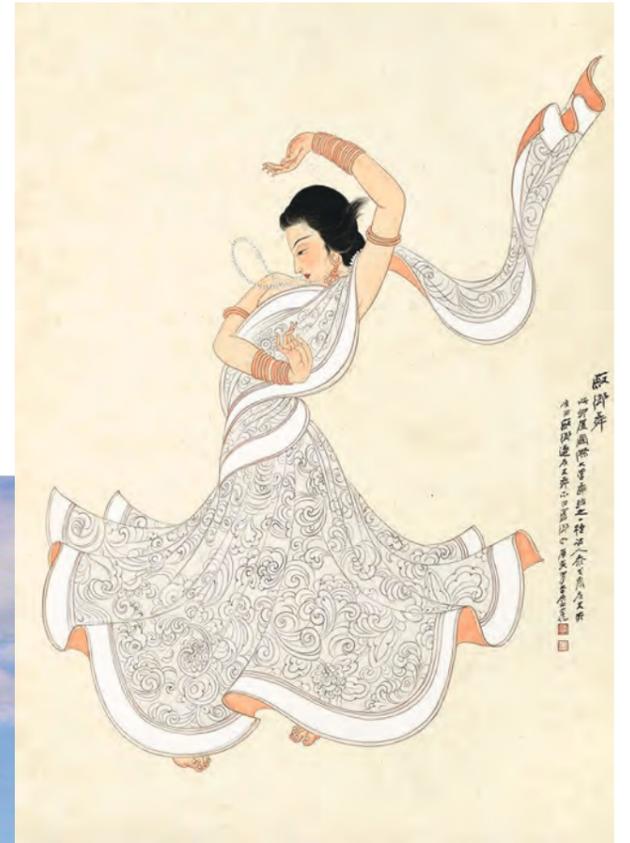


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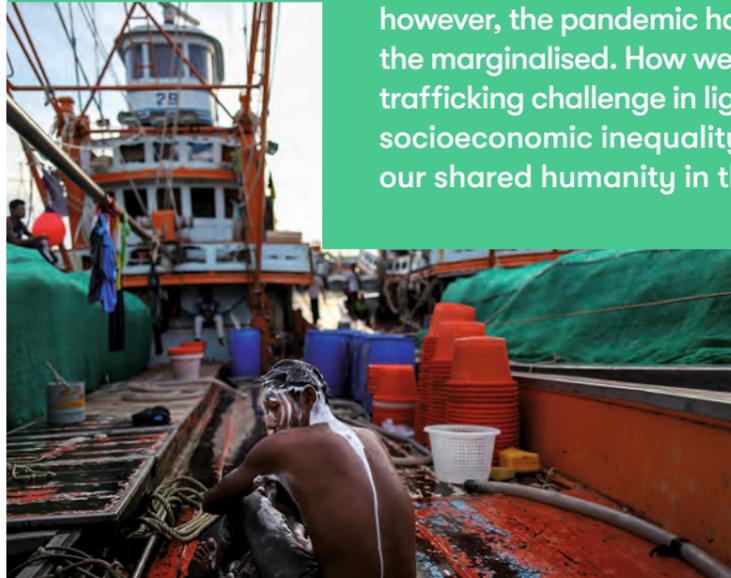
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In this edition of the Focus

Combatting human trafficking in East Asia and beyond

Bonny Ling
and Isabelle Cheng

The reality of human trafficking is complicated. Its underground nature can lead to a poor understanding of its causes and consequences, and impede efforts to combat it. Human trafficking can be transnational, yet most cases are domestic in nature. The exploitation can encompass different forms and involve diverse victim profiles. Human trafficking is a crime, but it can take place within legal channels of immigration and employment. In reality, the issue of trafficking and exploitation is multifaceted and the challenge is based on the recognition that there is still much to learn—and much to do—to combat it. The articles in this issue's Focus present cross-disciplinary perspectives on the issue of human trafficking. Planned more than a year ago, the publication of these essays amidst a global pandemic was not foreseen. With expected prolonged effects of an economic downturn worldwide, however, the pandemic has intensified the misery of the marginalised. How we address the growing anti-trafficking challenge in light of the ever-increasing socioeconomic inequality will be the hallmark of our shared humanity in the post-COVID world.



Main cover photo: Vietnamese agricultural migrant worker in Taiwan. Common amongst migrant workers, in Taiwan and beyond, is the unbearable weight of debt and, for some, the shared experience of being undocumented. Photo by filmmakers Nguyễn Kim Hồng and Tsai Tsung Lung.

Left: The migrant fishermen of Phuket, Thailand. ©ILO Asia Pacific / CC License.

The Newsletter is a free periodical published by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). As well as serving as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond, The Newsletter is also a window into the Institute. Information about the programmes and activities of IIAS can be found in the Network pages of each issue of The Newsletter.

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a global Humanities and Social Sciences institute and a knowledge exchange platform, based in Leiden, the Netherlands, with programmes that engage Asian and other international partners. IIAS takes a thematic and multi-sectoral approach to the study of Asia and actively involves scholars and experts from different disciplines and regions in its activities. Our current thematic research clusters are 'Asian Heritages', 'Asian Cities' and 'Global Asia'.

In this issue

As we enter the second wave of the pandemic we continue to be amazed at the enthusiasm of our contributors and the efforts made by all colleagues who helped put together this issue. Once again, during this taxing year, we have managed to produce an excellent issue. We hope you enjoy it!

Next year summer ICAS will be holding its twelfth instalment, in Kyoto. The submission deadline for ICAS 12 has just passed, and with surprisingly good results. Read more in our Director's editorial on the next page, and on p.52 where ICAS Secretary Paul van der Velde updates us on the conference's progress. There you will also find details about the ICAS Book Prize, which is already breaking its own record, but also still open for submissions.

The article on pp.48-49, 'Lifelong learning with indigo in Mali', is the latest from the IAS Humanities across Borders programme. On pp.50-51 you will find a few short essays presented in the context of the institute's work during the pandemic, mainly the need to go online with many of our activities.

One of our fellows, Zoë Goodman, wrote a poem in honour of Leiden, the old University town in the Netherlands where IIAS is located. Please enjoy the read and her literary talents on p.53. Latest announcements can be found on p.47 and IAS research programmes, networks and other initiatives are described in brief on pp.54-55.

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

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Images taken during various projects of the Humanities across Borders programme (all rights reserved).

Left: Learning about film making. Photo taken during the project 'Living with and in the Forest in Northern Thailand', Center for Ethnic Studies and Development (CESD), Chiang Mai University.

Middle: Artisan Kamlabai Banskar stitches a basket (Ayodhya Basti, Pipariya, 2017, from CCK archives). Photo taken during the project 'From Forest to Town', Centre for Community Knowledge, Ambedkar University Delhi.

