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The Newsletter

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International Institute for Asian Studies

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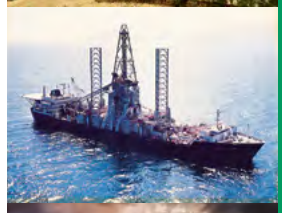

The start of 2022 has greatly furthered the need to restructure energy production and consumption to respond to geopolitical crisis. Through the war in Ukraine, Europe has been called to strategize against Russia by way of its natural resources. As a response to these geopolitical crises, Western governments have instigated a reduction in carbon emissions and greater integrated sustainability of supply chain. While this immediate response seems rational, it reinforces existing socio-ecological inequalities and asymmetries, causing immense stress to other natural resources. This plays into "Politics of Sacrifice," which describes how increased needs for clean energy detrimentally affects an ecosystem and its inhabitants.

This Focus section highlights that although the climate crisis is a shared world-wide experience, it produces differing pathways across spatial and geographic politics, perpetually linking the macro-political and the economic with climate governance.

The Focus regroups articles thematically intertwined, expanding to China, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, even transcending and challenging national borders. Although these environments exist in various contexts, they are united by having to deal with resource management, path dependency, and shifting power structures.

These perspectives offer complex understandings on the intersection of place, policy, and the ever-growing natural resource scarcity that impact regions of the world to varying degrees.

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

It is our great pleasure to introduce our new IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator, Laura Erber. She introduces herself on page 49. You can also read about the IIAS Fellowships and the Taiwan Studies Chair here, along with a report by Anne Sokolsky, who held the Chair from February to June, 2022.

Page 50 is dedicated to the journal *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China*, which is approaching its 25th anniversary. Founder and Managing Editor Harriet Zurndorfer writes about the journal's history, changes to its chronological scope, and the shifts in disciplinary approaches to gender studies of China.

The 7th edition of Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN) took place in June at the Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ) Research Centre of Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea. Convener Ruth Gamble reports on page 51.

On page 47, Tamas Wells writes about his experiences while researching his book *Narrating Democracy in Myanmar*, which was published in the IIAS Publications Series.

Furthermore, we invite you to join the book launch (online or in person) of 'River Cities in Asia. Waterways in Urban Development and History'. The launch will include a panel discussion with the book's authors led by its three editors (page 51). Concise information on the research programmes and the initiatives of IIAS can be found on page 52-53.

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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International Institute for Asian Studies

In this Issue

Paramita Paul

What is personhood? What is our relationship to the earth and the cosmos? This issue of *The Newsletter* opens with The Tone, a new section we launched in the summer of 2022. This edition of The Tone begins with four critical investigations on self and existence by Binna Choi, Nida Ghouse, June Yap, and Ala Younis, the four Co-Artistic Directors of the Singapore Biennale. Organized by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), and commissioned by the National Arts Council, Singapore (NAC), the seventh edition of the Singapore Biennale engages participants and audiences in Singapore and around the world. While the program spans over a one-year period, its main event runs from October 16, 2022, through March 19, 2023, across a network of sites in Singapore.

When we first decided to invite Choi (Director of the Casco Art Institute, from Korea/the Netherlands), Ghouse (writer and curator, from India, living in Germany), Yap (Director of Curatorial and Collections, SAM, from Singapore), and Younis (artist and curator, from Jordan) to write about this edition of the biennale, we envisioned four articles in which we would combine a curatorial piece with an interview with each of the authors. However, in our discussions, it became clear that Choi, Ghouse, Yap, and Younis designed this biennale specifically as a site to reflect on the very idea of personhood, on living, and on relating to what is around us. They gave the biennale a name: *Natasha*. By naming the exhibition, the authors aimed to extend "an invitation to encounter presence," to ponder it, to "ask what it is composed of," and to "consider how it is felt." Therefore, the first four pages of The Tone in this issue of *The Newsletter* extend beyond interviews with individuals to questions of social being itself. Their articles are about ancient stone tablets, sketches of photographs, a plot of land, and digital works. Each offers up new understandings of ourselves and the world.

Combinations of two different sketches of AI-generated faces from https://thispersondoesnotexist.com. Sketches by Xiaolan Lin [@xiaolanlan65].

Also in this issue's The Tone is an article on the 23rd Meinung Yellow Butterfly Festival held in Meinung, Taiwan, in 2021. Meiqin Wang shows how this festival of eco-public art integrates the protection of natural ecosystems and community building, and how it is a "much-needed endeavor in our age of climate change."

These five The Tone articles all reflect the goals with which we set out to redesign this section. They think in broader terms about artistic output, and push the boundaries of art and traditional writing about art.

The Study, The Focus, and The Region

The Study, our section dedicated to stand-alone research articles, starts with a piece by John Smith, who reports on the current crisis in Sri Lanka. The country has gone bankrupt, social unrest has escalated, and it is unclear how the new establishment will rebuild the nation.

In a year that marks 75 years of independence for India and Pakistan, Sambarta Rakshit writes about women revolutionaries in the Indian struggle for independence in his article "Of Extremist Grandmothers." Rakshit documents the story of his grandmother Banalata Sen (1950-1989), and he connects her experiences to those of the well-known female revolutionary Bina Das (1911-1986).

2022 also marks 400 years since the Battle of Macau, fought between Portugal and the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC). In "Revisiting the Battle of Macau in 1622: A Polyphonic Narrative," Caspar Chan compares different narratives of this event by different individuals.

Looking to the future, Yoichi Mine envisions Africa and Asia as one large region in his article "Afrasia: An Emerging Macro-Region." Mine created a map centered on what ancient Greek sailors called the Erythraean Sea, and he posits that "it will be critically important to organize a heuristic dialogue between Africa and Asia in the 22nd century."

In "Ambassadors of K-Culture: Korean Americans, Korea, and K-Pop," Jayson M. Chun and Eun Bin Suk introduce us to the "Pop-Pacific." The authors coined this term to describe "a larger cultural sphere... [consisting] mostly of the US, Japan, and Korea... which combine to create a transnational Pacific culture." K-pop, an aspect of the "Pop-Pacific," is an influential part of Asian-American culture and has transcended the Pacific to become a world culture. It reflects the rise of Korea as a cultural production center, but it is essentially transnational.

Sandunika Hasangani takes us on a journey through Tokyo's manner posters in "Social Control or Trust?" These posters instruct passengers on social etiquette in railway spaces. Hasangani argues that, rather than induce subtle social control, the posters "construct a shared value system among daily commuters" and "yield mutual trust among passengers."

Theang Teron completes The Study with his article "Cultural Hijacking: Clash of Storyworlds." In this piece, Teron discusses the appropriation of non-mainstream narratives by majoritarian cultures in ways that homogenize, flatten, and simplify them. Specifically, the author investigates the situation of the Karbi people, whose indigenous ways of life and belief systems are threatened by a mainstream Hindu right-wing nationalist agenda. Teron suggests that we consciously "create spaces for cultures to flourish" and "enable multiple storyworlds to exist."

Jewellord Nem Singh is the guest editor of this issue's The Focus on "Environmental Governance amidst the Climate Crisis and Energy Transition in the 21st Century." The five articles of this Focus consider China, Kazakhstan, the wider region of Central Asia, Cambodia, and the ultra-deep sea beyond national borders. Climate change is a collective experience, but distinctive contexts face distinctive challenges. The authors elaborate on different pathways towards meeting global climate targets, and in so doing, the essays explore problems of inequality, hierarchy, and power differences. They urge the public to become part of a wider political discussion.

Our regional editors Su-Ann Oh and Ilhong Ko update us on research in Asian Studies at the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore and the Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC), respectively. The ISEAS pages report on a webinar series about what archaeology and art history can tell us about Southeast Asia in the second millennium. SNUAC compiles narratives of heritage in Northeast Asia, addressing the problem of a black-and-white understanding of heritage being either tangible or intangible.

New section: The Slate

In this issue, we launch a new section called The Slate. In addition to facilitating research, exchange, and collaboration with scholars and practitioners throughout the world, another of IIAS' important pillars is education and learning, broadly conceived. In The Slate, we invite educators and researchers to explore the debates, practices, challenges, and opportunities of 21st-century education. Contributions can take many forms, and authors are welcome to submit personal reflections, articles on practical resources, and critical essays on traditional education. For this first iteration of The Slate, Monisha Bajaj writes about pedagogies of Partition. She offers three areas through which we can engage these pedagogies in the classroom and beyond, to learn from this painful history. Violetta Ravagnoli discusses how she uses graphic novels for histories of Asian migration. She shows how well-researched and effectively illustrated graphic novels, combined with academic publications, can fulfill important educational purposes.

Paramita Paul,
Chief Editor of *The Newsletter*

If you would like to contribute to The Slate, or to any of our other sections, please go to www.iias.asia/the-newsletter for more information, and reach out to the editorial team at thenewsletter@iias.nl

'Natasha': The Singapore Biennale 2022

https://www.singaporebiennale.org

Group portrait: Singapore Biennale 2022 Co-Artistic Directors. From left: June Yap, Nida Ghouse, Ala Younis, and Binna Choi. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

( )

Binna Choi

What's in the name? What if there's no person behind the name so it's just the name? If the name evokes more than one person, who is going to answer when it's called? Why do we name the unnameable or the unnamed? Who still remain nameless and stay with us?

1.

Natasha manifests when we undo the wor(l)ds as we know. By undoing them, we arrive at the "matrix" of life: home, family, and other relationships, whether of friendship, love, hate, or simply womb. Simultaneously, by undoing, we also land at home as earth – that is, the family of and in relationship with other species, non-animate beings like stones, or invisible presences like ghosts or spirits. A biennale is an exhibition of contemporary art – along with other programs – taking place biannually and mostly organized in large scale, grabbing many resources including attention. It's a festivity, a ceremony, a statement, a momentum, or all of them. The Singapore Biennale 2022 is named *Natasha*. Given a name, *Natasha* pushes against our normative knowledge and ways of knowing – even including the biennale itself – to become minor, small, nothing, and to be something again. It's the invitation for an encounter, as in a journey to face the meaning of life again.

Likewise, the life of the artist matters in relating to their works. It's life before art or art in life. The encounter may enable us to practice different ways to relate to one another, ultimately towards what I would like to call "impersonal fellowship." This idea is borrowed from theoretical physicist and theorist of mind David Bohm. He said, "The point is that we would establish, on another level, a kind of bond, which is called impersonal fellowship. You don't have to know each other. In England, for example, the football crowds prefer not to have seats in their football stands, but just to stand bunched against each other. In those crowds very few people know each other, but they still feel something – that contact – which is missing in their ordinary personal relations. And in war many people feel that there's a kind of comradeship which they miss in peacetime. It's the same sort of thing – that close connection, that fellowship, that mutual participation. I think people find this lacking in our society, which glorifies the separate individual. The communists were trying to establish something else, but they completely failed in a very miserable way. Now a lot of them have adopted the same values as we have. But people are not entirely happy with that. They feel isolated. Even those who "succeed" feel isolated, feel there's another side they are missing."[1]

2.

Note to take: it may well be that, without names, a family, a community or any other relationship can maintain their relationship of love. There's something immense behind the names, not in the names. The names

Fig. 1

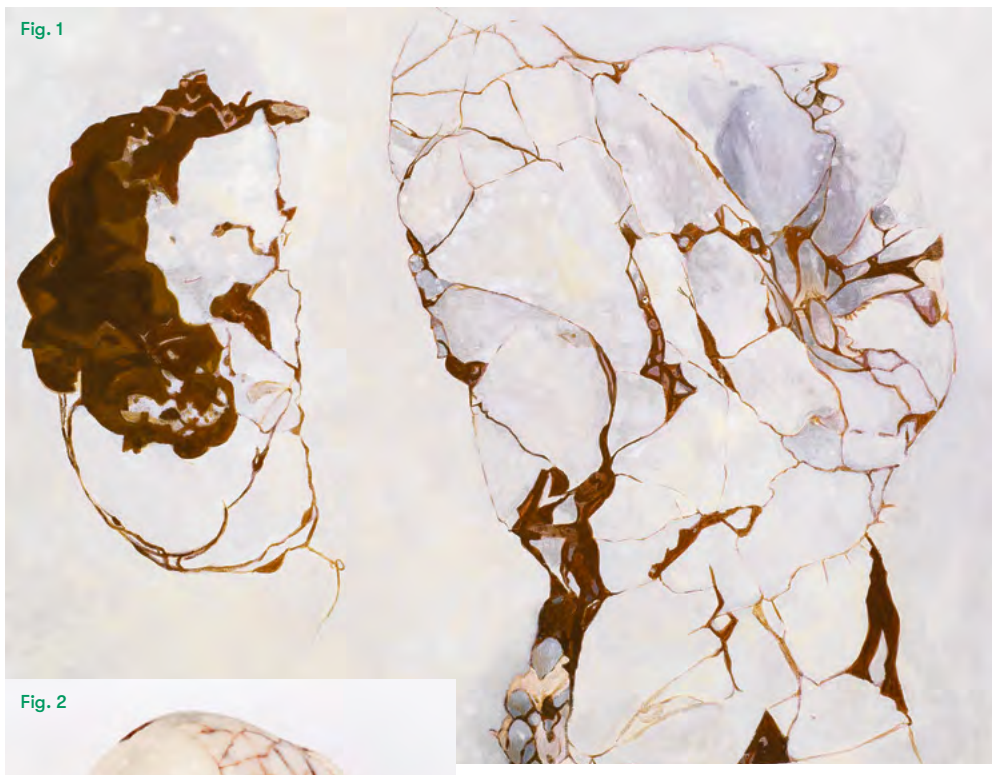


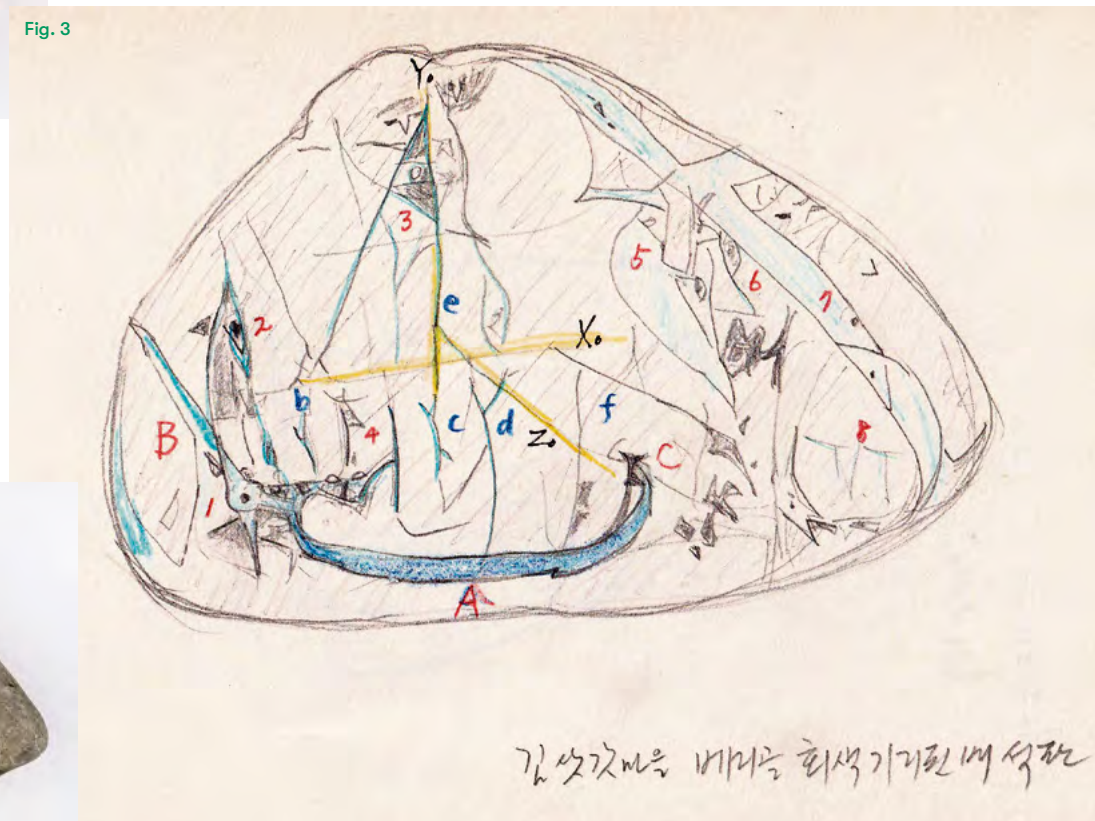
Fig. 2

Fig. 1-2: The photograph (draft, unedited) taken by Kyoungtae Kim shows a stone tablet as part of the collection by Shin Beomsun where the Queen Shyashya and her princess make their appearance. Kwon Koon painted ten different tablets from the collection. One of them is what's presented in Figure 1 (photograph by Youngtae Kim).

Fig. 3-4: The photograph (draft, unedited) taken by Kyoungtae Kim shows a stone tablet as part of the collection by Shin Beomsun, where shapes evoke the forms of ships, gyryffyns and syamyan. The sketch by Shin is presented in Figure 3.

Fig. 4

Fig. 3



are the incomplete agent and rather might perform an act of distancing, a way of objectification as in the colonial custom. So the name at best might be an index, an agent of the relationship in question. Anonymity can be an act of love.

3.

"While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we used to live by suspending ordinary life, and causing the loss of many, we now witness a process of normalization, whether voluntary or forced. Many biennales have also celebrated this 'return' of post-pandemic, with a renewed hope for a world different from what we live(d) in. Visiting Natasha is not only to return, but to be conscious of the values most intensively experienced during the pandemic: intimacy, living the unknown, the capacity to adapt, realizing other possibilities of living and relating to the world." – A collective voice from us, co-artistic directors of Singapore Biennale 2022

4.

Shin Beomsun [신범순] is one of the "artists" contributing to the Singapore Biennale 2022. Shin is Professor Emeritus of Korean Literature at Seoul National University. He never made or exhibited an artwork, but he has an expanding collection

of small stones that he found over last few years. Every day he sketches them, one after another, in order to read them carefully and closely. They show beings – numerous beings – whether they are shamans, *cheonsa* (angels in Korean), princess and queen, or mythical bird-cum-lion like a griffin. Shin, however, named them somewhat differently: "shyamyan" rather than shaman, "tenshya" rather than *cheonsa*, "gyryffyns" rather than griffin. A queen is named, or has the name, Shyashya. Queen Shyashya is composed of multiple and endlessly weaving lines of gyriffin. There's no foreground or background. One form of being lends to another to make a multitude of forms or beings. One could say, a joyful and vital form of co-existence is Queen Shyashya. The story of Queen Shyashya is a redemption of the lost language or lost "paradise" as told by the Little Prince. Shin believes there's a fairy tale prior to myth. The tales are the stories that honor the creators or creating principle of the world. Petroglyphs are a pre-text of such tales. Small ancient stone tablets make the stories travel, available for discovery by those who seek for them.

Natasha draws artists from the edge of – or even outside of – the field of contemporary visual art. It's not to insert the "outsiders" into the "inside." Rather, it's asking all to be outsiders from what and where they used to do. *Natasha* is a means of undoing knowledge or ways of knowing as we know, to say it again. Thus ask: What do we know about art? What does art do? Where to find art and artists? Shin guides us back to the basics yet the fundamental: a way of seeing, the question of who I am and how this "world" is created. We journey into other kinds of temporality and in different directions – e. g., we track back far and far to a long past in order to reach a near future.

5.

Salutes, and stories. This short text is composed during my research trip to Phnom Penh together with Ala Younis, one of the other co-artistic directors. Our time here is short and yet dense, as guided with care by performing artist and organizer Sinta Wibowo, artist and designer Tan Vatey, actress and observer Ma Rynet, artist Tith Kanitha, and filmmaker Davy Chou (Anti-Archives). Along the way, we meet many, This includes Kavich Neang of Anti-Archives, a filmmaker who once was a traditional Kmer dancer; Meta Moeng, who recently relocated the Dambaul Reading Room to share the building at the Anti-Archives; Arnont Nongyao, sound artist from Chiang Mai, in the middle of his workshop with local artists, curators, and neighbours at Rong Cheang: A Community Art Studio; and many more. Sorn Soran welcomed and introduced us to his practice of Cambodian shadow puppetry. Bertrand Porte, archaeologist and curator at Musee National du Cambodge, also showed and shared stories around un-exhibited sculptures and objects in his workshop, where the rich and complex history and culture of Cambodia are integral. In the place where no institution of contemporary art is established, there are branches of friendship, fellowship, broken hearts, and healing that grow out, give shadows, and move the breezes. This research trip would lead us to enable many of colleagues and friends to take a journey and "salute" in the rich yet tearful land of Southeast Asia towards the end of the Biennale, where everyone met or found something of Natasha and came and put together those pieces of a puzzle, if not a forest. At this moment, for my own path to Natasha, I hold on to a piece of stone tablet where from gyryffyns to the Queen many beings buzz toward an opening.

Binna Choi is a curator and the director of Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons in Utrecht, the Netherlands. She is affiliated with different bodies and spirits around the world. Email: binna@casco.art

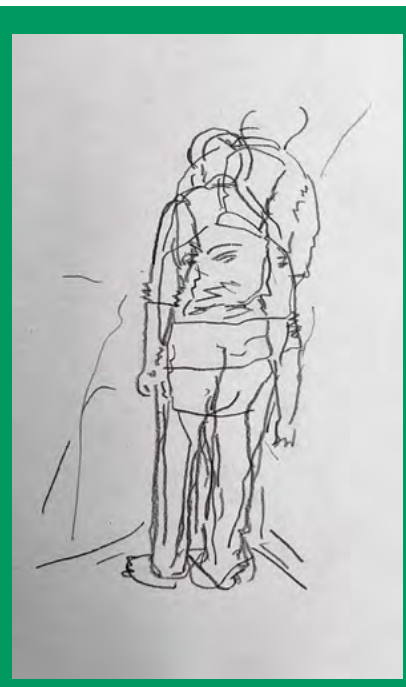
Notes

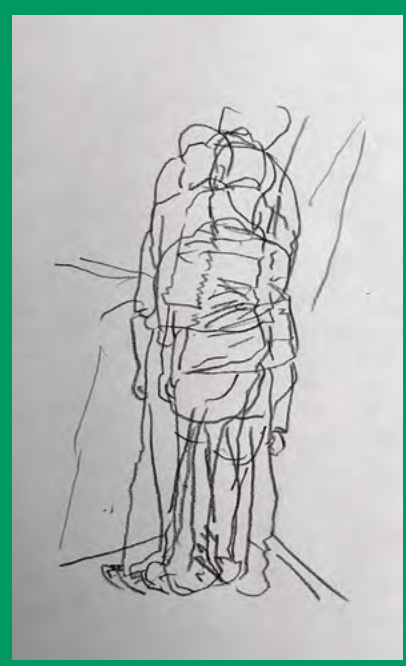
1 David Bohm. 2004. *On Dialogue.* Routledge, p. 37

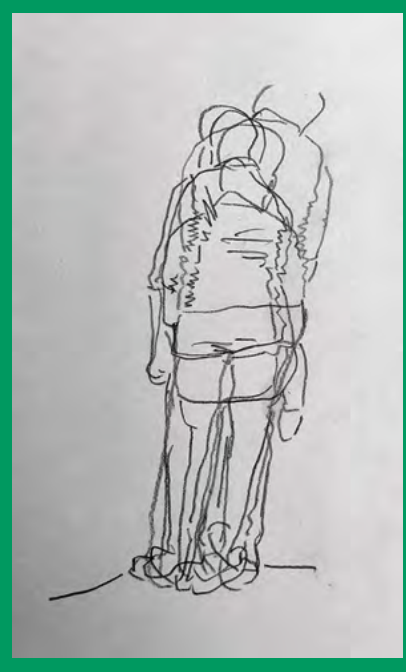
Ghostwork

Nida Ghouse

In one of our initial conversations with Aarti Sunder, she showed us a set of four photographs she had procured by posting a high-paying HIT, or human intelligence task, on a notorious online marketplace she's been researching called Amazon Mechanical Turk — a crowdsourcing website that businesses use to hire geographically dispersed workers to perform discrete on-demand labor that computers are unable to do.







She asked people to send her four images of their workspaces, taken looking inward from each corner of the room they sat in. The COVID-19 pandemic had many pe ople around the globe setting up home offices as a novel condition. Aarti, who was studying at MIT at the time, was in dialogue with friends and colleagues about what isolation from the communal context of the classroom or office, as well as what Zoom-enabled access into the private spaces of the home and the bedroom, might be doing to the nature of learning and work itself. In contrast to this experience of novelty brought on by quarantine regimes, the elimination of the office cubicle or the factory floor is a mainstay for a gig economy that essentially functions by outsourcing work to a remotely located crowd of individuals who are unable to know or interact with each other.

Eliciting images of the physical locations that people inhabit while performing click work via digital platforms, which are ultimately designed to keep them invisible and negate their existence, introduces a crack in a seemingly totalizing system. Aarti received around 20 submissions in response to the assignment she posted, but she singled out one set that caught her attention. When I saw these photographs, I was struck and perplexed, and they have lingered in the back of my consciousness since. What did these pictures want, exactly? In that preliminary discussion, the images seemed to exceed our capacity for attributing language to what they were doing. And even Aarti's subsequent and poignant analysis indicates that what they represent is that which supersedes what can be seen. These photographs are rendered here as sketches that Aarti has made by hand, and their handmadeness is a significant aspect [Figs. 1-4]. The reason she turned to drawing in this particular instance is that she is unsure about releasing these images into the public domain in photographic form. This might have something to do with what she calls their potency, and in addition, what I see as their immediacy.

How does this relate to *Natasha*, the biennale we are making? During one of our early curatorial discussions, Ala flashed a website called *This Person Does Not Exist*[1] onto the shared screen, and June helped me identify my extreme unease – or was it terror? – in response to its content within the uncanny valley. *This Person Does Not Exist* is a repository of high-resolution images of seemingly real people generated by powerful artificial intelligence technology. Each photograph is a composite of many other people, and the single person it portrays is not of this world in the way that you and I might be. Who or what is the referent? Our relationship to the experience of looking at the representation of a visage is undone and that which is indexical about the genre of portrait photography explodes into impossible fragments. The faces on the website express feelings, but it is safe to claim that the entities in the images do not possess the capacity to have them.

In aesthetics, the uncanny valley denotes a negative emotional response with regard to one's relation to an object, based on the object's degree of indistinguishability from a human being. One of the things we have hoped to do by giving the Singapore Biennale 2022 a name that is generally associated with a person is to assess our assumptions of the fundamental conceptual category of the stable unitary subject that personhood implies, to think of our relation to the earth and the cosmos in more material and temporal terms. Sometimes we insist in public discussions that this "Natasha" is not a person, but we maintain that visiting *Natasha* is an invitation to encounter a presence nonetheless. What is this presence composed of? How is it felt? From where has it come and to what time does it belong? While *This Person Does Not Exist* opens onto a terrain I am hesitant to enter, Aarti's project compels us to confront the "intentionally hidden and opaque forms of labor" called *ghostwork* and to feel its presence across various platforms that claim to be computer-operated. It is widely understood that the commonplace notion of artificial intelligence rests on negating the material and human costs that have gone into machine learning. "The word *ghost* here," she writes, "indicates that it is not just the physical absence of a person doing a particular job, but the pretense that such a person does not even exist; the silent laboring hand behind the magic of technology; the silence that requires spontaneity, creativity, and cultural interpretation."[2]

Nida Ghouse is a writer and curator whose projects span mediums and disciplines, experimenting with ways of engaging artistic practices, in relation to activating materials and sites. E-mail: nghouse@bard.edu

Notes

1 http://www.thispersondoesnotexist.com
1 Aarti Sunder, "Spectral Ghost – Deliberate Images, Intended Metaphors," in *Platform Politics: Around In-between and Through* (forthcoming 2023, Singapore Biennale 2022).

Fig. 1-4: *Layered Light Trace,* series of drawings by Aarti Sunder, 2022. "To be willing to read in between the shapes, to see the formation of the human body once again and be reminded of it as a part of the process of automation, where the fight is to identify oneself as a visible node, is a violent process. There is something intimate about these images, yet impersonal. The images contain the violence of forced hiddenness, but also the power to willingly remain unidentifiable. This is why these images are so potent – they urge the viewer to contend with the creativity of the hidden hand all the while signaling towards the harsh apparatus that enables it." – Aarti Sunder

Natasha in Nature

June Yap

Angkrit Ajchariyasophon's *The Sanctuary* is a 24-acre plot of land in Chiang Rai, Thailand, which the artist began tending in 2002. The land came to belong to his family in the 1990s, and before then it had been used for growing pineapple and other seasonal crops. Subsequently, Angkrit would learn from a neighbor that there had been a lotus field and wetlands prior to cultivation, and that the grounds had been a place for the gathering of waterfowl. Determined to return it to a more natural state, Angkrit began experimenting with planting trees and other flora, with hopes also of attracting its original fauna.


Fig. 1


Fig. 2


Fig. 3


Fig. 4

Fig. 1: The garden path. It is late December, the weather in Chiang Rai is cool. The ground has some moisture left. The Lychee tree is still green, but the leaves of the Taiwan giant Bamboo have fallen and now cover the ground. The *Acacia mangium* stretches its branches to find the sunlight that is a source of its energy.

Fig. 2: By the pond. The Bur-flower tree rises straight, elegant and beautiful at the edge of the pond. Its neighbour is the white *Champaka* tree with its fragrant white flowers that stay all round the year. Behind them, upon a small hill, stand the three-needled pine and the large Monkey Fruit tree.

Fig. 3: The octagonal *sala*. My father had bought numerous teak poles and kept them for many years. I used them to build an octagonal pavilion, just like in the Wuxia films that I enjoyed watching when I was young. Around it, I planted many of the *Yang* trees, which love water and these grew up quite quickly.

Fig. 4: Sacred Lotus. In winter, the lotus flowers would wither throughout the pond, so as to store energy in their underground rhizomes. There, they wait for summer time to start new rhizomes from which large bouquets of white and pink flowers would blossom across the pond.

All photos and captions by Angkrit Ajchariyasophon.

But how to begin such an endeavour? Masanobu Fukuoka's *The One Straw Revolution* would prove to be a suitable guide and inspiration, as Fukuoka saw nature as a network of complex dependencies. Within his seminal manifesto, Fukuoka extolled a radical approach that he described as "do-nothing" farming. As he wrote, "If you want to get an idea of the natural fertility of the earth, take a walk to the wild mountainside sometime and look at the giant trees that grow without fertilizer and without cultivation. The fertility of nature, as it is, is beyond reach of the imagination."[1] In nature, plants and trees do not grow in neat rows and organized plots. Fukuoka's process involved not being involved – observing that modern agricultural techniques have become necessary only because a natural balance has been upset. With its principles of direct seeding, non-cultivation, and natural succession, Fukuoka's strategy may be summarized as simply not getting in the way of nature.

While it is not Angkrit's purpose to produce arable land, returning the land to nature would mean some measure of work, or at least the facilitation of growth. Amongst methods, Angkrit would employ Fukuoka's practice of spontaneous seed broadcast – a carefree tossing of seeds roughly where soil conditions could provide them with the opportunity to take root. The process of transformation of land has thus taken the artist many years and much experimentation. It would seem his efforts have borne fruit – quite literally, too.

Walking though *The Sanctuary* – which incidentally is not too simple a task because, following Fukuoka, the land is covered with enthusiastic undergrowth rather than human-friendly paths – we spot a cluster of recently-sprouted mushrooms amongst drifts of fallen leaves. Squatting down, Angkrit brushes aside these leaves to reveal white mycelium tendrils just underneath, and he invites me to feel this enriched soil. The humus is cool, friable, and clean to touch, and it emits a fresh and pleasing earthy scent.

Interest in fungal life seems to have bloomed in recent times, as warnings of climate crisis turn into reality. What may be more compelling is how this expanded knowledge of mycelia life might reorient our understanding of the world. For it is, indeed, entire worlds and systems that we are coming to fully understand. Even the assumption of ourselves as unified in form and consciousness is brought into question. Looking at our microbiomes, we are not singular organisms; we are ecologies.

The invocation of being and its experience in *Natasha* offers up the possibility of new knowledge and new understandings, of ourselves and of the world around us. A world in which we are perhaps not so distinct from the land and nature. From the study of mycelia, the tendency to frame the world in terms of human intention is a blind spot. As the fascinating exploration of fungi by Merlin Sheldrake reveals, "when we humanize the world, we may prevent ourselves from understanding the lives of other organisms on their own terms."[2]

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Notes

1 Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming*, Larry Korn (ed), New York: New York Review Books, 1978, p. 36

2 Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Futures*, New York: Random House, 2020, p. 41

Fig. 1: Samia Halaby showing her codes on Amiga, in a studio visit by Ala Younis, New York, 4 April 2022 (Photo by the author).

Natasha as Code, or Future Friends Passing through the Digital Gate

Ala Younis

In 1987, my uncle gifted us a computer. It was a product that was built by Yamaha in Japan, but as an Arabic-language technology that was conceived in 1983 in Kuwait. MSX Sakhr AX150 was a personal computer that operated in an Arabic interface and offered an array of software to engage with. We called it only Sakhr, an Arabic word that means rock but is also a common male name. At the time, we could not imagine an alternative to Sakhr's limited color range and graphics possibilities. We spent hours on Sakhr trying every feature in its system and cartridges, until we eventually mastered booting its system, navigated it using tips from its manual, and learned how to mimic its operating sounds.

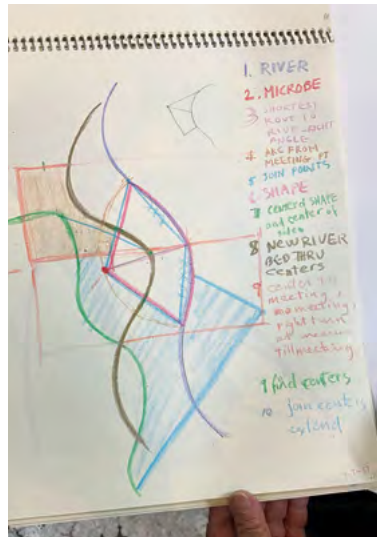

Fig. 2-3: Samia Halaby showing her work on Amiga (left) and her sketches (right) during a studio visit by Ala Younis, New York, 4 April 2022 (Photo by the author).

In 1986, Samia Halaby passed through a similar (digital) gate; her personal computer's name was Amiga, a Spanish word that means female friend. After seeing an Apple II in her mathematician sister's house in 1983 – and successfully trying to use *Logo*, a software that can relay instructions to a digital turtle to move a certain number of steps in different directions, eventually drawing a line as it travels – Samia shopped for her computer in New York. Samia read about the different computers on sale, visited computer shops, asked sales persons for details and information that were not necessarily known to them, and studied carefully the computers' promotional videos. She finally bought an Amiga 1000 for 1000 USD, attracted to its system that offered much more color options than the other models. The artist began programming her art on this computer using *Basic* and C, studying these coding languages from manuals which sit until today in her library.

With Amiga, Samia delved deeper into a world of art-making. As an abstract painter, she questioned the medium versus the knowledge she had amassed until that moment. She learned that she did not want to reproduce digital versions of her own paintings, but to find ways of "expanding the language of picture making."[1] She writes, "there would be no point in using the computer medium to create paintings if they could be done in pigments." A computer-generated art piece should not be a "primitive static image." It should allow a painting to be what a canvas could not offer, while pushing the limits of the artist's/painter's imagination beyond the acquired/established knowledge of her own medium. "A large swish of yellow over dark areas was a pleasurable novelty unique to the computer," she notes. Shapes that shift in color and size – and often make their own noise – was the "kinetic abstraction" Samia sought.

Understand the careful attention of our eyes as we cross a street, or how our brain could bring a distant thing close through its sound. Kinetic abstraction was this ability to move with and around the elements of a painting, just like we navigate the endless possibilities of existence. If an *end* command is not written in its generating code, the painting will go on and on in Samia's work: "I would press the key for the rain function to begin and rain fell all over the screen, I would then, using other keys, add larger shapes, one by one, that would then begin to accumulate 'rain.' The resulting screen was a group of shapes with varying degrees of accumulation. If no more shapes were added, the continuous rain would blur and make all shapes disappear."

Niihau (1987) is a work named after an island in Hawaii, where Samia guest-taught before she returned to acquire her Amiga. A recording of the work, made in the same year, is two minutes and eight seconds. It shows a light violet 4:3 canvas with the word "Niihau" in its upper left corner. Computer-generated sounds precede the visuals, which start as five interlacing oval shapes in different colors that start to override other shapes and each other. After few minutes, the screen becomes populated with a dense mesh of shapes and colors. It is short, but the journey was so full of details that the memory of its beginning might have faded already, requiring that we watch it again. These works are stored as versions of series of codes, stored and indexed on 3½-inch floppy disks. The artist had carried them to exhibitions and performances on her bulky computer device, but for *Natasha*, we are showing them recorded or captured offscreen.

When I visited Samia's studio in New York, where she has lived since 1976, she demonstrated on her Amiga how she wrote and plays the work. She feeds her desktop computer with floppy disks, one for the booting system, then another for some of her works that exist in versions, similar to how we save several word files for the same text, each with a little addition or omission. She types commands into the system, and this shows directories of folders and their content [Fig. 1]. She then types the name of the work (which is a progam) that she wants to play, and it blows up into a full screen and presents one shape/sound after another [Fig. 2]. She cannot interrupt the work /program unless she cuts off the electrical supply. As we try to make a decision on how to show this work in *Natasha*, we also understand that the artwork is the code and not a particular manifestation that Samia has recorded in any stage of time. The work comes on screen clear and pristine, and I ask myself: Can a digital art from 1987 show a sign of its age? Does it have to?

In this studio visit, I told Samia about the name of the Singapore Biennale edition that we were inviting her to participate in. *Natasha*, I said. Samia contained a smile. I explained how we are using a biennial format to rethink the interrupted givens of our professional and personal lives, and how we are trying to articulate our thoughts through close and intimate conversations with artists that inspire us with their intimate involvement and blurred boundaries between their life and work. Samia's smile grew bigger, and she disappeared shortly to return with sketch books [Fig. 3]. Fascinating drawings that she made before and after her computer works, which codify the meanings of the lines and shapes we see in her digital works.

In these sketches, a purple line is a river, a red dot is a microbe, a pink arch is the shortest route to the river, and an orange arc is a house for meeting. These entangled worlds of Samia are abilities to capture with the mind, before our eyes and devices, a logic of commands that instructs (a computer to convey) a journey. Here, *Natasha* is a code, Amiga, or Sakhr – a digital gate passed through in 1987 – a set of energies, an intention of companionship, an institution of the mind that, sometimes, can be mediated through physical, technological, or cerebral abilities.

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Notes

1 All quotations from Samia Halaby are from her unpublished text "My History with Digital Art", drafted in July-August 2020.

A Case of Eco-Public Art in Taiwan

The Meinung Yellow Butterfly Festival

Meiqin Wang

"Storm is coming in the afternoon, so we can only work till noon and this has been the case in the past several days," artist Lin Yann-Lyn told me while we were looking at her husband Wang Yaw-Jun working on a massive installation artwork [Fig. 1]. Their daughter and son were helping their father with the installation. That morning, July 21, 2021, I was observing the creation of *Wind of Summer* in the famous tropical forest Yellow Butterfly Valley (YBV) of Meinung town. Located in southern Taiwan, this is a rural town inhabited by mostly Hakka people (an ethnic minority in Taiwan) who have created a distinctive agrarian culture [Fig. 2]. Summer here is the season of daily thunderstorms in the afternoon, so the artwork developed slowly.

Fig. 1: *Wind of Summer* in the middle of creation (Photo by author, 2021).

Created in the shape of a gigantic squirrel from organic materials such as vines and tree branches [Fig. 3], the work represents a forest elf and embodies Wang's appreciation of the dynamic, poetic, and mysterious natural world in the forest. He wrote: "The innocent life exists because of the abundant water, fertile soil, and healthy forest."[1] Both Wang and his wife are nature-loving people who live in a house situated amid farm fields bordering a foothill area in Meinung where squirrels frequent. He started in early July to construct the framework of the creature at his backyard. Then, this structure was transported to the forest where the family worked together for two more weeks until its completion.

An unpretentious artwork made of and for nature, *Wind of Summer* will stay in the forest until it disintegrates naturally, without leaving any art-induced garbage behind. This simple piece embodies a profound respect for nature – both its nourishing and destructive capabilities – and a desire to work with natural force while reducing the environmental footprints of art to a minimum. This is an ecologically conscious paradigm of thinking that has shaped much of Meinung's community activism. As the main environmental artwork commissioned by the 23rd Meinung Yellow Butterfly Festival (MYBF) in 2021, Wind of Summer carries on the characteristics of artistic production promoted at MYBF: environment- and family-friendly, community-based, and simple and profound at once.

Founded in 1995, MYBF is one of the earliest ecological festivals in East Asia and the first in Taiwan to integrate the protection of natural ecosystems with the promotion of Hakka culture. It is the lasting legacy of the legendary grassroots mobilization Meinung Anti-Dam Movement, which Meinung-born environmental and intellectual activists initiated in 1992 upon learning about the government's plan to construct a dam in YBV to supply water for heavy industrial projects.[2] The forest I visited would be entirely submerged in water if the dam had been constructed. Concerned about the dam's potential threat to the safety of the human community and permanent destruction to the rich ecosystem in YBV, activists quickly launched an anti-dam campaign. They formed organizations and made alignments with local community leaders, politicians, teachers, students, and farmers as well as international scholars and organizations to advance an anti-dam movement.

The annual MYBF was born for the purpose, and it served as a major platform facilitating people of different backgrounds to concentrate their energy, knowledge, and social resources for the anti-dam movement. With well-coordinated efforts, the movement lasted for eight years, forcing official budget for the dam to be eliminated multiple times. Eventually, it achieved a significant success in 2000 when the newly elected president Chen Shui-bian promised not to build the Dam.[3] MYBF has since become the cultural symbol of a rural community dedicated to taking control of the development of their own homeland against the tide of industrialization and rural decline. Importantly, it continues to function as a community-based platform to promote environmental protection, ecological education, and sustainable development.

In the past decade, MYBF has gradually transformed into an environmental art festival, and in 2015 it adopted the biennial format, rebranding itself as an environmental art biennial that aspires to "think globally, act locally." "Think globally" concerns its focus on issues of agriculture, nature, and sustainability that are pertinent to rural communities across the world. "Act locally" reflects MYBF's efforts to foreground local talents and cultivate local collaborative networks. It has striven to engage local people of different ages and various backgrounds in a wide range of reparative works that seek to re/establish a sustainable relationship between human society and the ecosystem that they are part of. It is now a multi-dimensional, multi-medium, and multi-month arts festival that combines ritual, performance art, theater, exhibition, workshops, public talks, field trips, guided tours, youth camps, volunteer training, an artist-in-residence program, sports, craft fairs, and farmers markets, among others.

Fig. 2: View of Meinung town, 2021 (Photo by author, 2021).

One can say that MYBF has evolved into an encompassing project of socially engaged public art, the very subject of my recent edited book.[4] Specifically, it is a case of eco-public art, given its commitment to ecological literacy and sustainable human-world interactions via public arts production and collaborative community experiences. As a long-term eco-public art project, MYBF is a product of the ongoing environmental activism in Taiwan that strives to advance the discourse of ecological protection and promote alternative (i.e., nonexploitative) imaginations about the relationship between human beings and the environment. It has in turn fostered a vibrant community culture

Fig. 3: Whole view and closeup of *Wind of Summer* (Photo courtesy of Lin Yann-Lyn, 2021).

centering on ecology-friendly agricultural practices, alternative lifestyle experiments, and public arts productions in and around Meinung town. By bringing people close to nature, to farming, and to each other, MYBF has also contributed to new forms of art and cultural production, rural living, community experience, and social imagination.

Integrating ecological consciousness in collective learning and community collaboration has been the signature approach of MYBF. Back in 2019, for example, the above-mentioned Lin Yann-Lyn was one of the local artists commissioned for environmental artworks. A fiber artist skillful in weaving with plant-based materials, she led a one-week workshop that took adult and young participants (several of them were families) to explore the flora in YBV, learn about natural materials, and observe and experience nature through one's bodily immersion in it. They collected durable vines from the forest and individually weaved animal forms based on personal preferences, such as bee, butterfly, dragonfly, fish, lizard, owl, etc. All of these were then integrated into a collective environmental art piece – *We Weave a Dream in the Tree* [Fig. 4] – as the final product of their collaboration.[5] After its showcase during the festival, the work was left to disintegrate on its own cause, and its biodegradable materials all returned back to nature.

As it has always been, the 2021 MYBF was hosted by two local non-profit organizations, the Meinung People's Association (MPA, founded in 1994) and the Yellow Butterfly Valley Indian Pitta Workshop (founded in 1993). Both organizations played crucial roles in the anti-dam movement and have remained active in Meinung. MPA in particular has evolved into a social organization that considers itself the custodian of "a never-ending community movement."[6] This year, they chose a theme for MYBF that was more relevant than ever in our environmentally and socially battered world: "Relationship Repair." The theme called out three sets of broken relationships: the human being's relationship with nature, with others, and with oneself.[7] These troubled relationships were at once exposed and worsened by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and MYBF theme promoted reparative learning and actions to improve human-world relations.

Facing strict mobility regulations in Taiwan due to the pandemic, the 2021 MYBF mainly operated virtually and at a much-reduced scale. It officially kicked off on July 15, 2021 with a Teenager Ecological Camp. This was followed by a Youth Art Creation Camp. Both belonged to the "Training Activities" program of MYBF that spanned across art, ecology, and education, with young people as the intended participants and audience. The second program group was "Serial Activities." It started with a publicity session on July 18 showcasing visual arts, music, and creative writings. This session was produced from a performance workshop sponsored by MYBF last year exploring the interactions of land, rivers, and people. This was followed by a public screening of a documentary that recorded a habitat walk, which explored the current ecosystem of the Meinung Creek. The walk (and documentary) shed light on the plants, insects, and wild animals who make a home in and around the creek.

The third program group was called "Thematic Activities," and it started on July 31 with the Butterfly Ceremony, the core component of MYBF. This is the ritual dedicated to yellow butterflies that used to appear in millions, fluttering around the valley in summer and for which the YBV was named.[8] By extension, the ritual pays tribute to all life forms that once populated the valley. The Butterfly Ceremony has been one of the most attended activities of MYBF since its inception.[9] This year, due to the pandemic, only the organizers and a few invited guests attended the ceremony. A recording of the ceremony was then posted to MYBF's Facebook page and other social media channels.[10]

The Butterfly Ceremony was followed by two other thematic activities in August: (1) an artist talk and public discussion on this year's environmental artwork *Wind of Summer*, and (2) a concert featuring songs in Hakka dialect. Both the environmental art commission and the concert have been signature components of MYBF, but this year they were smaller and presented online. The last activity was a performance art workshop that lasted for a week in September. This was the only program that was carried out in real physical space, specifically, along the creek and forest in YBV. In addition, a number of virtual talks were hosted for the public during these months, in which scholars and artists offered in-depth discussion on topics related to ecology and community-based public art.

Coming back to *Wind of Summer*, it was also the subject of a 12-minute video of the same title by Lauwei Wei, a local video artist and filmmaker who participated in an earlier edition of MYBF when he was still an undergraduate student. The video not only recorded the creative process itself, but also provided Wei's personal interpretation of the interrelation between Wang's artwork and the natural ecology of Meinung.[11] This video was released online to prepare the audience before they participated in the online artist talk held by MYBF to celebrate the completion of the installation. Such multi-dimensional and creative collaborations have been a typical approach of MYBF, an approach that guides much of its operation.

Overall, MYBF is an inspiring case of eco-public art that seeks to integrate environmental activism, ecological literacy, community building, and public arts production. It is a much-needed collaborative and collective endeavor in our age of climate change, extreme weather events, and pollutions of all kinds in the air, soil, and water. Especially for people who are interested in community-oriented creative experiments aiming for sustainable, holistic, and beneficial relationships between human living, nature, and art, the 27-year-old MYBF has much to offer.[12]

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Fig. 4: Whole view and closeup of *We Weave a Dream in the Tree* (Photo courtesy of Lin Yann-Lyn, 2021).

Notes

1 MYBF, "Wind of Summer," posted August 7, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/mnybf/posts/4331549333588991/

2 For an in-depth study of the anti-dam campaign, see Jeffrey Hou, "Grassroots Practice of Environmental Planning," Doctorate Dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 2001).

3 Jeffrey Hou, 66.

4 Meiqin Wang ed., *Socially Engaged Public Art in East Asia* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2022).

5 https://mpa.artlife.tw/mall/help-3_58_54-335.html

6 MPA, "Historical Origin," https://mpa.artlife.tw/mall/help-1-1.html. Also see Jeffrey Hou, 69.

7 MYBF Facebook, posted June 26, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/mnybf/posts/4213737235370202/

8 The number of butterflies as well as the biodiversity of YBV have been greatly reduced since the early 1990s due to profit-driven logging in the area prompted by the government's plan to construct the dam.

9 The 2010 and 2011 Butterfly Ceremonies can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQFHy0JRKcg and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vdi0yvDdFrY

10 The 2021 Butterfly Ceremony can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7H8La_oWzA

11 Video *Wind of Summer* can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2qA7SttGgE

12 For MYBF's past editions, see Meinung People's Association's website https://mpa.artlife.tw/mall/help-3.html. For MYBF's recent editions, see MYBF' Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/mnybf/

Sri Lanka at the Crossroad of Its History

John Smith

I met Nishal, a 27-year-old man, in Colombo in early July 2022. He was buying essentials for his upcoming journey. On 12 July, Nishal's ship departed from the Port of Colombo with a crew of 34. Nine Russians and 25 Sri Lankans were on board, all young and hopeful. The team was united in the task of transporting hundreds of containers across the globe, starting in the USA. On the same day, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the now former President of Sri Lanka, left the country bound for Singapore. Sri Lanka went bankrupt after months of crisis, social unrest escalated, and the new establishment was left with the challenge of rebuilding a collapsing nation.

