

NO. 94

The Newsletter



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Buddhist
Women
in Hawai'i**



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**Indigenous
Community-based
Water Governance**



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**Humanities
Across
Borders**

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In this edition of The Focus

Indigenous Community-based Water Governance

Assam/Nagaland, Karen, Papua, and Sabah

Saw John Bright and
Bram Steenhuisen

Water is proteiform and omnipresent in both our environment and our bodies. It is a necessary yet finite resource whose scarcity is an increasing concern throughout many regions. In the light of the climate crisis, water is defined in quantifiable terms, as a commodity meant to be controlled or dominated. Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge about water underlines the non-materialistic and non-scientific understandings of waterbodies. These ontologies emphasize the interconnectedness between Indigenous Peoples and lands, forests, water, and species. This Focus uniquely explores Indigenous accounts of water management, and is (co-)written by Indigenous authors. The four articles offer case studies from Assam/Nagaland, Karen, Papua, and Sabah.

This issue’s Focus notes how crucial it is to treat Indigenous ontologies as equal to the dominant ontologies currently informing mainstream economics, politics, and conservation practice, and to nurture reciprocal relationships.



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

This year, we are celebrating the tenth edition of the ICAS Book Prize (IBP). This edition will be the first to be held separately from the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), and on page 44-45, Martina van den Haak and Wai Cheung discuss this new setup and introduce some of the sponsors.

What does it mean to be a fellow at IIAS? On page 50, our new Fellowship Programme Coordinator Laura Rabelo Erber elaborates on the aims and objectives of a “revamped programme” that contributes to improving scholarly practice and enhancing interactions between universities and society.

On page 48, Francesco Montuori and Meera Curam report on the success of the first post-Covid In Situ Graduate School in September 2022, organised together with LeidenGlobal and Humanities Across Borders (HAB). In November 2022, Humanities Across Borders (HAB) co-hosted ‘Craft as METHOD’, a Graduate Humanities Institute (GHI) Workshop held in Saint-Louis, Senegal. Kawlra and Erber report on their experiences on page 49.

On page 47, IIAS-EPA Director Mehdi P. Amineh announces the launch of a new joint research programme, titled ‘The Geopolitical Economy of Energy Transition: Comparing China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union.’ Also on page 47, Paul Rabé tells us about the launch of ‘River Cities Network’ (RCN), a new transdisciplinary and global network to promote the inclusive revitalisation of rivers and waterways.

In ‘Print Journeys’ on page 51 Pierpaolo De Giosa discusses his experiences while writing *World Heritage and Urban Politics in Melaka, Malaysia. A Cityscape below the Winds*, published with IIAS Publications in the Asian Heritages Series. Finally, our research programmes and initiatives 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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A New Fellowship Coordinator for a Revamped Programme

Philippe Peycam

The recent hiring of Dr. Laura Erber as the institute's new Fellowship Programme Coordinator gives me the opportunity to introduce readers of *The Newsletter* to our new colleague, and through this, to IIAS's ongoing effort to revamp one of its most important initiatives, its international fellowship programme.

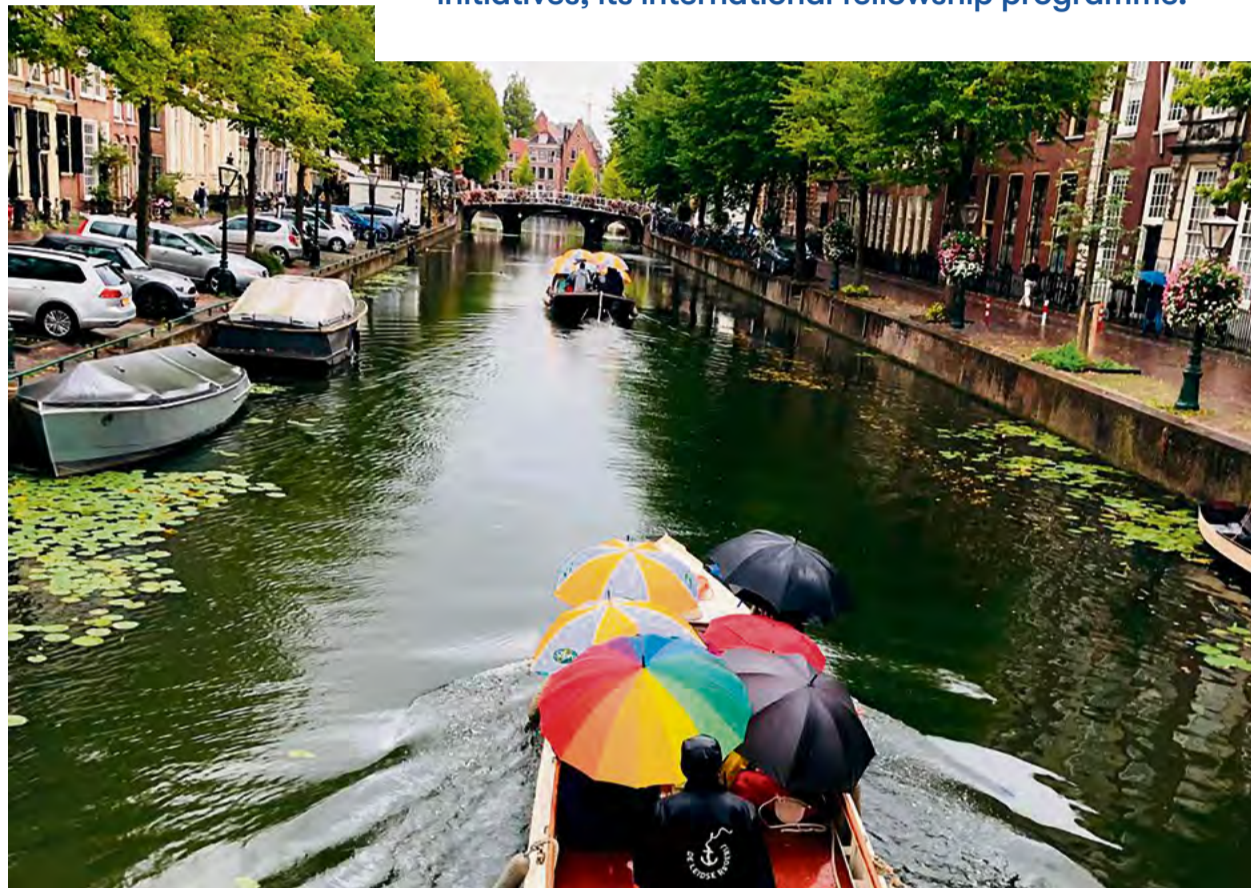


Fig. 1: Tourboats on the canal in Leiden. (Photo by Laura Erber, 2022)

Laura's personal profile is unique. At first glance, her background would seem not to fit entirely with what the position requires. She is not an 'Asia specialist' per se. Also, although she is a full-fledged scholar in critical literature studies, her range of academic, cultural, and artistic engagements far exceeds that of a traditional single-discipline, country-specific area studies scholar. Working in her native Brazil as well in different parts of Europe – as a poet, a fiction writer, and a visual artist, but also a literary theorist – she brings with her a rare combination of approaches and experiences to the practice of knowledge generation and transmission, beyond traditional area studies. Sure enough, Laura has plenty of experience working with scholars and artists, traversing across and mediating between both worlds with ease. Her trajectory between Southern and Northern academic contexts, moreover, places her in the position of being able to critically assess prevailing valuation norms. This confers a capacity to appreciate trajectories that may have escaped dominant evaluation standards. Such an itinerary should enable Laura to undertake her mission of creatively revamping the IIAS fellowship programme by broadening its reaches in close synergy with the other programmes and activities of the institute.

This brings me to the fellowship programme itself, one of the oldest of the institute, and one that has remained largely unchanged since IIAS was established in the 1990s. The IIAS fellowship programme is, indeed, one of the most coveted and well-established postdoctoral spaces for Asian Studies of its kind. When it was set up, it sought to open the field by privileging inter-disciplinarity and comparative methods, creatively and seamlessly combining traditional humanities with the social sciences as they apply to Asia. From the outset, it sought to support individuals from diverse backgrounds, generations, and conceptual orientations, offering them the

chance to share their ideas and research with a wide audience. With time, the programme has contributed to the process of epistemic diversification, and, I would say, even to the decolonization of scholarship on, in, and with Asia. Hundreds of scholars now active in the field were once fellows of IIAS, contributing thereafter to the transformation of the academic landscape.

My experience of working in Cambodia, like IIAS's present work with colleagues from South Asia, Southeast Asia, or Africa, has continued to alert me to the perpetuation of an unequal distribution of opportunities, notably for people whose talents and capacities are rarely assessed or recognized on their own merits, beyond rigid or blind criteria. Against an academic trend that may itself verge toward more conformity in its compliance with a single model, IIAS and its Academic Committee have tried to maintain the most open and fair selection process. By regularly reviewing the application questionnaire and by introducing questions that more clearly link the candidate's personal trajectory to their research project, we seek to refresh the institute's commitment towards more diversity, notably by reaching out towards individuals whose profiles and careers do not necessarily conform with the norms and codes that quantitatively define academic profiles. These are often restricted to scholars who have access to conference networking, archives, online journals, libraries, and recommendations from influential scholars in the field.

Similar to its other areas of intervention, IIAS seeks for its fellowship programme to be also opened to people with different experiences and walks of life, from regions, institutions, and communities that too often are absent from 'mainstream' area studies circles. We still have too few fellows originating from Southeast Asia or South Asia, who studied in their regions (beyond a handful of institutions in Singapore or Delhi). Likewise, we hardly receive any applications from people originating from world regions

as vast and populous as Africa, Latin America, or Central Asia. This same sort of blind spot in our programme also applies to people with different modes of expression and other formats of narration, including (but not exclusively) what we now call scholar-artists.

Laura's appointment, thus, comes at an appropriate time, when we want to better align the institute's fellowship programme with other IIAS activities, many of which have long gained in inclusiveness stemming from the institute's responsibility as a highly innovative supporter of intellectual engagement on, in, and with Asia, in the world. Luckily, the institute offers a wide range of initiatives and a diverse set of platforms that should be of benefit to future fellows. We want to offer them an ever-adapted and diversified environment, one that not only supports area, disciplinary, and topical specialisations, but also, when possible, promotes approaches privileging inter-contextual comparisons and connections. This means mobilising the institute's vast network of individual and institutional partners. It also means offering an extensive range of situated intellectual ecosystems, which should help fellows better prepare themselves for today's transformed academic and professional landscape. Whilst remaining open to all kinds of profiles – including the 'traditional' ones – we thus want to offer a dynamic multidimensional model that embraces different knowledge generation processes and situations, an increasingly diverse range of sources, and more versatility in accessing them. Such a model gives a chance to candidates emanating from less obviously 'connected' milieux than those that often operate as unconscious 'gatekeepers' of the field, an environment prone to encompass people from different backgrounds so long as they enrich the field and the learning community of Asia.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

Dead Wet Girls versus Monstrous Mothers

The Female “Monster” in Japanese Horror Cinema

Jennifer M. Yoo

As in many other cultures, the feminine is often portrayed as having an affinity with the supernatural, even the monstrous or evil, by the sheer fact of being female. In Western horror cinema, Barbara Creed refers to what she calls the “monstrous feminine,” wherein women are commonly represented as weak in horror films, except when represented as the villain, in which case they are inherently evil. According to Creed, however, this portrayal should be viewed more as by design than as something “natural”: “Woman is not, by her very nature, an abject being. Her representation in popular discourses as monstrous is a function of the ideological project of the horror film – a project designed to perpetuate the belief that woman’s monstrous nature is inextricably found up with her difference as man’s sexual other.”²

By portraying the feminine as “monstrous,” an innate connection is drawn between woman and monster, highlighting their similar status as what Creed describes as both “biological freaks” within patriarchal structures, and consequently “potent threats to vulnerable male power.” Although Creed was largely referring to Western horror when she wrote, the Japanese horror film is no exception, with the female “monster” often seen to reflect patriarchal fears.

It should be noted, however, that in the 1990s there was a visible change in Japanese horror cinema, often attributed to the economic turmoil of the recession for Japan. With the collapse of Japan’s bubble economy in 1991, the country entered a period “marked by a sense of millennial crisis, social malaise, and economic stagnation,” a time referred to as the “Lost Decades.”³ Initially produced utilizing the low-budget strategies of independent filmmakers, these films emphasized more of an atmospheric horror.

Although this was originally due to financial constraints, films produced with this effect sparked a renewed interest in what would later be referred to as the “J-horror” film, a new aesthetic that would become representative of the entire cinematic genre to overseas audiences. In the face of a crumbling economy and society in crisis, both audiences and filmmakers became almost entirely fixated on the “monstrous” female ghost. The female “monsters” that manifested as a result of these changes, however, were considerably different from those that appeared in supernatural films prior, and certain character tropes emerged.

The dead wet girl: Sadako of *Ringu* (“The Ring”)

Of particular note in this regard is the “dead wet girl,” a term first coined by film scholar David Kalat to describe the, at the

The supernatural, especially ghosts or spirits, have captivated the imagination in Japan for centuries, as evident in the prevalence of the supernatural as a subject in Japanese art, literature, theatre, and cinema. Although not explicitly referred to by the name, supernatural “horror” films have been produced for almost as long as the history of cinema itself in Japan.¹ The prevalence, or one might even say popularity, of the supernatural female specifically is apparent in Japan from as early as the eighth century and carried on through to present day. Over time this tendency to portray the feminine as “monstrous” has continued, even increased in prominence, to the extent that Japanese horror films today are rarely without a haunting female “monster” spirit as the primary antagonist.

time, very unique female ghost character emerging in J-horror. Seen to be highly distinct from not only earlier Japanese supernatural films but also American horror, these characters are, as the term implies, dead and wet, but also specifically “girls.” While often literally “wet” with water, which is traditionally a common motif to evoke the supernatural, this wetness can also be seen as tied to the feminine, as in for example the cosmological concept of yin and yang, where the feminine is not only associated with the “dark” but also the wet. The dead wet girl can therefore be interpreted as a figure of untapped feminine power, which can in turn explain why she is typically portrayed as possessing extraordinary power bordering on inhuman power. It is arguably out of fear of this potential power that the dead wet girl is persecuted. As a girl – in other words, a young, unmarried woman – she is full of vitality, regularly made “wet” through menstruation and thus ripe for pregnancy, but as yet unfettered by social obligations, namely marriage and motherhood. So long as she remains unfettered, the dead wet girl cannot be controlled and is a threat to society.



Fig. 2: Screenshot of Kayako with son Toshio haunting a victim in the film *Ju-On: The Grudge*. Directed by Shimizu Takashi, Lions Gate, 2002.



Fig. 1: Screenshot of Sadako emerging from a television to complete her killing curse in the film *Ringu*. Directed by Nakata Hideo, Toho, 1998.

course of their investigation, the two discover that Sadako’s mother, who was also gifted with preternatural power, was convinced to demonstrate her abilities in an attempt to prove the existence of extrasensory perception. During the demonstration, one of the attending reporters denounced her mother as a fraud, inciting his colleagues to join in on the ridicule, and was subsequently killed psychokinetically by Sadako. Ultimately, it is the fear of her potential power as Sadako fully matures that results in her being attacked and then thrown down a well to die, serving as the impetus for the entire franchise.

The nature of Sadako’s death being so inextricably linked to water further affirms her status as a dead wet girl. While water is often seen as a source for purification in Japanese religious belief, water has been continuously utilized as a visual motif to evoke the supernatural. This is largely due to flowing bodies of water, such as the ocean or rivers, being viewed as fluid boundaries between worlds of the living and the dead. In Sadako’s case, however, her death takes place in a “still” body of water, which cannot freely carry her spirit to the netherworld, her body left to rot inside the well. Combined with being cut off from flowing waters and thus incapable of moving on even if she wanted to, Sadako has been left to fester, both in body and spirit, in the well’s waters for years.

By the time Reiko and Ryūji find the well to try and recover her corpse, she is long since beyond any form of spiritual pacification, which may explain her indiscriminate desire to inflict suffering in the form of a video tape that anyone could potentially watch. It also explains why Sadako is not seen to be at peace at the end of *Ringu* and proceeds to kill Ryūji by emerging from his television that starts inexplicably playing her cursed video. It is revealed afterwards that what spared Reiko was not the recovery of Sadako’s corpse after all, but the fact that Reiko had Ryūji watch the video and made a copy of the tape, effectively aiding the female “monster” in the dissemination of her curse.

The monstrous mother: Kayako of *Ju-On* (“The Grudge”)

While J-horror cinema might seem to be largely dominated by the dead wet girl, a second major character trope that is equally present is the “monstrous mother.” Although her origins are closely tied to traditional, premodern views in Japan, the monstrous mother as she is seen in J-horror arguably reflects more the growing concerns over the fracturing of the nuclear household and its potential impact on Japanese contemporary society. According to Chika Kinoshita, “a casual survey of J-horror films is enough to fathom the depth of crisis in

the normative family life of the recessionary Japan; single parents, abused, abandoned, and/or murdered children constitute most J-horror narratives.⁶

Concerns over this “crisis,” however, are largely focused on women and their specific role in the household that they are failing to uphold or are neglecting altogether. While women may not necessarily be expected to uphold traditional familial values structured around a patriarchal society as in premodern times, getting married and having children are still considered the most defining traits of womanhood in Japan. Even today, women wishing to remain independent and pursue careers past the age of 30 continue to face considerable prejudice and discrimination, especially single working mothers. The monstrous mother can thus be viewed as an expression of largely male or patriarchal anxieties about women becoming increasingly independent and breaking away from the established family norm. Consequently, the monstrous mother tends to be portrayed as a character who is not only seen to be similarly “non-traditional,” but also as a woman who has somehow “failed” her children, often by killing or abusing them physically or mentally, through neglect or violence.

Aside from Sadako, Saeki Kayako of director Shimizu Takashi’s *Ju-On* (呪怨, “*The Grudge*”) franchise is another iconic figure of J-horror.⁷ While her appearance almost always comes paired with that of her son, Toshio, most viewers may find it difficult to recognize her character as a monstrous mother. Most will associate her more with having suffered great violence by her husband, Takeo, transforming her into the primary agent of the “*Ju-On*,” the curse or “grudge” that subsequently infects her house. As a result of the incident, she now targets anyone who enters the space.

The apparent impetus for the violence done unto her, however, has largely to do with Kayako’s status as a mother. In the 2002 theatrical film, *Ju-On: The Grudge*, it is hinted that Takeo killed both her and Toshio due to his suspecting that Kayako was having an affair and that Toshio was not in fact his biological son. In the direct-to-video version made of *Ju-On* two years prior, these suspicions are at least partially substantiated by Kayako’s journal, which reveals that she had been thoroughly obsessed with another man, though this could have been purely a one-sided infatuation on Kayako’s part. In both versions, the source of Takeo’s rage is less about his wife’s suspected adultery and more about his lack of biological progeny.

Overall, the audience is given little context for Kayako’s “monstrous” acts as a vengeful ghost. This is largely due to the fact that she is characterized as being physically unable to even walk, let alone speak for herself. Most will recognize the sound of the her eerie death rattle, a product of her husband’s violence,

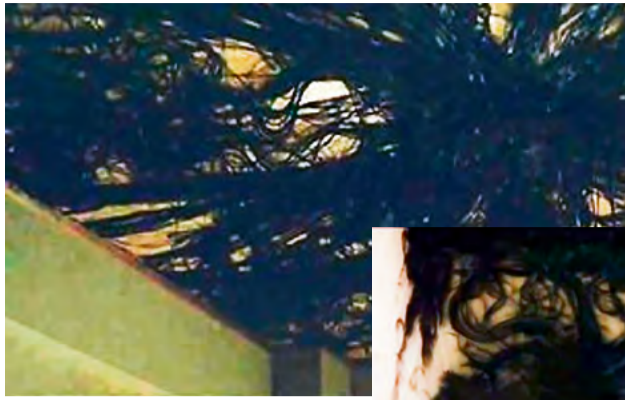


Fig. 3: Screenshot of Kayako’s hair in the film *Ju-On: The Grudge 2*. Directed by Shimizu Takashi, Lions Gate, 2003.

who brutalized her body and broke her neck in his fit of rage. How she physically presents to the audience altogether embodies her perceived “failures” as a mother.

The “woman” erased, the “monster” remains: J-horror today & beyond

Although it should be acknowledged that there is less of an imbalance in gendered representation of the “monster” in Japanese horror as of late, more J-horror films are still made featuring a female “monster” as the sole or primary supernatural antagonist rather than a male one. Despite the Japanese film industry having a history of making concerted efforts to attract young male audiences by utilizing action genres, such as the yakuza film in the 1970s and 1980s, thereby increasing the presence of both aggressive male characters and graphic violence in Japanese cinema, it is particularly notable that portrayals of male “monsters” have not significantly increased in J-horror films.

This implies an overall emphasis on conflating the feminine with the monstrous, with women being perceived as more fear-inducing in J-horror. Adding to this is the overall effect of commercialism on portrayals of the female “monster” in J-horror. More often than not, films are being made that notably reduce or heavily abstract her depiction as an actual woman character, and now seem to follow more of a checklist formula, diminishing her to an object, a prop piece in the scenery of Japanese horror. No longer does she really require a narrative to explain or justify her actions. Her image becomes virtually interchangeable with those found in other J-horror films.

A notable example of this can be found in the film *Sadako vs. Kayako* (貞子VS伽椰子),⁸

which was a crossover film of the *Ringu* and *Ju-On* series. In the film, both Sadako and Kayako are depicted killing their victims utilizing their respective cursing methods, with no apparent hope of defeating either of them. The sense of futility is perhaps heightened by the fact that the speed at which each “monster” metes out her punishment has been rapidly accelerated, giving little time for victims to find a way to save themselves.⁹ The solution that is proposed to save the two main female characters – Suzuka, who entered the Saeki house, and Yuri, who watched the cursed videotape – is to have Suzuka watch the video from inside the house alongside Yuri. Being thus afflicted by both curses, Sadako and Kayako would presumably battle one another over the two girls and destroy each other in the process.

While this pitting of horror icons from popular franchises against one another is not an original concept,¹⁰ what is notable is how the two female “monsters” are, barring some superficial elements, virtually indistinguishable from one another in the film. This is heavily affected by the minimal narrative details given on either character, resulting on entirely visual or aural cues to signify the two women. Even these identifiers, however, are seen to be used for the two interchangeably.

One notable example is when Yuri, who is only cursed by Sadako at the time, is taking a shower in the bathroom where she is visited by the female ghost in the form of masses of Sadako’s hair covering the ceiling and dropping down on her from above. This scene, however, is highly evocative of scenes from the *Ju-On* films. One of the most memorable scenes, aside from the climax, in *Ju-On: The Grudge* is of Rika in the shower feeling Kayako’s hand on her head while she is washing her hair. In *Ju-On: The Grudge 2*, the scene with perhaps the strongest visual impact is when Kayako kills characters Tomoka and Noritaka, the entire ceiling covered with her hair. In contrast, no such scenes take place in either of Nakata Hideo’s *Ringu* films.

Furthermore, Sadako’s well, which is arguably one of the most crucial visual features to her character, is almost completely altered in *Sadako vs. Kayako*. The well itself does not figure into the cursed video footage, nor is she seen crawling out of the well in the film, which is perhaps the most iconic scene of the *Ringu* franchise. In fact, the well that is present in *Sadako vs. Kayako* is not even hers, but one located on the grounds of the Saeki house. Ultimately, the well is only utilized at the end of the film when the plan to have the two female ghosts fight one another backfires horribly and Yuri sacrifices herself to lure them into the well so it can be sealed with all three of them inside. Instead, the spirits end up colliding and then combining to form a new entity that possesses Yuri’s body referred to as “Sadakaya.” The reveal of Sadakaya at the conclusion of the film serves as the epitome of this tropification of the female “monster” in Japanese horror. Who each woman was is both irrelevant and insignificant.

Considering the effect and influence of the monstrous feminine begs the question of what the female “monster” truly represents

for her audiences, both then and now, male and female. Is she merely a reflection of views and attitudes towards women through the eyes of male writers? Or perhaps she embodies the fears of men regarding women altogether? This is especially relevant for the J-horror film industry itself, as filmmakers are predominantly men, and it continues to be difficult for women directors to gain entry. For any aspiring director of J-horror to gain an opportunity, regardless of gender, they must first be mentored by established (male) directors, effectively making men the gatekeepers for the entire genre. The fact that there is really only one notable woman director actively creating J-horror films today, Asato Mari,¹¹ mentored by Kurosawa Kiyoshi,¹² is indicative of this.

As films have increasingly de-emphasized the personal narrative and humanity of the female “monster,” her status as a woman is steadily erased, making it virtually impossible for the audience to sympathize with her. This growing trend in portrayal runs the risk of being harmful to the self-perception of women. Not only can it potentially influence female audiences, but also future creators of horror. This is evident given that the term J-horror has come to be associated with an overall horror film aesthetic that almost requires the presence of a monstrous female. As other countries, both in other parts of Asia and in the West, have taken to adapting this aesthetic for their own respective horror cinemas, the far-reaching impact of Japanese horror cinema’s female “monster” cannot be disregarded.

Jennifer M. Yoo, Ph.D. is currently affiliated with Tufts University as a Lecturer in Japanese culture, film, and literature for the Department of International Literary and Cultural Studies.

Notes

- 1 The first Japanese supernatural “horror” film is believed to have been made in 1898. Film was introduced from overseas to Japan in 1897.
- 2 Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. 1st ed., Routledge, 1993.
- 3 Ambros, Barbara R. *Women in Japanese Religions*. New York UP, 2015.
- 4 It should be noted that this term is not originally Japanese and is used almost exclusively in English language discussion of the genre.
- 5 Japanese names have for the most part been written in the Japanese order with surname first. Exceptions, however, have been made when citing sources written in English by Japanese authors whose names have been published in the Western order.
- 6 Kinoshita, Chika. “The Mummy Complex: Kurosawa Kiyoshi’s *Loft* and J-horror.” *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*. Edited by Jinhee Choi and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, Hong Kong UP, 2009, pp. 103-22.
- 7 Began with two direct-to-video films released in 2000, which became widely successful due to word of mouth, shortly followed by two theatrical films, titled *Ju-On: The Grudge* and *Ju-On: The Grudge 2*, released in 2002 and 2003 respectively. The success of *Ju-On* has sparked a number of Western remakes as well as multiple reboots of the film franchise.
- 8 Directed by Shiraishi Kōji, released in 2016.
- 9 In the film, Sadako kills those who watch her cursed video after two days instead of seven as in the original *Ringu*.
- 10 The crossover films *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), directed by Ronny Yu, and *AVP: Alien vs. Predator* (2004), directed by Paul W.S. Anderson come immediately to mind.
- 11 Best known for directing a film in the *Ju-On* franchise, titled *Ju-On: Black Ghost* (呪怨黒い少女) and released in 2009, and *Gekijōban Zero* (劇場版零), also known as *Fatal Frame: The Movie*, released in 2014.
- 12 Best known for creating J-horror films such as *Kairo* (回路, “Pulse”), released in 2001.



Fig. 5: Screenshot of Sadakaya emerging from the well in the film *Sadako vs. Kayako*. Directed by Shiraishi Kōji, Kadokawa, 2016.

Sea Changes in the Lives of Japanese Buddhist Women in Hawai'i

Karma Lekshe Tsomo

Three cycles of change characterize the evolution of Japanese Buddhist temples in Hawai'i: the early years, the war years, and the contemporary period. This brief article explores women's roles and patterns of adaptation to local circumstances over generations during these cycles of change. Special attention is given to the experiences of Japanese immigrant Buddhist women in the Jōdo Shinshū school of Buddhism. The aim is to show how Japanese women who immigrated to Hawai'i helped shape a uniquely local flavor of Buddhism, made significant contributions to Jōdo Shinshū's development, and helped ensure the continuity of Buddhist traditions up to the modern period.

Hawai'i, the world's largest island chain, is a unique social and cultural crossroads of peoples from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. At the time of Japanese in-migration, Hawai'i was a colonized territory. Because of its colonial history and the incarceration of Japanese American citizens during World War II, awareness of social and political justice issues is relatively high. It took the American government 100 years to formally apologize for its overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893. Successive waves of immigration – Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Vietnamese, South Pacific Islanders, and many others – have made Native Hawaiians a minority in their own land. In response, Native Hawaiian culture exerted a profound influence on immigrants in all spheres of society.

Waves of migration

The Japanese contract laborers who migrated to Hawai'i toward the end of the nineteenth century largely identified as Buddhists. At that time, Buddhism was the religion of a small minority and it was often misunderstood. Plantation workers felt compelled to hide their Buddhist shrines and Buddha images behind screens to avoid being denigrated as idol worshippers. At first, Christian officials refused to accept the legality of marriages conducted in Japan and couples were required to undergo a Christian wedding ceremony when they arrived in Honolulu. After protests by members of the Japanese community, authorities of the Territory of Hawai'i conceded and began to allow Buddhist priests to certify marriages.¹

The first wave of Japanese workers endured many unexpected travails: harsh working conditions, abuse by overseers, poor housing, social dislocation, and racial prejudice. The large numbers and perceived "foreignness" of immigrants from Japan aroused fear in the white overlords. By 1920, people of Japanese ancestry constituted 43 percent of the population, arousing fears of a potential "racial menace." At the time, most spoke only Japanese and preferred the values and customs of their homeland rather than adapting to the host culture. Most planned to return to Japan one day and therefore sought Japanese language education for their children, giving rise to Japanese-language schools in the temples.

Working conditions on the sugar and pineapple plantations were brutal and Japanese immigrant women endured many hardships. To cope with these hardships, and to affirm their cultural identity and heritage, workers and their families began to establish Buddhist temples in plantation communities around the islands. The majority of these temples were affiliated with Jōdo Shinshū, the largest Buddhist denomination in Japan, with both the Higashi Hongwanji and Nishi Hongwanji branches of Jōdo Shinshū represented. On March 2, 1889, the first Buddhist temple in Hawai'i was established in Hilo by Soryu Kagahi (1855–1917), a Jōdo Shinshū priest from Kyushu, Japan. Honpa

Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i oversees the temples of the Nishi Hongwanji branch of Jōdo Shinshū in Hawai'i and is responsible for communications with Jōdo Shinshū headquarters in Kyōyo, Japan.

The various schools of Japanese Buddhism share many religious elements and cultural traditions in common. At the same time, the Japanese migrants and their religious leaders sought to uphold the unique heritage and institutional identity of their own particular Buddhist schools as they became acclimatized to their new environment. In the process of settling, adjusting, and adapting to life in Hawai'i, the immigrants faced many challenges and the Japanese Buddhist temples were in a unique position to help maintain cultural cohesion, facilitate social orientation, and nurture the spiritual life of their members. Plantation workers and their families found community support and spiritual solace at their local Buddhist temples. Buddhist women's organizations called "Fujinkai" (婦人会, Buddhist Women's Associations) were pivotal in the process of adaptation, creating a sense of community among their members and promoting Japanese culture through their youth groups, chanting groups, tea ceremony and flower arrangement classes, and a host of activities. Fujinkai were founded in all Jōdo Shinshū temples and became influential in connecting and encouraging members who lived on different islands.

The ministers who were sent to Hawai'i by Honpa Hongwanji headquarters in Japan were not well compensated and their families

lived in substandard housing. In *Immigrants to the Pure Land*, Michihiro Ama mentions that ministers sent from Japan (all male) were quite shocked by the low salary and poor accommodations provided in Hawai'i, especially in comparison with the high salaries and posh standard of living enjoyed by some Buddhist priests in Japan.² The ministers assigned to ministerial posts in Hawai'i spoke little or no English, which made for difficult communications between the recently arrived Buddhist clergy members and their congregations of plantation workers. Even with limited language skills, they were expected to tend to administrative duties, provide Buddhist education, record births and marriages, resolve conflicts, and preside at services in times of illness and death. The wives of these missionaries worked extremely hard and experienced many hardships.

As Buddhism began adjusting to a predominately Christian environment, a process of religious accommodation took place. Pews were installed in place of tatami mats, hymns replaced sūtra recitations, priests became known as ministers, and temples became known as churches, Dharma schools similar to Sunday schools were created for children, and Sunday services structured like Christian services began. The chief incumbent of Honpa Hongwanji, Reverend Emyo Imamura (1867–1932), made a conscientious effort to modernize Buddhism, using Christian churches as a model. Alongside ethnic Japanese elements, he introduced English services, wrote Buddhist hymns, and carefully promoted

adaptation to the American context. Working with Ernest Shinkaku Hunt (1878–1967), an Anglo American Buddhist who ordained as a Hongwanji minister, Imamura implemented Sunday schools and a Young Buddhist Association, among other innovations. Consciously adopting the Christian model for religious services and other activities was seen as a skillful means of making Buddhism more socially acceptable. The struggling Japanese Buddhist community felt validated and greatly encouraged by the well-publicized presence of Queen Lili'uokalani at a ceremony commemorating the birth of Shinran Shonin held on May 19, 1901.³

Several sources mention the early history of Fujinkai in temples in Hawai'i. A very useful and perhaps the most complete source is *Hōsha: A Pictorial History of Jōdo Shinshū Women in Hawaii*, a commemorative volume compiled by Jōdo Shinshū women themselves.⁴ The book summarizes the establishment, development, activities, and the status of 36 branches that existed in 1989, when the book was published, and includes many historical photos. Toku Umehara, president of the Buddhist Women's Association from 1976 to 1978, expressed the goal that motivated the project: "The youth of today will truly come to understand the unselfish devotion, whole-hearted dedication and humble services rendered by the pioneer Fujinkai women in their endeavor to uphold their temples as well as their organizations." She refuted a persistent impression that the organization was simply a women's social club, saying that "Fujinkai organizations are unique in that they are religiously oriented, rather than primarily social organizations." Her hope was that Fujinkai members make the most of every opportunity to listen to the Jōdo Shinshū teachings and become role models for young people so "they will be able to understand that we are always surrounded by the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha." This sentiment is also reflected in her Jōdo Shinshū perspective on *monpō* (聞法), or "listening to the teachings sincerely and gratefully": "By listening we come to realize that as human beings we cannot escape our own earthly greed and passions. The knowledge of our powerlessness leads us to entrust ourselves to Amida Buddha and his Primal Vow.... Our first and foremost responsibility as Fujinkai members is to make every effort to listen to the teachings."

Fujinkai in Hawai'i was initiated by Reverend Honi Satomi (1853–1922), the first bishop of the Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, in 1889. Bishop Emyo Imamura formally established the organization in 1903 and his wife Kiyoko Imamura was elected to be the first president in that same year.⁵ Under her leadership, Fujinkai members became active in social welfare work, sporting events, hospital visits, and other community service projects. Women's active engagement in the earliest stages of the Hongwanji mission is documented in a photo taken at the groundbreaking ceremony at Honpa Hongwanji Betsuin (Headquarters) in Honolulu in 1916. Photos show Fujinkai members wearing matching kimono for the occasion [Fig. 1]. Once the construction of Betsuin was completed two years later, it served as a convenient location for many Fujinkai activities, which included Dharma talks, Sunday school classes, New Years' celebrations, funeral services, and a range of social service activities. Fujinkai members gathered to commemorate the founding of Hawaii Hongwanji and organized the 700th Memorial Anniversary of Shinran Shonin (1173–1263), the founder of Jōdo Shinshū. Over the years, they organized many fundraising drives to help renovate the temple and construct a designated Fujinkai Hall, which was completed in 1964. Fujinkai members of branch temples were equally active; for example, they organized fundraising for reconstruction after the Hongwanji temple and priest quarters in Pearl City burned down in 1936. Despite their economic limitations, Fujinkai women were dedicated to supporting charitable activities whenever needed.

The principles of Fujinkai are expressed in the Buddhist Women's Pledge new members recite when they become members: "As a person of Buddhist faith, I will follow Shinran



Fig. 1: Fujinkai members at the groundbreaking for Honpa Hongwanji Betsuin, Honolulu. (Photo courtesy of The Hawaii Federation of Honpa Hongwanji, 1989)

Shonin who sought to live the life of truth; appreciate fully the blessing of human existence; thoroughly hear the Primal Vow of the Buddha; and diligently strive to live the Nembutsu as a Buddhist woman. Earnestly listening to the teaching, I will live my daily life embraced in Amida's Light. Building a home fragrant with the Nembutsu, I will nurture a child of the Buddha. Following the teaching of 'One World,' I will spread the circle of Dharma friends."⁶

Their aspirations and commitment to Buddhist ideals are also expressed in the stated objectives of the Hawaii Federation of Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Women's Association: "To unify, assist, and cooperate with all United Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Women's Associations in the State of Hawaii. To assist in the perpetuation and expansion of Jōdo Shinshū (Pure Land Sect) in the State of Hawaii. To assist in the establishment, progress, and development of Buddhist women's organizations in the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. To plan for the advancement and promotion of Buddhism throughout the world, both as a movement and as a way of life. To cooperate with the Buddhist women's organizations of the world and coordinate activities through active participation, and work for world peace."⁷

The friendships Fujinkai members developed during the early years helped them endure the hardships of plantation life and their Jōdo Shinshū faith provided principles and inspiration that guided their daily lives.

Being Buddhist in a time of war

The Japanese Buddhist community in Hawai'i suffered further hardships during World War II. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 led to the immediate forced relocation and incarceration of approximately 120,000 Japanese throughout the United States, including citizens and permanent residents. Internees who were still alive in 1988 received a formal apology from the United States government and a pittance in reparations, but the effects of this unconstitutional incarceration have still not been fully recognized.

The war years affected everyone in Hawai'i, but especially residents and citizens of Japanese extraction. Japanese Buddhists and Christians, young and old, experienced the times differently, depending on their social status, educational background, language ability, and religion. While many factors determined how people of Japanese descent were treated during WWII, those who were more closely associated with Buddhism were considered more suspect. Even before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, in 1936, President Roosevelt backed a plan to investigate the loyalties and extent of assimilation of Japanese Buddhists in Hawai'i, California, and elsewhere intended to identify "dangerous" and "potentially dangerous" individuals. When the FBI and ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) conducted their study, they concluded that Buddhists were more likely to identify with their Japanese ancestry and resist Americanization than their Christian counterparts.⁸

Duncan Ryūken Williams has conducted extensive research on the role of religion in the forced relocation and incarceration. He found that many Japanese language teachers and Buddhist priests in Hawai'i were immediately arrested and sent, without trial, to special detention camps on the mainland for indefinite incarceration. He observes that no Christian ministers were among those detained.⁹ Ryūto Tsuda, a Buddhist nun and U.S. citizen born on the island of Hawai'i, was one of over 2,000 people of Japanese descent who were arrested because they were suspected of being a national security threat. In contrast to the mainland U.S., where more than 110,000 people were confined due to Executive Order 9066, mass detentions were not feasible in Hawai'i, where more than one-third of the population had Japanese ancestors. The Geneva Convention bans forced labor and guarantees freedom of religion but these statutes were frequently transgressed or ignored in the camps.¹⁰



Fig. 2: Fujinkai members bond through cultural activities, including Japanese dance. (Photo courtesy of The Hawaii Federation of Honpa Hongwanji, 1989)

Just as Japanese Buddhists suffered more than Japanese Christians, Japanese women experienced more hardships than Japanese men. The vast majority of those incarcerated were men due to the fact that the detainees were mostly priests, Japanese language teachers, and prominent business leaders, typically male. The story of Tomo Izumi is an example of how the detentions left families without economic support and counsel. Her father, Kakusho Izumi, an ordained Jōdo Shinshū priest and Japanese language teacher, was summarily arrested on the night of December 7, 1941, leaving their mother and six children alone at the Papaalooa Hongwanji Mission on the island of Hawai'i. When he was arrested, he put on his clerical robes and went with his wife and children to the temple and then to the family altar to make prayers. Unbeknownst to his family, he had performed his own funeral rites, expecting to be shot and killed that night. Uncertain where their kind and cheerful father had been taken or what fate awaited them created great fear and confusion in the children and their mother. As it turned out, he was among tens of thousands who were incarcerated based on their Japanese heritage and required to carry Enemy Alien Registration Cards, with their photos, at all times. During this time, reciting the name of Amida Buddha (*nembutsu*) to be reborn in his Pure Land brought great consolation but the arrests of Buddhist clergy were a great loss to their families and communities, depriving them of guidance and religious leadership. During the clergy's absence, temple wives or Fujinkai members stepped in to perform funeral rituals and other services with great kindness. Their faith in the saving grace of Amida Buddha helped Jōdo Shinshū followers cope with their grief, anxiety, and personal losses, but the detention of Buddhist priests and the shuttering of Buddhist temples in Hawai'i surely contributed to a decline in active temple participation.

Reflections at a crossroads

The contributions of Fujinkai members as pioneers in the founding of Jōdo Shinshū temples and as humble, diligent workers dedicated to the perpetuation of these temples is well-recognized in Japanese Buddhist circles. Yet, although Japanese Buddhist women's selfless dedication in supporting the temples has always been appreciated, their efforts have not always been publicly acknowledged or rewarded, especially by their male colleagues. In the early history of Jōdo Shinshū, women may have preferred to work behind the scenes but that began to change as women became more educated, more confident, and more qualified to take leadership roles in the temples. In the early years on the plantations, women had many responsibilities and were busily engaged in both nurturing their families and working in the fields. Consequently, they usually dedicated their efforts to their local temples and communities. In recent years, however, as their horizons have expanded, Buddhist women have begun making contribution on the statewide, national, and international levels. An example is the student exchange program Fujinkai initiated in 1971 that chose two young women, Gail Mamura and Jan Aratani, as the first students to visit Japan. Another example is Project Dana, a volunteer organization founded in 1989 by Shimeji Kanazawa and Rose Nakamura at Moiliili Hongwanji that provides care for the frail and elderly. This project expanded into an alliance of more than thirty churches and

temples to train compassionate caregivers for the community, gaining national recognition for the selfless service of its volunteers. Project Dana models cross-cultural understanding and compassion by providing care for people regardless of their ethnic identity or religion, cooperating with Christian churches and Vietnamese Buddhist temples, and recruiting volunteer caregivers from different religious backgrounds.¹¹ The success of Fujinkai members in building this interfaith coalition demonstrates the enormous potential of Jōdo Shinshū women for social transformation.

Writing in 1989, Toki Umehara, then president of the Hawaii Federation of Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Women's Association, expressed the hope that women would become more active and prominent in Jōdo Shinshū overall: "I expect the image of the Fujinkai members to change as women are becoming educated and they will become important members of the temples. Undoubtedly, we shall see more women as officers of their respective Kyōdan [administrative bodies]."¹² In 1975, while Umehara was president, Fujinkai's membership grew to 6,400 women. She recognized the social importance of Fujinkai organizations and encouraged women to become more involved in the administrative functioning of the temples, but emphasized that the religious practice of *nembutsu* was primary. She urged Fujinkai members to serve as examples to the youth by nurturing their spiritual development, listening to Jōdo Shinshū teachings at every opportunity, and surrounding themselves with the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha. The biggest question that faces Jōdo Shinshū and other Japanese Buddhist temples today is whether the younger generation of women in Hawai'i will have the same level of commitment as earlier generations of Fujinkai women did.

Recent changes in Jōdo Shinshū institutional structures are aimed not only at preserving members' Japanese Buddhist heritage but also at promoting its growth and development, especially among the younger generation. In a time of great social and technological changes, the goal of revitalizing traditional religious structures is not easy to achieve and requires new insights and innovative leadership. In recent years, women have been taking expanded roles in the overall functioning of the temples, not just on the periphery or in the kitchen. Women have become recognized for their leadership skills and are becoming more visible as teachers in Jōdo Shinshū temples, some taking ordination as ministers. Coincidentally or not, during these years, Fujinkai membership and participation have declined and some branches have closed or merged. Some speculate that, as women take more visible roles in temple leadership overall and become more active in religious forums throughout the islands, there will be less need for Fujinkai branches as separate, independent organizations.

