

Of pop, kitsch,  
& cultural heritage  
Ulrich Timme  
Kragh

The Study  
page 8-9



News from Asia  
ISEAS

The Network  
page 42-44



Batik: Spectacular  
Textiles of Java  
Natasha Reichle

The Portrait  
page 56



IIAS

International Institute  
for Asian Studies

# theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

62  
Chinese and EU  
Energy Security



## The energy security challenge of the 21st century

China and the European Union have common vulnerabilities and interests in the areas of energy, environmental protection, and sustainability.

In this edition of the Focus, Guest editors Mehdi P. Amineh and Yang Guang ask how they should proceed with regards to mutual cooperation.



# Contents

- 3 FROM THE DIRECTOR
- THE STUDY
- 4-5 Ethno-religious heritage in Singapore and the quest  
**Bernard Arps**
- 6 Indies prison notebooks  
**Elizabeth Chandra**
- 7 Law reform and human rights in Indonesia-Myanmar  
**Melissa Crouch**
- 8-9 Of pop, kitsch, and cultural heritage: A meditation  
on cultural heritage and its intimate relationship  
with history  
**Ulrich Timme Kragh**
- 10 India-China-Pakistan economic axis:  
reality or wishful thinking?  
**Manish Vaid & Tridivesh Singh Maini**
- 11-14 **Special feature pages: The Opinion**
- 11 India's Republic Day: language & the nation  
**Rituparna Roy**
- 12-13 Southeast Asian studies as a form of power  
**Pingtjin Thum**
- 14 Navigating Indonesia's bureaucracy:  
getting a research permit  
**Sharyn Graham Davies**

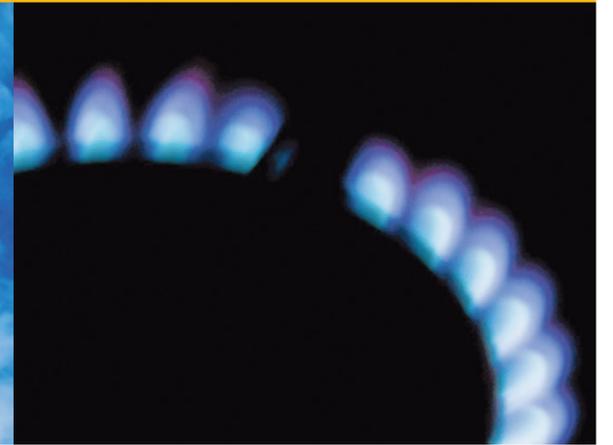


THE FOCUS  
21-36 Chinese and EU Energy Security  
**Mehdi P. Amineh and Yang Guang**  
Guest Editors

- THE REVIEW
- 15-16 New for review
- 17 The routine of atrocities  
**Alex de Jong**
- 18 Ahmedabad: a cautionary tale  
**Ward Berenschot**
- 19 Oral and written traditions  
**George Kam Wah Mak**
- 20 Engaging the nation across borders  
**Chiara Formichi**
- 37 A reconciliation of historiographies  
**William B. Noseworthy**
- 38 Terminology and the translational  
ambiguities of public health  
**Vivek Neelakantan**
- THE NETWORK
- 40-41 The Substation: art and culture in/of  
the city-state Singapore  
**Special feature page: The Performative Space**  
**Roy Voragen**
- 42-44 News from Asia
- 45 Cobbled streets without traffic  
**Special feature page: The Alumni**  
**Ranjini and Gananath Obeyesekere**
- 46-47 Announcements
- 48 IAS News
- 49-52 IAS Reports
- 49 World Wide Asia: Asian Flows, Global Impacts  
Report of the second IAS Summer Programme  
**Thien-Huong Ninh**
- 49 UKNA Roundtable
- 50-51 History, Identity & Collective Memory:  
In Search of Modern China  
**Sandra Dehue**
- 52 North Korea in the Spotlights:  
IIAS Annual Lecture 2012 given by Geir Helgesen  
**Willem Vogelsang**
- 53 IAS Research projects
- 54-55 IAS Fellows

THE PORTRAIT  
56 Batik: Spectacular Textiles of Java  
**Natasha Reichle**

## The Focus Chinese and EU Energy Security



Page 21-23  
**Mehdi P. Amineh and Yang Guang** introduce 11 essays looking into the energy security challenges for the 21st century.

Page 24-25  
**Robert Cutler** analyzes post-Cold War geopolitics in Central Eurasia in relation to the emerging 'complex system' of hydrocarbon networks.

Page 25-26  
**Frank Umbach** uses a comparative perspective to analyze the contradictory strategic trends and developments in Central Asia and the Caspian Region.



Page 27  
Given the important role that Iran plays in China's foreign energy security policy, **Yu Guoqing** explores China's energy relations with the Islamic Republic.

Page 28  
**Zhao Huirong and Wu Hongwei** explore the significance of the Caspian Region for China's energy security and the prospects for cooperation.

Page 29  
**Chen Mo** discusses China's external relations with emerging oil producer Angola in the context of its overall energy supply security strategy.



Page 30  
**Sun Hongbo** analyzes the energy ties between China and Venezuela which in comparison with other LA countries stands out as a unique example.

Page 31  
**Raquel Shaoul** evaluates Japan's energy security supply strategies, outcomes, and prospects throughout the building of its relationship with Iran.

Page 32-33  
**Daniel Scholten** analyzes the relationship between energy transition governance paradigms and renewable innovation processes in the Netherlands.



Page 34  
**Li Xiaohua** examines China's policy towards the development of a solar energy industry.

Page 35  
**Mairon G. Bastos Lima** examines the development of the Brazilian biofuel industry in recent decades and associated geopolitical challenges.

Page 36  
**Edward Vermeer** provides an analysis of China's hydropower development and the associated economic and ecological challenges.



# Broadening intercultural dialogue

Two IAS events took place this October in different parts of Asia. Both testify to the versatility and pioneer-like character of the institute in its ability to widen the contours of the field of 'Asian Studies', and with it, to test the role that academia can assign itself in the business of transcultural relations. Both events were under the purview of the IAS thematic cluster on critical heritage studies in Asia and Europe.

Philippe Peycam

THE FIRST was a roundtable entitled 'Constructive Contestation around Urban Heritage in Taipei: Exploring a New Approach for Cities in Asia'. It was held in Taipei, 7-10 October, in collaboration with National Taiwan University's Graduate Institute of Planning and Building, the institutes of Sociology and Taiwan History at Academia Sinica, and with representatives of Taipei Municipal Government and those of the local community of the Bang Kah historical district.

The second event was a local-international workshop entitled 'Ikat Weaving (*Tenun Ikat*) as Heritage for Sustainable Development in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia'. Discussions were held within the walls of St Emanuel Church amidst the village community of Ndao Island, Rote-Ndao Regency, 26-28 October. The workshop was a collaboration between IAS, Indonesia's National Heritage Trust, Gadjah Mada University, the East Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government, and the Rote Ndao Regency.

In both gatherings scholars and experts interacted directly with civil society and government counterparts to address locally relevant heritage issues with global – comparative – implications. The two events emphasized people and local communities and ways to enable them to affect discourses and policies traditionally framed by remote 'experts' and other official power-knowledge mechanisms validated by states and their international incarnations, such as UNESCO or the World Bank. Much of the two events' success owes to their interactive and participatory format. Members of local authorities, scholars, homegrown business owners, NGOs and other community group participants discussed openly, and on equal terms, the development of a concrete model of action in each given context: suggesting initiatives for a socially inclusive revitalization plan of the historical area of Bang Kha in Taipei; establishing a policy framework integrating research, conservation, production and marketing activities to help sustain the tradition of *Tenun Ikat* in Eastern Indonesia. The active involvement of cultural anthropologists, historians, economists, sociologists, artists and other 'creative thinkers', local and international, alongside community representatives, craftsmen, traders, government representatives and other social actors, helped to elicit these integrated, contextualized responses.

This is the kind of social role that IAS, together with its partners at National Taiwan University and University Gadjah Mada, would like humanities and social sciences scholars to reclaim. It is in the same spirit that the three institutions, together with Leiden University, decided to establish the first Asia-Europe double-degree educational programme on Critical Heritage Studies. The choice of Indonesia and Taiwan is not fortuitous. In the last two decades, both countries have seen the emergence of vibrant civil societies, with universities and their members playing an essential role within their communities.

This kind of open roundtable is not a substitute to more 'traditional' scholarly exchanges still performed by IAS. However, it is now a critical element in our programme, contributing to reinforce the institute's position as a bridge between traditional academia and society, and a committed facilitator of mutually beneficiary intercultural dialogue between Asia and Europe.

Philippe Peycam, Director of IAS

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The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a post-doctoral research centre based in the Netherlands. IIAS encourages the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia and promotes national and international cooperation.

The Newsletter is a free quarterly publication by IAS. 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.

[www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl)

## IIAS Main Office

International Institute  
for Asian Studies  
PO Box 9500  
2300 RA Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Visitors

Rapenburg 59  
Leiden  
T +31 (0) 71-527 2227  
F +31 (0) 71-527 4162  
[iias@iias.nl](mailto:iias@iias.nl)

## Colophon

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# Ethno-religious heritage in Singapore and the quest



Narrative is accepted as central to the representation of experience in a variety of disciplines, ranging from sociology and philosophy to history. A fascinating narrative pattern in this connection is ‘the quest’. Its focus on an individual with a strong sense of purpose, its structure of layered progression, and its promise of revelatory closure give the quest an especially solid architecture and have it exemplify familiar ideals. The quest in western mythology and literature has been much studied. Theoretical perspectives rooted in Jungian psychoanalysis have dominated since the 1950s, with plenty of academic remakes and retakes in the same vein. Oddly and disappointingly, however, this emphasis is not counterbalanced with *cultural* study. Quests pop up everywhere around and in people – in videogames and pilgrimage, self-perception and national histories – but this ubiquity and the quest’s presumed psychological universality have not triggered empirical research into the social aspects of its presence, its variability, and the political uses to which it is put.

Bernard Arps

Fig. 1 (top): Puppets during a rehearsal.  
Fig. 2 (right): Agnes Christina with one of her puppets.



IN A BOOK PROJECT provisionally titled *The crossings of a quest* I have tried to develop such a new understanding of the quest – a cultural one. I explore its significance in its actual material variety, for human beings, through case studies of one quest as it crosses religious cultures. This is the story of Bima’s perilous search for the purifying water at the instruction of his *guru* Drona, a classic of Javanese and Balinese literature and shadowplay that is told in other formats too: comic books, television drama, animations, paintings, statues, and more. Bima’s adventures culminate in his encounter with the Deity in the ocean, from whom he receives profound teachings.

Owing to their structural properties, quest narratives tend to possess a preterhuman and mystical aura. Bima’s quest is no exception. Throughout its six-centuries-long history it has been told in distinctly religious frameworks, such as Mahayana Buddhism, Shaivism, Sufi Islam, Javanism (*kejawen*), even Calvinist Christianity. But this is changing in the postcolonial and postmodern conjuncture. *Dewa Ruci* – as the story is often called after a name of Deity – partakes in the fast, frequent, pervasive, and widespread flows of contemporary global culture. How does this affect its religiosity? What happens when it is transplanted to Hanoi’s Young Pioneers Palace, The Arches underneath Glasgow’s Central Station (“host to some of Britain’s biggest club nights and an eclectic range of gigs”), or Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago? One would think that in the kind of context represented by these spaces – where it does not obviously resonate with established religious mythology – the story must make do with its intrinsic religious qualities or else be areligious, perhaps no more than a work of exotic art.

Or must it? Other sites for tellings of *Dewa Ruci* in recent years have been Peace Pole Park in Byron Bay, the new age capital of Australia, the thirteenth-century Romano-Gothic church in the hamlet of Westerwijtwerd in Groningen, the Netherlands, and the street that leads to Sultan Mosque in the so-called Arab Quarter of Singapore. But while these are sacred places, they too are unconventional venues for a Javanese story of quest. All these performances of *Dewa Ruci* were uncommon also in terms of format. In two cases this involved merging the narrative with a kindred story from a mythology that the audience could be expected to be more familiar with: Dante’s *Inferno* in Chicago and other American cities in 1994 and the Celtic myth of Cúchulainn in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2002. While in the other four venues the narrative was relatively unchanged, the visual, dramaturgic, and musical format were innovative nonetheless.

Innovative, but also remarkably alike. Producers with widely different backgrounds, in different countries and circumstances, have in the same period, mostly without awareness of each other’s work, made renditions of *Dewa Ruci* that differ from previous ones in like ways and resemble each other in similar ways. These productions were intentionally syncretic, in format only, in narrative as well, or in the way they blended the alien story and format into a local religious setting. They were also individualistic and rooted in the main producer’s biography. The performance in Byron Bay presented the story as “a re-telling of Bima’s quest to find inner wisdom” – fully resonant with the place’s spiritual vibe. For the performance in the village church, stained glass windows showing Bima facing the Deity were specially designed – an age-old Christian visual idiom Javanized, but by a contemporary Dutch cartoonist. And, as a final example, the 1994 American production that merged *Dewa Ruci*, a related Balinese *wayang* play, and Dante’s descent into hell, was titled *Visible Religion*.<sup>1</sup> It is in their self-consciously distinctive syncretism, their *idiosyncrasy* as I shall call it (using the term in a special sense), that the religiosity of these productions was concentrated. They juxtaposed, merged, and transcended religious traditions to play on them, with some humour, and they tended to be critical of the local religious heritage.

#### ‘Wayang Dewa Rutji’ in Arab Street District, Singapore

Most of the performances were held in Christian or post-Christian environments and outside Asia, but not all. Because it took place in front of a mosque in a markedly Muslim district (indeed one marketed as such), a production in Singapore in January 2012 brings out, especially clearly, the dynamics of cross-religious quest-narration in a discursive ambience that circulates globally and involves de-institutionalized spirituality, mobility, and heritagization.<sup>2</sup>

The modern shadowplay *Wayang Dewa Rutji* was presented twice in the evenings of 20 and 21 January 2012 in the open air in Kampong Glam Conservation District, against the backdrop of Sultan Mosque (Fig. 3). It was shadow puppetry with dialogues in Malay, and as such it bore the stamp of tradition, but the narrations between scenes were in English and the puppeteer was a professional modern actor without training or experience in shadowplay. Like her, the sole musician was Malay; he played the Peruvian box-drum called *cajón* and electronic music made with the help of an Akai MPC.

Like in most of the *Dewa Ruci* performances I have mentioned, the core creative role was played by a single individual. This was Agnes Christina (born 1987), an Indonesian national who began acting while attending junior college in Singapore and extended her artistic career to scriptwriting and directing at university, also in Singapore, where she studied engineering. She composed the initial Indonesian-language script for *Dewa Rutji* which the puppeteer then rewrote in more idiomatic Malay and improvised upon in performance. Agnes also directed, and she had designed the puppets (Fig. 2).

The performances were sponsored by the Malay Heritage Centre, an institution that is, as formulated in its publicity material, “under the management of the National Heritage Board in partnership with the Malay Heritage Foundation.” The former, “the custodian of Singapore’s heritage,” is a government institution with the mission to “foster nationhood, promote identity building, and champion the development of a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore.” The latter cooperates with “various segments of the Malay and Singapore community, government agencies, philanthropists and entrepreneurs” to “promote the study and research, and the public’s understanding and knowledge of, the historical and socio-cultural development of the Malay community in Singapore [...]” The performances belonged to a series of monthly Neighbourhood Sketches or *Sejenak di Kampong Gelam* [Moments in Kampong Gelam] that were organized in the run-up to the reopening of the Malay Heritage Centre, scheduled for later in 2012.<sup>3</sup> Bussorah Mall, the now pedestrian street where the performances took place, is represented as the Malay heartland of Singapore.

The idiosyncratic of this work of story-telling – idiosyncratic from the perspective of *wayang* and its genre conventions – lay in four realms. Most conspicuous were the puppets. Agnes was inspired by the style of Javanese *wayang kulit*, but reduced them to what she considered the bare essentials. She did away with legs and feet, as these cannot move anyway, and modelled the puppets after the kris (*keris*), the ceremonial dagger that is iconic of Malay culture (and Javanese and other Indonesian cultures too) (Fig. 1). The musical accompaniment was equally unconventional. Agnes had engaged this particular musician because she wanted the puppeteer’s speech to be punctuated by the *cajón*, his trade-mark instrument. In the first rehearsal it turned out he was also competent with an electronic instrument that could produce atmospheric music. There were no gamelan-like sounds whatsoever in *Wayang Dewa Rutji*. Thirdly, the performances were conceived in the terms of modern, that is western-style, drama. Explaining the construction of her play, Agnes referred to the well-known tripartite plot structure with its ‘problem’, ‘climax’, and ‘resolution’, and also to ‘pace’ and ‘blocking’, and of course to ‘character’ (in the double sense of personage and individual nature) and ‘character development’. These concepts are either lacking in traditional *wayang* theories or conceived from quite other vantage points.

#### The religiosity of ‘Wayang Dewa Rutji’

Agnes Christina also took an idiosyncratic approach to the story. Raised a Christian in a Chinese-Indonesian family, she became interested in Javanese mystical thought in Singapore after 2010, when she helped to organize an Indonesian arts festival there. On the agenda was a traditional-style *wayang* performance by a Javanese puppeteer; the play turned out to be *Dewa Ruci*. The puppeteer framed it as a “journey of self-discovery” in which Bima “eventually discovered spiritual fulfillment and found his own, true self.” This event triggered Agnes’s interest in Javanism. The story-line of *Wayang Dewa Rutji* was furthermore inspired by a book published in Indonesia in 2010, which contains an Indonesian translation of an eighteenth-century poetic version in Javanese and an analysis of this work according to the tenets of Islamic mysticism, which is rather different from Javanist interpretations.

Agnes added an episode and somewhat changed the order of scenes, but like the classical poem and most *wayang* renditions, her version ends with Bima meeting the Deity, entering His body through His ear, and being taught a mystical doctrine there. Still her script did not make reference, explicit or veiled, to specific religious traditions. She explained to me that she did not consider the narrative as bound to one or more particular religions (*agama*), but rather as a story of enlightenment. (She used the English term.) She regarded Bima’s quest as an individual exploration of religiosity. This kind of understanding was also alluded to by a staff member of the Malay Heritage Centre who sat in on a rehearsal. Criticizing the characterization of Bima, he warned that a certain and meant-to-be comical way of speaking “makes his journey very trivial” and urged the performers to “try to find out what Bima’s journey is for you.”



Fig. 3 (above): The modern shadowplay *Wayang Dewa Rutji* presented in the open air in Kampong Glam Conservation District, against the backdrop of Sultan Mosque.

Motifs like the water of life (*air kehidupan*), belief (*percaya*), passions (*nafsu*), and light (*cahaya*), which were thematized in Agnes’s rendition, appear in the mythologies and doctrines of several major world religions. There was justification for the performance publicity that described the narrative as “featur[ing] elements found within the three faiths of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.” This characterization came from the Malay Heritage Centre, not from Agnes, and as I learned it was a considered statement. It told the mosque and its people that although this was *wayang* and as such seemingly heathen, in historical fact it was Islamic. At the same time, like certain other Neighbourhood Sketches had done, it made the point that the site is not exclusively dedicated to Islam.

#### Bima’s quest as Malay heritage

This was not an unusual way to describe the religious affiliations of *Dewa Ruci* in the international performance circuit, although in the context of Malay heritage it was. Malayness is Islamic, and indeed the setting did provide more circumscribed interpretive guidance to the spectators. A mosque was undeniably there, and not just any mosque, but the most prominent one of Singapore, located right in the heart of the Malay district. The performances were organized by the Malay Heritage Centre, as was clear from the publicity, including on-site posters. The discursive ambience, therefore, promoted an understanding of *Wayang Dewa Rutji* in the terms of local Islamic heritage.

Although fundamental properties of the performances were in fact innovative, they were cast in the light of traditionality. A news item on the Malay television channel of Singapore, Suria, described the production as “given a modern touch” although “it still maintains its traditional features” (“*diberi sentuhan modern*”, “*masih mengekalkan ciri-ciri tradisionalnya*”). A further dimension of this traditionality can be illustrated with an idea that was considered as the Neighbourhood Sketches were being prepared. The proposed performance site was the neglected plot of land where the *Pondok Jawa* [Javanese lodging-house] used to stand. Architectural historian Imran bin Tajudeen describes it as “the community and cultural hall of Javanese immigrants situated close to the Istana” (i.e., the palace) and as a “cultural and community hall, where *wayang wong* (classical opera), music, and shadow theater were staged.”<sup>5</sup> In the late 1980s the Urban Redevelopment Authority had entertained the idea of having a “community house at the former Pondok Jawa.”<sup>6</sup> But it was not to be. To the chagrin of conservationists and Malay organizations alike, the building was demolished in

‘The quest’ not only provided the plot-type of the play and should inspire the performers, but was also expected to appeal to the audience [...] because the very reason they reside in Singapore is a quest.

2004.<sup>7</sup> It would have been ideologically highly meaningful if the Neighbourhood Sketches had been located there. In connection with *Wayang Dewa Rutji* this would have singled out Singapore’s Malays of Javanese descent, undermining the myth of ethnic homogeneity that continues to do the rounds in conservative Malay circles. It would also have drawn attention to the state’s sometimes drastic, irrevocable, and unexplained interventions in heritage initiatives. Reputedly, however, the site would present technical difficulties. Bussorah Mall was chosen instead.

‘The quest’ not only provided the plot-type of the play and should inspire the performers, but was also expected to appeal to the audience. This is not as self-evident as it seems. Besides, of course, by resonating with the spectators’ personal religiosities, it was hoped to appeal to a central category among the intended audience because the very reason they reside in Singapore is a quest. When Agnes Christina proposed the performances to the Malay Heritage Centre in 2011, she wrote:

*Dewa Rutji* Story was chosen because this story is about spiritual journey. In the past, a lot of Javanese came to Singapore in transit before they headed for their Hajj Pilgrimage. This story of a spiritual journey illustrates the journey of the Javanese from Java to Singapore and then to Mecca.

Some came back to Singapore. Bima’s quest had to interest their descendants, as the story allegorizes their very own history. This line of reasoning made ‘heritage’ an important ideology attached to the narrative in *Wayang Dewa Rutji*.

#### Heritage as quest

The analogy must be taken even further. To the extent that heritage is a process, it too is like a quest. The search for and performance of Malay-Singaporean heritage is temporalized; it happens not once and for all. It unfolds in space and involves movement, with Singapore as the hub and end-point. It is animated by confrontations with ill-willed obstacles that are readily personified, such as the Urban Redevelopment Authority or more generally ‘the *gahmen*’ as it is called in Singlish. The heritagization has as yet unachieved and unknown, but clearly rewarding, goals: recognition, appreciation, prosperity, authority.

The quest, this mode of narrative representation of actions and events, was operative on multiple levels in and around *Wayang Dewa Rutji*. The correspondence across dimensions gave a remarkable coherence and purposiveness to the entire enterprise – a coherence and purposiveness that were not only formal, but also ideological, and quite centrally religious.

**Bernard Arps is Professor of Indonesian and Javanese Language and Culture at Leiden University. He researched the cultural significance of ‘the quest’ as visiting professor at the University of Michigan (2006–2007) and as fellow of the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (2011–2012) (b.arps@hum.leidenuniv.nl)**

#### Notes

- 1 I cannot elaborate on these performances any further here. They are treated in my forthcoming study of the inflections of the *Dewa Ruci* story crossing religions.
- 2 I was able to attend one of the performances and several rehearsals thanks to the kindness of playwright-director Agnes Christina. I am grateful also to staff members of the Malay Heritage Centre (who must remain unnamed) for their willingness to exchange thoughts with me about the performances and their political context.
- 3 The Malay Heritage Centre, located since 2004 in a palace built by the Sultan of Johor in the early 19th century, was closed for refurbishment in 2011 and reopened on 1 September 2012 by Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loon. As stated in the media release, “Based on positive public and participant feedback, MHC will continue to organise programmes such as the popular *Neighbourhood Sketches* which showcase traditional Malay art forms along the streets of Kampong Gelam.”
- 4 No English translation of this work has been published. A Dutch version is Bernard Arps (intro. and transl.), “*Déwa Rutji: avontuur en wijsheid in een Javaans verhaal*”, in Harry Poeze (ed.), *Oosterse omzwervingen: klassieke teksten over Indonesië uit Oost en West* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2000). The Indonesian study that inspired Agnes is Imam Musbikin, *Serat Dewa Ruci (misteri air kehidupan)* (Jogjakarta: Diva Press, 2010).
- 5 Imran bin Tajudeen. 2007. “State constructs of ethnicity in the reinvention of Malay-Indonesian heritage in Singapore”, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 18.2:7–27, pp.10 and 18, respectively.
- 6 Yeoh, Brenda S. A. & Shirlena Huang. 1996. “The conservation–redevelopment dilemma in Singapore: the case of the Kampong Glam historic district”, *Cities* 13:411–422, p.418.
- 7 As noted by Imran bin Tajudeen (2007:11,18).

# Indies prison notebooks

During World War II, one's chances of survival depended very much on one's race. This was most certainly the case in the Siantar (North Sumatra) prison in the former Dutch East Indies, then under Japanese occupation. From the painstakingly detailed accounts by Kho An Kim in his *Pendjara Fasis* [Fascist Prison],<sup>1</sup> we learn that only 252 of the 536 detainees in the Siantar prison survived the Pacific War. As the prisoners were organized according to their race, the mortality rate in Siantar is quite telling: 66% of the European prisoners perished during internment, 62% of the 'Indonesians' (mostly Ambonese, Manadonese, Timorese, and Javanese soldiers of the former colonial army), and only 1% of the Chinese detainees (7 out of 95). Death did not come to all – it came to some before it got to others.

Elizabeth Chandra

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS, by Chinese political prisoners during the first half of the 1940s, are quick to demonstrate that the logic of 'plural society' also operated in the Japanese prisons and especially internment camps. Here, detainees were housed and segregated along racial lines, had their respective appointed spokespersons (through whom rules, announcements and duties were socialized), took turns using prison facilities and, as a result, were responsive only to the wellbeing of their own group. The divisions explain the remarkable difference in mortality rates along racial lines. In their defence, Kho mentions the occasions when Chinese prisoners, out of pity, assisted other inmates with provisions. In general, however, group solidarity ruled.

## Arrested memory

Among the accounts by the Chinese in the Japanese internment camps, none is more telling than the above-mentioned memoir by Kho, and that by Nio Joe Lan, entitled *Dalem Tawanan Djepang* [In Japanese Detention]<sup>2</sup> – both prominent Chinese writers in respectively Medan and Batavia. Kho was detained for allegedly aiding a Kuomintang undercover agent; Nio for his affiliation with *Keng Po*, a newspaper that was critical of the Japanese expansionist policy. Kho was imprisoned for fifteen months in Siantar; Nio for over three years in three different prisons in western Java. Both Kho and Nio credit the high survival rate of Chinese prisoners to local and national community organizations, such as *Partai Peranakan-Tionghoa* (Indies-Chinese Party), the Chinese Anti-Fascist Association, and *Hua Chiao Chung Hui* (HCCH, Chinese Central Organization). These organizations lobbied prison superintendents to allow aid, such as food, medicine, clothes, and cash, to reach Chinese detainees. Starvation and malnutrition was the primary cause of death in Siantar, while in the Cimahi camp, a f10 monthly stipend from HCCH helped Chinese prisoners supplement their inadequate diet by purchasing food items from the prison management. Their stipend also allowed Chinese prisoners to purchase bread from fellow Dutch inmates on the rare days this luxury was rationed.

Both Kho and Nio made interesting remarks about the Dutch/European groups with whom they were interned. They sympathized with this group because, unlike the Chinese, Javanese, Ambonese and other prisoners, the Dutch were often sent to camps with their whole families, including women and children. This meant there were no, or fewer, family members or community organizations supplying them with basic necessities from outside, or lobbying prison administrators on their behalf. In addition to selling their share of bread, Nio relates how Dutch prisoners collected (for consumption) scraps of cassava skins from the Chinese kitchen, and happily accepted the scraps of clothing from Chinese inmates when the latter received donations from outside. When the Japanese occupation ended, other prisoners could return home where their families waited; but the vacant homes of many of the Dutch prisoners had, in the meantime, been seized or vandalized.

This differential treatment during Japanese internment did not seem to end with the Dutch prisoners' repatriation. Whilst in Holland researching the wartime literature, I couldn't help but notice the absence of this particular memory of World War II among the many war monuments in the country. While one often comes upon monuments honouring those *Gevallen in de Strijd voor het Vaderland* between 1940 and 1945 ('in memory to the fallen'), the same does not hold for those who perished abroad in the colony. The few monuments

devoted to the Indies experience are much more recent, and generally do not figure in the national memory. Those who died in the Japanese prison camps in Indonesia, it seems, lack the moral justification to be similarly commemorated. The Indies Dutch victims were casualties of another front line, perhaps, and not at home defending the fatherland – as if 'home' could safely be extricated from the colonies overseas. The subtext of an Indies memorial is inevitably problematic and precarious.

But it has been interesting to see that even though the Indies experience rarely figures in the Dutch memory of World War II, accounts of it have been widely available in the form of personal and family memoirs. The same cannot be said about the Chinese in Indonesia, for whom the experience has remained an arrested history. After the transfer of sovereignty, Indonesia went through a process of national consolidation in many facets of life that overrode narratives of groups (local or ethnic). Not unlike the handful of Indonesian colonial collaborators, many of the Chinese political prisoners were those suspected of pro-China or anti-Japan activities; e.g., activists of the Tjin Tjay Hwee movement who raised funds for China during the Sino-Japanese conflicts in the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> For these groups, their stories did not fit neatly into the national historical narrative. That is, until recently. Now that it is becoming increasingly more acceptable in Indonesia to speak with a 'Chinese' voice, Nio's account has been republished (in 2008). Kho's prison memoir, however, remains largely unknown and hard to access; it is currently preserved by the Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) library and in the Cornell University Rare and Manuscripts Collections. (KITLV is in the process of making it, along with other Sino-Malay literary publications, available for the public online.)

## Some prisons were more equal than others

An important observation to be made of the prison accounts written in the 1940s is that the experience was not homogeneous. This is mostly due to the volatility of politics in a period so aptly captured in the title of Tan Moh Goan's journalistic novel, *Doenia Terbalik* [Topsy Turvy World].<sup>4</sup> One only needs to compare two memoirs, Oey Tiang Tjoei's *Pengalaman Kita Dalem Pengasingan* [My Experience in Internment]<sup>5</sup> and Pouw Kioe An's *198 Hari Dalem Koengkoengan Kenpeitai* [198 Days under Kenpeitai Detention],<sup>6</sup> to grasp the fluidity of power, position and alliances in the first half of the 1940s. Chronicling his experience of internment (by the Dutch government) in Nusakambangan, Oey relates the delight with which he witnessed, from prison cell, the Japanese shelling of Cilacap, which he interpreted as an indication of his imminent freedom. Ironically, his account is as heartfelt as Pouw's admission of growing optimism for his own discharge when the Allied bombardments in the vicinity of his prison became increasingly more frequent. Pouw's memoir also notes the arbitrary ways in which the Japanese military police (*Kenpeitai*) decided which individuals were to be detained.

Furthermore, while most prison accounts are gloomy and bitter in temperament, no two prisons were alike, in terms of conditions. Kho's account, for instance, is entirely bleak; physical torture and starvation feature centrally. Nio's memoir, on the other hand, has room for humour and describes occasions when individual humanity seemed to prevail in subhuman conditions. Kho describes in detail one particularly painful interrogation technique, used by *Kenpeitai*, to extract information: "a technique that involved pouring water over the prisoner's cloth-covered face to inflict the sensation of



Above left: 'Kho': from Kho An Kim's *Pendjara Fasis*. Courtesy of 'Cornell University Rare and Manuscript Collections'. Above right: 'Pouw': from Pouw Kioe An's *198 Hari dalem Koengkoengan Kenpeitai*. Photo taken by author.

drowning." (He would no doubt be appalled by the recent decision by the United States President Bush administration that this method of interrogation we now know as 'waterboarding' does not constitute torture.)

In Nio's prison, hunger was not the biggest problem, but rather access to alternative and nutritious food (which required cash). Nio even has a chapter devoted to the prison music program and other forms of entertainment that the internees put together to distract themselves. This might also have been because many of his fellow inmates could have been included in the "Who's Who" of the Chinese communities of western Java: the top ranks of Sin Po, Keng Po and other news organizations, wealthy industrialists, civil bureaucrats and other socially prominent individuals, like major Khouw Kim An, who passed away during internment on New Year's Eve (1944). The music program was especially remarkable, according to Nio, because it was organized by professional (European) musicians who happened to be touring the Indies when Japan invaded.

There is an oft-repeated story about internees in Semarang, Central Java, who were supposedly housed in an orphanage, operated by a Dutch matron and assisted by Dutch girls. This particular detention facility, Nio relays, was run like a hostel; prisoners had individual rooms, slept on folding beds, and wore formal attire outside their rooms. This exact same description was repeated in an account by Lie Hoo Soen, a manager of the Semarang-based business empire Oei Tjong Ham Concern, who was reportedly incarcerated in this facility.<sup>7</sup> The likeness of the two accounts, down to the details of recreational fishing trips in the accompaniment of Dutch girls, makes them suspect. One wonders if this is a case of an internalized urban legend, claimed as a personal memory.

The Chinese wartime accounts are especially significant because the 1940s was a turning point in Indonesian history that affected Chinese and non-Chinese populations in different ways. Yet the framing of studies on this period is rarely from a Chinese perspective. Not unlike the Indies Dutch wartime memory, the national narrative has taken precedence, overriding all other narratives and human stories. Much more thus remains to be uncovered.

Elizabeth Chandra is a lecturer at Keio University International Center, Tokyo, and presently a joint postdoctoral fellow of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) (ec54@cornell.edu)

## Notes

- 1 Kho An Kim. 1947. *Pendjara Fasis, atau Dari Neraka ke Neraka*. Medan: Toko Boekoe Djaman.
- 2 Nio Joe Lan. 1946. *Dalem Tawanan Djepang (Boekit-Doeri, Serang, Tjimahi): Penoeoeran Pengidoepan Interneeran pada Djeman Pendoedoekan Djepang*. Djakarta-Kota: Lotus Co.
- 3 Dixi (pseudonym). 1946. "Bangsa Tionghoa di Indonesia pada zaman Djepang." *Malang Post* no.1, pp.8-9.
- 4 Tan Moh Goan. 1949. *Doenia Terbalik*. Djakarta: Tjilik Roman's.
- 5 Oey Tiang Tjoei. 1942. *Pengalaman Kita dalem Pengasingan Garoet-Soekaboemi dan Noesakambangan (Tjilatjap)*. Djakarta: Hong-Po.
- 6 Pouw Kioe An. 1947. *198 Hari dalem Koengkoengan Kenpeitai*. Malang: Perfectas.
- 7 Go Sien Ay. April 2007. "Lie Hoo Soen digantung Jepang karena membela Oei Tjong Hauw, putera Oei Tiong Ham," *Sinergi Indonesia* no.49, pp.53-6.

*The Indies Dutch victims were casualties of another front line, perhaps, and not at home defending the fatherland – as if 'home' could safely be extricated from the colonies overseas.*

# Law reform and human rights in Indonesia-Myanmar

National Human Rights Commissions have the potential to make a significant contribution to the process of acknowledging and addressing past abuses of human rights. The experience of Indonesia has important lessons for countries such as Myanmar/Burma.

Melissa Crouch

## Indonesia's Human Rights Commission: acknowledging the 1965 killings

In July 2012, the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission ('Komnas HAM') made its most significant findings to date. It issued a report that was the result of a three-year investigation into the alleged attempted Communist coup of 30 September 1965 and subsequent mass killings.<sup>1</sup> It concluded that military officials were involved in the widespread detention and extra-judicial killings of members, or suspected members, of the Indonesian Communist Party in the 1960s-70s. This is the first time that these killings, with an estimated 200,000 to 3 million victims,<sup>2</sup> have been formally acknowledged as a gross violation of human rights by an institution recognised by the state.

Komnas HAM's report effectively rewrites Indonesian history, forcing the current government to confront one of the most horrific events of the country's past. The report demands the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, and urges the government to issue an official apology to all victims and their families and to provide appropriate compensation. Such a report and the claims it makes would have been unthinkable prior to 1998, when Indonesia transitioned from authoritarianism to democracy. The findings directly implicate the regime of the late former president, Suharto. In the 1960s, Suharto was head of the Command for the Restoration of Security and Order, and then in 1967 he became President. He was never prosecuted for any crime during his lifetime.

Indonesia is one example of a country that established a National Human Rights Commission while still under a military regime. Komnas HAM was established in 1993 in the final years of Suharto's New Order. At the time, there were real concerns that the establishment of this institution was an attempt to legitimise the Suharto government. Despite its initial critics, after the downfall of Suharto and the transition to democracy in 1998, the mandate and authority of Komnas HAM was strengthened. Its powers and independence were established by Law 39/1999 on Human Rights (art 75-99). The reaffirmation of the responsibility and importance of Komnas HAM was crucial to the future credibility of its investigations.

*There are interesting parallels between Indonesia, often upheld as a model country that has made the transition to democracy, and Myanmar, which claims to be in the process of reform.*

Below: Mosque in Myanmar, photo taken by author.

There are interesting parallels between Indonesia, often upheld as a model country that has made the transition to democracy, and Myanmar, which claims to be in the process of reform. Part of any state transition to democracy inevitably involves the adoption or transplant of global ideas and legal institutions. One example is the proliferation of National Human Rights Commissions, which ideally should comply with international standards (known as the Paris Principles).

Despite early questions about the motives for its establishment, Komnas HAM has made a significant contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights in Indonesia. It has played a key role in conducting investigations and reporting on incidents post-1998. For example, in 2005 it issued a major report to the government on the violence against the Ahmadiyah community, a minority group that has experienced increasing levels of violence from vigilante groups.

In addition to recent violations, Komnas HAM has also conducted investigations into past events, such as the Petrus 'mysterious killings' of 1982-1985. The recent report on the 1965 killings is perhaps the most important in terms of Komnas HAM's investigations into, and recommendations concerning, past abuses and violations that implicated the former Suharto regime.

## Myanmar in transition

If we turn to Myanmar, it is clear that the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has just begun to embark on the journey of investigating violations of human rights. The Myanmar Commission was established in September 2011, which makes it the fifth such Commission established in an ASEAN country.

The Myanmar Commission consists of 15 members and has been given the broad mandate to conduct inquiries and make recommendations on compliance with international human rights. It has already attracted many of the criticisms that Komnas HAM did in its early years. For example, questions have been raised about the independence of its members and their previous connections to the military regime.

There are also concerns that the Myanmar Commission does not comply with the Paris Principles because, for example, it has not been officially established by legislation. There are, however, efforts underway to introduce such a law. This was prompted by the refusal of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (national parliament) in March 2012 to give its consent to the government's budget proposal for the Commission.<sup>3</sup> Despite these concerns, the Myanmar Commission has already conducted investigations and issued statements on incidents that have occurred since it was established. For example, in late 2011 it issued a statement condemning the violence in Kachin state and then in August 2012 it conducted a follow-up investigation into the conflict and communities who have been displaced.<sup>4</sup> In November 2011, it sent an open letter to the president to release all political prisoners.

Its responses to recent incidents have been perceived by many as inadequate and it has been criticised for its failure to investigate the Buddhist-Muslim violence in Rakhine state. The chairperson claimed that it would not investigate because the government has established its own special committee to investigate the violence.<sup>5</sup>

Further, the Myanmar Commission has not yet made attempts to address past human rights abuses. Whether past incidents will be investigated and, if so, how, remains critical to the quality and depth of Myanmar's democratic transition. There are a wide range of past incidents that could be investigated, such as the brutal violence against students in the 8-8-1988 democratic uprising, and the 2007 crackdown against the monks who conducted protests in support of democracy, in what was dubbed the 'Saffron Revolution'.

## Long-term potential

Efforts must persist to ensure that violations of human rights do not continue. The Myanmar Commission, however, must also be considered for its long-term potential. If efforts were made to bring it in line with the Paris Principles, it has the potential to become an independent and credible institution that could be an important mechanism for receiving complaints and investigating violations.

This potential is evident when we look to the Indonesian experience. The 14 years since Indonesia made its transition to democracy has been nothing short of remarkable. It has included a complete makeover of the Constitution and the holding of fair elections. It has seen the affirmation of an independent judiciary and a free press. The strengthening of the role and credibility of Komnas HAM has been a crucial part of this process. It has not only demonstrated its willingness to investigate and address highly sensitive political issues, such as the position of Ahmadiyah, but also to deal with past abuses of human rights connected to the former Suharto regime, such as the 1965 killings.

Of course, we now await the response of the Indonesian Attorney General's Office to the recommendations of Komnas HAM on the 1965 killings. Regardless of the outcome, it does not diminish the importance of the fact that a gross violation of human rights, denied for over 47 years, has now been recognised publicly.

Pressure on Myanmar to address current human rights abuses must continue. If the experience of the Indonesian Komnas HAM is any guidance, there is also hope that past violations of rights can be investigated in the long term. Ten or fifteen years from now, we might see significant recommendations from the Myanmar Commission on past violations, as we have just seen from Komnas HAM in the context of Indonesia.

Melissa Crouch was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the International Institute of Asian Studies from July to August 2012. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Law Faculty, the National University of Singapore (melissacrouch@nus.edu.sg)

## Notes

- 1 M. S. Aritonang, 'Komnas HAM declares 1965 purge a gross human rights violation', *The Jakarta Post*, 23 July 2012.
- 2 'The killings now can be told of', *The Jakarta Post*, 25 July 2012.
- 3 Soe Than Lynn, 'Hluttaw refuses human rights body budget', *The Myanmar Times*, 26 March-1 April 2012, www.mmtimes.com.
- 4 H. Hindstrom, 'Human rights commission recognises Kachin abuses', *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 7 August 2012, www.dvb.no/news.
- 5 A. Gayathri, 'Myanmar Commission to probe clashes between Buddhists and Rohingyas', *International Business Times*, 19 August 2012, www.ibtimes.com.



# Of pop, kitsch, and cultural heritage



Culture is the great shaper of human will and desire; the social binder of a shared yearning for value and taste: the love of common language, cuisine, and way of life. It is the connector of future-looking volition with past-derived identity; a juncture where expectation can be challenged by deep-felt questioning. Yet, will and desire are restricted by the extent to which imagination can fancy desirable objects, and imagination is culturally determined.

Ulrich Timme Kragh

The sense of culture being what shapes and directs these innermost impulses stands out in the word's underlying trope. The Romance word *culture*, from Latin *cultura*, is an agrarian metaphor conveying a figurative sense of tilling, cultivating, and guarding (*colere*) through education. Similar senses of restraint and refinement emerge in the words for culture employed in the languages of the two historically dominant hubs of Far Eastern civilization, China and India. The Chinese word for culture, *wénhuà* (文化), signifies 'transformation through literacy', pointing to the centrality of writing in Chinese society. The Hindi term for culture, *samskr̥ti* – whose very form suggests its rootedness in Sanskrit, India's classical language of erudition – connotes a 'creation of sophistication' as opposed to things in their unmodified, natural, and vernacular form, called *prakṛti*. Thus, the underlying universal figure of pre-modern words for culture is an imposition of discipline and artifice.

#### From humanism to modernity

It is only in the last 150 years that *culture* has taken on the broad meanings it holds today. Before then, culture signified the edifying, didactic ideals of sixteenth-century humanism with its focus on what now has become known as 'fine culture'. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the word has been stretched to encompass common customs and trends, changing its import from being what directs towards a higher ideal to being that which more generally shapes desire and will to conform to a social collective of shared tastes and interests. In other words, culture has gone from Plato to pop.

With the newfound immensity of its semantic range, culture has come to occupy center stage in modern society, turning into the very defining trait of a people. No longer reduced to an elitist quest for refinement, it is every person's possession, characterizing the modern ideal of individualized expression and originality. This breadth of meaning induced the so-called 'cultural turn' in anthropology and the humanities, where the question is no longer the historical 'How was it really?', but rather 'How was it for him, or her, or them?' In light of this, a critical understanding of 'Asian heritages,' which since 2010 has been one of the three thematic foci in IIAS' research agenda,<sup>2</sup> requires awareness of what it is that gives a privileged status to 'cultural heritage' in the contemporary multivalent notion of culture.

#### The pop-heritage dichotomy

Cultural heritage is one of several forms of fine culture belonging more clearly to the old humanist, edifying ideal, as opposed to the underlying folk culture. This calls for drawing a distinction between heritage and pop. What divides the two is primarily whether or not the cultural expression is rooted in history.

Heritage and pop both center on the present, but aim at the past and future respectively. Heritage, on the one hand, operates through a logic of shaping the imagination of present social identities by means of reference to the past seen, for example, by the way in which national identity is anchored in a country's history. Pop culture, on the other hand, is first and foremost characterized by its entertainment value derived from its ability to fulfill present desires, driven by an expectation of forthcoming satisfaction and social belonging. Therefore, pop demands constant renewal, a steady stream of novel offers in music hits, fashion trends, or sporting events, whereas heritage represents immutable tradition and permanency derived from its representation of history. This implies a diachronic linkage of the past and the future to the present within the synchronic opposition between heritage and pop.

There is though a marked difference in the status ascribed respectively to heritage and pop evident in the culture-politics of most nations, when the fine arts, heritage monuments, and museums are financially favored over pop cultural events. The privileged status of cultural heritage is not only due to its historic edifying purport but is also politically determined in terms of how heritage plays a central role in the creation and redirection of national identity. For heritage is not a given; it does not simply exist 'out there'. Rather, it is made significant in the present via its narrativity.<sup>3</sup> This view is quite unlike the opinion of Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia, who in the context of discussing the ongoing dispute with neighboring Greece concerning the right to use the name 'Macedonia' defended his country's effort to

construct numerous new monuments to Alexander the Great 'of Macedonia' by stating, "It is not our fault there is so much history in our region".<sup>4</sup> Such privileging of cultural heritage as important for the nation is rooted in the fundamental relationship between heritage and history.

#### The history-heritage complementarity

History and heritage have complementary but opposite movements. While history is a movement from the present to the past, heritage is a movement from the past to the present. The historian must rely on present sources – the library, manuscript, or artifact – as witnesses of the past, constructing a memory not of the past itself, which no longer can be perceived, but of what the extant sources have to say about the past. Heritage involves a countermovement to history, utilizing historical narratives about the past to ascribe special meaning to a present physical object or intangible cultural practice, imbuing a contemporary cultural phenomenon with historical status. In the eloquent words of Ricoeur: "Before presenting themselves as master craftsmen of stories made out of the past, historians must first stand as heirs to the past. This idea of inheritance presupposes that the past in some sense lives in the present and therefore affects it."<sup>5</sup>

The movement of heritage from the past to the present is of consequence for academic policy when a research facility such as IIAS makes 'Asian Heritages' one of its foci. The study of heritage places the past in modernity in a mode that differs from that of history. In general, there may be a tacit sense that specialists of the past, especially those working on pre-modern periods, are somewhat lost in an endless antiquarian quest for intellectual relics, out of touch with the recent political pressures for the university to become more relevant to contemporary society, the private sector, and the labor market. By subsuming history under the rubric of 'heritage', the historian is forced partly to shift his or her focus from the past to the present, having to take into consideration the contemporary dimension and relevance of the historical narrative of the past. The intended and unintended theoretical, pragmatic, and institutional outcomes of this conceptual reorientation will first become fully clear in the years to come.

No longer being an empirical object of experience, the past, however, is absent in the present. Hence, the notion that something is 'old' and therefore 'important' or 'meaningful' as a memory is not an actual experience but an imagination that first becomes suggestive when the object or cultural practice at hand becomes associated with a historical narrative. The cultural determination that lies at the very root of such historicizing is occasionally confronted when visiting regions that are still relatively unaffected by modern Eurocentric notions of history, where the Western traveler may look with incomprehensiveness when confronted with the local inhabitants' preference for a nice fresh look in their Himalayan temple,

Fig.1 (above): The Tibetan Black Hat Lama Karmapa (1924-1981) with a background of skyscrapers. Modern mural in a seventeenth-century Buddhist temple in Sikkim, India. Artist unknown.

# A meditation on cultural heritage and its intimate relationship with history

which is achieved by painting over centuries-old murals (fig. 1). Here a conceptual clash occurs between the modern sense of the worth of heritage and a traditional feeling of the importance of performing religious worship using fresh offerings.

## Heritage as a modernist term

The confrontation between culturally determined historicist and non-historicist outlooks underlines that the very idea of 'heritage' is associated with the modern view of the past, which, in turn, is dependent on its conception of the present. As 'legacy', cultural heritage denotes certain forms of culture that are considered to have been handed down from the past. For Chinese and Indians alike, 'cultural heritage' (文化遗产 *wénhuà yíchǎn*, *sāmskr̥tik virāsat*) signifies an ancestral inheritance (遗产 *yíchǎn*, *virāsat*), a patrimony which in East Asian Confucian or Indian Śāstric senses of filial piety demands respect and obedience. Yet, 'heritage' also implies a renewal, the passing from one generation to another, pointing to how society ceaselessly reconstructs a sense of continuity and belonging within the unstable dynamism of the modern mind-set. The fact that heritage is installed in modernity – in the present – puts it within the stream of the massive cultural reproduction that is a characteristic feature of contemporary society. It is only within modernity that cultural heritage becomes significant as a term, because its meaning arises through modernist historicism. Consequently, it necessarily follows that pre-modern societies could not possess any 'cultural heritage'.

