unique pieces. It is therefore more likely that the *sikin panjang* in the Rijksmuseum collection was obtained as a spoil of war rather than through purchase or other means.

The second case of research into Van Daalen’s acquisition practices concerned two pencil drawings. In the repository of the National Museum of World Cultures (Museum Volkenkunde collection), there are 15 drawings, all with imaginative depictions of various scenes. They were made by Teuku Teungoh, *ulëëbalang* (aristocratic leader) of the village of Pate on the west coast of Aceh. The drawings are exceptional because little figurative drawing is known from Aceh. Prior to the provenance research, little was known about Teuku Teungoh as a person, and the museum mistakenly named him Teungku Teungoh. Two of the drawings, both donated by Frits van Daalen, turned out to have crucial information on the reverse, which was previously overlooked by the museum. On the drawings, the artist had written a plea in Malay, addressed to the *civil gezaghebber* (civil commander), the Dutch military authority in Pulo Raya. The text shows that Teuku Teungoh was in prison.

The first of these drawings depicts Buraq, the creature that accompanied the Prophet Muhammad on his night journey and his ascension to Heaven (*al-‘isra’ wal-*

mi‘raj) [Fig. 4]. The legendary creature is often portrayed in Islamic iconography as a fabulous animal with the head of a woman, the body of a horse, and wings. In this drawing, however, Buraq has the head of a man and the body of a horse (but with clawed feet or wearing shoes) besides the more common wings and peacock tail. The other drawing shows Buraq as a bird, which is not unusual in Indonesian images, surrounded by parrots, butterflies, and two trees (one with a serpent in it).⁶ There are four men depicted: one wearing a fez and a large sword, throwing a spear; another with a load on his head, carrying a basket; and a third one, also wearing a fez, punishing the fourth man.

Both drawings contain on the reverse pencil inscriptions in Malay in Jawi script, written by Teuku Teungoh, addressed to the civil commander [Fig.5].⁷ On one of them there is also a note in Dutch, written by Frits van Daalen, stating that the Teuku is writing from prison in Pulo Raya, and that he is requesting: (1) grace, (2) a small knife, and (3) permission to take a walk. However, according to Dr. Annabel Gallop, Lead Curator of the British Library’s Southeast Asia collections, Van Daalen made a mistake in interpretation. The first line in Malay is not a specific request for grace or a pardon, but just the conventional preamble appropriate for a humble request made to an overlord.

The request reveals that the Teuku tried to use the presentation of the drawings to the civil commander to send out a cry for help. During the research it was discovered that the civil commander in question was most likely Theo Veltman (1868-1943), who held the office between October 1903 and March 1905; alternatively, it might possibly have been Henri Swart (1863-1946), who was appointed as the first *civil gezaghebber* of Pulo Raya in July 1902. Both officers were avid collectors (although Swart focused

more on weapons), and Teuku Teungoh is strengthening his plea by referring to an object, possibly a receptacle, which the civil commander apparently had requested him to make: “Many greetings, I proffer my pardons to beneath the shoes of Sir, hoping for help for my affairs, because I am but a poor man, hoping for forgiveness for any wrongdoings. This is what I am hoping for: unless Sir gives me a small knife, it will no longer be possible for me to make it, Sir, because I will not be able to make the receptacle [?].”⁸

The inscription on the second drawing commences with a similar expression of humility and is, again, followed by a rather desperate plea for help: “Many greetings, to beneath the shoes of Sir, with my hopes for permission from Sir, that Sir should give the order for me to be taken for a walk each day, because for so long now I have been kept in, unable to see anything, and I have frequently fallen ill; this is my never-ending hope entrusted to Sir.”

Thus, while in prison, Teuku Teungoh asked the governor to lighten his regime, requesting time out of his cell to see the daylight and to go for a walk. The investigation did not make clear why he was imprisoned, nor whether he was punished for political or criminal activities. However, in the years directly after the death of famed resistance leader Teuku Umar (1899), there were pockets of resistance active on the west coast, including Pulo Raya district. In those years *ulëëbalang* were sometimes imprisoned for lack of cooperation with the Dutch authorities. The *Koloniaal Verslag* (Colonial Report) on 1902 reports that the prison of Pulo Raya held 55 prisoners, half of whom were reported ill during the year, and 10% of whom died. These numbers tell us something about the conditions in the prison, and Teuku Teungoh also mentions that he had frequently fallen ill. Via the civil

commander, two of the 15 drawings came into the possession of Frits van Daalen, who donated them to Museum Volkenkunde in 1904. The other 13 drawings were sold to the museum in 1907 by Theo Veltman, probably the civil commander in question.

Today, various objects that were owned by Van Daalen and his fellow officers are on display in museums in the Netherlands. What is the impact of these collections on the public imagination? Several scholars have argued that the Aceh War shaped official historiography and popular conception to such an extent that today Aceh is rarely shown in dimensions other than war and religious fervour. This image is confirmed by the museum collections in the Netherlands. In 1942, when the Dutch left Aceh, collecting stopped completely, and, apart from a handful of objects, therefore, everything in the museums was taken out of Aceh during the period of colonial rule. Around 20% of the total collection of Acehese objects in the National Museum of World Cultures are weapons, reflecting the fact that most collecting was done by the army. In contrast to other parts of Sumatra and Java, where curators undertook collecting trips from the 1970s onwards so that museums could represent contemporary Indonesia, the Dutch museums contain virtually no Acehese objects from the post-independence period. This effectively freezes Aceh in its image as a setting of colonial conflict.

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Notes

- 1 For more information on Van Daalen’s collecting practices, see Mirjam Shatanawi, ‘Making and Unmaking Indonesian Islam: Legacies of Colonialism in Museums’ (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2022); Harm Stevens, ‘G.C.E. Van Daalen, Military Officer and Ethnological Field Agent’, in *Colonial Collections Revisited*, ed. Pieter ter Keurs (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2007), 115–22; Harm Stevens, ‘Collecting and “the Rough Work of Subjugation”’: Van Daalen, Snouck Hurgronje and the Ethnographic Exploitation of North Sumatra’, in *Indonesia: The Discovery of the Past*, ed. Endang Sri Hardiati and Pieter ter Keurs (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005), 76–84.
- 2 J.C.J. Kempees, *De tocht van Overste van Daalen door de Gajo-, Alas- en Bataklanden: 8 februari tot 23 juli 1904* (Amsterdam: Dalmeijer, 1905), 223.
- 3 Transcript of a letter from G.C.E. van Daalen to Christine Elisabeth de Lang Evertsen, 4 July 1896. Special Collections of Leiden University Library/Collection of H.T. Damsté.
- 4 M.H. du Croo, *Marechaussee in Atjeh: herinneringen en ervaringen van den eersten luitenant en kapitein van het Korps Marechaussee van Atjeh en onderhoorigheden, H.J. Schmidt van 1902 tot 1918* (Maastricht: Uitg. onder auspiciën van ‘Oost en West’ door Leiter-Nypels, 1943), 65.
- 5 Letter from G.C.E. van Daalen to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 2 November 1903. Special Collections of Leiden University Library/Collection of C. Snouck Hurgronje, inv. no. Or. 8952 A: 239.
- 6 For this image, see Fig. 1 on page 31 of this issue of *The Newsletter*.
- 7 I want to thank Annabel Gallop for the translation of the Malay inscription and providing further information.
- 8 Damage of the paper and subsequent restoration made the text partly illegible.

Lush Lives

The Peregrinations of Borobudur Buddha Heads, Provenance, and the Moral Economy of Collecting

Marieke Bloembergen



Fig. 1. Borobudur, around 1874. Photograph: Isidore van Kinsbergen. Leiden University Library, Special Collections, inv. nr. KITLV 87568.

Fourteen Buddha heads in the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) “probably” originate from the 8th-century Buddhist shrine Borobudur in Central Java. This would mean that they belong to 14 of the 504 Buddha statues that, from the temple, once overlooked Javanese rice fields. They share the same fate with a much larger number of tokens from Borobudur – heads, statues, and reliefs, carried away in colonial times – being kept in museums worldwide. Research into these objects, therefore, cannot be restricted to national or bilateral forms of collaboration; rather, it requires international coordination. That said, research in PPROCE has shown how rich the stories are that objects hold within them, and how lush their lives can be – stories that transcend the interests of institutes, nations, and states. Precisely because of these stories, the results of PPROCE might be treasured and mined: to the benefit of further research and new stories.

The 14 Buddha heads in the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) are all disconnected from what was once an architectonic unity: a temple for local religious-political purposes built under the Javanese Sailendra Dynasty, which flourished between c. 750-850. A millennium later, in the 1810s, when the majority of the population of Java (since the 16th century) had converted to Islam, the ruined temple Borobudur, covered by debris but not forgotten, became the object of huge cleaning operations, research, and conservation programs under changing colonial and postcolonial regimes. Since then, while being cared for by local inhabitants and becoming a site for local tourism, the temple transformed into a colonial, postcolonial, and UNESCO World Heritage Site, drawing mass tourism. On the way, it also got re-sacralized by various religious groups, with various aims. The Borobudur objects were carried away during that modern, 19th- and 20th-century life of the temple. They became part of networks of accidental and scientific collectors and museums worldwide. Since the 1910s, Borobudur Buddha heads have also entered a rising market in Asian art that, if we consider the prices they sold for in the 2000s, is still booming.

In addition to requiring international coordination, research into these objects should ideally be conducted on behalf of the temple and the objects rather than for the diplomatic interests of decolonizing museums and governments. PPROCE – initiated by two national museums and an academic institute, and supported by the Dutch government – is not just a noble beginning of decolonizing diplomacy. Researchers for this project have shown the stories that we find if we dig deep in the archives and trace as many sources and transactions as possible – stories generated by the objects along their journeys. But these stories should not be restricted to the question of provenance.

Provenance, in the narrow sense of “origin,” is not necessarily the most interesting aspect of the life of a museum object.¹ The signification of an object changes, in mechanisms of exchange and interdependence, when it changes owner and place, in the eyes of different users and viewers, and in its journey through time. In this process, time and again, in different places, they become part of heritage politics. The sum of these transactions is what we call the social biography of an object, and it is what makes this biography

political.² For this reason alone, the question of provenance is not the same as asking: who is the rightful owner?

While for many objects it is unclear who they should be with – and the answer to this question is always political – for some it is immediately clear where they should be. This applies, for example, to the Borobudur Buddha heads from Central Java, now held in depots and showcases in museums around the world (including in Indonesia). The Buddha heads, to which I restrict myself in this essay, belong on the statues of the Buddhist temple which has stood in Java for over 1100 years.

Notably, in the course of that time, the majority of the population in – what is now – Indonesia had converted to Islam. The temple, in turn, became part of national and international heritage politics, and it also changed as a result of local signification. But there, the Buddha heads – now scattered across the globe – could have continued to play a part in local practices of care, memory creation, and changing signification of that place. The fact that they have been unable to do so is painful. The fact that they were removed in the context of colonial power structures, that they disappear into museum showcases and depots as spiritual “Asian

Art,” or that they are traded in the art market at ever-higher prices, should be seen as an injustice and epistemic violence.³ This is not necessarily a new idea: PPROCE itself is a result of the discussions on this subject.

Political, thus, are the objects that travelled from sites in formerly colonized regions, to other places in the world; political are the many, many objects that ended up in museums worldwide and that were categorized as subjects of archaeology, ethnography, history, art, or a combination of the four. The Buddha heads have been all. Likewise political, moreover, and never neutral, is the research we do – whether as academics, curators, activists, or artists – on histories, social biographies, and provenance of museum objects recognized as “heritage” and as “collected during the colonial era.” This is also the case for PPROCE. It is all part and parcel of the politics of heritage formation. PPROCE provides, in that sense, just a new phase to the social-political biographies of the museum objects, which in their perhaps much longer life, also got loaded by a colonial burden.

It is important to emphasize here: heritage, in itself, is nothing. Heritage, here in the guise of museum objects, “becomes,” “transforms,” and will always change in meaning over time. Yet it can only do so when people, private parties, collectors, institutions, or governments decide they want to keep it, to take care of it, to trade it, or to lend it to other parties; or it can do so when governments, groups, or individuals “reclaim” or “restitute” objects. All of these activities imply a set of choices: What are we going to keep, scrutinize, restore, or return? For whom? How and why so? Heritage is therefore essentially political. Critical research into the politics of heritage, into provenance, or into biographies of objects gives insight into choices, changing valuations, and conditions of exchange. In this way, such research can, therefore, have an impact on new socio-political choices regarding the politics that transform objects into heritage, to the effect of marginalizing other options.⁴ As researchers, we always also make choices, and thereby leave out other options.

Provenance research, as conducted within PPROCE, encompasses not only the question of origin but also the socio-political biography of an object: the histories and circumstances of the various transactions (including pillage) that have occurred from the moment an object disappeared from its original site to the moment it ended up in a museum. Whilst the research by PPROCE produced salient descriptions of looting or donation under duress, often, despite thorough research, this transactional history remains shrouded in mystery. These transactions were seldom or never recorded – by collectors, donors, or recipients. Which is in fact strange. Those

Fig. 2. Gallery of Borobudur, with headless Buddha Statues, 2016. Photograph: M. Bloembergen.

Fig. 3. Three of the Buddha heads – TM A-5945, 5946, 5948 – kept at the Museum of World Cultures, on display as ‘Souvenirs’ at the exhibition ‘Encounters: Hidden Stories from the Tropenmuseum’s Collection (2012-2013)’. In the background, ‘Study of the Borobudur’ by Jan Pieter Veth (1864-1925). Photograph: M. Bloembergen.



who, for example, removed the Buddha heads from Borobudur, saw the original site and entered into an actual transaction. However, most did not take the trouble to note down how, from whom, or under what circumstances and conditions of exchange they had obtained the heads. More importantly, this did not seem to bother collectors and curators of the archaeological, ethnographic, and art historical museums that purchased or received the heads. There was virtually no change to this passive stance until the recent worldwide restitution debates and, for the Netherlands, PPROCE. Why was the provenance of colonial acquisitions held in museums never a burning issue?

Let us follow a few of the donors and recipients of Buddha heads from Borobudur. What did they write down? Perhaps that will give us an answer to our question. Three motifs stand out: firstly, a sense of abundance without embarrassment; secondly, and seemingly contradictorily, a sense of decay and mission (i.e., a compulsive mission to save the material witnesses of disappearing civilizations); and thirdly, love of the object – in other words, greed motivated by scientific curiosity, aesthetic appreciation, and a desire for status. This love, or greed, dispelled all thoughts of moral and ethical questions regarding an object's provenance. In some cases, patriotism – a frequently used argument for shipping objects off to the Netherlands – could be a factor connecting all three motives. But patriotism was just as much a façade for these. This combination of motives paradoxically resulted in indifference towards the objects and alienation from their collections. I give two examples crossing different periods.

Colonial abundance without embarrassment

Abundance without embarrassment is what perhaps best describes the attitude that came to characterize collectors on the ground in colonial Java and in the museums in Europe. Even today, 19th-century descriptions of the abundance of Hindu-Buddhist antiquities in Java convey to the modern reader the idea of “obtainability,” as if they were there for the taking.

One of the Buddha heads under custody of the NMVW Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden goes back to a gift of Caspar G.C. Reinwardt (1773-1854), a Dutch botanist of Prussian descent, who between 1816-1821 led a prestigious scientific mission to Java. Notably, the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam, where heritage professionals are trained, is named after him. Reinwardt visited Borobudur in 1817, when, under the preceding British colonial regime, it had only just been reclaimed from the jungle. On seeing the temple, Reinwardt experienced an acute and overwhelming sense of decay. Seeing the ruined temple sprouting tree roots and watching the behaviour of its visitors, Reinwardt observed an apparent “freedom” to remove the statues: “This piece which is remarkable to the history of Java [will] quickly [...] decline and disappear, now everyone is free to remove statues from it.”⁵ Apparently, this freedom implied that Reinwardt himself could take hold of a number of heads (and hands) of statues from Borobudur, and these were shipped to the Netherlands. He did not note how he had acquired them, and nobody in the Netherlands seemed to care about this. What mattered to the recipients was the head itself, what it might represent, and to which science – and hence in which emerging museum – it belonged.

Now let us move to the museums. We follow four Buddha heads that in 1921 would end up in the collection of the Colonial Institute (the predecessor of the NMVW Tropenmuseum, which opened its doors in 1926). They did so as a gift from the Society Natura Artis Magistra (or Artis), the zoo in Amsterdam, which had closed its own Ethnographic Museum in 1910. They were described as “possibly from Borobudur.” In the Colonial institute, we can trace their journey from highly refined imperial showpieces to items “unfitting” to the stories the museum wished to tell and finally to objects in the museum depots. But otherwise,

these four Buddha heads suffered a similar fate to the Reinwardt Borobudur pieces: nobody asked about their provenance. In postcolonial times, however, one curator expressed his doubts about provenance. He believed that the different external characteristics of the various Borobudur Buddha heads in the Tropenmuseum, by now eight in total, may suggest that they could not all have come from the same temple. Nothing was actually done; no historical research was conducted. These doubts, and the reasoning behind them, were eventually copied over into the digital registration system TMS, and in exhibition texts well into the 2010s.

In 2012-2013, three of the Buddha heads resurfaced in the exhibition *Encounters: Hidden Stories from the Tropenmuseum's Collection* – on display as ‘Souvenirs’. Visitors were invited to think about the ethics of all this: “Is it prestigious to have a Buddha head from the Borobudur or is it unethical and should restitution be considered?”⁶ Thus, the museum publicly subjected itself to critical self-examination, and the exhibition's curators should be commended for this. But their question about ethics also seems non-committal. In a rather bizarre way, the museum text questioned the provenance of the Buddha heads without mentioning research being done, nor the necessity of such research. The biggest let-down came at the end of the museum text, which included language implying abundance and availability: “Near Borobudur there are also other monuments which once housed thousands of Buddha statues. You did not need to walk far to find a so-called ‘authentic’ Borobudur Buddha head.”⁷

Abundance may lead to alienation. The more a collection grew, the less time a collector or curator could spend on object-focused historical research. But this way of handling collections also reflects the priorities set by the museums and their financiers. And then there is the curator's love for the object. That love is always also exclusive, reflects particular forms of curiosity, and tends to disconnect that same object from the place where it came from and from the violence with which it once was captured. The tragedy, once again, is that in that double way, through love or greed, and abundance without embarrassment, the museums became alienated from their collections.