The formation of Fujinkai in 1889, concurrently with the founding of the Hawai'i branch of Honpa Hongwanji, can be seen as a momentous achievement for Japanese immigrant women in Hawai'i. By steadfastly asserting their Japanese Buddhist identity in the face of religious domination by the Christian majority, regardless of the political and social costs, Buddhist women in Hawai'i made a powerful statement of religious integrity and independence. Successive generations of Jōdo Shinshū women weathered many changes – racism, communications gaps between first-generation (*issei*, 一世) parents who spoke

Japanese and their second-generation (*nisei*, 二世) children who spoke English, cultural gaps between maintaining Japanese cultural identity in an overwhelmingly Christian environment, living by Buddhist values in a rapidly changing, secularizing social landscape, smaller families and greater employment opportunities – monumental changes that challenged the traditional Jōdo Shinshū worldview.

It can safely be said that the strong ties that earlier generations of women felt to their Japanese heritage and their reliance on temple activities for social networking and cultural enrichment have weakened. A substantial number of young women in Hawai'i have moved away or drifted away from the temple and may only return for special occasions. Women today have far more options to choose from and many are content to celebrate their Japanese Buddhist heritage by attending Obon Odori (dancing) in late summer or mochi-making at New Year's. Events such as Obon, traditionally organized at Buddhist temples to honor deceased relatives and ancestors, are opportunities for temple members and friends to come together to celebrate their Japanese cultural identity. Temple leaders are very concerned to reach out to the younger generation and are exploring programs to attract a new digital generation. Increasingly, the English term, Buddhist Women's Association (BWA) is being used more frequently than Fujinkai, the organization's original name in Japanese, which most Japanese Americans do not speak. Changes such as this reflect the changing ethos and the need to update and expand the temple's outlook and membership. Some temples are even adding meditation, taichi, gardening, and Buddhist studies classes to appeal to a new demographic. Whether these innovations will succeed in sparking interest in a new generation of Buddhist women is now in the merciful hands of Amida Buddha.

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Notes

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- 3 Queen Lili'uokalani's participation in this event at Honpa Hongwanji Temple was celebrated on the 100th anniversary of her passing with a Buddhist chant, "Mele Kähea Buda," composed and performed in traditional Hawaiian *oli* style. "Queen Lili'uokalani Honored at Honpa Hongwanji" *The Hawai'i Herald*, December 1, 2017. <https://www.thehawaiiherald.com/2017/12/11/lead-story-queen-liliuokalani-honored-at-honpa-hongwanji> Accessed December 3, 2022.
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- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Duncan Ryūken Williams, *American Sūtra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 35–38; and Duncan Ryūken Williams, "Complex Loyalties: Issei Buddhist Ministers during the Wartime Incarceration," *Pacific World* 3:5 (2003): 255–74.
- 9 Williams, *American Sūtra*, 41.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 51–52.
- 11 Miwa Yamazaki, "Diversity of Acculturation to Multiethnic Society and Human Relationship in Hawaii: A Case Study of Buddhism-Influenced 'Project Dana,'" *The Japanese Journal of Human Relations* 9:1 (2002): 71–79.
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Leave to Enter

Visas and Academic Mobility from the Global South

Saba Sharma

As the day for her departure to Oxford drew nearer, it became clear the UK visa would not be processed, leaving her to hurriedly reroute her journey from the UK to Poland, an expensive and stressful endeavour. A last-minute cancellation of her flight to Poland days before her trip left her scrambling to change plans yet again. She would present at the Oxford conference virtually from a stopover in Dubai (where her Indian passport allows her visa on arrival), before going onwards to Poland, where she was scheduled to present on the first day of the conference. Between visa application fees, multiple flight changes, and unexpected accommodation costs, Arundhati spent thousands of euros on attending three international conferences, only two of them in person. While some costs were reimbursed by conference organisers (one of whom has yet to pay her back) and her public university in India, she shouldered most of the expenses herself. In addition, she estimated that the time and effort spent on various visa and flight-related changes cost her between 30 to 40 working days. In the midst of trying to travel to Europe, she was also attempting to prepare for three presentations, in anticipation of feedback on her research which was critical to write her PhD draft. To add insult to injury, the UK embassy ended up processing her visa four days after her presentation at Oxford. It was dated to start a week earlier.

For many academics with passports from the Global South, such experiences with visa bureaucracies are standard. Visa-related barriers to academic mobility are common, particularly when the mobility is towards the Global North.² Concurrently, international academic mobility in the form of conference attendance, research stays, and experience working in multiple university systems has become the norm for the advancement of academic careers, particularly among early career academics.³ This article examines

In July 2022, Arundhati,¹ a PhD student based in India, was attending a conference at the University of Oxford from a hotel room in Dubai. Although she meant to attend in person, and applied 11 weeks in advance for a visa to the United Kingdom, it did not arrive in time for her flight. In an effort to make the most of an expensive trip to Europe, she had decided to attend three back-to-back conferences: in the UK, Poland, and Portugal. Despite multiple emails and phone calls to the visa application centre, the British High Commission, and government officials in India, there was no news on her visa. The only way to check its status was through a paid service, which gave no information about the stage of the application or how much longer it could take. As she waited, the separate Schengen visa she needed for conferences in Poland and Portugal did come through, though not before some back and forth to determine which of the two countries' visa authorities she needed to approach: the first port of entry, or the one where she would spend the most number of days.

the experiences of four academics from the Global South as they navigate the increasing expectations of internationalisation and mobility, using visa applications as a lens. While internationalisation is beneficial to universities and career academics alike, the logistical and emotional burden of maintaining this mobility is often placed on academics who cannot move as freely through the various inter-connected academic networks of the Global North. Moreover, these experiences reveal themselves to be but one layer of an increasingly unequal system of access to international academic institutions, raising the question of whether mobility enhances or inhibits academic freedom.

Visas as a necessary burden

As a conference organiser based at a university in Western Europe, Shubham encountered visa bureaucracy from the other end of the spectrum. In attempting

to invite colleagues from East Africa to join a week-long research seminar, she and her team struggled to help get their visas in time, despite their applying weeks in advance, with one participant only picking up her passport from the embassy on the way to the airport. While part of the delay was caused by a misunderstanding around what documents were required for the application, she found that there was an expectation on the part of her European team that the East African colleagues should have just "known" which documents to provide for their visas. Concurrently, there was an assumption that visas were a transparent and fair system if the rules were followed and the right documents were presented, often based on the generally fewer requirements when traveling from the Global North to the Global South. As someone who held a South Asian passport herself until recently, Shubham recognised that an understanding of visa "savvy" was a skill developed over time and through multiple applications, rather than



Fig. 2: "Your documentation is incomplete ... I don't see your grandfather's birth certificate." Illustration by Xiaolan Lin (@xiaolanlan65).

an inherent ability. This is an aspect that remains invisible to those with European passports. In addition, it was finally only after direct intervention from the European colleagues in the embassy that the visas were eventually processed.

Institutions possess far more power to influence and support visa application systems than individuals. When they do step in to facilitate Global South academic mobilities, the experiences can become easier. During his doctoral studies in Switzerland, Biren, an early career South Asian academic, was able to get a two-year visa to conduct archival research in the UK only with the support of his faculty. They helped sponsor this expensive application, which costs a minimum of 500 GBP as of 2022 (including service and processing fees). Unlike his other colleagues at the department, who had European or North American passports and could easily choose to travel for work in the UK archives at short notice during teaching breaks, his travels required a great deal of advance planning and money. Receiving support from his department was also not straightforward – as a rule they did not sponsor visa applications, and only the intervention of senior faculty allowed for an exception to be made, on the grounds that Biren's passport put him at a professional disadvantage compared to his colleagues. After applying again for a UK visa for a research stay in 2022 from another European country, Biren's visa was delayed, pushing back his trip and causing him to incur costs associated with changes in travel plans. Moreover, because of his one-year UK research stay, he became ineligible to apply for a South Korean visa to attend a conference, as visa rules there required him to apply from an OECD country where he had been resident for at least two years, a criteria he now met in neither place. Alternatively, he was given the option of applying from his home country, which would mean another expensive flight, and additional waiting time. Like Arundhati, he found himself attending an important conference virtually, presenting from home at 3:00 in the morning.

While many of the details in these stories seem specific to individual cases and are hard to generalise, they reveal a complex web of visa bureaucracy that appears to hinder rather than facilitate academic mobility, and that places the burden of navigating this system entirely on the individuals. As Biren testified, having been left stranded by delayed visas over the years has enabled him to learn a few tricks of the system. These included how far in advance one must apply, how to keep track of new visa categories, and how to refrain from booking tickets until the documents are secured. Such strategies to make visa applications smoother and more predictable effectively become an extra set of skills required for scholars from the Global South and also impose an emotional toll. While the stories often appear as funny anecdotes in conversations, their treatment as inherently suspicious can be humiliating, and conversely, getting a visa can feel like an achievement, rather than a mere necessity. For Arundhati, the experience



Fig. 1: "All passports, please keep passport ready." Illustration by Xiaolan Lin (@xiaolanlan65).

with academic travel led her to reconsider a conference in South Africa entirely. Given the financial and mental stress it triggered, she decided to restrict her academic mobility only to specific kinds of conferences or workshops that felt indispensable, and avoid any others, despite the impact on her international exposure.

Mobility and career-building

Visa hurdles are not confined to early career academics and affect those in senior positions as well. Even for tenured academics who are able to turn down travel opportunities more often, it eventually becomes an imperative to reconnect with international networks, to show up and be counted.⁴ For Kamal, a South Asian academic currently based in the United States, an academic collaboration with a prestigious British research institute was delayed as his visa to attend the initial meeting never arrived. With the support of the research institution, he applied for a priority visa — more expensive, but with the (ultimately unrealised) guarantee of receiving the document within a specified time frame. Not only was he unable to travel, but his emails to withdraw his passport and application were answered in what he termed “standard bureaucratese,” insisting that his “case was being reviewed.” It was only after friends and family connected to the diplomatic services intervened on his behalf that he was able to collect his passport. While he waited at the visa centre to finally retrieve his documents, he encountered an elderly Indian woman in tears, unable to locate her passport, which had been mailed to an unknown address and could not be traced. As he left the centre, he discovered that he had finally been given a visa, but in haste, the visa authorities had given him one in the wrong category: as an accompanied minor.

Earlier in 2022, Kamal nearly missed two back-to-back conferences organised by a Swiss institution, as he struggled to convey to visa authorities why he was applying for a Swiss visa when the first conference was in Germany (both conferences were organised by the same Swiss institute, and were part of a series). As it happened, one of the conference venues was just on the other side of the Swiss border in Germany, a trip convenient to make if one was already located in Switzerland, but one that proved challenging to explain to a suspicious visa officer. These experiences highlight the importance of growing calls from within the academy to organise conferences and other networking events in places with more accommodating visa regimes, ones that do not place undue logistical burdens on academics from the Global South.⁵

For Kamal, missing the event in the UK was not a major setback. As he put it, it was primarily the research institution that was benefitting from his expertise. Due to the many international opportunities for collaboration he received throughout his career, he could now afford to travel when and where he was interested, rather than depend on them to build his career. In contrast, Arundhati and Biren saw international academic experience as pivotal to career advancement and testing their ideas in an international context. An “internationality imperative” has become the norm among scholars, increasingly constructed as an academic virtue, with greater international exposure synonymous with prestigious positions and distinguished careers.⁶ As scholars have noted, international mobility is now essential not simply to facilitate upward mobility among early career academics, but rather stave off the downward mobility associated with not participating in such networks.⁷



Fig. 3: “We welcome our international participants, who have traveled so far to be here.” Illustration by Xiaolan Lin (@xiaolanlan65).

Systemic issues in academic mobility

Internationalisation is also an outcome of the increasingly market-like behaviours of universities, for whom it is a way to remain competitive in a globalised, increasingly privatised system of education, by attracting both international faculty as well as fee-paying students.⁸ In this system, universities stand to benefit as much as — if not more than — academics from increasing internationalisation. Yet, as the experiences of the academics interviewed for this piece show, the onus of facilitating this mobility is on individual academics. For those from the Global South, this implies dealing with hostile visa bureaucracies, largely out of sight of both academic departments and their colleagues, and with only sporadic institutional support.

Moreover, the experiences of hindered academic mobility depicted here reflect only one layer of the interconnected inequalities associated with mobility. They do not fully capture, for instance, the socioeconomic positions of mobile academics.⁹ Arundhati was aware that despite the stressful experience she had, she was one of the few scholars in her PhD cohort even able to consider international conference

attendance, largely due to being from a more well-to-do and already internationally connected background than the others, many of whom were either unable to access or unaware of such opportunities. Her public university in India could not have borne the full costs of sending her or any of her colleagues to an international conference. This form of “mobility capital” tends to accrue to those who already possess it, and reproduces and amplifies existing inequalities within national and international contexts.¹⁰ Those who gain international exposure are more likely to be internationally mobile in the future, including through becoming adept at navigating visas.

Relatedly, Shubham and her colleague’s experience of visa bureaucracy also made her consider the underlying economic and political mechanisms of the partnership that enabled the workshop in the first place. As is the case with many funding bodies, the grant funding that their project received in Europe required partnership with Global South colleagues and universities, a condition levied by many such funding bodies. Thus, while there was an underlying narrative that her colleague’s visa entanglements were reflective of Global South academics needing too much support and failing to show gratitude for the help they received, from another perspective

it was the European university that benefitted from funding received due at least in part to their Global South partners.

I conclude this reflection on academic mobility and passports with an anecdote from Amartya Sen, which I was reminded of by Kamal.¹¹ When the Nobel-prize winning economist Sen, then Master of Trinity College at Cambridge University, arrived at Heathrow airport, he was questioned (as all without UK/EU passports are) at the immigration desk. “Where will you be staying?” asked the immigration officer. “At the Master’s Lodge in Trinity College,” replied Sen. “I see,” said the officer, “And is the Master a close friend of yours?”

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Fig. 4: “You got it!” Illustration by Xiaolan Lin (@xiaolanlan65).

The Composite Elephant

An Unseen History of Connected Asia and Beyond

Pichayapat Naisupap

Throughout history, the elephant has been employed to represent abstract, unseen ideas of royalty, sanctity, and morality. In Asia, elephant traditions that were passed down and spread out from ancient India formed a strand connecting various Asian cultures together, ranging at the very least from Persia to Southeast Asia. Histories of connected Asia have been written mainly by focusing on cross-cultural contacts but still lack in noticing what has been shared across cultures. This article will shed light on the iconography and iconology of the composite elephant, which helped create commensurability between Asian cultures and beyond in an age of globalization of the early modern period.

Asian elephants that we know today, *Elephas maximus*, live in the wilderness located in India, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Borneo, and mainland Southeast Asia. In the past, the distribution of Asian elephants was vaster than in the present, spanning at least from Persia in the west to Southeast Asia and southern China in the east. Peoples in these wide areas must have encountered real elephants or at least known relatively well about them. These individuals incorporated iconography of the elephant into their everyday artifacts and rituals starting in pre-historic times.

Due to its great size and charismatic behavior, the elephant has been employed to emblemize kingship and religious ideas. As one elephant treatise found in India puts it, "The creation of elephants ... was holy, and for the profit of sacrifice to the gods, and especially for the welfare of kings."¹ This statement was believed to have been said by the sage Palakapya, the nominal founding father of Indic elephantology, or *gajaśāstra*. It also shows the two main qualities of the elephant: holy and kingly. A genre of the elephant treatise can be found across Asia, for example in Sri Lanka, mainland Southeast Asia, and the Malay world. From the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea, the mass of the elephant's body thus helped abstract, unseen ideas about royalty and holiness become visible and tangible for people living in the mundane world.

The composite elephant has been a prevalent motif in representing abstract ideas in human cultures. It is a figure of the elephant formed completely or partly by other elements such as other kinds of animals, humans, plants, etc. A figure of the composite elephant usually retains an easily recognizable outline of the elephant as the animal with the trunk. The earliest known motif of the composite elephant is a representation of the Indic elephant-headed god Ganesh. Throughout history, the composite elephant has been part of a grand concept of the internal unity of all beings and things in the cosmos.² This concept has been found through other philosophical equivalents across Eurasia such as Brahman in the Indic religions and Neoplatonism in the Abrahamic religions.

The holy and kingly composite elephant

One elephant was brought into a town. A group of blind men who never knew about the elephant before came to inspect the animal, touching it on different parts of its body. When they gathered to discuss the nature of the animal in the end, they could never reach an agreement. This story originated in India and became a parable in the Buddhist scripture *Sūtra Pitaka*, which the Buddha employed to teach his disciples about how different perceptions lead to discord.

When this parable traveled into the Persianate world, it served to endorse the majesty of a sultan and, more importantly,

to make the idea of an infinite God digestible to the basic senses. A poem in one Persian manuscript of Herat in 1569 tells a story of a sultan's elephant in a city not far from Ghūr in today's Afghanistan. The elephant was kept to prove the sultan's "splendor, rank and state." Blind delegates then came to investigate this rare animal, each sensing its different members and striving to acquire a clear image of it. In the end, each "had but known one part, and no man all. ... Naught of Almighty God can creatures learn, / Nor e'en the wise such mysteries discern."³

In this Persian manuscript, not only the elephant was used to express the grandeur of the sultan's kingship, but it was also used to materialize the infinity of God. The poem is accompanied by an illustration of a white elephant surrounded by four blind men. Another Persian manuscript also includes a similar trope of a composite white elephant

being ridden by an Islamic ruler and examined by blind men [Fig. 1].

Similar to a crowned figure in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* frontispiece, an art piece at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto shows a figure of the elephant composed of other animals and men and ridden by a mahout [Fig. 2]. This watercolor work dates back to the early 17th century and was signed by Dawlat Khan, an artist from Agra of the Mughal Empire. In this work, the elephant and the rider, representing the king, are seamlessly connected by a multitude of animal and human elements to the extent that they are hardly separated from each other. The elephant and the king are in harmony, unifying and governing both people and animals under one universal realm. This iconology mirrors the Neoplatonic kingship and imperial ideology of the Mughal Empire.⁴

Moving further east, from Persia and India into Southeast Asia, where the Indic elephantology was translated into vernacular versions, an elephant treatise in Thailand tells an origin story of the divine elephant. The elephant in the Thai elephantology was composed of twenty-six deities [Fig. 3]. According to one Thai manuscript, a group of 26 deities descended from a heaven and formed together the elephant, each possessing different members of the elephant's body.⁵

Today, this divine composition is still believed and worshipped by Thai elephant caretakers. When one abuses an elephant, one has to beg for forgiveness not only for the offended elephant but also for the deities embedded in the physical body of the elephant.

Long before these composite figures of the elephant, the earliest composite iconography of the elephant was the god Ganesh. The tradition of Ganesh can be traced back to the early centuries of the first millennium. One of the earliest sculptures of this god was found in the northern region of India. This sculpture was found in the Pushkarim well in the city of Mathura and can be dated to the period between the first and third centuries.⁶ The mythology of Ganesh spread across various Asian cultures soon after it had been elaborated throughout the Gupta period in India.⁷ Elephant treatises found in South and Southeast Asia often started with venerating Ganesh before delving into other topics.

Navanārikuñjara

A popular motif of the composite elephant was found in a term called *navanārikuñjara*. The word itself indicates the composite nature of the concept. The elephant, *kuñjara*, is formed by nine women, *navanāri*. The historical columnist Shefali Vaidya has explained that the elephant composed of the nine-woman figures represents strength as well as control over sense organs.⁸ The iconography has been favored in Indian art since the 16th century at its earliest. Said visual has been adapted to vernacular tastes such as in the Mughal Empire, Sri Lanka, and Thailand [Figs. 4-6].

The French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689), who visited Golconda in the middle of the 17th century, claimed in his written record that he had witnessed a royal procession wherein a motif of the *navanārikuñjara* was brought into a real performance by agile "public women." He wrote that "nine of them very cleverly represented the form of an elephant, four making the four feet, four others the body, and one the trunk, and the King, mounted above on a kind of throne, in that way made his entry into the town."⁹

In Europe, a *navanārikuñjara* motif can be found in the Dutch Republic through an art piece by the 17th-century Dutch painter Willem Schellinks (1627-1678). Despite the elephant representation, he had never traveled to Asia. His "visit" to Asia was mediated through his networks which



Fig. 1: Illustration of a story of an elephant and blind men in the late-16th-century Persian manuscript. Denman Waldo Ross Collection, Accession number: 09.324c © The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Fig. 2 (left): The 17th-century watercolor of the composite elephant found in Agra. Accession number: AKM143 © Aga Khan Museum, Toronto.

Fig. 3 (left): A figure of the composite elephant in a 19th-century Thai elephant treatise. Digitised Manuscript, Shelfmark Or 13652, fol. 3v © British Library Board.



Fig. 4 (right): A navanārikuñjara elephant in a 17th-century Mughal miniature. Accession number: 1985.247 © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



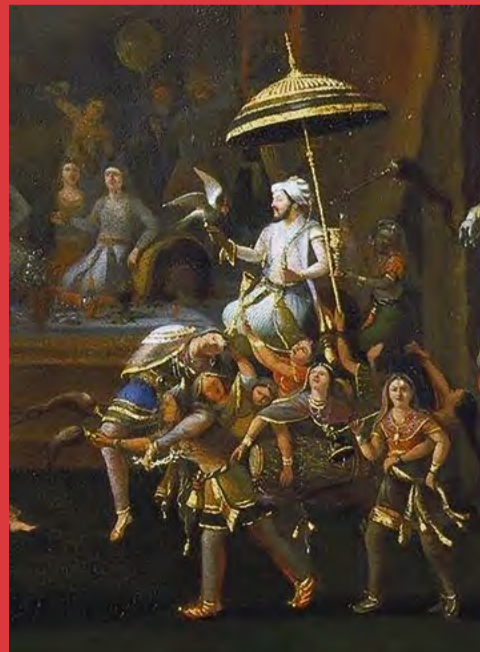
Fig. 5 (right): A navanārikuñjara elephant on a 19th-century wooden panel found in Sri Lanka. Anthropology, Object number: 219iii © Horniman Museum and Gardens, London.



Fig. 6 (left): A navanārikuñjara elephant in a 19th-century Thai elephant treatise. Digitised Manuscript, Shelfmark: Or 13652, fol. 18r © British Library Board.



Fig. 7 (right): A navanārikuñjara elephant ridden by a Mughal prince in the painting by Willem Schellinks. South & South East Asia Collection, Accession number: IS.30-1892 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



gave him opportunities to meet with contemporary European orientalists. Two of the paintings by Schellinks – one kept in Musée Guimet in Paris and the other in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London – portray the fantastical scene of the succession war between the four sons of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592-1666). Each prince is on his respective vehicle. One of these vehicles is a figure of the elephant composed in the *navanārikuñjara* style [Fig. 7].

A fragile thread

By looking at the composite elephant, we can see the interconnectedness of a variety of elephant traditions in Asia. To recall the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s need to write a connected history, the composite elephant can be one of the “fragile threads” that weaves together various polities in Asia, especially within the Indian Ocean world.¹¹ The composite elephant is one amongst many Asian elephant traditions that has commensurability within the region. Beyond Asia, as seen from the case of Willem Schellinks, this composite iconography may extend the connective thread into Europe, where there is an elephant tradition passed down from antiquity and Middle Ages that also associated the elephant with kingship and Christianity. The fragile thread of the composite elephant, thus, brings to light a historical continuum of the emblematic elephant across Eurasia.

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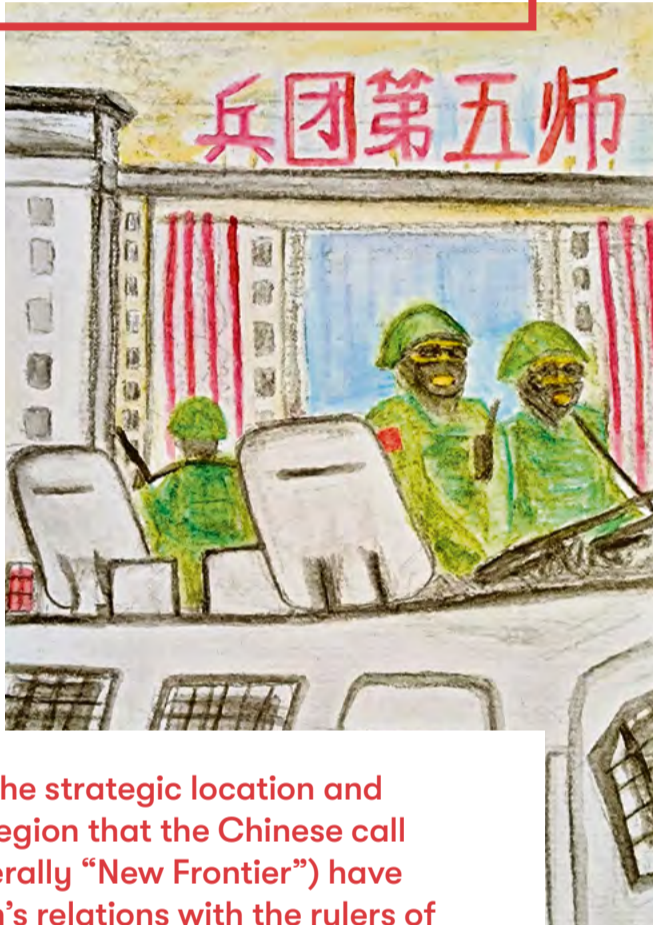
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Xinjiang as Eurasia's Energy Hub

A Governance Perspective

Susann Handke



From the outset, the strategic location and resources of the region that the Chinese call Xinjiang (新疆, literally “New Frontier”) have shaped the region’s relations with the rulers of China proper. Currently, the Chinese debate hints at a potential future for Xinjiang as an energy hub (i.e., a centre of transnational energy activity). This notion is based on the region’s role in China’s fossil economy and on the central government’s plans to position Xinjiang as a vital producer and exporter of renewable electricity. For these plans to facilitate a more sustainable future, does it matter how Xinjiang is governed? Are infrastructure links benign and neutral?

Recent developments in China’s energy policy suggest that the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereafter Xinjiang) will play an increasingly important role in the country’s energy system. This positioning relates to Xinjiang’s resource endowment of fossil fuels, its preferable location for the generation of electricity from renewable energy sources, and its energy infrastructure connections with neighbouring countries.

The importance of these characteristics are reflected in a 2020 White Paper that includes China’s “New Energy Security Strategy.”¹ This Strategy foretells large-scale transformations that the country’s energy sector will undergo in the near future, and it calls for an enhanced engagement in international cooperation, in particular under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Furthermore, the Chinese government’s dual goal of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and becoming carbon neutral around 2060 – the so-called “dual carbon”

(双碳, *shuang tan*) goal – focuses on stabilising and then reducing the volume of carbon dioxide that is emitted in the course of the combustion of fossil fuels (i.e., coal, crude oil, and natural gas). Thus, the country’s large coal industry and numerous facilities that process crude oil and natural gas have to transition to emission-avoiding modes of operation, while new installations for the generation of renewable energy will have to be added.

Finally, the Chinese leadership frequently points to the need to enhance the country’s energy security. Recent comments by President Xi Jinping re-emphasise this focus and also suggest that the availability of domestic resources will determine China’s low-carbon energy transition.² Generally, the concept of energy security concerns the reliable availability of affordable and environmentally sustainable energy supplies. The Chinese leadership’s particular interpretation of energy security has practical implications for economic and infrastructure planning: a geographical diversification of supply routes under the Belt and Road Initiative, the emission-avoiding utilisation of domestic coal, and the diversification of fuels,

especially the use of domestically available renewable energy sources.

Xinjiang has the potential to play a vital role in Chinese schemes to enhance the country’s energy security for two reasons. First, its geography facilitates the import of oil and natural gas via pipelines from Central Asia, contributing to the diversification of supply origins and routes. Second, its geographical features and industries that produce vital components for the utilisation of wind and solar power make Xinjiang a crucial player in China’s decarbonisation strategy. These considerations have enhanced Xinjiang’s position in the Chinese energy debate. Zhang Xin, an influential regional industrial leader and member of the National People’s Congress, even suggested that the region should become an “energy hub.”³ In any case, investment in various segments of Xinjiang’s energy sector is set to increase in the coming years.

The function of an energy hub is to generate, transfer, and store various forms of energy. Thus, a regional energy hub is an interface between different energy infrastructures and load centres.⁴ To operate the energy hub smoothly by balancing its inputs and energy services, a finetuning of the regulatory framework is necessary, especially when large volumes of variable renewable electricity have to be absorbed. Besides these day-to-day regulatory aspects, governance structures need to guide the long-term trajectory of the low-carbon energy transition. In fact, constant government involvement and monitoring of the transformation process are necessary, mainly because, other than in the past, the transition from one fuel to another is not instigated by the more cost-effective or convenient usage of the new fuel. The government has to create incentives and a favourable regulatory environment for the deployment of renewable energy sources. The incremental trajectory and countless uncertainties require frequent government interference and policy adjustments. Therefore, the low-carbon energy transition is described as a governed transition.⁵

To realise the establishment of an energy hub in Xinjiang and ensure its contribution to the government’s dual-carbon goal, the region will need to undertake a large-scale industrial transformation, receive and allocate huge sums of investment, and establish new energy infrastructure, potentially expanding interconnections with neighbouring countries. This prospect warrants a closer look at existing infrastructures and the region’s governance system that will have to facilitate the implementation of new energy policies and cope with potential challenges.

Legacies of development policies

For more than two millennia, consecutive Chinese dynasties have been interacting with Xinjiang and the broader region at the centre of the Eurasian mega-continent. Yet, only in the 1950s, a stronger Han Chinese presence manifested itself in this part of the world and began to determine Xinjiang’s mode of governance and its socio-economic development.

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps or *bingtuan* (兵团), formed by Han Chinese settlers from other parts of the country, have played an important role in the region’s political economy. The responsibilities of these military-agricultural colonies concerned three interrelated policy objectives: territorial security, economic development, and the management of ethnic relations. In 2010, about 2.6 million people (12 percent of Xinjiang’s total population) belonged to the *bingtuan*.⁶ A number of urban *bingtuan* settlements have merged with surrounding areas, bringing more people under the control of its administration and thus enlarging this “corporate state” within the state that is directly administered by the Chinese Communist Party.⁷ These entities are able to exclusively channel resources and opportunities to their predominantly Han Chinese constituencies.

In addition to Xinjiang’s hybrid administration, throughout the region’s modern history, modes to exploit the region’s products and natural resources have shaped its evolving institutions and governance structures. Hence, Xinjiang’s socio-economic development and its persistent problems must be understood as a complex interaction between the central government’s policy objectives and the region’s unique governance structure.

No doubt, previous state-led development programmes provide some clues for the evaluation of Xinjiang’s emerging role in China’s low-carbon energy future. Generally, these strategies sought to combine Xinjiang’s socio-economic progress with national security considerations, related to both external threats and instances of domestic instability. During the reform era, starting with the 7th Five-Year Plan (1986–1990), Xinjiang and other interior regions and provinces provided crucial energy supplies to China’s eastern coast, enabling China’s fast entry into the global economy in the 1990s and early 2000s.

However, the rapid economic development of the coastal areas caused severe imbalances in the economy. To address these inequalities, the Chinese government implemented the so-called “Open Up the West Development Programme” (西部大开发, *xibu da kaifa*) from the turn of the century onwards. Xinjiang was part of this development programme that primarily consisted of energy projects and environmental measures. Moreover, since its commencement in 2013, Xinjiang has also been a vital component of China’s transcontinental Belt and Road Initiative.

A central legacy of these state-led programmes is the neglect of Indigenous interests and only marginal participation of members of non-Han ethnicities in the drafting and management of the schemes. Since the early 1980s, the reform and modernisation era and its exclusionary setup in Xinjiang have led to ethnic tensions that resulted in protests and violence. The underlying sentiment can be described as “resistance to a Xinjiang shaped by Beijing.”⁸

The Chinese government sought to achieve stability through economic development, combined with ever increasing suppression.⁹ This approach eventually led to the establishment of mass detention centres. These facilities are mainly administered by the *bingtuan*.¹⁰ Furthermore, an unprecedented, intrusive form of surveillance is deployed over the entire population of the region, backed up by a heavily expanded force of paramilitary troops and their pervasive presence in people’s daily lives. Xinjiang’s governance structures are neither benign nor sustainable.

Cross-border infrastructure to reconstruct the larger region

The construction of Xinjiang’s cross-border infrastructure is closely linked with the central government’s development policies for the region. As such, the programmes follow the dual purpose of addressing economic development needs and enhancing the security situation of Xinjiang. By doing so, the Chinese government submits Xinjiang’s neighbouring countries to a region-building project that derives its objectives from the domestic, Xinjiang-focused state-building efforts. Thus, cross-border cooperation externalises the Chinese government’s development-security logic.¹¹ In other words, governance objectives that the Chinese government seeks to realise in Xinjiang become implicitly part of China’s bilateral relations with the countries that maintain close economic ties with Xinjiang and/or share a common border with it. This particularly concerns the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). China thus utilises bilateral relations for the solution to problems that the leadership has detected in Xinjiang (i.e., terrorism, separatism, and extremism).

Two transnational pipeline projects coincided with the “Open Up the West

Fig. 1 (above): Chinese paramilitary personnel in the streets of Shuanghe City, which was founded out of a *bingtuan* settlement in 2014. (Artwork by the author)

Programme” during the first decade of the 21st century. The construction of the Kazakh-Chinese oil pipeline was the first large cross-border energy project. Plans to build the pipeline were already discussed during the late 1990s. Eventually, the changed geopolitical situation after 9/11 and Chinese concerns regarding seaborne oil imports after the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003 accelerated the project. Indeed, around the turn of the century, the geopolitics of China’s rise and the complexities of securing energy supplies for the country’s expanding economy merged and crystallised in the region.¹² The pipeline became operational in 2006. Subsequently, the construction of the first line of the Central Asia-China gas pipeline began in Turkmenistan in 2007. Both pipeline systems were extended in the following years, while Chinese energy companies further strengthened their presence in Central Asia.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is another example of transnational infrastructure. It forms an important component of the Belt and Road Initiative that was launched in 2013. At least in its initial conceptualisation, the Corridor included the construction of an oil pipeline. It was designed to link the Pakistani port of Gwardar with Kashgar, traversing challenging physical terrain and entering China at the Khunjerab Pass – at an altitude of almost 4700 metres. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor currently includes other energy-related projects, such as coal, wind, and hydropower projects as well as electricity transmission lines.¹³ Even if the oil pipeline will not be built, the Corridor emerges as a complex, networked energy and transport linkage that connects Pakistan to Xinjiang.

Indeed, these infrastructures not only link Xinjiang’s neighbours to the energy and infrastructure policies that China pursues in Xinjiang; they also transmit the Chinese government’s prevalent governance modes and objectives, all of which are inherent in the realisation of the projects. These structures thus project ideational and real power.¹⁴

In fact, infrastructure and modes of governance, which are embedded in infrastructure construction and management, build long-lasting legacies. Energy infrastructures in particular create socio-technical landscapes that exist at the intersection of governance and territory.¹⁵ Large infrastructure projects transform the utilisation of the landscapes where they are deployed, often with significant societal and environmental impacts. They change how people interact with and within these landscapes, while also influencing environmental services that these landscapes provide to the communities. Moreover, the “obduracy” of infrastructures – their long-term utilisation and presence – extends practices related to these projects for many years.¹⁶ In Xinjiang, governance comes with a specific manifestation of Chinese state power.

Fig. 2 (left): Laying of the Central Asia-China gas pipeline, which began in 2007. (Artwork by the author)

Fig. 3 (below): China’s border gate at the Khunjerab Pass, at the border with Pakistan. (Artwork by the author)



The political ecology of imagining Xinjiang as an energy hub

Recent research provides an overview of the Xinjiang’s current energy situation, describing its potential for the development of non-fossil, renewable energy sources (e.g., wind, solar, and hydropower). However, the authors do not question the effectiveness of additional investments in the region’s energy sector to realise Xinjiang’s low-carbon transition. They primarily discuss Xinjiang’s favourable conditions for a further extension of its energy sector, considering the region as a “strategic lynchpin for maintaining the country’s energy security.”¹⁷ By doing so, the authors only touch upon one aspect of energy security, i.e. the availability of fuels. This limited analysis omits the two other components of the concept, as it does not consider the costs of expanding Xinjiang’s energy sector nor the sustainability of the sector’s large-scale transformation. This latter aspect relates to the societal acceptance of the transformation and environmental impacts.

Moreover, by closely linking Xinjiang’s energy future with the Chinese government’s dual-carbon goal, a project of truly global significance, these investments seem to reiterate the notion of an ecological modernization of China. This was the key narrative of earlier development programmes: “Economic growth and ecological protection will feed each other in a virtuous mutually sustaining circle.”¹⁸ Thus far, this assumption has proven erroneous in western China.

The legacies of earlier state-led, large-scale development programmes point to the danger that a strengthening of Xinjiang’s posture in China’s energy system will most likely increase incentives for the government to further enhance state control over Xinjiang’s economy and population. This will amplify the marginalisation of the region’s Indigenous ethnic groups, which has been caused by a continued demise of traditional livelihoods, the destruction of socio-environmental spaces, and a denial of their participation in the imagination of Xinjiang’s (energy) future.

Concluding remarks

Infrastructure links are not neutral. Energy infrastructures transform the communities and regions that they traverse, creating new socio-technical landscapes. They rely on governance structures that shape and maintain a country’s political and administrative system. Infrastructure cannot be built and operated without these governance structures, as large-scale construction projects require an organisational framework to channel personnel, funding, and material resources. After the construction process, governance structures support the functioning of the infrastructure links. Hence, infrastructures come with an obdurate presence of governance structures that they embed, preserve, and – in case of cross-border linkages – even export.

Continued efforts by the Chinese government to economically integrate Xinjiang with the rest of China and intrusive methods of state control have brought about vast violence against the region’s Indigenous peoples and inflicted severe damage on the environment. Chinese-led transnational infrastructure projects that connect neighbouring countries with Xinjiang export Chinese modes of governance. Undoubtedly, countries that link their political economy to Xinjiang’s economic development seek to benefit from its resources and geography. Yet, they need to be cognisant of the region’s distressing political ecology. The imagination of Xinjiang as an energy hub, especially one playing an important role in China’s dual-carbon trajectory, merely upgrades previous development strategies, greenwashing decades of environmental degradation and human rights violations.

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Silk Road Treasures on Show at a New Exhibition at the Louvre Museum in Paris

Elena Paskaleva

“The Splendours of Uzbekistan’s Oases” opened on 23 November 2022 and will run until 6 March 2023. It is the first Louvre exhibition to feature more than 170 artefacts from the Silk Road urban centres situated on the territory of present-day Uzbekistan.



Fig. 1 (above): Entrance to the exhibition, Louvre, Paris. (Photograph by the author, 2022).

Fig. 2 (left): Detail of the Southern wall of the Hall of the Ambassadors from the mid-7th century CE depicting a sacrificial procession to a Zoroastrian fire temple, most likely on Nowruz, the Persian New Year. (Photograph by the author, 2022).

The title of the exhibition entices the viewer to believe that the history of the vast region, narrated from the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE until the powerful Timurid empire from the early 15th century, is closely related to the history of the contemporary nation-state of Uzbekistan. The truth is that the first Uzbek ethnic tribes settled in Transoxiana, the territory between the Oxus (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes (Sur Darya) rivers, at the beginning of the 16th century. The Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and Islamic artefacts on show were created long before the borders of present-day Uzbekistan were delimited by Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union in the early 1920s. In an attempt to attract international investors and to boost the tourist potential of the post-Soviet independent state of Uzbekistan, the exhibition serves a rather politically connotated agenda. The show is co-organized by the Louvre in partnership with the Art and Culture Development Foundation of the Republic of Uzbekistan established under the Cabinet of Ministers. The French President Emmanuel Macron and the Uzbek President Shavkat Mirzoyev attended the officially opening on 22 November 2022 in Paris.

The exhibition took more than five years to organize. Initially planned in the larger *Hall Napoléon*, the current show had to adjust to the newly allocated and much smaller *enfilade* gallery of the *Richelieu Wing* on the first underground floor of the

Louvre [Fig. 1]. Due to the lack of space, the star piece – the southern wall of the Sogdian Hall of the Ambassadors from the mid-7th century [Fig. 2] is exhibited in the Islamic Galleries which disrupts the logical flow of this important exhibition.

In order to fully grasp the significance of the event, the viewers are repeatedly told by means of short texts illustrating each historic period that the artefacts they see leave Uzbekistan for the first time. Indeed, the span of the exhibition, chronologically covering more than 1,900 years of the most sophisticated cultural production along the Silk Roads, is truly breath-taking! The curators, Yannick Lintz, recently appointed as president of Musée Guimet, and Rocco Rante, an archaeologist in the Department of Islamic Art at the Louvre, have had access to the collections of eight national and local museums. Some of the artefacts have never been on show even in Uzbekistan because of their fragility or recent restorations. Originally, additional artworks for the Louvre exhibition could be borrowed from the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, but due to the economic and political restrictions on Russia as a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine, that exchange was impossible.

The star attractions of the exhibition include the head of a Kushan prince from Dalverzin tepa, 1st-2nd century CE [Fig. 3] and the Khalchayan statues, both sites found in the valley of the Surkhan Darya (a northern tributary of the Oxus) dating

from the Kushan period (40-230 CE). The area was occupied by the Yuezhi, a nomad group who migrated into the region of ancient Bactria in the middle of the 2nd century BCE after they were driven out of their homeland in present-day Gansu province in north-western China by a rival nomad clan. The Khalchayan palace was built in the Hellenistic period in the 2nd century BCE, and was excavated between 1959 and 1963 by the famous archaeologist and architectural historian Galina Pugachenkova (1915-2007). The paintings and almost life-size sculptures in painted clay recovered from the palace, rank among the most remarkable finds of the ancient world. The sculpture of the Khalchayan prince with armour from the 1st century CE [Fig. 4] is characterized by his slightly slanting eyes, long, thin moustache, and the hair tied with a ribbon typical of the steppe horsemen. He holds a sword in his right hand and a cataphract's armour in his left hand. His armours represent the triumph of the Kushans' princely aristocracy over the traditional cataphract warriors of the Sakas. In the early 3rd century CE, the Kushan Empire dissolved, probably due to the arrivals of the Huns.

Another fascinating group highlights the Bodhisattvas found in Dalverzin tepa, dating from the 3rd century CE. One of them is an impressive fragmentary statue of an elaborately dressed Bodhisattva wearing three necklaces, of which the last one opens towards the abdomen and is characteristic of

the adornments worn by Buddhist adherents of high rank [Fig. 5]. The lower part reveals his trousers decorated with belts typical of Buddhist costume.

The exhibition also features selected rare textiles. The silk shroud of Saint Josse from 970 is particularly interesting [Fig. 6]. The cloth protected the relics of Josse, a seventh-century Breton saint. The largest fragment is decorated with two elephants facing each other under which are two small, long-necked Chinese dragons. Camels are depicted on the borders as though in a moving caravan. The Arabic text reads ‘Glory and good fortune to the Qa’id Abu Mansur Bakhtekin, may God grant him long [life]’. This textile piece epitomises the complex cultural interactions along the Silk Roads in which Indian, Chinese, and local Zoroastrian visual vocabulary mixed. The Arabic inscription in the linear Kufic script marks the shift towards the Islamic history of Central Asia that starts as early as the 8th century CE with the Muslim conquest of 705, when Qutayba ibn Muslim became the governor of the historic province of Khurasan.

In the early decades of the Arab conquest many Zoroastrian and Buddhist monuments were burned by the invading armies. The exhibition showcases one of the most fascinating restoration projects conducted by the French restorer Delphine Elie-Lefebvre at the State Museum in Samarqand. The Kafir Qal’a gate consists of several fragments of carbonized wood that has been subjected

to very high temperatures and very little oxygen, highly unusual circumstances that have allowed the mineral matter to be preserved. The door reveals a complex composition depicting the seated four-armed figure of Nana, the widely venerated Sogdian and Bactrian goddess of prosperity, the equivalent of the Iranian goddess Anahita, surrounded by tiers of musicians, priests, and gift-bearers reflecting the social life of the Sogdians prior to 712.

Gradually, the city of Samarqand became the capital of several powerful Islamic empires that conquered larger parts of Central Asia. One of the most prominent and aesthetically sophisticated family that ruled across the Silk Roads are the Timurids. Their dynastic founder Amir Timur (r. 1370–1405), known in the west as Tamerlane, led numerous military campaigns from his capital city of Samarqand and surrounded it with villages bearing the names of the largest Islamic capitals: Sultaniyya, Shiraz, Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo. Timur and his descendants employed monumental architecture as a tool to legitimize their rule on a grand scale and to assert themselves as heirs to major Islamic empires. The exhibition features a fantastic wooden inlay door from around 1425 created by Timur's grandson Ulugh Beg (r. 1409–1449) for the Timurid dynastic mausoleum of Gur-i Amir, the family burial ground.