To be sure, pre-modern societies had cultural memory in the form of 'traditions' handed down from ancestral generations. However, to render modern society meaningful as 'modernity' with the sense of incessant development, innovation, and novelty this word implies, pre-modern society – without doubt anachronistically – is logically forced to be seen as its opposite, namely undeveloped, stagnant, and traditional. Koselleck thus argued that the very notion of temporality differs entirely in pre-modern and modern societies, in that the pre-modern notion of time is 'continuity', whereas modern time is 'progress'. 'Cultural heritage' possesses no semantic contrast in pre-modernity, for 'heritage' becomes meaningless as a distinction when simply everything in the so-called 'stagnant' Antique and Medieval societies is 'tradition' and is handed down. Consequently, 'cultural heritage' is strictly a modern idea that could first come to be with the rise of modernity, the modern sense of history, and the invention of the museum in eighteenth-century France.

## The contextual site of heritage

The museum is a story told in stone and artifact, whether it refers to a concrete institution housed in a building or merely is insinuated in a figurative sense superimposed on a landscape, neighborhood, or community, for instance designating certain quarters of a town as 'the old city', treating a building as a historic monument, or viewing a community of traditional artisans as representing an intangible cultural heritage.

The museum puts the historical artifact on display, robbing the object of its common import and utility ('Do not touch!'), instead imbuing it with a special narrative significance that only emerges with the historical consciousness of being in a museum as a site of intentionally visiting the past. Heidegger once wrote: "The 'Museum' now is no longer the place for storing what is past but the place for exhibiting what is planned that appeals, educates and thereby commits ... Exhibition means that what is shown is already principally rendered stable."<sup>6</sup>

*Heritage is significant in its solemnity [...] Pop is significant in its expectation [...] Only kitsch is insignificant, bound as it is to a satirical narrative of the past that defies seriousness.*

Fig. 2 (below): 'Trying Out a Batik Dress' by Liú Kàng (1997). Oil on canvas.

In other words, exhibiting a thing is an artifice that requires a plan, a contrivance that commits the viewer to the show that is being put on. Exhibition renders the object 'uncanny' in a Freudian sense, creating a cognitive dissonance of unfamiliarity with the otherwise familiar.

The *artifice* of the museum and the privileged status this ascribes to the *artifact* raise the question of where the borderline lies between heritage and pop. If what demarcates cultural heritage from pop is the former's association with the imaginative power of a historical narrative, what stands between them is 'kitsch', seeing that numerous cultural sites are as kitschy as they are exhibits of heritage.

## The kitschy in-between

Being the opposite of *avant-garde*, kitsch has been defined as "a worthless imitation of art" producing what Theodor Adorno called a "false consciousness". The reference to *imitation* presupposes a legacy of what has formerly been established as art having a conceived worth. In other words, kitsch requires art to be seen as heritage. It should be added that since the full spectrum of culture thus encompasses heritage, pop, as well as kitsch, it may be worthwhile to consider whether it is truly justified for IIAS to limit its cultural research-focus exclusively to heritage at the expense of ignoring pop and kitsch.

Like heritage but unlike pop, kitsch entails a historical narrative. The historical dimension of kitsch is evident at the Wolf's Lair, a WWII military installation in Kętrzyn, Poland. This encampment has not (yet) been developed as a tourist attraction by the local government, but because of its importance in history, books, and movies as an essential command center for Hitler, many sightseers nevertheless visit the place, where local vendors offer them the kitschy opportunity to have their picture taken in Nazi uniforms.<sup>7</sup> To be seen as 'kitsch', the object requires a historical narrative, but it is an ironic narrative that invokes the past without meaning it for real. This is not to say that irony has no will to power and that the display of kitsch does not involve an effort to commit the viewer to its artifice. The emptiness of such machination still rings true in what Heidegger wrote some seventy years ago shortly before the war: "'Kitsch' is not the 'inferior' art but the very best skill that is devoted to what is empty and is not fundamental, which in order still to secure itself a significance seeks support in the public advertising of its symbolic character."<sup>8</sup>

The artificial absence of meaning, which causes kitsch to seek significance symbolically, is what sets kitsch apart from heritage and pop. Heritage is significant in its solemnity, in its association with a romantic or tragic narrative of the past that respectively reinforces or contests the implied senses of national or social identities. Pop is significant in its expectation, a comic forward-looking hope to the future. Only kitsch is insignificant, bound as it is to a satirical narrative of the past that defies seriousness. The romantic, tragic, comic, or satirical narrativity of culture, which allows an object to be read as heritage, pop, or kitsch, turns the cultural artifact into a 'text', and it is through this textuality that culture weaves the past and the future into the present, fashioning the multi-dimensionality of culture.

To begin with, the substance of culture, its 'sub-text' so to speak, is the *presence* in which the cultural object is encountered, its concrete form. If, on the one hand, the sub-text is read as heritage or kitsch, its presence becomes hyperlinked with a narrative 'hyper-text' of a *history*,

a historical imagination. If, on the other hand, the sub-text is read as heritage or pop, its presence is imbued with an epithet, an 'epi-text' as it were, in the form of the *significance*, or value, with which the object is ascribed as an authored work.<sup>9</sup>

To characterize the contrivance of the ascribed epi-textual significance, the Japanese art-historian Kazuko Okakura once declared that "People criticise a picture by their ear."<sup>10</sup> In other words, it is often first when hearing that a cultural object possesses a pedigree of having been produced by an esteemed artist that art becomes appreciated as 'art' whether it is likeable or not; likewise, with heritage and pop. This is though not so with kitsch, which as imitation lacks the worth ascribed to heritage and pop, given that a significant context of production and authorship is entirely immaterial.

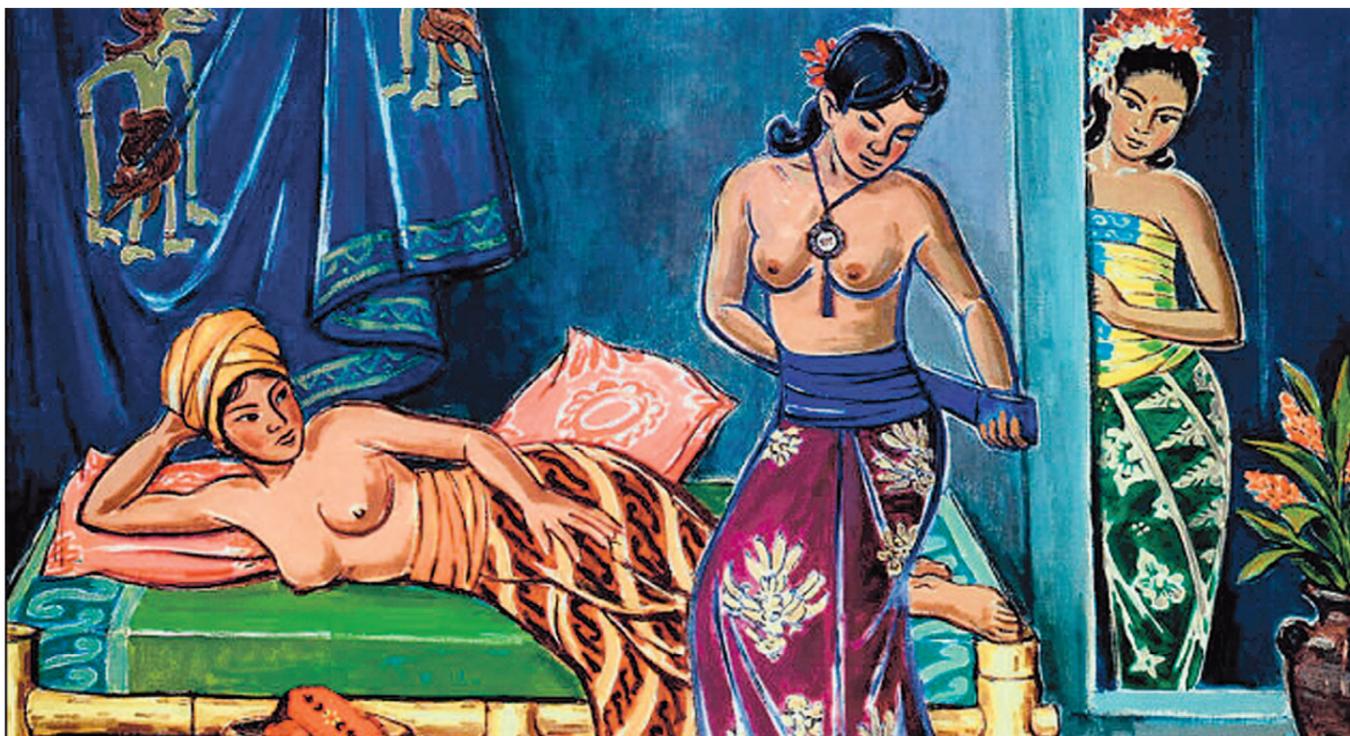
When kitsch is placed as the intermediary between heritage and pop, it becomes possible to triangulate heritage, kitsch, and pop in terms of their sub-textual presence, hyper-textual history, and epi-textual significance. In view of this, cultural heritage possesses presence, history, and significance. Pop entails presence and significance but no history. Kitsch has presence and history, yet lacks significance. The culture-political privileging of heritage is accordingly to be found in its three-dimensionality as opposed to the two-dimensionality of pop and kitsch.

## The demarcation of heritage as a critical term

Pop and kitsch demarcate the notion of heritage. Respectively highlighting its epi- and hyper-textual dimensions, they allow for a deeper level of the 'heritage' notion. In the contemporary epoch, Asian heritages invariably come into view in the specific context of postcolonialism, the discussion of which has been initiated in The Newsletter by Michiel Baas,<sup>11</sup> whose considerations included citation of a painting by the Singaporean artist Liú Kàng (刘抗, 1911-2004). However, aside from the context-specific interpretation that the work of art receives within the postcolonial narrative, a figurative statement about the multidimensionality of perspectives that Liú's art demands may also be uncovered in the painting, which cuts to the deeper, decontextualized level of 'heritage' that may symbolically invest the picture with the three dimensions outlined above.

Three figures appear in the painting (fig. 2). In the center stands a woman, who is trying on a batik dress. Occupying the cardinal position in the scene, she represents heritage as a mere sub-textual *presence*, her downcast eyes allowing the viewer to behold her uninhibited by any concern of being caught gazing. To the left, on a couch behind her, lies another woman who observes the woman standing in the center. Her gaze of looking from behind represents the *historical narrative* of heritage or kitsch, whose hyper-text may be seen symbolized in the traditional Indonesian *Wayang* shadow-puppet motive on the blue cloth hanging to her rear. To the right stands a third woman who looks straight at the viewer. The directness of her gaze inquisitively questions the beholder, producing a hermeneutical self-awareness of the epi-textual *significance*, which if ascribed would make the picture 'heritage' or, if not, would render it 'kitsch'. Whether as heritage or kitsch, the presence of an object construed as a relic provokes a memory and both modes serve a function in negotiating the imaginary linking of the present with history, inscribing the present with a past.

Ulrich Timme Kragh is currently an IIAS research fellow with a project on the philosophy of history in Asia and the West.



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# India-China-Pakistan economic axis: reality or wishful thinking?

The time has come for India, China and Pakistan to exhibit economic intelligence and maturity by aligning their common interests in the economic realm. India and Pakistan have had strained relations for over 6 decades; the last year, however, has been witness to improved ties. Cooperation between the three might seem wishful for now, but the emerging geo-political situation implores such a nexus.

Manish Vaid & Tridivesh Singh Maini

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY are two primary areas in which these nations can truly support and complement each other, not only in the context of South Asia, but also by strengthening energy relations with Central Asia. Energy-rich Central Asia would gain South Asia as a significant and profitable market. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline deal of May 2012, is one such step in the direction of a possible energy link between Central Asia and South Asia.

## Improved bilateral relations

There has been a series of diplomatic efforts from all three countries to strengthen their bilateral relations, yet little thought has been given to aligning themselves trilaterally. One of the obvious reasons for this is the longstanding border disputes of both China and Pakistan with India. Interestingly, the desire for convergence at a bilateral level, between India-Pakistan and India-China, is clearly evident from the outcomes of recent parleys.

China and Pakistan have shared close ties ever since 21 May 1951, when their diplomatic relations were first established.<sup>1</sup> It would be important to point out, however, that Pakistan has received more military and nuclear support from China, than economic support. Pakistan's search for an alternative ally in the form of China, replacing the US, was not easy, particularly after the US raids on Osama bin Laden's compound in May 2011. Moreover, though the recent Sino-Pak high level talks hinted at an expansion of its ties beyond military cooperation, through economic and cultural exchanges, China exhibited little interest in bailing out Pakistan's economy, which is in dire straits.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the cosy Sino-Pak relationship in the strategic sphere has not resulted in extraordinary Chinese largesse vis-à-vis Pakistan.

This is where India's role is relevant. Its improving bilateral relations in recent times, with both China and Pakistan, have been a consequence of New Delhi's restraint and prudence in handling thorny issues. Nothing illustrates this point better than the playing down, during the recent visit of the Chinese defence minister to India, of the Indian fear that China might be threading a 'string of pearls' (encircling India by financing infrastructure and military strength in neighbours, stretching from Pakistan to the Maldives).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, China too has not only acknowledged, but welcomed, the thaw between India and Pakistan and has also felt the need to collaborate trilaterally for more than one reason. One such initiative is the 'India-Pakistan-China Trilateral Nuclear Strategic Dialogue', supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (Washington) and initiated by The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi. China is also considering a similar trilateral dialogue on Afghanistan, in the wake of rising geopolitical rivalries intensifying over Afghanistan in the region.<sup>4</sup> And for this, China wishes to go along with both India and Pakistan to stabilize Afghanistan territory, despite its ambitions and stakes in this part of the world.

The aforementioned consistent bilateral efforts between the countries have created space for an expansion of trade and confidence-building measures. Ties between the two countries are no longer confined to a handful of initiatives; what was once outside the purview of discussions, is now an integral part of the bilateral relationship.

## India and China

Indo-China relations have evolved and improved, despite general disagreements on various issues, particularly on borders. Both these nations have learned to look and move forward whilst consistently exploring new avenues and opportunities to grow for themselves. This has been the

trajectory ever since the two nations restored ambassadorial relations in August 1976 and revived political contacts in February 1979,<sup>5</sup> after the 1962 conflict. It was only in 1984 that these countries officially resumed bilateral trade, when they signed the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Agreement. By 2011-2012 bilateral trade stood at US\$75.45 billion, making China one of India's largest trading partners.

In December 2011, Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Limited (IL&FS) became the first Indian company to acquire a stake (49 percent) in a state-owned Chinese enterprise, with a deal estimated at US\$150 million.<sup>6</sup> On 18 June 2012, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India (ONGC) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a Memorandum of Association to jointly explore oil and gas worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Both these deals were the result of confidence building measures, initiated by both nations. There is now scope for convergence in a wide range of areas, and these positive developments can certainly help in easing the tension on the borders, further enhancing cross-border trade.

## India and Pakistan

In general, Indo-Pak relations have always been characterized by acrimony, beginning with the bloody partition of British India in 1947, and continuing with the Kashmir dispute, Kargil War, military conflicts and terrorism. The most recent black page in Indo-Pak relations was the 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai (in 2008). Considering their history, and ongoing difficulties, it is surprising to see how their bilateral relations are growing. Just as with the Indo-China relations, the underlying issue is the border dispute between these nations. Similarly, India and Pakistan are also undergoing honest efforts to continue to move forward in strengthening their bilateral relations, with the hope that increasing trade and commerce, and mutual economic support, will lead to a solution to their longstanding political issues as well.

Bilateral trade, which dropped to US\$1.7 billion in 2009, from US\$2.1 billion in 2008,<sup>8</sup> recovered in 2010-11, and stood at US\$2.6 billion. In April 2011 Commerce Secretary Talks in Islamabad called for its revival, followed by many more bilateral trade visits in each of these countries, with an objective to increase trade to about US\$6 billion. Various measures have also been taken up to end deadlocks on many issues like stringent visa rules, non-tariff barriers and so on. This, coupled with the energy crisis in Pakistan, set the stage of opening up yet another foray into the petroleum sector.

The latest in these developments was to allow foreign direct investment from Pakistan, and a cut in customs duty of 264 tariff lines to five percent in three years time.<sup>9</sup> Visa liberalisation between these two countries was also on the agenda, so as to almost double the present trade volume of US\$2.5 billion within a year.<sup>10</sup> The Commerce Secretary Level Talks were held in September 2012 to discuss a wide range of issues, taking bilateral trade to the next level, including the discussion of Pakistan possibly granting India the MFN status.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

It is important for India, China and Pakistan to move a step further in consolidating their similar goals and objectives with that of other countries and help each of these nations in achieving economic liberty, strengthening their economy and energy security, in addition to pursuing their own goals of stabilizing the regional economies like Afghanistan, which would not be possible by excluding its neighbours. Each country should bring in more transparency in dealing with security issues in the region. If the three countries can integrate their economic agendas and work in tandem to promote both economic integration and political stability in the region, the India-China-Pakistan axis could well be a reality.

Manish Vaid is a Research Assistant with the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

Tridivesh Singh Maini is a New Delhi based columnist and Independent Foreign Policy Analyst.

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Daily flag lowering ceremony at Wagah, on the India-Pakistan border. In 2010, the commander in charge of the Pakistani Rangers announced that the aggressive nature of the Wagah ceremony would be toned down to reflect the desire for improved relationship between both countries. Courtesy of Joshuahsong, Creative Commons /Flickr.



# India's Republic Day: language & the nation

## The Opinion



On 26 January 2013, India will celebrate her 64th Republic Day, which commemorates not the birth of the nation (August 1947), but the coming into being of its Constitution (January 1950). The annual Republic Day parade held on Delhi's Rajpath – a veritable delight to children and adults alike – follows a similar pattern but varied routine from year to year. It has two main recurring themes, namely, India's 'unity in diversity', and its national pride in the armed forces.

Rituparna Roy

FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOMAGE to martyred soldiers at the *Amar Jawan Jyoti* (instituted by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after India's second war with Pakistan in 1972), to the awarding of bravery medals to the endless stream of naval/army regiments, and of course the display of the latest weapons – the Republic Day parade is a remarkable showcase of India's military power. These particular displays are followed by tableaux that highlight the special attractions of India's different states, as well as central government initiatives for the well-being of the country.

There is little, if anything, of the elaborate programme that reflects the workings of the Indian Constitution – except, that is, the commentary. It is such an obvious and unobtrusive part of the celebrations that it goes virtually unnoticed; but actually, the commentary, in itself, represents an issue long battled over during the compiling of the Constitution. Language.

The entire commentary of the televised event of the Republic Day celebrations is bilingual; it is given in both English and Hindi, the two official languages of India, in such a way that people who speak just one of the languages will not miss a thing. And yet, millions of Indians are left out nevertheless. Not everyone speaks one of the two 'official' languages; English is still predominantly the language of official India and its elite and (ever expanding) middle classes, whilst Hindi (despite the efforts of the central government) is, to a great extent, still confined to northern India. But this was (in the words of Granville Austin) "the half-hearted compromise" that India's Constituent Assembly reached after a prolonged and heated debate on the language issue, from 1 August to 14 September 1949.

The Constituent Assembly was a 308-member body elected by the elected members of the provincial assemblies of colonial India, which, from November 1946 to November 1949, was engaged in creating what eventually became the 'longest constitution for the largest democracy' in the world. It was an extraordinary feat as India's founding fathers were involved in the impossible task of both governing the country and drafting a Constitution.

The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 and it came into effect on 26 January 1950. The date, 26 January, was chosen for a very special reason; it harks back to India's first Independence Resolution, passed by the Congress at

Lahore in 1929. Unfortunately, the two basic principles of that resolution – the unity of India and full independence (or 'Purna Swaraj') from British rule – could not be attained in 1947. For not only was India partitioned when she finally gained her freedom (entailing a total reversal of all that the Indian National Congress had stood for), but her leaders also accepted 'Dominion Status' at the time, a status it retained till the Constitution came into effect in 1950.

Unity was, however, still very high on the Constituent Assembly's agenda while it was framing the constitution – not only because of the harrowing experience of Partition, but also because of the tough time that the fledgling state was having in integrating the erstwhile Princely States into the new Indian Union (these had not been part of British India). This is an important instance of how the Indian Constitution developed, not only following the precedents of some of the major democracies/republics of the world (UK, USA, France, Ireland), but also in response to the national contingencies of the times.

The language issue was actually part of independent India's desperate attempt at unity. India needed a common tongue; a national language that would bolster the unity of the new nation. But there were a dozen major regional languages in India, each with its own script, none of which were spoken by a majority of the population. English was the official language of India in 1946 and had also been the language of the national movement, but after independence it became an unacceptable language for many, as it had been the conqueror's. Indians cannot be really free in a foreign language, it was argued. The need of the hour was an Indian language for Indians, and a strong case was made for Hindustani by a section of the Assembly members representing north and central India, as it was spoken by about 45 percent of India's population at the time.

The more passionate of its advocates demanded that Hindi should not only be the 'national' language, but should, as soon as possible, also replace English both as the official language at the

centre, as well as the second language of the provinces. In opposition to their views were a group of moderates, who were willing to let Hindi be the 'official' language of the Union because it catered to the largest number of Indians, but insisted that it was simply the first among equals, with the other regional languages also given national status. And they wanted English to be replaced by Hindi only very slowly, if at all.

Members of these two groups also fell out with each other with regard to the definition of Hindi itself. Hindustani, as spoken in 1946 was a mix of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and words from other Indian languages, as well as English. The conservatives/extremists wanted Hindi to be purged of its foreign elements and retain only its Sanskrit roots. The moderates however were more in line with Gandhi's thoughts:

– *This Hindustani [Gandhi wrote] should be neither Sanskritized Hindi nor Persianised Urdu, but a happy combination of both. It should also freely admit words wherever necessary from the different regional languages and also assimilate words from foreign languages, provided that they can mix well and easily with our national language. Thus our national language must develop into a rich and powerful instrument capable of expressing the whole gamut of human thoughts and feelings. To confine oneself exclusively to Hindi or Urdu would be a crime against intelligence and the spirit of patriotism.*

The moderates were also sensitive to the apprehensions of the regional language speakers regarding the status of their language, and to the implications of making Hindi compulsory for the civil services. A compromise was thus reached – the Munshi-Ayyangar Formula, as it came to be called (after the chief members who gave it shape). It was decided that Hindi would be the 'official language of the Union' and would also be used for inter-provincial communication. For an initial period of fifteen years, however, English was to continue to serve as the official language. After this time, Hindi would supplant English unless Parliament legislated otherwise. The provincial governments could choose one of their regional languages, or English, for the conduct of their own affairs. The major regional languages were listed in a schedule to the Constitution – "for psychological reasons and to give these languages status" and to "protect them from being ignored or wiped out by the Hindi-wallahs." The fierce controversies over Hindi were put to rest by, once again, following a golden median. Hindi was to draw "primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages", but it would also aim to serve "as an expression of the composite culture of India" by assimilating "the forms, style, and expressions used in Hindustani" and in the other major languages of India.

It is interesting that since the coming into force of the Constitution, Hindi did not replace English as the official language of the Indian Union, but co-existed with it; and the use of English after 1965 was provided for by the Official Languages Act of 1963.

In retrospect, it is easy to see why language assumed such overwhelming importance in the Assembly debates. Like fundamental rights, it touched everyone, and it was tied up with the cultural pride of distinct linguistic groups within India, and ultimately to India's unity as a nation.

The coexistence of Hindi and English is now a fact of national life in India – and we see its practice officially validated every 26 January. Republic Day is a good example of what India's Constitution-makers aimed for.

**Rituparna Roy is an IAS alumni. She is the author of 'South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh', Amsterdam University Press, 2010.**

Above: The Border security force contingent during republic day parade, New Delhi, India. Courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

Below right: An Indian Agni-II intermediate range ballistic missile on a road-mobile launcher, displayed at the Republic Day Parade on New Delhi's Rajpath. Courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.



# Southeast Asian studies as a form of power<sup>1</sup>



In the 1980s, the massive economic growth of Southeast Asian states made ASEAN the subject of interest for foreign governments seeking to duplicate or take advantage of opportunities arising from the region's economic miracle. This was especially true in the USA, UK, and Australia. The flip side of this came in the latter half of the 1990s. When the economic miracle of Southeast Asia vanished so did interest in Southeast Asian studies, apart from studies of the crisis itself, which tended to be non-region specific.

The study of Southeast Asia in the West has since generally been on the decline. After 11 September 2001, there has been some interest in the USA, although nowhere near previous levels. On the other hand, within Southeast Asia, governments have been pumping more and more money into the field, such that within Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian studies is generally more buoyant and well-supported in the region (as well as in Japan) than it has even been.<sup>11</sup>

## Trends and patterns

Southeast Asian studies, as part of the academic mainstream, has been subject to nearly all the major paradigm shifts of area studies. This includes the 'crisis' of area studies, amidst arguments that Southeast Asia is an externally imposed construct; the focus on national studies shifting to supra-national and multi-national foci; and the various postmodernist fields, including post-colonial studies, cultural studies, global studies, and so on. The roster of disciplines that comprise Southeast Asian studies, and the structure of the disciplines themselves, have also evolved and changed according to prevailing academic thinking.

At the same time, because Southeast Asian studies for a long time lacked its own academic hinterland, it is hypersensitive to the changes which have influenced academia. Its dependency on external funding from governments and funding bodies has forced it to constantly adapt and refashion itself to appeal to prevailing trends. Arguably, this insecurity is one of the major reasons why Southeast Asian studies has undergone such exhaustive soul searching – far and beyond the crisis in area studies – over the last 10 to 15 years.

Much of this soul searching was sparked off by Ariel Heryanto's 2002 essay, entitled "Can there be Southeast Asians in Southeast Asian studies?"<sup>12</sup> Heryanto argued that because Southeast Asian studies, as a field, was invented and remains rooted in Western academia to a great degree, its rules and conventions remain Western in their conception. Its conditions for membership do not reflect the reality of Southeast Asian identity, it imposes on the region models which do not reflect the lived realities of the region, and distorts the priorities and directions of Southeast Asian scholarship. It is thus a very alien place to Southeast Asians, and excludes Southeast Asians from the study of their own homelands. Heryanto did expect that there would be a gradual expansion of home-grown Southeast Asian scholars working on Southeast Asia, and indeed that has been happening, although certainly the best Southeast Asian scholars still seek training in the West.

Much of the subsequent debate within the field focused on proving or disproving Heryanto's thesis, as well as focusing on questions surrounding the definition and conceptualisation of 'Southeast Asia' and 'Southeast Asian studies' and associated questions about the nature, composition, boundaries, construction, methodology, and perspectives of the field.

However, much of the debate has also missed a more important theme of Southeast Asian studies. I believe the main characteristic of Southeast Asian studies is that it has been defined by purposeful agendas and self-interest. From the colonial powers before World War II, to American, British, Japanese, and Australian interests after the War, and to the national governments of ASEAN from the 1970s onwards, the defining characteristic of Southeast Asian studies is that it has always served a concatenation of forces who have funded it in order to push forward their agendas, promote their values, and investigate the questions they regarded as being the most pressing. Likewise, when it did not serve their needs, they dropped the programme. These forces are best described as a loose agglomeration of governmental, industrial, military, and commercial interests.

To a certain extent, this is true of academia in general, as it is true of the world in general. However, the one major trend or characteristic of western academia that has bypassed Southeast Asian studies is the role of knowledge producers speaking truth to power, especially with regards to the promotion of values indigenous to Southeast Asia that are representative of the lived realities of the vast majority of Southeast Asians. Southeast Asia lacks the equivalent of an academic tradition that allows academics to produce

The origins of Southeast Asian studies as a field are exogenous to Southeast Asia. It remains deeply embedded within Western academia and has been influenced by all the dominant trends that have shaped Western knowledge production. Its defining trait is that it is determined to a very significant extent by the funding priorities of establishment interests (both internal and external to Southeast Asia) and has no significant independent tradition of critical knowledge production. Where then does this leave Southeast Asian studies? How can the field become relevant to the people of Southeast Asia?

Pingtjin Thum

## A brief history of Southeast Asian studies

The field of Southeast Asian studies initially evolved out of a colonial interest to perpetuate their influence on Far Eastern cultures and societies.<sup>2</sup> Institutions of Oriental studies were set up to meet practical needs, and emphasised colonial vernacular language training. The Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris was founded in 1795. Leiden University's programme was established in 1864. In the UK, the establishment of School of Oriental Studies in 1917 was closely related to Britain's imperial interests in Asia and Africa. Though the "pre-Second World War period was relatively insignificant for the academic study of Southeast Asia" in Britain, it established the practical importance of Oriental studies, and initiated a more coherent scholarly approach.<sup>3</sup>

Southeast Asian studies further solidified after World War II. National interests and a general belief in the importance of area studies led governments and funding bodies to establish centres for Southeast Asian studies. The United States' growing global role, and particularly the Indochina wars, led to substantially increased government funding for Southeast Asian studies between the late 1950s and early 1970s, and a strategic network of programmes were established.<sup>4</sup>

In Britain, the Scarborough Report of 1947, the Hayter Report of 1961, and the Parker Report of 1986 shaped the development of Southeast Asian studies. These emphasised the importance of the study of non-Western peoples and cultures, and the dangers of British ethnocentrism and an overly Eurocentric view of the world. Also stressed was the practical application of area studies programmes, though these utilitarian considerations were subordinated to strong arguments for the importance of a base of scholarship in area studies.<sup>5</sup> Following these reports, Centres for Southeast Asian studies were established at Hull in 1962, and Kent in 1978.

For geographical and political reasons, Australia too embarked on an ambitious plan of establishing centres of Southeast Asian studies. ANU set up the Research School

of Pacific and Asian studies and the Faculty of Asian studies in 1947 and 1950 respectively. A Centre for Southeast Asian studies was created at Monash in the mid-1960s.<sup>6</sup>

Despite all these energies and resources being poured into the field, the foundation was weak. From the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, Southeast Asian studies was "not so much a place as a site of displacement."<sup>7</sup> People chose the field not so much because of an interest in the region, as they did for the strong desire to expand freedom and justice. This was a time of decolonisation, revolution, and war in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War years had an "enormously complex and contradictory impact upon the Southeast Asian field."<sup>8</sup> The chaos of anti-war demonstrations that were often associated with staff and students of the field made university administrators wary of funding its study.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, in Europe, the decolonisation of many of their colonies meant that the need to train colonial officers for the region evaporated. By the post war decade of 1975 to 1985, Western governments no longer saw the field as serving any immediate national need, and so the field sank into the doldrums in the Western world. The Americans simply wanted to forget Vietnam. Similarly in Britain, funding dropped dramatically and centres were closed.

Yet, precisely because of the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam in 1973 and communist victories throughout Indochina in 1975, other Southeast Asian governments needed to strengthen their own national foreign policies, nurture self-reliance, and promote regional cooperation. To achieve this, solid knowledge of the region was necessary. Therefore, in 1976, the decision was reached at the first ASEAN Summit Meeting to promote Southeast Asian studies in the region itself. Programmes and Centres were swiftly created. The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies was set up in Singapore in 1971. Malaysia started an interdisciplinary Southeast Asian studies programme in 1976. As a counterpoint to this, in 1973, an Institute of Southeast Asian Studies within the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences was set up in Hanoi.<sup>10</sup>

first-rate scholarship, based on meticulous research and judicious reasoning, that also makes clear interventions into contentious public debates. For example, America, just over the past year, has produced books like Lawrence Lessig's *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress—and a Plan to Stop It*, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein's *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism*, and Corey Robin's *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*. The authors of these books have all received praise (and criticism) from their peers in academia, while also making important and pointed contributions to debates of major public significance. These books targeted leaders, but also appealed to the general public to hold those leaders accountable. We do not have this equivalent academic tradition in Southeast Asia.

#### Southeast Asian studies and power

One possible counter-argument is that if Southeast Asian studies has been defined by values-laden, agenda driven scholarship, then perhaps the solution is disinterested scholarship. However, there is no such thing as disinterested scholarship. All work takes place in the context of powerful interests. The only difference is the degree of self-consciousness and self-awareness. Academia is also highly influenced by political power and corporate wealth. They motivate universities by providing the desirable prizes: bigger endowments, more buildings, more awards. Universities in turn offer incentives to their faculty—promotion, tenure, higher salaries, prestige—if they innovate in prescribed directions that will help win those prizes. The larger interests of power and wealth are thus internalised in the motivations of the scholar. There is no conspiracy. These are just the normal rules of power and wealth. While scholars undoubtedly act in good faith, believing themselves to be independent of interests and pursuing their own agenda, they are nevertheless subject to the academic environment they operate in.

Many scholars have unconsciously responded to this situation by producing work which does not challenge the status quo. As a result, the work produced fails to ask important questions about issues like poverty, class, race, repression, or imprisonment. This plays right into the hands of those with power, who are only too happy to see knowledge produced that will advance their universities while guaranteeing that the knowledge will not challenge them in any meaningful way.

Those who command the obvious forms of power (i.e., political control and wealth) in Southeast Asia have also long used their power to commandeer knowledge. Industry entices the most agile minds with wealth. Government lures others with the promise of patriotism, and access to influence. The best minds are offered government scholarships and are thereby bonded, thus ensuring the control over, and if necessary the suppression of, the fruits of their mental labour. In many Southeast Asian states academics are rewarded for producing knowledge that safely perpetuates the status quo.

For a long time, ASEAN governments have justified their control of knowledge production by arguing that they were solving the problem of poverty and development. Academic discipline under the control of the state, they argued, enabled the maximisation of limited resources of knowledge production toward solving this problem.

But a look around the region today makes clear that nothing has changed in relative terms. It has been 50 years or more since Southeast Asian states became independent, and power and wealth throughout Southeast Asia remain in the hands of a selected elite. Southeast Asia's rich countries are also tremendously disproportionate. The instruments that enabled growth are not equipped to redistribute it equitably. If hard work really led to success, every mother in Southeast Asia would be a millionaire. Instead, women are the most exploited and oppressed group in our region.

For Southeast Asia to prosper in the 21st century and beyond, we need a revolution in social thought and policy. However, we have no knowledge of how to make such a revolution, or what its final form should be. These revolutions are unprecedented anywhere in the world. At the same time, power and wealth are highly concentrated in government, corporations, and the military, while the rest is highly fragmented. Many of Southeast Asians do not have votes or even voices, let alone the means to turn either domestic or foreign policy in new directions.

That is why academics, scholars, and knowledge producers are so important. Knowledge is a form of power; and, in a liberalising Southeast Asia, it is growing ever more powerful. Southeast Asian governments have begun to realise the inefficiency of using violence, and in many places its everyday use has been discredited as an option. Instead, everyday

control is better exercised by manufacturing a set of rules, a fabric of values that can be justified through appeals to essentialist claims and internalised by the people. In such a scenario, the population censors and monitors itself. Sukarno's *Pancasila* and Singapore's 'Shared Values' are examples of attempts to propagate this. Governments have recognised that the rise of democracy means that force is replaced by deception, via education and the control of information, as one of the chief methods of maintaining the status quo. Thus, knowledge can either reinforce or counteract deceptions that make the government's force legitimate. And the knowledge industry thus becomes a vital and sensitive locus of power. That power can be used to maintain the status quo, or to change it.

#### Values

What then should the future shape of Southeast Asian studies be? Or to put it another way, who is Southeast Asian studies for? Which interests should the Southeast Asian scholar serve? It is inevitable that Southeast Asian studies will continue to be shaped by values and agenda. It should be. But the difference should be diversity and freedom of choice. The values that a work promotes should be up to the individual scholar. There is always room for beauty for beauty's sake. We need people who will produce both the answers to questions today as well as visions that inspire us and make us aspire to better, greater, more beautiful tomorrows. To achieve this, we need to have the self-awareness to ask ourselves what the subconscious influences on us are, and we need the courage to resist influences which pull us away from the values we wish to promote.

I personally believe the scholar should serve fundamental humanistic interests, above any nation, ethnic group, cultural group, class, or ideology. I believe a scholar should serve broader goals of eliminating poverty, war, racism, and restrictions on individual freedom. Other scholars may feel differently, and I strongly urge them to create work that exemplifies their own values. All I suggest is that they are self-aware and understand what values they are working for.

One should also be careful not to confuse this for a lack of accuracy. Accuracy means that one is academically honest and scrupulously careful about reporting correctly everything one observes. But accuracy is only a prerequisite. Howard Zinn suggests the analogy of a blacksmith. No matter what the blacksmith chooses to make, he must use reliable measuring instruments, high quality metal, and top-grade tools. But it is up to the blacksmith whether to make swords or ploughshares.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, it is up to us as scholars to decide if we want to use our academic tools for war or for peace, to promote one set of values over another. As Zinn notes, "Too many scholars abjure a starting set of values, because they fail to make the proper distinction between an ultimate set of values and the instruments needed to obtain them. The values may be subjective (derived from human needs); but the instruments must be objective (accurate)."<sup>14</sup> One must report what proves one wrong as well as what proves one right. Our values determine the questions we ask, but not the answers. By comparison, nobody questions why scientists or medical researchers do not start from a position of neutrality with regards to life and death. The tacit assumption behind their work is always to save lives, to extend control over the human environment for the benefit of humankind. Why not for the humanities and social sciences?

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge all scholars of Southeast Asia to become aware of the environment in which they work and its influence on them. I believe we need to expend our time and energy to draw the attention of our fellow men and women to those facts that states seek to conceal, to the truths that people find inconvenient, to the universal values that are often denied to the people of Southeast Asia. We need to expose lies told by politicians, by the mass media, by religion, and by corporations. We have a responsibility to reveal the corruptions of power, its inconsistencies and double standards, and the intoxicating symbols and concepts (nationalism, ethnicity, religion) that are used to distract and divide people. We must bring to light the facts about rich and poor, about racial division and exclusion, about tyranny and oppression, and about exploitation and brutality that our societies rest upon. We need to do this so that our fellow citizens can make their own judgements on the realities beneath the political rhetoric. In short, we need to be critics of power, rather than its perpetuators and apologists.

**Pingtjin Thum (PJ) is co-ordinator of Project Southeast Asia at the University of Oxford, and a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. PJ is a Harvard graduate in East Asian Studies, and completed a DPhil in History at Hertford College, University of Oxford (aritpt@nus.edu.sg).**

#### Notes

- 1 The author acknowledges a debt to the late historian Howard Zinn, whose writings on the responsibilities of the historian inspired this article.
- 2 Cynthia Chou and VJH Houben. 2006. 'Introduction', in Cynthia Chou and VJH Houben (eds.), *Southeast Asian studies: Debates and New Directions*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p.4
- 3 Victor T. King. 1990. *Between West and East: Policy and Practice in South-East Asian studies in Britain*. Hull: Hull University Press, p.2
- 4 George Mct. Kahin. 1994. 'Lauriston Sharp (1907-93)', *Southeast Asia Program Bulletin*, (Fall 1994) 2-5, p.2-3.
- 5 King, *Between West and East: Policy and Practice in South-East Asian studies in Britain*, p.4.
- 6 Anthony Reid. 2004. 'Studying Southeast Asia in a Globalized World', *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian studies*, 1/2 (October 2004), 3-18, p.7
- 7 Vicente Rafael. 1999. 'Southeast Asian studies - Wherefrom?', in *Social Science Research Council* (ed.), *Weighing the Balance: Southeast Asian studies Ten Years After*. New York: Southeast Asia Program, Social Science Research Council, p.10
- 8 Alfred Mccoy, *ibid*.
- 9 *ibid*.
- 10 Reid, 'Studying Southeast Asia in a Globalized World', p.15.
- 11 For a longer history of Southeast Asian studies, see Chou and Houben, 'Introduction'. (see above, note 2)
- 12 Ariel Heryanto. 2002. 'Can there be Southeast Asians in Southeast Asian studies?', *Moussons*, 5, 3-30.
- 13 Howard Zinn. 2009. 'The Uses of Scholarship', *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy*. New York: Seven Stories Press, p.6243 of 8663 [Kindle Edition].
- 14 *ibid.*, p.6247 of 8663 [Kindle Edition].

# Moussons

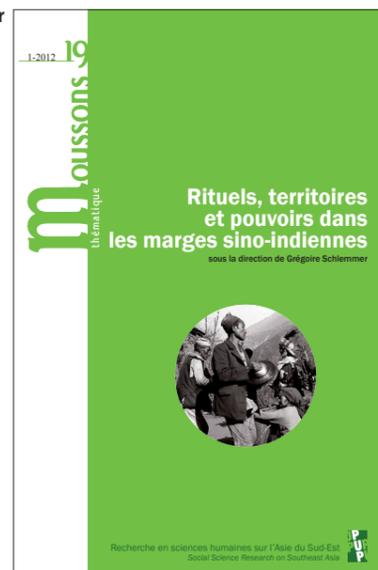
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# Navigating Indonesia's bureaucracy: getting a research permit



We arrived in Jakarta two hours late; it could have been worse. Oh that's right. It was worse. Much worse! We arrived with no more drama than can be expected when travelling with a three-year-old and a one-year-old on a flight scheduled to leave at 2.30am but that does not take off until 4.30am.

Sharyn Graham Davies

MY GREEN SUITCASE, however, did not arrive at all. Where could it have gone? It was a direct flight from Perth to Jakarta taking less than 4 hours. Moreover, we were first off the plane and first to the baggage carousel. If the other 11 pieces of luggage made it, why not this one? Alas, there was no sign of my green suitcase; ten weeks later there is still no sign of it. There was nothing of great personal significance in the suitcase but the thought of having to replace all my underwear brought on a minor breakdown. Trying to find non-padded, non-synthetic

bras in Indonesia is near impossible – I know this because it is not the first time I have been separated from my luggage!

Such a welcome to Jakarta did not bode well for the purpose of my visit. I was in Jakarta to get a research permit. I, along with Adrianus Meliala at the University of Indonesia and John Buttle at AUT University in New Zealand, am looking at policing in Indonesia, so I wanted to make sure I had all the proper permissions and the all important research permits.

The experience of getting the research permit is one of the most frustrating of my life. To give just one initial example, after lining up at the Department of Immigration for an eternity, I finally got to the counter to be told, "Sorry, it's break time, come back in an hour." I was first in line when the counter reopened. "Sorry", the man said, "the computers are down. Best you come back tomorrow." I returned the next day. The computers were working. Hooray! "Sorry", the man told me, "but the person you need to stamp your application is sick today. He may come in after lunch, but he probably will not be here until tomorrow. He is the only person who can stamp your application. You best come back tomorrow." This was just the start of the process and already I wanted to bang my head against the counter until I passed out.

The first place you have to visit to get your research permit is RISTEK (Ministry of Research and Technology). So far so good! The second place you have to visit is the police station (Fig.1). The taxi dropped me right at the front of the police station, which, as it turned out, was quite far from my actual destination. As I approached the guards to ask for directions, I tried to decide whether their casual approach to gun safety, evident from their haphazardly slung assault rifles, made me feel more or less nervous. The officer I asked directions from had braces, not the ones he might use to hold up his thermal-like uniform that would be better suited to Arctic conditions than an equatorial country in July, but the ones on your teeth. This would not normally be notable except for the fact that he was the second officer I had seen that day with braces. Were the police finally being paid a decent wage? Filling in the forms at the police station I wondered, not for the first time, why pens in Indonesia never, ever, work properly. In fact, my pen performed so poorly that much of my application was barely legible. This did not seem to be a problem, though, and it made me wonder just how important filling in the litany of forms

really was. Indeed, the address I wrote on my son Alfie's form was so illegible that his official ID card lists his address simply as 'Hotel'.

The third and final place you have to visit is the Department of Immigration. Dealing with Immigration is for most people the most frustrating process of getting the research permit. Everything happens slowly, computers crash, only one person can do fingerprints and they are invariably on holiday, applications get lost, photos get mixed up.

It took me two weeks to get all the permissions and ID cards – indeed I looked more like an imminent criminal than budding researcher in the photo on my finally issued KITAS research permit card. I think, though, that if you do the following you may be able to complete the process in five full working days: arrive at RISTEK at 9am on a Monday, take taxis and the super-efficient Busway, always have exactly the right amount of money required (adding up all the costs, you will not get much change from US\$1000 if you are getting a 12 month research visa), be prepared to spend all day waiting and running around, do not get lost, make sure your taxi does not get lost, avoid street protests and demonstrations (especially where 8000 people are marching against the possible arrest of a popular imam), avoid public holidays, make sure there are no computer failures, have sufficient passport photos of the right size and colour, make sure your passport and/or application do not get misplaced in the toppling stacks of other applications, avoid Friday prayer times, make sure you are wearing suitable attire when they take your official photo, avoid Ramadan, be unencumbered by offspring no matter how cute, and make sure that the one and only person who can stamp your Blue Book, take your fingerprints, or staple your Red Folder together, is not on holiday, sick, or otherwise unavailable. If you manage to do all of the above (no chance!), it is within the realms of possibility to get all the permissions and ID cards within a week!

Sharyn Graham Davies is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. She is the author of *Challenging Gender Norms (2007)* and *Gender Diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam, and Queer Selves (2011)* (sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz)

Fig. 1 (above left): Outside the South Jakarta Police Station: "No Corruption, Collusion, or Nepotism – That's Our Commitment"

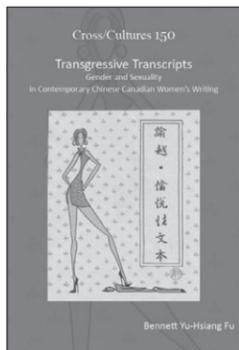
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## Transgressive Transcripts

*Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Chinese Canadian Women's Writing*

Bennett Yu-Hsiang Fu



*Transgressive Transcripts* examines the construction of women's subjectivity and the textual production of Canadian female voices orchestrated in history, culture, ethnicity, and sexuality. The book, stressing the dissemination and re-inscription of femaleness and femininity in Chinese Canadian history, employs critical models that defy the sexual/textual imaginary of the Canadian literary scene. Four fields of study are conjoined: feminist theories of the body, gender and sexuality studies, women's writing, and Asian North American studies. Analysing four writers, SKY Lee, Larissa Lai, Lydia Kwa, and Evelyn Lau, the book anchors its thematic and theoretical concern with female sexuality in the context of Chinese Canadian writing. Feminist narratives and gender politics in contemporary Asian North American literature are highlighted via the trope of "transgression".

*Transgressive Transcripts* offers sophisticated readings of recent Chinese Canadian women's writing as a form of powerful agency that resists stereotypical representations and opens up new possibilities for heterogeneous feminist and queer identity formations. Building on a comprehensive critical overview of the current state of Asian Canadian literary studies, and combining studies of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender, the interpretations are illuminating, provocative, and original.

— Donald Goelnicht, Professor, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies, McMaster University

This book, a substantial contribution to an understanding of the ways sexuality mediates histories of national and transnational belonging, helps constitute the field of Chinese Canadian women's writing yet resists turning that writing into an object of knowledge or writers into informants. Of central interest is textual agency and the critical spaces literature opens within minority and feminist studies. Engaging with thorny, silenced issues such as how to write about sexuality and subjectivity, Fu uncovers transcripts subverting dominant culture and unacknowledged within Chinese Canadian culture. Particularly compelling is the analysis of processes of hyper-feminization, desexualization, exoticization, demonization, and abjection that have come to stand phantasmically for Chinese Canadian women's sexuality.

