SINCE THE FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE REGIME in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Profits of the widespread marketisation of natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed among the elite of Cambodia's patrimonial society, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. Taken together, the contributions to the Focus of this issue reveal a political modus operandi that has facilitated the CPP's domination, but which now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.

Kul (58) is a farmer and community activist. Here she stands on logs that once made the forest where she lived since her childhood. Kul was forcibly evicted from her land by the government, who sold it to foreign companies to grow sugar cane and rubber, ultimately benefiting politicians and military. Photo by David Rengele.
Politics and Society in Contemporary Cambodia

Introduction (29-31)

Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). Hun Sen’s rise has complemented the emergence of a tight-knit elite who have come to dominate and characterise Cambodia as a patrimonial society. The profits of the widespread marketisation of Cambodia’s natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed within this elite, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. In the Focus of this issue guest editors Michiel Verker and Jake Wieczorek explore the extent and nature of the CPP’s fingerprint on different societal spheres. Taken together, the contributions here reveal a political modus operandi, in the context of a politics that has facilitated the CPP’s domination, but which now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.

Sarah Milne investigates resistance and counter-resistance to the state supported Areng Valley Dam project. What happens when monks, expats, local villagers and NGOs coalesce in a movement of localised civil resistance to the environmental impact of development?

Jake Wieczorek examines the role of lawmaking in the CPP’s latest moves to consolidate power against a backdrop of growing civil society unrest and international resistance ahead of the 2018 national elections.

Heidi Dahles takes focus on the development path of Cambodia’s education sector as the nation moves forward economically, addressing and reflecting upon the challenges of managing education in CPP Cambodia.

Jean-Christophe Diepart contrasts the fortunes of the Cambodian peasantry in the upland and lowland regions and the subsequent effects of state policy, including the state sponsored economic land concessions, on peasant land tenure and food security.

Michiel Verker’s research uncovers the differing experiences of Cambodia’s elite inner circle of well-connected business tycoons and those on the outside, the small to medium enterprises looking to grow in the Cambodian market.

Gea Wijers analyses prospects for Cambodia’s entrepreneurs, asking the question whether conditions in the Cambodian economy have been met for new entrepreneurs to flourish.

Suppya Nut introduces the outcome of the Khmer Dance Project, a collaborative, public project to give voice to the community of the Khmer Royal Ballet, making possible the transmission of knowledge of the centuries old traditional dance to future generations.
This summer, two incidents reminded us that academic freedom, which we often take for granted, can be curtailed or overtly restricted. The first incident was the absurd charge of ‘fomenting illegal political assembly’ brought against our colleague Professor Chayan Vaddhanaphuti that will hopefully make the Thai authorities realize that an overtly restrictive policy towards academics will bear considerably negative consequences for the future of the country.

IASS, a proud member of the international academic community, reiterates its commitment to the fundamental value of academic freedom, which should always override considerations of governments’ demands or market access. One initiative Dr Chayan and IASS specifically undertook was to organize ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, somewhat anticipated what was to unfold in July. As a response to discussions one year earlier among a few individual scholars on the opportunity of boycotting ICAS and ICTS because the events would take place in military-run Thailand, we thought, instead, to offer a public platform for individuals whose life-long engagements demonstrated their commitment to uphold intellectual and public freedom in their country. We invited Dr Maria Serena Diokno, Dr Jon Ungpakorn and Dr Son Soubert, from respectively the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, countries where intellectual and political freedoms have been – and are being increasingly – violated. The speakers’ backgrounds or political inclinations differ; yet all three share the same quest for justice, dignity and democratic rights for their countrymen and women, including academic freedom. The ICAS Keynote Roundtable for which the three speakers were invited, was entitled ‘Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia: Intellectual Freedom and Public Engagement’, and took place in the afternoon of 22 July 2017. It was attended by a large proportion of the ICAS participants.

At the end of the event, the speakers were approached by a delegation of Bunongs – a small ethnic minority with its own language and beliefs located on the mountainous border between Vietnam and Cambodia. The Bunongs’ distress as a community dates from the war period. They are today being expelled from their ancestral lands to give way to commercial ventures such as industrial plantations or mining. The case of this community and the presence of its representatives at the roundtable attests of another form of freedom, less clearly articulated than that of academic freedom, but that nonetheless is linked to the risk of the reduction of freedom of expression. Historians, anthropologists, geographers, linguists, other academics have often become the last spokespersons or advocates for these communities. This is also true for the numerous communities or groups that are being evicted from the many inner-city areas of Asian cities or other marginalized communities like the Rohingya in Burma.

The current commercialization of higher education, with its logic of increased precariousness of academics, also contributes to the marginalization of these voices. We see how CUP, a beacon of academic excellence turned into a for-profit outlet, was ready to dispose of the secular intellectual trust put into it by thousands of scholars. We also show how the labeling of entire communities’ languages and histories can be suppressed from curricula because these don’t attract enough students or funding, or because, as was the case in Japan a few years ago, one does not stand as ‘useful’ or marketable knowledge worth being supported by the state. As we well know, there are many ways – often discreet – to keep academics from performing their role as public educators and ‘openers of consciousness’.

These questions of intellectual and academic freedom are at the core of ICAS. Since its creation, the institute has always supported and promoted the highest level of freedom of intellectual expression and engagement. In developing its networks and platforms we strive to render audible voices that exist behind restrictions or imposed hierarchies whether based on geographic, ideological, social, gender, sexual, ethnic, religious or other determinations. Many of the institute’s projects, this Newsletter included, are freely accessible. There is no populist undertone in these lines. Merely a search for inclusion and a recognition of the diversity of perspectives that can only shape a vibrant public sphere of intellectual exchanges. It is not for nothing that IIAS is located in Leiden, a long-time refuge of universal intelligences like those of Joseph Scaliger, René Descartes or Albert Einstein, speaking at the institute’s projects, this Newsletter included, are freely accessible. There is no populist undertone in these lines. Merely a search for inclusion and a recognition of the diversity of perspectives that can only shape a vibrant public sphere of intellectual exchanges. It is not for nothing that IIAS is located in Leiden, a long-time refuge of universal intelligences like those of Joseph Scaliger, René Descartes or Albert Einstein, and the place where their writings were published free from censorship and restrictions of all kinds.

Philippe Pycam, Director IASS
ICAS10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand (20-23 July 2017) was an extremely productive and gratifying meeting, which brought together over 1300 Asia scholars from across the globe. These pages give a visual impression of the undeniably successful event, organised by the ICAS Secretariat (at the IIAS offices in Leiden, Netherlands) and our local hosts of RCSD at Chiang Mai University (Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development). ICAS10 took place in the Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Center.

The imposing venue was the stage for a variety of activities ranging from cultural exhibitions organised by various academic departments, individual scholars and civil society groups; and an outdoor market place with local arts and crafts; to more than 300 panels, roundtables, keynotes, book and dissertation presentations, publisher and institute exhibits and bookstalls, and the multilingual ICAS Book Prize ceremony. Memorable were the Lanna cocktail reception on the opening day, the catchy speech by former Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, and the highly impressive on-site skills of Rhinosmith’s design and production wizards (www.rhinosmith.com).

We would like to thank everyone involved for their unrelenting hard work and dedication; together we made this an event to never forget.

On behalf of the ICAS Team, Paul van der Velde (ICAS Secretary)
The ICAS public plenary round-table ‘Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia’ (from left to right): Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Son Soubert, Maria Serena I. Diokno, Jon Ungpakorn and Philippe Peycam.

Inset far left: Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary, opening the award ceremony and thanking the valued sponsors of the ICAS Book Prize.

Main photo: ICAS Book Prize winners in attendance (from left to right): Seth Jacobowitz, Gauri Bharat, Hans van Ess, Adams Bodomo, Jaehun Jeong, Han Vermeulen, Lui Tai-Lok.
ICAS10 – A reflection continued

One of the cultural exhibitions organised by various academic departments, individual scholars and civil society groups.

IBP party 2017: Paul van der Vrede hosting a special event for all involved with IBP 2017.

Left: Akkarut Wantanasombut, Director of Rhinosmith, and head of the design and production team at ICAS 10.

Right: Just a small group of the many indispensable and wonderful ICAS10 volunteers.

Below: Interactive traditional weaving demonstration.

The collective bookstall: Sonja Zweegers (managing editor of The Newsletter, newbooks.asia, and ICAS exhibitions coordinator) manning the bookstall organised by ICAS especially for those publishers unable to attend the conference themselves.

ICAS10 as an experience will be difficult to beat, but as we speak, the ICAS team and Leiden University – together with the city of Leiden – are already working hard to meet the high standards set in Chiang Mai. Only 641 days and counting before we all meet again, at ICAS 11 (16-19 July 2019) in Leiden, with the overarching theme: ‘Asia and Europe, Asia in Europe’.

If you have not yet signed up to our mailing list please do so in order stay updated about submissions, registrations and exhibitions (https://icas.asia/icas-11). In the meantime, mark the dates in your agendas!
The project title ‘Dutch sources on South Asia’ perhaps evokes an idea of archives and libraries within the Netherlands, but many such sources can actually be found outside the country. In an effort to trace these, Lennart Bes and Gijs Kruijtzer searched collections the world over. The resulting guide adds a new dimension to what we may think of as the Dutch East India Company archive.

Gijs Kruijtzer and Lennart Bes

IN MAY 1698 a worried official of the VOC, or Dutch East India Company's south-western Malabar coast (present-day Kerala) wrote the following about the Company's record administration:

The secretariat has the misfortune that the papers not only must be kept with difficulty from the injures by the Malabarian air, but, moreover, so many of the important papers have been found damaged or missing among them, that it is a shame […] because they may often come in useful, even when one least thinks of it. And therefore it is a very bad habit, which also has been in fashion in Malabar for some time, that various papers […] like extracts from proceedings, memoirs and such […] have been taken and removed by various people to whom those [papers] relate […]. And in such a way of proceeding, where one does not see the death or transfer of those people, [while] the office remained deaf and the orders fell into oblivion.

These words would prove foretelling in two respects. First, notwithstanding the Dutch official's warning, many VOC documents kept in Malabar and elsewhere in South Asia did eventually vanish. The local climate, pests, neglect, theft, archival transfers and changing record-keeping practices all contributed to the fact that the records of the Dutch, Chinese and English in Asia and Sri Lanka have only partly survived—unlike the Company's archives created in the Dutch Republic itself, of which much has remained. The other point is that, although VOC archival sources could hardly have been aware, concerns his view that these documents “may often come in useful, even when one least thinks of them [i.e., when one does not see the death or transfer of those people, [while] the office remained deaf and the orders fell into oblivion.”

Our findings very much reflect the varying degrees of appreciation accorded in different times and places to sources emanating from the VOC. The history of this appreciation ranges from contestation to neglect. The records that essentially stayed in place largely survived because they were prized by—the in many places British—successors to the VOC, but the ones that strayed often went through wars (such as the Prize Papers in the National Archives in London), or seized from the Dutch on account of their perceived usefulness for the British acquisition of their sources. The latter is the case especially for some of the VOC materials transferred to Paris during the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands, as well as the papers of Isaac Titigving, on whose inheritance several French ministries laid claim. Napoleon himself stepped in to prevent them from being donated to the British Museum, as Titigving had intended. The French and English competitors of the Dutch also made numerous copies of Dutch archival materials (including maps), which can still be consulted in Colombo, London and Paris.

Where to begin such a global hunt for ‘Dutch sources’ is a matter of documents and flat visual materials, produced or acquired by Dutchmen as well as other people connected to the VOC and its immediate successors? Unfortunately, the last fifty years have seen a great effort to inventory much of the actual archives of the VOC that remain in what used to be the radius of the VOC, namely everywhere east of the Cape of Good Hope. Especially important are the voluminous archives still kept in Chennai, Colombo and Jakarta. These remaining administrations of the Company establishments contain many types of documents not found in archives in the Netherlands. The Dutch records in Colombo strayed no more than a few kilometres from where they were created and those in Chennai were in the possession of the VOC.

To witness the interactions between the VOC and South Asia, and created on the spot, these records tell us about events of a more local and daily character, ranging from judicial case files and slave lists to plans of Indian dwellings and palm-leaf letters in South Asian languages. We also found other documents still stored more- or less locally. First of all, a collection of land records relating to the Dutch administration of Chinsura in Bengal, now in the State Archives in Kolkata, and correspondence with local rulers and merchants in and around Cochin, now in the Regional Archives at Ernakulam. We heard reports of VOC documents still in the possession of descendants of people who had conducted business with the Company, but they proved hard to find. Great efforts were, for instance, made by us and local well-wishers to trace a document near Sadras in Tamil Nadu, which had been sighted in the 1990s, but in the end our guide only includes one document held privately in Palakkollu in Andhra Pradesh. This contains details of a land grant for the construction of a tank to dye textiles that are interesting from a social history point of view.

Sources contested and neglected

Our findings very much reflect the varying degrees of appreciation accorded in different times and places to sources emanating from the VOC. The history of this appreciation ranges from contestation to neglect. The records that essentially stayed in place largely survived because they were prized by—the in many places British—successors to the VOC, but the ones that strayed often went through extremely complex trajectories. They were requisitioned, sold, stolen, copied and gifted all over the globe.

First of all, there was the struggle for domination of the land and sea of South Asia between the various European powers that shaped the operations of the VOC and its European competitors. Many of the ‘Dutch’ materials in Great Britain and France ended up in those countries because they were caught up in a war (such as the Prize Papers in the National Archives in London), or seized from the Dutch on account of their perceived usefulness for the British acquisition of those sources. The latter is the case especially for some of the VOC materials transferred to Paris during the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands, as well as the papers of Isaac Titigving, on whose inheritance several French ministries laid claim. Napoleon himself stepped in to prevent them from being donated to the British Museum, as Titigving had intended. The French and English competitors of the Dutch also made numerous copies of Dutch archival materials (including maps), which can still be consulted in Colombo, London and Paris.

Furthermore, for Germany and Central Europe, the Dutch Republic and the VOC functioned very much as a portal to the East. This is reflected by the geographical dispersal of many private papers. First, there are the diaries and travelogues left in some countries by some of the numerous Germans, Swedes, Poles and Danes who took service with the VOC. Second, some ex-VOC personnel ended up as expert advisors to German and Central European rulers, a case in point being Arthur Grajew, whose papers are now in Karlsruhe. Third, in the Age of Discovery in which the VOC played such a crucial role in the transmission of objects from and knowledge about Asia, scholars and noblemen in Central Europe were interested as any in obtaining such curiosities and information and looked to the Dutch Republic for this purpose. The only surviving items known to us that date from this period are the manuscripts drawn up and kept by home university and VOC employee Herbert de Jager who have turned up in Giessen in Germany, where a university professor seems to have acquired them from the German soldier who took care of De Jager during his final days in Bavaria.

The visual materials preserved by the Dutch were often treated as rarities, and therefore moved fastest and furthest. Maria Therasia of Austria had agents seek out Indian miniature paintings in the Netherlands, while the Florentine Medici family collected Vingboons’ maps and bird’s-eye views. Many of these visual materials have become works of art only in the modern period, such as the Colonna-style paintings of Cornelis van den Bogaerde in his Indian setting. He probably commissioned them as souvenirs, but the French artist Raymond Subes scrounged them up for his collection in the eighteenth century and they have lately found a place in the galleries of Islamic art at the David Collection in Copenhagen.

Altogether, the visual sources outside the Netherlands comprise a body of information that stands out for both its massive size and its specific contents, and this third archival guide has grown even thicker than its predecessors. Now that the enormous and highly varied body of Dutch sources worldwide on early-modern South Asia has been described in three archival guides, we hope that scholars agree with the VOC official quoted above that these materials “often come in useful,” and that they will finally be used to their full potential.

Gijs Kruijtzer (gijsbertrkruijtzer@gmail.com), Lennart Bes (l.bes@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

References
2 First two volumes published by Manohar in New Delhi and discussed in the IIAS Newsletter, nos. 25 and 48 (see: tinyurl.com/jia5k8d6 and tinyurl.com/ jia4822).
Sir Robert Hart, the Irish-born Inspector-General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs between 1863 and 1908, exerted such wide-ranging influence that the historian John Fairbank called him one-third of the “trinity in power” in China in the later nineteenth century.1 Historians have long recognised the importance of Hart’s personal archive, particularly his diary in seventy-seven volumes held at Queen’s University Belfast, for understanding Sino-Western relations in the late Qing period.2 Yet Hart’s collection of several thousand photographs, many of them unique, has not received the same degree of attention. A preliminary selection of these photographs has been published as China’s Imperial Eye, and the full collection is now being digitised.3 Hart’s photographic collection shows us not only something of the look of late Qing China, but also helps to reveal how this controversial figure viewed the country he served for forty-nine years.

Emma Reisz and Aglaia De Angelis

Sir Robert Hart: the ‘insignificant Irishman’

In a generally indulgent biography, Hart’s niece Juliet Breton stated that her uncle was once described as “a small, insignificant Irishman.” Few of his contemporaries would have recognised that description, however. Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911) was probably the most influential European in late Qing China. His career coincided with the final years of the Chinese empire, ending shortly before the Boxer Uprising in 1900, the year of his death. By 1900, the customs service over which Hart presided had a staff of almost twenty thousand and raised the bulk of Qing imperial revenue. Several of Hart’s projects transformed China’s infrastructure, from the postal service to lighthouses, and he also helped to shape foreign relations during the Qing’s last half-century, through close relationships with senior officials of the Chinese government in the Grand Council and in the Zongli Yamen (the Qing court’s Foreign Ministry), and with foreign diplomats alike.

Born in Portadown in County Armagh, Ireland, Hart was a brilliant student. He graduated in 1853, aged only eighteen, from what was then the Queen’s College, Belfast (now Queen’s University Belfast) and continued to graduate studies. The following year, however, Hart abandoned his research when he won a hotly contested position as a trainee interpreter with the British consular service in China. He was attracted both by the generous annual pay of £200 and by the chance to leave Belfast, where—hardly uniquely among students—Hart had acquired a taste for nightlife and sexual encounters. After a brief stay in Hong Kong, the British consular service sent Hart first to Ningbo and then to Guangzhou, where Hart’s unusual facility for languages became rapidly apparent. In 1859, Hart made the second abrupt career change of his young life when he resigned his British diplomatic post in order to join the new Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs. Though an agency of the Chinese government, the purpose of the Maritime Customs was to tax the foreign trade which Britain and other powers had compelled China to permit. The first foreign-administered customs was established in Shanghai in 1854, and after 1858 the foreign powers insisted this system be extended to the other foreign trade treaty ports. Despite its origins, the Maritime Customs was always a Sino-foreign hybrid institution, and not under the direct control of the foreign powers. In particular, though the new Maritime Customs had an exclusively foreign senior staff in the nineteenth century, it was the Chinese who selected the top Customs officials. Aged only twenty-four, Hart was appointed to establish the Maritime Customs in Guangzhou by the Viceroy of Liangguang, Lao Chongguang.

An early test of the hybrid nature of the Maritime Customs came in 1863, when the first Inspector-General, Horatio Nelson Lay, acquired a small flotilla of steamships in what one British diplomat described as a misconceived attempt “to make China the vassal of England.” Lay was dismissed, and in 1863, Hart was appointed Inspector General in Lay’s place. Hart in his diary on Christmas Eve of that year felt no need for false modesty, noting “My life has been singularly successful: not yet twenty-nine, and at the head of a service which collects nearly three millions of revenue, — of all countries in the world — the exclusive land of China.”

Hart held this position for over forty years until 1908, when he went on what was termed ‘home leave’, generally understood to be his retirement. During his career, Hart never wavered from his conviction that serving the Chinese interest benefited Britain as well, and that the two need not be in conflict, though sustaining this opinion required some intellectual gymnastics. In his later years, Hart found himself increasingly powerless to prevent what he considered to be disastrous steps in Sino-Western relations, such as the exorbitant indemnity demanded by the foreign powers after the Boxer Uprising. Though he helped to negotiate the Boxer Protocol settlement, Hart nonetheless wrote privately that “nothing but bad will result from it.”

China’s difficulties in paying the indemnity contributed to the Wuchang Uprising just a few weeks after Hart’s death on 20 September 1911, swiftly followed by the overthrow of the Qing dynasty.

Hart and photography

As Inspector General, Hart was responsible for customs houses across the country. The network under his control expanded hugely throughout the nineteenth century as foreign powers demanded ever-closer trading links with China, rising from two customs houses in 1859 to around fifty by the time Hart left China for the last time in 1908. The foreign-run service was originally responsible only for trade at the maritime treaty ports, but by 1899 the Maritime Customs also collected at a number of land and river border trading posts. After 1901, the collection of domestic trade tariffs by the largely Chinese-staffed Native Customs came increasingly within Hart’s orbit as well.

Hart found multiple applications for photography within the Customs service, and many staff records included photographs. Customs officers used photography to verify the identification of customs staff and their families, customs houses and related activities. While there is no evidence that Hart was himself a photographer, he regularly engaged a professional to photograph events and social functions. A meticulous correspondent, Hart preserved photos sent by family, friends and colleagues updating him on their personal lives.

Most of Hart’s photography collection was destroyed on the night of 13 June 1900, when all the Customs buildings, including Hart’s house, were burned down in the siege of the Legation Quarter of Beijing during the Boxer Uprising. Hart’s private archive, like the rest of his possessions, was lost in the flames almost in its entirety, though a Customs assistant, Leslie Sandercock, was able to take Hart’s diaries to safety. So complete was the destruction of his belongings that when Hart was finally able to contact the outside world, his first act was to telegraph for four suits from London, noting “I have lost everything but am well.”

It has sometimes been asserted that all the pre-1900 photographs were destroyed, but in fact some survive, including several albums and a number of loose images, whether rescued by Sandercock or previously stored elsewhere. Nevertheless, the vast bulk of Hart’s photographic collection was lost, and Hart’s distress at losing it was considerable. Months later in 1901, an 1899 photograph belonging to Hart was found in the street and returned to him, but Hart misplaced the photograph a few days later, to his “great grief”, not least because one of the figures in that photograph had died as a result of the Uprising.

The Hart Photographic Collection

Much of Hart’s surviving private archive of diaries, correspondence, photographs and ephemera is now held at Queen’s University Belfast Special Collections (QUBSC). The connection between Hart’s archive and Queen’s University began in 1965, when the eponymous great-grandson of the original Sir Robert Hart willied his ancestor’s diaries to the university, stating they were
Hart’s god-daughter.15 The Queen’s collection relate to the customs official James and sold by Christie’s in 1987. A further set of images in Customs officer Ernst Ohlmer, believed to have been Hart’s dispersed, as for example an album of 1873 photographs parts of Hart’s original photographic collection have been though physically unharmed.17 Along with his home and be a kind of betrayal and which left him “horribly hurt”, Westerners during the Boxer Uprising, which he felt to outpouring of violence against Chinese Christians and the social life of Beijing’s Legation Quarter.

and formal group cartes de visite China: professional connections to Chinese and foreign reflecting the life and preoccupations of a Westerner in and his correspondents. The collection also shares many of its themes with similar contemporaneous collections, reflecting the life and preoccupations of a Westerner in China: professional connections to Chinese and foreign contacts, visible in cartes de visite and formal group photographs; the Boxer Uprising and its consequences; and the social life of Beijing’s Legation Quarter.

Hart wrote extensively trying to understand this outpouring of violence against Chinese Christians and Westerners during the Boxer Uprising, which he felt to be a kind of betrayal and which left him “horribly hurt”, though physically unharmed.18 Along with his home and his possessions, Hart lost much of his optimism for future relations between China and the West in the Legation Quarter siege. The complex borders of friendship between Hart and the Chinese are also apparent in the photographs. While a few great Chinese officials are documented affectionately in the collection, perhaps the most intimate image of a Chinese is a photograph of Hart with his butler of many decades Chan Afang (also referred to as Ah Fong). Afang had been in Hart’s employment butler of many decades Chan Afang (also referred to as Ah Fong). Afang had been in Hart’s employment, and made two written declarations of their illegitimacy. Though Hart seems to have been faithful to his wife Hessie and was interested in his legitimate children’s welfare, these relationships were also distant. Hessie left China with their three children in 1882, only returning for a visit twenty-four years later in 1906, while Hart never visited Europe after 1879 until he left China for good in 1908.

The Hart Photographic Collection gives a unique sense of Hart’s personal relationships and of how Hart saw the country in which he lived for almost his entire adult life. Though Hart was mindful of the possibility that his letters and diaries would be published, he seems not to have had any expectation that his photographs would ever reach a wider audience. As such, this collection offers new insights into this complex man and his major role in Sino-Western relations. Emma Reisz (emma.reisz@qub.ac.uk) and Aglaia De Angelis (a.deangeli@qub.ac.uk), Queen’s University Belfast. References


3 De Angelis, A. & E. Reisz. 2017. China’s Imperial Eye: Photographs of Qing China and Tibet from the Sir Robert Hart Collection, Queen’s University Belfast. Belfast: Queen’s University Belfast Special Collections [afterwards QUBSC].


6 Hart Diaries, 24 Dec. 1863. MS 15/14/4 p.360. QUBSC; sirroberthart.org/diaries [afterwards ‘Hart Diaries’].


In colonial days the Sultanate of Pontianak on the southwestern coast of Kalimantan was an important state, among other reasons because its Sultan Mohammed Alkadrie (1895-1944) was a staunch supporter of the Allies during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). Japanese troops came to this town on the Kapuas River early in 1942, and a few months later all of the former Netherlands Indies was occupied. But not everyone meekly accepted their fate, and in the Pontianak area some resistance was organised by local Dayaks, some troops from the Raj, and men of the Indies Civil Service. The Japanese decided to take radical action and the Japanese Navy Secret Police [Tokkeitai] hunted down most members of the regional ruling Houses, as well as the social elite in West Kalimantan. The Sultan of Pontianak along with his three eldest sons and 22 other male family members of his House were taken prisoner. The ladies of the House offered the invaders all the treasures they possessed and pleaded for their relatives’ lives. To no avail. The old gentleman was tortured, forced to watch the beheading of his dear relatives, and eventually beheaded himself. The Japanese Navy then went on to ransack the Royal Treasury as well as rob all individual citizens of their possessions. No Japanese naval officers have ever faced court martial for these war crimes.