What is rather puzzling is the size and scale of the information on the Timurids provided by the curators. Both Timur and Ulugh Beg, who are highly regarded as the founding fathers of the Uzbek nation, are diminished to stickers on the wall the size of an index finger. Even if the limited exhibition space could not provide enough exposure, there could have been other more respectable ways to tell the stories of their glorious reigns by a world-renowned museum. What is even more disturbing are the images used for the two historic figures. The curators have decided to use portrait busts created by the Russian anthropologist Mikhail Gerasimov in 1941. Gerasimov was commissioned directly by Stalin to exhume the skeletons of the Timurids and to reconstruct their busts in order to prove the ethnogenetic origins of the Uzbek nation and to attribute the burials in the Timurid mausoleum to the male descendants of the dynasty. Gerasimov's expedition in Samarqand is regarded to this day as a highly controversial desecration of the entombments and as an assault on Islamic burial traditions. It seems that neither the French nor the Uzbek organizers were bothered to reflect on the accuracy of the historic truth as any information on Gerasimov is missing.

The purpose of the exhibition – to transport the viewers to the civilizations in the heart of Central Asia – seems to be fulfilled by the quality and variety of the 170 artefacts depicting Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Sogdian, and Islamic masterpieces. Yet the general European connoisseur is given very limited historic context in which to place these artefacts. The exhibition catalogue, published only in French, features exclusively French, Russian, and Uzbek authors, an agreement made by the Louvre and the Art and Culture Development Foundation. It provides short essays on the key periods highlighted in the exhibition and remains an important contribution to the study of the material culture along the Silk Roads.

In connection with the exhibition, a documentary directed by Jivko Darakchiev entitled "A Timeless Journey in Uzbekistan" was created in collaboration with the Louvre. The film was aired on 27 November 2022 on the Arte TV channel and can be viewed here (<https://vimeo.com/699748139/4ffffd4fffb>). It echoes the archaeological discoveries done by the Soviet scholars in the 1950s and 1960s, and links the artefacts to the actual modern history of Uzbekistan.

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Fig. 3 (top): Head of a Kushan prince, Dalverzin tepe, 1st-2nd century CE. (Photograph by the author, 2022).



Fig. 4 (above): The sculpture of the Khalechayan prince with armour from the 1st century CE. (Photograph by the author, 2022).



Fig. 5 (right): Statue of a Bodhisattva found in Dalverzin tepe from the 3rd century CE. (Photograph by the author, 2022).

Fig. 6 (below): Silk Shroud of Saint Josse from 970 CE. (Photograph by the author, 2022).



Representing Arthur Gunn

Popular Music, *American Idol*, and Imaginaries of Nepal

Benjamin Linder and Premila van Ommen



In the autumn of 2019, Arthur Gunn stood before three celebrity judges – Katy Perry, Lionel Richie, and Luke Bryan – hoping to become a contestant on the 18th season of ABC’s hit singing competition *American Idol*. Over the subsequent months, he became a favorite of judges and fans alike with his soulfully belted covers of folk, pop, and reggae songs. He would ultimately win second place in the competition during the season finale in May 2020. Born Dibesh Pokharel, Gunn was raised in Nepal, and this heritage was a prominent storyline for the producers of *American Idol*. It was also a prominent storyline for the thousands of Nepalis viewing his success from Nepal and around the world. However, these two viewing publics contextualized and interpreted Gunn/Pokharel very differently. This article explores the production of two divergent imaginaries of a singular artist, imaginaries that were based on distinct webs of semiotic relations within which Gunn was placed and understood. At its core, the divergence revolved around the nature of Pokharel’s relationship to his native Nepal – or, even more precisely, how different imaginaries of “Nepal” produced different conceptions of Arthur Gunn.

For the most part, American viewers indexed Gunn by placing his native Nepal in contradistinction to rural America, building a narrative redolent with American Dream mythologies. Meanwhile, Nepali viewers indexed Gunn by situating him within a different constellation of cultural signifiers and historical relations: Kathmandu’s rich musical history, diasporic Nepali cultural productions, emergent 21st-century iterations of Nepali identity, and more. While the latter was a more accurate picture, in both cases the significance of Arthur Gunn/Dibesh Pokharel – that is, what he represented and symbolized to different audiences – depended to a large degree on how “Nepal” itself was imagined and mobilized.

American Idol, American Dream

Throughout his time on *American Idol*, Gunn’s Nepali heritage was conspicuously featured by the show’s producers and judges. This in itself is unsurprising, since *American Idol* has a longstanding practice of framing contestants within American Dream narratives.¹ Plenty of other contestants are framed in terms of overcoming adversity: Just Sam, who beat out Gunn in the finale to win Season 18, came from a background singing in New York subway trains, as the show constantly reminded its audience. Gunn/Pokharel, however, appeared custom fitted for a specific archetype of the storyline: the striving immigrant who overcomes humble roots – not only “rags to riches,” but also “there to here.” More precisely, he could be made to fit that storyline, given most viewers’ limited knowledge of Nepal. This American understanding portrayed Gunn as an inspiring example of immigrant assimilation and the American Dream.

Fig. 1 (above): Arthur Gunn auditioning for the celebrity judges of *American Idol*. (Screenshot from YouTube. Original video property of ABC and *American Idol*)

Fig. 2 (right): Promotional poster advertising Arthur Gunn’s recent tour of Australia. (Image courtesy of S-Events & Multimedia, 2022).

Gunn rose to renown on the strength of his regional audition, and a promotional video package – which included a brief interview and sleekly produced montage – garnered millions of views on YouTube [Fig. 1].² It begins with the artist introducing himself: “My name is Dibesh Pokharel, and I go by the stage name called Arthur Gunn.” His accented voice continues over picturesque images of Nepal: drone shots of temples and courtyards, doves congregating around a famous *stupa*, Tibetan singing bowls, robed monks, distant figures walking mountain trails. The editing of the video reinforces an array of longstanding Western fantasies about Nepal – a place defined by exotic cities and awe-inspiring mountain landscapes, humble traditionalism and intrinsic spiritual wisdom. In other words, the video portrays Nepal as both geographically and culturally remote from America.

Gunn describes his longstanding love of music and explains that he moved to America after high school “because it’s the land of great opportunity.” The next shot: Dibesh and his family in front of their house in Wichita, Kansas, adorned in traditional Nepali garb. Towards the end of the video introduction, he explains that Wichita exposed him to bluegrass and country music and that *American Idol* is “a chance to make my American dream come true.” Even before Arthur Gunn sang a word, then, the show had effectively curated a particular perspective. It cultivated a precise story by positioning him in relation to a specific set of culturally coded images and Orientalist narratives.

The audition itself begins with Arthur greeting the judges with a “Namaste,” which Katy Perry gleefully returns. When the pleasantries are over, the 21-year old Gunn begins fingerpicking his acoustic guitar and singing a gravelly rendition of Bob Dylan’s classic “Girl from the North Country.” The judges seem taken but request a second tune. Gunn responds with a belted version of Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Have You Ever Seen the Rain?,” which would go on to become his signature cover throughout the competition. The judges appear instantly impressed. When he hits the refrain, Katy Perry beams while Luke Bryan and Lionel Richie high-five. In the discussion that follows, Gunn explains that he first auditioned at an

open call, when the show brought its bus to Wichita, Kansas. Perry responds: “So you just brought your guitar, you came to the bus, and you sang your song.” Gunn affirms. “I like it,” she says, followed by Luke Bryan: “I mean, what an American story. This is in the middle of Kansas!” Moments later, Lionel Richie physically embraces Gunn, saying, “You are the story we need to tell, and welcome to the world, my friend.” The clear impression was one of delighted surprise on the part of the judges: *How could a kid from Nepal sing Bob Dylan and Creedence Clearwater Revival so beautifully?*

Subsequent episodes of the show relentlessly reinforced this perspective and emphasized Gunn’s heritage. Thus, the show built a clear narrative around Gunn: a Nepali kid who discovered American roots music in Wichita, a bright-eyed immigrant chasing his own American dream of rock stardom. This portrait was meant to be inspiring precisely because of the imagined distance, both geographical and cultural, that Gunn was supposed to have traversed on his road to success. The show’s judges, promotional videos, and strategic editing all framed Gunn as an embodiment of immigrant dreams and cultural assimilation. None of this denies Gunn’s formidable musical talent. However, the not-so-subtle storyline

presented by *American Idol* viewed this talent as especially exceptional given Arthur Gunn’s identity and heritage.

For both Americans and Nepalis, “Nepal” was a critical signifier in the web of semiotic relations through which Arthur Gunn was interpreted. *American Idol* – and presumably the show’s American audience as well – composed a particular (and particularly provincial) image of Gunn. Continuing a longstanding interest in presenting “inspiring” stories, the show presented Dibesh Pokharel as a humble Nepali kid with big dreams, an intrepid youth who made his way to Kansas and discovered American roots music. This portrayal relies upon, and dovetails with, tired Orientalist fantasies about Nepal as intrinsically remote, exotic, traditional, underdeveloped, spiritual, rural, and un-/pre-modern. Kansas, the archetypal embodiment of Middle America, becomes the agent of transformation and opportunity, the cultural geography that broadened Gunn’s musical horizons and opened new professional doors. By this interpretation, the webs of meaning composing Arthur Gunn all but require a humble origin story in an exotic, non-Western place. Nepal, at least as imagined by many Americans, seemed to fit the bill.

The delight with which the judges evaluated Gunn, his substantial talent notwithstanding, stemmed to some extent from their surprise at his virtuosity with Western music. In part, this presumes that Nepalis lack a connection with such genres. It implicitly suggests that Gunn was a wonderful folk singer and guitar player *notwithstanding* his Nepali origins. On the season finale in May 2020, Arthur Gunn played yet another arrangement of Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Have You Ever Seen the Rain?” The same B-roll of South Asian mountains, monks, and temples introduced his performance. After the song, Luke Bryan said, “If there are any more like you in Kathmandu, please get on the phone and call them and tell them to come out next year. Please!” The other judges laughed amicably, and Lionel Richie chimed in: “So true!” Our point is not to disparage the *American Idol* judges, but rather to highlight the central importance of their imaginaries about Nepal for how they made sense of Arthur Gunn.



The transnational lineages of Nepali music

Bryan's comments resonated quite differently for the thousands of Nepalis around the world who were following Gunn's success. For those familiar with Kathmandu and the Nepali diaspora, Arthur Gunn was not an anomaly at all, except insofar as he broke through to global fame. Indeed, the irony of Bryan's comment is that Kathmandu is filled with talented young musicians proficient not only in "traditional" Nepali genres, but also in rock, folk, blues, jazz, reggae, fusion, heavy metal, and hip-hop. Kathmandu's music scene is teeming with diverse artists, all of whom embody long histories of mobility and transnationalism that link Kathmandu with the world beyond. When Bryan asked if there are any others in Kathmandu, Nepalis around the world laughed not because there are not, but because it seemed patently obvious that there are. From the beginning, Nepali viewing publics situated Arthur Gunn not within narratives of cultural assimilation and the American Dream, but within long histories of musical creativity in Nepal and across the Nepali diaspora. On the one hand, Arthur Gunn was placed in relation to a different set of signifiers, such that "Kansas" decreased in explanatory importance. On the other hand, the assemblage of "Nepal" was still crucial, but its particular meaning was shifted.

Nepalis, both inside Nepal and around the world, actively followed Arthur Gunn's success on *American Idol*. When his audition video began spreading in early 2020, Nepalis watched, circulated, and discussed it widely and eagerly. There was, to be sure, a certain degree of hometown pride and vicariousness in such viewing. There may even have been a bit of American Dream mythology among some. By and large, though, Nepalis did not understand Gunn as an exception to the modern Nepali music scene, but rather as a direct descendent of it. Gunn was not a wonderful folk-rock musician despite coming from Kathmandu, but because he came from Kathmandu. Nepalis had a different set of cultural and historical touchstones through which to make sense of Gunn: the long history of rock n' roll in Kathmandu, spaces of rich (sub)cultural production, and diasporic circulations to places like Hong Kong and London. This was the idea of "Nepal" within which many Nepalis understood Gunn's style – not a landscape of remote mysticism, but a real place. This yielded a different "Arthur Gunn" altogether, one who embodied and reflected a different set of geographic, cultural, and historical imaginaries.

For us authors, Gunn immediately evoked not imaginaries of Kansas and rural Americana, but the cosmopolitan cultural spaces of Kathmandu and Nepali enclaves abroad [Fig. 2]. Arthur Gunn moved to Kansas after completing his schooling in Nepal. For the American viewing public, this displacement is a crucial chapter for framing Arthur Gunn's affect and musical style. His music, by this logic, is rooted in American lineages of folk, roots, and rock. Nepal becomes the foil, the origin point from which Gunn had to move outward in order to encounter Bob Dylan, John Denver, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. There is a familiar politics of authenticity at play, whereby "authentic" Nepal cannot explain such music being performed by Arthur Gunn, but "authentic" America can. Such perspectives reveal the way in which Western imaginaries of South Asia obfuscate popular music history in Nepal.

Even if Arthur Gunn fortified his interest in country and bluegrass music after moving to Wichita, his musical stylings were clearly forged in relation to music scenes in Nepal as well. Dibesh Pokharel had already begun playing music before setting foot in the United States. Even after he moved to Kansas, he returned to play shows in some of Kathmandu's well-known venues. In 2018, he released his debut album *Grahan*, a collection of original songs with Nepali lyrics. He has played shows in Thamel and Jhamsikhel, two neighborhoods imbricated in an array of socio-spatial contestations that seek to expand the acceptable parameters of Nepali identity through new modes of consumption and cultural practice.³ In 2022, he returned

to Nepal once again on a "Homecoming Tour." Music has been, and remains, a pivotal medium through which Nepalis perform, contest, and reshape personal and national identities.

From the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, Nepal was ruled by the autocratic Rana family, hereditary prime ministers who imposed strict sumptuary laws that effectively isolated most Nepalis (though not the Ranas themselves) from foreign goods and media.⁴ In 1951, the monarchy under King Tribhuvan reasserted power and wrested *de facto* control of the state back from the Ranas. What followed is generally presented as a period of radical "opening up" after a century of relative enclosure and disconnection from the outside world. New media and foreign tourists began entering Nepal and broadening its musical horizons. The influence of Western styles on Nepali pop music began in the 1950s, in no small part due to the instantiation of Radio Nepal in 1951.⁵ Meanwhile, Nepal became accessible to foreign tourists. Initially, these foreigners were mountaineers or elderly elites seeking a new prestige destination. By the late 1960s, however, Western countercultural seekers (i.e., hippies) had begun arriving in Kathmandu via overland bus routes, drawn by their own array of Orientalist fantasies to a place where marijuana was then legal.⁶ The British folk icon Cat Stevens famously visited Nepal during this period. They brought new music, new fashions, and new ideas, and these were appealing to many young Nepalis. To this day, musicians beloved by global hippiedom – Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, and Bob Marley – remain classics in Kathmandu.

As Nepal opened itself up to foreigners in the second half of the 20th century, it also invited teachers, writers, artists, and musicians from its older diasporic communities in Darjeeling and other parts of Northeast India. Musicians from these places helped establish some of the earliest rock bands in Nepal, including Prism and 1974 AD. Many such bands continue to receive adoration to this day. Simultaneously, Gurkha soldiers who made up exclusive Nepali regiments within the British Army brought with them cassette tapes picked up from places they were stationed around the world.

The 1990s were yet another watershed moment in the cultural history of Kathmandu. Since the 1960s, Nepal's political system was a pseudo-democratic *Panchayat* system of rule, which generally stifled diversity in favor of a hegemonic national identity, defined narrowly as the culture of high-caste Hindu elites. This ended after popular protests known as the *Jana Andolan* (People's Movement) demanded substantial political reforms in 1990. What followed was a wave of constitutional experiments, economic liberalization, and decreased media censorship. A consumerist middle class emerged in Kathmandu, and along with it new social categories of youth and their attendant practices.⁷ By the late 1990s, a civil war between state forces and Maoist insurgents had begun driving many rural villagers into Kathmandu, dramatically diversifying the cityscape and its demography. The relevant upshot of this (very truncated) history is that young people in 1990s Kathmandu were socialized and enculturated into dramatically different lifeworlds from previous generations. New media, from the Sunday Pop radio show to print magazines like *Wave*, encouraged and shaped emerging cultural identities defined by non-traditional dress styles, fashions, and music.

These cultural transformations manifested spatially in Kathmandu. Early rock bands in Kathmandu tended to perform where the foreigners were: on the one hand, the few swanky hotels favored by wealthy tourists; and on the other hand, the dingier cafes and flophouses of *Jhochhen*/*"Freak Street"* favored by the hippies. By the late 80s, the formerly peripheral neighborhood of Thamel

had overtaken these old spatializations by catering to a middle-class tourist demographic interested in the burgeoning attraction of "adventure" and "trekking" tourism. Pubs and restaurants in the neighborhood blasted popular music, and more live bands formed to play gigs in Thamel. As the tourist hub migrated to Thamel, in other words, "music moved with it."⁸ While bands performed in other spaces and contexts around the city, Thamel became a magnet attracting musicians and groups interested in all manner of "foreign" genres. Prominent among these were reggae, psychedelia, classic rock, grunge, and 80s metal. These days, in any Thamel bar, on any given night, practically any set list will include some combination of standard staples evoking this history: Bob Marley and Pearl Jam, Pink Floyd and Bon Jovi, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Kings of Leon. These staples further inscribed themselves as Nepali musical heritage as they were – and continue to be – reproduced through live covers at diasporic music events in pubs, bars, community centers, and concert halls around the world. They also became important canons in the transmission of musical knowledge, serving as templates for the production of rock music amongst Nepalis, despite the evolutions embracing musical genres such as rap, R&B, and Lo-Fi.

The transformative 1990s in Kathmandu produced a young generation of urbanites whose subjectivities were not only forged in relation to a different set of structuring inputs, but who were increasingly able to partake



Fig. 3: A rock show in the popular Kathmandu music venue Purple Haze. (Photo by Benjamin Linder, c. 2017)

in a variety of new practices and tastes. This prominently included music. Many of the bars in Thamel these days rely on Nepali consumers far more than foreign customers. The rollicking rock shows in clubs like Purple Haze, Reggae Bar, or Shisha Terrace are frequently catered not to foreigners fresh off their mountain treks, but to hordes of shouting Nepalis eager to sing along with any number of Thamel standards [Fig. 3].

This is why, in 2020, it came as no surprise to see an overseas Nepali performing songs like "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?" and "Is This Love." The global recognition and degree of success may have been new for Nepal, but Creedence Clearwater Revival and Bob Marley certainly were not.

A tale of two Nepals

American Idol curated Arthur Gunn through a particular set of semiotic relationships. For American audiences, Gunn's relationship to the American heartland, American Dream mythologies, and immigrant assimilation narratives all occupied nodal roles in signifying the artist. These factors played a far more minor role in the dominant interpretations by Nepali viewing publics. For young Nepalis, Gunn evoked the cosmopolitan, sub-cultural spaces of Kathmandu at least as much as he evoked the cornfields of Kansas. For the diaspora, Arthur Gunn reminded them of the sounds and places they grew up with and returned to when visiting "home": the live music venues of their youth that continue to play the same beloved songs to newer generations. The sound of home is "Hotel California" by the Eagles, blasting through someone's window above the bells and rickshaws weaving through the bustling streets of Kathmandu. From the English countryside to the streets of Melbourne, Nepalis arranged concert tours

for Arthur. For them, Arthur sang the songs they had always sung.

"Nepal" – not as a geographic territory, but as a cultural idea – is the lynchpin in all of this. *American Idol* presented a narrative of Arthur Gunn that necessitated a particular image of Nepal: remote and exotic, humble and spiritual. That image, of course, is fed by an obdurate wellspring of Orientalist tropes and Western projections. At best, it presents a highly selective impression of Nepal; at worst, it reiterates tired imperial discourses that have long relegated Nepal to the global margins.

Young Nepalis, especially urban Nepalis, are significantly less vulnerable to these imaginaries. Kathmandu is simply not reducible to such Western fantasies. It is a lived-in reality. Importantly, this actually existing Nepal embodies histories of transnationalism through the mobility of incoming foreign tourists, outbound laborers, educational migrants, and diasporic Nepalis overseas. Such transnational movements have always had a substantial cultural dimension to them. Indeed, the development of Kathmandu's thriving and diverse music scene emerged out of these itineraries.⁹ Their sounds were produced from circuits of travel and migration, the meeting point of routes from hippies and travelers, trails from tea plantations in Darjeeling and roads lit by night markets in Hong Kong.

Arthur Gunn/Dibesh Pokharel reflected a set of entangled histories and cultural geographies. In some sense, the "Nepal" that one imagines determined the "Arthur Gunn" that one witnessed. Contra dominant narratives proffered by the producers, judges, and audiences of *American Idol*, Gunn is a clear manifestation of contemporary Nepal and its recent decades. He has not transcended the cultural world of Kathmandu; he has distilled it. His musical style does not negate his Nepali roots; it embodies them. The bifurcation of Arthur Gunn into two discrete narratives, then, reignites persistent questions of representation and authenticity. In short, it indexes a larger struggle over the meaning, imagination, and reality of Nepal itself.

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A Journey to the West

What Could a Fragment of Porcelain Tell?

Zixi (Peter) Zhang

China has had a strong presence in the global trade network since the Tang dynasty (618-907). In the early Ming dynasty (1368-1644), more Chinese objects became available to all corners of the world through the maritime network. One of those objects was a typical Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, discovered at Drake's Bay on the California coast, but surprisingly, this object was later identified as originally made for the Middle East market. Why and how did it diverge from its original destination? What could its unusual "journey to the west" tell? What did California, China, and the Middle East have in common hundreds of years ago?

Origin of the porcelain

The first step to studying this porcelain is to find out the origin of its journey. According to the Hearst Museum archive at the University of California, Berkeley, the porcelain was made in China for markets in the Middle East. Prior to the Ming dynasty, the ruling Yuan court (1271-1368) was the only non-Han dynasty that has ever occupied the entire mainland China in history. Built and separated from the vast Mongolian empire that covered almost all of Asia (including the Middle East), the Yuan dynasty brought many Muslims to China, who were known to the locals as *huihui* (回回, Muslim). There was even a Chinese slang saying that "Yuan shi hui hui bian tian xia" (元时回回遍天下, "Muslims were all over the world during the Yuan dynasty").¹ This statement revealed the fact that Muslims, as early as in Yuan dynasty, had already become a vital part of Empire's population.

When the Ming dynasty overthrew the Yuan, the first emperor of Ming, Emperor Hongwu (洪武), initiated national policies to integrate Muslims with the Chinese. Such policy gave the foundation of the appreciation of Chinese culture within the Muslim community. It eventually influenced Muslims' lifestyles and attracted them to Chinese porcelains. On the other hand, when Emperor Hongwu founded the new Ming dynasty, many Muslim merchants also left China, as they viewed the political environment as no longer friendly. From the government side, Emperor Hongwu, as the one who had just dethroned a foreign regime to take power back for the Han ethnic majority, wished to re-establish the Chinese dominance. He "discouraged links with the outside world and restricted foreign trade to the level of tribute missions."² That discouragement led to a change in style of Chinese porcelains. The decoration patterns started to emphasize "exactness of execution, symmetry and precise arrangement" instead of the "powerful

and vivid" or "strong and impressive" designs that were found on porcelains in Yuan dynasty. However, even with changes in patterns, those artworks were still valued by Muslims. From practices such as interracial marriages, Muslims in China assimilated into the Chinese majority, adopting the latter's standards of appreciating arts. As Qiu Jun (丘濬), one of the cabinet members in the Ming dynasty, noted, Muslims "after a long time have already forgotten (their differences) and integrated, so they are also hard to be recognized (as Muslims) by their differences (*"Jiu zhi gu yi xiang wang xiang hua, er yi bu yi yi bie shi zhi ye"* 久之固已相忘相化, 而亦不易以别识之也). While different Chinese people had their own preferences of porcelain styles, Muslims in the Middle East were exposed to fewer types of Chinese porcelains, so they were prone to favor whatever they could have imported from China. Therefore, even with a change in style to be more austere, Chinese porcelains were still valuable in the Middle East market. This consistent love of Chinese porcelains, sometimes regardless of style, explains why the object would be thought as produced for consumption in the markets of the Middle East.

Journey of the porcelain

If this porcelain was originally made for the Middle East, how did it diverge from its journey and land on American soil? *The California Historical Society Quarterly* reported that the captain of two ships San Pedro and San Agustín, Sebastian Rodríguez Cermeño, carried this porcelain on his itinerary from the Philippines to California. In 1590, the new viceroy of New Spain, Luis de Velasco, was trying to accelerate trade between Mexico and the Philippines, and one of the major difficulties was the lack of a port between trade routes for merchant ships to rest and reload. However, when he was finally granted permission to undertake

a port-seeking mission, "he found that there was difficulty in getting funds for the exploration."⁴ Velasco later found Cermeño, who was willing to take the job. After some negotiations between the two of them and the King of Spain, in January 1594, Velasco ordered Cermeño to carry out the mission. In exchange, Cermeño was allowed to generate revenue by selling off merchandise at any new ports he may find. Because this cruise was not a routine practice, Cermeño grabbed all kinds of cargo that he could bring to the potential port for trade, as he did not know whom he would encounter and what goods they would want. Therefore, the porcelain originally made for the Middle East was brought on board and went all the way to America.

Cermeño spent four months at sea – from July to November in 1594 – traveling from the Philippines to a spot on the coast of California: Drake's Bay. Upon arrival, Cermeño and his men spent a month on land while encountering some local Indians. In the declaration Cermeño made to claim the newly-found land for Spain, he described that "they [Indians] were all very peaceable and their arms were in their houses, it not being known up to that time that they had any."⁵ The natives also gave their visitors small seeds as food, but these peaceful encounters did not bring the Spanish any luck, as in late November the ship was destroyed by a strong gale. It was assumed that the goods and cargos Cermeño brought with him to trade were lost with the ship, including the porcelain. The rest of the crew struggled to find food and, on December 8, they left Drake's Bay on a small Philippine ship called *Viroco*, bound for Mexico for seven weeks [Fig. 1].

Though the crew who brought the porcelain to California went home, the object itself did not return and remained there for almost four centuries. In 1970, the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley decided to

excavate at Drake's Bay to find objects that could represent the native culture in the 16th century. At sites called Estero and Cauley, anthropologists found iron spikes and fragments of blue chinaware. Specifically, at some Indian village sites in the Point Reyes Peninsula, archeologists uncovered blue-on-white porcelains fragments. Those porcelain fragments "received a definite identification by Theodore Hobby, assistant curator, Department of Far Eastern Art, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," and they originated from the Ming dynasty in China.⁶

At this point a question was raised: as discussed earlier, Ming porcelains were of high value, so how did those fragments remain untouched underground? From what captain Cermeño described, Indians who stayed close to the coast "were looking on with great fright in seeing people they had never seen before" when they met the Spanish crew.⁷ Because they were unfamiliar with the outside world, Indians did not hold those porcelains as valuable items: they either "deliberately shattered [the porcelain], possibly to 'release the spirit' of the sherds" according to their own culture, or broke them to make "beads, pendants, or scrapers" out of smaller fragments.⁸ When those porcelains were broken and deemed not valuable, they "[were] discarded and became scattered in the refuse layers."⁹ Those fragments therefore, lay peacefully for more than 300 years until the discovery by anthropologists of UC Berkeley.

Impact of porcelain

As this porcelain moved between two continents, involving cultures from three geographical regions, it reflected the influence one culture had over the other. In China, as early as the Song dynasty, due to massive demands of porcelains from the Middle East, artisans in the famous porcelain-making town of Jingdezhen (景德镇) started to make their work more to the taste of their customers overseas. They added signature designs like six-pointed stars and Arabian figures to those porcelains intended to be sold to foreigners. Those patterns were not originated from traditional Chinese culture but were common in Jewish or Islamic religions. As to how the Chinese artisans knew how to design patterns with foreign letters, Emperor Hongwu's friendly policy in dealing with the Muslim minority in China made a major impact. Under Emperor Hongwu, many bilingual Muslims scientists were assigned to the task of translating works that were in Islamic languages to Chinese. This gave an opportunity for Chinese people to understand some of the basics of Islamic languages by directly comparing them to Chinese characters.¹⁰

The direct trade between the Middle East and Chinese merchants also helped artisans in China to perfect their designs of unfamiliar patterns: "the homes of the Quanzhou merchants were famed for their riches, filled with Middle Eastern metalwork that could serve Chinese potters as models, along with carpets and textiles as sources

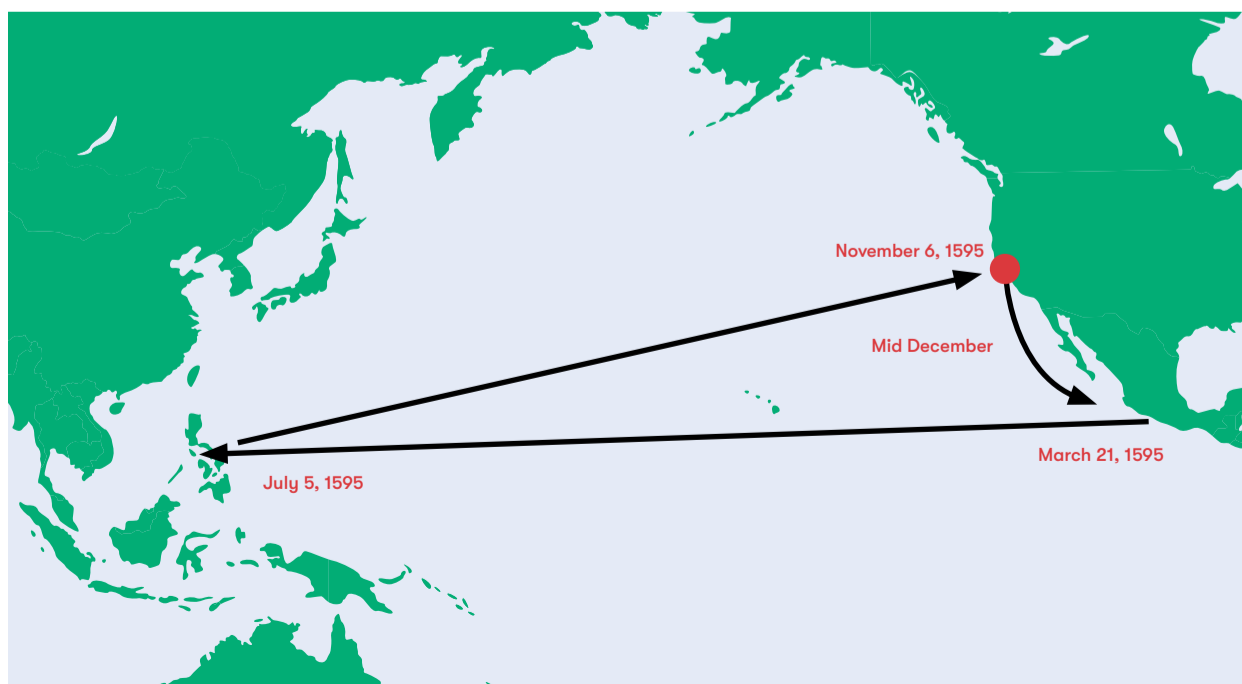


Fig. 1: A map of captain Cermeño's journey. (Figure by the author, 2022).



Fig. 2 (above): Remnants of Chinese porcelains made in the Ming dynasty. (Image courtesy of California Historical Society Quarterly, 1941)

Fig. 3 (below): Example of porcelain made in colonial Mexico. (Art Institute of Chicago, 2022)



of Islamic design.”¹¹ As merchants kept bringing works from the Middle East to artisans in Ching-te Chen, Chinese artisans of the latter were able to learn directly from original samples of pottery with foreign patterns. Therefore, with translations of Islamic work and frequent trade with foreign merchants, workers in Ching-te Chen designed many foreign patterns on typical Chinese porcelains, increasing the diversity of not only Chinese artwork, but also of Chinese appreciation of arts. The influence of Islamic designs kept growing in the Ming dynasty, and later under Emperor Xuande (宣德, 1425-1435), the education received by elites eventually incorporated the way Muslims decorated their porcelains as the standard.

From being integrated into Chinese culture in the Hongwu era to influencing Chinese attitudes to porcelain decorations in Xuande's time, Muslims became a noticeable force in shaping Chinese culture. In the report of discovery from Heizer about the porcelain fragments brought to Drake's Bay by captain Cermeño, there was clearly a flowery design with heavy paintings [Fig. 2]. Dated to the 1500s, 100 years after the Xuande period, those fragments are the direct proof of cultural exchange and the adoption of traditional Middle Eastern aesthetics in China.

The effect of diversifying porcelain designs by trade was not only on the Chinese side. As Muslims in China helped add foreign patterns to Chinese porcelains, these Chinese products in turn shaped a new appreciation of ceramic art in the Middle East. Amazed by the transparency of Chinese porcelains, artisans in the Middle East were motivated to experiment with new ways to reach the standard of their Chinese fellows. While those experiments in the Middle East mostly failed due to different compositions of clays in the two regions, Islamic artisans successfully took some Chinese styles into their own designs. Before the Ming dynasty, Chinese porcelains were more decorated with asymmetrical patterns, while Middle Eastern arts were more symmetrical. During the process of learning from imported Chinese porcelains, Middle East artisans and patrons adopted freer designs of space, and they welcomed spontaneity and dynamism that were found in the Chinese tradition. Starting by simply copying patterns from Chinese porcelains, Islamic artisans found their way in combining both their own style of strict spacing and the less regulated flow of patterns from Chinese designs. Both patterns initially developed isolated from one another, yet with the development of a massive trading network, both sides took ideas from each other. Before the Ming dynasty, Chinese porcelains were seen as flowing in their designs when Islamic ones were more conservative in spacing. However, when Emperor Hongwu ordered to restrict designs to be simpler, potteries from the Middle East had already incorporated that stylish decoration from imported Chinese work, which later influenced the elite class in China under Emperor Xuande to bring that emphasis on complicated, colorful designs back to Chinese porcelains. Through mutually learning from and influencing the other, Chinese and Islamic artisans had created a new version of porcelain design that combined cultures from two distinct geographical regions.

Beyond connections between China and the Middle East, the link between Spain and China was also crucial in the journey of the porcelain found at Drake's Bay. Unlike the mutual awareness between Islamic and Ching-te Chen artisans, Chinese workers in the early modern period knew very little about their customers in America. Such unfamiliarity from the Chinese perspective was understandable: the Spanish had little presence in China compared to the massive migration of Muslims during the Yuan dynasty. In order to make a profit from the trade, Chinese artisans needed to prepare a range of their works to make sure at least some of them would be valued by Spanish merchants. This kind of preparation for uncertainty was very similar to captain Cermeño's approach when he selected the porcelain in Manila for the cruise to America: he did not know his customers either.

To Spanish artisans, on the other hand, Chinese porcelains were familiar. Though they were exposed to Chinese artwork later than the Middle East, Spanish workers were also astonished by Chinese porcelains, which were “inspiring Mexican potters in Puebla to produce their own distinctive blue-and-white earthenwares in order (as an eighteenth-century priest boasted) ‘to emulate and equal the beauty of the wares of China.’”¹² Like Islamic artisans, Spanish and Mexican workers (who fell under colonial rule in the territory known as New Spain at the time) imitated the pattern and style of Chinese porcelains to either add new elements to their own work, or to make similar copies to compete with imported Chinese work in the market. For instance, artisans in the city of Puebla, Mexico kept their ways of making porcelains and other artworks, but also adopted Chinese styles to make products more popular in the local market. Their creation was neither Chinese nor Mexican, but a combination of both to make something original and international. Through the same behavior of learning from Chinese porcelains, Muslims in the Middle East and Spanish in the West also shared a connection of creating arts beyond the culture of a single nation [Fig. 3].

In modern times, Chinese porcelains are often valued at an astronomical price when they enter an auction, but behind their price tags is a map of connections between nations' economies, cultures, and much more. Even some fragments of a seemingly unimportant porcelain discovered at Drake's Bay reveal a history of massive connections among three distinct locations. This porcelain had no description nor words on it, but it spoke just like one of the four classic books in China, *Journey to the West*: the journey in the book contained moral values of Chinese society; the journey of the porcelain revealed an adventure of captain Cermeño, and more importantly the influence that China, the Middle East, and Spain had over one another's culture. From establishing a global trading network, the confluence of their ways of appreciating art was built.

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Notes

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- 2 Regina Krahl, “Export Porcelain Fit for the Chinese Emperor. Early Chinese Blue-and-White in the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, no.1 (1986): 73.
- 3 Ma, “Islamic Elements in Ming Period Porcelain,” 450.
- 4 Robert Fleming Heizer, “Archeological Evidence of Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeño's California Visit in 1595,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 20, no.4 (1941): 315.
- 5 Raymond Aker, *The Cermeño Expedition at Drakes Bay* (Point Reyes: Drake Navigators Guild, 1965), 27.
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- 11 Robert Finlay, “The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History,” *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 155.
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The Tensions of Regional Revitalization in Japan

Anthony Rausch

The vibrancy and vitality of Asia's major metropolises means that the focus of contemporary Asian studies is often focused on cities, examining tensions and offering solutions that reflect the complex realities of urban society. However, regional and rural places offer complex realities and demand imaginative solutions as well. Regional and local governments increasingly craft their own policy solutions to provide for stable and sustainable communities and to make themselves more attractive. The question is, will such policies resolve regional and rural tensions and contradictions, while also meeting the often specific-to-place objectives of regional places?

The conditions that characterize Japan's contemporary regional and rural places are those that other Asian societies will increasingly come to face. At present, Japan is facing regional and rural depopulation, residential shrinkage, and a general hollowing-out of local economies. This has, in its most nullifying effect, created a vacuum of both activity and identity in many areas and set off questions about how to build sustainable local communities. In my recent book, *Resolving the Contemporary Tensions of Regional Places: What Japan Can Teach Us*, I outline five specific tensions that characterize regional Japan and constitute points of focus for regional areas to maintain their standing and chart a future: (1) resident relocation, (2) regional finance, (3) local leadership, and (4) equitable area-to-area tax redistribution, together with (5) a revaluation of local cultural resources to revitalize local education, cultivate local activism, and generate a sense of local relevance. Local specificity is an undeniable reality from place to place, but the objectives relative to these themes are increasingly and uniformly important for all regional areas. For example, drawing urbanites to relocate in regional municipalities, dealing with an increasing instability of regional banking and capitalizing on local leadership potential, and addressing tax inequalities across geographically regional and distinct economies are common objectives for most rural places. Likewise, responding to the potential loss of cultural uniqueness by incorporating that uniqueness more effectively into policies of revitalization and understanding the changing dynamics and meaningfulness of higher education and local volunteerism in regional society are increasingly important policy points for regional municipalities. The policy responses that can be turned to these themes reflect the unique reality of Japan's regional and rural areas: establishing a vacant house information bank to ensure widespread information on low-cost housing purchase opportunities, promulgating a 'hometown tax scheme' that allows taxpayers across the country to appoint a part of their tax burden to a municipality of their choice, cultivating informed leadership through local think tanks, and reconfiguring the local landscape of national higher education so as to create local meaningfulness for regional Japanese universities.

Complex responses to complex tensions

Making urban to regional relocation both possible and desirable highlights the power of a national 'vacant-house' information bank – the Akiya Bank – providing a listing of vacant houses in locations throughout Japan. However, in addition to attracting potential new residents from urban areas,



Fig. 1: Local festival in Japan. (Photo by author, April 2016). Inset: Book Cover, *Resolving the Contemporary Tensions of Regional Places* (Kindle, 2021)

regional municipalities must also allow that their own residents may also benefit from the affordable and available 'starter' housing made possible with something like the Akiya Bank, and without the competition of a better-financed urban competitor.

Turning to finance, it is a contemporary reality that regional banks are struggling in a globally competitive finance environment. In non-metropolitan areas of Japan, regional banks are merging not only with each other, but also with national and international finance entities, often on terms that are not wholly beneficial to the host areas. Here is where the local leadership that can be developed with regional think tanks may offer local solutions, by forging stronger links that can generate meaningful economic activity within the unique economy of a specific local area. At the heart of any regional solution to any regional issue is recognition of the potential – often latent – that these think tanks have to create a credible source of independent local knowledge and capable local management/leadership. From a 'think tank theory' perspective, regional think tanks in Japan may provide a counter to the all-too-common issue-advocacy think tank, providing a blueprint for effective place-advocacy think tanks.

Equitable tax systems and how these shape regional economies are an important part of a nation's regional-area tax policy. The take-away on Japan's Furusato Nozei tax payment option – where taxpayers can direct part of their local tax obligation to any municipality in the country – is that not only are the aims of this new tax system not being met equitably across the regions of Japan, as it creates tax revenue winners and tax revenue losers; the system is also creating havoc in municipal governing throughout Japan with unpredictability in budget planning while seeding doubt in the intentions of the central government policy to redistribute national tax revenues systematically. The potential for local history and geography, together with local area cultural commodities to

contribute to a regionally-specific cultural economy have long been overlooked in regional areas. Theory asks what constitutes a place-based cultural commodity while the practical implications lie in crafting policy that valorizes and sustainably exploits such cultural commodities, both in a tourist economy for visitors as well as a lifestyle economy for local residents.

This local valuation is vital to building and sustaining place identity, the sustainable foundation of a cultural economy for regional places. Along with identity, place relevance – both nationwide and locally – is not a given. For many outlying areas, local educational opportunities and activating local volunteerism are meaningful mechanisms to cultivate this relevance. As a higher percentage of students continue onto higher education, it may be that a sense of place relevance can be cultivated through educational institutions that act as anchors in their communities. The relatively short history of volunteerism in Japan has seen an intriguing evolution, with educational and social welfare volunteerism giving way to high-profile disaster response and event volunteerism, the latter particularly vital in large-scale international sporting events. One could envision the next turn to be in the form of highly local 'revitalization volunteerism' for the regional areas of Japan.

Extending the study of regional revitalization

However, beyond the purview of the book outlined above is another set of organizational and planning-related tensions and contradictions. These reflect a complex intersection of preference, policy, practice, and reality that must be negotiated in order to realize regional and rural revitalization. These include the practical expertise, the sources of funding, the characteristics of local participation and membership, and the frequency and continuity of local activities

and how these influence the potential of local revitalization efforts. There are also tensions that emerge in the inherent limitations of local economies and the economic relationships that are forged with external entities, as well as the role of Information Computing Technology in realizing or diminishing the possibilities and meaningfulness of modern life in regional and rural places.

If one describes local revitalization in terms of the constituent details – i.e., who plans it, who pays for it, who participates in it, how often it takes place, what it offers, and what it aims for – and out of this develops a working set of guiding principles, such vague dimensions take on a concrete and common-sense reality.

The questions are many. And often those questions intersect, leading to more questions. Who should lead local revitalization? Locals certainly know about their locale – its history, culture, and scenic vistas – and their instincts for revitalization policy and practice are certainly meaningful, but experts often bring a broader, more informed view. Local activities require funding, whether for the set-up of an annual festival or for paying for printed materials to promote an area. While 'official' funding for such elements is often subject to long wait times, fiscal year compromises, fixed-term terminations, and delicate negotiations with the businesses that can offer it, 'local' funding that originates within a community is often temporary, insufficient, or non-existent. Local membership, often limited to retirees, homemakers, or the self-employed, can be dedicated and hard-working, but generating and maintaining such membership is difficult.