— Lianne Moyes, Professor and Chair, Department of English Studies, Université de Montréal

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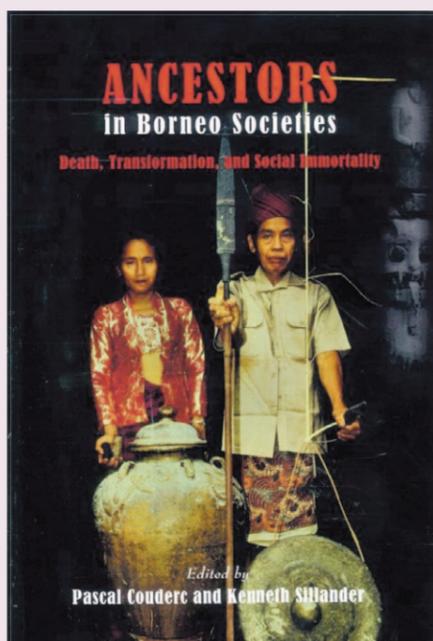
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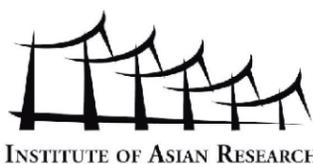
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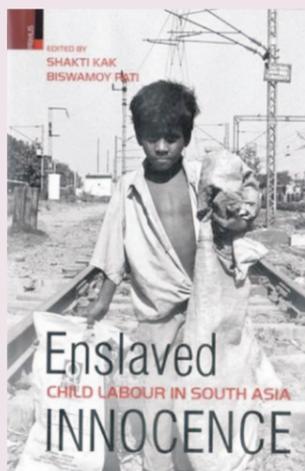


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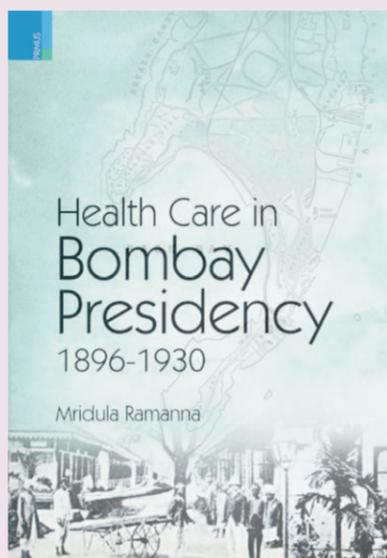
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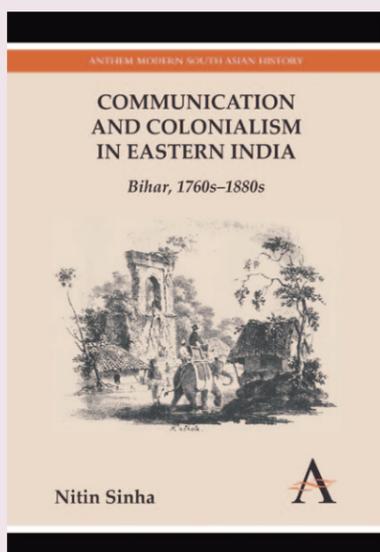
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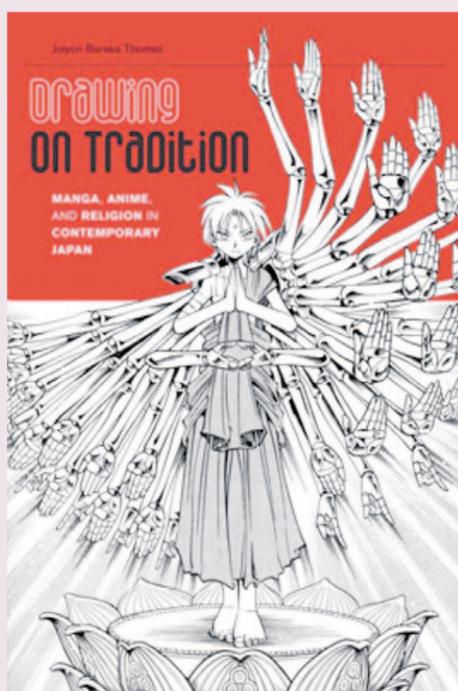
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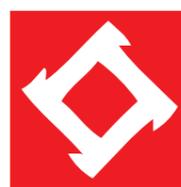


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# The routine of atrocities

The commander of the American army unit that killed 24 civilians in the Iraqi village of Haditha was demoted from sergeant to soldier. Two members of the 'kill team' that killed Afghani's for fun are eligible for early release after 8.5 years. Louise Barnett shows how this kind of juridical leniency is not new, by examining atrocities and trials from three episodes in Southeast Asian history: the American occupation of the Philippines, the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during the Second World War, and the American war in Vietnam. She shows how the "history of official prohibition [against torture and the mistreatment of noncombatants] is accompanied by a history of repeated and often systematic violation". The first and third parts discuss atrocities ("the violent harming of known noncombatants") committed by American soldiers. The second part discusses the case of Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Japanese general held responsible for atrocities committed during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

Alex de Jong

Reviewed publication:

**Barnett, Louise. 2004.**

*Atrocity and American Military Justice in Southeast Asia.*

New York: Routledge,

278 pages, ISBN 0415556406 (hardcover)

## Our own

Barnett shows how the military justice system easily excuses those considered to be 'one of our own'. Even when harsh sentences are imposed, normally due to public pressure, they are commonly reversed or decreased in the following years. Lieutenant William Calley, who led his men to execute unarmed men, women and children in the 1968 My Lai massacre, was sentenced to life of hard labour after a military cover-up had failed. Calley then received a number of sentence reductions and ultimately only served three years of house arrest.

Over sixty years earlier, major L.W.T Waller had also been tried for killing nameless civilians whilst he commandeered American forces on the island of Samar, the Philippines. His commanding officer, colonel C.H. Smith, had ordered that the island, where resistance against the Americans was fierce, should be turned into "a howling wilderness". Smith stated he wanted all persons killed who were capable of "bearing arms in actual hostilities against the United States" –including boys "ten years and older". Waller did not implement Smith's genocidal instructions to the letter, but did conduct a campaign in which every Filipino was considered an enemy that could be killed, regardless of circumstances. Waller and Smith were, following public demand, prosecuted for executions of civilians and prisoners of war. Waller was acquitted, Smith retired.

The trial of Yamashita tells a very different story. Yamashita spent most of the war as military commander in Manchukuo, the Japanese protectorate in China, but was sent to the Philippines in late 1944 to organize the defence against the Americans. After Japan capitulated he surrendered. The Americans held him responsible for atrocities committed by Japanese troops during the battle for Manila. In the closing days of the war in the Philippines, Japanese troops raped, mutilated and murdered thousands of civilians in Manila. Whether Yamashita knew of these crimes or not was considered irrelevant by the American court –the troops had been his responsibility.

Barnett convincingly shows how, from the beginning, Yamashita's execution was the only possible outcome of the trial. General MacArthur, who organized the trial, did everything to make sure Yamashita would be found guilty. There is no doubt about the scale or nature of the Japanese atrocities in Manila, but most of the actual perpetrators, some 20,000 marines under the command of admiral Sanji Iwabuchi, were killed in battle. Yamashita had ordered them to evacuate Manila, but Iwabuchi and his men ignored the orders. It was never suggested that Yamashita participated in any atrocity, nor was any order ever found to implicate him in such crimes. But as a defeated enemy, Yamashita was not one of the army's own. He was hanged on 23 February 1946.

## Enemy populations

Calley, Smith and others were considered to belong to the in-group in two ways. First, they served in the army, like the members of the court. Like any other institution, the US army wanted to protect its name, and its members were protected by bonds of loyalty. Unlike regular crimes, opportunistically committed by soldiers, atrocities were usually seen by the perpetrators as part of the war effort. They were made possible by a context in which military policies, implicitly or not, had labelled an entire population to be the enemy or supportive of the enemy.

As Frantz Fanon (1967) pointed out, this process is inherent to colonialism. The colonizer is unable to understand the colonized. To see the colonized as people, with memories of crimes committed against them and a wish to live in freedom and dignity, is impossible to colonial thinking, which justifies occupation by the supposed 'savage' or 'primitive' character of the natives. The colonizers are then

General Yamashita and his defense counsel. John Dorle, Harry Clarke, Milton Sandberg, Tomoyuki Yamashita, Hamamoto, and Akira Muto during a break from court, Oct 1945; note the autographs by Yamashita, Hamamoto, and Muto. Photo obtained through ww2db.com; courtesy of the family of Colonel Harry E. Clarke, Sr. Photo taken by U.S. Army Signal Corps.

angered by the lack of gratefulness shown by the colonized, for the attempts to 'uplift' them. This resulted in, as during the Vietnam war, American soldiers thinking a "gook is a gook" and all of them the enemy.

## Atrocities invariably take place

However, this part of the book also highlights some weaker points in Barnett's narrative. She uses the example of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official executed by Israel for his role in the Shoah. Barnett's picture of Eichmann as a colourless bureaucrat, based on the famous book by Hannah Arendt on "the banality of evil", is incorrect; Eichmann was a fanatic anti-Semite, committed to his task, and not just a cog in the machine (Cesarani, 2006).

A more substantial problem is Barnett's tendency to give her opinion on not just the trials and questions of guilt, but also on the character of the people involved. This is unnecessary and draws attention away from the main points. It is especially problematic when she describes Yamashita in positive, even admiring terms. His trial might have been a farce, but this doesn't mean Yamashita was free of blame. Smith's orders created a situation in which all Filipinos were seen as enemies and atrocities could, and did, happen. Yamashita stated, about the war in the Philippines, that it had come down to "kill or be killed. No matter who the person is, a Filipino or not, if we hesitate we ourselves will be killed". This is the kind of language with which commanding officers contribute to situations in which atrocities can happen. Yamashita was a commander of an occupying army in a war of aggression; and as Barnett points out in her conclusion, in such wars atrocities invariably take place.

Barnett's recommendations for avoiding such atrocities include a strong commanding structure and an effective judicial system; they seem weak compared to the systematic character of atrocities in this kind of war. Rather than a breakdown of the 'regular' functioning of the occupying army, they are a disavowed yet unavoidable part of it.

**Alex de Jong studies mass violence and genocide, with a focus on Southeast Asia (alexdejong@iire.org)**

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# Ahmedabad: a cautionary tale



A city of extraordinary economic growth and innovation, horrendous communal violence and appalling poverty; Howard Spodek justifiably calls Ahmedabad a 'shock city' in his new book *Ahmedabad: Shock City of Twentieth Century India*. But the reason for its shocking nature does not lie in the demise of its enlightened, civic-minded elite. The roots of Ahmedabad's shocking politics lies in the shocking lack of concern of this elite for the welfare of less privileged citizens.

Ward Berenschot

Reviewed publication:

**Spodek, H. 2011.**

*Ahmedabad: Shock City of Twentieth Century India.*

Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

320 pages. ISBN: 9780253355874 (hardback)

## Feel-good movie turns nightmare

Ahmedabad's twentieth century started upbeat as some of India's most prominent businessmen and nationalist leaders – including Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel – worked together to turn a regional backwater into a political and commercial beacon for the rest of India. But as economic liberalization and Hindu-nationalism swept through the city, the result was far from a happy ending; Ahmedabad in the early twenty-first century combines high levels of economic growth with the social marginalization of a sprawling underclass, strong segregation between caste- and religious groups and high levels of Hindu-Muslim violence.

Spodek used his extensive familiarity with the city and its inhabitants to tell this story of decline – his first visit to Ahmedabad was in 1964 – and has produced a well-documented and engaging account of how a well-educated, civic-minded elite gradually lost their commanding role as Ahmedabad became a "capitalist city out of control". In the first and second part of the book, Spodek appears in awe of his subjects as he describes how Ahmedabad's relatively progressive textile barons cooperated with some of India's finest Congress leaders to develop the city's infrastructure and establish important cultural and social institutions such as the Textile Labour Association (TLA), the Indian Institute of Management and, later, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). With chapter-titles such as 'Ambalal Sarabhai and Kasturbhai Lalbhai Build an Industrialized, Westernized, Prosperous, Cultured, World-Class Company Town' Spodek paints an alluring picture of an enlightened elite who, because of their wisdom and civic-mindedness, spurred economic growth, prevented Hindu-Muslim strife and avoided labour militancy. "By providing such mutual support for each other, the Ahmedabad leaders (...) reaped benefits for themselves (...) as well as for their city".

This rosy picture leaves the reader unprepared for the turmoil in the third part of the book. Suddenly all is not well. The former backbone of Gujarat's economy, the textile industry, collapses. The formerly progressive mill owners cheat both investors and their workers out of their money. The textile labour union refuses to represent the mill workers. Massive tax evasion cripples the municipal government. Politicians work in tandem with notorious criminals. Repeated outbursts of caste-violence and Hindu-Muslim violence cause death and destruction. Ahmedabad turns into the 'laboratory' of Hindu-nationalist organizations and prejudices against Muslims become widespread. During the horrendous anti-muslim pogrom in 2002, Ahmedabad's middle class uses the occasion to engage in a festive looting of unguarded department stores. As Spodek laments, there is a "general departure from the ideals of the Mahatma". The feel-good movie turned into a nightmare.

## Failures of the elite

It is this part of the book that illustrates the unproductiveness of the gulf that still exists between historians and social scientists. As his rather factual account generally avoids developing explanations for Ahmedabad's transformation, Spodek fails to provide a convincing account of how Ahmedabad's feel-good movie could turn so sour. With his

idealized, elite-focused account in the first part of the book, Spodek suggests that Ahmedabad's greatest 'shock' lies in the way an enlightened elite lost power to crass democratic forces. The reader closes the book wishing that Sardar Patel and Ambalal Sarabhai were still ruling the city. I suspect this conclusion can be partly attributed to Spodek's method; because much of his material is gathered through interviews with Ahmedabad's cultural and economic elites, he adopts a distinctly uncritical stance towards these elites.

But the shocking aspect of Ahmedabad's history is not that these elites lost power. The real shocker is the callous lack of concern these elites had for the welfare of less privileged citizens. This lack of concern is what led to their own demise, the unravelled social cohesion of the city and the unruly politics that was to follow. To mention just a few aspects of this shocking lack of solidarity – whose import Spodek fails to highlight: the textile labourer strikes,

which led to the founding of the Textile Labour Association (TLA), were called because the extremely rich mill owners refused to pay wages above *subsistence* level. With the impressive exception of Anyusaben Sarabhai, the financial and organizational strength of the captains of industry was (and is) rarely used to do more for the living conditions of their workers beyond building overcrowded and unhygienic *chawls*. While much effort went into the founding of (private) colleges for the elites, there has been a shocking disregard for the quality of public education. The upper-caste leaders of the TLA ended up betraying the interests of the textile labourers and suppressed the development of a class and caste-based political movement. And, more recently, the kind of economic liberalization pursued in Gujarat amounted to an attempt to reduce labour costs to the lowest possible level, as jobs were informalized, minimal wages were no longer upheld and working conditions deteriorated. While the upper-caste businessmen regularly emphasize the importance of merit when criticizing caste-based reservations, they generally refuse to hire applicants with *dalit* names, like Parmar or Macwana. While Gujarat's police force and judges regularly collude with the rich and powerful to dismiss charges of corruption, they routinely fail to adequately pursue the perpetrators of caste-based violence that is still widely used to intimidate the workforce. While fountains are built in the posh parts of the city, inhabitants of the poorer eastern parts still rarely get more than two hours of water per day.

## Struggles of the poor

This lack of concern of Ahmedabad's elite for the welfare of fellow citizens, and the resulting marginalization of the poorer, eastern side of Ahmedabad, can be directly linked to the unruly politics that Spodek laments. Having been served a bad deal by Ahmedabad's early leaders, it is not surprising that common Ahmedabadi's have been trying to use their advantage in numbers to replace these upper-caste elites by electing their own kin. In this, Ahmedabad mirrors the 'silent revolution' that has taken place throughout India (in general Spodek makes too little effort to show the parallels and relation of Ahmedabad's history with other (Indian) cities). Secondly, the disregard of Ahmedabad's elite for maintaining or developing strong institutions that could address the everyday struggles of poorer citizens (e.g., legal aid, healthcare, education, sports, etc.) made these citizens susceptible to promises made by Hindu-nationalist organizations; in marginalized neighbourhoods these organizations developed their popularity by offering inhabitants much-needed access to healthcare and other (state) resources. These organizations gain popularity through the lack of alternative organizations offering these services. Furthermore, in the light of the precarious nature of their livelihoods it is not surprising that access to governmental jobs and other state resources are considered very valuable – which makes poorer neighbourhoods even more vulnerable to manipulation by politicians who promise to provide these resources. The failure of Ahmedabad's municipal corporation to meet the demand for basic amenities, like water and sanitation, have stimulated poorer citizens to nurture clientelistic ties with local politicians. In the absence of adequate public service provision, citizens need to use their vote instrumentally to reward whoever promises to provide, for example, an electricity connection. Finally, as particularly lower caste citizens and Muslims have felt the biased attitude of Gujarat's judiciary, it is not surprising that their respect for the rule of law (let alone the tax system) is limited and that flamboyant criminals are held in awe.

## Cautionary tale

It is unfortunate that Spodek has largely missed this connection between Ahmedabad's 'shocking' forms of politics and the social outlook of its elites. Ahmedabad deserves scholarly attention because its development trajectory holds important lessons about the challenges of achieving economic growth without sacrificing other important social goods like social cohesion, the rule of law, and social justice. While the city achieved spectacular levels of economic growth, Ahmedabad largely failed on these other dimensions of human development as a limited sense of solidarity between the city's disparate social groups paved the way for a particular harsh form of economic liberalization. Despite its flaws, Spodek's Ahmedabad invites the reader to think about the important question of how economic development, social cohesion and civic-mindedness could go hand in hand.

**Ward Berenschot is a political scientist and researcher at the Royal Dutch Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV)**

**He is the author of *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian State* (Hurst/Columbia University Press 2011)**

Above:  
Ahmedabad.  
Courtesy Meena  
Kadri, Creative  
Commons/Flickr.

# Oral and written traditions

Although literary scholars now seldom consider Chinese vernacular novels to be essentially equivalent to real scripts for storytellers, recent scholarship unfortunately tends to go to another extreme, viewing the novels as largely original literati creations and ignoring the relationship they might have with orality. Growing out of the symposium *The Interplay of Oral and Written Traditions in Chinese Fiction, Drama and Performance Literature*, held in Oslo in 2007, this edited volume moves beyond the simple 'oral vs. written' binary approach and explores the complex interactions between orality and writing in China with a focus on vernacular genres from the late imperial to modern periods. Excluding the concisely-written introductory chapter, this volume comprises six chapters authored by scholars well-versed in their subjects, ranging from Ming vernacular fiction to popular prints and contemporary folk ballads.

George Kam Wah Mak

Reviewed publication:

**Børdahl, Vibeke & Margaret B. Wan (eds.) 2010.**

*The Interplay of the Oral and the Written in Chinese Popular Literature.*

Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

xvii+269 pp. ISBN: 9788776940553 (Paperback)

DESPITE ITS RATHER RAMBLING STYLE, André Lévy's chapter serves as a good start as it brings out the issue of the inseparability between the oral and the written in vernacular genres, which is further addressed in subsequent chapters in various ways. With the example of the Ming vernacular novel *Jin Ping Mei*, Lévy argues that it is possible for oral and written sources to have co-existed when vernacular novels were produced by single or a group of literati writers; "The one does not preclude the other" (20).

Whereas Lévy briefly touches on some features, such as the storyteller's point of view and verbosity, which show the influence of the oral versions of *Jin Ping Mei* on its textual traditions, Liangye Ge's chapter is a scholarly attempt to find out possible oral sources of another Ming vernacular novel *Water Margin*. Comparing versions of the novel and a cluster of *chantefable* about Judge Bao, Ge's chapter proposes that their similarities in terms of narrative scenes and thematic patterns could be attributed to the early storytelling genre of *gong'an* (court case). This agrees with Patrick Hanan's view that a common storehouse of convention from which early vernacular novels drew initially belonged to oral literature (31).

However, supposedly conspicuous characteristics linking vernacular novels to oral storytelling are not necessarily reliable indicators of the relationship between them. In chapter 4, Vibeke Børdahl argues that the so-called "storytellers' stock phrases" serving meta-narrative functions could be a kind of literary invention to facilitate reading, rather than a mirror of real storytellers' oral habits. As attested in the living oral performances observed in her fieldwork, actual storytellers seldom used those kinds of stock phrases. Their presence in the textual versions of the story of *Wu Song* is genre-dependent: a certain set of phrases intimately associated with genres for reading, of which the novel is an example, only sporadically appears in performance-related genres. Børdahl's findings echo Lévy's note of caution for researchers: "the more skilful the re-appropriation of the storyteller's language, the more likely is it to be an imitation without real oral sources" (22).

Readers' needs, therefore, were in the authors' minds. It is commendable that the impact of readership on the textualization of vernacular stories is addressed in this volume. Margaret Wan's chapter offers interesting speculations on the relationship between fictional practices to readership with the example of Qing drum ballads. For example, frequent omission of dialogue markers and end-of-chapter formulae in drum ballad texts could result from the intended reader's familiarity with the conventions of drum ballad performance. Also, Børdahl relates the education background of readers to textual format. She argues the use of black cartouche setting off the pre-verse formulas would be helpful in guiding semi-literate readers to read *pinghua* (plain tales).

While authors might have adopted or imitated elements of oral storytelling in written versions of vernacular stories, Anne McLaren's chapter informs us that 19th century amateur storytellers with some literacy would also enrich their repertoire with the sung narratives in written form. The findings of her fieldwork in the lower Yangzi delta indicate that depending on the storyteller's choice, a Wu prosimetric folksong could be told in a way close to its *changben* (song text) version, the text of which is both reading matter and an *aide memoire* for performance (175). Here we can see a cycle: an oral story was adapted by a literatus for literary reading;

the story's textual version went back to orality through the storyteller's appropriation.

Hence authors and storytellers rarely felt obliged to adhere strictly to either the oral or written tradition. The same is true for another group of actors of the interplay between the two traditions. Scrupulously analyzing a group of prints portraying storytelling episodes and scenes of stories, Boris Riftin's chapter explains how attributes from novels, dramas and storytelling were amalgamated in a print depicting a particular story through the hands of its creator. Nonetheless, a difficult question arises from this kind of mixing: how can one determine whether an element in a print belongs to written texts of a novel, theatre performance or oral storytelling? Riftin does not answer this question, but highlights where the difficulties in doing so lie, such as shared plot elements and the co-existence of written and oral forms of a story. Such indeterminacy invites further investigations.

Børdahl and McLaren's approach of comparing living oral performance with extant manuscripts and printings of a given story merits special remarks. Both contributors capitalized on the situation that many forms of traditional oral performance are still alive in China, gleaned empirical data other than written sources and thus being able to avoid sole reliance on them. Their findings, despite being suggestive, challenge established views and "have the potential to illuminate significant questions and approaches" (12). Of course, such an approach must be utilized critically. We have to bear in mind that features or practices attested in modern storytelling could be absent at the time when vernacular novels were created. Also, censorship is liable to skewed representation of orality in the transcription of oral performance. Indeed, McLaren shows how modern storytellers self-censored sexually explicit references to conform to the socialist moral norms, which helps explain why the 19th century written version of the romantic story of *Xue Liulang* (Xue Sixth Son) turns out to be more faithful to the oral tradition than the version performed by modern storytellers. This reminds me of André Lefevere's idea of the rewriting of literature: the most accessible version of a literary work could often be a construct that is the result of manipulation.<sup>1</sup> The same applies to oral performance. Nevertheless, given the unavailability of video recordings of oral storytelling activities in late imperial China, we should by no means ignore the value of oral performance in the present as an informant about the relationship between the oral and the written in the past.

On closer examination readers will find some errors and inconsistencies such as erroneous Chinese characters, inconsistent font size, and repeated words. Although 'Notes to the Reader' states that "Chinese characters are rendered in the traditional *fanti* form", simplified Chinese characters occur occasionally in this volume. Yet these annoyances are offset by the colourful illustrations that appear in every chapter but the introduction. In addition to stimulating

ideas and fresh perspectives on how vernacular genres could be both works of art and products of oral inspiration and imitation, the valuable empirical data collated by some contributors will be of valuable service to researchers. A notable example is Børdahl's tables and appendices related to the occurrence of pre-verse phrases and phrases of narrative transition in the vernacular texts about the story of 'Wu Song Fights the Tiger'. The contributors to this volume are not ignorant of the preliminary, exploratory nature of their research and the limitations facing them, of which they frankly remind their readers. However, I agree with Hanan that the value of this volume "is not that it answers all the questions we have but that it will act as a stimulus to new research" (back cover). This volume is highly recommended for both scholars and graduate students interested in not only Chinese literature, but also late imperial Chinese society.

George Kam Wah Mak is Postdoctoral Research Fellow of Cross-Cultural Studies Working Group at David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University (ggkwamak@yahoo.com.hk)

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lefevere, André. 1992. *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Below:  
'Wu Song Fights the Tiger', at the Tiger Balm Gardens in Singapore.



# Engaging the nation across borders

*Traveling Nation-Makers* addresses the overlapping ideological space between nationalist aspirations and transnational movements, and it does so focussing on the lives of less-studied political activists in Southeast Asia throughout the twentieth century.

Chiara Formichi



Reviewed publication:

**Caroline S. Hau & Kasian Tejapira (eds.) 2011.**  
*Traveling Nation-Makers: Transnational Flows and Movements in the Making of Modern Southeast Asia.* Singapore: NUS Press, in association with Kyoto University Press. Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies 3. 320 pages ISBN: 9789971695477

THE VOLUME'S "central organizing concept" is travel, "within and beyond Southeast Asia, and its transformative effect in individual lives and their intellectual, political, religious, and cultural projects, and on the trajectories of nationalist, Communist, Islamic, and other movements in the region" (5). And in the case of the Vietnamese writer Vu Trong Phung, it is the absence of physical travel, added to his engagement with "global modernity", that makes him a "provincial cosmopolitan" (127).

In the introduction, Caroline S. Hau and Kasian Tejapira advance a balanced assessment of the outcome of the "understandable frustration with the narrowness of national studies", by pointing out that the trend to "produce 'prehistories' of contemporary globalization, or [...] contemporary transnationalism and connections" has not induced a better understanding of the dynamics at play. "Relatively little sustained attention has been paid to the question of how nation-states themselves were constituted out of, and crisscrossed by, these multidirectional material, cultural, and intellectual flows, circulations, and interactions across space and time" (4).

The chapters cover most of the region (Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Shanghai and Hong Kong in China), addressing the late colonial period of the region (with the exception of chapters 9 and 10). The authors adopt a biographical approach and find their rallying points in "redress[ing] the imbalances in current research on travel", and in "question[ing] current theories that construct the nation as a bogeyman of cultural stasis and repressive entrapment in order to contrast it to the freedom and transformative agency of cosmopolitan mobility" (10).

The editors give a much broader perspective than the collective chapters, both conceptually and chronologically. They tackle the impact of travel on the anti-colonial, nationalist imaginations; invoke Susan Bayly's "socialist ecumene"; point to the ritual manifestations of Islam's transnationalism; and bring on the table the role of returning migrants throughout the century (6-8).

However, the volume struggles to live up to this. Most of the contributions deal with members of the Left (Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and to a certain extent 7). In fact, although Communists and leftist sympathizers had a "natural" predisposition towards transnational activities, the volume does not recognize Pan-Asian trends nor the role of religious networks in the shaping of nationalist movements. Transnational Islam is only called into question in the last chapter, as Shiraishi Takashi reflects on the impact of travel in the jihadist ideology of Imam Samudra, infamous protagonist of the Bali Bombings of October 2002.

Chapter 1 is arguably the most interesting and pleasant to read in the collection. Resil B. Mojares introduces us to Mariano

Ponce, "the last Propagandist". He epitomises all that the volume would like to address: a key personality of the anti-colonial movement in the Philippines, colleague of Jose Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar, yet a "barely visible" figure (33). Ponce travels across Asia and to Europe, he is an active participant and *formateur* of international networks, is inspired by Japan's "Asianism", yet remains focused on the need for national independence.

Chapter 2 looks at a Vietnamese revolutionary in 1920s Canton, whose "notions of travel, nationalism, and national boundaries" were shaped and "complicated" by the Concessions' system implemented in Southern China. Lorraine M. Paterson analyses the biography of Pham Hong Thai written by Phan Boi Chau. Himself a nationalist, this transforms the biography into somewhat of a hagiography, making the tomb a place of pilgrimage and a "sacred national space" (66). Biographies had become a popular genre, as they could circumvent censorship laws; at the same time, even though "the territorial space had to be definitely defined as French, then the icons moving through 'national space' could be universal figures" (79-81).

Chapter 3 also picks up on the European Concessions' system, and looks at travel between the various territorial units of Shanghai, in relation to nationalism and transnationalism. Onimaru Takeshi reconstructs the multiple lives and identities of Hilaire Noulens, an underground officer of the Third International. As liaison officer between the Comintern's headquarters in Moscow and all affiliated organizations in East and Southeast Asia, Noulens was able to keep his real identity and intentions hidden from the authorities for over a decade. Onimaru argues that this was possible only thanks to Noulens' skilful exploitation of Shanghai's modern infrastructures and its accessibility to and from other places, as much as to the extraterritoriality, widespread international communities, and gray zones (101-04).

Chapter 4 deals with the absence of travel, as Zinoman argues that "scholarship about the dynamics of cultural change under colonialism" has, among other things, "inflate[d] the significance of overseas travel" (126). To challenge this trend, he illustrates the formation of a provincial cosmopolitan, Vu Trong Phung, through engagement with literary global modernity. We are thus taken across the various streams of French literature that influenced Phung; yet Zinoman does not omit to stress their 'localization': "the category of 'realism' functioned for Vu Trong Phung less as an aesthetic (or even a political) category and more as an instrument to be deployed in what was essentially a local struggle with his critics" (137).

Caroline Hau's contribution, investigating the revolutionary flows between China and the Philippines in the 1940s, and their relevance to contemporary dynamics, is another gem in this volume. She extensively delves into the relation between the Communist spirit of internationalism and the guerrilla's goal of national liberation, giving an insightful local perspective on Communism's polycentrism. And she does so by focusing on the "Chinese historical participation in the Filipino revolutionary movement and the contested place of Maoism and China in the development of Filipino Communism" (153-54). The state's criminalization and marginalization of leftist groups, which included the Wha Chi, was reverted in the late 1970s, yet

"this official recognition glosses over the Wha Chi's historical connections with the global and regional socialist-cum-colonial network" and only focuses on its national relevance (156).

Kasian Tejapira's chapter appears as an odd-fit in this volume. His narrative centres on the representation of the Communist Party of Thailand as "Mother", thus leading to an interesting opposition with the depiction of Prime Minister Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat as "the Father of the Thai nation" (202). Sure, travel and transnational connections are present here too. Tejapira follows Ruam Wongphan's life from the countryside in central Thailand to political training in Bangkok first and Beijing next, and then back to his hometown to mobilize the local peasantry. It is in Ruam's 'Farewell Letter to Mother' that the image of a caring, peace-loving, truthful, sympathetic, Mother is introduced as a metaphor for the CPT (198-99).

Chapter 7 brings the volume's focus once again at centre-stage, as Khoo Boo Teik takes James J. Puthuchery's life story as a laboratory to analyse the "inflows, outflows, and internal flows" that "washed into Malaya" (209) and shaped this region's political outlook. An Indian from Malaya, Puthuchery returns "as an Indian nationalist" in the early 1940s; yet, feeling that he "had been de-culturalised almost completely" (215), he moves to Singapore. Here starts Puthuchery's (dis)adventure with the PAP, which would ultimately make him return to Malaysia. It is then, in the 1960s, that he reflected on "the counter-hegemonic fallacies" of the left-wing movement, a consequence of "Asian nationalism, [which] originating in China, India, and Indonesia, had washed over colonial Malaya only to leave behind no ideological synthesis" (220).

Yamamoto Hiroyuki's contribution follows the journalistic career of K. Bali, a Sino-Thai Buddhist from Kelantan who moved to North Borneo, Sabah, to live as a Malay-Muslim. Influenced by the Indonesian attempt at 'Unity in Diversity', in the 1950s K. Bali became committed to spread the notion of a local "*bangsa Sabah*", grounded on the observation that the region was "free of ethnic polarization and that people lived in harmony in spite of ethnic diversity [and] that Malay was widely used as the lingua franca of the region" (239).

The volume has a chronological focus on the early twentieth century, but the lives of Puthuchery and K. Bali propel us towards the latter part of the century, when the activities of the Filipina overseas contract worker (OCW) Connie Bragas-Regalado, and the jihadi Imam Samudra are instead set. If one retains the perspective of nation-building, the story that Odine de Guzman tells is one made by nation-makers *in absentia*. Connie Bragas-Regalado became a leader for the Migrante Sectoral Party after several years as a domestic worker, mostly in Hong Kong. This chapter is grounded on the recognition that women migrant workers have carried the burden of Philippines' unemployment and economic deficit, whilst receiving little acknowledgement for the sacrifice. Odine de Guzman does a good job at introducing the reality of migrant workers in Singapore and Hong Kong. And even more so at addressing the issue of return, from the mythology of the *balikbayan*, the state discourse of OCWs as heroes, and the difficulty of reinsertion in the original family and its traditional roles. Thus, Connie's political activism should be seen in the frame of re-asserting female migrant workers' voices "at home".

Shiraishi Takashi's chapter is the only contribution addressing Islam's transnational networks, but it is a pity that these should be mentioned within the discourse on terrorism, and the "thinness of [Imam Samudra's] language". The chapter is based on the life of one of the mastermind behind the Bali Bombings of 2002, Imam Samudra, and it "suggests the centrality of his Afghan experience in shaping his life" (284). Here Shiraishi reads between the lines to pin-point those instances where the 1990s journey and sojourn in the training camps affected Samudra's vision of Islam, religious activism, and ultimately jihad.

Overall, the volume has its coherence in the fact that all contributions use biography as the narrative thread and deal – each in their own way, and to a varying degree – and engage with (the absence of) physical travel and flows of ideas. As it is often the case with edited volumes, some chapters read better than others, and space has not been evenly allocated to the ideological variations of nationalism. Nonetheless, readers across the board will enjoy it. The introduction offers a well-constructed criticism of post-national studies; various chapters touch upon the key topics related to colonialism in a way easily understandable and entertaining even for an undergraduate and general audience. Scholars will find stimulating the continuous engagement with the two faces of anti-colonial movements, national identity and transnational networks.

**Chiara Formichi is Assistant Professor at the Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong (c.formichi@cityu.edu.hk)**

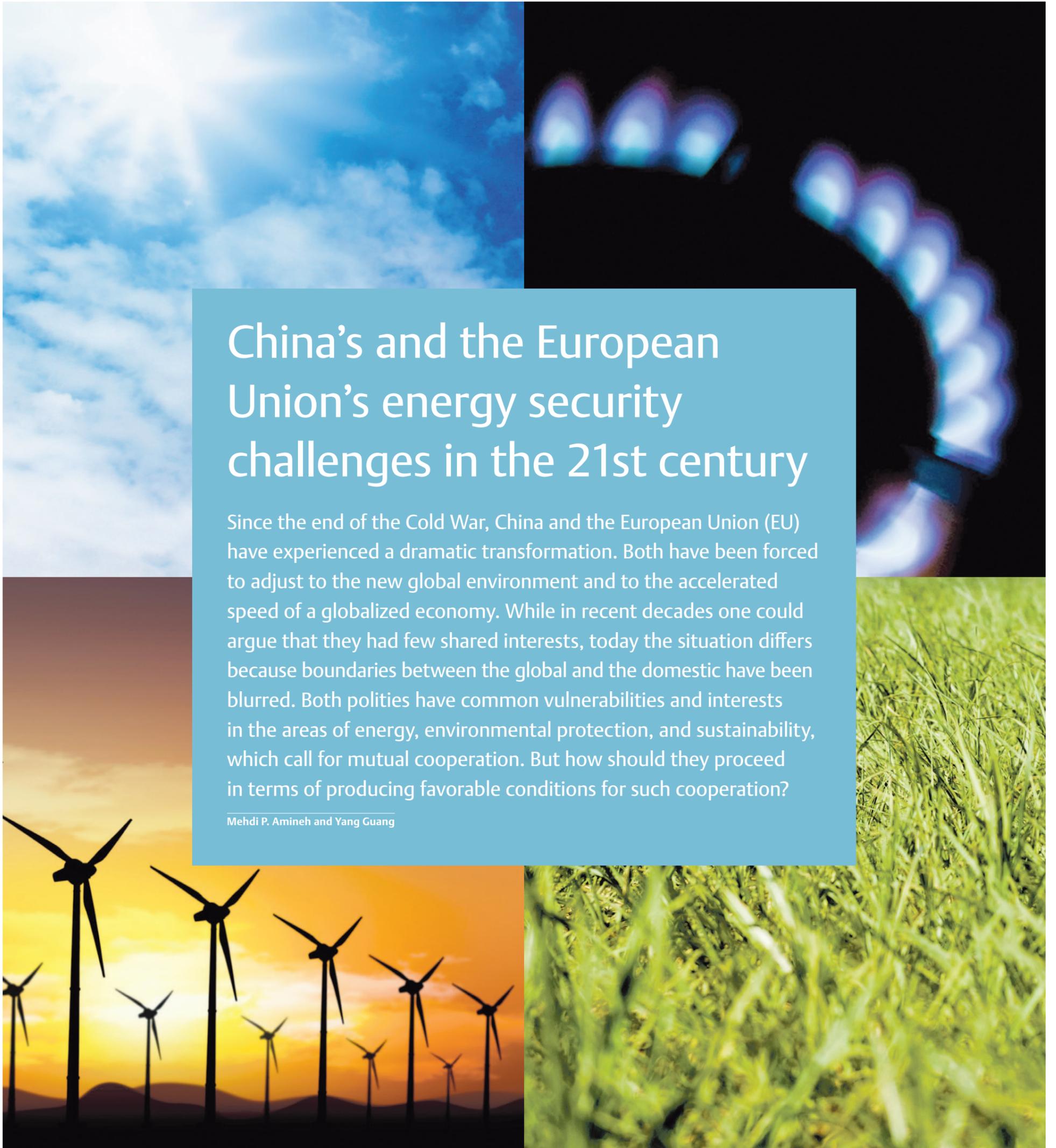
Pull-out supplement

# theFocus

## China's and the European Union's energy security challenges in the 21st century

Since the end of the Cold War, China and the European Union (EU) have experienced a dramatic transformation. Both have been forced to adjust to the new global environment and to the accelerated speed of a globalized economy. While in recent decades one could argue that they had few shared interests, today the situation differs because boundaries between the global and the domestic have been blurred. Both polities have common vulnerabilities and interests in the areas of energy, environmental protection, and sustainability, which call for mutual cooperation. But how should they proceed in terms of producing favorable conditions for such cooperation?

Mehdi P. Amineh and Yang Guang



China's and the EU's energy security challenges in the 21st century *continued*

In this Focus section of *The Newsletter* we present to you our research project, which searches for an answer to this comprehensive question; in so doing, the project adopts a comparative perspective to study the policies, practices, and challenges of both China and the EU in the areas of conventional energy security, development of alternative and renewable energy sources, and sustainable development.



ENERGY SECURITY has become a key issue for both China and the EU, thus putting pressure on policymakers to look for new responses, including diversification of both source and origin of conventional energy, with a view to encourage supply security and improve efficiency in energy use. In these endeavors, the urgency of geopolitical concerns seems to draw more attention than long-term plans for transition to renewable energy. As a result, the perception that China and the EU might be competitors in accessing foreign markets often overshadows their common interest to develop renewable and alternative energy and share efficiency-improving technology.

At the same time, the fact that both polities are placed well enough to cooperate vis-à-vis producer countries, and to compete in the development of high-end renewable technologies, is often neglected. Our research project challenges such dominant perceptions and aims to provide the wider public with a more balanced account of the China-EU energy relations. To this end, our research focuses not only on the geopolitical realities that affect energy relations among both polities, but also on energy efficiency and the development of alternative and renewable energy sources.

#### Global energy demand and supply

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), global primary energy demand is expected to increase by 36 percent between 2008 and 2035. (The figures are naturally dependent on, among other things, the level of economic growth). Most of this growth is expected to come from the newly industrialized Asian states, such as China and India. Meanwhile, energy demand in the OECD countries is estimated to grow more modestly, given that energy use is already very high there. As a result, it is predicted that by 2035, more than 22 percent of world energy demand will come from developing countries, and especially China. (According to BP, China overtook the US as the world's biggest energy user in 2010). The IEA also anticipates substantial growth in the global demand for natural gas in the period 2008-2035; it predicts a 44 percent increase and a move towards a global consumption of 4.5 trillion cubic meters (tcm) per year. The gas import dependency of China and the EU will grow to about 70 percent of the domestic consumption by 2030, and a similar trend is expected to be seen in all major consumer markets, except in East and Southeast Asia, where it is already very high.

Due to the fact that proven oil and gas reserves are unevenly distributed in the world, and that only a few countries are surplus producers, fewer countries will be producing oil and gas in 2030. Additionally, it is expected that world oil supply will need to be increased by 15 million barrels per day (mbd)

(compared to 2009). In order to meet this demand, OPEC and non-OPEC countries will respectively have to produce 49 and 63 mbd, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). This will result in OPEC countries having a market share of 46 percent by 2030, with a longstanding growth trend expected. No more than five countries – Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, and Iran – hold about 55 percent of global proven oil reserves. So far, the Persian Gulf has been critical for meeting global demand, closely followed by the states of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, non-OPEC supplies are maturing, resulting in increased pressure on OPEC oil in the long-term.

Proven gas reserves are slightly less concentrated than oil reserves. Russia and the Caspian Sea region and the Middle East represent about one-third and two-fifths of proven global reserves, respectively. Moreover, Russia, Iran and Qatar hold about 55 percent of the global gas reserves (data from the EIA).

Global oil and gas markets look bleak as a result of the ever-growing energy consumption, an increasing exhaustion of reserves, and an increasing geographical concentration of production. Against this background, it is likely that state and non-state actors will assign more significance to economic and resource concerns and energy relations will increasingly politicize. On the one hand, the growing energy imports of countries such as China and India can be added to those of the EU and the USA. In addition, the anticipation of future supply disturbances is reflected in generally rising oil and gas prices and, in particular, their increasing volatility and the inelastic demand by major consumers. On the other hand, based on the location and increasing scarcity of world oil and gas reserves, a geographical concentration of energy supplies is expected to materialize in the politically unstable producer countries of the Persian Gulf, Russia, and the Caspian Sea region. Moreover, internal conflicts may arise in countries where oil and gas are the main source of income, especially when accompanied by ethnic hostility, terrorism, religious fundamentalism, economic injustice, corruption, and political competition.

#### Geopolitical and domestic challenges

The objective of the comparative research presented here, in this section of *The Newsletter*, is to analyze the geopolitical and domestic aspects of energy security challenges for China and the EU and their impact on energy security policy. The analysis of geopolitical aspects involves research on the effects of the competition of access to oil and gas resources among the main global consumer countries and its implications for the security of energy supplies of the two polities. The research also includes an analysis of the domestic energy demand and

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supply, an analysis of policies to increase energy efficiency, and it estimates the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy resources.

In 2010, the OPEC countries shared 40 percent of the total world oil production. BP estimates that this share will rise to 46 percent by 2030. This increase is primarily a result of the impact of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) countries, which account for almost 35 percent of the total world oil production in 2010 (data from the EIA). Alongside the oil and gas producing countries, Arab countries that produce less or no oil, such as Egypt and Yemen, also contribute to the distribution of hydrocarbon fuels as hosts to important transit routes and pipelines. Therefore, major disturbances or crises in the MENA may not only (temporarily) obstruct production, but also infest important transit networks and choke points. Such obstructions could potentially result in a sharp rise in the global oil price, which would inevitably lead to increases in production and transportation costs all over the world. Moreover, civil disturbances could simultaneously trigger structural scarcity – resulting from deliberate actions by powerful actors prohibiting the free flow of energy commodities exports<sup>1</sup> – and destabilize the European energy market even further. Any significant losses of hydrocarbon energy imports will eventually hamper the EU's economic growth. Political unrest and social revolts, such as those that began in late 2012 in the MENA (and are still ongoing), have the potential to influence the supply security of polities such as China and the EU.

Environmental constraints and advances in technology also affect energy security. According to the IEA, apart from the threats connected to energy supply security, governments also need to take into account environmental harm. BP argues that global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are expected to increase by 27 percent by 2030 (or 1.2 percent annually). Thus, emissions are growing faster than energy demand. This is alarming, because it contrasts with the 25-year-long opposite trend towards cleaner energy sources, and testifies that our future energy use will, in fact, be 'dirtier'. A likely cause for this is the switch back to coal, which has occurred in response to the oil and gas scarcity in many countries. Coal resources are more abundant and geographically less concentrated, although they have higher levels of carbon than oil and gas.

#### Transition to more sustainable energy

While pollution creates cross-border tensions, innovations in alternative and renewable resources, as well as efficiency measures, can reduce energy import dependency and contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However,



deploying new technologies involves more than simply replacing oil and gas with other energy sources. It requires the construction of new production and storage facilities, new distribution means, and new end-use applications. Besides time and capital, such energy infrastructure transitions require constant government and popular support, especially given the fact that they are likely to be driven by social, political, and environmental benefits, and that some technical and economic aspects cannot yet compete with existing fossil fuels.

Moreover, a transition to a more sustainable energy system differs essentially from past energy transitions. First of all, it is estimated that a transition to alternative energy systems will take around fifty years, rather than the ten to twenty years experienced during previous shifts. Secondly, the current transition is taking place in a liberalized market setting involving many actors, whereas past transitions were situated in a regulated setting with few actors, whose governments held the dominant position. Finally, the current transition has a very diverse set of technologies and complex solutions in mind, whereas past transitions had comparatively simple technological goals. Consequently, the general public was more supportive of past transitions than they are of the shift to sustainable energy.

Thus, it is expected that even by 2030 the role of the renewables in the global energy mix will be marginal. IEA suggests that while renewables and alternatives today cover 19 percent of global primary energy supply (including nuclear and biomass energy; renewables alone account for only 3 percent), by 2030 this will be almost one-third. This is not due to the lack of development of renewable energy, but rather because global oil, gas, and coal consumption will also continue to rise. Nevertheless, as oil and gas become increasingly scarce, developing innovative technologies remains as the only long-term alternative.

#### This Focus section

The Focus in this issue of *The Newsletter*, published by IIAS, consists of this introduction followed by 11 short essays originating from the research program "Domestic and Geopolitical Challenges to Energy Security for China and the European Union", jointly run by the Energy Programme Asia of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden and the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). All essays are based on the contributions to the edited volume *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy: The Geopolitics of Energy Paths of China and the European Union*<sup>2</sup> and briefly present their research and results.

*The objective of the comparative research [...] is to analyze the geopolitical and domestic aspects of energy security challenges for China and the EU and their impact on energy security policy.*

In the first of the essays, Robert Cutler analyzes the post-Cold War transformation of the geopolitics in Central Eurasia and the Caspian Region in relation to the emerging 'complex system' of hydrocarbon networks, with a focus on Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Frank Umbach takes over by using a comparative perspective to analyze the contradictory strategic trends and developments in Central Asia and the Caspian Region. He focuses on the growing interdependencies with the states' energy partners, and analyzes the strategic implications for the EU's declared energy partnership with the region and its energy supply strategies.

Given the important role that Iran plays in China's foreign energy security policy, Yu Guoqing explores China's energy relations with the Islamic Republic. Indeed, ever since the establishment of bilateral relations in 1971, the two countries have maintained good political and economic relations. In the following essay, Zhao Huirong and Wu Hongwei explore the significance of the Caspian region for China's energy security and the prospects for cooperation in the light of recently heightened geopolitical competition. They focus on China's energy policy in relation to Kazakhstan, in particular, in the context of China's foreign policy strategy towards the Caspian region.

Chen Mo discusses China's external relations with Angola in the context of its overall energy supply security strategy. Angola is an emerging oil producer which recently recovered from the scourge of war. Thus, the energy cooperation between China and Angola, built upon exchanging loans and infrastructure projects for oil resources, has unique features. In the last piece to discuss China's energy relation with other states, Sun Hongbo analyzes the energy ties between China and Venezuela. In pursuit of the growing energy interest across various countries, Chinese companies employ different forms of energy cooperation. In comparison with other Latin American countries, the Sino-Venezuelan model stands out as a unique example.

Raquel Shaoul analyzes the energy relations between Japan and Iran in the period 1979-2010. Shaoul's contribution evaluates Japan's energy security supply strategies, outcomes, and prospects throughout the building of its relationship with Iran.

Daniel Scholten analyzes the relationship between energy transition governance paradigms and renewable innovation processes in the Netherlands. Key in this effort is the idea of focusing on establishing general patterns at a higher abstraction level, i.e., sacrificing the detailed insights of in-depth case studies for the possibilities of generalization on an aggregate level.

Li Xiaohua examines China's policy experiments in the area of the development of a solar energy industry. China's photovoltaic and solar thermal industries have demonstrated rapid development in recent years, but the utilization of solar electricity and solar heat are quite different. The author compares the differences, and the causes of the differences, between the development characteristics of China's photovoltaic and solar thermal industries.

Mairon G. Bastos Lima examines the development of the Brazilian biofuel industry in recent decades and the associated geopolitical challenges, by analyzing the importance of geopolitics when it comes to the energy transition from fossil to renewable fuels, and the environmental implications of the large-scale biofuel production. The focus of his research is Brazil, the global leader in biofuel utilization and policymaking.

Edward Vermeer provides an analysis of China's hydropower development and the associated economic and ecological challenges. During the past few years, the Chinese government has formulated ambitious plans for building a large number of hydropower stations, but so far it has withheld final approval for the construction of the majority of these.