FROM ALL MEMBERS of the Pontianak Royal House only Prince Hamid (1913-1978; also known as Max Alkadrie in social circles) survived this full scale murder because he, having studied at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy, had become a POW and was imprisoned on Java. After the end of the War, the Lieutenant Governor General of the Netherlands East Indies, Dr Hubert van Mink, asked Prince Hamid to accept the Crown, which he did after due deliberation as Sultan Hamid II. The new Sultan was very much involved in the lengthy post-war Independence deliberations of 1945-1949, and supported the Dutch attempts to create a federal United States of Indonesia. Shortly after the Japanese occupation came to an end, Sultan Hamid II wasted no time in calling upon General Douglas McArthure to take measures in Japan, to have the stolen jewels returned to their rightful owners. Unfortunately, the documents and photos regarding the treasures had also been destroyed or stolen in 1944. Sultan Hamid II still managed to produce an (incomplete) list of what his family had lost, which included two gold tiaras set with diamonds and other gems; eight ceremonial creeses with golden sheathes and hilt; a gold Sword of State; 21 pairs of gold bracelets set with gems; 60 necklaces of the same; 150 gold rings and 14 pairs of earrings set with gems. General McArthur instructed his Monuments Men unit of art experts, to immediately trace the treasures and come with quite a detailed description. The reverse cover, decorated in multi-coloured enamel inlay, and the diamond studded crown of Pontianak was prominently featured. The accompanying text mentioned that though no documentary proof was available, the watch may very well have been a gift to the late Sultan Mohammed of Pontianak. Indeed it was! Watches like this one had been given to Indonesian rulers who attended the 1938 jubilee of the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina, among them Sultan Mohammed; the decoration may have been added later. Sultan Mohammed’s only surviving grandchild Max Alkadrie Jr (b.1942) contacted me and others regarding this very unusual development. The auction house was instructed in writing that the watch could not be auctioned, as it was part of the Pontianak treasure stolen in 1944 by Japanese officers. Thus it was withdrawn from auction and kept safe pending further developments.

On several YouTube videos of the Auction House Jones & Horan of May this year the beautifully decorated reverse of the Sultan’s pocket watch is visible on the desk and as an image in the background (www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KFHhogKNo). It is normal procedure for properly established auction houses such as Christie’s or Sotheby’s, to establish contact between the legal and the present owner. However, this was not what Jones & Horan did. They asked Max Alkadrie Jr for proof; not that the watch had been Sultan Mohammed’s private property, but that it had actually been stolen in the war. Assuming that the present holder of the watch was innocently unaware of its real origins, Mr. Alkadrie provided documents from Dutch and American archives. He also noted that demanding written proof that an object had been stolen during a war is an unreasonable request. Would indeed the wartime robber have provided a receipt to the person that was robbed? And if proof was demanded of the watch having been presented by the Dutch Queen, would the consignor expect Heads of State to present one another not only an object, but also its receipt? It would seem that Jones & Horan’s client, still unnamed, was neither willing to surrender his possession of the watch nor recognise the fact that he, by law – not to mention the symbolic sum of US$1,000, and is now preparing to enter the pocket watch in the National Stolen Art File as kept by the FBI, or perhaps the International Art Loss Register. Maybe, more than 70 years after it was stolen during the Second World War, Sultan Mohammed’s cherished watch may one day return, finally, to where it belongs.

With thanks to Max Alkadrie Jr., Robert Egeter van Kuyk and Dutch Culture Amsterdam.

Art-historian Louis Zweers is Research Fellow at KITLV. He received his PhD degree at the Department of History, Culture and Communication of the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2013. His current research focuses on the robbery and plundering of cultural heritage in the former Dutch East Indies/Indonesia 1942-1957. His book will be published in Spring of 2019 by Boom publishing house, Amsterdam, in conjunction with an exhibition and symposium (louis.zweers@ziggo.nl).

Mr. Alkadrie let it be known that he was not prepared to entertain such immoral and preposterous demands, and is now preparing to enter the pocket watch in the National Stolen Art File as kept by the FBI, or perhaps the International Art Loss Register. Maybe, more than 70 years after it was stolen during the Second World War, Sultan Mohammed’s cherished watch may one day return, finally, to where it belongs.

Below: The yellow-golden case of the watch of the sultan Mohammed Alkadrie (1895-1944) of the Pontianak Sultanate of Borneo, established in 1773. This watch was fabricated by the famous French watchmaker Charles Odlin in Paris. Photo Jones & Horan Auction Team, catalogue Horological Collection and Jewelry Auction, New Hampshire, USA, 21 May 2017, lot 117.
The proliferation of Indian graphic narratives that we see today is due mostly to the perfect storm that is proving to be the post-millennial Indian moment. This has entailed the opening up of fiscal markets, the creation of employment opportunities, increased leisure spending, the construction of malls with large bookstore chains, the advent of online selling platforms such as Infibeam and Flipkart and, most crucially, a generation of ‘young’ Indians ready to both consume and create Indian-oriented graphic narratives.

E. Dawson Varughese

ALTHOUGH MOST of the post-millennial Indian graphic novels have been published by established publishing houses such as HarperCollins India, Racheta India and Penguin Random House India, there is an equal determination on the part of lesser-known, independent publishers, story houses and collectives to create and disseminate Indian graphic narratives, whether they be in the graphic novel form or otherwise.1 In deepening our understanding of the publishing scene in post-millennial India, we can start to recognise that the outcomes of the decisions taken to liberalise the Indian economy have been essential in fostering a conducive environment for established publishers to grow and expand. This has been particularly true for the global publishing houses mentioned above, with expansion activity concentrated chiefly in the late 1990s (early 2000s). This early post-liberalisation period revealed a more economically minded India, an India which concentrated on its domestic market, on consumption more than investment, on the service industry and on high-tech manufacturing. From the early post-millennial years, the publishing companies began attuning themselves more closely to the domestic market, its mores and its aspirations. From this desire to look inward towards an Indian identity,2 a graphic novel quickly became apparent: that domestic, genre fiction in English was becoming an area of activity in which publishers would need to invest.

The interest in publishing graphic narratives was nurtured in this environment. However, publishing texts that went against the orthodoxy of the established Indian literary novel in English proved to be a risky business decision. Notably though, through the leadership of HarperCollins India’s publisher and chief editor, V. K. Karthika, from 2006 to 2010, the company published some of the most reputed Indian graphic novels of the time: Anuradha Patil, Sarah Ramani, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Vikram Balagopal and Appuven, as examples. It was not only bold of V. K. Karthika to endorse graphic novels at a point in Indian publishing where little was seen of them, it was also visionary as she went on to consistently publish such works, accruing a catalogue of talented graphic novelists during the ten years she spent at HarperCollins India.3

In all, it is a curious time, post millennium, wherein Indian authors (based in India) interact and negotiate with Indian publishers who are part of large, global publishing houses whilst being located in regional or India-based offices. This negotiation of the local within the global is significant. Particularly, I am interested in post-millennial Indian graphic narratives, given that I posit the mode of narration invokes and requires new ways of (Indian) ‘seeing’.4 My work is interested in how post-millennial Indian graphic narratives encode a sense of Indian modernity and in doing so, asks what kind of ‘seeing’ is at play when we read ‘them’. New ways of (Indian) ‘seeing’ In both appearance and content, the Indian graphic narratives of the post-millennial years have little in common with the famed Amar Chitra Katha series of comics, a popular Indian staple of the mid to late 20th century. There is, however, a connection manifest in the material product of the graphic narrative and in the invitation to ‘see’ ideas of Indianness. Freitag reminds us that the visual is almost always “inestrud in nature” and says that “[i]mages – whether framed, viewed as bound objects, or recombined on a wall by owners/viewers […] involve vision and the gaze”; thus, it is important to remember that “the handling of an object, or interactions of bodies” are equally important aspects to consider when we talk about “visuality.”5 The post-millennial years, however, have turned out to be a time where India recognises and defines its comic and graphic narrative production. This shift in recognition from the comics of Amar Chitra Katha to the graphic narratives of Banerjee, Ghosh, Patil, Appuven and others, represents an equal shift in the idea of the ‘life-narrative’ of which Chandra writes in her book. 


Graphic narratives have systematically critiqued ideas of India7 and Indianness since their debut in the Indian market. Orjik Sen’s River of Stories is often hailed as her first graphic novel and gained notoriety through its engagement with the environmental, social and political issues of the controversial Narmada Dam project. Following the work of Sen, throughout the post-millennial years to date, Indian graphic narratives have collectively (although not necessarily mindfully) embarked upon problematising entwined, safe, settled ideas and projections of Indian society, history and identity. Such problematic and unfavourable depictions of Indianness, both textual and visual, have been crafted through Banerjee’s re-visionsing of history; Patil’s portrayal of sexuality in Korn through Appuven’s critique of celebrity culture in Legends in life and HUSH; Ghosh’s “Emergency” in Delhi Calm; through the re-telling of the life of B. R. Ambedkar in Bhimanya or Jotiba Phule’s life in a Gardner in the Westend; to portrayals of the conflict in Kashmir (Kashmiri Pandit, Banerjee’s critique of urban, modern and technologically-driven life, All Quiet in Vikupri); and through representations of gender violence in Zubaan’s edited collection Drawing The Line: Indian women fight back.

All these works engage variously in the narration of problematic, difficult and yet timely issues that communicate their immediacy and impact through both form and content. Thinking of the graphic narrative as one which narrates a challenging story, coupled with dark and difficult visuals, is often recognised within western cultural studies as being of the graphic narrative mode. For India, however, where the visual especially has traditionally been depicted and represented India (and Indianness) in positive ‘proper’ ways, the post-millennial Indian graphic novel (and graphic narratives more broadly) has proved challenging to domestic Indian readings, because ideas of Indianness have been portrayed in less favourable ways. Rather than bright, sharp, celebratory colourways, bold, clean line drawing and representation, Indian graphic narratives display sketch-like image, employ sepia and muted colour tones, alongside collage and mixed media elements for composition.

As the content collector for Kokaachi.com, I suggest that the aesthetic invites “a different way of seeing”. Often anchored in issues of New India, post-millennial Indian graphic narratives show how both form and content allow for a critical engagement with issues as varied as corruption, child (sexual) abuse, celebrity culture, caste and national identity; the image-text medium is particularly suited to the storying of such charged topics. According to Orijit Sen, “The tension between image and text provides one of the primary dynamics of the language of comics. Image and text are like the warp and weft on which the narrative is woven. The patterns emerge when these threads interplay in various ways: through convergence, divergence, contradiction, intersection, etc. In some narratives, image and text must remain incomplete within themselves, each finding its resolution finally in conjunction with the other.”7

As comics collectors, editors, and publishers, we imagine and curate visual styles and physical studios continue to establish themselves within India and with new publishing houses as well as established ones growing in presence both domestically and globally, the production of Indian graphic narratives appears to be supported in its infrastructure at least. And yet, as part of a literary scene swamped with genre fiction that celebrates India’s past through ‘mythology-inspired’ fiction, it is questionable how Indian graphic narratives will fare. So, despite the infrastructure, innovation and talent, it remains uncertain as to how feasible it will be for the continued storytelling of an auspicious India whereby, favourable ideas of Indianness are dismantled through ominously narrative and inauspicious visual depiction.

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1 My work focuses on Indian graphic narratives in English although I readily acknowledge the same in other languages across India (Malayalam see DC Books recent publications – and in Bengali as exemplary)
2 See https://tinyurl.com/shockharper (accessed August 2017)
The gendered mobilities of Chinese educational transmigrants

Fran Martin

IN MOST OF THE DEVELOPED western countries that are popular destinations for international students, including the USA, the UK, and Australia, students from the People’s Republic of China have for several years been the biggest group, by a wide margin.1 Particularly as a result of the one child policy in force when the current generation was born, meaning that relatively few daughters had brothers to compete with for parental resources, young women make up around sixty percent of Chinese students abroad.2

In the case of Australian higher education, female Chinese students account for around 54%,3 despite the sex-ratio skewing of China’s youth population toward males.4 This group, by a wide margin,1 Partly as a result of the one child policy, the USA, the UK, and Australia, students from the People’s Republic of China have for several years been the biggest group, by a wide margin.1 Particularly as a result of the one child policy in force when the current generation was born, meaning that relatively few daughters had brothers to compete with for parental resources, young women make up around sixty percent of Chinese students abroad.2

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The really interesting question, though, is how such transformations in these young women’s gendered self-understandings as a result of their educational mobility will play out over time to come, especially for those who ultimately return to China to live.

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For News from Australia and the Pacific, we ask contributors to reflect on their own research interests and the broader academic field in Australia and the Pacific of which it is a part. We focus on current, recent or upcoming projects, books, articles, conferences and teaching, while identifying related interests and activities of fellow academics in the field.

Our contributions aim to give a broad overview of Asia-related studies in Australia and beyond, and to highlight exciting intellectual debates on and with Asia in the region. Our preferred style is subjective and conversational. Rather than offering fully-fledged research reports, our contributions give insight into the motivations behind and directions of various types of conversations between Asia and the region.

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In the current issue, we highlight the topic of Gender and Mobility Regimes in Asia and its Diaspora.
Balinese migrant masculinities
Ana Dragovic

A TREND OF MALE outmarriage to female and male foreign nationals started in Bali with the rapid expansion of mass tourism in the 1980s. Now, in the 21st century, the practices of male outmarriage continue to increase, raising numerous concerns among Balinese cultural nationalists that “Balinese might become the other people”. Such concerns are not surprising in the cultural context where it is predominantly women who, upon marriage, move to the homes of their husbands. Portrayals of Balinese and Indonesian men’s intimate encounters with foreign tourists in the beachside resorts in Bali in Airmant Virmans’ documentary Cowboys in Paradise (2010), had brought about heightened concerns about moral order and respectability of manhood and femininity. In situations where a Dutch spouse is too poor to support two individuals over a period of five years, Balinese men, like any other non-Western migrants, are valued only by a very limited number of caregivers besides the biological mother, and the effect of long distance parenting on children left behind.1

An international collaborative project in which I am taking part – funded by the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council, and involving researchers from the UK, USA, Canada and Australia – focuses on Southeast Asian women, family and migration in the global era, and addresses a gap in this literature on the feminisation of labour migration. In particular, we counter the assumptions surrounding Philippine and Indonesian female migrants working as maids and nannies. Our research focuses on the interactions of national and migrant identity and the expression of low skill migration. We do so to unpack the notion of the family in the transnational flow of people and ideas, the mobility regimes affecting women and men, and the family, as well as a global geography of care work.

A focus of our research is on absent children in the lives of these migrant women.2 Deidre McKay looks at how Philippine migrant women working in the health care industry in the UK, might bear their children in the UK in order to confer UK citizenship, but subsequently send them back to the Philippines as toddlers to be brought up by their extended family. These women believe that their children will grow up in a better environment in the Philippines.3 Later, as UK citizens, these children could spend time with their parents and extend family as migrants in the UK. In comparison, bearing children in Hong Kong, frequently out of wedlock, has proved enormously difficult for Indonesian and Philippine female migrant domestic workers. Nicole Constant has looked at how these women narrate their decision to give up or not to give up their babies for adoption. In addition to social stigma, the mobility regimes of the host and the originating countries, may also have a bearing on this process. Women with first class and birth certificates. In Singapore, as in Hong Kong, where there is also a high number of female domestic migrants, a different set of mobility regimes exists for skilled migrants. While similar practices of parting one distance and separation from their very young children existed for both domestic and skilled female workers, Leslie Butt found that skilled migrant women experienced multiple migration trajectories whereby Singapore becomes one of several

the Netherlands, or are valued only by a very limited job market. Thus, most of the men can only find work in low-paid manual labor. In situations where a Dutch spouse has a much higher annual income than the Balinese spouse (one of the main requirements for family reunification with a non-Western national is that the Dutch applicant is able to prove that they can financially support two individuals over a period of five years), Balinese men often take on most of the domestic labor and child rearing duties in the home. Some of the men take on casual domestic work. Grounded in understandings of masculinized domestic labor that draws on the Dutch imaginary of colonial servitude and obliging Indonesian workers, Balinese (and other Indonesian) people have easier access to the domestic labor market.4 Thus, Balinese men take on domestic and caring work, which in Bali is considered ‘women’s work’. Such shifts in gender relations leads to an ongoing negotiation of the masculine self.

Dr Ana Dragovic is a Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of Beyond Subalternity and Post-Colonial Intimacy, Amsterdam University Press 2016, and co-author with Alex Broom of Bodies and Subjectivity, Extremes and Care, Routledge 2017. She is currently completing a book manuscript on Balinese migrant masculinities.

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 Accounting for the future: masculinity, sex and work in urban Indonesia

Benjamin Hegarty

IN THE MAINSTREAM Indonesian comedy film Arisan Brondong, a group of rich Jakarta women tempt a group of young, innocent adolescents with payment for sexual services. These rich ‘aunties’ (bundar-tante) start a racy version of the community lotteries (arisan) found at all levels of Indonesian societies. In their, they put the money collected each time towards payment for sex with adolescent men (brondong). The young men, who coveted contact with rich, male-like, endowed women, were naïvely willing to transgress moral boundaries in order to attain sexual wealth. On the other hand, the women are unable to control their billeted consumer and sexual desires, which spill out as a corrupting force on masculine youth. That the adolescents are poor and the women rich suggests how gender and sexuality intersect with class in contemporary Indonesia. In this way Arisan Brondong is a moral tale, common in Indonesia, which warns of the corrupting influence of consumer desire on masculinity, contrasted with the danger of wily femininity.

During the course of PhD fieldwork in Jakarta and Yogyakarta in 2014 and 2015, I met many brondong similar to those depicted in the film. Certainly not all brondong sell sex, but I did understand it as a category used to refer to attractive male-bodied adolescents. The term is not used to describe oneself; like gay or waro, is rather one that is used to describe others. Brondong seemed to be an ubiquitous feature of urban life in Indonesia; young men, no older than twenty, always unmarried, sometimes studying, often working in poorly paid jobs in the services and informal sectors. They almost always had migrated from a smaller city to a larger city in order to study and work. I met brondong most often in the course of fieldwork with older waro (roughly male-to-female transgender or male-bodied femininity).

My interest in Arisan Brondong thus stems from the range of gendered, sexual, and economic forms of intimacy which are often rendered invisible. There are various reasons for this, but the most important one is the way that gender serves as a code for directionality both of desire and, in the case of transactional sex, payment. This unqualified assumption is that masculine individuals buy sex, while feminine individuals sell sex. While I believe that this is certainly one type of exchange that takes place in markets for sex, the presumption that this is the natural order of things upon which all others are based tends to obscure other forms of desire and gender. During my research, I observed complex and varied modes of economic exchange for sexual services in which the same person might buy sex as often as they sell it.

Through migration, masculinities are challenged and transformed by hegemonic ideologies encountered in the host country. A review of the current literature on Chinese masculinity and migration shows two things: firstly, Chinese men’s masculinity is highly tied to work, and thus Chinese masculinity cannot be discussed without reference to the (global) economy. Secondly, the link of Chinese masculinity with the global economy has produced hegemonic ideals of masculinity in which economic power is proof of virility. As such, while many low-wage Chinese migrant men are likely to have already been subordinated to hegemonic ideals of masculinity in China due to their socio-economic status, it is likely many feel their subordinate positions even more intensely in destination countries such as in my field site, Singapore. Low-wage workers are subjected to multiple restrictions while working in Singapore. Their stay in Singapore is transient – up to a maximum of two years – and is subjected to renewal according to the employers’ decision. They are not permitted to marry a Singaporean citizen or permanent resident. They are also not allowed to bring their wives or families into Singapore. Loneliness is a recurring theme in interviews with low-wage migrant men. Furthermore, low-wage workers often find themselves in tightly-surveyed environments where they are subordinate to male supervisors who may physically or verbally abuse them. Low-wage workers, especially those in the construction sector, are often forced to live in cramped spaces, such as in cargo containers. Many low-wage Chinese male migrants live on-site, with imposed curfews and limited free movement.

To gain access to them I used the mobile phone application WeChat that (commonly known in Chinese as Weixin). This application is used among friends, but more often by men looking to get to know women; it allows the user to ‘find’ people in his/her physical proximity and to initiate a ‘chat’. Through WeChat I was able to have conversations with many Chinese migrants, nearly all of whom were male. My research showed that I was often the first (and only) Singaporean woman most of my low-wage Chinese male respondents had spoken to. This undoubtedly reflects their marginality in Singaporean society.

Since economic status is a key marker of Chinese masculinity, many of the male workers who migrate to Singapore to take on low-wage jobs are likely to be considered “losers of modernisation.” Encountering a marginalized economic and social status in Singapore, is then to be associated with “failed masculinity,”

To be a Chinese man with a low socio-economic status is perceived as not just falling short of masculinity but also Chinese masculinity.

While migration scholars should certainly continue their research on female migrants, as I have done myself, scholars in this field of migration will do well not to neglect male migrants – an understudied group relative to female migrants. The literature on Chinese masculinity and migration has become dated. Moreover, while work on Chinese masculinity in the field of migration has been emerging, it is small and concentrated on research in China. In 2015, 61% of 978,000 Chinese emigrants were male.

This is a phenomenon research needs to catch up with. I have found that researching low-wage Chinese males contributes not just to an understanding of the gendered subjectivities of the migrant worker, but also of how the intersection of ethnicity and class can work to subdivide him.

Sylvia Ang is a recent PhD graduate from the department of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Melbourne. She has published in Gender, Place and Culture and Cultural Studies Review. Her current research looks at international labour migration, intersectionality, ethnicity, gender, class, and local modernities (sylvia.s.ang@gmail.com).

Low-wage Chinese migrant men in Singapore

Sylvia Ang

DESPITE THERE BEING a growing body of research focusing on male migration – especially low-wage migrant men – it still shows a certain bias in which work (and economics) is seen as central to the men’s lives. Yet migrant men are not just workers, but also fathers, husbands, lovers, boyfriends. A small field of research is now emerging, among it my own work, which is looking at migrant men’s various positionalities and specifically their heterosexuality. Focusing on the heterosexuality and sexual desires of migrant men can bring some clarity to how masculinities transform with migration.

Through migration, masculinities are challenged and transformed by hegemonic ideologies encountered in the host country. A review of the current literature on Chinese masculinity and migration shows two things: firstly, Chinese men’s masculinity is highly tied to work, and thus Chinese masculinity cannot be discussed without reference to the (global) economy. Secondly, the link of Chinese masculinity with the global economy has produced hegemonic ideals of masculinity in which economic power is proof of virility. As such, while many low-wage Chinese migrant men are likely to have already been subordinated to hegemonic ideals of masculinity in China due to their socio-economic status, it is likely many feel their subordinate positions even more intensely in destination countries such as in my field site, Singapore. Low-wage workers are subjected to multiple restrictions while working in Singapore. Their stay in Singapore is transient – up to a maximum of two years – and is subjected to renewal according to the employers’ decision. They are not permitted to marry a Singaporean citizen or permanent resident. They are also not allowed to bring their wives or families into Singapore. Loneliness is a recurring theme in interviews with low-wage migrant men. Furthermore, low-wage workers often find them-
The following articles come from the Thailand Studies Programme (TSP) at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. The programme promotes analysis of and scholarship on contemporary Thailand. Its goal is to develop understanding of the country among the full range of parties concerned with its mid-term and long-term future: governments, the media, journalists, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and scholars. The foci of the programme are three-fold — on political dynamics, social change, and cultural trends. In its attention to politics, the concerns of the programme include party and electoral politics, Thailand’s place in regional politics and geopolitics, regionalism and decentralization, the state of Thai institutions, constitutionalism and royalism, and the impact of politics on economic competitiveness and the investment climate. Social issues that fall within the programme’s purview are migration and demographic change, religion, ethnicity, the Thai education system, the relationship between urban and rural Thailand, the middle classes, and sectorial industries like tourism. In the area of cultural trends, the arts and literature, the media and mass consumption patterns number among topics of interest. The programme seeks to build institutional links to scholars, analysts and centres involved in the study of modern Thailand, not least those in Thailand itself. The co-coordinators of the Thailand Studies Programme are Michael Montesano (michaelmontesano@iseas.edu.sg) and Benjamin Loh (benloh@iseas.edu.sg). Please contact the co-coordinators for further information on the programme.

Reactions to the Thai royal transition

Benjamin Loh

Geopolitically, the royal transition is also occurring at a time of deepening political and economic relations with China and difficult relations with the West. US-born and Swiss-educated Bhumibol was a staunch supporter of strong relations with the US. Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quick in affirming his country’s readiness of strong relations with the US. Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quick in affirming his country’s readiness about the dialogue between the US and China. He has sought to re-boost the US-China relationship, but also to push back against the US on a variety of issues. The US is also concerned about China’s rising influence in the region, including its growing military power and its economic and political influence in the Asia-Pacific region. China has been quick to take advantage of the US-China rivalry, and has been pushing its own agenda in the region, including its Belt and Road Initiative and its efforts to make China a regional leader. This has led to a tense relationship between the US and China, with tensions rising over issues such as trade, security, and territorial disputes.

On the ground, the king’s death triggered an outpouring of grief across the nation. Even the younger generation participated in the national mourning by wearing “I was born in the reign of King Rama IX of Thailand” emblazoned T-shirts and filling their social media pages with selfies of their reverence. Black clothing soon flew off the shelves and dyeing centres popped up across Bangkok as black clothing became too expensive. Demand for commemorative banknotes and coins, stamps, and books bearing the portrait of the late king also soared. And while the prices of Buddhist amulets have been declining over the years, those for medals and amulets – both newly-minted and old – bearing the king’s image have risen manifold. At the capital’s amulet shops and markets, the efficacy of King Bhumibol amulets are often explained with a laminated reprint of a 2006 news article on how a policeman who was also a Thai Rak Thai Party politician purportedly survived a gun shooting incident by wearing such an amulet. If the veneration for a king is both expressed and stimulated by the mass production and commodification of his image, it will be small wonder when his successor follows suit. Following the amendment in April of a royal property law to formally give King Maha Vajiralongkorn full control of the Crown Property Bureau, which manages the multi-billion dollar holdings of the monarchy, Siam Commercial Bank – with stakes controlled by the bureau – issued a calendar later that month with the image of the new king on its cover. The bank’s customers would have collected the calendar, rolled it up for the journey home for display, perhaps, alongside the multiple pictures of the old monarch hung on their walls. Some other people were seen to be more overt with its display on streets and the metro system.

In a country where relationships between monarchy, army and politicians determine its stability, the authorities are expected to continue to use all of the tools at their disposal to orchestrate stability and taper existing fault lines in Thai politics; predictably, these include constitution rewrites, delays to the general election, and an even looser exercise of lèse majesté.

Below: Train passenger carrying calendar depicting King Maha Vajiralongkorn; Sale of black clothing at a Bangkok mall (Source: Benjamin Loh)
ONE OF THE MOST widely reproduced images in the Thai press in the first days after King Maha Vajiralongkorn ascended the throne was a colour photograph of King Bhumibol’s ritual investiture of Prince Vajiralongkorn as Crown Prince, and heir to the throne. This elaborate ceremony took place on 28 December 1972, when the prince had just become 18. It marked a break in his studies at the Australian Royal Military Academy of Duntroon in Canberra. In this widely reproduced photo, the prince is pictured with head bowed before King Bhumibol, who is sitting on a raised throne. This 40-year-old picture represents the new king in a humble position before the former king, visually indicating King Bhumibol’s imprimatur of his son as heir to the throne and provides an especially powerful image of the authority of the late king in perpetuating the Thai monarchy.