The question of provenance is not necessarily the most important aspect of the socio-political biography of a museum object, but this is not to say that provenance does not matter. Object-focused historical research should become the main task of museums and their curators if they wish to be socially relevant – and it looks as if more and more museum deem this more and more important. But museums should not be the ones in control of such research. Let them be generous in opening up, giving access to their archives, and providing research space in permanent reading rooms for students and outside researchers of every kind. So that the objects can tell the socio-political histories of global, local, and colonial dimensions that they hold within them – wherever and to whomever. So that we can ask questions about what makes these histories colonial (or not). So that we can learn from the objects and see and understand the wider world, beyond our own horizons and outside the context of heritage institutions.

Home is where the heart is

It is intriguing that from the early 20th century, outside the world of restoration expertise and research-in-development, scholars scrutinizing the temple's history and meanings normally do so by re-imagining the temple in the state it was built around c. 800 – thus, as a complete unity. They

rarely contemplate its missing parts unless in the sense of regrettable loss and decay. Yet, ever since its so-called “rediscovery” in the early 19th century, the missing tokens are just as well a part of the stories Borobudur has to tell. Borobudur has become more and more incomplete over time, suffering losses in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries due to the looting of objects belonging to a temple by individuals who saw no problem with that. It is, moreover, a site of national heritage, world heritage, and global Buddhist commemorative festivals like Waisak. It is and has been part of the local landscape, in which local inhabitants build their own relations with the temple. Many Indonesian citizens occasionally celebrate *Lebaran* (the feast marking the end of the Islamic fasting period) at the site, and others profit from a local and international tourist industry and its politics generated by a world heritage site designation.

This raises the question: to what kind of temple would Borobudur Buddha heads return if they do. Perhaps part of the answer lies in the kind of stories people tell each other about the temple's possible meanings, to themselves or to others – academically, architecturally, artistically, privately, socially. Examples are the forms of local activism showing various forms of belonging. These include the protests of villagers living around Borobudur, who were forced to move for the UNESCO-supported restoration project in the 1980s; the “*ruwat-ruwat Borobudur*” (*lit.* ritual meant to liberate, to cleanse) those villagers have been organizing since 2003;⁸ and also the story-telling project recently initiated by the Indonesian ministry of tourism and a research team from Universitas Gadjah Mada.⁹

I end this essay, however, with another story – or actually a poem – by the Javanese Roman Catholic activist and poet Linus Suryadi (1951-1999), entitled “Borobudur.”

I do so precisely because, in the 1980s, Linus Suryadi pondered Borobudur and its headless Buddha statues, and what this meant – then, and there – in his eyes, to Indonesia, and for Indonesian identity. I would like to thank Taufiq Hanafi, who helped me in locating the full original of the English translation of Linus Suryadi's poem I had encountered myself; and in understanding the translator's liberties. In the poem, Suryadi poignantly writes:

“The statues of Buddha are without heads / Headless in their places / Quiet imprisoned by the old world / You guess full of anger: / Is this a riddle Or is it reality? / I see only Javanese peddlers / Groups of tourists sightseeing / Shops and restaurants are also there / Hotels and markets at the foot of the temple.”

He proceeds to reflect further on a sacred landscape transformed by tourism and commerce, wondering what all of this might entail for Indonesian identity:

“When it is lush the *Bodhi* tree falls with a crash / There is no replacement / There is another version without the centres / For shopping and handicrafts / There is another meaning without the reality / Of the sacred building commercialized [...] The legacy replaced by arenas for entertainment [...] A diverse identity”¹⁰

The point I wanted to make with this poem was, originally, this: not only academics study the transformation of Borobudur and the tokens it lost into heritage objects. Indonesian poets/activists do so as well: from, in the first half of the 19th century, the authors of the *Serat Centhini* (a grand, generative compendium of knowledge, initiated at the court of Surakarta and written in the form of a poetic travelogue, which includes descriptions of Javanese antiquities), to the modern Indonesian poets Noto Soeroto (1888-1951) and Amir Hamzah (1911-1946) in late colonial times, to Linus Suryadi after the big UNESCO restoration in the 1980s. But Taufiq Hanafi corrected me, and he was right. It is the other way around: not only Indonesian poets reflect upon Borobudur, and make us think about

its possible meanings for multiple identities of and beyond Indonesia; but (other) poets, academics, artists and tourists – anyone, anywhere – do, and might do so, too.

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Notes

- 1 This paragraph, and the next, elaborates on M. Bloembergen 'Colonial abundance without embarrassment. Provenance of museum objects and the moral economy of collecting', *Clues. Research into provenance history and the signification of cultural objects and collections acquired in the colonial era*. Final Report PPROCE (NIOD, Rijksmuseum, National Museum for World Cultures) 67-71.
- 2 Literature and theorizing on this problem is huge, beginning with the classic study of Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: CUP, 1985. Just to compare, here: Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997; and in the framework of restitution debates: Salomi Mathur, 'A parable of postcolonial return: Museums and the discourse of restitution', *India by design. Colonial History and cultural display*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, 133-164; and the essays in Louise Thyatcott and Panggang Ardiyanshah ed. *Returning Southeast Asia's Past. Objects, Museums and Restitutions*. Singapore: NUS, 2021.
- 3 Compare Marieke Bloembergen, 'The politics of 'Greater India', a moral geography. Moveable antiquities and charmed knowledge networks between Indonesia, India and the West', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol 63, 1 (January 2021), 170-211.
- 4 Bloembergen, Marieke and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Exchange and the protection of Java's antiquities: A transnational approach to the problem of heritage in colonial Java', *Journal of Asian Studies* 72,4 (2013): 1-24; Bloembergen, Marieke and Martijn Eickhoff, *The politics of Heritage in Indonesia. A cultural history*. Cambridge, CUP: 2020.
- 5 Reinwardt, *Journal van de reis naar Indië en excursies op Java, Oct. 1815 - Oct. 1818*. UBL Leiden, Special Collections, BPL 2424: 5. Digitalised version, pp. 86-87. With thanks to PPROCE research-assistant, Melle Monquill.
- 6 Museum text, Exhibition 'Encounters: Hidden Stories from the Tropenmuseum's Collection', Tropenmuseum, 2012-2013.
- 7 Idem.
- 8 On the protests, as well as the Ruwat-Ruwat Borobudur: Sucoro, *Bumi Karma Borobudur*. Borobudur: Warung Info Jagad Cegluk; Bloembergen and Eickhoff, *The politics of heritage*, 258-260.
- 9 'Borobudur Heritage Trail. Menghidupkan kembali Legenda Borobudur'. Gadjah Mada University and Ministry of Tourism, 2019. With thanks to Louie Buana.
- 10 From the translation of Linus Suryadi's poem 'Borobudur', translated as 'At Borobudur', in: Iem Brown and Joan Davis, (eds. and trans), *Di Serambi = On the verandah. A bilingual anthology of modern Indonesian poetry*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995, 113-115. The original, much longer poem is published in Linus Suryadi's *Kembang Tunjung: Sajak Sajak*. Ende: Nusah Indah, 1983: 68-72. Suryadi also gave a presentation, entitled 'Beyond Borobudur', at the 2ND ASEAN writers conference in Bali, 1985, translated by J. Lindsay. The paper is on the role of local oral traditions and formal literary education in his formation, and on the problem of illiteracy and politics of education in Indonesia. There he gauges Borobudur as a proof of the collective creativeness of his Javanese ancestors; as reflecting a time lost, given the fact that it is now (in the 1980s) used as national park for local and foreign tourism, representing the language of intercultural communication in modern times; but also as an object of hope that grasps the spirit of local spoken language and literature, and as a 'symbol of the openness of the Javanese people'.



Fig. 4. Linus Suryadi (1951-1999). Photograph: private collection Sunardian Wiradono.

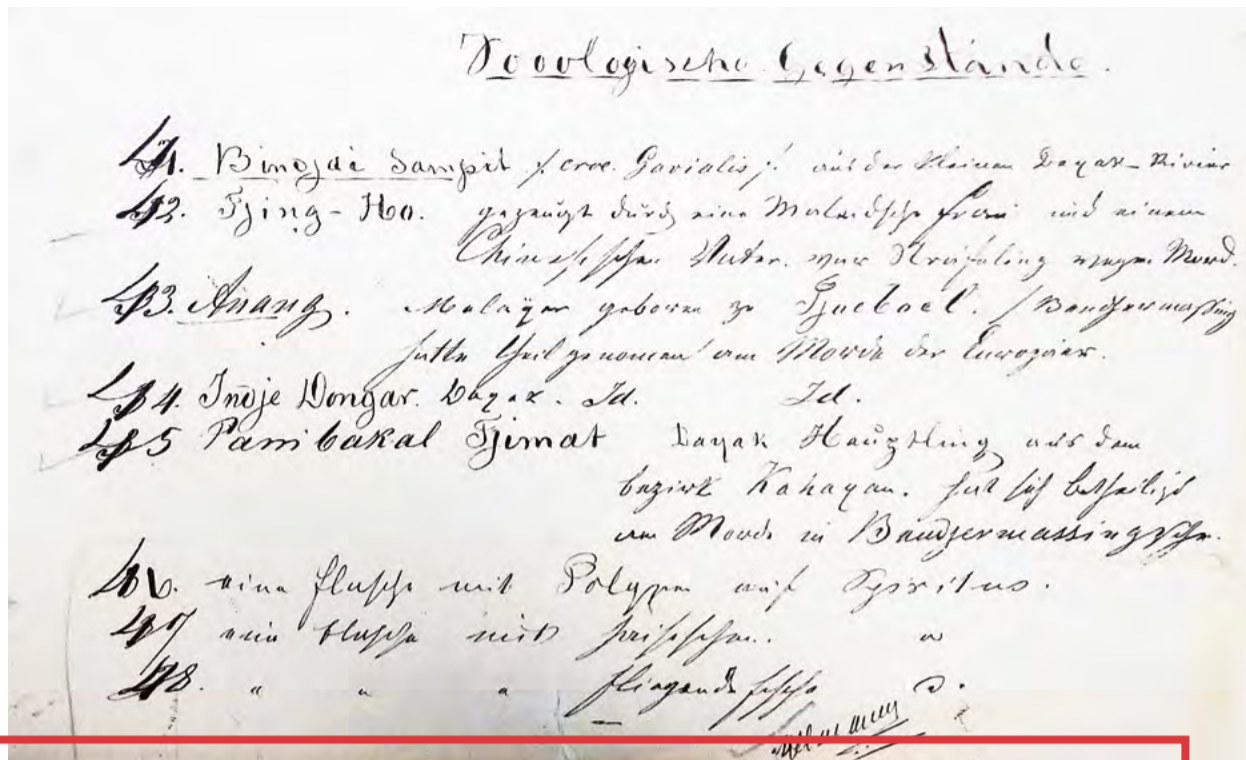


Fig. 1: Final section of Ullmann's donation list, dealing with "zoological objects" (Photo by Kerstin Volker-Saad).

“Anang” and “Andreas”

Provenance Research on Human Remains in Germany as a Lens on Inter-Colonial History

Adrian Linder

Long forgotten by the general public and specialists alike, the Baroque Palace of Friedenstein in Gotha (Thuringia, Germany) houses notable Indonesian collections in its art, oriental, ethnographic, and naturalistic departments. Some Javanese weapons date back to the very beginnings of the collection as a “chamber of miracles” founded by Duke Friedrich I in the mid-17th century. Donations increased dramatically from the mid-19th century. In this period, German traders, missionaries, administrators, doctors, and military men began to participate in large numbers in the colonial expansion of the Dutch in “East India” – today’s Indonesia – in particular, in the colonization of its “outer islands” such as Sumatra, Borneo, and Sulawesi.

Among the large collections – which include ethnographic objects, oriental art, weapons, and remains of exotic animals – are 33 human skulls. After lying forgotten in museum storages for a century and a half, the provenance and history of these skulls is being studied by a multi-disciplinary, international team partly funded by the German Lost Art Foundation.¹ One of the earliest collectors to be found in the museum inventory was the “Royal Dutch Captain Ullmann,” who played a key role in sending the skulls to Friedenstein. Captain Ullmann spent close to 25 years in Sumatra, Borneo, and Java. During a home leave from his service in the Banjar War (1859-1863) in Borneo, he donated 48 items to the Duke, which entered the latter’s “Art Cabinet” on September 4, 1862. The donation comprises weapons of various types, artisanal products, articles of clothing, jewelry, and objects of everyday and religious use. Also included are several rare or historically important items, such as personal weapons of “a priest from Mecca (actually a haji), who played an important role in the murder of the Christians in Banjarmasin in the year 1859.”

According to a list written by Ullmann, most of the items are said to originate from different parts of Borneo, with a few from Sumatra. Somewhat hidden at the end of the list are four human skulls, under a special heading – “Zoological Objects” – that also includes three bottles with animal preparations in spiritus and a large skull of a Gavia Crocodile [Fig. 1]. The human skull

Human remains occupy a very delicate position in the discussion over the future of ethnographic collections. Provenance research on the skull of a presumed Borneo rebel and murderer, whose skull was donated to Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Gotha in 1862 by a German officer in Dutch services, leads to the story of the rebel’s alleged victim. This victim was the first known casualty of the Banjar war in 1859 and Borneo’s first Christian martyr. Reduced to a “zoological object,” the rebel’s individual destiny is forgotten in the museum trajectory, much as that of the victim, who as a non-European was accorded a marginal role at best. The example can serve to provide insight into the types of questions and issues involved in researching the provenance of human remains.

are marked in China ink with numbers 42-45 and the inscription “Kapit (for “Captain”) Ullmann,” together with the sign for his military rank consisting of three points between two lines. The skulls were later mounted on wooden stands including names and some biographical information. They became part of a collection of 42 Asian “race skulls,” for the most part from Batavia hospitals. Of these 42 skulls, 33 are still present in the collection, currently in Gotha’s Perthes Forum.

For all four skulls, Ullmann’s list gives personal names and ethnic attributions. It also mentions that they belonged to murderers: two of them were said to have “participated in the murder of the Europeans,” while another “participated in the murder in the Banjarmasin area.” In addition, it is said in museum catalogues and/or on the stands that they were executed, an addition possibly provided orally by the donor.

Osteoanthropological research suggests that two of these men were decapitated, followed by their heads being exposed on stakes or poles for an extended period. This was a usual practice after executions.

The Banjar War

The expressions “murder of the Europeans” and “murder in the Banjarmasin area,” without any further explanation, suggest that the events referred to were known to the recipients. In fact, the news

23, 1859, from a correspondent at Batavia forwarded to Scottish merchants Finlay and Co.: “We have the greatest regret in informing you that we have [...] received the most disastrous tidings regarding the coal mine establishment of Kalungair,² which has, by some accounts, been entirely, by others only partly, destroyed by an insurrection among the native subjects of the Sultan of Banjermassing;³ but, saddest of all, the whole of the European employés have been brutally murdered, without leaving one to tell the tale.” The paper goes on to explain the causes of the insurrection: Disputes on the Sultan’s legitimate succession and agitation by “Mohamedan priests” (actually hajis) returned from Mecca. Among the 50 or 51 European victims are mentioned four German missionaries, three of their wives and a number of children. While the information so far is generally accurate, this is definitely not the case with the paper’s contention that the “cause of the insurrection proceeds in no way from dislike to the mines.” The statement is clearly meant to placate alarmed shareholders in the recently established coal mining industry. Actually, the mines were scenes in which workers – consisting largely of native debt-slaves and chain gang laborers often brought over from Java – suffered terrible brutality. Consequently, large numbers sided with the rebels and turned against their bosses during the attacks.

Along with the Dutch and indigenous mining personnel, members of the Rhenish Mission Society were attacked and killed at several stations. These German people were not collateral victims as has sometimes been claimed. Rather, the Christian mission constituted a threat to Muslim activists who came under increasingly anti-Christian influence on their pilgrimage to Mecca. Also, many Dayaks in and around the mission settlements had developed strong resentments due to violence exerted by some of the missionaries towards redeemed debt-slaves living and working in their colonies. Dutch retaliation for the initial attacks soon developed into a long and bloody conflict known as the Banjar War. With utmost cruelty on both sides, the war saw the participation of large numbers of foreign mercenaries from Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Luxemburg. Although it officially ended in 1863, resistance and “punitive expeditions” continued until 1905.

Captain Ullmann

Captain Ullmann played a crucial role in the war. Born in Pirmasens (Bavaria) in 1813, he entered the Dutch military service as a volunteer at the age of 18 and came to the Dutch East Indies in 1841 after having participated in the suppression of the Belgian uprising in 1831-1834. He fought

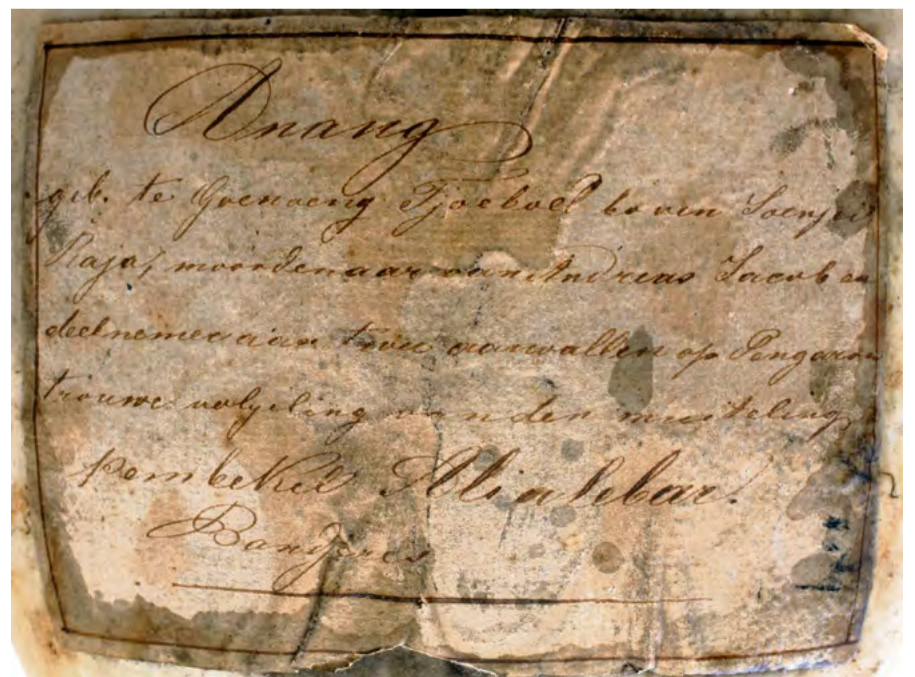


Fig. 2: Ancient label in Dutch glued on Anang's skull (Photo by the author).