**M. Parvizi Amineh is Director of the Energy Programme Asia (EPA) at IIAS. He is also Adjunct Professor of International Relations at Webster University, Leiden, and member of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam (m.p.amineh@uva.nl)**

**Yang Guang is Director-General of the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of CASS, President of the Chinese Associations of Middle East Studies, Executive President of the Chinese Society of African Studies, and editor-in-chief of the academic journal West Asia and Africa (yangguang@cass.org.cn)**

#### Notes

- 1 Amineh, M. & Houweling, H. 2007. "Global Energy Security and Its Geopolitical Impediments: The Case of the Caspian", in Amineh, M.P. (ed.) 2007. *The Greater Middle East in Global Politics: Social Science Perspectives on the Changing Geography of the World Politics*. Leiden: Brill
- 2 Amineh, M.P. & Yang Guang (eds.) 2012. *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy: The Geopolitics of Energy Paths of China and the European Union*. Leiden-Boston-London: Brill Academic Publishers.

# The Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex



The focus here is on understanding current developments in the Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex and their relationship to the ‘Southern Corridor’ strategy of the European Union (EU) for insuring energy provisions from the Caspian Sea basin. This essay examines how the circum-Caspian region, in particular western Central Asia and the South Caucasus, are together acting so as to extend a geo-economic energy network from China to the EU. The emphasis is on influence and constraint upon choices concerning resource development, and on how those choices feed back into reconfigurations of those international constellations of influence. Regarding Central Asia, it concentrates on the evolution of energy development and export strategy in Turkmenistan; regarding the South Caucasus, it concentrates on Azerbaijan. Due to editorial limitations on length, the discussion is almost entirely on natural gas.

Robert M. Cutler

THE ORGANIZING APPROACH TAKEN is an east-to-west ‘ordering’. The first section below sets out the organizing categories and framework for analysis. A discussion then follows on Central Asia in general, in particular the evolution of Turkmenistan’s energy export policy; then, more comprehensively, prospects for the trans-Caspian transmission of natural gas from Central Asia for European destinations; and finally, the evolution of Azerbaijan’s energy policy with special, but not exclusive, attention to how this complements the EU’s ‘Southern Corridor’ strategy. The essay is closed with a summary of the argument and offers associated conclusions concerning the motives of the various players involved and the significance of this evolution of international ‘geo-economic’ energy relations on classically conceived geopolitics in the present and near future.

## The Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex

A ‘complexity science’ approach is appropriate for tracing the evolution of the Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex over the last two decades. The distinctive features of the approach are (1) a framework built around the three technical terms – ‘emergence’, ‘autopoiesis’, and ‘coherence’ – for explaining the self-organization of the energy networks and (2) the emphasis on different scales of analysis. The phases of emergence (1993-1998), autopoiesis (1999-2004), and coherence (2005-2010) respectively express the ‘bubbling-up’ of possibilities for new patterns of international relations, free from bipolar constraints; the ‘settling-down’ of unsustainable patterns of structuration of regional subsystems (including the beginning of their relatively autonomous self-direction of their own evolution as regional subsystems of international relations); and the ‘running-deep’ of reciprocal relations among those new subsystems (including their incipient coherence).

In that perspective, two facts about the evolution of the Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex are especially striking. The first is that bilateral Kazakhstan-Russia and Turkmenistan-Russia energy relations have been so important over the last twenty years that the Kazakhstan-Russia-Turkmenistan triangle may be analytically taken as the basis

from which the Central Eurasian hydrocarbon energy complex has evolved since then. (Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan energy relations are now developing as well, most notably, but not only, through cooperation over the gas pipeline to China). The second is that an inductive logic appears to govern how patterns in that evolution recur and recombine in different and ever-newer ways. There are evolutionary regularities in Caspian/Central Asia energy development and its connection with the South Caucasus through three phases over nearly the last two decades. However, their essence cannot be properly understood through the regular emphasis on bilateral relations in international studies; on the contrary, the focus on triangular relations is essential. Network sociologists have demonstrated that these have a dynamic that differs qualitatively from any aggregation or iteration of bilateral or dyadic relations.

In each of the three Central Asian phases described (1993-1998, 1999-2004, and 2005-2010), a different strategic player – a ‘fourth vertex’ – adds itself to the basic Kazakhstan-Russia-Turkmenistan energy triangle. Between 1993 and 1998, the fourth player that added itself to the Kazakhstan-Russia-Turkmenistan triangle was the US, creating a Kazakhstan-Russia-US triangle, immediately in evidence over the question of an export pipeline for Tengiz crude. American offshore terminals in the Gulf of Mexico were the first intended targets of Kazakhstani oil shipments. Also during these years, the US embassy in Almaty (then Kazakhstan’s capital) proved essential to Russia and Kazakhstan for the restructuring of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, in fact enabling the CPC’s pipeline to be subsequently built. Western interest in Turkmenistan at this time was exclusively from the US, concentrated on ameliorating Ukraine’s payments situation as an importer from Turkmenistan and also promoting the first attempt to negotiate a Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP). In the 1990s, US companies GE Capital, Bechtel and PSG were the driving forces behind this pipeline. The US-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan triangle remained undeveloped.

From 1999 to 2004, the EU became the fourth player associated with the fundamental Central Asian energy triangle, after the American project had failed. The EU’s latest initiative, led by the German company RWE, concerned a Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan gas link descending from that failed project. The EU-Russia-Kazakhstan triangle was manifested in European and Russian interest in developing the Kashagan deposit and other North Caspian fields in Kazakhstan’s offshore, though the European interest was from EU member states and their national champions, rather than from the EU itself. The EU-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan triangle was also manifested in the failed Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline project and other designs still on the drawing-board, with more or less direct successors being: the idea to pipe Kashagan’s associated gas to Azerbaijan, and the proposed Kazakhstan-Caspian Transportation System (KCTS), also for Kashagan if not Tengiz oil.

Finally in the third phase, from 2005 to 2010, China became the prominent fourth player. The China-Turkmenistan-Russia triangle is animated by disagreements between China and Russia over Turkmenistan’s natural gas, as in the competition between Russia’s unrealized project for a refurbished Caspian Coastal (Prikaspiiskii) Pipeline on the one hand and, on the other, the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline now under construction. The China-Kazakhstan-Russia triangle is also characterized by a China-Russia contradiction, in for example the China-Russia competition to buy out the Canadian firm Petrokazakhstan (previously Hurricane Hydrocarbons). Petrokazakhstan owned a piece of the pipeline that China needed to put together its Tengiz-Xinjiang oil pipeline, a westward extension of the pipeline from eastern Kazakhstan to China agreed upon in the late 1990s and which entered into service after long negotiations over implementation. The China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan triangle is evident in the gas pipeline, negotiated on the basis of a bilateral China-Kazakhstan project, now being built from Turkmenistan, through Uzbekistan, and then through Kazakhstan to western China. There, it will join up with the ‘West-East’ Pipeline in China running to the coast, which Beijing constructed earlier this decade, and for precisely this reason, at a financial loss.

Above: Following the South Caucasus Pipeline (left) Turkish Billboard, Ceyhan and (right) marker post, Azerbaijan. The natural gas pipeline from the Shah Deniz gas field in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea to Turkey runs parallel to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Right: Outskirts of Baku, Azerbaijan. Photographs reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

# New players, rules and conditions for the Caspian energy great game

As the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned in November 2010, the world is confronted with “unprecedented uncertainty” for maintaining global energy security, due to the present worldwide economic crisis, the twin challenges of climate change and global energy security, as well as the huge energy demand of Asia and in particular China. According to the IEA’s central scenario, the so-called ‘New Policies Scenario’ of 2011, world primary energy demand will increase by 40 percent between 2009 and 2035, with the non-OECD countries accounting for 90 percent of the projected increase.

Frank Umbach

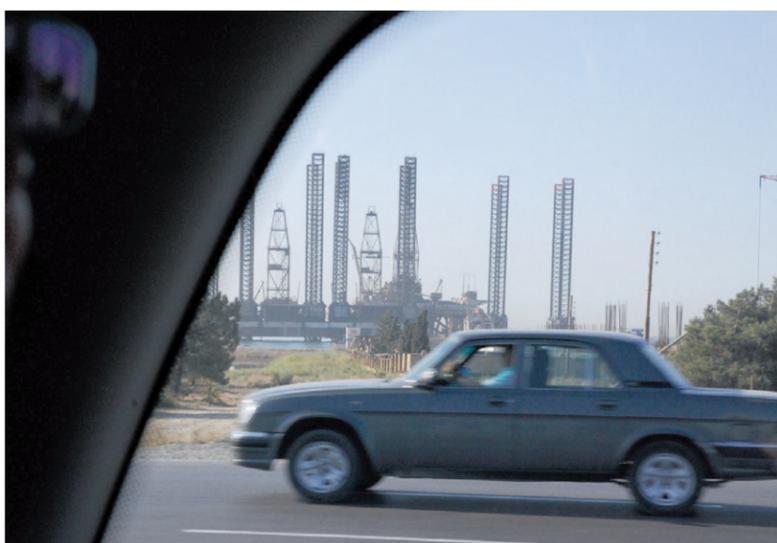


> Continued from page 24

## Eurasia and geo-economic developments

Thus in Greater Central Asia, there are three periods of epigenetic development (i.e., each building on or accumulating from what went before), starting from the basis of the Russia-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan triangle, and then successively adding the US, then the EU, then China, as fourth vertices, consecutively driving the evolution of the network as a whole. In the realm of Eurasian energy development, this means that the years 1993-1998 were marked principally by manifold proposals for new resource explorations and development, and pipeline construction as new possibilities for new patterns of international relations began to percolate from events on the ground, relatively free from the hierarchical constraints that characterized the bipolar Cold War system. The years 1999-2004 then saw the coming-to-life of some of those projects and the death (or suspended animation) of others; while from 2005 to 2010, some of those projects that were successfully born began to thrive.

*Other analysts of international relations, using different methods, have independently also projected the years around 2040 to be the next period of global-systemic transformation.*



HENCE, NEW LARGE SCALE INVESTMENT is required urgently at a time when geopolitical risks are rising: the high concentration of the world’s remaining oil and gas reserves in an ever-smaller number of potentially unstable producer states and regions, makes the future supply of energy increasingly uncertain. The perceived “unprecedented uncertainties” for maintaining global energy security are also the result of those non-economic factors such as the political stability of many producer states. Thus the Arab revolutions have caught the entire international world by surprise and led to supply disruptions of oil and gas to Europe and other parts of the world.

Understandably, Russia has tried to use the opportunity to present itself as a harbour of political stability for its oil and gas supplies to Europe, on which the EU can rely for its future energy security. However, and quite contrary to its self-portrayal, as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian energy crisis in 2006 and in 2009, Russia (as Europe’s most important energy partner) has been perceived as a rather unreliable and assertive partner, which uses the asymmetric interdependence with the EU-27 and its energy dependence on Gazprom as a foreign policy instrument to enforce its geopolitical influence in the Eurasian landmass.

While the global energy markets are more than ever determined by developments outside the OECD countries, particularly in China and India, Central Asia and the Caspian Region (CACR) with its regional oil and gas reserves have become increasingly important for the global energy security. Although these regional oil and gas reserves cannot replace the Persian Gulf (in terms of, e.g., oil supply), the region has become a strategically important fossil fuel supply base and has been identified both in the EU-27 as well as China at least as a ‘supplementary supplier’ and a rising diversification source for their oil and gas imports.

In recent years, the states of CACR have diversified their energy exports and energy foreign policies to China, the EU, and other energy partners. These new strategic trends, regional developments, and economic-political interdependencies offer new prospects, for both the regional states and their energy partners (Russia, China, Japan, the US, and the EU) in their energy and foreign policies. But they also create new challenges and problems when coping with the diverging interests of all sides in an increasingly more competitive international arena.

International regions today enjoy an increased relative autonomy of the general international system in comparison with the bipolar Cold War system. Not only have new international regional subsystems emerged, but also new categories of such regions as well; littoral basins, for example, have become more important, and regional international systems are more and more densely linked to one another. One key aspect, and the irrefutable geo-economic significance, of such littoral basins is international energy pipeline construction. Their profile in international public policy issues in the broad sense continues to grow through issues such as ecological security, applicable legal regimes, and the need to put cross-sea trade by the littoral states on a firm and regular footing.

The effects of these geo-economic developments upon international politics, traditionally conceived in terms of alliances and military power projection, is really a question of general approach. For example, China has recently emerged as an important player in the geo-economic configurations that govern, and also result from, the development and export of hydrocarbon energy resources in the region of the Caspian Sea basin. However, that increased profile would be impossible without the state-financial resources at Beijing’s disposal, which were aggregated over years of antecedent US government deficit spending. This development highlights, in particular, new aspects of world politics and economics that must be taken into account if their further evolution is to be projected.

Specifically, for a comprehensive geo-economic analysis, perhaps more closely approaching ‘critical geopolitics’, it would be necessary to engage in a much longer exercise, including not only traditional military-diplomatic as well as newer economic dimensions, but also financial instruments (which are distinct from economic ones), as well as ideological or political-cultural elements. In view of the lengthy advance planning that is necessary for energy geo-economic projects, and the emphasis that a comprehensive approach might put on ideologically or culturally constrained

## Russia’s declining geopolitical influence in the CACR

At first glance, Russia’s position appears stronger than ever. During the last decade, Russia’s strategy of increasing its own and Gazprom’s market leverage in the European gas market, by contractually locking in supplies, building new pipelines bypassing transit states, buying into European critical gas infrastructures (i.e., distribution system) and maintaining Gazprom’s monopoly over Russian exports, had mostly been successful. In 2010, thirteen European countries still relied on Russia for more than 80 percent of their total gas consumption; a total of seventeen countries were dependent on Russia for more than 80 percent of their gas imports.

Moreover, the IEA has forecasted that Russia’s projected increase of its gas production between 2009 and 2035 is greater than in any other gas producing country, accounting for no less than 17 percent of the worldwide gas supply increase. More recently, Gazprom officially opened its Nordstream pipeline last November, with a future volume of 55 bcm. This has given Russia more political and economic leverage over Ukraine in its negotiations with Gazprom over gas prices, but also with regards to Ukraine’s willingness to sell its Gas Transport System (GTS) pipeline network, and to join the Moscow-led Customs Union. Until recently, Ukraine transported around 80 percent of Russian gas exports to Europe via its own transit pipeline network.

In 2011, the Kremlin successfully forced Belarus to join the Customs Union and to sell the remaining 50 percent of its prized pipeline company Beltransgaz, to Gazprom, which also controls the entire Belarusian refinery network. In response, Belarus has received a more generous discount on Russian gas supplies, accounting now for US\$286 per 1,000 cubic metres (cm) in contrast to Ukraine’s imported gas from Russia at a rising price of more than US\$400 per 1,000 cm.

At the same time, however, alongside the growing LNG markets, which further pushed globalization, Gazprom has largely overlooked or has marginalized the development of unconventional gas in the US, particularly shale gas. The release of unconventional gas resources has triggered a revolution in the global gas markets. Unconventional gas not only transformed the US energy market, and especially the natural gas market, but it also was the tipping point of a fundamental change in global gas markets.

Continued on page 26 >

perceptions of the future, the still limited availability of non-hydrocarbon energy sources would not alter the fundamental direction of the analysis presented here, even if they became more available. This especially so in view of the relative non-substitutability of oil and gas fuels in the existing industrial plant and consumer commodities in the world economy.

The logic of the complex-scientific approach regards the three phases from 1993 through 2010 (emergence, autopoiesis, and coherence; or more colloquially, bubbling up, settling down, and running deep) as one large ‘meta-phase’ of emergence (bubbling up). This is followed by a ‘meta-phase’ of autopoiesis (settling down, 2011-28), which we are in fact now entering, and which in turn is also subdivided into three phases, each lasting for about five to six years. The emerging phase of the ‘meta-phase’ would thus run from 2011 through 2016, followed by the autopoiesis phase (2017-22) and the coherence phase (2023-28). After which time we could predict that a ‘meta-phase’ of ‘running deep’ (coherence), subdivided again into three phases, will follow from 2029 to 2046.

Other analysts of international relations, using different methods, have independently also projected the years around 2040 to be the next period of global-systemic transformation. This will undoubtedly also be felt in the Caspian Sea basin, and also in the geo-economics of the region. The central phase in the nested progression outlined above is clearly the middle phase of the middle meta-phase, i.e., 2017 through 2022. The projects today being planned for construction and entry into service during those years will therefore be the defining axes of development for the entire energy production sector from Central Europe to Central Asia, for the whole half-century following the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

**Robert M. Cutler is a senior researcher at the Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Carleton University, Canada (rmc@alum.mit.edu)**

## New players, rules and conditions for the Caspian energy great game *continued*

An increase in incremental US non-conventional shale gas production coincided with other critical economic, political, and technological factors – the drop in demand linked to the global recession and the arrival of new LNG delivery capacity – that all together created a sudden global ‘gas glut’. It laid the foundation for an expanded role of natural gas in the world economy. The IEA has already envisaged a ‘Golden Age of Gas’, during which it expects that around 35 percent of the global increase in gas production will come from unconventional gas sources. Between 2008 and 2035, it has forecasted an annual growth of 1.4 percent of natural gas consumption (altogether 44 percent), thus making it the only fossil fuel for which demand is higher in 2035 than in 2008.

While the EU is striving towards a liberalization of its energy markets, since 2001 Russia has been moving in the opposite direction. The EU’s declared energy and foreign policy interests in the Black Sea region and CACR have become another field of competing interests between the EU and Russia.

### New players and rules

At the same time, China has intensified its foreign energy policies to CACR as the result of a rapidly growing demand for energy, deteriorating prospects for major new energy discoveries in their own country, and rising oil and gas imports. The states of CACR themselves have diversified their energy exports, as well as energy foreign policies, to China and other energy partners. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have become not only more independent and self-confident, but are changing the regional conditions of the ‘Great Game’ as two recent examples highlight.

Firstly, on 26 December 2011, Azerbaijan and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to build a Trans-Anatolia Gas Pipeline (TANAP). Since then, the pipeline competition between the Nabucco, ITGI, TAP, SEEP, and the South Stream gas pipelines has increased. With TANAP being a game-changer, many observers believe that the original Nabucco project is no longer realistic. But a shorter Nabucco pipeline version or alternative project might become economically more realistic for the EU’s intention to get direct access to Caspian gas fields, circumventing Russian territory. Furthermore, the TANAP pipeline will give Azerbaijan direct access to European downstream markets and make it very price-competitive in Europe. In particular, this project would compete with future high-priced Russian pipeline gas from its frontier super-costly new gas fields in Yamal, Shtokman, or other Siberian or even Arctic gas fields. The TANAP project also indicates that Azerbaijan will control its European gas exports largely itself and, thereby, enhance its regional influence and geopolitical leverage.

Secondly, the EU’s direct involvement, since the autumn of 2011, in negotiations with Turkmenistan to accelerate the building of a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline has led to harsh criticism of Moscow. The Kremlin has warned both the EU and Turkmenistan against meddling in the affairs of the Caspian Sea and its traditional sphere of influence. The diplomatic war between Moscow and Ashgabat has escalated since last November when Gazprom cast doubts about Turkmenistan’s gas reserves. The Turkmen government not only dismissed those ‘unprofessional’ arguments, but has viewed Russia’s propaganda campaign as an attack on its independent energy policies and insisted on diversifying its energy exports. In response, the Kremlin and Russian



Above: Azeri oil drilling island, Caspian Sea.  
Below: On the outskirts of Sumgayit by the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan.  
Photos reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

commentators even threatened Turkmenistan and the EU with military force. In regard to the cooperation between the EU and Turkmenistan, the EU Commissioner for energy, Guenther Oettinger, noted on 24 January 2012 that the negotiations with Ashgabat are very ‘constructive’ and ‘intensive’ and could already lead to a final decision by June 2012, or at least before the end of the year.

Russia has insisted on a common definition of the legal status of the Caspian Sea and demands that no Trans-Caspian pipeline should go ahead without the approval of all five coastal states. In its view, all greater energy projects threatening the environment of the Caspian Sea need to be approved by the consensus of all littoral states. But Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, the EU, and the US have all denied those demands. They have noted that only a bilateral agreement between Ashgabat and Baku is sufficient to build a Trans-Caspian pipeline, which will include international standards of environmental protection. It is clear that Russia has no interest in giving up its present gas export monopoly for Caspian, and in particular Turkmen, gas. Hence it also has no interest in solving the legal status of the Caspian Sea for the time being.

While Russia seeks to continue preventing Turkmenistan from forging closer energy relations with the West and to control the country’s energy ties to China and Iran, the Turkmen government prefers to use its vast gas resources

to maximize its energy revenues, balance its foreign relationships with a neutral policy, and avoid Russia’s alliance system such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Union.

At the same time, CACR itself has become increasingly fractured because the regional states have developed their national energy, economic and foreign policies in very different directions and with contrasting, and often competing, perspectives. Hence the CACR has increasingly become just a geographic, but ever-less coherent, political-economic entity and common or united political-economic actor.

However, as the core and hub of economic integration of the Eurasian super-continent, the Black Sea region and CACR will play a key role in the development of a transcontinental transport infrastructure, linking Europe with Russia and Asia for the rapidly expanding trans-continental Eurasian trade and capital flows.

**Frank Umbach is currently senior associate and head of the International Energy Security Program at the Centre for European Security Strategies (CESS) GmbH, Munich-Berlin and associate director of the European Centre for Energy and Resource Security (EUCERS), Department of War Studies, King’s College London (umbach@cess-net.eu)**



# China's foreign energy policy towards Iran

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Middle East was not among the priorities of China's foreign strategy. After the Bandung Conference in 1955, however, China started promoting relations with Arab states. Between 1956 and 1990, China established official relations with all Arab states. The first was Egypt in 1956, the last was Saudi Arabia in 1990. China established diplomatic relations with Iran in 1971.

Yu Guoqing



## The Sino-Iranian relation is an integral part of China's Middle East diplomacy

The Sino-Iran relationship is often influenced by the US-Iran and the China-US relationships. For a long time China's position towards the Middle East was politically motivated, in which the two polities routinely supported each other. For example, China has always supported the Arab states' quest against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, while the Middle-Eastern states recognize the PRC as the sole legal government of China. But now, due to China's rapid economic growth, China and the oil-producing states of the region also have great interests in the field of energy cooperation.

In 1994 China became a net oil importing country, and the Arab oil-producing states, including Iran, became increasingly important for China's energy security strategy. In 2000, the President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, visited China; as a result, China and Iran issued a joint communiqué in which both states agreed to establish a long, stable, and friendly cooperation.<sup>1</sup> During the visit of China's President, Jiang Zemin, to Iran in 2002, the two states signed six governmental cooperation agreements. In 2004, China and the Arab states set up the China-Arabia national cooperation forum; ever since, the relationship between China and Iran has developed steadily, and officials from the two states have met regularly in the international arenas. In 2006, the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, joined the summit of SCO in Shanghai and met with his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao. On 15-16 June 2009, shortly after the post-election turmoil in Tehran, Ahmadinejad joined the leadership summit of the SCO in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, and again held a meeting with Hu Jintao. On 11 June 2010, he again visited China and attended the ceremony of the Iranian National Pavilion Day at the Shanghai Expo. In April 2012, Faro Lathief Zande, the Vice President of Iran, visited China.

## Energy cooperation is becoming the core of China's foreign policy towards Iran

In 1995 China began to import large volumes of crude oil from Iran. In 2002, China and Iran signed 10-year long-term oil trade agreements. By 2008 the total volume of trade between China and Iran reached US\$20 billion and approximately 65 percent of this was oil trading. In 2008 and 2010, Iran was the third biggest exporter of oil to China (after Saudi Arabia and Angola).

The Sino-Iranian oil cooperation has made substantial progress in the past decade, due to the fact that Iran has allowed Chinese companies to exploit its oil and gas fields. CNPC, China's largest national oil company, was given exploitation rights in 2004,<sup>2</sup> while Sinopec signed a US\$70 billion oil and natural gas agreement with Iran (China's biggest energy deal with Iran). Under a MoU signed in 2004, Sinopec Group will buy 250 million tons of liquefied natural gas over 30 years and develop the giant Yadavaran field.

Iran is also committed to export 150,000 barrels per day of crude oil to China for 25 years at market price, after the commission of the field. Official figures show that China imported 226 million tons of oil in 2003, 13 percent of which came from Iran. On 15 January 2009, CNPC signed a US\$1.76 billion contract with the National Iranian Oil Company to develop an oil field in western Iran, while Petro China Co. will develop the North Azadegan oilfield, which holds six billion barrels. On 3 August 2009, CNPC signed a US\$4.7 billion contract with the Iranian national oil company to exploit the South Pars gas field. Interestingly, the original deal was supposed to be signed with the French company TOTAL.<sup>3</sup>

## Sino-Iran energy cooperation: domestic and geopolitical factors

The Sino-Iranian energy cooperation is greatly advantageous for both China and Iran. But why is it that Chinese oil companies have even defeated some western oil companies in obtaining oil business in Iran? First of all, Chinese state-owned oil companies have great advantages in obtaining overseas oil contracts. In the last twenty years, there has been an obvious international trend of many state-owned oil companies surpassing many traditional western private oil companies in oil reserves and market occupation. For example, in 2006, the world's ten largest oil reserves were all state-owned oil companies, while China's Petro China was the fourth largest oil company in the world in investing on oil exploitation. In order to fulfil the national interest, Chinese state-owned oil companies seek not only commercial profit, but also seek to obtain strategic oil reserves and resources, for which the national banks of China provide sufficient funds and credit support to Chinese oil companies. When it comes to Iran, the fact that oil and gas reserves are state-owned is highly relevant. Following the nationalisation of oil and gas reserves and infrastructure in the 1950s, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has the right to decide on its oil cooperation partners. In fact, almost all Chinese oil companies present in Iran have signed their oil contracts with NIOC.

The Chinese oil companies will certainly consider chasing oil business in Iran, but at the present time they are more concerned with securing long-term oil reserves and a high volume of market occupation. The commercial action and business deals in Iran reflect the intent of China's oil security strategy. In this sense, the commercial interest of the oil companies, energy security, and China's national interest in Iran are compatible. Another reason for the Chinese oil companies to develop oil business in Iran is the fact that Iran links two important oil-producing regions: the Middle East and the Caspian Sea/Central Asia region. The states in both regions are among China's most important oil exporters, and Iran controls many international oil pipelines that grant access to Central and South Asia. China has already built an oil pipeline from Central Asia to China's northwest territories, and so China is able to import oil from Iran to China via Central Asia.

## The future challenges and opportunities for the Sino-Iranian relationship

China should realize that Iran finds itself in a complicated geopolitical situation. Firstly, Iran's nuclear issue still needs to be resolved. While the US president, Barack Obama, pursues engagement with Iran, Iranian leaders seem to continue their hard policy towards the US. Additionally, the UN has passed several resolutions sanctioning Iran, and the US and some European Union member states plan to impose further sanctions. If such sanctions include the ban of oil and gas business between Iran and external partners, the Sino-Iranian energy cooperation will of course be adversely affected. In fact, for both China and Iran, the most important thing is how to deal with such sanctions and to prevent any possible military action targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, since this too would undermine the Sino-Iranian energy cooperation.

On 9 June 2010, the UN Security Council (UNSC) decided on further sanctions against Iran. Resolution 1929 is the fourth set of UN sanctions against Iran since December 2006. It prohibits Iran from investing abroad in nuclear and enrichment operations and imposes new restrictions on the import of conventional arms. Shortly after the UNSC passed the resolution, the spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry reiterated that "the UN's adoption of a new resolution on the Iranian nuclear issue does not close the door on diplomatic efforts".<sup>4</sup>

Though the UNSC has passed several resolutions sanctioning Iran, China believes that the Sino-Iranian oil cooperation does not violate them. For China, the unilateral sanctions imposed by the US, the EU, and other Western states cannot restrain China from cooperating with Iran. Iran still appreciates China as an important oil cooperation partner. On 11 June 2010, two days after the UNSC imposed further sanctions on Iran, Ahmadinejad visited China and attended the Shanghai Expo.

How can one assess the impact of the UNSC resolutions on Iran? So far, four resolutions sanctioning Iran have been passed, but Iran seems indifferent towards the consequences.

The US government is still considering building a broader coalition of partners for sanctions. By doing this, the US hopes to accomplish two, potentially irreconcilable, goals: forcing Iran to negotiate its nuclear program (which the US and its allies suspect is aimed at creating nuclear weapons), and at the same time winning the support of Russia and China, which are eager to preserve their significant economic ties with Iran.

The different geopolitical situations and international statuses of China and Iran mean that they also have different considerations. China is a rising power with important international influence and good relations with almost with all countries. Additionally, it is a permanent member of the UNSC and is committed to broad international responsibility. For example, on the Iran's nuclear issue, China will certainly consider Iran's interests and legitimate demands, but will also take into account the international appeals, hoping that Iran obeys the conditions of the IAEA and the resolutions of the UNSC. Iran often overestimates its own importance as an ally, and underestimates its liabilities. It can try to play the China card against the West, threatening a strategy reorientation. Such a policy may be credible as a simple and natural recalibration of Iran's diplomacy and commercial interests, but in an interdependent, globalized world, playing the China card is very risky and self-defeating.

The most serious challenge for the future of the Sino-Iranian relationship depends on two factors. The first one is the status of Iran's energy cooperation with China. Since 2011, as a result of the sanctions and some technical causes, China has reduced its oil imports from Iran. However, considering China's huge energy investments in Iran in the past, Iran will keep the status of one of the main oil exporters in the world. The second factor is the future development of Iran's nuclear issue. China will follow two parallel tracks: consider its own interests, while taking into account other national requirements and compliance with UNSC resolutions.

**Yu Guoqing is associate professor at the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (yangguang@cass.org.cn)**

## Notes

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# China's energy policy towards the Caspian region:<sup>1</sup> the case of Kazakhstan

Energy security is an important component of national security as a whole. In the past 20 years, with China's economy developing rapidly, its demand for oil has also grown. According to the 2009 forecast by the International Environmental Organization (IEO), the world's total energy consumption will increase by about 44 percent annually, between 2006 and 2030. The estimation is that the non-OECD economies will show the largest increase in energy demand. China and India are the two fastest-growing non-OECD economies, and they will be key world energy consumers in the future.

Zhao Huirong & Wu Hongwei

## Guaranteeing energy supplies

Chinese economic growth structure and the pace of it made China the world's second largest oil consumer in 2003; the US was the first. The 17th session of the Chinese National People's Congress mentioned that the next five years will be crucial for China to achieve its goal of quadrupling Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita by 2020 (compared to 2000), and to build a "comprehensive medium prosperous society". To achieve this goal, energy supply must be guaranteed.

Based on China's current energy demand and supply situation, China must both develop the domestic potential capability and actively seek overseas energy resources in order to ensure its energy supply. One such overseas resource is found in the region of the Caspian Sea, which hosts one of the world's largest oil and gas reserves; according to BP's 2009 Statistical Review of World Energy, the oil reserves of the states of the Caspian basin were estimated at 36.2 thousand million tonnes, or 21 percent of the world's proven reserves. However, in terms of significance to the global energy market, gas is even more important than oil. By the end of 2008, the gas reserves of the Caspian basin states were estimated to be 84.91 trillion cubic metres, or 46 percent of the world's proven reserves.<sup>2</sup>

China entered the Great Game in the Caspian region later than the other players, but the energy cooperation between the two parties has progressed significantly. Especially the cooperation between China and Kazakhstan will play an important role in helping China to expand energy cooperation into the other Caspian basin states. Since the mid-1990s, the competition for energy in the Caspian Sea region has been increasingly fierce. The prospects of massive gains for energy companies is apparent, and the Caspian Sea is about to become a hotspot as energy-hungry countries race to secure their shares in the exploitation of the vast energy resources. However, the exploitation of oil and gas is impeded by unsettled disputes over the distribution of energy resources among the littoral states of the Caspian Sea. Only Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan have signed a demarcation agreement and have started exploring and developing the region.

Most of the energy resources exploited in the Caspian Sea are exported. Thus, an increase in production is dependent upon the development of the downstream infrastructure. The direction in which the Caspian Sea countries choose to build their export pipelines to the international markets is the focus of the competition in the related countries. This is mainly because all existing or designed pipeline projects are connected to specific geopolitical and economic interests, but also to those interests of the large international companies. Currently, three of the pipelines that export oil from the region pass through the Russian port of Novorossiysk, two are westbound, while one is currently under construction.

Additionally, there are four existing natural gas pipelines in the region: the 'Central Asia-Center' (CAC) gas pipeline system, the 'Blue Stream' connecting Russia with Turkey, the Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi-

Erzurum pipeline. Another pipeline, the China-Central Asia gas pipeline, is currently under construction. How to further promote energy cooperation with the Caspian states and promote harmonious development in the region is an important quest for China.

## China's energy policy for the Caspian region

The Chinese government has developed its own energy strategy. Energy security means reliable energy sources, smooth transport, and stable prices. In order to ensure these three points, cooperation with only energy producing states, transit states, or energy consuming states is not enough. Instead, China's energy security concept advocates the strengthening of multilateral cooperation, mutual benefit, and win-win resolution. Those can be achieved only by mutual cooperation to secure the global oil supply.

How will China implement its energy policy in the Caspian region? Kazakhstan is a Caspian littoral state rich in energy resources. Compared to the energy cooperation between China and other Caspian littoral states, the energy cooperation with Kazakhstan is more prominent, runs relatively smoothly, and is comparatively successful. In fact, the energy cooperation between those two countries can be seen as representative of the wider cooperation between China and the Caspian region states.

The government of China and Chinese companies play different roles. The government attaches a lot of importance to the energy cooperation with Kazakhstan, since it has a lot of potential, and is considered to be a way to ensure energy security. Simultaneously, strengthening the energy cooperation is conducive to the consolidation of bilateral friendly relations. For this reason the government of China tries to extend its support to Chinese companies, just as all countries support their native companies, under the condition of policy and law permission. More specifically, the government's good neighbouring policy and the western development policy give the Chinese oil companies a good environment to cooperate with their partners. China respects and understands the states that choose their developing model according to their national conditions, and advocate diversity and the democratization of international relations. Inter-governmental cooperation plays a key role in guaranteeing the energy cooperation between the two countries. While implementing the energy cooperation with Kazakhstan, the government of China provided all possible assistance and loans to support the construction of infrastructure and the improvement of the population's living conditions. Additionally, the Chinese government actively supports the financial, agricultural, and other non-energy sector cooperation between the two sides, and has signed many relevant legal documents with Kazakhstan about energy cooperation. All these actions have been welcomed by Kazakhstan, and have played an important role in promoting energy cooperation between the two parties.

Unlike many companies with high operating costs, Chinese companies have low costs and high efficiency advantages. Chinese enterprises focus on both economy and social

benefits, and are appreciated by their partners. Chinese enterprises also adopt a flexible management model and advocate unity and an integration corporate culture, pay attention to establishing harmonious relations with the local government, parliament and trade unions, abide by the law, respect the local customs and habits of partners, and try to build close relationships with local populations.

In order to understand how the relationship between China and Kazakhstan has achieved such remarkable results in a very short period of time, we have to admit that there are many objective factors that have played an important role in promoting bilateral energy cooperation. First of all, China and Kazakhstan are neighbours. Second, since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Kazakhstan, the bilateral relations have been stable and healthy, and that has laid a sound political foundation for both sides to develop bilateral energy cooperation. Third, the good relationship between the two countries' leaders is conducive to developing bilateral energy cooperation. Fourth, the energy cooperation between the two countries can result in mutual benefits and a win-win situation. Fifth, both states are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, through which they continuously expand and deepen the cooperation in the energy field. Sixth, the energy cooperation between the two countries also has cultural advantages.

What is the future of China's energy policy for the Caspian region? China is still in a disadvantaged position to compete for energy resources in the Caspian region. China has only made some outstanding achievements with Kazakhstan in the energy cooperation field. The cooperation with the other Caspian states is still at a very early stage, facing many difficulties. However, in the context of the global financial crisis, the strong trend of China's economic development and harmonious diplomatic philosophy will support China to get a place in the future energy competition map in the Caspian region.

**Zhao Huirong is associate professor at the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IREECAS CASS) (zhuirong@cass.org.cn)**

**Wu Hongwei is Director of the Central Asian Department of the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IREECAS CASS) (wuhw@cass.org.cn)**

## Notes

- 1 The Caspian Sea regional countries in this essay refer to the five countries around the Caspian Sea, including Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran.
- 2 Among them, the proven gas reserves of Azerbaijan are approximately 1.20 trillion cubic metres, Kazakhstan's are approximately 1.82 trillion cubic metres, Russia's are 43.3 trillion cubic metres, Turkmenistan's are about 7.94 trillion cubic metres, Uzbekistan's are 1.58 trillion cubic metres, while Iran's are 29.61 trillion cubic metres.

Below: State oil company complex, Kazakhstan. Photo reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.



# Energy ties and the China-Angola strategic partnership



China and Angola made a historic breakthrough in their relations on 20 November 2010, symbolized by the release of the Joint Communiqué on the Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Angola during Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping's state visit to Angola. China has established a strategic partnership with many foreign countries, but very few in Africa. The release of the joint communiqué indicates that China-Angola relations have been elevated to a new status in terms of strategic cooperation.

Chen Mo

DURING RECENT DECADES, a number of bilateral interests have been developed between China and Angola and the contents of their strategic mutual cooperation have expanded rapidly. These interests can be classified according to three aspects: initially, relations were developed around mutual political support; this was followed by closer economic ties between the two countries and mutual benefits from economic and trade exchanges; most recently, this has also evolved into the mutual protection of energy security. These three pillars of strategic partnership – politics, energy, and economic and trade relations – lay a solid foundation for continued bilateral relations between China and Angola. In the new century, increased energy relations have played an increasingly important role and, indeed, have become the key factor in propelling the development of the strategic partnership.

## Political cooperation

Developing countries such as Angola form the basis of China's diplomacy. Supporting African national liberation movements and establishing diplomatic relations with newly independent African countries is an important part of China's diplomatic strategy. China's support for Angola's national liberation movement forged a deep political friendship and mutual trust between the two states. China provided support to all the major parties that fought against Portuguese colonialism during the Angolan civil war. Also, when Angola started economic reconstruction after the civil war, it faced challenges in terms of choosing a development path. China, who has always insisted on a policy of non-interference, helped Angola to resist the pressures exerted by the IMF, by showing its respect for Angola's development path choices and providing loans to the country.

When Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, met with Antonio Paulo Kassom, President of the National Assembly of Angola, in May 2011, Wu restated that China firmly supports the development path chosen by the Angolan people according to their own national conditions. In turn, Angola has shown its explicit support on important issues relating to China's state sovereignty and territorial integrity, in particular relating to the issue of Taiwan.

## Oil cooperation

Oil cooperation has played a crucial role in promoting the development of political relations between China and Angola, and has added new and important content to their bilateral relations. When Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping visited Angola in November 2010, he signed the Joint Communiqué on the Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Angola in Luanda. It is true that both states are willing to implement cooperation projects and continue to encourage and support the enterprises and financial institutions of the two countries, as well as to expand trade and investment that will strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation in key sectors, including agriculture, industry, infrastructure construction, urban construction and exploration for energy and mineral resources.

In 1996, China changed from a net exporter of oil to a net importer, as its domestic oil output could no longer meet the demands of rapid economic development. Consequently, seeking out oil suppliers is of great importance to China's economic security. Angola, as an emerging oil exporter, has provided good opportunities in this respect due to the concerns of China's oil import security strategy. For Angola, an emerging oil exporter with oil as its pillar industry, oil economy contributes about half of its GDP, and oil exports account for more than 90 percent of its total export value. Long-term security of oil exports is of strategic importance to the country's post-war reconstruction and development. China's economic growth and its soaring imports of oil undoubtedly provide a potentially huge market and a strategic choice for Angola's long-term oil export. China's energy import security and Angola's oil export strategy are mutually complementary, which is an important driving force behind the two countries' oil trade.

Another important aspect of China-Angola oil cooperation is oil exploration and drilling. In order to develop, Angola's oil industry needs cooperation with international oil companies. At the same time, Chinese oil companies, keen to expand their overseas business, want to invest in and exploit oil resources in overseas oil production bases. However, Angola's oil exploration business is largely controlled by its own oil companies as well as Western oil giants, and generally speaking, Chinese oil companies' share in Angolan oil exploration is very limited. Hence, there is huge potential for Chinese oil companies' direct investment in the Angolan oil industry, though it will unlikely change the fact that China-Angola bilateral energy relations are dominated by China's purchase of Angolan oil.

China and Angola have also tried to cooperate in the downstream oil industry, although no real progress has been made. There is only one refinery in Angola, but its gasoline production is inadequate in the face of the huge demand for post-war reconstruction. Queuing for gasoline is a common phenomenon in Angola and there is an urgent need to set up new refineries in the country. Due to the large local demand in Angola, it is still possible that the two sides may in the future strike a deal in the downstream oil field.

In summary, China-Angola cooperation has a bright future. The countries are strategically complementary in terms of economic security and oil cooperation plays a vital role in establishing the strategic partnership and further enriches the content of their bilateral cooperation in the new century.

## Oil behind the curtain

As developing countries, the major task for both China and Angola is to boost economic development. Realizing common economic development on the basis of mutual benefit is a solid foundation for their strategic partnership. In the context of China-Angola relations, oil supply remains China's main strategic interest, while infrastructure construction is, without doubt, the top priority for Angola's post-war reconstruction. The cooperation between China and Angola in terms of infrastructure construction further enriches the content of their strategic partnership and offers new points of growth for bilateral relations.

Big dump trucks with Chinese drivers can be seen everywhere in Angola. Photo reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

These three pillars of strategic partnership – politics, energy, and economic and trade relations – lay a solid foundation for continued bilateral relations between China and Angola.

In 2002, the 27-year-long civil war ended in Angola and the country started rebuilding its economy and society. Consequently, Angola's top priority in the post-war period is to rebuild its infrastructure. This includes the restoration and reconstruction of transportation facilities as well as social public service installations such as hospitals and schools. China embarked on overseas construction and engineering business in the late 1970s and it has an experienced overseas construction team capable of providing general contracts and complete sets of equipment, as well as providing low-cost labor and equipment after more than 20 years of practice in regions such as the Middle East and Africa. China has since become a major contractor in the international construction and engineering market. The huge demand for post-war infrastructure construction provided new business opportunities for Chinese engineering companies. To take advantage of these opportunities, Chinese companies immediately moved into Angola and became the backbone for Angola's post-war reconstruction. The war had led to enormous damage to infrastructure projects such as airports, harbors, roads, housing and railways. The participating Chinese companies also incurred huge losses, but in the face of the sweeping financial crisis,

most of the Chinese companies chose to pull through the hard times together with the Angolans. In the most critical period of the Angolan economic recession, none of the large Chinese state-owned enterprises walked away from their original contracts. Just like cooperation in the oil industry, construction and engineering has become an important part of the strategic partnership between China and Angola in the new century.

It is worth mentioning that the financing model supporting China's large-scale participation in Angola's post-war reconstruction is closely related to oil. To a large extent, oil is the pillar that safeguards China's participation in Angola's post-war reconstruction and many of the projects are financed by loans from the Export-Import Bank of China. Providing favorable loans is a fundamental form of Chinese government support to Angola. These loans are guaranteed by Angola's oil income. The China-Angola loan mode has some new features, including that the loan is secured, protected against capital abuse, guaranteed by government and under rigorous supervision.

To date, China has already provided loans to Angola in three phases. Angola welcomes Chinese loans as they have no political strings attached. In the meantime, there has never been an issue of Angola-related bad debts for the Export-Import Bank of China as the loans are guaranteed by oil income. Both sides are very pleased with the 'oil-for-loans' cooperation model, which supports Angola's post-war reconstruction. They believe this cooperation is mutually beneficial. It is safe to assume that cooperation, guaranteed by oil, between China and Angola will continue and expand.

## Summary

China-Angola relations, and the strategic partnership, are not confined to energy relations. The sound relations between China and Angola are built on long-term mutual trust and support on the political front, and are based on mutual support and reliance in terms of development. Mutual benefit, win-win outcome and common development are long-standing characteristics of China-Angola relations. As Wang Qishan, Vice Premier of the State Council of China, has stated, cooperation between China and Angola is the backbone of bilateral relations. In recent years, both sides, by bringing their advantages into full play, have cooperated in the fields of economy and trade, investment, energy and finance, making enormous contributions to the national construction and economic development of both countries, and to promoting regional peace and prosperity. As Joao Bernardo, Ambassador of Angola to China, said, China has participated in developing Angola's resources and brought development to Angola, and it was mutually beneficial in that the Angolans were able to enjoy the rich natural resources of their own country. The significance of energy as a new element in bilateral relations in the new century lies in that it expands the base of political and economic cooperation and plays a key role in promoting strategic bilateral relations.

Chen Mo is associate professor at the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IWAAS CASS) (chenmo@cass.org.cn)

# The dragon's oil politics in Latin America

The China-Latin American relationship has numerous strategic implications in the current international political and economic power transformation, whereby the world's economic centre of gravity is gradually shifting towards the emerging economies. Particularly, the energy-related ties between China and Latin America have gone through great developments within the oil and gas intra-industry collaborations, including crude oil trade, investments, loans-for-oil, technical equipment purchases, mergers and acquisitions, etc. Without a doubt, the Sino-Latin American energy cooperation is a significant aspect of the emerging new energy order currently witnessed in the Western Hemisphere.

Sun Hongbo

CHINA'S PARTNER COUNTRIES in this region include Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica, Peru, Argentina and Columbia, with the first three of those countries involved in nearly 80% of the Chinese oil-linked projects. Politically, China's above-mentioned partners range widely from the left to the right of the spectrum. With respect to their style of strategy, Chinese oil companies in Latin America are often described by media and scholars as aggressive, risk-loving and opportunistic.

Chinese oil companies made opportune use of three significant occurrences in the Latin American countries (LAC): the open hydrocarbon industry and privatization in the 1990's, the nationalization by leftwing governments (2003-2007), and the international financial crisis (2008-2011). In 1993, CNPC, one of China's national oil companies, won exploration rights in Peru; it proved to be a milestone for China's energy cooperation with LAC. In addition to a large number of loan-for-oil deals with Venezuela, Brazil and Ecuador, in 2010, thirteen new big deals were made by Chinese oil companies in LAC, including the mergers and acquisitions of the regional assets of international oil companies such as Repsol, Pan American Energy, and Occidental Petroleum.

LAC in itself cannot safeguard China's energy security. However, China regards LAC as a potential region to diversify her crude oil import. According to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy, China imported 25.3 million tons of crude oil from LAC in 2010, accounting for 8.6 percent of Chinese

global imports and 10 percent of Latin American world exports. Taking into consideration the new offshore discoveries in Brazil and the huge proven reserves in Venezuela, without a doubt, the two countries could be viewed in the future as China's and India's sustainable strategic crude oil suppliers. It should be emphasized that the volume of oil trade between Asian countries and LAC has been steadily rising. From 2004 to 2010, LAC's oil export to Asia increased from 4.38 percent to 18.80 percent of its total global export.

## China's 'Going Global Strategy'

The guarantee of energy security, and the Chinese national 'Going Global Strategy', which encourages national enterprises to invest overseas, are fundamental factors highly integrated into Chinese policy towards Latin America. A new trend emerging from this situation is the increased cooperation between financial organizations and national oil companies. Their commercial patterns in LAC can be summed up with seven key fields of cooperation: 1) crude oil trade, 2) technical services, 3) joint development, 4) infrastructure-building participation, 5) loan-for-oil, 6) heavy technical equipment transactions, 7) bio-fuels technology joint research.

The bulk of the cooperation between China and LAC is still in a primitive development stage and can hardly be defined as a mature pattern. In comparison with other Latin American countries, the Sino-Venezuelan Model stands out as a unique representative example that can explain the dynamics of the two countries' oil cooperation from governmental and corporate perspectives. I have also previously noted that the Sino-Venezuelan Model is a plural collaboration pattern with energy as the cooperation axis and extended to infrastructure, high-tech, agriculture and other fields under the intergovernmental institutionalized cooperative framework. It is financed by Chinese banks or oil companies in the form of credit or investment. Chinese participatory companies in this model will be repaid by Venezuelan crude oil.

The Sino-Venezuelan Model is a special case in China's energy collaboration landscape with Latin America. This model's architecture can be deconstructed into three integrated parts: a policy-making centre, an open participatory pivot, and a financing pool. The China-Venezuela High Level Mixed Joint Committee works as the inter-governmental institutionalized cooperative framework, functioning as a political decision-making centre for cooperation; oil is the pivot in this cooperation mechanism with high participatory openness beyond oil, extending to other fields and attracting non-oil companies to join in; for solving capital shortage, the China-Venezuelan Joint Fund operates like a financing pool with large amounts of credit provided by Chinese financial institutions or companies. Chinese companies are repaid in the form of crude oil or by the Joint Fund.

In essence, its innovative design lies in multiple contractual arrangements. Combined with Venezuelan interest, this kind of bilateral cooperation architecture design is an extraordinary trial with the economic strength of China's rise at the regional level. It is, however, too early to say that this model has reached maturity, because of Venezuelan's political uncertainty. Strictly speaking, the core of this broad cooperation mechanism absolutely focuses on Venezuelan oil production. Only if Venezuela can continue to produce crude oil and maintain the political willingness to export oil to China, will this model operate well.