Below: Forox-caaya vendor in Senegal. Photo taken by Bruno Diomaye Faye during the project 'Atelier Populaire: Building New Knowledge and Practices on Street Food in Saint-Louis, Senegal', Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis.



With gratitude, astonishment and great pride

Philippe Peycam

In the midst of the gloom of the current period, some sparks of hope appeared at IIAS. One of the brightest was the Institute being awarded a third grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York to support the consolidation and sustainability of our flagship pedagogical programme 'Humanities Across Borders' (HaB). In its second phase, the programme and its 18 partners in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, will move from the experimental to the institutional level of intervention in higher education. Whereas initially HaB concentrated on building a network of individual partners involved in testing with out-of-classroom and community embedded experiential pedagogies, HaB 2.0 aims to mobilise educational institutions into a new pattern of South-South-North collaboration, thereafter formalising the programme's place-based methodologies to real-world societal and ecological concerns.

Three institutional innovations are envisioned for HaB 2.0:

- i) a global consortium with its commitment to public humanist values in education;
- ii) a foundational curricular platform in 'Humanities across Borders' co-created and co-taught across the consortium's geographies;
- iii) an interactive education digital platform to operate as HaB's pedagogical resources repository, made widely accessible through libraries.

In this way we hope to build a model of locally rooted, globally conscious, higher education that until now was an aspirational ideal for many universities attempting to achieve educational justice goals. By disseminating the programme's humanistic approach to teaching and learning through a website, publications, conferences, and other pedagogical events, we hope to encourage other institutions to join our efforts. I take this opportunity, on behalf of IIAS and its partners, to express our sincere gratitude to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for holding on to its visionary approach by supporting HaB and its efforts to re-enchant scholarship through civic engagement.

The other ray of light that appeared recently was the surprising response to our first call for abstract submissions for ICAS 12 in Kyoto in August next year. We received 1200 submissions, amounting to about 2,000 potential participants! Because of the ongoing uncertainties presented by the pandemic, we had not dared to hope for this result. We were astonished, and indeed emboldened, by the high number and quality of the submissions, a number which even exceeded that of ICAS 11 at the same time of the event's preparation. This number demonstrates two things: the burning desire of a large number of people to resume proper intellectual interactions, hopefully in person, but also through online devices; and the continuing success of ICAS's biennial events as a unique and necessary space for meaningful academic and civic exchanges.

It is interesting to notice that the number of submissions remain evenly distributed geographically, with a strong proportion of people intent on participating in person, and also, thanks to the prospect of delivering online participation, contributions from groups or regions that would otherwise have been left out. Having submissions framed around broad thematic inter-disciplinary headers was probably another reason for the eagerness of participants to engage with one another. This ICAS feature facilitates comparative discussions and helps to avoid narrow disciplinary or geographic 'silo' discussions. The model of ICAS events as an open, mutualised space for collaboration between people and organisations may also explain this continuing appeal. In addition, the amalgamation of the ICAS conferences with their local communal environments serves a vital function which I doubt insulated (online) meetings can easily substitute. In fact, Kyoto and its eco-human system may be too precious a place for a conference to be contemplated as just a virtual event (ICAS Secretary, Paul van der Velde, also gives a brief ICAS 12 update on p.52 of this issue).

I wouldn't want to be over-optimistic, because the pandemic is still with us and the general economic and political prospects are bleak, but it is important to recognise that, perhaps even more during these confusing times, one must strive to sustain more inclusive engagements and collaborations. IIAS is proud to continue to serve these objectives.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

The Shanghai *lilong*

Approaches to rehabilitation and reuse

Gregory Bracken

The Shanghai *lilong* is an attractive and vibrant house type.¹ Originating in Shanghai in the 19th century, it came to dominate the city by the 20th century, before declining into decrepitude under Communist rule and then suffering from mass destruction when capitalism was reintroduced after 1978. Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, perceptions have begun to change again. The *lilong* may not be in such danger from destruction any more but there is another danger, one that could prove almost as devastating unless we pay attention to how the remaining stock of this unique house type is redeveloped in the city. This paper looks at four *lilong* redevelopments that have taken place since 2000. Xintiandi and Tianzifang are vibrant commercial areas, Jiayeli is a residential redevelopment, and Jing'an Villa straddles the commercial and the residential. All four exhibit different approaches to rehabilitation and reuse in Shanghai. They will be compared here to see which approach is best suited to ensuring the *lilong*'s continued vitality.



Above: Tianzifang. Photo by author.

potential (although, ironically, it was the lack of development in this era that had done the real damage to the city's potential for generating wealth in the first place).

Another factor in the city's lack of development during this period was the fact that, well into the 1980s, the city's leaders were sidelined from national decision-making processes. Shanghai, as a result, was unable to lobby for more favourable policies and as a result it experienced its only period of (relative) recession after what had been a century and a half of otherwise stellar economic growth.

Eventually, in 1984, Beijing allowed Shanghai to open itself up to foreign investment. The Yangtze River Delta was opened up the following year and by 1986 Shanghai was able to set up three small economic zones. It was a start, but not enough, because so much of southern China had already begun to boom, leaving Shanghai far behind. Then in April 1990, Shanghai's Mayor, Wang Daohan, launched a Special Economic Zone in Pudong and finally Shanghai was able to reassert itself. The city is now home to more skyscrapers than Manhattan, and they are not all to be found in Pudong. Ironically, it is this revitalisation of the city that is posing an even greater threat to the city's stock of old buildings than anything that happened under the Communists.

Cities are extraordinarily resilient, they can, and do, recover from fire, flood, and warfare. The one thing they often find hard to withstand is a sudden and catastrophic influx of cash. Torrents of new money will scour away old buildings and streets and places, not to mention the lifestyles associated with them. All the old well-established networks

and ways of life that took generations to build can disappear overnight, and this is what happened to Shanghai when it reopened to the world in the 1990s.

Rehabilitation and reuse

The stock of Shanghai's *lilong* became severely dilapidated during the three decades of Communist rule. They survived, but neglect and overcrowding meant that many of them were getting to be beyond repair and were increasingly unfit for human habitation. Peter G. Rowe points out that the squalid, run-down condition of these houses was allowed to happen because they were seen as a reminder of a way of life the Chinese would rather forget: the Treaty Port era.⁴ Rowe also reminds us that

historic preservation in East-Asian cities tends to be weak. It was only really in the early years of the 21st century that Shanghai finally began to realise the cultural and tourist potential of its dwindling stock of *lilong*.

One other aspect of Chinese life that has been a big factor in the erosion of the *lilong*'s attractiveness (and also increasing the popularity of the Western-style apartment or suburban home) is the One Child Policy, which operated from 1979 to 2015. People were obliged to have small families, this was compounded by the fact that, according to Rowe, the "traditional practice of housing extended families, including the elderly, [has] also eroded substantially in East Asia".⁵ Many people now prefer to live in newer, cleaner, more comfortable and spacious apartments, even if they are located outside the city centre.