Fig. 3: Memorial picture of the killed German missionaries published by the missionary society. Andreas Jacob is only represented in a vignette drawing in the margin at the right. (Image from BMArchives, accessed April 13, 2022, <https://bmaarchives.org/items/show/81797>, photo BMA QS-30.014.0037).

in Sumatra and was involved in important cartographic endeavors both in Sumatra and Borneo. After being awarded the knighthood of the *Militaire Willemsorde*, he got married at the end of 1852. He produced an important description of the island of Bangka, besides other ethnographic and archeological contributions. In 1857, he was promoted to the rank of a captain and made military commander of the *Zuid- en Ooster-Afdeeling* of Borneo, based in Banjarmasin.

Upon receiving intelligence of increasing unrest from Dayak or Banjarese informants, he warned of the impending uprising, asking for military reinforcement. The danger was minimized by the civil Resident, another German, resulting in severe conflict between the two men. When finally the uprising broke out in late April of 1859, troops were sent over from Java, and Colonel Andresen took over both the civil and military command. Hurt by the loss of his function, placed under the command of a junior officer, and suffering from severe health problems, Ullmann tried to obtain an honorable discharge or at least a leave, all without success.

In 1860 Ullmann took part in the “castigation” (*tuchtiging*) or “punitive expedition” under the new military commander Major G.M. Verspijck, which was undertaken in revenge for the humiliating destruction of a Dutch war ship ‘Onrust’ (which translates as ‘Unrest,’ an exceptional name for a ship). The major ordered: “Every Dayak or Malay showing evidence of complicity in the crime has to be put to death without mercy, every village in which any object from the Onrust was found, be laid in ashes. Only women and children should be spared.” Diaries of participants and contemporary reports amply document that the campaign took place accordingly, with countless burned villages and rice-fields, and summary executions of prisoners.

Skulls became thus available in great numbers, initially as trophies, for which the Dutch authorities offered fixed rewards, varying according to the wanted person. Soon, such skulls also came to meet the increasing demand for “race skulls,” which became popular in the Dutch East Indies for craniological studies. Major Verspijck, as a member of the Royal Naturalistic Association, was asked “to help the Association in obtaining skulls of known persons, stating their names, their place of birth, etc., and also to add some indications about the easiest way to remove the soft parts of skulls.”

Ullmann must have obtained his four skulls in 1860, since, having finally been granted his home leave, he left Borneo for Java around December 19, 1860. Unless the skulls were sent by someone else after his departure or were obtained in Java rather than directly in Borneo, we can therefore take the middle of December 1860 as the latest possible date for the death of these individuals.

“Anang”

Let us now have a closer look at one of the skulls, Nr. 43 on Ullmann’s list. The entry reads in German, “Anang. Malaijer geboren zu Tjoeboel (Bandjermassing) hatte theilgenommen am Mord der Europäer.” (“Anang. Malay born at Tjoeboel (Banjarmasin), had participated in the murder of the Europeans.”)

According to osteoanthropological research, he was male, 30–45 years old at the time of his death, of medium height (160.8 ± 7 cm). The skull vault is stained, apparently from dirt or blood, and there are remnants of grease on the skull base, indicating an insufficient, probably hasty preparation. There are various skeletal alterations probably associated with a weakened immune system due to nutritional deficiencies or chronic infections.

The most interesting information is found in Dutch handwriting on a piece of old paper glued on top of the skull: “Anang, born at Gunung Cubul above Sungai Raya, murderer of Andreas Jacob and participant in two attacks on Pengaron, faithful follower of Pambakal Aliakbar, Banjarese” [Fig. 2].⁴ A similar label is found on a second skull. The use of the Dutch language, content, and writing style all indicate that the label was written by a person habitually writing in Dutch. The content presupposes familiarity with the local situation and events. A native person would have written in Malay, the lingua franca generally used also to address Dutch colonial personnel. The handwriting is not Ullmann’s, and he would probably have used his native German to address persons in Gotha. The fact that the labels appear to have been written by another person might indicate that Ullmann did not take these two skulls from the site of the decapitation himself, but received them from another, probably Dutch, person.

Anang or *nanang* was originally a title for nobility in the Hindu Kingdom of Dipa Negara and the subsequent Islamic Sultanate of Banjar. Later it became a common nickname for boys among the Banjar people. In fact, several fighters called Anang are known from the early phase of the Banjar war.

Interestingly, the ethnic attribution “Bandjeres” is changed to “Malay” in the museum documents, following “racial” classification usage of the time. Gunung (“mountain”) Cubul, now called Bukit (“hill”) Cubul, is located in today’s Desa (“town”) Madurejo, in South Kalimantan. In 1859, the area was part of the region of Sungkai, over which Pambakal Ali Akbar, whom “Anang” was said to follow faithfully, was chief. Ali Akbar was among the main leaders of the massive assault on the fortified Oranje Nassau coal mine at Pengaron on April 28, 1859.

“Andreas,” the purported victim, was born around 1828. After the death of his Dayak mother, he was raised and adopted – along with his younger brother Jacob – by

J.H. Barnstein (1802–1863), the first Rheinisch missionary in Borneo. His Dayak name, Kedjang (meaning “stiff”), points to a somewhat difficult character. He became a missionary teacher and part-time trader, joined German explorer H. Von Gaffron (1813–1880) on his pioneering expedition in West Kalimantan in 1853, and finally became a writing clerk at the Kalangan mine. On May 3, Barnstein wrote in a letter what happened on April 28 or 29 after the attack on Pengaron: “24 Dayaks, who had taken Mohammedan wives there and lodged outside the fort, had joined the enemy. Our Andreas, Jacob’s brother, who supported himself by trade and wanted to come to Banjar anyway,⁵ had escaped with others just before the attack, but at Sungai Raya, 1 hour from Pengaron, they found the river blocked; the boats were examined, the Mohammedans were let through, but our Andreas, one of our baptized, confessed that he was a Christian. He was promised freedom if he would become a Mohamedan, the prayer formula was recited to him, but

Andreas refused to repeat it. There he was stabbed and is thus, as far as we know, the first blood witness of our community. His father was Chinese, his mother a Dayak. The matter is confirmed, because a Mohammedan woman, mother of Mr. Eman, has solemnly confessed this as an eyewitness here before the court.” In several other early reports, the name of the victim is given as “Jacob,” “Andreas Jacob,” or “Andries Jacob.” Whether Andreas used his younger brother’s name as a family name or he was simply being confused with Jacob, who lived outside of Pengaron, cannot be established based on available sources. Unfortunately, the court testimony mentioned by Barnstein could not be located. It might be hidden in military archives in Bandung, which remain inaccessible so far.

Although he was hailed as Borneo’s first martyr, on the memorial picture of the killed missionaries later published by the missionary society, his portrait is missing, as are those of the killed children. His death as “first blood-witness” in European-type clothing, being speared by an *olo Kajau* (headhunter), is represented only marginally in a vignette drawing as part of the frame for the main picture [Fig. 3]. In Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis, the region’s church that eventually grew as a late fruit of Rheinisch missionary activities, murdered German missionaries are remembered on certain festive days, while Andreas, the first martyr, remains entirely unknown.

On December 12, 1860, the newspaper *Java-bode* reported: “On November 26, five mutineers were hanged in Martapura, of whom two had participated in the murder of Mr. Jacob at Pengaron, and another, former watchman of Mr. Wijnmalen, who first took down the Dutch flag at the latter’s establishment. Now, everything here is quiet and peaceful, etc.”⁶ The latter deed is mentioned on the label on a second skull donated to Gotha together with Anang’s. Therefore, it can be assumed that this execution was the origin of at least these two skulls. The date of the hanging is two to three weeks before the latest possible date established above. Ullmann would thus have had time to get a hold of the skulls and have them prepared.

What we do not know is how and why he was able to obtain them. From other cases, it is known that local people brought the heads of enemies to military or civil authorities to prove their death, often to claim the head money, even for victims of an execution. Unfortunately, no other report confirming the newspaper article has turned up. Again, it would be most helpful to consult documents that remain inaccessible in the Indonesian military archives. Other possible sources of information might be found in letters, diaries, or personal memoirs by Ullmann, other participating soldiers, or surviving missionaries; in Banjarmasin archives; or in oral traditions of regional families.

To make the matter more complicated, another man said to be the killer of “Mr. Jacob” was caught together with five others in the wilderness near Sungai Raya on March 20, 1861: a certain Poe Said, Ali Akbar’s “infamous brother.”⁷ A month later, on April 26, five “mutineers” were hanged, among them a certain Kemis, watchman of Wijnmalen and murderer of Mr. Boodt at Kalangan, as well as “the presumed perpetrators of the murder of Mr. Andrias [sic] at Pengaron.” Whether any of these are identical with “Anang” cannot be determined; after all, 24 fighters were involved in the killing of Andreas, also known as Mr. Jacob. On October 9, 1861, Ali Akbar turned up in the Martapura region with 400 armed men “who had participated in the murder of Jacobs [sic].” If the skull brought to Gotha by Ullmann was from a man who died in 1861, it would have had to be sent to Europe rather than apprehended by Ullmann in the field, since he left Batavia for the Netherlands on March 18.

In Gotha, at the end of May 1864, “Anang’s” skull, together with the three others, was transferred from the “Art Cabinet” to the craniological collection of the “Natural History Cabinet.” There it was integrated into the *Sammlung Vierfüßler* (Collection of Quadrupeds) as *homo sapiens* together with the other mammals, in exchange for a number of ethnographic objects that did not fit the modern scientific specialization of the *Naturalienkabinett*. This recontextualization marked the shift of interest from individual war trophies to natural scientific, actually zoological, study objects. The rebel from Borneo had definitely lost the last traces of his obscured identity, much as his purported victim, the forgotten martyr.

What this case study illustrates is that provenance research into museum collections can unravel much more than just one particular history. Not only is there information found about the skull and its specific historical context, but also about collection practices in general, about repression and extreme violence in a colonial context, about processes of forgetting and remembering, and about changing meanings and contextualizations of these skulls. Finally, it reminds us of the presence of human remains and skull collections, not only in formerly colonizing countries and established anatomical collections, but also in other countries and collections.

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Notes

- 1 Provenance and history of the collection of Indonesian skulls of the Schloss Friedenstien Gotha Foundation, project KK_LA09_112020 (www.kulturgutverluste.de and www.proveana.de). Information not referenced here is from unpublished archival sources for this project, planned to be completed by May 2022. See also www.friedenstien.eu/human-remains
- 2 Erroneously for Kalangan
- 3 Banjarmasin on Borneo’s south coast, capital of the sultanate and main Dutch colonial center
- 4 “Anang geb. te Goenoeng Tjoeboel boven Soengei Raja, moordenaar van Andreas Jacob en deelnemer aan twee aanvallen op Pengaron trouwe volgeling van den muiteling Pembekkel Aliakbar. Bandjeres”. Pambakal (Banjarese), Pamakal (Dayak), Pembekal (Malay) or Pembekkel (Dutch) is a term for a village chief.
- 5 Several newspaper reports state that “Andreas Jacob” was sent to bring news of the attack to Banjarmasin.
- 6 “Den 26sten November heeft men te Martapoera vijf muitelingen opgehangen, van wie twee deel hadden genomen aan den moord op den Heer Jacob te Pengaron, en een ander, gewezen oppasser van den Heer Wijnmalen, die het eerst de Hollandsche vlag bij diens établissement naar beneden rukte. Thans is hier alles stil en rustig, enz.”
- 7 I thank Mansyur M.Si., M.Hum in Banjarmasin for some of the information in this paragraph.



Uncovering Layers and Crossing Borders

Provenance Research into Sri Lankan Objects from the Rijksmuseum

Alicia Schrikker

Introduction

The Sri Lanka work-package of PPROCE revolved around six objects which were assumed to have been spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war 1762-1766. One of these objects, the embellished ceremonial cannon, plays a pivotal role in current restitution debates and Dutch and Sri Lankan journalists and scholars have been critical about earlier collaborative research initiatives.¹ The work-package was designed as a collaborative and interdisciplinary project, which meant that it reached beyond the narrow historical provenance question of when and how an object ended up in a certain collection. Such questions, after all, tend to gravitate towards archival research, and in this case towards Dutch-language documentation kept in the Netherlands, to which Sri Lankan colleagues had little access.

In hindsight, this turned out to be a very important decision. Along the way, we realized that it was not only the archives but also the objects themselves that carried clues and traces of their historical journey. Piecing these clues together thus became a truly collective effort, where experts joined in from different corners of the world. The main collaborators from Sri Lanka were Prof. Asoka de Zoysa and Dr. Ganga Dissanayake from Kelaniya University and Senarath Wickramasinghe and Chamikara Pilapitiya on behalf of the Colombo National Museum. Meanwhile, Doreen van den Boogaart and I joined the team as historians on behalf of the NIOD. In the course of the project, more experts were involved to help us solve very specific questions, ranging from, for example, the dating of the cannon's copper by Arie Pappot of the Rijksmuseum to the assessments of the mechanics of the *Maha Thuwaku's* flint lock by Philip Tom. The detailed reconstruction of the object histories and the conclusions regarding their provenance that we drew are available

open access.² In this contribution, however, we will discuss the broader relevance of this interdisciplinary and multilateral research.

A broader approach to the question of provenance, which includes a biographical approach to the object and gives space for reflection on the changing socio-political context in which the object acquired meaning, allows for a more inclusive academic approach. In practice, the research shows that this socio-political context is usually less straightforward than would appear at first sight. Thorough knowledge and consideration of regional historiographical debates is therefore vital. In the case of Sri Lanka, for example, various views of essentialised ethnic identity and cultural uniqueness play a major part in social and academic debates. Other scholars seek to place Sri Lankan history, and that of the kingdom of Kandy in particular, in a global history perspective. In the words of Gananath Obeyesekere: "The interplay between the local and the foreign is not simply a phenomenon of *Nāyaka* [Kandyan] rule but existed in different shapes and forms in Lankan history and, one might even add, in the history of other nations."³ At the same time, the Netherlands long held a rather nostalgic view of its own colonial past in Sri Lanka, a situation

that is but slowly changing.⁴ In the course of the research into the Sri Lankan objects from the Rijksmuseum, it proved important to recognise these at times conflicting views and historiographical trends. Moreover, it is through object research that we are able to make our own contribution to these debates by emphasising the layered and borderless history of Sri Lanka in the 18th century.

Layered history

The provenance research into the Sri Lankan objects largely revolved around unravelling the layered and culturally intertwined histories of the objects. Precisely because of this layeredness of the objects, the research needed a transnational, borderless approach, in both the literal and the figurative sense. As an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has a long history of external political, cultural, and economic influences. For example, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Kingdom of Kandy maintained dynastic relations with courts in South India and had religious links with other centres of Theravada Buddhism in Arakan (Myanmar) and Ayutthaya (Thailand). Moreover, it is one of the few regions in the

Fig. 4 (above right): Lewke's cannon, NG-NM-1015 (Photo: Rijksmuseum), pre-1746.

Fig. 1 (above left): Golden pihya, or knife, NG-NM-7114 (Photo: Rijksmuseum), pre-1765.

Figs. 2-3 (above centre): Two *Maha Thuwakku* or large wall guns, NG-NM-519 and 520 (Photo: Rijksmuseum), pre-1765.

Fig. 5 (below): Golden and Silver *kasthāné*, or sword, NG-NM-7112 and 560 (Photo: Rijksmuseum), pre-1765.



world scarred by colonialisation by three successive European powers: the Portuguese (1506-1658), the Dutch (1658-1796), and the British (1796-1947). The recent political history of Sri Lanka was long dominated by a nationalist discourse, in which foreign cultural influences were minimalised and the history of minorities was marginalised. In the words of Zoltán Biedermann and Alan Strathern, "here remains indeed a general sensitivity towards 'foreign interference' in the past and in the present, whether that is suspected as emanating from the neighbouring behemoth of India or the more distant ex-hegemon of Europe or 'the West.'"⁵

The six Sri Lankan objects from the Rijksmuseum bear traces of this layered history of Sri Lanka. On the one hand, they portray cultural processes of localisation, interconnectedness, and exchange. On the other hand, they show the raw history of physical appropriation of land, people, and resources by the VOC. The research into these objects was a fascinating process in which we sought to untangle the objects' various layers. The provenance question with which we started the research automatically led to broader questions about the manufacturing history and signification.

Take, for example, the cannon of Kandy – or “Lewke’s cannon,” as it is called. The layered history was a part of the socio-political biography of this object, both literally and figuratively. For instance, the cannon turned out to have been decorated in various stages. Our research showed that it was probably originally cast in the Dutch Republic or Batavia as a gift from the VOC to or by order of the king of Kandy. That also explains why the cannon was originally decorated with acanthus leaves and cherubs – familiar European motifs. But it also bore a number of typically local elements, including a Kandyan crest decoration and a typical ‘oriental’ onion-shaped knob on the end, highly uncommon for cannons in Europe. So even this most basic layer of the cannon expresses a history of cultural adaptation and interconnectedness.