The Sino-Venezuelan energy cooperation began in November 1985, when the two countries signed the protocol on scientific and technological cooperation in oil survey and exploration. This period was a trial process for both countries to explore the possibilities of collaboration, but the agreement clearly expressed that they were aware of the fact that the hydrocarbon cooperation could not be ignored. In November 1996, during Chinese Premier Li Peng's visit to Venezuela, the two governments signed an agreement on joint oil exploitation. Since then, the cooperation between the two countries materialized and has been successfully deepened. Among the cooperation partner countries, Venezuela has been a unique one in South America. Its relationship with China has witnessed an unprecedented leap-forward since the beginning of Hugo Chavez's presidency in 1999. Venezuelan oil has been a driving force, propelling their bilateral ties during Chavez's administration.

The Sino-Venezuelan energy cooperation has become an important component of bilateral cooperation, as it has increased considerably over the past decade. At present, both countries have been working towards establishing Venezuela as one of China's leading partners in terms of crude oil production and by-products. Thanks to the support of the two governments and the joint efforts of enterprises, both sides have deepened the fruitful cooperation in oil exploration and development, engineering technology services, trading, transportation and refining, etc. Another new important trend in the Sino-Venezuelan energy cooperation model is the integration of hydrocarbon upstream and downstream between the both countries.

China has also attached great importance to renewable energy cooperation with LAC. Since the 1980s, China has provided technical and financial assistance to build small-hydro power plants in Cuba, Ecuador, Guyana, Columbia, and others. In 2006, China helped Cuba to build a solar cell production line with Chinese photovoltaic technology. In 2009, China and Brazil founded China-Brazil Center for Climate Change and Innovative Technology for Energy. In the 3rd China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum in September 2011, China announced that it will help the Caribbean countries to build small-scale new energy projects, such as those with solar power.

With her booming economy and rapidly rising influence on the international stage, China has been increasingly attractive to Latin American countries and has become an important destination for them to diversify their external political and economic relations. It is not surprising that Latin America, with its abundance of hydrocarbon resources, views China as an important partner for its international energy cooperation. The primary goal of all governments involved is to maximize their oil import or export security by implementing geopolitical diversification strategies; for oil companies it is to maximize profits by adopting different commercial operation patterns in resource countries.

Although there are no explicit official documents available, China's detailed energy cooperation policies in LAC can, to some extent, be understood by analyzing its policy intentions and the national oil companies' behaviour. From the Chinese governmental perspective, policy-makers regard LAC as a strategic alternative to diversify crude oil import to maximize energy security, and national oil companies are able to act as agents to realize this target at low costs through corporative operations in this region.

While opportunities for investment are present for both China and Latin America, China's national oil companies are confronted with risks of social conflict at the local level, political instability, intense commercial competition, environmental clauses, and the uncertain US response to China's presence in the region. In order to cope with the relatively complex business environment in Latin America, Chinese companies need to improve their learning capacity to increase localization and gain more expertise in human resource management. In fact, China's growing energy interest in Latin America goes far beyond the performance of oil companies. Therefore, it is essential for China and Latin America to establish inter-governmental policy dialogues and information exchange mechanisms.

When operating in LAC, China's oil companies should consider not only China's domestic energy needs and their own international operational interests, but also regional politics, specific policy changes, and other diverse factors. China should seek out cooperative opportunities in LAC, but must approach steadily and carefully; avoid going in blind, and beware of the tendency toward 'swarming'. China should be cautious, which involves successful risk assessment and a responsible examination of country-specific investment opportunities.

Sun Hongbo is associate professor at the Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS) of China's Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (sunhb@cass.org.cn)

Right:  
Chinese workers  
in Venezuela.  
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## Japan and Iran: an evaluation of relationship-building in the context of energy security supply

Japan's dealings with Iran have been those of a close and long-term relationship. Relations with Iran date back to 1953 when the first direct oil deal with the government of Iran, through Idemitsu Kosan Co. Ltd, was agreed upon. Additional significant oil experiences in Iran have taken place since 1968, when the Japanese government dispatched a Mitsui Company mission to investigate the feasibility of joint petro-chemical production in Iran, which led to the establishment of the Iran-Japan Petrochemical Company (IJPC) in 1973. Despite the fact that the IJPC joint venture terminated prematurely and under bad terms, this did not affect Japan's overall energy cooperation with Iran.

Raquel Shaoul



LIKEWISE, NEGATIVE FACTORS impacting Iran's energy capabilities and oil transactions during the 1980s and the 1990s, such as the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) and the US imposition of economic sanctions, did not cause a rupture in Japan-Iran diplomatic and energy relations. Instead, Japan and Iran have succeeded in maintaining close energy relations under the so-called 'Critical Dialogue' relationship. In February 2004, Indonesia Petroleum, Ltd. (Inpex), a Japanese upstream company, with the government of Japan as its largest shareholder, and the National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC) on behalf of the government of Iran, entered into a new phase of energy cooperation by signing a deal to jointly develop the southern part of the Azadegan oil field. Relations, however, have begun to deteriorate since the promising Azadegan oil agreement (projected to yield 260,000 barrels of crude oil per day by 2013) came to an end in September 2006. The disruption of the Azadegan oil deal illustrates the external sources of anxiety and pressures the Iran-Japan relationship has had to contend with since the oil deal was made.

This essay sheds light on how Japan-Iran relations developed between the late 1970s and the early 2000s, as a result of economical, political and strategic factors. The analysis of the Japan-Iran relations in the course of different periods of time and constant changing circumstances reveals a multifaceted relationship characterized by unilateral Iranian dependency on Japan, despite Japan's huge energy dictated imports. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Japan's relations with Iran lies in the fact that despite its improved leverage vis-à-vis Iran, its sense of vulnerability to a large extent has had an impact on its attitude and policies towards Iran. This has caused Japan to sustain relations with Iran, even though it has put at risk some of the most important interests with its foremost ally, the US.

Japan defines its relationship with Iran as 'interdependent'. Hence, it is essential to define interdependence. One view of interdependence stresses the cost and benefits that would be lost if a relationship were disrupted. Interdependence should be understood as mutual vulnerability.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that the interdependent relation pattern of Japan and Iran is symmetrical or static, but the disruption of relations has always been perceived to be a high disadvantage and a loss.

### Relationship-building: phase analysis (1979-2010)

'Phase analysis' was used to examine the countries' relations and their interdependency patterns. We determined three phases of the relation-development: Phase One (1979-1989), Phase Two (1990-2000), and Phase Three (2001-09). The use of this method of analysis has two main purposes: (1) to evaluate

Above: Distant Oil Refinery, Iran. Photo reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

*The new sanctions illustrate Japan's acceptance of the US view, which accuses Iran for illicit development of nuclear weapons, even though IAEA has not endorsed this view.*

the countries' relationship-building nature, and (2) to analyze the circumstances under which the interdependency pattern may erode. The implications for Japan's future energy security supply are assessed in this regard.

Despite the differences found between Phase One and Phase Two, they depict a common picture: Iran's dependence on Japan seems to be greater than Japan's dependence on Iran, both in economic and political terms. However, Japan has perceived itself as much more vulnerable vis-à-vis Iran in terms of potential disruption of relations. Phase Three, by contrast, revealed Japan's growing energy vulnerability due to several severe energy setbacks faced since the early 2000s. Nevertheless, a more confident Japanese political position in relation to Iran has been detected.

The evaluation of the Japan-Iran relations throughout the prism of the Phase Analysis has revealed different trends of continuity and change over the years. A major trend of continuity relates to the Iranian dependence on Japan. In accordance to the specific circumstances over time, the dependency varied but still remained significant over the years. For instance, during the 1980s, Japan's importance to Iran was mainly founded on relative narrow economic terms. Japan became a provider of wealth in terms of oil purchasing during the 'Arab Oil Shock'. In the 1990s, however, Iran's dependence on Japan expanded. Japan became not only a significant political bridge to the international arena in times of isolation, but also provided capital in terms of overseas development assistance, in addition to oil purchases – particularly important for a country immersed in economic difficulties.

Nevertheless, we can see that despite Japan's leverage on Iran, the former's sense of vulnerability, consequent to its almost total dependency on imported energy sources and its subordinate relations with the US, caused it to maintain relations with Iran in accordance to the so called 'Critical Dialogue' policy. However, the nature of the relations began to gradually change in the early 2000s. The Azadegan oil agreement rupture of 2006 exemplifies one of the mentioned changes in the relations. Though the rupture was the initiative of the government of Iran, it resulted from Inpex's continuous delay in the development of the field.

### Assertive policy

At present, and probably for the first time ever in the two countries' relationship, the government of Japan and the various upstream and downstream company policies vis-à-vis Iran can be portrayed as self-confident and assertive.

In previous years, when Japan was asked either by the US or by some of the European countries to impose sanctions or decline relations with Iran, the different Japanese governments usually refused the demands, until the moment they felt that the 'critical dialogue' was leading to either the isolation of Japan in the international arena, or to a serious potential risk to its interests vis-à-vis the US (exemplified by Japan's response to the 1979 and 1995 sanctions).

By contrast, since 2005, the various Japanese governments have shown no hesitation to back UN and US sanctions against Iran. Japan has voted in favour of all UNSC sanctions against Iran for noncompliance with IAEA regulations. Moreover, in 2007, Japan took additional penal measures against Iran, including the freeze of assets belonging to several Iranian citizens and institutions considered to have some link to the country's nuclear program. On 3 September 2010, after the US, the EU, Canada, and Australia, Japan also imposed new sanctions on Iran. Unilateral sanctions beyond the UN framework that include a ban on transactions with several Iranian banks, sanctions against investment in energy and freezing the assets of 88 institutions and 24 individuals suspected of being linked to Iran's nuclear program development, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines. The new sanctions illustrate Japan's acceptance of the US view, which accuses Iran for illicit development of nuclear weapons, even though IAEA has not endorsed this view.

We conclude therefore that Japan's assertive policy has led to the observed decreasing share of Iranian oil imports to the country. Amid the development of political circumstances, Japanese downstream and upstream companies are not willing to risk their security of energy supply. The fact that energy demand in Japan is not expected to increase dramatically in the coming future, due to an aging population and changing patterns of industrial production, has led Japan to introduce changes into its energy supply security strategy. This has resulted in a large impact on Japan's relations towards 'traditional' oil-producing countries, such as Iran.

**Raquel Shaoul is a reader and researcher at the East Asian Studies Department of Tel Aviv University (raquel@post.tau.ac.il)**

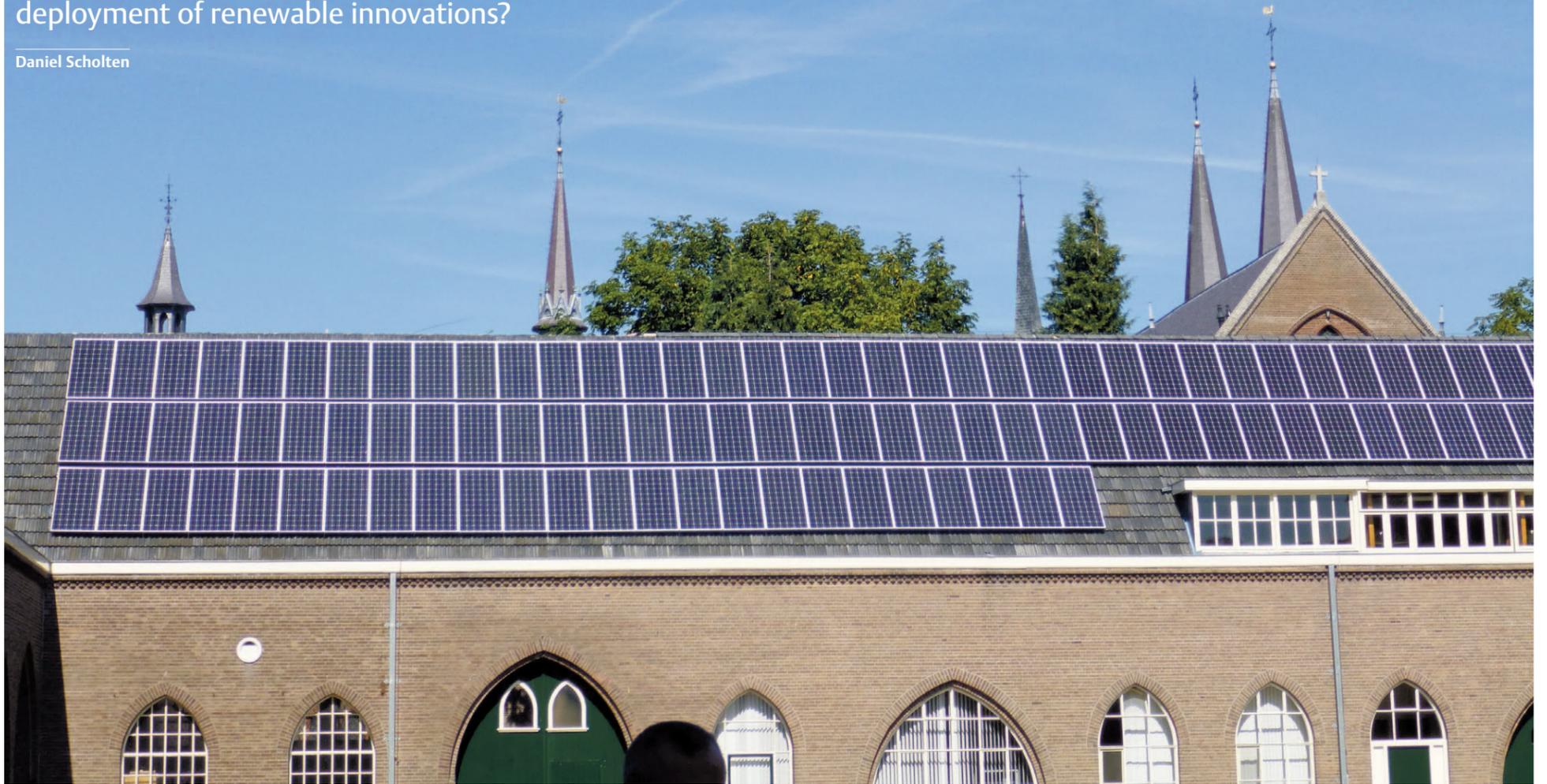
### Notes

1 J. Kroll. 1993. "The Complexity of Interdependence," *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:3, pp.321-47.

# The governance perspectives behind renewables

Increasing fossil fuel scarcity and deteriorating environmental conditions call for a transition towards the use of sustainable energy sources. Policy makers of various countries, however, respond very differently when it comes to the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies. Whereas some countries leave the creation and diffusion of renewables to market forces and private actors, government's of other countries take a strong leading role in technical innovation. As a result of these differences, countries experience rather divergent processes of renewable development and deployment, also reaping different results. Hence we arrive at an intriguing question: what are the consequences of different energy transition governance perspectives on the development and deployment of renewable innovations?

Daniel Scholten



UNFORTUNATELY, ANSWERING THIS QUESTION is not as simple as it seems. Challenges to establishing 'causality', and performing 'comparisons', hinder generalizations about the relationship between governance perspectives and renewable innovation processes. Regarding 'causality', it is not easy to prove the influence of energy institutions on energy outcomes. Frequently, a myriad of national peculiarities and particular circumstances may just as well account for the described outcomes. Regarding 'comparison', it is difficult to relate the diverse experiences of countries' energy governance efforts frequently depicted in in-depth case studies. The diversity of approaches used and actors and factors taken on board as explanatory variables tend to create highly context-specific accounts that hinder cross-country comparisons.

In light of these challenges, my contribution to this Focus section of *The Newsletter* proposes a possible means to study, in a comparative manner, the relationship between energy transition governance perspectives and renewable innovation processes of countries. Key in the effort is to develop definitions and classifications of governance perspectives and innovation processes that allow establishing valuable insights on their relationship, distinguish the meaningful differences among them, that are applicable to any country (allowing for many countries to be compared), and that may structure further research in this area. The hope is that, if many cases were investigated, certain patterns between governance perspectives and innovation processes may be found, indicating at least a degree of correlation, and perhaps even causality if the amount of cases allows particular circumstances of individual cases to be ruled out. Please allow me to briefly introduce here the main classifications I have in mind.

## Energy transition governance perspectives

Energy transition governance perspectives represent the way countries pursue the development and deployment of renewables energy technologies. They embody the key assumptions, values and beliefs behind the 'proper way of doing things' concerning energy policy, reflect the distribution of power and responsibilities that shape energy

policy making and implementation, and are expressed in countries' particular formal and informal energy institutions and policy instruments. Generally, energy transition governance perspectives are differentiated along a public-private divide, between market forces and central coordination, more or less government intervention in the market, and between the nature of the actors involved (public or private) and their interaction (cooperative or competitive).<sup>1</sup>

A convenient differentiation of perspectives has been presented by Hisschemöller et al. In their 2006 article they ask the question "What governs a transition to hydrogen?", and distinguish between four governance paradigms based on whether major actors in the governance of an energy transition to hydrogen collaborate or compete in either a public or market setting.<sup>2</sup> In the so-called 'governance by corporate business'-paradigm, the private sector has the knowledge and ability to develop and diffuse renewable technologies. In the 'governance by policy networking'-paradigm, the state helps private actors to jointly realize the public interest through formation and maintenance of policy networks. In the 'governance by challenge'-paradigm governments address rules, regulations, and privileges that stand in the way of innovations and interfere in markets to improve fair competition. Finally, in the 'governance by government'-paradigm, the government is expected to lead the development and diffusion of renewable technologies, albeit with support of private actors and society, in the name of safeguarding the public interest. Of course, these four categories represent ideal-types that help structure a debate on the effect of governance perspectives on renewable innovation processes. They are not meant to exclude the possibility of intermediary or other categories.

In this light, we might consider, for example, China as moving from 'governance by government' to a 'governance by challenge' perspective over the last decades (as part of its economic reforms), especially noting the principal-agent structure that seems to characterize the relationship between the State Energy Commission (which drafts strategies and makes decisions) and the State Energy Administration

(which oversees implementation) on the one hand, and state-owned enterprises (which possess expertise, manpower, finances, and considerable political influence) on the other.

The Netherlands, by contrast, balances between the 'governance as challenge' and 'governance as networking' perspectives. On the one hand, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (in charge of energy policy), adheres to the credo 'the market where possible, the government where needed', leading to a regulatory approach wherein the energy chamber of the Dutch regulator NMa keeps an eye on market functioning and the introduction of renewables with regard to the EU's 20-20-20 targets. On the other hand, the new transition management framework seems to be centered upon the typical Dutch polder-model, with its transition platforms where businessmen, policy makers, and academics regularly gather to discuss the promotion of renewable energy technologies.

## Renewable innovation processes

Renewable innovation processes refer to the development of renewable energy technologies and their deployment in the market place. To classify their nature, the literature on industrial life-cycles, wherein the growth of a technology from its emergence to its maturity in the market place is discussed, and theories on technological change and trajectories, which allow distinguishing variations in this process, provide good starting points. Accordingly, several aspects of innovation processes may be distinguished.

First, innovations may be radical or incremental in nature, i.e., renewable energy technologies may be complementary to existing energy technologies, which they optimize, or contain fundamentally new technologies that replace the existing dominant design. Second, innovations are continuously starting, breaking through, and optimized. The question is when technologies are intended for use or become usable: the short, medium, or long term? Third, the speed with which a new technology diffuses in the market place may be slow, normal, or fast. Fourth, innovations seldom come alone and develop in isolation. Usually, many compete for their use.

Above:  
Solar panels added  
to existing buildings  
in the Netherlands.  
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Hence, how many renewable technologies is a country pursuing; does it have a narrow or broad focus? Fifth, what decides the success and direction of renewable innovations; is it market competition (consumer demand) or deliberate choice by powerful actors (politicians and industry incumbents)? Finally, the dominant actors in the innovation process may be vested interests or newcomers, public or private institutes and firms.

Focusing on these aspects, we may note some interesting differences between China and the Netherlands. China sees the introduction of renewables as the construction of a renewable energy industry required next to its fossil fuel industry to meet its ever growing energy demand. It tends to import existing renewable energy technologies to mass-produce them for immediate domestic use and exports. Overall, then, China focuses on technologies already further down their life-cycle, i.e., on short term product diffusion of immediately usable technologies.<sup>3</sup> In general, we may also note that the diffusion of renewable energy has been very rapid and large-scale by any standard and that this holds for almost all renewables, be they solar, wind, hydro, etc. To achieve an energy transition, the Chinese government sets concrete targets regarding renewables for state-owned energy companies to pursue. However, energy companies enjoy considerable organizational and operational independence from policy making when deciding how to meet these targets.

By contrast, the Dutch have been considering the energy transition as an ongoing long-term evolutionary process in which fossil fuels are being replaced by renewable energy sources. In principle, both existing technologies and more radical innovations enjoy an equal focus and all options are on the table; in practice, special attention goes to meeting the EU 20-20-20 targets,<sup>4</sup> focusing efforts on medium term deployment, while the rate of introduction of renewables so far has been slow (compared to the EU member states and China).<sup>5</sup> The government's pro-market attitude, the lack of a clear overall vision for renewables and unified policy towards them, its attempt to increase private participation

*The cases of China and the Netherlands show how pressing circumstances may override the impact of governance perspectives on innovation processes.*

for purposes of burden sharing, and the technical and practical expertise of energy companies, weakens government leadership and puts vested incumbents in oil and gas in the driving seat for achieving the energy transition.

#### A promising proposal?

The point of departure was that a country's choice of governance perspective influences the development and deployment of renewable innovations. Yet are we now, after classifying governance perspectives and innovation processes, able to meaningfully compare countries and will a large scale cross-country study shed light on their relationship? Such matters are explored in more detail in the edited volume where the proposed definitions and classifications are further operationalized and illustrated at the hand of more in-depth examples from China and the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup>

If we were to make a long story short, however, it seems that the means for comparison are established, despite some operational issues, but that the issue of causality remains to be seen. The definitions and classifications do appear to grab the key elements of governance perspectives and innovation processes, accentuate meaningful differences among them, be applicable to any country, and provide valuable insights on their relationship. However, there are some operational issues to be resolved. For example, establishing the governance perspective of a country may be difficult due to the often very complex arrangements of public and private actors in the energy sector. Next, the innovation process classifications are rather black and white. There may be too little room for nuance. Finally, establishing generalizations remains difficult. The cases of China and the Netherlands show how pressing circumstances may override the impact of governance perspectives on innovation processes. In China, for example, the combination of energy scarcity, environmental pollution, and rapidly increasing energy demand has undoubtedly shaped its renewable energy development and diffusion pattern to a great extent. The Dutch, by contrast, have willingly increased their renewable goals beyond that posed by the EU for the 20-20-20 targets. The innovation process is thus more likely the direct result of the governance perspective.

Below: Windfarm, Ningxia Province, Northern China. Photos reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.

**Daniel Scholten is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management of the Delft University of Technology (D.J.Scholten@tudelft.nl)**

#### Notes

- 1 Prominent actors are government policy makers (ministries), regulating institutions, (renewable) energy producers and suppliers, infrastructure companies and operators, metering and service providers, R&D facilities, energy research institutes, universities, NGOs, interest groups, and consumer organizations.
- 2 Please note that "none of the paradigms reject government intervention, but [that] each paradigm reveals an institutional bias in that it articulates opportunities for collaboration and competition in a particular way, thereby creating a context for policies, regulations, and instruments, which may at first glimpse look identical but are given a specific meaning by their institutional context" – Hisschemöller, M., R. Bode, & N. van de Kerkhof. 2006. "What governs the transition to a sustainable hydrogen economy? Articulating the relationship between technologies and political institutions", *Energy Policy*, 34 (11): 1227–35, p.1234
- 3 While this may bring immediate benefits in terms of increasing renewable energy use, the risk is that of early movers: to be stuck with less efficient technologies in the long run.
- 4 Please note that the Dutch goal for 20% renewable share by 2020 goes beyond the proposed national target of 14% of renewables in total energy consumption set under the overall EU 20-20-20 targets.
- 5 The share of renewables in total energy supply in 2007 stood at only 2.8% while this was already an increase of 85% since 2000. It needs to be kept in mind though that the Netherlands lacks traditional hydropower, which so often makes up the bulk of countries' renewables.
- 6 Amineh, M.P. & Yang Guang. 2012. *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy: The Geopolitics of Energy Paths of China and the European Union*. Leiden-Boston-London: Brill Academic Publishers.



## Development characteristics of the solar energy industry and related policies in China

As a clean energy source with rich resources, solar energy has great prospects and is the focus of the development of renewable energy all over the world. The two most important utilizations of solar energy are: (1) solar power, which converts solar radiation into electrical energy using semiconductors that exhibit photovoltaic effects (solar photovoltaic power generation – or PV for short); and (2) solar thermal, which converts solar radiation into heat. If this thermal energy is then used to generate electricity, it is called solar thermal power generation. In recent years, both China's PV industry and its solar thermal industry have expanded rapidly, but their paths of development have differed significantly. Renewable energy policies have played an important role in the development of China's solar energy industry.

Li Xiaohua

### The development characteristics of China's solar energy industry

China is now ranked first in the world in both the photovoltaic industry and solar thermal industry, but the two industries demonstrate quite different characteristics.

#### (1) Start time and growth

The main solar thermal products manufactured in China are solar heat collectors (water heaters). China's solar thermal industry has become relatively large-scale and in the 1990s it entered a stable phase of development, with an annual growth rate of around 20 percent. The development of China's PV industry started at the beginning of the twenty-first century and has entered an explosive growth phase since 2003, with an annual growth rate of more than 100 percent. At the same time, the different parts of the PV industry chain, from downstream to upstream, have been exhibiting wave-like patterns of growth. The rapid growth of the PV industry in China began with the downstream parts of PV module packaging and PV cell manufacturing, while the upstream parts of silicon material took its first steps even later. Until 2005, the production of China's polysilicon – an essential and primary raw material in the production of solar cells – was only 80 tons. Two years later, however, polysilicon production experienced an explosive growth.

#### (2) Industrial scale

Although the production volume of China's PV cells and solar water heaters both rank first in the world, there are significant

differences between the two in terms of international status and international competitiveness. China's solar thermal industry can be described as thriving, accounting for more than half of the world's output, and the development of all aspects of the industry chain are fairly well balanced. China's output of PV cells does not have an absolute advantage in the world and, in particular, the upstream of China's PV industry chain lags behind that of other countries. This is illustrated by China's need to import large volumes of polysilicon to meet its PV cell production requirements. There is still a big gap between China's technical level and environmental governance, compared to other countries, although China's upstream polysilicon capacity has been expanding fast.

#### (3) Market distribution

The raw materials for China's solar thermal industry depend primarily on domestic supply. Likewise, 81.2 percent of the products between 1998 and 2007 were manufactured to meet domestic demand. China's total installations accounted for 57.6 percent of total global installations in 2008. It is safe to say that, even though international demand has been growing rapidly in recent years, the development of the solar thermal utilization industry is generally driven by the domestic market and demonstrates features typical of endogenous growth. By contrast, the features of China's PV industry demonstrate a dependence on the demand and supply of international markets. Specifically, on the one hand, it imports a large amount of vital polysilicon material; on the other hand, 98 percent of China's PV cells were primarily destined to meet international demand in 2008. In November 2003, Germany issued new provisions for on-grid power tariffs; in August 2004, it amended its Renewable Energy Law; and in 2006, Spain launched its Royal Decree on Solar Energy and began to adopt fixed grid electricity prices. All of these policies and regulations in developed countries greatly contributed to the growth of the world's PV market, as well as China's.

### The role of energy policies in the development of China's solar energy industry

The Chinese government has always put more emphasis on the development and utilization of solar energy. According to the targets of various policies, regulations and specific policy measures relating to renewable energy, China's solar energy policy can be divided into two phases, since the promulgation of the Renewable Energy Law in 2005.

#### (1) The macro guidance phase 2005-2008.

The development of both China's PV and solar thermal industry benefited from the support of government. First of all, government policies indicate the direction of the development of new renewable energy, which enables enterprises to form expectations about the future and attracts them to invest in the field. Secondly, technology innovation in both industries has benefited from the government's support, especially in the early development stage. Thirdly, government purchase contributed to more than 60 percent of the domestic PV market and was essential for the promotion of technology, from the laboratory to the market. On the other hand, the Chinese government plays a limited role compared to other governments in developed countries. Although China introduced, among various policies, its Renewable Energy Law in 2005, its goals for solar energy development appear to be low, its supporting efforts are small, and its substantive promotion policies inadequate. Take China's PV industrial policy for example, the cumulative installation goals for solar PV power generation in the 'Medium- and Long-term Development Plan for Renewable Energy' are 300,000 kW and 1,800,000 kW, in 2010 and 2020 respectively, accounting for about 0.227 percent of the total national power capacity. The government has not adopted specific, practical measures to establish a long-term solar energy strategy.

#### (2) The vigorous promoting phase (since 2009).

Since 2009, the Chinese government has strengthened its efforts to support renewable energy use, including solar energy, and promulgated a number of policies with substantive content. The policy improves the development goals, takes comprehensive measures in terms of financial assistance, supports technology, and provides market incentives to accelerate the industrialization of domestic PV power generation and its large-scale development. For example, it sets out plans to provide financial support for no less than 500 MW PV power generation demonstration projects in the coming two to three years. In respect of grid-connected PV power generation projects, the government provides subsidies amounting to 50 percent of the total investment of the PV power generation system and its supporting transmission and distribution projects; independent PV power generation systems in remote areas without electricity are subsidized by up to 70 percent of the total investment. For a long time, policies have not paid enough attention to the use of solar thermal energy. However, in 2009, China's policies promoting the use of solar thermal appear to have made great progress. Firstly, enterprises involved in solar thermal utilization were finally accepted as members of China's Consumer Electronics Association. Secondly, and for the first time, solar water heaters came into the scope of subsidy policies of "the project to provide household electrical appliances to the countryside", and the subsidies were equivalent to 13 percent of product sale prices for farmers purchasing household appliance products.

### Policy suggestions for promoting China's solar industries

#### (1) The significance of the solar industry for China

The development of the solar energy industry in China is of great significance. First, the Chinese government has promised that carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP will be reduced by 40-45 percent by 2020, compared to 2005. Bearing in mind the projected development of renewable energy, by 2020 China's non-fossil energy will account for about 15 percent of the country's primary energy consumption. Second, the solar energy industry is an emerging industry, and solar energy utilization technology, especially PV technology, is immature. This period of flux is allowing developing countries to catch up with developed ones in terms of technology. Via the development of the solar energy industry, they can continuously improve their engineering and industrial technologies. Furthermore, China's industrial development experience has shown that if a product's industrialization cannot be achieved, then the prices will be high; once a product's industrialization is realized, then the presence of domestic competitors will pull down the prices of imported products considerably. Thus, the development of the PV industry can help China to lower its costs in relation to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, climate change and carbon dioxide emissions will provide an important international context for China's future development. The country is facing an important challenge in terms of changing its development mode from a high-carbon economy to a low-carbon economy. Clearly, the development of the solar energy industry will be an important component of a low-carbon economy. If China is to fulfil its obligation to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the overall production costs of its manufacturing industry will need to be pushed higher. Certainly, compared with being burdened with a carbon tax or purchasing carbon quotas, China could do worse than to take the initiative to promote renewable (including solar) energy.

#### (2) Policy recommendations for the promotion of China's solar energy industry

Given China's current stage of development, the high costs involved in PV power generation are hard to bear for both business and residential users and the government appears to have difficulty in providing large-scale subsidies. Therefore, at this stage in the industry's development, the focus for solar energy use should be on solar thermal utilization, PV construction in regions without electricity and grid-connected PV demonstration systems. PV demonstration projects not only increase PV demand in the short-term, but also help to accumulate vital experience in industrialization and in building PV power generation projects. This will also lay the foundations for a large-scale grid-connected PV power generation market. With the costs of PV power generation continually decreasing, in the medium-term China will start construction of grid-connected PV systems. In order to promote the healthy development of the solar energy industry and solar energy use, China's policies must make adjustments, including: improve goals for solar energy utilization; speed up the relevant legislation; strengthen the incentives for solar energy utilization; provide financial and tax support for solar energy industry; provide R&D in solar energy utilization technologies; supervise production efficiency; secure environmental protection and the safety of its PV industry, especially in terms of the production of polysilicon.

Li Xiaohua is associate professor at the Institute of Industrial Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (xiaohuali@gmail.com)

Below:  
Examples of solar powered lighting (left) and solar water heaters (right) in China. Photos reproduced courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr.



# The Brazilian biofuel industry: achievements, challenges, and geopolitics

What is the role of energy in today's world? Arguably, there are three points which are important to keep in mind. First, energy is an essential input to production in a world of increasing consumption and demand for goods and services. Therefore, energy is an essential resource for development. Second, energy is at the heart of environmental debates. The large-scale production and utilization of energy has created a number of ecological implications that cannot be left unchecked – most notably global climate change. Finally, energy is also a key part of geopolitics, particularly liquid energy – petroleum – on which the whole world depends, but which is produced primarily by a handful of countries.

Mairon G. Bastos Lima



IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT that Brazil's emerging biofuel industry stands out as an important initiative which may promote clean development and, in the process, contribute to geopolitical shifts. Biofuels are liquid fuels extracted from biomass and which can replace or be blended with petroleum-based fuels, such as gasoline and diesel. Gasoline is replaced by ethanol, normally produced from starch- or sugar-rich crops (e.g., corn, sugarcane), and diesel is replaced by biodiesel, produced from vegetable oils or animal fats.

In Brazil, sugarcane and soybean are, respectively, the main crops utilized. The country has already successfully replaced more than half of its gasoline consumption by domestically-produced ethanol. Together with electricity produced from sugarcane biomass, the sugarcane sector already represents nearly 20 percent of the country's total energy production. Biodiesel, although a relatively infant industry in Brazil, is growing fast and has already replaced 5 percent of the country's overall diesel utilization. Thus, biofuels have contributed to Brazil having one of the cleanest energy production systems in the world – where almost 50 percent of it derives from renewable sources.

The question, however, is what ecological and socio-economic implications this growth in biofuel production and utilization may have. In addition, Brazil's ascension as a renewable energy power – eventually as a clean-fuel exporter – is poised to alter geo-economic and geopolitical configurations, especially if other countries that currently import oil follow suit.

## Challenges of Brazilian biofuel industry

The chapter in *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy*,<sup>1</sup> on which this essay is based, conducts an in-depth analysis of those two questions by fleshing out the development path of – and the challenges faced by – Brazil's emerging biofuel industry. Although biofuel production in Brazil dates as far back as 1905 and has gone through many periods of ascension and decline, the current boom had its thrust in the 2003-2008 period, with the introduction of flex-fuel cars – which can run on any combination of gasoline and/or ethanol – and the increase in oil prices on the international market, suddenly making biofuels more competitive. Flex-fuel cars have given consumers the freedom to move between various fuels, based on relative price, shielding them against price volatility in either gasoline or ethanol.

As far as global climate change is concerned, Brazilian sugarcane-ethanol (which accounts for about 95 percent of the country's biofuel production) also seems to be a major tool for mitigation. It has been estimated that its utilization creates about 80 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than gasoline. This does not account for eventual emissions provoked by land-use change, i.e., clearing of natural vegetation for expanding sugarcane plantations. However, this has seldom been the case in the sugarcane sector. As a safeguard, the government in 2010 launched a Sugarcane Agroecological Zoning policy that creates disincentives for encroachment on forests or environmentally-sensitive areas. As such, sugarcane-ethanol has efficiently contributed to low-carbon energy development in Brazil.

It is important, however, to have a broader view on sustainable development and go beyond climate only. A more thorough assessment has to recognize additional elements of biofuel production – or, for that matter, of any production system – such as impacts on freshwater, on ecosystems more broadly, and on society and the economy. For instance, in 2009 Brazil became the world's largest consumer of pesticides in agriculture – 713 million litres in a year. In the case of sugarcane, pesticide utilization almost doubled between 2004 and 2008. This, of course, bears a number of impacts on water resources, soil, biodiversity and human health. It is thus important to understand how production systems can become more sustainable on all fronts, as it has on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

One important move in that direction, made by Brazilian biofuel policy, has been the incorporation of traditional, smallholder farmers into the biodiesel production chains. With its National Programme on the Production and Use of Biodiesel (PNPB) the government has provided regulatory and economic incentives for industries to promote the cultivation of biofuel crops among small farmers, and to establish seed-purchasing contracts with them.

There are important lessons to be learnt, in terms of institutional arrangements and contract design, in order to optimize the results of such partnerships and to avoid drawbacks, such as farmers eventually replacing food cultivation for biofuel crops and becoming exposed to greater food insecurity. However, after initial difficulties, the programme has succeeded in integrating tens of

Above: The growing and processing of sugarcane to produce ethanol, Brasil. Photos reproduced courtesy Shell, Creative Commons /Flickr.

thousands of poor Brazilian farmers, tackling poverty, countering the erosion of traditional smallholder farming and thus reducing rural-urban migration, and promoting a type of agriculture that is far more equitable and sustainable, from both social and ecological standpoints.

The Brazilian biofuel industry therefore has both achievements and challenges to account for. Much has been done to improve its sustainability, and more is still needed. However, the ascension of the country, not only as an emerging economy, but also as a new global player in the energy field is already having international implications – and more are in sight. In Brazil, oil-imports have been almost completely phased out (compared to 80 percent oil import dependence in the 1970s) partly due to biofuels, allowing the country to have greater economic and political leverage. Over the last few years the country has also become firmly engaged in disseminating biofuel cultivation, policies and technologies in much of Africa and Central America, knowing that an international biofuel market will not become established until there are a larger number of producers. Moreover, it has become a new fuel exporter to traditional oil-importers such as Europe and China. Even if in absolute terms the volume of biofuel trade is still small compared to overall fossil fuel consumption, it has certainly started to appropriate some of the power wielded by oil-exporting countries. One of the lessons seems to be that the environmental qualities and benefits of renewable energies should not overshadow the economic and ultimately political implications.

The emergent energy transition toward renewables is one of the most important global changes taking place, and Brazil is at the forefront of this trend. To understand the sustainable development and geopolitical implications of this movement is of crucial importance. A closer examination of the Brazilian case may thus offer many valuable lessons to a worldwide audience.

Mairon Bastos Lima is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), VU University Amsterdam (mairon.bastos.lima@ivm.vu.nl)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Amineh, M.P. & Yang Guang (eds.) 2012. *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy: The Geopolitics of Energy Paths of China and the European Union*. Leiden-Boston-London: Brill Academic Publishers.

# Hydropower in China: development or slow-down?

The approval process of China's hydro-power projects has slowed down considerably since 2005, in spite of expansionist plans. Chinese targets are usually met or surpassed, but for hydropower this has not been the case. Until 2015, installed hydropower generation capacity will continue to grow by about 20 GW annually, based on approvals given before 2005, but very few large projects will be completed thereafter. For many reasons this is surprising.

Eduard B. Vermeer

DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY has grown annually by over 10 percent since 2000, and hydropower is the cheapest and cleanest supplier. Demand will increase by a further 7.5 to 9.5 percent annually between 2011 and 2015, to 6,000-6,600 TWh.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, hydropower is the main contributor to China's non-carbon targets pledged in Copenhagen. Of the 15 percent non-carbon final energy target for 2020, at least 9 percent will have to come from hydropower, 4 percent from nuclear, and less than 2 percent from wind, solar and other energy sources.

## Fossil and non-fossil alternatives

Let us consider the alternative sources of power generation, first and foremost coal. In 2011, thermopower (a very small part of which comes from gas) was responsible for as much as 82 percent of China's electricity generation. After years of rapid expansion, the construction of coal-fired power stations is grinding to a halt now. Between 2006 and 2010, the average investment cost per kilowatt capacity of completed thermopower stations fell by 2 percent to 3,745 yuan, primarily because of their increased size with 600 MW units. Those of hydropower projects rose by 19 percent to 6,870 yuan.<sup>2</sup> Of the latter cost, actual expenses for compensation of submerged land and buildings, and for resettlement, constituted 20 percent, much more than the originally budgeted 12 percent; construction costs grew too, but capital costs went down. However, the operating cost of hydropower stations varied between 0.04 and 0.09 yuan per kWh, compared to 0.20 yuan and more for thermopower.<sup>3</sup> The costs of thermopower production have risen steadily, along with the price of coal, and power companies, constrained by state-set low electricity prices, have been suffering losses for several years. Their reluctance to invest in more coal-fired stations led to an electricity shortage of 30 GW in 2011, and probably 40 GW in 2012. Coal and cokes have to be imported nowadays at a rate of 20 million tons per month. Coal is perceived as a great burden to the environment, and rightly so. Carbon dioxide emissions have doubled from 3.5 billion tons in 2000 to 7.2 billion tons in 2009, making China the biggest emitter of carbon dioxide worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

The Electric Power Industry Association has calculated that it needs a 30 percent electricity price rise (from 0.57 yuan/kWh in 2010 to 0.73 yuan/kWh in 2015) to accomplish the planned

increase of thermopower generation capacity. Failing that, the present electricity shortage is likely to worsen. Rather than coal, natural and shale gas may become the preferred sources of energy, but their development will take considerable foreign technical support, and many more years.

As for non-carbon alternatives, the expansionist plans for nuclear power (80 GW by 2020) in the Chinese interior have been put temporarily on hold after the Fukushima disaster. Wind power, though rapidly expanding, can supply only a few percent of electricity needs in the mid-term future. Moreover, it still requires subsidization of producers and high feed-in tariffs (0.51 to 0.61 yuan/kWh), and provincial governments are unwilling to invest in the necessary additional power lines and pumped storage stations. In contrast, most hydropower stations supply electricity to the grid at prices 30 percent (since 2009, for new ones about 20 percent) below those of desulphurized thermopower stations – in 2009, on average, at 0.25 yuan rather than 0.38 yuan per kWh. In 2012, after the poor year of 2011, water supply was abundant again.

So far, only one-third of China's economic hydropower potential has been utilised, compared to over two-thirds in most developed countries. The rivers flowing from China's sparsely inhabited western regions have a huge, untapped potential. In the 1980s and 1990s, because of past under-investment in long-distance power lines, many large hydropower stations such as Sanxia had to be situated along the middle reaches of rivers, and their reservoirs inundated much land and displaced many people. Since then, three ultra-high-voltage lines have been built running from West China to the coastal areas, where most consumption is found. They have created cheap long-distance transport and greater flexibility in the power grid. Local coal power pit stations benefited, but hydropower projects even more so, because dam sites can now be selected in the mountains of West China, where relatively few (less than ten thousand people in almost all cases) have to be displaced.

Other positive factors for hydropower development are China's engineering experience, sophisticated equipment industry, and a strong state command over land resources and investment capital. The low interest rates over the past few years favour projects with high capital and low running costs, such as hydropower stations. Moreover, usually they enjoy local political support because, apart from electric power, downstream communities may enjoy additional benefits of flood control and water supply. Negative factors include the uncertainty about future obligations for power companies to pay more resettlement compensation, and about sharing reservoir benefits with other users (such as flood control or irrigation), and the worries about the vulnerability of high dams (after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake). In particular, the historical and present social cost of resettlement and growing ecological concerns have begun to dominate Chinese political discussion after 2004.

The 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) announced that construction of 70 GW of hydropower stations would be approved, but actual approvals totalled only 43 GW and construction started on little more than 20GW during that period. During 2012-2015, hydropower capacity will increase greatly, reflecting project approvals made before 2005 (typically, construction of a hydropower station takes ten years), but growth will be much less thereafter. Given the favourable economic conditions for hydropower, what has been delaying its rapid expansion and will delays continue?

## Causes of the slow-down in approvals of hydropower projects

Several temporary causes may be found for China's difficulties in transitioning to new institutional arrangements, for present uncertainties in electricity price formation, and for the adoption of different, more inclusive planning procedures since 2005. More permanent causes are the higher valuation of the cost of displacement and resettlement and ecological damages, and even more important (because actual numbers of displaced people and the extent of environmental damage are lower than in previous decades) is a growing political reluctance to take decisions that may threaten social stability through popular protest. Moreover, the alternatives of nuclear and wind energy, the so-called 'new energy sources', have succeeded in attracting a great deal of technological and political support.

The moment that more-comprehensive planning and implementation procedures, such as public consultation and representation of all stakeholders in river water use, result in longer planning and construction periods, the costs of hydropower will increase for investors, and projects may become less attractive. For instance, after 2004 provincial authorities were forbidden to issue permits to start with preparatory foundation work at dam sites in anticipation of an eventual central government permission to cut off the river flow. In defiance of that rule, construction of the Ludila power station on the Jinsha River started in 2006, was halted, and finally only obtained formal approval in 2012. The Ministry of the Environment has a greater role now, but apart from delaying and demanding revisions to constructions approved by the mighty NDRC it cannot impose sanctions that really hurt, and depends on political backing by the Politburo, rather than on legal means. Unsurprisingly, with responsibilities and rules being unclear, both local authorities and displaced persons try to, privately or publicly, get the most out of national companies that build and finance large projects. The days of top-down administrative imposition and implementation of projects are over.

Longer procedures did not deter planners from increasing their hydropower generation targets for 2020. To what extent planning has become detached from political realities will be tested again this year. For 2012 alone the State Energy Bureau has planned the approval of 20 GW of hydropower projects, but last October and this January the Ministry of the Environment promulgated stricter rules for environmental approvals. Delays in approval of large dams, and stalemates between national and provincial governments, have led to unlicensed and wanton construction of many medium- and small-size hydropower dams (for instance, almost one hundred dams totalling 1.7 GW in the Nujiang (Salween) basin over the past few years; a most worrying development. Environmental NGOs, who are mostly active in Beijing and at universities, find it impossible to keep up with the great number of hydropower construction projects in the western regions. Project authorities are required to post formal notices and organize hearings in the project area, giving the public an opportunity to provide suggestions or objections; but time constraints and a lack of expertise mean that local people and concerned NGOs have very little input, if any.

## The future

Eventually, hydropower generation capacity in China will run into its natural limits of about 450 to 500 GW, still more than double the 230 GW at the end of 2011. Thus, its contribution remains most essential for achieving medium-term national goals of meeting electricity demand and reducing the negative environmental impact of coal burning. However, our research showed that the direct positive and negative local impacts of hydropower construction, eighty percent of which is located in poor mountainous areas in China's southwest, play a most important role in the local and national decision-making processes concerning electricity generation. In addition to local impact itself, Chinese politicians high and low seem anxious to avoid intractable political and public discussions about negative social and environmental effects of large hydropower stations. While some keep dreaming about the technological solutions of wind and solar power, the construction of thermopower stations goes on, locking China into a carbon economic mode.

Eduard B. Vermeer was member of the board of Leiden University, professor of contemporary Chinese history at the University of Turku and president of the Graduate School of Asian Studies in Finland. He is currently an affiliated fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies-Energy Programme Asia, Leiden (vermeerpe@planet.nl)

## Notes

- 1 China Electricity Company Association, 电力工业“十二五”规划滚动研究报告, 9 March 2012.
- 2 State Electricity Regulatory Commission, “十一五”期间投产电力工程项目造价监管情况通报, 2012.
- 3 Vermeer, E.B. 2011. “The benefits and costs of China's hydropower: development or slowdown?” *China Information* 25:1, pp.3-32.
- 4 Chinese Academy for Environmental Planning. 2010. *China Green National Accounting Study Report* 2009. Beijing.

Below:  
Three Gorges Dam  
in the Yangtze River,  
Hubei, China.  
Photo reproduced  
courtesy Creative  
Commons/Flickr.