In the early days of the new reign, the Thai press repeatedly emphasised King Maha Vajiralongkorn’s close relationship to and approval by his late father, publishing accounts of conversations between fathers and sons, in which the new king is reflected in the charismatic aura of his late father. Much press coverage represented the new king’s legitimacy in terms of his bloodline. In this respect, with King Maha Vajiralongkorn reported as ascending the throne in order to honour King Bhumibol’s wishes and to repeatedly emphasised King Maha Vajiralongkorn’s close relationship with his father, the religious affiliation of the late king and his symbolic fatherly role in the Thai state. The new king has also been emphasised in the press. There is a long history of Thai kings being represented as the ‘fathers’ of the nation and its people, and in the current period, King Bhumibol was increasingly referred to in public discourse simply as Phor, or ‘Dad’ in English. On the occasion of what would have been King Bhumibol’s 88th birthday on 5 December 2016, the Thai-language daily Matichon headlined an article on his legacy, “The Royal Father of all Thais: The Royal Leader of King Rama 10.”

Human capital accumulation is also important for Thailand’s competitiveness. The Thai economy continues to prefer to resolve the issue. Corruption in Thailand is difficult to completely resolve. While the Cold War ended and the CPT ceased activities over two decades ago, images of anti-communist operations from the 1970s still have political value, reflecting the continuing role of anti-insurgency thinking among Thai officials. The Newsletter | No. 78 | Autumn 2017

The Thai press stressed King Maha Vajiralongkorn’s religious affiliation as a faithful supporter of Buddhism, publishing many photos of him when, in November 1978, he followed Thai custom and ordained for a period as a monk. In such a context, the Thai press is influenced by Buddhist ethical and ritual practices.

Front page of The Newsletter | No. 78 | Autumn 2017

Peter A. Jackson

A VARIETY OF FACTORS appear to be holding Thailand back from rising to the next level of economic development. The country’s long dependence on natural resources and cheap labour means that growth is negatively impacted when resources diminish or when labour becomes more expensive. The country’s lack of skilled labour, particularly in the information technology sector, means that it is unable to climb the value chain to produce and export more technologically advanced products like electronics and automobiles. Instead, the country merely assembles consumer products designed in other countries. In addition, existing government training programmes are not used by the labour market, suggesting that these programmes are out of touch with economic realities. Perhaps more fundamentally, the Thai education system has contributed to the lack of productivity because of its inability to deliver relevant skills to students, particularly to the information technology sector. Meanwhile, R&D investment is substantially lower than in Asian countries. The number of researchers and technicians in Thailand is much lower than in South Korea and Singapore, for example.

Public and private investments have also contracted markedly. Thai firms have demonstrated poor innovation, while foreign investments in the higher-value sector have been low. The consequences of these realities are seen in the decline in short-run income, which reduces capabilities for long-term investment, and the capital accumulation possibilities of external foreign debt in the long run. There are also few sound macroeconomic policies in place, as a series of coups have disrupted government policies in recent years. The country’s macroeconomic policy, its fiscal policy in particular, has not encouraged long-term growth. Instead, populist policies enacted to stimulate short-term consumption have led to fiscal deficits.

What is holding Thailand back from becoming a high-income country?

Nipit Wongpunya

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Countries such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea have shown that innovation and high-value productivity are needed if one is to escape the middle-income trap. The Thai manufacturing sector, however, has failed to transfer foreign technology to local firms, and to encourage local innovation. By importing practical technical knowledge, local firms could contribute to the local knowledge base. This would encourage imitation and innovation, which play an important role in promoting technological progress.

However, the Thai economy continues to prefer assembling technology to imitating technology. Thai firms have been manufacturing products designed by other countries for more than two decades as Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) and should now endeavour to become Original Design Manufacturers (ODM). The Thai government needs to collaborate with leading local universities or the private sector to imitate, for example, the technology needed for these electric vehicle control devices. It could do this by funding Thai researchers and technicians in Thailand is much lower than in South Korea and Singapore, for example.

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Indigenous Peoples’ shifting engagements with the Thai state

Micah F. Morton

SINCE THE EARLY 2000s a coalition of ethnic minorities in Thailand has promoted a sub-national social movement under the banner of Indigenous Peoples. The movement is led by the 10 so-called ‘hill tribes’ in the North, the movement has expanded as an inclusive platform that represents additional 30 ethnic groups from within and beyond the North. Recent estimates place Thailand’s population of ‘hill tribes’ at 1.2 million people and lowland ethnic groups at 4.9 million people. The expanding Indigenous movement therefore presents the potential to represent some 6.1 million people, comprising 9 percent of Thailand’s total population of roughly 68 million people.

The Indigenous movement in Thailand officially began in August 2007 when a coalition of grassroots organizations representing 24 ethnic groups organized Thailand’s first annual ‘Festival of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand’ on the occasion of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. At a follow-up event to the festival in the same year, the Regional Initiatives for Indigenous Peoples in the Asia-Pacific (RIIPAP) was established. Its goals were to campaign via public demonstrations, media campaigns, and bureaucratic lobbying to raise the recognition of Indigenous Peoples by the Thai state in order to protect and grant their basic rights to citizenship, land, and their distinct identities. The Indigenous movement emerged during a period in Thailand when the state, at least rhetorically speaking, was striving to reframe the nation in a multicultural rather than monochromatic fashion. The movement has been variably supported and obstructed, with support because of the state’s new multicultural rhetoric yet obstructed because of the state’s top-down approach to multiculturalism.

In recent years the Indigenous movement has shifted its strategies away from public demonstrations towards independent media productions and bureaucratic lobbying. Beginning in 2014-2015, the movement especially worked to establish direct ties with state agencies overseeing the review of national legislation and the constitutional reform process initiated by the current military regime. It has further decided to focus its limited time and resources on lobbying for the passage of a state law governing the ‘Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand’ (CIPT), a new, independent state-level organ comprised of Indigenous representatives with the central mandate to advise the state on policies and plans of relevance to Indigenous Peoples. Since November 2014 the NLA has included Indigenous representatives in various state agencies, including the Prime Minister’s Office, for advice and support in its efforts to have the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) review its first constitutional draft law governing the CIPT. The NPT was eventually successful in gaining recognition of Indigenous Peoples in each of the two successive constitutional drafts drawn up by different military-appointed Constitutional Drafting Committees. The NPT eventually gained official recognition of Indigenous Peoples in the first constitutional draft released to the public in April 2015. Its success was, however, short-lived, as just five months later, on 6 September 2015, the military-appointed National Reform Council rejected that first draft. The second and final constitutional draft, which was released to the public in March 2016 and ratified via national referendum on 7 August 2016, did not include any reference to ‘Indigenous Peoples’ whatsoever. Regardless, the NPT’s success in gaining recognition of Indigenous Peoples in the first draft of the constitution was significant given the Thai state’s longstanding stance of non-recognition of Indigenous Peoples.

Despite constitutional and legal setbacks the NPT has moved forward independently of the state in bringing its vision of the CIPT to fruition. On 9 August 2015, the NPT publicly declared the CIPT to be fully functioning with 190 representatives from 38 different Indigenous groups across Thailand and two sub-national Indigenous Peoples’ Councils. As of early November 2016, 40 different Indigenous groups and three sub-national Indigenous Councils were affiliated with the CIPT. The membership has expanded such that the CIPT has administratively divided its constituents into five geographical regions – the northland, the lowland North, the northeast, and the east and west of Central Thailand, and the South. At present, however, the movement faces the problem of insufficient funding to take these developments forward in an expeditious manner without losing its current momentum.

Official state recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand seems highly unlikely in the near future given both a long history of non-recognition and the current military regime’s renewed focus on nation building in a mono-ethnic fashion, centralizing state power and budgets, and national security issues in relation to which upland Indigenous Peoples have long been held suspect. In this political climate any claims for state recognition as a distinct group within the larger Thai nation are likely to fall on deaf ears, at best, and at worst, evoke suspicions of separatism as in the case of the far South and, more recently, the North and Northeast. Meanwhile, the Indigenous movement has expanded to become a national movement potentially representing some 6.1 million people. The Thai government has accordingly paid ever greater attention to the movement and provided certain opportunities for its growth, albeit largely on the state’s terms.

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References

China’s ‘shame offensive’ directed at Thailand

Pongphisoot Busbarat

SOUTHEAST ASIA has become a major focus of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as it seeks to develop a significant sea lane for China’s maritime trade. Mainland Southeast Asia also offers China alternative routes to seaports for its landlocked states such as Laos and Myanmar, which are thus induced to develop their own roads and ports. A Thailand that issecs itself in a regional context and pan-ethnic perspective is hence included in Beijing’s plan to develop transport links and industrial parks. Thailand has realised that situating itself in China’s blueprint could be economically beneficial and Thai leaders have expressed their support for the BRI since its first launch. Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha, for example, has lauded that this initiative would enhance Thailand’s strategic importance and improve the country’s participation in regional and global investments. China’s participation in the Thai economy is indeed notable, with China being the 4th largest foreign direct investment (FDI) source in Thailand. China is now the 3rd largest imports and exports partner of Thailand.

China’s participation in the Thai economy, however, is not without controversy. On 11 September 2017, China’s President Xi Jinping invited Prime Minister Prayut to attend the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing. While Prime Minister Prayut has yet to confirm his attendance, he has stated that the Thai government would consider the invitation and would make a final decision for the forum. It is possible that the meeting may take place in the near future, with the possibility of the Chinese President extending a state visit. However, it is also possible that the meeting may not take place, with the Thai government maintaining its stance of not engaging in high-level official meetings with the Chinese President. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Chinese President’s visit may potentially trigger a diplomatic crisis with the Thai government, which could have significant implications for bilateral relations.

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Since 2009, the Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) has been proposing new contents and perspectives on Asia by integrating regional and thematic research across Asia. SNUAC seeks to be the leading institution for research and scholarly exchanges. SNUAC features three regional centers, the Korean Social Science Data Archive (KOSDAS), and seven thematic research programs. By fostering ‘expansion’ and ‘layering’ between Asian studies and Korean studies, the Center endeavors to shape new frameworks of Asian studies that go beyond a ‘Western-non-Western’ dichotomy. SNUAC will continue to support the pursuit of scholarly excellence in the study of Asia by providing opportunities to conduct international collaboration on an array of topics in Asia. For further information please visit: http://snuac.snu.ac.kr/center_eng

North Korea in the eyes of the Nordic region and China

Kyuhoon CHO

The Newsletter | No.78 | Autumn 2017

North Korea in the eyes of the Nordic region and China

Kyuhoon CHO

The Nordic region has been able to turn a long history of conflict into a modern era of cooperation. Their historical conflict has not been hidden, but rather is used as an ideological tool to fuel present conflicts of interests and general disagreements. Past is past, let’s do it better onwards, seems to be a Nordic consensus. The five independent countries are bound together into a unified entity, in particular, by our common cultural traits: we share basic values and norms, and have decided to stress the similarities and respect the still existing differences between us. The Nordic region is possibly the best integrated region in the present world, and it is the regional cooperation with the strongest popular support.

What is the potential relevance of this for Korea? Some facts are quite similar between the Nordic region and the East Asian region: a history of animosities and conflicts between the neighbors, and, at the same time a basically common cultural heritage, with common values and norms. Differences between the two regions are many, with size as an obvious and visible one. The two regions are also dealing with the history of conflict in different ways, and, the division between the four countries in the East Asian region is fortified by different and opposing political and ideological positions.

The similarities and differences between our two regions consists of elements that cannot be changed, but also politically based facts, that can be altered, if there is political will and popular support. Size and history cannot be changed, while how these facts are dealt with, how they are invested in political ideologies and visions, is a matter of choice, although often hard choices. They are not free to be made, as culture is a harder fact than most people are able to understand.

What we cherish or dislike, see as true or false, good or bad, right or wrong, is to a certain degree affected by our cultural environment. In the Nordic region, even if we at present are living in a post-Christian era, all of us are colored by Lutheran Protestantism in particular. The moral values and the worldview developed based on this northern European Christian faith affect our societal norms. In the East Asian region, Confucianism is, in my view, a fundamental basis, but Shamanism, Buddhism, and also Christianity, add to societal life, politics and world outlook of the people in the East Asian region.

Some sweeping generalization is necessary in order to relate to and open-mindedly discuss issues informed by our heritage, albeit not easy. I have met Korean friends in the South who have a very difficult time accepting Koreans from another province in their own country, not to speak of people from Japan. Their dislike is not based on personal experiences, but on learned ‘truths’. It’s not that there are no reasons for animosities; sad and gruesome historical facts often make it difficult to look ahead and move forwards. Nevertheless, moving forward is necessary and to the benefit of all concerned, and should be a common aim.

Many years ago, while visiting North Korea, I had a number of serious conversations with people in my proximity, people with whom I had a positive relationship. I wanted to know if there is a chance to use the country as a totally new entity, a post-war ‘Kum Il Sung-land’ with its Juche ideology, untainted by past experiences, including the “5000 years of history”, also in the newly talked about North Korea. They always said yes, in the first instance. They claimed that their system was totally new and they gave a host of arguments and examples in support of this position. If expressed a willingness to try and understand this, and respect their view, the dialogue would usually continue. Then I would maintain my position, which was and is, that we all, to some extent, are cultural constructs, and that even new ideas and political ideologies are in debt to the past, which moreover is a necessity for the new to be rooted and to grow in the local soil. My North Korean dialogue partners could see this point, but were worried if I stressed it too much. “It makes sense, what you are saying”, was the general reaction, “but please do not overstate the importance of the past, our culture, and he knows what is best for us, like the father in a family.”

The northern half of the peninsula has made an effort to create a self-reliant entity, and to realize this it has fenced itself in and has kept relations with the outside world at a minimum. During the later years of a military build-up on both sides of the demarcation line, in particular when nuclear ambitions became a military priority for the North Korean leadership, the USA, followed by its allies and most Western powers and the UN Security Council responded with an ever tightening embargo. To the self-imposed isolation is added an externally imposed one. Who gains, except those who fear change?

Currently it might be difficult to envisage a dialogue as the one described above. A main reason is that the years that have passed since my small and informal survey in Pyongyang have been filled with mutual accusations and hatred, and during the last couple of decades North Korea has been demonized to the extent that it is hard to imagine the existence of normal people ‘up North’. But they are there, and they are not that different from their country fellows in the South, or from Japanese and Chinese fellowmen, for that matter. There is a cultural similarity to build on! A Nordic inspiration to, and possible intervention for, peace and mutual understanding between the Koreans could be based on experiences with Nordic regional cooperation, and, on the newly acquired knowledge about the impact and importance of cultural affinity among people in neighboring countries for the success of regional cooperation. As there are longstanding diplomatic relations between the two Koreas and the Nordic countries, such a humanitarian and long-term involvement should be possible and within the accepted limits of the ongoing sanctions and an activity that aims at a positive solution for all parties concerned.

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Reference
1 Five independent countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, organized as one cooperative region through the Nordic Council, the parliamentary cooperative body, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the governmental body of cooperation, as well as joint public and private bodies within the fields of economy, culture, sports etc.
North Korea from a Norwegian perspective

Jan Grevstad

THE THEM: THROUGHOUT this paper is the Norwegian government's strong commitment to uphold and advance international laws and principles, our condemnation of North Korea's human rights situation and their weapons development program, and our support for peaceful, diplomatic and political solutions. The article presents two simple answers as to why Norway is concerned about the Korean peninsula: Our common security. Our common prosperity.

Norway established diplomatic ties with the DPRK at the same time as the other Nordic countries, in 1973. While Norway never had an embassy in Pyongyang, North Korea closed its embassy in Oslo in the 1990s. Since 2004, the Norwegian Ambassador to Seoul has also been accredited as Ambassador to Pyongyang. We continue to maintain a diplomatic relationship with North Korea as we believe contact is critical to sustain peace and development in any geopolitical situation.

As a small country with a virtual embargo, we have a limited role in the trade with North Korea. Our engagement is restricted to humanitarian assistance through international organizations, and diplomatic interactions, including at the multilateral arena. The embassy attempts annual visits, mainly to follow up on our humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea, which we have been giving since the 1980s. Our assistance is based purely on humanitarian needs and therefore we do not withhold aid as and when the political situation changes. Our mainaim is to deliver assistance. Norway communicates clearly to the North Korean authorities that we expect them to respect and support humanitarian principles. We advocate for the government to do its best to make sure United Nations and other agencies have full access.

When in North Korea we also make it clear that any improvement in our bilateral relations is contingent on two issues: unambiguously positive developments on the human rights and the cessation of nuclear tests. Norway is not a party to the conflict on the peninsula, but global norms, international law, and the security situation of East Asia matters to us. Continuing testing and development runs counter to international norms and resolutions. An unstable peninsula means an unstable world. In response, we firmly and faithfully support all multilateral sanctions on North Korea, which we have adopted into Norwegian law.

An unsafe peninsula also represents a risk to our common prosperity. Norway has robust and healthy trade relationships with not only South Korea, but also other countries in the region. This region’s role in and impact on the world economy, for merchandise and financial products and services, is immense. Finally, however much we disagree with their actions and their attitude, we must accept that North Korea, its leadership and regime, have their own concerns.

Understanding Pyongyang’s own positions is a first step for any useful discussion on the North Korea issue. Norway stands with the international community in supporting all efforts for peaceful, diplomatic, and political solutions to the situation on the peninsula.

Jan Grevstad, Ambassador of Norway to Korea (Jan.Ole.Grevstad@mfa.no).

Perspectives on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue in Chinese online media

LEE Jeong-Hoon

AFTER CHINA OFFICIALLY GAINED access to the World Wide Web in 1994, its internet forums have developed into spaces where a variety of opinions on social issues are expressed, enabling scholars to examine the views of ordinary Chinese people on North Korea. In February 2013, North Korea's third nuclear weapons test sparked controversy in China, with the view of North Korea as a socialist ‘brother nation’ weakening and some even advancing the idea of severing ties with Pyongyang. In order to understand this critical view of North Korea in contrast to the position of the Chinese government as expressed through the official media, there is a need to investigate the function of the internet as a space for the discussion of issues of public interest and the formation of public opinion in China.

Through internet forums, we can examine the unofficial, internal, and broader and deeper considerations of the different levels of Chinese society with regard to North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue that exist on the flip side of the official and public reactions of the Chinese government. North Korea and the North Korean nuclear weapons program are among the most hotly debated issues in Chinese internet discussion forums, and the variety of perspectives that exist in China with regard to North Korea can be found on the representative discussion sites Tianya Club (tianya.cn), MOP (mop.com), and Utopia (Wuyouzhixiang, wyxwex.com).

Tianya Club is known as the most influential internet forum in China. Launched in 1998, Tianya developed with a focus on internet literature and discussions on social issues, initiating the production of contents and exchange of opinions to satisfy the expectations of highly educated and middle-class users. Posts related to North Korea mainly appear in the ‘International Watch’ section of the site. A majority of them approach North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue from a realist perspective, and some show an impressionistic degree of knowledge and expertise on China-US relations or the situation in East Asia. Going beyond an emotional or official approach to the North Korean nuclear issue, they examine it through the frames of the international conditions of North Korea or inter-Korean conflict, with some of them conducting an assessment of the issue in light of China’s strategy for East Asia. In other words, Tianya Club discussions demonstrate that Chinese online debates on North Korea are not limited to the emotional reaction of the general public but range vastly to a very high level in which we can see a degree of strategic discernment and knowledge of international affairs far exceeding what one would normally expect. In the closed media environment in China, the reason that this kind of bold discussion is possible is due to the nature of online media that guarantees the anonymity of discussion participants, allowing a freedom of expression unhindered by the control of information, political taboos, or diplomatic considerations that normally come into play in formal venues of discussion on North Korea.

MOP is the largest comprehensive Chinese-language entertainment portal, currently boasting 130 million registered users. As befitting a site that leads the latest internet trends in China, focusing primarily on entertain-entertainment, the number of users aged 18 to 32 is relatively high, which makes it a suitable choice to gauge the attitudes of young Chinese people regarding North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue. Characteristic of the younger generations, the discussions on MOP display an amusement-oriented and non-ideological approach with an overall negative view of North Korea. Posts featuring the negative aspects of a declining and unprogressive North Korea such as its closed internet environment, its lack of credit in international transactions, and the spread of drugs by North Korean defectors, reinforce the negative image of the country. To the average user, North Korea is an object of amusement yet evokes adverse feelings due to its image as a strange and foreign nation with a closed political system and feeble economy.

On the other hand, we can find a number of users who make efforts to correct biased perceptions of North Korea by introducing various aspects of the country they have experienced firsthand while traveling there. Their posts neutralize the negative image among Chinese internet users by painting a more detailed picture of the internal circumstances within North Korea than any external media source and relaying their experiences in near real-time.

In contrast to MOP, the discussions about North Korea on the Maost and liberal site Utopia (Wuyouzhixiang) show a tendency of projecting on North Korea and idealizing the lost socialist past of China. Many of the posts on Utopia argue that North Korea has carried on the authenticity and historical legitimacy of the socialist system, unlike China, which has departed somewhat from the traditional socialist line through reformation and the opening of its markets. The socialist welfare system providing free education, free medical care, and free housing maintained in North Korea to the present is used as a basis to criticize the current status of China. In addition, the posts related to North Korea on Utopia frequently emphasize the alliance between the two countries ‘cemented in blood’ through the Korean War and their historical amity during the Mao era.

In this way, the discussions on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue found on internet forums in China more clearly show the unofficial and latent perspectives that exist in society in contrast to the official and public positions of the Chinese government and official media.

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Foreigners in Treaty Port China

"I found the Chinese in Shanghai to be a very jolly people, much like colored folks at home. To tell the truth, I was more afraid of going into the world famous Cathay Hotel than I was of going into any public place in the Chinese quarters. Colored people are not welcomed at the Cathay. But beyond the gates of the International Settlement, color was no barrier. I could go anywhere", Langston Hughes (1902-1967) writes in his autobiography about his visit to Shanghai in 1934.1 During its Treaty Port era (1843-1943), Shanghai transformed from a trading town of 270,000 residents to a world-renowned metropolis of over 5 million people, attracting fortune-hunters like businessmen, writers, musicians, architects, and refugees from all over the world.

Lena Scheen

Asian jazz diasporas: performing jazz in Pacific port cities, 1920-1945

Andrew Field

WHAT CAN THE SPREAD in Asia of the American popular music known as jazz, during its early period of the 1920s-40s, tell us about the dynamics of western colonialism and imperialism in this world region? How does the historian reconstruct and analyze the flow of jazz music as it spread into this part of the world? Who were the musicians who played key roles in spreading jazz in Asia and what were their trajectories? In what sorts of venues was jazz performed and who constituted the audiences for live jazz performances during this era? Finally, what was the overall impact of the jazz diaspora into Asia during this period, and is it really true that these jazz musicians laid the groundwork for the nativization of American popular music and the formation of modern pop music cultures in Asian countries?

While this paper cannot answer all of these questions in exhaustive detail, it constitutes a first attempt by the author to tackle a few and offer some initial answers. Many scholars and popular writers, including this author, have produced comprehensive book-length studies of the initial rise and spread of jazz in specific cities and countries, including Bombay, Shanghai, the Philippines, and Japan. Others have written articles about jazz and popular music in South and Southeast Asian countries and cities, particularly India, yet until now the vectors and networks by which jazz spread around Asia as a whole have remained somewhat mysterious.

One key observation is that the spread of jazz through-out Asia was carried out mainly through the vehicle of passenger liners that cruised along networks of port cities. The passenger liner was the ideal vehicle for jazz, since it brought the musicians themselves to far flung ports throughout Asia Pacific. These musicians were sometimes given jobs on the liners entertaining passengers, and they could disembark at any port and explore and sometimes even settle in port cities where they might also find an audience for their music. In this sense, the spread of jazz in this world region is best understood through the networks of trade, commerce and culture that emerged through the forces of western colonialism and imperialism, but which were far more deeply embedded in the history of oceanic trading networks in Asia. Similarly, jazz was a modern western invention, and yet as it spread across the globe, it took on the trappings of local musical cultures, which often played a mediating role in bringing jazz to ‘native’ peoples in these countries and cities.

The Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA)

Steve Upton

While there is surely a vast universe of such materials, this one is likely the largest and most diverse collection of materials regarding foreign organizations whose activities in pre-1950 China were partly in a non-Chinese language. Some of the items at USFA are former belongings to notable people, including Sun Yat-sen, Li Hongzhang, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. USFA has one of the largest special collections regarding Chinese culture in China, as well as important of all, to Asia, these establishments also nurtured ‘native’ jazz movements, even if the musicians themselves were sometimes trained in other countries (as in the case of Japanese musicians learning jazz in Shanghai). The single most important figure in the history of the spread of jazz in Asia during this period was unquestionably Teddy Weatherford, an African American stride pianist. Between his arrival in Shanghai in 1926 and his death in 1945, Weatherford contributed more than any other jazz musician to the popularization of this form of music in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to bringing American jazz artists, arguably the most influential and important of all, to Asia, these establishments also nurtured ‘native’ jazz movements, even if the musicians themselves were sometimes trained in other countries (as in the case of Japanese musicians learning jazz in Shanghai).
IN ABOUT 1929, shortly after he began working for the first time, a young man in Shanghai seems to have used his new-earned wealth to buy a camera. With all the fearlessness and curiosity of a neophyte and, it turned out with some natural talent and technical skill, Jack Ephgrave then set about over the next five years documenting the city in which he lived, his workplace, and his family. And then, for over 70 years, the photographs lay carefully preserved but unseen outside his family.

John William Ephgrave (1914–79), always known as Jack, was born in Shanghai in October 1914. His father had arrived in the city in 1912 to work for a department store, and would in time become one of its directors. Jack started off as an apprentice in the printing department of British American Tobacco’s China operation (BAT), the British Cigarette Company (BCC), and later worked for its subsidiary Capital Lithographers Ltd. In later life he rose to hold a senior position in the company’s global marketing and publicity operations on China’s modern visual culture. Its advertising hoardings, cigarette packet cards, and calendar posters, were designed by some of China’s most influential graphic artists, and Ephgrave by 1941 was head of the Artists’ Department at Capital Lithographers.

But it is young Jack’s experiments with photography that are, for me, the striking thing about his China career.

The two albums that emerged contain 1,000 photographs. There is something of the street photography held by families with historic links to China’s port cities (www.hpcbristol.net). These are families whose ancestors lived in or visited China, and who commissioned, bought, or like Jack Ephgrave took themselves and sometimes stole the photographs that survive as prints in albums, negatives and slides. The project has been presented in the Newsletter before (issue 76, Spring 2017), but as it continues to grow, new collections are offered by members of the public from across the world, and it has embedded within its cross-searchable holdings other publicly-accessible digital archives (most recently 4,700 photographs by Hedda Morrison from Harvard-Yenching Library; www.hpcbristol.net/collections/morrison-hedda).

The latest large set of images, digitized by the project team and unvield online, contains an extensive set of photographs documenting revolutionary events in Wuhan in 1911 (www.hpcbristol.net/collections/wyatt-smith-stanley), while the most recent collection to arrive in the office covers two years in the (off-duty) life of a British intelligence officer in early Communist Shanghai.

The geography of the foreign presence in China certainly shapes the collection, as it also shaped the bodies of work produced by the famous. Chinese Maritime Customs staff, consuls, businessmen and missionaries largely moved on what became familiar circuits of postings from port to port. They also spent vacations in the same resorts, or went on sightseeing trips to the same temples or natural sights. But while there is always something predictable in any set that arrives in the office in Bristol, there is always something new, unusual and exciting, like the fruits of Jack Ephgrave’s first flush of love for the camera.