Subsequently the cannon was further embellished with exceptionally rich decoration, which appeared largely Kandyan in nature. It is also during this phase that a Sinhalese inscription was added. Dr. Ganga Dissanayake reinterpreted the inscription, which allowed us to conclude that the lavish decoration had been applied at the instruction of the Sinhalese noble Lewke Disawe (ca. 1680/90-1751), an important political figure in the 18th-century kingdom of Kandy.⁶ Closer inspection of the motifs, conducted by Dr. Dissanayake and Prof. de Zoysa, once again revealed traces of cultural interconnectedness: the elegant *narilathas* (“plant women”) engraved on its side – most unusually – have wings which appear to echo the wings of the cherubs applied at an earlier date. Other elements, such as the engraved giant squirrel, a type of animal endemic to Sri Lanka and South India, conversely pointed to the specifically local context in which the decoration had been applied.

Socio-political biography of the objects

Right from the start, the cannon was a political object, having twice served to curry favour with the king of Kandy, first by the VOC and later by Lewke Disawe. The subsequent history of the cannon, however, reflects the violent context of colonialism: it was taken during the Dutch campaigns against the king of Kandy in 1762-1765 and subsequently gifted as spoils of war to Stadtholder William V (1748-1806), who displayed it in his cabinet of curiosities as a war trophy. In the 19th century, the object took on another new life when it was temporarily linked to national hero Michiel de Ruyter (1607-1676). In the 20th century, it was alternately interpreted both as a gift and as spoils of war. The trope that the cannon had been gift to the Dutch continued to haunt the cannon throughout the century and was used explicitly in the 1960s and 1970s by the ministry of culture as an argument against restitution. The PPROCE research, therefore, involved peeling away not only the art historical layers but also the various layers of meanings assigned to the cannon in the past.

Each object was found to have a different socio-political history. The manufacturing history of the *Maha Thuwakku* (large wall guns) brought to light an ancient history of

technical knowledge exchange that led to the development of a sophisticated weapon industry in Kandy in the 17th and 18th centuries. Upon the request of Chamikara Pilapitiya, an expert on historical guns, these huge guns were dismantled in the studio of the Rijksmuseum, and together with experts, the mechanics were studied and disclosed [Fig. 6]. With clear traces of usage, these heavy weapons literally carry with them the history of the war between Kandy and the VOC in 1762-65.

The golden *kasthāné* has a beautiful and typically Kandyan hilt of solid gold, inlaid with no fewer than 138 diamonds and 13 rubies. The shining gold, rubies, and diamonds immediately catch the eye. Once studied up close, this object, too, turned out to carry layers of local and global history: a closer analysis of one of the rubies revealed a possible provenance of this precious stone from Myanmar. The ruby probably found its way into Kandy through the kingdom’s longstanding diplomatic contact with Arakan. At the same time, this royal ceremonial weapon has a blade with a clear VOC origin, once again revealing the object’s entangled history.

At the centre of the densely decorated knuckle guard, Sri Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity) is elegantly seated, while Saraswathi (the goddess of wisdom) adorns the inner part of the knuckle guard [Fig. 7]. During the research, Senarath Wickramasinghe from the Colombo National Museum pointed out that Sri Lakshmi and Saraswathi similarly adorn the Kandyan throne, which was made in the same period and is currently one of the centre pieces in the Colombo National Museum.

The biographies of these Sri Lankan objects thus make an extremely complex history tangible. It is the uncomfortable history of a world in which cultural transfer, diplomacy, and violent conflict were inextricably linked.

Crossing borders

Cross-disciplinary cooperation was essential in creating the object biographies. The collaboration with experts from Sri Lanka and other parts of the world was vital: expertise in the area of 18th-century Sri Lankan (Kandyan) art, crafts, weapons, and epigraphy is virtually non-existent in the Netherlands. Conversely, the language barrier means that Dutch archives are virtually inaccessible to most Sri Lankans, despite some of them being held in the National Archives of Sri Lanka in Colombo. The archival research into the VOC and Dutch Royal archives provided us, in some cases, with surprising detail on the provenance of the six objects. Through a careful reading of the palace descriptions in the embassy reports from the VOC archives, we were able to locate Lewke’s cannon, decorated and well, in front of the palace audience hall in 1749. We also managed to fully reconstruct the shipment of the cannon from Colombo to Amsterdam and find evidence of it being displayed explicitly as war trophy in the Dutch Stadtholder’s cabinet of curiosities in the 1770s. We could also reconstruct the journey that the *Maha Thuwakku* took via Batavia (Jakarta) to arrive in the collection of the Dutch Stadtholder in 1769, together with

two other large guns. In other cases, such as the golden *kasthāné*, the archives were less accommodating, and we were confronted with gaps in our knowledge.

Although physical border crossing was impossible for the duration of the project due to Covid-19, much could be achieved via video calls (e.g., close joint examination of detailed photographs of inscriptions and motifs on the objects and archive files). This provided an effective way for researchers who were looking at the objects from different disciplines to share their observations and analyses.

There is also another way in which the experience with Sri Lanka brought important insights. Sri Lanka is a country that, like many other parts of the world (e.g., Taiwan, Brazil, South Africa, Ghana) has a Dutch-colonial past that impacted the subsequent colonisation by other European – or, in the case of Taiwan, Asian – powers. People in the Netherlands were and are often not so aware of the frequently violent role played by the Dutch in this early history of colonisation. Until quite recently, this had consequences for how objects from these regions were treated: applications for restitution were not taken seriously, and painful histories of war and violence were often downplayed. This was not beneficial to the dialogue.

This blind spot that the Netherlands has with regard to its own colonial past also played a role in a different way. With the discussion about the objects being viewed as a purely Dutch-Sri Lankan matter, earlier reconstructions of the object histories rarely looked beyond these borders. As demonstrated by the aforementioned cannon of Kandy, however, it was important for the research to orient itself beyond the borders of the Netherlands and Sri Lanka. Thanks to the involvement of historical cannon specialists, Ruth Brown and Kay Smith, we were able to track down two similar cannons, which are held in Windsor Castle. A comparison of these three cannons produced important insights into the manufacturing history.

There was also another way in which the British legacy played a role in the history of the objects we researched: Sri Lankan interest in the cannon was sparked in the 1930s, when in 1934 a number of royal objects were returned by Great Britain to the national museum in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon).⁷ These objects had been presented to the British royal house as spoils of war after the conquest of Kandy in 1815. After gaining its independence in 1947, Sri Lankan officials also made a number of applications to the Netherlands for restitution of the cannon, but the Dutch Government and representatives never took these requests seriously. Not only was Sri Lanka not on the radar; it is also likely that government officials in the Netherlands were unaware that the British had already restituted Kandyan objects and that this was deeply important to Sri Lanka. In other words, for the Netherlands, the cannon simply belonged to a history that it regarded as ‘closed.’ Yet this same history is still visible everywhere in Sri Lanka and, moreover, paved the way for British colonialism. From the Sri Lankan point of view, these histories are therefore inextricably linked. And what applies to Sri Lanka will also apply to many other areas upon which the Netherlands has left its colonial mark.⁸

Alicia Schrikker

is senior lecturer in colonial and global history at Leiden University. She currently leads two research projects funded by NWO: “Colonialism Inside Out: Everyday Experience and Plural Practice in Dutch Institutions in Sri Lanka (c.1700-1800),” and “Institutional Memory in the Making of Colonial Culture: History, Experience and Ideas in Dutch Colonialism in Asia, 1700-1870.” For PPROCE she coordinated the research that investigated the provenance of the Sri Lankan objects from the Rijksmuseum. E-mail: a.f.schrikker@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Notes

- Jos van Beurden, *Ongemakkelijk Erfgoed. Koloniale collecties en teruggave in de lage landen*. (Zutphen: 2021). 53-57. See also: Niels Mathijssen, ‘Een Westerse worsteling met goede bedoelingen’, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 25 March 2020.
- The reports can be downloaded here: www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/research/our-research/overarching/provenance-research-colonial-collections. For a summary-overview of the research results see also: Randima Attygalle, ‘Solving the Mystery of Kandyan Artifacts’, *Daily FT*, Colombo, 8 April 2022: <https://www.ft.lk/front-page/Solving-the-mystery-of-Kandyan-artifacts/4-733199>
- Gananath Obeyesekere, ‘Between the Portuguese and the Nāyakas: the many faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591–1765.’ In: Biedermann, Z and Strathern, A. *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*. (London, 2017). 161-178: p. 177; see also the important reflection on this in the report by Asoka de Zoysa, ‘Report No: 01’ in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, ‘Provenance research of the “Lewke cannon” in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022).
- Nira Wickramasinghe wrote as recently as in 2016: ‘*Terwijl in postkoloniaal Sri Lanka onverschilligheid over het koloniale verleden veranderde in een gretige consumptie ervan, lijkt de Nederlandse samenleving te verholden in ontkenning. Termen als ras, of koloniaal geweld horen we zelden in het maatschappelijk debat of de wetenschap*’ [“While in postcolonial Sri Lanka indifference with regard to the colonial past made way for eager consumption thereof, Dutch society appeared to persist in denial. Terms such as race or colonial violence are seldom heard in either the public debate or scientific circles”], see: N. Wickramasinghe, ‘Voorwoord’ in: Lodewijk Wagenaar, *Kaneel en Olijfant. Sri Lanka en Nederland sinds 1600*. (Nijmegen, 2016), p. 13.
- Alan Strathern and Zoltán Biedermann, ‘Introduction: Querying the cosmopolitan in Sri Lankan and Indian Ocean history’ in: Biedermann, Z ; Strathern, A. *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*, 1-18.
- For background on this important political figure see Eric Meyer, *Lewuke Disawa: un aristocrate kandyen du 18ème siècle, Sri Lanka and Diasporas*, hypothesis.org. Available here: <https://slkdiaspo.hypotheses.org/4993>
- Nira Wickramasinghe, ‘Authenticity and hybridity: Scrutinising heritage.’ in: *IIAS newsletter*, No.57, 2011, 20-21; Aldrich, R. (2016). ‘The return of the throne: the repatriation of the Kandyan regalia to Ceylon.’ In: Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (eds) *Crowns and Colonies*. (Manchester 2016). 139-162.
- Please note that this is a reworked version of: Schrikker A.F. (2022), *Geschiedenis in lagen en over grenzen: zes Sri Lankaanse objecten uit het Rijksmuseum*. In: J. Mooren, K. Stutje en F. van Vree, *Sporen. Onderzoek naar herkomstgeschiedenis en betekenisgeving van culturele objecten en collecties verworven in koloniale situaties*. Amsterdam: NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies. The author would like to thank all collaborators in the project for the fruitful and enjoyable collaboration, in particular: Prof. Asoka de Zoysa and Dr. Ganga Dissanayake from the Samkathana Research Centre, Kelaniya University; Mr. Senarath Wickramasinghe, Chamikara Pilapitiya from the Colombo National Museum; independent researchers Doreen van den Boogaart, Ruth Brown and Kay Smith; and Arie Pappot, Joosje van Bennekom and Jan de Hond from the Rijksmuseum.

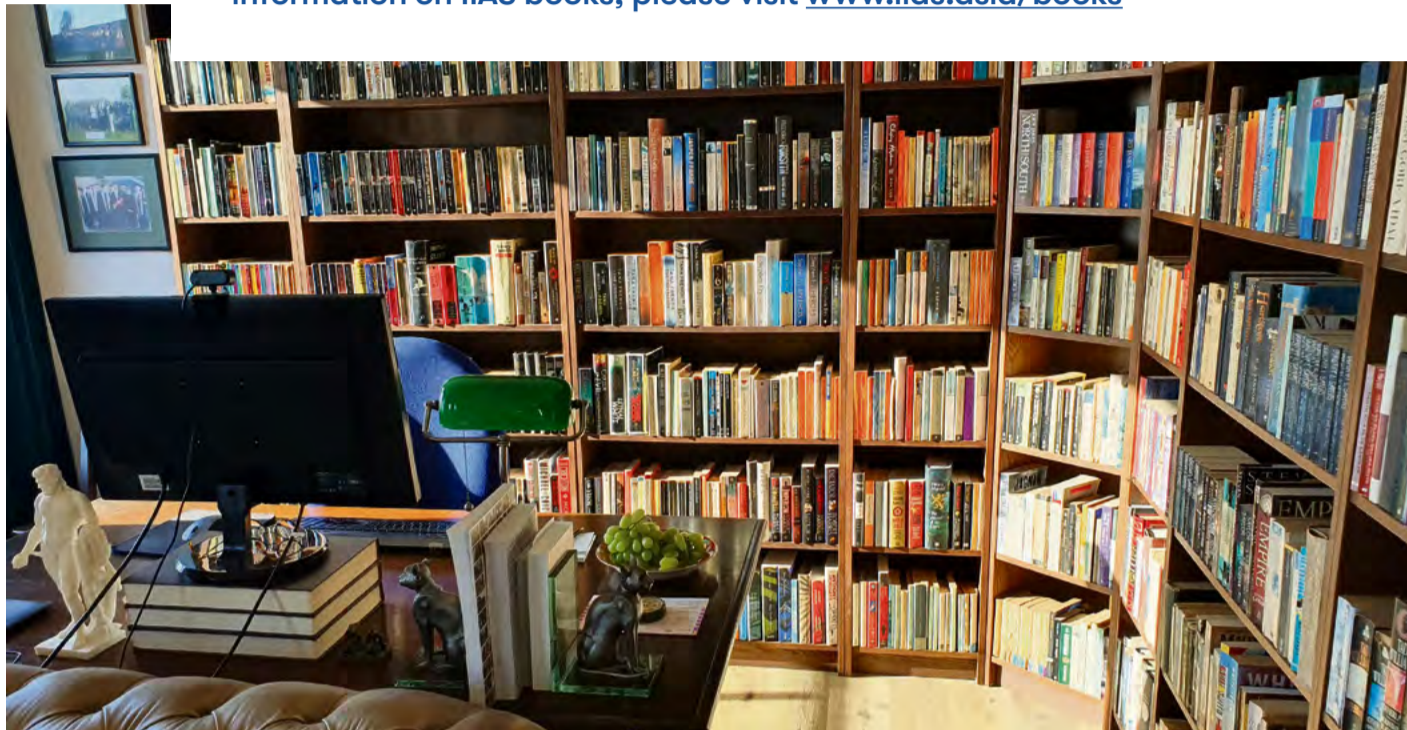
Fig. 6 (left): Inspecting the mechanics of the *Maha Thuwakku* in the studio of the Rijksmuseum (Photo by Eveline Sint Nicolaas, Rijksmuseum).

Fig. 7 (right): Detail of the knuckle guard of the golden *kasthāné*, including goddess Lakshmi (Photo by Joosje van Bennekom, Rijksmuseum).



Print Journeys

For IIAS Publications, we invite authors and editors who have recently published in the IIAS Publications Series to talk about their writing experiences. What inspired them to conduct research? What did they encounter in the field? What are the stories behind their books? For more information on IIAS books, please visit www.iias.asia/books



From the Editor's Desk

Gregory Bracken

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a wonderful place to work. I had the good fortune to be a Research Fellow there from 2010 to 2016, during which I finalised and wrote up the research for a monograph (based on my PhD thesis, which I defended in TU Delft in 2009). The book, *The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular*, was published by Routledge in 2013, and it was through contacts made at IIAS that it was translated into Chinese two years later.

While at IIAS I also organised a series of annual conferences around themes I was interested in. This proved to be not only a very effective way of getting in touch with people interested in similar topics (often from other disciplines – a good way of broadening horizons); it also proved a fecund generator of publications, with just over 50 percent of these events leading to books or special issues of journals.

The conferences themselves were usually one- or two-day events. If it was intended to lead to a publication, it was definitely two-day in order to have a larger pool of potential papers. The series continued even after I left IIAS, thanks to their generous support. Spring 2022 saw the latest installment (the 13th): a conference on “Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West.” This is the third in a series dedicated to the Care of the Self (Michel Foucault’s concept). The first two were “Ancient and Modern Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West” and “Contemporary Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West,” both of which were developed into edited volumes published by IIAS and Amsterdam University Press in their Asian Cities series.

Other edited volumes generated by IIAS conferences were *Asian Cities: Colonial to Global* (2015) and *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou* (2012, predating the Asian Cities series). There were also two special issues of

the journal *Footprint*: “Mapping Urban Complexities in an Asian Context” (2008, Issue 2) and “Future Publics: Politics and Space in East Asia’s Cities” (2013, Issue 12). *Footprint* was co-founded by myself with a group of colleagues at the Delft School of Design (now the Theory Section of the Architecture Department, TU Delft). The journal is dedicated to architectural theory and focusses on a wide variety of issues relating to the built environment. Our focus on Asia made for an interesting addition.

I have, in fact, also written quite a number of books. There’s the Walking Tour series of architectural guides on (mostly) Asian cities (but also including London and Paris). I illustrate these books as well with line drawings. The series spawned some spin-offs, with guides to Dublin and Cork in Ireland (where I am originally from) and even Ahmedabad in India. I also wrote two novels in the 1990s, one of which, *Unusual Wealth*, was set in Thailand (where I lived at the time) and was a national bestseller there. This led to interviews in newspapers and magazines and even on TV in Australia and Singapore – something that also happened when *Dublin Strolls* (written with my sister Audrey) became a surprise bestseller in Ireland in 2016. We also found ourselves being interviewed by newspapers, magazines, and on radio and TV. I’m only mentioning this to point out that I have worked with a number of publishers, in Europe and Asia, but that Amsterdam University Press is one of the most consistently pleasant to work with: efficient, professional, and friendly.

Editorial process

And now to the editing. Using a conference (or, if you’re lucky, a series of them) as a basis for publications is a good idea. I claim no credit for this strategy, it just sort of happened. If you gather a group of researchers together, then a book or an issue of a journal is a good way to disseminate

research. The key is planning to do it from the beginning. As only a little over half my events led to publications, it actually led to a very workable rhythm, with shorter conferences alternating with longer ones (the ones that led to the publications).

When planning an event with a publication in mind, it needs to be clear to those involved that it is a two-step process: step one being the conference itself, and step two being the publication. What I have done in the past is to compose a call for abstracts specific enough to coalesce around given themes but broad enough to attract a wide field of interest. Cross-disciplinary endeavours have proved particularly interesting because they lead to the most surprising and rewarding results: anything from an analysis of Korean martial arts to seeing graffiti’s role in a city’s politics (there are of course more ‘classical’ aspects of urban research as well, including gentrification, citizen participation, heritage issues, etc.).