Table 1.  
China's electricity generation in 2010-2011,  
and planned capacities for 2015 and 2020

Year	2010 TWh	2011 TWh	% change	2010 GW	2015 GW	2020 GW
TOTAL	4,228	4,722	11.7	962	1,463	1,935
Hydro	677	663	-3.5	198	301	360
Pumped storage	9			15	41	60
Coal	3,249	3,898	14.1	650	928	1,170
Gas	74			27	40	50
Nuclear	76	87	17.0	11	43	70-80
Wind	50	73	48.2	31	100	180
Solar					5	25
Biofuel a.o.	0.3	N/A	N/A	0.3	5	10

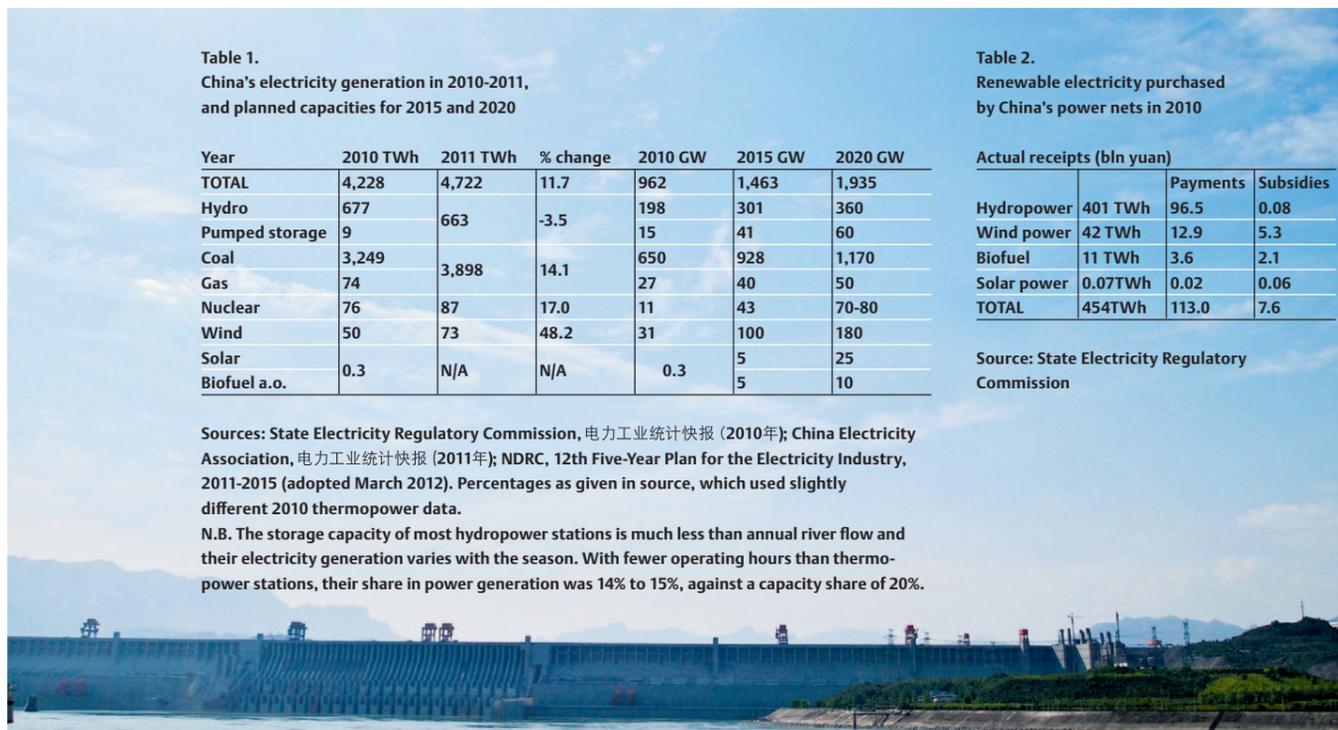
Sources: State Electricity Regulatory Commission, 电力工业统计快报 (2010年); China Electricity Association, 电力工业统计快报 (2011年); NDRC, 12th Five-Year Plan for the Electricity Industry, 2011-2015 (adopted March 2012). Percentages as given in source, which used slightly different 2010 thermopower data.

N.B. The storage capacity of most hydropower stations is much less than annual river flow and their electricity generation varies with the season. With fewer operating hours than thermopower stations, their share in power generation was 14% to 15%, against a capacity share of 20%.

Table 2.  
Renewable electricity purchased  
by China's power nets in 2010

	Actual receipts (bln yuan)		
	Payments	Subsidies	
Hydropower	401 TWh	96.5	0.08
Wind power	42 TWh	12.9	5.3
Biofuel	11 TWh	3.6	2.1
Solar power	0.07TWh	0.02	0.06
TOTAL	454TWh	113.0	7.6

Source: State Electricity Regulatory Commission



# A reconciliation of historiographies

In *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past* Wynn Wilcox draws upon a deep knowledge of historiography in Vietnamese, French, and English in order to mount a considerable reshaping of the important questions of Vietnamese History and appeal to a broad audience of readership interested in politics, history, the Vietnam War, literature, and the nature of truth.

William B. Noseworthy

Reviewed publication:

Wilcox, Wynn. 2011.

*Allegories of the Vietnamese Past: Unification*

*and the Production of a Modern Historical Identity.*

New Haven: Yale University Press. Monograph 61/Yale Southeast Asia Series. ISBN: 9780938692966

AS SUCH, as it has become clear that it would be inappropriate to make reference about contemporary geopolitics without reference to the Vietnam War, Professor Wilcox demonstrates that it ought to be impossible to make reference to America's engagements in Southeast Asia, without regarding the literature and the intellectual history of Vietnam. In order to accomplish this achievement *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past* centers around the mythic historical voyage of Bui Vien, a nineteenth century diplomat who theoretically voyaged to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Bui Vien, as Wilcox argues, may be more historically important in fiction than in truth. As the evidence is mounted it becomes clear that, although such a figure did exist and was considerably notable as a person of *tu tai* [flourishing talent] (142), the personage by the name of Bui Vien did not in fact voyage to the United States. However, the image of this voyage became important to the Vietnamese and the Americans alike during the period of decolonization, in order to demonstrate that 'South Vietnam' and the United States were "in the same sampan", as Wilcox draws upon the words of author Ann Caddell Crawford.<sup>2</sup> (134) However, as Wilcox argues, the story of Bui Vien can be applied through allegory to a greater historical context, which not only includes the recent diplomatic relations of the United States and Vietnam after the *doi moi* reforms 1980s and the *mo cua* policy of the 1990s, but can also be traced back through a reprinting of the text during the conflict with the French, to the original narrative of Bui Vien whose life is overlapped in the rise of French colonial power in the nineteenth century.

From the discussion of Bui Vien, Wilcox provides a logical link from the literary figures of the Vietnamese past to more contemporary understandings of these literary figures. For example, the two poets Xuan Huong and Ngoc Han became important not only through their poetry, but also because their stories represented allegories of the Vietnamese nation in the eyes of Vietnamese historiography; both from Ha Noi, and from Saigon. In the eyes of both schools of thought, the image of female poets could be used to construct, as Wilcox argues, "a new and legitimate society in a time of ideological uncertainty" (108). In the same way, Wilcox draws upon the allegories of *The Tale of Kieu*, the French missionary *Pigneaux de Behaine*, and the 'xenophobic' emperor Minh Mang in order to argue that each narrative has been employed by authors of history in order to provide a commentary about their 'contemporary' present, a subjectivity that demonstrates the intent behind authorship. In this way Professor Wilcox makes his writing relevant to a host of authors and theoreticians who have engaged with both the nature of subjectivity and history, since *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past* draws substantial theoretical contributions from the likes of Hayden White, Judith Butler, and Vietnam historian Shawn McHale.

Through his exploration of historical theory and subjectivity *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past* reminds readers, in the concluding words of Wilcox, of "what makes studying history worthwhile in the first place" (156). Thus, although there is ample critical material in Wilcox's work, particularly about history used as a platform for justification during the era of French colonialism, there is also ample material to draw upon for narratives of reconciliation.

References to reconciliation are strung throughout *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past*. In the book we see an articulation of viewpoints that were at one time radicalized through the realities of history. We see evidence presented from the Republic of Vietnam, combined with Marxist interpretations of history. We see the efforts of the American President Lyndon Johnson placed in conversation with the historiography of Vietnamese nationalists. We see the historiography of Vietnamese nationalists placed back into conversation with works that appeared in French. As Wilcox argues, "taken as allegories, these interpretations – mine included – offer greater insights into Vietnam in the eighteenth and nineteenth century." (156) Therefore, *Allegories of the Vietnamese Past* offers a reconciliation of historiographies that were at one point competing, into a more coherent and complex narrative that brings the relevance of eighteenth and nineteenth century Vietnam into a greater exploration about the nature of truth and the construction of history.

William B. Noseworthy is a PhD Candidate at the Department of History, UW-Madison (noseworthy@wisc.edu)

#### Notes

1 The review author would like to thank Professors Winichakul and McCoy for introductions to concepts that appear in this review. Additionally, he would like to thank co-TA Brett Reilly and the students of Hist-319: History of the Vietnam Wars (Fall 2011 – UW-Madison).

2 Ann Caddell Crawford is author of the book *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, which was popularly read by American forces during their introduction to Vietnamese culture.

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Please address your enquiries to Dr Stephen C Druce, Graduate Programme Leader, Academy of Brunei Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Tungku Link, Gadong BE 1410 Negara Brunei Darussalam Email: [Stephen.druce@ubd.edu.bn](mailto:Stephen.druce@ubd.edu.bn)

# Terminology and the translational ambiguities of public health

In this collection, which provides a critical history of Chinese public health during the colonial and post-colonial eras, the authors decentre the nation state in order to critically expatiate the global genealogies of scientific practices in interaction with local conditions. Special reference is made to outbreaks of disease such as plague, malaria, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The collection is organised into three main themes, in roughly chronological order: indigenous Chinese notions of disease and cleanliness before the 1911 revolution; colonial health and hygiene in Taiwan under Japanese rule; and, campaigns against epidemics.

Vivek Neelakantan



Reviewed publication:

Leung, Angela K.C. & Charlotte Furth (eds.) 2010.

*Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia: Policies and Publics in the Long Twentieth Century.* Durham: Duke University Press. 337 pp. ISBN 9780822348269 (paperback).

The four case studies illustrated in the volume – plague in Manchuria, malaria in Taiwan, schistosomiasis in the lower Yangzi delta and SARS in South China, Taiwan and Singapore – shed invaluable light upon the incorporation of Western biomedical concepts into Chinese medical cosmology, the popular understandings of disease control programs, and the framing of disease within the context of traditional Chinese medicine.

## Contagion

Angela Ki Che Leung's chapter chronologically traces the evolution of the notion of contagion (*chuanran*) and contextualises the multiple meanings attributed to contagion, from the tenth century until the advent of the germ theory of disease in the early twentieth century. Yu Xinzhong's essay contends that while human excrement was considered an integral element of increasing agricultural production rather than an insanitary concern in the Qing period, it became a part of urban public health programs in foreign concessions in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The association of public health measures with the vitality of the population in China dates back to the turn of the twentieth century which was marked by Japan's defeat of China in the First Sino-Japanese War (1895). The Chinese intelligentsia, most notably the author Liu Tingchun, who studied in Japan in 1907, established a correlation between cleanliness, orderliness, and punctuality, which constituted discipline of the individual body and the body politic.

Sean Hsiang-lin Lei's chapter highlights the indeterminate particularity of the notion of *chuanran* that was vaguely associated with either infection or contagion and the translational difficulties encountered when rendering 'contagion' into traditional Chinese medicine in the context of the Hong Kong (1894) and Manchurian plague epidemics (1910 and 1921 respectively). Unlike Chinese traditional medicine, which advocated avoiding epidemics (*biyi*) and fleeing the

site of plague outbreaks, the modern quarantine measures implemented by the colonial authorities in Hong Kong recommended blocking the chain of transmission of infection. As a result of the conceptual differences regarding the notion of contagion between Western and Chinese medical cosmologies, the Qing government had not enacted any legislation regarding the notification of infectious diseases. The Manchurian plague served as a catalyst for the Chinese doctors to unify Chinese and Western medical terminologies.

## Medical evil

Shang-Jen Li examines the British medical views regarding food, drink, hygiene in China, and the relationship between diets and climates in the construction of national and racial identity. Ruth Rogaski's nuanced and well-argued chapter draws upon a rich variety of sources, e.g., articles in scientific journals, village rumours and urban legends, to explore the multiple meanings attributed by both the Chinese and Japanese to public health activities in Manchuria. As well, she throws light on the hopes and anxieties that accompanied the introduction of 'hygienic modernity' into the region's complex informal and formal colonial settings. The Japanese colonial physicians constructed Manchuria as a 'singularly diseased environment' that required vigilance and control by the colonial state; the local population, in sharp contrast, regarded biomedicine of the colonial state as the embodiment of medical evil. The 'hypodermic syringe' was variously a signifier of healing, the mark of the colonial state, or of addiction.

Rogaski's discussion of hygienic modernity raises questions pertinent to representation, truth, history, and justice while at the same time discussing the embodiment of the 'hypodermic syringe' in colonial Manchuria. Rogaski argues that Japanese scientists neither used 'hypodermic syringes' to inject harmful substances nor to draw blood from humans, but positioned humans and animals on an ecological continuum, performing autopsies on human and animal corpses as objects of scientific dissection. As a consequence, the framing of injections as a medical evil can be interpreted as a form of subaltern resistance exercised by the local Manchurian population to the objectification of science.

Wu Chia-Ling's chapter uses oral history interviews of twenty-one women to question the causal link between the use of traditional birth attendants and the high rates of infant mortality in colonial Taiwan. Wu advocates a greater centrality of accounts in Science, Technology, and Society Studies (STS) *vis-à-vis* the non-use of the new midwifery system introduced during the colonial period, and the excessive use of obstetrical services in the twenty-first century.

## Political medicine

Lin Yi-ping and Liu Shiyung's chapter addresses the continuity between the pre-World War II Japanese anti-malarial efforts and the post-World War II malaria eradication programs undertaken in Taiwan with the technical assistance of the US. The authors argue that the study of malaria eradication efforts in Taiwan is situated at the intersection of medical and political history. Li Yushang's chapter traces the history of schistosomiasis elimination in Jiaying and Haining counties in the People's Republic of China, during the ten-year period 1948-1958. In the early 1950s, when the chances of contracting schistosomiasis were attributed to the environment, the government emphasised large-scale sanitary measures, which required tremendous human and material resources. But, due to a long famine from 1959-1963, and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) eradication programs could not be implemented in full. By 1958, schistosomiasis control had become a political issue incorporated into Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward. But, because treatment of schistosomiasis came into conflict with the interests of the local cooperatives, it could not be realised in practice.

Marta E. Hanson regards biomedicine's inability to engage with traditional Chinese remedies when combating SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) as a conceptual blind spot. Tseng Yen-fen and Wu Chia-Ling's chapter reveals that during the SARS outbreak in 2003, there was a great discrepancy between scientific evidence and decisions related to designating 'danger zones'. The World Health Organisation (WHO), despite its inability to determine how SARS would develop, nonetheless paradoxically established scientific criteria for listing danger zones. In a brief but well-written afterword, Warwick Anderson argues from a Foucauldian perspective that the predominant modality of the colonial state – registration and surveillance of the colonial subjects – was disciplinary, and a necessary condition for political self-government or national sovereignty.

## Readership

This collection, which is a welcome addition to the historiography of medicine in East Asia, should be read profitably in conjunction with Ming Cheng Lo's 2002 monograph, *Doctors within Borders*, for a fuller understanding of the ambiguities surrounding Japanese colonial medicine. The Japanese educated Taiwanese doctors positioned themselves as intermediaries between the colonial state (Japan) and the colonised (Taiwanese subjects).

The intermediary role of physicians in Chinese East Asia as interpreters of biomedical knowledge continued after World War II, as illustrated by Martha Hanson's chapter, but the continuities and changes of the physicians as interlocutors deserves further exploration. The contributors to the volume converse with each other on a variety of themes; most notably, Angela Ki Che Leung's discussion of *chuanran* is critically reflected upon by Sean Hsiang-lin Lei. The chapters of this volume, which critically explore in turn questions of the conceptual plasticity of Chinese medical terminologies, and the translational ambiguities surrounding the implementation of public health procedures, for example quarantine, address a broad academic readership including medical anthropologists, historians of medicine, and cultural studies.

Vivek Neelakantan is a PhD candidate at the Unit for the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Sydney, Australia. His thesis explores the growth of social medicine in Indonesia during the 1950s; in general he is interested in the history of medicine in Southeast Asia and the role of international aid agencies in the post-World War II period (vivekneelakantanster@gmail.com)

Above: Rendering the Notion of Contagion into Chinese. This 1920 poster shows cartoon-type drawings of situations that can cause cholera and methods of prevention. Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine (public domain).



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# The Substation: art and culture in/of the city-state Singapore

## The Performative Space



I have been living in Indonesia for the past nine years, and occasionally I must travel to renew my visa. I have already visited Singapore five times for this reason. As I waited for the MRT (subway train) to make my way from the airport to downtown Singapore, on my most recent visit, I spotted over forty CCTV-cameras on the platform alone. One wonders how many people are employed to watch all that footage. (The situation has led to locals mischievously joking that civil servants in Singapore must be perverts since they love to watch that many hours of CCTV video.)

Roy Voragen

IN SINGAPORE, SECURITY CAMERAS are indeed omnipresent, no-smoking signs are everywhere, and hefty penalties are levied to those who fail to comply. It seems though as if most Singaporeans have internalized the multifarious do's and don'ts of the law – from surveillance to self-surveillance. Nevertheless, there are plenty of great artists in this 'nanny state' who also like to mock their nanny – often in private and sometimes in their artworks.

In addition to this sterile and controlled environment, Singapore is also often accused of being a cultural desert; even some Singaporeans have made this claim.<sup>1</sup> However, even if that has ever been true, a lot has changed over the past two decades. And alternative art and performance space The Substation has played – and still does play – a significant role in this development. Since its founding, many organizations have been added to Singapore's cultural landscape, to name just a few: the Singapore Art Museum (SAM; 1996), which now has probably the best collection of contemporary art from Southeast Asia; the Singapore Biennale (organized since 2006); the art fair Art Stage at the Marina Bay Sands Convention and Exhibition Centre (organized since 2011); and the art district Gillman Barracks (opened earlier this year). SAM and The Substation are now exploring the possibilities to collaborate for the upcoming Singapore Biennale in 2013. Moreover, The Substation's current artistic director, since 2010, artist and playwright Noor Effendy Ibrahim says that to counter the cultural desert argument we should not merely look at a country's

infrastructure, as we will then still overlook the richness of cultural practices and art making – "the learning, the training, the sharing, and the empowering."<sup>2</sup>

For me, art museums and bookstores are the gateways into a new city. Wandering as a modern-day *flâneur*, from art museum to bookstore, I slowly get to know a new city – whether it is Stockholm or Singapore – and detours are part of the journey. My first impression of Singapore and its sidewalk crowd: the women are clad in sexy miniskirts, are buying Gucci and are scented by Picasso. The men go around in Armani and smell like Boss. My first impression of its architecture: an apparent mixture of communist-style office buildings and hyper-capitalist styled mega-malls. What then to expect from and to discover in Singapore's cultural landscape? I acknowledge that first impressions are colored by many prejudices. And it took me a while, but I befriended art spaces SAM and The Substation, and bookstores Select Books (a new neighbor of The Substation) and Books Actually.

In the nineties, the Singapore government's role in and its policies on the arts changed dramatically. The government started to subsidize the arts substantially, among other reasons because the arts are considered essential to attract qualified expatriates to work and stay in Singapore. The government wanted to make Singapore a global and creative city to bolster its GDP, and the arts were instrumental to the branding of "a city with a softer face."<sup>3</sup> This led to the classic problem with government subsidies for the arts: artists and art organizations

happily accept subsidies, but also prefer to have as little as possible government involvement. Noor Effendy Ibrahim says of the pre-subsidy era: "I remember, much opportunity was carved by artists themselves despite the severe lack of arts infrastructure then. Artists found and created spaces where there wasn't any (or was perceived then). What I do find to be disturbing yet intriguing is the reverse today." Today, artists generally do not consider alternatives to the grant system, which means they have to work within the state's parameters.

The Substation was founded in 1990 by the late playwright Kuo Pao Kun (1939-2002), who was its first artistic director until T. Sasitharan took over in 1995. Kuo Pao Kun had been jailed without trial between 1979 and 1980 on suspicion of being a communist (during this time his citizenship was rescinded as well, only to be reinstated in 1992). The Substation is named after the building's original function: in 1926 the Public Utilities Board built it as an electric substation. In the late 1970's the building was vacated and it took the vision of Kuo Pao Kun to put it to good use once again, this time for artistic experimentation and imagination. And as in its original manifestation, The Substation is an essential source of energy.

The Substation has become like a friend to return to time after time for inspiration, for imagination, to be moved towards new horizons and possibilities. The Substation is an interface between artists, audiences and their city; an interface that is never merely transactional. It is, therefore, fitting that The Substation started the Love Letters Project in 2010, for which poets are invited to address The Substation as a long lost lover. This was the May 2010 contribution by poet Gaston Ng:<sup>4</sup>

*Rent*

*We never ever meet during daytime,  
when you're busy turning tricks for  
donations, charging rent for endless  
courses, who occupy your body  
as efficiently as possible.*

*At closing, I smoke endless, curb-side cigarettes,  
waiting for your last patron to go home,  
waiting for our bedroom whispers to begin.*

*Your aspirations sound better worry-free; money-free.  
Dreams flourish when reclining,  
hopes fattening up for the night,  
you make a killing, and begin  
doing what you really want to do.*

*I wait helplessly.*

Randy Chan and Grace Tan's project earlier this year, entitled *Building as a Body*, for which they wrapped the façade of The Substation, can also be seen as emphasizing the above mentioned interface element that makes The Substation so significant.

The Substation's home is a large building, housing a 108-seat black box theatre, a white cube gallery, a dance studio and two classrooms. This multifunctional architecture facilitates the crossing-over between diverse artistic disciplines and media for different audiences in varying settings. It is The Substation's mission to support experimentation through inter- and cross-disciplinarity. For example, artists Andrée Weschler and Lynn Lu decided to use the theatre instead of the gallery for their project *La Carte de Tendre* [A Map of Love]. Andrée Weschler explained: "a theatre [...] is a very different kind of space, and is closer to a landscape than a gallery, it is a space of possibilities."<sup>5</sup> The building is, therefore, well suited to meet the needs of very different artists and their audiences. Furthermore, The Substation has a night bar in its backyard, Timbre, which also organizes live (cover) music performances (the backyard was added in a 1950 renovation to store outdoor equipment).

The Substation's sources of income are government subsidies, rent from the bar, individual donors, corporate sponsors, merchandise and ticket sales<sup>6</sup> – diversification is important in case one source dries up. Leasing out the backyard to Timbre is a financial necessity, but Noor Effendy Ibrahim misses the openness of the garden during the 1990s and the connection with other activities at The Substation. Sustainability of art and cultural organizations must also include variables such as *audience, human resources and new ideas*. The Substation is able to exist as it does today because it has a loyal audience, which is also important for feedback. And art and cultural organizations can only survive over time if their audience is not only diverse, but also multi-generational.

Second, the work force is vital to the sustainability of art and cultural organizations. Most of these institutions function with a limited number of staff, who work long hours for little pay (compared to the commercial sector). A lot of attention should be given to keeping them satisfied with their jobs. The organization, with its staff, should also consistently regenerate itself, so as to avoid an over-identification with the founder, unable to move on and develop.

Third, sustainability requires a maintained flow of ideas on how to attract new financial resources, draw in and keep audiences, and organize human resources; but above all, it needs fresh artistic ideas, including a discourse on the arts, to keep The Substation and its programming contemporary. The Substation's programming includes visual and sound arts exhibitions; theatre, dance, music and art performances; movie screenings ranging from documentaries to video art; publications, including the Love Letter Project; and conferences.<sup>7</sup> One way to test and renew ideas, of course, is through reciprocal feedback between members of the audience, artists, and The Substation. The Substation employs a number of ways to encourage and engage with artists, to challenge and guide them to develop discursive, performative and visual ideas.

One way is through The Substation's Associate Artist Research Programme (AARP), a two-year residency program for which artists receive curatorial, financial and organizational support to develop and execute research and artistic practices. Participating artists are supported to work with communities to rethink the connection between art and everyday life. One of the AARP artists is musician and sound artist Bani Haykal. His project rethinks aspects of music; for example, he developed alternative styles of music notation, because the classical way excludes lay people. He even invited non-classically trained people to play music with him in the gallery.

Another way The Substation engages with artists is through the Open Call for visual, sound and performance artists. Visual artist Boedi Widjaja commented: "The Substation's Open Call means that I receive tremendous support to develop, execute and present a new work to the public."<sup>8</sup> Through the Open Call, The Substation gives young and upcoming artists an opportunity. Recently, sound artist Joel Ong developed and showcased his *Wagon* project: robotic wagons equipped with sensors would start moving in response to visitors pacing up and down the gallery, which, in turn, altered the sound emitted from loudspeakers mounted onto the walls. Ong's exhibition succeeded in subtly offering us a new experience of the (acoustic) environment.

In an interview with curator June Yap,<sup>9</sup> co-artistic director Audrey Wong (2000-2010) explained why The Substation remains relevant: "Pao Kun's vision was (and still is)



"A worthy failure is more valuable than a mediocre success"  
Kuo Pao Kun, founder of The Substation



supremely relevant to Singapore: to provide a space for artists to play, to experiment, test things out and fail, if necessary; to recognize the need for honesty of vision in the artist work; to cultivate depth in the arts [...]; there aren't that many platforms [...] to showcase more risky and alternative, abstract or intellectual kind of work."<sup>10</sup> The Substation, which aims to show art practices and processes instead of finished art products<sup>11</sup> (that can be sold as commodities on the art market), has to deal with two issues: First, while the numbers of visitors are, of course, important, there is more to art than can be quantified; unfortunately, quantification is exactly what a government hopes to see after granting a subsidy. Second, to show what remains invisible in the art market will have a limited reach, although in a city the size of Singapore that should not be a problem; at the same time though, it remains important to communicate why these forms are relevant without patronizing members of the audience.<sup>12</sup>

Art and cultural organizations in Singapore have to deal inevitably with censorship. Noor Effendy Ibrahim: "Our approach with the state on censorship matters and situations is of open and transparent negotiation, and this includes the artists involved, as much as we can possible get. It is never easy and the openness and transparency varies with each case, and often we will find ourselves in a situation where the state opts out of such negotiation parameters, and then we'll find ourselves in an impossible situation." In the meantime, the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore's body in charge of granting subsidies, decided it would not sponsor Singapore's pavilion at the next Venice Biennale, which very well may indicate a new direction in art policy. During my last visit this was the talk of the town – artists feel neglected, they feel they have been bereft of a wonderful chance to showcase their work at the best venue in the art world.<sup>13</sup> Pragmatically speaking, NAC's budget and organization are limited, and the Venice Biennale absorbs a huge part of its budget and manpower. NAC justifies its decision by demanding that art organizations develop programs that have more community involvement.<sup>14</sup> What this means for The Substation is yet to be seen. The Substation continues to organize ambitious programs, such as the yearly art festival SeptFest in celebration of its own birthday: 22 and counting.

**Roy Voragen is a Bandung-based art writer and founder of Roma Arts, he can be contacted at [fatumbrutum.blogspot.com](http://fatumbrutum.blogspot.com)**

**The Substation, 45 Armenian Street, Singapore [www.substation.org](http://www.substation.org)**



#### Notes

- For example, C.J.W.L. Wee, "Creating High Culture in the Globalized 'Cultural Desert' of Singapore," in *The Drama Review* 47, 4 (Winter 2003): 84-97.
- All quotes by Noor Effendy Ibrahim in this article originate from an email to the author, 27-10-2012.
- Jeannine Tang, "Spectacle's Politics and the Singapore Biennale," in *Journal of Visual Culture* 6, no.3 (2007): 365-377.
- <http://tinyurl.com/c5kl487> (accessed 18-10-2012). Originally the poem was written in Mandarin, the poet wrote the translation.
- Tim Zeely, "Charting Unknown Territory, an interview with Andrée Weschler," <http://tinyurl.com/czwkobj> (accessed 19-10-2012).
- Emily J. Hoe (general manager since 2010): "Up until 2006, The Substation was making substantial losses each year. Since then, the rental from our tenant [Timbre, RV] in the Garden has increased substantially. When combined with the rental from our other facilities, it equals about 55% for FY2012. Funding from National Arts Council and Singapore Film Commission was 20%, donations/sponsors 19%, and the rest was made up of ticket sales, merchandise, course and our Visual Arts Fund." Emily, J. Hoe, email to the author, 27-10-2012.
- A recent conference was the third HAO Summit for young curators from the region, <http://tinyurl.com/c5hanes> (accessed 19-10-2012). 'Hao' is Mandarin for good.
- Michele Adriaans, "Exhibition: *Path.1* by Boedi Widjaja," <http://tinyurl.com/bqz8hp4> (accessed 19-10-2012).
- June Yap is a curator-in-resident at the Guggenheim in New York (2012-2014).
- June Yap, "The Substation in Contemporary Singapore, an interview with Audrey Wong and Ho Tzu Nyen," in *C-Arts Magazine* (March-April 2008), 89. Today, Audrey Wong teaches art management at Lasalle College of the Arts.
- Audrey Wong claims that The Substation is an alternative art space as it is distinct from commercial art galleries. Audrey Wong, "On The Substation's 21st Birthday," <http://tinyurl.com/bnk77nz> (accessed 19-10-2012). She also signals another problem: "Our highly materialistic and results-focused society has bred a consumerist mentality towards the arts."
- For example, the wall texts at the Singapore Art Museum are patronizing; they make the artworks flat by explaining literally what one sees.
- Audrey Wong: "our artists are being recognized internationally but remain totally unknown to local audiences," and now artists are afraid that international recognition might also diminish. In June Yap, "The Substation in Contemporary Singapore," 90; see note 10.
- Does that mean that art organizations have to do more with traditional or ethnic art forms? Or does NAC want people to come to visit Singapore instead of bringing art from Singapore to venues abroad? On a more cynical note: the last parliamentary elections saw substantive criticism against the government that allowed the influx of a great number of foreigners who could easily become permanent residents, approximately one third of all people residing in Singapore do not have citizenship (see <http://tinyurl.com/dydkb7c>; accessed 19-10-2012), and NAC's decision not to sponsor a pavilion at the Venice Biennale could then indicate a policy change towards pacifying this anger, but that is perhaps speculation (while those receiving grants have to be accountable, the Singapore government is only accountable to a certain degree).

# News from Asia

## Debt bonds and Vietnamese migrant sex workers in Singapore: exploitation or win-win system?

Nicolas Lainez

COUNTER-TRAFFICKING DISCOURSE perceives informal debt-financed sex migration as a manifestation of exploitation and human trafficking. This paper examines in short the social form and function of the debt-bond in a specific case study,<sup>1</sup> and shows that contrary to commonly held assumptions, debt-bonds in the migration process do not necessarily always lead to risk and exploitation, but at times to a migration system in which both parties benefit.

### The migration broker's services

The main role of the migration broker is to facilitate travel, from Vietnam to Singapore, and accommodation for the clients (the Vietnamese migrant sex workers). In this case study, the broker offers a package, costing US\$815, which includes: a return air-ticket from Vietnam to Singapore, the advance of the 'show money' to use as evidence of solvency when requested by immigration officials (up to US\$800), an address outside Geylang and Joo Chiat (the two red-light districts where the majority of Vietnamese work) to use on the embarkation card, taxi pick-up, admission into the boarding house, inclusion in the peer network, and advice.

Most migrant sex workers decide to hire the services of a broker mainly because they must continually deal with the law. There are no legal statutes in Singapore prohibiting or criminalizing the act of prostitution per se, but procuring and persistent soliciting in public places are legal offences. Foreign sex workers can also be arrested under immigration laws. The majority of those currently working on the island are foreigners residing on a 30-day Social Visit Pass (tourist pass). As such they are not permitted to work. In addition, two sections of the Immigration Act allow the authorities to stop and expel suspected migrant sex workers considered to be 'Prohibited Immigrants'. It is thus common for immigration officials to refuse entry to Vietnamese women who are suspected of coming to work in the prostitution sector.

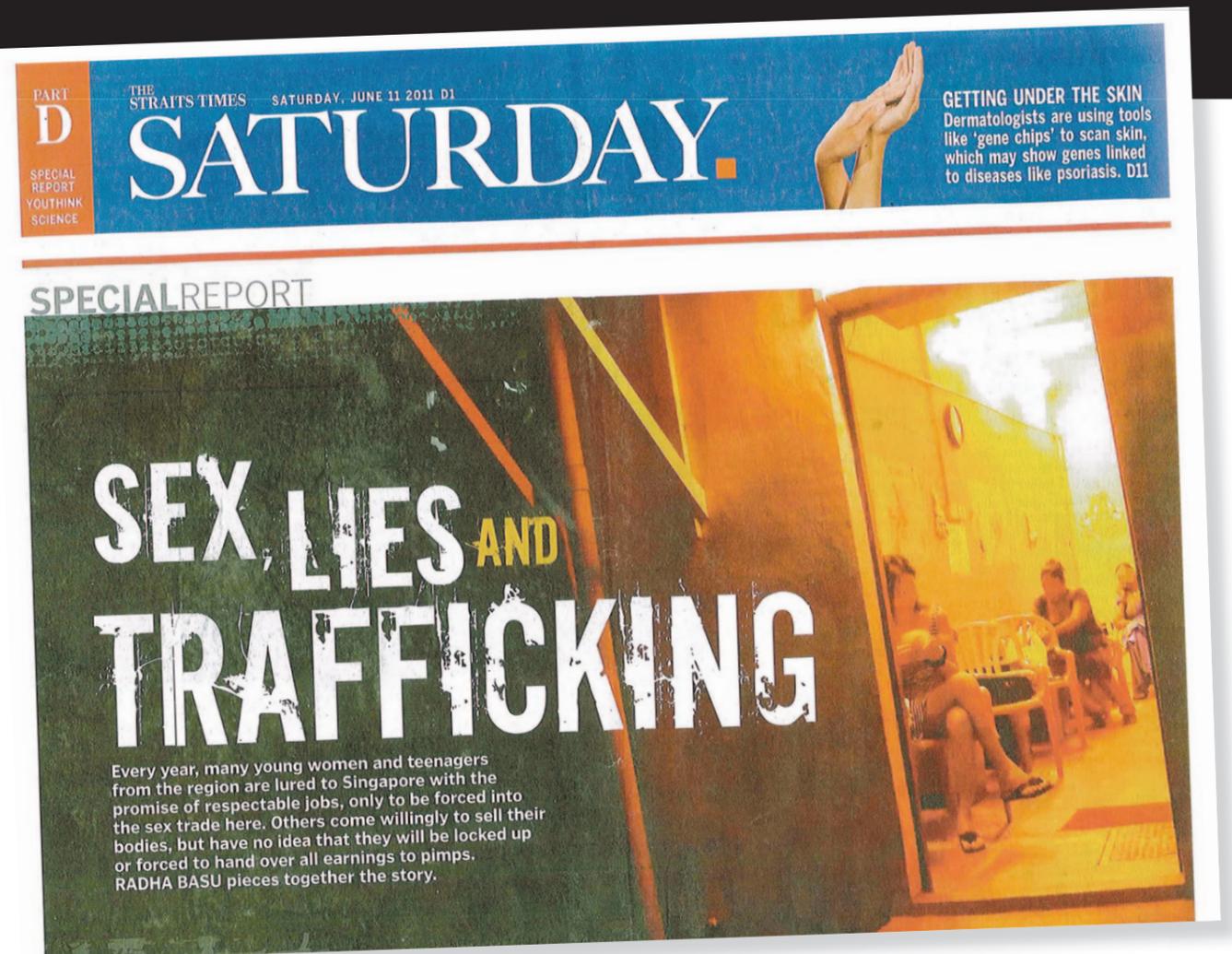
### Repaying debts and exploitation

The agreement is that the broker (creditor) arranges travel logistics on credit, and that the client (debtor) reimburses the cost by working. Vietnamese sex workers can make an average of US\$570 (if they buy the migration package), or US\$800-1200 (if they organize the trip by themselves) per month. It is possible for them to pay off their debt, but they have to serve at least ten clients within a month to do so. It may take a few days for an experienced sex worker or a few weeks for an inexperienced one.

During the investigation, I wondered how the migration broker ensured that the debt was recovered. My findings show that the broker did not resort to violence or abuse because: she does not acquire any rights over the productive activities of her clients, meaning that she cannot force them to work; she neither confines her clients to the boarding house, nor does she confiscate their passports; violence or other methods to pressure clients would involve added costs, as the broker would have to travel to Vietnam or hire someone there to pressure the clients who evade their debt; acts of violence would trigger

Above: The cover of a sensationalistic media report about trafficking in Singapore published in *The Straits Times* (11 June 2011). An entire section reports on migrant sex workers, debt-bondage and exploitation.

Below: A pub on Joo Chiat Road, a Vietnamese red light area in Singapore.



a reaction from the community in the house thereby causing the broker a loss in business and network; newcomers are greatly dependent on the broker for arranging their basic and daily needs, and the constant fear of arrest and expulsion reinforces seclusion and social isolation; the strong social pressure within the boarding house and Vietnamese community in Singapore discourages migrant sex workers from breaking the rules. To sum up, pledging of sexual activity, exploitation, coercion and violence were absent because the social context is strongly binding for all parties.

### Social relationship between broker and clients

Analyzing and understanding the broker/migrant sex worker relationship is crucial, as it helps us to frame the social setting in which there is debt-bondage, but no exploitation. This relationship generally begins with the purchase of a migration package by newcomers, which enables them to enter the boarding house and its vibrant social world.

One of the first things that struck me upon my arrival in the house was how familial the broker and her clients were with one another. They addressed each other using the kinship pronouns *con* (child) and *me* (mother), instead of the more usual pair *chau* (nephew/niece) and *co* (paternal aunt). The roles associated with these pronouns constantly located the broker (mother) and sex workers (daughters) in a strong but reassuring hierarchical and familial position.

I am particularly interested in this dynamic relationship in which intimacy, roles and economic activity are constantly negotiated. The relationship is *dyadic*, as it binds two people; it is *personal* because it falls outside any kinship, administrative or political system; the relationship is *personalized*, as some sex workers are more dependent on the broker than others because of personal affinities, history of their relationship, etc; it is *voluntary*, as both parties enter voluntarily into the relationship (no one was coerced or deceived); it is *informal*, as it is neither legally formalized nor validated by any ritual or oath (the commitment was always oral and moral in the house); the relationship is *hierarchical*, as both parties are in an unequal position in terms of access to material and symbolic resources; and lastly, the study shows that the broker and migrant sex workers undertake *business* as well as *non-business* monetary transactions (in addition to the sale of migration services in cash or on credit, the broker and the sex workers also borrow, lend, give and pay each other for services in ways that mark their relationship). In brief, different aspects and dimensions are added to the relationship making it particularly dynamic, complex, multi-faceted and difficult to classify.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that Vietnamese migrant sex workers who purchase the migration package on credit are economically and socially tied to the broker. But what does dependency mean here? The concept may be understood as a broad spectrum that ranges from correlation, interdependency and solidarity on one end, to subordination, bondage and exploitation on the other. It seems to me that the situation

I have described relates to the first rather than the latter classification. I do not deny the fact that there exist models of informal migration in which indebted migrants are forced to work in constraining environments. But contrary to the trafficking discourse that associates debt-bondage with exploitation, the research shows that some migration business models support non-exploitative and well-organized migration systems in which both parties benefit.

As for debt-bondage representations, some scholars have already pointed out the gap between counter-trafficking narratives on debt-bondage on one hand, and the 'reality' of debt-bonded migrants on the other (O'Connell 2012, Testai 2007). Not only is there a gap between the situation that I have described and its perception and representation (see Basu 2011 for a sensationalistic media report about trafficking in Singapore), but there is also an assumption that informal debt-financed migration regimes are exploitative whereas formal regimes are not. This is misleading. As my case study shows, Vietnamese sex workers are debt-bonded in an informal regime, but they are not exploited and they have a large measure of autonomy in their work. Government sanctioned debt-financed labor migration in Vietnam, however, often involves much higher loans, higher risk, and legal means to immobilize, isolate and exploit migrant workers (Wang and Bélanger 2011). It is ironic that this debt-financed migration is sanctioned and promoted, whereas informal debt-financed sex migration is condemned and persecuted (O'Connell 2012).

Nicolas Lainez is a PhD Candidate (Social Anthropology) at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (France), and a Research Associate at IRASEC (Bangkok) (niklainez@gmail.com)

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### Notes

- 1 The discussion here is based on a six-month ethnographic investigation conducted in Vietnam and Singapore, focusing on the relationship between Vietnamese migrant sex workers and one particular Vietnamese migration broker in Singapore. My informants were 16 Vietnamese migrant sex workers, including six in Ho Chi Minh City and ten from a boarding house in Singapore. I am aware that 16 informants do not constitute a representative sample.



## The 'Heart of Borneo'

Thanut Tritasavit

EXTENSIVE DEFORESTATION ON BORNEO, the world's third largest island, has transformed its once lush and untouched green landscape. With development set as a main priority, the conservation of nature often comes in second place, with displacement of indigenous tribes and the depletion of flora and fauna as a result. In order to reverse this trend, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) initiated the Heart of Borneo (HoB), a conservation agreement that is a voluntary, trans-boundary cooperation between the three ASEAN nations that constitute the island: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

With lush tropical rainforests and one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, the HoB is not only the ideal place, but the sole place in Southeast Asia where both rainforests and biodiversity can still be conserved on a grand scale. The three countries work together to achieve the HoB's goals while maintaining and respecting each other's sovereignty, policies, and development needs for present and future generations.

Signed in February 2007 in Bali, Indonesia, the HoB specifically aims to conserve and manage the trans-boundary highlands of Borneo and parts of the adjacent foothills and lowlands. This, in turn, helps protect diverse biological species and the indigenous people that reside within the confines of the 200,000 km<sup>2</sup> rainforest preserve. Other objectives of the HoB include maximizing trans-boundary linkages, promoting the expansion of the Protected Area network, maintaining connectivity, and ensuring sustainable land use practices. The HoB is unique as it presents a location where the border does not divide, but rather unites.

### Positive trickle-down effects

The HoB has brought about much development since its inception. Multiple activities and projects have stimulated awareness of conservation, while also improving the quality of life of the indigenous people living in the HoB. These communities have been supportive of the HoB from the very beginning, using their traditions, knowledge, and local wisdom to initiate trans-boundary grassroots support and sustainable development of the highlands. The experiences that these communities bring to the field greatly enrich the contributions made towards achieving sustainable development within the HoB.

Above: The Crested Fireback forest pheasant, Borneo. Photo courtesy Creative Commons /Flickr

One of the successful activities is the *Pesta Nukenen Bario*, or the 'Bario and Kelabit Highlands Food and Cultural Festival'; a unique community-run event that takes place in the highlands of Central Borneo. It lasts for three days and involves the celebration of food, farming, forests, and cultural heritage in the Kelabit Highlands. Tourists are shown the best that the local communities have to offer, but the event also provides a glimpse of what could be lost if further deforestation were to occur.

Capacity-building is key to the HoB agreement, and local communities have been keen to embrace new technologies as a form of learning, thus providing development at a personal level. For instance, the 'e-Bario telecenter' in the Kelabit Highlands serves as a platform to reach the community in the local Kelabit language, broadcasting about issues such as conservation efforts and environmental protection within the HoB.

Another project that reinforces cooperation between indigenous populations and external actors is the 'Bario Public Secondary School', or the *Sekolah Menengah Kerajaan Bario* (SMK Bario). The well-equipped learning facility near their own homes offers future generations an opportunity to study in a structured and high-standard environment, something that was previously unavailable. Better education increases the chances that local tribes become more involved in policy-making, leading to better prospects for an improved quality of life.

### Current issues and future challenges

Even though the HoB has been active for five years, there are still various issues that must be better dealt with so as to improve the integration of the people living within the HoB's borders. These issues mainly deal with land ownership and property rights, and communication and participation of indigenous communities.

The root of the problem boils down to certain areas of native land that have been encroached upon by the government for development purposes, whereby people have been progressively alienated or removed from land that unites history, *adat* [customary laws] and cultural knowledge, and which is vital to the local communities. The HoB seeks to work in this social and regulatory space existing between governments and communities.

A land rights case that highlights the problem well is the Pulong Tau National Park (PTNP) in the Kelabit Highlands of Sarawak. Although the PTNP was originally proposed by the Kelabit Highlands community in the early 1980s, in order to protect the Highland forests from logging, the eventual

boundaries for the PTNP were only identified and gazetted in 2003. The area considered for inclusion was decreased significantly and no right of access was granted to the local communities for hunting or timber harvesting, leaving them only with land that was no longer 'Kelabit' in nature, but merely land that they happened to reside on.

Transparency is crucial to resolving these disagreements. If the laws and regulations are defined clearly, the indigenous communities will be empowered to fight back and claim what is rightfully theirs. Furthermore, proper allocation will pave the way for clearer development and conservation planning for both the local communities and external organizers. The issue now lies with whether transparency will be created, as there may either be political forces behind these ambiguities or difficulties in amending older laws.

The second issue revolves around communication and participation from the local communities. While community involvement was touted in the HoB, much more work needs to be done to harmoniously integrate locals into the project. At the very least, there needs to be a greater level of communication. The HoB is an ambitious plan that is implemented by a large non-government organization, which essentially assumes a top-down approach. This creates a particularly distinct lack of trust from the locals, as they suspect hidden agendas. Thus, transparency and regular communication become key aspects of gaining their trust and full cooperation.

### Conclusion

The HoB has proven to be successful so far, with some challenges still remaining. While community involvement and collaboration have resulted in programmes and projects such as *SMK Bario* and *Pesta Nukenen*, initiatives which will improve the local communities' quality of life will help gain their trust and dedication, thereby producing a smoother passage towards sustainable programmes in the future. Transparency also remains a key issue, ranging from better communication to land rights issues and regulations.

Thus, the three ASEAN nations and the WWF must continue to persist in their efforts to remain focused, commit more resources to the preservation of the remaining tropical rainforests, and to continually educate everyone involved. With the high profile publicity that the HoB has received, all participating governments must ensure the sustainability of its implementation through greater involvement and participation from all relevant stakeholders.

**Thanut Tritasavit is a Research Associate (Regional Economic Studies) at ISEAS, Singapore.**

## Women can't have it all: gender and politics in Singapore

Theresa W. Devasahayam

POLITICS IS CLEARLY A MALE-DOMINATED ARENA, yet a small number of women have managed to rise to the top. Asia is a case in point as the geographic region has featured several prominent female political figures in recent decades. Just think of those women who have held the highest political office: Indira Gandhi (India), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), and Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka). In Southeast Asia, we are familiar with Yingluck Shinawatra (Thailand), Corazon Aquino (the Philippines), Gloria Arroyo (the Philippines), and Megawati Sukarnoputri (Indonesia). Dominating the news lately has been Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese opposition politician who won 59 percent of the national vote in the 1990 elections. Significantly, these women all belong(ed) to powerful, dynastic families – unfortunately their rise to the top is an exception to the rule.

What then of the ordinary woman in these countries? There appear to be no explicit structural obstacles for women to join politics, so can we expect their numbers to rise? Focusing on Singapore, this article puts forth insights gained from in-depth interviews with six current and former female politicians, and one who ran for a seat in the 2011 General Elections.

Since independence, the lives of Singaporean women have changed significantly. Today Singapore can boast a near gender parity in many areas. In education, girls and boys have equal access to schooling, and the gender gaps in literacy are minuscule. Men and women have equal access to healthcare, and in fact, the country's life expectancy ratio of 1.06 surpasses that of the global average 1.04 (Global Gender Gap Report 2011). A gender gap continues to exist, however, in labour force participation, and in economic participation

and opportunity. And of course, in the political arena. But the ordinary Singaporean woman does most definitely participate in politics. As in the rest of the world, Singaporean women have consolidated enormous voting power. Moreover, women in this country boast a strong history of voluntary and non-political organizations. However, in terms of female representation in office, their numbers are still relatively low.

Singapore has come a long way in terms of female representation in politics. Since the 1990s, numbers have progressively risen. In 1984, there were three women MPs, joined by a fourth in 1988. With the introduction of Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs) in 1990, numbers grew even more. Currently Singapore has eighteen elected female parliamentarians, out of a total of 84 elected MPs. Seventeen are from the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and one represents the opposition, the Worker's Party. Singaporean women represent just a small fraction of parliament (albeit above the world average). The absence of structural obstacles begs the question whether women are shying away from the political domain for reasons unique to being female.

In Singapore, politics is not a full-time career. MPs hold down jobs in addition to taking on a political appointment. Furthermore, the parties tend to invite only *married* women into their folds because they represent the majority. Divorced and unmarried women are mostly sidelined, because they form the minority; however, things have been changing as there have been five unmarried women in parliament since 2001 although one of the five has since been married. Unfortunately, traditional gender ideologies still persist, and women are expected to bear the bulk of domestic

responsibility towards children, spouses, and ageing parents. Thus, married women who consider entering politics must balance the three spheres of family, work, and politics.

Traditional gender roles are reinforced by government policies. For example, fathers are granted three days of paternity leave, whilst new mothers receive up to twelve weeks of (paid) leave. The policy clearly reflects who the government expects to care for the children. The multitude of expectations placed upon women makes it impossible for them to keep their family, work, and political domains entirely separate.

Unmarried women, or at least those without families of their own, are generally more easily convinced to join the political arena. In fact, research in the US in the past has found that female political candidates were often less likely to be married, less likely to have young children still at home, and less often in the labour force for long stretches of time. However, this has changed considerably as today's woman resembles her male counterpart: she has more labour and political experience. Moreover, voters' views of women as political leaders have also changed as more women are winning elections.

It is clear that women have to pay a price if they wish to enter politics. Something will likely have to give: either family or career. And as long as women are forced to juggle the demands of family, work, and politics, they are more likely to retreat rather than actively participate in the political arena.