Yet, since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of old *lilong* enclaves have been redeveloped. Below is a brief examination of four such redevelopments, looking at the role different actors have played in them, from large, top-down private developers to small, bottom-up individuals, to determine which approach comes closest to preserving the once vibrant spirit of the *lilong*.

Jiayeli

We begin by looking at Jiayeli, a residential redevelopment by the American architectural firm of John Portman and Associates. This project, near the corner of Taiyuan and Jianguo West Roads, includes 51 houses and 62 serviced apartments and is aimed at the luxury end of the housing market. Most of the original 1920s' buildings have been dismantled (only one third were restored rather than rebuilt). This has been done so that they can be more conveniently modernised (with amenities such as plumbing, electricity, and heating – most of which were absent from the originals) as well as to allow for other modern requirements, such as parking and better fire safety.



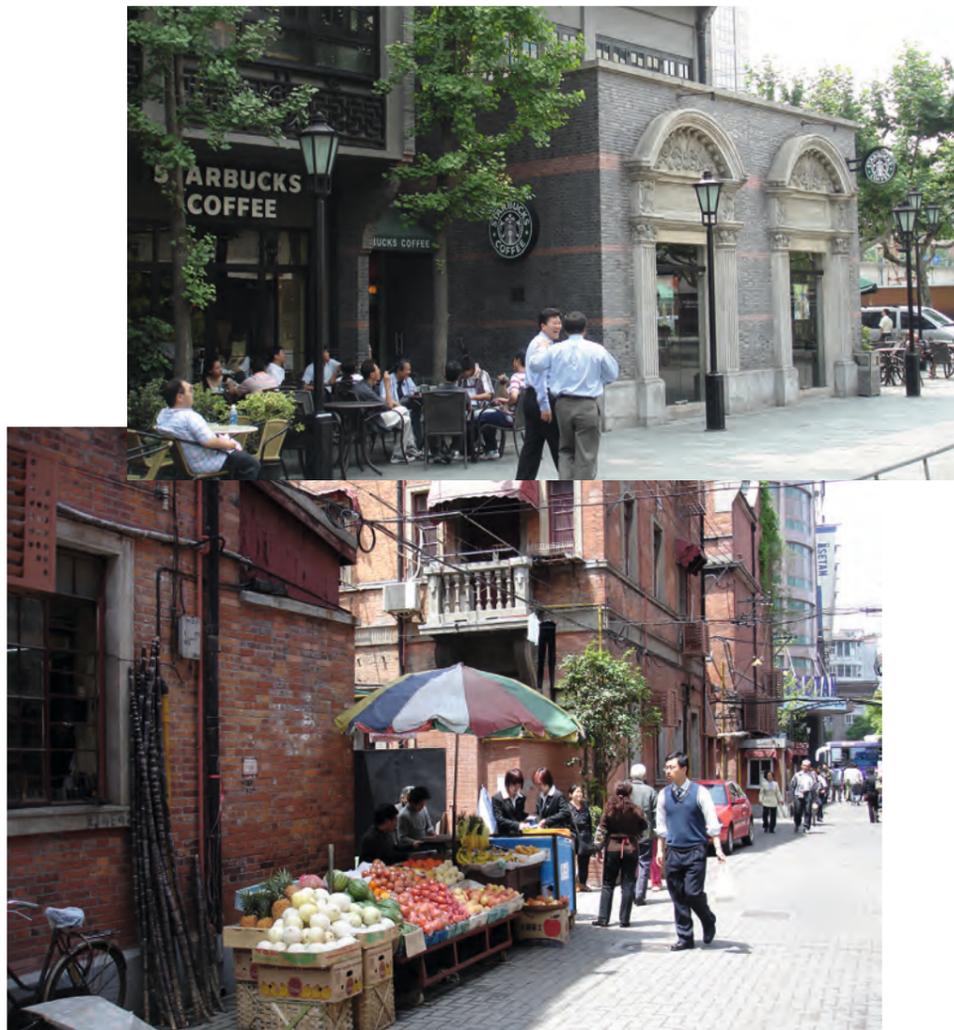
Above: Jiayeli. Photo with kind permission of Bart Kuijpers.

Lilong under threat

By the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, approximately 50 percent of the total built area of Shanghai was covered by *lilong*.² They accounted for almost three-quarters of the city's residential dwellings, with 70 to 80 percent of the city's population living in them.³ As late as 1990, it is estimated that there were well over 9,000 clusters of *lilong* in the city, but since that time they have been rapidly disappearing. Why?

Shanghai was, until 1949, a conspicuously successful apparatus for capitalist accumulation. Then, under the Communists, it became a paragon of state control. Yet despite its importance to the Chinese economy in the Communist era, and its willingness to accede to Beijing's wishes, the city suffered badly between 1949 and 1990. The central government was, according to the old Chinese proverb, 'draining the pond to catch the fish'; it saw Shanghai as a generator of wealth that could be used to fuel development in other parts of the country.

When Deng Xiaoping introduced the Open Door policy in 1978, he set up four new Special Economic Zones (SEZs), but decided to do so along China's south-east coast. He had toured Asia's 'tiger economies' (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) and was convinced that capitalism was the way to go, yet he was understandably wary of importing yet another Western ideology, since Communism had so conspicuously failed to deliver on its early promise. He was also reluctant to introduce anything that might damage Shanghai's wealth-generating



Top: Xintiandi. Above: Jing'an Villa. Photos by author.

What is interesting here is that the luxury market has now begun to take an interest in the *lilong*. Clearly there is a demand for this type of housing, something which might seem to bode well for its future. Jiayeli could, at first glance, be seen as a healthy sign for the future of the *lilong*; at least it is residential, but in fact this sort of redevelopment is nothing more than gentrification and actually subverts the house type by being for the rich. It has also killed off the outdoor life that was the *lilong*'s main contribution to Shanghai's streetscape. As a potential future direction for the rehabilitation and reuse of *lilong* it is something of a dead end.

Xintiandi

Xintiandi (which means 'new world' in Chinese) is a hugely successful commercial redevelopment designed by another firm of American architects, Wood and Zapata. Consisting of two city blocks bordered by Taicang, Zizhong, Madang, and Huangpi South Roads, it forms part of the larger Taipingqiao redevelopment, which includes hotels, office towers, and residential facilities. Opened in 2001, it quickly became one of Shanghai's most popular shopping and entertainment hubs. One of the reasons Xintiandi proved so popular was that foreigners thought they were seeing the 'real' Shanghai, while Chinese saw it as exotically foreign; misperceptions that worked in the area's favour.