Once the call has gone out, a selection is then made from the submissions. Usually, I’ve been lucky with the numbers: the latest, on future practices of citizenship, had well over 100 applicants (for only 16 places). This is great, on the one hand, because you have a wide range to choose from, but it’s also tough, because decisions sometimes exclude potentially interesting papers.

This latest event is a useful one to illustrate the whole process, from call to editing. For the first time I had co-convenors: Paul Rabé, from IIAS, with whom I have worked for many years on projects such as co-editing *Future Challenges of Cities in Asia* (with R. Parthasarathy, Neha Sami, and Bing Zhang – also in AUP’s Asian Cities series), and Nurul Azlan, whose PhD I supervised in TU Delft, and whose work on the digital aspects of spatialisation of politics was one of the themes we were hoping to explore in our call.

Given, as I said, that we had so many applicants, we decided to institute a system of assessing the abstracts, with a yes, maybe, or no (the maybe also had a plus or a minus aspect). We were quickly able to identify the papers we wanted – that is, those that best fitted the themes and each other. We then organised the panels to cover the topics: citizenship, the digital age, Covid-19 and its responses, and sustainability. Papers that adopted a comparative approach are

particularly welcome, as you get not only individual research in a case study but the combination of these to further enrich the knowledge.

We make it clear that we do not expect people to present finished papers at the event – this is why we only ask for abstracts initially. We prefer to see a work in progress, with the event acting like a seminar or symposium rather than the more traditional conference. After people present, they receive feedback from us, as coordinators, but also from their fellow participants and audience members. We expect people to attend both days in full and to involve themselves in the discussions. This year’s event was particularly good for the discussions, and one of the benefits of being a small event is that we can allow sessions to run over time without adversely affecting the programme. We always allow plenty of time for each session, as well for breaks, which can (and do) get shortened to allow for interesting discussions to continue.

Publication

The next step is the publication – and here we finally come to editing. Within a month or so of the conference I contact contributors with feedback. This consists of comments made during the discussions. (This is also when contributors are informed if their papers have not made it to the next stage – I usually prefer to have more people at the conference than can fit into the book as this is a good way of ensuring we have enough papers). Some people drop out, for personal reasons, and some fail to make it through peer review (although this is rare, thanks in part to the diligent incorporation of feedback from the conference). I, as editor, also suggest places where contributors can refer to each other’s work (something praised by reviewers of past volumes).

We always organise the event in the spring, usually April or May. This means that contributors have the summer to finish their papers. If they have been able to incorporate the feedback, they usually have a relatively smooth run through the peer-review process (which is usually blind, although it can sometimes be double-blind, if a particular contributor requests it).

First-draft papers are submitted by 1 September and edited during the autumn. The peer review takes place early the following year, with the following summer for contributors to redraft their papers (if they’ve made it through peer review). There then follows a second editing period in the autumn, which pulls everything together prior to sending the MS in to the publishers. This is when I usually add my own Introduction and, where appropriate, an Afterword or Conclusion. The format of the book may differ from the conference, and it all depends on finding the best way of fitting the papers together so that there is cohesion as well as a logical progression.

I have traditionally been quite a ‘hands-on’ editor, meaning that I make changes rather than simply suggest them to the contributors. Any changes that are made are always run by the contributor (who is usually only too happy to find that things have been done for them). I also do the proofreading at this stage.

The third and final editing stage is when Amsterdam University Press’s editorial team gets involved. Final corrections are made, and this is when I compile the index, a time-consuming task but one which I rather enjoy (probably because I don’t have to do it too often). Finally, a cover is selected (usually from a range of my images, as I have built up quite an archive of Asian photographs over the last three decades). Once the book comes out, I try to ‘launch’ it. This means giving short lectures at the IIAS, TU Delft, and elsewhere. I also present it at conferences, basically anything to let people know it’s out.

I do hope this brief sketch of my editorial process is helpful, especially to anyone planning similar activities. Do feel free to get in touch if you would like to know some more.

Gregory Bracken, Assistant Professor of Spatial Planning and Strategy, TU Delft. Email: G.Bracken@tudelft.nl

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



Elizabeth Smithrosser

IIAS Research Cluster: Asian Heritages
1 February – 31 July 2022

www.iias.asia/profile/elizabeth-smithrosser

Written Traditions of Jokes and Humour in Pre-Modern China

I am first using my Fellowship with IIAS to finish an annotated translation of three pre-modern Chinese jokebooks for Oxford University Press. After that, I will revise my PhD thesis into a monograph while preparing several accepted conference papers on humour publishing in late imperial China and

methodologies for utilising humorous material to the advantage of historical research.

My Fellowship at IIAS began in February 2022, a few months after graduating from my PhD in the United Kingdom. At that point in time, there were a lot of different tasks on my plate: several conference papers, a thesis to revise into a monograph, keeping up with my regular column for *Medievalists.net*, a book-length translation of pre-modern Chinese jokebooks, not to mention job applications.

My time at the Institute so far has provided me with the space and facilities to work towards all of these projects. As an IIAS Fellow, I have access to a physical office overlooking the picturesque Rapenburg canal. The community of staff and Fellows that gather in the building are working on different topics and regions at a variety of career stages and come with a range of life experiences, which has led to fruitful conversations and new friendships. I have especially appreciated the community feel of IIAS after two years of quarantine and working from home.

The first three months of my Fellowship have mostly been a rush to hand my book manuscript in by the deadline. Nevertheless, I did have the chance to soak in the sights of Leiden while walking to and from the University Library. Leiden is a city which confronts you with waterways, trees, old houses, and windmills from every angle. It is especially beautiful in the Spring. The

different kinds of trees flowering one after the other ensures that there is always a spark of colour in every direction. The area in front of the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde), a short walk from the IIAS office and the University Library, is home to nine cherry blossom trees which explode into bloom for a brief period in April. It makes for an excellent lunch spot. Within the bounds of the original city walls, there are lots of secret *hofjes* to explore. These are quaint courtyard-style residential areas complete with trees and gardens, accessed by an inconspicuous door in a wall, which often allow visitors if they explore quietly. Each *hofje* has its own story, with most having started out as almshouses for widows or religious communities.

Now that I have submitted my book manuscript, I am looking forward to visiting the different sights around Leiden as well as the rest of the Netherlands before focusing on the next stage of my Fellowship.



Srirupa Bhattacharya

IIAS Research Cluster: Asian Heritages, Global Asia
15 September 2021 – 15 July 2022

www.iias.asia/profile/srirupa-bhattacharya

Hindu Religious Organisations in Neo-Liberal India

Unlike most other fellows at IIAS, this is my first academic experience outside my home country, India, and I am overwhelmed by the opportunity extended to me by the Institute. The objective of my research fellowship at IIAS is to convert my doctoral thesis into a book. After five years of rigorous teaching at Delhi University, I have once again been able

to revisit my research and get back to reading and writing. Surrounded by colleagues at different stages of their careers, coming from different parts of the world, and working on diverse geographical and thematic areas, I am filled with excitement and anticipation for new research possibilities. Coming from the developing world, I am thrilled to be able to access resources that were never within my reach. I am honoured to be able to discuss my research with established scholars in my field in the Netherlands and elsewhere in

Europe. So far, it has been a very fulfilling journey indeed.

The idea behind my book is to look at neo-liberalism through the window of Hindu organisations that have come up in India since the 1980s. Based on ethnography in three states in India (Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Karnataka), the manuscript traces the growth of two of the largest religious organisations in India and their deepening nexus with corporate interests, state agencies, and international governing and funding organisations. The manuscript also looks at the visibility of godmen in media and the role they play in developmental projects, political propaganda, and mass mobilisations. Last but not the least, I study the internal structure of the religious organisations reflected in the changing caste-class-educational-gender profile of followers and members.

So far, I have contributed a chapter to an edited volume (*Gurus and Media*), which is likely to be published later this year by UCL Press. The chapter, titled 'Doing-Seeing,'

traces the rise of guru Baba Ramdev, who taught yoga through television. It describes how the popularity of these programmes contributed to the Hindu-nationalist identity consolidation and activism in the new millennium. The chapter shows how live interactive yoga camps converted passive television viewers into empowered subjects, the ramifications of which are evident in the optics of majoritarian politics in India in the last decade. I have presented my conclusions at the 5th Ireland India Conference in April and in an invited lecture at Krea University, India, in May.

I am touched by the friendship and camaraderie of the other fellows during the pandemic restrictions that existed until recently. I have rarely felt alone, from lessons on using a washing machine to warnings about grey winters, wine-tasting to travel, sickness to sunny days, and potlucks to political discussions. I cannot imagine a better ending to a global lockdown or beginning of a new chapter of my life.

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 Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (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

IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

IIAS research and other initiatives are carried out within a number of thematic, partially overlapping research clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents and built around the notion of social agency. In addition, IIAS remains open to other potentially significant topics. More information: www.iias.asia

IIAS Research Clusters

Asian Cities

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

Asian Heritages

This cluster focuses on the uses of culture and cultural heritage practices in Asia. In particular, it addresses a variety of definitions associated with cultural heritage and their implications for social agency. The cluster engages with a broad range of related concepts and issues, including the contested assertions of 'tangible' and 'intangible', concepts such as 'authenticity', 'national heritage' and 'shared heritage', and, in general, with issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage.

Global Asia

Asia has a long history of transnational linkages with other parts of the world, thereby shaping the global order, as much as the world at large continues to shape Asia. The Global Asia Cluster addresses contemporary issues related to Asia's projection into the world as well as trans-national interactions within the Asian region itself. In addition IIAS aims to help develop a more evenly balanced field of Asian Studies by collaborating in trans-regional capacity building initiatives and by working on new types of methodological approaches that encourage synergies and interactions between disciplines, regions and practices.

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) is an inclusive network that brings together 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).



www.ukna.asia

Coordinator: **Paul Rabé**

Email: p.e.rabe@iias.nl

Clusters: **Asian Cities; Asian Heritages**



Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

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 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**

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Cluster: **Asian Cities**

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**

Dual Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

The Dual Degree forms part of a broader ambition to decentralise the production of knowledge about Asia by establishing a platform for continuing dialogues between universities located in Asia and beyond. The present institutions involved in the Dual Degree – IIAS, Leiden University, National Taiwan University and Yonsei University – have established a fruitful collaboration in research and teaching and talks are underway with several universities in Indonesia and North Africa. The Dual Degree programme offers selected students the opportunity to follow a full year of study at one of the partner institutes with full credits and two MA degrees. Also see page 49 of this issue.

www.iias.asia/programmes/critical-heritage-studies

Coordinator: **Elena Paskaleva**

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Cluster: **Asian Heritages**





Humanities Across Borders

'Humanities Across Borders' (HAB) is an educational cooperation programme, co-funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York, that aims to create shared, humanities-grounded, interdisciplinary 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).

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

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, including migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, ethnic mobilisation, 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.

www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network
 Coordinator: Erik de Maaker
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 Cluster: Global Asia



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

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)



The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest global forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. It 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



by IIAS in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and are attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from around 60 countries. The biennial 'ICAS Book Prize' (IBP) awards 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, Daejeon, 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



The Forum on Health, Environment and Development

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
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 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
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 Cluster: Global Asia

The New Silk Road. China's Belt and Road Initiative in Context

This interdisciplinary research is 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

Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals (GRIP-ARM)

The ERC-funded research programme (2021-2026) *Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals: A Transregional Comparison of Growth Strategies in Rare Earth Mining* (GRIP-ARM) examines the globalised supply and demand for rare earths, from mining to processing, manufacturing, use and recycling. Using a trans-regional comparison of China, Brazil and Kazakhstan, the proposed research is one of the first systematic, comparative studies on rare earths mining and economic development, bringing political science perspectives in conversation with natural resource geography and international political economy. GRIP-ARM is hosted by Erasmus University (Netherlands) and supported by IIAS.

www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm
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 Cluster: Global Asia

River Cities as Method

Introducing a new working group under the umbrella of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

Chao Phraya river in Bangkok (Photo by Paul Rabé, 2014).



A transdisciplinary network to promote revitalization of rivers and the landscapes/riverscapes, cities, and neighbourhoods that co-exist with them

Paul Rabé

River Cities as Method (RCM) is a new working group spearheaded by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) at Leiden University, in collaboration with partners worldwide, which seeks to revitalize urban rivers and the ecological, social, cultural, and economic systems linked to these rivers. In time, RCM seeks to evolve into a transdisciplinary network in its own right. The outcomes of RCM are envisaged to be practical – culminating in concrete urban revitalization projects – as well as knowledge-based, leading to new insights about “transformational resilience” for theory and for university/school curricula.

Introducing a new network

RCM will comprise several case studies of “disrupted rivers” in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America, in comparative perspective. The “disruptions” that RCM examines are usually caused by a combination of human-induced and natural factors. Project teams comprising local scholars, scientists, and activists will

engage with a broad range of stakeholders in seeking to revitalize the stretches of river that they select as case studies. By addressing the disruption in their river-city nexus cases, each team will contribute insights about what “transformational resilience” means in their own contexts. At the same time, each team will also engage with the disruption issues in other river city teams – thus helping to ultimately build a network. This network seeks to be truly global in nature, with learning and innovation between and within the Global North and Global South.

RCM adopts a trans-disciplinary approach, bringing together knowledge of the river-city nexus from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences around three main project components, which strengthen each other: (1) river bios (histories and stories of the river), (2) spatial analysis (layer mapping of the river and its environs), and (3) transformation (activism to achieve river-city revitalization through networks of stakeholders). Each case study team is expected to implement all three components in their projects.

Transformational resilience

As a working group and later as a network, “River Cities as Method” hopes to contribute insights about resilience in both theoretical and practical terms. RCM seeks to go beyond the narrowly scientific and technical understandings of resilience that are commonplace in current theoretical and policy approaches. Through a combination of research, activism, and pedagogy, the network promotes an expanded view of resilience that is “transformational” in the sense that it acknowledges the longer-term, structural, and multi-faceted nature of disruption and recovery, encompassing climate adaptation needs as well as human, cultural, institutional, and political dimensions of resilience. Throughout, the RCM network will approach the river-city nexus with a historical lens, mapping the story of each river-city over time so that the deployed revitalization measures can be better informed by past lessons.

Real transformation also includes striving for “justice” – justice not only for the human communities adjacent to the river, but also for the plant and animal species that co-exist with the river and which are an integral part of the ecology of the river-city. Each project team is expected to come up with its own definition of, and contribution to, transformation and justice relevant to the local context. Research and action on “transformational resilience” is still in its early stages, as is the application of this budding concept – and formulations of justice – to practice. Exchanges and peer-to-peer support among the participating project teams will help to develop learning and pedagogy around the concepts of resilience, transformation, and justice for the benefit of the network partners as well as scholars and practitioners more broadly.

Invitation to join RCM

Are you interested in the scope and activities of the RCM working group? And do you think you can put together a transdisciplinary team to investigate transformational resilience in a specific river-city context in your part of the world? RCM is currently recruiting teams that wish to propose a river-city project, through a Call for Expressions of Interest. For this Call and for more information about application criteria, please visit the RCM website (see below). The Call will close on 15 August 2022.

RCM welcomes applications from project teams from all over the world. Together with the newly recruited teams, the RCM coordinators and advisors will work on a funding proposal to help build the RCM network, and which will help to fund the network’s activities. In the meantime, the RCM project teams are expected to start their work through a combination of their own funds and (where available) limited other funding.

The benefits of joining the RCM working group and network include access to a diverse and global network of professionals and scholars working on the river-city nexus; workshops to share insights on a peer-to-peer basis; and publications. The RCM partners will have considerable freedom to determine together the shape of the network and its common activities.

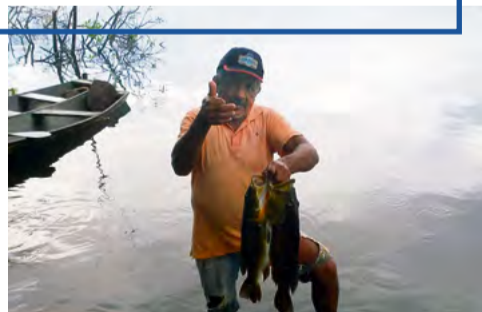
For more information about the RCM initiative, the pilot project on the Xingu River, or the Call for Expressions of Interest, please visit: <https://ukna.asia/river-cities>.

Paul Rabé is Coordinator of Urban Knowledge Network Asia, IIAS. Email: p.e.rabe@iias.nl

RCM Pilot Project: Xingu River and City of Altamira, State of Pará, Brazil

Satya Patchineelam

What follows is an attempt to tell the story of the Xingu River from its own perspective. The narrative explores the traditional life of the river as well as the disruptions wrought by a hydropower development project. These dynamics are the subject of my Ph.D. research as well as the RCM pilot project.



Leonel Batista, a riverine man, on the Xingu River (Photo courtesy of Leonel Batista, 2020).

Tale of the Xingu: The River That Was Dammed

I was life. I would transport sediments, rocks, dead leaves, insects, animals, and others. That would be my daily routine. I flowed downstream, taking nutrients to other places, fertilizing grounds and carrying seeds to germinate in some other locations. There would be animals crossing, boats passing through. I was a leisure space for people and animals. Giving life and taking life. My cycle was constant and healthy,

I would renew myself constantly. I was always fresh, vibrant, clean, sometimes wavy, other times calm, feeding animals and the abundant vegetation around me.

Throughout half of the year the rain would fill me up, make me stronger and faster. I would create hiding spots for some animals by flooding areas filled with vegetation, this way the animals would reproduce without being exposed, securing the eggs and baby animals in these secluded and sometimes mysterious spots. During these generous and strong seasons, I would

flood through spaces that riverine people cleaned up to plant their crops and help take nutrition to the soil, helping their production. But sometimes I would also invade their houses and show my force. During that time, I could also be dangerous, and the riverine people would be scared of me, and the motors of the boats would work twice as hard to drive against my flow.

The other half of the year, the heat would force my water to evaporate, and the lack of rainfall would weaken and slow me down. I would dry up, the rocks throughout my body stretch would appear, creating small ponds, and the sunshine would pass through to the ground. The small, beautiful fish would find it hard to hide from the people.