On the other hand, trying to continually develop new membership invites an undesirable churning that can leave the dedicated base unhappy. Similarly, what constitutes the backbone of local revitalization efforts and activities? Is it a low-key and warm-hearted festival for local residents held once a year, where planning and participation are the same act? Or is it something more 'profitable,' something that will appeal outside the community, drawing tourists and their one-night, two-day financial contributions to the area? Is a distinction between organizer/volunteer/participant on the one side and attendee/tourist/observer on the other necessary, possible, preferable, or profitable? The sale of local products – those hand-crafted, traditionally-meaningful items one finds both in the homes of long-term residents and tourist shops around the area – is both an important source of income for local artisans as well as a tangible symbol of the place. That said, one could question the gain when locally and traditionally handcrafted cultural products are marketed via global web-based shopping and transported through environmentally-questionable shipping networks to distant buyers who have little understanding of either the character or the place of such culturally significant and earth-friendly local goods. Likewise, ICT is certainly a big part of the potential of any regional place. But one might also ask if the possibilities that ICT brings in allowing people to engage in big-city corporate jobs from the countryside might also be diluting the purity of what 'rural' and 'regional' mean in terms of offering truly complete lifestyle alternatives?

Understanding the reality of regional rural places is a topic of increasing importance. The question then is how to identify the tensions that characterize regional places while also crafting policies that can be brought to address them. And while every place has its own combination of historical, geographical, and contemporary societal characteristics, the study of the tensions and contradictions that characterize regional and rural Asian locales will certainly provide a range of important and highly informative cases.

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Gold has been processed and revered since the beginning of the Metal Age in Southeastern Europe more than 7000 years ago. In Southeast Asia, the earliest gold objects are evidenced in burials of the Early Iron Age more than 2000 years ago. Gold's rarity makes it a precious commodity, while its durability conjures up notions of eternity and immortality. The warm lustre it exudes draws associations with the sun, and gold was thus linked to light and life. Gold's malleability makes it suitable for different forms of expression. The vast variety of gold objects found by archaeologists around the world attests to its enduring appeal across time and cultures. In this edition of "News from Southeast Asia," Natalie S. Y. Ong explores the significance of gold artefacts in premodern Singapore and how it can provide insight into the life of an ancient community.



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Style and Substance

Investigating the Gold Ornaments of Ancient Temasek

Natalie S. Y. Ong

On the 7th of July 1928, during excavations to clear the summit of Fort Canning Hill in Singapore, a trove of 11 gold objects was unearthed. Not long after the discovery, Sir Richard O. Winstedt, noted historian of Malaya, reported on the find in a four-page article. The Dutch archaeologist Dr. P.V. van Stein Callenfels was consulted on the identification of the artefacts, and they were ascribed to the East Javanese Majapahit period (late 13th to early 16th centuries CE). For almost 100 years, this label has prevailed and been regularly repeated to justify Majapahit hegemony over this part of the archipelago, thus providing Temasek's *raison d'être*.

A Visiting Fellowship programme at the Temasek History Research Centre, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute Singapore, provided the opportunity to review the existing ornaments and their identification, and to submit them to technical analysis. The scientific studies

Fig. 1 (above): Gold armband and two rings (Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board)

were conducted in collaboration with the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC), the institution responsible for the conservation and preservation of Singapore's National Collection, under the auspices of the National Heritage Board (NHB).¹ The original cache consisted of a pair of armbands with flexible chains, a conch and disc clasp, an elliptical ornament, an inscribed finger-ring, and six rings. Only three of the 11 ornaments remain today (Fig. 1 one of the armbands and two of the six rings), most having disappeared during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore in 1948.² The armband was the subject of the paper "The so-called 'kala' head armband of Temasek: A preliminary report," soon to appear in the *Temasek Working Paper Series*.³

A complex construction

The rings were given a paragraph in Winstedt's article and were described as a set of three pairs: "Six rings set each with 11 inferior diamonds of the Pontianak type (7 on one section and 4 on the other) and

each having a flimsy bar-and-socket joint and a rude wire hinge."⁴ Winstedt also determines that they are "fragile, too clumsy in contour and far too narrow in diameter (outside 20 mm.; inside 10 mm.) to be finger or toe-rings." He cites van Stein Callenfels, who identifies them as "of Javanese shape." While most of the factual statements remain accurate, these observations pre-date technological advances and contemporary methods of scientific analysis, which now allow us to take a close look at the rings.

Under the microscope, specific features could be more clearly determined, and in addition to the general description given by Winstedt, it was found that the two rings were of elaborate construction and formed of several different elements (Fig. 2). The main support structure was a backing that was divided into two parts, one smaller than the other, corresponding to the two sections mentioned by Winstedt. The 11 gemstones were each cut into a complex eight-sided

shape with triangular and quadrangular facets, and each stone was embedded in a setting made of several layers of gold sheet (Fig. 3). Each gem and setting formed a unit, which was then individually welded onto the backing. Each setting was also additionally and separately decorated with a triple-pronged shape that was attached to the surface to create a design resembling a crown to the modern eye (Fig. 4). Once these were in place, a long narrow lateral protruding edge strip was welded at a 90-degree angle to the centre of each side of the ring (Fig. 5). The two sections were then connected to each other by means of a wire hinge, and the opening had an interlocking socket through which a split pin was inserted, which allowed for easy removal or fastening.⁵ A ring was not more than 20 mm in diameter, with internal parts such as the main facet of a gem measuring about 3 mm at its widest, and the lateral strip approximating 0.5 mm in width and 0.2 mm in thickness. The fineness of the construction probably contributed to the objects' fragility, exacerbated by subsequent exposure to natural forces whilst underground.⁶

New findings

More interesting were two new findings. The first was that each ring was not made purely of solid gold and gemstone, but constructed of several layers of thin hammered gold. Notably, the backing consisted of gold sheet wrapped over a core of a bright reddish material, which could be observed at several locations where the rings were damaged, suggesting that the material had

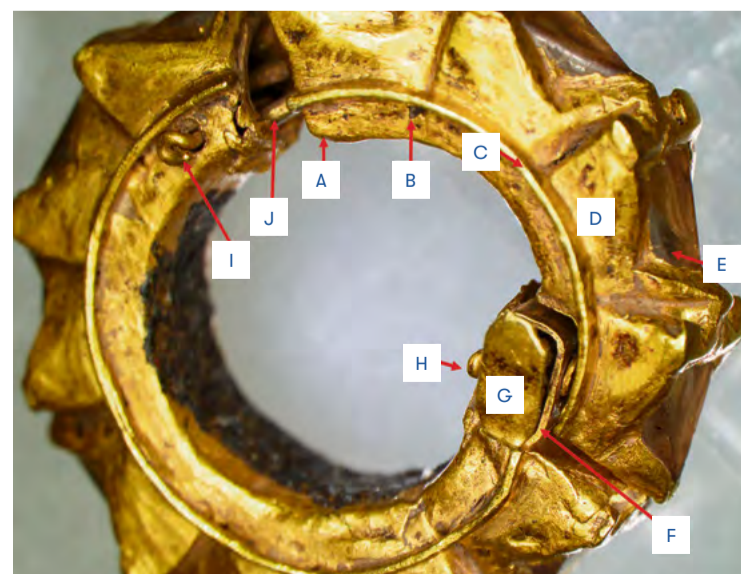


Fig. 2: Parts of a ring: A) backing; B) core with reddish material; C) lateral protruding strip; D) setting; E) gemstone; F) socket; G) split pin; H) nail securing pin; I) nail securing hinge; J) wire hinge (Photo courtesy of ISEAS, 2022)



Fig. 3 (left): Stereomicroscope image of ring with gemstones, settings, design and lateral protruding strip (Photo courtesy of ISEAS, 2022)



Fig. 4 (right): SEM image showing layers of gold foil with 'crown' design fused onto gemstone setting (Photo courtesy of ISEAS, 2022)

been intentionally used as the core (Fig. 6). The loss of gold may indicate extensive wear prior to burial, which corroborates the evidence on the armlet. To test whether the red material was the product of seepage of elements, it was subjected to SEM-EDS and Raman spectrometry,⁷ which identified the elements mercury (Hg) and sulphur (S). Mercury sulphide is more commonly known as cinnabar; in ancient times, this mineral was used as both the main source of the red pigment vermilion and of mercury for extracting gold from ores.

The second was the identification of the pale yellow precious stones, which were not diamonds as Winstedt and the Indian jewellers he mentions believed. The mislabelling may be understandable, since diamonds from the Pontianak region occur in shades ranging from colourless to pale yellow and even brown.⁸ SEM-EDS imaging showed the presence of the chemical elements fluorine (F), aluminium (Al), and silicon (Si), which strongly indicates topaz, $Al_2SiO_5(F, OH)_2$. In the 17th century, the well-travelled French gem merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier informs us that Ceylon and the Kingdom of Pegu (lower Myanmar) were the only two places in the East where topaz and other coloured precious stones originated.⁹

Clearly, none of the above raw materials could have been found in Singapore. Gold is plentiful in Southeast Asia, with the closest sources to Temasek in the Malay Peninsula and the neighbouring island of Sumatra, where cinnabar was also mined in the 19th century.¹⁰ Other possible sources of cinnabar include China, Sarawak, or Ceylon. Song-era chronicles (10th–13th centuries CE) inform us that it was a staple trade good to Java, where it was mainly used for cosmetics and dyes.¹¹

Sophisticated symbols

It is much less obvious why cinnabar would be used as a core material in an article of personal adornment, although the mineral has been found embedded in gold artefacts from the first-century Seogam-ri Tomb in South Korea.¹² On the Korean royal ornaments, however, the red pigment figured noticeably as part of the surface decoration, whereas in the case of the rings from Temasek, the mineral is entirely covered

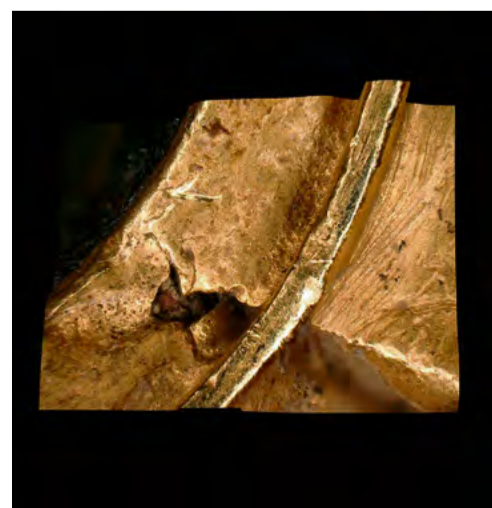


Fig. 5: 3D digital microscope image of lateral protruding strip (Photo courtesy of ISEAS, 2022)

in gold sheet. On the one hand, this provided some protection to the wearer from direct contact with the mercury within the ore (which we now know is toxic). It may also have protected the mineral somewhat from the elements and erosive forces while the objects lay buried. On the other hand, the gold sheet also hid the presence of the cinnabar from the naked eye. Concealment may have been intended; in at least one case, cinnabar was included in a deposit purposefully buried beneath a shrine at Santubong in Sarawak,¹³ suggesting ritualistic meaning relating to its natural properties. The colour red has, for example, long had symbolic value in many Asian cultures, and mercury was closely associated with alchemical and Tantric practices in both Indic and Sinic contexts.¹⁴

In a similar manner, much significance has been attached to both the gold and the gemstones, the latter often deemed heralds of fortune or calamity. The lore laid out in *Mani-Mala, A Treatise on Gems* shows the multifarious beliefs and practices associated with precious stones,¹⁵ and topaz is not exempt from this treatment. Topaz is generally said to confer fertility on women, but of the many legends connected to it, the ones of note belong to the Indic cosmological system, which is well known to have greatly influenced Southeast Asian culture in the first millennium of our era. The topaz is regarded as one of the *nava-ratna* ("nine precious gems") associated with the *nava-graha* ("nine planets"), each presided over by deities linked to specific *varna* ("colour"), *vahana* ("vehicle"), and attributes.¹⁶ Each having dominion over certain aspects of life, the wearer of such gemstones invokes their power.

Most available texts on Indic gemmology tend strongly towards Hindu mythology, where topaz is identified with the divinity Brihaspati. Brihaspati first appears in the *Rig Veda*. The deity was born from light and drives away the darkness with thunder, becoming guru of gurus to the gods themselves and synonymous with the knowledge and intelligence of the sage. In later *Puranas*, Brihaspati's devotion to Siva earns him lordship over the planet Jupiter. Both he and the gem are associated with Thursday and the Northwest direction, and the deity's vehicle varies according to the region – goose, tiger, or chariot.

This summary of the deity over millennia is necessarily brief, but some elements appear to line up with the other artefacts of the discovered cache. For instance, the inscribed ring of a bird shown in Winstedt's article may be related to Brihaspati's goose vehicle, or the goose can represent one of Visnu's avatars. Another reference to Visnu may lie in the now-lost disc-and-conch ornament of the same cache. Winstedt mentions the possibility that the avian motif could have been an insignia of either a person or the Javanese Surakarta Court, although examination of the armband showed that the monstrous face was not in fact a Javanese 'kala' head, but a depiction of a lion's face (*singhamukha*) that by no means references Javanese manufacture or influence. Moreover, the "Javanese shape" ascribed to the ornaments is so vague as to be unhelpful. Similarly, the triple-pronged 'crown' design of the gemstone setting recalls the triple-petaled flame motif in the middle of the *singhamukha*'s forehead on the armband, both of which may be a reference to Siva, which is also suggested in Brihaspati's later incarnation.

Jewellery, multi-disciplinary ornaments

Which of these multiple meanings is intended is difficult to ascertain today, assuming even that the disparate articles of the hoard were created as a set or presented as such. While this may be inferred from their discovery as a deliberate bundle grouping diverse objects, certainty eludes us, all the more because much of the initial cache is now missing. Furthermore, combined with the exposure to elemental forces underground, tell-tale manufacturing techniques can no longer be verified. But, far from simply being beautiful treasure, jewellery is also a storehouse of information about the past.

Besides demonstrating the wealth of the person who commissioned these ornaments, the rings show that he was learned in the lore of gemstones and their uses, as persons of status back then should have been. The ancient treatises assert that flawed gems could bring about misfortune, so he would have been careful to select only the finest topazes. He was thus well-connected not only to the general maritime trade, but also to the specialised commerce for jewels. The former was possibly the source of his wealth, but certainly of the raw materials from far and wide used in these ornaments. Quality topaz would not have been an item of commonly traded products. He, furthermore, knew a master jeweller to whom he could entrust these precious components, an enterprise which was very likely not located in 14th- or 15th-century Temasek, where the small population, rich as it may have been, could not support such a profession in the long term.

At this point, the tantalising direction indicated by the topaz's cosmological symbolism appears to support the hints inherent in the armband's make and motif, suggesting that the rings were also created in northwest South Asia, where Alexander the Great first ventured into the Indic subcontinent. The Macedonian king features prominently in the *Sulalatus Salatin* (A *Genealogy of Kings*, also known as the *Sejarah Melayu*, or *Malay Annals*). This was probably an attempt to imbue Paramesvara, the historical founder of Temasek and Malacca, with ancient and religious power that legitimises his and his descendants' sovereignty in the Malacca Sultanate. There is, however, much left to be deciphered about the ornaments in Singapore's collection: the significance of the numbers for example, along with the references to Hindu mythology as opposed to Buddhist teachings. Additionally, we are faced with reconciling the various new findings with what we know about ancient Southeast Asia.

As has been shown here, when incorporating multi-disciplinary methods and combining scientific, historical, archaeological, and art historical approaches, the study of jewellery can provide new perspectives from which to review ancient artefacts and their place in society, leading to new insights on the ancient peoples that made and used such articles of personal adornment.

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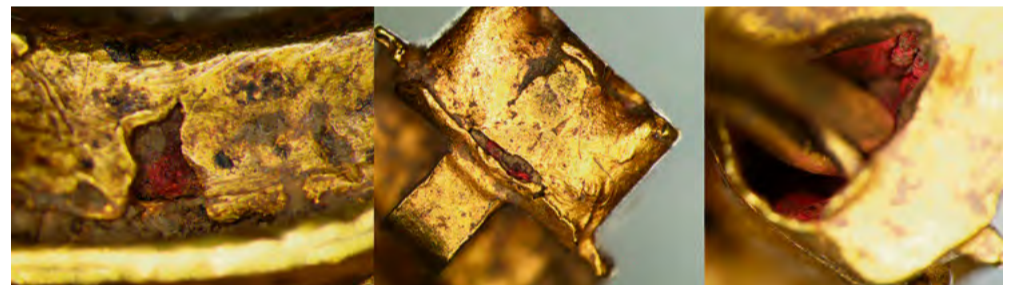


Fig. 6: Red material as core seen at different locations on the rings (Photo courtesy of ISEAS, 2022)

Notes

- Ms. Lynn Chua, Conservation Scientist, conducted the analyses. All the following data and images from the optical stereomicroscope, the digital microscope, the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) with Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (EDS), and the Thermo Niton XL3t X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer were captured at HCC between 24 and 29 April 2022.
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- A video capturing the workings of a ring can be found here: https://youtu.be/PGWEU5dXe_M.
- Although the objects were found unprotected in the ground, the grouping of 11 small objects together strongly suggests that they were transported to the interment location by some means, probably in a wrapping that has not survived the centuries of burial in a tropical climate. It is not now possible to determine which of the surface traces on the objects are due to human or natural forces.
- The Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) measures surface topography, and composition of material when combined with Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (EDS).
- Pontianak is the capital city of the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. The area has been known as sources of gold and diamond since the pre-modern period. See L.K. Spencer, S.D. Dikinis, P.C. Keller, R.E. Kane, "The Diamond deposits of Kalimantan, Borneo", *Gems & Gemology* 1988, 24:67–80
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- Sourindro Mohun Tagore, 1879, *Mani-Mala, or A Treatise on Gems*, 2 vols., Calcutta: I.C. Bose & Co.
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Reexploring the Silk Roads: Ancient Interactions and New Collaboration

The ancient Silk Roads have been a topic of intense scholarly debate in Chinese academia in recent decades. The study of Silk Roads has been further boosted by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by the Chinese government in 2013. Chinese archaeologists were encouraged to conduct joint excavations in other BRI countries with the aim of exploring the connections between ancient China and the outside world. Many more exhibitions in Chinese museums started to display cultural relics loaned from foreign institutions and to highlight ancient interactions through both overland and sea routes. The current research on the ancient Silk Roads benefits from these new international collaborations and has accordingly achieved a more global perspective.

Within this background, the five scholars in this edition, either archaeologists or curators, bring insights into the finds from sites along the Silk Roads, examining them as material evidence of ancient Sino-foreign interactions.

Liangren Zhang and Ali A. Vahdati introduce the discoveries, including mud-brick dwellings and imitations of Chinese blue-and-white ware yielded by the Tepe Naderi project, a collaborative excavation led by archaeologists from China and Iran.

Based on first-hand material, Yu Ding examines the chronology and scale of Chinese Longquan celadon exported to Kenya from the 13th to 15th centuries, as well as the impetus behind the trade in Longquan ware.

Yue Wang investigates the formation and spread of Kushan art through cultural exchanges along the Silk Roads, emphasizing the styles and carving techniques of various statues and objects.

Finally, focusing on the transmission of glass objects and craftsmanship, Chunlei Qin analyzes the development of glass artistry and trade between China and other ancient civilizations.

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The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai is currently working on a BRI-related research project, which includes examining some of the archaeological initiatives discussed in this issue as well as the creation of a comprehensive database in collaboration with researchers from the University of Virginia.



Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information about the contexts of the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Since its formation, the center has made extensive efforts to promote Asian studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with Asia Research Centers in mainland China and a multitude of institutes abroad.

The Tepe Naderi Project

Liangren Zhang and Ali A. Vahdati

Tepe Naderi is located in Northern Khorasan Province, on a section of a major route from Central Iran to Central Asia. It is an imposing site, the second largest tepe (mound) in the upper Atrak valley, and is very rich in history. In the late 19th century, King Nasir al-din Shah (1831-1896) of the Qajar Dynasty came to visit the old citadel of Shirvan (modern Tepe Naderi) during his pilgrimage to Mashhad. According to E'temād-al-Saltana, who accompanied the Shah on his second royal tour of Khorasan, the tepe had a castle on

the top and a fortified wall, with a large moat (5-7m wide) around it. The fortified wall had two entrance gates and 40 towers along its perimeter, but only one tower is partially left standing today; the castle on the top has totally vanished. The dates of the tepe and the wall, however, remain a mystery.

The field project at Tepe Naderi was initiated in 2015, when Nanjing University and the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The general background to this project is China's "One Belt One Road" Initiative, of which Iran is an important partner. In response to this initiative, Chinese financial investment in Iran grew steadily. Scholarly exchanges in the academic and educational spheres are an integral part of this initiative, but initially no progress was made with respect to the archaeology of Iran. The field project at Tepe Naderi was therefore launched to fill this intellectual vacancy, with much aid from seasoned American scholars, including Prof. Daniel T. Potts of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World.



Fig. 2: Ground penetrating radar survey at Tepe Naderi. (Photo by Ziqi Guo, 2018)



Fig. 1: Mud-brick walls of the Bronze Age at Tepe Naderi. (Photo by Liangren Zhang, 2018)

The concept of the Silk Road is too familiar to readers to require any explanation. What is important is that it has been a dynamic road network connecting East Asia, West Asia, South Asia, Russia, and Europe, and that Iran has played a particularly significant role in its history. This is no coincidence because Iran is located right at the crux of the road network; in addition, the peoples of Iran have been very active in spreading goods, technologies, and religions across the Eurasian landmass. In particular, contact between China and Iran has been very close, as is eloquently borne out by the *Sino-Iranica* of Berthold Laufer and *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* of Edward Shafer.

This project raises a number of research questions. One regards the origin of the

tepe, a very common form of settlement in Iran and the Near East, Central Asia, and South Asia in general. The interesting thing about the tepe is that ancient people added layers of mud-brick dwellings upon one another's ruins, such that the tepe kept growing for hundreds or thousands of years [Fig. 1]. However, doing so meant that they had to level the ruins to make the ground for the floors and walls of new dwellings. In China, ancient peoples sometimes did this as well, but only a few times, so that a site might have, for example, five or six layers of occupation lasting 200-300 years. Why did ancient peoples go to the trouble of building their dwellings upon earlier ruins rather than on fresh ground? One hypothesis is that they did so to avoid floods. In much of Iran, rainfall is rather meager and the

vegetation is thin, but when rain does occur, it can rapidly lead to flooding. In 2016, we witnessed a flood in Northern Khorasan province, when a 15-minute rainstorm turned the foot of a mountain into an ocean of torrent, endangering dwellings standing right upon the ground. To test the flooding hypothesis, we opened a long trench, Trench 1, to the south of the tepe. It is 30m long and 2m wide so as to arch over the tepe and the outside area, enabling us to investigate the early history of the tepe and the interaction between flooding and human occupation.

Excavation was resumed in 2018, and the trench was extended up on to Tepe Naderi, but due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the excavation planned for 2020 was canceled. The project is planned to be a long-term one, and we hope to resume the excavation as soon as possible. As a result of the two seasons of fieldwork in 2016 and 2018 [Fig. 2], we have established a sequence for the earliest strata and identified a number of features. The earliest ones discovered to date are from the late Chalcolithic/early Bronze Age (5128±30 cal BP). One is a sturdy mud-brick wall, which may have served as the perimeter of the tepe, the whole of which is datable to the Bronze Age. Upon the alluvial deposit that has accumulated on the original surface of the tepe, however, several features of the Islamic period (291-0 cal BP, 2 Sigma, 95.4% probability) have been found. In one large pit a good number of examples of blue-and-white stonepaste ware from the Qajar Dynasty (1789-1925) were found [Fig. 3]. The blue-and-white porcelain of the Ming and Qing dynasties was so popular in the Islamic world that it inspired the production of imitations using locally available sand, clay, and glass. This phenomenon, which has long been treated in Western scholarship, has caught little attention from Chinese scholars. The unexpected discovery of blue-and-white stonepaste wares provides a welcome opportunity to revive the long-forgotten history of the vibrant trade between China and Iran.

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Longquan Celadon Found in Kenya

Yu Ding

Ceramics are forever being excavated in important sites throughout Eastern Africa, proving the existence of connections and exchanges between this region and ancient China. Longquan celadon, which is the best celadon among ceramics of China, was mainly produced in Longquan, Zhejiang province. Longquan celadon and blue-and-white ware are the most common categories of Chinese ceramics found at these sites. Western archaeologists are continually conducting chronological research at sites based on Chinese ceramics, for which they already have a nearly complete chronological system. Thus, information about Chinese ceramics can be found in most archaeological reports of East African sites. Western researchers rarely pay attention to this information, but it can be used for a more profound analysis of Longquan ware.

In the 1980s, the Chinese researchers Ma Wenkuan and Meng Fanren introduced Chinese ceramics found in Africa, as shown in archaeological reports published in English. Subsequently, archaeologists from Peking University conducted surveys of Chinese ceramics in Kenya from 2010 to 2013, in which I, too, took part. Some research results of the survey have been published. Here I would like to conduct a detailed supplementary analysis of Longquan celadon with the data from two other sites in Kenya, Shanga and Malindi.

The Shanga site is located on the southwest coast of Pate Island, Lamu archipelago. From 1980 to 1988, Mark Horton from Cambridge University excavated there for six seasons, which has provided us with abundant materials. He carried out a statistical study of the different categories of remains, including Chinese ceramics. In Trench 1 and Trenches 6-10, 389 shards of Chinese ceramics were found, including Yue ware, Longquan ware, blue-and-white ware, white porcelain and Changsha ware. The hoard included 230 Longquan shards, or 59% of the Chinese ceramics found in the hoard. In Shanga, the earliest Longquan ware was excavated from the stratum dated 1000 to 1050. From the Late Yuan Dynasty to the early Ming Dynasty, which equal to early 14th century to the beginning of 15th century, 220 shards of Longquan were excavated, or 56% of the Chinese ceramics found at the site. These finds indicate that Longquan is the most important category of imports among Chinese ceramics in Shanga.

Horton made good use of Chinese ceramics to determine the ages of their different contexts. However, when carrying out the survey in Shanga, we found a number of Longquan shards produced during the Southern Song Dynasty (early 12th century to late 13th century). So, although the shards were excavated from a later period, they may have been produced and imported at an earlier time, possibly from the Southern Song to the Ming Dynasty.

Malindi has a similar pronunciation to the Chinese characters "Malin" (麻林) or "Malindi" (麻林地), which appear in the historical records of the Ming Dynasty. A number of researchers regard Malindi as the port where Cheng Ho (郑和), the famous fleet admiral and explorer during early China's early Ming Dynasty, had arrived. Having excavated there, we found 566 shards of Chinese ceramics, including 232 Longquan, or 40% of Chinese ceramics. The percentage of blue-and-white is in fact less than Longquan, at 32%. Interestingly in Malindi, no Longquan ware was produced in the Southern Song Dynasty; most of it being produced in the Yuan Dynasty.

Considering the results of Prof. Qin Dashu's research and the new data from Shanga and Malindi, we can conclude that the Yuan to early Ming Dynasty was when Chinese

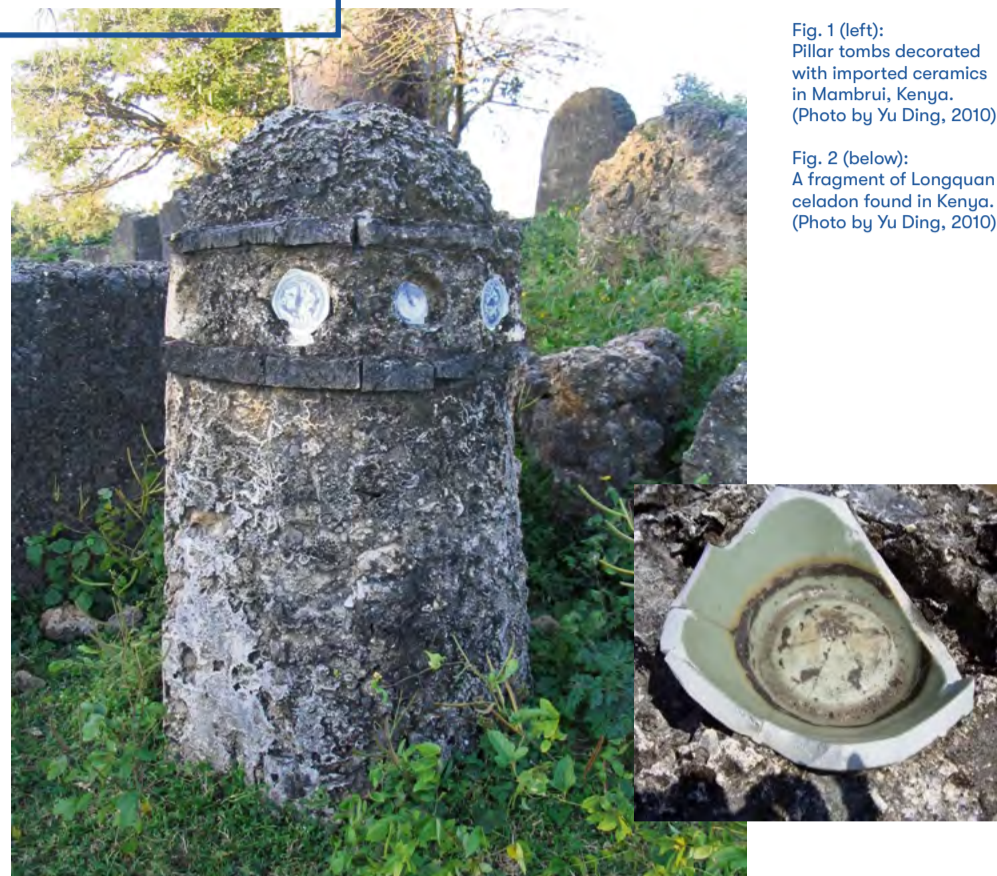


Fig. 1 (left): Pillar tombs decorated with imported ceramics in Mambui, Kenya. (Photo by Yu Ding, 2010)

Fig. 2 (below): A fragment of Longquan celadon found in Kenya. (Photo by Yu Ding, 2010)

ceramic imports peaked in East Africa. During that time, the most important category among Chinese ceramics was celadon ware. Why did Longquan become so important from the 13th to 15th centuries? At that time, China had other famous ceramics, so why was Longquan so much more popular?

For commodities, there are three key aspects affecting their destiny, namely production, circulation, and marketing. Here I will analyze the materials found in East Africa based on these three aspects.

Obviously, there are strong production backgrounds in the 13th to 15th centuries. The situation of production in China formed the material basis of ceramic exports. Production of celadon in Longquan developed quickly from the late Northern Song Dynasty. From the Southern Song Dynasty (ca. early 12th century to late 13th century), the quality of Longquan celadon improved; and from the Southern Song to the Early Ming Dynasty (ca. early 12th century to early 15th century), its production flourished. The technology and scale of its production reached a peak in the Yuan Dynasty (ca. late 13th century to late 14th century). In the early Ming Period (ca. late 14th century to early 15th century), some of the kilns in Longquan supplied ceramics for the imperial court, giving them the highest position among all kilns in China. During this time, a lot of famous kilns underwent processes of change, so the jade-like Longquan products occupied both the domestic and international markets. We can conclude that Longquan celadon became an international brand at that time.

Policy and the safety of travel routes are both aspects of circulation. The governments of the Southern Song and Yuan had a policy of encouraging exports to earn money by selling commodities abroad. Some scholars think that the income from this international trade was an important part of their finance.

From the international perspective, the establishment of the Mongol Empire strengthened the connection between East and West within Eurasia. Especially when Kublai Khan (1216-1294) wanted to win the support of Hulagu Khan (1218-1265), he and his eastern empire communicated with Western Asia more frequently, which also made communication and trade easier. At that time, Muslims from the Middle East were active around the Indian Ocean and they could take advantage of these favorable conditions. Kublai Khan was also trying to expand his empire by sea, and ports on Sumatra also wanted to come close to the Mongols in the hope of setting up special cooperation with them and monopolizing the trade with China. That meant that the routes in Southeast Asia were comparatively safe.

From the perspective of the market, the situation of sites of consumption can also affect the ceramics trade. An example is Shanga, a site that existed from the 8th to 15th centuries. After its abandonment, no Chinese ceramics at all are to be found. The sites at Gedi, Mambui, and Malindi Old Town are three of the most important in the Malindi area. Their periods of prosperity are different, and the amount of Longquan wares seems to have a direct relationship with their developments.

In fact, among the remains found in sites in East Africa, Chinese ceramics are few. However, some of the details about Longquan celadon are interesting. We found that important mosques and pillar tombs are always at the center of the site. It can frequently be seen that the stone mosques and tombs are decorated with ceramics, both Chinese and Islamic. For instance, in Mambui a broken tomb pillar is decorated by Chinese ceramics, with blue and white porcelain around the head of the pillar, and Longquan celadon on the top [Fig. 1]. Stone buildings, mosques, and stone tombs decorated by Chinese ceramics can be associated with the upper classes. This indicates that, although Chinese ceramics are few, they were used by high-class people in Swahili society and were regarded with esteem.

Another question concerns Cheng Ho, who is the most famous explorer of China in early 15th century, led seven well-known voyages to west Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean between 1405 and 1433. In the survey, we found some special Longquan wares, which had been produced in the imperial kiln in Early Ming, whose production was strictly controlled by the government. They were only produced for three purposes: for use by the emperor, as a reward for his ministers, or as a kind of gift in diplomacy. This ruled out the imperial porcelain in East Africa being imported by private trade. The only voyage we know of is Cheng Ho's voyage, as is confirmed by the period of the porcelain's production.

Longquan celadon is the most important kind of Chinese ceramics found in East Africa, and its import peaked from the 13th to 15th centuries. The circumstances of its trade were affected by production, policy, the international environment, and the sites in East Africa. Longquan celadon had a close relationship with the upper classes in East Africa and provides key evidence of Cheng Ho's voyage.

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Fig. 3: Fragments of blue-and-white stonepaste ware of the Islamic period found at Tepe Naderi. (Photo by Ali A. Vahdati, 2018)

The Silk Road and Kushan Dynasty from the Perspective of Cultural Relics

Yue Wang

The Silk Road is not only a road of commerce and trade, but also one of spiritual and cultural exchange in the ancient world. Before restrictions on sea routes were lifted, people on the Eurasian continent exchanged goods and ideas through the overland "Silk Road" network. There is an inseparable relationship between the process of civilization on the Eurasian continent and the material, spiritual, and cultural exchanges promoted by the Silk Road.

Along the ancient Silk Road, the role of the Kushan Dynasty (first to fourth centuries CE) was crucial, making important contributions to the development and progress of world civilization in a unique way. From the first to the fourth centuries CE, the territory of Kushan gradually included parts of Central and South Asia, occupying in particular the central area of the Eurasian continent, where all the traveling and communications took place. During this period, the Chinese Empire in the east, the Roman Empire in the west, ancient India in the south, and the nomads in the north were all at important stages of their cultural development and institutional formation. The Kushans remained open to all different civilizations, while the mentality of tolerance ensured exchanges and mutual learning between different cultures, having played an extraordinary role in the progress of human civilization. The stone carvings of the Kushan people fully reflect their cultural openness and inclusiveness.

The territory of Kushan covered roughly what is today Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the northern part of India. The original inhabitants of this area must have been able to process stone materials from a very early age. The "Hellenization Age," which began in the fourth century BCE, introduced the Greek art of stone-carving from the west into this area. With the rise of Kushan, more and more stone carvings reflect the "mixing" of this form of art.

The Greek Goddess of the Harvest, holding the Cornucopia in her left hand, sits on a high-backed chair with a halo on her back showing her divinity [Fig. 1]. Her hairstyle and robes, the high-backed chairs with various modifications to their legs and backs, the footrests in front of the chairs, the cornucopia filled with the harvest, and more, are all details that reflect the Greek style. However, the posture of sitting upright is completely different from the dynamic gesture of the Greek statues, as is the light coming from the back, which should be interpreted as the local understanding and expression of divinity.

A unique relief of the Buddha shows him sitting and preaching the dharma [Fig. 2]. On his left is a standing disciple, while on

the right are Kushan patrons standing hand in hand. A Corinthian column, commonly found in Greek architecture, stands on each side. The Buddha and his disciples wear light cassocks, showing the characteristics of clothing under the influence of the hot climate of South Asia. Kushan patrons with mustaches wear hats and short robes with the hem down to the knees, and their belts are embellished with ornaments. The fact that a piece of stone sculpture can include so many features like the Greek-style pillars showing the solemn atmosphere of the occasion, the religions of South Asia, and the wealthy Kushan patrons fully demonstrates the inclusiveness of Kushan culture.

Especially when Kushan stone-carving was combined with Buddhism coming from the south, it solved the key problem of the continued spread of Buddhism towards the east. The Kushan people were open to beliefs introduced from all over the world, but the various languages adopted along the Silk Road limited the spread of different beliefs, whereas images can help overcome this inconvenience. As for Buddhism, we can see that, in the Gandhara area of Kushan, Buddhism visualized the content of belief through images carved in stone. It can be inferred that this method of dissemination enabled Buddhism to continue to spread eastward, across Xinjiang, through the Hexi Corridor, until finally entering the Central Plains and from there spreading widely throughout East Asia.

In its prime, the Kushan Dynasty might have crossed the Congling Mountains and reached as far as Kashgar and Khotan. In cultural relics, we do find some traces of this left behind by history. The three pieces of wooden craft in the Khotan Museum are exquisite examples of the art of sculpture. The eyes, mouth, and ears carved on the furniture leg are in their proper proportions and have been delicately carved [Fig. 3]. The animal relief on the carved plaque is vivid and dynamic, with a man holding the elephant raising his right leg, the elephant arching its back slightly, and the griffin bending over backwards and kicking his legs [Fig. 4]. The structure of a carved holder [Fig. 5] is very similar to the stone beams found at the site of Persepolis in Iran. But if they are examined closely, it is not difficult to see that this wooden craft with exquisite round and relief patterns is not achieved by simple planning and straight sawing. It can be assumed that, at that time, the owners of the wooden crafts had well-developed carving skills and an aesthetic vision, and they had no problem processing stone materials, though they lacked the basic tools for processing wood. Perhaps these were craftsmen moving east from Kushan who could not find suitable stone to carve in the Khotan oasis and devoted their skills instead to carving poplar wood.

The Silk Road does not only belong to China; it actually belongs to the entire Eurasian continent. It is a network of roads constituting the bloodline that has nourished the growth of human civilization in Eurasia. Understanding the Silk Road from this perspective has practical significance for our future development of the New Silk Road.

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Fig. 1: Seated goddess of Harvest. (Photo courtesy of the Lushun Museum).

Fig. 2: Building component with scene of devotees around the Buddha. (Photo courtesy of the Lushun Museum)

Fig. 3: Carved furniture leg with dragon's head. (Photo courtesy of the Khotan Museum)

Fig. 4: Carved plaque with humans and animals. (Photo courtesy of the Khotan Museum).

Fig. 5: Carved holder with Siamese birds. (Photo courtesy of the Khotan Museum).



Glass: Witness to 4000 Years of Cultural Exchange between West and East

Chunlei Qin

Glass is one of the greatest ancient chemical inventions – known as the art of fire and sand – that is still closely related to our lives today. From faience (the predecessor of glass) to glass, this magical artificial silicate connects the current world with ancient China, having endured for 4000 years.

Exotic faience beads excavated from Adunqiaolu (阿敦乔鲁) and Xiaohe (小河) cemeteries in today's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region show that, even 4000 years ago, whatever the chilliness and scorching heat of mountains and deserts, people could not be prevented from exploring the East. In the early Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-771 BCE), China achieved localized production of faience, which has been found at the Zhou Yuan (周原) site.

Glass-eye beads unearthed from the burial of Marquis Gushi (固始侯古堆), Henan Province, show that, no later than the end of the 6th century BCE, people on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean had established overland connections with the Central Plains of China. During the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE-8 CE), South Asia was connected

to southern China by the Maritime Silk Road, as is confirmed by a potassium glass cup with a string pattern unearthed from tomb No. 12 of Shendingling (深钉岭), Guigang (贵港), Guangxi (广西) Province [Fig. 1]. As recorded in historical literature, emperors' messengers of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) had travelled by sea to the Huangzhi kingdom (黄支国) in South Asia for pearls, gemstones and other exotic treasures. What they brought back may be including glasswares from the West. The ribbed glass bowl unearthed from the tomb of Prince Liu Jing (刘荆) of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 CE) in Ganquan Zhuang (甘泉庄), Yangzhou (扬州), Jiangsu Province, obviously from a glass workshop in Italy, bears witness to cultural exchanges between the Roman Empire and the Han Dynasty in the 1st century CE.

The Biography of the Western Regions of Weishu (魏书·西域传, Weishu-Xiyuzhuan) is the first historical literature to record that Central Asian craftsmen introduced Western glass-making technology to China in the 5th century CE. The faceted glass bowl found in the tomb of Li Xian (李贤) of the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581 CE) in Guyuan (固原)

is important evidence of the ties between the Sassanian dynasty and China in the 6th century CE [Fig. 2]. The Islamic glassware, unearthed from the underground palace of the Famen Temple in Fufeng (扶风法门寺地宫), Shaanxi Province, are contemporary masterpieces and witnesses to the prosperity of the trade between West Asia and the Tang Dynasty in the 9th century CE [Fig. 3]. Nobles of the Liao Dynasty (907-1125 CE) preferred glassware from West Asia in the 11th century CE, as shown by beautiful Islamic glass vessels unearthed from the tomb of the Princess of the Chen kingdom (陈国公主墓) in Tongliao (通辽). The Islamic enameled and gold-painted glass vessels of the Mamluk Dynasty (1250-1517 CE) found in China may have been imported into the Yuan Dynasty by sea from Egypt or Syria in the 14th century CE.¹

After receiving glass objects imported from the West, China gradually formed types of glass with local characteristics, such as lead-barium oxide glasses from the Warring States period (475-221 BCE) to the Han Dynasty, and lead-silica glasses from the Sui (581-618 CE) to Northern Song (960-1127 CE) Dynasties. While absorbing elements of foreign styles of glass, ancient Chinese craftsmen created native art and new functions with Oriental aesthetic taste in glass-making, such as the stratified compound glass eye beads of the Warring States [Fig. 4] and glass bi (璧), a round ritual object usually made of jade for worship or entombment. Such craftsmen created fantastic gilt bronze items like belt hooks [Fig. 5] or mirrors inlaid with jade and glass, and they blew gourd-shaped glass bottles used to hold Buddhist relics.

At the beginning of 2022, the Art Museum of Tsinghua University held a special exhibition entitled "Marvelous Colors, Manifold Forms: Culture Exchanges in Glass Art among the Ancient East and West." For the first time, ancient glass objects from archaeological sites in China were brought together with ancient glass artifacts from other parts of the world to form a time corridor spanning nearly 5000 years. The exhibition took glass as the media for displaying a history of ancient civilizations, including the development of science and technology as well as exchanges in art and trade. It gave ordinary audiences fresh visual experiences and provided scholars with new perspectives on glass. This could be seen as one of China's responses to the United Nations' initiative to designate 2022 as the International Year of Glass.²

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Notes

- 1 Abdullah Wenkuan Ma, *The Discovery and Research of Cultural Relics of the Islamic World in China*, Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2006, pp. 51-83.
- 2 You can find more details about the "International Year of Glass" here: <https://physicsworld.com/a/international-year-of-glass-gets-cracking-in-geneva/>



1.



2.



4.



3.

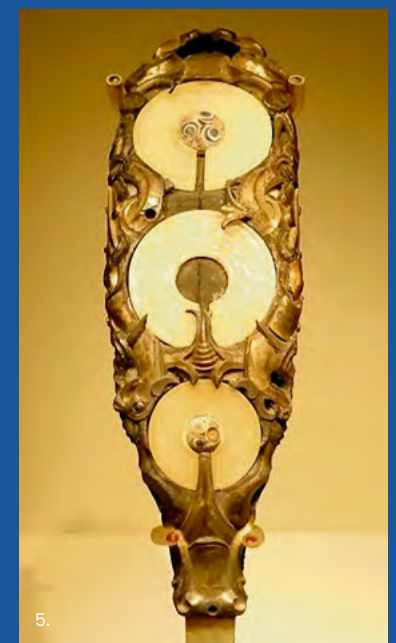
Fig. 1: Glass cup from Shendingling. (Photo by Yi Feng, 2022)

Fig. 2: Faceted glass bowl from the tomb of Li Xian. (Photo by Chunlei Qin, 2019)

Fig. 3: Glass plate from underground palace of Famen Temple. (Photo by Chunlei Qin, 2019)

Fig. 4: Stratified compound glass eye bead of the Warring States Period from Mashan site of Jiangling. (Photo by Chao Ren, 2022)

Fig. 5: Gilt bronze belt hook inlaid with jade and glass of the Warring States period. (Photo by Chunlei Qin, 2017)



5.