Fig. 1: An entire town blocked by queues for fuel (Photo courtesy of Dilip Kumar, 2022).

Nishal's girlfriend Radeeka helps her mother make breakfast. As gas has been out for weeks, preparing breakfast involves waking up earlier, gathering *dara* (left-over palm branches), cooking, and then scrubbing pots hard. Currently, Sri Lanka is experiencing the most serious economic, political, and social crisis in its history.[1] In many parts of the country, the 26-year war has never directly affected the people this much. As a result of the lack of debt repayment, the rampant inflation, and the lack of many basic necessities (e.g., fuel, medicine, food), the island is in the midst of complete economic chaos. Several factors – mismanagement, corruption, lack of political vision, a sudden ban on agricultural pesticides, COVID-19, and the energy crisis in Europe – have contributed to the downfall and social isolation of millions of Sri Lankans.[2]

The Rajapaksa family

The Rajapaksa dynasty has long held power in Sri Lanka. In the 1950s, D.A. Rajapaksa (1905-1967) was the patriarch, and later his sons stepped into politics. One of these sons, Mahinda (b. 1945), became President in 2005. During his tenure, his brothers and family members held different powerful positions. Among them Basil (b. 1951) and Gotabaya (b. 1949) kept key strategic ministerial roles till Gotabaya, in 2019, eventually became President himself. It's not a matter of individual skills alone. Since the final phases of the Civil War (2009), the Rajapaksas have constructed an extensive political, economic, and financial network. Over many years, they have established companies, firms, financial institutions, and connected these to government and foreign donors.[3] China played a major role in funding gigantic projects, supposedly for people's benefit, but often for enhancing the ruling family's power and image. It is true that some projects were necessary for the country to develop, such as highways, ports, and power plants, but loans were a noose for the government.[4] Additionally, Chinese banks provided huge loans to Sri Lanka for the construction of useless works that merely contributed to rulers' enormous economic wealth at the expense of the people.

One of Sri Lanka's well-known and well-exploited fortunes is that it is in a highly strategic geopolitical position. For this reason alone, the offers of support from India and the USA, the requests for stability from Europe, and the economic interests of Russia and China continue. Yet again, everyone is ready to use Sri Lanka for political interest. Ukraine's president, for example, declared that Russia must be considered responsible for the Sri Lankan crisis.[5] China, India, the USA, Europe, the United Kingdom, and others, continue to strongly affirm their willingness to help Sri Lankans and the nation. The reality, however, is that such powers just make sure that their physical, financial, and political positions remain intact. Rather than a blessing, this bond appears to be a curse. China comes forward offering financial support and loans: one of the roots of the problem trying again to become the solution.

Street protests

On July 9, 2022, the situation spiraled out of control. Seen from above, the scene resembled a street scene during one of the great religious holidays. The heat was, as always, suffocating, the screams of the crowd deafening. The crowd pushed everyone towards a single center: the presidential palace. That same white building, always so immaculate and silent, was protected by yellow police barriers just a few hours ago. So protected, that the two rows of fences also prevented people from seeing inside. But the crowd managed to enter, to bathe in the pool, and to use the President's toilets, as a form of revenge.

On July 11, the President, the highest expression of a broken political class, announced his resignation, after leaving the same building.[6] Once again, Gotabaya Rajapaksa did not keep his promises: he left the country using the immunity constitutionally given to his role, and he did not present his resignation on the day he publicly declared it, because he was concerned about being safe abroad. As usual, first personal and family gain and then, eventually, the public interest.

The political future of the country fluctuated for days, reflected in countless projections, predictions, and snide comments. Ranil Wickremesinghe was named Acting President after Rajapaksa escaped. What the Acting President did was what governments in Sri Lanka have always done in times of hardship: he imposed curfews in different areas of the country and enacted the emergency law. People are used to those measures: during wartime, during the orchestrated communal riots in 2018, following the Easter attacks in 2019, and then during COVID-19 in 2020. Curfew and emergency laws were imposed so many times that, now, people no longer feel their weight. Soon, Wickremesinghe was elected by the Parliament as the eighth President of the country with a majority of 134 votes. Hopefully this is the beginning of a new era of stability, so needed and deserved by Sri Lanka's people.

A matter of accountability

In the new government, just after the presidential election, many of the same ministers were confirmed, raising a critical question: can the parliament bring about the changes that are needed, or will continuity mean immobility? Having seen the former President flee, the Supreme Court banned his powerful brothers from leaving the country. This seemed to be the end of the dynasty. Yet many old incidents and crimes remain unresolved. Many attempts to identify root causes and direct responsibilities have failed in the past.[7]

This crisis showed how much the people of Sri Lanka changed since the end of the war in terms of public participation. It also showed how much the democracy matured. The #GotaGoHome or #GotaGoGama[8] – later *Aragalaya*[9] – movement has written the history of Sri Lankans as a diverse nation, a nation in which Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Agnostics, and Atheists united for a common goal of justice and development for all. Overall, this movement has demonstrated enduring solidarity and civil faith, showing that there is an alternative to violence and war. And that the alternative is doable. In Colombo and several other cities, hundreds of thousands of people joined the peaceful sit-ins, regardless of weather, opponents, and political attempts of bending their motivation.

Facts and history will prove whether the political system has changed as well. Whether the new leaders prioritize their people will be seen through their actions and the implementation of their policies. Several issues remain unresolved, including delegation of power, constitutional reforms, economic plans, international positioning.

Until now, new leaders and politicians have not been able to find an appropriate space. It's not about new names. It's about a new pattern of living politics, a new approach to power, an open space for participation, and a strong commitment to accountability and inclusion. There is often a vicious circle here: politicians discourage people from participating, and people do not stand up to discouragement.

Realistic hopes

Hour by hour, week by week, the ground situation changes. The state of emergency passed in parliament, former President Rajapaksa's visa was extended in Singapore, activists were arrested, and a court seeks to hold those responsible for the crisis accountable. It all happened within hours, while people kept queuing for fuel. At the end of July schools partially reopened, a sort of rehearsal of normality.

In October this year, Nishal will return to the island and will likely see a different Sri Lanka. He hopes that his parents and girlfriend have regular access to gas for cooking and fuel for transportation. He believes that there will be a solid plan for the economy of the country. He trusts that a recovery from the crisis will be supported by the IMF and reliable international partners.[10] In the meantime, with rampant migration continuing, thousands of citizens will have left seeking a better future.

John Smith lived in Asia for almost twenty years and works in the field of human, social, and personal development. Nishal and Radeeka are pseudonyms.

Notes

1 https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61505842
2 https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/09/world/asia/rajapaksa-family-sri-lanka-president.html
3 https://www.icij.org/investigations/pandora-papers/sri-lanka-rajapaksa-family-offshore-wealth-power/
4 https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/13/china-sri-lanka-rajapaksa-family-corruption/
5 http://www.adaderana.lk/news/83636/ukrainian-president-blames-russia-for-sri-lanka-crisis
6 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/9/sri-lanka-protesters-storm-president-house-demanding-resignation
7 https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/promoting-reconciliation-accountability-and-human-rights-sri-lanka-report-united
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9 https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/aragalaya-this-word-means-struggle-sri-lanka-gotabaya-rajapaksa-8039897/
10 https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/07/27/imf-says-sri-lanka-needs-to-talk-with-china-about-debt-restructuring/

Quezon City: Asia's Lesser-Known Planned Capital City

Ian Morley

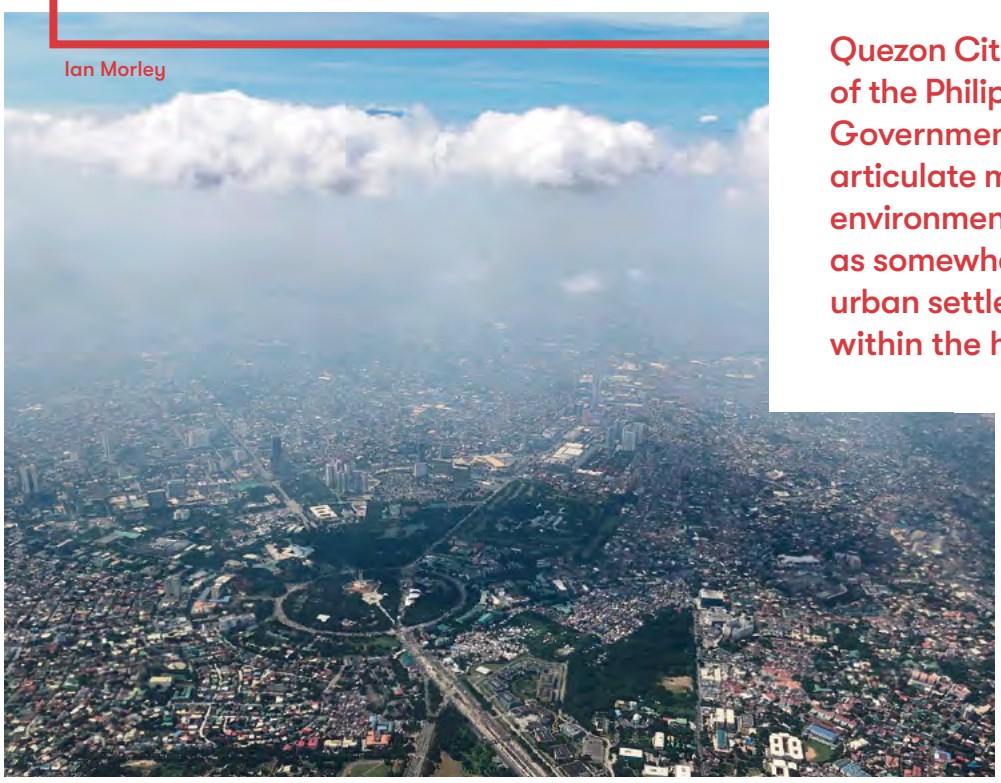

Fig. 1: A westwards aerial view of the Quezon Memorial Circle and Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City, December 2019. Source: Ian Morley.

Quezon City was founded in 1939 as the future postcolonial capital of the Philippines. Inspired by the social values of the Commonwealth Government (established 1935), the settlement was meant to articulate modernity, equity, and the Filipino soul in architectural and environmental form. Yet, despite the intention to devise Quezon City as somewhere "better planned" and "more beautiful"[1] than any existing urban settlement in the Philippine Islands, it is a place largely ignored within the historiography of Asian urbanism.

Despite nowadays having a population of almost three million people,[2] and in consequence being the largest municipality in the Philippines, scholars have tended to neglect the early development and urban planning of Quezon City. Broadly speaking, what has been said of the settlement's plan is that it builds upon the American City Beautiful paradigm. The city's layout conforms to the grand spatial forms introduced to the country in 1905 by the American architect-planner Daniel Burnham. However, this narrative underplays a number of significant contextual matters. Firstly, during the 1930s, Filipino architects put forward new ideas and new solutions in order to resolve ongoing social and environmental challenges.[3] Secondly, akin to developments in other Asian nations, Filipino innovations in architecture and urban design were perceived to enrich the concept of citizenship. Thirdly, by the late-1930s the phenomenon of transnational city planning practice was well-established.[4]

Against the backdrop of political, cultural, and environmental design advancement, Quezon City was never meant to be an ordinary community. On the one hand, its layout was not influenced by the 19th- and early 20th-century exemplars of Washington, DC and Paris, France.[5] On the other hand, as the "mother city" of the soon-to-be independent Philippine nation, the city was to be the postcolonial site where Filipino democracy was depicted, where culture was augmented, and where heroes were acclaimed. It was to be the nucleus where Filipinos could create their own destiny and, in that context, display their unique spirit.[6] Housing arrangements, not just public edifice and public space design, were important to this process.

Planning for social betterment

Quezon City's original plan was composed in June 1941 by the American Harry Frost with assistance from Juan Arellano and Alpheus Williams. Whilst representing "a joint Filipino-American achievement,"[7] the plan merely laid out residential districts in a grid-type pattern. However, subsequent to national independence (July 1946), such utilitarian configurations were redrawn. As *The Master Plan for the New Capital City* (1949) reveals, in the early-postcolonial milieu, state-sponsored city planning was to operate with noticeable social purpose: Quezon City was to comprise economically productive, self-contained communities known as "neighbourhood units," and these were to be spatially organized around the activities of the modern Filipino family.

Within the restructured urban form,[8] parcels of land were cut into approximately one kilometer square (100 hectare/245 acre) segments. To help nurture social "efficiency," land in each neighbourhood unit was divided along clear-cut lines: 60% dedicated to low-rise housing (sited in 400 sq. metre, 800 sq. metre, and 2,000 sq. metre plots); 3% for school premises; 12% for parks; 18% for roadways; and, 7% for shops and the community hub.[9] Facilities such as health centres, recreational halls, community halls, police stations, fire stations, and more were recognized as being vital to the city's and, so, nation's development. Put simply, activities occurring within the bounds of Quezon City were to synchronize with the course of national evolution.

Given that the late-1940s city plan purportedly offered something more socially beneficial than its early-1940s counterpart, it is worthwhile to assess why, by 1949, spatial forms hitherto unseen in Philippine urban planning were utilized in Quezon City. Notwithstanding geometrical approaches to city planning being used in the ancient past – e.g., by civilizations in China, India, Greece, and Rome – it is my belief that during the 1940s, leading Filipino urbanists were stirred by planning discourses in not only Europe and the United States but also in Latin America. For example, in 1947, a delegation of Filipinos visited North and South America to develop ideas and plans for the future capital.[10]

International modernity and the planned capital city

As to why there is a need to reappraise Quezon City's early planning character, it is commonly overlooked that Modernism was judged in many Latin American countries to contain "native elements." Modern design was recognized in Central and South America as being truly national *and* contemporary. Critically, it also presented, and represented, the reorganization of urban living so that citizens could have a better quality of life than was previously possible. That said, within Asian historiography, barely any attention has been given to the correlation between plot patterns, the Philippine Government's remit to beget social justice, and the cost of constructing new modern urban neighbourhoods. Yet, by way of example, two works – Thomas Adams' *The Design of Residential Areas* (1934) and the Federal Housing Administration's *Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses* (1936) – supply empirical data that demonstrate how planning methods, such as those developed/practiced in places such as the Philippines, could maximize social benefits. In the view of Adams, when land is arranged thoughtfully and functionally into large-sized divisions (of 200 acre area), it supplies economical arrangements for housing design (i.e., it produces houses affordable to the masses). Likewise, the Federal Housing Administration recommended the use of curvilinear, courts, and cul-de-sac configurations in modern planning practice: grid plans have "several decided disadvantages when applied to residential areas"[11] – e.g., they increase the need for additional volumes of paving.

All in all, Filipino bureaucrats and architect-planners no doubt became increasingly cognizant of the Modernist concept of efficient urban design: habitation, work, leisure, and circulation.[12] In their efforts, they carried forward the views of progressive-minded urbanists in Europe and the Americas who, during the 1930s/1940s, supplied new directions to rationalize the laying out of urban fabrics. Furthermore, they became aware that city planning as a state-sponsored endeavor not only offered a means to overcome existent social problems, but was a tool too to advance Filipino social ideals borne within the decolonizing political and cultural frame, *and* to accordingly (re)organize the functions of collective life. In supplying a means to connect with societal organization on Filipino terms, the logic behind modern planning paralleled the transitional ideals of Filipinos as the colonization of their country drew to a close and, from 1946, they undertook self-rule for the first time since 1565.

Thus, the goals of the revised Quezon City plan as specified in *The Master Plan for the New Capital City* echo American architectural pioneer Frank Lloyd Wright when he argued that planning's function is to endorse liveability, culture, and democracy.[13] Evidently, there is still much to learn about the form and meaning of Asian urban places, especially within the frame of decolonization. With Quezon City purposefully formed as a showplace - "*lunsod na maganda, maayos, maunlad at makabgo*"[14] ["a city that is beautiful, orderly, prosperous, and modern"] - life within it was to supply "an atmosphere of dignity, freedom and human happiness."[15] Today, the connection between planning, urban morphology, and quality of life is well known. But how this association was formed in past eras, especially times when nations experienced profound social, political, and philosophical transition, offers much for scholars of Urban History and Asian Studies to explore and learn. Quezon City's planning history explicitly demonstrates that there are many avenues still in need of exploration.

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Notes

1 Harry T. Frost, "Quezon City. Functional Planning Gets its Chance", *Philippines* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1940), p. 16.
2 The Philippine Statistics Authority lists Quezon City's population on May 1 2020 as being 2,960,048 persons. https://psa.gov.ph/population-and-housing/node/164811.
3 Ian Morley, *American Colonisation and the City Beautiful. Filipinos and Planning in the Philippines, 1916-35*. London, UK: Routledge (2020), pp. 82-172.
4 Stephen V. Ward, 'A Pioneer 'Global Intelligence Corps'? The Internationalisation of Planning Practice, 1890-1939', *Town Planning Review* 76.2 (2005), pp. 119-41.
5 'Plan New Capital to Replace Manila in Philippines', *The Daily Herald* (Provo, UT), October 15 1948, p. 10.
6 Arguably the most authoritative book on Quezon City's urban history is Michael Pante's *A Capital City at the Margins*. Quezon City, the Philippines: Ateneo de Manila Press (2019).
7 Celso Carunungan, *Quezon City. A Sage of Progress*. Quezon City: Cultural and Tourism Affairs Office (1982), p. 35.
8 As the *Report of the Committee on Capital City Site* (1947) exposes, numerous Filipino architects—e.g., Juan Arellano, Antonio Toledo, Cesar Consio, Juan Nakpil, Pablo Antonio, Fernando Ocampo, and Antonio Kayanan—were involved in the process of laying out the new city and designing its public and private buildings.
9 *The Master Plan for the New Capital City*. Manila: Capital City Planning Commission (1949), p. 12.
10 Isabelo Crisostomo, *Quezon City. Ang Paglikha ng Inyong Lunsod*. Quezon City, the Philippines: Capitol Publishing House (1971), p. 20.
11 Federal Housing Administration, *Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses, Technical Bulletin No. 5*. Washington, DC: Federal Housing Administration (1936), p. 12.
12 Le Corbusier, *La Charte d' Athènes*. Paris: La Librairie Plon (1943).
13 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City*. New York, NY: William Farquhar Payson (1932), p. 53.
14 Isabelo Crisostomo, op. cit., p. 9.
15 'Foreword', *The Master Plan for the New Capital City*, p. 5.

Afrasia: An Emerging Macro-Region

MINE Yoichi

One might assume that those engaged in African studies are typically African, European, or American. However, such an assumption does not reflect reality. Looking at East Asia, the Japan Association for African Studies has nearly 1000 members. The majority are Japanese who carry out ethnographic fieldwork in Africa at the level of local villages. African studies have also developed remarkably in China, India, and South Korea, each in its own way.

Fig. 1: Afrasia in the World.
(Figure by the author, based on Reto Stöckli, NASA Earth Observatory; G. Projector).

Asia and Africa as a single unit

I visited Africa for the first time in 1989 to take part in an NGO mission to observe Namibia's independence elections. Flying with Malaysia Airlines, I approached the African continent with stopovers in Mauritius and Madagascar. On the way back, as the airplane from Kuala Lumpur to Tokyo did not fly as scheduled, the airlines offered the passengers sightseeing in Melaka, where merchants from Portugal, the Netherlands, West Asia, China, and the Ryukyus roamed around centuries ago.

Over the 30 years that have passed since then, I have enjoyed sojourns in Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Bangkok, Delhi, Dubai, and Istanbul in transit to African cities. As travelling via Europe is an expensive, time-consuming detour, one needs to go via an Asian city to travel from Japan to Africa. I naturally got into the habit of thinking of Asia and Africa in combination.

What if we were to envision Africa and Asia as one large region? Using NASA satellite imagery, I created an image that centres on what ancient Greek sailors called the Erythraean Sea [Fig. 1]. In the first volume of *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee gave the term Afrasia to the steppe belt stretching from West Asia to North Africa, a part of the cradles of civilisations.[1] Historians today call the western part of the Indian Ocean, where the cosmopolitan Swahili civilisation flourished, the Afrasian Sea.[2] I define Afrasia more broadly, following the terminology of Ali Mazrui and Seifudein Adem, as a macro-region that embraces both the African and Asian continents plus their surrounding islands.[3]

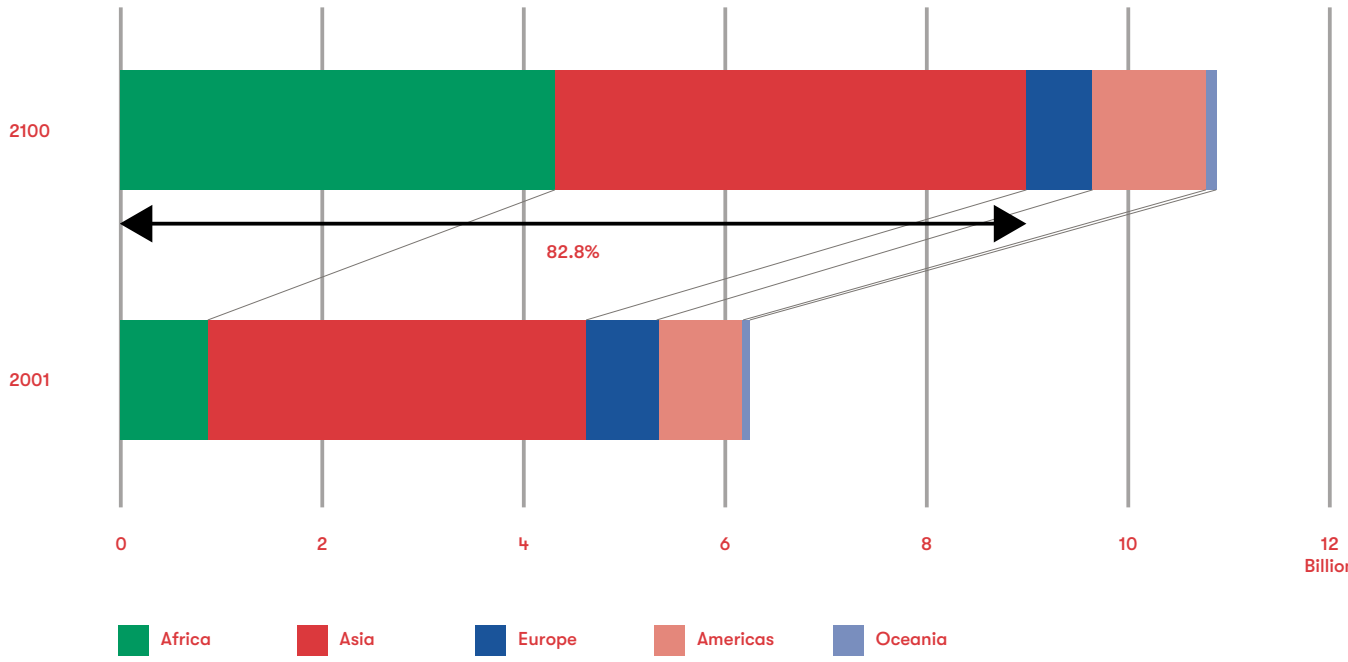

Fig. 3: Afrasia's Share in the World's Population. (Figure by the author, based on *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*).

Let us take a macroscopic, futuristic view. People living in this broader Afrasia will make up the overwhelming majority of the world's population by the end of the 21st century. This trend is confirmed by long-term projections of demographic change by world region [Fig. 2].[4] The population of Asia is projected to plateau around 2050 and gradually decline in the second half of this century, while the population of Africa is expected to increase five-fold throughout the century due to relatively high fertility rates and improvements in health conditions in the region. We can get an idea of the magnitude of the change by looking at the population distribution at the starting and ending points of the 100-year time span: in 2100, Asians and Africans will each account for around 40 percent of the world's population, thereby representing more than 80 percent of the total in combination [Fig. 3].

The combined area of Asian nations is roughly equal to the combined area of African nations. Therefore, given that the population sizes of the two regions will be on a par by the beginning of the 22nd century, the population densities of the two regions will also become almost equal. In terms of the social landscape, Africa's future may look like India's present.[5]

If demographers adopt different assumptions, the resulting figures may change significantly. However, recent research conducted by *The Lancet* has also reached similar conclusions about the distribution of the world's population in 2100.[6] The future shape of the planet will be contoured by the dialogue that the peoples of Africa and Asia, the big twins, will organise.

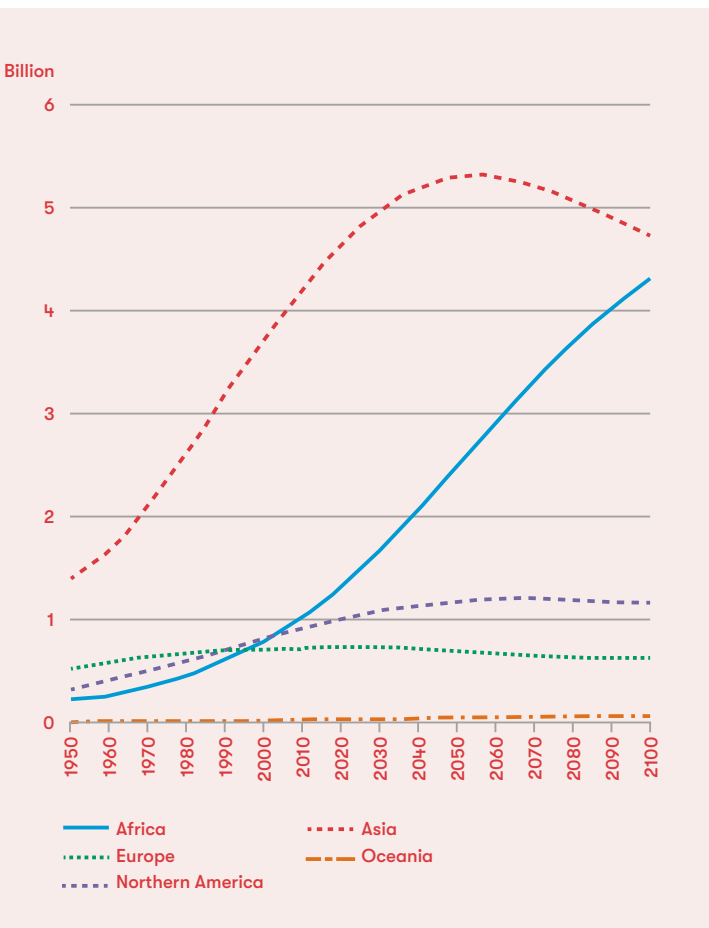

Fig. 2: Global Population Change by Region, 1950-2100.
(Figure by the author, based on *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*).

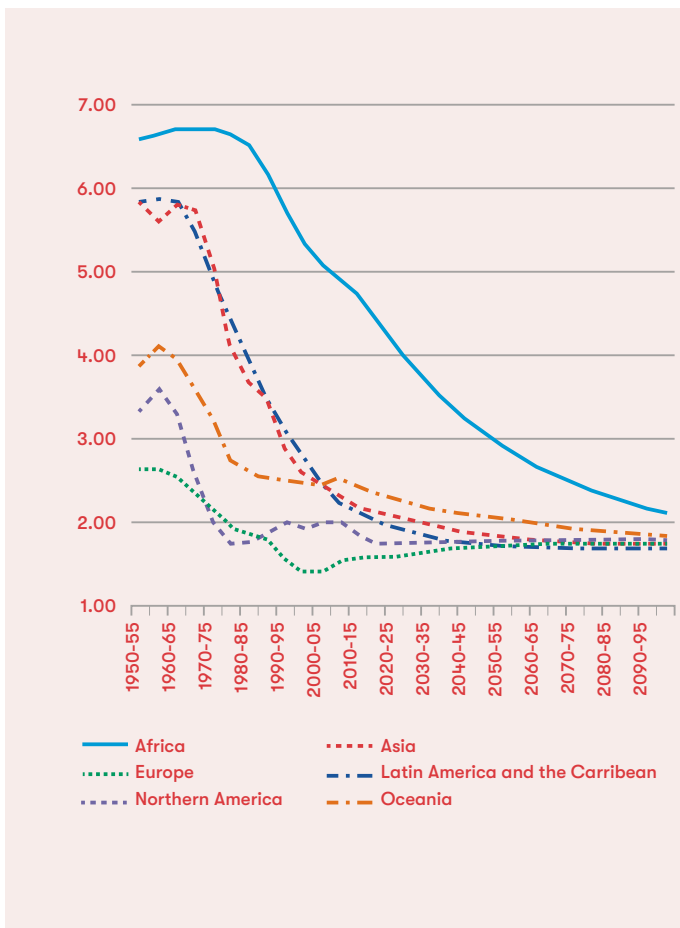

Fig. 4: Projection of Fertility Change by Region,1950-2100.
(Figure by the author, based on *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*).

History matters

The Japanese scholar of Middle Eastern studies Itagaki Yuzo once proposed the idea of 'n-region'. The variable 'n' can be any countable number, and this means that individuals can freely conceive and choose different regions, or spheres/spaces in which

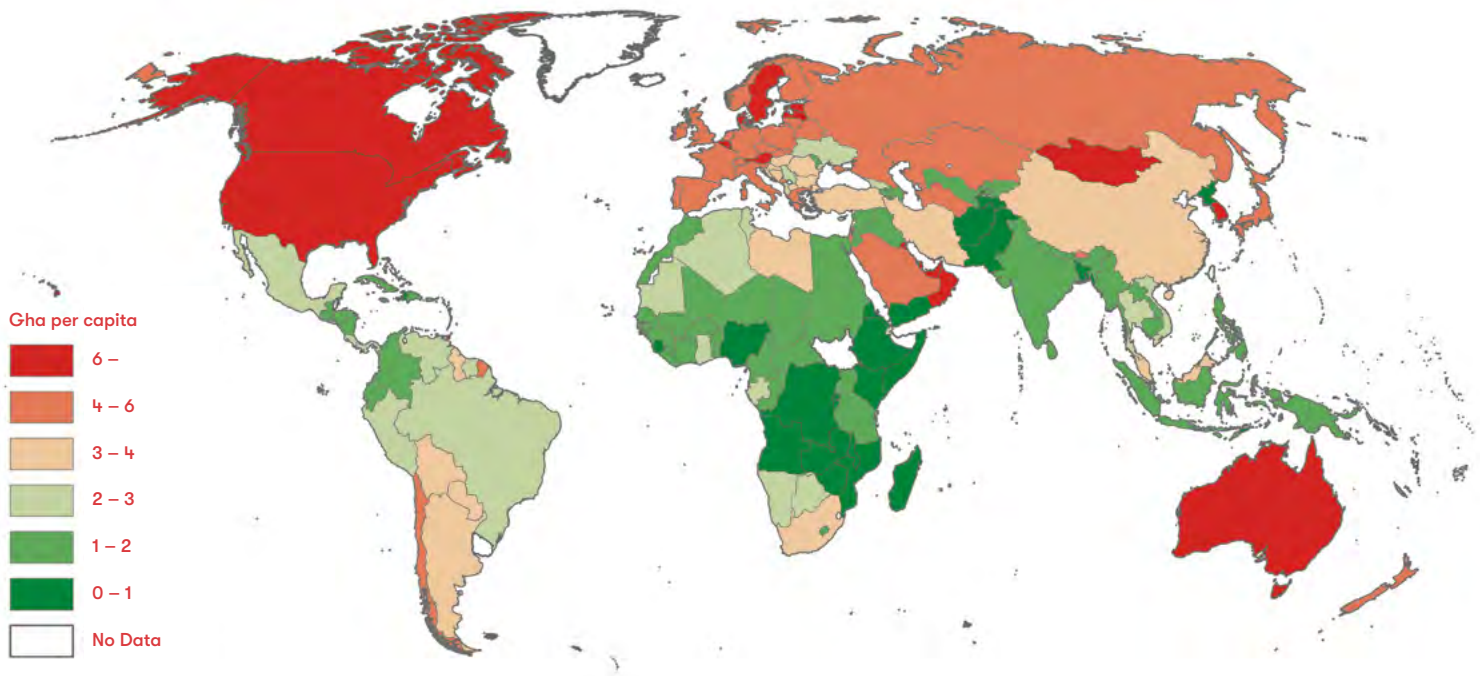

Fig. 5: Ecological Footprint (Consumption), 2017 (Figure by Yasumoto Shin'ya and Kawamura Shin'ya).

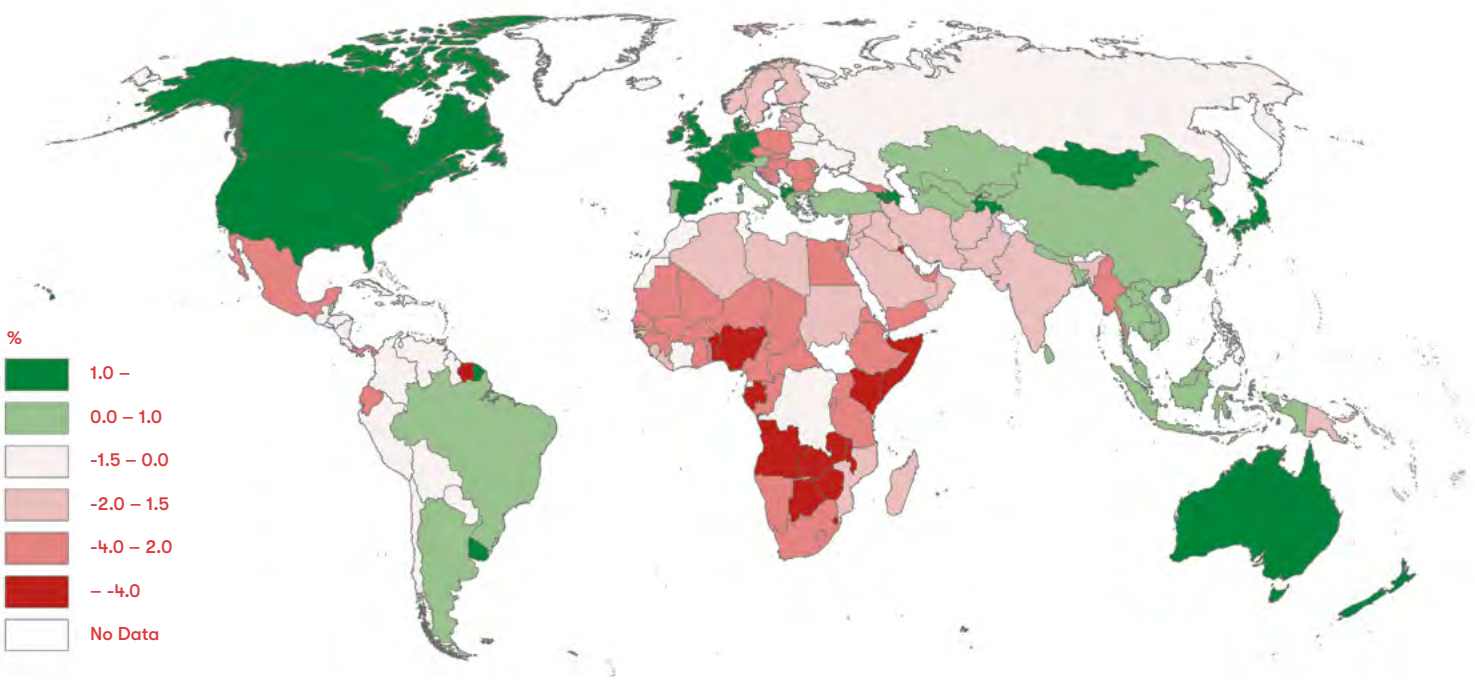

Fig. 6: Effects of Climate Change on Crop Production (B2A), 1970–2000 (Baseline) and 2080 (Figure by Yasumoto Shin'ya and Kawamura Shin'ya).

human activities are embedded, based on their multiple identities. One may belong to various regions at diverse levels, from a village, a network of individuals, a nation, or a group of nations to the globe at the same time. While a region can be politically constructed, it may also be a religious community without specific geographical boundaries or a group of people who share certain secular values. In fact, a region may be a historical imaginary that exists only in the memory of an individual.[7]

With different motivations, people have already discussed a number of other macro-regions combining two internally diverse regions: Eurasia, Eurafrica, Eurabia, Afrabia, Chinafrique, etc. The Americas is another macro-region that is distinguishable from the rest of the world. So, what is the rationale for uniting Africa and Asia? Does it have any impact on the configuration of smaller regions or on the individual's worldview?

In my understanding, the raison d'être of Afrasia is chiefly a historical one. Most of the peoples of Africa and Asia share a common experience of being colonised by the West. When the Latin American nations gained their independence in the early 19th century, Europe began to colonise Africa and Asia just like a parasite changes its host.[8] The delegates of Afrasian independent states gathered in Bandung in 1955 to form the Non-Aligned Movement that distanced itself from both the United States and the Soviet Union. In the 21st century, the Bandung frame is being revitalised as the heads of Afrasian nations assemble again in Indonesia. The second Bandung Conference of 106 states was organised in 2005, and the third of 109 states took place in 2015. The group of Bandung is growing into the largest regional organisation, even though it has no permanent secretariat.

The network of Afrasian nations is expected to have a significant impact on tumultuous world geopolitics in the current era of violent rupture in the eastern part of Europe. As Afrasians come to form much of the world's population, the way of decision-making in international organisations, including the United Nations system, will have to undergo major changes. This is not because democracy means majority rule but because everyone is equal in rights and dignity. If 80 percent of the population is alienated from decision-making, it will be exactly like apartheid South Africa on a global scale.

Toward a benign community

Like it or not, the Afrasian people will make up the vast majority of the world's population. However, such a discourse requires two caveats. First, one should not confuse Afrasianism with a crude anti-Western mindset. The era of political colonialism by the West is already gone. And yet the formerly colonised nations should know the pain of being ruled by others. Major Asian nations such as China, Japan, and India should not behave as the West did in the past. All Afrasian peoples must share and internalise the norm against hegemonic behaviours *within* the region.

Second, the population growth in Africa in the 21st century will not be a part of an endless population explosion. While there is no doubt that Africa's population will increase dramatically, the rate of expansion is expected to slow down and then come to a halt. Childbirth decreases everywhere as urbanisation progresses and as women's economic participation increases. Even in Africa, the total fertility rate (the average number of children a woman is statistically expected to have) peaked in the late 1960s and started to decline sharply in the 1990s [Fig. 4]. The world in the 22nd century, therefore, may be entering a stationary state in terms of the reproduction of the population.

While these projections assume that fertility rates worldwide will converge to the replacement level (slightly more than two), those figures may eventually fall and remain below two in all parts of the world, as is already the case in Europe and East Asia today. In the distant future, human society may shrink further and return to a sort of hunter-gatherer society, where people might break into bands, carry wearable devices, and lead mobile lives.

Many things concern us when we think of the near future of Afrasia. Let us pick up just one of them. The ecological footprint per capita is an indicator of the amount of natural resources consumed by human beings. When it is presented on a world map, we can see that the people of Afrasia do not cause much damage to the nature of the globe [Fig. 5]. However, considering the expected impacts of climate change on the production of wheat, rice, and maize (the percentage change between the 1970-2000 baseline and 2080), tropical Afrasia will suffer a big loss [Fig. 6].[9] It is morally unacceptable that the region that has been relatively friendly to the planet should be the one to bear the brunt of global environmental destruction.

Cultural triangulation

Afrasia is the largest variant of 'n-region' imaginable on the globe. Let us zoom out and look at the world map. And then let us zoom in on the level of towns, villages, networks of individuals, and even an individual person. The framing of a macro-region may influence our approach when conducting fieldwork in specific locations.

The cultural anthropologist Kawada Junzo advocated a method of cultural triangulation. If the locations of two points are given, and the angles from these points to the third point are known, then the location of the third point can be accurately determined. Kawada wrote about oral communication in a village of Burkina Faso, West Africa, using the European and Japanese literary classics as his major reference points.[10]

Currently, my students are writing theses on foreign exchange policies in Indonesia and Nigeria, hospitality and tourism in Cape Verde and Japanese islands, and agricultural cooperatives in Zimbabwe and East Asian countries. Rather than using one as a model for the other, they attempt to make reciprocal comparisons. In envisioning the world of the 22nd century, it will be critically important to organise a heuristic dialogue between Africa and Asia, the twin components of Afrasia. If you apply the method of cultural triangulation and compare two villages in Afrasia, you may clearly see the place where you are now standing, wherever you are.

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The discussion in this article is based on Yoichi Mine, *Connecting Africa and Asia: Afrasia As a Benign Community* (Routledge, 2022). This is an Open Access book downloadable at: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-mono/10.4324/9781003229261/connecting-africa-asia-yoichi-mine

Notes

1 Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vol. 1* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).
2 See, for example, Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
3 Ali A. Mazrui and Seifudein Adem, *Afrasia: A Tale of Two Continents* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2013).
4 The figures in this article are based on the *2019 Revision of World Population Prospects* released by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA). https://population.un.org/wpp/ In the UN statistics, Russia is classified as a European country.
5 John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
6 https://www.thelancet.com/infographics-do/population-forecast
7 Itagaki's article is thought-provoking but available only in Japanese. The concept of 'n-region' was presented in a piece he wrote in 1973.
8 This is a scientific analogy. See the concept of macroparasites in William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Harmonds¬worth: Penguin, 1979).
9 Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 are based on the following datasets, respectively. www.footprintnetwork.org/resources/ and https://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/data/set/crop-climate-effects-climate-global-food-production
10 Kawada Junzo, *La voix: étude d'ethno-linguistique comparative* (Paris: l'EHESS, 1998). As for an example of Afrasian endeavour of academic collaboration, visit https://www.afrasia.org/

Of Extremist Grandmothers

Recalling Banalata Sen and Bina Das, Revolutionaries in the Indian Struggle for Independence

Sambarta Rakshit

Fig. 1: Reunion of Revolutionaries, including Nirmala Acharja, Banalata Sen, Pratibha Bhadra, Kamala Dasgupta, Bina Das, Indusudha Ghosh, Suniti Choudhury, and others, circa 1982 (Photo from the author's family archives).

Women revolutionaries in the Indian struggle for independence are often idealized in textbooks – and in the popular imagination – as *Agnikanya*, firebrand daughters of a subjugated nation. Modern scholarship on the subject has eschewed such idealistic commemorations and examined the conditions that gave rise to a homegrown women's movement in the period following the non-cooperation movement of 1920. A movement is characterized not by isolated acts of violence, but by organized systems of resistance. Such systems, in an occupied country, are supported by clandestine networks of recruitment. At a time when women had limited mobility and higher education came with patriarchal surveillance, the formation of women-led fronts and the induction of women into existing subversive organizations marked a remarkable disruption of the political space. In this article, I attempt an alternative and more intimate recollection of the movement. I do so by documenting the story of my grandmother Banalata Sen (1915-1989), a relatively unsung name among women revolutionaries, whose experiences I interweave with those of Bina Das (1911-1986), a revolutionary who is far more widely recognized.

interrogate the nature of extremism itself to examine whether it is possible for a revolutionary to reclaim ordinariness in post-independence calm. I also challenge the mutual exclusivity of Gandhian civil disobedience and armed resistance by uncovering the composite identities of these revolutionaries. My deeply personal connection with the subject allows me to record narratives that incorporate instances of vulnerability, conflict, and disillusionment. In this sense, I acknowledge Manju Chattopadhyay's call to depict revolutionary women as *rakta-mangsher manush* (women of flesh and blood).[1] Bina Das and Banalata Sen enjoyed a long friendship. I explore how a solidarity forged during the freedom movement transcended differences in their backgrounds, political ideologies, and subjectivities.

Prison narratives

In the summer of 1964, my grandmother Banalata Sen and my mother Susmita Rakshit paid an unannounced visit to Ujjala Majumdar at her residence in Park Circus, Calcutta. Ujjala's words upon opening the door were, "*Satya ghatana noy, Bana.*" ("Cannot be true, Bana.") My mother's recollection of the precise words – decades later – is linked to the transfiguring power of the moment. This was the first meeting of the two revolutionaries after their time in Presidency Jail in the mid-1940s. Aside from reminiscing about political activism, the women also recalled their roles in the Tagore play, *Raktakarabi* ("Red Oleanders"), which was staged on the prison grounds. Both enacted male roles since there was no opportunity for collaborating with male prisoners. Yet, on occasions, late at night, a resonant voice singing Tagore songs would carry over to the female ward.[2]

Women revolutionaries spent a significant part of their youth as political prisoners. Universally, they regarded these years as time irretrievably taken away from their mission, and longed to return to organizational and subversive work. The autobiographies of Bina Das and Kamala Dasgupta, both compatriots of my grandmother in Presidency Jail, provide insights into the process of adapting to the prison system and into attempts at subversion while in confinement. Bina Das was convicted in 1932 for the attempted assassination of Stanley Jackson, Governor of Bengal. She spent the next six years in several prisons in Bengal. She was again arrested in 1942 during the Quit India movement and spent the next four years in Presidency Jail.[3] Banalata Sen was also arrested in 1942 at the height of the Quit India movement, and she was held without trial at Presidency Jail until 1945.

The British prison was a layered bureaucracy comprising superintendents, jailers, deputy jailers, clerks, matrons, and janitors. There were separate wards for political prisoners and convicted criminals in addition to cells for lepers and mental patients. Despite the relative privileges afforded to political prisoners, experiences of alienation and suffocation were shared across partitions. Kamala Dasgupta recalls how she and Bina Das used a crack in the wall above a putrid drain to catch sight of trains beyond the Hijli Jail compound.[4] Incidentally, Hijli Jail is now part of the campus of my alma mater, the Indian Institute of Technology. "Were those years wasted?" is a question repeated throughout Das' memoir, *Shrinkhal Jhankar* ("Ringing Chains"). During a reunion of Dasgupta and Das at Hijli, Bina relived her failure to assassinate Governor Jackson. Kamala responded that the attempt itself had served to "shake the foundations of British rule." Despite such moments of despondency, Das' assessment of political imprisonment remained largely constructive. In her view, every wave of mass political imprisonment strengthened the larger freedom movement by exposing British repression and progressively broadening participation. The voice of *Shrinkhal Jhankar* is frequently imbued with idealism. Her role, even in incarceration, was "to teach a supplicant race the lesson of embracing death."[5]

The prison years enabled a gradual evolution of Das' political ideology from one of armed extremism to a composite revolutionary identity. Adopting Gandhian methods, she led inmates on a hunger strike in Midnapore Jail to protest various forms of physical violence and harassment by a particular jailer. A direct association with Gandhi began when he visited Alipore Jail and she was unafraid to debate him on his rigid adherence to non-violence. Nearly a decade later, they would walk together, barefoot, on a relief mission in riot-torn Noakhali. Her commitment to labor and mass movements can also be traced to prison kinship networks. These networks transcended class boundaries and included women convicts in the general wards. She views such women as subversive figures, whether in their retaliation against male violence or even through their petty theft of food during the British-engineered famine of 1943.[6]

Similarly, Banalata Sen recalls her incarceration as a period of ideological development and enrichment. At the time of her arrest, she was a member of the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and, previously, of the Marxist wing of *Anushilan Samity*. *Anushilan* and *Jugantar* were the two original revolutionary nationalist organizations in Bengal. Prison gave Banalata an opportunity to meet seasoned revolutionaries, including Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, and Ujjala Majumdar, who had been involved in the earlier wave of direct attacks on British officials. The female yard in Presidency Jail became a forum of political debate, which allowed Banalata to evaluate her radical commitments against the moderate principles of the Indian National Congress. Kamala Dasgupta writes of a reading circle comprising herself, Banalata, Pratibha Bhadra, and Nirmala Ray. Banalata's passion was for discussing *Anti-Dühring* by Engels. The debates, which carried on till the early hours and were particularly animated by Banalata's analysis, "stirred the stagnant waters of prison life."[7]

Detenus at Presidency Jail and Hijli Jail had access to the collection of the Imperial Library, and they could also request books from university libraries. Banalata utilized such materials to complete her M.A. in Economics during imprisonment. She was conferred the formal degree upon her release in 1945.

Accounts of the freedom movement: 1925-1947

A comparison of the lives of Banalata Sen and Bina Das reveals the difficulty in constructing an archetypal female revolutionary who disrupted both the Bengali middle-class patriarchy and the rigid formalism of British rule. Das received an essentially British education in Cuttack and Calcutta and recalls a fulfilled upbringing in a liberal Brahmo household. She recalls imbibing *swadeshi* principles from her father and her elder sister Kalyani Das. The former taught Subhash Bose (1897-1945), the architect of the Indian National Army, and the latter founded the women's front, *Chhatri Sangha*. This was a time when the Gandhi-led non-cooperation movement and the Simon Commission boycott nurtured a new, though still fragile, nationalist identity.

Das' early training under the aegis of the Bengal Volunteers prepared her for a *hartal* ("strike") on the Bethune College campus in 1928. As a student at Bethune and Diocesan College, she became an avid recruiter of fellow students to the revolutionary movement. Contemporaneous acts of armed insurrection – for instance, the Chittagong Armory Raid of 1930 and an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate police commissioner Charles Tegart – galvanized the *biplabi* ("revolutionary") front. Such events led Das to eschew Gandhian principles in favor of focused underground activity.[8] Kamala Dasgupta, who was involved in the secret storage and distribution of arms to revolutionaries, records an intimate account of this transformation: "She was a gentle, emotional girl, also an intellectual and first in her class. An idealism shone on her face ... She covered her face when I asked her to consider the shock to her parents. 'Don't tell them, please.'"[9] Das had gone to Dasgupta to procure a revolver for an assassination attempt on Governor Stanley Jackson. The attempted assassination at the Calcutta University convocation, the trial of Bina Das, and her eloquent confession have been widely covered in historical and nationalist texts, fostering an ethos of female revolutionary courage and sacrifice.