The *lilong* that house the area's glittering new retail and entertainment outlets were newly built using brick recycled from old demolished *lilong* in an attempt to lend the area an air of authenticity. There is, in fact, a long tradition of reusing building materials in Shanghai; Samuel Y. Liang says that the Sassoon family frequently reemployed materials from demolished houses in their real-estate developments.⁶ But the concept of authenticity is somewhat different in China than the West. Li Shiqiao says that newly built buildings can be thought of as authentically old to the Chinese because they are seen as a continuation of the past. This too is a very ancient tradition in China. Westerners may be tempted to dismiss Xintiandi as some sort of Disneyland-like reconstruction, but the Chinese conception of memory that these buildings contain is not a confusion of the real with the imitated, this is because the Chinese possess what Li calls "immaterial authenticity"⁷ in their collective memory, something that is maintained through (not in spite of) spatial and temporal relocations – even if this seems odd to Westerner observers.

Ackbar Abbas makes the point that preservation is not memory. "Preservation is selective and tends to exclude the dirt and pain",⁸ and this, he says, results in a form of kitsch. Xintiandi, it could be argued, is a form of kitsch, yet we must not let ourselves be blinded by its kitschiness and lose sight of what is actually going on here. The real lesson to be learned from Xintiandi is the fact that these buildings, which were once homes, are now being used as shops and restaurants. Any hope of recapturing the lively street life of the *lilong* is gone. The streets are lively, it cannot be denied, but they are not lived in. There is also the rumour that the poor are excluded (supposedly by security guards watching out for beggars), but in reality, more probably by the high prices commanded by these retail outlets. What it was that made these buildings, and the alleyways between them, interesting is gone: there are no longer any people to call them home.

Tianzifang

Tianzifang is a bottom-up commercial redevelopment a few blocks southwest of Xintiandi. Also known as Laotian (or 'old world'), clearly a reference to nearby Xintiandi. Tianzifang is a nebulous redevelopment of *lilong*, warehouses, and former factories that began to take shape between Sinan and Ruijin No. 2 Roads (just south of Jianguo Road Central) and then spread to adjoining areas as it grew in popularity.

Consisting of a confusing warren of twisting passageways, with buildings of different sizes and scales and sudden changes in ground level, it gives the impression of being more natural or bottom-up than the more rigorously planned Xintiandi. Originally home to studios, galleries, boutiques, and bars, it rapidly became something of a tourist trap, although it does preserve a mix of commercial and residential life.

Without the earlier Xintiandi redevelopment it is unlikely that Tianzifang would have developed, and certainly not in the way it did. There had long been galleries and bookshops here, but they may never have coalesced into this Xintiandi-like development had they not had such a successful example of commercial redevelopment so close by. Sadly, it is also probably thanks to Xintiandi's influence that these long-established cultural outlets have steadily been overtaken by shops catering to a more generic tourist trade.

Jing'an Villa

Jing'an Villa is one of the best preserved *lilong* in Shanghai. It saw a brief but fascinating efflorescence of bottom-up informal commercial activity in the early years of the 21st century initiated by *haigui* ('sea turtles' – the returning descendants of former Shanghai emigrants). Ying Zhou sees this redevelopment, with its echoes of international trend quarters such as Berlin's Prenzlauerberg and New York's Williamsburg, as an interesting variant in the way creative linkages can be spatially manifested. In this case they utilise the specific spatial characteristics of this particular *lilong* to facilitate entrepreneurial innovations that have led to what she calls "gentrification with Chinese characteristics".⁹ This is something that she sees as a potentially viable alternative to the demolition-and-reconstruction cycle more usually seen in Shanghai's urban redevelopment.

The *haigui* are 'localized cosmopolitans'. Their access to local culture helps them introduce international products and services while adapting them in situ. Their connections to transnational and local networks allow them to operate between the global and the local, and their small-scale creative enterprises began to transform Jing'an Villa in a way that was more flexible than by the imposition of heritage status. In other words, it is diversifying rather than homogenising. *Haigui* know-how enabled them to cultivate the spatial qualities of the area in a way that seems to follow the bottom-up development at Tianzifang.

Jing'an Villa was traditionally a middle-class *lilong* located between Nanjing and Weihai Roads. Ying Zhou identifies the urban structure of the *lilong*, with its semi-permeable block hierarchy and fine-grained ownership patterns, as being well suited to the commercial realisation of new consumption, as well as for creating an urban value-chain of living and working that allows for encounters that are both local and global. What distinguished this area is that, instead of the usual processes of residents simply renting out ground-floor space for commercial use, the *lilong* attracted a clustering of transnational creative activities, with cafés, boutiques, designer showrooms, and exhibition-cum-studio space all epitomising the lifestyle of the localised cosmopolitans who operated them, but also linked to an international value chain of locally situated spaces and producers.

The informality of these commercial conversions was indicated by the fact that signage of the enterprises only appeared when the venues were actually open. Without knowing of their presence, passers-by could easily miss them, a fact that increased their allure, especially for those in search of interesting and authentic-seeming local colour. Visitors who managed to find the area usually had access to selected networks thanks to top-end design magazines, or were part of a particular type of expatriate circle whose patronage of the area relished its 'under-the-radar' feel.

Ying Zhou highlights the *lilong*'s young entrepreneurs' concern for the dangers of over-commercialisation, and her research indicated a ratio of 30:70 for commercial to residential facilities here, which is in stark contrast to Tianzifang's 70:30. But even this ratio seems to have been too much for the local residents who, it seems, felt increasingly harassed by visitors (and who may also have been jealous of being excluded from the profits generated by their activities). Whatever the cause, this informal commercial activity soon shut down. The catalyst may have been the closing down of the adjacent Weihai 696, an independent, grass-roots arts community centred on number 696 Weihai Road which consisted of artists' studios, small galleries, and a variety of related creative enterprises; when it closed in 2010 this led to an influx of young designers into Jing'an Villa and may have acted as a tipping point for local residents.

However short-lived this experiment was, Jing'an Villa's combination of local agility and international perspective led to something really interesting. That skill-set is still there, especially among *haigui*. So, too, are a number of potentially appropriate *lilong*. Perhaps we could see a bottom-up flowering of informal commercial activity crop up again in some of these spaces? We may hope so.

Conclusion

Developers now see the benefit of reusing *lilong*. Xintiandi is as popular as ever, while the trail it blazed enabled places like Tianzifang and Jiayeli to develop. These different approaches to urban rehabilitation are not really sustainable if we want to see the spirit of the place preserved. And while Jing'an Villa was an interesting, if short-lived, experiment, whether it can be seen as a viable alternative to Xintiandi, Tianzifang, or even Jiayeli remains to be seen.