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The HPC’s Jack Ephgrave collection can be found at www.hpcbristol.net/collections/ephgrave-jack.
The title of Matthew Cohen's book seems, on the face of it, somewhat provocative. Surely, one might suggest, there were always performing arts in Indonesia. Coming to terms with Cohen's thesis here hinges on how the terms 'invention' and 'performance' are defined, for which the subtitle, 'modernity and tradition in colonial Indonesia', points the way. For Cohen, 'performing arts' needs to be conceived of within a paradigm of modernity which emphasizes its consciousness of purpose; and the 'modernity' of which the book speaks is, of course, a colonial modernity, primarily as it was manifested in Java and Bali.


WITH THE NOTION of 'invention' furthermore, Cohen certainly does not have in mind a 'one off' moment. The reference to colonial in this book, roughly covering the period from the latter 19th century to the end of the Japanese occupation and its immediate aftermath in Indonesia, indicates that Cohen is positing an understanding of 'invention' as a process, something that took place over a time span of almost a century and across a colonial public space constituted by Indonesian (mainly Javanese and Balinese) Chinese, and Eurasian communities. The book, then, details the way the interaction of ideas, practices, and inventions, and of artists and publics, came to create Indonesia's pre-Independence vibrant performing arts world of which today's Indonesian artists, performers and impresarios – and publics – are the inheritors.

Part One, 'Common ground for arts and popular entertainments', opens on the world of 'jeki', the world of public entertainments available to a hybrid colonial urban population in Batavia and other cities on Java in the late 19th century, before proceeding to delineate the different, community-linked genres available to its diverse audiences. Here Cohen creates the atmosphere wonderfully by drawing on contemporary newspaper advertisements and reports. The title of Chapter One signals that what appears from a distance to be a random obscurity in fact represents the 'interacting art worlds' and traditions of the different communities who inhabit the expanding urban public space. Despite the close proximity indicated by the urban environment which blurred and made porous the boundaries of artistic practice, each ethnic group drew from their cultural separateness to experience and stage these different practices differently. Thus, Eurasian musical and school music, Javanese wayang and court-based tari, and Chinese opera, co-existed in diverse public spaces. Over time however, as Chapter Two then goes on to demonstrate, increased leisure time, improved economic circumstances and the increased penetration of European goods and ideas that expressed the growing culture of urban modernity, brought with it new forms of entertainment, such as circuses, puppet theatres, Malay language theatres and commercial wayang wolong. Detached from their specific local cultural or ethnic traditions, these newer forms began to construct an appetite for the diversification of performances that could be enjoyed 'in common'. They were, in that sense, 'modern'.

Part Two then launches the reader into the more full blown culture of modern performing arts. The first topic (Chapter Three) reprises Cohen earlier ground-breaking work on the world of the European opera-style influenced Komedi Stambol. This popular theatre gradually morphed into forms of modern (Eurasian) theatre, as Indische toneel, with scripts by, and reflecting the interests of, the growing European community, and in a somewhat different style, as Opera Derma, or Sino-Malay spoken drama, reflecting Indonesian influences. Chapter Four focuses on the performances of popular music in public locations, such as markets and dance halls and, with the encroachment of modern technology, also within homes as phonograph recordings. In the ecstatic world of music, 'hybridization' too soon become evident. But, contrary to those who might see 'Artistic hybridity... as a sign of the weakness of indigenous culture', and representing the submission of the local to the foreign incursion, Cohen's argument, articulated here in relation to music, but relevant across the performing arts, is that 'musical innovators of the 1920s and 1930s... were strongly grounded and confident in the musical idiom of their local cultures... [while] also quick to respond to market contingencies, curious about exogenous practices and inventive in catering to new modes of patronage' (p. 100). And, indeed, the next two chapters address the growing 'ethnic awakenings' that were inspiring a revival of interest in and the revitalisation of traditions alongside further developments in new theatre forms.

As to be expected, the reader is here introduced to the important contribution of the Java Institute, in its elaboration of a discourse of cultural nationalism and its practical support of local Javanese (and Sundanese) cultural groups, such as Kridha Beksa Wirama in Yogyakarta. This cultural revival, nevertheless, marked another phase of cultural interaction, in that the indigenous artists with artists and progressives intellectuals from Europe, such as the architect, Thomas Karsten, in Java, and the artist, Walter Spies, in Bali, inspired by the various new art movements in Europe. While both sides were concerned to generate greater appreciation of Javanese and Balinese arts, by 'tweaking' cultural performances to meet the 'demands' (of taste and comfort) of modernity, they were differently inspired: the one by cultural nationalism, the other by an academic or artistic interest in the conservation of cultural heritage.

Part Two ends with a discussion of the link between the performing arts and rising nationalism of the thirties. It was a period not only of continuous change, such as the rise to popularity fak-fak, panting the staging of Javanese stories, but also of intense debate on culture and modernity. Cohen is not concerned here to close off interpretation with definitive conclusions, but to emphasize that the 'reinvention of tradition occurred in conjunction with the emergence of artists' modernity'. Drawing here an apt observation by Perry Anderson, Cohen concludes that the invention of the performing Arts in Indonesia at this time flourished 'in the space bound by a still viable classical past, a still indeterminate technical present, and a still unpredictable political future' (p. 172).

Part Three addresses the Indonesian interregnum. Long ignored by historians and historians fascinated by war, Cohen adds his contribution to a number of new histories that see the initiatives of the Japanese civil administration not only as significant in and of themselves but as forming an important continuation, if in some ways contrasting, of the history of colonial modernity. The book devotes three relatively brief chapters from the limited detail available for this period, once again drawing heavily on the foreign incursion, Cohen's argument, articulated here in relation to music, but relevant across the performing arts, is that 'musical innovators of the 1920s and 1930s... were strongly grounded and confident in the musical idiom of their local cultures... [while] also quick to respond to market contingencies, curious about exogenous practices and inventive in catering to new modes of patronage' (p. 100). And, indeed, the next two chapters address the growing 'ethnic awakenings' that were inspiring a revival of interest in and the revitalisation of traditions alongside further developments in new theatre forms.

Below: Kelyar Dodiuk, performed here by dancer of the Balinese dance troupe, Sekal Jalur. Courtesy of Cisn. 1402 on Wikimedia Commons.
The most famous leader of the Black Flags was Liu Yongfu. These bandit armies were a motley throng of poor Chinese of state weaknesses in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. The results were mixed. Under such conditions the borderland areas nominally outside the reach of the governments of China and Vietnam were ‘imperial’ because they were frequently sanctioned by one or more of the regional governments. As the author concludes, we cannot fully grasp the nature of imperial banditry without recognizing the important roles that imperial states played in shaping the region’s politics and economies. The seemingly endless cycle of imperial bandits continued for several more decades. In weaving his story Davis skilfully combines Vietnamese, Chinese, and French documentary evidence with the oral traditions of highland aborigines about the Black Flags and Yellow Flags and their conflicts and relationships with Vietnamese, Chinese, and French governments. As the author concludes, we cannot fully understand the interconnected histories of Vietnam, China, and France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries without recognizing the important roles that imperial bandits played in making that history. Imperial Bandits is an important, well-argued book that should be essential reading for scholars and students interested in histories of modern Vietnam, China, and Western imperialism.

Unresolved Disputes in Southeast Asia

Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia is an edited volume containing 12 chapters including introduction and conclusion. Broadly speaking, this book recounts and analyses three intra-regional and extra-regional land and maritime border conflicts involving Southeast Asia, namely Preah Vihear spat between Thailand and Cambodia, Koh Tral island dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia and row over South China Sea islands, atolls and islets between China and multiple members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
In Search of the Bengal Famine of 1943

The Bengal famine of 1943 remains a relatively unexplored topic of the modern Indian history. Despite the insightful and thought-provoking works on the Bengal famine by Amartya Sen (Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement & Deprivation, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) and Paul Greenough (Prosperity & Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-1944, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), both of which were incidentally published in the early eighties, the famine has not been understood in its totality. The teleological nationalist history writing of India has exclusively focused, as the teleological nationalist history writing of India has exclusively focused, on the nationalist struggle, negotiations for a transfer of power, the manoeuvring of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League and/or the rise of communal rancour (p.2). Mukherjee in this work provides a disturbing, yet riveting account of the Bengal famine of 1943, which was, as he aptly pointed out, not limited to the year 1943.

Reviewer: Shubhneet Kaushik, Jawaharlal Nehru University

HE DECLARES IN THE INTRODUCTION of the book that his objective is to demonstrate ‘the deep and abiding impacts that both war and famine had on the course of events in India on the verge of independence’. And to a large extent, he succeeded in fulfilling his objective. He gave us a detailed picture of the politico-economic and socio-psychological conditions which prevailed before and after the Bengal famine of 1943. While analysing the historical events that led to the famine, and understanding the socio-political milieu of the late colonial Bengal, Mukherjee also explores the structures of power and the Bengal famine due centralities in the history of the 20th-century India. He emphasised that famine has to be understood as a complex form of human violence. In this context, Sen in his critically acclaimed work on the famines, Poverty and Famines, noted that starvation essentially means that people do not have enough food to eat and it is not related to the unavailability of food. In Sen’s own words, ‘Famine imply starvation, but not vice versa.’ And starvation implies poverty, but not vice versa. 

Mukherjee argued in this book that the history of the Bengal famine is the history of power and disempowerment. Exploding the myths around the Bengal famine, Mukherjee shows with great mastery over details, how during the period of the famine and the war, some powerful capitalists made fortunes and even influenced the negotiations for independence. Though the policies of the colonial rulers were responsible for the making of the Bengal famine, the nationalist leadership was also guilty. Although it is true that most of the Congress leaders were behind bars during 1942-1944, when finally out of prison, rather than tackling the issue of the Bengal famine, the nationalist leadership was quite busy negotiating the transfer of power, with the colonial rule. He also draws our attention towards the fact that the leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League had close socio-economic and political relationship with the industrialist class of Calcutta, which further led them to overlook the problem of the Bengal famine. Mukherjee rightly noted that as the end days of the Empire were also draw near, “the tribal leadership circle around the pie of independence, failing even to notice that...the population in Bengal were beginning to starve” (p. 252). In this context, the schlepping and repression of the agrarian movement (which was led by the sharecroppers) by the Indian state, also shows clearly that which class had the sympathetic support of national leaders at the all the while.

The Bengal famine was also the direct consequence of the ‘denial policy’ of the British government. It essentially means, to confiscate all surplus stocks of rice in the vulnerable coastal districts of Bengal, so that an invading Japanese army could not feed its troops with locally confiscated stocks. And to worsen the situation further, more than 40,000 boats have been destroyed leaving the Japanese invasion, thus ruining the essential water transport system of Bengal. And the ongoing war, hoarding of the middle class, sudden raids by the army and the callous attitude of the Indian society towards the problem of famine further made the situation very grim.

Mukherjee treated the famine in a continuum, which was preceded by malnutrition and succeeded by debilitation and disease. And thus he did not limit himself to one particular year, i.e. 1943, but traces the history of the Bengal famine before and after this period as well. Inspired by the works of James Scott (Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Political Resistance, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985) and Ranajit Guha (Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983) on everyday forms of political resistance, Mukherjee forcefully argued that the victims of the Bengal famine did not ‘die without a murmur’, but in fact, they contested the famine at every stage (p. 12). He provided us an insightful account of the Second World War as it proceeded in South Asia, particularly in the colonial Bengal; the British efforts to save Calcutta, while exposing the countryside to the perils of famine and starvation. With the so-called ‘denial scheme’, Mukherjee also exposes the ‘benevolent’ nature of colonial rule, by giving the account of the activities of colonial officials in ‘tackling the famine and dealing with wartime shortages. Japanese invasion, air raid damages and the riots of 1946 (followed by the Muslim League’s call for Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946) were aptly dealt with in this book.

Linking the Calcutta riot and famine, Mukherjee argued that the Calcutta riots were a way to deal with the context of cumulative violence that began with chronic, multi-generational poverty, was compounded by war, and brought a catastrophic famine, the Bengal famine (p. 254). This book also draws our attention towards the persistence of famine and starvation in the post-colonial India. The Indian state has failed miserably in addressing the problem of malnutrition, hunger, starvation, and famine. As far as sources are concerned, Mukherjee relies heavily on the official sources like the famine reports, department files (including Home, Political, Economic and Overseas Department), private papers (e.g., Jadunath Sarkar and Nanavati Papers) and the invaluable volumes of the Transfer of Power. Overreliance on the official records of the colonial era of the Bengal famine is also the major weakness of this book. Though in the bibliography, he mentioned more than a dozen interviewees, he did not utilise these interviews in his narrative of the Bengal famine. Though Mukherjee talked briefly about the persistence of the famine and the war, his account of the post-colonial, he neglects the role that the memory of the victims, remembrance of the famines affected by the famine played in structuring, shaping, articulating and configuring the experiences and memories of the famine and starvation.

Also, he mentioned about the artists and activists associated with the Indian People’s Theatre Association only at the end of the book, and that too inadequately. Though the book began with a quotation of Somnath Hore, it is a pity, that the artists like Chittoprasad, Somnath Hore, Gopen Roy, Rambandhu Sen, and the like were just mentioned in passing. And their works and the Indian People’s Theatre Association’s theatrical presentation and songs on the famine were completely ignored in this otherwise insightful and detailed narrative of the Bengal famine of 1943.

ASEN'S responses to it, perceptions and behaviour of few individual countries like Vietnam, Philippines and Cambodia to the problem and finally, offer some viable solutions to the problem which include prospects for joint development programmes. Scattered over various chapters, while reading the book, a reader will discover the past and present and understand the implications of the South China Sea disputes. The narrative offered by Josef Falks Loher clarifies; Chinese government practises a synchronised strategy to enhance its power in the region on the one hand and on the other hand, tries to keep the extra-regional powers at bay. Simultaneously, in an order to ensure dominance over the region, China tries to divide the ASEAN members on the South China Sea issue and economically weak countries like Cambodia serve the interests of the giant neighbour in doing so. The territorial disputes involving Cambodia on the one hand and other ASEAN members on the other hand further instigate Phnom Penh to accept China’s regional actions, even at the cost of a disintegrated ASEAN. Alica Kisekova and Alfred Gerstl pointed out that ASEAN follows the path of multitrack diplomacy and engaging China with the regional institutional initiatives to avoid further escalation of disputes in the region. Trung, Minh Vu and Jorg Theile analyse Vietnamese’s (and to some extent, Philippines’) responses to the South China Sea crisis through multidimensional ways including making friends in the region (including Japan and India), taking the issue to the international forum (such as Permanent Court of Arbitration), provoking popular mandate against China domestically and using strategic restraint by encouraging joint development initiatives.

The advantages of reading this book are manifold. First, it discloses valuable evidence, both on the intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN territorial disputes covering the land borders as well as the maritime ones. Second, it is a most welcome new addition to the literature. Therefore, this book should be appreciated as a well-documented fact book containing historical information and analyses. More specifically speaking, this book is cherished as it has explained the impacts of the mentioned conflicts for contemporary Asia-Pacific studies.

This book offers few new arguments. First, besides China, United States is also responsible for the existing divisions within ASEAN as it often indulges itself in the great power rivalries in the region leaving little options for the smaller Southeast Asian countries except to be either with the United States or China. The role of the United States in the great power game in the region however could have been more comprehensively treated. Second, in their co-authored chapter on Preah Vihear, Richard Turcanyi and Zdenek Kritz mentioned that ASEAN countries are competing against China. While this logic sounds stimulating and optimistic, the author needs to put more efforts to clarify the reasons behind this particular thinking. Third, Pankaj Lyagh, in his chapter, noted that the South China Sea disputes have almost become an anarchical situation, thanks to the roles played by the great powers. To add more value to the chapter, the author could have studied the role of the small powers in that anarchy. One striking limitation of this book is the lack of discussions on China’s role as the missing indispensable economic conglomerate playing a pivotal role in dividing ASEAN on the maritime disputes involving China.

However, overall, Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia is most welcome new addition to the existing literature on the political history of Southeast Asia, South China Sea issue and the history of border conflicts in the Asia-Pacific. This would be definitely helpful for the students, scholars and experts on the region as it deals with Southeast Asia in a lucid manner which is the centre of contemporary world affairs.
Democracy, State Elites, and Islamist Activists in Indonesia

In this important book, Michael Buehler attempts to explain the cause of Islamization of politics in Indonesia after the fall of Soeharto’s New Order military regime in 1998. Between 1998 and 2013, the country witnessed no less than 443 sharia regulations adopted by provincial and district/city governments across the country. This figure is remarkably high given the marginal status of Islam under Soeharto’s New Order. Against this background, Buehler asks what factor drives the proliferation of such regulations and how this factor works under Indonesia’s new democratic system.

Reviewer: Sirojuddin Arif, Northern Illinois University

Cambodia Votes

After two decades of strife, opposing Cambodian factions in October 1991 concluded several agreements, collectively known as the Paris Peace Accords. One of the agreements called for the United Nations to create a special authority, which became the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), to serve as an interim force to run government ministries, verify disarmament, and organize elections for a national assembly. Another agreement called on the international community to provide economic assistance for the reconstruction of Cambodia.

Reviewer: Ronald Bruce St John, Independent Scholar

IN INTERNATIONAL DONOR CIRCLES, it was widely accepted at the time that competitive multi-party elections were the optimum mechanism to put countries with little or no experience with democracy on the path to peace, prosperity, and democratization. An opposing school of thought held that elections should not be held until the rule of law and democratic institutions had been firmly established and consolidated in a country like Cambodia.

In Cambodia Votes, Michael Sullivan, a long-time resident of Cambodia and a member of the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Phnom Penh, analyses the impact such regulations and how this factor works in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, this book should be read by diplomats and policy-makers faced with similar problems in other countries around the world.

Reviewer: Ronald Bruce St John, Independent Scholar

In 1990, after the fall of Soeharto's New Order military regime in 1998. Between 1998 and 2013, the country witnessed no less than 443 sharia regulations adopted by provincial and district/city governments across the country. This figure is remarkably high given the marginal status of Islam under Soeharto’s New Order. Against this background, Buehler asks what factor drives the proliferation of such regulations and how this factor works under Indonesia’s new democratic system.

Reviewer: Sirojuddin Arif, Northern Illinois University

A sign of Intellectual exhaustion?' Indonesia

Nevertheless, regardless of the above questions about the impact of sharia policymaking across different regions in Indonesia is to understand how changes in power dynamics within the state define not only the nature of competition among different political actors but also state – Islam relations.

As laid out in Chapter 2, the relationship between Islam and the state was mostly antagonistic throughout the New Order. Some engagements that Soeharto showed since the early 1990s did not eradicate the prevailing tensions between Islam and the state. At local level, the rise of the New Order implied a couple of things: (1) the creation of new elites consisting of military personnel and state bureaucrats; and (2) maintaining of the old tension between old aristocrats and a new class of social elites consisting of rich Muslim farmers and traders, who often cast their opposition against the old aristocrats as well as the New Order in Islamist terms. Yet the collapse of Soeharto’s military regime in 1998 has changed the trajectory of political relations between these different groups. Rather than being antagonistic, state elites and Islamist activists now often engaged in mutual collaborations, albeit with interests at odds. In ‘fusing’ politics at local level, it is true that the collapse of Soeharto’s regime did not necessarily eliminate the influence of the old elites nurtured by the New Order. Instead, it implied a new era, in which political appointments were determined by the central power of the central government, aspiring leaders now have to gain popular support from voters to be elected as governors, district heads or city mayors. This allowed Islamist activists to capitalize their social capital and networks in both rural and urban areas as bargaining chips with the state. At the same time, as there was a need for state, Islam relations.

By tracing the development of sharia policy making since the beginning of the New Order, this book offers a fresh look at the evolution of state – Islam relations in Indonesia especially at the local level. Nevertheless, despite its rich data analysis, the book leaves some questions unanswered. First, it is widely known that Islam in Indonesia is not a homogenous entity. Yet it seems to me that the book covers areas dominated by modernist Muslims. In fact, a substantial part of Indonesian Muslims adheres to the traditionalist version of Islamic teaching. It is interesting to know how the collapse of the New Order affects state – Islam relations in areas dominated by traditionalist Muslims. Besides, it is also interesting to know how traditionalist Muslims respond to the demand of Islamization of politics by Islamist activists.

A sign of Intellectual exhaustion?' Indonesia

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Olivia Killias. 2017. Follow the Maid: Domestic Worker Migration in and from Indonesia NIAS Press ISBN 9789877694226
Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). Hun Sen’s rise has complemented the emergence of a tight-knit elite comprising CPP ministers, lawmakers, local officials, business tycoons, police chiefs and military generals who have come to dominate and characterise Cambodia as a patrimonial society. The profits of the subsequent widespread marketisation of Cambodia’s natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed within this elite, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. In the process of consolidating its power-base and grip over the population, the CPP has extended its influence throughout society, from the commemoration of the Khmer Rouge atrocities to the distribution of television broadcasting licences, and from the designation of land concessions to the relocation of the urban and rural poor. This Focus Section explores the extent and nature of the CPP’s fingerprint on different societal spheres, including civil society, natural resources exploitation, urban business, education, agriculture, and the arts. Taken together, the contributions here reveal a political modus operandi, with its accompanying intended and unintended consequences for Cambodia. They arrive in the context of a politics that has facilitated the CPP’s domination, but now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.

Michiel Verver and Jake Wieczorek
The rise of Hun Sen and the CPP

In February of 2017 the CPP amended the Law on Political Parties, thereby barring convicted criminals from political party leadership roles and conferring authority to the Ministry of Interior to dissolve political parties on the basis of making ‘serious mistakes’, threatening ‘national unity’, or ‘the security of the state’. The human rights office of the United Nations (UN) has protested the vague language and excessive restrictions contained within the amendments, because they provide “considerable discretion” for the Ministry of Interior to control the political process.1 No one has any doubt that the amendments were designed to debase Sam Rainsy, Hun Sen’s political rival who is currently living in exile in France, with the opposition suggesting the amendments “kills democracy in Cambodia”.2 Rainiess faces several convictions, including a five-year prison sentence over a Facebook post criticising the CPP. In the 2013 elections Rainiess Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) won 55 seats while the CPP share fell from 90 to 68 seats, its worst performance since 1998. The results were striking considering the CPP’s control over the National Election Committee, state media and multiple reported electoral irregularities. Due, in no small part, to the amendments to the Law on Political Parties Sam Rainsy resigned from the CNRP to protect the party from dissolution, transferring the presidency to his former deputy, Kem Sokha. As this Focus Section goes to press, Kem Sokha has just been arrested on charges of treason and faces up to 30 years in prison, with the CPP claiming that Sokha has conspired with the United States to instigate regime change. CNRP representatives refuse to appoint yet another president, and hence Sokha’s arrest could spell the dissolution of the opposition party. The amendments to the Law on Political Parties represent the latest move by the CPP to consolidate their power, part of an ongoing political strategy originating nearly four decades ago when Hun Sen touched down at Phnom Penh Airport on 11 January 1979. Four days earlier, Vietnamese troops had moved into Cambodia’s capital and ousted the Khmer Rouge regime, an extreme Maoist regime that led to the death of an estimated 1.5 to 2 million Cambodians and left the country decimated. The Vietnamese installed a regime including Hun Sen, Heng Samrin and Chea Sim. The three men were defeated Khmer Rouge commanders who had fled to Vietnam in 1977-78 following a series of violent, paranoia driven internal purges instigated by Pol Pot, the head of the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese stayed in power for a decade (1979-1989), this allowed the three men, who still featured on CPP billboards together during the latest national elections campaign, to lay down their political roots. Hun Sen proved the most politically shrewd amongst the three, orchestrating a coup d’etat in 1985. Hun Sen has been characterised as a pragmatist, never a devoted communist.3 Since becoming prime minister in 1985, Hun Sen has effectively maintained his power-base through the exchange of political privileges and backing (khenming) for financial contributions and loyalty to the CPP, which would grant individuals access to the patronage networks that cement his position. The CPP elite incites loyalty amongst government officials by distributing opportunities for rent-seeking, and military generals have been allowed to make money from the land, timber and soldiers being put at their disposal. Similarly, business tycoons have been granted public contracts, import monopolies and land concessions in exchange for financial contributions to the CPP coffers and top officials. As such, Hun Sen has erected a pyramid-like patronage system, himself the figurehead, whereby power flows down and money flows up. The patronage system rests on informal strings (khmer), reinforced at charity events, on the golf course and through strategic marriages between political, military and business elites. These patron-client arrangements produced an extraterritorial elite that has subjugated the formal regulatory political system or, in other words, a weak state rule by strong men.

Hun Sen first demonstrated the efficacy of his power-base in the 1990s. The departure of the Vietnamese in 1989 urged the involvement of the UN (1991-93), who initiated a peace-building mission to avoid another civil war. The UN aimed for reconciliation between Cambodia’s political factions including Hun Sen’s, the Royalists and the Khmer Rouge who still controlled Cambodia’s western provinces. Hun Sen lost the 1993 elections to the Royalist party headed by Price Ranarridh. However, he refused to relinquish power and eventually brokered a power-sharing coalition using control over the police and armed forces as leverage. The coalition was fragile and violent clashes broke out on 5-6 July 1997, during which armed forces loyal to Hun Sen gained the upper hand over Ranarridh’s forces. This resulted in Hun Sen’s coup de force, allegedly paid for by allied tycoons, marking the beginning of CPP hegemony. The CPP won the subsequent elections, elections dubbed a “miracle on the Mekong” by the head of the United States observation delegation, increasing its seats in the National Assembly from 64 in 1998 to 73 in 2003 and 90 in 2008 (out of 123 seats).