**Theresa W. Devasahayam, Fellow and Researcher-in-charge, Gender Studies, ISEAS**

News from Asia *continued*

## Debating Bukit Brown: bringing a cemetery to life in Singapore

Hui Yew-Foong

IN MAY 2011, the Singapore government announced that Bukit Brown Cemetery (BBC),<sup>1</sup> a historical Chinese cemetery in Singapore with an estimated 100,000 graves, had been earmarked for housing. In September, initial development plans were unveiled in the form of a dual four-lane road that would be built through the cemetery, starting 2013. The stated purpose of the road was to ease traffic congestion along the existing outer ring-road. In land-scarce Singapore, these were seen as “difficult trade-off decisions” that had to be made. The usual protests ensued. Letters were sent to the forum page of the national broadsheet, and an online petition was initiated by a local academic. In response, the Singapore government reiterated that the area had to be developed to meet the housing needs of Singaporeans.

In this instance, however, the protests of the public did not die down as usual. In June 2011, a Facebook group known as ‘Heritage Singapore – Bukit Brown Cemetery’ was formed. The group was “...Dedicated to our common heritage in Singapore – Bukit Brown Cemetery – where many of our forefathers were laid to rest...May they rest in peace, forever.” To date, the group has attracted almost 2,000 members. Subsequently, blogs such as ‘Rojak Librarian’, ‘bukitbrown.org’ and ‘All Things Bukit Brown’ emerged to share knowledge about the history and heritage value of BBC. Another group, known as ‘SOS Bukit Brown’, organized a petition against the planned developments, aiming to collect 100,000 signatures, that is, one for every grave in Bukit Brown. At the same time, two civil society groups – the Singapore Heritage Society and the Nature Society (Singapore) – compiled position papers on the preservation of BBC, based on its cultural and natural heritage. Volunteers have also been organizing weekly tours to educate the public on the heritage value of Bukit Brown.

Such a flourish of activities and activism over an old cemetery is unprecedented in Singapore; this is also a case in which the process of heritage site-making is more of a ground-up initiative than a state-sponsored enterprise. In the discourse of pragmatism that is characteristic of Singapore, the common refrain is that in land scarce Singapore, the needs of the dead will have to give way to the needs of the living. However, the Bukit Brown issue so far is not just about the interests of the living versus the dead, but a debate between preserving the cemetery for its heritage value or meeting the pragmatic needs of Singaporeans. That such a debate on the heritage value of a cemetery should rise to prominence suggests a shift in the public discourse of Singapore, whereby it is no longer sufficient to pursue simple ‘bread and butter’ issues. Rather, it is also important to be searching for the soul of the nation, and for some, the place to start is among the graves of Bukit Brown.

### Historical background

As early as 1904, the Chinese community in Singapore had been lobbying the municipal government to set aside a cemetery for non-Christian Chinese. At that time, such burial needs were met by private family cemeteries or clan association cemeteries. However, changes in the law restricted the amount of space available, which was why the Chinese clamored for a public cemetery to take care of their burial needs. The colonial government was reluctant to venture into establishing a municipal cemetery for the Chinese because they expected that the Chinese would not be willing to subject themselves to the grid-like standard plots of a municipal cemetery, given their beliefs in geomantic principles (with very individualized preferences for size and bearings, and a seemingly haphazard layout). However, by the late 1910s, the municipal government

had been convinced that such a cemetery was feasible, and by 1919 had acquired 213 acres of land for the public cemetery.

BBC became the first Chinese municipal cemetery to be opened by the colonial government, in 1922. It was a cemetery that did not require communal affiliations, that is, a relationship with a family or clan. Thus, BBC was the first Chinese cemetery that facilitated a pan-Chinese identity in organizational and spatial terms. Chinese of diverse communal origins – such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese – or surnames, could be buried next to each other.

Initially, the Chinese were indeed reluctant to subject themselves to the discipline of a municipal cemetery. It was more than three months before the first burial took place, and only 93 were buried in the cemetery during its first year of operation. However, by 1929, more than 40% of all burials within municipal limits were at Bukit Brown. It had become acceptable and commonplace for Chinese of different communal origins, whether rich or poor, elite or commoner, to be buried at Bukit Brown. This trend continued till 1944 when the cemetery became full, although those with reserved plots could still be buried in BBC till it was officially closed in 1973. It is commonplace for Chinese Singaporeans today to have ancestors buried in Bukit Brown.

### From familial space to national space

A Chinese cemetery is very much a familial space. Every year, during the Qingming Festival in March and April, Chinese families will trudge through the undulating landscape to locate their ancestors’ tombs, clear the overgrown foliage, and make offerings to their forebears. This is a family affair and the grave is a space for families to commemorate their ancestors. It is no surprise then that when plans for an eight-lane carriageway to be built through Bukit Brown were first announced, some of the most concerned citizens were those with ancestors buried in the cemetery. Many went down to the cemetery to find out if their ancestors’ resting places would be affected by the road project. Others who had not visited for years embarked on journeys of rediscovery to find their ancestors’ graves. The authorities announced they would pay for the exhumation, cremation and relocation of the remains in any of the graves that would be affected by the development plans. These people are those with direct stakes in the cemetery, and their concerns are very much confined to the interests of the family.

But there are also some who see the biographies of those buried in Bukit Brown as being intertwined with the early history of Singapore. Among those interred at Bukit Brown were prominent leaders of the local Chinese community, philanthropists, municipal commissioners, Chinese revolutionaries and literati, and even colonial office bearers from the Dutch East Indies. Their stories tell not only of the Chinese diaspora and their concern with developments in China, but also of their embeddedness in the regional networks of maritime Southeast Asia. At the same time, the materials used in the construction of tombs, such as fine stone reliefs from China and decorative ceramic tiles from Europe, demonstrate a material culture that is very much integrated with the global economy of the early 20th century. Furthermore, the cemetery features some of the largest, most intricate and oldest graves found in Singapore.

In this light, Bukit Brown can be articulated as part of Singapore’s national heritage, and indeed, many who have been actively lobbying for the preservation of Bukit Brown do not have direct familial connections with the cemetery. Their



Top: Ong Sam Leong Panoramic view of the largest grave at Bukit Brown (photo courtesy of author).

Above: National day Celebrating National Day at Bukit Brown (photo courtesy of Martina Yeo).

identification with those buried in Bukit Brown is not through direct familial ties, but through an imagined fraternity of the nation; those buried in Bukit Brown could be imagined as the concern, not only of their direct descendents, but of all Singaporeans. The cemetery could be construed not just as pockets of private familial space for commemorating individual ancestors, but a national space for commemorating pioneers of the nation. It was exactly this imagination that allowed a civil society group to celebrate Singapore’s National Day on 9 August 2012 at the cemetery, to commemorate the ‘Nation’s Deceased Pioneers’.<sup>2</sup> Through such efforts, lobby groups seek to reconstitute the cemetery as a national space.

### The making of heritage sites

Many have noticed that there was little concern over BBC as a heritage site until the authorities announced that the site would be developed. Since then, many have been converted to the cause and, indeed, parliamentarians who have visited the cemetery have debated its value for Singapore. As communities emerge to celebrate the heritage value of Bukit Brown, the site begins to accrue meaning and becomes an important part of the heritage landscape of Singapore. It is no longer a mere cemetery, but a cradle for Singapore’s historical narratives. Through the deep investments of communities, a cemetery is brought to life and a heritage site is made.

Hui Yew-Foong is a Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme at ISEAS, Singapore.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> ‘Bukit’ is Malay for ‘hill’. Thus, ‘Bukit Brown’ can be read as ‘Brown’s Hill’.
- <sup>2</sup> Note that ‘Nation’s Deceased Pioneers’ is a play on the acronym NDP, which is commonly known to represent the ‘National Day Parade’, a civil ritual that is the highlight of the annual celebration of Singapore’s national day.

The articles on these ‘News from Asia’ pages were compiled by our regional editor Lee Hock Guan, at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

If you would like to contribute to this section in a future issue, please send your submission to [iias\\_iseas@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:iias_iseas@iseas.edu.sg)

# Cobbled streets without traffic

My first contact with IIAS was when my husband Gananath Obeyesekere was invited to Leiden for several months as a research scholar in 1997. We were given a section of a spacious though slightly run down house with a garden. My husband was annoyed at first because we had to share a communal bathroom, but we quickly realized what a luxury it was to have a large apartment with a garden – a rare commodity in a land of small living spaces.

Ranjini Obeyesekere

THOSE MONTHS IN LEIDEN were for me a sheer delight. I felt I had gone back in time to a medieval world of cobbled streets and monumental public buildings that were, not just monuments, but still very much in use. I loved the long walks by the canals, the open market along its bank, the restaurants with their lights reflected in the water and the city squares where one could sit and enjoy a cup of coffee and watch the world go by. But what amazed me was that this small 'walking city' was also a modern city, with its sophisticated shops that carried every kind of modern necessity from furniture to food to household goods. I asked a friend, "How do shops get their goods if no vehicles are allowed in the city centre?" I was told that vehicles could come in between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. to make deliveries. Much later I tried very hard to introduce this system to our old city of Kandy in Sri Lanka, where we lived. I managed to convince the then Mayor to try it out,

but it was not a success. The businesses all protested and since they carried a significant vote bank for the Municipal councillors, the experiment ended after two weeks. Our small city, once the ancient capital of the country, and marked as a World Heritage site, continues to be congested and polluted, crammed with all manner of vehicles and jammed with pedestrians who have little space to walk.

When five years later my husband and I were again invited to IIAS, this time in its former branch at the University of Amsterdam, we were delighted to return to an institution that we knew. Our apartment was located in the centre of the city, a tall narrow brick building just four storeys high, looking out over the river Amstel. I had the sense that I was walking into the doorway of a Vermeer painting I had once seen as a student. As I stepped in I was amazed at the narrowness

of the stairs. This time it was a miniscule apartment, but beautifully appointed with all the conveniences one could wish for – a miracle of a twenty-first-century modern apartment in a seventeenth-century shell!

We settled in quickly and two days later began the daily walk across the little bridge, the 'Halvemaansbrug', over the Amstel to the University where our offices were located. Those morning walks were a meditative experience for us both. The serenity, the ever changing reflections of clouds and shimmering buildings in the slowly moving water of the canal, the tree shaded roads with the occasional cyclist, are memories that remain with us.

We would use the excellent facilities and office space at IIAS and work on our specific projects during the day. It was the first time after many years I had untrammelled time for my own work, undisturbed by the demands of household or family commitments. I was able to get a first version of a translation I was doing of the Yasodhara poem, later published by Suny press.

The IIAS offices would (sensibly) close by late afternoon, and the long evenings were ours to explore the flower markets, the antique fairs, the old churches, and the many museums. We would end the day savouring one or other of Amsterdam's many and diverse ethnic restaurants. Our memories of Amsterdam will always be of a great European city, which like all great cities is a melting pot of peoples and cultures, foods and art, and thus a very liveable city for people like us, IIAS scholars from distant parts of the world.

Ranjini Obeyesekere,  
Lecturer Emerita at Princeton University



I was the beneficiary of two memorable fellowships at IIAS, first in Leiden for six months in 1997 and then in the summer of 2002 in Amsterdam. My wife Ranjini has described better than I ever could the pleasures of living in these two beautiful cities.

Gananath Obeyesekere

Regarding my stay in Leiden I had the following to say about it in the preface to my book *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist and Greek Rebirth*. In that work I thank Wim Stokhof and his colleagues for a productive stay and add: "I cannot think of a better place than the beautiful city of Leiden for putting together a satisfactory first version of a work that to me remains an unfinished one." In addition to putting together *Imagining Karma*, I gave several public lectures on my fieldwork, and if I remember correctly, especially on my work on the so-called Aborigines of Sri Lanka, the Veddahs.

One of the intellectual pleasures of my stay in Leiden was meeting other scholars, especially younger ones (no longer young, just as the present writer is in his ripe old age), and engaging in conversations and communal meals with them. It was at Leiden that I learned what PhD rituals are like in the Netherlands, and I assume elsewhere in Europe – such a contrast with my US experience! The Amsterdam experience was similar and yet different. Both my wife and I enjoyed the artistic and intellectual pleasures of a great city. Additionally it was great fun meeting some of my old friends, Peter van der Veer and

Carla Risseuw, and new friends in the Anthropology Department; enjoying their hospitality and conversations during meals at homes and out in restaurants. It was in that department that I gave a lecture on the theoretical underpinnings of my work on visions, expounded at length in my book published this year as *The Awakened Ones: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience*. I then had the pleasure of putting that lecture in print in an article I wrote in 2006 on "Asian Studies and the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in a book in honor of Wim Stokhof and edited by Josine Stemmelaar and Paul van der Velde, *What About Asia? Revisiting Asian Studies* (2006).

Both visits were eventful ones in my long intellectual career. My work and thinking and my personal life experiences have been much enriched by these two memorable visits to Leiden and Amsterdam as guests of IIAS.

Gananath Obeyesekere,  
Emeritus Professor of Anthropology  
at Princeton University

# Announcements



## Multiculturalism in Thailand

Alexander Horstmann

ON 2-3 OCTOBER 2012 the workshop 'Multiculturalism in Thailand: Concept, Policy and Practice' was held at Mahidol University in Salaya, Thailand. The workshop was organized by Dr. Sirijit Sunanta and Dr. Alexander Horstmann, on behalf of the new PhD program in Multicultural Studies, which successfully commenced in August 2012, at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA; Mahidol University). A third organizer was Professor Chayan Vadhanaputhi, Director of the two other participating centers, both at Chiang Mai University: Regional Center for Sustainable Development (RCSA) and Center for Ethnic Studies and Development (CESD). Professor Chayan Vadhanaputhi is also Senior Advisor of the PhD program in Multicultural Studies at RILCA.

The aim of the workshop was to discuss the state of multiculturalism as a political position and policy in Thailand. The main question was if multiculturalism as an ideological position has arrived in Thailand and how multicultural policies impact on ethnic minorities in Thailand. Another question asked was if Thailand has quit the assimilation model and has implemented multicultural policies that sincerely aim to accommodate diversity. The workshop concluded that multicultural policies are not yet sincere and although some encouraging signs of rethinking the cultural others and community participation indicate change, Thailand is not yet prepared to grant substantial rights to ethnic minorities, let alone self-government. Migrant populations fall outside government policies and the state is mostly repressive.

Multicultural policies should not only include identity and cultural heritage, but also full access to education, social welfare and full rights of political participation. The special cultural zones (*ket wathanatham piset*) seem to be a crucial indicator of government honesty and commitment to multiculturalism and some of the speakers in the workshop are committee members. The project was critically discussed and evaluated and it was concluded that there are still too many limitations and contradictions as to the responsibilities and sincerity of the project.

### The panels

In the first panel, 'Multiculturalism in Thailand: A new framework and its challenges', Chayan Vadhanaputhi provided a foundational analysis of different theoretical concepts of multiculturalism in Southeast Asia. He argued that ethno-nationalism used to prevail in Thailand and that Thailand in the 1950s had a strong nationalist and civilizing project in which ethnic minorities were seen as a problem and troublemakers who had to assimilate to mainstream Thai national identity in order to benefit from modernization. This led to a state of discrimination and exclusion. Only in the 1980s did Thailand apply a policy of selective multiculturalism and selective ethnic pluralism, although selective multiculturalism has not yet replaced the assimilation model. Cultural rights for ethnic minorities are still outstanding, and ethnic minorities are exoticized and used for tourist purposes. Thailand does not grant rights of self-determination or self-government to national minorities and the sincerity of selective multicultural policies have yet to be proved. Chayan contrasts state multiculturalism with critical multiculturalism and argues that initiatives should come from civil society rather than from the state.

Sirijit Sunanta (RILCA) likewise critically reviewed the experience of multiculturalism in Thailand and in the West. Even in the countries where multiculturalism originated, such as Canada and Australia, governments have partially withdrawn from the approach, and the concept as a policy has come under increasing controversy. Sirijit argued that the concept may be state-centered, ethnocentric and disadvantageous for women. Multiculturalism in the West is squeezed between the left and the right. Sirijit argues that multiculturalism as a discourse and policy has not really arrived in Thailand, although there are some changes that are more than cosmetic. It has to be seen if and how much a rethinking of diversity will take place in Thai society.

Olivier Evrard (CESD, Institut de Recherche en Développement) questioned the appropriateness of the terminology of multiculturalism in the context of mainland Southeast Asia. Like Chayan did, he too referred to the ethno-spatial order and the civilizing project of the hill communities in Northern Thailand. He argues that multiculturalism has replaced older terms and narratives and he maintains that there are competing concepts of cultural pluralism existing side by side. Evrard referred to concepts of hybridity, creolization and spaces of dispersion to emphasize the complexity and contradictions underlying current multicultural policies in mainland Southeast Asia. He said that even France emphasizes universal rights on the detriment of partial group rights. He also distinguished formal from substantive citizenship. Substantive citizenship includes full access to education and full political participation.

In the first panel, speakers suggested that the application of multiculturalism in Thailand is far from certain and that multiculturalism exists side by side with other competing and contradicting models, such as ethno-nationalism. The following panel focused on the perception of rights in Thailand. In her conceptual presentation, Coeli Barry (Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre) conceptualized different types of rights, collective rights, community rights and cultural rights. She argues that Thailand has a history of impunity and has basically withdrawn collective rights from ethnic minorities. Barry argues that cultural rights have huge political implications, and that a recognition of rights is essential for giving people back their right to cultural identity, history and dignity. Barry states that



the idea of rights has still to be promoted by civil society and that ethnic minorities claim ownership of cultural heritage. International rights frameworks need to be contextualized to become effective in the local context.

Prasit Leepreecha (CESD) gave a comprehensive introduction to the rise of indigenous rights movements and how indigenous people form partnerships with local and international NGOs to claim access to social welfare and rights. He describes how civil society was able to empower community leaders from hill tribes who now regularly participate in the UN forum on indigenous rights. The Thai government is not able anymore to simply ignore the citizenship and rights claims of indigenous people.

Tiamsoon Sirisrisak (RILCA) presented his work on community rights and contested ownership of cultural heritage in Bangkok's Chinatown. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has plans to modernize Bangkok that conflict with the maintenance of cultural heritage by the communities. Tiamsoon argues that while the BMA does not invite the community to participate in urban planning, the community – although divided – organizes activities in their place to raise consciousness for the significance of cultural heritage in their neighborhood. The outcome is open to contestation. Tiamsoon concludes that urban modernization is state and business driven, and does not consider community needs.

The practice of multicultural policies was deepened in the next panel. Malee Sittthikriangkrai (CESD) is advisor of the special cultural zones project. This pioneer project is funded by the Ministry of Culture and aims to strengthen marginalized communities. The project was initiated by civil society actors and a pioneer project of Karen communities in Northern Thailand and Moken communities in Southern Thailand is now underway. But, even though the project is supposed to strengthen the identity of Karen and Moken, there are a number of problems arising. Neither Karen nor Moken have substantial rights to use environmental resources and conflicts with the Environment and Forestry Department are rampant. Bilingual education is practiced, but local teachers are not recognized by the Ministry of Education. The project stops short of granting the communities any substantial rights and customary law is not recognized. Malee thus confirms the general statement made by Barry, that the government is not yet prepared to shift ownership and substantial cultural rights to the minorities. Karen communities, however, are able to use their internal strength to pressure the government for more accommodating policies.

Suwilai Premsrirat (RILCA) gave an overview of national language policies that followed the assimilation model. The Mahidol project aims to preserve endangered languages and promotes multi-lingual education. The government does not yet provide teachers and funds to support native languages. Suwilai gives particular significance to the introduction of multi-lingual education in the Deep South as a means to reduce ethnic conflict there. This point was taken up by Panadda Boonyasaranai (CESD) in her case study of the multi-lingual Akha. The non-recognition of minority cultures in Southern Thailand was again discussed by Ngamsuk Ruttanasatian. Kwanchit Sasiwongsoj (RILCA) provided a detailed picture of health policies in Thailand and how they impact on migrant's access and exclusion from these policies.

The final panel again reminds us that multiculturalism is state-centric and that a lot can be gained by looking at the agency of borderland communities and refugee-migrants. The presentation by Alexander Horstmann (RILCA) reminded us that migrants are not even considered for multicultural policies and are controlled in state spaces. Thailand has not signed the Refugee Convention and refugees are hence not protected. Worse, refugees have been routinely abused by state authorities and are not even considered of equal value. Alexander showed how refugee-migrants organize themselves to create their own spaces. Mukdawan Sakboon (CESD) reminds us that many people in Thailand are still stateless and face many obstacles to receiving proper citizenship.

Clearly, multiculturalism is on the map of Southeast Asian Studies. The workshop was well received, was given substantial outside attention and both RILCA and CESD agreed to, in the future, exchange faculty and students, develop workshops and conferences, produce publications, and provide training to government ministries and civil society.

**Dr. Alexander Horstmann is a teacher for the new PhD program in Multicultural Studies, at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, at Mahidol University (ahorstmann3@gmail.com)**

**Sirijit Sunanta PhD is chair of the same program (Sirijit.Sunanta@gmail.com). This is the first PhD program in Multicultural Studies in Thailand.**

**Above: The Manoora master puts his bare foot on the face of a sick baby of a Muslim mother in Wat Ta Kura, Songkhla, Thailand. Local Theravadin Buddhists and Muslims alike believe in the power of ancestral spirit. Photo reproduced from Thomas Reuter and Alexander Horstmann (eds.), 2012. *Faith in the Future*, Leiden: Brill. Photo by Alexander Horstmann, May 2006, in Sating Phra, Songkhla, Thailand.**

**Below: Dr. Chayan Vadhanaputhi (director CESD, Chiang Mai) giving his presentation.**

## Soviet Modernism 1955-1991: Unknown Stories

Elena Paskaleva

**Exhibition in Architekturzentrum Wien:  
8 November 2012 – 25 February 2013**

UNTIL 25 FEBRUARY 2013 the Architekturzentrum Wien is presenting a unique exhibition focussing on the modern architecture of the former Soviet republics (with the exception of Russia). Organised according to four geographical regions, *Soviet Modernism 1955-1991* offers visual and material insights into the architecture of the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Eastern Europe (Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus), the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).

The project, based on the initiative of Georg Schöllhammer and the association 'Local Modernities', has resulted in an extensive network of scholars from East and West who have jointly worked towards the exhibition. For the first time, the *Unknown Stories* of eyewitnesses and architects themselves have been recorded and are now being told in Vienna. As a result of the collaboration between researchers and local architects, the exhibition outlines the diversity and artistic value of Soviet Modernism.

The construction programmes initiated by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in the late 1950s resulted in the creation of model socialist cities. On the one hand, the reduced functionality of apartment buildings was meant to solve the pending social problems of free housing for each Soviet citizen. The plans were uniform and mass-produced, and the material was invariably pre-fabricated concrete. The complete design process was carried out in large architectural institutes, with very limited artistic freedom, using standardised plans and techniques. On the other hand, representative buildings were designed individually, allowing for more creativity on the part of the predominantly Russian educated architects.

Stretching from Scandinavia to China, the region covered by the exhibition is enormous and rich in diverse ethnic and religious traditions. The architecturally unique designs of Soviet Modernism express both the cultural relationships to Russia (particularly in Eastern Europe) and the struggle for new national identities (mostly evident in the Caucasus and Central Asia). These characteristics have been skilfully represented by the curators Katharina Ritter, Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair and Alexandra Wachter.

Architectural examples from the four geographical regions were selected by the curators according to the following five typologies indigenous to Soviet architecture:

- *Houses for political education.* These public buildings played a major role in Soviet propaganda and in the majority of cases represented the story of the Revolution and the heroism of the Soviet people. (e.g., Lenin Palace, 1970, Almaty, Kazakhstan; Lenin Museum (now Historical Museum), 1984, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Lenin Museum, 1970, Tashkent, Uzbekistan).
- *Wedding palaces.* These 'palaces' were used as a venue for mass celebrations in which large groups of people could gather without any religious connotations. (e.g., Wedding Palace, 1985, Tbilisi, Georgia; Wedding Palace, 1987, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan).

- *Winter circuses.* In 1952 the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a decree to build permanent winter circuses in the country. As a tribute to the Belarusians who had contributed to the reconstruction of the national economy, it was decided to build the first one in Minsk (1959). (e.g., Circus, 1976, Tashkent, Uzbekistan).
- *Markets.* Markets are intrinsic features of Central Asian culture as trade was at the centre of the Silk Road routes that connected China with the West. Covered markets, in particular the four-fold type of chorsu, can still be found along the trading hubs in pre-modern settlements. During the Soviet period the concept of the market was further developed by utilising the century-old multiple dome structures and using modern engineering methods. (e.g., Bazar, 1983, Baku, Azerbaijan; Chorsu Bazar, Tashkent, Uzbekistan).
- *Restaurants as free standing buildings.* (e.g., Gulistan Restaurant, 1967, Tashkent, Uzbekistan).

The timing of the exhibition is appropriate as it provides, among others, material sources for the study of Central Asia, which is a relatively new field in the West. Of particular interest is the architecture of Uzbekistan. It can be analysed as a synthesis of Soviet Modernism and centuries-old ornamental traditions. The majority of public and apartment buildings in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent were designed by Russian architects from Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg). One example of the cultural exchanges between Soviet design and the architectural heritage along the Silk Road is the Lenin Museum in Tashkent designed by Boldychev, Rozanov and Shestopalov in 1970. It constitutes a massive prism clad in a sun-protective grating of Gazgan marble, using medieval patterns dating back to 14th century Il-Khanid architecture. The interior walls, covered with mosaics praise the Soviet valour in a capital which remained unscathed by the war.

Another decorative idiom used by the Soviet Uzbek designers was the *ganch panjaras* (lattices) with stained glass that could be seen in the Gulistan Restaurant in Tashkent from 1967. They were designed by Grosman and Lipene, whose work was influenced by the achievements of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian artists.

In the 1960s, the multi-storey apartment blocks were imposed upon the traditional Uzbek way of life in which several generations lived together and shared large common spaces that could not be accommodated by the new standardised living norms. These new Uzbek dwellings were elaborately decorated with colourful mosaics and were erected along large Soviet avenues in order to promote Tashkent as the centre of Socialism across Central Asia. The Uzbek capital was a Soviet show city, the stage of multiple international conferences and symposia attracting pro-socialist architects from all corners of the world. Architecture was a political tool used in a larger scheme of creating a modern Soviet nation out of 'backward nomads'.

The exhibition layout was designed by Six & Petritsch. Each region is represented by a huge map with clear boundaries marked around the newly independent states. Selected buildings based on the above mentioned typologies are presented with photographs and architectural drawings. Many local architects have kindly lent images, newspaper



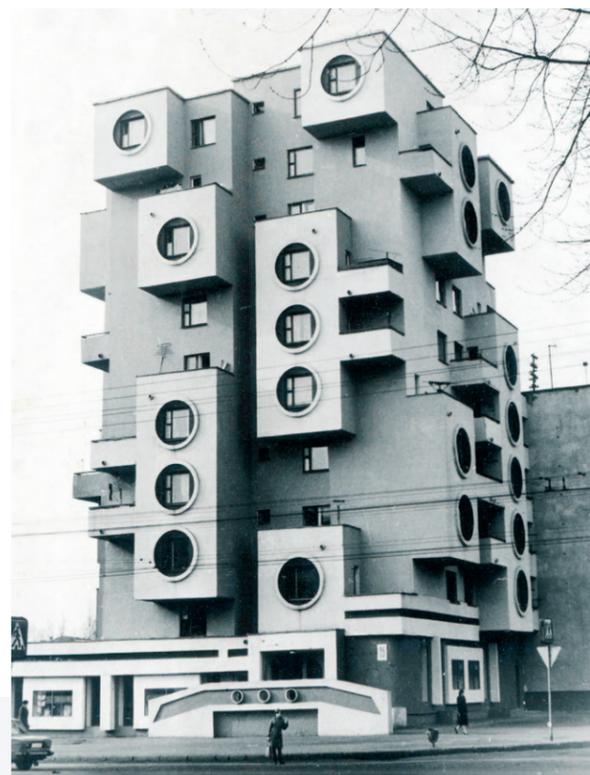
Above: Residential building, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Photo by Elena Paskaleva.

clippings and magazine articles from their private archives, which are exhibited in glass cases. Period (propaganda) films depicting the construction and the design of the buildings enrich the visual experience. However, the large screens with pictures are set against the walls or fitted into metal frames in a vaulted, rather cluttered elongated space. In my view, the exhibition would have profited from a more spacious setting, which could have allowed for a better perception of the architectural images, and perhaps the inclusion of architectural models. For perceiving architecture is multi-sensory and the quality of the space does matter.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue in English and German (published by Park Books). The publication aims to go beyond the average exhibition catalogue as it provides an extensive overview of each country composed by a local expert. Since the main aim is to present Soviet Modernism both from outside and from within the local cultural contexts, the Architekturzentrum Wien has become a pioneer in the search for the roots of local Soviet modernities.

**Exhibition website:** [tinyurl.com/cz8ct68](http://tinyurl.com/cz8ct68)  
(or museum website: [www.azt.at](http://www.azt.at)).  
**Information on the Park Books catalogue:**  
[tinyurl.com/bqylswm](http://tinyurl.com/bqylswm)

**Elena Paskaleva works on architectural heritage in Central Asia. At present she is an affiliated post-doctoral fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden ([elpask@gmail.com](mailto:elpask@gmail.com))**



Left: Residential building on Minskaya Street, 1980s, Bobruisk, Belarus. © Belorussian State Archive of Scientific-Technical Documentation.

Below: Lenin Palace, 1970, Almaty, Kazakhstan. © Simona Rota.



# IIAS News

## New publication

Rath, Saraju (ed.) 2012  
*Aspects of Manuscript Culture  
 in South India*  
 Leiden: Brill. 320 pages.  
 ISBN: 9789004219007

*Aspects of Manuscript Culture in South India* is the outcome of a seminar organized at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands. The volume marks an important advancement in the study of South Indian Sanskrit manuscripts and manuscript culture. These manuscripts, which are predominantly on palm leaf, are rarely older than three to four centuries. Nevertheless, they give access to traditions of knowledge and culture that developed in the Indian world over several millennia.

In addition to an introductory essay addressing theoretical and historical issues of text transmission in manuscripts and in India's remarkably strong oral memory culture, the volume contains a further twelve contributions. These deal with South Indian manuscript collections (mainly Sanskrit texts), as well as manuscripts that were recently, or that still are, part of a living culture in which manuscript culture is still intertwined with oral transmission and a cultural and religious tradition. Problems related to the scripts and the dating of ancient manuscripts are also dealt with. The volume will be of interest to indologists, manuscriptologists, paleographers and students of India's intellectual history. Its contributors are: Gérard Colas, Anna Aurelia Esposito, Masato Fujii, Cezary Galewicz, Jan E.M. Houben, Heike Moser, P. Perumal, Kim Plofker, Saraju Rath, Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, Dominik Wujastyk and Kenneth Zysk.



Edited by Saraju Rath  
*Aspects of Manuscript Culture  
 in South India*



### The 'Van Manen Collection' at Leiden University

The volume is the outcome of the two-day workshop 'Production, distribution and collection of Sanskrit manuscripts in Ancient South India', organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands. The workshop was convened by Saraju Rath in the context of her research on the 'Van Manen Collection' of Sanskrit palm leaf manuscripts, which have been preserved at Leiden University since 1929. In 2009, Saraju completed the five-year long manuscript project, which resulted in the identification of 193 new texts within the manuscripts, adding significantly to the 395 individual texts already known to be included in the collection. A complete list of titles of all 588 texts is available at [www.iias.nl/profile/saraju-rath](http://www.iias.nl/profile/saraju-rath). A catalogue providing more details on the manuscripts, and the texts they contain, is under preparation.

The second article in the book by her hand is entitled Varieties of Grantha Script: the Date and Place of Origin

of Manuscripts. The article is a detailed study of distinctive characteristics of varieties and stages of the Grantha script, which is the main script in the 'Van Manen Collection', in addition to other scripts such as Telugu, Malayalam, Nandināgarī, and Vaṭṭe uttu. Grantha occupies a major position among scripts used to transmit Sanskrit texts, as it is the only script specially designed to write Sanskrit (and Vedic) texts, including royal records and documents in the southern states of the Indian subcontinent. In South India, Grantha is therefore a transregional script, employed for texts in the Sanskrit language next to other scripts that are preferably used for other languages and vernaculars: Tamil script for Tamil, Telugu script for Telugu, etc.

**Saraju Rath, PhD (Pune University)** is a senior research fellow at IIAS with extensive research experience in Indian manuscripts. She teaches and lectures on manuscriptology and on the history and development of ancient Indian scripts in India and Europe.

## In Memoriam Arne Kalland

ON 22 OCTOBER we heard the sad news that Prof. Arne Kalland had passed away after a long increasingly immobilizing illness. Prof. Kalland worked as an anthropologist at the University of Oslo. In the early 1990s he worked with the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen before returning to Norway. His main intellectual interest was Japanese fishing and whaling, about which he published numerous articles and books, including *Japanese Whaling, End of an Era?* and *Fishing Villages in Tokugawa Japan*. In addition he (co)edited books on topics like *Asian Perceptions on Nature and Environmental Movements in Asia*.

In the late 1990s he was a member of a loose network of scientists called 'East West Environmental Linkages', which organised workshops on topics such as Environmental Movements, Indigenous Environmental Knowledge, Co-management of Natural Resources. This network was facilitated by grants from the European Science Foundation (ESF), but also from NIAS and IIAS and the home institutions of the participating senior scientists in the USA, United Kingdom, Norway, the Philippines, the Netherlands and others. Many publications have come out of this network.

Arne was an active member of this network for a number of years. His physical condition, however, no longer allowed him to travel to distant places. Even though he was restricted in his movements he kept on teaching at the university and inspiring young researchers and colleagues to do solid and innovative research on human interaction with the environment. His students and colleagues in Norway as well as abroad are grateful for the opportunities to have worked with him.

**Gerard A. Persoon, PhD; IIAS Professor Environment and Development, Institute Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University.**

## IIAS PhD platform and discussion group

THE IIAS PHD DISCUSSION GROUP on LinkedIn ([www.iias.nl/linkedin-phd](http://www.iias.nl/linkedin-phd)) forms part of our 'National Platform for Asia Related PhD Research in the Netherlands'. The PhD platform was recently set up by IIAS as a tool to support PhD students and their supervisors in the Netherlands in their research.

In January 2012, the IIAS conducted a review of PhD research on Asia in the Netherlands (with a humanities and social sciences focus) and this led to the identification of more than 250 projects being carried out all over the country. What struck us most, was the enormous range of subjects studied, and the large number of Dutch universities, research schools and institutes involved.

Subsequent discussions indicated that PhD researchers in the field of Asian studies, linked to different organisations, rarely know of each other's work, even when the respective PhD subjects cover a similar region and/or discipline and co-operation could benefit both parties.

IIAS therefore decided to set up a national PhD platform to help PhD researchers (and their supervisors) in the Netherlands to establish contact, as well as to disseminate information about relevant courses, lectures or,

for example, international visitors (research fellows, visiting professors), etc. The platform may also function as a tool to encourage groups of PhD researchers to initiate workshops, or to invite national and/or international scholars for lectures and seminars, etc.

### Join the PhD platform on LinkedIn

To develop the platform, PhD researchers in Asian studies in the Netherlands, and their supervisors, are invited to join the LinkedIn group 'IIAS PhD Platform'. We welcome all comments and recommendations posted to the site, which will help to develop the platform into a useful tool for anyone conducting PhD research in Asian studies in the Netherlands, and who would like to share information and experiences with fellow researchers.

A comparable Facebook discussion site has been set up at: [facebook.com/PhdPlatform](http://facebook.com/PhdPlatform)

We hope you will enjoy the discussions and find the information on the platforms useful.

**Willem Vogelsang, International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden**

## Patterns of Early Urbanity

**International Conference on Pre-Modern Asian Cities**  
**Date: November 2013**  
**Venue: Leiden, The Netherlands**

IN NOVEMBER 2013, IIAS and the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University, along with other partners, will be hosting an International Conference in Leiden, the Netherlands, bringing together leading scholars from around the world to explore the 'early urbanity' of pre-modern Asian cities.

The conference seeks to explore Asian cities during their crucial period of urban formation and activity, before the 'modern period' when Western practices and concepts brought about major changes. Although the main focus of the conference will be on Asia, informative comparison and contrast will be brought into the debate through contributions summarising European, Mediterranean, Near Eastern and Meso-American urban history. Three main perspectives will be explored:

- processes of urban development,
- urban economy,
- social fabric of the city.

**More information on the conference and Call For Papers will be made available on the IIAS website: [iias.nl](http://iias.nl)**

## IIAS Global Agenda

**Submit your event to our online events calendar**

IIAS OFFERS THIRD PARTIES the opportunity to disseminate information about their own Asia-related events, research fellowships, grants or job opportunities through the IIAS website.

**We invite you to create your own account at [www.iias.nl/events](http://www.iias.nl/events) and upload your information to our Global Agenda.**



# IIAS Reports



our work with our peers and the conveners, within the collegial and supportive environment of the masterclass, expanded our methodological and theoretical lens, pushing us to think deeply of the wide array of practices, social issues and configurations of power.

As Aniek Smit, one of the student participants, shared: "I met with inspiring people from various disciplines, who were all able to look beyond their own topic and discuss migration in a more general sense. As a historian of migration, it was interesting to talk to people from Area Studies who were very familiar with the Asian context, whereas my focus up to this date had been more on the migrants in my study." Likewise, Helene Ilkjaer reflected: "For me, the Summer Programme was a great chance to meet Ph.D. fellows and professors working in and on Asia, and it was very inspiring to learn about the wide range of topics and methods that the others were engaged in. The Summer Programme really broadened my regional scope, and it has helped direct my focus beyond the narrow national context of the country I'm working in."

## World Wide Asia: Asian Flows, Global Impacts

Thien-Huong Ninh

Report of the second IIAS Summer Programme in Asian Studies, 27 Aug – 1 Sept 2012, Leiden, the Netherlands

THE SECOND International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) Summer Programme, *World Wide Asia: Asian Flows, Global Impacts*, gathered graduate students and researchers across academic disciplines and regions of the world in Leiden, between 27 August and 1 September 2012. The event started with a four-day masterclass followed by a two-day international conference during which the participants examined how the flows of people, goods, capital and ideas within and from the Asian continents have been transforming the global landscape.

Organized by IIAS, in partnership with the Leiden Global Interactions (LGI) research profile at Leiden University, this year's summer programme was directed by three leading scholars in, respectively, the fields of global migration history, the history of globalization, and modern Asian history: Prof. Leo Lucassen (Leiden University), Prof. Adam McKeown (Columbia University) and Prof. Radhika Singha (Jawaharlal Nehru University). The event followed last year's summer programme on *Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives*. Twenty-two graduate students, including myself, participated in the masterclass. Prof. Henk Schulte

Nordholt, Chairman of the IIAS Board, opened the class and encouraged us to cultivate Asian perspectives on historical and contemporary forms of migration and their impact on shaping global-local landscapes, practices, relationships and structures. He pointed out that 'border crossing' assumes that borders exist before migration, although, for many cases in Asia, migration precedes the configuration of borders. Therefore, how do Asian networks and flows, which at times may have been subsidized and then revitalized, continue to challenge political concepts such as citizenship and shape market forces and institutions?

Coming from various standpoints and academic training, the students aimed to provide insights into this question through intensive and interactive workshop-style discussions of our dissertation research during the masterclass. From Korean migrant workers in China to Japanese migration in Brazil and ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia, the wide spectrum of our research interests examined the multiple conditions, processes and effects of globalization and historical global forms pertaining to Asian mobilities. The opportunity to share

Above: Summer School attendees outside the Peace Palace, The Hague, Netherlands.

I particularly liked the interactive and eclectic structure of the programme, which encouraged lively discussions and creativity without compromising individual focus. In our theme-based groups, we had the opportunity to present our work and received constructive feedback from peers of similar research interests. We were also at times intentionally divided into groups that cut across these themes, which forced us to engage with perspectives beyond our academic backgrounds. Individual consultation meetings with the conveners and excursions to the Peace Palace and immigrant communities in The Hague provided additional opportunities to develop and contextualize our projects. The masterclass ended on a high note with our group presentation about a hypothetical research project we would carry out based on lessons and ideas we had learned during the past four days.

The programme wrapped up with a two-day conference on Asian migrations, featuring many international scholars and attracting more than 100 attendees. Topics of the panels ranged from subaltern mobilities to commodity networks, citizenship, and modernity and self-making. In addition to the opportunities of meeting and interacting with the conference panellists, four of us from the masterclass were also invited to present our research in one of the conference sessions.

For more information about past and future IIAS Summer Programmes, please visit [www.summerprogramme.asia](http://www.summerprogramme.asia)

Thien-Huong Ninh, Williams College ([ttn1@williams.edu](mailto:ttn1@williams.edu))

## UKNA Roundtable



First UKNA Roundtable in Delft, the Netherlands (5-6 November 2012)

On 5-6 November the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) held its first annual Roundtable, which brought together scientific representatives and a number of researchers from the 14 partner institutes of the UKNA research exchange network. The venue was the Faculty of Architecture at the Technical University in Delft, one of the Dutch partners in the network.

On the first day of the Roundtable, the UKNA partners strategized about the research outputs of the network. They agreed to invite research contributions from scholars in the network within three (for now) broad thematic areas. The first thematic area is *The Future of Cities*, which will examine critical issues that define urban life and the future of urbanization in Asia. The second area is *Cities by and for the People*, which will explore how residents and civic groups shape Asian cities. The third theme is the *Idea of the City*, representing an epistemological approach to cities, and looking at the question of how knowledge about Asian cities is acquired and shaped, and by whom.

Each thematic working group will be led by a Steering Committee composed of three or four individuals from UKNA institutes in the three main geographical areas represented in the network ('Greater China', India and Europe/USA). The Steering Committees will determine the focal topic(s) to be covered by their respective thematic areas, and will decide on

the format of research outputs and activities. In addition to UKNA scholars, outside researchers are also welcome to contribute to any of the three established working groups, provided that their research is of a multi-disciplinary nature and addresses the topics to be explored.

On the second day, the Roundtable hosted a forum on the situation of urban heritage within urban planning and redevelopment in Europe and Asia. This forum was open to UKNA scholars as well as an external audience of policy makers, academics, and researchers. The city of Delft was used as a case study in the discussion; lessons learned from planning approaches in that locale (and more widely in the Netherlands and Western Europe) were critically compared and contrasted with experiences in Asian cities. In the morning, Ilse Rijnveld, Advisor of the Department of Monuments at the Municipality of Delft, spoke about the evolution of heritage management approaches in the city. This was followed by a walking tour of the city center, which exposed UKNA scholars and outside experts to the changing face of urban 'heritage' in various neighborhoods of Delft.

In the afternoon, Dr. Paul Meurs of the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture delivered a presentation on urban heritage policies in the Netherlands, in which he discussed the growing emphasis in Dutch cities on 'cultural value as a motor for redevelopment'. This was followed by a presentation by Dr. Zhang Bing, Chief Planner of the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, on the urban heritage management trends and challenges in Beijing.

The next UKNA Roundtable will be held under the auspices of the ICAS 8 conference in Macau, in June 2013.

For questions about UKNA or the three thematic focal areas identified at the Delft Roundtable, please contact Dr. Paul Rabé, Coordinator of UKNA. Paul is based at the UKNA Secretariat at IIAS in Leiden ([p.e.rabe@iias.nl](mailto:p.e.rabe@iias.nl)). More information about UKNA can be found on the network's website: <http://www.ukna.asia>

Above: Street scene, Delft, the Netherlands. Illustration by Simone Bijlard, Lumen Architectuur [lumenarchitectuur.nl](http://lumenarchitectuur.nl)

### The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The Urban Knowledge Network Asia is an academic research exchange network on urbanization in Asia, coordinated and administered by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), which brings together over 100 researchers from 14 different institutes in India, 'Greater China', Europe and the United States. UKNA is funded by a €1.25 million grant awarded by the Marie Curie Actions 'International Research Staff Exchange Scheme' (IRSES), which is part of the European Union's Research Executive Agency Seventh Framework Program. UKNA was launched in April 2012 and will run for a period of four years. Its key objective is to nurture new forms of multi-disciplinary and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities. This will be achieved via a combination of research staff exchanges, targeted case study-based research, seminars and roundtables focused on three core substantive focal areas: urban environment, housing and neighborhoods, and urban heritage.

The fourteen partner institutes of UKNA are: Ambedkar University, Delhi; the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Beijing University of Technology, Beijing; the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, Beijing; CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India; the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai; the Development and Planning Unit, University College London; the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville, France; the Department of Architecture at Hong Kong University; the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, the Netherlands (the coordinating institute of UKNA); the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru; the School of Architecture at Tianjin University, Tianjin, China; the Faculty of Architecture of Delft University of Technology, Delft, the Netherlands; the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Macau; and the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. In addition, UKNA has two strategic partner institutes: the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore; and the Graduate Institute of Planning and Building, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan.

IIAS Reports *continued*

# History, Identity & Collective Memory: In Search of Modern China

Sandra Dehue



Above:  
Beijing Olympics  
opening ceremony,  
2008. Photo  
courtesy Creative  
Commons/Flickr.

"ONLY WHEN CHINA STOPS defining itself in terms of how it thinks it is perceived by the West and Japan, will it truly have overcome 'national humiliation'." This was one of the many points made and issues raised during the seminar 'In search of Modern China' (29-30 June 2012). Nine scholars from different countries and academic backgrounds presented their research papers, shedding light and exchanging ideas on the question of how history, identity and collective memory issues are interpreted, constructed and appropriated in the nation building process of modern China. With this two-day seminar, convener Prof. Jui-sung Yang, concluded his half-year teaching appointment at Leiden University as IIAS visiting professor from National Chengchi University in Taiwan. The event was also attended by a small group of his students and other interested parties, including Sandra Dehue, editor at IIAS.

In his introduction to the seminar, Yang outlined the context of the topic. The image today's China is eager to present to the world is that of a modern nation at peace with itself, and fully integrated in the modern international system. A China that is no longer under the shadow of its imperial past or its modern vicissitudes, and where history and collective memory only seem to play an insignificant role in its rapid economic

development and self-understanding. For many people a rich and powerful China is nothing but the realisation of the widely shared pragmatic value in contemporary China: to 'look forward in all respects' (*yiqie xianqiankan*). However, China thus portrayed, is only one side of the story. There are many signs indicating that the 'new China', while 'looking forward' economically, has continued 'looking back' to redefine its modern significance by reinterpreting history and constructing collective memory. For example, during the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China in 2009, an unusual ceremony, a march of 169 goosesteps escorting the PRC national flag from the People's Heroes Monument to Tiananmen Square, honoured the sacrifice of the Chinese people ever since the Opium War in 1840 (169 years ago). Another example is the important and widely promoted goal for Chinese athletes, especially during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to erase the label of 'Sick Man of East Asia', a term believed by the Chinese to have been used since the 19th century by the West and Japan to humiliate the Chinese people and country.

Elena Barabantseva presented her paper *In Pursuit of an Alternative Model? The Modernisation Trap in China's Official Development Discourse*. She argues that China's model of

development is preoccupied with modernity as a linear process of progression, relying on the suppression of other possible development paths. This paradigm of modernisation is symbolically celebrated in China's official discourse and public rituals. By tracing its impact on the influential annual publication *China Modernization Report* and on the 2009 National Day mass parade, Barabantseva aims to show what kind of Chinese nation is produced and how. The *China Modernization Report*, which offers a comparison of China's development with other countries, is for example not issued by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, but by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which represents the hard sciences. Another example is the theme of the 2009 National Day, 'Advances of the motherland', which was expressed in the mass parade by the Yangtze river representing the necessarily forward flow of development, while the ethnic minorities – officially regarded as backward – held the last position in the parade.

Andrea Riemenschneider (*Specters of modernity in Post-Maoist fiction*) pointed our attention to the heterogeneity and polysemy of the symbols employed in post-Maoist literary works. The multiplication of Chinese pasts, it has been suggested, is one of the strategies to reconstruct an alternative (to the) present. Post-Maoist fiction also explores new ways of understanding history through the voices of hitherto silenced subjectivities. While famous writer Lu Xun, during the late 1910s, woke up his elite compatriots from their long shut-eye complacency, post-Maoist writers, in their turn, investigate a century of supposedly awakened, modern reason, that had nevertheless led to other forms of no less harmful irrationalism in Mao's China and thereafter. Meanwhile, the violence of the revolutionary monomyth has given way to passive nostalgia, while the unsustainable dreams of capitalist new China threaten to turn its (social) landscapes into wasteland. In her paper, Riemenschneider analyses Bei Feiyu's novel *Tuina* (*Massage*, 2008), which offers an outlook on the everyday lives of a group of social outcasts, in terms of its renegotiation of China's different modernities and core values.