Unlike Bina Das, Banalata Sen's patriotism did not crystallize from familial ideological influences. Her father, was a successful *kabiraj* ("Ayurvedic practitioner") who supported a rural estate in Kartikpur, Bangladesh. Banalata had six sisters and two brothers; many of her siblings died young. There was no expectation to pursue studies beyond a semi-formal early education. Her eldest sister was married off young to an older groom with an earlier wife and child, and she endured a long widowhood. But Banalata successfully resisted patriarchal interventions and managed to realize her academic ambitions. Her subsequent

nationalist work was woven into her academic life with a deliberate precision. Matriculating with distinction as a private candidate, Banalata moved to Calcutta to seek intermediate studies. To fund her education in Calcutta, she first took a basic training course and found employment as a primary teacher. Details of this period are unreliable: neither my mother nor my aunt can convincingly reconstruct the process by which a female student of about 20 years old, settled on her own in an unfamiliar city, secured boarding and employment, and pursued her education. Banalata was possibly assisted by Satyaranjan Sen, an elder cousin who was settled in Calcutta. Such linkages in an extended family, clustered in rural Bengal but spreading across nodal towns to the capital, provided a resilient support network to women revolutionaries.

Banalata's intermediate and undergraduate education was at Women's College, Calcutta. She was among the first cohorts to graduate from this institution. Morning classes allowed her to continue teaching in the afternoon and work as a private tutor during the evenings. Subsequently, she pursued a Master of Arts in Economics at Calcutta University. Throughout her student years, Banalata resided in a women's hostel in North Calcutta. Claiming the hostel as accommodation and private tuition as supplemental income was an exigency for a female migrant student. These domains were not yet receptive to women in a city where even unaccompanied commuting was unpleasant. Manikuntala Sen, who founded the women's front, *Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti*, and Kamala Dasgupta were also boarders in North Calcutta. Dasgupta, who supervised such a hostel, also used it as a storage site for arms used in revolutionary missions.

Banalata's revolutionary work began with her induction into *Anushilan Samity* while a student at Women's College. During the 1920s and early 1930s, *Anushilan* had orchestrated armed attacks on British administrative officials. By the late 1930s, when Banalata joined the organization, it had tempered its methods and formed an ideological coalition with Subhash Bose. Her first underground activity was to aid political prisoners who had escaped from Alipore Jail, Calcutta, and had taken shelter in a hideout in Titagarh.[10] At the time, she was a prominent member of the Students' Federation and served as General Secretary of the All-Bengal Girls' Students Committee. Like Bina Das, she actively recruited students into the revolutionary fold.[11] The college campus proved both a crucible of nationalist ideas and a site of subversion. In 1937, she rallied in a movement to free political prisoners. This movement, spearheaded by Gandhi, secured the early release of many revolutionaries, including Bina Das. In 1938, Banalata traveled to the Haripura Congress, a pivotal session where Subhash Bose advocated radical militancy.[12]

From 1939-1942, both Banalata and Bina were involved in organizational work and mass protests, though they espoused divergent ideologies. Despite her family connection to Subhash Bose, Bina chose to align with the main wing of the Congress in Bengal. She travelled widely to recruit women to the nationalist cause. When in Calcutta, she worked as General Secretary of the South Calcutta Congress wing until her arrest at a rally during the Quit India movement of 1942. Banalata continued her work for the Bose wing (Forward Bloc) as a courier and a bearer of provisions to his residence, where he remained under house arrest until his escape to Germany in 1941. After the dissolution of *Anushilan Samity*, Banalata joined the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and worked in both labor and nationalist movements. Banalata was an essential recruiter and organizer of protest marches in North Calcutta during the August revolution of 1942. The high drama of the protest that led to her arrest has remained an enduring fixture in our family history. That day, the ferocity of a police raid took the activists by surprise. Banalata, who led the rally, fell on her face during the ensuing stampede but survived police boots and batons on her back. She retreated to hiding on the advice of party *dadas*, who put up posters at University Institute Hall demanding "revenge for the killing of Banalata Sen." Despite the ruse, she was arrested by police who maintained a reliable network of informants.[13]

Upon release from prison in 1945, Bina and Banalata stepped into a nation "plagued by famine, inflation and ordnances."[14] They became active in labor movements and unions on behalf of the Congress and the RSP, respectively. Both served in relief missions for Hindu-Muslim riot victims. Banalata's reminiscences of the Great Calcutta killings and her work in ravaged neighborhoods remain haunting memories. Bina Das served mainly in relief camps in Noakhali, where waves of violence followed the riots in Calcutta.[15]

Quiescence and disquietude: 1947-1989

The memory of a particular Sunday in the early 1980s has stayed with me. I spent the day with my grandmother at Vivekananda College, Calcutta, where she taught economics. It was Annual Celebration Day, and a foyer had been repurposed for staging sack and spoon races. Afterwards, Banalata introduced me to a professor of chemistry, who took me on a tour of the wet laboratory. I remember the complete ordinariness of the day, Banalata indistinguishable from other professors watching children trip over potatoes on the course. I view an extremist grandmother as a figure who can inhabit such ordinariness without compromising her radical identity. On other days she was a raconteur who could reconstruct a police charge on Amherst Street as she calmly crisped pumpkin blossoms on high heat.

Banalata had envisioned a teaching career even while taking the M.A. examination in prison. Her first appointment was at Tangail College, Bangladesh, in 1947, the same year that my mother was born. My grandfather Saroj Chakravarty, also a freedom fighter, stayed in Calcutta, where he was the editor of a Bengali daily *Pratyaha*. After briefly rejoining him in his one-room flat on Harrison Road, Banalata took up a teaching position in Bhagalpur, Bihar. In a reversal of gender roles, Banalata was then the primary breadwinner of the family. She was also the caregiver of my mother. Around 1951, the family moved to Jalpaiguri, a suburban town in North Bengal, where they set up a single-family home with a small dairy farm. While teaching economics at the local college, Banalata also pursued a PhD on women's labor in the tea industry. Despite compiling data from fieldwork, she was unable to finish the project. Saroj, who had completed his law degree in prison, set up a successful practice. The family moved back to Calcutta in the early 1960s, primarily for my mother's college education following her matriculation. Banalata joined Vivekananda College and taught there until her retirement.

Banalata evinced a thrill in this restive settlement and migration which was akin to an immigrant experience. She had stepped into a country which was ancient yet newly imagined. It was a country experimenting with changing models of governance, industry, and education. The weave of Calcutta streets had hardly changed in thirty years. She remained an educator, yet there was a settled household to return to at the end of the daily commute, in contrast with the days of processions, underground missions, and surveillance. Despite such earned comforts, Banalata, like Bina Das and other freedom fighters, felt a duty to actively participate in the political sphere in post-independence India. After moving to Kolkata, Banalata steered clear of electoral politics but was nominated to the Calcutta University Senate, where her work centered on teacher recruitment and benefits. This role was a far cry from the revolutionary idealism of the pre-independence years. Banalata acknowledged that she had become part of a bureaucracy designed to establish leftist hegemony in academic institutions. She did not seek a second term on the board and distanced herself from party politics. She spent her spare time teaching slum children and contributing articles on revolutionaries to *Anushilan Barta*, the original organ of *Anushilan Samity*. The nationalists who particularly inspired her were Madame Bhikaji Cama (1861-1936), Bhagat Singh (1907-1931), and Ashfaqullah Khan (1920-1927).

For Bina Das, who remained with the Congress, the disillusionment with the leadership of her own party came as early as the celebration of independence. She documents her disbelief when Indian military officers – who held the King's Commission and were, therefore, imperial symbols – were invited for the guard of honor at Delhi. Das served as elected member of the legislative assembly in West Bengal, India until 1951, but she withdrew from subsequent election cycles. She was also involved in the labor rights movement as a trade union activist, but even there, she was unable to reconcile her principles with the atmosphere of corruption.[16] Like Banalata, she found a measure of solace as an educator. She taught English at a girls' school in south Calcutta.

The two women enjoyed a close relationship after Banalata's return to Calcutta. My mother recalls visiting "Bina Mashi's" home in Jodhpur Park and discussing passages from her book *Pitridhan* with her. A Sunday reunion of women revolutionaries in the early 1980s, coordinated and hosted by Banalata at her house, remains vivid in my memory [Fig. 1]. Among those present were Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, Suniti Choudhury, Indu Sudha Ghosh, and Pratibha Bhadra. The light streaming on their faces through a screen of ixoras was far different from the pallor in the female yard of Presidency Jail. I was at that reunion and sensed the gentle recapture of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed temporal frame. Whether in a British prison or in that gathering, such a consciousness was a manifestation of freedom itself. The house (which remains my parental home) resonated that afternoon with the verses of *Bande Mataram* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. I recall my mother joining in.

The last days of Banalata Sen and Bina Das were spent in relative obscurity. Yet, the news of their deaths (separated by about two years) triggered a brief rush of commemoration, mostly under the aegis of the respective political parties for which they had once worked. I walked in the modest procession to Kalighat, where Banalata's body was taken for cremation. Officials of the RSP briefly spread the red flag of the party on her body with a cry, *Biplabi Banalata Sen amar rahe* ("May revolutionary Banalata Sen live on"). The flag was then discreetly rolled away. Kamala Dasgupta, perhaps the only author to document Banalata's biography, penned an obituary in a Bengali daily.

Bina Das concludes *Shrinkhal Jhankar* with an avowal of tireless work: "My journey remains unfinished."[17] Her last physical journey was almost a pilgrimage. She took a trip to Varanasi, Hardwar, and Rishikesh in 1986, after the death of her husband Jatish Bhowmik. Her body was found on the road to Rishikesh and was identified by relatives to whom she had written from Varanasi.[18] My mother, who attended her memorial service, recalls the tribute of Phulrenu Guha, a political and revolutionary colleague of Bina Das. Guha invoked the moment from 1932 when Bina fired on Governor Jackson.

Despite intermittent amnesia, it is likely that Bina Das will shine in national remembrance, if only because of that attempted assassination, an act that became symbolic of women's militancy in the Indian freedom movement. As recently as 2021, a postage stamp was released to honor her. Names such as Banalata Sen, however, will be forgotten because there is no brilliant singularity in her life that will merit sustained commemoration. Yet, such women are also remarkable because of their distinctive identities and their choices of resistance. A reconstruction of the women's revolutionary movement would be incomplete without the examination of such histories.

Fig. 2: Banalata Sen (left) with her younger sister, Kusum Sen at a North Calcutta Studio, circa 1946 (Photo from the author's family archives).

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Notes

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3 Bina Das, Shrinkhal Jhankar (Kolkata: Jayasree, 1956)
4 Dasgupta, 'Rakter Akshare', 99.
5 Das. Translation, mine.
6 Das, *Shrinkhal Jhankar.*
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8 Das, *Shrinkhal Jhankar.*
9 Dasgupta, 53-54. My translation.
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Ambassadors of K-Culture

Korean Americans, Korea, and K-pop

Jayson M. Chun and Eun Bin Suk

Fig. 1: BTS at 2017 American Music Awards in Los Angeles, 19 November 2017. Korean Culture and Information Service, December 6 2017 (Photo courtesy of Korean Culture and Information Service via Wikimedia Commons).

BTS' performance of their hit song "DNA" at the American Music Awards in 2017 in front of screaming fans marked the triumphant arrival of Korea as a producer of cool culture to mainstream American audiences. This event marked the first time a K-pop boy band performed at a major American music awards show, and it was also BTS' mainstream US television debut [Fig. 1]. While Psy's earlier viral hit "Gangnam Style" (2012) achieved global popularity, it was more of a novelty hit renowned mainly for its unusual depictions of Korean culture. BTS' performance, on the other hand, marked K-pop's breakthrough in the United States, the world's largest music market.

Yet, BTS' performance in the United States was not the first milestone for K-pop, as K-pop had already achieved popularity in the 2000s in Asia and especially in Japan, the world's second largest music market. This is surprising since in the 1990s, Korea was not known as an exporter of popular culture. One of the reasons for the popularity of K-pop in Asia was that it expresses a larger hybrid transpacific "K-culture" labeled as "Made-in-Korea," even though not much is culturally Korean about it. BTS' performance represented this K-culture because, while performing intricate Western choreography and wearing stylish Western fashions, the group also sang in Korean peppered with some English phrases. Importantly, BTS performed a culture that Korean Americans helped create. Korean Americans in the 1990s served as "ambassadors" by helping to create early K-pop and K-culture. This flow of culture, as seen in BTS's performance, has then come back to the United States to influence Asian-American youth. The rise of K-pop reflects the rise of Korea as a cultural production center in what we call the "Pop Pacific."

The Pop Pacific and K-culture: K-pop as a transpacific culture

K-pop is associated with the rise of Korean culture worldwide. Yet, K-pop music use mostly English-language signs and pseudo-American settings. In most videos, there is little symbolic reference to Korea and a startling lack of signs in Hangul. TWICE, a multinational girl group of performers from Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, invokes the image of American students in their video for "Cheer Up" (2016), performing in a gymnasium at an American-style high school pep rally with English signs in the background. With the sound off, this video invokes the image of Asian-American cheerleaders performing in a high school or college, like a mishmash hybrid of Korean and American settings [Fig. 2]. To understand the dominance of hybrid Korean and American settings, consider that K-pop is part of a larger "K-culture."[1] We define this culture as encompassing K-pop, K-cinema, K-drama, K-fashion, and K-food. As this essay will show, K-pop invokes this hybrid culture because Korean Americans were early pioneers of this music.

The "K" in K-culture stands for Korea, but it also represents a larger cultural sphere for what we call the "Pop Pacific."[2] This sphere consists mostly of the US, Japan, and Korea (with significant influences from places such as Europe and Southeast Asia), which combine to create a transnational Pacific culture. Korea is one of the major cultural centers of production in the "Pop Pacific" through the export of K-culture overseas. Rather than being a barrier, the Pacific, as ancient Polynesians used it, functions as a route that connects people and culture. This sphere began in the early 20th century, and American military bases accelerated the spread of this culture in the postwar era. Japanese-American jazz musicians such as trumpeter Jimmy Araki taught bebop jazz to Japanese nationals, and Koreans like the Kim Sisters performed at US bases. In the following decades, television and the Internet accelerated this transnational flow.

The "Pop Pacific" reveals the links between Korea and the United States and how much of K-pop was part of a larger global web of popular music. "K-culture" also contains much Western-influenced culture, such as coffee shops, fashion, and cosmetics alongside native Korean culture. According to Joo Young-ha, a professor of folklore studies at the Academy of Korean Studies, non-Koreans identify *chimaek* (chicken and beer) as their favorite Korean food, and yet most Koreans do not consider it Korean food. Joo recommends focusing on the concept of "K-food" rather than arguing over whether or not this dish is a Korean dish.[3]

It is difficult to describe the difference between Korean culture and K-culture because Korean culture has been influenced at various times by China, Japanese colonialism, and U.S. military bases. Perhaps food could illustrate this relationship between Korean culture and K-culture. To many Koreans, kimchi is the national dish representative of Korean culture. In contrast, the BTS meal (Chicken McNuggets, French fries, Cajun sauce, and a Coke) sold at McDonalds is K-culture, and fans swarmed stores to get these meals in 2021. In a similar fashion, K-pop represents an aspect of K-culture popular worldwide, even though K-pop music holds a great deal in common with other Western music.

Korean Americans and the making of K-pop

Korean Americans played a key role in early K-pop. In Korea, "American" has a cultural cachet, so Korean *Americans* performing K-pop contributed to making it become "cool" in Korea, and then this music was re-exported to the rest of the world as "K-pop." Seen as inauthentic Americans at home but authentic Americans overseas, Korean Americans helped to turn the "K" in K-pop into a pan-Pacific culture appealing to international audiences in places like Japan and the US.

One of the hallmarks of K-pop is its frequent citations of African-American culture.[4] Scholars trace the beginnings of K-pop to 1992 with *Seo Taeji-wa aideul* (서태지와 아이들, "Seo Taiji and Boys"), a trio who invoked American culture through their use of African-American hip-hop fashions, street beats, dancing, and samples from American artists. Their music appealed to Korean youth, much to the dismay of their parents. By using American imagery, Seo Taiji and Boys reflected the strong influence of American culture – especially after the end of military rule in the late 1980s – and marked the rise of Korean popular music favored by teenage fans during the 1990s. Also, Korean Americans mainly from Los Angeles contributed to the popularization of the early K-pop scene by adding an American cultural appeal.

Some historical background will shed light on the Korean-American influence on K-pop. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 accelerated the pace of the Korean immigration into the United States. Koreans in America transformed from a marginal immigrant community to a major presence in areas like Los Angeles Koreatown, one of the focal points of Korean settlement. There were 11,000 Korean immigrants in 1960, but due to the change in immigration policy, that number increased to 290,000 in 1980, a 2500 percent increase.[5] Koreatowns became contact zones for the children of these immigrants to experience many different cultures, especially African-American culture.

A contact zone like the Los Angeles metro area played a key role in the creation of what we call the "DNA of K-pop" because many K-pop artists hailed from that area. To many 1990s Korean youth, LA was both a place of fantasy and threat, reflecting Hollywood-produced popular culture. H.O.T was a K-pop boy band in the 90s, and one of its members, Tony Ahn, hailed from L.A. Because of his fluency in English, Korean youth were fascinated with Ahn and his hip image. In addition, Lena Park, Tiffany Young (from the group Girls Generation), and Tiger JK are some other examples of K-pop pioneers from LA. Furthermore, as Young Dae Kim points out, many K-pop performers were not Korean Americans; rather, many would be better described as *gyopo*, a Korean term that "... broadly embraces people with Korean descent who lives (sic) abroad, with or without a foreign nationality of which they chose to live."[6] This term perfectly describes those Koreans who study abroad in the US or have lived there for a period. One prominent example is Lee Soo Man, the founder of SM Entertainment, one of Korea's major entertainment companies. He studied as a graduate student in Southern California in the 1980s and came up with the idea of SM Entertainment through watching MTV in America. SM Entertainment also played a key role in the growth of K-pop, revealing yet another connection to Los Angeles.

Korean Americans in early K-pop and the K-pop boom of the 1990s

Korean American performers before Seo Taiji both mediated and inflamed cultural anxieties. For example, Kang Susie immigrated to New York in the 1980s and came back to Korea in the 1990s. Her songs, which were taking off in the years following the end of military rule, promoted American-style dating culture. The Korean press portrayed her as a positive example of reverse migration, of a *gyopo* coming back to her roots in Korea to pursue her dream. However, some also felt ambivalence towards her songs. A reporter in *The Kyunghyang Shinmun* criticized one of her songs, *Sigan sogui hyanggi* (시간 속의 향기 "The Fragrance of Time"), as too sentimental and felt it would badly influence teenagers' emotional growth.[7]

As seen in Kang's example, the Korean press in the early 1990s was alarmed at American influences on teenagers. If Kang represented unwanted emotional sentimentality, then Yang Joon-Il, a *gyopo* returned from America in 1990, represented a darker threat with his androgynous fashions, wild dancing, and inability to properly use the Korean language. Although the norm in K-pop now, and for world music of his time, his gender-bending appearance shocked Koreans. Yang was seen as such a threat that the SBS radio program that he co-hosted was suspended for three months because of his excessive use of English.[8] Facing such negative publicity, he faded from the public eye (although he made a guest appearance in 2019 on a nostalgia TV program). As seen in Kang and Yang, the Korean press viewed Korean Americans as pioneers of a globalized Korea but also feared them as spreaders of negative American influences.

The Korean-American R&B boy band Solid (1993-1997) played a key role by providing American-sounding K-pop from model, church-going *gyopo*, thus rendering the music safe for Korean youth consumption. This trio, composed of Korean Americans from Orange County, California, sang the smash 1995 hit *I bam ui gguteul jabgo* (이밤의 끝을 잡고,

"Holding the End of This Night"). A Korean reporter from *The Hankyoreh* found it hard to find any "Koreanness" in their music and noted a more African-American "feel," thus concluding that "there is no race or national boundary to their songs."[9] Another reporter also gave reports on the members' schools and majors, casting them as model, studious Koreans free of negative American influences.[10] Their music reflected the contact zone of Southern California, where Korean Americans came into contact with African-American culture. The song cited African-American R&B culture in its music, choreography, lyrics, and fashion, but it was sung in the Korean language.

Korean-American groups used their Americanness as authenticity but also added their own touches of Korean culture. For example, the popular boy band idol group g.o.d – of which three of five members were Korean American – fused American hip-hop with Korean values in their song *"Eomeonimkke"* (어머님께 "Dear Mother" 1999). This helped make their American-influenced K-pop acceptable to Koreans. A journalist from the *Chosun Ilbo* praised "Dear Mother," as it gave thanks to one of the members' deceased mother and the sacrifices she made raising her child. This song was loved by older audiences as well, especially mothers, who felt their sacrifices were unappreciated by the younger generation.[11] So, Korean Americans like those in Solid or g.o.d adapted American (especially African-American) culture to Korea, where it went from edgy threat to mainstream K-culture.

Solid's success built upon Korean K-pop pioneers like Seo Taiji or Hyun Jin-young and led to an explosion of Korean Americans in K-pop. Idol groups, such as H.O.T often had *gyopo* members to add American "authenticity." The girl group S.E.S had an interesting Korean diaspora mix: Shoo, a Korean resident of Japan, Eugene a Korean American from Guam, and Bada from Korea. With K-culture firmly a part of K-pop, the K-pop companies (e.g., SM Entertainment in the 2000s) made a major push to sell in Japan, the world's second-largest music market. This marked the rise of second-generation K-pop artists, who focused on the market overseas. SM entertainers like DBSK and Girls Generation were trained to speak in Japanese for Japanese audiences. K-pop videos made extensive use of hybrid K-culture images to popularize K-pop overseas in the 2010s. KARA's "Mister" (2009) used imagery of a basketball court and US military bases. Even groups with no American members, like BIGBANG, used K-culture, for example in their English name, or English signs in their videos.

K-pop and Asian America

K-pop is an influential part of Asian-American culture. K-pop has become a means for panethnic Asian-American youth to feel cultural representation in the US media. What do we mean by Asian America as panethnic? In the US, different Asian ethnic groups (e.g., Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, or Indians) are lumped into a singular Asian-American panethnicity that makes up around seven percent of the US population. Although the term "Asian" is not commonly used in Asia, K-pop often replicates this panethnicity by putting different Asian members in a single K-pop group. For example, Aespa, a girl group formed by SM Entertainment, boasts members of three different Asian ethnicities: two Koreans (Winter and Karina), one Japanese-Korean (Giselle), and one Chinese (Ningning). There are many other multinational, panethnic groups bound together by K-culture, such as Seventeen, TWICE, BLACKPINK, NCT, or Got7. Thus, K-pop is called "Korean" but encompasses many different Asian cultures and ethnicities in a manner similar to Asian-American panethnicity.

One may ask, how can a Chinese person represent Korean pop music? This is possible because K-culture is a hybrid style that allows this panethnic identity within a cultural production. We argue that K-culture allows non-Korean Asians to represent K-pop. The constant use of these idols becomes "normal" after seeing countless audition shows that embrace Asian panethnicity. At first, it seems odd to see non-Korean Asians in all these shows, but the more one watches, the more it becomes normalized to see Chinese, Japanese, and Thai performing K-pop music in Korean. Thus, K-culture may not be specifically Korean but taps into a wider pan-Asian ethnicity.

American media representations of Asian Americans have been narrowed down to stereotypical roles such as a sexy but dangerous dragon lady or a studious model minority. Only recently, films such as *Crazy Rich Asians* depicted positive Asian characters in US media. Through K-pop, Asians in America can envision themselves in a positive light such as the main characters in love stories. Christina Qu, in writing about her youth with K-pop, noted that the non-white fans were misfits. Thinking of her attraction to K-pop, she wrote that "we were never the potential topics of love songs."[12] Similarly, a young Asian American wrote, "With no representation in American media, we turned to K-Pop – a genre of South Korean music characterized by its use of audiovisual elements – to find people who looked like us: our idols represented us in ways that mainstream American music did not."[13]

Images of Asian-American youth in K-pop videos fill a void in the US media because of the general lack of representations of Asian American youth engaging in everyday social activities. For example, 2PM's "Go Crazy" (2014) uses imagery associated with American college youth, like a house party with people drinking from red solo cups. This video is radical because of the scarcity of American media representations of Asian-American youth doing otherwise "normal" activities like this. Thus, K-pop fills in the media gap caused by mainstream American media neglecting Asian-American youth. K-pop videos are professionally produced and readily available for free online. Therefore, Asian-American youth can easily relate to K-culture's American imagery. They can see themselves partying, dancing, dressing in the latest fashions, and having relationships with each other.

Fig. 2: Screenshot from the music video for "Cheer Up" (2016) by TWICE (Full video available at: https://youtu.be/c7rCyII5AeY).

K-pop as the "sweet spot" with just enough rebellion

While Asian immigrant youths may be turned off by the hypersexuality of the US media, K-pop music allows for a bit of sexuality that may satisfy these youths, but with enough modesty to be close to one's values learned at home. K-pop stars are viewed in a positive light because they convey a humble, well-mannered image. K-pop idols follow a strict code of conduct, and any minor transgression is quickly called out by fans, forcing a quick apology. When T.O.P from Big Bang was caught using marijuana, he apologized publicly, bowing down in front of a slew of reporters. Not only do K-pop stars convey a good attitude; they also allow for a little bit of rebellion that provides a sweet spot for the teenage audience. For example, BLACKPINK's "Kill This Love" (2019) is about a female initiating the breakup of a toxic relationship. This conveys female agency and independence in a country still heavily patriarchal, thus showing a rebellious attitude by strong female idols.

K-pop also challenges the mainstream view of desexualized Asian men. In the US media, Asian men are usually stripped of their masculinity and portrayed as unmasculine clowns, a depiction of Asian masculinity alienating to Asian-American youth. For example, William Hung, who clownishly sang "She Bangs" off-key on *American Idol* in 2004, brought up accusations of negative stereotyping of Asian men.[14] In addition, Ken Jeong's performance in *The Hangover* (2019) was accused of manifesting the stereotype of "a prancing, lisping Asian gangster known as Mr. Chow."[15] Unlike the stereotypical depiction of Asian males in the US media, K-pop male idols convey a tender yet attractive soft masculinity, like "*kkonminam*," (꽃미남 "flowery handsome man") well-groomed pretty boys with androgynous features such as a thinner frame, soft body, and facial proportions. One could say that women are fed up with toxic masculinity and so they feel safe with these beautiful idols that offer tenderness and softness often missing from Western male singers. Moreover, in the 2010s, there was a phenomenon of "beast idols," male idols who were edgy but still safe according to US standards. These were K-pop idols such as Rain, who showed his abs and muscular features. Such idols can be the object of desire for many fans and provide alternatives to common portrayals of Asian men in US media. K-pop's rise in America forces people to confront long-held stereotypes they have regarding Asian men.

Conclusion

There is so much meaning lying behind BTS' 2017 televised appearance. When BTS stepped on stage that day, it represented the culmination of decades of Pacific interchange. Korean-American pioneers paved the way for their appearance at the American Music Awards. Among the screaming fans for BTS were Asian American youth glad to see other Asians in the spotlight. As discussed, Korean Americans played a key role in helping to create and popularize K-pop and K-culture. In return, Asian Americans have found a home in K-pop, which features Asian American-looking youth as cool normal kids, instead of being invisible, stereotyped, or sidekicks to White and Black kids. Thus, the United States and South Korea are more connected via a common culture than one realizes. And when one considers that much of K-pop is written by songwriters from all over the world, especially Sweden, and that European, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African fans make up a large part of the audience, this culture transcends the Pacific to become a world culture.

As a result of this Pacific interchange, BTS' performance represented the rise of Korea as a global cultural production center, and it heralded Korea's ability to shape culture in the U.S. We have entered the era of the "Pop Pacific," where young people across the world can be united in their love of a common transpacific culture. K-pop is just one aspect of the Pop Pacific. Whether it be anime from Japan, K-pop from Korea, or Chinese movies (Hollywood producers often make movies with the large Chinese market in mind), youth worldwide are consuming the "Pop Pacific" culture. They may consider K-pop as Korean, but it is really transnational. We look forward to more investigations of how popular cultural forms may be labeled as national culture but are really transnational.[16]

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Fig. 1 (left): A poster on how to handle your wet umbrella in public space, 2009. (Photo copyright: Tokyo Metro. Reprinted with permission).

Social Control or Trust?

A Journey through Tokyo's Railway Manner Posters

Sandunika Hasangani

During my long stay in Japan, the 'manner posters' displayed along the corridors and platforms of railway stations in Tokyo were a common sight. Through graphical content and accompanying text in these posters instruct passengers on social etiquette and public decency in railway spaces. Many railway companies in Tokyo (i.e., Tokyo Metro, Seibu Group, Keio) have a long-established tradition of displaying manner posters. These address different audiences and situations, and they construct normative standards of behaviour in public spaces. These manner posters have a strong visual component – specifically, the posters' images are more expressive than their textual contents. In this article, I examine several recent eye-catching manner posters displayed by Tokyo Metro and argue that, rather than nannying or controlling, these posters play a more progressive role. By collectively constructing a shared value system among daily commuters of busy railway lines in Tokyo, these posters underpin mutual trust among passengers.

Japanese public etiquette on rails, roads, and beyond

Historical evidence of Japanese 'conduct literature' dates back to the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) with the advent of commercial print culture.[1] Illustrated, easy-to-read "how-to" books were commonplace in Tokugawa Japan, and Ikegami identifies these books as "Tokugawa books of civilized knowledge."[2] Some of the commonplace labels were "*chōhōki*/重宝記(treasure books, manuals); *setsuyō-shū*/節用集 (dictionaries, often encyclopedic); *kinmō zui*/訓蒙図彙 (illustrated encyclopedias written at the introductory level); *shorei-shū*/諸礼集 (guidebooks for formal manners); *shosatsu-shū*/書札集 (correspondence guidebooks); and *ōrai mono*/往来物 (collections of model correspondence used as elementary school textbooks)."[3] The body and its relationship to social status were central concerns: some handbooks highlighted the rules for bowing, fan etiquette, clearing the nasal passages, passing a sword to another person, serving drinks and food, table manners, and sliding doors. Ikegami also notes that these Japanese manners and etiquette have been strongly influenced by the performing artists in Japan who "generally attempt to shape a body capable of the graceful execution of stylized movement through practiced repetition of motions and gestures."[4]

Concerns about good manners in public transport in Japan manifested in various visual and non-visual forms. For instance, in 1924, the *Asahi* newspaper reported about the increased number of cases of cheating on the fare ticket.[5] In 1911, a male reader wrote to the *Yomiuri* newspaper that "rules should be enacted regarding the proper way to sit in mass transit vehicles. He advocated that passengers be forbidden from sitting with their legs extended or open and from taking up more space than is needed by one person."[6] Newspapers reported negatively on the behaviours of schoolgirls and young women on mass transportation in the first decade of the 20th century, expressing concern over the deterioration of public manners.[7] This discourse on female misconduct continues to the present, as some Japanese criticize the way females apply cosmetics/makeup on trains. In one of Tokyo Metro's recent manner poster campaigns, entitled "Please Do it at Home," a female applying makeup is portrayed as running counter to public etiquette.[8]

While the above are non-visual accounts of expected manners, during the Taisho period (1912-26), *The Dictionary of Meiji and Taisho Period Etiquette and Manners* (絵で見る 明治·大正礼儀作法事典) published illustrated etiquette for short commutes and long-distance train travel for youth,[9] perhaps one of the first instances of visualized train etiquette in Japan. George Bigot (1860-1972) also illustrated some of the manners of the Japanese on railroads, especially the way passengers relax in second-class compartments.[10] Photographs of how people queued up for crowded streetcars in 1920 are available in the Transportation Museum.

Contemporary manner posters

Many railway companies in Tokyo currently promote public manners and etiquette in commuting. The largest railway operators in Tokyo – Keio, Tokyo Metro, JR East Japan Railway Company, and Seibu – have all adopted various programmes to promote manners of public commuting. Tokyo Metro was one of the pioneers, launching a manner poster campaign in

Fig. 2 (top left): A poster encouraging passengers to line up before boarding, 2014. (Photo copyright: Tokyo Metro. Reprinted with permission).

Fig. 3 (bottom left): A poster illustrating the ill-mannered way of sitting with widened legs, 2015. (Photo copyright: Tokyo Metro. Reprinted with permission).

September 1974. The tradition continues today, and each year the subway company adopts a particular theme for its manner posters (e.g., "Do it somewhere else" in 2008, "Good manners, Good Tokyo" in 2018). Every month a new poster is displayed on its platform walls, at automatic ticket gates, and along station corridors.

The manner posters cover a range of topics. For instance, loud talking, eating, talking on the phone, holding parties, unnecessarily invading the seating space, drinking and sleeping, blocking the entry/exit, rushing to board trains, and applying cosmetics/make-up are some of the discouraged activities inside trains. Helping others, offering seats to the elderly, lining up for boarding, properly storing luggage on racks, and properly handling large luggage are some of the encouraged activities. Interestingly, some manner posters target subtle human behaviours like "how to handle your wet umbrella in public space." Other posters, negatively depicting a couple's intimacy inside a train, indicate what is considered 'private' and 'public' in Japan. The majority of these visual contents are highly expressive, cynical, and humorous.

The visual content of these manner posters overwhelms the textual. The instructions for good manners have been visualized. The textual contents, in many of the cases, have been given a relatively lower emphasis or priority. The "images, not the text [in the manner posters], are the core of the communication. In one glance they tell the story."[11] Scholars who analyze visual artifacts agree that, compared to verbal cues, images are more memorable, which makes the viewers process those faster than the textual contents. Previous research finds that the use of pictorials in warnings increases comprehension[12] and enhances the memory of a warning.[13]

Notably, the railway manner posters in Japan are similar to other pictorial warings (i.e., signal words such as *Danger*, *Warning*, or *Caution*) commonplace in many countries, but they also differ in key respects. While commonplace signal words (along with pictorial signs) function to communicate safety-related information, the manner posters do not only convey safety warmings but also display a range of public etiquette and cover a wider range of situations inside trains and railway stations. Scholars also argue that the use of manner posters in Japan is substantially different from other parallels, such as the use of cartoon characters by the Paris Transport Authority (RATP). The anthropomorphic pink rabbit of the Paris RATP – portrayed with his left hand pinched between the sliding doors of a train – invites the passengers to pay attention to the automated device which closes the train entrance. However, the Japanese manner posters differ substantially in terms of their communicative aim. "They [manner posters] are not concerned with the passenger's own safety, they do not want to warn him of the danger of dealing inattentively with a technological environment. They focus instead on person-to-person relationships, on the sensitivity of the other travellers, who might be hurt by our inconsiderate and self-centred behaviour."[14]

Social control or social trust?

As a regular passenger of commuter trains in Tokyo, I became interested in what determines the efficiency, peacefulness, and user-friendliness of Japan's rail transportation? Is it merely a product of modern technology and advanced transport ergonomics, or is there something more to it? In my opinion, while technology and the punctuality of train operators (companies) are impressive, what makes the Japanese railway system unique is its passengers and their shared behavioural standards inside spaces of public transport. While some scholars argue that these manner posters induce subtle social control by regulating the social life of passengers and placing them under the gaze of other passengers, I argue that these posters foster a sense of social solidarity and trust.

Manner posters collectively construct a shared value system among daily commuters of busy railway lines in Tokyo, which consequently yield mutual trust among passengers. This enables the passengers to associate with each other for a common purpose. It is important to note that the trust among commuters is not based on explicit rules and regulations but out of ethical habits and reciprocal moral obligations. This notion of trust has a larger and a measurable economic value, which needs to be explored in future research. In conclusion, the practice of displaying manner posters along the corridors and platforms of busy railway stations in Japan is best understood as a soft tool for forming a shared value system among the passengers, rather than a subtle instrument of social control.

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Revisiting the Battle of Macau in 1622

A Polyphonic Narrative

Caspar Ka Yin Chan

This year marks the quadricentenary of the Battle of Macau, fought between Portugal and the Dutch VOC over the Portuguese settlement of Macau. Traces of this significant piece of history can still be seen in the names of different places in the city. However, what indeed happened on that destinate day of June 24, 1622 has remained folkloric and anecdotal, nor is there a comparative study using sources from different perspectives. Besides, the Dutch failure to capture Macau did not only allow the Portuguese to realise their precarious holding of Macau in the Far East, altering their subsequent governance of the city, but also directly influenced the diplomacy as much as the power struggle among the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the Chinese, and others in the following years. In order to understand more about this critical battle over the small port-city of Macau, we need to start from the beginning.

Prelude

The Portuguese first settled in Macau in 1557. It became the first diocese ever founded in the Far East, a base for Portuguese missionary work. The city also acted as an important trading post where the Portuguese could establish themselves when trading with the Chinese, the Japanese, the Malays, and other Southeast Asian communities. In addition, let us not forget that during the 60 years of the Iberian Union (1580-1640), when the Portuguese throne was assumed by the Spanish crown, Macau was the hub that linked the lucrative Lisbon-Goa-Macau and Mexico-Manilla-Macau routes together. Concurrently, the little port existed as the redistribution centre where gold, silver, silks, cotton, timbers, porcelain, spices, and precious stones were exchanged. Thus, situated as a node between the sea and the land, the South and the East, different colonial powers saw Macau as occupying a strategic spot for expanding their influence and market in Asia. Therefore, in the context of the 16th and 17th centuries, capturing Macau means possessing a significant position to scramble for wealth and power in the world. Allegedly for this reason, the Dutch tried to seize Macau from the Portuguese from as early as the 17th century. Indeed, before the Battle of Macau, the Dutch had raided the city in 1601, 1603, and 1607. But the assault in 1622 is seen as their first real – and final – attempt to capture Macau [Fig.1].

In 1621, the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies and officer of the VOC, Jan Pietersz Coen (1587-1626), started actively planning a trading monopoly with China. His proposal was to send a fleet and occupy Macau first, hoping to replace the Portuguese in their trading position with the Chinese. In the event that the plan failed, he would divert the fleet to the "Pescadores Archipelago," now known as *Penghu* (澎湖 "Penghu"), situated on the Strait of Taiwan. A fort could be built there and subsequent strategies could be developed. Coen ordered his commander Cornelis Reijersen (c.1590-1632) to execute the campaign. He left Batavia with his soldiers and ships on April 10, 1622, and on June 22, his fleet appeared over the sea of Macau.[1] Over the following two days, a battle that would influence the fate of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the city of Macau took place. Of the same battle, different individuals have given their own narratives. Depending on their own affiliations and personal backgrounds, these narrators offer us a polyphonic portrayal of the battle, where facts are blurred with fantasies. This brief article, therefore, attempts to present such a polyphony so that we can revisit this drama once again from different perspectives 400 years after the battle.

Fig. 1 (above): "Battle of Macau," an imagined battle scene based on the recollection of the Dutch traveller Johan Nieuhof, printed in 1665.

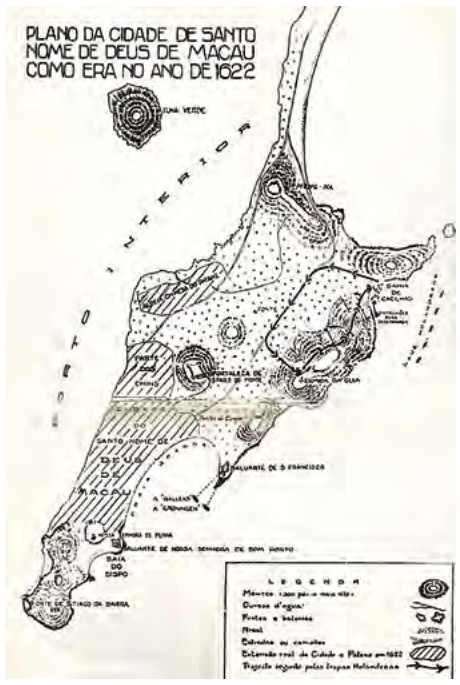

Fig. 2 (centre): "Map of the City of the Holy Name of God of Macau As It Was in the Year of 1622," extracted from the Bulletin of the General Agency of the Colonies in 1926. As shown, the Dutch first landed on the Eastern edge of the city at *Bahia de Cacilhas* ("Bay of Cacilhas"). The route taken by the Dutch was indicated by the arrows.

In the following paragraphs, I present four archival materials about the Battle of Macau. Some details from one may be contradicted by another, yet by comparing them, we can come closer to what indeed occurred during the battle. The first account is from the Jesuit Jerónimo Rodrigues (1567-1628), who wrote in Spanish *Relacion de la Victoria que alcanço la ciudad de Macau, em la China contra los Holandeses* ("Report about the Victory Achieved in the City of Macau in China against the Dutch"). This report was only retrieved and published in 1938 by the British historian Charles R. Boxer.[2] The second perspective comes from the diocese's governor *(governador do bispado)*, António do Rosário (in office: 1613-1623; 1624-1630), who wrote *Rellação da vinda dos Olandezes a Macao* ("Report of the Coming of the Dutch to Macau"). In this account, he also gave his evaluation of the defence led by the captain-major *(capitão-mor)*, Lopo Sarmento de Carvalho (in office: 1617-1618; 1621-1623).[3] The third comes from a Swiss mercenary, Elie Ripon (in service for VOC: 1618-1626), who fought on behalf of the Dutch VOC. His diary was first published in 1997 in French by Yves Giraud. The following analysis references the Dutch edition, published in 2016 by Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor.[4] Last but not least, I consider a brief study conducted by the Swedish historian Anders Ljungstedt, who claimed to have studied the manuscript from Cornelis Reijersen and the reports at the Macau Senate's archives. Together with other observations he had made during his stay in Macau, he issued his monograph, *A Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlement in China*, in 1836.[5]

The Arrival of the Dutch from the Sea

Right from the beginning of the battle, there are already different descriptions of the strength of the assaulting party. Ripon, in his diary, wrote that there were 12 ships when they left Batavia, but he did not specify if the "boats" and "sloops" that were used to attack Macau were among these 12 ships. On the other hand, Rodrigues reported that there were 13 ships, including those with three masts, seen from the harbour of Macau. Two other three-masted ships that were originally sailing to Japan also joined this battle. Rosário's description accords with Rodrigues: he gives the details that nine of the 13 ships were battle ships with three masts. Meanwhile, Ljungstedt wrote that there were 16 ships that set sail from Batavia, while two other trading ships to Japan joined the fleet at the seas of Macau.

In any case, all the accounts describe that the Dutch fleet anchored on June 22. The Dutch immediately surveyed the geography of the port, deciding where they would land their attack. Rodrigues reports that Reijersen himself carried out the survey, and the Portuguese from the city attacked the survey team on June 23. Rosário describes a yet more dramatic scene: already on the 22nd, the Dutch attempted to land but retreated under the defending fire from the city. On the 23rd, two big battle ships with 25-30 canons approached Macau, raiding the city for four hours. He writes that "our men have accurately destroyed their ship so that it could not sail anymore, and we have yielded a huge casualty on them."[6] This episode, however, does not appear in other materials, including Ripon's diary. This passionate description, as well as his vivid illustration of the battle which we will see later, may be due to his affinity with the Portuguese. To the contrary, Ripon reflects that they merely prepared everything to disembark after anchoring. He also wrote that they could not find a suitable landing spot other than the place where the Portuguese and the Spanish had built a trench and a battery. In the other three sources, the spot is recorded as Cacilhas/Cassilhas (劏狗環 "Tanggouhuan"), on the Eastern edge of Macau.

The Battle on Land

Despite all these differences, the sources are consistent in stating that 800 soldiers from the invading army landed at Cacilhas on the morning of June 24. On the defending side, both Rodrigues and Ljungstedt identified that there were 60 Portuguese and 90 Macanese. The Dutch side captured the trench and battery successfully, but according to Ripon, they succeeded at the cost of great losses. For one, their commander Cornelis Reijersen was wounded as soon as he arrived at the front and was transported back onboard immediately afterward. Rosário, in his account, speculated that the Dutch landing was mere luck. Unable to prevent the invaders from occupying the trench and battery, the defenders retreated to the city.

What happened next seems to be one of the determining moments of the battle. Nevertheless, such an incident was only recorded in Ripon's diary through his first-person experience. After the landing, and seeing that the Portuguese had retired into the city, Captain Hans Rufijn (d. 1622) was convinced that they would win the battle. Therefore, acknowledging that his soldiers had engaged in prolonged hours of shooting and were exhausted, he still ordered them to follow the Portuguese at once, instead of allowing them to rest or to equip themselves with ammunition. Ripon, meanwhile, foreseeing that a tragedy would happen, asked his sergeant to acquire some gunpowder and arms. Concurrently, he also asked Rufijn to organise their supply of armaments, which he did briskly. From the descriptions of Rodrigues and Ljungstedt, 200 Dutch soldiers stayed at their landing spot to unload artillery. During this time, the defending soldiers had already regained order and prepared to continue defending. The bells in the city also rang to signal the invasion. Many citizens ran to assist the defence although without clear organisation or commands.

The Dutch force was in all likelihood advancing into the city through the valley between the Forte de Monte (大炮台 "Dapaotai") and the Hill of Guia (東望洋山 "Dongwangyang shan"). This area was also within the firing range from the Forte de Monte [Fig.2]. Rodrigues, Rosário, and Ljungstedt all stated that once the invaders had arrived in this space, cannonballs were shot, which impeded the advance of the Dutch. In addition, in Rosário's account, Captain-Major Carvalho understood that Ripon's possible position on the Hill of Guia

Fig. 3 (left): "Macao," a map created by António Bocarro in 1635, watercolour on paper, Evora Public Library and Regional Archive, Evora. City walls are already seen in this depiction of the city. Around 14 years before this map was created, the Dutch should have landed at the rear side - now being separated from the sea by the red wall with a gate in the middle, on the upper left side of this map.

Fig. 4 (below): The monument at Victory Garden, at the foot of the Hill of Guia. This is but one of the examples in Macau that reminds its citizens of the battle in 1622 (Image courtesy of the The Heritage Society, Macau).

was a strategic vantage point for the Dutch, as it is the highest point on the Macau Peninsula. For this reason, "he [Carvalho] commanded his men to occupy [the hill] through the eastern part. [...] Seeing the resolution of the Portuguese, the valour and the morale with which they attacked, the enemy lost rigidity and abandoned the hill."[7] As a matter of fact, the accounts of Rodrigues, Rosário, and Ljungstedt all show that the resolution of the Portuguese and their fierce defence halted and drove away the Dutch. Rosário even described the defending soldiers as "angry lions" *(estomagados leões)*.

Yet, Ripon's narrative once again allows us to see another dimension of this counter-attack. According to him, the Portuguese were unable to have the upper hand after three to four hours of fighting. Consequently, they brought 200-300 drunken slaves into the fighting. Ripon recorded that "the salves fought so furiously and disorderly that the earth shuddered."[8] While the Dutch were shocked by the scene, many of these slaves were killed. Only afterwards did the ammunition arrive, and the Dutch soldiers wanted to harness it directly. It may be because of the hurry that a "clumsy" *(onhandige)* Japanese, who wanted to grab the gunpowder, set fire to it and burst into the air with the explosion. Seeing this, the Portuguese might have thought that the Dutch's supply had been lost, so they fought with even more determination, slaughtering those in Rufijn's entourage. Despite this loss, Ripon kept on fighting. Eventually, however, seeing that his fellow soldiers had no more ammunition nor hope, Ripon told his lieutenant to retreat. Finally, they came back to Cacilhas, where they had first landed.

From these descriptions, we can once again see the contrast between Rosário's account, which tends to glorify the defender's courage and disparage the invader's action, and Ripon's diary, which asserts that both parties were equally unorganised. On the other hand, Rodrigues' and Ljungstedt's reports, until then, appear to be more distanced from the scene.

The Retreat of the Dutch to the Sea

Rodrigues and Ljungstedt reported that the Dutch attempted to re-organise themselves when those who had retreated rejoined those who were stationed at Cacilhas. However, without being able to withstand the Portuguese counter-assault, the Dutch turned to the sea, trying to swim to their ships. Many fell on the beach, while 90 were drowned in the sea. Rosário reported that only a few survived the retreat back onboard. Ripon also described that his fellow soldiers were "slaughtered like chickens" *(als kippen werden geslacht)*. Simultaneously, he saw a tall priest, standing on the shore, who encouraged the Portuguese to slay his army. He then sneaked to the back of the priest and killed him with a stroke that went through his body, before jumping into the water and swimming to his fleet. He was rescued onto a boat, but he could only see a few soldiers onboard.

Ripon detailed that of the 800 men sent to the battlefield, only 250 returned, plus six captains, three lieutenants, nine sub-lieutenants, and seven sergeants. Rufijn was also killed. Rodrigues reported that the Portuguese had killed 300 invaders, while both he and Ljungstedt stated that four captains, together with 12-13 Japanese who helped on the Dutch side, were slain. There were corpses constantly being flushed onto the shore. The defending party also captured one captain and seven soldiers, in addition to seizing thousands of artilleries and weapons, standards and drums.