The CPP blueprint for power was established. Through violence, intimidation and bribery, Hun Sen neutralised or co-opted the threat from political opposition outside and within his ranks. Meanwhile, he elicited votes by populist measures such as having roads, pagodas and so-called ‘Hun Sen schools’ built by proxy tycoons, and by reminding the largely rural electorate of the security risks involved in political pluralism, and the horrors of what came before. Following the 2003 elections Hun Sen placed loyalists in key positions, cementing his leadership and becoming synonymous with the CPP and, in extension, the Cambodian state. The consolidation of CPP power over the period since has fostered the expansion of state, business and military elites. Well-connected CPP officials have reaped the benefits of patronage, while the army, for example, now has an estimated 3000 generals (over three times more than the US army), while the number of okhna, an honorary title bestowed upon Cambodia’s resource owners, has swelled. The killings of garment sector unionist Chea Vichea in 2004, environmentalist Chut Wutty in 2012 and government critic Kem Ley in 2016 are widely believed to have been politically motivated. The opposition sets forth a pro-poor agenda based on human rights and democratisation, whereas CPP representatives downplay the severity of land evictions or human rights abuses, blaming protests on ‘incitement’ by the opposition. Notably, in opposition Sam Rainiess aggressively capitalised on populist anti-Vietnamese sentiments, claiming that the CPP is still a ‘puppet’ of Vietnam that turns a blind eye to Vietnamese ‘encroachment’ and ‘colonisation’. For example, the public holiday on 7 January, the day the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979, generates annual controversy: the CPP dub it ‘Victory Over Genocide Day’, whereas the Khmer opposition campaigns to downplay this national Day. The CPP go on to accuse their opponents of ‘terrorism’. International organisations and Western donors have been scrutinised for their role in the development of Cambodian society. They have facilitated the emergence of thousands of NGOs in the country and introduced a developmentalist discourse of democratisation, rule of law and ‘good governance’. The international community of the early 1990s, Phnom Penh has hosted innumerable Joint Technical Working Groups and Government–Donor Coordination Committees aimed at tackling corruption, strengthening the judiciary or decentralising government. Donor reports follow a familiar line of reasoning that in order to further Cambodia’s development certain preconditions are to be resolved via technical or structural reforms. Reports by the World Bank, for instance, consistently feature long lists of recommendations, urging the government to close the human opportunities gap, promote local participation, take steps to ensure...
transparency, and build capacity. These recommendations, however, ring hollow. The CPP elite has largely paid lip service to these good governance ideals, formulating concurrent National Strategic Development Plans and Rectangular Strategies alongside cementing networks of loyalty and controlling development. Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Hun Sen's right-hand man who died earlier this year and whose personal fortune was estimated at $1 billion, once argued at a donor meeting that "there is no need to plead the case of good governance" because "we are all converts."77

Publications by good governance converts aside, academic commentary on Cambodia tends to debunk the rhetoric of both the regime and international donors. On the one hand, scholars denounce Hun Sen's discourse and other Western donors, who, willingly or ignorantly, have become a pillar of Hun Sen's political consolidation. On paper, privatisation and the decentralisation of governance distribute power more broadly in society and enhance accountability. Yet in the Cambodian patrimonial context these reforms are co-opted, producing opportunities for the CPP elite to fortify the CPP's position at the district, commune and village levels.11 One thinks of the evictees of Boeung Kak Lake, removed under the auspices of the World Bank's land titling programme. The CPP had created, for a time, a façade of progress, which not merely serves to delude international donors, but provided the latter a pretext for extending 'no strings attached' rhetoric, seems intended to broker state oppression and high-level corruption. On the other hand, scholars critique the neoliberal reform approach taken by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other Western donors, who, willingly or ignorantly, have become a pillar of Hun Sen's political consolidation. On paper, privatisation and the decentralisation of governance distribute power more broadly in society and enhance accountability. Yet in the Cambodian patrimonial context these reforms are co-opted, producing opportunities to fortify the CPP's position at the district, commune and village levels.12 One thinks of the evictees of Boeung Kak Lake, removed under the auspices of the World Bank's land titling programme. The CPP had created, for a time, a façade of progress, which not merely serves to delude international donors, but provided the latter a pretext for extending aid. This maintenance of appearances has been well documented by scholars across various societal spheres resulting in a period of hegemony in Cambodia referred to by Sebastian Strangio as “a mirage on the Mekong.”12 A critical juncture?

The mirage, however, seems to be fading. It has become harder for donor countries to deny the CPP's attempts to purge the opposition in the aftermath of the 2013 elections, and Hun Sen seems no longer willing to play along. The most recent illustration is the widely condemned silencing of The Cambodia Daily, a newspaper often critical of the government that was forced to shut down operations after it was unable to pay an exorbitant $6.3 million tax bill. Last year, the European Parliament passed a motion calling on the EU to freeze its education and funding to Cambodia to be made dependent on its human rights record. Hun Sen replied: “You threaten to cut off aid; please cut it and the dismantlers by who will suffer will be the people who work with NGOs”. He added that “China has never made a threat to Cambodia and has never ordered Cambodia to do something”78. Indeed, the CPP has become less dependent on Western donors and more reliant on Chinese investment and aid, which, underneath the “no strings attached” rhetoric, seems intended to broker access for Chinese companies in Cambodia and enhance

China's political clout in Southeast Asia. Remarkably, in issuing a ten-page paper titled “To Tell The Truth” earlier this year, the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs clarifies the regime's antagonism towards the West.79 The paper argues that the United States has exploited the opportunities in the region and toppled the regime using civil society as a tool, distorting facts and amplifying minor problems. Western governments, it continues, does “not to support the side that ‘advocates disorder’ and ‘incites conflict with Vietnam’ rather than ‘the one that pursues development’, ‘treasures peace’, ‘protects the country, and protected its people’.”

The report points towards the hypocrisy of the West, which enjoys good relations with countries that have a single-party system while “Cambodia adheres to a multi-party system”. Coming full circle, “To Tell The Truth” is a direct response to the UN’s critique on the earlier mentioned amendments to the Law on Political Parties. Bringing into focus

This tit for tat between Western international institutions and the CPP, a hardening of CPP politics, changing international relations in the region, changes in the national political mood and the forthcoming 2018 elections, may present a critical juncture with the potential to depart from the mirage/miracle discourse on Cambodian politics. These considerations present us with a moment to bring into focus the dynamics at the convergence of politics and society in contemporary Cambodia. The topics presented are not merely political in nature and will provide a combination of analysis broad and focused in scope and perspective in their examination of this convergence. To begin with, Sarah Milne will take us to the Areng Valley in the Cardamom Mountains to look at the local political dynamics of resistance to the Areng Dam project, particularly the strategies deployed by the CPP locally to deal with resistance to this kind of development. Moving from the local to the national, Jake Wieczorek examines the state of the law in Cambodia and recent trends in law making that have increased the CPP's ability to intervene and control elements of civil society, including the political process. It places these in the context of the international debate on human rights in Cambodia. Heidi Oakes investigates the impact of politics and marketisation specifically on higher education, reflecting across a range of issues such as commercialisation, competition, employment and funding. Jean-Christophe Diepart charts the changing fortunes of the Cambodian peasant with Cambodia's modernisation in both lowland and upland regions. He examines geographical movements in Cambodia's agricultural population and analyses peasant security in the wake of the state sponsored ELCs. Alvin Lim uncovers the construction and deconstruction of the Cambodian political subject through the lens of recent political debates and controversies in Cambodia, providing insight into the varied experiences of political subjecthood under CPP rule. Following from the Wieczorek examines CPP interference within Phnom Penh's private sector, revealing contrasting experiences between well-connected tycoons and a majority of small-scale business owners. There has been growing encouragement for the role of the entrepreneur in developing Cambodia's economy, but there are still many challenges facing entrepreneurs and start-ups. Gea Wijers investigates

the role of state policies in improving prospects for Cambodian entrepreneurs. Finally, Suppya Nut shines a light on the Khmer Heritage Project, an institution for the preservation and transmission of knowledge of the traditional Royal Ballet of Cambodia, of which many records were lost during Cambodia's recent history.

References

We won't be able to fight this unless we unite, said the activist monk Venerable But Buntenh to a small but significant group of Areng Valley residents, gathered under the hot sun at the local temple. The monk had travelled to the remote valley with like-minded others in 2014, to show solidarity with local indigenous people fighting the proposed Cheay Areng Dam – one of the many controversial, elite-backed dam projects in Cambodia. Together, the villagers and their allies staged various acts of resistance. Large trees in the valley were ordained by monks with saffron cloth to highlight the importance and value of the forest now being threatened by the dam. A blockade of the local access road was also implemented so that trucks associated with the Chinese dam-building company could not enter the area. Such actions escalated the anti-dam struggle, which soon gained national and international attention. For example, one hundred and fifty thousand Facebook ‘likes’ appeared rapidly on the profile-page of the main NGO involved in the campaign, a local group called Mother Nature [Meada Tomechiet]; and countless visitors began arriving in the Areng Valley to show their support, including young middle-class Khmers and a Khmer-speaking foreigner and a defiant local indigenous soldier settler, and other speculators interested in the valley’s natural resources including wildlife traders and international conservation groups. This history means that although village life may seem unaffected at the outsider’s first glance, the valley is far from being a socially homogeneous rural idyll.

Nevertheless, the heart of the valley is remarkable, and it is from here that the anti-dam campaign emerged – specifically, in the two villages of Chumnoab and Prolay. Although remote, visiting these villages has always been relatively easy. Houses are lined along the road, the population is almost entirely indigenous, people are welcoming, and there used to be a sense of social harmony. It is entirely possible for outsiders to become enchanted with this place, and its inhabitants, who lead a life entirely connected with the river, the surrounding forest, and the valley’s resident spirits. No wonder this area has been the hub of the campaign; and indeed, it is where Alex Gonzalez-Davidson (of Mother Nature) landed in 2011, initially as an interpid Khmer-speaking visitor, on a bicycle. The place charmed and transformed him, and he in turn changed the village with the campaign against the dam that began slowly in 2012.

Villagers explained to me Alex’s role over the years, during my visit in 2015: “Alex made an impact upon the people here. He helped them to complain. He taught us about the impacts of hydro-power, and so we decided to protest ourselves”. In other words, Alex helped those local residents who silently opposed the dam (estimated by campaigners to be around two or three hundred people) to find their voice, and to discover the power of advocacy.

But not all local commentary was so kind, and not everyone was prepared to protest against the dam. This is because, as I indicated, the Areng is not homogenous, nor is it immune from the tentacles of the CPP apparatus, the party’s extractive interests, and the vagaries of village gossip. For example, at the northern tip of the valley lies an utterly remote indigenous village called Chumna. It was once described to me by an NGO colleague as “Divided, leaderless andSoutheast Asian”. A cloud hangs here, as local rivalries never resolved, and of poverty and vulnerability. Villagers are cautious towards outsiders in Chumna, and prepare for good reads, thinking no back-up. One’s survival in the face of short rations or illness hinges upon local reciprocity, patronage and kinship relationships, and the benevolence of the Village Chief. Indeed, the Chief sees the villagers as his children and grandchildren [goan, jom], who should behave accordingly. In context, it is clear that the concept of ‘advocacy’ [thoursumutek] is considered to be a dirty word.

I highlight these traditional Khmer and indigenous norms in the valley, because they have been deeply captured and manipulated by the CPP. There is a neat overlay between the state and local indigenous leadership, which makes anti-dam resistance contingent upon those who are prepared to rock the boat. This means challenging not just state authority, but also the prevailing social order. Indeed, one of the main problems faced by dissenters is that they are prepared to feel like they are not ‘right’ or they have crossed a moral line. This dynamic was painfully obvious in Prolay’s neighbouring village of Samraong, where the Village Chief is both a respected indigenous elder and an appointed CPP official (see photo). For this old man, who remembers the French colonial days, the CPP brought peace and stability to Cambodia, offering him a way to live as he perceives that there is a ‘right way’ to do things in the village. When asked about Mother Nature and the dam, then his reply was somewhat predictable: he said that the activists had made agrave error in not meeting with him, especially before their first gathering at the Prolay temple in 2013. This criticising failure could be echoed more generally by CPP compliant others across the valley, in comments like: “They [Mother Nature] don’t relate to the authorities. It’s not good. They take the young people to go and learn, and change their ideas”. For indigenous elders like the village chief, the weight of these conventions made it virtually impossible to consider a deliberative process over the dam. Or, as the old man said with a tragic glint in his eye: “I follow the government. I do what they say”. He chose not to elaborate on the pain of losing his homeland, the place of his birth some eighty years ago.

For the villages of Prolay and Chumnoab, this CPP co-option of traditional leadership has resulted in social divisions that now seem irreparable. For example, the wife of one of the campaign sympathisers in Chumnoab explained to me: “Life here is not like before. It’s complicated now. It’s like there are two groups in the village … and people don’t respect the new Commune Chief. This problem comes from the dam. Before we always shared with each other, and people listened to the old Commune Chief”.

Others also commented on the unravelling of village life, saying that it was hard to perform ceremonies and marriages in the village now, as the people were so divided. Everyone seemed to lament the loss of understanding between villagers, but there was no obvious solution. Instead there was a crisis in leadership, due to the new Commune Chief’s inability to maintain neutral or partial leadership. As one informant explained to me: “There are two roads, and the Commune Chief must choose: if he helps the people to stop the dam, then he is ‘wrong’ with the government law. If he helps the dam as we want, then he is ‘wrong’ with his people. Both ways are wrong”. The result has been a muted Commune Chief, falling into step with the CPP, and failing his people.

The result has been a muted Commune Chief, falling into step with the CPP, and failing his people. For the villages of Prolay and Chumnoab, this CPP co-option of traditional leadership has resulted in social divisions that now seem irreparable. For example, the wife of one of the campaign sympathisers in Chumnoab explained to me: “Life here is not like before. It’s complicated now. It’s like there are two groups in the village … and people don’t respect the new Commune Chief. This problem comes from the dam. Before we always shared with each other, and people listened to the old Commune Chief”. Others also commented on the unravelling of village life, saying that it was hard to perform ceremonies and marriages in the village now, as the people were so divided. Everyone seemed to lament the loss of understanding between villagers, but there was no obvious solution. Instead there was a crisis in leadership, due to the new Commune Chief’s inability to maintain neutral or partial leadership. As one informant explained to me: “There are two roads, and the Commune Chief must choose: if he helps the people to stop the dam, then he is ‘wrong’ with the government law. If he helps the dam as we want, then he is ‘wrong’ with his people. Both ways are wrong”. The result has been a muted Commune Chief, falling into step with the CPP, and failing his people.

Similar dynamics of confusion emerged around NGOs operating in the area at the time, often in association with the dam campaign. Some villages said that the NGOs came to operate in a political game: “to do what they wanted for their own benefit”. These accusations went hand-in-hand with rumours about how Mother Nature was supported by the opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). In fact, Alex and his movement were all “painted with that colour” [kpeu poah] if you associated with the anti-dam campaign, then you were presumed to be a CNRP supporter. Of course, Mother Nature campaigners denied that they had anything to do with party politics, but the paint stuck. For example, this meant a subtle exclusion from social and political life in the village.

Sarah Milne
Local politics and environmental struggle in Cambodia

For example, campaigners explained to me that they were no longer called by their leaders to attend village meetings: “They don’t call us because they’re scared that we’ll raise the issue of the dam”. Similarly, the dam campaigners were excluded from CPP-sponsored handouts in the village, such as those from the Cambodian Red Cross. Thus, the authorities conveyed a clear message to villagers: disobedience entails isolation and social risk.

While much of the local fall-out from the dam campaign seems like petty bickering, or an accidental crisis in local governance due to some misguided gossip, I was advised otherwise. As we debriefed on the Areng in 2015, my old colleague who had worked in the area for over a decade said: “They [the party] want Khmer people to be like that. It’s their strategy”. Indeed, I was also informed by campaigners in the valley that the local police were instructed by higher authorities to “paint” people with gossip, calling into question their behaviour and party affiliation, in order “to create conflict inside the community, to break them”. And so the workings of the CPP and its divisive politics came into view. It is apparently easy to divide people, especially when they are geographically isolated and vulnerable. Indeed the Venerable But Buntenh, leader of the Independent Monk Network for Social Justice, must have known what was coming when he spoke to the Areng gathering in 2014: “we won’t be able to fight this unless we unite”.

Divide and conquer?

But the CPP’s ability to trigger local divisiveness does not guarantee it victory over the anti-dam campaign. Faced with a very public and emotive struggle against the dam, and still dealing with its 2013 election shock, the CPP employed other strategies too. Primarily, these have involved graphical isolation and vulnerability. Indeed the Venerable But Buntenh, leader of the Independent Monk Network for Social Justice, must have known what was coming when he spoke to the Areng gathering in 2014: “we won’t be able to fight this unless we unite”.

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9  See note 5
The Cambodian People's Party (CPP), Cambodia’s long standing ruling party, has recently adopted a strategy of ratifying laws that increase their legal capability to intervene in civil society beyond what some believe to be amenable to a multi-party democracy. The recent ratification of The Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO) and the amended Law on Political Parties drew intense scrutiny from civil society opponents and the international community, the latter being directly addressed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for its contravention of international treaties safeguarding political rights that the Cambodian constitution is party to. This significant, if not belated, criticism from the mainstream international community warrants interest. However, there is also a domestic avenue of investigation with regard to what further power these laws provide to a party that has proved already capable of pursuing its domestic political interests through an informal patronal network within which the judiciary is subjugated.

LANGO WAS RATIFIED into practice on 1 January 2016. The law provides the state with a legal framework for controls and restrictions over the activities of all domestic and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate in Cambodia. LANGO provides a legal basis to deny registration, which is required for activities to be legal, on the basis of any activity that may “jeopardise peace, stability and public order or harm the national security, national unity, culture, and traditions of the Cambodian national society”, stipulating political neutrality specifically as a requisite for approval.1 This puts the legality of many organisations that the Cambodian state may find troublesome at risk. As part of its special consultative status to the 38th UN Human Rights Council, Human Rights Now stated “LANGO is inconsistent with Cambodia’s obligations under both international and domestic law, beginning with freedom of association.”

The amendments to the Law on Political Parties provide the state with a legal capacity to dissolve political parties. Of particular interest is Article 6, which deems unlawful any activity that affects the “security of the state”, sabotages the multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchist regime, or incites to “break up the national unity”; as well as Article 18, which bars from leadership positions those convicted of a “prison term of a felony or misdemeanor” unless the sentence was pardoned by the King. Furthermore, criteria for political parties are also introduced. In a similar fashion to LANGO, the Ministry of Interior has discretion of the exact strictness of what activities are criminalised; the criteria for political parties are also introduced. In a similar fashion to LANGO, the Ministry of Interior has discretion of the exact strictness of what activities are criminalised.

To grasp the full implications of these laws, further information around Cambodia’s legal system is forth-coming. Formally Cambodia has a continental style legal system with a separation of powers between executive, legislative and judicial branches and legal mandates that stem from a mixture of the 1993 constitution, legislation, government decrees and international treaties. This system, as with all legal systems, exists within a politised space.

The latest Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (2016) report found that the judicial system is subjugated by the executive branch, characterising judges as being paid to convict, liberticide, and the courts are unconstitutional in its implicit recognition of the diverting of the ‘vougar’ of the laws of the Kingdom of Cambodia.2

One of their interviewees, an anonymous Cambodian judge, added that officials “send their fixers who are connected to big people to the court to talk directly with judges and prosecutors.” On this arrangement another judge added that “maintaining one’s stance is difficult. For example, they used to help our interests. What can we do in such a case?”

The state of the law is of interest; Articles 8 and 31 of LANGO, for example, stipulate that the organisations subject to the law must file appeals through the court system if they are denied registration, suspended or deleted from the register. Concordantly, Articles 19 and 24 of the amended Law on Political Parties give proviso for dissolution or disapproval of registration of political activities by political parties that must also be appealed through the courts. With corruption seemingly imminent in the courts process, it is no wonder civil society organisations are fearful. Global Witness has suggested this enables the CPP to legally “pick and choose which groups can exist and criminalise those deemed to be trouble makers”. Yet, one must also acknowledge that the Cambodian government has been oppressive of opposition in this way for decades by arresting human rights and community activists and running unfair elections. When one considers that the strategy of oppressing civil society has been undertaken effectively through the courts without its formalisation in particularised laws, one could consider these laws as an extension of the CPP’s strategy, rather than a true departure, that comes in response to fears of its formalisation in particularised laws, one could consider these laws as an extension of the CPP’s strategy, rather than a true departure, that comes in response to fears of electoral unpopularity ahead of the 2018 elections. The trend from the 2013 elections, including the 2017 commune elections, show a steady decline in support for the CPP and a steady increase in support for the CNRP opposition party.

Case study: the Kem Sokha affair

To understand the nuances these laws bring to bear on Cambodia’s political landscape, it is interesting to assess their impact on one of Cambodia’s largest recent political scandals involving the current leader of the opposition CNRP Kem Sokha. In 2016, Kem Sokha, then deputy leader of the CNRP, was embroiled in a scandal following the leak of audio recordings supposed to contain defamatory remarks by Kem Sokha to an alleged mistress mon Mon Srey. The supposed affair subsequently evolved of Kem Sokha and Mon Srey’s permission, which is illegal and inadmissible as evidence, is not considered. We then have the curious case of Kem Sokha and ADHOC staff members being charged for leaking a witness statement, which stated not only is the audio tape inadmissible, but adultery is itself illegal in Cambodia. In fact Kem Sokha has political immunity due to his position in parliament, but has been criminally charged due to a clause in Cambodia’s legal system, which states that politicians who are caught in the act can be prosecuted concurrently with, but not as a result of, the act of having an affair, as the conversation was an audio recording. However, authorities state he was caught in the act of not arriving to the court proceedings on time of writing Kem Sokha has been arrested once more and formally charged for treason and collusion against ADHOC and Kem Sokha for allegedly offering her hush money to keep the affair under wraps.6 Following the complaint, the government also attacked ADHOC and deployed to question seven members of the human rights community, arresting four of them and a deputy member of the National Election Committee. In the end, Kem Sokha was given a Royal Pardon and was allowed to continue as CNRP leader, for a while. However, at the time of writing (Sept. 2017) Kem Sokha remains under investigation and formally charged for treason against the Kingdom of Cambodia.
they have acted pre-emptively to avoid “future headaches” by removing operating funds from Cambodian bank accounts. "The reason is simple: this new repressive law obliges all NGOs to share with the Ministry of Interiors information related to funds [...] which can then be used by the ministry to pressure donors into not supporting them ... which can then be used by removing operating funds from Cambodian bank accounts. They have acted pre-emptively to avoid “future headaches”.

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Cambodia is facing major challenges arising from its membership with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the new economic power-house established in 2015. The AEC, in promoting the free flow of financial and human capital within its boundaries, will have far-reaching impacts on the labour markets in and across its member states. To keep pace with other countries in the AEC, the Cambodian government has turned its attention to Higher Education (HE) development to promote economic growth. As higher education is emerging as a sector of national strategic importance, it acquires significant political involvement.

Heidi Dahles

CAMBODIA IS STRUGGLING to establish a feasible tertiary education sector, wearing the scars of the destruction of its entire education system during a decade of civil war in the 1970s and later, with the Paris Peace Accords in 1991 and the UN-led general elections in 1993, bilateral developmental assistance from multiple developed countries poured into Cambodia. Australian and US aid was used to build funding from donor countries focused on improving access to, and quality of, basic education. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were heavily reliant on bilateral educational assistance from developed countries, and as a result foreign dominance over higher education in Cambodia, a country once under French colonial rule, was the first to offer extensive assistance to Cambodian HEIs in a wide range of knowledge areas. However, this support came with conditions that the Cambodian HEIs, recipients such as the Institute of Technology of Cambodia were required to use French as the medium of instruction. Unsurprisingly though, French is not what the English language enjoys growing popularity among young Cambodians. The story goes that students happily apply for French scholarships only to enrol in English language programs upon receiving the funding. US academic institutions also stepped up their collaboration with Cambodian HEIs which eagerly adopted the American curriculum and programs of study.

Commercialisation in higher education

The Americanisation of the HE sector in Cambodia coincided with the establishment of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Education in the mid-1990s, which unleashed the privatisation of the sector, allowing public HEIs to charge tuition fees and for private HEIs to operate in the country. Overseas universities, foreign-based religious groups, private investors and international NGOs established themselves in Cambodia to compete for student enrolments. As a consequence, the Cambodian HE sector soon entered a phase of rapid, largely unregulated, expansion.

Currently, the Cambodian HE sector counts 39 public and 62 private HEIs with over 250,000 enrolments, only 15,000 of which in postgraduate degree programs. While all Cambodian HEIs deliver undergraduate programs, only a few have postgraduate programs. Consequently, enrolments in undergraduate programs have shown a sharp increase since 2010 while enrolments in postgraduate programs are stagnating. The growth in HE is most pronounced in the private sector where enrolments exceed public university enrolments at all degree levels. While the increase in the number of HEIs and enrolments appears impressive in view of the ‘scorched earth’, after decades of civil war and foreign occupation in the 1970s and 1980s, Cambodia – with a HE gross enrolment rate of about 13 per cent – still holds the lowest rate in the AEC.

The low participation rate, while concerning in itself, is a symptom of more severe issues smouldering under the surface and experienced in many of Cambodia’s HE enrolments. The most pressing issues – chronic lack of government funding, the absence of staff development and trivialisation of curricula – cast a shadow on Cambodia’s HE sector, while leading in terms of economic growth in the region, persistently fails to adequately nurture its HE sector! Public HEIs are grossly under-funded and hampered by centralized ministerial control. In 2013, the government’s total annual educational expenditure amounted to about 2 per cent of GDP while public higher education expenditure received only 0.1 per cent of GDP. A large portion of the HE budget is spent on staff remuneration, leaving hardly any funding for staff development, quality assurance, or improvement of educational infrastructure. For the latter, Cambodian public HEIs still depend on support from international partners and donors such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

Public HEIs have increasingly become dependent on student tuition fees as their major source of income, handing them direct competition with private institutions. Consequently, issues of quality and relevance continue to affect the sector. Efforts to raise enrolment numbers outweigh concerns with quality standards, notwithstanding government efforts – such as the establishment of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia in 2003 – to act as a quality assurance body and promote quality and higher HE. Most Cambodian public and private universities do not apply admission requirements beyond the results of the final national high school examinations. However, widespread corruption in the school system, where underpaid teachers are susceptible to payments from students in exchange for (passing) grades, does not provide the necessary push to hold quality standards.

The pressure of increasing student numbers in both public and private HEIs inevitably affects academic staff. Salaries in the public sector are by far the lowest in the region, less than USD 300 per month for a full-time university lecturer, insufficient for a family’s basic needs. Therefore, public university lecturers have to take on additional part-time teaching in private institutions to make ends meet. Research is virtually absent from Cambodian universities. Unsurprisingly, few academics hold doctoral degree from Cambodian universities. Those who do, find hardly any incentives to assume leadership positions in academia. Academic relevance, or the lack thereof, is also detrimental to the HE sector. Curriculum are established to meet the requirements and preferences of foreign donors or investors or, conversely, are dictated by commercial interests. The knowledge and skills provided in universities do not match the needs of the Cambodian labour market. Unemployment among Cambodian graduates is soaring! Responding to student demand, both public and private HEIs focus on commerce, economics and IT. Business Studies is the most popular program among Cambodian students as their expectation is that a business degree guarantees a well-paid job in an air-conditioned office. However, employment in these areas is saturated, while the labour market is in desperate need of qualified graduates in science, mathematics, agriculture and health.

From a lack of government funding, public univer- sities are unable to increase enrolments in science programs as the required facilities (equipment, laboratories and qualified staff) are insufficient to absorb more students.