The main point of this paper was not to propose a blanket approach to preservation of the Shanghai *lilong*, neither is it intended to focus on preservation of the houses alone. The Shanghai *lilong* was a remarkable generator of vibrant street life, and it is this we should be seeking to preserve. Turning them into attractive outlets for international chain stores, while it does retain some of the buildings, does nothing to preserve the street life they engendered. Neither does turning them into homes for the rich, or preserving them as a sort of decorative museum in a heritage enclave. Blind nostalgia for old architectural forms is not going to help these buildings adapt to life in the 21st century, and trying to preserve them as mere shells misses their point. If we are going to preserve anything, it should be the spirit of the *lilong*, so that they may have a future as rich as their past. By preserving their spirit, we will also ensure that these houses are once again really interesting places to visit.

If we can understand lessons that the *lilong* can teach about urban life we will have a better chance of preserving them for the future, making sure Shanghai does not become just another generic Global City, full of skyscrapers and shopping malls, where redevelopment means the disappearance of what Non Arkaraprasertkul calls the city's "living heritage",¹⁰ the less benign side of preservation that is threatening the very soul of the city. Ironically, it seems that capitalism may point the way to a brighter future, which is not inappropriate, given its role in developing the house type in the first place; it may even make up for the damage that has been done to the *lilong* since the 1990s.

Not one of these four redevelopments will point to a brighter future on its own. Jiayeli proved detrimental to the street life that made the *lilong* such a wonderful contributor to vibrancy of the city, as did Xintiandi in its own way. Perhaps bottom-up informal commercial activity may be the most promising way of preserving them, an approach something between that of Tianzifang and Jing'an Villa. But it is probably by combining lessons from all four (even if only what not to do) that we may have a chance of ensuring a better approach to preserving this fascinating, unique, and still threatened house type.

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Notes

- For a brief introduction to the history of the *lilong* see 'part 1' of this article: Bracken, G. 2020. 'The Shanghai *lilong*: A new concept of home in China', *The Newsletter* #86, pp.10-11.
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The *Gulzār-i ḥāl* by Banwālīdās

Notes on a South Asian manuscript tradition

Giuseppe Cappello

An introduction to Banwālīdās's life and his *Gulzār-i ḥāl*

Banwālīdās (d. 1666), known by the pennames Walī and Walī Rām, was an interesting intellectual figure who lived in 17th century Mughal South Asia. Born into a Hindu Kāyastha family, Banwālīdās was attracted to Islamic mysticism already from an early age. Motivated by this interest, Banwālīdās moved to Kashmir, where he became a disciple of a renowned spiritual guide named Mullā Shāh Badakhshī (d. 1661). Mullā Shāh's teachings were inspired by the metaphysical ideas rooted in the doctrine of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* [Unity of Being]. Among the followers of Mullā Shāh were two members of the Mughal imperial family, the Mughal heir apparent Dārā Shukūh (d. 1659) and his sister Jahānārā (d. 1681). For a certain period, Banwālīdās served Dārā Shukūh as his secretary, until he retired from worldly duties to engage exclusively in ascetic practices.

The *Prabodhacandrodaya* by Kṛṣṇamiśra is an allegorical drama composed to highlight philosophical ideas linked to the doctrine of *Advaita Vedānta* and Vishnuite devotionalism. During several centuries, different authors composed texts inspired by the *Prabodhacandrodaya*'s allegorical plot. Around 1570, the Vallabhan poet Nanddās (ca. 1530-1585) produced a new version in Brajhbhāṣa (Hindi dialect) entitled *Prabodhacandrodaya Nāṭaka*. And the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* is Banwālīdās's Persian adaptation of the original Sanskrit text. Interestingly, Banwālīdās's translation process intertwines both Kṛṣṇamiśra's and Nanddās's *Prabodhacandrodaya*. Two preface models of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*, both penned by Banwālīdās, provide contrasting information about the source text.¹ One preface informs us that Banwālīdās translated the text from Sanskrit into Persian. The other states that Banwālīdās consulted Nanddās's version. No matter which source text(s) Banwālīdās used to realise his work, he adapted Hindu philosophical elements to an Islamic religious milieu heavily inspired by the doctrine of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*.

European collectors and collections

Manuscript editions of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* are available from different libraries in India, Pakistan and Europe. A limited number of both hard and digital copies can also be found in Iran. The European copies are generally found in the UK, with the exception of a manuscript edition present in Paris at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. In total, there are approximately 50 codices containing the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*, which were transcribed between late 17th and early 20th centuries. The present article provides information drawn from the codicological analysis of 27 items.

The presence of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* in Europe results from the general interest in Indian culture of different historical characters. Among the collectors who acquired a copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* was Warren Hastings (d. 1818), the first General Governor of India (1773-1785). Hastings promoted the study of Indian history, literature and arts through the analysis of Sanskrit, Persian and Arab sources. During his life, Hastings collected diverse Oriental manuscripts later acquired by the India Office Library.² Hastings's copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* (British Library, MS. Isl. 1591) was the work of an unknown copyist who transcribed the text in Banaras (1755) by employing a *shikasta* script.



Above: Frontispiece and folios with flowery decorations from an undated copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*. Library, Museum and Document Center of the Islamic Parliament (Teheran). MS. IR 10-46071, ff. 1b-2a; <https://dlib.ical.ir/faces/home.jspx>

A prominent figure in the history of British collections of Oriental manuscripts is William Johnson (d. 1807). Johnson was an officer of the British East India Company who studied Arab, Persian, Turkish and Hindustani. Johnson's collection of manuscripts amounted to 1000 items in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Sanskrit, Bengali, Panjabi, Hindi and Assamese. Among these manuscripts was an undated copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* (pre-1781) written in clear *nasta'liq* script (British Library, MS. Isl. 1182). Johnson's interest in Indian art also led him to acquire 64 albums of paintings. Shortly before Johnson's death, the East India Company purchased his collections, and the acquisitions "formed the backbone of the East India Company (later the India Office) Library".³

Another British collector of Oriental manuscripts was D.D. Dickson. During his travels in Persia and North India, Dickson acquired 109 Persian, 13 Arabic and 65 Indo-Aryan manuscripts, together with coloured prints and drawings of Oriental subjects. Dickson purchased two codices containing the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*, one incomplete and undated (SOAS, MS. 44591), the other transcribed in 1843-44 (SOAS, MS. 44758).

The Parisian copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* resulted from the collection of manuscripts acquired by Colonel Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Gentil (d. 1799) during his 25 years in India. For more than 10 years Gentil served as adviser and negotiator at the court of Shujā' al-Dawlat (d. 1775), who was the Nawāb of Awadh (1754-1775) and grand vizier of the Mughal emperor Shāh 'Ālam II (r. 1759-1806). Gentil's great interest in Indian history, literature and painting, as well as for cartography, resulted in a collection of Persian manuscripts, maps of Mughal territories and images of Oriental subjects.⁴ By 1776, Gentil had acquired a copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* (SP 24) dating back to the late 17th – early 18th century. Shortly after, in 1778, he gave this item to the Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale (now Bibliothèque nationale de France).