From there, Rodrigues conferred the victory to the help of Saint John the Baptist. He asserted that "[t]here would have been more [dead] if the kaffirs and servants had not been occupied by divesting and beheading the dead, honouring Saint John the Baptist, on whose day the heretics [the Dutch] tried to profane the many temples, monasteries and sacred altars in this city."[9] Similarly, besides reporting that the Portuguese had killed 300 of the best Dutch soldiers and almost all of their captains, and had seized numerous swords and muskets, Rosário also expressed that if the servants and slaves had not been busy with stripping the clothes off the fallen Dutch, no one could have escaped.

On the defending side, according to Rodrigues, four Portuguese, two Castilians, and "some" *(alguns)* slaves died in the conflict, while 20 were injured. Rosário, on the other hand, did not specify any casualties at all throughout his report, other than a Macanese being killed at the beginning of the battle. Ljungstedt's number accords with Rodrigues, but stated that "a few" slaves were killed. Although Ripon did not specify how many defenders were killed, following his overall narrative, there must be far more people who were killed by the Dutch than the numbers indicated. According to Chronicle of Macau (澳門編年史 "Aomen Biannianshi"), there were 163 Dutch killed and 162 wounded. Concurrently, there were tens of Portuguese and Spanish, together with "a great number of" (大量 "daliang") servants and slaves, killed in this battle.[10] In the end, it seems that no consensus could ever be reached regarding the casualties on both sides.

Epilogue

Rodrigues recorded that on the next day (June 25), a ship bearing a white flag was sent, trying to rescue the rest of the Dutch. The city, however, responded by saying that it was not time until the King judged. Ripon, without recording this event, wrote that after they had treated the wounded in good order, they decided to continue their expedition and reached the Pescadores Archipelago on June 27. In addition, both Rodrigues and Ljungstedt reported that the admiral of sea from the Canton province, seeing the courage of the slaves and servants who fought on behalf of the Portuguese, awarded them with a considerable amount of rice. Some of the slaves were even freed by their masters right after the battle. It is also after this instance that the post of a governor – instead of a captain-major – was established in 1623, and a systematic construction of forts and walls was planned [Fig.3].

Ljungstedt's study ends here without any further evaluation. Rodrigues and Rosário praised the bravery of the Portuguese and attributed the victory to God. In particular, throughout Rosario's whole reportage, the legitimacy of the Portuguese rule of Macau and defence against the Dutch – the "heretics" – are closely linked to God's will. This portrayal may not be surprising, given their backgrounds as friars. Their affinity to the Portuguese side may also explain their manner of describing this conflict, where they used positive terms to portray the defenders and accredited the assaulters with negative attributes. In addition, Rosário glorified Carvalho in having led the Portuguese in this conflict. For example, he portrayed that Carvalho fought with calmness and intelligence like David from the Bible. Lastly, it may also be due to their allegiances that the casualties of both sides have been exaggerated, and that some of the scenes in the battle have been fantasized.

On the other hand, Ripon clearly stated that the Dutch's failure was due to the shortage of ammunition and Rufijn's lack of order. Ripon reasoned that Rufijn's desire to acquire fortune had undermined his preparation for the battle. The other captains, who were merchants or masters of ships, also did not possess enough experience to lead in the conflict. As a result, together with all the hasty orders on land and the accidental explosion, the Dutch could not but have failed in their plan. Indeed, when this piece of news was transmitted back to Coen, he was frustrated and lamented that in this battle, some of their best men had perished and most of their weapons had been lost.[11] As a result, the Dutch explored further north to the island of Formosa (Taiwan), where they were successful in establishing a few forts and towns, before they finally retreated to Batavia after a few decades, abandoning altogether their plan to occupy a place on the Chinese coast.

For a long time in Macau (as well as in Portugal), this decisive battle reassured the Portuguese narrative of their rule in Macau [Fig.4]. There was even a sort of hagiography of those who had – whether truly or not – been involved in the battle. For example, since I was a child, I have been accustomed to the widespread legend that there had been a Jesuit who shot a cannonball from the Forte de Monte so accurately that it hit a gunpowder barrel of the Dutch, causing a huge explosion and desperation on the Dutch side. However, a closer look at the archives may reveal to us that such an incident may not have happened at all. Simultaneously, Ripon's diary has not only debunked such a myth, but is arguably the only source that recorded the first-person experience on the battlefield. According to Blussé and de Moor, Reijersen's premature exit from the battle, let alone his undecipherable writing due to his wounds, made his report incomplete and hard to follow.

In the end, by reading these different people's narratives, we can see the same scene through their eyes. Putting these materials together allows us to have a better look on the battle. From there, we come closer to the drama, happening 400 years ago between two colonial powers over Macau, that determined not only the fate of this tiny piece of land, but also its relationship with the surrounding areas, and even with different colonial powers during the early modern time.

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Notes

1 Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *Een Zwitsers Leven in de Tropen: De Lotgevallen van Kapitein Elie Ripon in Dienst van de VOC (1618-1626) [A Swiss's Life in the Tropics: The Fate of Captain Elie Ripon in Service for the VOC (1618-1626)]*, (Amsterdam, Prometheus: 2016), 106, 109, 114-115.
2 S.J. Jerónimo Rodrigues, "Vitória de Macau contra os Holandeses, 1622 [Victory of Macau against the Dutch, 1622]," trans. Aldino Dias, *Review of Culture*, international edition, no. 12 (2004), 89-93.
3 O.P. António do Rosário, "Ataque dos Holandeses a Macau, 1622 [Attack from the Dutch to Macau, 1622]," trans. Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Review of Culture*, international edition, no. 12 (2004), 94-97.
4 Blussé and de Moor, 109-115.
5 Anders Ljungstedt, "Chapter IV: Foreign Relations," in *A Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China*, (Boston: James Munroe and Co, 1836), 73-74.
6 Rosário, 96.
7 Rosário, 97.
8 Blussé and de Moor, 110.
9 Rodrigues, 92.
10 Zhiliang Wu 吳志良, Kaijian Tang 湯開建, and Guoping Jin 金國平, "第五部分 荷蘭爭奪澳門 (1600-1622) [Part Five: The Netherlands Scrambling for Macau (1600-1622)]", in 澳門編年史 *Chronicle of Macau*, vol.1 (China, Guangdong: 2009), 372.
11 Charles R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550-1770: Fact and Fancy in the History of Macao.* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1948), 83.

Cultural Hijacking: Clash of Storyworlds

Theang Teron

India is home to hundreds of indigenous people. The Karbi community is one of the significant indigenous populations of Assam, Northeast India. Karbi are culturally and historically distinct from the majority Hindu population of India. The Karbi worldmaking process is ritually mediated through indigenous knowledge conventions. When dealing with storyworlds[1], I am using the term 'Storyworld' from a folkloristics approach to understand storytelling as means of sense making and continuously engaging in the creation of a storyworld that a culture per se inhabits. It is problematic to subscribe to a single narrative/myth or history. This can homogenize complex fields. Marginal storyworlds comprise of narratives that are local, vernacular, and non-mainstream that are neglected in the re-imaginings of a one world homogenous storyworld. Some myths from some storyworlds are more powerful than the others, and hierarchies are formed when they collide. The hijacking and appropriation of marginal storyworlds by colonial storyworlds is a present-day reality with different hegemons run by the same agenda.

Fig. 1 (left): A group of young Karbi boys and girls in traditional attire partaking in the cultural festivities at the Karbi Youth Festival (Image courtesy of DS Teron, 2015).

Fig. 2 (above): The Entrance to Lokhimon Ashram, Dolamara, Karbi Anglong (Image by the author, 2022).

Myths, storyworlds, and world-building

I will be employing the term 'mythopolitics' as a conceptual framework to understand the interactions between different competing storyworlds. I am part of the Mythopol project[2] that seeks to interpret and deconstruct the role of hegemonic Hindu storyworlds in the contemporary politics. I see mythopolitics as an interdisciplinary concept that applies insights from politics, religion, and folklore to acknowledge the multidimensional aspects of competing storyworlds. In reality neither is free of the other as neither would exist without the other. Mythopolitics[3] is a developing concept that focuses on the present day trends of world-building processes to probe into the possible futures by trying to realize the facets of negotiations, re-imaginations and re-interpretations of the competing hegemonic storyworlds underpinning identity and belonging.

Karbi people speak a Tibeto-Burman dialect and there are numerous expressive verbal repertoires in the Karbi convention. The Karbi way of life stems from the belief in and propitiation of multiple protective spirits. They are animist in the traditional indigenous Karbi religious sense. Karbi indigenous religion is a cornerstone that shapes the belief system and gives meaning to the world that they inhabit.[4] It entails the co-creation – a collectively held, embodied, and reciprocal knowledge system. As a product of oral tradition, folklores and narratives serve as the only source for Karbi history and understanding one's own culture. The Karbi are one of the many indigenous populations at the periphery persistently battling for rights and equity over status, identity, and representation.[5] There is an increasing rate of acculturation, assimilation, and asymmetrical power relations aimed at the homogenization of the Karbi culture into the folds of the mainstream Hindu right-wing nationalist agenda. To understand the processes of internal colonization by majoritarian forces against the Karbi is the focus of this article. I look at it from the perspective of "cultural hijacking," I use this term to actually look at how majoritarian cultures exert their ideologies by changing the lens of minoritarians through alteration of worldview, knowledge system, and one's cultural understanding of identity and belonging. Through uniformity and homogenization tactics the cultural blueprints of a community are replaced with new ideas of the hijackers. The study on the new religious movement *Lokhimon* will be central in framing my arguments, a group vital for understanding the transformation, conversion, and identity politics. In the discussion that follows, I will attempt to show how Hindu myths created by Hindu nationalists have captured and tailored the imaginations of the Karbi people through media, language, and politics.

Myths are hierarchical in nature, and narratives become competitive in situations of asymmetrical power relations. The notion of coexistence is seen from the vantage of the victors, and more than often, the 'us versus them' narrative continues to clog imaginations perpetually fixed in a binary opposing system.

In the world-building processes, narratives dictate and shape the world(s). A storyworld is and also the outcome of the world-building which entails a culture's particular ways of exhibiting itself embedded with notions of identity, language, cultural practices and knowledge systems. Myths are essential, as they legitimize and form the foundations of identities, communities, and even nations. For marginal communities, it is taxing to subscribe to a single narrative/myth, or to a history of uniformity, assimilation, hegemony, othering, and silencing. As some myths are more compelling than others, being carriers of storyworlds, it is consequential when it collides.[6] Throughout history, many worlds have constantly engaged in power struggles and waged war based on differences in thoughts, words, and actions. An alternative to a one world-world issue could be the acceptance of heterogeneity and multiplicity.

The world we see and experience is an outcome of our perception, but what about the others' perceptions?[7] The difference is perceived as something of the unknown, and the inability to comprehend the unknown as others do results in a tendency toward rejection and assimilation. Variation and inconsistency – that is, narratives other than what is condoned, uniform, and sanctioned – are disputed in a society that feeds on homogenized ideals. The conception of Karbi identity and history is a classic case of hegemony, domination, marginalization, misappropriation, and misinterpretation. For long, Karbi people have been referred to as 'Mikir' (a derogatory misnomer), firstly by the British administration and later by post-colonial India until very recent times.[8] The Karbi history is absent in the discourse of the Indian education system, there's hardly any acknowledging mentions in the grand narrative.

Cultural hijacking as a phenomenon

The term 'cultural hijacking' is an established concept in the study of cultural forms and spatial practices of branding. The nation branding post-independence politics has painted India and it's peripheries with ideas of citizenship through religion, media and language. In Karbi Anglong, modes of education are mainly transmitted either through English, Hindi or Assamese. Karbi religious practices and cultural values are either diluted or transformed into becoming a more Hindu based variants in the present situation. I see cultural hijacking as a phenomenon that incapacitates the host (culture bearers) by dissolving the cultural values, displacement of one's own understanding, and detachments to land, language, and cultural ownership at the behest of the hijackers. It is from this standpoint, I use this concept to analyze and explicate the hegemonic Hindu mythic storyworld and its effects on the marginal storyworlds from the context of Karbi culture. No doubt the eventual outcome of cultural hijacking is a complete assimilation process over time, albeit from the stance of internal colonization. Ashworth and Kavaritz elucidate how the notion of branding and hijacking are related.[9]

The problem stemming from majoritarian versus minoritarian claims in India predates the British era, but British colonization played an instrumental role in instituting new hierarchical formations within South Asian communities. The 'Hindu storyworld and Karbi storyworld' are simultaneously in an arena of contestation and conflict. Culture or cultural traits go on to have a life of their own in everyday repetition and re-enactments through lived performances. Constant interruption in this flow of everyday embodied practices will definitely change the course and may even replace it. There are origin or creation myths behind every Karbi traditional ritual practices that inform the Karbi people about their world. Orality plays the most vital role in the Karbi world-building process. Repetition and constant engagement with the ritual performances endow possibilities for continuity in shared and lived reality. Point of rupture ensued in the 1900s through the colonial religious classification schemes which enabled the dominant Hindu culture to intervene and impose majoritarian values.[10] Hindu Mahasabha (an organ of Hindu nationalist organization) and associated working as Hindu census supervisors post 1920s rallied in the tribal populated areas of Assam to propagate Hindu beliefs.

This incident harkens the hijacking of a Karbi storyworld by majoritarian Hindu storyworld through power, religio-politics and administrative means.

The importance of storytelling is vital in what a human tells themselves about themselves. The power of collective imagination is what gives power to the group of humans that tell that story. The Karbi could have been telling their story from much earlier on if equity, reciprocity, and acknowledgement were considered. The colonial mindset presupposed that it was the colonizer's duty to shape the different storyworlds on their own. By employing the colonial-centric logic, the British hijacked the Hindu storyworld and appropriated the legacy of hijacking of other storyworlds. This has left consequential ripples across different space-times nationwide in India.

For marginal communities like the Karbi, the aftermath of European colonialism is a present-day reality in the form of homogenization and majoritarian politics, with different actors run by the same agenda. One of the aftermath of religious classification schemes gave birth to *Lokhimon*, a new religious movement among the Karbi in the 1950s and since its inception the group continues to grow in number promoting Hindu ideals and attracting spectacles from the center. It is one of the many cogs in the wheel that are steered by the Hindu right-wing nationalists and their vision of India as a homogenized Hindu Rashtra. To explicate this argument, I would like to share an encounter with an Uber driver during my fieldwork in Assam, India. While I was traveling, the Uber driver, who was keen on discussing politics remarked, "It's all about the packaging. The labels are different, but the content is still the same." I could straight away infer, as he belonged to the 'Goria' community (an Assamese group that converted to Islam during the 1600s Mughal era) and who himself faced bouts of racism and othering. His interpretation was very allegorical to the present *Lokhimon* case indicating the shift in association of identity and belief are proportional to power dynamics and majoritarian influences.

One of the many consequences of cultural hijacking as a rupture in cultural practices displaces lived experience and cultural embodiment. Liefsen explains a trait of settler colonialism that is apt to the hijacking phenomenon: "Wolfe seeks to identify a set of key features that in one way or another imply elimination – spanning a spectrum of strategies from genocide to conversion and assimilation."[11] Once new programs are installed, the hijacking of a culture subliminally conditions cultural practitioners into new beings automated to follow new protocols. This creates a sense of 'social distancing' and deep resentment toward one's traditional cultural values and belief systems among the culture bearers. In the same vein, *Lokhimon* followers denounce Karbi traditional practices and refrain from participating in traditional rituals as they see it unfit and less moral. Instead, the followers perform a Hinduized devotion by chanting hymns and offering prayers based on the teachings of Vaishnavism (patrons of lord Vishnu) and lead a 'new' Hindu lifestyle. Karbi traditional practices are seen as something 'less than'.

From this point of view, it cannot be truer than the current status quo of India marred by communal party politics and the hijacking of other cultures. Hindu right-wing politics' scope of homogenizing India reflects a mindset of a community that was once under a long 250 years of British colonizers. There is certainly a stench of colonial hangover in the recent dispensation which underlines cultural hijacking through administrative implementations such as the CAA ('Citizenship Amendment Act'), the demolition of Babri Masjid and rebuilding of Ram Mandir, the Jammu and Kashmir reorganization act.

The new religious movement of a one-world paradigm

In the post-colonial era, Hindu right-wing nationalists have emerged as one of the main cultural hijackers of the Karbi storyworld in Northeast India. As discussed earlier, the hijacking process entails the deployment of Hindu ideals and myths in place of Karbi traditional belief system. The lived reality of Karbi cultural practices are geographical, contextual and subjective, and these components define the Karbi storyworld. In recent years, the constant re-enforcement of Hindu ideals by the Hindu nationalist party through politics, economics, and religion, has resulted in an inclination of the Karbi population toward the reception of a 'grand Hindu tradition'. At present, the BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) is the ruling party in the Karbi Anglong district and Assam. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's latest visit to *Lokhimon* Ashram at Dolamara on 5 October 2021 for the purpose of *Rat Chingrum Amai* (*lit.* "a religious solidarity meet") marked a direct governmental aid in terms of finance and resources for the establishment of *Lokhimon* temples. This is one reference to cultural hijacking that reflects the majoritarian political power struggle bent on homogenization, through political representation and religious sanctions reshaping the Karbi storyworld.

The impacts of homogenization brought about the first new religious reform movement[12] among the Karbi during the late 1950s. This movement was known as "*Lokhimon* Sangha," which sought to reform the old Karbi religious belief system, labeling it redundant and outdated. *Lokhimon* fashioned itself in an organized, uniform, and institutionalized religious system, drawing from its Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad counterparts (VHP). *Lokhimon* is one of the many examples of the new religious movements boom in Northeast India led by Hindu nationalist right-wing politics.

Lokhimon religion is viewed as a sect of Vaishnavism in the current iteration, and in its formative days, it included many fascinating yet confusing overlaps of deities. The spiritual leader, Lokhon Ingti Hensek, is still worshipped as the avatar of Vishnu [as well as] the amalgamation of all the incarnations of Karbi heroes, deities, and prominent Hindu gods/goddesses. The religion of *Lokhimon* was founded on February 5th, 1959, by the spiritual leader alongside his followers. Lokhon is revered as the creator/ruler of the universe/source of all moral authority, a supreme being, with mystical abilities, a reformer, and the harbinger of Truth. The practices of *Lokhimon* differ from that of the old traditional Karbi belief system mainly in the aspects of sacrificial offerings, usage of alcohol in rituals, and the consumption of meat. There is a gap widening within the Karbi storyworld, between the *Lokhimon* followers and the traditional Karbi culture bearers in practices, interpretation and reception of cultural repertories.

Lokhimon is a departure from the old Karbi oral tradition in practice and belief, in the name of reform, the spiritual leader has manufactured new laws and norms to command his followers. New hymns and prayers are crafted in the fashion of *kirtan* or Hindu prayer recitation to eulogize his supreme and invincible status. Lokhon Ingti Hensek in the *Lokhimon* religion is a prominent, central, and god figure.

It is noteworthy that Dolamara, where the *Lokhimon* movement has its origin, was a site of resistance to the growing missionary activities. Dolamara and the surrounding areas have been reportedly Christianized since the late 1800s, and it is evident that the Karbi folks living in those areas chose to resist conversions to Christianity and to adopt Hinduism as an alternative. In 1921, the Assam Census Report posited that the borderline between Hinduism and Animism as vague and operating side by side with Hindu customs making it one and the same. The Hindu Mahasabha of Assam resorted to this census by launching propaganda campaign to do away with the distinction and persuade all Animists as genuine Hindus.[13] The battle of faith ensued for the non-Christian Karbi population of Dolamara as an identity reclamation strategy. The early leaders responsible for the creation of *Lokhimon* had strong inclination and ties with the Hindu nationalist organization and were patrons of the Hindu religion. I suspect this case to have elements of both strategic essentialism[14] and complete assimilation. In the case of the former, the *Lokhimon* leaders sought to transform themselves into something akin to the institutions of Hinduism in order to compete with the missionary adversary of the time. However, from the latter point of view, it is evident that the Hindu counterparts were divisive in restoring a stronghold and securing its spheres of influence as two major religious institutions were at a tug of war. In the current situation, the position of missionary control has waned as the result of the majoritarian Hindu-right wing state-run homogenizing politics. *Lokhimon* in its core belief aims to reform Karbi culture. In practice, this is more difficult to distinguish. The process of cultural hijacking is apparent in displacing Karbi roots in place of Hindu ideals. This case begs a question, "How much is enough?"

Bearing this in mind the concept of cultural hijacking is vital in the understanding of cross-cultural interactions between the Karbi storyworld and Hindu storyworld. The creation of NRM groups reveal the causes and effects of the Hindu-Rashtra assimilation processes as my study has shown. I see *Lokhimon* as a liminal space or what I would like to call a "dialogue space" between the two parties (i.e., the Hindu right-wing and the Karbi). Now, this dialogue space is crucial in analyzing the facets of negotiation and the relationships the Karbi have with Hindu majoritarian influences. *Lokhimon* is one of the index markers that exhibit cultural assertion in the form of strategic essentialism where agency and representation are at stake. The present study shows a one-way track for the Karbi in this dialogue space. As I have enumerated earlier, the practices and affiliations *Lokhimon* are tilting towards the endorsement of Hinduism as opposed to the Karbi traditional belief. There are critical questions to be asked at this junction while addressing the posterity of Karbi culture: What picture are we building? Who is contributing and who has authority over what is being built and how it has to be? There are no easy solutions, but the spark in re-imagination, re-negotiation and re-inventing "how we see ourselves" while acknowledging and accepting our differences might just be a starting point for dismantling any form of cultural hijacking. Creating spaces consciously for cultures to flourish can enable multiple storyworlds to coexist.

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Notes

1 "Storyworld ... is evoked by ... multiple modes of verbal expression [that] can be conceptualized as a liminal realm between factuality and fiction, where everyday reality is transformed by imagination" See : Valk, U. and Sävborg, D. (2018) "Place-Lore, Liminal Storyworld and Ontolgy of the Supernatural, An Introduction." In Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas, Ülo Valk and Daniel Sävborg (eds.). Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. p.7-26.

2 https://mythopolitics.mf.no/ (last accessed on 24/08/2022)

3 "Project MYTHOPOL will analyse this mythopolitics, as produced in contemporary political moment, in the context of the existing mythological narratives, by the Hindu nationalism and its resistance as the primary tool of creating narratives of identity and belonging." See: Sen, M. (2020) Mythopolitics in South Asia: The Lifetimes of Powerful Stories. Available at: https://mythopolitics.mf.no/ (last accessed on 24/08/2022)

4 Ernst Bloch (1995) argues "religious stories of emancipation and oppression possess a utopic function in that these stories reveal the inherent contradictions of human existence and, in so doing, open the door to understanding the need for the transcendence and transformation of existent society. In this sense, religion, while often operating as an ideology of domination, can also be understood as a revolutionary narrative that inspires political commitment to challenge the irrealism of social reality". See Reed, J.P. & Goldstein, W.S. (2022) "An Introduction to the Critical Study of Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, and Social Movements." In Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, And Social Movements, Jean-Pierre Reed and Warren S. Goldstein (eds.). New York: Routledge, p.1-27.

5 "Indigenous cultures are alive and participate in a process of permanent change. The only way for them to survive is to reinvent themselves, re-creating their identity while maintaining their differences." See Marcos, S. (2022) "Indigenous Spirituality and the Decolonization of Religious Beliefs: Embodied Theology, Collectivity, and Justice." In Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, and Social Movements, Jean-Pierre Reed and Warren S. Goldstein (eds.). New York: Routledge. p.231-245.

6 "Embracing narrative and particularly fiction can provide one of the most powerful tools for building and exploring plausible futures." See: Stackelberg, P.V. & McDowell, A. (2015) "What in the World? Storyworlds, Science Fiction, and Future Studies." In Journal of Futures Studies, December 2015, 20(2). p.25-46.

7 "The new post-colonial response is that the differences are not simply matters of belief. They are also a matter of reals. What the world is, is also at stake." See: Law, J (2011) "What's Wrong With A One-World World?" This paper was presented to the Centre for the Hummanities, Wesleyan University, Middleton, Connecticut on 19th September 2011. p.1-13. Available at: http://www.heterogeneities.net/publications Law2011WhatsWrongWithAOneWorldWorld.pdf (last accessed 24/08/2022)

8 "The name Mikir is that given to the race by the Assamese: its origin is unknown. They call themselves Ārlèng, which means man in general." See: Stack, E & Lyall, C (1908). The Mikirs. From the papers of the Late Edward Stack. Edited, arranged and supplemented by Sir Charles Lyall. Published under the orders of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, David Nutt, 57,59, Long Acre, London. p.4.

9 "While branding claims to appreciate the role of culture and actually be based on culture, the two are rather disconnected and branding seems often to 'hijack' culture. This 'hijacking' refers to the interpretations of culture that are dominant within place branding, the explicit and implicit reasons this is attempted, the emphasis on certain cultural elements over others and the wider effectiveness of culture-based strategies." See: Kavaratzis, M. & Ashworth, G.J. (2015) "Hijacking Culture: The disconnection between place culture and place brands." In Town Planning Review, 86(2). p.155-176.

10 See Mullan, CS, (1932) Census of India, 1931, Vol 3, Assam Part 1-Report

11 See Leifsen, E. (2021) "Governance Sensitivities and the Politics of Translation: Rethinking the Colonisation of the Shuar of Ecuador's Amazonian South-East." In Journal of Latin American Studies. Cambridge University Press. p.1-25.

12 Here I will be categorising *Lokhimon* under the banner of new religious movement. By the term I am referring to the definition provided by 'The Oxford Handbook of Religious Movement', "[NRM] arose in response to the cult controversy of the early 1970s and continued to grow in the wake of a series of headline-grabbing tragedies involving religious groups like the People's Temple and Heaven's Gate ... NRM studies had actually emerged several decades earlier in Japan in the wake of the explosion of religious innovation following the Second World War. Even the name "new religions" is a direct translation of the expression shin shukyo that Japanese sociologists coined to refer to this phenomenon." See: Lewis, JR & Tøllefsen, IB (2016) "Introduction." In The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements: Volume 2, James R. Lewis and Inga B. Tøllefsen (eds.). Oxford University Press. p.1-16.

13 Mullan (1932) p.189.

14 A post-colonial term coined by Gayatri Spivak to show how a minority group asserts resistance by clubbing with the majoritarian's ideals in reclaiming its identity and political goals.

Pedagogies of Partition

Collective Memory and Counternarrative 75 Years On

Monisha Bajaj

The Slate is devoted to pedagogy and educational praxis, both in and beyond the classroom. This section is meant to be a space for educators and researchers to explore the debates, practices, challenges, and opportunities of 21st-century education. The Slate can take many forms, encompassing everything from personal reflections to practical resources for educators (e.g., syllabi, field exercises, etc.), from critical essays on traditional education to experimental teaching strategies. With this section, we seek perspectives that decolonize conventional curricula and pedagogies. Through socially and civically engaged approaches, the section aims to foster alternative models for education that are grounded in contemporary experience and which strive towards greater accessibility, innovation, and critical engagement.

Seventy-five years ago, the world witnessed one of the largest migrations in recorded human history: the Partition of India and Pakistan. An estimated 14 million people were uprooted from their homes, driven by violence or the fear of it as the newly independent nations of India and Pakistan were born from the subcontinent's long struggle for freedom. After 300 years of British economic intervention and, later, political domination, the new nations were formed in August of 1947. India had a majority Hindu population (though it was envisioned to be a secular country), and Pakistan had a Muslim-majority population. The new nation of Pakistan was divided into East and West Pakistan; East Pakistan later fought for its independence and became the nation of Bangladesh in 1971.

In the lead-up to Independence from British colonial rule, which had politicized South Asian religious identities in new ways, vigorous debates were held about whether to divide – or "partition" – into two countries. Splits within the independence movement, represented by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, prevented a consensus on power-sharing formulas and guarantees for the rights of Muslims in a Hindu-majority India. Ultimately, then-British Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, enlisted a British judge Cyril Radcliffe to draw the borders of the new countries, though he had never been to the region. The new borders were only announced by the departing British days *after* India's and Pakistan's independence. As tensions were already on the rise, many began migrating prior to the official announcement.

Fig. 1 (above): A still from the short film "Rest in Paper," directed by Haseeb Rehman as part of the Lost Migrations project (Photo courtesy of Puffball Studios, 2022).

Fig. 2 (right): *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani (Penguin Random House, 2018).

From 1946 to 1948, an estimated 14 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs headed in both directions, many forcibly driven out by violent extremist groups on both sides. Unspeakable violence engulfed this large human displacement. An estimated one to two million people were killed, and hundreds of thousands of women were victimized by sexual violence.[1]

The 1947 Partition was part of an established practice by the British empire of "drawing lines on maps of other countries"[2] in order to more effectively "divide and rule"[3] or to attempt to solve ethnic and religious tensions that the British had previously fostered, as evidenced in the earlier partitions of Afghanistan (1893), Bengal (1905), and the Ottoman Empire after World War I (1918-1922). Newberry notes that from 1870-1914, "Everywhere in British Africa, partition changed the cultural landscape."[4] The legacies of these partitions are long-lasting, and even today, they certainly continue to impact world politics and possibilities for peace.

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan – given the magnitude of displacement and death – certainly deserves greater attention in our education systems and public consciousness globally. The 1947 Partition is rarely included in discussions of world history, and where it is, such as briefly in textbooks in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom, there is a focus on "us and them" and singular narratives. They tend to be silent about the violent outcomes of Partition, as educational scholar Meenakshi Chhabra discusses in her extensive research and text-book analyses about the historical event.[5]

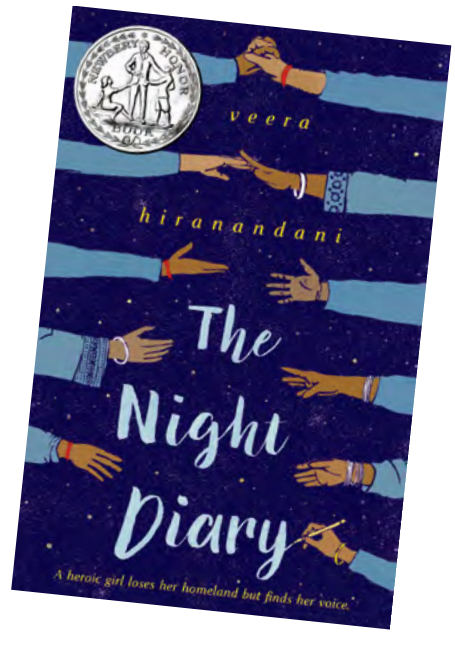
One-fifth of the world's population lives in South Asia (accounting for nearly two billion people), a region comprising the nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The South Asian diaspora across the globe also numbers an estimated 24 million. For those with South Asian heritage, and also for those without this heritage, teaching about the 1947 Partition as an important event in world history offers a corrective to the silence and invisibilization of this history to date.

My own family's trajectory was greatly impacted by Partition through the loss of family members, their sudden displacement as refugees, and the lasting intergenerational trauma that all of it caused. As an educational scholar, I offer three areas through which we can engage the pedagogies of Partition in our classrooms, communities, and beyond to learn from this painful history: (1) humanizing Partition through children's literature and curriculum; (2) public pedagogies and counternarratives of Partition; and (3) efforts towards peacebuilding and solidarity. Education – both inside and outside of the classroom – offers important analytical frameworks as we grapple with understanding contested historical events like the 1947 Partition; it also provides a way to develop a "people's history" of Partition, one that can foster a more expansive collective historical memory, one which transcends the political agendas and projects of nation-states.

Humanizing Partition through children's literature and curriculum

Whether in schools, libraries, or even the books read at home, the increasing number of Partition-related stories in recent years offer multiple perspectives on this event through the hopes, realities, and experiences of the characters in the texts. The following texts at the primary and secondary levels can introduce readers to stories about the Partition.

At the level of upper primary school, three titles deserve special mention. First is *Chachaji's Cup*[6] by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Soumya Sitaraman. This picture book, for which there is also a teacher's guide,[7] tells the story of an Indian-American boy and his grand-uncle, whose special teacup is the only item that the elder still has from his childhood home. There is also a page at the end of the book that offers a brief history of the Partition that could be shared with students as well.



The second book is *Mukand and Riaz*[8] by Nina Sabnani. This picture book – which has also been rendered into a short animated video[9] – is set in 1947 and tells the story of two boys (Mukand and Riaz) who enjoy playing together. When the news of Partition comes, they must say farewell to one another, and Riaz helps Mukand and his family depart for India safely. The third book at this level is *The Moon from Dehradun*[10] by Shirin Shamsi, illustrated by Tarun Lak [Fig. 3]. This is a picture book about a young girl who has to leave her favorite doll behind during her family's migration from India to Pakistan during the Partition. The beautifully illustrated story, with an informative note on Partition at the end, allows readers to relate to the uncertainty felt by migrants forced to flee violence and seek safety.

There are also engaging titles aimed at slightly older readers at the middle and secondary school levels. *The Night Diary*[11] by Veera Hiranandani, tells the story of Nisha, a 12-year old girl who has a Hindu father and a deceased Muslim mother [Fig. 2]. Nisha recounts her family's refugee journey during the Partition through a series of letters to her mother in her diary. The publisher's website includes an open-access educator's guide[12] and the book received the Newberry Honor as a "distinguished contribution to American literature for children" in 2019. A sequel to *The Night Diary* about the characters' lives after Partition will come out in 2024. Another title at this age level is *A Beautiful Lie*[13] by Irfan Master. In this young adult novel set in 1947 during the weeks before Partition, 13-year old Bilal, a Muslim boy in India, devises an elaborate plot with his friends to keep the news of the Partition and its related violence from his dying father, who would find the division of the countries heart-breaking. Like *Chachaji's Cup* and *The Night Diary*, *A Beautiful Lie* also offers an extensive educator's guide online.[14] Finally, *The Partition Project*[15] by Saadia Faruqi is a forthcoming (2024) middle-grade book about a young girl, Maha, whose curiosity and budding interest in journalism leads her to explore her family's experiences during the Partition of India and Pakistan, causing rifts with family and friends who do not understand her fascination with this history.

Other resources that could be explored in classrooms or community spaces include a six-minute video from TED-Ed – "Why was India split into two countries?"[16] – and curricula from the University of Texas[17] and Stanford University.[18]

Public pedagogies and counternarratives of Partition

Public pedagogies refer the ways that learning occurs outside of formal institutions and within public or community spaces. One "public pedagogy" of Partition is the extensive 1947 Partition Archive[19] – a treasure trove of information with nearly 10,000 oral histories of individuals who survived the Partition. An interactive map on their webpage can help users locate stories, explore migration routes, and read summaries of survivors who moved in different directions. Coverage about the Archive from the *New York Times*,[20] as well as the organization's YouTube channel,[21] can be useful ways for anyone – young or old – to engage with first-hand accounts and experiences of Partition. The organization's website also hosts a "Partition Library" with extensive lists of films, books, and web resources that address the historical event and its legacies.[22]

Museums dedicated to the stories of Partition have also emerged. For example, one can visit or take a virtual tour of the Partition Museum in Amritsar, India, exploring online images of collection items, videos, and articles about the museum.[23] There is also a Kolkata Partition Museum that is primarily virtual at present.[24]

Recent shows and videos in popular culture have addressed the Partition in different ways. For example, in his short music video "The Long Goodbye," which received an Oscar in 2022 for best live-action short film, actor and musician Riz Ahmed discusses the multiple displacements of his family from India to Pakistan during Partition then, later, to the UK.[25] The 2022 six-part fictional series Ms. Marvel explores the superhero Kamala Khan's origin story, which centers around her great grandmother's experiences during the 1947 Partition.[26] Several episodes include archival and fictional footage of families fleeing violence, offering a window into this historical period through popular culture.

Archives, museums, films, and shows visibilize the complex and layered experiences of Partition. Exposure to multiple narratives can be an opening to discuss these events, but caution is required to not fall into the singular narratives of "enemy/victim" and "us versus them" that have been galvanized by political leaders in different nation-states.

Efforts towards peace-building and solidarity

Attention to agency and solidarity, as well as counternarratives to dominant discourses, can help avoid the traps of simplistic tropes around Partition that have fueled enduring hate and division across nations. It is essential to highlight stories of solidarity as well as to critically analyze how political leaders have leveraged singular narratives for their own agendas over the past 75-plus years. Shedding light on lesser-known stories of Partition can also further illuminate the diverse and complicated realities of this period.

One such effort is a joint, publicly available text produced by the History Project entitled *Partitioned Histories: The Other Side of Your Story*.[27] The project, collectively developed by Indian and Pakistani educators and scholars, presents 16 chapters in a nearly 300-page book; each chapter has the Indian and Pakistani narratives of historical events side-by-side, as culled from history textbooks in both nations. As the authors of the book note in the introduction when referring to the book's last chapter, "The Partition of India, with which we conclude, is arguably the most important of these events and it is still the reason for the rift between people on either side of the border, a rift that we hope to interrogate, transform, and even heal by doing history differently." The placement of conflicting narratives side-by-side offers a chance for the reader to zoom out and question why such narratives have been produced, by whom, and in the service of what agendas.

The organization Project Dastaan is a "peace-building initiative which examines the human impact of global migration through the lens of the largest forced migration in recorded history, the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan."[28] The organization uses virtual reality (VR), with footage compiled from volunteers, to allow survivors of Partition to visit their childhood homes through VR headsets, as opposed to navigating the turbulent political terrain of securing visas or traveling long distances across hostile borders. With teams from across the South Asian region, the organization also produces videos like "Child of Empire," a virtual reality "docu-drama experience" of the 1947 Partition.[29] The organization also recently produced three short animated videos entitled Lost Migrations to shed light on "hidden stories" of Partition, such as the experiences of women, South Asians in Burma, and those who became stateless after 1947.[30]

Brazilian educational scholar Paulo Freire has argued, "Looking at the past must be a means of understanding more clearly what and who [we] are so that [we] can more wisely build the future."[31] The role of critical inquiry and education as the pursuit of greater freedom requires a nuanced understanding of history and how asymmetries of power are interwoven with colonialism, imperialism, and lingering structures of violence. By exploring pedagogies of Partition in our homes, classrooms, and communities, we can better understand the dimensions of global conflict and possibilities for peace and justice in our world today.

The previous article by the author on Teaching Partition, that this articles draws from, can be found here: https://medium.com/@mibajaj/teaching-about-south-asias-partition-673287eaad98

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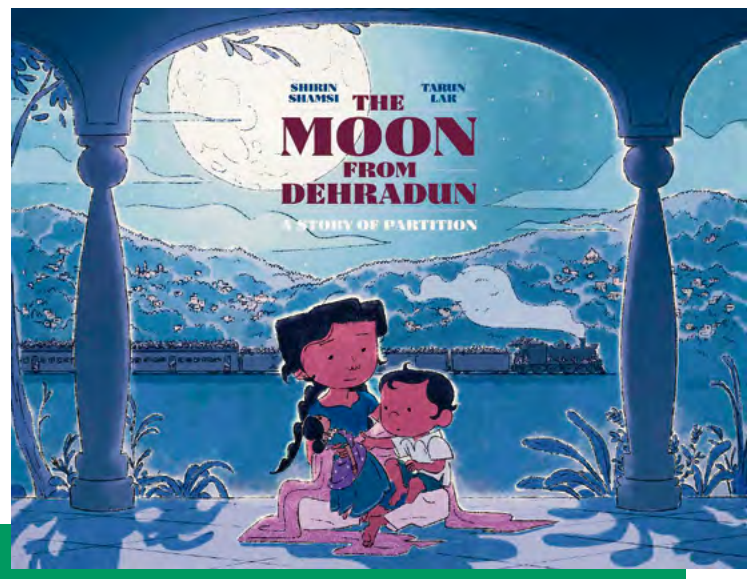


Fig. 3 (right): *The Moon from Dehradun* by Shirin Shamsi, illustrated by Tarun Lak (Atheneum Books for Young Readers [Simon & Schuster], 2022).

Additional Resources

- "The Great Divide" in *The New Yorker:* https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple
- "How the Partition of India Happened" in *The Conversation:* https://theconversation.com/how-the-partition-of-india-happened-and-why-its-effects-are-still-felt-today-81766
- "Young Indians and Pakistanis Rewrite their Shared History" in *NPR:* https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/08/17/340687306/young-indians-and-pakistanis-rewrite-their-shared-history
- "From post-memory to post-amnesia: Remembering and forgetting East Pakistan" in *The Daily Star* (Bangladesh): https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/postmemory-post-amnesia-1452601
- "South Asian diaspora brings 1947 partition to Western pop culture" in *Al Jazeera:* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/11/south-asian-diaspora-brings-1947-partition-to-western-pop-culture

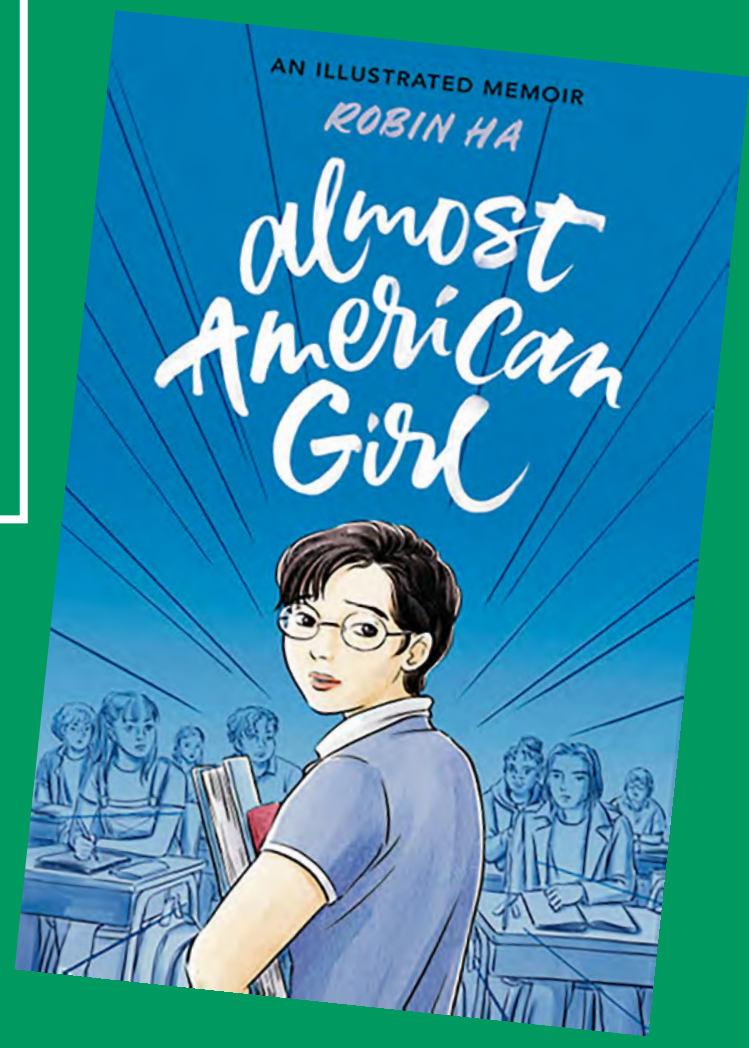
Notes

1 These texts offer further information and historical insights into the Partition: Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971 and Modern South Asia by A. Kabir (2013, Women Unlimited); Time's Monster: How History Makes History by P. Satia (2020, Harvard University Press; Midnight's Borders: A People's History of Modern India by S. Vijayan (2021, Melville House); Footprints of Partition: Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians by A. Zakharia (2015, HarperCollins).
2 https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2017/8/10/the-partition-the-british-game-of-divide-and-rule
3 https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/partition-of-bengal-1905-divide-and-rule-protests-1368958-2018-10-16
4 Newbury, Colin. 1999. "Great Britain and the Partition of Africa, 1870–1914" In Andrew Porter and Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford University Press, 1999; online edn, Oxford Academic, 3 Oct. 2011): https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198205654.003.0027, accessed 7 Sept. 2022.
5 Chhabra, Meenakshi. 2018. "A human rights and history education model for teaching about historical events of mass violence: The 1947 British India Partition." *Prospects* 47: 149-162.
6 https://www.leeandlow.com/books/chachaji-s-cup
7 https://www.leeandlow.com/images/pdfs/Chachajis_Cup-1.pdf
8 https://www.tulikabooks.com/picture-books/mukand-and-riaz-english.html?product_rewrite=mukand-and-riaz-english
9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Od0G2PLCswI
10 https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Moon-from-Dehradun/Shirin-Shamsi/9781665906791
11 https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/549250/the-night-diary-by-veera-hiranandani/
12 http://images.randomhouse.com/teachers_guides/9780735228511.pdf
13 https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/beautiful-lie-9781408812013/
14 http://www.welovechildrensbooks.com/wp-content/uploads/files/cc_beautiful_lie.pdf
15 https://bradfordlit.com/2022/03/04/partition-project-from-saadia-faruqi/
16 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrcCTgwbsjc
17 https://minio.la.utexas.edu/webeditor-files/southasia/pdf/partition_in_classroom.pdf
18 https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/india-partition
19 https://www.1947partitionarchive.org
20 https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/14/arts/potent-memories-from-a-divided-india.html?referringSource=articleShare; https://www.nytimes.com/video/arts/100000002387575/preserving-partition.html?referringSource=articleShare
21 https://www.youtube.com/c/1947PartitionArchive/videos
22 https://www.1947partitionarchive.org/library
23 https://www.partitionmuseum.org
24 https://kolkata-partition-museum.org
25 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzz50xENH4g
26 https://www.teenvogue.com/story/inside-ms-marvel-partition-storyline-co-creator-sana-amanat-interview
27 https://qasimatgumroad.gumroad.com/l/partitionedhistories
28 https://projectdastaan.org/about/
29 https://projectdastaan.org/child-of-empire/
30 https://projectdastaan.org/lost-migrations/#:~:text=Lost%20Migrations%20is%20a%20three,by%20British%20authorities%20in%201947
31 Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Visual Accounts of Complex Histories

The Pedagogical Value of Graphic Novels in Teaching Asian Migrations

Violetta Ravagnoli



The introductory class of the Colleges of the Fenway (COF) Minor in Migration Studies[1] usually opens with a good half hour of silence. Students follow the turning of the pages of *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, a wordless graphic novel on the experience of migration [Fig 1]. The story unfolds on the screen with the help of an old-fashioned overhead projector lamp. Students' reactions span from embarrassment at the quiet activity to complete and devoted absorption in the bewitching pages of the book. The 45 minutes that follow are possibly the most engaging of the entire semester. The book produces emotions, raises questions, and demands participation out of every student; often, even the most reserved one has a hand up to share a thought or an image. This article stresses the pedagogical benefits of graphic novels to teach migrations in the discipline of history and across the social sciences.

Fig. 1 (left): *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Hodder Children's Books, 2006).

Fig. 2 (centre): *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui (Abrams Books, 2017).

Fig. 3 (right): *Almost American Girl* by Robin Ha (Balzer + Bray, 2020).

Combined media in the teaching of migration history

The social sciences often address topics related to migration (e.g., assimilation, ethnicity, race, citizenship, multicultural societies, belonging, identity) through structured processes; that is, they postulate hypotheses based on specific theories, and then they undertake empirical analysis. However, this scientific approach sometimes runs the risk of taking meaning away from the reality of migration. In *The Arrival*, people are sketched with photographic precision, on a seemingly sepia paper. As the turning of the pages resembles the intimate act of looking at a family album, the shared reading of the book plants into the students a genuine interest for the personal stories of diasporic people. Hence, the use of graphic novels can help find a balance between systematic research and personal narratives while raising awareness about the underlying unpredictability of human behaviors. Additionally, research on migration cannot be complete without a "two shores" approach,[2] which combines sources on and from the receiving societies with material from the sending localities, while also analyzing change at the intersection.

A book of choice in my "East Asian Migration and Diaspora" is Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do* [Fig. 2]. It is a memoir that portrays Vietnamese migrations to the US from the viewpoint of Vietnamese refugees. Through personal narratives of translocal lives,[3] the book is a powerful tool to challenge dominant discourses on the Vietnam war, and it urges students to step outside of the popular US-centric understanding of that complex historical period. With crude and ubiquitous images of childbirth in New York, Saigon, and refugee camps in Malaysia, the book depicts Vietnamese people's struggle before, during, and after the war. By engaging with this graphic novel, which illustrates a multi-faceted and culturally heterogeneous Vietnam, students approach the history of colonization and delve into the concept of diversity and migrants' agency. Therefore, intimate images, with which students identify, facilitates a two-shore, transnational, historical analysis of the war, with special attention to its consequences for refugees' conditions.

In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud demonstrates that simple and sometimes silent pictures offer readers an opportunity to identify with circumstantial features that can also be universal.[4] Therefore, I adopt *The Arrival* for the core class of the Minor, "Intro to Migration Studies," for two main reasons. First, the book sketches stories of struggle and adaptation, stressing the agency of migrants as a key element to understand migration issues. Second, the author, an Australian citizen, son of immigrants from Malaysia, successfully conveys a de-nationalized representation of the migration experience. Even if the first drawings in *The Arrival* evoke popularized images of Ellis Island, the book stresses the transnationality of migratory movements, which is one of the teaching objectives of the Minor. Dean Chan, an expert on Cultural Visualization, recognizes that the significance of graphic novels in creating alternative pedagogies might still not be obvious to many. And yet, he argues that *The Arrival* has surely obtained a steady position in college classrooms. Among the plethora of texts adopted to teach and underscore the transnationality of migration and diasporic studies, especially of Asian cultures, Shaun Tan's graphic novel is among the most successful.[5] Typically, I also select traditional scholarly texts, such as *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, edited by anthropologist Caroline B. Brettell and political scientist James F. Hollifield. The latter aims at familiarizing students with interdisciplinary approaches to global migrations, another learning goal of the Minor. And yet, the course would not obtain the same level of engagement without Tan's visual introduction.