After many years, strange people whom I had never seen before started coming by to observe me, mapping and collecting pieces of me. Suddenly one day, I felt a strong explosion. It shook the ground in such a way that animals ran away and stopped coming back, rocks fell, and that part of me became damaged.

A part of my body was connected to another part of my body and disconnected from another, which did not make much sense and affected my entire life cycle. Blocks of concrete were built up, blocking my water to feed all of the bits and pieces.

Suddenly part of my body became steady water, like a pool but with some of the water flowing down without the consistency it would naturally have. Many fishers came during that period, the fish were trapped in this reservoir, they became such an easy catch. The community of riverines that grew up around me were pushed aside, many did not come by as often as they would before. The water in this pool became so high that the trees were constantly submerged, resulting in many trees dying. I felt sick. There were no more fruits and seeds to take downstream, the fish in my waters became hungry and sick too. The riverine community that grew up here and created a livelihood of respect towards me became hungry and sad. I saw a few familiar faces coming back, mostly men, as most women stopped coming here. The kids were not around anymore either. I missed them, as it was fun to have them playing with me in years past.

I finally understood, my body was dammed, and life as I knew before was over. My web of life was disrupted.

Satya Patchineelam is a PhD Candidate at IHS/Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Principal Investigator of the RCM’s Xingu River pilot project. Email: s.maia.patchineelam@iias.nl

ICAS 12 Conference Proceedings available in Open Access

The twelfth edition of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) was held from 24 to 28 August 2021. A selection of articles presented at ICAS 12 can now be accessed online in the Amsterdam University Press Conference Proceedings Series.

ICAS is a global space where Asia scholars and social and cultural actors from all over the world engage in dialogues on Asia that transcend boundaries between academic disciplines and geographic regions.

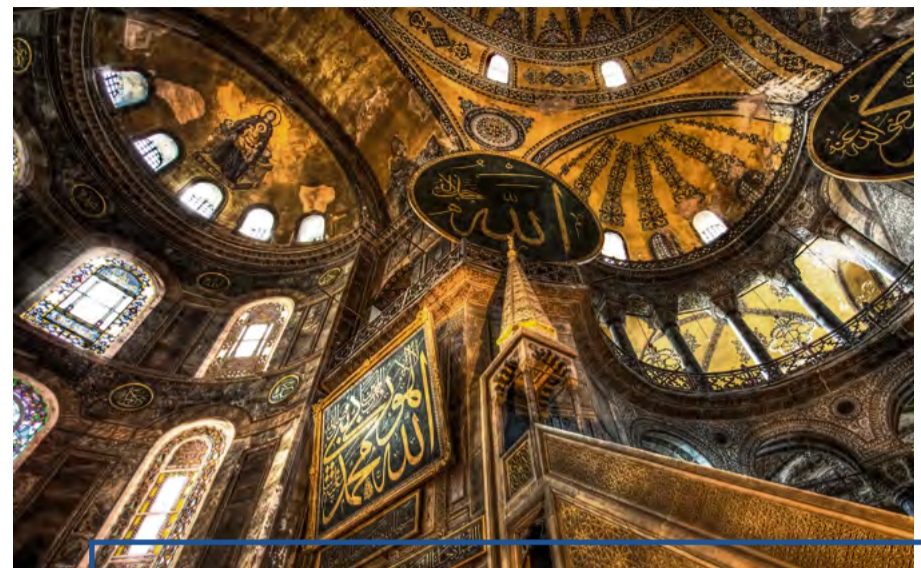
The special focus of ICAS 12 was 'Crafting a Global Future.' Presentations at the conference involved topics from all Asian Studies disciplines in the broadest possible sense. Due to the global circumstances, ICAS 12 manifested its theme in a dynamic virtual form. Unlike the previous editions, which were hosted in different countries together with local partners, ICAS 12 was organized for the first time entirely online by the ICAS Secretariat in Leiden in partnership with Kyoto Seika University, Japan.

The ICAS Conference Proceedings is doubtlessly a mere excerpt of the richness and diversity of ICAS 12. These 94 articles represent the newest advancements in the field of Asian Studies. They depict ongoing research on the themes of Arts, Economy, Development and Urbanization, Education and Knowledge, Environment and Climate Change, Gender and Diversity, Heritage and Culture, History, Language and Literature, Media and the Digital Age, Migration and Diasporas, Philosophy, Region and Beliefs, Politics and International Relations, and Society and Identity.

Check out the ICAS 12 Conference Proceedings via our website www.icas.asia



D. Grifeco on unsplash.com



'Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe' to include a new course on the Politics of Heritage in the Middle East

Elena Paskaleva

From 2023, the international post-graduate Dual Degree in 'Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe' will expand its focus to include the politics of heritage in the Middle East. The Dual Degree forms part of a broader ambition to decentralise the production of knowledge about Asia by establishing a platform for continuing dialogues between universities located in Asia and beyond. The present institutions involved in the Dual Degree – IIAS, Leiden University, National Taiwan University, and Yonsei University – have established a fruitful collaboration in research and teaching. Currently talks are underway with several universities in Indonesia and North Africa. This latest addition to the Leiden part of the programme is a logical next step in the discussions about the relevance of critical heritage studies.

The Politics of Heritage in the Middle East

Heritage is always political. Originally a concept coined by the nation-state, heritage has become the object of political appropriation by national and local authorities and stakeholders. Institutional and non-institutional social actors in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East are increasingly involved in debating the legitimacy of – as well as the need to 'safeguard' – different expressions of heritage. Analysing the dynamic of the various types of public, institutional, and private actors engaged in the current negotiations on heritage practice across the Middle East will be the topic of a new course, titled 'The Politics of Heritage in The Middle East' in the Leiden master's programme in Critical Heritage Studies.

The political and power practices in the Middle East are crucial to understanding how heritage was romanticised or defined as marginalised in the colonial context. Current attitudes towards cultural heritage can be better understood if they are situated in a historical perspective. That is why the new course will offer a special focus on the ways the modern concept of cultural heritage was introduced to the Middle East during the colonial period. The first initiatives to conduct large-scale archaeological expeditions, to start collecting newly-excavated objects, and to initiate restoration campaigns led by European archaeologists, architects, and art historians set the tone for generations to come. As part of global competition among world empires for supremacy over the protection of cultural heritage, the colonial policies behind these projects can be considered an integral part of the overall restructuring of the colonised space across the Middle East.

Above: Hagia Sofia, Istanbul, Turkey.
CC License/Courtesy Anne Dirkse/Flickr.

Political independence after the Second World War marked the postcolonial states' attempts to build specific national narratives and forge national identities based on the traces of powerful empires. Another trend was to promote popular religious traditions and folklore, considered to be the 'authentic' expression of the Arab essence which was to define these modern societies. As a counterbalance to these discourses incorporated into state heritage practice, the new course will look at the transformative nature of cultural heritage as derived from individuals and communities who attach meaningful memories to and identify feelings towards the physical traces of their own past.

Cultural heritage – especially its materialisation in objects, buildings, and sites – has become a magnet for tourists across the Middle East. While in the 19th century, tourists were fascinated by the constructed idea of an ancient cultural landscape unchanged since the Biblical times, the controversial questions of authenticity have been negotiated at present by preserving the material traces of the past and by reconstructing heritage sites that have been deliberately shattered by war conflicts or looting.

The Dual Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

The Dual Degree programme offers selected graduate students from the participating universities the opportunity to obtain two MA degrees – one from Leiden University and one from a partner university in Asia – and a Certificate for the Dual Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe, issued by IIAS. The diploma at Leiden University is for the MA in Asian Studies, which comes with a special certificate for completing the specialisation in Critical Heritage Studies (also issued to students who complete this programme at Leiden University without opting for the Dual Degree).

Information

Please contact Dr Elena Paskaleva (LIAS) with any questions about the Leiden programme in Critical Heritage Studies or the Dual Degree. We especially invite students from the Leiden master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies (offered at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies) to enquire about the possibility of choosing this programme.

Website

www.iias.asia/programmes/critical-heritage-studies

Dr Elena Paskaleva (Leiden University Institute for Area Studies) is the coordinator of the IIAS Asian Heritages Cluster and the Dual Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe. Email: e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Tenth Conference of Iranian Studies ECIS 10

Conference dates
21 - 25 August 2023

Venue
Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Call for papers submission deadline
1 December 2022

Submission of papers

Please complete the submission form available on the conference website if you wish to present an individual paper or a panel. An academic committee will review all proposals. We welcome individual abstracts of no more than 1500 characters related to the conference topics. Panel proposals (with up to six participants divided into no more than two sections) should clearly outline the pre-arranged panel's title, themes, and objectives. The individual presentations of the panel must be on a related topic; please provide the full names of the confirmed panel participants and the abstracts of their papers. The submission deadline is 1 December 2022.

PhD Thesis Award

On the occasion of ECIS 10, the fifth edition of the European Award of Iranian Studies will be awarded for an outstanding PhD dissertation, published or unpublished, in any field of Iranian Studies. The dissertation should be completed and successfully defended at any European academic institution between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2022. The submission deadline for PhD theses is 1 January 2023. For further information on the PhD award, see the SIE website.

Website

www.universiteitleiden.nl/ecis10

Contact us

Email: ecis10@leiden.edu

The tenth edition of the European Conference of Iranian Studies ECIS 10 is organised by the Societas Iranologica Europaea (SIE), hosted by Leiden University and convened by Gabriëlle van den Berg, Albert de Jong and Elena Paskaleva of the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies.

ECIS 10 will cover a wide range of topics related to Iranian Studies, including philology, linguistics, literature, history, religious and cultural studies, art and architecture, archaeology, philosophy and anthropology.

The Societas Iranologica Europaea is an international academic society in the field of Iranian Studies with members from European and non-European countries. The SIE was founded in 1983 in Rome with the support of the European Science Foundation and the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (later Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente) on the occasion of the First European Colloquium of Iranology. The aim of the SIE is to promote, develop and support Ancient, Middle and Modern Iranian Studies in all subject areas of the field. For membership information, see www.societasiranologicaeu.org.



Societas
Iranologica
Europaea

Film, Pottery, and the Mingei Movement

A Conversation with Marty Gross

Benjamin Linder

The Channel is the flagship podcast from the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). Each episode delves into a particular Asian Studies topic from across the social sciences and humanities. Through a mixture of interviews, lectures, discussions, readings, and more, *The Channel* is a platform to connect scholars, activists, artists, and broader publics in sustained conversation about Asia and its place in the contemporary world. Listen and subscribe at <https://shows.acast.com/the-channel> or on your preferred podcatcher app.



Fig. 1 (left): Marty Gross interviewing potter Sakuma Fujiya, Mashiko, Japan, 2015.

Marty Gross is a filmmaker and producer based in Toronto. He also founded and runs the Mingei Film Archive Project. Established in the 1920s in Japan, the Mingei Movement championed the beauty of everyday, homemade objects. Over the past few years, Marty Gross has overseen the restoration and remastering of a vast collection of Mingei-related films from Japan, Korea, England, and the United States, covering the period from 1925-1976. In this conversation, he discusses pottery, filmmaking, the Mingei Movement, and the archive he is building at the intersection of these disciplines.

The films you're restoring for the Mingei Film Archive Project depict ceramic production in 20th-century Japan and Korea. How did you become interested in film and ceramics in general?

Well, as a teenager, I took a pottery class. It was something as simple as that. I became interested in pottery making and what kind of life you could live as a potter. That led me to go to Japan to study. I studied in Japan just for about five months because I was already quite busy here [in Canada] with a teaching career. After my first trip to Japan, I made a film about the work I was doing with children in my studio, which was called *As We Are*. When that was completed, I decided that I wanted to bring the two things together – my filmmaking and my interest in ceramics – so I made the film *Potters at Work*, which led me on the path that I'm on now.

What is the Mingei Movement? When was it established and who were its founders?

1926 was when they came up with the word *Mingei*, which is a new coinage. That term was decided upon by the key philosopher and aesthetician in this movement, whose name was Yanagi Muneyoshi or (as known in

the West) Yanagi Sōetsu. He was a brilliant young man. He had been deeply involved in promoting information and knowledge about the newest in Western art in Japan in the 1920s. As time went on, he developed a strong interest, through his visits to Korea, in objects used for daily life. He changed his focus from searching outside of Asia to searching inside of Asia. Korea was exceedingly important to him. He'd been invited there to look at the objects created for use in daily life by ordinary village craftspeople of Korea. And when he came back to Japan, he started looking around Japan as well. He began collecting and realized that there were many rich traditions of craft-making all over Japan. Some of this was new for people in a certain way. These were city people I'm talking about. They were artists and intellectuals. As Japan was developing its modern transportation system in the 20s, suddenly they could go and see things that they hadn't seen before. Japan is a very mountainous country, and most of the works that were made in localities stayed in those localities. Suddenly, there was a whole new world opening up for these people. They could see the beauty of ordinary objects made by,

shall we say, 'ordinary' people for their friends and for their neighbors. It was a different idea of what was beautiful. In a Western sense, we think of beauty as a result of effort, of deliberation, of great trying, and, to some

extent, of suffering. The artist is seen as a sufferer, whereas this is a radically different way of looking at things. This is like: beautiful things are created by ordinary people for use by people like themselves.



Fig. 2: Bernard Leach Films *Korea and Manchuria*, 1935.



Fig. 3 (top left): Hamada Shoji Makes a Tea Bowl, 1970.

Fig. 4 (top right): Interviewing Sakamoto Shigeki, Onda, Oita Prefecture for commentary on 1950s films of Onda pottery, 2015.

Fig. 5 (left): Filming Potters at Work, Koishihara, Japan, 1976.

Fig. 6 (below): Loading kiln in The Working Processes of the Korean Folk Potter, 1974.



What do you see as the legacy of the Mingei Movement today?

The Mingei Movement continues to be with us. The reason I say this is that there continues to be interest in handmade goods and handmade items. Now, as we feel that we're losing knowledge of how to do all these things – and we're losing the people who did these things – there is an attempt to revive it. The social context is different for us, but I think the need is still there. Now especially, when we're all enduring this worldwide pandemic, we are sitting and looking at what's around us, partly because we have no choice. One of the underpinning ideas of the Mingei Movement is the use of local materials. This was kind of a rule that they had. There was a strong feeling that every material that you touch has both its qualities and its limitations. Constant repetition and practice allowed you to make good use of the limitations as well as the qualities of the materials on hand. Now here we are, faced with: "What we have is right here." Of course, we have Amazon to help us get whatever we need, but on the other hand, we're trying to understand how to experience these new limitations.

One other way I can think of that the Mingei Movement endures is exactly through the work that you're doing to restore and publicize all of this old footage of the potters and their techniques, which brings us to the films themselves.

Every film in the archive – there are more than 50 hours of film now – I either stumbled on, found, or sought out. When we read stories about how people used to work, it all sounds very fascinating and romantic. The

storytelling is fascinating and romantic, but I realized that I had a unique opportunity. With the films I had, I could actually show people what it looked like and help them feel what life was like back then by adding oral history commentaries to the films. We still have the opportunity to talk to some people who were there and experienced life as it's depicted in the films. Because of digital technology, I have the opportunity to work with people quite intimately. I can sit with a potter in his home with a quiet machine and a microphone and my laptop. I can show films and get that person to comment and reminisce and explain. So I've done that for approximately 40 films so far, in Japanese and in English and several in Korean.

Do you have a sense of who the imagined audience for these films originally was?

I can imagine my audience, but I'm not sure that I can necessarily tell you too much about what the audiences were at the time. Some were made for record-keeping. The film made by [the Benedictine Priest] Norbert Weber in Korea did play in cinemas in Germany, and I believe it was quite popular. It was an exotic look at Korea and what the Benedictine missionaries were doing to educate or to convert the Korean people at that time. The film that Bernard Leach made – I believe that he made it to share his fascination with Japan and to create a visual document to accompany his lecture tours. Leach later travelled in Scandinavia and Europe. Bernard Leach mentions showing films in different places, but I've never managed to find any information about how people may have reacted. The films that Bernard Leach made would have been

the very first moving images of Japanese craftsmen at work.

In other cases, some of the films were documentaries made for educational use in universities and colleges. As for who's going to watch this now, I'd like to hear from people who are going to watch the films now [laughs]. To me, it's a visual record. It allows us to imagine how things get made. I, for one, when I look at things, am always curious about how they were made.

As you build this huge archive and restore all of these old films, was there any particular moment that stuck with you or had a particular impact on you?

I'm going to tell you one story: I went to Mashiko.¹ There's a very key film in this project that was made by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (KBS)² in 1937. I call it *Mashiko Village Pottery, 1937*. I went to visit the grandson of the home and pottery studio where that film was taken. His name is Sakuma Fujiya. I called him to say that I have this film. He said, "Oh yeah, I know about that film. I have a video copy." So I went to visit him with the film on my laptop and my notebook. My idea was, "I'm going to write notes, and then I'm going to write a narrative." But about halfway into this, I realized that's not what we were going to do. What we're going to do is let him tell his own story, because who could do better? There is no substitute for the human voice of the person who actually knows what he's talking about. It turned out that Sakuma Fujiya is also a great storyteller and has a wonderful voice, and that helped. So I told him, "I'm coming back. I'm going to record your voice, and

you're going to be the narrator." The result is actually quite a brilliant story. Then I moved on to other people. The authenticity and the sense of "being there" that they provide is something that I am very satisfied with. I'm happy and proud that I have been able to find people to cooperate with me in telling these stories and in reviving these films in this way.

This transcript has been heavily edited and abridged. The original interview includes a wealth of further details and discussion. To hear to the full conversation, listen and subscribe to *The Channel* podcast: <https://shows.acast.com/the-channel>

Benjamin Linder is Assistant Editor of *The Newsletter*.

Notes

- 1 A town known for its pottery in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan.
- 2 A cultural agency in Japan in the 1930s.