The Olympic Games and Politics in Northeast Asia

Ilhong Ko

Although Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympics, endeavored greatly to obscure the political nature of the games, it is said that in ancient Greek times, the Olympics were highly politicized events, where military power was put on full display. The same can be said for the Olympic Games of the 21st century, albeit with economic power replacing military power. The countries of Northeast Asia, in particular, have been active in using these mega-events to promote their respective agendas, with three Olympic events taking place over a span of five years in the region.

The most recent of the Olympic Games to have taken place in Northeast Asia was the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, which was used to demonstrate to the global audience that China had emerged as a world superpower.

Unfortunately, this also meant that the games became a stage of frigid geopolitical conflicts, as Jung Woo Lee of the University of Edinburgh argues in “Cold Geopolitics at the Winter Olympics in Beijing.” Amid the chaos of a global pandemic, the 2020

Tokyo Summer Olympics were held in 2021. Displaying Japan’s revival appears to have been the key agenda behind the hosting of the games, commonly held by all actors involved. Yasuhiro Sakaue of Hitotsubashi University, Japan, shows this in “Demonstrating to the World Japan’s Revived ‘Strong Economy’: The National Strategy for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.” In 2018, the Winter Olympics were held in Gangwon-do Province, the most underdeveloped region in South Korea, at a time when there were

high hopes for a defrosting of relations on the Korean Peninsula. The local and central governments’ agendas for hosting the games are relayed by Haenam Park of Seoul National University Asia Center in “Between Developmentalism and Nationalism: The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.”

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Cold Geopolitics at the Winter Olympics in Beijing

Jung Woo Lee

In February 2022, Beijing became the first city in the world to have hosted both the Summer and Winter Olympics. China initially boasted about the delivery of an eco-friendly Winter Olympic Games because many of its venues were refurbished facilities originally built for its summer counterpart in 2008. Then, the communist nation praised their self-acclaimed achievement of making Beijing 2022 COVID-safe. As for sporting excellence, Team China reached third place on the medal table, demonstrating its best performance at the Winter Olympics ever in its history. It is also believed that more than 300 million Chinese people took up skating or skiing as a leisure activity after the winter sport extravaganza. Clearly, a sense of Olympic triumph overflowed in the People’s Republic of China when the Games concluded.

Despite this seemingly enviable status and visible success, the 2022 Winter Olympics involved a few controversies when it came to international politics surrounding the Games. This Winter Olympics took place amidst the escalating tensions between the West and China. With the rapid development of its economy and technology in the first two decades of the 21st century, the communist giant gained confidence in its relationship with other countries and transnational bodies. This enhancement of power allowed China to implement a more ambitious foreign policy. Particularly, by hosting this global winter sporting spectacle, China exercised its desire to revamp its image from a world factory to a world superpower.

Yet, the West, particularly the United States, was wary of China’s rise and intended to preserve its hegemony in the current world order. The recent trade war between America and China was a consequence of this shifting power balance in international relations. In an attempt to curb Chinese diplomatic aspirations, the West questioned the legitimacy of the Chinese capital as an Olympic host due to the poor human rights record in China. They especially condemned

the alleged operation of a re-education camp in Xinjiang Province. Some Western nations even implied that they would not dispatch their delegations to the Olympics unless the communist state was made more accountable. China categorically rejected such allegations, claiming that the West should not interfere with the domestic affairs of China.

Senior lawmakers in the US Congress sent a letter to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in order to request the relocation of the Olympic venue to a different location governed by a democratic regime. The sport governing body refused to succumb to the argument against China and instead supported the Chinese effort to deliver the major event without friction. At the G7 Summit in June 2021, Western leaders again blamed China for undemocratic practices within and for unfair trade deals with its external partners. In the following month, the European Union also issued an anti-China resolution, asking the government representatives of its member states to decline Beijing’s invitation to the Winter Olympics. American politicians, most notably Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, also called for a diplomatic boycott of Beijing 2022. Before the commencement of the Winter Olympics, relations between China and the West turned the coldest ever since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s.

China downplayed this political protest and asserted that the West should stop its anti-Olympic campaign. According to the Chinese authorities, such protests had no basis. The West, Beijing further argued, must not politicise an international sporting event as a way to realise their diplomatic aims. The communist regime even warned that it would retaliate resolutely against any attempt to damage the Winter Olympic Games on Chinese soil. Nevertheless, scepticism of China in the West showed no sign of abating. Eventually, no Western VIPs – except a few IOC members – travelled to Beijing to see the Olympic Games in person. Indeed, the “royal box” at the Olympic stadium was



Fig. 1: 2022 Winter Olympics cauldron at Yanqing Winter Olympic Cultural Square. (Photo courtesy of N509FZ via Wikimedia Commons, reprinted under Creative Commons license)

largely occupied by Chinese officials while the opening ceremony unfolded.

However, one prominent political figure at this Olympics attracted global media and public attention. This person was Vladimir Putin. His presence at the stadium was particularly noteworthy given that there were formally no Russian delegations to this Olympics due to the sanction against Russian athletes because of state-sponsored doping. Putin’s appearance may be seen as a reciprocal courtesy because Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi eight years ago. Xi’s appearance in this Russian town was his first and only official visit to a major sporting competition held outside his home nation. Xi and Putin also had a summit meeting in a Black Sea resort at that time.

In fact, Russia and China maintained a supportive relationship in the field of winter sport. In 2018, the two emerging powers arranged an international friendly match between their junior ice hockey teams in the Chinese city of Tianjin. Putin and Xi watched this game together in the stadium, displaying their intimate partnership to world audiences. During this trip, the Russian leader also applauded the Chinese people for their relentless effort to prepare for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Additionally, a Beijing-based professional ice hockey team, Kunlun Red Star, has participated in Russia’s Kontinental Hockey League since 2016. Taking part in this Russian league was a Chinese strategy to foster competitive ice hockey players before the Winter Olympics.

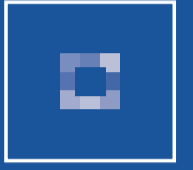
That said, Putin’s attendance at Beijing 2022 represented more than the Sino-Russia sporting connections. It was a time when China confronted the West not only diplomatically but also militarily in the South

China Sea and Taiwan Strait. Likewise, Russia gathered its forces in its Western frontier against Ukraine. Geopolitical conflicts could be detected in several different places on the globe when the Winter Olympics was about to start. A group of authoritarian regimes and an alliance of Western democracies yet again tore the world apart, and Putin’s rendezvous with Xi at the Olympics simply confirmed their union against the West. Soon after the end of the Winter Olympics, Russia invaded Ukraine. This post-Olympic aggression presents a disturbing déjà vu of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian army in a post-Sochi Olympic period in 2014. China remained neutral on both occasions.

It is cliché that politics and sport should not mix. Such a rhetoric paradoxically indicates that sport, especially during a major international championship, is often entangled with political incidents. The 2022 Winter Olympics aptly reflected this mood of a new Cold War on the rise. A series of diplomatic rows at this competition and the post-event military violence simply defied the United Nations resolution for Olympic Truce and the IOC’s campaign for international friendship through sport. At the closing ceremony of Beijing 2022, IOC President Thomas Bach proclaimed, “give peace a chance.” This statement ironically reaffirmed that this Winter Olympics was arguably the most politicised Games ever.

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SNUAC
Seoul National University Asia Center



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

Demonstrating to the World Japan's Revived "Strong Economy": The National Strategy for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Yasuhiro Sakaue

What kind of identity and image did Japan seek to build within the international community through the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games? This question can be explored through the "Basic Policy on Preparation and Management of the 2020 Games" document adopted by the Japanese Government Cabinet in November 2015.¹ The hosting of the Games, a mega-event that attracts the attention of the world, involved a complex interplay between the sporting community and the host city, as well as the government, businesses, media, and the people. This Cabinet Decision collectively expressed the aspirations of all of these actors.

In the opening section of the document, the government states: "The 1964 Tokyo Games symbolised Japan's full-fledged return to the international community and showed the world that Japan had risen from defeat. It was an opportunity for the Japanese to gain confidence that if they worked hard, they could compete on a par with the rest of the world, and it gave momentum to Japan's rapid economic growth." In contrast, the stated significance of the Tokyo 2020 Games was to "revive Japan, which had almost lost its confidence, and to show the world its advanced initiatives in a mature society." The reason for Japan's loss of confidence is the long-term economic depression that has continued since the early 1990s, and the significance of the Games was to use the event as an opportunity to break out of this situation, revive Japan, and restore confidence. The model for this is the 1964 Games, which is believed to have been the springboard for Japan's rapid economic growth, and the country was eagerly awaiting a repeat of that event.

This was not just a desire of the government. The catchphrase for the Japanese that the Bid Committee came up with was also "Japan's revival," which appealed to the sense of crisis: "If we do not do something now, the world may forget about us. If we do not do something now, we may deprive the country's future and our children's confidence."² It was natural that people would seek an opportunity for change amid the stagnation caused by the long-term depression, but then why was the Olympics chosen for this purpose?

The main reason for this is the strong image and narrative that the 1964 Games had created a "glorious era" combined with economic growth, which gave rise to a fanatical attitude among the Japanese towards the benefits of hosting the Olympic Games. The most apparent evidence is that since Tokyo's bid in 1952, a total of five cities selected as national candidate cities have participated in a total of 11 Olympic bids and a total of four preparations for the Games, which together amounted to 60 years and three months, or 85% of the total period.³ In this Olympic addiction or dependency situation, the Olympics was chosen as an opportunity to break the long-term depression. The 2020 Games can be viewed as the historical conjuncture of this situation. The power and persuasive force it gave was powerful. That is why the bid for the 2020 Games was not derailed by the major political upheavals and catastrophes of the 2009 change of government, nor by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. It is also why the event was held forcefully despite

widespread local opposition – 80 percent of the Japanese public, at one point – to holding the Games amid the COVID-19 pandemic and even though the vaccination rate against the virus was still only 38 percent.

Returning once again to the Cabinet Decision of 2015, it is of interest to note that the 2020 Games is considered to be an opportunity to "revive Japan" and simultaneously show the international community that Japan is making "advanced initiatives in a mature society." The "advanced initiatives" referred to by the government are "addressing ageing societies and environmental and energy issues common to advanced nations" and showing that Japan "is leading the world in solving these problems." This statement may have some relevance to Olympism. However, the specifics are environmental and energy technologies for building a hydrogen society, a practical application of automatic driving technology, robot technologies, new services using high-precision satellite positioning technology, and the like. This demonstrates that it is nothing more than a blatant measure to revive the Japanese economy. In other words, the Games are to be seen as a "driver of innovation towards the realisation of a strong economy," and these "showcase Japan's strengths in technology and communicate them to the world through the Games."

On the other hand, the Cabinet Decision also states that various Japanese cultural attractions – or "content that attracts the world's attention as Cool Japan" – will be disseminated to the world.⁴ This aim is nothing other than the realisation of a "strong economy." To this end, the government aimed to "spread the effects of the Games to every corner of the country" by promoting tourism by attracting more foreign visitors and increasing the participation of companies and others in projects and events related to the Games, and "promoting investment by communicating the improved Japanese business environment to the rest of the world." Thus, the 2020 Games became part of the government's economic policy, called "Abenomics". The Cabinet Decision also contains such rhetorical flourishes as assisting in the reconstruction of areas affected by the Great East Japan

Earthquake and realising an inclusive society, but these carry little weight beyond that of an add-on.

Meanwhile, the 2020 Games Organising Committee also established a new sponsorship mechanism, separate from the IOC's The Olympic Partner, to meet the demands of Japanese companies. The system consists of three categories of sponsors, not limited to one company in one industry, and a total of 67 Japanese companies were approved as sponsors.⁵ The vision of realising a "strong economy" also coincided with the expectations of the public. According to a public opinion survey on the Games by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute,⁶ the top answer to the question "What do you expect from the Games?" was "contribution to the Japanese economy," with 63 percent in the October 2016 survey and 50 percent in the March 2021 survey. However, in the September 2021 survey, immediately after the closing of the Games, when asked what the Games had achieved, only 15 percent answered "contribution to the Japanese economy." The results of the event fell short of the public's expectations.

Needless to say, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a complete lack of foreign visitors to Japan and to the cancellation of most of the events related to the Games. However, the pandemic was not the only factor behind the failure. A more fundamental factor was the failure to generate innovations that would attract the world's attention, including in the technology field, which had been touted as "Japan's strength."⁷ The most apparent evidence is that Japan was unable to halt the ongoing depreciation of the Yen. At the same time, prices have soared, and the average Japanese annual wage has already been overtaken by South Korea (OECD, Stat)⁸. Japan's economy is on the path of decline, the opposite of revival.

The day after the 2020 Games closed, the Japanese newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* noted that "this atypical Olympics may finally force the Japanese to break free from the illusions of 1964. It is a change that could be a turning point in post-war history."⁹ However, signs of such a change are hard to spot: the decision to host the World Expo in Osaka in 2025 and Sapporo's bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympic Games

both suggest that Japan has not yet broken free from the "1964 illusion."¹⁰ It has not yet developed a vision with vivid outlines of its alternative future.

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Notes

- Masaru Ogawa, 2016, *Tokyo Orimpikku: mondaï no kakusin ha nanika (Tokyo Olympics: what is the core of the problem)*, Tokyo: Shueisha, pp.160-181.
- Hiroshi Ochiai, 2015, *Konnakoto o kaitekita: supôtsu media no genba kara (I've been writing about this: from the field of sports media)*, Tokyo: Sôubun Kikaku, p.49.
- Calculated based on Table 1 in Yasuhiro Sakaue and Kyoko Raita (eds.), 2021, *Tokyo Orimpikku 1963 no Isan : seikô shinwa to kioku no hazama (The Legacy of the Tokyo Olympics 1964: between Success myth and memory)*, Tokyo: Seikyûsha, p.15.
- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's appearance at the closing ceremony of the 2016 Rio Games dressed as the popular video game character Mario may have been part of this.
- A total of six newspapers, including Japan's major national newspapers, were included there, preventing newspapers from maintaining the neutrality and impartiality media they were supposed to fulfil.
- https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/uron/20220601_7.html (last visited 4 December 2022).
- Growing public opposition to the Games in the country led significant sponsors of the Games to stop airing TV commercials, among other things, which might otherwise have given the Japanese public some idea of the revival of "the Japanese economy".
- <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=RMW> (last visited 26 December 2022).
- Mitsuo Ôshima, "Irei no Natsu Mirai heno kate (An Unusual Summer: Feeding the Future)", *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 9 August 2021.
- In 1970, Osaka hosted the World Expo; in 1972, Sapporo hosted the Winter Olympic Games.

Fig. 1: Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games-Monument of Olympic Rings. (Photo via Wikimedia Commons, reprinted here under Creative Commons license)



Between Developmentalism and Nationalism: The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics

Haenam Park



Fig. 1: The Unified Team of Korea during the entrance ceremony at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. (Photo courtesy of the Korean Culture and Information Service via [Wikimedia Commons](#), reprinted here under [Creative Commons](#) license)

Since the 2010s, Asia has become the region hosting the most mega-events. Previously, since their inception in the middle of the 19th century, mega-events had primarily been used to showcase the prosperity of cities and countries of the Western world. However, the following events have been or soon will be hosted in Asia during the decade from 2015 to 2025: three Olympics (Pyeongchang 2018, Tokyo 2020, Beijing 2022), one FIFA World Cup (Qatar 2022), and two World Expos (Dubai 2020 and Osaka 2025). The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics was the event that ushered in the era of mega-events in Asia. Recording the largest number of countries and participants among any Winter Olympics held thus far, the event was held in three cities (Pyeongchang, Jeongseon, and Gangneung) of Gangwon-do Province, a northeastern province of South Korea.

Mega-events refer to events that have tens of thousands of visitors and billions of viewers, such as the Summer Olympics, Winter Olympics, FIFA World Cup, and World Expositions. Because this means that the venue of such a mega-event is broadcast to billions of people, at least ten billion US dollars are invested over several years for the massive renewal of a host city, the impact of which lasts for decades. As such, host cities and countries formulate grand plans upon which they decide what to display through that mega-event. What was the grand plan behind the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics? What was intended to be displayed through the event? A brief introduction of the history of mega-events is required before we figure out the answer to these questions.

Mega-events have been associated with various ideologies. The most popular expositions held in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were closely related to nationalism and imperialism. Western cities, such as London, Paris, and Chicago, wanted to display the industrial developments achieved by their respective countries, in addition to how well they had civilized their colonies. After World War II, mega-events came to be combined with

the Cold War. The Olympics (the mega-event that received more attention than expositions from this period onwards) was used as a stage where the prosperity of the Western world, led by the United States, was displayed. The stage was also used to convey the message that Italy, Japan, and West Germany had transformed from former Axis powers into responsible members of the international community.

Since the 1990s, mega-events have come to be combined with the ideologies of neoliberalism and urban entrepreneurialism. From the mid-1970s, the cities of the West were faced with the need to find new engines of urban growth to replace manufacturing, and they turned towards finance, logistics, tourism, and cultural industries. In addition, perspectives on the role of the city have changed from "urban managerialism," which focuses on distributing public resources and facilities for residents, to "urban entrepreneurialism," which actively aims to attract businesses, business elites, and tourists to promote urban growth. The Olympics provided an opportunity for such cities to publicize their new images to the world through hotels, skyscrapers, and middle-class apartments. Prime examples include the Olympics held in Barcelona in 1992, Atlanta in 1996, Beijing in 2008, and London in 2012, as well as the Dubai Expo 2020 and the FIFA World Cup in Qatar 2022.

The ideology behind the Pyeongchang Olympics was developmentalism. In developmental states, central government bureaucrats make plans for rapid economic growth and implement such plans by mobilizing conglomerates. Industrial cities that will become the engines of rapid economic growth are determined by the state. Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and China are countries that share such practices of top-down developmentalism. In addition, these countries can also be seen to share bottom-up developmentalism. This is because the local governments in these countries, witnessing the rapid growth of certain cities due to the central government's plans, actively request that the central government distribute resources to them as well. This is

why the central governments in East Asia allocated the right to host the Olympics, Expos, and Asian Games to several cities, whereas in the west, it was mostly local governments, such as London and Paris, that singlehandedly made bids for the mega-events.

Gangwon-do Province, one of the least developed regions in South Korea, had previously witnessed how the central government provided a large amount of budgetary support to Daejeon when the Expo was held there in 1993. Subsequently, Gangwon-do made efforts to become a host city of the FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan. Unfortunately, Gangwon-do became the only province not to host a FIFA World Cup game in 2002. Attempts began in the early 2000s to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, but Gangwon-do had to wait until the 2018 Winter Olympics to finally host the event, after three bids. For over a dozen years, Gangwon-do insisted that, because the province was alienated from the central government's distribution of resources and had no developed industries, the hosting of the Pyeongchang Olympics required much support from the central government. The cost of building the necessary facilities and holding the event itself was 1.9 billion USD, but the amount of social infrastructure investments required in the wake of the Olympics reached 11 billion USD.

For South Korea's central government, on the other hand, the message that was intended to be displayed by hosting the Pyeongchang Olympics was closely related to nationalism. In 1988, when South Korea first hosted the Summer Olympics in Seoul, the majority of Korea's progressive civic activists campaigned against it. The reason was not to do with hosting the Olympics itself; rather, it had to do with the fact that the hosting of the Olympics in Seoul would promote the image of a divided Korea to the world. The argument made was that the Olympics should be held in both Seoul and Pyeongyang in order to demonstrate the peninsula's commitment towards unification. Their idea was realized as athletes from the two Koreas jointly entered the Olympics

from 2000 to 2006, holding one flag (bearing the image of the Korean Peninsula). The political party with close links with the progressive civic activists re-gained power in 2017, and attempts were made once again during the Pyeongchang Olympics to display to the world a will to improve relations between the two Koreas and achieve unification. This was done through the joint entrance of athletes during the opening ceremony [Fig. 1], as well as through the creation of a "unified" women's ice hockey team.

In this sense, the Pyeongchang Olympics can be interpreted as a nationalist performance on a stage created by developmentalism. A clear and coherent strategy and vision was not present in hosting the event. For the local government, obtaining resources from the central government was the most important goal, but they were not able to establish specific plans for the utilization of these resources. The central government's plan was also unsuccessful. The creation of a "unified" women's ice hockey team meant that several of the South Korean athletes who had been preparing for the Olympics for a long time had to be left out. The decision was subject to much criticism, and the "unified" team did not receive much support from inside or outside South Korea.

In South Korea today, the multiple imbalances that exist between the Seoul metropolitan area and other provinces, as well as the decline facing the provinces outside the central area, have become important social problems. Despite previous, unsuccessful experiences, local governments are still trying to revitalize their local communities by hosting mega-events. This is because mega-events continue to provide justification for receiving resources from the central government. In this way, developmentalism and the politics of distribution around mega-events in Korean society cannot be separated, like two sides of a coin.

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Indigenous Community-based Water Governance

Assam/Nagaland, Karen, Papua, and Sabah

Saw John Bright and Bram Steenhuisen

What is water? A scientist may say H₂O. An economist a scarce natural resource, a nutritionist an essential nutrient. All are correct. All are also scientific and/or materialist understandings of water. Without consciously realizing it, these are the understandings that are often most familiar, especially for those of us who were raised in Western societies.

However, freshwater – much like other natural phenomena – also holds cultural and spiritual meaning. Laborde and Jackson capture this nicely with their distinction between modern water and Living Waters – the former refers to water as a substance to be utilized and managed, while the latter is an Aboriginal Australian concept that refers to water that is in relationship with people and other beings.¹ Living Waters' particular essence/meaning is derived from those relationships, and this is particularly true for people who grew up in Indigenous communities anywhere in the world.

This Focus section presents four articles on community-based water governance, all of which are (co-)written by Indigenous authors. They cover a vast area in Asia – Assam/Nagaland, Karen State, Sabah, and Papua. What shines through in each of these discussions is the reality of Living Waters as relational and shaped through the ontologies of each of these communities. An ontology concerns people's "understanding of the nature of reality to determine what exists and how all that exists relates to each other."² An individual's or community's ontology underpins knowledge and practices; it is shaped slowly over time in a society, often across multiple generations.³ We are excited by how the Indigenous (co-) authorship of this issue conveys Indigenous community-based water governance from within the communities' ontology.

The articles underline the non-materialistic and non-scientific understandings of waterbodies that characterizes Indigenous Peoples' knowledge about water in these communities. The collection further illustrates that, despite the many differences between Indigenous Peoples in Asia (and around the world for that matter), one of the common characteristics between Indigenous ontologies everywhere is the interconnectedness and reciprocity between Indigenous Peoples and their (often enspirited) ancestral lands. Moreover, the physical world is closely tied to ancestral land. Figure 1 – co-created with First Nations peoples from Canada – aims to visualize this, and it illustrates how Indigenous knowledge and practices are carried by languages and stories over time, through ceremonies and practices that are guided and protected by law.

Dr. Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi belongs to the Ahom Indigenous group and is related to the Dimasas through marriage. In her article, "The Entangled Sphere of the Dimasas' Socio-Cultural Life and Its Implications for Water Governance," Gogoi shows the important role of the river as an intermediary between life, death, and rebirth, and the analysis demonstrates how the river is one of three things a Dimasa cannot live without. She illustrates how Dimasa identity is intertwined with waterbodies by explaining their use of traditional Khernai water retention ponds, their interaction with the Dakinsa water spirit, and their ties to the Dhansiri and Brahmaputra rivers.

Andrew Paul, Saw Sha Bwe Moo, and Robin Roth contribute a piece on water and fish conservation in the Salween Peace Park in Karen State, Myanmar (Burma). This territory

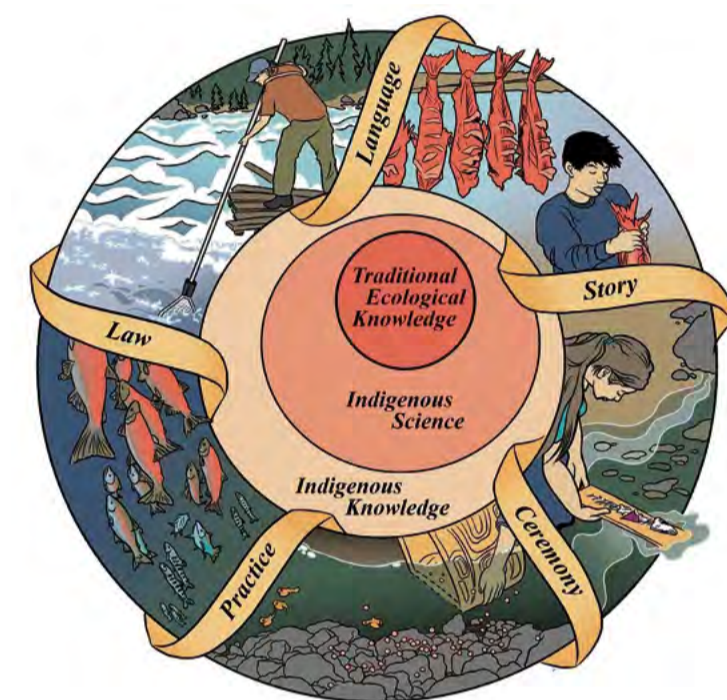


Fig. 1: Artist impression of the interconnectedness and reciprocity that characterizes Indigenous ontologies. (Artwork by Nicole Marie Burton Reid. Reprinted with permission. As featured in A.J., N.C. Ban. Accepted. "Indigenous Leadership is Essential to Conservation: Examples from Coastal British Columbia." In *Navigating Our Way to Solutions in Marine Conservation*. L.B. Crowder, ed. Open Book Publishers.)

was the birthplace of Saw Moo, a member of the Karen Indigenous group, who was born into a traditional Animist community. Their article, "Water and Fish Conservation by Karen Communities: An Indigenous Relational Approach," makes clear how Karen societies developed around and through interaction with the river. From the examples of two Karen fish conservation areas, we learn that humans are perceived as custodians of the water, land, and forest – not the ultimate owners. Spirit beings play an active role in shaping water governance by Karen communities in traditional Kaw territories. In their discussion, the authors highlight the need to pay attention to Indigenous Peoples' beliefs, values, and practices. What is called for is upholding humans' relations with more-than-human beings, rather than a dominating focus on management of land, forests, water, and species that treats these as mere inanimate phenomena or irrational and irrelevant beings that are separate from how people relate to water.

Elisabeth Wambrau belongs to the Biak tribe in Papua and draws on her own research and that of her students. Her article, "Water Governance from the Perspective of Indigenous Peoples in Papua," provides an overview of water governance by Malind Anim, Enggros, and Sambom tribes. Her insights on traditional cultivation, irrigation and drainage systems, and zoning-based river governance feature characteristics similar to those described in the other articles. However, her description of the important role of totem and the metamorphism of spirits adds another layer of interconnectivity between humans and the world around them. This interconnectivity underlines the depth and complexity of Indigenous community-based water governance systems.

Adrian Lasimbang, a member of the Kadazan-dusun Indigenous community, discusses what drives the success of the micro-hydroelectricity mini-grids which he has been working on with Indigenous and rural communities in Sabah, Malaysia. In "Use & Protect: How Indigenous Community Watershed Management in Sabah Sustains Micro Hydro Systems," Lasimbang

explains how community-based watershed governance that aligns with traditional knowledge is key for realizing renewable energy solutions at the local level. Referring to traditional Tagal practices, he illustrates how this creates ownership at the grassroots level, which benefits conservation and also ensures that local communities are committed to maintaining the local micro-hydro systems.

These different understandings of water – i.e., 'modern water' versus 'Living Waters' – are increasingly recognized. For example, the Whanganui river in New Zealand was officially recognized in 2017 as "an indivisible and living whole"⁴ with legal personhood in law – a reflection of her status as a living force in the ontology of local Māori tribes. But there is still a long way to go, which also motivated us to bring these four articles together for The Focus.

The importance of free-flowing rivers, a central feature in the Whanganui case, is something that can be seen as a common thread running through all four articles as an implicit warning about the threat that mega-hydropower dams pose to Indigenous community-based water governance systems. For the Dimasas in Assam/Nagaland, rivers should never fall silent since stagnant water leads to pollution, which directly threatens the Dakinsa river spirit who exclusively resides in clear water. In Sabah, a community-based micro-hydro project designed as a runoff river system does not require construction of large dams, standing in sharp contrast with the controversial Kaiduan dam. According to Indigenous communities, the Kaiduan dam (if built) would be deeply destructive to both the environment and their way of life. A free-flowing Salween is of crucial importance to Karen, as it supports their sacred relationship with the river and the beings living in its watershed. It also safeguards unique biodiversity and cultural practices which depend on the ebb-and-flow heartbeat of a free-flowing river. Wambrau in Papua carefully describes how communities' very identities diminish if the totem animal, plant, or phenomenon a community is linked to becomes locally extinct or disappears. This offers clear proof

of how the wellbeing and fate of the local ecosystem is directly related to the wellbeing and fate of local Indigenous communities.

We leave you as Focus readers with a request not to romanticize Indigenous community-based water governance. This is not an exotic anthropological debate but rather a life-or-death issue for Indigenous Peoples. It is a matter of respect at its very core. It is critical to treat Indigenous ontologies as equal to the dominant ontologies currently informing mainstream economics, politics, and conservation practice today. It is a matter of equity and dignity.

Indigeneity is not about trying to preserve the past in a globalizing world. But because of Indigenous Peoples' unique ontologies, they experience global issues in a particular way. Indigenous communities face particular challenges, and they are able to offer unique solutions and propose alternative development models that start from local Indigenous knowledge and practices.

We hope this free-to-access compilation of articles by different Indigenous (co-) authors in Asia increases your understanding as much as it did ours during the process of bringing these articles together. We wish that it supports emerging cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange between Indigenous communities on the governance of Living Waters.

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The Entangled Sphere of the Dimasas' Socio-Cultural Life and Its Implications for Water Governance

Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi

The Dimasas, an Indigenous group in Northeast India, hold a similar ontological understanding of their socio-cultural world, which depicts such complex and intricate relations within the human realm. The Dimasas offer prayers to their clan God and perform ancestral worship in a way similar to Shinto practices whereby the Kami are worshipped. Kami can be understood as sacred spirits who are worshipped through various rites, rituals and festivals. Thus in the worldview of Shinto there is a continuity between humans and nature in a way that is similar to how in Dimasa cosmology we as humans co-exist with non-humans and supernatural beings in the same world. Both systems tell us that this way harmony is maintained.

If there is any disturbance, a bad omen might befall the community. T. B. Subba, a prominent anthropologist of India, points out how contemporary Indigenous people from Northeast India still hold personal relationships with deities, rivers, and mountains.³ This connectedness of people with their physical environment is a vital source of cultural and individual identity.⁴ Any attachment to a place is a powerful emotional bond between people and their physical surroundings.

In this article, I bring forth the case of the Dimasas who associate themselves with animistic religious life that has some amalgamation with pan-India Hindu elements, and deep-rooted attachments to certain ritualised spaces. In addition to the diffusion of various Hindu rituals in their socio-cultural milieu, other elements need further exploration, such as the intricate relationship of the Dimasas with their surrounding water bodies. The importance of waterbodies in their socio-cultural life informs the Dimasas' Indigenous water governance systems. In particular, the world of spirits is an essential aspect of their worldview and cannot be overlooked if one wants to explore the intricate personal relationships Dimasas have with their surroundings. This article explores and discusses the belief system of the concerned community, as the world of spirits is an indispensable part of the traditional belief system of any Indigenous population of Northeast India.

Data collected from two sites – Doyapur and Khernaidisa in Nagaland and Assam respectively – are primarily highlighted. The most prominent aspect of these two field sites is that they are located beside the river Dhansiri on opposite sides. The Dimasas of Northeast India are also known as Kachari.

The movie *Spirited Away* (2002), directed by Hayao Miyazaki, presents an interesting storyline on the theme of the spirit-human continuum, thereby presenting components of the Shinto religion.¹ Shinto (the way of the Gods) is the Indigenous faith of the Japanese people and is as old as Japan itself. It is one of the significant religions alongside Buddhism and is also considered one of the largest surviving animistic faiths in the world.² In the movie, the protagonist Chihiro and her family enter the world of Kami while exploring an abandoned theme park. Their presence in a place where humans are forbidden disturbs the harmony of the place's environment. Eating the food kept for the spirits thus results in the transformation of her parents into pigs. In the commotion, her accidental encounter with Haku, a river spirit who forgot his identity and name due to anthropogenic activities, leads to the river's disappearance. The eventual development of a personal relationship between Chihiro and the river spirit – along with Chihiro's adventure to restore her parents into the human form – constitutes the movie's base. The film presents an interesting contemporary picture of the Japanese people's deep-rooted belief in the existence of spirits and their cosmology. Such a belief system amounts to animism, which presents the association of humans and non-humans within the realm of the existing world. A human maintains the harmony of such personal linkages and relationships through elaborate rituals and offerings.



Fig. 1: The map shows the states of Northeast India along with the neighbouring countries. (Map prepared by Avantika Lawal, 2019)

The intertwined world of the spirits: Dimasas' way of life

Dimasas have a commonly narrated belief which traces their origin to a mystical bird, Arikhidima. This belief states that the Dimasas are the progeny of the union between Arikhidima and Bangla Raja, the God of earthquakes. The union resulted in Arikhidima laying seven eggs at the confluence of two rivers. Six eggs hatched without any effort. From them came the six Dimasa Gods: Shibarai, Alu Raja, Naikhu Raja, Waa Raja, Gyunung-Braiyung, and Hamiadao, all of whom were believed to be benevolent Gods. Among them, Shibarai is the eldest and most significant local deity, believed to be present in all *Daikhos* – places reserved for a higher omnipresence being in sacred forest areas. *Daikhos* are regarded as abodes of deities where periodic rituals are conducted to appease the concerned deities.

The remaining last egg took time to hatch, and external force had to be applied. When it finally hatched, malevolent spirits emerged. Dimasas consider the benevolent Gods as their ancestral and local deities.⁵ Both benevolent and malevolent deities are part of the Dimasa cosmologies, and they seek protection and wellbeing by making offerings to them. Some local deities are associated with Hindu deities like Lord Shiva and Goddess Kali. However such associations with established religion have not weakened the strong hold of traditional beliefs among the Dimasas.

Dimasas believe that their surroundings – forests (*hagra*), hills, and streams – host both malicious and benevolent spirits.⁶ Therefore, a ritual must be performed before any expedition (e.g., entering a forest, fishing, clearing a forest, etc.). This mandatory ritual involves giving a sacrificial animal to seek permission from the spirits to carry out an action without causing any disturbance to the residing spirits. In addition, this is a way to seek blessings and protection. The existence of spirits and living beings in the same realm is a commonly held belief system among most of the Indigenous communities in Northeast India. Karbi, a neighbouring community of the Dimasas, also offer prayers to their local deities and seek permission to collect parts of the medicinal plants from the groves by offering betel leaf (*Piper betle*) and areca nut (*Areca catechu*).

In most forest-related rituals, a small fowl must be sacrificed to appease the forest's deities and spirits. Dimasas believe that different kinds of spirits reside in the forest. Some may cause you to get lost by calling your name, while some malicious spirits may create a false illusion of being prey in hunting expeditions.

Apart from forests, rivers and streams are also believed to be inhabited by various spirits. Among them, Dakinsa is a prominent one. A Dakinsa is believed to be a spirit with no anthropogenic features but rather a ball of fire who floats in the air. One evening while strolling around the dusty lane of Doyapur village in Nagaland, one of the field assistants narrated the story of him being attacked by Dakinsa which he believed to be the result of him being responsible for polluting the residing space of the spirit near his house. It resulted in him being sick for days. His parents had to perform a small sacrificial ritual to the spirit seeking acceptance of their apologies.

Disturbance to the spirit might bring a bad omen to the concerned individual. The field assistant stated that Dakinsa resides in a clean stream, and any defilement in the area might drive the spirit away. Therefore, the stream water should not be blocked; it should be free-flowing, since stagnant water leads to pollution of the stream. So utmost care is taken to ensure the free flowing of rivers and streams. The spirits and more-than-human existence are a reality in the day-to-day affairs of the communities in Northeast India. The reciprocal relationship of responsibility that the Indigenous communities maintain around water bodies in need of protection indeed helps to maintain ecological balance.⁷

Fig. 2 (right): The river Dhansiri forms the natural boundary between Assam and Nagaland (near the Dhansiripar sub-division). On the left is Nagaland and on the right is Assam. (Photo by the author, 2022).



Fig. 3 (left): A small stream (left) and the Damadi Daikho (right) located next to each other in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. (Photo by the author, 2022)



Fig. 4 (right): Privately owned pond surrounded by agricultural fields in Doyapur, Chümoukedima district, Nagaland. (Photo by the author, 2022)



Fig. 5 (left): A well-structured drainage channel is constructed through which excess water flows out of the pond, Doyapur, Chümoukedima district, Nagaland. (Photo by the author, 2022)



Fig. 6 (right): A network of water channels connects different ponds in Doyapur, Chümoukedima district, Nagaland. (Photo courtesy of Maison Jeedung, 2022)



Fig. 7 (left): The author with her husband during a ceremony in Doyapur to incorporate her into the Dimasa community. Part of the ritual took place in a khernai traditional pond which can be seen in the back. (Photo courtesy of Mailodi Jigdung, 2022)



The significance of water bodies

Water plays a significant role in the socio-cultural life of the Dimasa. Consequently, water bodies make up large portions of the territories Dimasas inhabit. A prominent feature of any Dimasa village is that it is situated beside a river or other waterbody. In this case, Semkhor village in the Dima Hasao district of Assam is an exception as it is located in a remote area away from any river or stream. One of the community members we spoke to stated that there are three things Dimasas cannot live without – the river, banana, and bamboo. These three things are extremely crucial in Dimasa social life. The banana and bamboos are used in all the Dimasa rituals and villages are named after bamboos. Most of the communal rituals

are performed beside a river or waterbody. In addition to that, the etymology of the term Dimasa reflects the close association with the river or any waterbody. A small stream or waterbody is one of the prominent characteristics observed across different sites of *Daikho* (Fig. 3). In local terminology, the term 'Dimasa' translates to 'descendants of a big river' or 'children of great water' meaning specifically the Brahmaputra.⁸ The Dimasa term for water ('di') is prefixed in most of the rivers found in Assam: Dikhou, Dibru, Dirang, and Dihing, which signifies that the Dimasa might have settled beside the banks of these rivers.

In addition, the Dimasas' belief associates life and death as cyclic phenomena. They believe that after death, the soul leaves the physical body of the deceased and goes to the *dembra*, the place of the dead, and these souls

return to the living world by taking rebirth. A river separates the living world and the dead world. The funeral rites are elaborate and extensive, and they are seen as crucial to ensure that the deceased's soul successfully moves from the living world into the world of the dead. This journey and incorporation comprise various rites and rituals, such as placing coins on the body. This is symbolic, as they believe that the soul will use these coins to cross the river and reach the other world. A small makeshift house is placed near the dead body for the soul to rest.

Furthermore, when the people carry the dead body from the house to the cremation ground – which is usually situated beside a river – a woman is assigned to throw rice or pieces of thread from the deceased house to the cremation ground. This particular rite ensures the direction of the soul and the route to the other world. It is meant to guide the way for rebirth into the same family or clan. These rites and rituals are communal, as they involve the village, neighbours, and kin groups. Therefore, patri-clan and matri-clan members of the dead actively participate in death rituals in addition to the assigned priest and his helpers.

The etymology of the term 'Dimasa,' the story of their inception, and their cyclical conception of life all resonate with the importance of water bodies in the Dimasa socio-cultural life. The association with water bodies is so significant in Dimasas' cosmology that the names of many villages have local derivations of a small stream or they are named after other water bodies. Some such villages are Disagufu (a small white stream), Khernaidisa (pond and stream), Disagisim (a small black stream), Maderdisa (a small stream with *Mader* trees).

The case of khernai

In the local Dimasa terminology, *khernai* means pond or lake. Apart from residing beside a river bank, Dimasas make ponds for various purposes: rearing fish, harvesting rainwater and drinking water, and irrigation. In fact, local historians have negated the assumption of wet-rice cultivation being introduced by Aryan settlers in the valley. Bathari argues that Dimasas were all acquainted with this form of cultivation due to the presence of an Indigenous irrigation system.⁹

A *khernai* is a prominent feature of most Dimasa villages. It is not an isolated ecosystem but is connected to other ponds in the village and sometimes even to ponds across agricultural fields – which in turn also are connected with each other through channels. This forms a well-structured system of drainage where water is stored and managed for various purposes. The water of the *khernai* eventually flows into the adjacent river.

Khernai is a traditional way of water management which is similar to the *dong* traditional water management system that can be found throughout Assam whereby the river water is brought into local villages through connected channels. The *khernai* have been prevalent in the Dimapur area, once the capital of the Dimasa Kingdom, for centuries. Many rectangular-shaped ponds were dug during the reigns of the Dimasa kings. However, the number of *khernai* have been greatly diminishing even though they can still be found in the rural areas of Assam and Nagaland. In big towns they have made way for runaway economic development and infrastructure projects. The blocking of the free flow of waterways was also pointed out to us by a community member as a reason for the collapse of the traditional irrigation method.

Conclusion

Dimasas' topographical understanding of the world is not homogenous. Instead, it is heterogenous, where a distinction is maintained between sacred and profane. The Dimasa worldview encompasses all animate and inanimate, along with the spirits, into their everyday life. Moreover, the complex interrelationship of space and the environment results in marking space as sacred. The institution of *Daikho*s is one such sacred space. *Daikho*s are territorial units that are considered sacred, and which are protected from defilement by any 'foreign' intrusion, usually

portrayed as something that might defile the sacred. The sacred space of the *Daikho* is kept separated from mundane space.

Furthermore, such manifestation is not confined to the space of *Daikho*. Rather, this sense of sacredness filters through into other elements of Dimasa life, such as rivers, lakes, and trees, to name a few. Rivers have been acknowledged as sacred places in the traditional cosmology of the wider Northeast region of India and also across other cultures.¹⁰ In particular, the presence of the river's guardian spirit *Dakinsa* encourages people to protect the local ecosystem, thereby putting in place prohibitions to any obstructions to the free-flowing river.

On a final note, the river Dhansiri which has a continuous flow of surface water throughout the year, is facing crises due to its increased level of pollution in the major catchment area. The Nagaland Pollution Control Board (NPCB) has put forward the idea of the restoration of lakes and making artificial lakes to manage the natural flow of the river Dhansiri thereby reducing the pollution of the river and groundwater of the district.¹¹ This recommendation is remarkably similar to the traditional irrigation method employed by the Dimasas and their holistic underpinnings of local water governance based on their traditional belief systems. An interesting acknowledgment that traditional approaches to understanding water bodies can help us tackle current water crises in the contemporary world.

Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi

is an independent researcher from Northeast India. Her doctoral thesis tried to comprehend the *Daikho* tradition prevalent among the Dimasa which bears an imminent resemblance to the practice of sacred forests. A section of the research was published in *Sacred Forests of Asia: Spiritual Ecology and the Politics of Nature Conservation* in 2022.¹²

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Water and Fish Conservation by Karen Communities

An Indigenous Relational Approach

Andrew Paul, Saw Sha Bwe Moo, and Robin Roth

In this article we ask: how do Indigenous Peoples' relations with more-than-human beings, including spirits, shape Indigenous forms of environmental governance and conservation, and what are the implications for building more just and effective collaborations with external conservationists?

This question motivates ongoing community-based research in the Salween Peace Park, a 5485-square-kilometre Indigenous Karen conservation initiative along the border between Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). This forested and mountainous region, which has been a war zone since the 1950s, is under the *de facto* administration of the Karen National Union (KNU), a political organization that has fought for greater autonomy against a series of military regimes in Burma. Most people here practice a subsistence economy. In addition to cultivating both irrigated rice paddies and upland swidden-fallow fields, Karen hunt, gather, and fish in the forests and streams. Most lands and resources, including water and fish, are managed communally. Karen communities are working to revitalize and articulate their systems of communal land governance following decades of conflict-induced disruption. Our research grew out of community collaborations to support this effort. The first and second author (who is an Indigenous Karen) collaborated closely with community members to conduct the research, while the third author served as an academic advisor.