On this topic, Barbara Postema argues that the drawings of a comic book can become open invitations to long-lasting empathy and not only tools to momentarily identify with the characters.[6] In *The Arrival*, every person possesses his or her own idiom, and yet, within the course of the book, the protagonist, and the readers with him, while sharing disorientation, make communication possible. Therefore, the book predisposes students to approach individual stories of transnational movement with empathy, while also pursuing scientific analysis of complex themes such as assimilation, emplacement, acculturation, integration, or multiculturalism. As an example, the ending of *The Arrival* presents an optimistic view of emplacement, one in which multiculturalism and intergenerational collaborations are achieved. Some scholars, however, have questioned this romanticized portrayal of modern societies and criticized it as a simplistic acceptance of US-born assimilation theories.[7] Consequently, *The Arrival* can help raise questions about nationalist narratives such as that of the "society of immigrants," commonly considered in the US to be one of the essential features of American nationhood. Hence, the graphic novel becomes a vessel to motivate students to critically analyze historical, political, sociological, and anthropological studies of migration as they relate to assimilation and other research issues.

Making sense of migrations with three graphic novels

These are only few examples that speak of the visual and conceptual power of graphic novels for teaching migration history as well as theoretical ideas developed in the humanities and social sciences. Due to space limitations, I can only pick a few among many interesting examples to highlight here.[8] In what follows, I will discuss three graphic novels that can be pedagogical successes for the teaching of Asian migrations. The first

is *Almost American Girl* by Robin Ha [Fig. 3]. This book is a great rendition of migrant life between Asia– Korea in this particular case – and the society of arrival.[9] The complexity of migration, the sociological questions about assimilation or adaptation, cultural differences, and the formation of ethnic identities are all illustrated in the memoir and, consequently, humanized. By pairing the images and the narratives of memoirs with scholarly articles, the educational power of graphic novels is compellingly revealed. That is, the drawings of a graphic novel prompts multi-disciplinary research questions about political actions towards migrations, about the role of domestic and international institutions, about levels of incorporation, or about the role of legal systems *vis-à-vis* migration.

The second is *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes [Fig. 4]. The author, a Japanese American, examines her own sense of belonging. She does so by piecing together the life story of her grandmother Ernestina Teranishi, who was sent to internment camps with her parents in 1943. Kiku, the protagonist, is shocked as she finds herself going back and forth between a 21st- and a 20th-century California. The images and feelings summoned by the author become tangible recollections of her grandma's (and Kiku's own) geographical and emotional displacements. In the final pages of the book, back in the 2010s, Kiku opens up to her mom, who also claims to be a time-traveler. They finally realize that their seemingly supernatural gifts are in fact memories, powerful ones. Such powerful memories formed the basis of their identities, their daily relations with local communities, and their interactions with society at large. Through this book, students become acquainted with historical methods, as they are exposed to primary sources and the craft of storytelling. In the comic medium, past, present, and future can sit on a single page, visibly showing the changes of global political interests and transnational networks over time, as well as shedding light on repercussions for individuals.

Lastly, I teach a class called "Immigrant Kitchens: A *Glocal* Perspective on Identity, Ethnicity and Foodways" in which students question theories about ethnicity and identity formation by tracing the history of different ethnic culinary traditions.[10] They are prompted to investigate historical menus, vintage cookbooks, family recipes, and the development of transnational culinary practices. Therefore, the third book I will mention here is *Measuring Up*, the debut novel of Lily LaMotte, illustrated by Ann Xu [Fig. 5]. It underlines the effectiveness of discussing migration issues through the lens of foodways. In *Measuring Up*, we taste the powerful resilience of first- and second-generation girls as they use food to connect hometowns and places of arrival. Food is also a source of adaptation and accomplishment in the book. Cici, the main character, has recently moved to the United States from Taiwan when she decides to participate in a cooking contest. Her hope is to win the first prize of $1000 to buy a ticket to America for A-Má, her grandmother. A-Má represents her roots. She symbolizes Cici's primeval sense of belonging, and she embodies the tastes of Cici's origins until she faces her new "home." Cici wins first place because she finds her own tweak to a traditional family recipe. The graphic novel conveys the perceptions and hopes of migrants that words alone might keep hidden. Students become acquainted with topics such as culinary nostalgia,[11] cultural intimacy,[12] uprootedness, and resilience through the protagonist's pragmatic and creative adaptations to the ingredients of the new land. Cici will declare at the end: "My dish is who I am … both Taiwanese and American."[13] Inspired by her culinary icon Julia Child and by her hero A-Mà, Cici finds her true, non-hyphenated self. Critics who are skeptical about the legitimacy of graphic novels as teaching tools might object to this ending as an oversimplification; however, as I tried to demonstrate here, I would not discard graphic novels as powerful instruments for the contemporary college classroom, as the pros offset the cons.

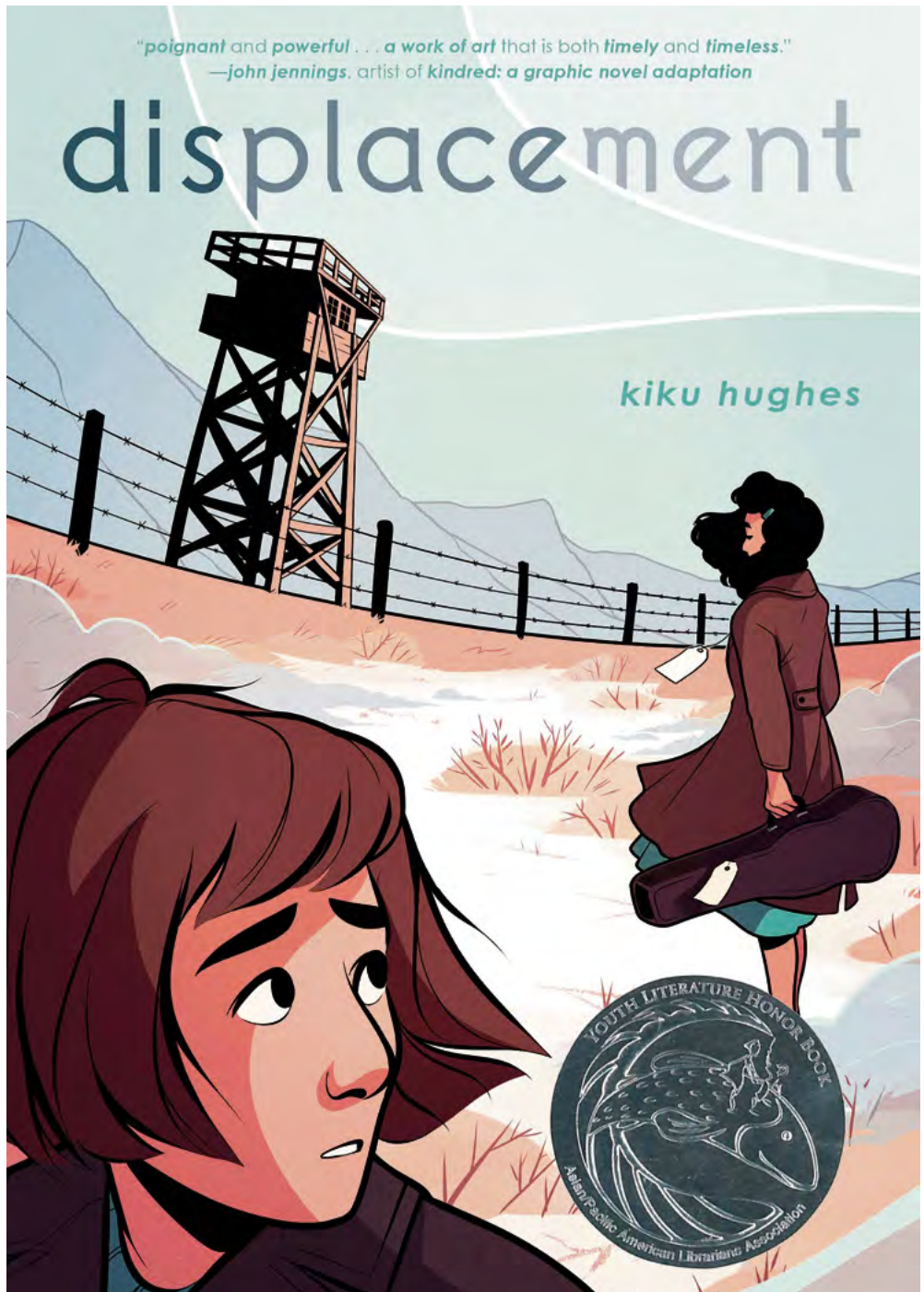


Fig. 4 (top): *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes (First Second Books, 2020).

Fig. 5 (below): *Measuring Up* by Lily LaMotte (HarperAlley, 2020).

Well-researched, articulate, and effectively illustrated graphic novels, combined with academic publications, can fulfill several important educational purposes in teaching Asian migrations. They can serve as icebreakers, attention triggers, introductions to theory-specific and discipline-driven analyses, and more. To conclude, graphic novels are a phenomenal medium of interaction between written and spoken knowledge, oral histories, and official narrations, they contribute to interdisciplinary approaches and provide useful insights to tackle theoretical conceptualizations as experienced by the migrants themselves.

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Notes

1 http://www.colleges-fenway.org/minor-in-migration-studies/
2 Choy, Catherine Ceniza (2003) *Empire of Care. Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham: Duke University Press), p. 191.
3 Gusain, A. and Smita Jha (2021) "Trauma, Memory, History and Its Counter Narration in Thi Bui's Graphic Memoir The Best We Could Do" *Journal od Graphic Novels and Comics* 12:5, 873-884.
4 McCloud, S. (1994) *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art* (NY: Harper Perennial).
5 Williams, P. Murray C., Green M. and Dean Chan (2014) "The academic study of comics within degree programmes in English literature" *Journal od Graphic Novels and Comics* 5:2, 211-228.
6 Postema, B. (2014) "Following the pictures: wordless comics for children" *Journal od Graphic Novels and Comics* 5:3, 311-322.
7 For example: Boatright, M. (2010) "Graphic Journeys: Graphic Novels' Representations of Immigrant Experiences" *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 53:6, 468-476 as cited in Banerjee, B. (2016) "Creating a 'well-fitted habitus': material culture, homemaking, and diasporic belonging in Shaun Tan's The Arrival" *Journal od Graphic Novels and Comics* 7:1, 53-69.
8 I would like to add a few more successful titles of graphic novels I have used in teaching courses on East Asian History and Migration: Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, *Boxers and Saints*; Shigeru Mizuki, *Showa. A History of Japan*; Nakazawa Keiji, *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*; Takemoto, Novala, *Kamikaze Girls*; Michael G. Vann and Liz Clarke, *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt. Empire, Disease, and Colonial Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam*; Keum Suk Gendry Kim *Grass*, Li Kunwu and P. Otie *A Chinese Life*; Liu Na and Andres Vera Martinez *Little White Duck. A Childhood in China*, among others.
9 In this case the US. As a side note, I am aware that most of the books I discuss here are linked to the US, and this limits somewhat the reach of this essay. As I teach in the US, I deem important to reach the audience with material that might result familiar; nevertheless, I always stress the significance of transnational and global approaches to migration studies. In this paper, there was no space to discuss graphic novels in other languages or set in other regions of the world, but I hope others will undertake this important and exciting examination.
10 For the use of the word *glocal* please refer to: Ravagnoli, Violetta (2016) "Toward A Glocal Oral History of Chinese Migration to Rome" in Sagiyama, Ikuko and Valentina Pedone eds., *Transcending Borders* (Firenze: Firenze University Press).
11 Swislocki, Mark (2008) *Culinary Nostlagia: Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
12 Herzfeld, Michael (2016) *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics and the Real Life of States, Societies, and Institutions* (NY: Routledge).
13 LaMotte, L. (2021) *Measuring Up* (NY: Harper Collins), p. 195.

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Mapping Connections through Archaeology and Art History in Second-Millennium Southeast Asia

What do archaeology and art history tell us about Southeast Asia in the second millennium? This broad question was tackled by a webinar series convened by Hélène Njoto (École française d'Extrême-Orient) and Noel Hidalgo Tan (Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, Bangkok) and hosted by Temasek History Research Centre at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

One of the overarching themes was connections in their varied forms among the polities in the region. Noel Hidalgo Tan highlights these connections – material, architectural, infrastructural, political – in his overview of the webinar series in the first article of this section.

The rest of the contributions are from three speakers in the series. Imran bin Tajudeen and Chotima Chaturawong provide fascinating descriptions of religious architecture in Southeast Asia – mosque and temple, respectively. They highlight translocal transmission and creativity, and their articles provide insights into continuity and change in religious architectural forms.

Nasha Rodziadi Khaw provides a broader view of one geographical region – namely, the Sultanate of Malacca – and its varied and variegated relationships with polities near and far.

Together, these articles provide us with a compelling glimpse into a time long past but whose legacies remain in its art, architecture, and material life.

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Southeast Asia in the Second Millennium CE through Archaeology and Art History

Noel Hidalgo Tan

Among the many disruptions brought about by COVID-19 was the inability to conduct an archaeological field school which was previously conducted in Indonesia and Cambodia. In its place, and with generous support from the Temasek Foundation, Hélène Njoto (EFEO Jakarta) and I were asked to convene a webinar series around the archaeology and art history of Southeast Asia. Aimed primarily at students, the Temasek History Research Centre Archaeology and Art History Programme was designed as an introduction to aspects of Southeast Asian archaeology and art history. We had initially wanted to take a broad chronological approach – starting from deep prehistory all the way to the colonial period – but with the limited number of slots to work with, we had to narrow our focus further to Southeast Asia in the second millennium!

The webinar series, held over 2021 and 2022, was organised along the two main themes, archaeology and art history. By way of introduction, Dr. Njoto and I set the stage in an introductory lecture by pondering the question: "How well do you know your neighbours?" This provided a reminder to the predominantly Southeast Asian audience that, despite the existence of national borders, the region is connected in many ways, including its cultures, languages, and foods. Presentations on the nature of archaeology, art history, and historiography also invited the participants to think more deeply about the way the past is reconstructed in Southeast Asia.

With the stage set, we launched into webinars with archaeology lectures centred on the major kingdoms and empires extant in Southeast Asia during the second millennium CE. We began with Angkor, arguably the most famous of the Southeast Asian empires, with a discussion by Dr. Heng Piphal on infrastructures and how recent archaeological research can tell us about the agricultural ability, road management, education, and healthcare in Angkor. Elsewhere in the region, we looked at the rise of competing polities in the region, such as the Dai Viet in present-day northern Vietnam (Do Truong Giang) and Bagan in Myanmar (Ye Myat Lwin).

Representing the middle of the second millennium, we learned from the case studies of Mrauk U (Ye Myat Lwin), Ayutthaya (Dr. Phacharaphorn Phanomvan), and Malacca (Dr. Nasha Rodziadi Khaw). Such presentations explored how these kingdoms, emerging in the 15th century, carved out spaces for themselves from existing hegemonies. At the same time, their cosmopolitanism and interactions reached beyond their immediate neighbours – in the case of Ayutthaya, as far as France. In the last part of the series, we looked at the rise and prominence of the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore (Shinatria Adhityatama) in Eastern Indonesia, kingdoms that both played an integral role in the global spice trade, and ultimately in European colonialism in Southeast Asia.

In the parallel theme of art history in Southeast Asia, we took a less chronological approach and focused on specific materials, such as ceramics (Dr. Heidi Tan), sculpture (Dr. Natalie S.Y. Ong), textiles (Dr. Sandra Sardjono), and bronzes (Dr. Mathilde Mechling and Eko Bastiawan). For a region where textual sources are hard to come by, the study of these materials fills an important gap in our knowledge and understanding of this early period. For example, almost all of our understanding of Southeast Asian textiles and dress come from representations found in sculpture, reliefs, and murals, since textiles very rarely survive to the present. Closer analysis of ceramics and bronzes found in Southeast Asia not only indicate the flow and circulation of ideas and beliefs in the region, but also how some artistic traditions were truly local expressions that persisted from antiquity to the present.

Prior to the arrival of Islam in the middle of the second millennium CE, many of the kingdoms and their resultant material expressions were religiously Indic (e.g., Buddhist and Shaivite). Dr. Chotima Chaturawong, who below writes about a Burmese-style monastery in northern Thailand, speaks about the larger Hindu-Buddhist styles found in Southeast Asian architecture. Most importantly, Chotima notes that temples in Southeast Asia were not copies of those found in India; rather, more often than not, they were variations that developed localised expressions within the region – an architectural case for being "same same, but different."

One major challenge of convening an overarching webinar series like this was working against the constraints of time and the availability of speakers, leading to some gaps in coverage. For example, we were unable to talk about some other notable kingdoms during this period, such as Lan Xang in Laos or Majapahit in Java. Moreover, subjects from the Philippines and Indonesia were underrepresented. However, these regions were still discussed towards the chronological and thematic end of this webinar series, where we pivoted to the coming of Islam into Southeast Asia and how this change is reflected in archaeology and art history. For example, Dr. Farouk Yahya discussed illustrated manuscripts written in Malay and showed 19th-century examples of manuscripts being used for magic and divination aside from scriptural and historical use. Elswehere in the Malay world, Dr. Imran Bin Tajudeen looked at the diversity of mosque architecture, unveiling a larger variation than previously thought. Rounding up the impact of Islam in Southeast Asia was Noorashikin Binte Zulkifli's exploration of artefacts in the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Southeast Asia in the second millennium CE was marked by the rise of large states – polities that were able to exert control over large areas of the region and that, at the same time, competed with other neighbouring polities for dominance and influence. These interactions were not always hostile, and the spread and diversity of material expressions derived from these states, be they architectural or artistic objects, illuminate the wider history of contact and localisation.

The webinars attracted a wide audience, from students in Singapore and abroad, as well as interested members of the public; it was common to have an audience size of at least 100 for these webinars. In a period where many planned activities were halted, this Temasek History Research Centre webinar series provided an introductory framework for the study and discussion of Southeast Asia through the lens of archaeology and art history.

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Introduction to Southeast Asian Forms of Mosque Architecture

Imran Bin Tajudeen

Contrary to the narrative in most regional surveys,[1] the Southeast Asian mosque form was not confined to a single type featuring a multi-tiered pyramidal hip roof only. Several other types were also to be found, though existing survey texts have only partly addressed this typological diversity.[2] The great diversity in mosque building types in Southeast Asia before the introduction of the dome form since the late 19th century bears witness to translocal circulations and recombination. There are few comprehensive or in-depth studies of historical examples and their former contexts. Besides a number of examples on Java,[3] historical mosques from other regions of Southeast Asia have not been well studied.[4] Many have also been demolished and replaced by new buildings featuring the dome.[5]

This article reviews three main issues: first, historiographical categories; second, the cultural and geographical contexts in which mosque forms were created; and third, the question of reinterpretation and revivals, localised Muslim cosmopolitanism, and the limits of translation.

Southeast Asian mosques in 'Islamic architecture', and art and archaeology surveys

The built heritage of mosques developed in maritime Southeast Asia is invariably excluded from surveys of Islamic art and architecture, a fate that is shared with Southern Arabia, Southern India, and Southern China. This exclusion needs to be understood in relation to the historiographical and geographical contexts of the study of mosques and Islamic art and architecture, which focused on the archaeology and art historical study of brick and masonry structures left behind by a number of inter-related dynasties and polities. For instance, attention for the 12th to 18th centuries is typically given to Persianate West and South Asia, Turkic and Persianate Central Asia, and the Arab-speaking lands of West Asia and the Mediterranean.[6] In the Indian subcontinent, the focus was on what Richard Eaton calls the Indo-Persian axis, which excludes the maritime Muslim regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Maritime regions of the Indian Ocean and beyond – where maritime Southeast Asia is to be found – thus lay beyond the scope of Islamic architecture surveys.

The 'vernacular architecture' category used to define Southeast Asian mosques may have further distanced it, given the primacy of the disciplines of archaeology and art history in the study of Islamic architecture. Vernacular architecture is typically defined as structures in wood as opposed to classical or canonical stone or brick architecture. This framing is problematic – Southeast Asian mosques and associated structures use a variety of materials beyond wood. Conversely, it is also necessary to expand the horizon of surveys of art and archaeology in Southeast Asian architecture beyond their usual focus on Hindu and Buddhist structures. Mosques typically do not even appear in such surveys or are consigned to a very small section.[7]

Variety of forms

Roof forms and the spatial and structural corollary features point to the connection of the Southeast Asian mosque to earlier building types. Roof forms thus usefully serve as synecdoche when discussing typology.

The first type is the *tajug* or pyramidal-hip roof type. This is the dominant form and can be found in examples from the 15th to 18th centuries in Champa, South Borneo (Banjarmasin), Palembang (Masjid Agung), Melaka (Tengkera, Kampung Keling, and Kampung Hulu), and Banten (Masjid Agung, Kasunyatan and others). The examples from Banten display the type's miniature upper tiers. In Java and Sumatra alone, great diversity may be seen in the form, including the number of roof tiers, the construction of walls and platforms, and the configuration of columns and beams. Minangkabau (West Sumatra) mosques possess two variant forms depending on the *laras* ("clan fraternity"). In both the mosque of Jepara (north coast Java, expunged) and Limo Kaum (West Sumatra), the upper levels of the massive five-tiered roofs are used as true floors, unlike other mosques where multi-tiered roofs are superimposed primarily for ventilation, esthetical, or symbolic purposes. Despite tremendous variations in this roof form, one feature found in common throughout the region is the use of a finial (*mustaka* or *memolo*) to decorate the summit of mosques [Fig. 1].

A second type using the gable or hip form is found in Kelantan, Teluk Manuk, Kota Bahru [Fig. 2], and also in Champa. It is also present in 9th-century temple reliefs such as at Prambanan in Central Java. A third type is the hipped roof, found, for example, in 15th-century Cirebon and Buton and early 20th-century Singapore (Khadijah and Hj Muhammad Saleh mosques). It is also found among other sites along the Straits of Melaka and the Malay Peninsula, such as at Kuala Terengganu (Surau Tok Kerinchi) [Fig. 3]. Finally, the simplest gable roof type, with two or three roof layers, is seen in small prayer halls or *surau*, such as at Surau Aur (Patani, southern Thailand) and in examples at Tengkera and Banda Hilir (Melaka, Peninsula Malaysia).

Fig. 1: Varieties of the pyramidal-hip roof form or tajug: (a) top: Royal Mosque of Banten in western Java, Indonesia (Photo by the author, 2009); (b) bottom left: Limo Kaum Mosque in highland west Sumatra, Indonesia (Photo by the author, 2015) (c) bottom right: Lubuk Bauk small prayer hall *(surau)* in highland west Sumatra, Indonesia (Photo by the author, 2012)

Translation and reworking

The names of some of the features on these various mosque types point to derivation from building types used as Hindu or Buddhist wooden shrines, as formerly found in Kedah, Muara Jambi, Central Java, and East Java. These features are distinct from temples found in India. Conversely, indigenous names and the forms of small Muslim prayer halls, today adopting the Arabic term *musolla* but originally called *surau* and *langgar,* point to origins in indigenous cult buildings and men's houses.

A key illustration of translation and reworking is seen in Java, where the Tralaya tombstones bearing Arabic Islamic inscriptions used the Saka calendar rather than the Arabic-Islamic one, and in the Trengganu Stone, which proclaims Muslim and local laws inscribed in the Jawi script (Arabic modified for Malay), but using the term *Dewata Mulia Raya* for God, rather than Allah as would be expected.[8] These examples defy the idea of a simple rejection of pre-Islamic cultures or of an unconscious 'influence' of pre-Islamic cultures. Instead, we observe the conscious and literate translation and accommodation of culture across conversion. The transculturation process from pre-Islamic Malay and Javanese literate cultures can thus be seen on these and other gravestones. They serve as indicators of parallel processes of adapting older building forms – some of which had previously served as cult buildings for indigenous, Hindu, and Buddhist creeds – for new Islamic needs.[9]

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Fig. 2: Telok Manok Mosque in Patani, southern Thailand (Photo by the author, 2015)

Fig. 3: Tok Kerinchi small prayer hall (surau) in Kuala Terengganu, Peninsular Malaysia (Photo by the author, 2012)

Notes

1 See for instance Narliswandi (1994). *Historic Mosque in Indonesia – Masjid-Masjid Bersejarah di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Jayakarta Agung Offset; Hidayat, T. and Widodo, H. (Eds.) (2005). *Masjid-masjid Bersejarah dan Ternama Indonesia: Direktori*. Jakarta: Permata Communications; and A. Baqir Z. (1999). *Masjid-masjid bersejarah di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gema Insani.

2 A. Halim N. (2004). *Mosque Architecture in the Malay world*, Trans. Omar Salahuddin Abdullah Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

3 Behrend, T.E. (1984). Kraton, taman and mesjid: A brief survey and bibliographic review of Islamic antiquities in Java. *Indonesia Circle*, 35, 29–55.

4 O'Neill, H. (1994). "South-East Asia." In M.J. Frisman. and H-U. Khan (Eds.) *The Mosque History Architectural Development and Regional Diversity* (pp. 225-240). London: Thames and Hudson.

5 Yulianto S. (2000). *Sejarah Arsitektur Masjid dan monument sejarah Muslim*. Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press.

6 Imran b. T. (2017b). "Trade, Politics, and Sufi Synthesis in the Formation of Southeast Asian Islamic Architecture." In F. Flood and G. Necipoglu (Eds.) *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture, Volume II: From the Mongols to Modernism* (pp. 996–1022). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

7 Imran b. T. (2013). Java's architectural enigma. In V. Rujivacharakul et al. (Eds), *Architecturalized Asia* (pp. 121–138). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

8 Zakaria, A. (1994). *Islamic Art in Southeast Asia 830 A.D.–1570 A.D.* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Ministry of Education of Malaysia.

9 Imran b. T. (2021). "Carving an Epistemological Space for Southeast Asia: Historiographical and Critical Engagements." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* Vol. 10, No.1 (Tenth Anniversary Special Issue), pp. 217-23.

Indigenization of Southeast Asian Buddhist Architecture: Case Study of a Burmese Monastery at Wat Upagupta, Chiang Mai

Chotima Chaturawong

Daigoro Chihara stated that Hindu-Buddhist Architecture in Southeast Asia is divided into three periods: (1) the period of early Indianization from the first to seventh centuries (insular) and the first to ninth centuries (mainland); (2) the golden period of maturity of Indian inspiration from the eighth to tenth centuries (insular) and the ninth to 13th centuries (mainland); and (3) the period of indigenization from the tenth to 16th centuries (insular) and the 13th onwards (mainland).[1] Although Southeast Asian Hindu-Buddhist architecture was first inspired by that of India, it underwent Southeast Asian localization from the beginning, based on available materials and craftsmanship.

The level of localization greatly increased and developed during the indigenization period starting around the 13th century in mainland Southeast Asia. This was when Buddhism began to decline in India and Sri Lanka became an important center of Theravada Buddhism, spreading it to Southeast Asia along with Buddhist art and architecture. Thereafter, Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia was further developed, and new styles blending local beliefs and craftsmanship were created, for instance, in Thailand and Myanmar.

A Burmese Buddhist monastery at Wat Upagupta, Chiang Mai provides an example of such indigenization of Southeast Asian Buddhist architecture between the 19th and the 20th centuries. During this period, the Burmese monastery (*kyaung* in Burmese) was a multipurpose edifice built on piles. It combined public and private areas – namely, a Buddha shrine, an assembly hall for dhamma preaching and ceremony practice, dwelling places of monks and novices, and storage. The funds for building the monastery at Wat Upagupta were donated by U Pan Nyo who came from Moulmein around 1870-1873 and later became a well-known Burmese teak merchant in Chiang Mai and northern Thailand. At that time, Chiang Mai was a vassal state of Siam (central Thailand) and was about to be annexed by the Siamese government. Chiang Mai was formerly the capital of the Lanna Kingdom, which is referred to administratively as Northern Thailand at present. The Lanna Kingdom was founded in the 13th century and was under Burmese rule for over 200 years prior to becoming a vassal of Siam in 1774. U Pan Nyo was a wealthy teak merchant who donated money to build and renovate Buddhist architecture as well as other public works, such as streets and bridges.

Architecture built and reconstructed by U Pan Nyo had various designs, such as Shan, Pa-o, Mon, Burmese, Tai Yuan (indigenous northern Thai), and colonial styles. The important buildings constructed by U Pan Nyo between 1890 and 1910 in Chiang Mai included his house and Wat Upagupta. The monastic compound of Wat Upagupta consisted of a monastery as the principal architecture, a stupa, a Buddha shrine (wihan), and a rest house.[2] Wat Upagupta originally had two compounds, a Tai Yuan and a Burmese one. However, at present the Burmese compound has been replaced by *Phutthasathan*, Chiang Mai (Chiang Mai Buddhist Practice Building).

The monastery at Wat Upagupta and U Pan Nyo's house shared similarities in architectural floor plan, materials, decorations, and style, and both were built by the same group of carpenters and workers. The architectural design of his house was perhaps associated with his birth planet, Jupiter, for a person born on Thursday. This is because his house faces the west, Jupiter's direction in Burmese astrology. The house has a north-south axis with the Ping River to the east. It was probably built by artisans from Lower Burma using two-story bungalow architecture, constructed with brick on the ground floor and wood on the upper floor [Figs. 1-3]. During the 19th and 20th centuries,

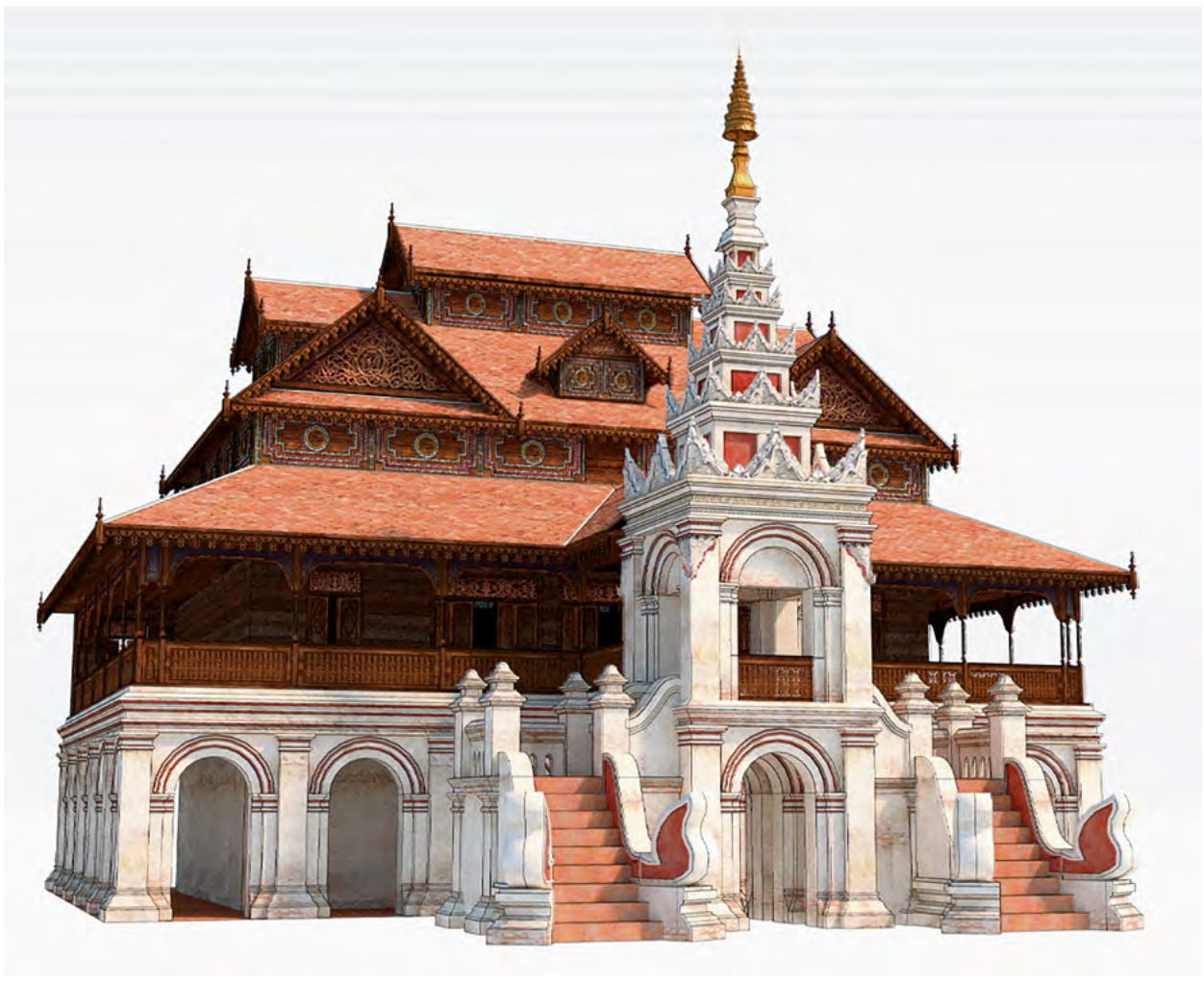

Fig. 1 (left): Architectural restoration of the monastery at Wat Upagupta based on old photographs (Drawing by Patcharapong Kulkanchanachewin in 2022).

Fig. 2 (top right): Front side of U Pan Nyo's house (Photo by Chotima Chaturawong in 2012).

Fig. 3 (bottom right): Back side of U Pan Nyo's house with the Buddha house shrine to the rear (Photo by Chotima Chaturawong in 2012).

Malacca Sultanate as a Thalassocratic Confederation (1400-1511): Power Structure of the Pacified States

Nasha Rodziadi Khaw

The Sultanate of Malacca is one of the many historic thalassocratic states which thrived from the inter-regional trade in maritime Southeast Asia. Though often viewed as a unified kingdom, it was in fact a loose confederation of various coastal and riverine polities, with its economic and political center situated at the port of Malacca. The main port was strategically positioned as the narrowest chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even to coerce the trading vessels to harbour at their port-city. The emergence and continuity of Malacca as a thalassocratic state always revolved around enhancing its ability to funnel as much wealth as possible to its main port, generated mostly from local and inter-regional trade. The political expansion of Malacca was to maintain strategic control over coastal settlements so that wealth could be generated at the main port through commodity exchange. Conquest for Malacca would not necessarily mean direct expansion of territory, but rather the acquisition of strategic control over coastal outposts, rival ports, and centers of production in order to reap as much profit as possible from the seaborne trade.

Information regarding the territorial expansion and administration of Melaka can be found in the Portuguese and Malay accounts: the *Suma Oriental* (written in 1512), *Book of Duarte Barbossa* (written in 1516) and the *Salalatus Salalatin* (compiled in the mid-16th century). All these materials provide important narratives as well as first-hand accounts of how the Sultanate of Malacca evolved and expanded from its founding by Parameswara until its demise under Sultan Mahmud Shah. These materials also give important information about how Malacca administered and exploited its subjugated territories. During the peak of Malacca's power in the early 16th century, the sultanate covered most of the Malay Peninsula, Riau-Lingga islands, and south-eastern Sumatera. However, careful study of these historical accounts shows that the power structure of the sultanate was far from centralized or symmetrical. In Malacca's capital, the rulers were supported by merchant-aristocrats and urban ruling elites. Malacca's political framework was derived from its form of economy, which focused on controlling and capitalizing on the movement of people and goods by establishing and maintaining a network of subordinate groups with different degrees of loyalties. From these historical accounts, it is suggested that within the large area under the political influence of Malacca, there were five levels of political control [Fig. 1].

The first level – marked in red in Figure 1 – covers the area of Malacca's center of population, possibly at the narrow strip of land between the Kesang river to the Malim river. It was ruled directly by the Sultan through his high officials known as the Bendahara, Temenggung, Laksamana, and Penghulu Bendahari. This area often consisted of the capital city as well as the main ports and settlements. The second level, marked in purple, was ruled indirectly by the royal court through the local chieftains appointed directly by the Sultan. They were known as *Penghulu* or *Mandulika*, who probably administrated the area according to Malaccan laws. The territories included Linggi, Klang, Jugra, Selangor, and Perak. These areas were also known to be rich in tin. The Sultan-appointed officials had to exercise tight control over these territories to maintain Malacca's monopoly over the export of such resource. The third level, marked in yellow, comprised semi-autonomous territories granted by the Sultan to the

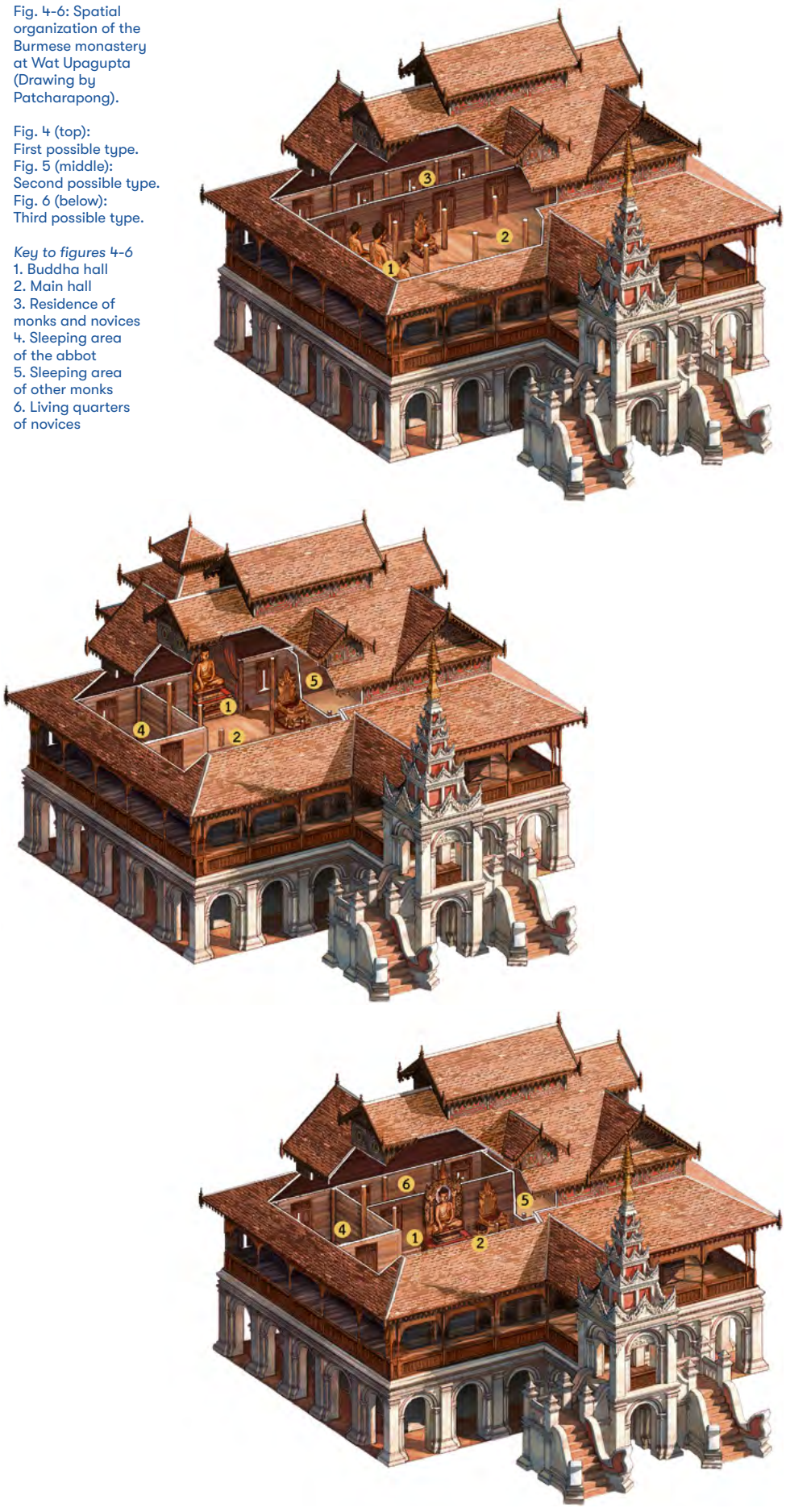

Fig. 4-6: Spatial organization of the Burmese monastery at Wat Upagupta (Drawing by Patcharapong).

Fig. 4 (top): First possible type.
Fig. 5 (middle): Second possible type.
Fig. 6 (below): Third possible type.

Key to figures 4-6
1. Buddha hall
2. Main hall
3. Residence of monks and novices
4. Sleeping area of the abbot
5. Sleeping area of other monks
6. Living quarters of novices

bungalow-style architecture spread across polities colonized by the British, such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Burma. The ground floor was likely U Pan Nyo's office, where he conducted his teak business. The living areas were situated on the upper floor, which has verandahs wrapped around the north-, west- and south-facing sides. The house originally had three outer staircases: two principal ones used separately by men and women (located to the front or west) and a minor one to the southeast that connected to a one-story kitchen on the ground level.[3]

While U Pan Nyo's house and his monastery at Wat Upagupta had corresponding elements, the monastery was more important and grander than the house. The principal roof of the monastery has two tiers, and its front porch is surmounted by a brick *pyatthat* ("spire") roof [Fig. 1]. It faces north, which is the same direction that monasteries face in Lower Burma.

Although the monastery of Wat Upagupta no longer exists, the ground floor is assumed to have no function or to have been used as a storage facility.[4] There are three possibilities for the way in which space was organized on the upper floor: the first is parallel to the spatial organization of monasteries in Moulmein, Lower Burma; the second and third share similarities with Pa-o and Shan monasteries in Lower Burma and northern Thailand. These three types of spatial organization have a porch entrance to the north with two outer staircases separating laymen and laywomen. The upper floor was surrounded by a covered verandah on three sides facing the west, the north, and the east. However, the three types differed in terms of the location of the Buddha hall, where Buddha images were enshrined and where monks and novices had their living quarters.[5]

The first type of spatial organization probably placed the Buddha hall to the east and the main hall to the west. The residence of monks and novices was situated to the south [Fig. 4]. This spatial organization is typical of monasteries in Moulmein.

The second type of spatial organization was likely similar to that of U Pan Nyo's house with the main hall at the center and the Buddha shrine as a detached structure to the rear. The main hall was flanked by two bedrooms to its right and left. The former to the east was the abbot's sleeping area, while the latter to the west was reserved for other monks [Fig. 5]. These two rooms probably included a raised platform in the front, a place reserved for monks to receive guests and for novices to study. Another raised platform was erected in front of the Buddha shrine and reserved for monks and laymen. The floor plan was similar to that of Nat-kyun Kyaung, a Pa-o monastery, in Thaton, Burma.[6]

The third type of spatial organization resembled that of Pa-o and Shan monasteries in Lower Burma and northern Thailand, such as Leip-in Kyaung in Thaton and monasteries at Wat Si Rong Mueang, Lampang[7] as well as at Wat Chong Pan and Wat Nong Kham, Chiang Mai. This was similar to the second type of spatial organization mentioned above, except that the Buddha shrine was not a detached structure and to its rear were possibly the living quarters of novices [Fig. 6].

The spatial organization of the Burmese monastery at Wat Upagupta was not similar to that of the Tai Yuan in Chiang Mai, the Siamese in Bangkok and central Thailand, nor the Burmese in Mandalay and Upper Burma. Instead, it shared similarities with Buddhist monasteries of the Mon, Shan, and Pa-o in Lower Burma and provides an example of the indigenization of Southeast Asian Buddhist architecture during the 19th to 20th centuries.

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Notes

1 Daigoro Chihara, *Hindu-Buddhist Architecture in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 7-13.
2 Kalya and Srisuda Thammaphongsa, *Tamroi Rong Amat Aek Luang Yonakanphichit: Phaya Taka* [On the Trail of Prefect, Luang Yonakanphichit: A Buddhist Monastic Donor] (Chiang Mai: Rajabhat University Chiang Mai, 2017), pp. 159, 161. Srisuda is a granddaughter of U Pan Nyo.
3 Kalya and Srisuda, op. cit., p. 54.
4 However, Kalya and Srisuda stated that it was used as a dhamma school in 1947. Kalya and Srisuda, op. cit., p. 161.
5 Also see these three architectural floor plans in Chotima Chaturawong, "U Pan Nyo: Siam and Burma Relations during the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries" (in Thai), in *Proceedings of the Seminar on the 70th Anniversary of Thailand-Myanmar Diplomatic Relations* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 2018): 157-176.
6 See information of Pa-o Buddhist monasteries in Thaton and northern Thailand in Itsareeya Nunchai and Chotima Chaturawong, "Pa-o (Taungthu) Buddhist Monasteries in Thailand and Thaton, Myanmar" (in Thai), *Najua: History of Architecture and Thai Architecture*, 16 (January-June 2019): 8-31, https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/NAJUA/article/view/178287/139567.
7 See its architectural floor plan in Chotima Chaturawong, "'Burmese' Monasteries in Chiang Mai and Lampang" (in Thai), *Najua: History of Architecture and Thai Architecture*, 5 (September 2007): 38-65.

Malaccan hereditary nobles to be ruled in his name. The areas included Muar, Batu Pahat, Beruas, Manjung, Rupat, Singapura, Siantan, and Bentan. These were coastal and riverine settlements located at the strategic chokepoints of the Strait of Malacca. Being administered semi-autonomously by the high officials loyal to the Sultan enabled the territories to serve as important outposts to control the sea traffic, for the defensive and economic interests of Malacca.

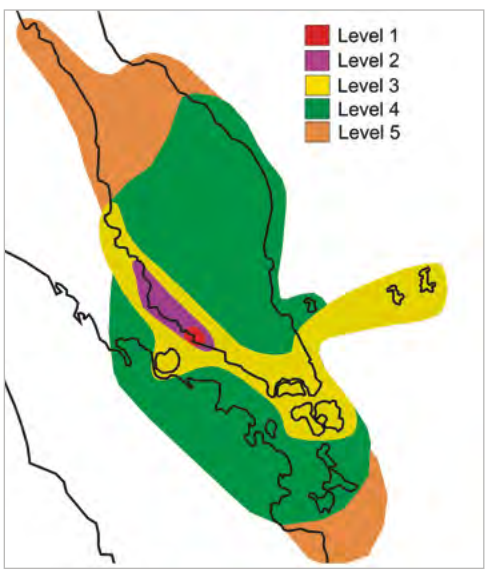

Fig. 1: Levels of political control within the Malaccan Sultanate (Figure by the author, 2022).

The fourth level, marked in green, was composed of autonomous kingdoms ruled by local rulers who were subordinate to Malacca. They included Rokan, Siak, Kampar, Inderagiri, Pahang, Kelantan, and Lingga, which were mostly potential rival ports pacified by Malacca. They were free to conduct local affairs, except in passing a death sentence, which required the Sultan's approval. They also needed to send regular tributes and army personnel when requested. The pacification of these ports was meant to keep them under control, so that they would not rise up and threaten the commercial and military interests of Malacca. These ports often consisted of resource-rich coastal polities strategically positioned along the trade route, but with less political strength than Malacca.
The fifth level, marked in orange, consisted of independent kingdoms with nominal allegiances to Malacca. Malacca had no effective political control over them, possibly owing to the distance and their political leverage, especially in terms of their military strength and ties with other regional powers. They probably had strategic partnerships in trade with Malacca, especially in the export of certain commodities such as rice and gold. They included Kedah, Pattani, and Jambi, which are all located at the northern and southern ends of the Straits of Malacca. Finally, there were maritime polities, which were not part of the Malacca political confederation, and often became its rivals, such as Aru and Pasai.

As a maritime confederation, Malacca's consolidation of power had less to do with direct political dominance over territories or settled populations than with the control over the movement and distribution of goods and commodities in favor of its main port. As a result, the form of Malacca's political control over its territories varied widely and was extremely asymmetric in nature. The different areas within the empire were administered with varying levels of political control, from direct rule by the court to a nominal recognition of suzerainty by local rulers. Due to economic necessity and demographic factors, such a system evolved organically to form a confederation that was structured by a fluid and adaptable network of relations between the dominant political center and its subordinate settlements. This was due to the fact that different areas would offer Malacca distinct strategic and economic advantages. Thus, in order to effectively capitalize on all of them in the interests of Malacca, there must have been particular forms of political arrangements for specific subordinate groups, depending on their economic strength, geostrategic location, and political leverage. Such was the true nature of Malay maritime statecraft, a complex and dynamic organization of political and economic bonds established between local chieftains, merchant-aristocrats, and the dynastic rulers.

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Narratives of Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Northeast Asia

Ilhong Ko

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 was a pivotal point for traditions and customs around the world in terms of their recognition, status, value, preservation, and promotion. However, this convention, which followed the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972, has arguably led to an almost black-and-white understanding of heritage being either tangible or intangible.

This approach is problematic because heritage, whether designated under "tangible" or "intangible," comprises both aspects when it comes to validation, preservation, and promotion. All tangible heritage sites have intangible stories and messages that are key to their "Outstanding Universal Value."[1] When it comes to the validation of intangible heritage, despite the emphasis on act and practice, there is also a strong reliance on tangible evidence and associated objects.

This edition of *News from Northeast Asia* looks into the narratives of tangible and intangible heritage in Northeast Asia. In "China and Its Changing Narratives of Nationhood and Heritage," Susan Whitfield of the University of East Anglia traces China's changing narratives of its "minority" heritages, both tangible and intangible, which are meant to be consumed internally (by the citizens of the People's Republic of China) as well as externally (by the international community). However, not all heritage narratives are intended for the global stage, as Liliana Janik of the University of Cambridge illustrates in "Best Kept Secret, Jomon Heritage of Contemporary Japan." That the tangible and intangible elements of heritage are intertwined and mutually important is demonstrated in "The Tangible Validation, Preservation, and Promotion of South Korea's Oral Tradition *Pansori* in The Gochang *Pansori* Museum" by Seoul National University Asia Center's Minjae Zoh. The way in which the tangible plays a central role in reproducing the intangible is also addressed by Emilie Jean Green from the University of Aberdeen, who touches upon how the physical gathering of people (which cannot take place in an online form) is crucial to practicing, maintaining, and transmitting the cultural knowledge associated with intangible heritage in "The Return of *Naadam*: A Celebration of Intangible Heritage in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic."