Seeing Japan from the Bottom Up

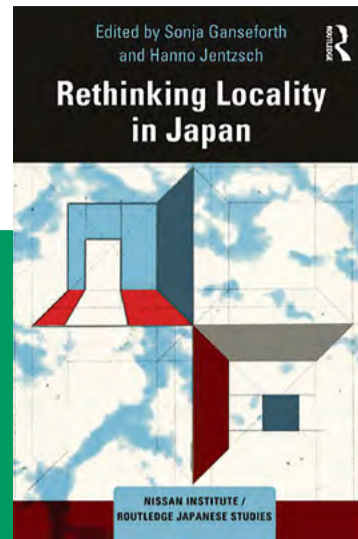
Shane Barter and Kenichi Ebisutani

Reviewed title

Rethinking Locality in Japan

Sonja Ganesforth
and Hanno Jentsch (eds.), 2022.

Routledge
ISBN 9780367469481



Japan is typically understood as an especially homogenous country, one featuring a uniform, hierarchical administrative system. It is also typically seen as urban, with rural areas associated with depopulation, aging, and decline. *Rethinking Locality in Japan*, a new edited volume helmed by Sonja Ganesforth and Hanno Jentsch, challenges these conventional understandings. Part of the Nissan Institute and Routledge series on Japanese Studies, the volume interrogates ‘local’ spheres across the country, discovering immense variety, complexity, and contestation. *Rethinking Locality in Japan* shatters top-down views of a uniform Japan, providing a readable, fun perspective from the bottom up.

The book is set in the context of municipal ‘Heisei’ mergers and rural depopulation, seeking to understand changing conceptions of locality given these trends. Ganesforth and Jentsch have assembled an array of experts, combining various disciplinary and methodological approaches to better understand Japan’s micro-level dynamics. The book is mostly sociological and anthropological, complemented by chapters on history, geography, politics, and economics. Its 16 chapters are organized into four sections: Lived spaces, social worlds at risk, contestation, and local-national linkages. After some conceptual discussion, the chapters move from local, micro-level studies to more macro-level research on economic and political decentralization. Most chapters grapple with rural decline and municipal mergers in the early 2000s, analyzing how shifting administrative boundaries exist uneasily with localized identities and self-understandings.

Rethinking Locality in Japan invites readers to reflect on locality in a great variety of contexts. This includes, in order of chapters, localized education and accents, urban-to-rural migrations and investment, cosmopolitan communities in Hokkaido, contrasting insider and outsider views of community, competing local views of nuclear power plants, innovative senior care and health care policies, welfare associations and urban renewal, opposition to mergers, transport and rideshare policies, fishery cooperatives, wine certification, redistributive taxation, political motivations for mergers, and local democracy. Readers will find that the chapters are engaging, often quirky, and above all highly informative. For instance, Aaron Kingsbury’s contribution analyzes Japan’s inchoate wine industry, focusing on efforts to implement local branding certification based on fuzzy, changing place and grape names. Isaac Gagné’s chapter focuses on rural areas with shrinking, aging populations and dwindling budgets. In one town in Nagano, he documents innovative policies to provide care to seniors, with coordinators navigating, and then setting an example for, national policies. Hansen’s study in central Hokkaido was conducted through his own household and community, reflecting on local gatherings and tastes. And although

we might expect a discussion of taxation policy to be dry, Rausch and Koji’s chapter analyzes policies that allow Japanese taxpayers to choose which municipality they pay a share of their taxes to, a creative, fascinating effort to stem urban/rural inequalities that has had mixed results.

Although the varied topics and methods of each chapter could be seen by some readers as a shortcoming, we feel that this is one of the book’s key strengths. If anything, we can think of several other chapter topics we would have liked to have seen – perhaps Ainu communities, domestic tourism, Okinawan cultural revivals, resistance to high speed rail, the rise of populist parties in Osaka and Tokyo, and more. As the editors would no doubt agree, the volume scratches the surface of locality in Japan. That readers may be left reflecting on still more varied localities is hardly a critique, but instead an indicator of the collection’s success.

More substantively, the book’s micro-level perspective might be complemented by some more quantitative measures, noting broader patterns of small-scale phenomena and their aggregate importance. As the book moves from micro-level to macro-level perspectives, the concluding chapters on decentralization and mergers provide information that might be useful earlier on. Earlier chapters mention administrative mergers in passing, and it

is only with later chapters that the reader is provided with a clear sense of the scale, timing, and logic of the reforms. It is also notable that the later chapters focus on mergers in tandem with decentralization. The book focuses a great deal on changing municipal boundaries, but less is said about decentralization and how enhanced subnational government power might also impact locality. Next, the collection would probably have benefitted from more diverse perspectives. The contributors are mostly talented outsiders, with only a few Japanese scholars featured in this project. Especially for topics so localized and intimate, it seems that Japanese authors would have especially valuable insights. Linked to this, it would be useful to feature more sustained discussion of varied Japanese terms for ‘locality,’ such as *jimoto*, *urusato*, and *chiho*, each of which has slightly different connotations. *Jimoto* refers to places around one’s residence; *urusato* is a place where a person has resided for a long time (implying nostalgia); and *chiho* is a neutral term that most resembles ‘local’ in English. Given the primacy of locality in the book, it would be useful to return to these different meanings beyond some brief, early mentions.

“What is (the) local” in Japan (p. 2) is clearly an unanswerable question, but *Rethinking Locality in Japan* goes a long way towards answering it. Minimally, the answer is that ‘it depends,’ with the chapters showing how, where, and for whom ideas of locality vary. It is worthwhile to state emphatically that, even in a relatively uniform country, the meaning of local spaces varies immensely across persons and places. The book succeeds in exposing nuanced, heterogeneous localities that are often masked by the top-down, administrative divisions as well as by dominant narratives about Japan. This fun, informative volume will appeal to specialists of Japan, but it is also approachable for non-specialists. It will be a valuable collection for those studying place-making, anthropology, urbanization, aging, care, decentralization, diversity, and much more. The reader walks away with a better appreciation of Japan’s dynamic grassroots, as the book succeeds in its goal of rethinking locality in Japan.

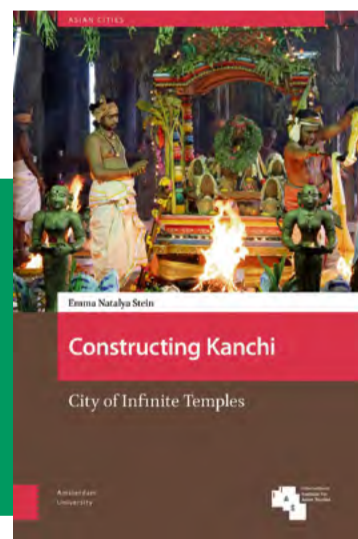
A History of Kanchi

Tilman Frasch

Reviewed title

Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples

Emma Natalya Stein, 2021.
Amsterdam University Press/IAS
ISBN 9789463729123



Despite Kanchipuram’s – or Kanchi, as the city is referred to throughout – crucial importance in South Indian history, art, and politics, which included being the capital of the Pallava dynasty in the 7th and 8th centuries, no comprehensive study of the city has been published so far. Nor have scholars of Indian art or history attempted to trace the changes that affected the city and its temples from its ‘imperial’ heyday to its rediscovery in the 19th century, including the changes in religious practice. This book by the art historian Emma Stein is a major step forward in these efforts.

Chapter 1 sets the scene with a reconstruction of the capital under the Pallavas. Two developments stand out here. The first one is the change from brick to sandstone as the main building material of the temples. This began with the sponsoring of the rock-cut monuments in the outskirts of the city and continued, in the 8th century, with quarrying stone for the construction of temples inside the city. The efforts culminated in the Kailashanath temple, Kanchi’s largest Pallava temple and one of the largest monuments built in India at the time (p. 68).

The second development that stands out occurred in the 9th century, when new masters of the city, the Cholas, came to

power. Construction in Kanchi came to an almost complete standstill at that time, and when it recommenced, it was aimed at creating a new city farther to the east of the previous Pallava capital. It centred on a new palace site with two main roads running from there to the north and to the south (Map 38, p. 121). Along with this came a host of new temples built along the southern road, but also new rituals, processions, and other religious practices. Another new feature that arrived with Chola rule was the installation and sometimes procession of bronze statues of gods.

The third chapter extends the network of Kanchi’s temples into its hinterland and especially along the Palar River to the seacoast. It presents temples and other religious monuments, pieces of art, and religious practices that made use of these. There are also two briefer sections on

(1) Mamallapuram, which also discuss the possibility of this city being the port for Kanchi; and on (2) the Buddhist art of the region, mainly by focussing on the Buddha images found in and around Kanchi. Buddhism may have had a much longer history in Tamil Nadu, as recent research has revealed. It lasted until the 13th century (and possibly even longer), as borne out by a variety of Buddha images found in Kanchi over the past 100 years. Kanchi’s Kamakshi Amman temple may have been one of the sites that had Buddhist and Jain origins.

The final chapter shifts the perspective to the colonial period, when a Kanchi in decline was portrayed through its ruins and relics of the past. Whilst travellers and other visitors produced the view of a city of ‘infinite temples,’ scholars like Mackenzie were collecting manuscripts, and James Fergusson and others were studying the monuments

in a systematic and chronologically sound manner. They all used the term “decline” for the city with great frequency, while at the same time their work demonstrated that Kanchi showed a stubborn will to persist and develop. It all turned the city into the place of religious innovation and persistence that still marks it today.

There is little to criticize about the book. It is clearly structured, proceeding from a narrow and focused art historical study of the Pallava capital, through a discussion of a provincial headquarters from the 9th century, and finally to 19th-century perceptions of the new colonial masters. The analysis of the temples and their art are precise, detailed, and evidence-based. Even if scholars do not accept some of Stein’s stylistic findings or datings, the book will be an important reference for future research. Ample illustrations – some (though unfortunately very few) in color – underscore the text and illustrate the findings. And the writing is extremely easy: I read the book in less than two days without getting tired or confused.

One could mention the maps, which are hard to decipher or recognize in their varying shades of grey. At the very least, they should have been printed on full pages instead of the half-page format chosen. Another point of criticism could be that Stein sets her research in the context of urbanism around the Bay of Bengal, but then restricts her thoughts on this matter to less than two pages at the end of Chapter 3. Those quibbles apart, it has to be repeated that this is a well-organized, clearly argued, and easy-to-read study of Kanchi that enriches our knowledge of the city and will make its way onto the reading lists of South Indian art, history, and anthropology seminars.



A Succinct Guide to Understanding Ukiyo-e Prints

Martha Chaiklin

Ukiyo-e prints have shaped Western perceptions of Japan and Japanese art since they were first exhibited in Paris at the Exposition Universelle in 1867. Their impact on decorative and fine arts of the late 19th century is well documented, and interest in them has remained high ever since. Of the scores of books that have been produced about ukiyo-e in the ensuing century and a half or so, many focus on a single artist or provide a survey based on artist genealogies and categorization by school, technique, or subject matter. In contrast, Julie Nelson Davis offers a guide to understanding ukiyo-e as part of Japanese culture and society by embracing the entire genre of books and paintings, eschewing the Western-constructed framework that emphasizes single-sheet prints. It is an introductory text, intended to be “a concise critical inquiry into the genre’s formation, history, production and reception in early modern Japan” (p. 3).

This emphasis on context is well within current academic trends and has been examined in works such as *The Commercial and Cultural Climate of Japanese Printmaking*,¹ or even in Davis’s own earlier work, *Partners in Print: Artistic Collaboration and the Ukiyo-e Market*.² The advantage this volume offers over these and similar works is price point (it is significantly cheaper), succinctness, and accessibility. It reads as a

Reviewed title

**Picturing the Floating World:
Ukiyo-e in Context**

Julie Nelson Davis, 2021.

University of Hawai‘i Press

ISBN 9780824889210

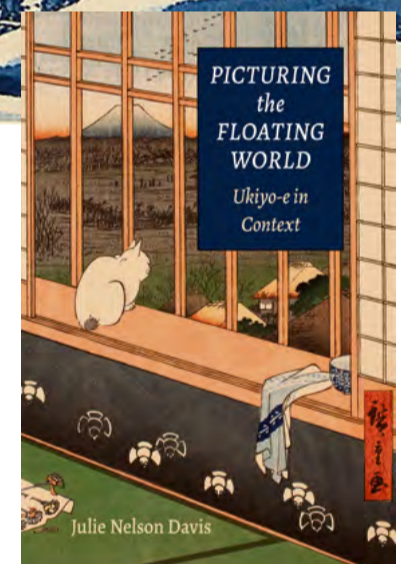
distillation of the author’s years of teaching, and she graciously thanks her students in the acknowledgements. The concepts are laid out clearly, without reliance on jargon, and complex ideas are reduced to their essence. Yet it is these same qualities that make this book a useful resource not just for those who are approaching ukiyo-e for the first time, but also for those who seek to broaden their knowledge or understand current academic trends and interpretations of this genre. The premise of the book is context, but formal analysis of artwork is not absent either, and the examples provided will introduce readers unfamiliar with this process to its value.

In keeping with her stated purpose of expanding the boundaries beyond Western categorizations of ukiyo-e, Davis looks at several under-discussed features of the ukiyo-e genre. For example, the incorporation of *shunga*, or erotic prints, into a holistic discussion is a notable feature of this book. This genre is commonly quickly glossed over or relegated to separate volumes rather than examined as the integral part of Japanese print history that it is. Similarly, Davis emphasizes the collaboration between designer, carver, printer, publisher, and patron necessary to produce the prints. While insisting that ukiyo-e were appreciated as “art” and that their purported use as wrapping paper is a myth, she does not shy away from noting

that prints were a profit-making venture and that publishers were not above including product placement or featuring actors or locations in exchange for sponsorship.

The emphasis of the text is thematic, but the book proceeds in a general historical arc from inception, where Davis examines the establishment of a canon and explains why Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694) marks the start of this art form (Chapter 1), to the Hokusai and Hiroshige landscapes of the 19th century in Chapter 4. In the Epilogue, Yokohama prints, Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889), and other Meiji artists discussed, as are later trends, including brief discussions of *sosaku* and *shin-hanga*. This extension is in part to emphasize the fact that ukiyo-e did not suddenly die with the arrival of Matthew Perry in 1853, and also to acknowledge that more research needs to be done both in areas that have been explored and those that have been under-explored.

The first and last images of the book are of Katsushika Hokusai’s *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, perhaps the most famous and ubiquitous of all ukiyo-e prints. The image, popularly known as *The Great Wave*, appears in its original print format in the beginning, and at the end, on the back face of a recently minted 1000 yen note. The significance of this image, as Davis acknowledges, has been explored



by Christine Guth in *Hokusai’s Wave: Biography of a Global Icon*.³ Nevertheless, *The Great Wave* is deftly employed as a device to encourage the reader to see familiar art in new ways. In the Introduction, Davis notes how the image is taken out of context by being separated from the series of views of Mt. Fuji for which it was created, and that it is not as popular as *Red Fuji* – or, more properly, *Fine Wind, Clear Weather* – in Japan. She explains that we have different reactions in part because we “read” these prints right to left, while in Japan contemporaries would have looked left to right. The return to *The Great Wave* in the Epilogue as currency “demonstrates the place of ukiyo-e in our contemporary world” (p. 171), suggesting that even in Japan, the place and appreciation of ukiyo-e is ever-changing and evolving. This is part of Davis’s greater challenge to the standard ukiyo-e canon and the value of looking beyond its boundaries.

Notes

- <https://brill.com/view/title/13292>
- <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/partners-in-print-artistic-collaboration-and-the-ukiyo-e-market/>
- <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/hokusai-s-great-wave-biography-of-a-global-icon>

A Century of Development in Taiwan

Edwin Pietersma

Reviewed title

A Century of Development in Taiwan: From Colony to Modern State

Peter C.Y. Chow (ed.), 2022.

Edward Elgin Publishing

ISBN 9781800880153

The combined scholarship published in *A Century of Development in Taiwan: From Colony to Modern State* is a well-timed overview of – and introduction to – the changes and challenges faced by Taiwan in the past and in contemporary times. Or, as China scholar Edward Friedman shares in the Foreword: “Learning about Taiwan has led me to re-think history.”

After the introduction (Part I), the book is divided into four thematic parts: identity, politics, and international relations (Part II); economic development (Part III); societal and educational development (Part IV); and literature and cultural development in Taiwan (Part V). It consists of 14 chapters, all written by prominent scholars in the field of Taiwanese and Chinese studies. Evenly divided among the four parts, the chapters provide a critical review of “the evolution of socio-cultural, economic, and national identity since the enlightenment movement in 1920s” (p. 3). In Part II, June Dreyer provides an overview of the international relations and politics of Taiwan in the post-war period and how this has led to its current status. Yi-Shen Chen shows in his chapter how Taiwan gained its ambiguous status today via treaties and changes in 1951, 1971, and 1991. Following this, Lung-Chieh Chang discusses the role of indigenous communities in the creation of a new Taiwan-centered subjectivity, as interpreted by historical scholarship. In addition, Shiao-Chi Shen shows how polls reveal the emergence of a “civic Taiwanese identity” (p. 84) after the 1980s.

In Part III, Frank Hsiao discusses how the Taiwanese economy was staged and developed as a specific policy of the Japanese colonial government. Peter Chow seems to continue this by discussing how the ripple effect of Japanese industrialization combined with the turn to the United

States in the post-war period, characterizing Taiwanese economic development as “learning by export” (p. 156). The article written by Hong-Jen Lin discusses how banking and the New Taiwan dollar – originally a colonial invention and the national currency since 2000 – exemplify changes in the official international status of Taiwan and are heavily subjected to national (identity) politics.

Part IV focuses on societal and educational developments in Taiwan. Here, Hsin-Huang Hsiao identifies how Taiwan needs to be regarded as a constantly “self-mobilized society” between 1920–1937 and between 1975–2020 (p. 198). The chapter by Wan-Yao Chou compares how the colonial government of Japan and the so-called “KMT/ROC party-state” of 1949–1997 educated the Taiwanese youth in national identity, history, and ethics.² Here, she shows how the Japanese colonial government invoked a difference between country (Taiwan) and nation (Japan) and used the setting of Taiwan to invoke Japanese nationalism, while the KMT-regime omitted Taiwan in their reinterpretation of history to strengthen national Chinese consciousness. Lastly, Doris Chang discusses how the colonial system educated Taiwanese girls. This, in turn, provided a catalyst for women to fight for more representation, resulting in Taiwan having the highest position in Asia in terms of women’s rights.