Possible routes of circulation

Generally, the items analysed do not present characteristics of luxury books such as decorated frontispieces, illumination, artistic writing style or high quality paper. The colophons of some copies contain aphorisms of copyists who wish for a prayer in their memory or ask for God's forgiveness. These aphorisms are pithy poetical formulations traditionally circulated among copyists of Persian texts. Furthermore, they are expressed by a less elegant language, not embellished by Persian classical metaphors and figures of speech. In other words, these aphorisms were produced by 'literary men' [*ahl-i qalam*] active outside of courtly contexts. And the lower material value of some of the items analysed supports this hypothesis. At the end of a codex manufactured as a

luxury book we would rarely find this kind of aphorism. Luxury books were transcribed by artists (calligraphers) who, if they intended to include an inspired thought in their colophon, would have expressed it by composing a new poetical formulation. In addition to the transcription of books, the calligraphers mastered different literary arts ranging from the creation of epigraphs for monuments and furnishings, to the composition of new poetical verses and aphorisms. The calligraphers thus had the necessary erudition and experience to articulate their inspired thoughts by inventing new poetical formulations. In the case of a serial production, the calligrapher would sell the item rapidly, and neither colophon nor calligrapher's signature would be included.

Concerning the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*'s manuscript tradition, palaeographic and codicological markers indicate that the books generally circulated among intellectuals of lower-intermediate social classes. Nothing indicates a serial production of the items analysed; they could result from the commission of a single item or be owned by the copyist himself. Nevertheless, a few items do present a decorated frontispiece, and two manuscript editions resulted from the work of calligraphers (Punjab Public Library, Lahore, MS. 873-0821-ḥ-2, MS. 873-0821-ḥ-3).

Among the colophons analysed one item emerged that circulated in higher social milieus. Notably, the calligrapher of MS. 873-0821-ḥ-3, a certain Khūshḥāl Chand,⁵ transcribed a copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* in Jaipur (1766) while he served as secretary to Rā'ū Hīmrāj Katāra and Rā'ū Hīr Singh (f. 54a). The colophon reports that these historical characters had political relations with Rāja Prithi Indra Jawāhar Singh Jāt.⁶

Some copyists of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* were not Muslims; they defined themselves with epithets such as 'bearer of the sacred thread' [*zunnardār*], pundit, and 'devoted to Dayā Rāma' [*banda-yi Dayā Rām*]. A clue to the circulation among Hindu readers are the invocations to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Gaṇeśa that adorn seven of the copies analysed. Such invocations sometimes substitute the Islamic *basmala*; in other cases, they appear together with it. An example of a manuscript book circulated among Hindu readers is MS. 368-374 (Idāra-yi Adabīyat-i Urdu, Hyderabad), which is a miscellaneous codex containing the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* and other Persian translations of Sanskrit texts. In total, MS. 368-374 contains seven texts, the first of which is an edition of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*. The codex lacks of folios at the beginning as well as the end. However, from the extant folios of the book invocations to Gaṇeśa have emerged that adorn the second and the seventh translation. Interestingly, the colophon of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* reports that the copyist transcribed the text in Banaras (1754-55) while he followed the army of the Nawāb Shujā' al-Dawlat. Even if nothing indicates that this copy of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* was

The *Gulzār-i ḥāl* [Rose Garden of Mystical Ecstasy] by Banwālīdās (1662-63) is a Persian adaptation of the Sanskrit drama *Prabodhacandrodaya* by Kṛṣṇamiśra (ca. 1060). However, it is hypothesised that Banwālīdās may have also consulted a vernacular version by the poet Nanddās entitled *Prabodhacandrodaya Nāṭaka* (1570), as an intermediary with the original Sanskrit. Approximately 50 extant copies of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* testify to how the text circulated among South Asian intellectual circles of later times. The extant codices containing the *Gulzār-i ḥāl*, which are available in India, Pakistan and Europe are witness to the recognition gained by the text from the late 17th century onwards. In this article, I focus on some collectors, collections and cultural trends of the copyists, to delineate possible routes of circulations covered by this Indo-Persian adaptation.

intended for the Nawāb, its existence is proof that military contexts also witnessed the text.

The copies analysed were produced in a wide geographical area, extending from Hugli (Bengal) to Bahawalpur (Pakistani Punjab). Among these items, only MS. 4529-21 was transcribed in South India (Hyderabad, 1834) and is now displayed at the Salar Jung Museum. During the 19th century, two lithographic editions of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* entered the South Asian market of printed books through the publications of the businessman Burjorji Sorabji Ashburner (Bombay, 1862) and the Nawal Kishor Press (Lucknow, 1877). Despite the advent of modern printing techniques, South Asian copyists continued to transcribe copies of the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* until 1906.

The codicological investigation brings to light the recognition gained by the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* among South Asian readers. Generally, this manuscript tradition circulated among intellectuals of low-middle social classes. Yet, the manuscript copy calligraphed by Khūshḥāl Chand in a courtly context demonstrates that higher social classes also witnessed the text. Furthermore, the items analysed circulated among socio-religious groups of Muslim and Hindu intellectuals. Why a readership of different religious beliefs accepted the *Gulzār-i ḥāl* among their spiritual readings is a question of great relevance in the field of South Asian intellectual history, and constitutes the central theme of my further research.

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- It is not clear if this is the Jawāhar Singh Jāt who reigned over the Bharatpur State from 1763 to 1768.

Panchayati Raj structural amendments in Jharkhand

Two sides of the same coin

Chiara Correndo

British indirect rule in the Chotanagpur Plateau

In 19th century Chotanagpur Plateau, located in the south-western part of the British India Bengal Presidency, the colonial administration managed to exercise power over the local indigenous (Adivasi) population through traditional chiefs, who were co-opted to administer civil justice, maintain public order and security and manage natural resources. These rights and obligations were ascribed through the *hukuknamas* [record of rights] and the chiefs discharged their duties against a salary directly paid by the British administration. The British therefore controlled lands through pre-existing local power structures and, having traditional chiefs on their payroll, they started to claim the right to appoint and remove those leaders who did not satisfy their requirements or simply were not loyal to the British administration.¹ By doing this, they managed not only to save the costs of day-to-day administration, but also to become champions of local traditions in the eyes of the population as they 'preserved' traditional power structures and to make their presence on the territory widespread.²

Nonetheless, it is clear that this co-option was done within the norms of British imperialism, which was not interested in extending autonomy to the ethnic communities, but rather in gaining tighter control over these 'ungovernable' territories and joint administration over the rich resources of the area.³ Indeed, local leaders had to conform to new norms (namely, positive state norms) and their source of legitimation in the eyes of the community shifted from being merely social to being superimposed by the colonial administration, which defined the spaces of existence and the features of traditional administrative patterns. This kind of complex interaction can be accounted for borrowing the concept devised by André Hoekema of 'internal conflict rules', meant as "legal rules, at the national level, that define the scope and limits as well as personal and material competence of an officially recognized, distinct, community-based jurisdiction and/or of an officially recognized, community-based authority".⁴

The assumption of my research is that the process of rationalization, co-optation and absorption of traditional administrative institutions carried out by the British first and by the independent Indian government afterwards, via the constitutional amendments to self-government schemes, deprived these communities of essential coping strategies they had devised internally to resist against exploitation and expropriation of land.