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Notes

1 For an overview of "Outstanding Universal Value", as defined by UNESCO, see https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/action=list&id_faq_themes=962.

China and Its Changing Narratives of Nationhood and Heritage

Susan Whitfield

Fig.1: A performance from the 2016 "Xinjiang National Unity and Progress Art Gala"

Since 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded, narratives of heritage have increasingly been used by the Chinese Communist Party to create a cohesion among communities of China's central plains and the surrounding colonized regions in order to present itself to the outside world as a nation-state. More recently, alongside archaeological activity, heritage tourism, the PRC's active role in UNESCO, a proliferation of inscribed sites, and the promotion of the Silk Road, there has been increasing use of Han-centric narratives to frame heritage. Such narratives are stifling and, in some cases, destroying diversity.

In 1985, when the PRC ratified the World Heritage Convention, the many destructions of the Cultural Revolution were in recent memory. The PRC readily mastered the vocabulary and practices of UNESCO and succeeded in having five sites inscribed in 1987. These encompassed the whole chronology of "Chinese" culture, ranging from Peking Man to the tomb of the First Emperor, from the Great Wall to palaces of the last two imperial dynasties, the Ming and Qing. The geographical focus was on the central plains, with the exception of the Buddhist rock-cut temple site of Dunhuang, which was situated on the northwestern edges of regimes in China for much of history. Dunhuang's place on the Silk Road was mentioned in the recommendation documents. Its diversity – including its Islamic history and independence from regimes in central China – was also noted.

The potential to include cultural sites in colonized regions – those of the "ethnic minorities" – on the UNESCO list, and thus to some extent to assert ownership of them, was first realized with the inscription of the Potala Palace in Tibet in 1994. But the inscription and its management has not gone without criticism: it has been argued that a focus on the palace has enabled the destruction of much of the surrounding culture, inappropriate new buildings, and forced removals of the population. There has also been concern about its conservation, especially following a fire. The inscription also presented an opportunity for local and other interested parties to assert their own rights to UNESCO. For example, in 2013, the Tibetan Women's Association asked UNESCO to stop "the destruction and frightening modernization of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet."[1]

Since then the PRC has been very successful with UNESCO, attaining 56 inscribed sites by 2021, ranking it second in the world behind Italy (with 58). But very few are in contested regions, such as Tibet or Xinjiang. A 2001 UNESCO publication, *The First Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage*,[2] which was to form the initial list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" inscriptions in 2008, provided another opportunity to inscribe and control "minority" heritage. Of the four "traditions" from the PRC, two were firmly rooted in what was described as traditional "Han" culture, but the other two were from "minority" cultures – namely, the Uyghur 12 Muqam and the Urtlin Duu, a traditional folk song and a joint inscription with Mongolia. However, the increasing commodification and appropriation by the PRC of "minority arts," especially music and dance, have also been subject to much criticism.

The growth of the Silk Road narrative to frame Eurasian heritage in UNESCO from the 1980s and the more recent politico-economic Belt and Road Initiative by the PRC have not only affected the approach to heritage in Chinese Central Asia. The division into steppe, sea, and land routes across Eurasia – made in a report presented to UNESCO by Japan in 1957 – persisted in the UNESCO narrative. As the PRC and its Silk Road vision came to prominence in heritage discussions, other northeast Asian countries – Mongolia, Korea, and Japan – started to challenge this by exploring the steppe and sea routes, which potentially could have bypassed China. Nevertheless, when a serial transnational nomination project for the Silk Road was proposed under UNESCO, it was the land route west from the PRC that was covered, excluding both Korea and Japan (although an extension to include "connecting seaways" is under discussion).

In 2006, the PRC proposed a Chinese section of the Silk Road. This was rejected but was incorporated into the successful transnational inscription in 2014 of the "Chang'an-Tianshan corridor," comprising Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan alongside the PRC. The PRC section includes sites around Turfan in Xinjiang. One of them, Yarkhoto/Jiaohe, had been proposed previously. Japanese funds had since helped with its preservation. This was not a lone example of international collaboration in the region: the Getty Conservation Institute's collaboration with the Dunhuang Academy for site conservation and management, active since 1989, continues today; in Xinjiang, from the 1990s, there were several international collaborations on major excavations, such as Sino-Japanese work at Niya and Dandan-Uliq and Sino-French excavations at Karadong.

But in recent years, the context and climate has shifted. Xi Jinping has spoken often about the importance of heritage in Chinese consciousness and for China's sense of nationhood. More recently, the portrayal of the Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and others living in the PRC as non-Han and less developed – and so benefitting from the civilizing influence of their colonizers – has changed. Xi's terminology now describes them, for example, as "family-members linked to Chinese bloodlines,"[3] implying a genetic relationship, and this is reinforced in school textbooks and "scientific" articles. On a visit to Xinjiang in 2022, he said that "Chinese civilisation is the root of the cultures of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang."[4] A corresponding denial of a diverse heritage is evident: the destruction or repurposing of shrines and mosques being an obvious example.

This denial and destruction is happening alongside the proliferation of archaeological discoveries throughout much of the rest of the PRC, the promotion of heritage tourism, and the reconstruction of "Chinese" heritage sites. Heritage and archaeology are thriving, but only those that fit a selected narrative.

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Notes

1 Tibetan Women's Association letter to Kishore Rao, Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, June 15, 2013. Reproduced on https://tibetanwomen.org/tag/united-nations
2 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000124206
3 新疆各民族是中华民族血脉相连的家庭成员 (Xinjiang ge minzu shi Zhonghua minzu xue mai xianglian de jiating chengyuan) Xi Jiping speech at 3rd Xinjiang Forum, Sept. 2020. Quoted and translated by James Millward, https://twitter.com/JimMillward/status/1548313172192350208
4 Source: Quoted in in Xu Wei, 'President sets out new vision for Xinjiang', China Daily, 16 July, 2022. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202207/16/WS62d1a4cda310fd2b29e6ca56.html

Best Kept Secret, Jomon Heritage of Contemporary Japan

Liliana Janik

The current heritage of Japan has been changed by a number of factors, one of the most important being the transfer of focus from the emperor to the people. After World War II, Japan underwent several re-evaluations or interruptions caused by the occupying power (i.e., the United States), one of which was the reassessment of its sense of belonging and identity via the use of archaeological heritage.

The invention of new heritage took place,[1] and we can see an interruption to previous heritage narratives. These narratives had been linked to the legacy of the Meiji period and the emperor – partly related to the embodiment of the state – and to the Kofun period (AD 250-710), which reflected the creation of statehood with keyhole-shaped tombs that dominated the landscape.

As Kaner has suggested, "Direct links are often drawn between archaeology /Jomon peoples and the images of traditional life that are actively propounded by a government ideology of *furusato:* stimulating feelings for one's native place in an increasingly displaced, rootless society. These images render the discoveries of archaeology comprehensible to the public who are encouraged to view the people of the past as their ancestors: there is a direct connection between contemporary 'salary man' and his stone-age forebear."[2] This is well illustrated by the song "Furusato" ("old home" or "hometown") with its strong emotional and nostalgic links to the countryside. Despite it being a children's song created in 1914, it took on a new status as a national song performed during the closing ceremony of the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano.

Where the **mountains are green,**
my old country home,
Where the **waters are clear, my old country home.**
Back in the **mountains** I knew as a child
Fish filled the **rivers** and rabbits ran **wild**
Memories, I carry these wherever
I may roam
I hear it calling me, **my country home**
Mother and Fathers, how I miss you now
How are my **friends** I lost touch with somehow?
When the **rain falls** or the **wind blows**
I feel so **alone**
I hear it **calling me, my country home**
I've got this dream and it keeps me away
When it **comes true** I'm going back there someday
Crystal waters, mighty mountains blue as emerald stone
I hear it calling me, **my country home**.[3]

The countryside is where people and their ancestors are. Inventing tradition is meant to anchor the nation to the archaeological landscape, which serves as "witness" /testimony of belonging to this land and its ancestors: it is a landscape of the common countryside that belongs to all. The Jomon period is signified by museums often located on the outskirts of towns or in the country-side; they do not differ from other buildings.

The Jomon period spans from c. 14,000-300 BCE. The prehistoric inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago made a wide range of material objects, remarkable for fisher-hunter-gatherers. Their ceramic creations, which include figurines as well as pottery vessels for food preparation and consumption, are of particular interest given their sophistication and variety.

Fig. 1 (above): Use of Jomon figurine from Sannai Maruyama by a local bar to convey COVID-19 restrictions to the customers, Aomori, Japan (Photo by Simon Kaner).

For many, this summer is the first year since 2019 that travel to Japan has been possible, and my visit coincided with the period of the August *obon* holiday, when many families got together after three long years of the pandemic. In July 2021, 17 Jomon sites, including stone circles located in the north of Japan, were inscribed on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. As a heritage professional and archaeologist, I decided to visit them. As in previous years when I followed the Shinano River Jomon Heritage Trail, the Jomon sites were somewhat hidden for the foraging tourist. In contrast to the well-known historical sites in Kyoto, Tokyo, or Nara – where the English-based leaflets and brochures inform tourists of the historical, cultural, and often artistic importance of those locations – the Jomon sites are Japan-focused.

This is not, I suggest, due to any lack of contribution of worldwide impact by Jomon peoples, such as technologies still used today. For example, we know that the first examples of lacquer use are from Jomon sites, and the first containers made of clay were created by the inhabitants of the area around the Sea of Japan / East Sea, also including China and the Russian Far East. Jomon cuisine, rituals, and continuity of occupation of particular locations have no equivalent among historical or contemporary foraging communities.

Jomon belongs to the Japanese people. Their material culture and associated archaeological narrative is now part of a grassroots heritage consciousness. The creativity of curators, educators, artists, and musicians who take part in the modern Jomon festivals across this region is inspired, and Jomon images are also part of the most popular genre of literature, manga. As foreigners, though, we do not easily see or hear it: Jomon remains one of Japan's the best kept secrets.

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Notes

1 Habu, J. & Fawcett, C. 2008. 'Science or Narratives? Multiple Interpretations of the Sannai Maruyama Site, Japan', in Habu, J., Fawcett, C., & Matsunaga, J.M. (eds.) *Evaluating Multiple Narratives*. New York, NY: Springer, pp. 91-117; Mizoguchi, K. 2013. *The Archaeology of Japan: From the Earliest Rice Farming Villages to the Rise of the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2 Kaner, S. 1996. 'Beyond ethnicity and emergence in Japanese Archaeology', in Denoon, D., Hudson, M., McCormack, G., & Morris-Suzuki, T. (eds.) *Multicultural Japan: Palaeolithic to Postmodern (Contemporary Japanese Society)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.46-59.
3 The song was translated into English by Greg Irwin and this was published in the album called "Japan's Best Loved Songs of the Season" in 1998.

The Tangible Validation, Preservation, and Promotion of South Korea's Oral Tradition Pansori in the Gochang *Pansori* Museum

Minjae Zoh

Pansori combines two Korean words: *Pan*, meaning "a place where people gather"; and sori, literally meaning "sound." Essentially, *Pansori* is a passed-down oral tradition of epic stories and songs that were (and are) sung by a singer to the accompaniment of a drum, and along with the audience, who would provide the reaction. Thus, a triple act was formed, making every performance intimate and unique. The origin of *Pansori* is difficult to pinpoint by exact date and location, but the common understanding is that it began around the end of the 17th century through to the 19th century – during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) – around southwest Korea.

There was no "script" for *Pansori* recitals; they were very much impromptu performances. Stories were passed down by word of mouth until, eventually, they were recorded into literary compositions by a man named Shin Jae Hyo (1812-1884), who was a theorist and patron of the oral tradition. Shin Jae Hyo's house in Gochang (in the North Jeolla Province) was used to teach and train *Pansori* singers. These very grounds, where Shin is known to have recorded and taught *Pansori*, are the present site of the Gochang *Pansori* Museum today. The annex where *Pansori* singers studied and trained became renovated and open to the public as part of the museum.

The Gochang *Pansori* Museum opened in 2001 to preserve and promote *Pansori*. The museum claims that its aim is to "collect, preserve, research, study, display,

Fig. 1 (left): A display of Shin Jae Hyo's books and possessions in the Gochang *Pansori* Museum (Photo by Minjae Zoh, 2013).

Fig. 2 (right): The final display in the Gochang *Pansori* Museum (Photo by Minjae Zoh, 2013).

and analyse tangible and intangible cultural items related to *Pansori* in order to educate the general public and to provide people with opportunities to appreciate *Pansori*."[1] At the core of the museum – in terms of its tangible evidence or validation of *Pansori* – are the twelve books of Shin Jae Hyo that can be seen as the first steps taken towards the tangible-isation of the intangible tradition, and also Shin Jae Hyo's house that was an important physical location for *Pansori* trainees and singers. The museum, moreover, houses over 1000 artifacts related to *Pansori*, including personal possessions of Shin Jae Hyo as well as *Pansori*-related objects owned by renowned *Pansori* singers such as Kim So Hee.

The Gochang *Pansori* Museum has used various methods not only to validate and preserve the oral tradition, but also to pay respect to the patrons of *Pansori* and to educate the public about it. Walking in, there is a huge board with a map, and numerous buttons are attached to specific locations within the map. Visitors are encouraged to press the button which holds recordings of *Pansori* recitals from different parts of Korea. Through this, visitors are able to hear the different dialects and styles of *Pansori*, depending on the region in which it was practiced. This display merges the tangible (buttons) and the intangible (audio). A large section of the museum is dedicated to the history of *Pansori*, and visitors are able to learn about the *Pansori* singers during the Joseon dynasty as well as how the oral tradition was preserved leading up to, during, and following the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) in Korea. This was when the Japanese tried to "Japanise" Korea, meaning that there were intentional efforts to erase anything that was intrinsically Korean. The history room at the Gochang *Pansori* Museum portrays, through tangible records and images, how the Korean oral tradition was preserved and passed down amid times of threat to Korean culture. Small 3D artworks have also been used to depict scenes from *Pansori* recitals back in the Joseon dynasty for visitors to imagine what a *Pansori* performance would have been like. The more interactive parts of the museum are the audio booths containing recordings of *Pansori* recitals and also the volume-check room where visitors can shout into the microphone to check how loud they can shout. This is a reference to "tteukum" training that *Pansori* singers had to undertake in order to pierce through the sound of the marketplace back in the 18th century.

Central to the museum are the preserved 12 books of Shin Jae Hyo. Five of these books became registered and designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008 by UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. As visitors head towards the exit, there is a wall with photographs of *Pansori* singers throughout the years. A few points are communicated through this display. The first is that this oral tradition has been passed down from one singer to the next, and these photographs put a face to the intangible process. The second is that intentional blank frames have been put up to stress that *Pansori* is a living oral tradition; that the oral tradition goes on.

The Gochang *Pansori* Museum can be used to understand how the tangible has an important role in validating, preserving, and promoting intangible heritage, and vice versa. In many respects, seeing the books of Shin Jae Hyo, exploring the countless artifacts related to *Pansori*, and stepping on the grounds that were used to train *Pansori* singers in the past provide tangible evidence of the intangible tradition.

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Notes

1 https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI_EN_3_1_1_1.jsp?cid=1602363

The Return of *Naadam*: A Celebration of Intangible Heritage in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Emilie Jean Green

Fig. 1 (left): Boy participating in horse race at Naadam in Mongolia. Public domain Wikipedia.

After being cancelled in 2021 because of the rising cases of COVID-19, this year Ulaanbaatar and the other provinces of Mongolia saw the grand return of *Naadam*, one of Mongolia's oldest and most celebrated cultural events. Over the last two years, the absence of *Naadam* has been sorely felt, and this summer there was a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the build-up to the celebrations. The pandemic changed much of the world in a very short amount of time; in many aspects of our lives, we had to learn to adapt and overcome these changes, and intangible heritage was no exception to this.

Intangible heritage relies upon "actors" and "agents" to practice, maintain, and transmit this cultural knowledge, in many cases depending upon people and groups gathering together to share and celebrate cultural traditions. The festival consists of distinct features of Mongolia's nomadic culture and traditions. Unlike many events which could be adapted onto an online platform, *Naadam* did not translate appropriately to such forums. *Naadam*, like many other intangible cultural heritage events, requires the congregation of people, and the act of togetherness is as important as the games themselves.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010, *Naadam* is a three-day event, the origins of which date back to the Mongol period. *Naadam* is a celebration of not only Mongolian culture and heritage, but of nature and the relationship the Mongolian people have with their environment. The event consists of three main traditional sporting events: horse riding, archery, and wrestling. Included within the celebrations and events of *Naadam* are traditional singing, dancing, artistry, and food. In preparation for the games and events of *Naadam*, the participants prepare and finely hone their skills over many years. Traditions, skills, and knowledge are transferred from generation to generation, and in more recent years schools have emerged in which young Mongolians can train for participation in the events of the festival. Steeped in cultural and historical significance, the events of *Naadam* are evocative for observers, as seen in the brightly coloured traditional garments, the ceremonies, and the sense of monumentality that comes with the occasion. In all these things, *Naadam* itself is deeply symbolic, promoting feelings of solidarity and togetherness – feelings that have only become more appreciated over the last two years.

A true amalgamation of many intangible cultural traditions, practices, crafts, and sporting events, *Naadam* can be seen as encapsulating the spirit of entanglement that connects people and landscapes across vast distances from the farthest provinces from all corners of Mongolia. Intangible heritage events and festivals have many different facets and elements which emphasise their importance, from the reinforcement of social bonds within and between groups to the perpetuation of skills, knowledge, practices, living traditions, and shared cultural memory. Not only is *Naadam* a celebration of the cultural history of Mongolia, but it is also a celebration of its people, their lifeways, and the deep tether that connects them to their environment.

Increasing numbers of Mongolian people are now living within cities such as the bustling Ulaanbaatar. Through the celebration of *Naadam* and the facets which constitute this great event, the Mongolian people gather and take a step away from their everyday lives to celebrate, maintain, and preserve this connection to the past. With the growth of cultural tourism within Mongolia, many have returned to the country this year to enjoy and observe the events of *Naadam*. Through this, Mongolian culture is celebrated and stands proudly on the global stage. As Mongolia continues to grow and change, *Naadam* is an opportunity to celebrate heritage, and as the world becomes increasingly globalised, the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage has only become more apparent.

Whilst COVID-19 remains in many ways a large part of our lives, it is encouraging to see a return to a greater degree of normalcy, wherein events such as *Naadam* can be celebrated, maintained, and safeguarded by current and future generations in their full capacity once more. The return of festivals and large-scale events such as *Naadam* has been an important part of the celebration of culture and heritage. Since the days of the early nomadic states who traversed the steppe, valleys, and mountains of Mongolia, *Naadam* has been the thread that connects the modern Mongolian people to their ancient past.

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Fig. 2 (right): The start of a *Naadam* horse riding event (Photo with permission of Joshua Wright).

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Fig. 1 (left): Taganito Open Pit Nickel and Iron Mine, Surigao del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines (Source: Author from Fieldwork, August 2016).

Jewellord Nem Singh

The first quarter of the 21st century is a remarkable period of significant political change for the world. Firstly, our world experienced a unique pandemic brought forth by the novel COVID-19 virus, which yielded to a rethinking on health and well-being as a central responsibility of the national state. The pandemic likewise raised serious debates regarding the merits of unfettered economic globalization, leaving questions about the sustainability of integrated supply chains. Since 2020 disruptions in global production networks have remained a formidable challenge for securing access to basic goods. This, in turn, reframed political debates, including the significance of reshoring manufacturing processes by way of establishing regional production networks to effectively respond to local demands for personal protective gear, food supplies, and COVID-19 vaccines.

Secondly, at the beginning of 2022, inter-state conflict escalated in the European continent as Russian President Vladimir Putin decisively occupied Ukraine. This has inadvertently produced a cascade of political pressures on the European Union (EU) to respond to a geo-political crisis at its borders. Less conspicuous in mainstream debates involves the degree of complexity of the geopolitical crisis. While leaders hastily declared Europe's desire for independence from other powers, the region's perpetual dependence on vital natural resources supplied by Russia and Ukraine is often marginalized in political discussions. Of course, alarms were raised in asserting European "strategic autonomy" – a discourse that shaped political decision-making in Brussels. Within national parliaments, European governments also responded swiftly. For instance, the German Parliament passed a historic bill to approve €100 billion to modernize the country's armed forces.[1] In Sweden, strong pro-environmental discourses which refuse further opening of the mining sector are now being challenged. Armed with advanced mining processing technology, new arguments are being crafted in support of Sweden taking a larger, geo-economic role within Europe to develop a regional supply chain of critical minerals. As Russian pressure for Swedish neutrality increases amidst its advances in Ukraine, the role of Sweden in critical minerals supply chain is tilting in favour of a pro-mining stance. Consequently, the project to decarbonize steel through the establishment of their first plant in northern Sweden has been given the green light, despite strong public opposition in the past.[2] To put it differently, critical raw materials and the mining industry more generally are gaining traction as a potential winner in Europe's attempt to influence the reconfiguration of the emerging geopolitical order.

Finally, the global reordering as a consequence of the rise of China as an economic powerhouse has several compounding effects. For one, the US government has begun to change its own perceptions regarding hegemonic rivalry and the viability of China "peacefully rising" in a liberal international order. China's growing economic influence also altered perspectives among political elites in the developing world. Searching for an alternative to the Washington Consensus, China has increasingly become a counterweight and an important source of financing, investment, and diplomatic cooperation for the global South, especially through bilateral arrangements via state-owned banks and the Belt and Road Initiative.[3]

These changes within the macro-political and economic realms are not insulated from the crisis of climate governance. Faced with uncertainty and crisis, Western governments promote the unprecedented drive to reduce carbon emissions during the Anthropocene. While global emissions still require slowing down, the global governance architecture overseeing climate policies falls short in securing a pathway towards energy transition – that is, away from fossil fuels-intensive growth – for many countries. In this context, environmental governance is a focal point to understand how moments of crisis can yield transformative political action. Through such critical junctures, we may witness the alteration of the course of human history as we respond to the challenges of climate change.

Climate crisis as a critical juncture

The International Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, known as COP26, has set the pace and direction of the worldwide transition to clean energy. Climate commitments have entrenched a net-zero target of reducing carbon emissions, preventing the release of planet-warming gases, and capping temperature rise at 1.5° C. Yet, as a McKinsey Report[4] notes, the current structures of finance, investments, and energy infrastructures are outdated, with supply chains incapable of meeting the rapidly growing demands for primary materials for clean technology. Thus, another reality becomes more apparent: As we build bigger wind turbines, offer solar panels in more households, and assemble new energy vehicle (NEV) cars across cities worldwide, our demand for critical minerals increases, inadvertently putting pressure on our environment.

The European Union (EU) and its New Green Deal is an important case to examine the success of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. The transformation of the EU into a carbon-neutral economy – along with its accompanying industrial strategy supporting the expansion of clean energy technology – will require up to a ten-fold increase of raw materials consumption to meet the 2050 climate neutrality scenario.[5] In addition, industrialization taking place in middle- and low-income countries likewise increases demand for material intensity and resource efficiency. With the global population projected to reach more than 10 billion by 2060, material resources are required to support the demographic change. The OECD Report outlines this very clearly: "Global primary materials use is projected to almost double from 89 gigatonnes (Gt) in 2017 to 167 Gt in 2060. Non-metallic minerals – such as sand, gravel, and limestone – represent the largest share of total materials use, projected to grow from 44 Gt to 86 Gt between 2017 and 2060. While metal extraction and processing are smaller when measured in weight, its growth is projected to be more rapid, not to mention their association with large environmental impacts."[6]

We can also think about the pressures of energy transition in terms of the range of minerals required to secure the seismic shift towards renewables. In Figure 2, we compare both the amount and type of minerals for which demand is projected to grow as governments – from the national all the way to the municipal levels – seek to achieve their net-zero targets. The rapid deployment of clean technologies would mean constructing electric vehicles, which consume more than four times the minerals compared to conventional cars. Wind power and solar energy – two of the most favoured renewables – will require between 4000 and 16,000 kg/megawatts of a range of base metals and rare earth elements (REEs). Put crudely, we expect the intensive and extensive exploitation of natural resources to meet global demands.

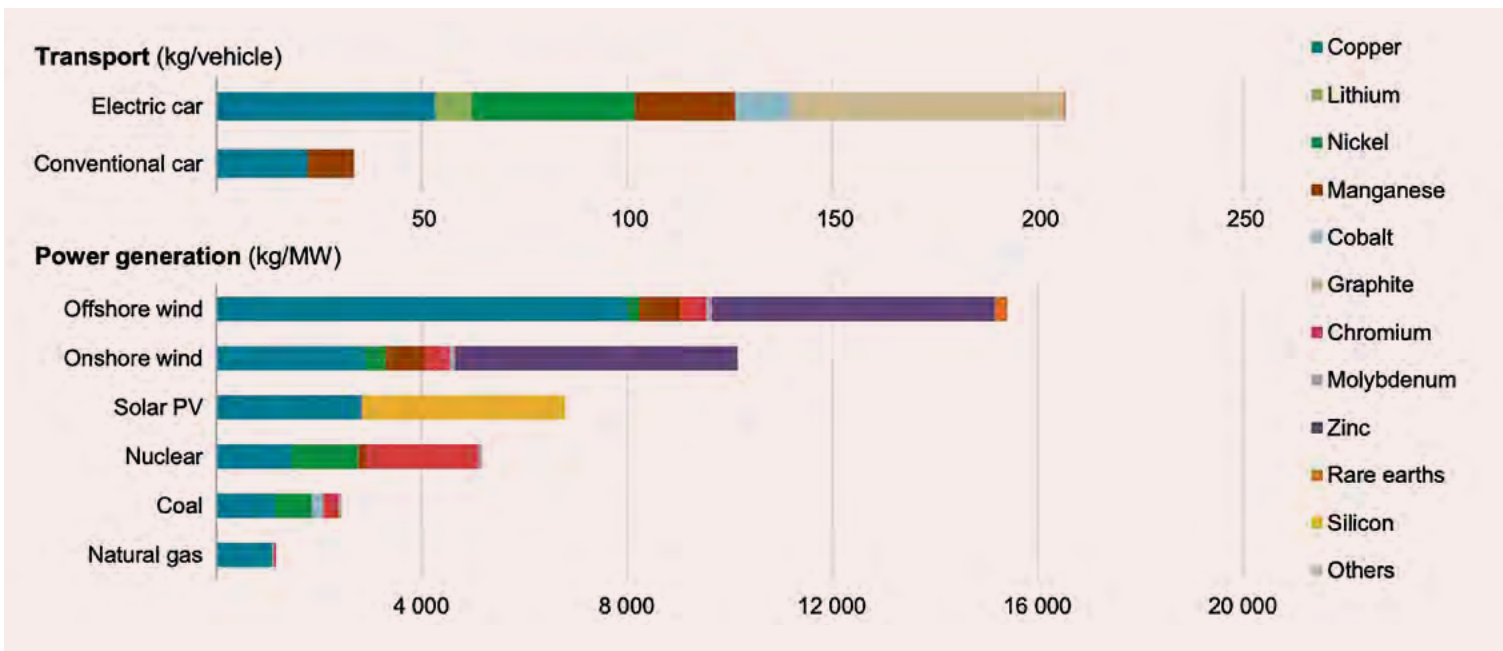

Fig. 2 (above): Critical minerals for clean energy transition (Source: International Energy Agency, "The Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions" [2021, p. 26]: https://www.iea.org/reports/the-role-of-critical-minerals-in-clean-energy-transitions)

Sacrifice zones and the quest for new models of resource governance

The global race for natural resources reinforces existing forms of socio-ecological inequalities, top-down modes of governance, and ecological debt by the industrialized world towards the developing world. Traditionally, we think about "environmental governance" through the lens of problem-solving approaches, in which dominant narratives coalesce around how to achieve resource efficiency and how to secure access to critical raw materials for the energy transition. Those in developing countries that bear enormous natural capital, especially communities living in close proximity to sites of extraction, are often considered

as "sacrifice zones." Areas of sacrifice are by-products of global capitalism, whereby the excesses of profit-seeking inadvertently yield to depopulation, impoverishment, and health hazards. Market environmentalism reproduces asymmetric exposures of citizens toward global environmental changes. Indeed, state-sanctioned policies on conservation and industrial tree harvesting aim at writing off environmental destruction in the name of national interest.[7] For mining producers, political leaders have constructed a discourse of economic development and the collective race against climate change to justify – worse, to further expand – carbon-intensive mining operations in exchange of a political project emphasizing health, education, poverty reduction, and ironically, sometimes even in the banner of the "rights for nature."[8]

As the clean energy revolution accelerates the demand for cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo, lithium in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and nickel in the Philippines and Indonesia, multinational capital, sometimes at work with national champions, is anticipated to leave these mountains barren, to excavate open-pit mining sites, and to displace local communities to meet the extra-ordinary demand for critical resources. Reinforced and sustained through centuries of pillage, colonial conquests, and imperialist territorial expansion, thus the extractivist logic of capital accumulation is taking its new form in the 21st century.

Anthropologists and political ecology scholars have called for incorporating concepts of fairness, environmental justice, and recently "climate justice" when examining who pays the costs of natural resource exploitation to meet the clean energy needs of industrialized countries. As this Focus section demonstrates, the authors agree with the need to think about environmental governance in terms of what Klinger[9] calls "the politics of sacrifice": whenever we demand critical materials to meet our growing clean energy targets, someone from somewhere must pay for the ecological damage. Given the finite reserves of exploitable commodities under current market conditions, political decisions to extract minerals are consequential for the success of energy transition. Whenever European governments decide against new mining projects within their own borders, minerals extracted from overseas leave social impacts and ecological footprints elsewhere, albeit farther from citizens demanding clean energy. To meet the demand for renewables – i.e., the growing consumption of electric vehicles, wind turbines, and photovoltaic panels – requires extracting minerals in the developing world. Notwithstanding the inequality over ecological costs, the problem is further compounded. Ironically, communities in the advanced industrialized world are not only resisting against new mining projects, but relatively privileged residents also fight proposed energy projects such as wind turbines for their adverse health effects and solar farms for their concerns over loss of arable land and food justice. Such resistances are often framed around generalized claims, which might be referred to as the "right to landscape."[10] Thus, "not in my backyard" attitudes (NIMBYISM), intentionally or otherwise, put enormous pressure on poorer, resource-rich countries to intensify their extractive activities for windfall profits and investments.

Hence, the worldwide shift to clean energy appears to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, resource producers are likely to witness a new resource bonanza, not only in terms of the return of higher commodity prices but also more sustained demand in a longer horizon. Perhaps unsurprisingly, ambitions for national industrialization have become compatible with novel demand for transition minerals from the developed world. For example, as early as 2016, Chile created a National Commission on Lithium to oversee the process of increasing strategic control over lithium, a critical material for battery production needed in EV and hybrid cars.[11] On the other hand, pent up demand for clean energy can exacerbate existing inequalities within the developing world. Notwithstanding the potential benefits of increased resource extraction, national governments might want to push for greater scope for extraction while neglecting societal compensation and ecological damage, especially in "frontier communities." Mining communities who face threats of social dislocations are likely to bear the disproportionate costs of energy transition.

Meeting the sustainable development goals (SDGs) can ironically reproduce new forms of social injustice and ecological damage at the local sites of extraction. In an important OECD report,[12] this trade-off was put in starkly clear terms. While embracing renewable energy can support SDG 7 – which encourages universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy – surging demands to produce clean energy technologies will impact natural resource use, especially the increasingly scarce metals for wind and solar power. On one hand, the clean energy transition is opening new pathways for economic development in the developing world in terms of investment, infrastructure, and construction for inclusive industrialization and innovation related to SDG 9. Yet, on other hand, these governments are wrestling over how to strengthen their weak institutional capabilities and to design industrial policy instruments to maximize developmental spill-overs from the mining industry. Thus, mining producers face difficulties in sustaining economic growth and limiting the environmental impacts caused not just by metal mining operations, but even those relying on the use of non-metallic minerals in construction.

The politics of sacrifice plays out in a multi-scalar way, connecting the individual choices of citizens and households living in the advanced industrialized world on one hand, and the winners and losers in the developing world on other hand, whether we speak of their national champions, communities living in the frontiers of extraction, or ordinary citizens in resource-rich countries. Clean energy transition, although presented as a panacea to the climate crisis, has uneven effects that become enmeshed with existing inequalities and structures of power imbalances within nations, classes, and social groups.

Multiple pathways towards energy transition

In this edition of The Focus, our authors build on the basic idea that climate change – although a collective experience shaping societies across the world – is shaping domestic political and economic contexts in ways that produce multiple pathways of (re)constructing environmental governance across distinctive geographical and spatial politics. The aim of each piece is to shed light on how the shared enterprise of keeping the worldwide temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius interacts with distinctive contexts and challenges on the ground. The collection contains five essays, each contributing to a new understanding of environmental governance in the context of our ecological crisis and uncertainty.

In the first two papers, Hao Zhang and Nuerjiazzi Akeerbieke examine the challenge of meeting the climate change commitments in China and Kazakhstan. China, like the United States, is responsible for intensive energy consumption thanks to its steady ascent as the second most powerful economy in the world. Given its reliance on a coal-powered industrial strategy, China's energy matrix requires a coordinated energy reform program. Such a program must simultaneously increase the participation share of renewable energy in its complex development planning while also signaling strong convergence towards COP26 targets. Zhang emphasizes the difficult balancing act necessary to achieve domestic growth targets and international climate commitments, showing the importance of strategic choices of the national government in pursuing a well-coordinated climate-energy-industrial strategy. To further problematize the multiple pathways for energy transition, Akeerbieke shows the unique set of policy challenges faced by resource-rich countries in Central Asia, notably Kazakhstan, to meet ambitious climate targets. As an oil exporter and raw materials producer, the Kazakh state must deal with similar pressures facing other countries in Latin America, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa. With export earnings from oil, gas, and minerals driving the country's catch-up strategy, Kazakhstan has pursued a gradualist approach in phasing down oil dependency while investing in renewable energy. Here, we can draw some parallel experiences between Kazakhstan and oil-rich Gulf states. Although oil exporters in the Gulf region have long recognized the vital role of economic diversification for long-term sustainability, the details of policy and the contentious nature of the social contract between the Gulf rentier state and their citizens render their policy strategy highly complicated, if not always infeasible.

To further analyze the distinctive challenge for raw materials extraction in a wider context, Erika Weinthal's essay carefully examines the path dependence of Central Asian states in managing their natural resources, from the Cold War politics of the 20th century to the contemporary climate crisis. As she points out, Central Asia has been an exporter of raw materials since the Soviet years. State sovereignty was enshrined in the post-Cold War days, though by no means did such process resulted in stronger state capacity to pursue natural resource sovereignty and to enjoy the wealth from their endowments. And, as market transitions exacerbate income inequality and social conflicts, the uneven distribution of socio-economic benefits and costs will remain a formidable challenge in the 21st century. In regions where oil and gas exploration and production occur, communities have seen their environments and health deteriorate. Hence, meeting the climate change goals not only requires Central Asian policymakers to address redistributive politics, but also to address the socio-technical challenges that come together with resource dependence in the context of clean energy transition.

Continuing with the theme of natural resource governance, Jin Sato takes us to Southeast Asia, where natural resources, notably fisheries, are considered quintessential for livelihood strategies. But while high rent sectors like mining and hydrocarbons attract the national government towards renationalization and centralization of state power to assert control over resources, Cambodia experienced an unusual process of decentralization of state power. On the one hand, delegation of powers to local communities have often been advised as a solution to top-down governance, leading to more sustainable and localized solutions for resource conservation. On the other hand, revenue imperatives – especially the need to tax to sustain the fiscal health of a low-income country – do not always explain the political decision of governments. To explain why states often adopt highly contradictory policies, Sato returns to politics – specifically, different incentives as a result of political competition – as the overarching motivation for the decision to control natural resources, despite weak revenues to be acquired from the resource sector.

In the final essay, Richard Griffiths moves away from local and national contests over extraction toward an even broader challenge: how to secure strategic critical raw materials needed for the clean energy revolution beyond national borders and into the ultra-deep sea. Griffiths outlines the need for a framework for inter-governmental cooperation as embedded in the foundations of international law. Importantly, even with a global governance architecture that could allow us to realize the benefits of deep-sea mining, he cautions on the immense technological challenges associated with offshore extraction, particularly the potentially immense environmental hazards that are projected once we move from prospecting and exploration towards extraction and production of mineral resources.

Overall, the following articles provide a better diagnosis of the resource race towards clean energy transition. As each country finds their pathway towards meeting our global climate targets, the public must become part of a wider political discussion to avoid the general tendencies of decision-makers to gloss over the damages associated with natural resource extraction. Crucially, inequality between and within societies, hierarchy in global production networks, and power differences among countries are continually shaping the future. To put it differently, political actions in the present are now profoundly affecting the trajectory of energy transition, and they are instrumental in crafting the diverse pathways for many developing countries towards meeting our common vision of reducing carbon emissions. As we recognize the significance of the present, contemporary struggles for social justice and fair distribution of environmental damages across societies are likely to determine the overall success of human endeavours to solve the ecological crisis in the Anthropocene.

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China at UN COPs: COP26 recap and COP27 forecast

Hao Zhang

As the 27th session of the UN Conference of Parties (COP27) approaches, this article looks back the progress China made at COP26 and foresees what to expect from China for COP27. COP26 was considered a 'big year' in the UNFCCC-led multilateral process to combat climate change. Six years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, it was time for states to make real actions on meeting our climate target by keeping the temperature rise this century below 2 degrees. The outcome of the negotiation indeed made some progress. However, it still fell short of meeting the 1.5-degree target set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Chang (IPCC). China, as a major player in this multilateral process, has a role in determining how far we can go with our climate actions. The policies and statements made by China before and during the COP26 not only contributed greatly to the negotiation process, but also signified certain changes and innovations in China's domestic climate governance system.

COP24 in Katowice (Photo by the author, 2018).

China's participation in COP26 in Glasgow did not disappoint. China's positions at COP26, as one of the most powerful players in the UN-led multinational climate talks, revealed both goals and reservations. While COP26 highlighted the gap between what developing countries can demand and what industrialized countries could deliver, China's participation appears to be even more critical in deciding the success of such efforts. China has made significant and ambitious carbon emission reduction targets in front of the international community. Nevertheless, these commitments are circumscribed by the need to balance politics at home and China's wider foreign policy agenda. This essay examines China's new commitments at COP26, emphasizing not just the significance of these climate policy efforts at the international level, but also the wider challenges at the domestic scale to promote decarbonization.

China at COP26: ambitions and reservations

China has entered a new era of dual carbon targets since President Xi Jinping announced the country's new climate targets in 2020. Its main goal is to reach carbon peak in 2030 and carbon neutrality in 2060. China has already implemented several initiatives at home in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow, demonstrating its commitment to tangible climate action. During the month of October in 2021, China issued multiple reports and policy papers stating their climate related agendas,[1] which included working guidance and action plans for carbon peaking, and China's 2021 yearly response to climate change.[2] On top of that, on the 28th, the Chinese government presented their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term low-carbon development strategy to the UNFCCC secretariat. These five new policy documents announce China's decarbonization plans to the rest of the world, as well as the country's position on climate debates at both international and domestic levels.

The joint Glasgow announcement between China and the United States on enhancing climate action in the 2020s was undoubtedly significant in boosting global climate objectives. Both countries pledged to further prioritize climate action in the 2020s, highlighting their shared conviction in reducing carbon and methane emissions while also reaffirming their commitment to the Paris Agreement.[3] Being the primary movers of international climate negotiations, these two countries have put aside their differences on many other issues to reaffirm their commitments and actions in addressing climate change. In so doing, the world has a fighting chance of retaining the goal of keeping 1.5C warming limit within reach.[4]

At COP26, China has also promised to gradually reduce coal usage. First, China's president, Xi Jinping, announced to the world China's 30/60 dual carbon targets in 2020, which stated China's intention to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Then, just days before the COP26, he announced at the UN General Assembly that China will stop building new coal power plants abroad, in response to criticism that China is outsourcing carbon power plants through its Belt and Road Initiative's overseas infrastructure projects. Notwithstanding such apparent progress, other considerations led China to resist over-committing to climate mitigation measures. For example, China was instrumental in changing the language used in the Glasgow agreement on coal power from "phase-out" to "phase-down." Even though high-level authorities set the ambitious goals and stated that "coal usage will be gradually reduced over the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026–30)," China did not sign the Global Coal to Clean Power Transition Statement produced at COP26. The statement is a key agreement for phasing out coal power and was signed by 46 countries.[5] As the world's largest coal power generator, China's refusal to accede to the language of "phasing out," and instead opting for "phasing down" coal demonstrates the tensions in climate mitigation measures and broader developmental objectives. Thus, climate policies reflect the careful balancing act between ambitious worldwide aims and a gradualist approach towards energy transition at home.

China also joined the *Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use*,[6] a statement aimed at halting forest loss and degradation. China also expressed its support for ending deforestation and enforcing laws against illegal importation of deforestation-risk commodities in a joint statement with the United States.

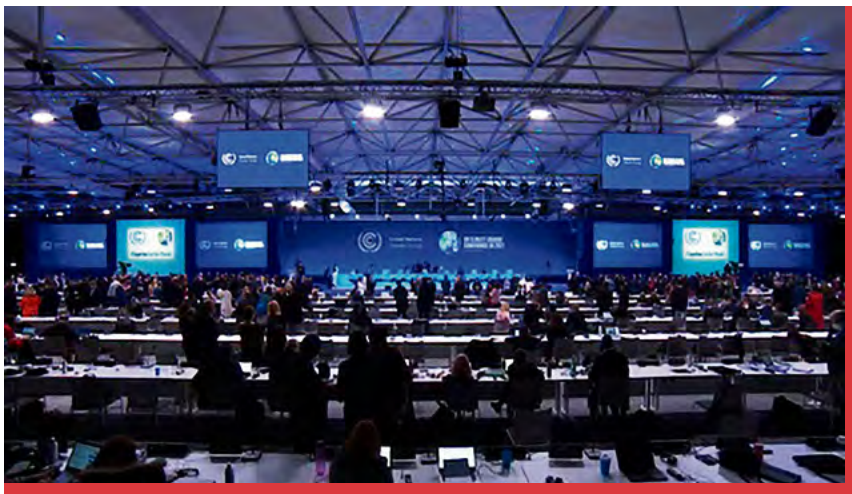
In general, the international community expected China to demonstrate greater climate ambitions and leadership at COP26, and China did so in certain areas while expressing reservations in others. This suggested that the country has reached a critical juncture in the period of "30/60 dual carbon targets," where both possibilities and problems exist.

"1+N": new governance scheme at home

Since the release of the dual carbon targets in 2020, China has failed to provide a clear roadmap that can link domestic economic development with its climate targets. The public was then presented with a new governance plan, which was released in the run-up to the COP26.

The "1+N" policy framework represents China's new climate strategy while also providing a clear path for different sectors

COP 23 in Bonn (Photo by the author, 2017).



Impressions of COP26 in Glasgow (Photos courtesy of Greenovation Hub, 2021).

to follow in order to meet China's dual carbon targets. China's emission-peaking efforts will be spearheaded by a newly constituted working group on climate change led by Vice Premier Han Zhen and consisting of high-ranking officials.[7] Wang Yi, a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and vice president of Institutes of Science and Development at the Chinese Academy of Sciences further clarified in a side event at COP26. He said that this top-down design emphasis on strategic guidance from the top leaders in China, the "1" stands for the working guidance for achieving the dual carbon targets; and the "N" comprised of several policies being enforced, such as the carbon peaking action plan before 2030, policy measures and actions on key areas and industries, and any forthcoming plans to facilitate the efforts. The overarching policy framework aims to lead efforts in several areas, such as the energy system, circular economy system, commerce, transportation system, and so on, in order to gradually transition to carbon neutrality. Specific plans and targets have been drafted for each policy area. Furthermore, the framework emphasizes the implementing subjects, which include ministries, commissions, local governments, industries, industrial parks, corporations, and individuals.

The "1+N" outlines a path for China to effectively achieve its climate goals while also creating synergies at all levels and across sectors. It addresses both short- and long-term climate goals, requiring contributions from a wide range of players across all key emitting industries and related spheres. For instance, according to the Plan, the energy system will limit coal consumption and transform the power system to be based on new energy.[8] In the meantime, the emission-intensive steel industry is targeted to reach carbon peak earlier than 2030 under the new guidance. Apart from the five above-mentioned policies that solely focused on climate governance, the Chinese government introduced several key policy documents in the year leading up to the COP26. The 14th Five-Year Plan for national economic and social development, the long-term goals for 2035, and the 2021 report on the work of the government all discussed the blueprint for China's future climate targets and laid the foundation for the "1+N" framework. This new policy framework is aimed at setting the direction for China's green transition and providing more systematic political guidance on China's environmental governance from top-level leaders. Just like Wang Yi pointed out, "to meet the targets, we have detailed a transformation to our entire system, not only in the energy sector, but across society and the economy."[9]

COP27 forecast obstacles and possibilities

Despite the commitment to actual climate targets and initiatives, China continues to face domestic concerns, as evidenced by the delicate balance displayed at COP26. In China, coal power plants are still a key source of energy. Concerns have been voiced over whether the plan to restructure the coal industry can keep up with the country's accelerating economy, as shown by the power deficit in Northern China in late 2021. Short-term volatility can make long-term planning and goal achievement difficult. China's officials have made up their minds to keep the country on a low carbon path. However, keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach will require their government to guide the process while carefully maintaining the delicate balance between economic development and decarbonization.

Furthermore, bilateral climate negotiations between the US and China have been put on hold due to the continuing conflict over Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, visiting Taiwan. The cooperation between the two largest emitters in the world is thus once again precarious, which might make negotiations at the upcoming COP27 even more challenging. However, even though the geopolitical conflict temporarily halts climate cooperation between China and the US, if the two nations can commit to other multilateral and regional agreements, it may still be possible to continue making progress against climate change. This may be a crucial factor in the success of the COP27.

Nonetheless, China's low-carbon transition appears to be a difficult assignment from every angle. The global response to climate change has been hampered by obstacles such as the public health crisis, the blockage of multilateralism, and an increase in economic and trade frictions. China's climate pledges boosted global climate efforts, and the "1+N" policy framework demonstrated seriousness about delivering such climate pledges ahead of COP26,[10] but strong political will still needs to consider domestic realities and challenges in order to make concrete progress and a successful international contribution.

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Kazakhstan's Environmental Governance Conundrum

The Challenge of Clean Energy Transition for Extractivist States in Central Asia

Nuerjiazi Akeerbieke

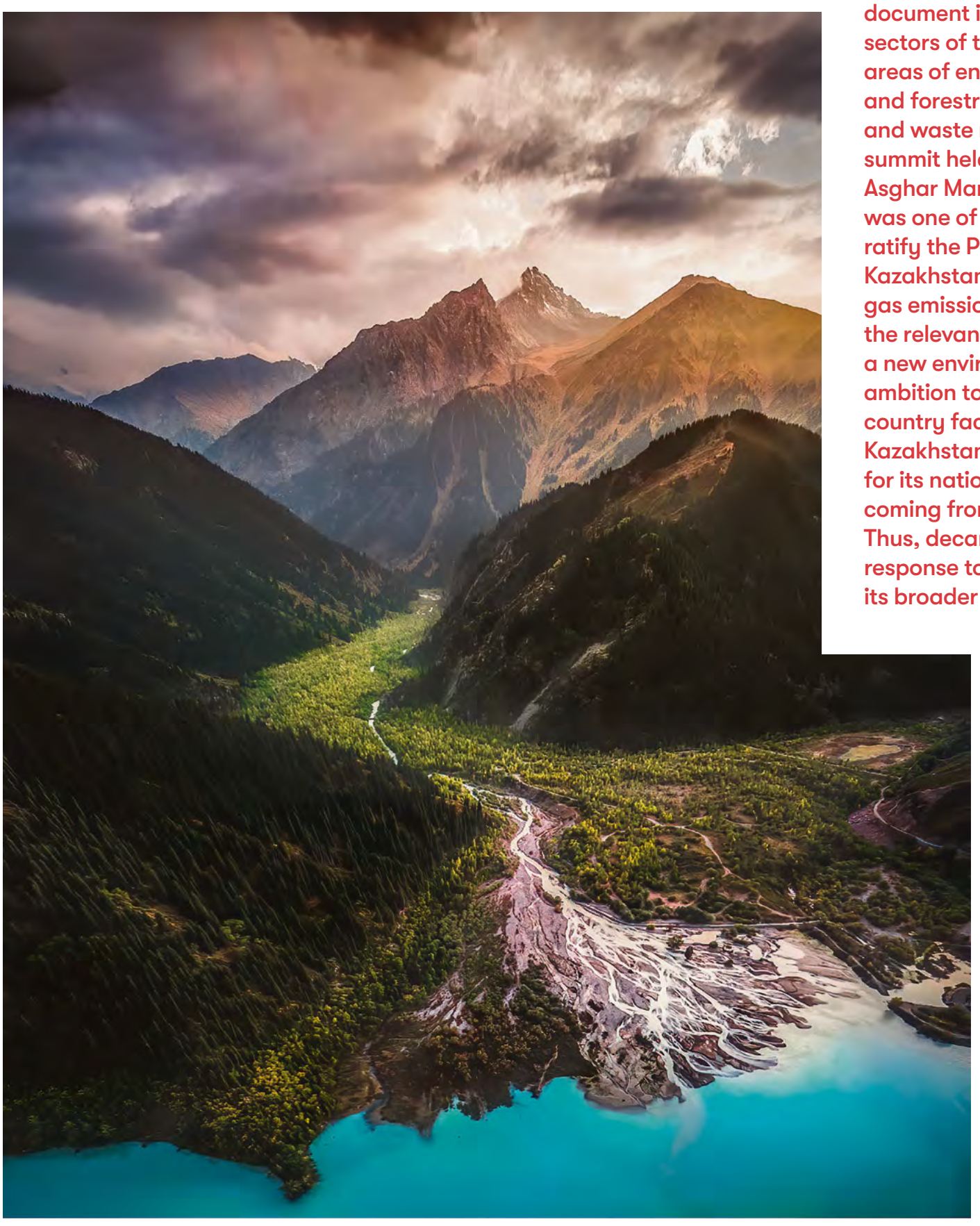

Fig. 1: Sunset in the mountain gorge Issyk (Photo courtesy of Islam Mirsaitov, 2021).