Political predicament

Returning to the guiding question of why Cambodia, despite rapid economic growth, remains unable to lift its HE sector out of the vicious circle of underfunding, underperformance and underdevelopment? The short answer is: politics. The HE sector in Cambodia is an arena for the ruling party to bestow favours, reward ‘loyal’ contestants, and punish non-conformists. There is no autonomy of HEIs to govern themselves nor academic freedom to push the quality of education. Public academic institutions are under centralised control, including the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports and 11 other ministries and government agencies. The government has granted the status of Academic freedom to them with greater autonomy in academic and financial issues. However, the political parties and parent ministries are actively involved in making important decisions in the administration of these PMs, and public HEIs in general. Promotion to senior academic leadership positions is subject to party membership. There are myriad examples of highly qualified staff who have been demoted because they failed to pledge their allegiance to the ruling party. Furthermore, curricula and course content are scrutinised for subjects related to human rights, social justice, democracy, transparency and good governance, and critical debates are banned in Cambodian HEIs. Similarly, private HEIs are not exempt from party politics. An estimated 50 per cent of the private institutions are established by returnees from France, the United States, Canada and Australia.3 The role of returnees in Cambodian private HEIs’ life is controversial because, in the eyes of many Cambodians who lived through the terrors of the Pol Pot regime and the Vietnamese occupation, they either represent conservative forces attempting to re-establish traditional Khmer society or act as agents of foreign hegemonic interests. Most importantly, returnees are under suspicion of disloyalty to the ruling party because many support the opposition covertly, even overtly.

Behind the shimmering façade of Cambodia’s sustained GDP growth is a narrowing but persistent gap between the new middle classes and the urban and rural poor, a gap that is sustained by an education system that is in dire need of reform. Higher education, in particular, lags behind. Much of Cambodia’s educated workforce is commercially driven and fails to develop the support of a viable domestic economy. For the ASEAN common market to incentivise the Cambodian HEIs to catch up with standards in the region, it would also have to interfere with Cambodian politics, which, in view of the delicate power balance revolving around the unresolved South China Sea issue, is most unlikely.

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See note 3.


Political subjectivity in Cambodia

Subjection

Political theorists have long sought to explain subjectivation. I draw on the theory of subjectivation provided by Jacques Rancière because I find that his account of the engagement of power with the world of experience offers a rich and compelling explanation of how individuals are aware of their social and political condition, and how political subjects orientate themselves in relation to the dominant power structures in society. In Rancière’s theory the policing function of the polity goes beyond what we normally understand as the provision of security and services to enforce what he describes as the “distribution of the sensible”. This is “the general laws that fix the lines of sight, forms of speech, and estimations of a body’s capacity”.

In other words, the police control the phenomenal life of the people, constraining the individual members to adhere to the norms of speech and behavior, which in turn govern what can be seen, heard and experienced in the community. As he elaborates, the distribution of the sensible that is established by the police is “an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood and another is not”. This establishes “a single direction for the movement of society”.

The Cambodian government’s restriction of media coverage of the massive funeral procession, in July 2016, for the murdered government critic Kem Ley is a good example of an attempt to police the distribution of the sensible. Kem Ley, the former co-founder of the Grassroots Democracy Party, had a large following on social media, and just prior to his assassination had published a series of patrimonialist articles on the local media and the watchdog NGO Global Witness’ report Hostile Takeover, which revealed the extensive business interests of Cambodia’s business elite, are good examples of the politics of the community, those implicit decisions about who is included and in what way, as well as those judgments about what counts as voice or noise.

Through their participation in the funeral proceedings, of which the government’s escalating threats eventually led some of the funeral committee members to leave Cambodia, the Cambodian participants hence achieved a redistribution of the sensible, making visible what the government had wanted to keep invisible. If they had not already been political subjects their involvement in this act of disensus served as their subjectivation, transforming their civilian status into the political and economic elite of Cambodia.

Consensus and disensus

The mass participation in Kem Ley’s funeral proceedings remains an exceptional event of disensus. As Simon Springer points out, the adoption of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s following the adoption of the Paris Peace Accords saw the ruling regime coping with a redistribution of the sensible, making visible what previously went unseen. It operates, first and foremost, in the form of land concessions, monopolies, and other patrimonialist interests. Kem Ley, a social activist and founder of the Grassroots Democracy Party, had a large following on social media, and just prior to his assassination had published a series of patrimonialist articles on the local media and the watchdog NGO Global Witness’ report Hostile Takeover, which revealed the extensive business interests of Cambodia’s business elite, are good examples of the politics of the community, those implicit decisions about who is included and in what way, as well as those judgments about what counts as voice or noise.

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Relations between peasantry and state in contemporary Cambodia

Jean-Christophe Diepart

The lowland squeeze

Since the end of the 1990s the agricultural policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) have promoted an increase in rice production. The policies are based on the diagnosis that rice yields had consistently been low due to poor farmer skills, improper water management, and low use of fertilizers. It was furthermore recognized that any increases in production made in the past had been due to the introduction of high-yielding rice varieties. As a result, Cambodian agriculture policies encourage the use of modern, high-yielding varieties that were introduced to Cambodia in the 1990s as part of the Cambodian Agricultural Research Development Institute (CARDI), whose role in the selection, testing and reproduction of improved cultivars was key. CARDI is not the only player, however; a number of companies from other countries in the region are involved in selling hybrid varieties, including from Malaysia and China, and there seems to be fierce competition between these companies to control the export rice markets. Along with encouraging the use of high-yielding varieties, the government and its advisers of the ruling party and international advisers, triggered dramatic transformations in the rural landscape of Cambodia. The approaches of power between the peasantry and the state shifted with the re-emergence and consolidation of large-scale forest and fisheries concessions serving the centralization of power. In the early years of 2000, the modernization of agrarian systems imagined by the government, the advisers of the ruling party and international advisers, triggered dramatic transformations in the rural landscape of Cambodia. The approaches and impacts were furthermore geographically differentiated between the lowland central plain and the upland areas.

In the early eighties, after a decade of civil war and violence, and in the context of post-war reconstruction and international isolation, the Cambodian peasantry and state were faced with the overwhelming task of attaining food security and laying the foundations for agricultural development. Access to land was relatively equitable and smallholder farmers took center stage in these reconstruction efforts. Within a decade, resilient peasants managed to ensure a reasonable degree of food and land tenure security. However, in the nineties the balance of power between the peasantry and the state shifted with the re-emergence and consolidation of large-scale forest and fisheries concessions.

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The central state powers have been perfectly aware of this situation and have looked at it favourably. They were probably happy to see spontaneous migration taking place as these movements were helping to solve poverty issues in the central plains that the government was unable or unwilling to tackle. It also seems that migrant smallholder farmers have acted as the territorial spearhead of the state in helping to stabilize the peripheral margins of the country and consolidate the sovereignty of the state. The state has also relied heavily on smallholders to manage the agrarian expansion across the country and to endorse the responsibility in the production of cash crops that are vulnerable on the global markets (cassava, corn, soybean, etc.). However, the authorities have not publicized these movements because they have conveyed contradictions. Indeed, insofar as the Land Law forbade the acquisition of forestland (i.e., state public land) after 2001, these lowland-upland migration movements are completely at odds with the legal framework for land that authorities were supposed to implement. This has resulted in a huge population living on land that they appropriated after 2001, meaning they have virtually no land tenure security under the 2001 Land Law institutions.

Tensions in the uplands

In a parallel and uncoordinated process, the government has granted large tracts of land and forest as agro-industrial concessions of up to 10,000 ha, as so-called Economic Land Concessions (ELC). Recent data shows that 280 ELC projects have been granted so far, covering a total area of 2.3 million ha. This can be compared with the 3.5 million ha of land that is cultivated by smallholder farmers. The large-scale agricultural development model was expected to result in new types of investments in rural Cambodia, to stimulate agro-industrial activities requiring uplands. The phenomenon is not insignificant as it represents nearly twice the rural-to-urban migration rate (representing 51 percent versus 28 percent of the total number of migrants). To a large extent, these migrations can be seen as an expression of the agency of peasant households in responding to rural poverty in the lowland. They are also the expression of an on-going trend on the part of the Cambodian peasant to consider the principle of appropriation ‘by the plough’ as a legitimate mode of land acquisition, which has been a consistent trend throughout Cambodian agrarian history.

The emerging policy narrative favours a rebranded green revolution that highlights a climate-smart approach, and indicates that climate resilience efforts by government and donors alike would be best realized through the implementation of the rice intensification and export policy of the government. Obviously, this convergence serves the interests of government and development actors in a highly opportunistic way.

In terms of rice production and yield, the success of this neo-green revolution is undeniable. Over the last decade, the increase in total paddy production has been sustained and reached 9 million tonnes in 2012. In this context, however, access to land has become more competitive in the central plains. It has strengthened a process of land commoditization that neo-liberal land reform has exacerbated through the processes of land titling, micro-credit and land markets. The 2001 Land Law adds a legal constraint to agricultural development by limiting legal possession of land to agricultural plots cultivated before 2001. Due to demographic growth and land atomization, the destiny is, inevitably, land concentration. As of 2011, 47 percent of households had less than 1 ha of agricultural land while 12 percent had landholdings larger than 3 ha. The land squeeze in the central plains is coupled with labour constraints, whereby the secondary and tertiary sectors have a very limited capacity to absorb surplus labour from agriculture.

Population mobility: peasants versus state rationalities

As a result, a large number of people have been leaving their villages to find work elsewhere. Indeed, the increase in the mobility of the rural population has been significant in the recent development of Cambodia. According to the 2008 demographic census, 3,457,228 people were considered to be internal migrants (they had changed their area of residence inside Cambodia) – namely, 29 percent of the total population. In addition to rural-to-urban and cross-border migration – 1 million Cambodians are thought to live and work in Thailand – there is also strong evidence of rural-to-rural migration flows, essentially from the Cambodian central plains (the Tonlé Sap plain and Mekong delta) to the peripheral (forested) areas.
A critical journey from lowland to upland regions

critical investment that the state did not have, and to develop so-called ‘underutilized’ land. Rooted in a strong assumption that smallholders do not have the financial or technical capacity to succeed in small entrepreneurial agricultural development, the leaders and their advisors thought that large-scale investment would increase employment and make opportunities available to land workers, villagers and the poor. They also generate state revenue at national and sub-national levels. The theorem is essentially not very different from what was seen decades earlier in the forest and fisheries concessions model. ELCs represent an opportunity for the government of Cambodia to reinvigorate the very profitable tropical forest concession model that has often been the collapse of the forest and fisheries concessions in the 1990s. The opportunities for foreign investment that ELCs offer have also been seen as a political tool to engage Cambodia in ASEAN integration by allowing neighbouring countries (states and companies) to invest in the kingdom. In fact, current mechanisms of ELCs are variations of old policies of capitalist penetration associated with the capture of profits by ruling elites. The political economic context in which concessions are granted and monitored was put in place under French rule to serve the interest of the protectorate administration; it was reinvigorated in the post-war reconstruction period to serve the interest of emerging political elite. There is a broad consensus in Cambodia among NGOs and researchers that the process of authorizing and implementing ELCs shows clear deviations from the established legal and policy framework. Public consultations and implementing ELCs shows clear deviations from the legal apparatuses, a political transformation that has not compensated for the loss of resources that local people depend on. An even more pernicious effect of ELCs remake rural contexts in ways that lead to varying degrees of land dispossession of small-scale farmers and exacerbate the recourse to wage labour, which usually does not compensate for the loss of resources that local people depend on. An even more pernicious effect of the concession system is what some scholars have called neo-patrimonialism. In Cambodia, the elite have used natural resources to serve their private interests and to consolidate their power as part of neo-patrimonialism. It is understood that private investors pay approximately US$50 in informal fees for each hectare approved in an ELC agreement, an important proportion of which goes as unoffical payments to the ruling party and its officials. This revenue is not reinvested in social services and infrastructure in populated rural areas. In return, the people are expected to support the government through the electoral machine, which has secured acceptable levels of domestic and international legitimacy for the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP).

The decision by the Prime Minister to suspend the granting of ELCs and to issue Order 01 in May 2012 was the result of the convergence of a number of events at play at that moment. First, there was little doubt that the decision by the Prime Minister to announce Order 01 was motivated politically in a move to lessen social unrest one month before the remaining two months and one year ahead of the legislative election in July 2013. In addition to freezing the granting of ELCs, Order 01 initiated an unprecedented land titling campaign where the land rights of people and companies overlapped with state land, including ELCs, forest concessions, forest land and other types of state land. It also made possible the seizures of ELCs where companies had not complied with the existing legal procedure or with the contract, in particular by using paramilitary activities and/or leaving concession land unexploited.

The land titling process has been significant – more than 1 million ha – but has proven to be largely incomplete, and substantial areas claimed by people have been left untitled. This incompleteness of land titling in areas where people live and/or cultivate might give false legitimacy to the efforts of ELCs to evict people from the untitled land. Order 01 conveyed a strong political message to the people of Cambodia in general, and to the smallholders farmer of smallholder farmers in particular. The campaign was intrinsically associated with the person of the Prime Minister; as if the security of land tenure of smallholder farmers was handled by him personally. Current reforms in the systems are responses triggered by political imperatives rather than measures to tackle the incursional nature of the system.

Struggles and crisis: concluding remarks

While post-war re-construction efforts in the agricultural sector were mainly conducted by the strong and resilient peasantry, the balance of power between smallholder farmers, the state and the markets has shifted rapidly. Whereas peasants used to be close allies of the state, they have been abandoned by state policies and a vision that favours a large-scale entrepreneurial and export-market oriented model of development. In both lowland and upland regions of Cambodia, the modernization of the agrarian system has worked to shackle smallholder farmers to the wheels of domestic regional and global growth through neoliberal technological apparatuses, a political transformation that has turned them into inefficient and backward subjects, under the practices of monopolistic capitalism. The mainstream narrative in the political arena is that smallholder farmers do not really fit into the vision of modern agrarian landscapes.

The relations between the Cambodian peasantry and the state lie in an institutional crisis. As a matter of fact, most smallholder farmers continue to live and make ends meet, within and without areas impacted by ELCs. They manage to buffer the incomplete and uneven agrarian transition that the leaders want to accelerate. And the inevitable conflicts arising from this race against time are handled in a dynamic process that combines a calculus by authorities to retain social legitimacy to secure votes while reproducing its sovereign power on land. Surely the Cambodian peasantry deserves better than that.

Jean-Christophe Diepart has been based in Cambodia since 2002, where he is involved in research and development cooperation activities. His research examines processes of agrarian change with particular interest in the transformations of smallholder agriculture, land tenure management and labour circulation. Most of his current fieldwork focuses on land control strategies on the agricultural front of northwest Cambodia. He is scientific collaborator with Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, University of Liége, Belgium (jcdiepart@gmail.com).

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Below: Rubber plantation in upland Cambodia (Ratanak Kiri, 2010). Photo by Jean-Christophe Diepart.
Phnom Penh’s private sector comprises a relatively small number of wealthy tycoons, who run large and diversified business conglomerates, and a majority of small-scale shopkeepers and manufacturers. This dividing line between big and small business parallels a dividing line between the politically connected and bereft. The Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) has co-opted the country’s most lucrative economic sectors, and provides privileges and protection to tycoons active in these sectors in exchange for loyalty and financial contributions to the CPP. The majority of business owners, meanwhile, are deprived of political backing and instead cope with rent-seeking officials and other impediments to develop their businesses beyond the status of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME). This essay explores the nature of political interference in Phnom Penh’s private sector, revealing contrasting experiences between tycoons and SME owners in the context of Hun Sen’s highly exclusive development agenda.

Michel Verver

The politically connected

Mong Reththy is one of Cambodia’s foremost celebrity tycoons. His Mong Reththy Group holds a portfolio including rubber, palm oil and sugar cane plantations, a pig farm, a seaport, an import-export company and a construction firm. Although Mong Reththy claims he has never bought favours, he has been implicated in numerous business activities that suggest otherwise. In 1997, six tonnes of marijuana was found in a container at his port, after which officials affiliated with FUNCINPEC – Prince Ranariddh’s party with whom the CPP formed an unstable coalition at the time – planned to arrest Mong Reththy. The tycoon denied the allegations, and Hun Sen recommended anyone trying to arrest Mong Reththy to better wear “steel on your head”. According to a 2007 report by international watchdog Global Witness, the seaport – also known in Phnom Penh as Cambodia’s ‘official unofficial port’ – has indeed been used for smuggling. The report claims that Brigade 70, an elite military unit that is essentially Hun Sen’s private army, exports illegally logged timber via Mong Reththy’s port. In response to the report Mong Reththy lamented: “It’s like the other allegations against your head”.3 According to a 2007 report by international development. For me, the schools and the hospitals, Reththy lamented: “It’s like the other allegations against your head”.3 According to a 2007 report by international

In 1994, the title was re-introduced to honour business people making contributions in excess of $100,000 to development projects. Formally, the King awards the title. In practice, however, the CPP leadership identifies candidates, while the King rubber-stamps the CPP’s requests.

There are competing narratives of how the okhna went from rags to riches. Asked about their lives, tycoons like Mong Reththy’s operate typically argue that the hardship of the 1970s taught them diligence and humility. Mong Reththy cherishes his worn-out sandals from the Khmer Rouge era as a reminder of past hardship,8 while his parents, who moved to Thailand and Vietnam in the 1980s, ran brothels and smuggled in drugs, cigarettes and liquor. According to some, former CPP President Chea Sim made an informal deal with the emerging business elite in the early 1990s, promising them access to Cambodia’s riches in exchange for allegiance to the CPP. Ever since, it seems that once the okhna have attained a favourable position vis-à-vis the CPP and especially when they manage to forge a direct link to Hun Sen, they are given carte blanche to venture into realms of economic and political power. Mong Reththy’s company did not skyrocket in the early 1990s because he managed to create a thriving import-export company from a mere $1000 in savings, as he claims,9 but because he acquired public contracts to build government buildings, schools and hospitals, a license to establish a port, and land concessions to develop plantations. This led one critical interviewee, himself a small-scale business owner, to mock Mong Reththy’s official biography titled The Golden Path of Mong Reththy: “This path was laid by others, he didn’t make it golden himself. He may have struggled when he was young, but his struggle is not his business success. The okhnas are not brilliant business people. Connections are more important for success than any good idea or business plan. It’s about business people and politicians together deciding how they are going to make the money”.10

The political system has become the most tangible manifestation of the elite pact.”11 The okhna receive ELCs, valuable urban property, import monopolies for foreign brands, public contracts and licences to operate Special Economic Zones, all of which require the favour of particular ministers, majors, governors or other CPP officials. Moreover, CPP protection facilitates illicit activities such as logging, sand dredging and tax evasion, and military connections are employed to chase the poor – many of whom do not have land titles because the Khmer Rouge destroyed documents – off concessional land. In return, the okhna bankroll the CPP coffers and provide company shares and under-the-table money to individual top-officials. This collusion of business and state interests and the exclusive regime it has brought about, as the next section suggests, goes hand in hand with impediments for small businesses.

The politically bereft

The likes of Mong Reththy have amassed wealth by virtue of their CPP patronage, the politically bereft create opportunities outside those niches co-opted by the elite, and hence venture into small-scale production, retail and services. SMEs producing foodstuff or other consumer goods, for example, are relatively free from state interference, so their profits can be enjoyed in the absence of CPP rents.
In production you don’t need connections much. We pay 500 or 600 dollars to a pharmacist whose success attracted an increasing intervention and hence higher costs. He gave an example of official requirements to start a business, there are a lot of statements; if you lost money, it’s not like they are going to exempt you from paying tax. So, a lot of business people pay a lump sum, meaning that tax officials estimate the appropriate tax, essentially bargaining the amount with business owners when they visit. According to one businessman: “when you pay 2000$, you get a receipt that says 550$. The person who handles your account will get some of [the $1500 difference], but at least half of it would go to the big guy in the tax department.” Attempts by the government to transition from this ‘estimated regime’ (tax through a lump sum) to a ‘real regime’ through registered turnover has not been very successful. While some blame this on non-compliance among SMEs, business owners themselves posit a different argument: “business people take the most profitable route possible, otherwise someone else does it. I want to pay full tax, it would improve education etcetera, but my competitor doesn’t, I can’t”. Another one adds: “the government is starting to collect more tax, but companies actually have to pay bribes to pay tax. The official wants some extra if you come to register [for the real regime]. Besides, they don’t accept your financial statements; if you lost money, it’s not like they are going to exempt you from paying tax. So, a lot of business people moved back [to the estimated regime].” The underlying problem, of course, is that officials depend on bribes to top up their low salaries. Roughly, while higher-level officials make money via ‘proxy’ tyrants, who are thereby exempt from interference by lower-level officials, the latter supplement their meagre salaries with informal payments from the lower strata of the private sector. A younger generation entrepreneur relates: “When we opened [our business] and had not even started yet, so many different officials were coming in. ‘You need to have this, you need to have that’. Outside the official requirements to start a business, there are a lot of unseen inspections and licences that we had never heard of.” According to one interviewee, a business consultant and member of the Council of Ministers, Cambodia’s development operates according to a ‘dis-economy of scale’; business expansion begets greater government intervention and hence higher costs. He gave an example of a pharmacist whose success attracted an increasing number of government officials asking for licences, tax accounts, including ‘sanitation fees’ and other payments seemingly unrelated to his line of business. Ultimately, the pharmacist created a couple of smaller stores under the name Long Family, members of which helped distribute his customers, and closed his big store. He could now say to officials: “look at my size, I don’t have the money to pay you that much.”

Exclusive development writ large There is thus a clear dividing line between big and small business in Phnom Penh, which largely parallels a dividing line between the politically connected and bereft. Big businesses benefit from political connections by way of protection and privileges, and hence are concentrated in those niches that depend on CPP patronage, including the exploitation of natural resources and land concessions, import monopolies, real estate, public contracts and channeling foreign investment. In contrast, SME owners are hampered by the lack of political connections and therefore from political patronage and power, and are often forced to sell out to foreign interests. The political establishment is divided into the political elite and a non-political翎, with the latter being more connected and secure from eviction from the political firmament, while the former continues to benefit from elite rents.
The rise of the Cambodian entrepreneur?

Gea Wijers

Above: WeCreate Cambodia celebrates the official handing over to their local partner, who will continue to develop and expand the Centre programming for women. Photo: courtesy of the U.S. Embassy on Flickr.

The traditional Cambodian patronage system continues to co-exist with economic modernization. The persistent pervasiveness of the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) in all sectors of society makes genuine societal transformation questionable. Current observations even suggest that the reciprocal ties between the state, the private sector and political parties have strengthened. To explore the paradox of CPP-led conservatism as a dynamic entangled with CPP-led modernization, this article discusses the ways in which the Cambodian government facilitates start-up entrepreneurial ventures in the internet sector.

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The Khmer Dance Project

In the wake of Cambodia’s troubled recent history, the issue of transmitting knowledge in all its forms is vital for the country’s reconstruction. In 2008, the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), which supports research and teaching of the social sciences, arts and humanities of Cambodia, initiated the Khmer Dance Project (KDP) to document court dance traditions. The overall aim is to reach out to both Khmer people and specialised researchers. For this reason, original KDP materials are handed over to the library of the CKS in Siem Reap and Bophana Centre in Phnom Penh, the only free-access institution that holds audiovisual documents on Cambodia (video, audio, photographs).1

Suppaya Hélène Nut

Past and present
During the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), the country’s entire population was sent to the countryside to do hard labour on farms and in forests. It was a relentless regime; a violent intrusion of a totalitarian state into people’s lives. Like all forms of Cambodian culture, the Royal Ballet was banned during that time. The hardship, loss and terror was shared by all the people, but artists of the Royal Ballet were among those particularly hard hit because of their ties to the Royal Court. After the collapse of the regime in 1979, only ten percent of these artists had survived. The trauma to the population as a whole was immense, with more than one million people killed or disappeared, out of a population of eight million.

The sentiment of loss ignited the will of survivors to reconstitute the forms of knowledge and repertoire of court dance. The writer Amitav Ghosh, during a visit to Cambodia, wrote, “Cambodia no longer enjoyed the ‘protection of international isolation’ and the economic ‘freedoms’ of the 1990s regarded by some as a panacea of better times introduced new social pressures that impacted negatively on the performing arts.” 1 In 1994, the Suramarit Theater, the only well-equipped performance venue, went up in flames and was later sold to a private company. In 2004, the campus of the Royal University of Fine Arts suffered the same fate, and was moved out of the center of the capital Phnom Penh. Many of its faculty and students have since deserted the far-away facilties, resulting in the slow decay of what was, since 1964, the main government-sponsored program for transmitting the traditions of court dance.

The Khmer Dance Project
I was asked to conduct this project, being myself a former dancer and a scholar working on the subject for many years. The task of reviving the traditions of court dance has advanced remarkably since the 1980s, thanks to the support of the Rockefeller Mentorship program established by the Asian Cultural Council. Nevertheless, the community of artists always remained in the shadows; my intention was to give voice to the entire community, comprising three generations of dancers, musicians, writers, singers, as well as embroiderers. Through interviews, I tried to capture the elusive site of memory, which lies in the body and psyche of every artist. Toni Shapiro, a scholar who spent several years studying this community in the refugee camps and inside Cambodia, pointed out that: “When a culture is destroyed, as it was in Cambodia, dancers and dancing bodies remain as the sole archives of dance tradition”. As a Khmer educated in Khmer culture and trained in classical dance in Paris by exiled teachers, I was in familiar surroundings. My ability to speak the Khmer language, but also knowledge of the peripheralattitudes, the language codes, characterized by Bourdieu as “cultural capital”, were particular assets when conducting interviews. To keep a sense of authenticity, the testimonies have been only minimially edited to ‘clean’ external interruptions, noises, and other irrelevant footage, as they are a ‘story-telling’ process and as such, involve pauses, repetitions, and a non-linear approach to narration.

The work took place primarily in Cambodia and included three phases (2008, 2009, 2010) of interviews and filming: elderly masters, middle-aged teachers and young dancers. The project was to connect a face to a name, a personality to a voice, a person to a story. The face-to-face allowed each artist to intertwine different narrations, an access to her or his own story, of court life, of Queen Kossoomak (King Sihanom’s grandmother) the patron of court dance, and of collective life in the 1950s and 1960s. In an interview with Ben Sama Deuk Chho, in her 70s, recalled her life as an artist at court; she was a singer and dresser for the troupe, and the last female to dance the ‘monkey role’.

She came from a generation of artists like her mother Deuk Por, a dance teacher who choreographed pieces of ballet. Another interview featured Pou Soong Chheng, a lead dancer of the monkey role in the 1960s, who spoke with emotion about his last moments spent with Queen Kossoomak in exile in Beijing. These fragments of life assembled back-to-back, finally provide a vivid picture of a community, of a period, and of a singular place (the palace and its surroundings). In addition to interviews, several hours of film were dedicated to interviews with Meas Hun, Sun Sovannrong, interviewed by Princess Norodom Buppha Devi, including their different phases of reconstitution.

All interviews are catalogued, and both films and transcripts are time-coded, making it possible to locate specific passages with minimum effort. The collection is supported by a comprehensive database, which contains an index of the interviews and details of the interviewees and their life stories. Thanks to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. In order to offer wide access to this material, especially all of KDP’s original interviews, English subtitles have been provided. The database collected during three years of field research is a pioneering achievement due to the sheer scope of media gathered: written documents, videos, photos and interviews.

To date, the Khmer Dance Project contains 46 interviews, nine performances and rehearsals, including two ritual ceremonies and two on costumes and props. The New York Public Library offers streaming video of all these recordings free of charge through its Digital Collections at digalcollections.nypl.org/dancevideo. I express my thanks for the splendid photos taken by Anders Jiras, who has been documenting the Cambodian performing arts for more than a decade (www.jiras.se).