Road to PESA

The 1992 constitutional reform, namely the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act on Panchayati Raj institutions, provided for the insertion of a Part IX within the Constitution and gave constitutional coverage to a three-tiered structure with the goal of ending arbitrary State enactments of the Panchayati Raj system.

This structure envisaged a *Gram Panchayat* (an assembly of 5-30 elected members at the village level, in power for five years), which was linked to a *Gram Sabha* (a body consisting of



Above: Courtyard of an Adivasi house, Ranchi district. Photo courtesy of Idrometra.

persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a 'revenue' village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level), a *Panchayat Samiti* (at the block level) and a *Zilla Parishad* (district level). Within this constitutional scheme, the role of the traditional *sabha* [assembly], built upon the 'natural' village (which takes into account social and economic ties as well as geographical boundaries, as against the 'revenue' administrative one) was erased and superseded by new institutions, which borrow shape and functions from the traditional assembly paradigms but are, in fact, legitimated, disciplined and constituted by the state.

Following art. 243M, the amendment would not apply to the Scheduled Areas and tribal areas; the Scheduled Areas of Jharkhand, located in the Chotanagapour Plateau, with their Adivasi population were therefore left out from the purview of the amendment. Despite this explicit constitutional prohibition, several States in India did not provide for special exemptions and extended the three-tiered structure also to the Scheduled Areas comprised in their respective territories; this was the case for Jharkhand (which had been part of Bihar until 2001) through the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1948. This praxis was declared unconstitutional in 1995,⁵ which created a legal vacuum for the Scheduled Areas; formal institutions were declared illegal if constituted in Scheduled Areas, but the traditional ones were not recognized. In 1996 the federal Legislator adopted an act to correct this situation and regulate the extension of the Panchayati Raj system to the Scheduled Areas (Clause 1, art. 244 of the Indian Constitution). The Act was called Provisions of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (commonly known as PESA), which laid out the general framework and the guidelines that should be followed by the subsequent state implementing acts.⁶

JPRA: a partial fulfillment of the promises

PESA builds upon the three-tiered structure, envisaged by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, introducing some important changes. First of all, the Legislator decided to privilege the concept of natural village over the revenue village one. The natural village becomes the unit against which to recognize the existence of the *Gram Sabha*, which shall "safeguard and preserve the traditions and

Right after the enactment of the 1992 constitutional amendment to the Panchayati Raj system in India, it became clear that it would be necessary to adopt different legal strategies for the so-called Scheduled Areas and the Adivasi communities living in these territories. These legal reforms skewed traditional patterns of justice administration and local governance, bringing about mixed results and concerns.

customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution" (art. 4.d). The powers conferred by PESA upon the *Gram Sabha* can be inflected in mandatory executive powers over plans, programs and projects for social and economic development (art. 4.e.i and 4.e.ii), consulting powers to be shared with the institutional Panchayats over the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects (art. 4.i) and recommendatory powers (to be shared with institutional Panchayats) over minor issues.⁷

Both *Gram Sabha* and *Gram Panchayat* were granted the power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe. Undoubtedly, the Legislator meant to endow the traditional *Gram Sabha* in Scheduled Areas with more power and recognition; nonetheless, this double pattern of shared powers turned out to be the downside of this reform and, eventually, one of the reasons of its substantial betrayal on the part of the several state implementing acts.

In the Jharkhand Panchayat Raj Act 2001 (JPRA), consulting and recommendatory powers were downsized and diluted, as major administrative tasks and *de facto* management over natural resources were allotted to *Gram Panchayats*, *Panchayat Samitis* and *Zilla Parishads*. This contributed to bringing back to the State key functions and prerogatives (mostly those related to land and natural resources), cutting out customary village institutions from these dynamics of local self-governance.

Two sides, same coin

The process of institutionalization and disciplining of local traditional administrative bodies has manifold and, at times, contrasting implications, depending on the different actors affected. From the research that I conducted in 2017 in New Delhi and Ranchi, it emerged that the application of PESA and JPRA in Scheduled Areas positively contributed to the upliftment and empowerment of women within the village administration. Indeed, both Acts provide for women's reserved quotas at each institutional level, thanks to which women progressively managed to carve out spaces of expression and self-determination in the local political arena.

On the other hand, new electoral processes brought about the 'detrabalisation' of local

councils and a progressive delegitimization of traditional leaders. The JPRA norms created, in fact, a duplication of leading figures especially at the village level (one institutional and elected, and the other one 'traditional'), which implied a doubling of forums and the hybridization of traditional spaces. On top of this, there is an additional aspect related to the fact that several struggles against displacement projects have been led by traditional leaders and assemblies. For instance, the struggles against the Koel-Karo project were led and coordinated by local leaders who used their power to restrict access to the areas and issued entry bans against National Hydroelectric Power officials.⁸ Disempowering traditional leaders and bodies therefore may end up depriving local communities of forums of resistance against external encroachments on and expropriation of Adivasi lands.

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Left: Ganti Sirap ceremony at Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi.

What animals teach us about Islam

Animal reliefs in the mosque of Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi

Tan Zi Hao

Conventional wisdom holds that Islamic art prohibits figurative representation and has a proclivity for abstract stylisation. This view is at best a misguided oversimplification and requires much nuancing. In the mosque of Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi, there are four central columns [*saka guru*] whose wood panelled bases display animal reliefs. The animals represented include snakes, tigers, bantengs, and fish, each of which conveys specific moral wisdom intrinsic to the teachings of Islam.

Tucked to the west of the holy tomb of Mbah Buyut Trusmi, bordering a graveyard, stands the mosque of Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi. For decades, the mosque has been a spiritual lodestone of Trusmi, a small yet hectic town in Plered, Cirebon Regency. Along with the holy tomb and the graveyard, the mosque belongs to the broader sacred complex Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi, named after the eponymous founder of Trusmi.¹ The sacred complex was once a *pesantren* [Islamic boarding school] that had welcomed students and scholars of varying Sufi orders. The site also consists of caretaker's halls [*bale*], an exclusive building believed to be the oldest structure in the compound [*witana*], an ablution pond [*pekulahan*], a pilgrim's lodge [*jinem*], and many more.