Being Karen in a relational world

In the Karen world, humans are not the ultimate owners of the land and water. Rather, the land, water, sun, moon, mountains, and rivers all have spirit owners known in the Sgaw Karen language as *K'Sah* (ကစံး).⁴ Humans acquire the ability to inhabit and use the land through negotiating with the *Htee K'Sah Kaw K'Sah* (ထံကစံးကီၵ်ကစံး) (“owners of the water and land”), offering sacrifices and praying for these beings' protection and blessing over their lands and communities. Each Karen

community territory, or *Kaw* (ကွၵ်), maintains a unique hereditary relationship with these *Htee K'Sah Kaw K'Sah*. This relationship includes so-called founders' rituals that structure the ceremonial practices of many Indigenous Peoples across the Southeast Asian highlands.⁵

Every *Kaw* community performs these annual founders' rituals to protect the water. Details differ from one *Kaw* to another, although the purpose remains the same: to ensure proper rains and to prevent water-related disasters such as floods or droughts. In small *Kaw* territories without major streams, rituals may be performed at the head of irrigation canals that feed the rice paddies. However, in *Kaw Thay Ghu*, where we work, the *Klaw Klaw Lo Klo* is a major stream that feeds multiple canals and irrigated rice paddies. At the mouth of this stream, a major ceremony is held annually called *Lu Htee Hta* (လှိုထံထံ) (“offering for the mouth of the stream”). Although people from outside the community are not allowed to directly observe the *Lu Htee Hta* ceremony, community members and ritual leaders explained the process.

Lu Htee Hta is performed at the beginning of the annual monsoon rains. A hereditary ceremonial leader – the *Htee Hko* (ထံခိၵ်) or “head of the water” – leads the ceremony, and the entire village participates. After building a bamboo platform [Fig. 1], the *Htee Hko* and his assistants sacrifice a pig. They then place offerings of rice alcohol, areca nut, betel leaves, tobacco, pork, and rice on the bamboo platform, while placing a pitcher of water on the ground at the foot of the structure. Once they have presented these offerings to the spirit owners of the water, the *Htee Koh* and his assistants pray to the spirits for blessing, sufficient water, and protection from floods and droughts. Recognizing the intimate relationship between fish and water quality, local villagers do not fish for three days following the *Lu Htee Hta* ceremony. The *Lu Htee Hta* site where the *Klaw Klaw Lo Klo* stream flows into *Bwe Lo Klo* River is also a sanctuary where fishing is prohibited. Community leaders explained that if the fish decline, the stream might dry up, in turn affecting villagers' farms and the efficacy of the *Lu Htee Hta* ritual itself.

Scientists and conservation practitioners increasingly recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews that treat nonhuman nature as living relations rather than inert resources. There is growing realization that these relational values are essential not only to inform conservation efforts but to facilitate transformative societal shifts toward more harmonious ways of being with the Earth.¹ This is good, and indeed long overdue. However, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) cautions, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and specific practices “cannot be decoupled from their communal worldviews, practice and traditions.”² For many Indigenous Peoples, the goal of “conservation” or “resource management” is not to control land and “natural resources,” but rather to maintain respectful and life-giving human relations with more-than-human social others.³

Besides the *Htee K'Sah Kaw K'Sah*, a host of other unseen spirit beings inhabit the Karen world. These include *Nah Htee* (evil water spirits), which are capricious beings that inhabit many streams and water features. For example, *Htee Meh K'Lah* (ထံမိၵ်ကလာ) (“mirror water”) is a spring-fed pool with no outflow and is traditionally protected as a place inhabited by *Nah Htee*. Violating these spirits' territories may cause harm such as temporary blindness, injury, or illness. For example, throwing trash into the water is said to harm the eyes of the *Nah Htee*, and thus one who dirties the water in this way may in turn suffer eye problems or blindness. On one occasion, we witnessed our research assistant perform an offering to the water spirits for his older brother, who had suffered a hurt leg for about three months. Divination had indicated that the man had violated the *Nah Htee* (နီထံ), and that an offering was required to make things right and heal his leg.

Thus, spirit beings play an active role in shaping water governance in Karen communities. As long as humans respect places inhabited by spirits such as *Nah Htee* and uphold ceremonial obligations to the *Htee K'Sah Kaw K'Sah*, they will prosper and avoid harm. These beings maintain a network of protected land and water features while compelling humans to maintain a general ethic of respect toward the water and all beings. Although the lands and waters may

not be directly policed by humans, they are inhabited by more-than-human social beings that demand humans' deference and respect.

An elaborate system of traditional prohibitions, or taboos, also govern humans' relations with the more-than-human species that inhabit a Karen *Kaw* territory. For example, the meat of aquatic and terrestrial species should never be cooked together; if people do, disaster may befall the *Kaw*. Several aquatic species (e.g., certain frogs, *Nya Lee* (ညာလီ) fish [*Channa* spp.], crabs, and shrimp) cannot be consumed in the forest; if people do, they may lose their way and become hopelessly lost. Our community colleague Saw Nya Ki Htoo summed it up this way: “The Elders knew how to make it difficult for us to overhunt [or overfish], so they made these rules and protocols that we need to follow.” Thus, relations on the spiritual plane guide Karen water governance and relations with both aquatic and terrestrial species, all in the absence of centralized human authority or formal regulations.

Karen fish conservation: two examples

Spiritual protocols also inform Karen fish conservation practices. Karen communities' creation of no-take fish reserves has been documented in the Salween River basin on both sides of the Thai-Burma border. Such reserves serve as fish nurseries, where total fish biomass may be more than twenty times that in surrounding waters where fishing is practiced.⁷

In the Salween Peace Park, fish sanctuaries have been established by many communities, and new ones continue to be created. Community members draw up formal rules and penalties that are often backed up by the local KNU government authorities. However, Karen animists also conduct prayer ceremonies to the *Htee K'Sah Kaw K'Sah* spirits to consecrate the fish sanctuary, protect the fish, and harm anyone who would dare to steal the fish [Fig. 2]. A village leader during such a ceremony told us that “this is how we take



Fig. 1 (left): Artist's rendering of *Lu Htee Hta* ceremony. (Drawing by Saw Poe Ngae, used with permission).

Fig. 2 (above): Animist consecration ceremony for fish conservation area. (Photo by Andrew Paul, 2017)



Fig. 3: Christian prayer service for fish conservation area Salween. (Photo by Andrew Paul, 2018)

care [of the fish].” Karen communities’ establishment of formal rules and punishments does not displace the role of the *Htee K’Sah Kaw K’Sah* in fish conservation; rather, human laws and spiritual laws work in tandem to protect these places and ensure effective fish conservation.

Another example of Indigenous Karen fish conservation involves a species the Karen call *Nya Nah* (ညှိန်နီ) (*Garra* spp.). *Nya Nah* is endemic to the Bwe Lo Klo River that flows through the heart of the Salween Peace Park. Humans maintain a very special relationship with this fish. Not only is *Nya Nah* a preferred species for human consumption, but it is also used for traditional feasts and rituals such as the post-harvest ceremony to release the rice spirit, embodied in the Asian Fairy Bluebird (*Irena puella*). Since *Nya Nah* spawn over pebbles in shallow water, they are vulnerable to fluctuating water levels. Karen stewards use small rock dams to maintain ideal spawning channels for the fish, even placing tree branches over the channels to deter predators. Our research colleague Saw Ray Kay Moo, who maintains these spawning channels, told us that *Nya Nah* fish depend on humans like an infant depends on its mother: “We need to take care of them, or they will die.” This embodies the ethic of reciprocity at the heart of Karen conservation, called *Aw K’Taw* (အိန်ကတိာ်): “If you consume, you must also take care of [the fish].”

Before the adult *Nya Nah* fish arrive at the spawning grounds, the entire community gathers in ceremony to pray to the *Htee K’Sah Kaw K’Sah* to protect the fish. Community members also observe numerous taboos related to *Nya Nah*. Violating these taboos, our community colleagues contended, would cause *Nya Nah* to abandon their area and spawn elsewhere. For example, only local community members are allowed to see the fish spawning – if visitors come, the fish will be scared away. It is forbidden to swear, point at the fish, throw rocks, or carry a gun near the *Nya Nah* spawning grounds. The largest fish are always spared to “bring back their children next year,” although some smaller adults may be taken after they have laid their eggs. These spawning fish can only be consumed in the local village; they cannot be given or traded to other villages.

For those who do not understand Karen relationships with more-than-human beings such as spirits or *Nya Nah*, it may be tempting to isolate practices such as the maintenance of spawning channels as examples of ‘practical’ Karen resource management and conservation. However, as our research colleagues explained, it is essential to understand the ceremonies and reciprocal relations within which humans, *Nya Nah*, and the *Htee K’Sah Kaw K’Sah* spirits are embedded. Disregarding spiritual practices while focusing on physical management practices misrepresents and does violence to these relationships, hindering just and effective community-based fish conservation.

Upholding relations in times of change

Most contemporary Kaw communities in the Salween Peace Park include Christian and/or Buddhist households as well as traditional animists, including various syncretic traditions. Since Karen conservation practice is intimately connected with a relational worldview, religious and cultural change presents a challenge for Kaw governance. However, our research findings indicate strong continuity in Karen conservation practice despite religious change. For example, syncretic forms of Buddhism known in Karen as *Bah Paw* (ဘာပေါ) (“flower worship”) maintain many of the traditional forms and practices of Karen animism.

Although Christianity may represent a stronger break from animist worldviews, even here continuity exists. Most Christians still believe in the spirits and can provide numerous stories as evidence. Fish conservation also illustrates this continuity in practice. For example, mixed animist and Christian communities may hold joint consecration ceremonies for a fish conservation area. One such event that we witnessed began with a community meeting among the villages involved in protecting the fish sanctuary. Following the meeting, the animists conducted a consecration ceremony, while the Christians held a similar prayer service nearby [Fig. 3]. The consecration concluded with a joint community feast.

In some Karen communities, nearly all households have converted to Christianity or other religions. In these communities, hereditary ceremonial leaders may no longer exist. However, even here one can find examples of continuity in Karen relational conservation practice. The substantive relations may be different, but many patterns persist. For example, many Christian Karen communities maintain their own fish sanctuaries, consecrating them in a manner similar to the animists – but instead of the *Htee K’Sah Kaw K’Sah*, they pray to the Christian God to protect the fish and harm anyone who would dare to steal the fish. Some Karen communities have held multifaith, multicultural prayer services to consecrate fish sanctuaries.⁹ In the mountains of Salween Peace Park, community research colleagues shared stories demonstrating the effectiveness of Christian consecration rites. In one case, a local animist disregarded a Christian fish conservation area and fished there anyway; immediately thereafter, several of his buffalo and cattle mysteriously died.

Karen communities are also revitalizing and adapting their environmental governance systems. As Karen fish conservation illustrates, protocols rooted in Karen relations with the more-than-human world are now being supplemented with formal codes. These rules ensure that everyone, regardless of religion, is required to protect and conserve community lands, waters, and resources. Formalized fish sanctuaries do not replace relations between humans, fish, and the spirit world – rather, these designations uphold relations and strengthen community conservation in the context of religious and

cultural change. The KNU administration of the Karen National Union has officially recognized Indigenous Kaw territories, which embody the relational worldview and practices of Karen communities. In April 2022, KNU officials awarded the first Kaw title certificates.

Officially launched in 2018, the Salween Peace Park is an umbrella initiative that consolidates and upholds Karen communities’ relational governance systems.⁹ The peace park comprises more than 250 Kaw territories, which in turn host a mix of community forests, agricultural lands, villages, sacred sites – and fish sanctuaries. It represents a “modern formulation of the Indigenous Karen environmental ethic.”¹⁰ Indigenous Karen traditions of the Kaw form the foundation for governance in the Salween Peace Park – including traditional protocols protecting the water and fish. Each Kaw community is explicitly empowered to establish and implement their own community codes and regulations to protect and manage the community territory and its resources.

The Salween Peace Park also seeks to defend Indigenous Karen relations with their ancestral territories by adopting an anti-militaristic and anti-capitalist position. The Salween Peace Park rejects the dams that have been planned by successive central regimes on the free-flowing Salween River. Not only would these dams spell disaster for many of the Salween’s estimated 100 species of fish, but they would also severely undermine Karen communities’ sacred relationships with the river and all of its beings. In contrast, Salween Peace Park offers a vision that upholds human responsibilities and relationships with the lands, forests, waters, and more-than-human social beings of the Salween River Basin.¹¹

Conclusions

Water and fish governance among Indigenous communities such as the Karen obviously includes physical management practices, formal rules, and policies. However, these practices and policies cannot be properly understood apart from the social relations within which they are embedded. Humans’ obligations to maintain proper relations with more-than-human beings, including spirits, are the most important driver of what we might call conservation in a Karen Kaw. In this context, the goal of conservation is to uphold humans’ relations with more-than-human beings rather than to manage land, water, and species as material objects. This is about more than beliefs and practices – it is a way of being in and with the world.

Documenting and enforcing community rules, although important, is not enough. It is essential to continue nurturing the web of relationships within which Indigenous Peoples live, and to foster the conditions for these relations to continue to thrive. The IPBES notes that the fundamental systems change necessary to avert catastrophic biodiversity loss can be facilitated through actions such as “mobilizing values of stewardship through tenure reforms that reconnect Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their territories.”¹²

In other words, a relational approach to management and conservation is needed: rather than manipulating and controlling the natural world, the goal is to maintain lifegiving reciprocal relations. The ongoing inclusive and bottom-up process to formalize traditional community rules and protocols across the diversity of religion and culture in the Salween Peace Park is testament to the possibilities that exist when we take Indigenous relational worlds seriously. Honoring these relations will make conservation collaborations not only more just but also more effective by aligning conservation action with the worldviews and lived experiences of local and Indigenous communities.

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Water Governance from the Perspective of Indigenous Peoples in Papua

Elisabeth Veronika Wambrau

Water governance should be applied in sustainable ways to protect the availability of water resources, and the knowledge and practices of Indigenous Peoples are there to learn from in this regard. Indigenous Peoples are inseparable from their ecosystems, including water, land, forests, animals, plants, landscapes, and wetlands. They have their own ways of using, planning, maintaining, and respecting nature to support their daily lives. It has been proven that Indigenous people have survived and thrived for thousands of years with their own traditional systems. For Indigenous Peoples, water is not only an economic resource or an environmental service, but has value by itself, in a spiritual way. They consider water and water bodies such as rivers and swamps as having their own spiritual dimensions.¹

Like other Indigenous Peoples around the world, Papuan people have their own ways to value, utilise, and maintain water. Papua has over 269 ethnic groups, 269 living local languages, and 1,068 clans spread across the seven customary zones of the entire Land of Papua (Tanah Papua). These zones are Bomberai, Domberai, Saireri, Mamta, Mee Pago, La Pago, and Ha Anim. This article discusses the Malind Anim people in Ha Anim, the Enggros people in Mamta, and the Sambom people in La Pago.

Despite several of these cultures and local languages having nearly disappeared, many of them still maintain their traditional wisdom, values, and philosophies on how humans relate to nature – in which water plays an important role.

Water resources are abundant in Papua. There are five officially classified main river basins: Kamundan-Sebyar, Omba, Eilandan-Bikuma-Digoel, Mamberamo-Tami-Apavaur, and Wapoga-Mimika. The latter three basins are in five customary zones (Saireri, Mamta, Mee Pago, La Pago, and Ha Anim) and together distribute to 153 watersheds, 15 lakes, and 40 groundwater basins. This means that the majority of Papua Indigenous people either live surrounded by fresh water, along the coastal areas, and/or on small islands. A brief introduction to the water governance practices by three different tribes highlights both their uniqueness and similarities. For example, the Malind Anim occupy both coastal areas and fresh water areas like swamps and riverbeds, and they have their own values to utilise and maintain the areas. The Sambom people meanwhile live in hinterland Papua and have their own ways to support freshwater bodies and thereby their daily life. The Enggros people occupy the Youtefa Bay and retain and care for their mangrove forests (including, Tonotwiyat or “women’s forests”) both as a food resource and because of their cultural value.

The Malind Anim

The traditional land of the Malind Anim tribe (also known as the Marind Anim) is the vast Merauke Regency territory on the southern part of Papua, including areas

Water is the primary basic need for human beings and all living things. It covers approximately 71 percent of the earth’s surface, but only 3.5 percent of this is fresh water, of which 1.7 percent is locked as groundwater and a further 1.7 percent comprises glaciers, ice caps, and vapor in the air as part of the precipitation process. This shows that accessibility to fresh water is limited and that water has become a precious economic resource, especially in light of increasing water pollution and population size.

that border Papua New Guinea. This area is characterised by many big rivers over 100 kilometers in length. The Malind Anim’s territory is located alongside the Fly, Mbian, Maro, Bulaka, and eastern Digul rivers, as well as along the coastal areas of the Arafura Sea and Kimaan Island. Most noticeably, the ecosystem influences the names of the Malind Anim, such as Malind Duh (“sea people,” or those who live along the coastal areas), Marind Deg (“river people,” or those who live along the rivers), and Marind Bob

(“swamp people,” or those who live inland). This shows that the type of water resources influences people’s identity.

The life of the Malind Anim is also influenced by the monsoon climate, and they have their own concept – based on their lunar calendar – of the east monsoon and west monsoon, which relates to climate and which distinguishes the dry and the wet seasons.

As part of their water governance practices, the Malind Anim have also maintained their traditional cultivation

system called *wambad* [Fig. 1]. The central feature of the *wambad* system consists of an elevated garden bed that has been dug by people in order to avoid flooding during the wet season. This is complemented by a traditional drainage system called *kamahib*, the size of which varies depending on the size of the *wambad*’s yield. The *wambad* system makes smart use of topography to drain excess water, as these gardens are usually close to a water body such as a tributary river or a swamp. Based on my discussion with an Elder of the tribe, Bapak Isaias Y Ndiken, it can be said that the *kamahib* traditional drainage system functions as an irrigation system as well. During the monsoon seasons the *kamahib* absorbs and stores fresh water. During the subsequent dry season, this is used to water the *wati*, bananas, bitter nut, and other plants that are grown in the elevated garden bed. The *wati* is an important plant for customary ceremonies and traditional rituals. The *kamahib* also functions as a habitat for fish, providing a body of freshwater during the dry season. Therefore, the *wambad* and *kamahib* features of Malind Anim’s traditional water governance practices provide the community with resilience because they can rely on their own plentiful and high-quality food year round.

While traditional Malind Anim water governance knowledge and practices support their lives and livelihoods, the people also have a spiritual relationship with water. Their worldview includes concepts of the *Dema* and the totem, and both inform a relationship with water that perceives water to be sacred. Prominent cultural anthropologist Jan van Baal described *Dema* as spiritual beings who lived in ancestral times and have since experienced metamorphosis into nature – animals, plants, and landscape features.² For example, one *Dema*, called *Teimbire*, changed into reeds and swamp grass after he died in a swamp. *Dema* can also transform from one shape into another. For example, *Ganguta* is a tree *Dema* who used to live in a place called *Onggar* but exists now in the shape of a tree, whose leaves turn into fish when they fall into the sea.³ The *Dema* can especially be found in coastal areas, forests, wetlands, and swamps.

As van Baal noted, particular *Dema* are also associated with natural phenomena and the universe.⁴ So called *Yorma* is a sea *Dema* who can destroy any housing with his big waves. *Yorma* is the son of the two *Demas* of the depths (called *Desse* and *Dawena*) who provide the community with ground water. The moon *Dema* is called *Mandow-kuper Sav*. The west monsoon *Dema* is called *Muli*, while the eastern monsoon *Dema* is called *Sendawi*. *Sendawi* is the son of *Yamiwal*, who is the *Dema* of thunder, and so forth.⁵ Because of peoples’ belief in the *Dema*, they will not change the natural landscape around them. They refrain from draining a swamp, cutting the mangroves, or polluting a sacred water source.

The Malind Anim also adhere to the totem belief system. Totemism concerns the relationship between one clan with a particular plant or animal species or natural phenomenon. Communities who live close to the water often have a totem who lives in the water – a crocodile, a waterlily, big waves, or a particular species of fish.⁶ If such a particular species disappears from the area, that means that the identity of that particular clan also ceases to exist. Since the (local) extinction of an animal results in the loss of the clan’s identity, the wellbeing and fate of the local ecosystem is directly related to that of the local community.

Thus while the Malind Anim protect several places for the purpose of securing water supplies – for example, spring water sources (*Awamadka*) that provide water resources during the long dry season – they also protect stretches of the river and swamps because these are considered sacred places related to *Demas* or totems who live inside those waterbodies.

The Enggros people

The Enggros people live in Youtefa bay together with the Nafri people and Tobati people. Enggros people build their houses on stilts because they are surrounded by seawater and depend on the nature around



Fig. 1 (left): Example of the *wambad* system in Merauke Town. (Photo Konny Kameubun, 2013). Inset: Author (right) and interviewee Elder Pak Isaias Y Ndiken (left) in Jayapura City after an interview on the *wambad* system. (Photo Charles Wambrau, 2022)



Fig. 2: The customary zones of the Enggros people. (Map courtesy of S.W. Taran, 2018)

Key
 Hutan Lindang
 Zone 1
 Zone 2
 Zone 3
 Zone 4
 Lokaal 1
 Lokaal 2
 Lokaal 3
 Lokaal 4

them, especially the mangroves. S.W. Taran, a student under my supervision, researched the gender dynamics of their forest governance system in 2018. She noted a number of “gender territories” [Fig. 2] – areas without a physical boundary but which everyone in the community knows can only be entered, monitored, or utilised by either men or women.⁷

Figure 2 shows that Zone 1 and Zone 2 are customary mangrove forests that function as “women’s forests” called *Tonotwiyat*. Only women can enter these areas to look for seashells and to fish, socialise, and undress to be comfortable. The women enter these mangrove areas with a canoe and dock the canoe at the edge of a bay as a sign that a group of women are in the area. If a man does enter these areas, he will get customary punishment depending on whether it was accidental or on purpose. The customary punishment is divided into three levels of payment: small (valuable) navy blue beads for intentional entry of an area known to be for women only, green beads as a medium punishment, and brown beads for accidental entry.⁸

Contrary to most other areas, which belong to either the Tobatri people or the Enggros people, the mangrove forested Zone 3 is accessible for women from both local tribes who use the area for fishing. Recently, however, Zone 3 has undergone a lot of economic development and some of these customary forests are experiencing reclamation. Zone 4 is utilised by men for providing house-building materials and firewood, but this zone has also undergone a lot of economic development. This economic development has gone hand-in-hand with the diminishing of the mangrove forests.

The Sambom people

The Sambom people live around Helaksili Village in the Abenaho District of Yalimo Regency. The people of this village use water from Kali Eleli (Eleli River), whose source is in Hawi Mountain, the highest mountain in that district. The Sambom people have their own management system to govern this fresh water source, consisting of a traditional zoning system that for centuries maintained high-quality water in the river. This system benefits the local community as well as wildlife. My student Marice Sambom, a member of the Sambom tribe, conducted research on this zoning system. She identifies 5 different zones, featured in her sketch [Fig. 3].⁹

Zone A [3.2] covers the area of the water spring that flows from Hawi Mountain [3.1]. This is a zone where people preserve the water area as it is. The forest around this zone is kept undisturbed from human activity. The clear part of the river is particularly sacred in the Sambom’s worldview. This is because, historically, the Sambom and Kepno ancestors performed ceremonies and rituals in this area. This zone is forbidden to the public, and only people who “belong” to the river (e.g., the community chief and his family) may enter. The customary punishment for entering without permission consists of payment of either money or a pig. According to local belief, a man entered the forest without permission from an authorised family, got lost due to the punishment of a spirit, and is still endlessly dwelling inside the area.¹⁰

Zone B [3.4] is the location from which people take their drinking and cooking water. People use a small water storage device made from bamboo called *findi jagat kecil* with which water is taken from the Eleli River to their house. This area is approximately one kilometre away from the community settlement. Zone C [3.5-3.6] is used for domestic purposes such as dish washing and laundry. Zone D [3.7] hosts the bathing place for men, and Zone E [3.8] is the bathing place for women.

The area between Zones C and D consists of a bush ecosystem covered with rocks and long-leaf plants called *Holim Engga*. The area between the two bathing places is an effective, densely forested border consisting of big *Wile* and *Evi Alem* trees that prevent men and women from reaching each other’s bathing areas.

Fig. 3: Sketch of the five zones of the traditional water governance system of the Sambom people. (Artwork by Marice Sambom, 2022)



Zone A

3.1: A view of Hawi Mountain where the water spring that is sacred to the Sambom is located. People preserve the water area as it is, and the surrounding forest is kept undisturbed from human activity. The clear part of the river is especially sacred to the Sambom. (Photo courtesy of Marice Sambom, 2021)

3.2: The sacred natural site that is at the heart of a traditional zoning system by the Sambom which for centuries maintained high-quality water in the river. This area is especially sacred since, historically, the Sambom and Kepno ancestors performed ceremonies and rituals in this area. (Photo courtesy of Marice Sambom, 2021)

3.3: A land area that forms part of the sacred natural site. (Photo courtesy of Marice Sambom, Yalimo Regency, Papua, 2021)

Zone B

3.4: View of the location from which the local Sambom community take their drinking and cooking water. (Photo courtesy of Marice Sambom, Yalimo Regency, Papua, 2021)

Zone C

3.5: View of the location where people utilise the river for domestic purposes such as dish washing and laundry.

3.6: View of the location where people utilise the river for domestic purposes such as dish washing and laundry. (Photos courtesy of Marice Sambom, Yalimo Regency, Papua, 2021)

Zones D and E

3.7: Boys swimming in the part of the river that is accessible to males only (zone D).

3.8: Women taking a bath in the part of the river that is accessible to females only (zone E). (Photos courtesy of Marice Sambom, Yalimo Regency, Papua, 2021)

Conclusion

Different tribes of the Indigenous Papua Peoples each have their own traditional systems to govern water, and these are rooted in their worldviews and cultural values. These systems have for centuries protected the ecosystem, and even today, they help local communities stay healthy. Respectful interaction with the other beings who share the nature around them underlines that Indigenous Peoples’ systems can teach us valuable lessons on conservation, development, and adaptation to the effects of climate change. The traditional cultivation and drainage system from the Malind Anim shows that traditional ecological knowledge benefits the control of flooding during the rainy season and provides food security year round. Moreover, their *Dema*- and totem-based belief systems effectively conserve nature. Mangrove forest governance by the Enggros illustrates how gender informs human interaction with nature. The traditional zoning system that the Sambom employ shows how sacred sections of the river are effectively

setting parts of the river aside for wildlife and ensuring clean water for use by the community.

This article highlights the knowledge and practices by only three out of the 269 Papua tribes. The Indigenous knowledge and practices of other Papua tribes contain other unique, time-tested approaches that should be taken seriously in our efforts to address the developmental and environmental challenges of our time, in which both water and justice for Indigenous Peoples are crucial issues. They deserve to be better researched, understood, and respected.

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Notes

- 1 Wambrau, E.V. 2015 Water Resource Management in the Lowlands of Southern Papua Using a Decision Support System and Integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge, thesis, University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- 2 Van Baal 1966, Ernst 1979, and Corbey 2010 (cited in Wambrau 2015)
- 3 Van Baal 1966 (cited in Wambrau 2015)
- 4 Van Baal 1966 (cited in Wambrau 2015)
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- 7 Taran, S.W. 2018 Gender Perspective in Mangrove Forest Management in Enggros Village Abepura District Jayapura City. Thesis in the Urban and Regional Planning, Cenderawasih University, Jayapura Papua Indonesia
- 8 Taran, 2018
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“Use and Protect”

How Indigenous Community Watershed Management in Sabah Sustains Micro-Hydro Systems

Adrian Lasimbang

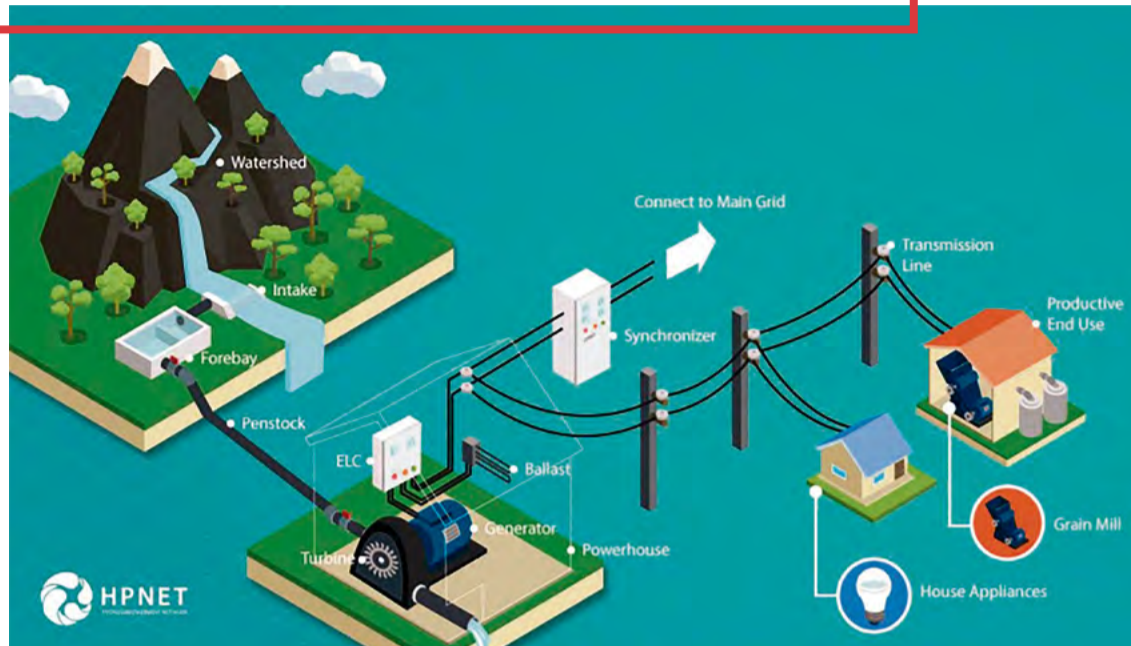


Fig. 1 (above): Typical setup of Micro Hydro Mini Grid system. (Figure courtesy of www.hpnet.org)

When the Malaysian state of Sabah grappled with destructive fishing methods and extensive logging in the 1960s, local Indigenous communities responded to this rapid destruction of the environment with the revitalization of *Tagal*. *Tagal* is our traditional system of sustainably managing our natural resources (particularly fish), endangered wildlife species, and medicinal plants. By 2008, 179 villages in kampung Notorrus alone had identified river areas for *Tagal* where no fishing would be allowed.

At present, Sabah is facing the challenge to provide enough freshwater for an increasing population as well as to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all – UN Sustainable Development Goal number 7. This includes rural and Indigenous communities who cannot be connected to the national grid, or who do not want to be because they want to govern their own (ancestral) territories. Our *Tagal* traditional system again plays an important role in solving these challenges in a sustainable and just way.

My organization TONIBUNG (TObpinai Nngkokoton koBUruon KampuNG, meaning “Friends of Village Development”) is a local Indigenous-led organization working to improve energy access to rural communities in harmony with existing Indigenous conservation laws. We combine micro-hydropower technology with *Tagal* watershed management to provide sustainable energy for our communities while also showing to the national authorities that we can take good care of water catchment areas ourselves and ensure enough clean water and energy.

This also proves that the currently stalled construction of the Kaiduan mega-hydropower dam on our Indigenous lands – a looming disaster for our people, as it will flood 12 square kilometers of ancestral land and negatively impact Indigenous communities living downstream – should be revoked completely.

Community-based micro-hydropower

A community-based micro-hydro system is managed and maintained by local communities. The most important component that needs to be maintained by the community, apart from the structure and equipment, is the watershed areas.

Micro-hydropower is a renewable energy technology that generates electricity using flowing water with a capacity of below 100kw.

Typically, the system is designed as a runoff river system which does not require construction of large dams for water storage. The micro-hydro system relies solely on the available flow of the river. Therefore, it relies directly on watersheds to sustain the water flow. The system consists of several components such as penstock pipes, a turbine, a generator, and the distribution system [Fig. 1]. These components need to be well maintained and require a trained person to operate and maintain. As this requires funding, communities can struggle to maintain operations and, in many cases, abandon the system if they can no longer afford it.

The sustainability of operations of a micro-hydro system also relies very much on the availability of adequate water discharge throughout the year. A well conserved forest in the watershed area where the micro hydro system is installed will ensure sufficient water resource availability throughout the year, as the forest retains and then gradually releases abundant rainwater that falls in the monsoon season. Land conversion in the watershed will decrease water discharge during the dry season. It will also increase conflict over those limited water resources between those needing it for agriculture, plantations, fisheries, industry on the one hand, and those needing it for drinking water supply on the other. Both of these effects can disrupt the operations of a micro-hydro system.

Therefore, in order to ensure continuous electricity supply to the community, both the regulation of water resource usage and land use management within the watershed area are important. Any disturbance in the watershed area, particularly agricultural activities, can cause land degradation. Land degradation upstream of the watershed will affect the hydrological condition in a way

that will disrupt the sustainability of existing micro-hydro systems. Heavy rain can cause floods and landslides that can severely damage the intake weir and parts of the penstock pipes of the structure. Severe damage caused by natural disasters generally requires high maintenance costs, which community funds often cannot cover.

Case study on community-based watershed management in Ulu Papar, Sabah

A community-based model ensures that the community has a sense of ownership of the micro-hydro system. A sense of ownership makes a community embrace the project as their own and invest more

time and effort to ensure the success of the project. If the community embraces the project as their own, they will be more aware and willing to work together to achieve a common goal effectively. Community involvement at every stage of development increases ownership and participation and results in a more reliable and better quality micro-hydropower system.

Ulu Papar is a region located at the upper Papar river in Sabah. It is a very remote area that can only be reached by jeep track roads or by hiking along the salt trails. There are six villages located near the Crocker Range Park. Micro-hydro projects have been developed and implemented in Ulu Papar since 2004.

All six community-based micro-hydro systems installed in Ulu Papar – in Kampung Terian, Kampung Buayan, Kampung Tiku, Kampung Pongobonon, Kampung Kalangaan, and Kampung Longkogungan – have established watershed management protocols. These protocols are a set of rules to manage the area based on the local *Tagal* Indigenous management system. *Tagal* applies the concept of “*Gompi-Guno*” (“use and protect”). Though most widely used and recognized in the protection of fish resources in the rivers in Sabah, the *Tagal* system can also be applied to protect the forest. Our organization used the *Tagal* system to design and implement the community watershed protocol in order to ensure better watershed management for micro-hydro systems. The first protocol was developed in Kampung Terian in 2003 with assistance from the PACOS Trust, a community-based organization dedicated to supporting Indigenous communities in Sabah.

Background of community protocol

Protocols for the management and care of important resources such as water catchments, forests, rivers, as well as forest and aquatic life have existed in Kampung Terian since a long time ago, but only in oral form. Fortunately, the younger generation in this village has been exposed to environmental issues that are becoming critical in Malaysia and are being hotly discussed globally. The younger generation sees these unwritten protocols as an important heritage that should be documented and practiced in the management and protection of water catchment areas.

This Terian Community Protocol on water catchment protection practices has been produced through cooperation with the Terian community, guided by the PACOS Trust. The production of this protocol is very important to the Terian community. It also ensures the continuity of our management and protection of our water catchments by the next generations to come.

This protocol is being put into practice and serves as a guide for the Terian community as well as other communities who are fighting for sustainable water



Fig. 2 (left): A Indigenous community operator presenting the micro-hydro setup at his village in nearby Long Lamai, Sarawak. (Photo courtesy of TONIBUNG, 2015)



because the tributary rivers flow into the main river that has been placed under *Tagal*. For example, *Tagal* river rules prohibit the throwing of waste that can pollute as well as fishing methods that are dangerous such as use of chemicals and electricity. *Tagal* is the responsibility of the community together. It is governed and carried out by the community, based on mutual agreement and discussion. Management of water catchments in Terian Village is thus communal, based on mutual ownership, and relying on consultations and democratic decision-making.

Our community has established a special taskforce to monitor the water catchment to ensure that the area is free from pollution and disturbances. When someone is accused of violating the rules, the individual will be brought to the *Tagal* committee together with the village chief. If found guilty, the individual will be given a fine/*Sogit* amounting to RM500 (roughly 100 Euro) and a pig that is at least 50kg in weight. This fine is paid to the community.

Conclusion

The sustainability of the community-based micro-hydro system depends very much on the management of the surrounding watersheds. Failure to adequately manage land use and activities within the watershed area of the river basin used for the system results in many disruptions to operations due to flooding, siltation, landslides, and reduced quantity and quality of water flow. These problems are aggravated by climate change, which further demonstrates the need for better watershed management. The use of traditional wisdom and practices instills a sense of ownership by the community towards the micro-hydro system, which is key for the success of any community-based projects.

The community management of watersheds based on traditional *Tagal* practice not only incentivizes the community to protect the watershed, but also asserts custodianship by the community towards the natural resources that they depend on for their livelihood. This use of community protocols is a strong example of how Indigenous traditional systems can play a role in grassroots-level freshwater management and renewable electricity provisioning. This contributes towards the global goal of combating climate change and reversing the loss of biodiversity.

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catchment areas through management based on traditional knowledge and practices. In addition, this protocol has been made into a book for youth in the communities, explaining to them how to care for this very precious treasure. This ensures our traditional knowledge is passed down to future generations of Indigenous engineers who work with their communities to develop and harness their resources on their own terms while incentivizing environmental stewardship.

The Terian community really hopes that the Malaysian government will start to realize the important contribution of the community for the care and management of nature. Indigenous communities have contributed greatly to forest sustainability, especially water catchment areas in Sabah, and they have positively impacted environmental issues such as global warming, biodiversity conservation, and recognition of the Ulu Papar region as a 'Biosphere Reserve' by UNESCO. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government and other related parties to start paying attention and recognized *Tagal* as a traditional practice for conservation and accept our community protocols as a legitimate law, specifically in Sabah and generally in Malaysia.

In particular, we are putting forward a viable alternative to the still pending construction of the controversial, destructive Kaiduan Dam. Our work with community protocols proves that the Terian community has its own system based on traditional knowledge and practices, resulting in good, sustainable care of water catchment areas. It is hoped that relevant parties will see this as an important practice and adopt these more environmentally friendly alternatives to obtain clean water supply and green energy. It is also hoped that they will rescind the construction of the Kaiduan Dam once and for all.

Resource management systems of the Dusun community in Terian, Ulu Papar

For the Terian community, without productive land and natural resources, the existence of our culture, practices and traditional knowledge will be affected. Therefore, the sustainability of our management of available resources is important. *Gompi-Guno* is one key practice in the

management of resources based on traditional knowledge. The *Gompi-Guno* concept means "use and protect," where resources that are used or taken will be replanted or given time to regenerate, while available resources are conserved to ensure the continuity of such resources for community use.

The *Gompi-Guno* concept practiced by our community in Terian has also been incorporated in our water catchment protection and management system. For example, when an individual violates a rule, such as polluting the river, it is believed that the river spirit will retaliate. This is based on the belief that springs and rivers in water catchment areas have spirits that act as guardians of the area and will give retribution to individuals who disturb or damage the area.

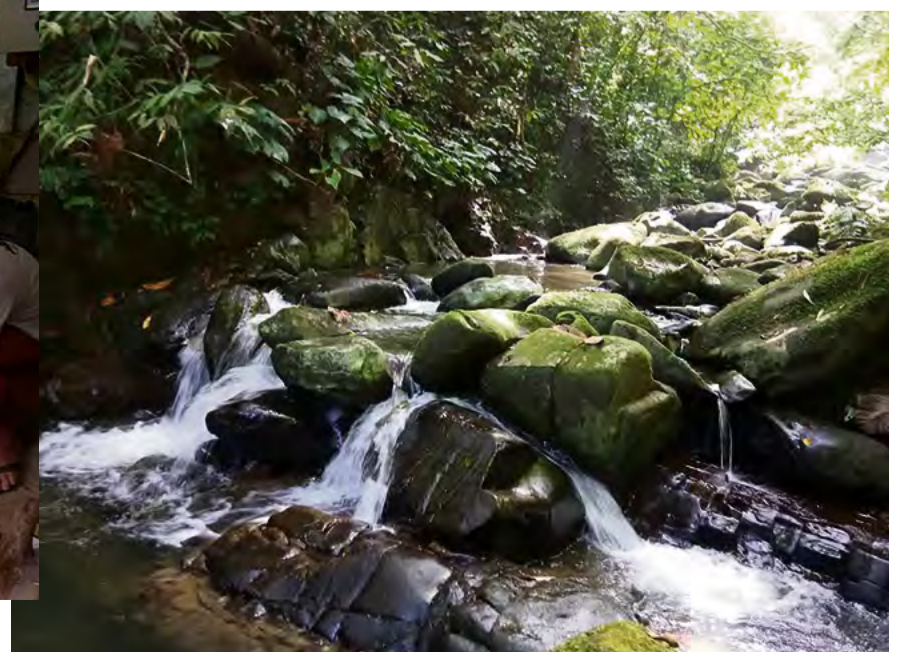
All main tributary rivers leading to the water catchment area cannot be disturbed. Our community has a holistic community protocol for the protection and management of the water catchment based on our traditional knowledge that is in line with conventional water catchment management systems.

The *Tagal* system is also integrated into the water catchment management protocol

Fig. 3 (top): Indigenous community members welding a HDPE pipe using butt welding machine in nearby Long Lamai, Sarawak. (Photo courtesy of TONIBUNG, 2015)

Fig. 4 (right): Indigenous community operators conducting repairs of a micro-hydro turbine at Kampung Terian Penampang, Sabah. (Photo courtesy of TONIBUNG, 2020)

Fig. 5 (far right): River flow at Kobulu River providing water flow for a 20-kilowatt runoff river system installed for Kampung Buayan, Sabah. (Photo courtesy of TONIBUNG, c. 2018)



Connecting the Musical Dots of Cold War Korea

Ely Haimowitz and Kim Sunnam

Yoon Joo Hwang

At 7:30 PM on October 2, 2022, I performed modern Korean composers' pieces from the 20th and 21st centuries at Carnegie Hall in New York. Music is a powerful tool to express my Korean national identity, and Korean modern composers' musical grammar communicates with me as a performer. For a long time, my performance repertoire was selected from music by European and American composers from different eras. However, I started to add Korean modern composers' pieces in 2020. Learning more about my native country of Korea through their musical narratives as well as their personal histories feeds my musical imagination about the colonial era (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953) that were sources of trauma for Korean people. In September 2022, I did an interview with David Kim, the concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who shared his experience of visiting South Korea in the 1980s for the first time with his father. Kim told me he cried on the plane when he came back to the United States because he realized that Korea was his land (*ttang*) and roots (*ppuri*).¹ By performing the music of Korean modern composers, I construct my national identity and understanding of Korean history – it has been my journey to find my “roots” as well. The music of Korean composers reflects such “roots” by evoking their traumas and sentiments.

American ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino notes, “The famous European composer Igor Stravinsky is often credited with the idea that music has no meaning beyond itself. He was expressing a notion that is held by some people about music, especially European classical instrumental music, that it is an abstract, socially autonomous art. One reason for this attitude is that it is often difficult to capture or translate musical meaning with words.”² For Korean modern composers, their lives and their music reflected the tumultuous

modern history of Korea: Japanese colonial occupation (1910-1945), liberation from Japan (1945-early 1950s), and the Korean War (1950-1953). The conflicts of the Cold War hardened after the Korean War divided the country into two separate nation-states: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea), occupied by the USSR and the United States, respectively, with the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between them. After his visit to North Korea to attend a music concert in Pyongyang in 1990, Korean

music scholar No Tongün said: “Nothing hurts more than the pain of division.”³ Korean modern composers' music narrates their nostalgic sorrow, traumas, hope, national sentiment, and despair, allowing us to imagine what their experiences of the Korean War must have been like. This article explores chaotic Cold War Korea by examining the complicated journeys of Korean modern classical musician Kim Sunnam (1917-198?) and American pianist Ely Haimowitz (1920-2010), connecting the musical dots through their music.