Suppaya Hélène Nut is a Adjunct Lecturer in Khmer literature and performing arts of Southeast Asia at the Institute for Cultural Studies, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and a research fellow at the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research interest is in the politics of Cambodian dance performance in Southeast Asia at the Paris Diderot University (Paris 7) and at Colombia University. She continues her research on the court theatre of Cambodia and especially on the recent repertoire choreographed by Princess Norodom Buppha Devi. In parallel she investigates Cambodian elites during the colonial and independence periods with a focus on women’s networks (suppya0@gmail.com).

References
1. This project was funded by a grant from the Anne Hendricks Bass Foundation in partnership with the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, home to the world’s most comprehensive collection of dance material. The project owes much to the personal involvement of CKS Founding Director and IAAS Director Philippe Puycau, Patron of the Arts Anne Hendricks Bass, and Princess Norodom Buppha Devi. The Focus | 43
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Humans across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World

IN 2016, IIAS announced its new programme ‘Humans across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World’. Now that the programme’s framework is fully in place and activities have started, we would like to provide you with an update about the developments at various levels of activities on research and education, on programmatic events and tangible outcomes, and at the level of the collaborative network. The programme runs from 2017-2020 and is co-funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the twenty-two partner institutes in Asia, Africa, Europe and the USA.

Revisiting ‘the Workshop Idea’ in Mandalay

THE WORKSHOP Re-imagining the civic role of the University, held on 25-26 July 2017 at Mandalay University (Myanmar), was the first attempt at exploring ‘the workshop idea’ as a space of learning in the context of the Humanities across Borders programme. The account below shares insights into its theoretical background and in-situ practical workings.

Aarti Kawala, Academic Director

In an experiment on teaching methods in the social sciences in the mid 1950’s, Schenken wrote in the Journal of Higher Education, “...we must get away from the idea that there are experts and non-experts”. He was making a case for ‘the workshop idea’ over ‘pure lectures’ during a summer session of Depression held in the city of Leiden in 1952. The workshop brought together participants from 16 countries in Asia, Africa and North America to share opinions and experiences on a common platform with respect to the boundary-crossing topic ‘Eastern and Western World’. Sound familiar?

Using ‘the workshop’ as a site for interrogating and unpacking hardened concepts and pedagogies in the social sciences and humanities is not new. What is special is that curricular experiments took place in Leiden more than sixty years ago in a spirited collaborative exchange across borders. In this piece, I will share how we, at IIAS, have been exploring the idea of the workshop as a space of learning and doing in an open atmosphere, fostering several levels of interaction in an atmosphere of mutual sharing and understanding.

Initiated under the IAS programme Rethinking Asian Studies (2013-2016; funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), and now ongoing as Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World (2017-2020), our methodological and pedagogical explorations draw upon the university’s self-appointed role as a ‘midwife ... of the next generation’ ... to re-imagine its boundaries as being dynamic and porous to wider societal exchange. The global terrain of higher education is uneven. Countries of the South have for long looked towards scholarship and research trends emerging from the West. Prevailing curricula are far removed from local and national realities; and pedagogies within the classroom, seminar and field site, however sensitively designed as spaces of learning, nevertheless spiral down to subtly reproduce pervasive hierarchies and deeply entrenched gender biases in the actual face-to-face encounter. In what ways can we bring the everyday context of our socio-cultural and political lives to the forefront even as we inculcate disciplinary (or trans-disciplinary) thinking in educational practice?

Deploying the workshop idea in Myanmar

The workshop titled Re-imagining the civic role of the University held on 25-26 July at Mandalay University, was our first attempt at exploring the workshop idea in the context of the Humanities across Borders programme at IIAS. François Vergès, advisor to the Mandalay programme, and I had already worked together within IIAS’ existing collaborative pedagogical formats of the Summer School and the in-situ, interactive multi-stakeholder D Roundtable. We were able to not only draw upon IIAS’ model of the Roundtable but also upon François’ experiments with L’Atelier at the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (FMSh) in Paris and my own curricular and co-curricular explorations with young adults at the School of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India in Chennai.

The workshop idea in Mandalay to a Buckminster Fullerian idea has not been possible without the anchoring vision of Thariphy Than of Northern Illinois University and the openness of Thidar Htwe Win of Mandalay University. They grounded us in the realities of present day Myanmar, so that we were all the while conscious of the subtle hierarchies defined by nationality, language, gender, discipline and institution in the course of the two days.

Myanmar universities are now in the throes of re-calibrating their mandate in society to define the public role of members of its faculty. Charged for mechanically reproducing rigid, militarised curricula promoting national values and state development goals disconnected from local realities, universities in Myanmar are experiencing large-scale educational reform. According to Thariphy, “Universities in Myanmar have undergone a depoliticizing process for more than two generations. Politics has been taken out of textbooks, classroom discussions, lectures and political activities banned on campuses. Physical symbols of students’ activism such as union buildings have long been demolished as well. In this context it is an understatement to say that our goal to help re-imagine the civic role of universities in Myanmar is daunting.” But we had the wholehearted support of the pro-rector and rector of Mandalay University who co-hosted the event on their campus as part of the new national educational policy in the post-socialist militaristic era, following the election of the National League for Democracy. Indeed, according to anthropologist and workshop participant Gustaf Houtman, Mandalay University opened its doors to him only last year in 2016, even though he has been working in Burma for the past 40 years.

Aim

The workshop was an occasion for mobilising local initiatives as part of our shared goal of catalysing university-society linkages. We wanted curricula to be infused by ideas and values that are not just impacted by state-driven national policies or by prescriptive ‘training’ models conducted by visiting faculty from foreign universities. It was the first time that Mandalay University hosted an event at which a diversity of civic agents could sit together with academics to discuss matters of curricula and pedagogies around common concerns pertaining to gender inequality, freedom of expression, land-use and educational reforms in Myanmar. Writers, poets, cartoonists, artists, gender and feminist organisations such as Rainfall, Gender Equality Network (GEN), Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation (MWAF), the YWCA, YMCA minority leaders, human rights defenders (including members of Pen, the largest freedom of expression group of poets and writers in Myanmar), a retired doctor practicing traditional medicine, and private schools located in conflict areas, not only invigorated the discussions but also helped further problematise our workshop process. The workshop gave space to a diverse range of opinions in an atmosphere of open exchange of ideas at an unlikely venue, i.e., the University.

Setting the stage

Spatial arrangement was a matter of special attention for us if the workshop was to nurture free interaction. We chose the horseshoe setup (chairs only, no desk) to accommodate an expanding number of participants and to consciously shift from the frontal proscenium stage setting more conducive for one-way lectures. A long conversation table in the centre was used as a prop to display a number of familiar household objects and food including bananas and traditional snacks so that participants could bring in other items. It was important to share our own moments of trial and uncertainty and to provide some very concrete examples of how we had sought to question our pedagogical practices both inside and outside the classroom and to stress the point that it was more than just an issue of out-dated curricula.
a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education across borders. These activities are carried out in the framework of fourteen projects, focusing on such themes as food, embodied practices, voices of dissent, language, memory and migration, in all their dynamic articulations in the world.

Developing the programme's framework

The lead partner institutes as well as the regional Principal Investigators (PIs) were identified in 2016. After that, the programme's framework was set up in close collaboration with the PIs. Between November 2016 and January 2017, four meetings were organised (in Leiden, Amsterdam, Delhi and Yangon) for the PIs to meet their regional colleagues and the HalP Project Team in person, to discuss the blueprint of the grant proposal and to explore working in a cross-border and collaborative setting. These workshop-like meetings helped transform tentative plans on research and education into concrete, workable projects.

Kick-off meeting in Chiang Mai

An intensive four-day assembly was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, organised in close cooperation with and co-funded by Chiang Mai University (CMU). It gathered seventeen Principal Investigators from all involved regions, the programme's advisors Carol Gluck and Françoise Vergès, and the full HalP Project Team.

Deconstructing meaning

Using a combination of group work and presentations, the first day was an attempt to unlock, unpack and unload received blanket terms and macro concepts and to “make the unfamiliar, familiar and the familiar, unfamiliar.” The aim was to animate existing tools of social discourse with new meanings by re-situating them in different contexts. Five sub-groups took up five separate words in Burmese to discuss and analyse among themselves and to later share with the rest of the group.

Tharapah had already begun thinking of many different contexts and meanings of the term ‘civic’ in everyday and classroom contexts in Myanmar. “I realised the Burmese word we have is derived from Pali and all civic duties are unfamiliar.” The aim was to animate existing tools of social discourse with new meanings by re-situating them in different contexts. Five sub-groups took up five separate words in Burmese to discuss and analyse among themselves and to later share with the rest of the group. Tharapah had already begun thinking of the many different contexts and meanings of the term ‘civic’ in everyday and classroom contexts in Myanmar. “I realised the Burmese word we have is derived from Pali and all civic duties are unfamiliar.”

Alternative pedagogies

The next day was reserved for some presentations and discussions on alternative pedagogies from local partners and invites. The ‘photo voice’ project of the Anthropology department of Mandalay University and Cornell University discussed how to use the photograph as a story telling device in fieldwork among women farmers in Upper Myanmar. The presentation of street photographs from the portfolio of famous photographer Nyein Chan Sein Lann elicited a variety of conflicting opinions particularly from the feminist group Rainfall. The discussion that ensued, we later agreed, was the highlight, indeed, a moment of critical self-reflection for all of us at the workshop.

The feedback (mostly in Burmese) we received was mostly encouraging although some did comment that we had not been able to complete all that we had set out to do or said we would do. This was in fact quite true. I share some of these comments for the benefit of those not present, but also as a way to keep the conversation ongoing.

Feedback #1

Lessons Learnt:
- While doing research, it is more important to observe what is happening rather than focusing upon the result or the answer.
- Remember to compare from a global rather than a national perspective alone.
- To think of a problem in many different ways as possible.
- To take an object near (and familiar) to oneself in order to think and teach or learn from the different perspectives it throws up.

Suggestions

Students and teachers are worried about what to do after university life. That is why it would be better to have courses like ‘after university life’ or do you have any other suggestions?

This is still a gap of knowledge to fill about gender among teachers (female).

This meeting was a quintessential step in the eventual cross-border exchange and collaboration between the various individuals and their projects. During this meeting, the PIs presented the first version of their project plans. From the discussions, important common methodological requirements where phrased and comparative themes were identified. An important part of this meeting was a day visit to the CMU ‘sites of social engagement’, an important requirement for all programmatic research and educational projects. One of the outcomes of this meeting was the insight that in some cases the regional platform structure was not conducive to the programme’s objectives. As a result, some of the PIs decided to move forward in a closer collaboration with project teams in other regions, depending on their thematic focus.

Connected Universities’ roundtable

A further meeting was organised in order to get the various institutes actively engaged in the programme. It took place during the tenth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 10) from 20-23 July in Chiang Mai, Thailand, offering a first opportunity for university officials to meet and develop a shared vision on the Humanities across Borders consortium. The roundtable discussion, entitled ‘Connected Universities, Engaged Curricula’, was attended by 22 official representatives of partner universities and 14 research team members. The meeting included break-away sessions on the themes of ranking, internationalisation, social engagement and internal dynamics, and a final plenary discussion resulted in several recommendations. A follow-up gathering to define how the partners in the consortium could concretely contribute to their shared agenda is envisioned for 2018.

The Humanities across Borders Blog

From the onset of the programme, the HalP Project Team and the Principal Investigators have deliberated about ways to facilitate the communication between partners about the developments of their respective projects. In order to share relevant documents and outputs, various means were tested. As a result of this process the HalP team developed an online blog with the support of a newly appointed content manager, who is currently assembling all the information about the people, the projects and the consortium. This blog will include the communication between the PIs as well as an overview of the relevant activities. Initially, this blog will be developed in a closed environment; it will become public when it is fully operational.

www.iias.asia/research/humanities-across-borders-asia-africa-world

References


Below: Mandalay workshop participants.
THE "SOUTH EAST ASIA JUNCTION" (or SEA Junction for short) is considered not only an art exhibition space, but also a library, a gallery with the goal of fostering understanding and appreciation of Southeast Asia, from arts and crafts to economy, politics or development. As a space, SEA Junction provides knowledge resources and promotes exchanges among students, specialists, and the general public. SEA Junction opened its doors on 15 May 2016 in the Bangkok Arts and Culture Center (BACC) in the Siam area of downtown Bangkok. The BACC holds a strategic location close to major universities with Southeast Asian interests and is easily accessible to the general public and visitors.

The physical space is an open library or ‘reading room’ containing books in English and regional languages; work stations also let visitors use online resources. The space is not all books: arts and crafts from around the region decorate the space and show visitors some of its cultural richness, from paper mâché figures from the Philippines and Burma to the paintings of emerging regional artists.

Making resources available is the first priority of SEA Junction; an ‘intellectual salon’ open to all, where people need not pay to visit. Anyone can come in for a cup of coffee or tea, take a look at the books, browse art objects, and participate in activities such as lectures and workshops. Staff and volunteers operate the reading room six days a week. So far, the library features more than 1300 books, most of which have been catalogued, in addition to a searchable e-library including sources in PDF format for downloading. SEA Junction maintains an online presence through its website, www.seajunction.org, which also provides a space for photographic essays and opinion pieces. Through the website, Facebook, and Twitter, SEA Junction gathers and shares information on conferences, courses, and fellowships of interest to academics and practitioners. Underlying SEA Junction is the idea of networking: both for the users and for the people who share their knowledge and experience through lectures, books or other modes of communication. This is a space for all kinds of people to make personal contacts, whether they be artists, intellectuals or representatives of groups and organizations, from the region itself or elsewhere.

A great priority of SEA Junction is events; from photographic exhibitions to panel discussions, to show the richness of the region and also the challenges it faces. SEA Junction is thus neither wholly about arts and culture, nor about development, politics or economics. Being in Bangkok provides a good base for networking with Southeast Asia for exchanges among people from the region and beyond. Music performances and film showings have profiled emerging talent; activities are in use in cooperation with practitioners from the region, while Southeast Asia-related events have featured both ASEAN-wide phenomena, such as migration, medical tourism and human rights, and country-specific events that would normally be too small to fit the centers in other home countries. The larger meeting spaces of the BACC also allow SEA Junction to offer more formal programs, including meetings, seminars, lectures and large exhibitions.

In the last year alone, SEA Junction has held public lectures, including ‘In Search of Social Justice along the Myanmar and China Oil and Gas Pipeline’, ‘Chinese Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Blessing for All?’, ‘LGBT Rights Under Siege in Indonesia’. Photo exhibitions have included ‘Harsh Life on Shore: Migrant Workers in the Thai Fishing Industry’, ‘Facing Trance in Indonesia’. For music, there were angklung classes and a concert of the Bang Khun Thai music band. One of the documentary screenings was of ‘Pulau Buru: Tanah Air Beta/Buru Island: My Homeland’, and involved talks by director Rahung Nasution and producer Whisnu Yonar. Other events include potluck parties, mini book fairs, and book launches, while still others fall under the rubric of ‘outreach’, such as classes for students. Recently a group from a nursing school in Indonesia came and gave a class on the impact of regional integration on health.

Behind SEA Junction stands the anthropologist and international development specialist, Dr. Rosalba Sciorinto, or ‘Lia’, who has lived and worked in the region for the past twenty-five years. Before starting SEA Junction, Lia worked extensively in the foundation and development world, including as regional director for Asia at the Rockefeller Foundation in Thailand, the International Development Research Centre in Singapore, Senior Advisor to AusAID in Indonesia, and as a Ford Foundation officer in Indonesia and the Philippines. She has held managerial positions for projects through the Canadian and Australian governments, when she worked on issues of health and migration. More recently, she has been teaching as an associate professor at the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) at Mahidol University in Bangkok, and is also a visiting professor for the Master Course in International Development at Chulalongkorn University, also in Bangkok. During her work and decades-long presence in Southeast Asia, Lia has seen the need for a cultural center for the region. She has observed how those centers that do exist are inside universities, and so are usually not open to the general public. “Through my years working with the Ford Foundation, IDRC and the Rockefeller Foundation and the many programs to better understand and address emerging challenges in the region, I felt there was a gap between the academic centers of the region and Southeast Asian regional and government agencies and civil society groups and the distribution to intended beneficiaries. A lot of Southeast Asia cultural expression that was threatened by nationalism and censorship, was not shared widely among the general public. Therefore, we decided to give form to our shared passion for the region.”

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Reflecting Lia’s own interests and networks, many of the events have focused on Indonesia, providing a rare opportunity for people in the Bangkok area and the rest of Mainland Southeast Asia to be exposed to their island neighbors. At the same time, Lia is very much interested in expanding coverage of the region’s events, and is always looking for experts and practitioners both from inside and outside the region for events. Lia, her staff, and all the founding partners of SEA Junction are looking forward to welcoming everyone to come and visit, make use of the library and other resources, take part in events, consider holding a lecture or workshop, or contribute to its running and activities. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Lia directly.

Patrick McCormick has held positions at the University of Zurich and the École française d’Extrême-Orient in Yangon. He is currently an independent researcher based in Yangon (mccormick.yangon@gmail.com). SEA Junction can be reached through www.seajunction.org and southeastasiajunction@gmail.com
Symposium report: Between stories and storytelling in the Indonesian archipelago

Clara Brakel and Tom Hoogervorst

The following presentation, by Victoria Clara van Groenendaal, called attention to a key collection of Central Javanese wayang tales and objects, assembled in the early twentieth century by H.J.L. Moens and currently kept in Leiden. Carnivased by colourful illustrations found in some of these manuscripts, the presentation concluded with a plea to continue and expand the preservation of paper-based artwork. Jauza Gieting provided an insider's view on North Sumatran storytelling – interfaced with sung Karo poetry. Focusing on a unique, square-shaped tree bark manuscript belonging to the KitLV collection, his presentation dealt with the刚好935 inauguration of a local ruler known as Sibayak Lingga. Interestingly, it turned out that the colonial state – rather than an ancient local kingdom – was involved to authorize his newly acquired position. Marije Plomp, subject librarian for South & Southeast Asian Studies, briefly introduced Leiden's Asia Collections and conducted a tour through the new Asian Library. Several manuscripts relevant to the presentations of the symposium were put on display for the occasion.

Performances and society

The second day, which took place at the Volkenkunde Museum, pivoted around the close links between practices of storytelling and social or political institutions. Ane van Engenhoven and Nazarudin demonstrated in the context of Kisar (Southwest Maluku) how local narrative histories can be studied in larger historical contexts, moving beyond the study of oral traditions simply for the sake of it. A similar case was made by Joachim Niell. Focusing on serialized stories in colonial-era newspapers, he argued that beyond popular entertainment – storytelling in print served to familiarize readers with events and developments in the wider world.

Traditional storytelling practices often shape and renegotiate power relations. This point was eloquently expressed by Johann Angeler in his presentation on founding rituals in Sumatra and Java. In a similar vein, Bernard Arps established that the idea of someone “pulling the strings”, which originated in the traditional wayang theatre, is still very much alive in contemporary Indonesian politics. Indeed, theatre plays can profoundly influence perceptions of past and present events. Focusing on a recent performance of popular drama (kethoprak) in Yogyakarta, Els Bogaerts showed in riveting detail how changes in the plot of a story may reflect changing perspectives within society, and how attitudes towards a local hero’s personality differs across regions.

In Indonesia and elsewhere, storytelling traditions cannot be separated from music. In an audio-visual presentation on a genre of ritual storytelling (pbetot) in West Java's remote Baduy villages, Wim van Zanten discussed musical aspects of recitation on the basis of his own fieldwork data and a rare cylinder recording. His talk was followed by an enchanting live performance of classical Sundanese songs played in the Canjuran style by the group Dangang Parahiangan, in which he also participated himself. The second musical intermezzo was a lively performance of West Sumatran music and dance by the cultural ensemble Archipelago. Led by the musician Bagus Woedjanto, various ensembles, bringing traditional instruments accompanied an energetic rontok dance performed by Rima and Yanti.

In the final session of day two, Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen presented some of her own fieldwork data from North Sumatra, with a selection of audio-recordings of male and female storytellers from the Malay-speaking coastal areas. The symposium concluded with a visual presentation of Clara’s earlier work on Dairi stories, which – as it turned out – had inspired new storytelling performances. Marjolijn Crousstra and Naomi Ploos van Amstel gave their artistic interpretations of some of these ancient North Sumatran legends, demonstrating first-hand how Indonesian stories continue to navigate between telling, singing, depicting, performing, writing and retelling.

Big in Indonesia...

The Symposium on Stories and Storytelling in Indonesia was organized in the spirit of re-appreciating the wealth of available resources in Leiden and beyond. A remark from a Dutch historian, quoted by Victoria Clara van Groenendaal, struck the core of our sentiments on this subject:

On the one hand, academic interest in Indonesian storytelling traditions is currently growing. On the other, knowledge of the relevant research materials, the antiquated languages in which they are written, and access to oral traditions is quickly disappearing. The global academic climate, with its insistence on performative novelty and short-term high-impact research initiatives, is unlikely to foster any profound change in the near future. Nevertheless, the enormous interest this event has generated – including from representatives of the Indonesian Embassy, Leiden’s diverse community of Indonesianists, numerous volunteers, and a delegation of PhD students from the University of Indonesia led by Dr. Pudenta M.P.S., – gives room for sincere hope. As a next step, we plan to attract funding for small-scale research projects on Indonesian audio-visual and manuscript collections, of which we are all presently the surface. We further aim to invite a larger number of Indonesian speakers for the next symposium on this topic.

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References

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2 Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia (Volume 17, issues 2 and 3, 2016). This special edition was initiated by Suij Mevrouw in cooperation with Clara Brakel and Tom Hoogervorst. For a free online version, see https://tinyurl.com/wacana2 and https://tinyurl.com/wacana3
3 This recording was made by Snouck Hurgronje around 1905 and is currently kept in the Leiden University Library
4 These stories were collected by the Bible translator and linguist H.N. van der Tuuk in the mid-nineteenth century. See Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen. 2016. Dari Stories and Putlogk Storytelling. Leiden: Brill.
Recalling mass violence and the roads to reconciliation in Nanjing

A report on the 2017-KNAW-'China Exchange Programme/Summer School

Eveline Buchheim, Martijn Eickhoff & Aomi Mochida

ON 14 DECEMBER 1937, the Japanese military captured Nanjing – then capital of the Republic of China – and the subsequent six-week long period of killing, raping and looting left a trail of devastation and destruction across the city. This period of extreme violence – also known as the rape of Nanjing – has left its mark on the city onto the present day. Yet, over the decades the memory-landscape of Nanjing has undergone considerable changes. In recent years there has been, for example, an increasing attention to the violent past; this is clearly visible in the public domain in the city. New museums (both state-supported and private) have been established, old museums have undergone thorough restructuring, and memorial sites have been increasingly institutionalized. This increasing institutionalization does not automatically lead to an overall improved atmosphere for reconciliation. At least, that is the conclusion of an international group of participants of the Summer School ‘Practices of Remembrance beyond Memory Politics: Recalling Mass Violence and the Roads to Reconciliation in Asia and Europe’, founded by the China Exchange Programme of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences(KNAW). The Institute for Advanced Studies Programme of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences(KNAW). The Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (IAS), the Institute for Peace Studies at Nanjing University, and the NIOD Institute for War-Holocaust- and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, organized this Summer School in Nanjing, which took place from 16 to 23 July 2017.

During the Summer School the participants – mostly of them students of peace studies or war studies – explored and discussed memory practices at historical sites of mass violence in Nanjing, it being a city where one of the major catastrophes of the Asia-Pacific War took place. They analysed how these sites relate to the past, to each other, to internal Chinese developments, and to foreign politics. Particularly relevant in this context is that in the pre-1979 political landscape, Chinese victimhood was not at the centre of attention; only in recent years has there seemed to be burgeoning consideration for the victims inside China. At the same time, part of Japanese society continues to play down or flat-out deny the atrocities committed. Even more complicating is that European attention to the Japanese atrocities generally focuses on the events directly following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The 26 participants of the Summer School came from China, Japan, Belgium and the Netherlands. On the first day the Dean of IAS, professor Zhou Xian, and the curator (director of Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, Zhang Jianjun, welcomed the group. Researchers from Nanjing University, professors Liu Cheng and Der Ruey Yang, and professor Ribbens, dr. Eickhoff, dr. Futselaar and dr. Buchheim from NIOD delivered the lectures and supervised the analyses of the on-site visits. The faculty aimed to create a secure and productive space for fruitful deliberation. In order to facilitate a smooth interdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration, the group focused on developing a common language for their discussions. It proved crucial to develop sensitivity for the different perspectives and to analyse how the different viewpoints came into being, and how they changed over time. The participants of the Summer School were divided into six multi-national groups; each of them was assigned one site in Nanjing. Four of these sites were official memorial sites, one was a private enterprise, and paradoxically one location played a role in the Nanjing Massacre and especially in its representations but is not an official memorial site. On the last day each group gave a 20-minute presentation, introducing the site and elaborating on its historical significance in the context of the Summer School. In preparation for the final presentations, the groups paid visits to the sites, conducted field research, and built on the insights found in literature and lectures. They endeavoured to develop a better understanding of the potential tensions on location between institutionalized cultural memory (archives, museums, official commemorations, etc.) and communicative memory (based on individual, inter-generational exchange). Important questions in this context were: what do people actually do when visiting a site, which representations of the violent events are present at the sites, which narratives can we trace in them and what is their meaning, and which audiences are targeted, and by whom? Although taking different approaches, all of the groups conducted oral history interviews with the visitors and local citizens, looked at popular representations, analysed the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the narratives, tracked the historical transformation of the sites and the interpretations of the Nanjing massacre, and examined the sites from the perspective of peace and reconciliation. Below, we summarize the most important findings of the groups.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (NMMH)

Established in 1985 by the Nanjing municipal government, NMMH is the dominant site in Nanjing and abroad related to the memorialization and commemoration of the Nanjing massacre. The memorial is built on a former mass execution and burial site, and consists of three main parts: an exhibition hall with historical documents and objects; an outdoor exhibition area with multiple sculptures and memorials; and ‘The Mass Grave of 10,000 Corpses’ where preserved skeletal remains of the victims are displayed. At the time of our visit, the main exhibition hall was undergoing a renovation for the upcoming 80th anniversary of the massacre. We therefore visited the temporary exhibition about the Western witnesses of the massacre and their activities during the event.

The group presentation on NMMH stressed the significance of the site both in the local; national and global memory cultures. They highlighted how the foundation of the museum and the memorialization of the massacre were closely related to political developments, especially in regard to the diplomatic tensions over the different interpretations of the history by China and Japan. The group noticed that the victims were represented as Chinese individuals, while the aggressors were framed as collective Japanese perpetrators. In addition, the analysis revealed how NMMH tried to integrate the Nanjing massacre into global cultural memories of WWII by mentioning the war in the European theatre and including personal testimonies of Western witnesses in abundance. The final part of the presentation covered the representation techniques used in the outdoor sculptures and physical structures, focusing on such aspects as static displays and light environment. The group critically illustrated how memory cultures and politics at different levels affect the representations and commemorations of the massacre at NMMH.