Focusing on two propaganda poster series from the 1990s, Professor Landsberger (*I want to be an amazing Chinese: How China prepared (the people) for a global role*) illustrated how the success of the modernisation process, as well as selected moments in China's history, have been used by the Chinese government in the conceptualization and visualisation of being Chinese. In the four-part educational propaganda poster series 'Amazing' (1996), intended for middle schools, the love for the Mother Country is clearly related to the success of the modernisation process. Posters like these are designed to prepare the Chinese people for a global role, and are intended to invoke feelings of pride in the self and the nation. The second series, the 'Patriotic Education Propaganda Poster Set' from 1994, adds a new sentiment by specifically remembering the century of 'national humiliation' by the imperialist West, starting with the 1840 Opium War and officially ending with the founding of the PRC in 1949. Its second poster, entitled 'How can we forget?', shows the ruins of the Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan), ransacked in 1860 by the British. The series not only appeals to feelings

## Professor Jui-sung Yang, first incumbent of the Taiwanese Chair of Chinese Studies at IIAS

PROFESSOR JUI-SUNG YANG visited IIAS and Leiden University, from February through August 2012, in the framework of the (renewed) agreement between IIAS and the Ministry of Education of Taiwan, in support of a teaching chair of Chinese Studies.<sup>1</sup> Following its mandate to stimulate Asian Studies in both academia and society, IIAS supports professorial fellowships that allow Dutch and Asian scholars to exchange expertise, by sponsoring Asian scholars to come to Dutch universities for the purpose of teaching and research. In this framework, Professor Yang taught an advanced course on Chinese nationalism in the last year of the bachelor's programme China Studies at Leiden University, while engaging in research at IIAS. He concluded his seven-month stay with a two-day international seminar entitled *History, Identity & Collective Memory: In Search of Modern China*.

Professor Jui-sung Yang holds the position of Associate Professor at the Department of History, National Chengchi University in Taiwan. He wrote his dissertation at the University of California (Los Angeles) under the mentorship of Professor Benjamin A. Elman, on the subject of Yen Yuan an early Qing Confucianism in north China. In recent years, Yang's research has focused on the issues regarding the construction of modern Chinese identity. He is the author of

the book *Sick Man, Yellow Peril, and Sleeping Lion: Chinese Images from the 'Western' Perspectives & the Discourses and Imaginations of National Identity in Modern China*, a publication chosen by the Taiwanese government as one of the Taiwanese official publications exhibited at the 2011 *Frankfurter Buchmesse*.

### Teaching

The course *Modern Chinese Nationalism* was designed to give last-year students of the bachelor programme China Studies, a rounded perspective on the complicated relationship between collective memory and modern Chinese national identity. Besides introducing the main themes of modern Chinese nationalism, it explored the construction of modern national identity in terms of symbols such as 'Yellow Emperor', the Great Wall, 'Sick Man' and 'Yellow Peril', and analysed the significance and impact of the 'victimisation narrative' of modern Chinese history.

In a period of twelve weeks, and covering selected readings from various contemporary scholars in both English and Chinese, the course familiarised the students with some important current scholarship regarding the study of modern Chinese nationalism and the discourse of Chinese national identity, and provided insights into the way symbols and images have been appropriated by nationalist discourses in the construction of modern Chinese national identity. It aimed to teach students how to assess and analyse the significance of historical memory and consciousness in modern Chinese nationalism; to redefine the complicated

relationship between traditional and modern China; and to rethink the ambiguous role played by the West in the 'victimisation narrative' of modern Chinese history.

### Research at IIAS

Yang's research project at IIAS focused on the relationship between population discourse and modern Chinese nationalism. It aimed to explore how the 'digitalised' population discourse shaped the boundary imagination of the modern Chinese nation, internally and externally. The fruit of this research is the article *The 'Four Hundred Millions' Discourse/Imagination of the Nation in Modern China* (in Chinese), published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas in East Asia*, vol.2 (June, 2012), in Taiwan. Yang also looked into the complicated relationship between the collective memory of 'national humiliation' and 'victimisation narrative' in modern Chinese historiography. His major research interests and concerns lie in investigating the various facets of modern Chinese nationalism and their interactions with modern Chinese collective memory and identity.

### Notes

1 Replacing an older agreement in support of a teaching chair of Chinese Studies, the new agreement was signed in March 2011 between IIAS and the Bureau of International, Cultural & Educational relations (BICER) of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education. The new agreement aims to promote the teaching and research of Chinese Studies, and its interaction with East Asian Studies, within the Netherlands and Europe, and provides for a Taiwanese Professorship Programme at IIAS.

of pride, but also emphasises the necessity to stand up for China's legitimate rights. Relevant questions include, among others: how did China see itself, and how did the Chinese people perceive themselves at this point in time?

Jui-sung Yang's presentation, *Long Live the Sick Man! The 'Bingfu' Complex in Modern Chinese Consciousness*, centred on the role of the 'Sick Man' label in the nationalist discourse in modern China as a form of 'imagined national humiliation'. An important mission for the Chinese athletes during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, was winning as many medals as possible in order to erase the so-called 'Sick Man' label, which is erroneously regarded by many Chinese to have been ruthlessly imposed upon China by the Western imperialists and the Japanese to humiliate both China and the Chinese, especially with regard to the physical qualities of the Chinese people. In the West the term was first used by Tsar Nicolas I to refer to the weak Ottoman Empire, and in the political discourse of the late 19th century, to describe the weak and corrupt state of the Qing empire. Agreeing with this metaphor, many pro-reform Chinese intellectuals at the time frequently invoked the term to call for radical reforms. The term was only used to refer to the physique of the Chinese when Chinese reformers, like Liang Qichao, invoked the term in the early 20th century to stress the importance of the national body reform movement. However, as time went by, the Chinese people forgot the Chinese origins of this new meaning, and even worse, the term has since been used time and again to invoke and mobilise xenophobic sentiments in the construction of modern Chinese collective identity. By historicising this 'imagined national humiliation' and showing how the image of 'Sick Man' has been 'individualised/personalised' as a bodily problem for every Chinese, and then 'nationalised' as a collective humiliation in the nationalist discourse in modern China, Yang's paper reflected on the complicated role the West plays in the construction of modern Chinese identity, as well as on the possibility of a 'post-national' understanding of this symbol in today's China.

Ivo Amelung (*Science and National Identity: Discovering History of Science in early 20th Century China*) argued that the history of science only became a serious research area in China in the 1930s, when it was integrated into China's discourse on identity in two ways. Firstly, China as an aspiring modern nation needed a past that could be linked to a Chinese modernity, and a history of Chinese science and technology was one way to achieve this. Secondly, the Chinese scientists as a group wanted to legitimise their position by emphasising the importance of science and technology in China's great past. As the study of the history of science had never before been an important topic, the Chinese used the existing western models of scientific classification as blueprints and a source of inspiration for the discourse. By doing so, they created an identity that in many respects relied heavily on western ideas and developments.

With his presentation, *The Date No One Could Recall: Collective Memory about the Founding Day of the Chinese Communist Party*, Yoshihiro Ishikawa showed how political

Right: Combining powerful images and rousing language, the "Patriotic Education Propaganda Poster Set" (1994) shows how China has shaken off its humiliation and is becoming a nation once more to be reckoned with. The poster set is part of the IISH/Stefan R. Landsberger Collections (chinese posters.net).



pressure can lead to collective memory creation. In the period after the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, its members gave special meaning to the exact founding date – and birthday – of the CCP. Lacking reliable information on the exact date, the pressure of the political arena at the time contributed to the formation of an 'official collective memory' of many who attended the first national congress; as time went by, however, they themselves had no actual clear recollection of when precisely it had taken place.

Below:  
Standing (L-R):  
Onodera (Kyoto U.),  
Yang (Nat. Chenchi U.),  
Ishikawa (Kyoto U.),  
Amelung (Goethe U. Frankfurt),  
Landsberger (Leiden U.)  
Sitting (L-R):  
Sakamoto (Hitotsubashi U.),  
Riemenschnitter (U. Zürich),  
Barabantseva (U. of Manchester),  
Ter Haar (Leiden U.)

Shiro Onodera (*Commemorating the National Humiliation: the Origin of Modern Chinese jinian and Guochi jinian*) focused on the origins of the Chinese 'National Humiliation Day' (*guochi jinian*). At the end of the 19th century, *kinen* (記念) in Japan, referred to a ceremony to celebrate honourable events. The idea of commemoration was introduced in China by Liang Qichao, but in a different way, namely for the purpose to remind people of *guochi*, or 'national humiliation', and to swear revenge. One of the first *jinian* (記念) ceremonies was to commemorate six executed reformers. When Japan confronted China in 1915 with the Twenty-One Demands, patriots responded in outrage by establishing *guochi jinian*, a day of national humiliation to commemorate the demands.

Hioko Sakamoto's presentation, *On the Concept of the Han, the Yellow Race and the New Chinese Nation in Modern Chinese History: From Liang Qichao's Concept of 'Yellow as Greater Han' to Fei Xiaotong's argument on the 'Plurality and Organic Unity' of the Chinese Nation*, showed how issues of ethnic identity played an important role in the nation building process after the fall of the Qing dynasty. She argues that Liang Qichao's concept of the 'Yellow Race' from 1901, meaning the Han Chinese and the highly sinicised Manchu minority, can be regarded as a sort of prototypical model of Fei Xiaotong's view on the Chinese nation. In his *Plurality and Organic Unity* (1988) Fei portrays the Han group as the 'coagulated core' around which many different groups fused together in China's thousands of years long history. After the fall of the Qing, most nationalists initially didn't agree with Liang's inclusion of the Manchu. However, fearing that they might lose large parts of the previous imperial territory, inhabited by its many different ethnic groups, they soon decided that the term *zhonghua minzu* (中華民族) [Chinese people, Chinese nation] should include all different ethnic groups in an attempt to unify the new nation. The term is present in both the Chinese names of the Republic of China (1912), *Zhonghua Minguo*, and of the PRC (1949), *Zonghua Minzu Gongheguo*, which also referred to itself as a 'Harmonious Big Family', comprising all ethnic groups within its borders. Nevertheless, the reality was that Stalinist policy soon declared that the ethnic minorities were at a lower stage of development in history. The question that arises is, if the great importance given to the Han group, first in Liang Qichao's concept of the 'Chinese race', and later also by Fei Xiaotong, may somehow pressurise the ethnic minorities to conform to Han identity?

The last presentation, *Stories of Northern Connectedness*, was delivered by Barend ter Haar. He put forward his hypothesis that many of the local indigenous cultures in southern regions of China have their origin stories stemming from the north. He argues that these stories may be interpreted as stories of belonging, rather than of evidence of historical facts. They create a fictional past linking the cultures in question to what is seen as 'Chinese', or at least to an 'imperial' past, which can be shared with what is seen as the original China of the plains of the Yellow River.

The seminar was completed with a discussion and concluding remarks about the subjects covered, including: how the historical past can be distorted in the construction of national identity; how present concerns can determine what of the past we remember and how; how the common people react to or consume the official ideology; and the question of the possibility of a post-modern, post-national understanding of the past in today's China.

Notes

1 The seminar was sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan; Leiden University's Institute for Area Studies, Modern East Asia Research Centre, and International Institute for Asian Studies.



IIAS Reports *continued*

## North Korea in the Spotlights IIAS Annual Lecture 2012 given by Geir Helgesen

Video of the Annual Lecture: [www.iias.nl/channel](http://www.iias.nl/channel)  
Full transcript: [tinyurl.com/c96ao97](http://tinyurl.com/c96ao97)

THE HISTORIC, MID-17TH CENTURY WAAG ('weigh house'), in the centre of Leiden seems an unlikely venue for a lecture on North Korea. What can the relationship be between a beautiful Dutch Classicist building, where goods entering the city were once weighed on huge scales, and an enigmatic country in East Asia that is often perceived as the last bastion of old-fashioned communism? Yet on Wednesday, 19 September, the *Waag* was filled with some 120 people attending the 2012 IIAS Annual Lecture and the subsequent reception. The speaker was Geir Helgesen, director of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen and a renowned expert on this mysterious East Asian country. The Annual Lecture was one of a trilogy of events putting North Korea in the Leiden spotlights: the lecture preceded a Round Table conference on North Korea, and some time later we enjoyed the inaugural lecture by Prof. Remco Breuker, the new professor in Korean studies at Leiden University, and also a member of the IIAS board.

Bearing in mind the topic of the Round Table conference and the inaugural lecture by Remco Breuker, the subject of the Annual Lecture was clearly not chosen at random. But neither was the speaker, Dr Geir Helgesen, director of NIAS. In his introductory words, IIAS director, Philippe Peycam, stressed the strong relationship between IIAS and NIAS. This institute has for many years been a close partner of ours. We share many characteristics and focus on the same part of the world, namely Asia. The institutes are also complementary; IIAS has a strong focus on the Humanities, and NIAS is more inclined towards a Social Sciences approach. The Annual Lecture was an excellent opportunity to strengthen the mutual relationship, which both institutes would like to expand through the exchange of scholars and managerial staff. In fact, in October IIAS welcomed a staff member of NIAS who, for some days, joined the IIAS to exchange information on current and future projects, management, and to discuss further forms of cooperation, including the training of PhD students. Both IIAS and NIAS hope to extend their partnership to include other groups, especially within the framework of the European Alliance for Asian Studies (EAAS), of which IIAS runs the secretariat. The Alliance includes a number of renowned European research centres in the field of Asian studies.

The title of the IIAS Annual Lecture was informative: 'A user's manual to North Korea: matters and issues that shape relations between them and us.' The lecture was indeed not solely about North Korea, but it instead focussed on the relationship between North Korea and 'us'. The speaker, Geir Helgesen,

is a Norwegian citizen, trained as a cultural sociologist at Copenhagen University. His main publications include: *Democracy and Authority in Korea. The Cultural Dimension in Korean Politics* (1998) and *Politics, Culture and Self, East Asian and North European Attitudes* (2006) edited with S.R. Thomsen. Forthcoming books are: *Ideas, Society and Politics in North East Asia and Northern Europe. Worlds Apart, Learning from Each Other* (2012) (in press), and *Preconditions for a Human Rights Dialogue with North Korea* (2012). He is a frequent visitor to Korea, North and South, and in his work he tries to approach North Korea independently, without being influenced by the stereotype images that prevail among Western politicians and the media. In fact, he is always trying to counter-balance these preconceptions.

Helgesen started his lecture with a quote from the blogger Mark McDonald, who earlier this year – after Kim Jong Un had succeeded his father as the new North Korean leader – wrote: "Here's a modest proposal for peace on the Korean Peninsula. Give the kid a break." (blog hosted by *International Herald Tribune*). McDonald made this suggestion following large-scale American and South Korean military manoeuvres that did not trigger any retaliation from the North Koreans. However, most Western media interpreted the North Koreans' reticence by saying that the new leader could not be trusted and would draft his own, negative agenda. Helgesen used this quote, and the Western response, in order to illustrate the prevalent Western attitude to North Korea, which tends to put whatever happens in the country into a negative context. Helgesen concluded: "The boy has not yet got his break."

Helgesen seeks to understand North Korea from its own historical and cultural dynamics. In doing so he follows, as he stated in his lecture, in the footsteps of Cornelius Osgood, who in his book *The Koreans and their Culture* (1951:v), wrote:

*It may be said of Korea that there is no country of comparable significance concerning which so many people are ignorant. For hundreds of years the Koreans sought safety in complete isolation, developing unique customs and a distinctive way of life. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, they have suffered deeply in the discovery that a nation cannot sustain its independence if it will not share in the general development of civilization. Shocked by violent Japanese, Russian, and American occupations, the Koreans now struggle for the restoration of their liberty and national dignity. As that effort, with its far-reaching implications, can affect the whole world, it has seemed desirable that the characteristics of Korean culture and the circumstances which led to their development should be made available, particularly to those whose obligation is the welfare of the sorely beset Koreans.*



Above: UN soldiers facing North Korea, on the border. Courtesy of Karl Baron Creative Commons/Flickr.

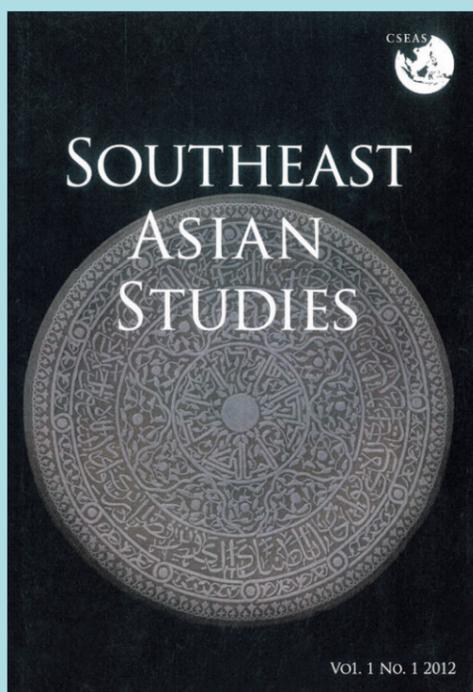
Commenting on these words, Helgesen speaks of how in the West we are used to recognising and respecting the culture and history of other parts of the world, yet we seem to turn a blind eye towards the uniqueness of North Korea and its history and culture. The country is often regarded as the last communist dictatorship, and we tend to look at whatever happens in the country through this unique prism.

Helgesen states that the present system in North Korea is neither completely run by, nor completely dependent on a small group around the Kim family. He notes that "the ideology, politics and leadership of North Korea have been created, developed and formed based on internally given traditions and in relation to external influences and pressures." He adds that this system is very strong, because it makes sense to the people. It is rooted in the history and culture of the North Koreans. It is also rooted in the way the North Koreans perceive the outside world, whether they do so correctly or not. The external influences and pressures, Helgesen continues, include the doctrine of communism, but especially the hostile relations with Japan, the US and South Korea.

As Helgesen put it in his introduction: "With the ever dominant picture of a Stalinist-like dictator as the front figure of a system inhumane in its core functions, the nuances tend to not only disappear, but even to be unwanted." Helgesen emphasises that the black-and-white approach to North Korea simply does not work, and in the end surely does not help the people of North Korea. For Helgesen, the 'old manual' for the Western attitude towards North Korea included the general advice: "... always believe the worst and question positive information, should it ever occur." The 'new manual' in the lecture's title refers to the need for a new approach. He stresses the necessity of a more balanced approach, that takes into account the particular characteristics of North Korean society, which is only possible when the Western audience becomes aware of its own position. It simply does not help to see North Korea as a country that is merely evil, led by an evil dictator; or as a country that, as stated by Bruce Cummings in his book *North Korea, Another Country*, "every American loves to hate." (Preface, p. viii) Helgesen adds that within this Western context, politicians tend to regard it as suicide to say anything about North Korea that may be perceived as positive. North Korea may thus be a source of abhorrence, amazement or, rather cynically, entertainment, but such a position will never reduce the tensions in East Asia and alleviate the dire problems of the North Korean population. That these problems are very much present, is also stressed by Helgesen. He refers to the hunger catastrophes of the 1990s, the labour camps, the complete lack of access for the North Korean people to information about the outside world. But Helgesen stresses that these enormous problems cannot be solved by regarding and depicting North Korea as a rogue state that cannot be trusted and where people blindly follow their unpredictable leaders from the Kim dynasty. Helgesen is very clear. He believes a new approach is so necessary because the old way simply does not work; by not changing the 'manual', the West, together with the Pyongyang leadership, is responsible for the continuing human suffering in the North. What is needed, Helgesen told his audience gathered in the Leiden *Waag*, is a far more balanced approach.

Willem Vogelsang, IIAS Institute Manager

## Announcing ...



IN 2012, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, re-launched *Southeast Asian Studies* as an all-English journal. Intended for a regional as well as global readership, *Southeast Asian Studies* will be published three times a year.

The new journal aims to promote excellent, agenda-setting scholarship and provide a forum for dialogue and collaboration both within and beyond the region. *Southeast Asian Studies* engages in wide-ranging and in-depth discussions that are attuned to the issues, debates and imperatives within the region, while affirming the importance of learning and sharing ideas on a cross-country, global, and historical scale. An integral part of the journal's mandate is to foster scholarship that is capable of bridging the continuing divide in area studies between the social sciences and humanities, on the one hand, and the natural sciences, on the other hand.

The journal welcomes accessibly written articles that build on insights and cutting-edge research from the natural sciences all year round.

Inquiries: [English-editorial@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:English-editorial@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp)  
<http://englishkyoto-seas.org/>

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

# IIAS Research projects

IIAS research is carried out within a number of thematic clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents – all built around the notion of social agency. The aim of this approach is to cultivate synergies and coherence between people and projects and to generate more interaction with Asian societies. IIAS also welcomes research for the open cluster, so as not to exclude potentially significant and interesting topics.

## Asian Cities

WITH A SPECIAL EYE on contemporary developments, the Asian Cities cluster aims to explore the longstanding Asian urban “tradition”, by exploring the origins of urbanism and urban culture in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times. Through an international knowledge-network of experts, cities and research institutes it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, IIAS wishes to initiate a productive dialogue where each participant can contribute his or her own expertise, with the potential to evolve into a broad multi-disciplinary corpus contributing to the actual development of Asian cities today.

## Asian Heritages

THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested distinctions of “tangible” and “intangible” heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in framing and creating various forms of identity. The cluster will address the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for determining who benefits or suffers from their implementation. It aims to engage with a broad range of concepts including the issues of “authenticity,” “national heritage,” and “shared heritage”, and, more generally, issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage. It will also critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

## Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region as well as Asia's projection into the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends will be addressed. The cluster wishes to contribute to a better academic understanding of the phenomenon by challenging the Euro-centricity of much of its current literature, acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformations. It also wishes to explore new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interaction in the form of South-South and East-West dialogue models. By multi-polarizing the field of Asian studies, an enriched comparative understanding of globalization processes and the role of Asia in both time and space will be possible.

### IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance in Asia, is engaged in innovative and comparative research on theories and practices – focusing on emerging markets of Asia. Its multidisciplinary research undertakings combine approaches from political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology in the comparative analysis of regulatory issues in Asia and in developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities. Currently the Centre facilitates projects on State Licensing, Market Closure, and Rent Seeking; Regulation of Intra-governmental Conflict; Social Costs, Externalities and Innovation; Regulatory Governance under Institutional Void; and Governance in Areas of Contested Territoriality and Sovereignty.

**Coordinator: Tak-Wing Ngo**  
(t.w.ngo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

### Jatropha Research & Knowledge Network (JARAK)

IIAS has become partner in a new network called JARAK, the Jatropha Research and Knowledge network on claims and facts concerning socially sustainable jatropha production in Indonesia. Jatropha is a crop that seems very promising: it can be used as a clean non-fossil diesel fuel and it can provide new income sources in marginal areas that will grow the crop.

**Coordinator: Dr. Jacqueline Vel**  
(j.a.c.vel@law.leidenuniv.nl)

### Senshi Soshō

This project, funded and coordinated by the Philippus Cortis Foundation, aims to translate a maximum of 6 official Japanese publications of the series known as ‘Senshi Soshō’ into the English language. From 1966 until 1980, the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo published a series of 102 numbered volumes on the war in Asia and in the Pacific. Around 1985 a few additional unnumbered volumes were published. This project focuses specifically on the 6 volumes of these two series which are relevant to the study of the Japanese attack on and the subsequent occupation of the former Dutch East-Indies in the period of 1941-1945.

**Coordinator: Jan Bongenaar** (iias@iias.nl)

## Open Cluster

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Ageing in Asia and Europe

During the 21st century it is projected that there will be more than one billion people aged 60 and over, with this figure climbing to nearly two billion by 2050, three-quarters of whom will live in the developing world. Ageing in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steady increase in life-expectancy. In Western Europe, ageing populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and healthcare, including pensions systems, unleashing substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing comparable challenges and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much shorter time-span. Research network involved: Réseau de Recherche Internationale sur l'Age, la Citoyenneté et l'Intégration Socio-économique (REIACTIS) Sponsored by: IIAS.

**Coordinator: Carla Risseeuw**  
(c.risseeuw@iias.nl)

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### The Postcolonial Global City

This research examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made the successful segue from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary approach bringing together architects and urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies. A key factor in the research is architectural typology. Architecture is examined to see how it can create identity and ethos and how in the post-colonial era these building typologies have been superseded by the office building, the skyscraper and the shopping centre, all of which are rapidly altering the older urban fabric of the city.

**Coordinator: Greg Bracken**  
(gregory@cortlever.com)

#### Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

Consisting of over 100 researchers from 13 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest academic international network on Asian cities. UKNA's objective is to nurture contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities. This will be achieved via research staff exchanges and targeted case study based research, focusing on three key areas: heritage, housing and the environment. The programme is funded by a grant awarded by the EU, and runs from April 2012 until April 2016. IIAS is the coordinating partner institute in the network and administrator of the programme.

#### Partners are:

IIAS, TU Delft Faculty of Architecture, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris-Belleville, Development Planning Unit, China Academy of Urban Planning & Design, Beijing University of Technology, Tianjin University, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Hong Kong University, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Ambedkar University, Centre for Environmental Planning & Technology, USC School of Policy Planning & Development.

**Coordinators: Paul Rabé** (p.e.rabe@iias.nl) & **Simone Bijlard** (s.f.bijlard@iias.nl)

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Translating (Japanese) Contemporary Art

Takako Kondo focuses on (re)presentation of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in art critical and theoretical discourses from the late 1980s in the realms of English and Japanese languages, including artists' own critical writings. Her research is a subject of (cultural) translation rather than art historical study and she intends to explore the possibility of multiple and subversive reading of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in order to establish various models for transculturality in contemporary art.

**Coordinator: Takako Kondo**  
(t.kondo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)



Brihadeeswarar Temple, Tamil Nadu, India  
Courtesy Creative Commons/Flickr

#### ABIA South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index

The ABIA project is a global network of scholars co-operating on a bibliographic database of publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. It was re-launched in 1997 at the initiative of IIAS in collaboration with international scholars and Asian academic institutes. Partners are the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India, and the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at www.abia.net. Extracts are available as a series of bibliographies, published by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO and is sponsored by J. Gonda Foundation.

**Coordinators: Ellen Raven** (e.m.raven@iias.nl) & **Gerda Theuns-de Boer** (g.a.m.theuns@iias.nl)

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Asian Borderlands Research Network

The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. A conference is organised every two years in one of these border regions, in co-operation with a local partner.

The concerns of the Asian Borderlands Research Network are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns.

**www.asianborderlands.net**

#### Energy Programme Asia – EPA

The EPA-research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitics of energy supply security on the European Union and main Asian energy consuming countries, and their national strategies for securing supply. Part of EPA was the joint research programme Domestic and Geopolitical Challenges to Energy Security of China and the European Union (2007- 2011) between EPA and the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, in collaboration with three other CASS research centres and four Dutch universities. The objectives were to analyse the (a) geopolitical and (b) domestic aspects of energy security challenges for the European Union (EU) and China, and their impact on energy security policy. The geopolitical aspects involved the effects of competition for access to oil and gas resources, and the security of energy supply, among the main global consumer countries in the EU and China. The domestic aspects involve national energy demand and supply, energy efficiency policies, and the deployment of renewable energy resources. Supported by: KNAW Chinese Exchange Programme, CASS, and IIAS.

The results of the joint research project have been published in two book volumes: *The Globalisation of Energy: China and the European Union* and *Secure Oil and Alternative Energy: The geopolitics of energy paths of China and the European Union*.

Preparations are being made for a second joint programme under the title ‘China's growing role in energy producing countries: company strategies, project embedment and relations with institutions and stakeholders’.

**Coordinator: Mehdi Parvizi Amineh**  
(m.p.amineh@uva.nl)

# IIAS Fellows

IIAS hosts a large number of affiliated fellows (independent post-doctoral scholars), IIAS research fellows (PhD/postdoctoral scholars working on an IIAS research project), and fellows nominated and supported by partner institutions. Fellows are selected by an academic committee on the basis of merit, quality, and available resources. See here a full list of the fellows currently at IIAS, three fellows in the spotlight, and information on how to become an IIAS fellow yourself.

## Asian Heritages

### Gwen Bennett

*The nation on display: cultural heritage interpretation in China's peripheries and the creation of new national identity narratives*

1 Sept 2012 – 28 Feb 2013

### W.J. Boot

*History of Japanese thought in the Edo Period, with a special emphasis on Confucianism*

1 Sept 2006 – 31 Dec 2012

### Aarti Kawira

*"Kanchipuram Sari as Heritage: Identity and the Politics of Culture"*

15 Sept 2012 – 31 Mar 2013

### Takako Kondo

*Translating (Japanese) contemporary art*

1 Sept 2009 – 31 Aug 2013

### Tim Kragh

*An anthology of Tantric Buddhist works composed by female masters from the Swat Valley in NW Pakistan during the 9th-11th centuries CE*

1 Jul 2011 – 1 Feb 2013

### Marouda Marina

*Imperial pasts in post-socialist presents: the ritual reinstatement of former royalty in contemporary Hue, central Viet Nam.*

1 Jul 2012 – 31 Dec 2012

### Dipika Mukherjee

*Negotiating Languages and Forging Identities: Surinamese-Indian Women in the Netherlands*

5 Oct 2007 – 15 Oct 2013

### Elena Paskaleva

*Reading the Architecture of Paradise: The Timurid Kosh*

1 Sept 2012 – 1 Sept 2013

### Ronki Ram

*ICCR Chair for the study of Contemporary India  
Dalit cultural heritage in contemporary India*

1 Sept 2011 – 1 Sept 2013

### Saraju Rath

*Indian Manuscripts in the Netherlands: from forgotten treasures to accessible archives*

5 Jan 2004 – 31 Mar 2013

### Meiji Yamada

*Numata Visiting Professor of Buddhist studies  
Buddhist art and archaeology*

1 Sept 2012 – 30 Nov 2012

## Asian Cities

### Shrawan Kumar Acharya

*Inner City Revitalization and Heritage Conservation*

15 Nov 2012 – 15 Jan 2013

### Gregory Bracken

*Colonial-era Shanghai as an urban model for the 21st century*

1 Sept 2009 – 1 Sept 2013

### Zhi-Tuan Deng

*Urban Knowledge Network Asia*

1 Sept 2012 – 30 Nov 2012

### Lena Scheen

*Urban Renewal in Shanghai: Social, Cultural and Mental Implications*

1 Sept 2012 – 28 Feb 2013

## Global Asia

### Antonella Diana

*Roses and Rifles: Experiments of Governing on the China-Laos Frontier*

1 Oct 2012 – 31 Mar 2013

### Anette Fagertun

*Localizing Global dynamics through Labor: Class as a new regime of value in Bali, Indonesia*

1 Oct 2012 – 30 Nov 2012

### Yoshiyuki Kikuchi

*Anglo-American Connections in Japanese Chemistry: the Lab as contact zone*

1 Sept 2012 – 28 Feb 2013

### Tak-wing Ngo

*State-market relations and the political economy of development*

1 May 2008 – 1 May 2017

### Fenneke Sysling

*Seeing Southeast Asia through Indian eyes. Physical anthropology and travel experience in the Dutch Indies, ca. 1880-1940*

1 Sept 2012 – 28 Feb 2013

### Huina Yao

*International Assistance and Domestic Politics: A Comparative Study of the Palestine after 1948 and China during the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945)*

1 Sept 2012 – 31 Oct 2013

## Open Cluster

### Cristina Peccia

*The section on dīkṣā in the Pramāṇasiddhi chapter of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika*

17 Sept 2012 – 17 Dec 2012

### Karl Praust

*Brhaspati, the "Great Lord" of the Rigveda*

15 Aug 2012 – 15 Feb 2013

### Ping Wang

*Zhuangzi, Guo Xiang and Daoism*

1 Aug 2012 – 31 Dec 2012



### Lena Scheen

Shanghai, urban transformations and literary representations

SHANGHAI IS A CITY IN FLUX. Ever since the city's Pudong area became one of China's Special Economic Zones in 1990, a huge transformation has swept across the entire city, turning it into a landscape of dusty trenches, towering cranes and skeletons of skyscrapers. Large scale urban renewal not only transforms the physical appearance of our built environment, it also transforms the way we live in this environment, with profound effects on citizens' daily and inner lives. Since the first time I visited China, I have been fascinated by the social, cultural, and mental implications of urban transformation, while focusing my research on the city of Shanghai. It is not urban change itself that makes Shanghai such an interesting case study; it is the sheer scale, scope and speed of the city's transformation that is extraordinary. For this reason, Shanghai functions as both a magnifying glass and an accelerator, triggering a variety of artistic responses to what is arguably a process of overall disruption in both individual and collective experience.

My fellowship at IIAS provides me with the opportunity to rewrite my dissertation into a book publication. In this study, I explore literary responses to the urban transformation of Shanghai. The study demonstrates how Shanghai's unique history and local culture are of crucial importance to its citizens' experience of the city's transformation



### Yoshiyuki Kikuchi

Anglo-Japanese connections in Japanese chemistry: a Dutch-American intermediary

I AM CURRENTLY WORKING on the manuscript of *Anglo-American Connections in Japanese Chemistry: The Lab as Contact Zone* (under contract with Palgrave Macmillan USA) based on my PhD (The Open University, United Kingdom) and postdoctoral studies at the Chemical Heritage Foundation (Philadelphia), MIT and Harvard University.

Weaving together history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, architecture and education, this explores how ideas on the teaching of exemplary techno-scientific knowledge, i.e., chemistry, 'travelled' across national boundaries between Japan, Britain and the United States between the 1860s and 1890s. These four decades are the formative critical period in the history of higher education in science and technology in all three countries.

Focusing on human interactions between teachers and students from different countries, this study reveals their culturally shaped different assumptions about 'science,' 'technology,' and 'education' and how they, despite such differences, connected to each other in various 'contact zones' such as laboratories, classrooms and other socializing spaces. I also argue that such connections led to the co-production of science education with technical edge and responsive to local conditions and indigenous knowledge systems. This analysis thus uses science education as a kind of litmus test to show cultural differences and connections

and, consequently, to its literary representations. For example, large-scale demolition of Shanghai's traditional *longtang* houses – characterized by their hybrid typology of the traditional Chinese courtyard house and the Western-style terrace house – triggered a wave of fiction and essays in which these buildings are turned into a trope of 'Shanghai identity'; whether in meticulous depictions of the buildings' handcrafted ornaments reviving a collectively remembered colonized city of the 1930s, or in portrayals of everyday life in the narrow alleyways, symbolizing a communal 'Shanghai way of life' that is now under threat. This interaction of changing Shanghai and literary imaginings of its citizens' experiences reveals how the real and the imagined Shanghai transform each other in a multidimensional discursive praxis that is relevant to contemporary Chinese culture at large.

Being an IIAS postdoctoral fellow has a special meaning for me. Before my PhD, I worked as a fellowship coordinator at the IIAS for three years. Deeply envying the daily lives of these international scholars, I found myself secretly reading their work during work hours and fantasizing about possible research projects. Today, I am back at the place where my love for academic research started, executing my own research project, while no longer having to hide my books under the table.

between Asia, Europe, and America and spotlights the spatiality of science education that plays the powerful role of connecting, and dividing, people, disciplines, and cultures.

Leiden, a beautiful historic town with the excellent East Asian Library of Leiden University, is an ideal place to pursue this project. Talking informally with scholars at IIAS on a daily basis helps me to contextualize my own research in Asia. On a lighter note, just strolling along Rapenburg and Witte Singel after lunch makes you feel special! Also, my project has an important Dutch element.

The Dutch-American missionary and educator in early Meiji Japan, Guido Fridolin Verbeek (1830-1898; *Verbeek* in Dutch and *Furubekki* in Japanese) had been born in the city of Zeist in the Netherlands and had received his education in engineering in nearby Utrecht, before immigrating to the United States. Because he was largely responsible for the set-up and management of an antecedent school of Tokyo University, the *Nankō*, between 1869 and 1873, and was also advisor to the Ministry of Education of the new Meiji government of Japan, we should know much more about his engineering training, which has been an understudied topic in his life, to really understand the genesis of techno-scientific education in Japan. During my stay at IIAS, I am looking forward to uncovering in the Dutch archives and libraries as many materials, both published and unpublished, about this topic as possible.



**Gwen Bennet**

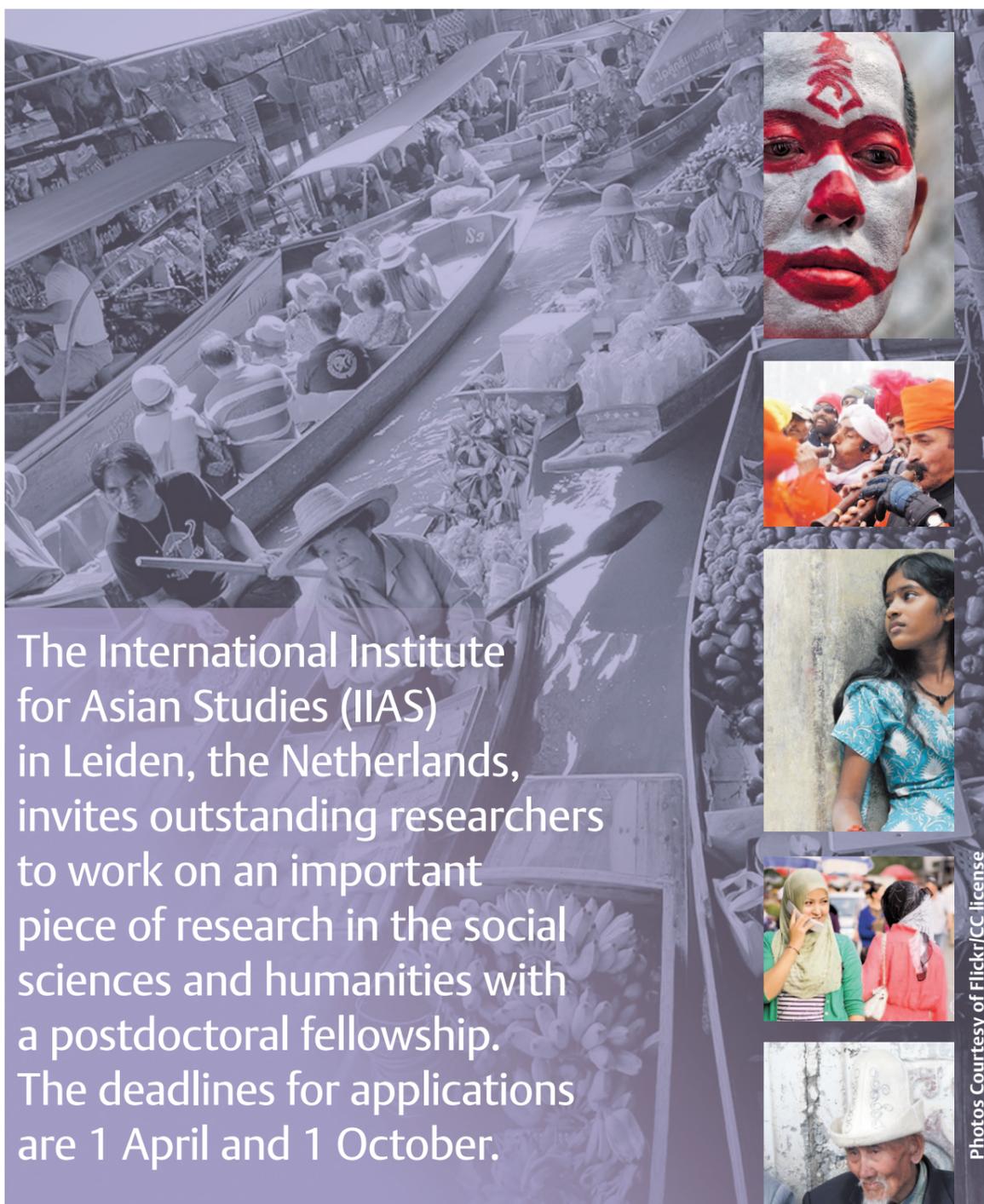
The nation on display: cultural heritage interpretation and new national identity narratives in China's peripheries.

THE GOVERNMENT of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has used museums to construct collective identity and national history narratives since its birth in 1949, but the revolutionary era narratives it once employed are now outdated and new ones have been introduced. Two of these new narratives are found almost exclusively in the northern border regions of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and the Northeast (Manchuria), where the PRC has had differing success at integrating its minority ethnic populations into the state. The first of these new narratives stresses the historicity of the PRC's multicultural composition, and the second attempts to bolster the legitimacy of PRC control over its vast territory by positioning the 'Chinese' state as having inhabited its current borders since the mid-Western Han Dynasty, ca. 150 BCE.

I am examining cultural heritage interpretation found in museums in these border regions to investigate the differing ways that the PRC is legitimizing itself by repositioning its history and relationships with its ethnic minorities to project an image of an expansive, unified, multicultural state that existed in the deep past. My work takes anthropological and museological approaches to examine this issue and will offer new perspectives on the PRC's relationships with its ethnic minorities, and a new approach to look at national-provincial (or national-autonomous region) and provincial-local relationships. I am examining museums at different administrative levels in terms of local, regional, national and international pressures and concerns to compare and contrast responses to these pressures, with a focus on how these administrative levels allow museums more, or less, agency to present their interpretations.

This approach allows me to offer nuanced and informed opinions on why museums at different levels in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Liaoning can give viewers very differently pitched introductions to their regions, some of which can even subvert interpretations offered at museums at different administrative levels. Moreover, I also examine the objects on display from the perspective of my archaeological background and discuss the sometime ambiguous roles they can play in these interpretations. Lastly, I offer suggestions why museum interpretation in the non-ethnic Han northern border regions differs from that in the PRC's southwest, where similarly large non-Han populations live. For me, IIAS provides the mentally stimulating environment within which to write, that results when a concentration of scholars works in proximity to one another on thematically complementary projects and issues.

# IIAS Postdoctoral Fellowships



The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to work on an important piece of research in the social sciences and humanities with a postdoctoral fellowship. The deadlines for applications are 1 April and 1 October.

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WE ARE PARTICULARLY interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute's three thematic clusters: 'Asian Cities', 'Asian Heritages', and 'Global Asia'. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

**Asian Cities**

The Asian Cities cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows of ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism, *métissage* and connectivity, framing the existence of vibrant "civil societies" and political urban microcultures. It also deals with such issues as urban development in the light of the diversity of urban societies.

**Asian Heritages**

The Heritage and Social Agency in Asia cluster explores the notion of heritage as it evolved from a Europe-originated concept associated with architecture to incorporate a broader diversity of cultures and values.

**Global Asia**

The Global Asia cluster addresses Asia's role in the various globalization processes. It examines examples of and issues related to multiple, transnational intra-Asian interactions as well as Asia's projection in the world. Historical experiences as well as more contemporary trends will be addressed.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualized, multidisciplinary knowledge, with the capacity of translating this into social and policy relevant initiatives, will be privileged.

For information on the research clusters and application form go to: [www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl)



# Batik: Spectacular Textiles of Java

In 2009 UNESCO named Indonesian batik a masterpiece of the 'Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'. This designation reflects UNESCO's efforts to move beyond the protection of ancient monuments and encourage living artistic traditions that have been passed down for generations. UNESCO's guidelines emphasize that promoting intangible cultural heritage is "an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization."

Natasha Reichle

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, California, USA  
On view 2 November 2012 – 5 May 2013  
www.asianart.org

INDONESIAN BATIK is an interesting subject to explore in this context, because the richness of the art form is precisely a result of a type of globalization. Java was long a crossroads for many cultures – from the early Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms of Central Java to the later Muslim sultanates across the island, from communities of Chinese emigrants to colonial European residents. The art of batik is thus not a 'pure product', but the result of the meetings of different groups and the mingling of ideas, motifs, and symbols.

The exhibition *Batik: Spectacular Textiles of Java*, at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, features a number of exceptional textiles. The batiks, drawn from the collection of Joan and M. Glenn Vinson, Jr., give a glimpse of the remarkable stylistic diversity and hybrid nature of batik production on Java. Examples from the Central Javanese cities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta are colored with natural brown and blue dyes and display the abstracted patterns typical of the region. In contrast, textiles produced along the north coast often have a broader palette of both natural and chemical dyes and bear patterns echoing inspiration from a wide range of cultures.

No one knows when or where people first began ornamenting textiles by using wax to resist the penetration of dyes. The method was practiced in ancient Egypt and many parts of Asia. But it is on the island of Java that the technique has reached the highest level of complexity. The origins of batik in Indonesia are obscure. Textual references from the 12th to the 14th centuries describe colored and patterned cloths, but we cannot be certain if the wax resist technique was used to produce them. One theory suggests that the practice of hand drawn, natural dyed batik textiles – like those still made today – developed during the early 17th century in the courts of Central Java. From there the tradition spread to the north coast, where European, Indo-European, Chinese and Arab communities eventually became involved in the manufacture of textiles.

An alternate theory is suggested by the scholar Rens Heringa, who posits that batik may have initially developed along the north coast, and then spread to the courts of Central Java and coastal urban trading centers. She has proposed that the hand woven and batik patterned cloths of the Kerek region of East Java are a direct descendant of this earliest north coast style of batik production.

One remarkable textile in the Vinson collection seems to confirm Heringa's theories about the early roots of north coast batik. It is a large hand woven cotton cloth, patterned with wax resist, dyed with indigo, and embellished with gold (fig. 1). Carbon dating reveals a date of approximately 1675-1750, making it one of the earliest surviving examples of Indonesian batik. The textile was collected on the southeast coast of Sumatra, but scholars believe it may have been produced along the north coast of Java, perhaps in the city of Cirebon. The textile's motifs suggest that it was exported to Sumatra for a Chinese patron.

Many aspects of the cloth are unusual: its size, the fact that the wax resist was only applied to one side of the textile, and the combination of motifs. The textile's unusually large dimensions (approx. 1.7 x 2.7 meters) suggest that it was not used as a garment, but instead displayed in a ceremonial context. Rows of squares divided diagonally into smaller triangles stretch across the entire cloth. Within the triangles are dozens of motifs. Among the easily recognizable designs are Chinese decorative motifs like butterflies, bats, bags of money, and flowers, as well as abstract patterns such as those used in Central Javanese batik.



Fig. 1: Ceremonial cloth (detail), approx. 1675-1750. Indonesia; probably Java. Cotton with gold. Lent by Joan and M. Glenn Vinson, Jr.  
Fig. 2: Sarong, approx. 1920, by Nyonya Oey Kok Sing (1896-1966) Indonesia; Pekalongan, Java. Cotton. Lent by Joan and M. Glenn Vinson, Jr.  
Fig. 3: (Kain panjang) Lower garment, early 1900s. Indonesia; Lasem, Kudus, and Surakarta, Java. Cotton. Lent by Joan and M. Glenn Vinson, Jr.

The other textiles in the exhibition date to a later period, from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. They also display an interesting hybridity and reflect the active borrowing of patterns between different regions of Java, and in some cases between competing batik workshops.

A sarong made in the 1920s is decorated with peacocks (fig. 2). The designs are dyed in green, light blue, and red against a white background. One bird stands under dangling wisteria blossoms, while the other perches upon the plant's woody vine. More than one sarong showing a close variation on this pattern is known. The earliest example was signed by Eliza van Zuylen, a woman of mixed Indonesian-Dutch heritage, who established one of the most successful batik workshops in Pekalongan. Batik designers of European heritage were among the first artists to sign their names to textiles, in part to try to prevent their designs from being copied. This evidently did not always succeed, as the peacock batik in the Vinson collection, remarkably similar to the van Zuylen example, bears the signature of an Indonesian Chinese entrepreneur, Oey Kok Sing.

Scholars have described the peacock pattern of this batik as being inspired by the Art Nouveau movement, and in particular by the illustrations of the British artist Aubrey Beardsley. Both peacocks and wisteria were widespread motifs in European and American art in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Whistler's Peacock Room (Freer Gallery of Art) or Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer's Wisteria Dining Room (Metropolitan Museum of Art) are indications of the use of these subjects in large-scale architectural contexts.

The design of this peacock sarong does have similarities to Art Nouveau illustrations, especially the emphasis on sinuous line. But it also bears resemblance to Japanese woodblock prints and bird-and-flower paintings, from which artists like Beardsley were drawing inspiration. Thus the Vinson peacock batik is most likely the result of a Chinese batik maker copying a pattern from an Indo-European batik designer who may have been looking at the work of European artists, who in turn were inspired by Japanese prints and paintings.

A third batik in the Vinson collection is a textile of the type known as a *tiga negeri* or 'three-cities' batik (fig. 3). It is thus named because the cloth was waxed and dyed in three locations, each famous for the production of a certain color of dye. Red lotus plants and parrots seem to float on the surface of the cloth. The lotus is an auspicious symbol in Indic religious contexts, as well as in Chinese iconography. Here the twisting, asymmetrical plants seem to echo the forms of 'trees-of-life' found on South Asian *palampore* textiles, which were once traded to Indonesia.



The lotuses on this *tiga negeri* batik are depicted against a dense background pattern of zigzagging chevrons (a design similar to certain Ottoman textiles). Five different patterns fill the diagonal bands, all dyed in the deep brown associated with the Central Javanese city of Surakarta and the indigo of the north coast city of Kudus. Some bands are filled with floral motifs, but others show variations on the *parang* or knife pattern, well known in Central Java.

The batiks of Java represent a remarkable artistic tradition, one that emerged from a melting pot of cultures. These textiles are the result of individuals of different regional and ethnic backgrounds creating art for a wide range of clientele. While these textiles can be admired as artworks of extraordinary artistic skill, they can also be appreciated as hybrid cultural products and signs of global interconnectivity.

Natasha Reichle, Associate Curator of Southeast Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco  
(nreichle@asianart.org)