At the UN Climate Ambition Summit in December 2020, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made a bold announcement in the office of the Nursultan: Kazakhstan will be carbon neutral by 2060. To implement this plan, the government prepared a strategy document involving major reforms across all sectors of the economy.[1] This includes the areas of energy, manufacturing, agriculture and forestry, transport, housing, utilities, and waste management. During the COP26 summit held in Glasgow, Kazakh Prime Minister Asghar Mamin likewise noted that Kazakhstan was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement (6 December 2016). Kazakhstan plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2030 by adjusting the relevant energy share and adopting a new environmental law. Yet, despite the ambition to achieve carbon neutrality, the country faces multiple challenges. For one, Kazakhstan relies on natural resource revenues for its national income, with 27.6% of its GDP coming from the mining and energy industries. Thus, decarbonization requires a coordinated response to align its environmental regime with its broader economic development model.

Kazakhstan's commitment despite challenges

Kazakhstan has made commitments under the Paris Agreement and, in 2013, announced its intention to transition to a green economy by 2050. However, the feasibility of these national strategies is questionable.[2] With a short transition period, an overall low level of economic development, a large carbon emissions base, inadequate resource endowments, and high costs, among many other challenges and difficulties, achieving carbon neutrality will be exceptionally difficult.

Kazakhstan currently trails behind other world-leading energy exporters in terms of energy efficiency and energy diversity. As Suma Chakrabarti, Presidential Adviser on Economic Development and Effective Governance, noted: "Kazakhstan is one of the most energy-intensive countries in the world, with energy-intensive and extractive industries accounting for 60 per cent of Kazakhstan's industrial production … Kazakhstan must reduce the energy intensity of its traditional industries and shift its economic base to new, less resource-intensive sectors and as part of a new diversification drive."[3] By implication, global decarbonization and transition to a green economy are likely to result in a reduction of Kazakhstan's hydrocarbon exports, or a 40% decline in fiscal revenues by 2040 (compared to 2016).[4]

The cost of the transition itself will be enormous for Kazakhstan. Due to the severe age of the country's power facilities, the government must undertake significant investments to upgrade equipment by 2030, even in the absence of a decarbonization target. To ensure the 'carbon neutrality' target of reducing 9.3 million tonnes of CO2 emissions by 2060, a cumulative net investment of US$666.5 billion is expected between 2021 and 2060.

The scientific community has proposed many practical solutions for adaptation, including technical, financial, political, and even managerial approaches. While all of these are viable solutions, they do not consider the current lack of financial and technical capabilities of Kazakhstan and other affected Central Asian countries to implement these solutions on a national scale. If these measures are to succeed, they will require significant mobilization of funds and far-reaching international cooperation at an unprecedented scale.[5]

For Kazakhstan, the major strategy involves the construction of numerous green energy facilities over the past two

Fig. 2: Sunset on a rainy day in Almaty city. Drone view (Photo courtesy of Islam Mirsaitov, 2020).

years. In 2020 alone, 25 renewable energy projects with a total capacity of almost 600 megawatts and a total investment of just over US$5 billion will be commissioned. This year has maintained the encouraging trend, with 22 projects totalling 450 megawatts receiving the green light and attracting $445 million in investors. Between 2022 and 2026, over US$2.5 billion will be invested in more than 60 new green energy projects, adding another 2400 megawatts to Kazakhstan's national grid. Policymakers and investors are particularly focused on the emerging 'green hydrogen' technology, with a massive 45-gigawatt project planned. In addition to large-scale energy projects, Kazakhstan also plans to accelerate its green transition – a national project to increase the absorption potential by planting more than two billion trees by 2025 is currently underway.[6]

Despite significant progress in Kazakhstan's environmental governance, action to reduce air pollution and waste and to improve water efficiency has so far been insufficient. Currently, Kazakhstan's national emissions management system monitors only 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. In the future, Kazakhstan will need to establish a stricter system for limiting emissions and improving waste management, to develop a comprehensive renewable energy strategy, and to increase investment in the decarbonization sector to US$273 billion between 2021 and 2030. These goals can only be achieved if phased and systematic measures are taken. While the new environmental law aspires to bring about change, administrative incentives in the environmental behaviour of economic entities and other activities dominate the national environmental regulatory mechanism. The instruments of market management and social impact on the environment are not yet widespread. Therefore, the current legal regulation of economic incentives for environmental management is ineffective.[7]

The significance of national ownership in decarbonization efforts

On January 2nd, 2022, in temperatures of minus-20 degrees Celsius, social protests over the price hike of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) broke out in Zhanaozen, Aktau, and Almaty. Rather than simply an organized collective mobilization, local economic grievances quickly spilled over into riots. Violent incidents ensued, such as the storming of government institutions, attacks on law enforcement officers, and even armed assaults. The riots left more than 4500 people injured and 230 dead, including 19 law enforcement officers. Economic losses were estimated at 136.8 billion tenge (equivalent to US$310 million). From the government reports, the incident is considered a terrorist attempt to overthrow the state and has been widely framed as the worst political crisis since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991. Although rising gas prices might seem a typical source of social protest elsewhere, Kazakhstan's dependence on oil and gas revenues reflects a wider political crisis, whereby the basic social contract between the state and its citizens is in question.[8]

As a starting point, the development of a green economy is not a purely economic issue, but a matter of political and security importance. At home, amidst the context of high international oil prices, whenever oil and gas production capacity are incapable of increasing foreign exchange earnings, domestic politics lead to intense social conflicts between the government on the one hand, and special interest groups and the wider public on the other hand. While the government pursued an economic strategy based on increasing the pace and scope of oil and gas extraction, other key industries have been underdeveloped, leading to the typical "Dutch disease" effects of commodity specialization. In turn, rising gas prices that are passed onto the citizens in an oil-based economy have periodically led to social discontent and, as the 2022 incident demonstrated, a rapid spiral into social unrest.

Kazakhstan's path to decarbonization – an opportunity or pitfall?

While COP26 is often framed in Western media as the most important climate conference to achieve national climate targets, for oil-exporting states, the COP26 reflects the changing geopolitical dynamics associated with the clean energy transition. At a general level, COP26 failed to resolve the so-called ecological debt of the industrialized world. Much of the tension stems from the mistrust between developed and developing countries, with rich countries continuously putting pressures on poor countries to accelerate their energy transition. By contrast, many emerging economies claim that rich countries should increase their financial support for climate adaptation to help the developing world. Take coal as an example. India and China have joined forces to soften the language on coal in the final agreement, changing the term from "phasing out" to "phasing down" coal production. In so doing, these countries have framed their positions as champions of the interests of developing countries. Kazakhstan, as one of the first signatories of the Paris Agreement, recognizes the need for a new growth model that incorporates the environmental and climate impacts of economic development. Its strategy emphasizes the shift from a hydrocarbon-dependent economy towards green electrification. If successful, Kazakhstan could serve as a model for other oil-exporting economies which face the unique challenge of simultaneously accelerating clean energy and reducing oil dependency. As the Kazakh government argues, "the fight for climate change and sustainable development appears ... to be unavoidable... and thus all our economic development plans should be aligned with the global agenda."[9]

Yet, the challenges remain formidable. As the COP26 negotiations clearly illustrate, compensation for climate policies and demand for the EU and other industrialized countries to contribute more will not disappear from political debates. After all, developing countries are not the main emitters of greenhouse gases; instead, they are the recipients of an economic system built around the intensive and extensive exploitation of coal and natural resources. The demand for climate action might also have an unintended consequence: calling for immediate decarbonization is also compressing the "developmental space" of developing countries by preventing them from using previous industrialization strategies learned throughout the last three centuries. On the one hand, the so-called *common but differentiated responsibility* principle in climate negotiations calls for shared responsibility among developed and developing countries to achieve the target of keeping global temperature at 1.5 degrees Celsius, highlighting the varied contributions of particular countries toward carbon emissions. On the other hand, developing countries, often led by China since the early 2000s, have persistently called for the "right to development" as an equally important principle in any burden-sharing framework towards decarbonization. The latter principle is underpinned by three important factors that justify lower carbon emissions reduction commitments for the rest of the world – namely, (1) the highly differentiated rates of historical carbon emissions, (2) differences in the structure of national economies under the current conditions of globalization, and (3) differences in the financial and technological capacity of countries.[10]

To sum up briefly, decarbonization can be made compatible with economic growth. This viewpoint can drive developing countries to embrace the necessary shift towards an economic development model that combines green transition with regulated extraction of mineral and energy wealth. After the riots in early 2022, Kazakhstan's new president has been determined to undertake bold reforms to address long-term issues. There is hope of moving away from the country's current oil-based economic structure. This has the promise of increasing the government's focus on domestic livelihoods, and it sets the stage for the country to gradually move away from a crude oil resource export approach to a people-centred development philosophy. The future trajectory is heading towards the development of green transformation and an environmental governance regime for oil-exporting economies.

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Governing Natural Resources and the Climate Crisis in Central Asia

Erika Weinthal

On July 8, 2022, a glacier collapsed in the Tian Shan Mountains of Central Asia, causing an avalanche. The Tian Shan are a favorite place for foreign tourists to climb, and if it were not for the camera of a British tourist that witnessed the ensuing avalanche, the loss of the glacier might have gone unnoticed. Instead, we got a firsthand account of what climate change means for Central Asia's ecology and economy.[1]

Fig. 1 (above): Tian Shan Mountains in Central Asia. (Photo reproduced under a Creative Commons License courtesy of Wikipedia).

The Tian Shan are home to the upper reaches of the Syr Darya River, one of two glacier-fed rivers that flow into the Aral Sea – the other being the Amu Darya. As temperatures rise globally, Central Asia's mountain glaciers are retreating and at risk of collapse, creating uncertainty downstream for those communities that depend on the rivers for drinking water, energy, and irrigation for agriculture. Changing patterns of rainfall and increasing frequency of floods in the mountainous regions will have varying effects across farms in Central Asia; small-scale farms in arid zones in Tajikistan, for example, may be more vulnerable to declining crop yields.[2] Droughts in Kazakhstan in May and June 2021 hit the country's production of wheat – its main agricultural export – very hard.[3] Climate change will, accordingly, have broad impacts across the region, ranging from glacial melt to choices over crop cultivation and fossil fuel production.

The Central Asian states are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts owing to their economic dependence on natural resources. Indeed, natural resource politics have long defined the economies of Central Asia dating back to the Soviet Union, when Moscow directed the Central Asian countries to produce a range of raw materials to fuel the state socialist economic system. The Central Asian states were large producers of coal, oil, and gas, along with numerous mineral and metal commodities; for example, Kazakhstan was the largest producer of copper in the Soviet Union.[4] Soviet centralized planning required a highly integrated and interdependent system of production in which many of the Central Asian states essentially bartered raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods from the other republics.

While much has been written about the energy-water nexus in Central Asia as well as about Central Asia's abundant oil and gas resources, there is less academic literature concerning climate change impacts in Central Asia despite earlier warnings that climate change would affect Central Asia's water resources and economic livelihoods.[5] Following a summer of record temperatures worldwide and collapsing glaciers – not just in Central Asia, but also in Italy – it is imperative to address how the global climate crisis and the ensuing global energy transition will affect local livelihoods and Central Asia's political economy. On the one hand, melting glaciers and changing rainfall patterns will wreak havoc on Central Asia's agricultural sector, which depends heavily on the rivers fed by the glaciers as well as rainfall; on the other hand, as countries worldwide shift away from fossil fuels, there may be less demand for Central Asia's oil and gas resources and hence less revenue for government coffers in the oil- and gas-rich states (e.g., Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan). While the war in Ukraine has seen an immediate uptick in demand for fossil fuels, over the long term, it is expected that many importing countries will seek to lessen their dependence on fossil fuels and shift to renewables. Ultimately, the climate crisis may amplify the negative impacts of fossil fuel development, as the oil- and gas-rich countries may lose export markets.[6] Yet, the global demand for clean energy technologies may also provide opportunities for the Central Asian states as suppliers of critical minerals and rare earth elements.

The Political Economy of the Water-Energy-Agriculture Nexus and Climate Change

Water and energy have long been linked in Central Asia owing to the importance of water for both hydropower and irrigation. During the Soviet period, Moscow created a system of economic interdependence in which the fossil-fuel rich downstream states (e.g., Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) would provide energy resources to the water-rich upstream states (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) in return for water for irrigation. Yet, after independence, this system of mutual interdependence began to fracture as the upstream states sought to harness the upper reaches of the Amu and Syr Darya rivers for hydroelectricity and the downstream states sought to sell fossil fuels to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rather than trade them as they did during the Soviet Union.[7]

Immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse, the international community supported regional efforts ostensibly aimed at restoring the Aral Sea, which had desiccated after decades of mismanagement when water was siphoned off for irrigation for cotton monoculture. International donors sought to ensure that the Central Asian states would sign regional agreements for sharing the rivers of the Aral Sea basin to prevent conflict over water use and to preserve political stability. Rather than addressing the root causes of the ecological disaster, these water sharing agreements reinforced prior institutional arrangements that privileged the agricultural sector and did not address the loss of livelihoods in the fishing communities surrounding the Aral Sea. Moreover, these agreements failed to address the mounting climate crisis that would affect the flow of the rivers given that they are fed by the summer melt of the glaciers.

For decades, scientists had, however, cautioned that global warming would accelerate glacial melt in places like the Tien Shan Mountains that extend across China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. A 2007

background paper for the UNDP Human Development Report on Climate Change found that 46 glaciers in Central Asia were already shrinking and that from the 1950s to the 1990s the Pamir-Alai glaciers had lost 19 percent of their ice.[8] Recent studies have found that approximately 80 percent of the Tien Shan glaciers are losing mass.[9] Earlier snowmelt coupled with shorter winters is likely to create natural hazards for those living near glaciers and associated infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs.

Overall, less water in Central Asia's rivers will have socioeconomic and political consequences given the importance of agricultural livelihoods, even in the countries that are rich in oil and gas resources. For the regions of Central Asia where livelihoods depend on the agricultural sector, changes in the river runoff will thus affect complex irrigated agricultural systems. For example, in the Fergana Valley, clashes over water resources occurred between communities along the border area between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2021. Changing precipitation has decreased the amount of cotton as well as wheat that can be produced, resulting in food shortages in 2017 in Turkmenistan.

Climate Change and Fossil Fuels

Addressing climate change requires an international commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For decades, the Central Asian states have sent mixed signals about their commitments to adhere to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. While Kazakhstan is a major producer of fossil fuels, the then Ministry of Environment and Water Resources engaged the International Institute for Environment and Development in 2011 to help it map out a path for building a green economy. This followed the launch of the Green Bridge Initiative to build regional collaborations to share lessons regarding green technologies and strategies for decarbonization.[10] At the 2021 UN Conference of the Parties meeting in Glasgow, Kazakhstan underscored its commitment to reaching carbon neutrality by 2060.

Yet, dependence on natural resources continues to constrain efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions not just at home, but globally through the production and export of fossil fuels. Kazakhstan remains the largest greenhouse gas emitter in Central Asia. Most of Kazakhstan's emissions are attributed to energy use in the energy industries and transport; decarbonizing Kazakhstan's economy is particularly challenging because it still relies upon aging coal-fired electricity plants for approximately 70 percent of its electricity, in contrast to 37 percent globally.[11] According to the Rocky Mountain Institute, Turkmenistan is listed as having the second dirtiest and climate damaging oil field (South Caspian Basin) after Russia's Astrakhanskoye natural gas field.[12]

Transitioning away from reliance upon the extractive industries remains difficult given the lack of diversification of their economies and dependence on export markets for oil and gas, which are constrained by pipeline routes. In the decades following the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia was a large purchaser of Turkmen gas, though it was surpassed by China in 2010. With investments in a pipeline to bring gas to China via the China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline, China imported 34 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan in 2021.[13] In recent years, Turkmenistan has reaffirmed its interest in completing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-India-Pakistan (TAPI) pipeline.

Fig. 2: Tian Shan Mountains in Central Asia. (Photo courtesy of Oli Brown, 2008.)

Much of China's investments in Turkmenistan's and Kazakhstan's oil and gas sectors are, furthermore, part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – or what is referred to as the Silk Road Economic Belt within Central Asia. The China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) has helped to develop the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan. In 2019, the Kazakhstan government published a list of 55 projects with Chinese investments, of which half were in oil and gas projects.[14] As with other BRI investments elsewhere in Asia, revenue generated from these projects will likely need to service the debt from the initial investments.

Whereas prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, despite being the world's largest emitter of CO2, China was taking significant steps to reduce its fossil fuel footprint by reducing its reliance on coal-fired power plants and expanding its use of clean energy technologies. Yet, by investing in fossil fuel projects abroad, China's commitment to decarbonization at home is not being replicated abroad with its BRI investments in dirty industries in Central Asia and elsewhere in Asia. In part due to such criticisms, Chinese financial institutions providing BRI finances have committed themselves to the "Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road."[15] Yet, if these investments are not carried out according to industry best practices with social and environmental safeguards, there will likely be associated environmental and health costs. NGOs have already raised concerns about the lack of transparency regarding the loans as well as the absence of reporting and assessment tools, which has implications for community engagement, oversight, and local implementation of environmental laws.[16]

Climate Change Opportunities for Critical Minerals

Meeting the Paris commitments of limiting global warming to 1.5°C will demand a reduction in the use of fossil fuels globally, which will be a challenge for the oil- and gas-rich countries in Central Asia, not only because they are large exporters of fossil fuels, but also because they are large consumers. Yet, as of 2021, all five Central Asian states have ratified the Paris Agreement and have submitted their national determined contributions. In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many countries, especially in Europe, are seeking to wean themselves off oil and gas. If the oil and gas-rich Central Asian countries continue to depend on fossil fuels domestically and for export revenue, the ensuing socio-economic impacts could be devastating not just in the short term, but over the long term.

Despite the short-term influx of oil rents from new markets in Asia, over the long term the oil- and gas-rich Central Asian states could be forced to yield to global pressure to decarbonize and risk social discontent if they are unable to diversify their economies. Furthermore, for the Central Asian states that are also at the forefront of climate change impacts, opportunities may emerge to offset the loss of revenue and contribute to a global energy transition through new investments in critical minerals. Indeed, the United States Geological Survey has highlighted the significant deposits of rare earth elements and rare metals located in Central Asia, which are essential for the development of clean energy and transportation. According to Vakulchuk and Overland, the region of Central Asia, moreover, holds important critical minerals, including global manganese ore, chromium, lead, zinc, titanium, aluminum, copper, cobalt, and molybdenum.[17] Kazakhstan is the second-largest producer of chromium, which is vital for the production of wind turbines.

Like the challenges faced by many oil and gas countries with state-owned enterprises managing their oil and gas revenues, it will be imperative for the states with significant deposits of critical minerals to be transparent about their supply chains and revenue accumulation to benefit society and mitigate conflict. While the Central Asian states have opened their state-owned enterprises to foreign investment, state ownership without any checks on revenue flows to the state can lead to corruption and misuse of revenue that may not benefit the local populations.[18] Thus, as the Central Asian governments develop their critical mineral resources, contractual agreements with foreign investors require transparency and accountability mechanisms as laid out in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). They must also include provisions for stakeholder engagement and public access to information, especially when it comes to important topics such as environmental and social impacts. Only Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are parties to the EITI, with Tajikistan having been suspended temporarily in January 2022 for missing a reporting deadline. EITI requires signatories to commit to disclosing information about how much revenue is received from the extraction of natural resources and how those revenues are used to benefit society. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are parties to the 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (i.e., Aarhus Convention). Article 21 of Kazakhstan's Environmental Code also includes provisions for information disclosure and public participation. Yet, most of the governments remain characterized by weak transparency and governance when it comes to the mineral sector.

To date, the absence of disclosing foreign investments and public participation in decision making has led to protests in other sectors, such as potential sales of agricultural land in Kazakhstan to foreigners. One reason public disclosure of contracts matters is that these contracts lay out environmental protections as well as commitments to benefit local communities, including investments in social services and hiring of local staff. While vital for fostering a global energy transition, research will be needed to understand the range of environmental and health effects for local communities caused by mining rare earth elements and critical minerals.

Conclusion

Turbulence and continuity characterize the natural resource sector in Central Asia. Since the Soviet days, Central Asia has been an exporter of raw materials. While independence has allowed the states to pursue natural resource sovereignty and enjoy the riches of their endowments, not all members of society have benefited. In regions where oil and gas exploration and production occur, communities have seen their environments and health deteriorate. Thus, as the world seeks to move away from fossil fuels, the Central Asian states will face their own reckoning regarding how to mitigate the impacts of global warming while ensuring that government coffers have resources to provide for basic social services and government functions. While a global energy transition might be economically costly for the oil- and gas-rich Central Asian states in the short term, the global transition to clean energy technologies could provide opportunities to diversify their economies and export markets in the long term. This is especially so if best practices are followed, in which industry activities are transparent and provide for stakeholder consultation and public access to information about impacts and benefits.

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Open Up to the Locals

Politics of Resource Control in Tonle Sap, Cambodia

Jin Sato

Fig. 1. Stilt houses in Kompong Phluk on Tonle Sap Lake (Photo by Thol Dina, 2012).

People in Southeast Asia earn a livelihood in a variety of ways. Certain nomadic groups live on or near the water, relocating from place to place to follow migrating fish. The largest of these groups live by Tonle Sap Lake, an enormous body of fresh water in Cambodia. In Cambodia, as elsewhere, water usage is governed partly by national policies. As we shall see, however, governance of water is necessarily the governance of people whose lives are connected with such water. In this context, Tonle Sap has historically been the target of political intervention mainly regarding who gets what from the resources available from the lake. This article examines how water resources can serve as an effective tool for political influence. By examining the case of policy change by the Cambodian government in relation to Tonle Sap Lake, I argue for the importance of providing local people with the resources and capacities to take care of their surroundings once governed by the state.

Fishing and politics in Cambodia

As we shall see, the government previous arbitrated a system of exclusive fishing lots that had been in use for over a century. In 2012, these lots were abolished, opening up the fishing grounds to the community at large. The abolition of the Tonle Sap fishing lot system is a rare example of a government policy that was greeted with jubilation by the locals. The new approach, on the surface, appears to have decreased the dominance of the state and reinstated certain freedoms to the public. Should this shift be viewed as part of the decentralization and democratization of resource governance, or should we see something else in this move? As we observe the increasing tendency of state control over revenue-generating resources such as oil, it is illuminating to see how politics matters in governing resources that are apparently not lucrative through the eyes of the state.

Cambodia has a population of 16 million people, out of which over four million, or 25 percent, have a direct or indirect stake in fishing on the lake.[1] The government was anxious to keep a lid on politically sensitive conflicts between the small-scale fishermen, who make up the vast majority of the four million stakeholders, and the smaller group of fishing lot owners, a smaller group numbering in the dozens. Whilst relatively minor in terms of tax revenue, the issue had potentially dramatic political ramifications.

Around the turn of the millennium, Cambodia was going through a decentralization process accelerated by a new legislation promoting communal elections and the enactment of the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management in 2001. Prior to this law, municipal leaders assumed seats of local government. From 2002 onward, for the first time, Cambodians across the country elected their community representatives directly. Further local elections based on the new laws took place in 2007 and 2012, bringing victory to the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The first commune council elections in 2002 were not only a milestone for the country's democratization process but also a symbol of decentralization.

In a highly restrictive political environment like Cambodia, commune councils are vital political spaces for debate among various party members, and key matters of local policy are often discussed. By the 2010s, the power of the CPP in these councils was absolute and unchallenged, despite occasional "reforms" of the election system. Therefore, if the ruling party already enjoyed such a solid power base, why did it intervene in Tonle Sap's fisheries arrangements? Is it simply because the government was interested in conserving the fishery resources in the lake? Or does the lake potentially serve as leverage for political purposes?

The Tonle Sap ecosystem

Before we dig into the governance issue, let us clarify the ecological context. Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, is a vast expanse of water that stretches in all directions almost as far as the eye can see. An estimated 1.7 million people make their home on the lake, spread out across over 1,500 villages.[2] What makes Tonle Sap unique is the fluidity of its boundaries. In the rainy season, the lake swells to several times its dry-season size. Lake dwellers relocate as the tides slowly shift, dividing their time between farming and fishing as the seasons change. Such a lifestyle is astonishing to the eyes of a city-dweller, where one's "residence" is always a fixed location on dry land.

Lake dwellers have good reason to remain close to these shifting shores. The climate is pleasant all year round, and fish are (or at least used to be) available in abundance, removing the threat of famine. Communities around the lake also encompass schools, health centers, and other infrastructure, all built on stilts. Anyone with a boat can find life's necessities on Tonle Sap Lake, and the lake dwellers have long enjoyed the freedom to live and work there.

What makes Tonle Sap unique is the fact that the size and location of these supposedly distinct areas change as the lake floods. Tonle Sap expands dramatically during the rainy season, as Figure 2 shows, and this annual transformation calls for a complex system of resource management. Over the last few decades, Tonle Sap has been affected by population growth, urbanization, deforestation, and hydropower demand, not to mention the impacts of climate change causing scarcity of water in the region.

On March 12, 2012, the Cambodian government announced a drastic policy shift, and the century-old fishing lot system was abolished. This had profound effects on the economically and environmentally valuable ecosystem of Tonle Sap Lake. While the government had already started to reduce the total area of fishing lots around the turn of the millennium, the total abolition of the system had been politically inconceivable. Initially welcomed by the small-scale fishermen subsisting on the Tonle Sap fishery resources, the 2012 shift also led to a rapid decline in fishing stocks. This came on top of other problems caused or worsened by the El Niño phenomenon: fish in Tonle Sap were becoming smaller in size, and biodiversity was suffering.[3]

The changing fishing lot system

Tonle Sap's fishing lot system dates back to the 19th century, when the government wanted to commercialize fisheries on the lake and set up a system to enclose parts of it. At that time, Cambodia was still a French protectorate, and marine products made up the bulk of the country's exports. Eighty percent of these marine products were salted and dried fish, mostly catfish caught in Tonle Sap.[4] Adhémard Leclère, who held a key position in the French administration near the end of the 19th century, observed that during the reign of King Ang Duong (1840-1860), the fishing rights to particular locations were usually granted for free. This changed when King Norodom (1860-1904) began financial leasing of fishing rights to fund the construction of a royal palace in Phnom Penh. Fishing along the shores of Tonle Sap, however, remained free for everyone at that time. King Norodom accumulated his wealth by selling monopoly rights to Chinese entrepreneurs, his chief trading partners.[5]

Between 1970 and 1979, the rise and subsequent rule of the Khmer Rouge triggered a civil war that greatly affected the Tonle Sap area. The fishing lot system plunged into chaos. Forbidding fishing altogether, Pol Pot's regime forced the people to work the rice fields in cooperative units based on communist ideals. Some Khmer Rouge cadres may have continued fishing in Kompong Chhnang Province, but we know very little about events in the lake area during this period. Certainly, any commercial fishing in Tonle Sap was virtually non-existent for those ten years, and by the time operations resumed in the 1980s, the fishing grounds were unsurprisingly richer than ever.

The re-introduction of the fishing lot system in 1987 marked a turning point in the territorialization of Tonle Sap. In theory, fishing lots were to be auctioned off to the highest bidder at regular intervals, but the same fishing lots were claimed over and over by the same group of politically well-connected fishermen.

Fishing lot operations were to follow regulations outlined in the "burden book" of the certificate that came with the fishing lot. This certificate included important information, including a map indicating the location of the lot, the rules guaranteeing proper management and conservation of fishing resources, and the amount paid for the lot, among other details. Actual amounts paid were often much higher than stated in the burden book; one fishing lot owner claimed to have paid almost ten times the amount designated on the certificate. Fishermen rarely adhered to the certificate guidelines. For example, it was prohibited to subdivide fishing lots, yet the vast majority of them ended up being exploited by multiple extralegal subcontractors. Furthermore, local officials and politicians often demanded various perks for granting exclusive fishing rights to lot owners.

The Cambodian government's first major intervention into the Tonle Sap system was in 2000, when it reduced the total area of fishing lots on the lake by 56 percent. Then, in 2012, the system was abolished entirely. According to an official from the Fisheries Administration, the government took over half of the area that had been essentially privatized as fishing lots, allocating it as an open-access fishing ground to be managed in cooperation with local communities. In practice, 76.37 percent of the total area previously taken up by fishing lots was turned over to the community while the rest (23.63 percent) became state-designated conservation areas for the protection of Tonle Sap's ecosystem.

Why did the government relinquish its control over fishing lots?

There are several arguments as to why the Cambodian government decided to open up fishing lots. Firstly, the administrative incentive of the state was a factor. There are oil and gas reserves under Tonle Sap Lake. For the government, the first step in securing control over the area was to dismantle the system that provided rights to private entities over parts of the lake and to establish itself as the main beneficiary of future revenues from the exploitation of these subterranean resources. However, the profitability of the still-hypothetical oil and gas exploitation remains to be determined, as there are no concrete plans to develop these reserves. Though plausible, it is difficult to identify a clear link between the abolition of the fishing lot system and plans for future resource development.

Secondly, the main beneficiaries of the abolition – the small-scale fishermen living around the lake – are not required to pay taxes to the government, whereas the lots generated revenue analogous to a tax. From a revenue perspective, it would be better for the government to simply leave the fishing lots in place to keep the associated revenues. As such, the Cambodian government's intervention in Tonle Sap seems to have harmed its own financial interests. My hypothesis is not based on revenue, but on "political capital" – namely, that the state, intending to use the lake's natural resources for the redistribution of economic profit and the ensuing political stability, hoped to gain support from a broader sector of the country's population in and around the lake. This explanation raises the possibility that, instead of attracting votes with subsidies, infrastructure projects, and other gifts that confer direct economic benefits (instead of levying taxes), the government is trying to achieve its political goals by promoting grander objectives like reducing inequality and protecting fragile ecosystems.

Can this agenda account for what is happening around Tonle Sap? As of 2015, the fisheries sector, which encompasses industrial fishing, household fishing, and open field fishing (e.g., in rice paddies), contributes to about eight percent of the GDP.[6] According to prime minister Hun Sen's statement on March 8, 2012, only about 100 fishery companies were involved in industrial-scale operations, and this small cluster generated about 400 million USD in total revenue. The government's new interventions in the fisheries sector sought to distribute natural resource revenues more broadly. Hun Sen proclaimed, "I ordered the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery to review all fishing lot leases across the whole country issued before April 2000. I also ordered the ministry to return all fishing lots under commune control to the people for household fishing".[7]

Furthermore, he asserted that the Tonle Sap fisheries contribute about 1.5 million USD to the government's coffers every year. Given that the economy had been maintaining a growth rate of over six percent, this is actually a very small amount. In fact, government revenue statistics show that throughout the 2000s, revenue from fisheries declined from 0.8 percent of the national budget to barely 0.2 percent.[8] Given the fact that the financial loss was negligible, the government used the lake as a means of accomplishing a different objective – namely, political support to the party.

While Cambodia is, in essence, a single-party dictatorship, politicians and officials have different attitudes and expectations toward Tonle Sap, depending on their position and associated departments. The situation around Tonle Sap involves multiple government agencies – primarily the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, but also the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries has jurisdiction over fisheries in the fishing lots. The Ministry of Environment presides over protected areas, especially with the aim of biodiversity preservation. The Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology was established in 1999. This ministry includes the Tonle Sap Authority, whose chairman is said to be a confidante of the very influential Prime Minister Hun Sen. For example, the authority to tackle illegal fishing operations is technically vested with the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, but such authority is held *de facto* by the Tonle Sap Authority. Further research is needed to clarify how the balance of power between these various agencies affected the abolition of the fishing lot system. One thing is clear: the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries lacked the political resources to hold on to the rights entailed by its jurisdiction over the fishing lot system.

As mentioned earlier, the Fisheries Administration benefits from its connection with fishing lot owners. For example, fishing lot owners may offer accommodations to politicians and officials when the latter visit local areas. There is always a risk that such connections lead to the perception of corruption. Thus, it makes sense that the government would be eager to snuff out the escalating conflicts between fishing lot owners and small-scale fishermen before the discontentment spread throughout Cambodia. In the post-2000 period, mounting resentment among small-scale fishers frequently sparked minor conflicts all over the country. The government's push for a full-scale investigation into the problem in 2011 was seen as an expression of Hun Sen's anger at the failure of the Fisheries Administration to deal with the situation.

Many fishing lots have been designated as communal fishing grounds and protected areas. Yet this raises another problem: who will manage them and how? Many community fisheries have considerable incentives to govern their fishing grounds properly. It remains to be seen, however, how successfully they will manage to do so in practice. It is equally uncertain how well the Ministry of Environment will do at conserving the new "protected areas" under its jurisdiction. The policy of opening up the fishing grounds was greeted with optimism by the small-scale fishermen. However, some fear that Tonle Sap Lake is a "tragedy of the commons" scenario waiting to unfold.[9] A report based on interviews with fishermen claimed a steep drop in the variety and volume of catches, even in the new "conservation areas" that have recently been established with help from the European Union.[10] In addition, there are obvious limits to the resource management that communities can accomplish on their own, especially with respect to controlling illegal fishing activities.

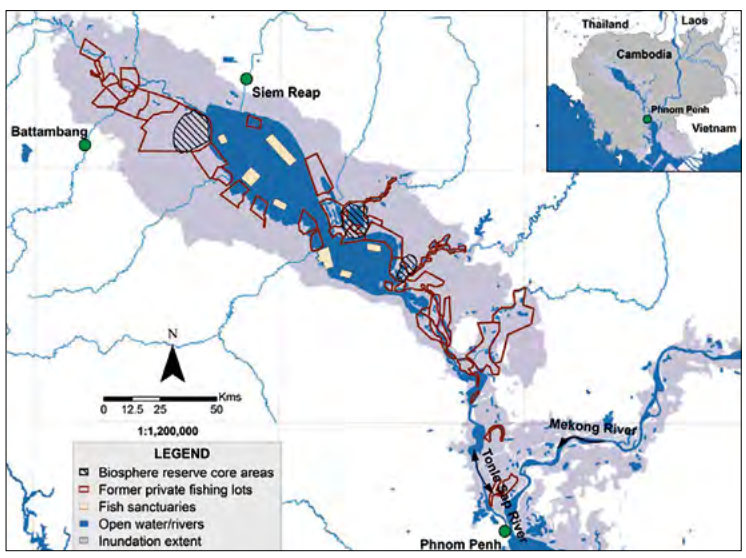

Fig. 2: The Tonle Sap Lake ecosystem of Central Cambodia (Source: Cooperman, M. et al. 2012. A watershed moment for the Mekong: newly announced community use and conservation areas for the Tonle Sap Lake may boost sustainability of the world's largest inland fishery, *Cambodian Journal of Natural History* (2), p. 103).

"Power to local communities" and the tragedy of the commons

Essentially, the fishing lot system offered a way, through private means, to manage a resource – in this instance, fish – that possesses many commons-like characteristics. If viewed from that perspective, the government overturned a century-old system of private governance and replaced it with a policy of public governance by local communities. This is the reverse of the more familiar government approach of privatizing or nationalizing resources that were once common to locals.

The overall reaction of small-scale fishers to the total opening of the Tonle Sap fishing grounds has been positive. Previously, fishing lots were fenced off or patrolled by armed guards who reacted violently whenever fishermen ventured into areas other than their own. All of that has disappeared, but not all is well. Representatives from local NGOs are concerned about the rising cases of overfishing and the use of illegal methods like electrofishing. Community fisheries are ill-equipped to resolve this, as they lack the funds even for such minor expenses as the gasoline required for patrolling common fishing grounds for poachers.

There are also persistent rumors that officials can be bribed to turn a blind eye to overfishing. Sithirith suggests that officials are susceptible to kickbacks because of their meager salaries. The opening of the fishing lots did nothing to eliminate corrupt practices; it has only made them more complex.[11] Without clear boundaries for the fishing lots, corrupt officials have the means to bend the definition of "illegal fishing" according to their needs. Illegal fishing operations continue to evade the law with well-placed bribes to the police or Environmental Conservation Bureau officials.

In short, the opening of the fishing lots has created space for ambiguity, which is now becoming an obstacle to the government's stated goal of reducing inequality and preserving resources. Tonle Sap was exposed to privatization for many years, which operated specifically on the logic of exclusion and, later, by the delegation of power to communities (which is not the same as nationalization). The result has been mounting disputes between villagers as boundaries blur and patrols fall short, all of which is exacerbated by the accelerated rate of resource depletion. The unforeseen outcomes of the opening-up policy suggest that the longstanding fishing lot system had some fragile merit. Garrett Hardin predicted that "injustice [as a consequence of lawful privatization of commons] is preferable to total ruin".[12] Sadly, this prediction is now coming true on Tonle Sap Lake.

Appealing solutions under the label of redistribution of access to resources should be subjected to scrutiny to uncover the state's hidden aims. I argue that the Cambodian government is willing to intervene in Tonle Sap because millions of people depend on the lake's fish for subsistence. Given that Tonle Sap remains relatively marginal in terms of overall tax revenue and economic production, implementing a popular fisheries policy on the lake is an easy way for the state to gratify at least a fourth of its citizens. It is hardly a coincidence that Hun Sen's government pushed its successive fishing lot policies just before elections. No doubt, the state was well aware of the political value of interventions in the lake's fisheries, whether that be enclosure or opening. Nonetheless, officials continue to obscure the state's possible motives behind claims of decentralization and democratization. Moreover, the real social and environmental effects of these populist tactics remain unexamined. If approaches like the one taken by the Cambodian government are indeed deliberate tools of governance, they should be subjected to scrutiny.[13]

Even when the economic importance of natural resources diminishes, they can still retain powerful political significance when relied upon by a significant population. For the government, toying with the possibility of allowing access to such resources can have greater value than imposing taxes or doling out subsidies. This is especially true in countries where many depend on primary industries for their livelihoods. People residing in the proximity of exploitable natural resources tend to have less political power. They are also less likely to notice unfair distribution when access to these resources is manipulated at greater distance at the national level. Once a government becomes aware of these realities, using access to resources for political gain becomes tempting.

In 2016, an environmental foundation called the Global Nature Fund declared Tonle Sap "the most threatened lake in the world," highlighting the decline of the natural environment and the depletion of resources that have affected this vast region. The policy of returning power to local communities and protecting the environment has had the opposite, unintended, effect. That is, delegating governance to communities can lead to inversion of the policy's intention when responsibilities are not clearly delineated and the communities affected do not get the resources needed to undertake their management. Local participation is an essential element of environmental governance, but it can only function when local people are given enough resources and capacities to take care of areas once dominated by the state. It will be a long time before the government and the people of Cambodia can work together to manage the lake's abundant resources in a way that resolves inequality and protects the ecosystem for the future.

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Greening the Ungreenable

The Prospects for Deep-sea Mining

Richard T. Griffiths

Fig. 1 (left): "Ocean Depths" by Tian Widjaya, Bali, Indonesia, web art, 2021 (Image courtesy of the author).
Fig. 2 (above): The Hughes Glomar Explorer (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Government via WikiCommons).

We need to switch to more sustainable forms of power generation, but this is being held back by the high prices and strategic supply vulnerabilities. Deep under the sea lies more rare earths than ever imagined, and there is both the technology and the funds to exploit it.[1] Moreover, the International Seabed Authority is preparing a framework to guard against environmental degradation. So, what can go wrong?

The temperature of the world is rising and the climate is changing. Having documented the nature of these changes and analysed their causes, at the end of March 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offered us a way to stop overheating the planet. It would not be easy, but in 25 years' time, the planet could reach a situation of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions if its businesses, governments, and citizens so wished. The task of rolling back the damage caused in the interval would then have to start. Central to this vision of the future was a massive increase in the role of wind and solar energy in global energy production. At present, these two sources contribute 7EJs[2] (1.36 percent) towards primary global energy production. Under the scenario offered by the IPCC, by 2045 this would increase to 260 EJs (53.6 percent). This implies a 37-fold increase in renewable generating capacity.[3] The report said nothing about the geographical location of these new sources of energy, nor about the distribution of the costs. It was also silent on the question of the materials required to realise this transformation. For example, if there is to be a 37-fold increase in wind and solar energy production, with current technology, it will require 37 times more materials than the entire stock produced to date for the solar panels, the generators, the storage batteries, etc. Undoubtedly, there will be an increase in the efficiency of wind and solar sources of energy, as well as some improvement in the recycling of materials, but the simple fact is that many of the minerals required are already in short supply, and this shortage is only likely to increase and to be exacerbated by strategic export controls.

A recent Dutch report, focussing on six critical metals, suggested that by 2040 the annual demand for several scarce metals needed in wind and solar energy would be several times higher than today, and the calculations excluded the requirements for electrical vehicles.[4] Most of these metals exist as major or minor constituents of minerals, such as silicates, carbonates, oxides, and phosphates. These are available on dry land, but dry land only covers less than 30% of the planet, and its resources have been exploited for decades. Attention is, therefore, turning to the oceans.

Deep-sea mining is defined as any activity removing minerals from a depth of more than 200m. Minerals exist in three different forms: (1) cobalt-rich ferro-manganese crusts on sea mounts, (2) hydrothermal vents bearing various sulphides, and (3) potato-sized nodules polymetallic nodules containing nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese that have been spewed over the ocean floor for millennia. For the areas that lie outside a country's exclusive economic zone (200 nautical miles/370 kms from the shore), the challenge of deep-sea mining is overseen by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), a body convened in 1994 by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). There are several problems with this arrangement. The first is that not all countries are members – the USA, for example, has only observer status. The second is that outside the area identified as the responsibility of a national government, it is difficult to establish any effective governance or means of enforcement. Third, in order to obtain consensus, many of its rules and practices are non-binding. While preparing its own laws, regulations, and procedures on deep-sea mining, the ISA has granted 31 licences for exploration (but none, yet, for mining). Seventeen of those licences apply to the 4.5 million km² Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone between Mexico and Hawaii. It is estimated that this area alone holds more reserves of recoverable metals than all of the Earth's surface combined. Over a ten-year period, investors expect $15.3 billion in profits.[5] Four of those licences are held by DeepGreen, a Canadian firm with an Australian CEO – for exploration around the Pacific Islands of Tonga, Cook Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati. In June 2021, Nauru, an island of 12,000 inhabitants, invoked the so-called "two-year rule"[6] informing the ISA that its sponsored company (DeepGreen) intended to start mining, effectively giving the ISA two years to finalise its regulation for the sector.[7]

The problem is that mining will disturb a unique ecosystem. At huge ocean depths there is no light, the biometric pressure is extremely high, and there are huge variations in temperature. Yet the hydrothermal vents provide the chemical-rich fluids that support an entire food chain. It was once thought that the deep-ocean surface was one relatively homogenous whole, but nothing is further from the truth. Each of these intense sites is unique and, through the spread of planktonic larvae, provides nutrients to a broader community. Destroying even one could mean the loss forever of a life form of which we know almost nothing.[8] The spread of waste and sediment could produce a 'nuclear winter' over an underwater habitat stretching hundreds of kilometres. The noise from mining activities can distort the navigational and communication abilities of creatures over a range of several kilometers.[9]

Fig. 3 (right): Manganese nodules (Photo courtesy of the United States Geological Survey, 2010).

The ISA's new code will doubtless contain provision for environmental reporting and clearance before mining can commence. The problem is that it is difficult to be certain about environmental protection if one knows almost nothing about the environment that is being examined. Then there is the question of who will be in charge of monitoring and protecting. Do we really believe that Nauru has the capacity or resources to do this, or even, as the royalties flow in, the incentive? Early in 2021, the World Wildlife Fund started a movement for an international moratorium on deep-sea mining. In September 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) voted in its favour.[10] Individual businesses and banks have joined the call. We should not be looking at 24 months as a signal to start deep-sea mining, but as the opportunity to stop it. There is no greening of the ungreenable.

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Notes

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Fig. 1: Protestors in Washington D.C. speak out about Myanmar's military coup (Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash).

Democracy: A Distant Vision in Myanmar?

Tamas Wells

Myanmar's 2021 coup d'état saw the country's military leaders forcibly remove the democratically elected government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Yet after more than a year however, the military regime have been unable to gain control over the country's governance in the way they had hoped. Through the popular Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), the reach and control of the regime is heavily curtailed. Yet despite widespread resistance and their deep unpopularity, Myanmar's military leaders are proving difficult to dislodge. In the short term, it is challenging to envisage a comprehensive victory for either the military leaders or the wide-spread opposition movement. This sadly leaves Myanmar politics in a brutal stalemate where poverty continues to deepen for many.

I began research for my book *Narrating Democracy in Myanmar* in 2013, and at that time many of my Myanmar activist and NGO friends had a guarded optimism about the rate of change in the country. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and many political prisoners had been released in previous years and were reengaged in public life. The press had new freedoms, and there was a flowering of new journals covering everything from fashion and sport to national politics. For activists, there were also new breakthrough shifts in government decision making – such as President Thein Sein's suspension of the Myitsone dam project – which gave hope for advocacy efforts. The military-aligned and much maligned USDP party still controlled parliament, but there was optimism that the upcoming 2015 elections would be an opportunity, the first in decades, for the people of Myanmar to participate in a relatively credible election.

Whilst there were many troubling issues in the country at that time, including growing violence against Muslim minorities, the anticipation of change and use of the word 'democracy' was increasing. Yet the more the word 'democracy' was used, and the closer it was perceived to be, the more complex and indeterminate it became. At this time, new fractures emerged between activists, democratic leaders, and their donor supporters. New questions were raised about the practices and values of democracy. As a set of more imminently achievable practices and values, 'democracy' now entailed many potential points of difference. Rather than there being one way to conceive of Myanmar's democratization, there were in fact many contrasting stories being told. My own research – with urban activists in Yangon, members and leaders of the NLD (Aung San Suu Kyi's political party which held government from 2016 to 2020), and European and North American donor representatives – revealed distinct narratives of democracy in Myanmar.

The most obvious narrative about democratic change – within European or North American donor programs on governance and democracy – was a liberal one. This focused on the development of new institutions and the promotion of liberal values of rights and minority protections. Yet at the time, many Myanmar activists and democratic leaders that I spoke to narrated a very different story of Myanmar's democratization, focusing instead on the problem of self-interested and dictatorial leadership and the need for a benevolent leader who could unite the country. This was democratization primarily through the fostering of goodwill and selflessness. The development of formal institutions was also important, but it was not considered by these activists and party leaders to be at the center of the process of democratization. Meanwhile, other groups of Myanmar activists and intellectuals stridently critiqued this common focus on benevolent leadership and sought a cultural reform toward equality in society.

Across Myanmar, it was clear that the word 'democracy' did not always mean the same thing. The widespread perception that democracy was imminent in the lead-up to the 2015 elections brought the differences in these contrasting narratives to the fore, sparking deep controversies over issues such as the rights of Muslim minorities, the political role of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the freedom of the press. After the 2015 elections – and during the period of NLD governance – these policy contests continued, revealing deeper contrasts in visions of democracy.

A unifying vision, from a distance

In 2006, I was living in Yangon and working for an NGO. I enjoyed going to local galleries and looking at the work of Burmese artists. Once I saw a stunning watercolour of a downtown Yangon streetscape. In the image, rain was falling, and the buildings seemed to close in on the street. I noticed, though, that the painting had a different impact depending on how far away you were standing. When viewed from a distance, the painting looked like a coherent street scene, but when viewed from close up, it was a complex mess of colours.

In 2006, democracy seemed a far-off vision in Myanmar. Power was continuing to centralize under Senior General Than Shwe. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – along with hundreds of activists and NLD party members – remained in house arrest or prison, and civil wars continued around the periphery of the country. Opposition to the brutal governance of the military leaders was a common cause for civil society organization leaders, ethnic political party members, urban activists, and members of the NLD . Donor agencies from Europe, North America, and Australia also sought ways to support these groups in their efforts to promote democratic change. At a time when democracy seemed far off to most Myanmar people, it was relatively easy for a diverse group of activists, political party leaders, and foreign aid agency representatives to see a coherent meaning for 'democracy' as an end to military role in governance. Seemingly disparate actors could unify around opposition to the military.