In the last part (Part V), the focus is on literature and cultural development. Here, we have Yin-Chen Kang discussing how

Chinese and Japanese theaters developed in Taiwan between the 1920s and 1960s. She shows how the political situation determines theater: the decline in the 1920s led to a Japanized modernization, but the emergence of TV and the suppression of these colonialized forms of theater by the KMT led to its permanent decline. The chapter by Jasmine Chen focuses on a similar topic – namely, the development of Taiwanese opera as a hybrid performance in Taiwan and an example of nostalgia for the Japanese past, which managed to survive in Taiwan despite the suppression of the KMT. Yeh’s chapter discusses the development and current status of modern literature, showing the complexity of this history by discussing the silencing of Taiwanese authors during the KMT-period, the return to Chinese cultural roots in the 1970s, and the redirection to repressed history from the 1980s onwards. The last article – written by Shih – discusses the appreciation of Taiwanese literature embedded in the discourse of Taiwanese identity and political status through the case study of the life of Taiwanese activist Chiang Wei-Shui (1890–1931) and the interpretation of his work in the post-war period.

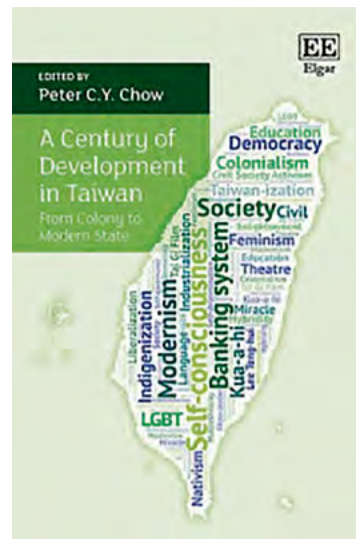
As the discussion above shows, this collection of essays is rich in material and approaches to the modern history of Taiwan. It provides a fascinating, in-depth account of 100 years of history and complexity. For this reason alone, scholars cannot ignore this work. At the same time, however, articles rarely interact with each other. This

is a shame, as many articles touch upon similar issues and tropes – e.g., *Kominka* or Japanization, development, and identity politics. This makes information redundant at times, given that several articles touch upon very similar topics that could benefit greatly from each other. All of the chapters assume the 1920s as a starting point, described by Chow as the “turning point when Taiwanese intellectuals started to promote the unique enlightenment campaign” (p. xix), which Masahiro Wakabayashi describes as the intellectual spirit that would pressure and manipulate the colonial government, as well as a starting point of ‘decolonization’ of Taiwan (p. xvii–xx). Beyond this, there is little discussion of this starting point, which would have aided with comparing Taiwan to other Japanese colonies at the time (e.g., Korea). This also applies to other key concepts, such as the Japanization or *Kominka* movement. These topics, however, deserve critical analysis and discussion on their own. In addition, it requires readers to have quite some background knowledge about Taiwan, making the book linger between an introductory work and a collection of essays for specialized readers.

In conclusion, this work does not help us to re-think Taiwanese history, but rather provides scholars with information that can help us to support arguments in a more theoretical or ideological sense. All chapters are strong individually and are helpful for both beginning and more advanced scholars. They also provide a lot of factual and background information. Therefore, we can expect this book to be a prominent source of help in the field: not necessarily as a way to rethink Taiwan, but as a rich source for a specialized understanding.

Notes

- 1 This excludes the introduction written by Chow.
- 2 The debate about Taiwan politically is often subjected to ideological understandings of Taiwan. Notably, most authors withhold from making any strong statements, focusing instead on factual representations of Taiwan’s ambiguous status. One of the few authors who strongly advocates their opinion in favor or against is Chow, who is known in her work to be a critic of the KMT.



Skateboarding and Urban Landscapes in Asia: Endless Spots

Christina Kefala

Originating in California, skateboarding has been characterized as an action sport involving riding, complex techniques, and tricks. Big cities – such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and other places along the coastline of the Pacific Ocean – became the soul of skaters, where streets transformed into undulating concrete rides ready for skating. Throughout the years, skateboarding has travelled worldwide. Duncan McDuie-Ra, Professor of Urban Sociology at the University of Newcastle in Australia, through his brilliant and eloquent monograph, opens up a new horizon in the academic literature on urban landscapes and skateboarding, showing alternative urban landscapes and skateboarding spots in Asia.

Throughout the book, the author presents a mosaic of urban landscapes in Asia. Chapter 1 dubs these “shredscapes,” the substitute for landscapes when viewed by skateboarders. Drawing on skate videos as an ethnographic vignette and attempting

to assemble his ethnographic data through rolling ethnography, he extensively analyzes how various landscapes in Asia produce, host, or even threaten skateboarding spots. McDuie-Ra makes four inter-linked arguments, which in my opinion highlight the richness of the text and render it one of the most illuminating and significant studies on urban Asia: (1) “spots produce an alternative cartography of urban Asia” (p. 32); (2) “the search for new spots is constant” (p. 35); (3) “the search for spots, their production and their enrolment in regional and global cartographies index urban development” (p. 36); and (4) “spots create encounters between skaters and authority, skaters and the public, and skaters with each other” (p. 37). Through five substantive chapters and a conclusion that delineates the book’s main arguments, the author creatively explores and opens up a new horizon for the discourse of urban landscapes and skateboarding culture.

McDuie-Ra begins his book (Chapter 1) by inviting the readers to watch a skate video,

Reviewed title

Skateboarding and Urban Landscapes in Asia: Endless Spots

Duncan McDuie-Ra, 2021.

University of Amsterdam Press ISBN 9789463723138

to observe the magnificent skate culture, and to see the creative reinterpretation of the urban landscapes through the lenses of skateboarding. He encourages the readers to explore spots in urban Asia “as they are captured and consumed in film/video, image, online and ‘on the ground’ in Asia” (p. 32). Chapter 2 declares the necessity of rolling ethnography to analyze what makes a spot desirable. Under the “skater gaze” and “below the knees,” urban landscapes and infrastructures produce knowledge for new spots, generating a flow of skateboarders and filmers. In Chapter 3, the author starts to map the main case studies. Starting from China – Asia’s concrete dragon, as he calls it – he focuses on the country’s constant production of spots. China’s infrastructure,

urban development, and endless landscape make the country a unique place for skaters who desire to consume its spots. Cities like Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou became familiar places through skate videos, while China, through his research, emerges as a significant market for skate consumption, including spots and goods.

In contrast with the above chapters, Chapter 4 offers readers a glimpse of Asia’s emptiness in hyper-modern landscapes and spectacle cities such as Astana, Baku, and Dubai. Metaphorically, emptiness refers to the accessibility to ride into these cities’ spots. Skateboarding is erratic in post-Soviet Asian towns like Astana, Baku, and Ashgabat. Their futuristic architecture and their spectacular urbanization produce,



Sociocultural and Historical Aspects of Martial Arts in Southeast China from World War II to 2020

Henning Wittwer

Scholarly treatments of East Asian martial arts in the English language are still rare and occasionally leave a lot to be desired, which is why *Hong Kong Martial Artists* is a most welcome addition to the existing body of knowledge. With his new book Daniel Miles Amos affords his readers a captivating insight into the lived reality of martial arts teachers and students in Southeast China, particularly in the cities of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, from the 20th century until 2020. In doing so, he is able to rely on ethnographic data collected by him in that region from 1976 to the current pandemic (p. xvii). What caught my initial attention and what I consider to be especially worth mentioning is exactly this extended period of investigation. It enables the author to present not only his early findings on the subject matter but also to explain subsequent developments that happened during more than four decades. For the sake of a better comprehension, it was a useful decision to include Chinese characters for specific terminology and photos to support the text.

In more general terms, the book under review is a history of martial arts in Southeast China roughly from the time of World War II to recent times. Over 10 chapters in a mostly chronological order, Amos describes the lives and practices of martial artists based on his informant's accounts and additional sources. He embeds this material in regional histories of Hong Kong and Guangzhou. As such his book may serve as a continuation of *A History of Chinese Martial Arts*,¹ published only three years before, which outlines China's martial arts history – without focusing on a specific geographical zone – until the 1990s. Since

informant's names were anonymized by the author (p. xviii), some of them articulated surprisingly critical words about the Chinese Communist Party and its policies (p. 118) or, for example, the Chinese educational system (p. 103). Naturally, this kind of criticism is missing in *A History of Chinese Martial Arts*, a book originally published under the umbrella of the Ministry of Sport of China. At the same time, because of the disguised names, Amos's text is less functional as a contemporary history per se.

However, more specifically, Amos delves deeply into the sociocultural situations of his research participants and draws detailed pictures of their martial arts and praxes associated with them. Readers will become aware that there was and is no uniformity in Southeast China's martial traditions, neither in their designations, technical contents, morals, nor believe systems. While some martial arts became modernized and "reframed" as a performance sport by the state (p. 61), others, described by Amos as "kungfu cults" and "kungfu brotherhoods," fulfill diverse purposes (p. 1). He explains the sociocultural dynamics within such groups as well as the way outside influences, for example globalization, effect regional cultural praxes like martial arts. Among other things in this connection, Amos presents lively descriptions of secret societies in Guangzhou and offers convincing analyses of them (p. 125). Based on his in-depth studies, he finally ventures to share a prognosis on the future of the "complex cultural systems of kungfu" in Hong Kong (p. 200), which reads well-reasoned.

When it comes to martial arts – even in today's scholarly world – clichés are common. Amos' nuanced, complex portrait of one martial arts teacher may serve as a helpful

Reviewed title

**Hong Kong Martial Artists:
Sociocultural Change from World
War II to 2020**

Daniel Miles Amos, 2021.

Rowman & Littlefield ISBN 9781786615435

counterpart to imagined "Oriental Monks," as Iwamura² dubbed the fictional characters which were independent from the real and simultaneously co-opted or colonized the real, like the 1970s television kungfu hero "Kwai Chang Caine." Based in the real world, Amos depicts a person who, besides leading a kungfu cult, engaged in stark alcohol and tobacco consumption, had to do day work as a kitchen laborer and waiter, got married and divorced, and developed serious health problems (p. 27). In this context the self-image of some informants is interesting, too. Amos gives examples of individuals who regarded themselves as a "Chinese knight errant" (p. 105) or stated that they are able to master "spirit possession" (p. 192), which in turn may be considered by outsiders as a kind of transfiguration, or at least as a romanticized attitude towards their martial training. Yet, mentioning these few examples from the text cannot but disguise the remarkable variety of individual characters, each with their own ideas on martial arts and society examined in the text. In fact, even after I had finished reading the book for the first time, all the colourful life stories resonated with me for days. In the best case, other anthropologists will follow Amos' example and conduct similar long-term research projects on martial arts groups in other parts of Asia. This would make possible comparisons of various aspects like the social strata to which the martial artists in different areas belong, as well as their ideologies and evolutions.

If I had to criticize something about the book, I would wish for a little more editorial vigor here and there. For example, in one instance, the family name "Wong" is written when "Chau" is probably meant (p. 14). In another case, the reader finds "Golden Park Association" instead of "Golden Pork Association" (p. 32). With conscientious reading, the messages are still understandable in these cases; however, ultimately a certain level of ambiguity remains. Apart from that the book truly is a rare gem.

In short, Amos' work is a unique contribution to the understanding of historical and sociocultural aspects of Southeast China's martial arts. Sinologists and students of sinology will find it useful in better comprehending the diverse roles martial arts played in contemporary Chinese society. Students of Asian studies in general may be provided with insights and inspiration for future research – for example, similar investigations in other Asian regions. Moreover, it may prove to be a meaningful source for teachers and practitioners of Chinese martial arts who are eager to learn more about the history and culture of their pursuit.

Notes

- 1 Huang, Fuhua and Fan Hong (eds.). 2019. *A History of Chinese Martial Arts*. London: Routledge.
- 1 Jane Naomi Iwamura. 2011. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 111.



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according to the author, "beautiful urban landscapes nestled with potential spots to skate, though they can be very difficult to access" (p. 92). He explains the desire of skaters to search for the city's backstage skate scene away from the authorities. And

while Dubai is heavily under surveillance, it challenges the skaters to ride the inaccessible wealth that the city offers, experience the "privileged" access, and consume the narrative of spectacle.

Continuing his research on post-Soviet

Asian towns and cities such as Tashkent, Bishkek, and Abkhazia, Chapter 5 analyzes spots where future and past, ideology and memory, clash. Rolling through memoriescapes such as public squares and monuments, skate videos shift their

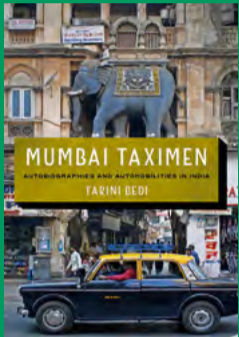
focus from performativity to the location itself, a narrating journey into the recent past. It seems that skate videos analyzed within this chapter capture the voice of these places, while skateboarding questions the limits of the spots. Alternatively, the author in Chapter 6 shows new frontiers in skate videos, analyzing three case studies: Iran, India, and Palestine. These places are lands for discovering new spots. They are challenging for skaters and filmmakers in search of untouched landscapes. Finally, an important merit of the monograph is how it concludes. The author wonders where the next China is, the next destination for skate cartography. However, it seems that he already knows the answer: in the final chapter, he writes about how Taiwan turned into an aesthetic destination for skate videos, an attractive destination for "virgin spots" (p. 166), and a landscape for skate consumption.

The book is an excellent resource presenting remarkable research. It offers a deep and interesting understanding of urban spaces. I find the author's methodology and how he builds his main arguments fascinating. It would be interesting if, in the future, the author continues his research and creates new theoretical discussions. Possible topics for analysis could be gender issues among skaters and exploring landscapes where skate culture proliferates, such as South Korea. On the whole, the book *Skateboarding and Urban Landscapes in Asia* is a precious and much-needed enrichment of international scholarship on urbanization, mobility, Asia, and skateboarding.

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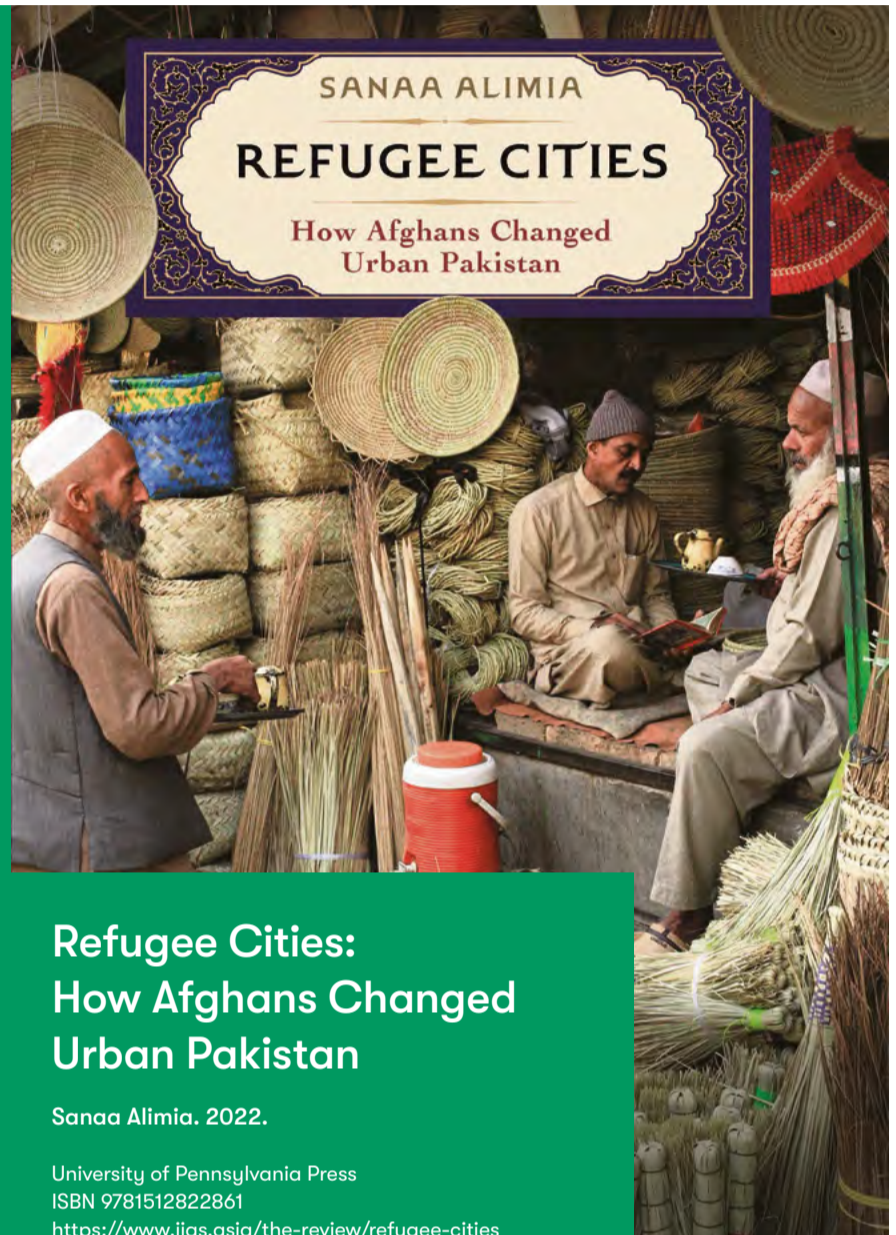
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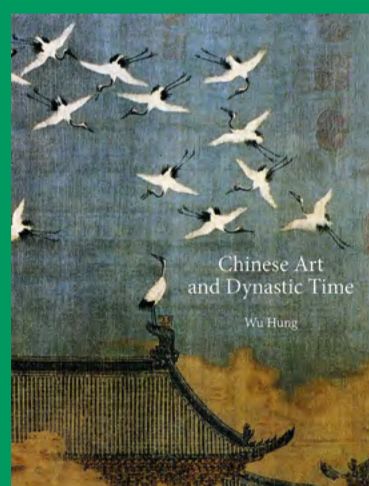
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