Fig. 1: Kim Sunnam (1917-198?). (Photo courtesy of Kim Sewon)

Floridian pianist Ely Haimowitz and Korean composer Kim Sunnam in Cold War Korea

To celebrate independence from Japan in 1945, Korean people came together to sing “Liberation Song (*Haebang üi norae*)” by Kim Sunnam, head of the Korean Proletarian Music Union. The piece evokes the post-liberation era (1945-1948), which is sometimes called the *haebang gonggan* (해방공간, 解放空間) in Korean, or the “space of liberation.” This *gonggan* (공간, 空間), which can refer to an empty space with nothing in it, was a chaotic period for Korean musicians. In the post-liberation era, the Korean Peninsula was occupied by the United States and the Soviet Union. In the south, the United States Army Military Government (USAMGIK) tried to establish music education and culture there.

A Florida native, pianist, and graduate of the Juilliard School, Ely Haimowitz arrived in Korea in 1945. Haimowitz was “in charge of music education for the USAMGIK in Korea, 1945-1946, then was made the first cultural affairs officer for the commanding general, US Armed Forces in Korea.”⁴ He organized workshops for music teachers and established a music curriculum that included Western music theory and history.⁵ Korea's classical music culture was achieved partially through Haimowitz's efforts. He helped to organize and raise funds for Korean arts groups and to develop the Korea Symphony.⁶ Political struggles brought confusion and instability, but ironically, Korean modern composers created beautiful and experimental music with their patriotic voices. The conductor Im Wönsik (1919-2002) and pianist Yun Kisöon (1921-2013) were the first Koreans to study at the Juilliard School with Haimowitz's help, and they established Korean music education and classical music culture when they returned to their home country. Haimowitz helped Kim Sunnam receive a scholarship to the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California. He also showed Kim's music to Aaron Copland, the American composer, who offered Kim a scholarship to participate in the Tanglewood Music Festival in Massachusetts, but Kim was not able to go to the U.S.⁷ The leader of the Korea Musicians' Coalition, Kim wrote the piece “People's Protester (*Inminhangjaengga*)” in 1946 with the lyrics of modern poet Im Insik (Im Hwa, 1908-1953).⁸ When the USAMGIK cracked down on the left, an arrest order was issued for Kim as the composer of this song, and he fled to the North in 1948, leaving behind his family in the South.⁹ Korean scholar No Tongün notes that approximately one hundred Korean classical musicians went to the North – all musicians in their 30s who studied in Japan. Unfortunately, he has not been able to track their work since they defected to the North.¹⁰



Fig. 2: Kim Sunnam's daughter, Kim Sewon, visited Ely Haimowitz in Reno, Nevada. (Photo Courtesy of Kim Sewon)



Fig. 3: Kim Sunnam's collection of Korean Art Songs, *Lullaby* (1948). (Photo Courtesy of Kim Sewon)

In 1952, Kim left North Korea to study in Russia at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music with Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978). He wrote a number of instrumental pieces and songs, but he had to return to North Korea in 1953.¹¹ Kim's honor, title, and right to create compositions were taken away in 1955, and his compositions were forfeited. He was purged and sent to Sinpo from Pyongyang to do hard labor because his music was criticized as "bourgeois."¹² Unfortunately, it is hard to connect the dots of his life in North Korea after he was purged. Some Korean scholars claim that he passed away in 1986, but his daughter received information that he passed away in the early 1980s from pneumonia caught while doing hard labor.

Kim Sewon's (b. 1945) memories of her father in North Korea: *My Father, Kim Sunnam*

Kim Sunnam's "Lullaby (*Jajangga*)" (1948) is one of the pieces I performed at Carnegie Hall this October. I called Kim

Sewon (b. 1945), Kim Sunnam's daughter in Seoul, from Florida to share this exciting news. Earlier this past summer, I had met her in Seoul to conduct an interview. She is one of Korea's distinguished broadcasters, and she published the book *My Father, Kim Sunnam* in the 1990s. Kim Sewon never met her father, who had left for North Korea. She recalls her trips to Russia, China, Mongolia, and Europe to find traces of her father. Kim's mother and grandmother talked about her father in Japanese so that she would not understand them, but she overheard them talking about her father in Korean late one night when they thought she had gone to sleep. She could not talk about her father for many years, until the ban on music by composers who were kidnapped or defected to the North was lifted in 1988. Kim Sewon still remembers how she was excited to attend a recital to listen to her father's pieces the first time they were performed in Seoul in public. Korean newspapers had highlighted her life as the daughter of someone who had defected to North Korea, so she described the moment to me as feeling that "the nail in her heart had finally been pulled out."

Kim Sewon is now 77 years old and is proud to recognize Kim Sunnam as her father. She further told me that her father left two things for her: her name, "Sewon," and his song "Lullaby" from the collection of Korean Art Songs, *Lullaby (Jajangga)*, which was published in 1948. Korean music scholars assert that this song is for Koreans who were in chaos during the post-liberation era and that he wrote it for Korean people as though soothing a baby. However, his three lullaby songs were also a gift for his only child, the daughter he named "Sewon," the meaning of her name expressing his wish that she become a beautiful person in the world. Kim wrote another "Lullaby (*Jajangga*)" in 1950, two years after he had left for North Korea. In the lullaby, he sang from the North to his daughter, who remained in the South at the time: "Sleep well, my baby / [My] proud Partisan's baby / When new spring comes / [your] father will also come."¹³

Fin

July 27, 2023, is the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement of the Korean War. The conflict between two opposed ideologies not only divided the Korean Peninsula but also separated musicians in the South from those in the North. Due to struggles between political ideologies, some musicians stayed in South Korea and others left for North Korea. I argue that Korean modern composers' musical works drove the creation of their musical language and led to their music being a dramatic musical diary of these tumultuous times. They were activists and artists, and their music survived amid the tragedy of the Cold War. Korean modern composer Kim Sunnam and American pianist Ely Haimowitz crossed paths in tumultuous times. Kim's *Konzert für piano in D*, "Dedicated to Mr. Haimowitz," survived long after their parting. Haimowitz gave this concerto to Kim's only child, Kim Sewon, and after a long journey, his music finally arrived in his hometown of Seoul.

On September 9, 2022, my research and questions led me to visit Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, where Haimowitz had studied. There, in a blue folder box, his handwriting, letters, pictures, newspapers, and Korean and English articles preserve Haimowitz's voice. In one of his letters, Haimowitz writes, "And then in the years to come, even a thousand years hence, men will not remember Korea today for its political problems or leaders or systems alone; they will remember the great achievements of Korea's artists. For we know that human life on earth is short, but its art endures forever."¹⁴ The chaotic and harrowing layers of history and politics on the Korean Peninsula are reflected in Korean modern musicians' musical grammar. Regardless of whether these musicians were on the left or right, or in the North or South, their music expresses their Korean roots, and we continue to remember "the great achievements of Korea's artists," as Haimowitz wrote.

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Notes

- 1 The information in this article is from personal communication and interviews conducted with David Kim on September 18, 2022 and with Kim Sewon, Kim Sunnam's daughter, on August 1, 2022. A special thanks to Kim Sewon and David Kim (Concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra) who shared their memories and experiences.
- 2 Turino, Thomas. *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. University of Chicago Press, 2008: 1.
- 3 Original text can be accessed online at <https://www.sisajournal.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=113073> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
- 4 Ely Haimowitz's Letter. From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.
- 5 Merry Anne Davis, "Great Talents," *Silver & Blue VII*, no.3 (1996): 11. From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.
- 6 Merry Anne Davis, "Great Talents," *Silver & Blue VII*, no.3 (1996): 11. From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.
- 7 Merry Anne Davis, "Great Talents," *Silver & Blue VII*, no.3 (1996): 12. From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.
- 8 Original text can be accessed online at <http://weekly.khan.co.kr/khnm.html?mode=view&code=116&artid=18981&pt=ny>. (Accessed on October 28, 2022)
- 9 No Tongeun, *Kimsunnam kü samkwa yesul* [Kim Sunnam, The Life and Arts] (Seoul: Nangmanümaksa, 1995): 105.
- 10 No Tongün, *Haebanggwa pundan, kü pigüü ümaksä* [Liberation & Division, the Tragic Music History] (Seoul: Kaeksök [The auditorium] no.138 August 1995):122. From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.
- 11 No Tongeun, *Kimsunnam kü samkwa yesul* [Kim Sunnam, The Life and Arts] (Seoul: Nangmanümaksa, 1995): 133.
- 12 No Tongeun, *Kimsunnam kü samkwa yesul* [Kim Sunnam, The Life and Arts] (Seoul: Nangmanümaksa, 1995): 105.
- 13 No Tongeun, *Kimsunnam kü samkwa yesul* [Kim Sunnam, The Life and Arts] (Seoul: Nangmanümaksa, 1995): 106.
- 14 Ely Haimowitz, "On Leaving Korea" (6) From Department of College Archives and Special Collections, Olin Library Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.



Fig. 4: Celebration for the publication of Kim Sewon's book, *My Father, Kim Sunnam*, in 1995 in Seoul, Korea. (Photo Courtesy of Kim Sewon)



Contemporary Chinese Master of the Traditional Papercut

Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky

Paper cutting is an ancient art in China largely performed by women in the countryside. Using red paper, they cut festive and auspicious images which are hung on doorways, windows, and elsewhere. For centuries the images and techniques survived in rural China. Recently such papercuts have become the focus of collectors, national programs, and professors who are dedicated to preserving the native art. Modern artists have taken this ancient art and transformed it into a new and exciting form of contemporary expression.

Largely an ancient women's art transmitted from generation to generation in the countryside, Chinese papercut artists celebrate the national holidays of the Spring Festival and New Year with their designs. Nearly all homes—farmhouses to urban apartments—display the lively red designs on their door frames. Such works carry symbolic associations because they were traditionally used for religious rituals and to depict deities. Often made with red paper, the most propitious color, papercuts use auspicious imagery and often include such lucky characters as 'Fu (福, blessing)' 'Xi (囍, double happiness)' 'Shou (壽, longevity) as well as more secular imagery. A fifth-generation papercutter in Yu County, Hebei Province, Zhang Haiquan explained the wide range of motifs used: opera characters, historical tales, flora and fauna, landscape scenery, lucky emblems, and activities from daily life grace windowpanes across China during the Spring Festival.¹ However, the art is in danger of disappearing as the rural population moves to the cities. Artist and historian Professor Lu Shengzhong has brought the appreciation of the art to a new height and created papercuts that relate to more contemporary art in their format, imagery, and techniques. Moreover, he trained several important artists at the Central Academy of Art in Beijing. In addition, recent governmental programs have given support to preserve the skill in the rural districts and to, in turn, stimulate the local economy.

Fig. 1 (top left): Lu Shengzhong, *Book of Humanity*, 2004. Papercut in glass container, 45 x 68 cm. (Image courtesy of Chambers Fine Art, NY)

Fig. 2 (top right): Lu Shengzhong, *Human Brick*, which used 600,000 red paper men cut by craftsmen using needles. (Image courtesy of Central Academy of Fine Arts, cafa.com.cn)

Contemporary Chinese papercut artist: Lu Shengzhong

Lu Shengzhong was a most gifted artist and teacher who is celebrated for discovering the artistic potential of the traditional papercut and for making extraordinary works of art.² Lu (1952–2022) was born in Dayuji Village, in Shandong Province and discovered papercutting by watching his mother as a child. During his college years in the 1980s, Lu rejected the western-looking styles adopted in the academies of art, turning instead to the rural art of the papercut. As one of the important scholars and practitioners in the field,³ Lu employed and reused a small red figure derived from folk art [Fig. 1]. This figure is described as a paper figure for calling souls, having a baby, a wedding or funeral, and celebrating festivals.⁴ As Lu said, "I use paper to cut this little red figure to demonstrate the delicate fragility of human beings. Ephemeral. A human's life is shorter than a paper's thickness. The material is not important. What is more important is the process you use to create that material. This is more valuable to me."⁵

Lu Shengzhong visited rustic villages to further study the art, relating his experience in his book, *Calling Soul*: "But when I arrived there, there wasn't a life-like flower at all, because they didn't create art according to real-life objects. Far from being naive, these were more mature than mainstream art, because behind them were thousands of year's historical accumulation ... Also, the old women were not illiterate. Apart from traditional customs, the patterns in their work were diverse and hard for us to learn; flowers, butterflies and phoenixes had different interpretations ... A piece of papercut for window decoration is a symbol for a dissertation. Together, all of them can make up a heavy book. When night falls,

every household had distinct red papercuts on windows, which told different stories and conveyed varied concepts. All the villagers, young or old, knew the meanings, but we just saw the patterns — actually, we were 'illiterate.' As I cut paper with my scissors and separate the shapes that result from my activity, I am making a statement against the separation of body and soul in contemporary thought. Summoning the detached forms of the souls so that they can be reunited with their bodies, the process echoes the juxtaposition of positive and negative forms or the perfect coexistence of the curves of *Yin and Yang*."⁶

The red character is a flat two-dimensional representation of a child-like body: soft flesh lacking muscular presentation with arms held up, palms up facing out, and extended fingers. Bent at the knee and outspread, the legs flank the body, and the feet appear claw-like. Two sprays of hair emerge on either side of the head, like the hair knots worn by prepubescent children. Its body is naked, as the curious articulation of the buttocks makes clear and reads as female, though gender specificity is lacking. Over the years, Lu used the image as a totem in dozens of configurations, with variations in size, placement, media, and formats. Among these formats he employed the paper bound book. For example, two pages from the 2004 *Book of Humanity* are identical: at the center of each page is a large red papercut on a white ground, two square frames repeat smaller images with ten little red people across and ten down [Fig. 1]. Soon, Lu considered not only the paper cut but the paper from which it was cut as important as the subject. Both were bearers of the image, positive and negative. Appreciation of the positive and negative space was an essential aesthetic concern in paper cutting, but for the first time, the scraps were not discarded and had equal

value. Lu attests that "on these waste scraps of paper were visible the same spirit and emotion as in the 'formal design' I had cut out."⁷

Lu used his red person as a kind of script, like a Chinese character, he worked to employ the image in several dispositions with the potential to replicate it a great many times and in a variety of positions and sizes. His *Book of Humanity* was an enormously difficult project: cuttings and scraps filled 20 red volumes and 40 black volumes, each comprising 90 pages. By 2003, when the project was finally realized, he had employed seven expert papercutters and many others to prepare the pages and bind the volumes, beginning a method of using many helpers.⁸ Lu's work is archly



Fig. 3: Lu Shengzhong, *The Book of Humanity: Empty Book*, 2007. Papercut, Chinese traditionally bound books. Dimensions variable depending on installation, c. measuring 228.6 cm. (Image courtesy of Chambers Fine Art, NY)



Fig. 4 (left): Lu Shengzhong, Face Maze 001, 2010 paper cut, thread on paper with pencil inscriptions. (Image courtesy of Chambers Fine Art, NY)

ironic as he adopts a familiar folk art, an ephemeral living art practiced in the countryside which is a typically illiterate environment, and mounts it as a book, an icon of the thousand-year-old elite literary tradition. What is more, in the book format, his red figures act like characters in China's ancient pictographic script. In consonance with several contemporary artists like Xu Bing (b. 1955 Chongqing)⁹ and Wenda Gu (b. 1955 Shanghai),¹⁰ Lu's artistic efforts looked like writing while they did not communicate a legible message. While the former artists' efforts were concerned with marks that mimicked calligraphy, Lu's use of the image took on complex and multivalent meanings as representations of "humanity" or "souls;" and with the presentation of the positive and negative parts of the papercut, it evoked the philosophic duality of Yin and Yang, transient and long lasting, body and soul, and more. The configurations of the red figures did not convey a readable text, yet they perpetuated and preserved a primeval and idiomatic form of communication. Lu relies on the image to convey his message, much like the woodcuts. He also published two books illustrating his works and explaining his thinking. Working with a team of students and papercutters, Lu embarked on a monumental cut paper installation. Craftsmen and students used

needles to cut and assemble a total of 600,000 paper men for the *Human Brick* exhibited in his solo show at Beijing's Today Museum in 2015 [Fig. 2]. A display at Central Academy of Fine Arts where he teaches had hundreds of thousands of tiny red characters affixed to the ceiling and walls of the exhibition space, an installation measuring 1350cm x 300cm x 500cm. In a further iteration, Lu had immense plastic Chinese coins fabricated (99cm x 18cm) and mounted on old fashioned wooden bases. Filling the plexiglass coins were innumerable tiny red figures. In this way humanity and money were presented in a modern format but appeared as old-fashioned looking artefacts, merging the divide between tradition and contemporary art.¹¹ Moreover, the red humanoids seemed dwarfed by the coins in which they are contained which could have been a sardonic reference to the all too important role of money in society. Another large-scale installation, originally created for the Venice Biennale of 2003, (though his participation was cancelled due to SARS)¹² was another iteration of *Book of Humanity: Empty Book* that was on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and elsewhere (Fig. 3).¹³ On its ceiling, he

mounted free-standing scrolls measuring 228.6 cm tall with trails of red paper cutouts. The top portion of each scroll was taken up with a carefully cut circular design within which tiny red figures ran, jumped, and danced. Beneath the central disc were long red trails of images that resembled calligraphy or hieroglyphs from a distance. They were, in fact, the scraps of paper left over from cutting out the top motif. The grandeur of the display awed viewers. But one must consider why the books are empty? Again, Lu chooses to be enigmatic and may be indirectly critical of modern society and the prohibitions against free speech. In sum, Lu increased the range of types of art made of cut paper, filling rooms from ceiling to floor with his red figures. Unlike the auspicious images that proliferate in rural traditions, he found one motif that he routinely employed in a number of formats including books, installations, and even cutout metal sculptures. He has greatly inspired later artists who studied with him at CAFA.

Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky is an art historian and curator. She teaches at Bard College Lehman College and has published widely on Chinese medieval art and Contemporary Chinese art. For more about her and her work, visit <http://www.karetzky.com>. Email: karetzky@bard.edu

Notes

- 1 Anon. (2018) "Chinese paper-cuts: A Spring Festival tradition," *CGTN Culture* 13:48, 17-Feb-2018. Zhang Haiquan, age 56, is the fifth-generation leader of the northern school for Yu County paper-cutting. He has been crafting his designs for over 40 years. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/77676a4e33677a6333566d54/index.html>
- 2 Lu Shengzhong (Lü Shengzhong, Lv Shengzhong) graduated from Central Academy of Fine Art in 1987, with a masters in folk art. He is represented by Chambers Fine Art, who has published three volumes on his art including--*Lu Shengzhong, First Encounter*, edited by Weiqing, Foreword by Christophe W. Mao. Introduction by Wu Hung, (New York: Chambers Fine Art, 2003) and *Lv Shengzhong, The Book of Humanity*, Edited by Christophe Mao, (New York: Chambers Fine Art, 2005) see also Sue Wang, "Starting Steadily from the Last Century: Lv Shengzhong Solo Exhibition Presented at Today Art Museum" *CAFA Newsletter* 2015.11.11 <http://www.cafa.com.cn/en/news/details/8323897>
- 3 Lu 2014 p. 54ff
- 4 Ke Qingli, "Chinese Folk Artist - Lu Shengzhong" Wordpress 2010; <https://keqingli.wordpress.com/2010/06/25/chinese-folk-artist-%E2%80%93-Lu-shengzhong/>
- 5 Ke Qingli, "Chinese Folk Artist - Lu Shengzhong" Wordpress 2010; <https://keqingli.wordpress.com/2010/06/25/chinese-folk-artist-%E2%80%93-Lu-shengzhong/>
- 6 Lv Shengzhong: *Life as Paper*, China Pictorial, Jan 14, 2016
- 7 http://www.chinapictorial.com.cn/en/culture/txt/2016-01/14/content_711403_2.htm
- 8 Lu 2003:29.
- 9 Lu 2003:34.
- 10 www.xubing.com
- 11 www.wendagu.com
- 12 Sue Wang, "2015 Lv Shengzhong: Adjustments on the Road We Have Trodden in the Name of the Last Century," *CAFA Art News* 2015.11.19 <http://www.cafa.com.cn/en/opinions/interviews/details/8323920>
- 13 Fan Di'an, "Synthi-scapes" (curatorial statement about the China Pavilion at the 50th Venice Biennale.) *Yishu* Vol. 2, Number 2, (June 2003):10-16.
- 14 Rebecca Pohancenik, "REVIEW: Out of the Ordinary - Spectacular Craft at the Victoria and Albert Museum" *Arts Hub* 23 Jan 2008. <https://www.artshub.co.uk/news/reviews/review-out-of-the-ordinary-spectacular-craft-at-the-victoria-and-albert-museum-169539-1216597/>



Fig. 5 (left): Lu Shengzhong, *Shape and Shadow III*, 2007 painted metal 240x180x2 cm. (Image courtesy of Chambers Fine Art, NY).
 Fig. 6 (right): Lu Shengzhong, *Shape and Shadow*, 2002 painted steel 81 x50 x 66 cm. (Image courtesy of Chambers Fine Art, NY)



ICAS Book Prize 2023

Martina van den Haak
and Wai Cheung (IIAS/ICAS)

In 2023, we are celebrating the tenth edition of the ICAS Book Prize! Twenty years ago, the Secretariat of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) developed the idea to establish a book prize that brings broader international attention and visibility to academic publications in the field of Asian Studies in a more interdisciplinary context. Entries would be reviewed by a reading committee with diverse backgrounds, working in different fields and focusing on various regions. What better way to introduce such a book prize than through the platform of an Asian scholars convention, namely, ICAS. So, here it began as a small initiative: the ICAS Book Prize (IBP), always being organised alongside ICAS and with the awards ceremony taking place during the Convention. Over the years, the IBP has grown to become one of the largest book prizes of its kind as it expanded to honour publications in various languages. With this multilingual approach, in cooperation with organisers and sponsors worldwide, ICAS is increasingly decentering the landscape of knowledge about and in Asia.

After IBP 2021, we discussed ways to better connect and integrate the Book Prize with the Convention. We came to the conclusion that hosting these two activities alternately might be a more suitable way to connect them. As our Dissertation Committee Chair described it perfectly: “disconnecting, but actually and paradoxically better connecting” the two projects. Prize winners are now notified that they have won before the ICAS proposal submission deadline, giving them the opportunity to present their work during the convention. The two projects will complement each other and together form a more continuous process, giving both activities the individual attention they deserve. The IBP 2023 will be the first edition to be organised and held separately from the ICAS Convention.

The deadlines for the IBP 2023 editions have passed and we are glad to have received a rich number of submissions. With the global pandemic changing our lives and restricting travelling in the past few years, we realised that opportunities to conduct research and do fieldwork have been much more limited. So, we are thankful to see that, despite this, many scholars have still obtained their PhD degrees and published their work. Similar to the previous editions,

a wide variety of titles were nominated. The review committees of all editions are now going through these brilliant titles; we aim to announce the shortlists by summer this year. The winners in all ICAS Book Prize categories will be announced in autumn 2023.

Our Partners

The following institutions in Asia, Latin America, and Europe either organise or sponsor the respective ICAS Book Prize editions. Wan Boo Sow Research Centre for Chinese Culture, Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore (Chinese Edition); Asian Library at Leiden University Libraries and IIAS/ICAS (English Edition); GIS Asie, French Academic Network on Asian Studies (French Edition); CATS, Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies

and Heidelberg University (German Edition); Society for Hong Kong Studies (Hong Kong Article Prize Edition); IDE-JETRO, Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization and IIAS/ICAS (Japanese Edition); SNUAC, Seoul National University Asia Center (Korean Edition); Casa Asia and SEPHIS, The South-South Exchange Program for Research on the History of Development (Portuguese/Spanish Edition).

In this issue of the Newsletter, we gladly introduce some of our organisers and sponsors of the IBP 2023. This issue features the partners of the Chinese, English, German, and Portuguese/Spanish Language Editions and the organiser and sponsor of the Hong Kong Studies Article Prize Edition. The IBP secretariat would also like to thank the other sponsoring and organising institutions, who will be featured in the next edition of the Newsletter.

The Asian Library

Sponsor of the English
Language Edition



**Universiteit
Leiden**
Leiden University Libraries

For several English Language Editions, IIAS/ICAS has had the privilege to work with The Asian Library, which is part of the Leiden University Libraries (Leiden, the Netherlands). We are grateful to have them, once again, as the official sponsor of the IBP 2023 English Language Edition. The Asian collections housed at Leiden University include the largest collection on Indonesia worldwide and some of the foremost collections on South and Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and Korea. Leiden University is a major international knowledge hub about Asia. Scholars and students from all over the world come to Leiden to participate in top research and teaching programmes on Asia. The Asian Library is a central focal point for study, research and encounters between those with a profound interest in Asia and its position in the world.

IDE-JETRO

**GIS
ASIE**
French Academic Network
on Asian Studies

SNUAC
Seoul National University Asia Center
서울대학교 아시아 연구 센터

South-South Exchange
Programme for Research on
the History of Development
SEPHIS

Wan Boo Sow Research Center for Chinese Culture

Sponsor and Organiser of the
Chinese Language Edition



The Wan Boo Sow Research Center for Chinese Culture was founded in 2015 under the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore. It promotes high-quality academic research by developing the strengths of the seven research groups of the Department of Chinese Studies: Chinese Linguistics, Chinese Religions, Classical Chinese Literature and Thought, Ming-Qing Studies, Print Culture and Popular Culture, Southeast Asian Chinese and Modern China, and Translation and Interpreting. The Center also collaborates with local and foreign institutions in organizing Chinese cultural events. By awarding fellowships to visiting scholars, it seeks to attract renowned specialists to conduct interdisciplinary research in Singapore.

The Wan Boo Sow Research Center for Chinese Culture is the proud sponsor of the ICAS Book Prize 2023 Chinese Language Edition, which consolidates the National University of Singapore's reputation as a leading institution in Sinology and Asian studies. Having been a research fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies in the past, I [Ed, Ying-Kit Chan] am honored to now serve as the secretary of this edition of the ICAS Book Prize and contribute to the IIAS cause of connecting knowledge and people for a more integrated understanding of Asia. We have received numerous outstanding submissions, which suggests the rising standard of Chinese-language scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It is high time that we recognize the groundbreaking monographs written in languages other than English in an academia that remains dominated by Anglophone scholarship. The National University of Singapore's sponsorship of the ICAS Book Prize 2023 Chinese Language Edition is a positive step toward making this a reality.

<https://fass.nus.edu.sg/cs>

Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS)

Sponsor and Organiser of the
German Language Edition



Centre for
Asian and
Transcultural
Studies

Since 2019, the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) at Heidelberg University has unified all departments of Asian studies in Heidelberg and connected them with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The Centre is committed to studying Asia in a global context and through interdisciplinary dialogue. Scholars at CATS specialize in a variety of disciplines, such as Anthropology, Geography, History, Cultural Studies, Art History, Literary Studies, Musicology, Religious Studies, Politics, Sociology, and others. CATS comprises the South Asia Institute (SAI), the Centre for East Asian Studies (ZO), the Institute of Anthropology (IfA), as well as the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS).

CATS is situated on Campus Bergheim in Heidelberg's city centre. The German federal government, the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Heidelberg University funded its construction, including workspaces, classrooms, and a unique dedicated space for library use on an area of almost 5,000 square metres. Located at the heart of CATS, with four buildings (SAI, GCTS, ZO, and IfA) surrounding it, this research building – designed as a multimedia collaboratory – also serves as a media centre offering central access to the libraries of the South, East, and Southeast Asian studies. In addition, the University of Heidelberg and the participating institutes contributed to the costs for the restoration of the historical buildings and the initial set-up of the offices, classrooms and library of the digital humanities unit (Heidelberg Research Architecture).

Scholars of different disciplines are working together at CATS; more than 25 Asian languages are taught here. The consolidation of the mentioned institutes facilitates a more intensive examination of the history and present state of nature and society in Asia, focusing on the profound interrelations of cultures. CATS thus combines the diverse expertise in research and teaching that already existed in Heidelberg. In addition to expanding the traditional tasks of Asian studies, new questions of Transculturality are also at the heart of CATS.

A new generation of Asia experts, educated at CATS, combines their sound knowledge of particular regions and languages with excellent methodological expertise, enabled by the collaboration planned between regional and methodological disciplines. Precisely this combination will qualify future graduates to thoroughly examine and develop the growing potential of global interrelations.

With these same thoughts, CATS has been working with the ICAS Secretariat to organise and sponsor the ICAS Book Prize German Language Edition for a second time. Many academic publications written in the German Language are of high quality and CATS regards it of importance to draw more attention to and promote these publications.

CATS colleagues were very positive when approached for the IBP German Language Edition in 2016. We are grateful to be able to explore the German-speaking landscape of Asia research this way – it is not only enriching for our team of reviewers but also fruitful to pay attention to those publishing activities and research often not that much attended to. The hope is that the IBP will encourage both authors and publishers to continue the important work of contributing to a diversification of research on Asia and, in doing so, also spread this knowledge among the broader public.

www.cats.uni-heidelberg.de

Society for Hong Kong Studies (SHKS)

Sponsor and Organiser of the Best Article
Prize on Global Hong Kong Studies

The Society for Hong Kong Studies (SHKS) is a scholarly, non-partisan, and non-profit professional association open to all scholars and students interested in Hong Kong Studies. Formed in 2018, the SHKS is an affiliate of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and has more than 600 members worldwide representing a range of disciplines. The mission of the SHKS is to encourage the development of new theories, concepts, and methods for studying Hong Kong's multifaceted connections to and significance in the world, both contemporary and historical. It provides a unique and global platform for promoting research, teaching, and inter-university collaboration. It seeks to build a multinational and interdisciplinary scholarly community that connects Hong Kong Studies scholars in America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific.

In 2021, the SHKS organised and sponsored its first academic award, the "ICAS Best Article Prize on Global Hong Kong Studies". It is the newest addition to the ICAS Book Prize (IBP) family. We are pleased that we received close to 100 submissions for the IBP Best Hong Kong Article Prize in its inaugural year and gave recognition to two scholars, Samson Yuen (Assistant Professor, Department of Government and International Studies, Baptist University Hong Kong) and Florence Mok (Nanyang Assistant Professor, Department of History, Nanyang Technological University), for their contribution to Hong Kong Studies. The award is one of the first regular prizes dedicated solely to Hong Kong Studies and will help encourage high-quality scholarship in the field.

The Best Article Prize aims to promote the study of Hong Kong beyond a single geographic space or chronological boundary. While many scholars view area studies as constrained and confined by territory boundaries, this prize welcomes work that goes beyond topical events or parochial phenomena in an effort to encourage dialogue with disciplinary theories and global puzzles as well as to reach a wider academic and general audience. The biennial article prize on Hong Kong Studies is given to authors of outstanding publications in both the Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines. It provides an opportunity to foster a more systematic, institutionalised and targeted effort to enhance the identity and quality of Hong Kong Studies.

An independent Reading Committee composed of senior scholars will help evaluate and award the article prizes. This multidisciplinary and pluralist structure will minimize disciplinary bias, ensure rigorous selection, and increase academic outreach.

Become A Member

We invite you to become a member of the Society for Hong Kong Studies to take advantage of the networking opportunities with established and emerging scholars in various humanities and social sciences disciplines, enjoy access to member-only resources and priority enrolment in the SHKS annual conference and present your works in progress at our workshops.

To register as a member of the SHKS, please complete an online form by visiting our website at www.hkstudies.org/membership
Email: info@hkstudies.org



Casa Asia

Sponsor of the Portuguese/Spanish
Language Edition

The relationship between the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and Casa Asia began almost two decades ago, although contact was occasional. Fortunately, since 2021, we have increased our collaboration by participating in ICAS 12, where Casa Asia organised a session on the Pacific and the 500th Anniversary of the First Circumnavigation of the World by Magellan and Elcano. In October 2021, IIAS representatives were present at our Ninth Meeting of Asian Studies, hosted by the Netherlands. Representatives of Asian Studies departments of several Spanish universities discussed the excellent work being done in and from Leiden to "connect knowledge and people" that leads to a greater understanding of the rich and heterogeneous Asian realities.

Similarly, at Casa Asia, our mission is to facilitate the exchange of cultures and projects of common interest between Spain and Asia-Pacific countries to achieve better knowledge and mutual understanding. For this reason, we believe that this new collaboration with the biennial ICAS Book Prize (IBP) – with almost a thousand submissions in nine different language categories last year – can help to further promote academic work on Asia. The Portuguese and Spanish language editions contribute to the global visibility of publications written in Portuguese and

Spanish and help foster a greater interest in the world of Asian studies. With this new collaboration, we also intend to increase our work, and that of ICAS, towards Ibero-America. Interest in Asian Studies is growing in this part of the world, where we are united by historical ties and renewed interests in increasing intellectual exchange, which is so important in these times of transformation.

Finally, at Casa Asia, we are committed to working with countries we are united with through common interests and shared values.

Casa Asia is a public diplomacy body created in 2001, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation, the Generalitat of Catalonia, and the Barcelona and Madrid City Councils. It is headquartered in Barcelona and has a centre in Madrid. Casa Asia was created with the aim of contributing to better knowledge and the promotion of relations between the societies of Asia, the Pacific, and Spain in the institutional, economic, cultural, and educational fields, in addition to bringing closer and facilitating exchanges in the domains of culture, ideas, and projects of shared interest.

www.casaasia.eu



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BOOK REVIEWS

NUMBER 40 COMING SOON



The Geopolitical Economy of Energy Transition: Comparing China's Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union (2000 – 2023)

Mehdi P. Amineh

Energy security, climate change, and energy transition are issues that can only be addressed by cooperation between two of the world's largest energy consumers and carbon emitters – the European Union and China. As we see it, the role of academics working on these issues is to improve our understanding of how conventional and renewable energy security and climate change, geopolitics, and international relations intersect.

In a series of successful joint research programmes since 2006, the IIAS Energy Programme Asia (IIAS-EPA) has worked with several Chinese research institutions in cooperation with 11 national and other international research centres and universities in Asia, Europe, and North and South America. The main focus of these programmes was comparatively studying “energy, political economy, environment” in China and the European Union in the context of global politics. The research outputs of these joint research programmes have been published since 2007 in four edited volumes and three peer-reviewed special issues of journals, totalling 85 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.

As Director of IIAS-EPA, I am pleased to announce the launch of a new joint research programme, titled, *The Geopolitical Economy of Energy Transition: Comparing China's Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union*. The period under study is 2000 to 2023. The programme will run as an interdisciplinary joint research programme between the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)

and the Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM), China, in collaboration with the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. It brings together 25 researchers from 13 national and international universities and researcher centres who are experts on politics, international relations and international political economy, economics, law, energy, and security. The 13 institutes are: IIAS, Leiden University, University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Maastricht School of Management, Durham University, Lancaster University, University of Cologne, Free University of Brussels, Federal University of ABC (Sao Paulo), Institute of European Studies of Macau and both the Institute of World Economics and Politics and the Institute of Latin American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS; Beijing). Each of the 25 researchers is part of one of the following seven research groups: (1) Divergence and convergence in China's relations with West and Central Asian states: the cases of Kazakhstan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Turkmenistan; (2) A critical evaluation of China's BRI in Central and Eastern Europe; (3) A critical evaluation of China's BRI in Brazil; (4) Geopolitical economy of energy transition and the role of hydrogen; (5) A survey of comparative energy transition in the European Union and China: policy, outcome, and challenges; (6) Belt and Road Initiative in West Asia: Strategic Partnership and its security challenges; (7) Energy security issues: the challenges of supply security and energy transition.

Background of research

In the last 200 years, fossil fuels have played a critical role in the rise and expansion of the modern state-system and the capitalist world economy. Technological advancements brought about machine-powered production, inducing a transformation in sourcing energy from wood and peat to coal, oil and natural gas. The fossil fuel consumption, mainly of industrialised societies, has created three major challenges: (1) fossil fuel scarcity; (2) import dependency in countries with a scarcity of fossil fuels; and (3) environmental degradation caused by, among others, greenhouse gasses, such as CO₂ emissions. To alleviate these problems, a transition from fossil to renewable energy sources is underway but far from complete. Carbon-intensity (CO₂/GDP) seems to have hardly decreased between 1990 and 2020, and several industrialised and late-industrialised societies have seen both their fossil and clean energy production increase. One of the main challenges of the energy transition is the timing of reducing fossil fuel consumption and the expansion of the clean energy sector without overstepping the limit of secure energy supplies in the main fossil fuel consumer countries and regions.

As major energy consumers and the world's largest fossil fuel importers, China and the European Union (EU) face the common challenge of catching up with the geophysical realities that threaten living standards. Both also attempt to escape the fossil fuel trap by developing clean energy sources. Within the context of

the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has increased its involvement particularly in energy and infrastructure sectors around the world, including in EU member states and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries.

Research purpose and aims

The purpose of the programme is to account for the dramatic transformations across Eurasia since 2000 and in the energy security strategies of China and the EU and the two sides' mutual interactions. It will study, firstly, their respective approaches to fossil fuel supply security, climate change and policies regarding the transition to renewable energy, and the challenges associated with moving to a clean energy-based economy and society. Secondly, it will look at China's Belt and Road Initiatives in the energy and infrastructure sectors of 29 selected countries and regions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, and the related domestic, geopolitical, and geo-economic risks and challenges.

The programme aims to promote new insights and improve research by fostering the exchange of ideas through research-oriented meetings and workshops in the Netherlands and China. The second aim is to encourage further cooperation across this truly international research network, nurturing the participation of junior researchers and building research collaborations across the partnerships. Thirdly, the expected research output will include publications in the form of peer-reviewed monograph(s), special issues of key specialised peer-reviewed journals, and policy briefings.

Full information/inquiries:

www.iias.asia/programmes/geopolitical-economy-energy-transition-China-BRI-EU
Email: m.p.amineh@uva.nl

Launch of the River Cities Network: Engaging with Waterways in the Anthropocene

Paul Rabé

The River Cities Network is a new transdisciplinary and global network to promote the inclusive revitalization of rivers and waterways and the landscapes/waterways, cities, and neighborhoods that co-exist with them. The network is being coordinated from the Urban Cluster of IIAS and, as of December 2022, comprises 40 project teams from around the world, each of which critically examines a local river-city relationship (the ‘river-city nexus’). A board of advisors has been formed, which includes prominent people in their fields from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Please contact us if you are interested!

The River Cities Network (RCN) was formally launched in December 2022 via two online meetings that brought together—online for now—members of the project teams and advisors.

The urgency that brings together the River Cities Network partners is the degradation of rivers and waterways all over the world, particularly in urban areas, where most of the world's population lives. As stated by the international NGO *International Rivers*, “free-flowing rivers work like arteries, providing the world's ecosystems with critical freshwater resources that sustain a higher biodiversity per square mile than almost any other ecosystem”. Yet, the fragmentation, diversion, and pollution of these water bodies endanger the food security, livelihoods, and cultural traditions of millions of people. The effects of climate change exacerbate river degradation in the form of flooding, drought, and unpredictable water levels, temperatures and quality, made worse by other man-

made interventions. This trend is especially pronounced in urbanized areas, where the health of river ecosystems competes for attention with many other policy priorities.

The RCN was established to address this complex set of problems by contributing action research on the river-city nexus in different parts of the world through local case study projects of urban river disruption and degradation. The river-city nexus provides a lens through which to critically analyze relationships between human settlements and rivers over time and a platform to engage in collective action to revitalize local river ecosystems and the communities adjacent to these rivers.

Justice and Biodiversity

Across all the case study projects, the network partners are motivated by a central question: In what ways can rivers and waterways better sustain productive urban life and vice versa? Key indicators of a productive life are improved water quality and increased biodiversity, and socially, culturally, and economically vital and just communities. The approach of the RCN to river revitalization is to elaborate a theoretical framework, backed up by practical tools, to bring together the two pillars of ‘productive life’ in a river-city context. Namely, a socio-economic pillar aimed at transformational resilience (‘justice’) and a nature-based pillar aimed at biodiversity restoration. These two pillars of the RCN are considered critical to the restoration of the relationship between rivers and cities.

Many of the RCN project teams have as their revitalization strategy to reconnect communities to their local rivers and



Left: Information panel, Kamogawa, Kyoto, Japan (foto: P. Rabé, 2022)

waterways. Whereas rivers and canals were once at the center of urban life—economically, socially, and culturally—these connections have often been ruptured for a variety of reasons. This rupture, in turn, leads to further degradation, as local people no longer feel a connection to their water bodies. Re-establishing a connection to the rivers and canals can help communities better understand their history, rediscover connections with nature and with each other, and as a result, acquire citizenship in a broader sense.

Historical approaches are front and center in the River Cities network. RCN project teams will adopt a historical perspective to tell the story of rivers or sections of rivers and their relationship with human interventions over time. The rationale is that river disruption issues must be understood from a longue durée perspective to learn from the past and re-establish future connections between humans and nature.

Join us!

RCN is a peer-to-peer learning network, with learning taking place within project teams, between project teams, and between

the network and other networks and initiatives. Teams represent many parts of the world, with different water management traditions, in the global North as well as the global South. Over half of the river-city case studies in RCN are in Asia (covering East, South and Southeast Asia). RCN's regular events will include project team presentations, in-situ graduate schools, workshops and short-term research exchanges. They will all have this peer-to-peer learning relationship as a central feature. RCN recognizes that there is a crucial need for broad-based learning, including from societies whose traditional knowledge of water systems has been neglected.

Expressions of interest from project teams all over the world are welcomed, particularly on river-city case studies in Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East.

Please consult the River Cities page on the IIAS website, also for updates about regular events open to a general audience: www.ukna.asia/river-cities. For more information, please contact the RCN coordinators: Paul Rabé, Email: p.e.rabe@iias.nl and Satya Patchineelam s.maia.patchineelam@iias.nl.



Textile and Dyes as Transnational, Global Knowledge

Francesco Montuori and Meera Curam
(Graduate School participants)

In Situ Graduate School,
Leiden, 18-23 September 2022

The September 2022 In Situ Graduate School *Textile and Dyes as Transnational, Global Knowledge* brought academics, researchers, and practitioners to Leiden, The Netherlands, to engage with their shared interest in the importance of textiles in Africa and Asia and the discourse surrounding their presence in Europe. It brought critical questions about the colonial powers, pasts, and histories carried across the oceans by the textile trade. It opened debates on decolonising narratives and practices, while recognising and acknowledging the diverse lenses through which the textiles are seen and interpreted.

This in-person graduate school was an opportunity to interrogate prevailing, dominant discourses through other, less visible, and marginalized vantage points. The intense week-long event revealed to us a world of hidden, invisible, and less common debates and discussions. It was an enriching experience, that, unlike regular classroom sessions, brought together many people interested in textiles, something that does not happen often. The three sub-themes were (1) Circulations of textiles and dyes along less visible cartographies; (2) Textile and dyes as sites of precarity and meaning; (3) Testimonies of past and present subjectivities of cloth, clothing, and colour.

Convenors Jody Benjamin (University of California, Riverside, USA), Neelam Raina (Middlesex University, UK), Pedro Pombo (University of Mauritius, Mauritius) and Academic Director of the Humanities Across Borders programme Aarti Kawlra (IIAS, Leiden) each led an efficient team of participants. They had shared readings beforehand, which now offered a space for both casual conversations and meaningful discussions. Topics covered in the classroom included the trading and travel of textiles from Asia and Africa to Europe, revisiting the journeys they travelled and the textiles' meanings based on past testimonies, and records and current biases or preferences for certain aesthetics. They brought about important discussions and allowed the

participants to continue the dialogues outside the classroom.

The graduate school started with a session to introduce the convenors, participants, and themes. We were also introduced to an online portal designed for sharing our reflections and holding discussions. This was followed by a long walk through the charming city centre of Leiden. The walking tour familiarised us with the buildings and places that had made Leiden one of the hotspots for woollen cloth production in the past. Walking along the lanes and canals, both first-time visitors and those who already knew the city discovered the places best known for the woollen cloth production. The 'Lakenhal,' currently a municipal museum of fine arts, was the place where the woollen cloths were checked by the guild. 'Langebrug,' a street that once ran along a now-closed canal was where wool was felted using the water from the



Above: Examining a special textile collection in the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde), Leiden.
Right: Jansen Holland African Fabric Shop.

canal. Both are just a stone's throw away from Leiden University. Each day was filled with several activities, seminars, and visits that helped the group bond together and engage in various debates. Using so-called 'accession cards,' we added our research, fieldwork, reflections, and practical work to the online portal.