The Presidential Place

Located downtown Nanjing, the Presidential Place is a huge complex of historical buildings and gardens. The site has been a key location for China’s modern history. It was a residence of Sun Yat-sen, who became the interim president of the Republic of China in 1912. Fifteen years later, the Nationalist Government led by Chiang Kai-shek established its headquarters there. After the Nationalist Government fled to Taiwan in 1949, the palace was used as government offices. In 2003, the palace was opened as the Museum of Modern Chinese History.

The group presentation on the Presidential Place demonstrated how ‘Chinese identity’ was constructed and conveyed. In particular, they focused on the representation of the Republic of China era, and argued that the site presents China as a cultural unity and showcases its continuity, despite the turmoil it has experienced. The group critically asserted that the history after 1937 is under-represented at the site. The central focus of the representations of the Republic of China is instead on Sun Yat-sen. Through their analysis of on-site statues (including Communist and foreign political figures), the group concluded that Sun Yat-sen is represented as a reconciliatory and unifying figure between mainland China and Taiwan, and beyond.

John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall

This memorial hall is the former residence of John Rabe, who, as the director of Siemens Nanjing, sheltered more than 600 Chinese refugees during the Nanjing massacre. Fallen into oblivion for decades after the war, a German-Chinese joint initiative turned the residence into a museum in 2006. The museum focuses on the help that Rabe and other members of the International Safety Zone gave to the China refugees of Nanjing during 1937-1938. The group analysed this site with three different lenses: commemoration, peace education and reconciliation. Although Rabe as a figure is remembered in China and Germany through different commemorative activities, the group found out that the local on-site commemorations take place sporadically and are conducted by neighbours, survivors, and small groups of people. However, the site is gaining popularity as a Chinese tourist destination, which might affect the future of commemoration there. In analysing the museum’s activities, the group sought to identify information they thought was missing. Their examination revealed that the museum concentrates on Rabe’s personal history and on contemporary German-Chinese relations, whereas historical information on the ‘bigger’ picture, such as the Sino-Japanese War, the Nanjing massacre, and the German-Japanese partnership is missing. The group further concluded that the museum does not contribute to inter-Asian reconciliation because its dominant theme is the German-Chinese relationship.

from her eyes. The group discussed the different ways and visitors can actually wipe off water coming down The sculpture represents a crying former comfort woman memories. At the end of the presentation, the group museum thus builds upon both cultural and communicative narratives: the national struggle and the honouring of veterans. The history of the massacre and the Sino-Japanese War were framed in themes of civilian victimhood and soldiers’ dedication. The group highlighted that the museum builds on a unique mixture of cultural and communicative memories. In one sense, it uses the same sources and pictures that are displayed in other museums, like the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, and follows a similar story line. At the same time, though, the museum actively incorporates oral history testimonies and objects from individual donators, building upon communicative memory. At the end, the group discussed the museum’s cooperation with civic associations in Hiroshima, and concluded that in a highly controversial and political event like the Nanjing massacre, it is easier to have reconciliation at the bottom-up, grassroots, civilian level, rather than on the official, top-down, state level.

Comfort Women Museum

The Comfort Women Museum is built in the barracks of a former Comfort Station in Nanjing. For decades after the war, the premises were left in decay, but in 2003 a former Korean comfort woman visited and identified the place. The museum opened in 2015, and comprises several buildings and exhibition areas. The main objects displayed are wartime objects used by the Japanese military and personal items of former comfort women they used after the war. One of the main themes of the museum is ‘tears’; visitors can spot ‘tears’ recurrently drawn and represented in sculptures, objects and architecture. During the presentation, the group emphasized three main narratives constructed and expressed by the museum through the uses of displays and objects: systematic dehumanization and objectification by the Japanese military; suffering and innocence of victims and survivors; and the survivors’ struggle for recognition. The group argued that the museum embeds personal testimonies into institutionalized ‘big’ stories throughout the exhibition. Similar to the private museum, this museum thus builds upon both cultural and communicative memories. At the end of the presentation, the group talked about a sculpture titled ‘Endless Flow of Tears’. The sculpture represents a crying former comfort woman and visitors can actually wipe off water coming down from her eyes. The group discussed the different ways that this statue was perceived emotionally among the group members, shedding light on the various reactions and receptions of the visitors.

Zhongshan Gate

Located in the east of Nanjing, Zhongshan gate was one of the sites attacked, bombed and destroyed by the Japanese military during the early phase of the invasion of Nanjing in December 1937. Though restored as a ‘heritage of shame’ site after 1945, the gate is not included in the official memory landscape of Nanjing. No official memorial or commemoration takes place at the site. However, the gate is a recurrent theme in numerous representations of the Nanjing massacre. Using clips from films made both within and beyond China, the group convincingly illustrated that the gate is used as the symbol of Japanese invasion and cruelty, and on some occasions also as a symbol of Chinese resistance.

To further investigate the role of the gate in the current local memory culture, the group conducted 24 short interviews with Nanjing citizens. The interview results demonstrated the various levels of knowledge and understanding regarding the gate: some interviewees had not heard about the gate before, others emphasized the practical uses of the gate (bus station, entrance of a highway), whereas only one person associated it with the Battle of Nanjing. Based on these results, the group concluded that although the gate is prominently present in cultural memory, it is not part of local communicative memory.

Concluding remarks

The group presentations on different sites drew attention to a range of commemorative practices, messages and appropriations of history taking place in the memory landscape of Nanjing. We came to realize that there is a strong coherence between these sites, not only because they commemorate the same events, but especially because they make use of a common pool of sources. One example is the diaries by John Rabe, the German businessman who played a large role in the establishment of the international Nanjing Safety Zone. This source, originally in German, has been translated into Japanese, Chinese and English and is used at different sites. Rabe not only provides a meticulous description of the atrocities committed, he also describes what activities the members of the Nanjing Safety Zone executed and how they negotiated with the Japanese officials. In hindsight, his descriptions have become the basis of important recalculations of the numbers of victims and casualties.

Yet, we also realized, the recent growth in the production of cultural memory does not automatically lead to an overall improved atmosphere for reconciliation. The question of how to integrate the mass violence into local, national and global history remains contested. Contemporary Nanjing is, as a result, a site of conflicted history where disagreements about the past continue to pop up at both expected and unexpected moments.

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Below: Summer School Participants at the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. Photo courtesy of Martijn Eickhoff.

Above: Display at the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. Photo courtesy of Martijn Eickhoff.
Over the last decades, historians have mined French, British, Portuguese and Dutch records for quantitative data on the European slave trade in the Indian Ocean. The information that is often missing, is the qualitative data on the experience of being a slave. The international workshop ‘Being a slave: Indian Ocean slavery in local context’ held at Leiden University on 29 and 30 May 2017 aimed to study the origin and aftermath of enslavement as well as the imaginaries and representations of slaves rather than the trade in the enslaved.

The workshop was divided into panels with the first panel ‘Testimonies, Letters, Court cases’ focusing on ‘History and the Archive’. Ulbe Bosma (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) discussed the case of Dandajoe, who was raised and via enslavement became the free spouse of a man living in Dutch territory. Dandajoe and her husband were interviewed by Dutch officials and Bosma questioned the representativeness of this and other colonial sources. According to him further research on oral history is needed in order to find out the amount of truth in colonial sources.

Paul Bijl (Utrecht University) analysed in the next panel ‘Stories and Statistics’ the text of Wange Van Balie, who wrote down his memories as a slave and eventually ended up in the Netherlands. Bijl argued that this unpublished ego-document was a fundamental act, as Wange presented himself as a human with the same equality as any other human. This may be seen as a protest against slavery and inequality. Matthias van Rossum (ISH) contributed to the panel by presenting statistics of enslavement in eighteenth century Cochín, as part of his project on slavery in South and Southeast Asia from 1600-1800. Together with his student-assistant, Marion Tosun, he discussed the place and re-enslavement in Colombo. By using archival sources, the statistic and stated that slaves of the Dutch East India Company had a voice, but never perceived equality and were seen as products rather than humans.

Nico Wilcken (Van Gorcum University of Amsterdam) explored the acts of Cape Town’s enslaved and the display of objects related to slavery. He argued that historians have to bring slaves from darkness to light, since they could not write themselves. The keynote address of the workshop, ‘At Sea in the Archive: Slavery, Indenture, and the Indian Ocean’, was provided by Yvette Christiansen, poet, novelist and Professor of English and Africana Studies (Barnard College, New York). She discussed the notion of indenture and freedom. What does freedom mean to the enslaved? How did they experience it? She argued that since the self was enslaved, the experience of freedom was constructed for emancipated slaves. They were traumatized and stripped of their identity, and these traumatic experiences needed to be read through the lines. She illustrated her points through a critical reading of registers of slavery and indenture as physical objects, rather than merely as bureaucratic tools. At the end Christiansen posed the intriguing questions: “Why do I hunger for experiences and what do I want from the voices? How does one acknowledge the archives?”

The second day of the workshop started with the panel ‘Projections of Emancipation’. Robert Ross (Leiden University) contributed to the panel by presenting the text of Wange van Balie, who was forced to work as a fisherman, and they sang about the sea and the display of objects related to slavery. According to him further research on the Banda Islands. Until recently, the representation had been done by Europeans. Manuhutu argued that the Missouri has discovered heritage as a way of stimulating tourism and therefore developed their own plans and activities in order to construct memory, which includes a new interest in the slave heritage on Banda. The European representation of slavery is also present in museums. Sarah Longair (University of Lincoln) discussed the many issues with recovering the materiality of slavery. She noted how objects carry emotions and show agency of the enslaved people. Also, objects from the museums can be used to fill in the gap in the experiences of the slaves. Wayne Modest (Research Center for Material Culture) elaborated on the issue of collecting and representing the afterlife of slavery. He was able to provide insight into the narratives in the museums with reference to slavery and argued that the museum structures a narrative it wants to tell the public, a narrative that is often political. Modest asked himself and the other participants the question how a political narrative and representation takes form in the museum setting.

During the closing discussion, the workshop partici- pants discussed the possibility of collecting a number of papers and publishing them in a volume co-edited by the organizers of the workshop. While discussing this, keynote speaker Christiansen suggested that the title of the volume could be ‘Seeing a slave’, as this would capture the achievement of the workshop that was to make invisible actors and voices from the archive and archives present in the mainstream narrative.

Doreen van den Boogaart & Harkurt Singh
IIAS Research and Projects

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 are addressed. The cluster aims to expand the understanding of globalization by considering the various ways Asian and other world regions are interconnected within a long-term historical framework. Acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformation, it is investigating the Asian historical experience through the current literature on the subject and explores new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interactions in the form of ‘south-south north’ and ‘east-west’ dialogue models. In principle, any research dealing with Asian global interactions is of interest.

Asian Bordersland Research Network
The Asian Bordersland Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. The concerns of the ABRN are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns. The ABRN organises a conference in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. The next conference, ‘Borderland Spaces: Ruins, Revival(s) and Resources’, will take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 23-25 August 2018.

COORDINATOR: Eric de Maaker (maaker@ifsw.leidenuniv.nl) WEBSITE: www.asianbordersland.net

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 urbanisation in 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 aims to create a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities ‘in context’ and beyond traditional western norms of knowledge.

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)
Consisting of over 100 researchers with affiliations at 77 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest global academic network on Asian cities. UKNA’s objective is to nurture contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities, seeking to achieve this by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. Funded by the EU, extensive research staff exchanges focusing on China and India were carried out between 2012 and 2016. The success of the UKNA synergy has encouraged the network’s partners to carry on its activities, among others, expanding its orientation to include urban development in Southeast Asia in the framework of the South East Asian Neighborhoods Network programme (2017-2020).

COORDINATOR: Paul Kabé (p.r.kabe@uva.nl) WEBSITE: www.ukna.asia

THE ASIAN HERITAGE CLUSTER focuses on the uses of culture and cultural heritage practices in Asia. In particular, it addresses the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for contemporary society. Doing so, it explores the notion of heritage as it evolved from an originally European concept primarily associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested assertions of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in defining one’s own identity or identities vis-à-vis those of others. The wide variety of activities carried out in this context, among others, aim to engage with the such concepts of ‘authenticity’, ‘national heritage’ and ‘shared heritage’ and, in general, with issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage.

Indian Medical Heritage Research Network
The Indian Medical Heritage Research Network wants to study social-cultural and social-historical research on Indian medical traditions such as Unani, Siddha, Yoga and Sowa Rigpa. Of special interest is the integration of Indian medicine in Indian public health and its role as second resort for middle class Indians and Europeans. The network offers a virtual space on Facebook (www.facebook.com/IndianMedicalHeritage) for collating research findings and other information about India’s medical heritage covering diverse perspectives, interests and backgrounds.

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Energy Programme Asia (EPA)
The EPA-research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitics of energy security on the one hand, and policy to increase energy efficiency and estimating the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy resources on the other. In 2012 and second joint comparative research programme with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was entitled The Transnationalisation of China’s Oil Industry: company strategies and implications for the future. In 2017, the IIAS has embarked on a new project. IIAS has begun a collaborative research project with IIASA on the current climate of the subject and explores new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interactions in the form of ‘south-south north’ and ‘east-west’ dialogue models. In principle, any research dealing with Asian global interactions is of interest.

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International Graduate Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies
Over the last few years, IIAS has been intensively engaged with the Leiden Institute of Asia Studies (LIAS) and targeted Asian partners, in the development of an international Double Degree programme for graduate students in the field of ‘Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe’. To date, the Asian partners involved have been two departments of National Taiwan University and one department of Yonsei University in South Korea; contacts with other possible Asian partner institutes are being explored. The programme offers selected students the opportunity to follow a full year study at one of the partner institutes with full credits and a double degree. The curriculum at Leiden University is supported by the IIAS Asian Heritages research cluster and benefits from the contributions of Prof. Michael Herzfeld (Harvard) as a guest teacher and the Senior Advisor to the Critical Heritage Studies Initiative of IIAS.

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Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World

A four-year programme for global collaboration on humanistic education, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2017-2020)
The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) at Leiden University has been awarded a four-year grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York) to facilitate a collaborative platform of over twenty African, Asian, European and North American universities and their local social and cultural partners in Asia and Africa, for the co-creation of a new humanistic, pedagogical model. This follows the successful completion in 2016 of a three-year project (Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context), supported by the same foundation, to rethink the scholarly practice of area (Asia) studies in today’s world, with a particular focus on Africa.

The epistemological vision of the Humanities across Borders programme is that of an inclusive and expansive humanistic education agenda of knowledge and collaboration. To this end, it will initiate methodological, pedagogical and curricular interventions to surpass narrow disciplinary, institutional, ideological and individualistic agendas in the production of knowledge. The programme facilitates border-crossing meetings, workshops and other collaborative pedagogical formats, organised by its partners together with their local civil society partners, agents and actors. These activities will be carried out in the framework of fourteen projects focusing on such themes as food, embodied practices, voices of dissent, language, memory and migration, in all their dynamic articulations in the world.

In this way, the programme will help shape a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education, research and dissemination across disciplinary, national and institutional borders. Also see p46-47 of this issue.

COORDINATION: Dr Philippe Pecyam, Programme Director; Dr Jariit Kawula, Academic Director; Titia van der Maas, Programme Coordinator.
WEBSITE: www.iias.asia/research/humanities-across-borders-asia-africa-world
Along with the research fellows who are attached to one of the IIAS research programmes, the Institute yearly hosts a large number of visiting researchers (affiliated fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, IIAS also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations.

CURRENT FELLOWS

Eva Ambos
The heritagization of the post-war in Sri Lanka
15 May 2017 – 15 March 2018

Pratay Kanungo
Visiting Professor,
India Studies Chair (ICCR)
Indian politics
1 Sept 2013 – 30 June 2018

Paola Maria Antonietta Rossi
Indology (Gonda Fund)
1 Sept 2017 – 18 Feb 2018

Sebastian Schwecke
Informal monetary markets
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Jan 2018

Tarini Shipurkar
Winner IAS MA Thesis Prize 2016
1 Sept 2017 – 31 Dec 2017

Bal Gopal Shrestha
Religiousity among the Nepalese Diaspora
1 Jan 2015 – 31 Dec 2017

CURRENT FELLOWS

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South Asia Institute,
University of Heidelberg, Germany
Heritage politics and dealing with the past

THE PROJECT I am working on while at IIAS has two objectives. First, it seeks to explore post-war heritage politics in Sri Lanka. In order to unravel topics such as the friction between heritage and ritual or the particular reading of the past inscribed in practices framed as heritage, I will draw on ethnographic fieldwork gleaned from my doctoral project in Sri Lanka. In my doctoral dissertation, I analysed the heritagisation of two ritual healing traditions with a focus on hereditary performers and their positioning vis-à-vis heritagisation.

At present, I am working on two papers based on my dissertation, one examining the changing role of possession in one of the healing ritual traditions as indicative of larger socio-political transformations and the other the processes of signification at work in heritage performances. The second objective of the project addresses ways of dealing with the past in post-war Sri Lanka. I am particularly interested in how religious practices and memorialisation efforts shape reflections on the past, talking about the past and engagements with the past.

IIAS offers the ideal environment for my project since it combines a strong rooting in Area Studies with a global outlook that allows developing dialogues beyond fields and across regions. It serves moreover as a hub for Critical Heritage Studies. Another reason prompting me to apply for an IIAS fellowship was my previous experience as a participant in an IIAS summer programme on Asian and European perspectives on heritage (2011), conducted by Professor Nira Wickramasinghe and Professor Michael Herzfeld. The summer programme not only motivated me to analyse my material from a new angle but was also characterised by an intellectually inspiring and extraordinary convivial atmosphere that stimulated future collaboration. One example is a panel at a Critical Heritage Studies conference in 2012 that was organized by five programme alumni with the support of IIAS and Michael Herzfeld (the Newsletter, issue 61).

I got to know IIAS as an institution that encourages out-of-the-box thinking and that is also dedicated to engaging stakeholders outside of academia, such as civil society actors and communities. My project greatly benefits from being based at IIAS and the thrilling intellectual environment in Leiden to which the people and activities of the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and its Faculty of Humanities add significantly. Last but not least, it is the cordiality and open-mindedness of people here that turns my stay in Leiden into such an enriching and enjoyable experience. While I continue to work on my project during my remaining stay in Leiden until May 2018, I also hope to expand my network, follow up on the burgeoning ideas for future collaborative activities and to have more equally enriching experiences.

Gonda Fellowships for Indologists

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level, it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation, to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS. Please send your application to the J. Gonda Foundation by the appropriate deadline below. The J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) supports the scholarly offers funding for projects or publications in Indology of both researchers and scientific publishers, as well as PhD grants.

Application form: www.knaw.nl/en/awards/subsidies/gonda-fund
Application deadline: 1 April and 1 October every year

ASCL-IIAS Fellowship Programme

A joint fellowship offered by the African Studies Centre Leiden and the International Institute for Asian Studies

This fellowship is intended for researchers specialising in Asian-African interactions. It aims to attract researchers whose work is informed by current theoretical debates, in the social sciences and humanities, on global connectivities and who are able to critically engage with shifting paradigms in ‘area studies’ beyond the ways in which these have traditionally been conceived in the West. We are particularly interested in receiving fellowship proposals that go beyond a mere analysis of current issues associated with Asian-African comparative economic developments or Chinese investments in Africa – although none of these themes, if appraised critically and for their societal consequences, will of course be excluded. Our definition of Asia and Africa is broad and inclusive, Asia ranging from the Middle-East to the Pacific Coast, and Africa from North-Africa to the southern tip of the continent.

Application deadline: 15 March and 15 September each year
For more information and application form, go to: iias.asia/page/ascl-IIAS-fellowship-application
Lawrence Chua
School of Architecture,
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Buddhist felicities and modern architecture in 20th century Bangkok

Since my Iias fellowship began in June, I have been preparing a book-length manuscript for a University publisher on the historical accommodations between Buddhist felicities and modern architecture in the 20th century Bangkok. The manuscript draws on Thai- and Chinese-language textual sources, images, and built forms encountered during archival and field research that I undertook for my doctoral dissertation as well as material that I found during my postdoctoral fellowship. The book’s structure reflects my experiences with teaching history in a school of architecture over the last three years, which has deepened my understanding of the ways that architects engage with the tools of representation, building materials and technologies, and infrastructural systems in their work. As a result, the focus, content, and structure of the book are considerably different from the dissertation.

I chose to begin my sabbatical year at Iias not only because of its reputation as a center for cutting-edge research in Asian studies, but also because of the richness of the collections at the Leiden University library. The fellowship has allowed me to write within close proximity of not only the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) collections, but also other collections that have supplemented my archival research in Thailand. The study centre at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam has been a helpful resource for comparative work on building programs in Indonesia, China, and Europe. Further afield, the British Library’s collection of illustrated Traiphum and Phra Melai manuscripts has been a rich source of material of literary and pictorial representations of Buddhist felicities like nibbana and the three worlds cosmology.

Early in my fellowship, I presented a paper on the architecture of Suan Mokkh, the Buddhist monastic complex founded by one of Thailand’s most prolific modern intellectuals, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at a conference organized by the Asian Dynamics Network on ‘Global and Singular Asias: Theory and Practice’. There, I will present from the final chapter in my book manuscript on the influence of systems theory on the Cold War development of Bangkok’s infrastructure architecture. I will then return to Bangkok to conduct field research on the funeral pyre of King Rama IX. In November, I will present from the first chapter of my manuscript at a conference organized by the Architectural History Network at TU Delft.

IAAS fellowships

We are particularly interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute’s three thematic clusters. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

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

Asian Heritages
This cluster focuses on the politics of culture and cultural heritages in Asia. It addresses a variety of definitions associated with cultural heritage and their implications for social agency. In general, the cluster engages with a broad range of concepts and ideas related to cultural and heritage, and their importance in defining one’s identity vis-à-vis those of others.

Global Asia
The Global Asia cluster 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 are addressed.

Combined research at Iias and the Collège d’études mondiales in Paris

A limited number of Iias/CEM-FMSH joint fellowships are available each year, allowing for a maximum of ten months at Iias, immediately followed by a stay of two months at the Collège d’études mondiales of the Fondation maison des sciences de l’homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualised, 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 visit our website: www.iias.nl
In December 2016, Fukuoka and Yangon signed the sister-city affiliation. Commemorating the event, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM) launched a new exhibition in August 2017, which looks back over the history of Myanmar art from the late 19th century to today.

Welcome to Art in Myanmar!

Commemoration of the sister-city relationship between Yangon and Fukuoka. Welcome to Art in Myanmar!

Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp) 
31 August 2017 - 9 January 2018

MYANMAR ART has been included in the FAAM collections ever since the museum’s inception in 1999. FAAM, moreover, contributes to the cultural exchange between Japan and Myanmar by inviting artists from Myanmar to engage in creative activities in Fukuoka. Among its 2900 collections from 23 countries and regions in Asia, 71 works (36 artists) come from Myanmar. This commemorative exhibition presents various artworks including a Western-style painting of the last dynasty of Burma/Myanmar during the British era, a beautiful golden pagoda representing the Buddhist tradition of the nation, and contemporary artworks that critically observe the social issues of the country. The Myanmar artists’ works created in Fukuoka are also on display.

Western-style painting during the British Era
The entire country of Burma (present-day Myanmar) was colonized by the British in 1886 as part of the Indian colonial territory, resulting in the end of the Konbaung dynasty. The former court painters started to show their paintings of the royal family at religious ceremonies, such as creation ceremonies for monks. A typical example of these paintings is Portrait of Royal Family by Saya Saw, in which the background is painted in Western style and perspective, with the figures in the foreground resembling traditional Myanmar puppets (top right). The facial expression of the figures became more realistic as the painters were influenced by photography. In the early 20th century, a Western-influenced modern style was developed by U Ba Nyan (1897-1945), U Ba Kyi (1912-2000), and others who had studied in Europe during the time of British influence.

Art after Independence
After Myanmar gained its independence in 1948, art infrastructures were developed through institutions such as the National Art Colleges (in Yangon and Mandalay) and the National Art Gallery in 1952. U Kin Maun, a founder of abstract painting in Myanmar, and Paw Oo Theh, a painter and a cartoonist, are known as the first generation of artists of the post-independence period. In the 2nd Asian Art Show in 1985 (held at the Fukuoka Art Museum), 20 Myanmar artists participated including Naing Win and Thien Lwin, who developed an academic style of painting.

Contemporary artists
In 1988, massive demonstrations demanding democratization brought down the socialist system. During the military regime that followed, when freedom of speech or expression could not be fully exercised, the artists continued their activities mainly by opening their own collective galleries to display their work. In 1994, a Myanmar artist came to Fukuoka for the first time to participate in the 4th Asian Art Show at Fukuoka Art Museum. Min Wae Aung, who later became a representative artist in Myanmar developed his famous S-curved composition in Fukuoka (above left). During the 1980s, a new current of art emerged in Myanmar where traditional style or the realistic and figurative paintings still remained mainstream. The artists started to create works that reflected an urgent sense of the changes in modern society, as well as works that included new trends of expression, like surrealism and abstraction. One of the groups that pursued such a direction was Gangaw Village Art Group, founded in 1979 by the members of the art club at the Rangoon Arts and Sciences University (the present Yangon University), was the first contemporary artist group. The group ceased its activities after the 1988 democracy movement and resumed their exhibitions only in 2000. In 2017, the 28th Gangaw Village Art Exhibition was held. The FAAM exhibition includes the recent works of four artists from the group (San Minn, Tito, Khin Swe Win, and Hla Toe), and in 2012 FAAM organized Contemporary Asian Artist VI: Freedom in Blossom! Gangaw Village and Experimental Art in 1980s Burma.

Entering the 2000s, young artists of Myanmar moved away from collective structures and started to use their individual networks to reach not only domestic audiences, but also those in neighboring countries, such as Thailand and Singapore. The FAAM-directed Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale contributed to the introduction of the works of these younger generations as well.

Myanmar artists visiting FAAM
Since 1999, FAAM has regularly hosted series of artistic creations, performances, and workshops by Myanmar artists. The current exhibition introduces artists who have visited Fukuoka and shows video footage of performances conducted during their visits. Two artists, Myoe Thant Oung and Aung Myat Htay, and one researcher, Ye Myat Aung (then Assistant Director, Cultural Museum Mandalay), stayed in Fukuoka through its residency program. Six artists, Po Po, Tun Win Aung, Wai Nn, Phyo Kyi, Aung Ko, and Min Thein Sung participated in the exchange program of the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale. These artists have now become leading figures in Myanmar’s contemporary art scene, and have been working actively both nationally and internationally.

Myanmar has been experiencing drastic democratization during the last few years. The lifting of censorship in 2012 has allowed artists to create works with political themes and to organize exhibitions of their own. Myanmar art has also started to receive much attention from international art galleries, which in turn has activated the local art scene. FAAM hopes that this exhibition will provide an opportunity for audiences to encounter the works by Myanmar artists who continuously strive to make and show their art despite prolonged restriction over artistic expression.

Rina Igarashi, curator of the FAAM commemorative exhibition ‘Welcome to Art in Myanmar!’