When we fast forward to 2022, activists and democratic leaders are again facing an entrenched and stubborn military leadership holding on to power. 'Democracy' in Myanmar is once again perceived by many to be far off. Yet opposition to military rule – and the perceived distance from democracy – has, to some degree, brought alignment and a new unity among diverse political groups. The protests of 2021 and the Civil Disobedience Movement have had broad public support. Some communities in the Burman majority areas of the country are experiencing the brutality of the military in a way that many ethnic minority areas have long suffered, therefore bringing new shared experiences of oppression. While fractures remain in the opposition, there is a newly galvanized resistance to the military, often crossing ethnic and religious boundaries.

From here, there are a range of scenarios for Myanmar, ranging from the optimistic (e.g., a breakthrough for the opposition and the formation of new democratic governance) to the pessimistic (e.g., a gradual centralization around military rule, or brutal and prolonged war). What will unfold in the comings years remains unclear.

From a personal perspective, the release of my book just after the Myanmar coup has been surrounded with sadness. The coup has been an incredibly distressing turn for those who participated in the research. Such people have devoted much of their lives to service of their country through work in political parties and NGOs or in advocating for justice. Many of them are also former colleagues and long-term friends. I hope that the book conveys my admiration for their bravery and commitment.

Tamas Wells is Coordinator of the Myanmar Research Network at the University of Melbourne. He writes on politics and development in Southeast Asia. Before entering academia, he worked for seven years as an adviser in the development sector in Myanmar.
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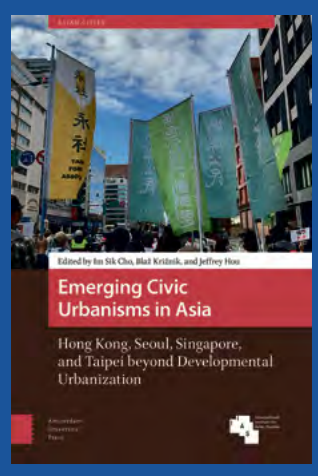
Latest Publication



Emerging Civic Urbanisms in Asia: Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore and Taipei beyond Developmental Urbanization

Im Sik Cho, Blaž Križnik, and Jeffrey Hou (eds.), 2022

ISBN 9789463728546 | 316 pages
IIAS Asian Cities Publication Series
https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463728546/emerging-civic-urbanisms-in-asia

In parts of Asia, citizens are getting increasingly involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and cities, representing a significant departure from earlier state-led or market-driven urban development. These emerging civic urbanisms are a result of an evolving relationship between the state and civil society. The ten contributions in this volume provide critical insights into how the changing state-civil society relationship affects the recent surge of civic urbanism in Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, and Taipei, and present cases of grassroots activism and resistance, collaboration and placemaking, neighbourhood community building, and self-organization and commoning in these cities. Exploring how citizen participation and state-civil society partnerships contribute to more resilient and participatory neighbourhoods and cities, the authors use the concept of civic urbanisms not only as a conceptual framework to understand the ongoing social and urban change but as an aspirational model of urban governance for cities in Asia and beyond

Im Sik Cho is Associate Professor and director of the Master of Urban Planning programme at the National University of Singapore's Department of Architecture.

Blaž Križnik is Associate Professor of urban sociology at the Hanyang University, Seoul and researcher at the Institute for Spatial Policies, Ljubljana.

Jeffrey Hou is Professor of Landscape Architecture and director of the Urban Commons Lab at the University of Washington, Seattle.

IIAS Fellowship Programme

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

Anne Sokolsky, Chair of Taiwan Studies, Spring 2022

Anne Sokolsky

Above: Anne Sokolsky (4th from right) with her students.

I was the Taiwan Chair and Professorial Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies at Leiden University from February 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022. It was a wonderful experience for which I am truly grateful. There were three major aspects to my position: teaching, research, and outreach.

The course I taught titled "Taiwan Women's World: The Voices of Taiwanese Women in Literature, Film and Politics" was for the Chinese Studies program at Leiden University. In the course, I had students think about Taiwan's position not just in East Asia but with the United States and other parts of the world through the voices of Taiwanese women. Through works of fiction, diaries, travel memoirs, film, and political speeches created by famous and not-so-famous Taiwanese women, we considered why most histories of Taiwan focus on the male perspective and how the narrative of Taiwan's history and culture might differ if we study it through the lens of those who tend not to control a nation's narrative. Some of my students' favorite reading assignments were San Mao's *Stories of the Sahara*, Shawna Yang Ryan's *Green Island*, Yang Qianhe's "The Season When Flowers Bloom," and Li Hai-Yin's short story "Candle." A fun final project for my students was to interview someone who had grown up in Taiwan. Some of the interviews will be posted for the "Made in Taiwan" project hosted by U.C. Santa Barbara Professor Sabine Fruhstuck. Overall, I was very impressed with my students. They were a joy to teach.

My research project at IIAS examined the colonial journal *Taiwan fujinkai* (台湾婦人界 Taiwan women's world), which was written in Japanese and supported by the colonial Japanese government in Taiwan. The journal, published between 1934 and 1939, was founded by Koga Chiyoko, the wife of a Japanese industrialist who worked for the colonial Japanese government in Taiwan. Her vision was to create a magazine for the women of Taiwan that would be on par with the cosmopolitan women's magazines coming from Japan. She felt that the challenges for women in Taiwan were different from those for women in Japan, and thus, a special journal needed to be created to address the specific issues faced by women living in Taiwan. My particular focus was on how the role of travel was depicted in the magazine and what part, if any, such a depiction played into Japan's greater colonial agenda in Taiwan. Thanks to the time I had doing research at IIAS, I was able to revise an article titled "The World of Women's Travel in the Japanese Colonial Journal *Taiwan fujinkai*" currently under review.

The final aspect of my fellowship was outreach. The major form of which was a workshop I organized for the final day of my stay in Leiden. The workshop titled "The Art, Politics, and Economics of Solo Women Travelers to, through, and from Taiwan" was an extension of my research and teaching. Aside from my presentation on how travel is depicted in *Taiwan fujinkai*, my colleagues Isabelle Cheng talked about the Women's Army Corps, Faye Kleeman talked about female sojourners to and from Taiwan, and IIAS fellow Cha-hsüan Liu talked about her own experiences as a solo woman traveler. Thanks to their informative presentations, we had a lively conversation with workshop participants, who included Leiden University graduate students, colleagues from the Chinese Studies program, IIAS colleagues, as well as members from the Leiden community and beyond. It was a wonderful way to end my time at IIAS.

Other outreach projects included a trip to the University of Vienna, where I met Professor Astrid Lipinsky, who heads the Vienna Center for Taiwan Studies, and to Cambridge University, where I met colleagues in Japanese Studies to discuss my research on *Taiwan fujinkai*. In the Netherlands, I was able to participate in the CinemAsia Film Festival, for which I am truly grateful.

Although I have returned to the United States, I look forward to continued contact with IIAS through the Humanities Across Borders project directed by Aarti Kawlra. I am now preparing my courses for Denison University, where I will be teaching this next academic year. I will be offering the same course that I taught at Leiden University on Taiwanese women. I am also working with the director of East Asian Studies at Denison University to create a course about East Asian (including Taiwanese) women filmmakers thanks to what I learned from my attendance at CinemAsia. The time I spent in the Netherlands doing research and meeting colleagues at various European universities has given me a rich source of material and ideas to add to my courses on East Asia as well as inform new directions in my research on Taiwan.

I want to thank the wonderful staff at IIAS who supported my research, and the IIAS fellows who were great friends to have in a foreign land. I also am eternally grateful to the Ministry of Education of Taiwan for allowing me to have this amazing research and teaching experience in Europe. It will have a lasting impact on the way I teach about Taiwan in my courses on East Asia here in the United States.

Professorial Fellowship for the Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University

We are pleased to announce that a new agreement has been signed to enable a Professorial Fellowship for the Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS. The new agreement runs until 31 January 2026 and provides for a Professorial Fellowship of one or two semesters at a time.

Information about the next opportunity to apply for the Chair of Taiwan Studies will be shared on our website as soon as possible.

The Chair of Taiwan Studies was jointly established by the Department of Cross-Strait Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China, the Leiden University Faculty of Humanities and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) to facilitate the Taiwan Studies programme at Leiden University.

Information
www.iias.asia/professorial-fellowship-chair-taiwan-studies-leiden-university

In the spotlight

Pao-Yi Yang

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

www.iias.asia/profile/pao-yi-yang

I embarked on my PhD journey in Leiden in late 2014, and it brought me to the coruscating world of museum storytelling. After I completed my PhD, I started my fellowship with IIAS in Spring 2022, with the aim of revising my thesis into a monograph. The alley next to the building of IIAS is the same one in front of my previous office in the Huizinga building of Leiden University; hence, doing the fellowship here really felt like a homecoming.

As the initial result of converting my thesis into formal publications, I have contributed a chapter to an edited volume, *Exhibiting East Asian Art in a Global Context*, which is set to be published in Spring 2023 by the University of Chicago Press. This article explores the shifting meanings of Ming and Qing porcelain—from decorative art serving Dutch self-fashioning to fine art with its own aesthetic and art-historical values—in the Rijksmuseum's changing display schemes between the late 1890s and the 1950s. This time period captures how the Rijksmuseum's collection history and the particular display aesthetics of the museum's directors/curators can impact the meaning generated by the objects on display. In addition, I also contributed a research article to the *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, which is going to press this October. This article tackles the importance of focalization in understanding subjective interpretations of museum displays, both as a narrative device that denotes the perspectival filtration of a museum presentation and an analytical tool that can explicate the potential ideologies behind an exhibition. During my fellowship, I have also completed an object-based article, a column, and two exhibition reviews, which are going to be published later this year.

Facing one of Leiden's beautiful canals, the IIAS building on Rapenburg street has a chic look, with white cornices, keystones, and decorated window frames on its brick-red façade. Behind the heavy, dark-green wooden door is a corridor connecting to a quaint, spiral staircase that leads to study rooms on different floors. The corridor also reaches a verdurous backyard where fellows and staff can enjoy a picnic. The Institute's calendar is fleshed out with plenty of (non-)academic presentations and sharing. A special activity I participated in was sharing my personal history with other fellows; more specifically, how my life stories and experience have led to the academic itineraries I choose today. This sharing took place in a cozy tea room, immersed in the smells of coffee, various strains of conversation, and moments of contemplation.

I appreciate the camaraderie and warm support from IIAS staff and fellows and cherish every moment we got to spend with each other. And now, I look forward to charting a new course on my academic voyage.

Meet the new IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator: Laura Erber

Above: Laura Erber

Coordinating a fellowship programme that fully assumes its critical responsibility in a world in need for multidimensional knowledge is an inspiring challenge.

IIAS has a unique position within the landscape of Asian studies, situated as it is on the intersection of local and global knowledge, encouraging innovative approaches to research and bridging the gap between academia and society. The IIAS Fellowship Programme affords a great opportunity for the development and completion of ambitious intellectual projects and can also invite area studies scholars to rethink forms of academic collaboration and knowledge exchange.

My previous experience as an academic administrator and professor in different countries and institutions has showed me how complex the challenges faced by researchers in a fast-changing academic system really are. Over the last 10 years, I have worked in both South American and in European universities. I spent 9 years as a professor of Art Theory and Culture at the Rio de Janeiro Federal University UNIRIO, and was a visiting professor at the Copenhagen University and at the Catholic University of Portugal. My areas of expertise cover visual and cultural studies, as well as art history and literature.

My extensive teaching experience in Brazil covering a wide range of disciplines in a cross and transdisciplinary approach, has provided me with the opportunity to develop inclusive pedagogical skills challenged by the increasing diversity on all levels.

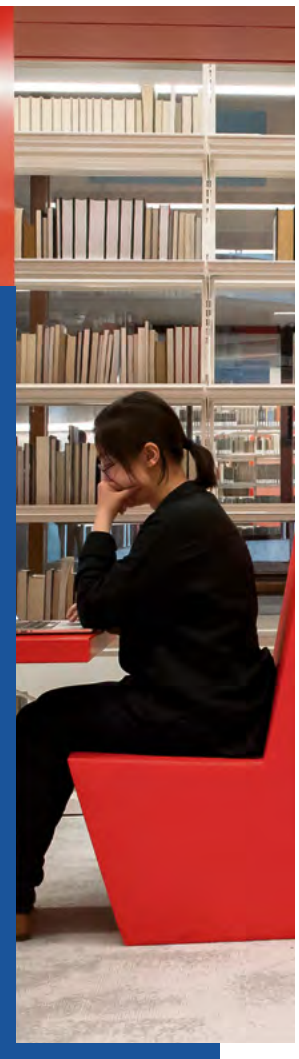
Given the challenges faced by South American, African and many Asian students in accessing academic bibliography, I became involved in the debate on publishing policies for the university public. In 2015, I founded Zazie Editions, a non-profit venture that publishes digital books in Brazilian Portuguese, accessible on an open-access platform. I have also been actively participating in the public debate surrounding the democratization of access to contemporary, high-quality theoretical-critical bibliographies.

Aside from my academic career, I am a writer and translator with books published in many different languages. Having been a scholar in different parts of the World, over the past 20 years, I believe it is important to approach a period of research not only as a transitional stage towards a future goal, but also as a meaningful experience in and of itself.

It is my goal to intensify the synergy between the different programmes and various important activities promoted by IIAS, with a dynamic perspective, embracing different areas of knowledge. I also see the Fellowship Coordinator as the person who should sustain and potentially enhance the global reach of the programme, fostering collaborative, innovative and transdisciplinary research, facilitating the integration of Asian studies within larger intra- and inter-regional global dialogue frameworks, in line with the Institute's mission.

I am grateful for being given the opportunity to coordinate and improve the programme. I will do my best to ensure it will continue to be a very welcoming environment, which encourages intellectual and academic exchanges among a diverse community of fellows.

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.

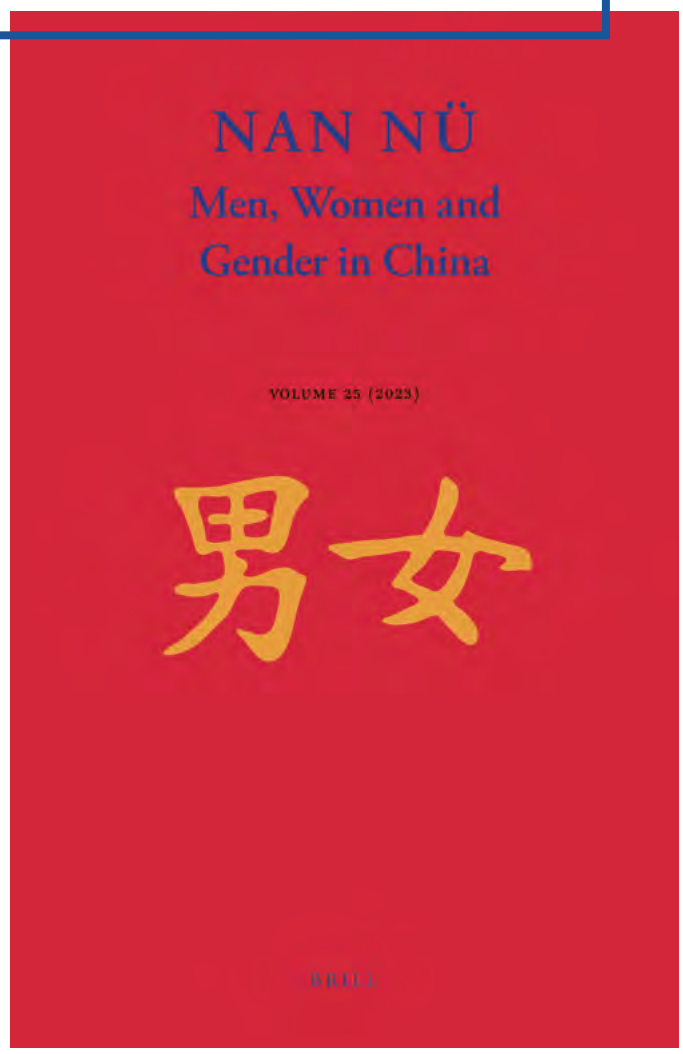
Apply for a Gonda fellowship

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

The journal *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* celebrates its 25th Anniversary

Harriet Zurndorfer



Some twenty-four years ago, *The Newsletter* of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), issue number 20 (November 1999), featured an interview between myself and Giovanni Vitiello, then an IIAS Post-doctoral Fellow and now Professor of Chinese Literature and Language at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. This dialogue began with a focus on the background of the launch that year by Brill Academic Publishers of the journal *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China*, and my plans as founder and managing editor of the publication to pursue its mission. That mission, which remains the same now as then, is to engage in the study of Chinese men, women, and gender in a wide range of disciplines, including history, literature, linguistics and language, anthropology, archeology, art and music, law, philosophy, medicine/science, and religion. Now that the journal is approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary, it seems a good time to review its history, changes to its chronological scope, and the shifts in disciplinary approaches to gender studies of China.

Aside from the IIAS 1999 *Newsletter* article, the IIAS had another connection with the founding of *Nan Nü*. The idea of establishing the journal in the first place relates to a Leiden University workshop I organized in September 1996, when a group of European and Asian senior and junior scholars representing different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences had the opportunity to meet and exchange information concerning Chinese women during the mid-to-late imperial era. The IIAS, along with several Leiden University funding institutions, generously financed this occasion. While it may seem nothing out of the ordinary nowadays that universities sponsor conferences and workshops, back in the 1990s, such munificence was not always available, and in particular not for subjects like women and gender studies, which were only just then attracting interest in the echelons of higher education.

Although the bulk of the first scholarship on Chinese women in the Western academy during the 1970s focused on the modern and contemporary eras, and the question of 'women's liberation', by the 1980s the first published research appeared about the lives of empresses and other imperial relatives as well as Buddhist and Daoist nuns as alternatives to the dominant Confucian ideology. These publications stimulated new work on women as 'historical agents' instead of 'victims'. Also in the 1980s, literary studies began to scrutinize the rich legacy of Chinese women's writing and artistic production, and in particular, courtesan poetry and painting. By the 1990s, scholars were publishing translations of female-authored writings, producing analyses drawing on theoretical works about culture and power and thereby utilizing the gender concept to investigate how male/female identities in imperial China were constructed. The 1990s also saw the first attempts to go beyond the study of Chinese women, and to investigate masculinity, homosexuality, and male homo-social relations outside the boundaries of the patriarchal family.[1]

In 1997, as I edited the papers presented at the 1996 Leiden workshop, which ultimately were printed in the volume *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), I approached the publisher to consider establishing a journal that would give more scholars, both senior and junior, a forum to communicate their research and findings on Chinese women and gender matters with others. My appeal to Brill was met with success, and so in October 1997, the first *Nan Nü* Board of Editors met in Leiden to formulate the journal's goals and foci. The original Board comprised of six editors representing universities and research centers in the USA, UK, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, formed a fabulous team. They worked extremely well together with authors and peer-reviewers as well as myself—and that close contact between myself and the Board members, I believe, has been a key to the long-term realization of the *Nan Nü* project. Since then, the Board has expanded in number, and now also includes scholars based in Australia, while the regular communication between myself and the Board members, who give generously of their time and expertise, has not wavered over the years.

At that first Editorial Board meeting in 1997, it was decided the primary chronological focus of the journal should be before 1900, that is, early and imperial China; hence the initial title of the journal, *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China*. The editors, who had already published studies situated in this era, sensed that there was much documentation, including writings by and about women, as well as visual materials, awaiting discovery, investigation, and analysis. By then, the pioneering studies by Patricia Ebrey, Dorothy Ko, and Susan Mann were drawing much attention, not only because of the excellence of their scholarship, but also because of the path-breaking revelations about Chinese women and gender relations.[2] These scholars and others overturned the long-established narrative, that previous to the twentieth century all Chinese women, of whatever class or geographical background, were passive and powerless "victims" of a so-called "traditional society," and countered the common assumption of Chinese women's oppression until more recent times. A vast library of printed monographs focusing on Chinese female rulers, family life, education, religion, work, literary output, law and property, concubines and courtesans, bodily practices (including foot binding), and medicine emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, exposed women's voices both in and outside their homes, and demonstrated the variability of gender norms with regard to class, locality, life-stage, and ethnicity.[3] Many of these publications, including those in Chinese, were reviewed in *Nan Nü*, which was a regular feature of each issue.

In the journal's first years, the book review section had only included publications about Chinese women and gender matters relevant to the period before the twentieth century. But as China scholarship by the early 2000s became increasingly blurry with regard to common parameters and intellectual paradigms that had at one time bound its chronology, such as 'premodern' and 'modern', it seemed appropriate to change the title of the journal to its current name, and to expand the chronological range to the twentieth century and beyond to the present one. Moreover, as the alluring power of the Chinese revolutionary ideal faded and the country transformed from a socialist collective to a neoliberal consumer economy, research on men, women and gender also took on new challenges. Articles and reviews appearing in *Nan Nü* represent these shifting trends in research and writing about gender matters. Many of these studies incorporate new disciplinary approaches to well-known facets of China's historical and literary record, such as the application of recent archaeological findings to burial practices or the interpretation of religious texts.[4] While such topics as family relations, sexual orientations, and sexual practices have been the foci of studies published in the journal both in the past and present, the significance of the more recent analyses seems to accentuate the consequences of rapid economic reform. A recent article on 'leftover men' in today's PRC makes clear that their socioeconomic marginalization is a result of how the last twenty years have seen exacerbated class and gender differences as well as rural-urban inequality there.

In its twenty-five-year history, Nan Nü has tried to make more transparent to its readers the substance and consequences of China's changing gender relations against the complexity of the country's values and current changing mores. That complexity may be viewed in the journal's multi-disciplinary, broad-sweeping chronology and multi-faceted foci, which affirm the centrality of gender dynamics toward understanding China historically as well as in its current circumstances. Thus, the reader may expect, as the contents of a recent issue reveal, a variety of sources and approaches: from analyses of pre-imperial classical texts that idealize male-female hierarchy—to late Qing reformers seeking to demonstrate the historical record of female rulers exposed to patriarchal oppression; from seventeenth-century Buddhist discourses which censor women killing animals, and the impact of these treatises on twentieth-century elite cosmopolitan women's religious practices in Shanghai—to the gender politics of transnational family formation in present-day Guangzhou.[5] These *Nan Nü* studies connect Chinese men and women and thereby fulfill the journal's mission to use gender as a category of analysis in a variety of disciplines and over a wide time span.

Harriet Zurndorfer,
Founder and Managing Editor of *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China*.
E-mail: h.t.zurndorfer@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Notes

1 For a systematic annotated listing of important books (including reference works) and research articles about Chinese men and women, see Harriet Zurndorfer, "Gender Issues in Traditional China," *Oxford Bibliographies Online: China Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014; revised 2017), 45 pages.

2 These three publications are: Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth-Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

3 For an analysis of these publications, see Harriet Zurndorfer, "Waves of Publications on Chinese Women and Gender Studies," *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 26.4 (2018): 357-366.

4 Every five years since 2003, *Nan Nü* issues an index of its contents, which also reprints the listings of past indices. These listings are arranged alphabetically in three main sections: according to the authors' names (of both research articles and book reviews), according to the titles of articles, and according to the titles of reviewed books. The next index to appear will be in issue 2 of volume 25 (2023).

5 These articles appeared in *Nan Nü*, volume 24, no.1 (2022).

Book launch 'River Cities in Asia. Waterways in Urban Development and History'

Date
27 October 2022, 12:00-13:30 (CEST)

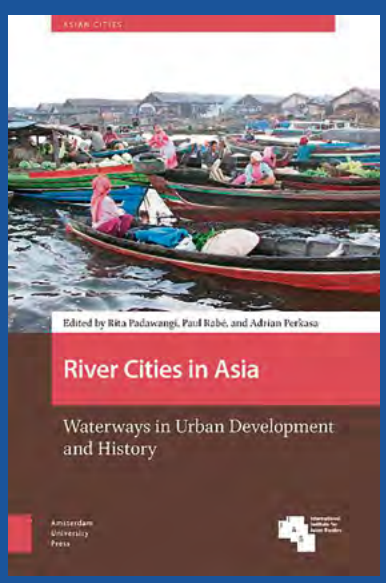
Venue
International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands and Online (hybrid event)

The Book Launch

This book launch will feature a panel discussion with the book contributors, led by the three Editors. It will be a hybrid event; you can join in person at IIAS, or online. A lunchbox will be served for (registered) in-person attendees.

The Book

River Cities in Asia uncovers the intimate relationship between rivers and cities in Asia from a multi-disciplinary perspective in the humanities and the social sciences. As rivers have shaped human settlement patterns, economies, culture, and rituals, so too have humans impacted the flow and health of rivers. In Asia, the sheer scale of urbanization increases the urgency of addressing challenges facing urban rivers, leading to the importance of historically, socially, and culturally relevant solutions. However, cities are also uneven landscapes of power, affecting chances to achieve holistic ecological approaches. The central premise of River Cities in Asia is that a "river city" is one where proximity between a river and a city exists across time and space, as well as with natural and social dimensions. Recognition of these deep connections can help to better contextualise policy solutions aimed at rivers and their ecologies, including human life.



The Editors/Speakers

Rita Padawangi is Associate Professor (Sociology) at Singapore University of Social Sciences. She is Coordinator of the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET).

Paul Rabé is the Coordinator of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), based at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, and Editor of the Asian Cities Series. He is also Lead Expert in Urban Land Governance at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Adrian Perkasa is a PhD candidate at Leiden University, and a lecturer in the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga in Indonesia.

Registration (required)

Please register via the IIAS website and indicate if you will join online or in-person at IIAS. A lunchbox will be served for in-person attendees.

www.iias.asia/events/river-cities-asia

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

The European Conference of Iranian Studies (ECIS) is one of Europe's largest conferences in Iranian Studies. It is held every four years and organized by the Societas Iranologica Europaea (SIE). The tenth edition of the conference ECIS 10 will be hosted by Leiden University and convened by Gabrielle van den Berg, Albert de Jong and Elena Paskaleva of the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies.

Information:
www.universiteitleiden.nl/ecis10

Societas Iranologica Europaea

Leiden University Institute for Area Studies

Meet Laura Erber, the new Coordinator of the IIAS Fellowship Programme
Read more on page 49 of this issue.

IIAS signs agreement to continue Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS another three years
More information: page 48 of this issue

Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences

7th ABRN Conference
23-25 June 2022

Seoul, South Korea

Ruth Gamble

The seventh Asian Borderlands Research Network conference took place this year from the 23rd until the 25th of June at Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea. It was postponed for two years due to the pandemic, and was held as a hybrid event because of ongoing public health restrictions. However, this did not stop the participant and attendees (in person and online) from having a great time, exchanging ideas, and meeting new and interesting people.

The conference was held and hosted by Chung-Ang University's Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ) Research Centre and was jointly organised by the RCCZ, the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN) and the International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden, the Netherlands). It revolved around the three key themes of 'technologies', 'zones', and 'co-existences'.

Panels focused on how technologies are shaping borders and borderlands, making them 'smarter' and increasing surveillance. Discussions on technologies included everything from Xinjiang's coercive industrial parks to the existence of borders in online influencer culture. The conference explored borderland zones through their ability to attract development, investment, extraction, and extra-territorial experimentation. Participants responded to this topic in multiple ways, including how borderland zones give licence for socially proscribed activities such as gambling and how deep-sea fisheries operate as borderlands. Within this section of the conference, the participants also examined how borderland models get exported from one county to others. Co-existences in borderlands was the other key theme throughout the conference, and those who engaged with this theme were particularly innovative. One of the conference's first panels was on human-non-human co-existence in Asian borderlands. Amongst other things, the speakers talked about the role that camels play in the Chinese state's creation of its Gobi Desert border.

The two Keynote presentations at the conference approached the idea of borderlands from quite different perspectives, but both were equally compelling. The first was given by Professor Yongku Cha from Chang-Ang University, our host university, and was entitled 'Whose Borders and Borders for Whom?'. Professor Cha gave us a history of three famously problematic borders: the Durand Line, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Oder-Neisse Line, which marked the border between East Germany and Poland after World War Two; and Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Besides providing us with interesting comparisons between these three borders—including getting us to think about what perpetuates a border and when they disappear—he reflected on South Korea's long history with the DMZ from a personal and national perspective. The other Keynote was delivered by Franck Billé from the University of California, Berkeley, and was entitled 'Archipelagos, Enclaves, and other Cartographic Monsters'. Dr Billé's work is at the cutting edge (no pun intended) of borderland studies. His talk gave us much to ponder about places that disturb our cartographic imagination.

Along with these Keynotes, other highlights of the conference were roundtables on borderland evoking art, and two documentary movie screenings. The first was *Shadow Flowers*, about Kim Ryon-hui, a North Korean woman trapped in South Korea. The other, *Comfort*, was about Kim Hak-sun, a Korean woman forced into sex slavery by Japanese troops in the Pacific War. Besides negotiating other borders, our hosts were also adept at transforming language barriers into multilingual expression.

The RCCZ members live in a borderland; the South-North Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is only ninety-one kilometres from Seoul. This meant that this particular borderland played a vital role in the conference. The RCCZ ran a series of special sessions, primarily in Korean, working through some of the issues associated with this unresolved border zone and other pressing borderland issues, such as the war in Ukraine.

The organisers also ran an all-day excursion to the DMZ on Sunday, after the conference ended. My own experience and conversations with others suggested that our closeness to the DMZ affected and intensified our borderland thinking at the conference. It is one thing to know that the Korean peninsula is divided, and the two states that occupy it operate in such different ways. It is another thing to be at a borderland conference, thinking about borderlands, when you are right next to one of the globe's most infamous border regions.

People in Asian borderland studies are generally amiable and interesting. Still, our hosts at the RCCZ exceeded even these standards through their friendliness and professionalism. They did multiple little things that made the event special. The commitment to running the digital component of the conference well was impressive, with a specialist IT assistant in each room. We had meetings in rooms with views over Seoul. My favourite was the stickers they gave us to commemorate the conference, because they were shaped like visa stamps and baggage tags. Here's hoping the Asian Borderlands Research Network will start organising the next conference soon.

IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

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

IIAS Research Clusters

Asian Cities

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

Asian Heritages

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

Global Asia

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

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) is an inclusive network that brings together concerned scholars and practitioners engaged in collaborative research and events on cities in Asia. It seeks to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. The UKNA Secretariat is at IIAS, but the network comprises universities and planning institutions across China, India, Southeast Asia and Europe. Its current flagship project is the Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET).

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
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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.

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

Read the report of the 7th ABRN conference 'Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences' on page 51 of this issue.

www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network
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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, Daejon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden. ICAS 12 was organised together with Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and took place entirely online).

www.icas.asia

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
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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
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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
Coordinator: Jojo Nem Singh
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Cluster: Global Asia

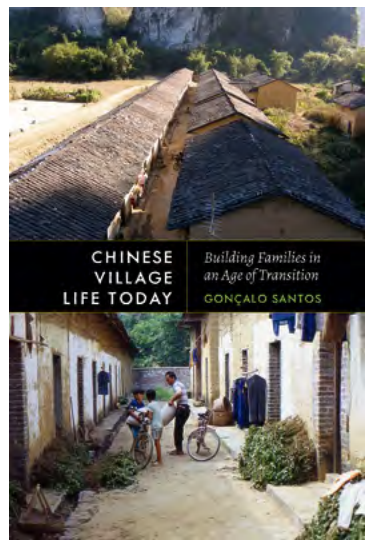
Chinese Village Life Today

Suvi Rautio

Reviewed title

Chinese Village Life Today: Building Families in an Age of Transition

Gonçalo Santos, 2021.
University of Washington Press
ISBN 9780295747408



Gonçalo Santos's book, *Chinese Village Life Today: Building Families in an Age of Transition*, draws on the experiences of a village community in South China to consider the intimate choices that rural families face in an age of transition. Told through fine-grained ethnographic and historical analysis, the book studies these intimate choices through state-led technocracy and digital connectivity that seep into how people make everyday decisions. Set in an age of transition, Santos continuously reminds the reader that there is also continuity. This continuity is located in the firm grip that China's villages continue to hold as a source of identity and a safety net for villagers who struggle to cope with the precarity and constant flux of hyper rural-urban mobility driven by the nation's labour migration system.

The book's strength is its solid ethnography and the highly detailed research that Santos has committed himself to over a period of two decades in northern Guangdong – in a village he calls Harmony Cave, some 200 kilometres north of Guangzhou city. It is because of this long-term engagement with the people in his field-site that villagers open up to him and share the many stories that unfold in the pages of the book, covering themes that touch upon intimacy, individuality, and technocratic governance. The introduction delves into these themes to outline the theoretical framework of the study. Here the reader learns that *Chinese Village Life Today* does not merely depict technocratic modernisation through the agency of macro-level actors (such as experts, developers, and policy makers), but also through the micro-level negotiations and intimate choices that Chinese rural citizens make.

Moving away from the introduction, Chapter 1 provides a detailed overview of the social demographics and local history of the field-site, Harmony Cave. This chapter also frames one of the main objectives of the book, stating that in the age of spatial mobility and labour migration, bounded territory alone does not define Chinese village life.

Chapter 2 looks at the changing frameworks of intimacy, love, and marriage. Birth Planning Policy remains a central component of these transitions that are driving people towards a more sentimental and individualised regime of love, marriage, and family life. What is particularly insightful about this chapter is the argument that Santos makes about the processes of individualisation. Rather than breaking individuals free from their collective entities, Santos depicts how the workings of technocratic modernisation have seeped into people's everyday practices of love, marriage, and family planning to redefine individualisation through top-down disciplinary procedures and bottom-up processes of self-formation.

Chapter 3 takes a multi-layered, woman-centred approach to uncover generational divides in perceptions of childbirth practices. In this chapter, the power of ethnography comes to the fore. Through the emotionally moving recollections of mothers' hardships in birthing practices, Santos sheds light on familial hierarchies and generational divides to illustrate how interventionist models of birth are perceived and what this means regarding how much pain and protection women should endure. These perceptions are in transition, shaped by techno-moral evaluations that are changing what Santos refers to as techno-moral subjectivities and medicalised visions of childbirth.

Moving away from childbirth, Chapter 4 discusses the challenges that village families face in terms of childrearing. The chapter portrays how intensive parenting is taken on by multiple actors, processes, and institutions under the conditions of labour migration. Through insightful ethnographic analysis, the reader learns about how class ideals and China's educational system are both modifying and strengthening local multigenerational practices of parenting and child rearing in the rural context.

In the final two chapters of *Chinese Village Life Today*, Santos moves away from the more in-depth analysis of how the intimate choices of village families shape the configurations of village life to move closer to the more mundane everyday level of decision-making. Chapter 5 takes the book in a different direction from the first four chapters, steering away from family practices to the technical arrangements and procedures in place for bodily hygiene. Santos describes how the shift towards flush toilets and private bathrooms in the household goes hand in hand with new notions of personal privacy and hygiene. Bodily hygiene and public sanitation also exist as fields of technical intervention, which are subjected to civilising forces of hygienic modernisation to promote the construction of a new state-led "socialist material civilisation."

Following the theme of technical intervention, Chapter 6 shifts the focus from hygiene to popular religion. Through extensive research on the monetary value and ceremonial auctions of symbolic mirrors inscribed with words representing key morals and ideals, Santos describes popular religion as technologies of ethical imagination that are subject to larger civilising forces of ethical modernisation and standardisation. Buying inscriptions becomes another example of the intimate choices that villagers make to construct a locally shared moral compass and framework of ethical imagination.

As a reader, I was perhaps anticipating that the final chapters would make Santos' argument about continuation and transition come to life through the same ethnographic richness that the first chapters hold. Throughout the book, Santos reminds the reader that, although Chinese rural communities no longer depend on ancestral land as a major source of livelihood, the sense of identity and attachment that people associate with their native lineage villages has not been broken. Santos tells the reader that this sense of belonging is sustained through ritual celebrations. Yet Santos does not explicitly tell us what these celebrations are. One would assume rituals and ceremonies practiced through popular religion might offer instances of continuity and attachment, but whether the inscription and auctioning of symbolic words, as discussed in chapter 6, are an example of such celebrations remains unclear.

The gap in thoroughly engaging with the notion of transition and continuity in Chinese rural life does not devalue the value of Santos' research. *Chinese Village Life Today* is an evocative, comprehensive, and ethnographically rich piece of scholarly work offering a timely perspective to understand Chinese village life through techno-moral subjectivities and new high-tech medicalised visions of childbirth. If we want to better understand the workings of the Chinese state's expansive, top-down, technocratic processes of governance, it is these voices that Santos documents – those of ordinary Chinese citizens in rural communities – that we need to be listening to.

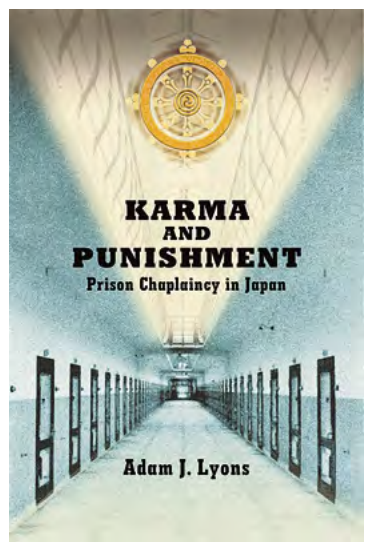
Karma and Punishment: Prison Chaplaincy in Japan

Jason Danely

Reviewed title

Karma and Punishment: Prison Chaplaincy in Japan

Adam J. Lyons, 2021.
Harvard University Press ISBN 9780674260153



In recent years, Japan's criminal justice system has gained increasing attention, in large part because of its remarkably low incarceration rate compared to other highly developed nations with large urban populations. While there have been active debates on this topic, relatively fewer works have looked at the historical development of the Japanese prison and the ways it came to represent and produce Japanese social values. Adam Lyons' *Karma and Punishment: Prison Chaplaincy in Japan* not only makes a major contribution towards filling a gap within the broader debates regarding crime and punishment, but it also makes a compelling and fascinating argument about the role of religion in the establishment of the modern prison and probation system and its continuing influence on public perceptions of justice. This is a fascinating story, told with sensitivity by Lyons, through the historical archives alongside the voices of chaplains today. The result is an impressive and original account of Japanese religious and penal history in the making of the modern nation.

Early on in the book, Lyons presents the astonishing fact that despite Japan's low crime and incarceration rate, it boasts more prison chaplains than the United States, where more than 20% of the world's prisoners are held. In fact, Japan's chaplain-to-prisoner ratio (1:29), far outstrips countries where the incarcerated populations are more likely to identify with a particular faith tradition. Even more intriguing is that this notable involvement of religious professionals in matters of social welfare is somewhat of an anomaly in Japanese society. Why are there so many chaplains in prisons, compared to hospitals, hospice care, or services for poor and homeless people? Questions like these are part of what hooked me into *Karma and Punishment*, which not only provides answers, but also gives us broader frameworks with which to contextualize them.

Buddhist prison chaplaincy may seem to be a rather narrowly focused topic for a book that weighs in at well over 300 pages with notes, but this is far from the case. As Lyons moves seamlessly from historical documents to ethnographic vignettes, he uncovers a story about not only chaplains, but also about the relationship between religion and the state more broadly.

The central claim is that Japanese chaplaincy emerged as, and still remains a strategy for Buddhist institutions to secure power and legitimacy within the modern secular state and society. At the same time, Buddhist priests gave new modern institutions like the prison a level of moral legitimacy, and secured the state's superiority over religious clergy. In other words, the symbiotic relationship between Buddhists and prisons had the effect of aligning the foreign institution of the prison with local moral values. At the same time, modernized Buddhist doctrine came to fit the needs of modern secular governance based on "civilization and enlightenment" *(bunmei kaika)*.

This unlikely pairing of religion and the state makes sense when we consider the context of chaplaincy's origins in the upheavals of the Meiji era. In the first chapters of *Karma and Punishment*, Lyons describes how Shin Buddhists, whose existence was under threat by a wave of anti-Buddhist movements in the late 19th century, found a place in the state's favor by arguing that the proselytization of the dharma was completely in line with the goals of the Emperor and the state. In practice, this proselytization was not about winning converts; rather,

COVID-19 in Southeast Asia

Lynette H. Ong

Southeast Asia was among the first regions that had to battle the COVID-19 virus originating from Wuhan, China. Given the heterogeneity in the socio-economic conditions in the region, how did and will the Southeast Asian countries fare after the pandemic? This is the overarching question posed by this erudite volume that brings together an impressive array of social scientists from multiple disciplines emanating from academic institutions, think tanks, and civil society organizations. The volume is stupendous in the breadth and depth of issues being addressed, ranging from urbanization, the environment, people's movement, collective action, and local community. It will stand as an authoritative volume that many – and anyone – with an interest in Southeast Asia will enthusiastically consult in the future.

Reviewed title

Covid-19 in Southeast Asia: Insights for a Post-Pandemic World

Hyun Bang Shin, Murray Mckenzie, and Do Young Oh (eds.), 2022 .

LSE Press
ISBN 9781909890763

The contributors uniformly treat COVID-19 as a critical juncture upon which they reflect how the issues examined maybe affected as a result of the pandemic. The volume is divided into three sections. Section One looks at urbanization, digital infrastructures, economies, and the environment; Section Two examines migration, mobilities, and cross-border issues; and the final section focuses on collective action, communities, and mutual action.

The contributors in Section One describe the rapid adoption of digital technologies to contain the virus as a double-edged sword that helps with contact tracing and connecting communities on the one hand, and also enhances state surveillance and empowers the state on the other hand. The pernicious effects of digital technologies are by no means exclusive to Southeast Asia; however, the deficiency in democratic institutions in parts of the region has allowed some governments to use those technologies to enhance their power to the disadvantage of the societies. Uneven access to technologies can also create inequitable opportunities across society, thereby raising concerns about the utility of digital technologies in times of crisis.

The first section then turns its attention to sectoral impacts of the pandemic on real estate, business process outsourcing, and garment industries. The common thread is that the pandemic has laid bare that the precarity of these industries – dependence of the property market in Malaysia on mobility of international investors, and more generally the exploitative relationship between global capitalists and manufacturing industries in the region – have exacerbated their detrimental effects on the marginalized in the societies. The remaining chapters in the section examine the impacts of the pandemic on labor relations and environmental conditions in the region.

The seven chapters in the Section Two take a critical view of the impacts of the pandemic on labor mobility, including the plight of the migrant workforce in Singapore and Malaysia, repatriated Filipino workers, and those in working in healthcare sectors overseas. The common thread across these cases is the precarity of this workforce pre-pandemic: they were the underbelly of the societies, and they were easily forgotten. The government's pandemic control measures took extra tolls on these workers, who appear invisible to the authorities (due to their informal status), whose pandemic-related immobility has affected their income, and/or who were caught in between borders because of the pandemic. Taking a case study approach, this section offers detailed analyses of the precarity of the low-end – and often foreign – labor force that is hardest hit by the pandemic.

In Section Three, the eight chapters examine various grassroots initiatives that support communities to contain the virus through the lens of collective action and mutual aid. These chapters give primacy to the people of Southeast Asia to illustrate how they can shape a better outcome when they come together – from neighborhood food-sharing and *gotong royong* in Indonesia to "happiness-sharing pantries" in Thailand and online collective actions.

These chapters are very fitting to end a voluminous book on Southeast Asia, which prides itself on being a heterogenous region with a multiplicity of ethnic groups, cultures, and religious beliefs. Despite such wide-ranging diversity, socio-economic issues that surfaced due to the pandemic are beyond the reach of the state – and are still best tackled by the grassroots communities.

Overall, this is an extremely impressive collection of essays that takes seriously the diversity of the region and offers thoughtful reflections on what the pandemic means for the cities, environment, economies, institutions, and people of Southeast Asia. It would be – and should be – widely read by not only area specialists, but also urban planners, geographers, and other social scientists interested in how societies evolve after a profound critical juncture.

Left: Thai public health poster, courtesy of Wikimedia.

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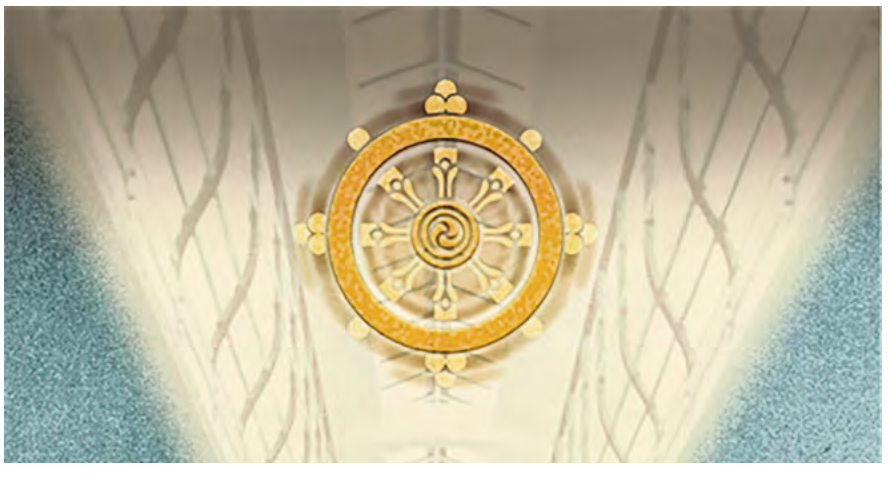
it was about "doctrinal admonition" that could lead prisoners to reform their ways and becoming good citizens. The word for "doctrinal admonition" *(kyōkai)* would literally become the basis for the first "chaplains" *(kyōkai-shi)*. Lyons argues that doctrinal admonition, as it came to define the role modern Shin Buddhism in the new Japanese nation-state, located moral threat in bad karma that one could purify through an interior process of reflection and reform. Lyons notes the ways this redemptive moral narrative resembles Christian models of sin and salvation, even while Shin Buddhists had been actively involved in the persecution and forced conversion of Christians. Yet while Christian chaplaincy developed a tradition of attending to the suffering of the prisoner, Buddhist chaplaincy is focused more on the promotion of state ideology. As the State sought to strengthen and formalize its own political ideology, so too did Shin Buddhists, whose practice of moral admonition evolved into a central component of doctrine and occupational practice.

In a fascinating analysis of Shin Buddhist writings on chaplaincy, Lyons elaborates the claim of the centrality of doctrinal admonition and how it aimed to promote not only a more harmonious society, but also an ideal of harmony between Buddhism and the state. One way this developed is through notions of karma that could be more easily linked to carceral logics and civic moral aims of the state. Apart from these official discourses, Lyons also details key historical events that illustrated the political power of Shin Buddhists as a result of their status in the penal system. In the Sugamo Prison incident, for example, several Buddhist chaplains resigned in protest of a move to reduce the number of Shin Buddhist chaplains and introduce Christian chaplains. Ultimately, this had effects that rippled all the way to the Diet, where a bill was quickly passed that would legally secure Shin Buddhist control over chaplaincy. This control was not limited to the prison facility, but extended to a network of volunteer "probation groups" and so on.



One of the most fascinating aspects of this book is that way Lyons shifts to more ethnographic methods and perspectives in the second half. Guided by existential anthropologist Michael Jackson's notion of the politics of storytelling, Lyons visits prisons, speaks to chaplains and addresses the controversial topic of the death penalty. Through his extraordinary access to several important and experienced chaplains and his exceptionally fortuitous involvement in the committee revising the Chaplain's Manual in 2014-16, Lyons gets under the surface of official accounts and into the debates and negotiations about what the role of chaplain really means. While I cannot do justice to the nuance and sophistication of Lyons' perceptive accounts of chaplains' lives, two points stand out as important departures from the pre-war chaplaincy. First is the way chaplaincy was reframed as a role that functioned to fulfil prisoners' newly enshrined constitutional right to religious freedom. While Shin Buddhists would continue to exert a strong dominance, Lyons also describes Shinto and Tenrikyo chaplains as well (including a detailed account of a Tenrikyo group chaplaincy session in an appendix).

Second, the right to religious freedom also pushed chaplains away from doctrinal admonition toward more modern psychological notions of spiritual therapy for suffering prisoners. One result of this was that chaplains often felt caught between their moral obligation to the prisoners and their personal objection to the criminal justice system. Chaplains would be removed from their duties and unable to care for prisoners if they publicly criticized the criminal justice system, and they struggled with complicity in ways that were not apparent in earlier iterations of Japanese chaplaincy. This ambivalence towards the role of the chaplain was most pronounced in chaplaincy for those facing the death penalty, but it is also a running theme in the conversations Lyons had with chaplains featured in the book.

This combination of historical and ethnographic perspectives is what makes Karma and Punishment so unique, exciting, and valuable for broadening our understandings of the relationship between religion and the state in Japan today. It is remarkable that despite the breath-taking wealth of sources Lyons uncovers in his research, he is still able to articulate such clear and compelling claims, about both the development of chaplaincy and its current state. *Karma and Punishment* is a must-read for anyone who is interested in these topics, but I hope it is also read by criminologists, religious studies scholars, and carceral anthropologists, all of whom will no doubt find assumptions about chaplaincy challenged in productive ways. The lucid writing and organization of the book keep it accessible to students, while the extensive notes are a treasure trove for other researchers.

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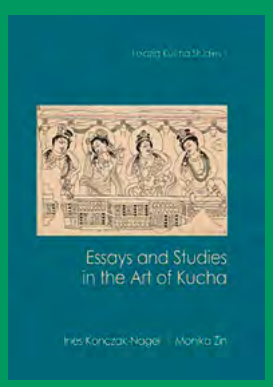

Essays and Studies in the Art of Kucha (Leipzig Kucha Studies 1)

Ines Konczak-Nagel and Monika Zin. 2020.

Dev Publishers & Distributors
ISBN 9789387496262
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/essays-and-studies-art

Queer Transfigurations: Boys Love Media in Asia

James Welker (ed.). 2022.

University of Hawai'i Press
ISBN 9780824888992
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