Visits to local museums, the Textile Research Centre in Leiden, the Textiel Museum in the city of Tilburg and to the 'Jansen Holland' shop sparked formal and informal debates and discussions about the post-colonial influences and policies that affected the textile trade and practices. Several reflections were shared and debated throughout the sessions, bringing forward the importance of concepts like transnationalism, provenance, and the precarity of textiles in the context of colonialism and its aftermath, and how they should be discussed nowadays in the light of post-colonialism and globalization.

The Textile Research Centre is an independent research-focused centre deliberately not identifying as a museum. The research centre curates a library and a textiles archive from which the tactile and fragile world of textiles are also brought to the general audience. Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood facilitated the group discussions, taking us through the centre's current exhibition of African textiles. This led to discussions about origins, stories, curations, and challenges. We also discussed what would be effective and respectful methods and strategies for the exhibition of textiles with complicated histories and narratives. Later, our visit to the colourful and exuberant shop of Jansen Holland with its amazing collection of Vlisco textiles took us to the question of colonial structures and their influence and effect on textiles, trading, ownership, display narrative(s), appropriation, and adaptation.

The seminars led by the convenors offered an open platform to discuss meanings and metaphors against louder and more popular narratives that have become common and have established (too simplistically) recognisable frameworks of perception. Observing the textiles in the museum archives, we further probed the questions of provenance and how to sustain the unique and distinguished stories of these textiles, here forgotten or appropriated. A specific piece of textile triggered disturbing debates. Now stripped of its relationship to place, purpose and community, it had become nothing more than an object of curiosity and souvenir.

The visits to Museum Volkenkunde, the Lakenhal and TextielMuseum in Tilburg allowed the group to examine and understand some of the rare textiles from their archives as well as put into perspective the contemporary interpretations of the African wax prints present at the Jansen Holland shop. These African wax prints and some of the finest woven and painted fabrics reiterated the importance of acknowledging and recognising cultural positions, collective identity and representation. Furthermore, our examination of the coveted and precious fabrics in the museum archives led us to consider the key actors who played influential roles in the production, circulation

and movement of these fabrics from Asia and Africa to Europe. As fabric production underwent changes over time, the changing narrative was accompanied by new visual styles. Consequently, contemporary debates often offer no deeper insight into the original meaning and cultural history of the textiles under consideration. Fabric production was the main topic during our visit to TextielMuseum in Tilburg, where the evolution of different textile technologies from the Early Modern period to today was on display. Here, we could observe how new technologies had changed the production of fabrics and garments, from the first mechanic looms to other textiles-related machinery and again to computer-designed and printed textiles.

Public Roundtable 'The Provenance Question: Blind spots in Itineraries of Museum Collections'

The graduate school concluded with a Public Roundtable titled 'The Provenance Question: Blind spots in Itineraries of Museum Collections.' Academics, museum curators, other professionals, and people with a specific interest in the topic engaged in a comprehensive discussion about issues related to museums and objects and the way museums should include discourses based on mutual cultural respect. Concluding the graduate school with individual presentations brought forth deliberations about the different lenses used by academicians, practitioners, and researchers that form their approaches and ideas. Bringing postcolonial discourse to the table proved to be an effective way to help unravel the complexity of the multiple layers of meaning associated with objects arising from culture, creative industries and economies, heritage and personal cultural intimacies. The understandings gained, along with memories and curations, can address ways to deal with the presumptions and louder narratives. Viewing and handling textiles is a tactile, sensory, intimate, and personal experience, making it a universal response. Unaware of the context in which the textile objects were created, the audience is drawn to their visual exposition, which opens the intricacies of the past and current histories, cultural, collective, and personal meanings. The fineness of the fabric making, the construction and surface development techniques and the craftsmanship involved cannot be considered apart from the discourse about belonging, authenticity, ownership, and displacement.

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) would like to express gratitude to its partners LeidenGlobal and Humanities Across Borders. Without their commitment, this In Situ Graduate School would not have been such a success.

We also thank the various institutions in Leiden and the Netherlands for enriching the programme with their extensive and insightful industry knowledge, namely, the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde), Museum De Lakenhal, TextielMuseum, Textile Research Centre, Textiel Factorij, and Jansen Holland African Fabric Shop.

Last but not least, many thanks to the Graduate School convenors, Neelam Raina, Jody Benjamin, and Pedro Pombo, and to the participants of the Public Roundtable *The Provenance Question: Blind Spots in Itineraries of Museum Collections*. They were: AJ Salter (MA Graduate, Leiden University), Annette Schmidt (Curator Africa, Research Centre for Material Culture and Museum Volkenkunde), Jos Damen (Head Library Department, African Studies Centre), and Pieter ter Keurs (Professor of Museums, Collections and Society, Leiden University, LeidenGlobal and LDE Centre for Global Heritage and Development). We are grateful for your contribution and dedication throughout the programme.

Further information:
www.iias.asia/masterclasses/textiledyes



Craft as METHOD

Aarti Kawra (HAB Academic Director)

Saint Louis, Senegal,
3-6 November 2022

In November 2022, Humanities Across Borders (HAB) co-hosted a Graduate Humanities Institute (GHI) Workshop titled 'Craft as METHOD' (craftasmethod.org) together with Senegalese partners of the University of Gaston Berger (UGB), Saint Louis, and supported by the Mellon Foundation's Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI). The weeklong workshop brought HAB partners from as far as Mexico, India, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, the US, and the Netherlands, as well as colleagues from neighbouring Mali and Ghana, to the historic oceanic port of West Africa. Inscribed under the UNESCO convention as a site of 'outstanding universal value,' an island wedged between two arms of the mouth of the river Senegal, Saint Louis has most recently been marked as the place of origin of 'Ceebu jën,' a rice, vegetables, and fish dish whose recipe comes from local fishing communities on the island.

The meeting was an occasion to use 'craft' as a point of departure to demonstrate the educational (pedagogical and curricular) potential of open discussions between scholars, artists, designers, museum and library professionals, community practitioners, NGOs, and other civic actors against the backdrop of the lived experience of local participants, and the social, economic, political, and ecological contingencies of their context.

The location of the HAB meeting in Africa was significant, not only because it was the first in-person meeting of the HAB consortium partners outside Asia since 2020 but also because it opened the question of 'craft' as legitimate knowledge, epistemologically eclipsed since colonial times. This topic has been a preoccupation among HAB partners for some time now. Meeting in the colonial architectural setting of Saint Louis, with the students from a university whose first stone was laid by anti-colonial political thinker and first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, in 1975, put a spotlight on HAB's focus on civic engagement using the local realities of craft as a shared experiential setting and intellectual pre-occupation.

For most participants, the most significant aspect of the Workshop was the insertion of community-based craft practitioners, artists, designers, photographers, and writers whose work is embedded in the culture and ecology of Saint Louis and its surroundings. Not only did this elevate the discussions that took place during the roundtables and in smaller groups, but it also encouraged dialogue among artisans practicing different crafts - and from different regions. Following the workshop, there were many proposals for shared syllabi, modules, and graduate schools around indigo or glass beads, in collaboration with practitioners, museum professionals, and other stakeholders, along the Asia-Africa axis of collaborative knowledge. The workshop was also an opportunity to rethink not only how knowledge is produced but also where it resides, with whom and how it is acquired.

"Hearing the conversations between Muhammed Mudasir Tijani, a professional indigo-dyer and Ebenezer Djaba Nomada "Cedi," a famous glass bead-maker from Ghana, showed the value of broader dialogue among craft producers and between craft

producers and academics. Similarly, Soxna, who makes jewelry out of cloth, participated in Cedi's demonstration—sharing and displaying his beads along with her own. Given the fact that Cedi is an English speaker and Saana is a French speaker, their communication-through-craft also showed the way in which learning about physical objects transcends language."

Wendy Singer, Kenyon College Ohio, USA

"Language is not an insurmountable barrier when talking of materials and practice. It became evident when I, as a listener not conversant with the language and having to abstract ideas with help from neighbours at the presentation, suddenly recognised a 'wow' moment. It first happened when Évelyne was presenting "Southern pottery: clays from Casamance" and she described how she washed the salt out of the mangrove delta clay using a technique borrowed from drinking water collection funnels in her home region. Another similar moment happened during the presentation by Ebenezer from Cedi Beads, when hearing of the observation that the clay of termite anthills is a naturally produced firebrick for the kilns."

Surajit Sarkar, Founder Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University Delhi, India

"We met the practitioners from the Workshop again at their booths just across the street from our hotel. Few hours ago, they were demonstrating their craft, expressing their life's challenges and sharing their thoughts with us at the Workshop venue. We heard them speak about the making of pottery, wax-print clothes and glass paintings, along with their stories and gestures of pride. Issues such as the ecological relations of craft to mangroves and rivers, feminist strength, China's force of appropriation in the global market of goods and material resources... at once became 'real' and made a deep impression upon us. There was no need for any academic concept or theory to establish this understanding. At these moments, I was a student inspired by a 'master's' class."

Min-Chin Chiang, Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

"It was clear that in-person meetings that span a few days allow for so much more productive conversations than online ones. To be sure, online meetings can get the basic job done, but there is much creative 'bouncing-around' of ideas when people are seated around a table, whether during official meetings or over lunch/ dinner. A few of us, for instance, began to talk about having students across different contexts - India, the Netherlands, Brazil - interact with each other around emergent situated social justice questions. It immediately struck us as a worthwhile endeavor, and we have since then started working on developing the idea and applying for small grants to make this possible."

Rohit Negi, Ambedkar University, Delhi India

"During my stay in Saint-Louis, I would be continually confronted with the gap between the formal façade of statehood and modern enterprise and the everyday practice of eking out a living, especially on an island village-city, which quickly looks like a fishbowl for those at the bottom of the chain of production and consumption. In this regard, there is not much difference between the countries across the border and the region."

Mohomodou Houssouba, Mali and University of Basel, Switzerland

"This experience has inspired me to further center questions of craft as forms of knowledge production and transmission into both my research and pedagogy. I am now working with a group of colleagues to establish a dye garden on campus (University of California, Riverside) to use for teaching purposes, for example."

Jody Benjamin, University of California Riverside, USA

"The workshop further revealed that through the study of crafts, scholars can interrogate histories of people, labour, and gender relations, as well as issues of trade and cross/cultural learning. For example, the Senegalese bead weaver talked about how she drew inspiration from glass bead

making in Ghana, while Cedi, the Ghanaian bead maker, revealed how he learnt the Murano technique from his global engagements. We can also see the interconnectedness between the practices as well as the challenges that practitioners in Ghana and Senegal face. It also became evident that we can conceive craft as non-textual reading. For example, by seeing different colours, shapes, and forms of beads, you can tell value, class, rituals, and symbolism."

Eric Lawer, Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana

"At Leiden University College, we are discussing the questions around decolonizing academia. The HAB approach provides tools for how to do this. It is not just about shifting the readings or expanding the canon but also really questioning where knowledge resides. Does it only reside in universities? Or in the Global North or even the Global South? The week in St. Louis solidified that if we want to decolonize, we must shift whose knowledge we value. For too long, only one type of knowledge or Umwelt was praised. There are opportunities to shift this paradigm. Shifting this idea of knowledge is also shifting power dynamics."

Jyothi Thrivikraman, Leiden University College, The Hague

The Unknown University: notes on 'Collaboration as Method'

Laura Erber (IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator)

I attended the Craft as METHOD workshop—in my capacity as the (new) Coordinator of the IIAS Fellowship Programme—to explore possible links between the fellowship programme and Humanities Across Borders (HAB). What is striking about HAB is the effective form of collaboration established there; it all depends on a common desire to transform institutions from the inside.

The Unknown University is the title of the volume that brings together the poetic work of the Chilean author Roberto Bolaño. The word "University" in his works does not name a fixed and delimited institution, but evokes learning processes from which life and society, in their complex entanglement, are not neutralized beforehand. I use Roberto Bolaño's title and its web of possible meanings here because, in a certain way, the experience participating as an outsider-insider in the HAB meetings in Saint-Louis, Senegal, has been the closest I have been to the Unknown University. The Unknown University will then be the name of a spacetime of experiences of ephemeral communities, experiences where thinking, creating, and living are not distinguishable from each other.

Due to their dynamics and synergy, the meetings of the HAB allow a reflection on collaboration as a method, which involves an enormous amount of invisible work difficult to describe in the documents that normally account for our academic activities.

The HAB meeting brought to light the concreteness of the effects—dramatic for some—of the isolation produced by the pandemic as well as of the community and academic reconfigurations it generated. The speeches of each member were guided fundamentally by a need to continue to elaborate, from mutual listening and collective effort, an effectively south-south academic (and trans-academic) platform. They took place beyond the design determined by the modern forms of control of the modes of valuing knowledge in this new axis of intellectual engagement not controlled by the North.

This meeting, the interventions of each partner, the reports of activities implemented, and the clashes with the



bureaucracy of the university machinery and the regional/national powers and their vicissitudes make the notion of collaboration more dense and concrete. Collaborative projects aimed at building more porous institutions require a struggle that can last for years with the university administration. This work, which involves the slow navigation of bureaucracy, is also part of the gestures of collaboration when it ceases to be a harmless word at the service of beautiful descriptions of academic life.

There is an enormous amount of work involved in the construction of a space of exchange that effectively values the moment of meeting. Collaboration as a method starts by defending the importance of bringing together researchers and practitioners from very different countries and contexts. To do so, it avoids building an artificially neutral environment guided by the pure idea of time optimisation and the corporate idea of efficiency.

Collaboration as a method allows us to reflect on the bottlenecks, on the fatigue and on the gaps that the academic space imposes. Instead of being seen as sacrificing the individual trajectory in the name of the institutional community, cooperation between HAB members is taken as the very vocation of higher education spaces.

The University as we know it will only be transformed by the mass of critical energy of the "unknown universities" that also inhabit it if scholars can take on their discomfort and reinvent their role by going beyond nostalgia, discouragement, or magical solutions imposed from above.

For information on the HAB programme: www.humanitiesacrossborders.org



What we talk about when we talk about being a fellow at IIAS

Laura Erber

Each year, IIAS hosts a group of researchers with diverse profiles from all areas of the Humanities and Social Sciences. We greatly value the quality of our fellows' academic production as well as their unique individual professional careers and engagement in activities outside the academic sphere. IIAS also welcomes self-funded visiting senior researchers and invited strategic collaborators (usually researchers already collaborating with one of the Institute's projects). In addition, the Institute sponsors the Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS.

The IIAS Fellowship Programme provides an environment where fellows from different parts of Asia and other continents, conducting research in different fields, can engage in debates that broaden their perspectives on Asian Studies beyond their particular national configurations. The programme offers a variety of activities that aim to encourage the individual development of its fellows and to facilitate the creation of a professional and social network that will benefit them long after their fellowship comes to an end. Moreover, IIAS invites its fellows to be active participants in the Institute's activities.

Our programme proposes activities conducive to the fellows' professional placement and is designed to encourage self-reflection about the researchers' place and position within their respective academic fields. During their stay at IIAS, fellows define the pace of their work and are encouraged to propose events with the help of the programme's coordinator, Laura Erber. Fellows can give lectures and invite other researchers based in the Netherlands or passing through Leiden for Conversation

Sessions, in which they can publicly discuss topics related to their research. We are open to designing workshops, outings and study groups according to the interests and needs of the fellows currently present at the institute. We organise internal activities, for both fellows and the IIAS team, such as our Inspirational Sessions. These are meetings in which fellows propose alternative ways to access their academic field and share their research interests with other fellows. Fellows may choose a film (of any genre) or text (theoretical or literary) that has inspired and shaped their academic path or relates in a relevant way to their research subject. We also organise outings, such as museum visits, guided tours to local breweries or a critical walk through the urban history of Rotterdam.

Fellows are considered active participants in the life of the institute. They can contribute to the IIAS Newsletter, propose podcasts or engage with those working in other IIAS programmes. We also encourage them to take advantage of their terms at IIAS to elaborate on new strategies for transdisciplinary collaboration and to come up with innovative ways to enhance the production and

transmission of knowledge. Gathered in the cosy atmosphere of Leiden, this group of scholars, whose experiences are undoubtedly enriched by the diversity of its members, is invited to engage with the various activities of IIAS and find ways to collaborate with and contribute to the projects developed by the institute. You can read more about this in the IIAS Director's Note on page 3 of this issue: 'A New Fellowship Coordinator for a Revamped Programme'.

In view of the fast-changing academic landscape, the IIAS Fellowship Programme aims to contribute to improving scholarly practices and enhancing interactions between universities and society. It is meant to provide a space that allows fellows to reinvent and hopefully re-enchant academic practices free from the increasing constraints imposed on higher education staff. Our objective is to facilitate the full development of each fellow's research project in a space conducive to academic and intellectual exchanges that values a reflexive approach to academic culture.

Laura Erber, IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator

Professorial Fellowship for the Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS

To facilitate the Taiwan Studies Programme at Leiden University, the Department of Cross-Strait Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Faculty of Humanities and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) have jointly established a Chair of Taiwan Studies, based at the Faculty of Humanities.

The Chair of Taiwan Studies provides a Professorial Fellow position of five or ten months for a visiting scholar in Taiwan Studies to teach and conduct research at Leiden University and IIAS.

For further information and application procedure go to: <https://www.iias.asia/professorial-fellowship-chair-taiwan-studies-leiden-university-and-iias>



IIAS Fellowship Options



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 important aspect of Asian studies research in the Social Sciences and Humanities.



Combine your IIAS Fellowship with a short term research experience at FMSH, in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional one to three 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: www.iias.asia/fellowships

Print Journeys

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

A Cityscape below the Winds

Pierpaolo De Giosa

In July 2021, my book *World Heritage and Urban Politics in Melaka, Malaysia. A Cityscape below the Winds* was published in the Asian Heritages Series. The publishing process has been a wonderful experience thanks to the Series Editors, the publication teams at IIAS and Amsterdam University Press, the anonymous reviewers, and, last but not least, my Melakan interlocutors and friends. Without each and every one of them, the publication of this book would not have been possible. The book is still fresh, and it has received only one review so far. A quite positive one I must add, and I was glad that it came from an established researcher with an expertise on critical heritage studies in the region.¹

In September 2021, I had the honour to present this work at the first “IIAS Book Talks” webinar. The very first question from the audience concerned the choice of Melaka as case study. As some might know, Melaka represents only part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca.” Let me say that, when I had to select an urban World Heritage Site in Malaysia for my doctoral research, I chose Melaka for two simple reasons. First, it is the city par excellence to unravel the intricacies of the international, national, and local politics of heritage in Malaysia. Melaka is celebrated as the cradle of the nation. Its glorified sultanate (c. 1400-1511) was followed by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial administrations. Because of its importance in the national narrative, Melaka was a priority in the agenda of World Heritage nominations. Second, despite the numerous publications on Melaka, a critical heritage approach was still missing, especially in comparison with its twin World Heritage city of George Town. In 2008, for example, Gwynn Jenkins published a book which explored the sociocultural and architectural history of George Town in light of the World Heritage inscription process.² Because Melaka and George Town together constitute a single World Heritage Site, a book on the other half of it – Melaka in this case – hopefully expands the understanding of urban World Heritage politics in Malaysia.

When I started this journey I was interested to know what happens to a city after inscription in the World Heritage List. Fieldwork opened my mind not only to the effects of such a designation in the long term. It also led me to understand how heritage conservation unfolds on the ground with specific reference to processes of “museumification” and “replication,” tourism gentrification, the politics at play in the making of “racialized” tourism enclaves, and urban struggles like the one that the Chetti community was undertaking against a high-rise construction next to its century-old *kampung* (“village”).

Kampung Chetti is a low-rise “heritage village” located just metres away from the World Heritage boundaries. Within the boundaries, limits on new constructions have been introduced to preserve the historical landscape. Nevertheless, Melaka has attracted the interest of developers, who are not constrained by conservation regulations when they seek to build high-rises all around the site. I started to realize the intricacies and asymmetries of heritage hierarchies, which unfold where international/national/

local heritage systems as well as ethnic majorities and minorities meet.³

During an interview, one conservation expert sketched a circle. At its center was the World Heritage Site, surrounded by high-rises [Fig. 1]. It represents what he foresaw following the construction boom triggered by the World Heritage status. My interlocutor was frustrated because there was no building height control around the site, and new high-rises were going to affect both the World Heritage landscape and other vernacular neighbourhoods such as Kampung Chetti.

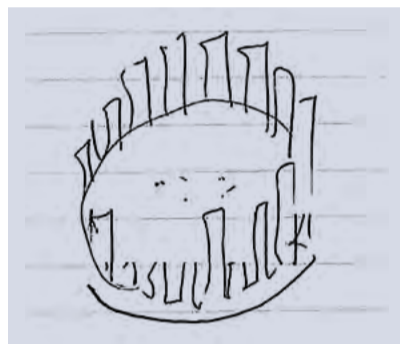


Fig. 1 (above): Sketch representing the future of Melaka. (Photo by Pierpaolo De Giosa, 2013)

I returned to Melaka in 2022, after a two-year long border closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the “heritage villages” around the World Heritage Site have their own adjacent high-rises now. Others along the coast are also affected by land reclamation projects that are meant to create new land and artificial islands from the sea. It is along the coastline, in fact, that the predictions of that sketch are most evident. Empty lots downtown are scarce,⁴ so land reclamation aims at providing more space for the construction of high-end real estate, hotels, malls, theme parks, and cruise facilities. For example, the M-WEZ (Melaka Waterfront Economic Zone) was launched in 2021 with the objective of transforming a mega-development corridor – stretching for 33 kilometres along the reclaimed coastline – into an “International Investment Destination.”

The M-WEZ promises to attract billions of ringgit from abroad, and to create thousands of new jobs for locals. There are, however, many risks to be considered, especially in light of the recent global pandemic and the local economic and political instability. First, the pandemic has taught us that to rely entirely on tourism and foreign investment is unsustainable. Most of the tourism-related businesses downtown have been badly affected in the last two years, and even well-known hotels have closed down. Second, the pandemic has exacerbated the foregoing slump in the property market. Melaka is indeed affected by an oversupply of residential units, retail space, and hotel rooms. Third, many mega-development projects on reclaimed land have been launched on the wave of enthusiasm for the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, introduced by China in 2013. Companies and investors from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore have been particularly active in this context. This makes sense, given that Chinese and Singaporeans made up the bulk of Melaka’s tourist arrivals before the pandemic. The property market impasse is intensified even more by capital controls or bans that have affected the outflow of money from China, Malaysia’s largest trading partner. Finally, such mega-development projects countertrend local preferences for low-rise landed properties and affordable housing. There is a feeling that Melakans themselves are not going to gain anything, neither in terms of job

opportunities nor in the purchase of properties that are mostly targeting foreigners and the well-off. Overall, many Melakans fear that such overambitious projects are not going to materialise. Melaka already has quite a number of failed projects, or “white elephants” as they are locally called, and many think that the M-WEZ will be yet another.⁵

Publishing my first monograph has been a personal milestone, and I am sure it played a crucial role in future research trajectories. When the book was published, I was preparing my application for a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship grant, which I had the good fortune to obtain. So, I am embarking on a new project called “Malaysian Reclaimed Landscapes: Urbanization, Heritage, and Sustainability along the Littoral.” This research will take my interests in critical heritage studies and urban anthropology to other shores, not so far away from Melaka: Penang and Langkawi, where land reclamation projects are being planned. Penang South Reclamation involves the creation of three artificial islands, and Widad@Langkasuka intends to reclaim land in the shape of an eagle, the symbol of Langkawi.

Many are concerned about the socio-ecological effects for the environment and coastal communities. On the one hand, reclaimed landscapes are being planned for large-scale construction projects, modelled on high-tech fantasies of a luxurious lifestyle in a greener and smarter environment. On the other hand, such projects are intended to transform spaces that represent enduring heritage (e.g., fisheries, seascapes, and biodiversity). Reclaimed landscapes thus emerge as contested spaces where what is not considered heritage becomes attractive for development.

This ethnographic project will explore the ways environmental activism and discourses on sustainability and heritage unfold on the ground, together with the masterplans and compensation policies at work around yet-to-be-built-islands. I will thus conduct fieldwork among a diverse range of actors

such as local residents, fishermen, surfers, activists, architects, and academics, but also governmental elites and developers. The project will also involve co-design activities with local stakeholders and the production of a Toolkit in a free-access booklet version. It will be based on emic perspectives, creating space for those marginalized voices in spatial planning and development. The project advocates the importance of ethnographic insights for policy-oriented practices in order to make a more sustainable and equitable planet.

Pierpaolo De Giosa

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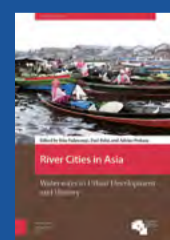
Notes

- 1 See: Muzaini, Hamzah. 2022. “World Heritage and Urban Politics in Melaka, Malaysia. A Cityscape below the Winds, Pierpaolo De Giosa, Amsterdam University Press.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 43 (2).
- 2 Jenkins, Gwynn. 2008. *Contested Space: Cultural Heritage and Identity Reconstructions; Conservation Strategies within a Developing Asian City*. Wien: LIT Verlag.
- 3 See also: De Giosa, Pierpaolo. Forthcoming. “‘Like the Story of the Camel and his Master’: A Melakan Village between Vernacular Heritage and Urban Transformation.” In *Heritage as Resilience in Asia*, edited by Michael Herzfeld and Rita Padawangi. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- 4 De Giosa, Pierpaolo. 2022. “Il Boom Edilizio oltre i Confini del Patrimonio Mondiale della Città di Malacca.” *RISE* 6 (3), 8-11.
- 5 For more details see: Arnez, Monika and Pierpaolo De Giosa. Forthcoming. “Symbolic Proximity, Enclaves, and Contestations: Sino-Malay Exchanges in Real Estate on Melaka’s Reclaimed Land.” In *Sinophone Borderlands Reader*. Olomouc: Palacký University Press.

Latest Publication

River Cities in Asia: Waterways in Urban Development and History

Rita Padawangi, Paul Rabé, and Adrian Perkasa (eds.), 2022
ISBN 9789463721851 | 294 pages
IIAS Publications Asian Cities Series



Hardcover book to purchase from AUP:
<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463721851/river-cities-in-asia>

Download the ebook from the following webpage:
<https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/59199>

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, natural and social dimensions. Recognition of these deep connections can help to better contextualize policy solutions aimed at rivers and their ecologies, including human life.

Editors:

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 Coordinator of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) based at the International Institute for Asian Studies based 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 (HIS) 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.

IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

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

IIAS Research Clusters

Asian Cities

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

Asian Heritages

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

Global Asia

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

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

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

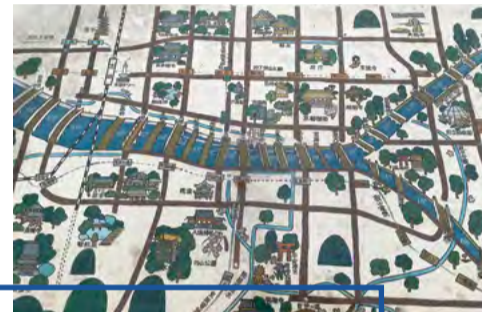


www.ukna.asia

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Clusters: [Asian Cities](#); [Asian Heritages](#)



River Cities Network

The River Cities Network is a new transdisciplinary and global network to promote the inclusive revitalisation of rivers and waterways and the landscapes /waterscapes, cities and neighborhoods that co-exist with them. The network is being coordinated from the Urban Cluster of IIAS and, as of December 2022, comprises 40 project teams from around the world, each of which critically examines a local river-city relationship (the 'river-city nexus'). A board of advisors has been formed, which includes prominent people in their fields from the

humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Do not hesitate to contact us for more information or if you are interested in getting involved!

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For more information, read the article on page 47 of this issue.

www.ukna.asia/river-cities

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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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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](#)



The Geopolitical Economy of Energy Transition: Comparing China's Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union

This new interdisciplinary joint research programme is between the Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM, Macau, China) and IIAS, in cooperation with the School of Government and International Affairs (Durham University, UK). It brings together 25 researchers from 13 institutes in the EU and China to account for the dramatic transformations across Eurasia since 2000 and in the energy security strategies of China and the EU and the two sides' interactions. It will study, firstly, their approaches to fossil fuel supply security, climate change and policies regarding the transition to renewable energy and associated challenges, and, secondly, China's Belt and Road Initiative in 29 selected countries and regions in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. Besides promoting new insights, the programme aims to help build new research collaborations, nurturing the participation of junior researchers. The expected research output will include publications in the form of peer-reviewed monograph(s), special issues of key specialised peer-reviewed journals and policy briefings.

For more information, read the article on page 47 of this issue.

www.iias.asia/programmes/geopolitical-economy-energy-transition-China-BRI-EU
 Inquiries: [Mehdi P. Amineh](#)
 Email: m.p.amineh@uva.nl
 Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

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

This interdisciplinary research is aimed at the study of the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government, with special attention given to the impact of the 'New Silk Road' on countries, regions and peoples outside of China.

www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad
 Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

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

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

www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm
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International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest global forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. It serves as a platform for scholars, social and cultural leaders and institutions focusing on issues critical to Asia, and, by implication, the rest of the world. The ICAS biennial conferences are organised



by IIAS in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and are attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from around 60 countries. The biennial 'ICAS Book Prize' (IBP) awards prizes in the field of Asian Studies for books in Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, and for PhD Theses in English. Twelve conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejeon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden. ICAS 12 was organised together with Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and took place entirely online).

www.icas.asia



Teaching the Craft of Writing

An Interview with Tom Robertson

Benjamin Linder

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.



Tom Robertson is a scholar at Kathmandu University in Nepal. Trained in history, Tom's academic research focuses on international development, with a special emphasis on the environment. The following is a conversation about the mechanics of writing well. During COVID-19, Tom launched two initiatives aimed at teaching practical writing techniques, particularly in nonfiction genres. The first of these initiatives is a free series of YouTube videos called *Mitho Lekhai*. Each video in the series presents tips for clear and effective writing. The second initiative is called "Writing Journeys," a series of essays by prominent Nepali journalists and authors about the craft of writing. While these initiatives were particularly tailored to the context of Nepal, the tips and strategies they offer will be useful for students, academics, and professionals working in any language.

Can you tell us a bit about your academic background? When did you first start researching and working in Nepal?

I'm a historian, and I trained at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where I finished my PhD in 2005. I first came to Nepal over thirty years ago as an undergraduate and later as a member of the Peace Corps. Throughout graduate school, I wrote a dissertation that related to South Asia but not to Nepal, and as a second project I wanted to write about American History but also about Nepal. The overlap I landed on was U.S. development projects in Nepal. The most important of those projects was malaria and its eradication.

We met around 2018, and at that time, you were leading the Fulbright office in Kathmandu. Fulbright is centrally concerned with education, so how did you first get interested in educational practice, both in general and in Nepal particularly?

Well, I wanted to live in Nepal and Fulbright was one way to do so. I have to say that I have always been interested in academic mentoring, and Fulbright was a way to do that. I really loved working with grantees. They are such creative, independent people. It is so much fun to help them with their journeys.

It wasn't long after we met that I started seeing posts about a YouTube series you initiated called *Mitho Lekhai*.¹ Can you describe that series and what led you to create it?

The series is instructional videos in Nepali language about how to write nonfiction. I give lots of examples, mostly in English, but I speak in Nepali with some English mixed in. I talk about topics like paragraphs, essays, sometimes I have a whole video on verbs. So I pick different subjects that I think are important, useful stepping stones for students and professionals. The videos are aimed at professionals and college-aged people, but I think some talented high school students can also utilize them. These videos truly work at all levels.

I'll tell you what led me to create it. Some friends asked me to do an online workshop with them about writing during the COVID-19 lockdown. They had a lot of things to say – these were professionals, but they had never had training in how to write, so that's what they were looking for. We met weekly and picked a different topic each time to focus on. Eventually, I began to anticipate what we would be talking about and what I would want to say. Often, the topics were things I had taught many times before. Although I had certain materials that I knew I wanted to say, I decided to videotape and share them with my friends in advance of this meeting so that I could also make them available to other people.

In Nepal, there is very little instruction about writing in schools, for all ages. As a result, students graduate and become professionals without having learned the basics of how to write. I became very aware of that during my time at Fulbright. I saw Nepal's best students, who struggled with writing. In large part, this was due to the fact that writing is super difficult and everyone struggles with writing, but it is even harder if you've never gotten any instruction. And there were certain learnable, discrete skills that I could focus on, such as paragraphs and organization, while mixing English and Nepali. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown we were in, my circle enjoyed this instructional platform and I was motivated to make more.

You delivered your videos primarily in Nepali. Were there any things in particular that were challenging in that act of translation? Was it difficult to take tips that emerged in an English context for you and put them into a Nepali context?

That's an interesting question. I decided to make the videos mostly in Nepali because my experience is that most people in Nepal are more familiar and comfortable in Nepali. I wanted to make sure that they understood every word I was saying. Plus, it's also the case that Nepalis like listening to foreigners speak Nepali, so that adds a little added appeal to the videos. It makes them a little more interesting. I mix in English, so that anyone who wants to practice English can



Fig. 2: Screenshot of the "Writing Journeys" series in *The Record*. (Available at <https://www.recordnepal.com/Writing%20Journneys?type=category>)

do that, too. To answer your question, I don't think there was anything that difficult to translate. Some of the examples I used – the actual language translation of the examples – were a little complicated, but not the writing principles.

I will say, however, that there are different cultures of writing. There's a culture of writing in Nepal that's different from the culture of writing in the United States or most of Western Europe. For example, in some writing cultures, people are not as direct, concise, and to the point in the way that gets hammered into pupils in the United States. That is a common obstacle that my friends, my students, and I need to get around. I try to avoid saying that one style is right and one is wrong, but I do point out the differences and let my students, friends, and workshop participants assess and decide what they want to do. I think that they should learn both ways, and then they can choose and use whatever method they think is appropriate.

What convinced you that writing was the subject you wanted to focus on? To put it in a pithy way: Why does writing well matter so much?

First off, it was Nepalis who approached me. They came to me and said, "Hey, we need this. We have things to say – we are experts in our fields – but we don't have the tools with which to say them." That meant specifically writing skills: how craft effective sentences, how to make paragraphs, how to pull things together in an essay form. But when they approached me, I was interested in this. I immediately recognized this as something I wanted to do because of my own experience. Growing up, I felt like words didn't come easily to me, that writing was something that was hard,

really difficult, maybe even a little unnatural for me. It certainly didn't come easily, but then I realized, through the benefit of some really excellent teachers, that there are certain skills that you can learn. There are certain steps that demystify the process and take it from some sort of magical creation of words to a step-by-step process in a lot of cases. There are lots of little learnable skills that are out there, and those skills really helped me.

Why does writing matter? Writing matters because we can't understand anybody without an intervention through words, and most often through written words. There are so many people that have so much to say, but they don't get heard because their words are a jumble, or they're not clear, or they're disorganized. Writing is crucial in every field – not just fields like history or social sciences, but in other more technical fields as well. I taught at a technical university in the United States for ten years. What distinguishes those who move ahead from those who don't is often the ability to think clearly and to read and write effectively.

What you're doing in these videos is getting into the "nitty-gritty" elements of writing. What are some of the tips you focus on in the videos and in general advice that you give to students?

Active versus passive voice, short sentences, short paragraphs. I also emphasize being concrete as opposed to abstract – to use specific, clear, and concrete language. I like to give examples of that. Overall, though, the main point of all of the videos and all of my teaching on writing is that there are learnable skills. Writing can be studied, it can be learned, and you can make improvement. I don't believe in "natural" writers. There are people that have a lot of

practice, and so things come more easily to them, but it's because they've had lots of practice. Just like volleyball or playing the violin, the more practice you get, the more you improve. This is something that I repeat again and again throughout my videos because I'm afraid that in Nepal, people think that learning the skills to write is not possible and that being a good writer is innate. My understanding is that it's just the opposite, and focusing on these specific skills – the "nitty-gritty" – is the way to do it.

This concern with effective and economical writing migrated over to your collaboration with *The Record*, a long-form journalism outlet in Nepal. You launched a series there in 2021 called "Writing Journeys."² What is "Writing Journeys," and how did it come to be?

"Writing Journeys" is a collection of articles by well-known Nepali writers who concentrate, although not exclusively, on nonfiction writing. It's a collection of essays that they write about their own writing journeys – about how they learned to write, about who taught them, about key discoveries they made in the process, about favorite breakthrough works that helped them get better-known to the larger public. I wanted Nepalis to hear from other Nepalis that writing is something that is learnable, that there are specific skills. These writers thus explained their little tips and the steps that helped them in their writing. They do it in storytelling fashion. It's really just a collection of stories about writing – about what makes it hard, about how improvement can be made, about what time of day they write, about what conditions they write in, about what joys writing brings them. It's all those sorts of things.

How did you select the Nepali authors and writers for the series? Were they eager and enthusiastic to join the project?

I mostly looked for nonfiction writers because fiction writers in Nepal have gotten a little more attention. I wanted to focus on a different kind of writing – not just fiction, but everyday writing (e.g., letters, essays, reports, journalism). I felt those topics had gotten almost no attention, and there were these great writers around. I approached them, starting with people I knew in the beginning. Then I also relied on recommendations from friends. Not everybody said yes, but most did. Sometimes, I had to explain what I was looking for, especially at the beginning. In general, people liked the process. They liked doing it. They feel that the writing assignment took them to places, took them to memories that they hadn't visited in a while, and it helped them pull together some experiences and reflect on their own evolution as writers. For the most part, people liked the process, and I liked that they liked it. We also did lots of versions. Nobody was able to publish something on the first draft. Even well-known writers were asked to do sometimes three or four edits, which was a very productive and fun process for me and for them, too.

We may have given the false impression that your primary occupation is teaching writing, when in fact you have your own long history of scholarship in Nepal and South Asia. I wanted to give you an opportunity to tell us what you have been working on at the moment in terms of your own research and teaching.

I'm working on writing up a lot of research I've done over the past decade related to the malaria eradication project in the 1950s and 1960s. The United States was very involved in that – a number of Americans were involved. As an outgrowth of the malaria project, I have also done a lot of work in the Chitwan district in south-central Nepal. I'm finishing an article on the origins of Chitwan National Park and on the role of grasslands in that park. It's about the interactions of people with grasslands over the decades and centuries, and it's about how that history was often forgotten and the problems that forgetting that history caused for the national park. So, I have a number of environmental history writings that I need to get done.

I also have done a lot of writing recently about Kathmandu. The city has changed so dramatically in the last five decades. There are a lot of fascinating historical stories that need to be told, so I'm trying to work on some of those as well.

What other resources would you recommend for students eager to improve their writing skills?

There is a classic book by William Zinsser called *On Writing Well*.³ Parts of it are a little dated, but parts of it are great. I use it with my students and workshop participants all the time. Another more recent book on writing is Roy Peter Clark's *Writing Tools*,⁴ which I think is really easy to read and really smart. He has great examples, and he summarizes his points in an effective way.

If you had to give one piece of advice to budding writers, particularly those seeking to write in a second or third language, what would it be?

My all-time favorite tip is: short, focused paragraphs. Short is important, but what is even more important is to make your paragraphs focused. Know what your paragraph is about and cut, cut, cut anything that doesn't belong. When I learned this, my writing improved dramatically almost overnight. A professor made the suggestion to me at one point that I try and limit my paragraphs to about five sentences. What that forced me to do is get straight to the point. At first, I thought that would be easy – "Oh, I don't have to write as much!" – but actually it's a lot harder. I have to really decide what to put in the paragraph and what not to put in the paragraph. That makes me decide, *what is it really about?* And once you do that, you can explain the main point in the first sentence, and that just makes it so much easier for readers to figure out what you're driving at.

Before I learned how to write short and focused paragraphs, I would have long, sprawling paragraphs that must have been a tough slog for my audience. So that's my favorite advice: keep what you're writing short, keep it concise, keep it to the point. That makes reading easier. It makes getting through your writing easier on readers. As writers, we tend to forget about our readers, but they have a tough job and we need to make it easier for them.

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

Notes

- <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwBbHOM3YpFFahm5mBI5pVrIn3D1Bhqb>
- <https://recordnepal.com/Writing%20journneys?type=category>
- <https://www.harpercollins.com/products/on-writing-well-william-zinsser?variant=32118081159202>
- <https://www.littlebrown.com/titles/roy-peter-clark/writing-tools/9780316028400/>

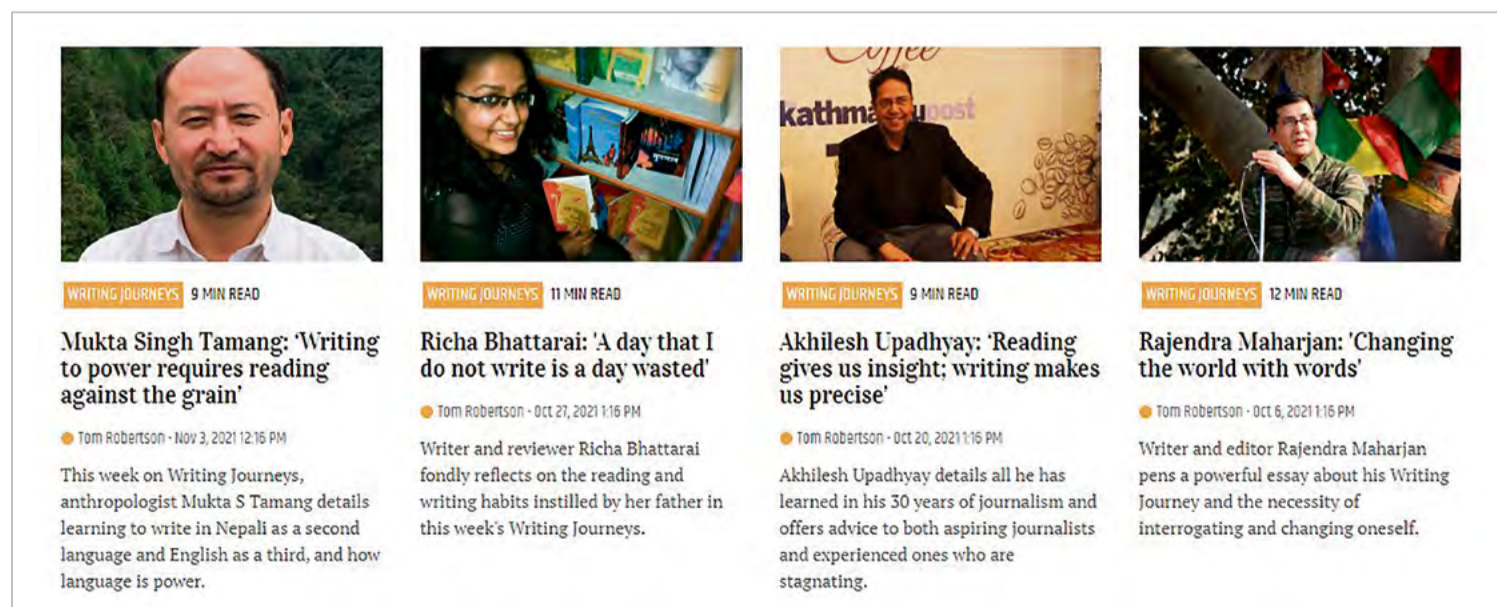
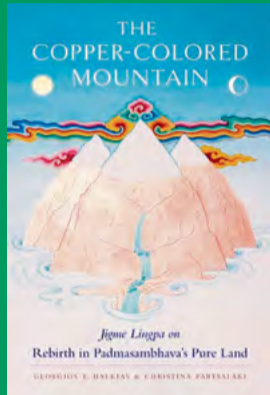


Fig. 3: Screenshot of four "Writing Journeys" essays in *The Record*. (Available at <https://www.recordnepal.com/Writing%20journneys?type=category>)

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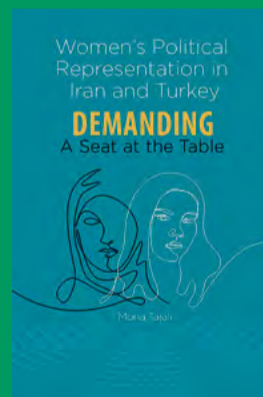
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*Effortless Spontaneity:
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<https://www.iias.asia/the-review/effortless-spontaneity>

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