During events such as the annual Memayu and the quadrennial Ganti Sirap ceremonies, devoted Muslims travel from afar to assist in replacing the roof covering of the various edifices within the sacred complex. Roof replacement is symbolic of spiritual renewal and rejuvenation. It stresses the importance of introspection and self-improvement so as to strengthen one's faith. Days before the festivities, the complex is often already abuzz with activities both logistical and spiritual: responsibilities have to be delegated, roofing materials and food ingredients have to be gathered, while devotional practices such as *tahlilan* and *brai* carry on deep into the night.² Altogether the activities stimulate greater anticipation if not direct participation among the Muslim communities in Cirebon. In both

ceremonies, the division of labour is starkly gendered. Whereas men are responsible for the reconstruction of roofs, women are mostly busy with food preparation. Nonetheless, the sense of communal conviviality is shared across all. It is largely believed that spiritual capital can be accrued from involvement in these ceremonies, where individuals voluntarily offer their time and labour in exchange for divine blessing or *berkah*.³

The *saka guru*

The animal reliefs are located in the innermost prayer room of the mosque. To reach this space, one has to pass through a common praying area where the *bedug* (a large drum beaten to signal the call to prayer) is hanging.⁴ In the rectangular common praying area, there exist columns similar to the *saka guru*, but the bases are profusely decorated with floral instead of animal motifs. Contrariwise, the main prayer room is enclosed by walls of equal width, with a *mihrab* [niche] and *minbar* (raised steps from where to preach) facing Mecca on the northwest side of the room. It is in this exclusive space that sixteen animal reliefs are found mounted on all four sides of the four *saka guru*. Leaving out the repeated motifs, one notices five different variations. All animal reliefs are situated below eye level, serving a mnemonic function for Muslims who pray seated.

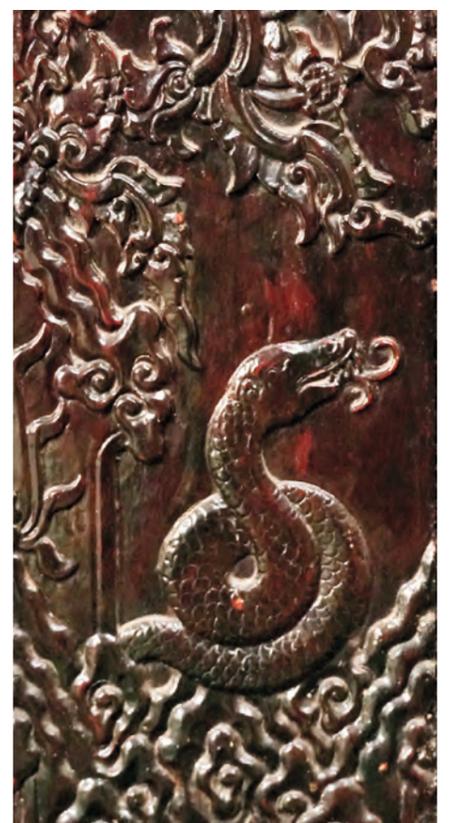
That the animal reliefs are placed at the inner sanctum of the mosque is suggestive

not only of their symbolic significance, but infers a decision made by one with sufficient authority. Moreover, only the *saka guru*, which are principal structures in Javanese architecture, have bases with animal motifs. The provenance of these reliefs remains uncertain. Cirebonese woodcarver Djoko Nurkafi recalled that he had seen sketches of the reliefs from his teacher, the late Ki Kamad, but he was unsure if the sketches were his original or a reproduction of earlier sketches. Considering the involvement of Ki Kamad's father in a team of woodcarvers responsible for providing decorative carvings for Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi in the early twentieth century, Djoko Nurkafi's estimation is barely surprising. Under the leadership of Ch.O. van der Plas, then Resident of Cirebon (1932-1936),⁵ a restoration project at Cirebon's Sang Cipta Rasa Royal Mosque had spurred the influx of equipment and techniques from Jepara, a coastal area notable for elaborate woodcarving.⁶ In all likelihood, the animal reliefs are relatively recent artefacts forged in the crucible of colonialism. The following discussion presents the animals in a sequence assuming that one moves from the doorway to the *qibla* wall that points towards Mecca.

Right: Animal reliefs mounted on the *saka guru* bases in the mosque of Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi. On the first two *saka guru* are a snake and a tiger in two variations; on the other two *saka guru* are a pair of bantengs and nine fish encircling Allah. The images from left to right depict: the snake, the sitting tiger, the tiger lying on the ground, the bantengs, and the fish.

As still as a snake and tiger

On the column bases facing the doorway, a snake sticks out its forked tongue while resting upon a rocky foundation with its body coiled up. The stringent stillness of a snake, according to the chief caretaker Kyai Tony, is to be emulated by fellow devotees. Social abstinence is the snake's greatest virtue, for any disturbance would drive it into hiding, into further isolation. Comparing the snake to a devotee, he contended that a Muslim does not wish to be disturbed during prayer. The late Kyai Achmad, the previous chief of the sacred complex, offered a similar analogy. In praise of the snake, he expounded that one should "behave like a snake", to "eat once and stop eating for an extended period", implying that Muslims should abstain from worldly indulgence.⁷ Abutting the snake reliefs are the tiger reliefs, which come with two renditions: one tiger is depicted sitting, while another lies prone on the ground. Pertaining to the tigers, Kyai Tony was of the opinion that they convey a lesson of spiritual concentration not unlike that of the snake. Kyai Achmad considered them a reminder for Muslims to "always sit, instead of sleeping", which was interpreted as a disposition for "contemplation" [*tafakur*].⁸ Read in the context of a mosque, the distinct tiger poses are reminiscent of the prescribed prayer movements [*rakaat*].



Symbolic affiliation between the snake, the tiger, and spiritual discipline is not uncommon in the broader Islamic world. The subduing of animality by Muslim saints is a recurrent trope in Sufism. The figure of a Sufi sheikh is commonly visualised riding a tamed tiger or lion with a snake as his whip, for it is precisely his unfaltering belief in God that renders him fearless among the beasts, at once enabling his extraordinary mastery over nature and the animal kingdom.⁹ Tigers and lions resting underneath the shade of trees is another persistent Sufi imagery in Cirebon and abroad. Seated beasts are direct evidence of the spiritual prowess of holy saints, who are capable of coercing abominable beasts into unusual compliance. From the abstinence of the snake to the tiger's aptitude for sitting, perceived composure of the animals is valorised and taken as a lesson for spiritual discipline.

Banteng, the people

Inching closer towards the *qibla* wall, the other two column bases present reliefs of bantengs (species of cattle found in Southeast Asia). Unlike the previous carvings, the banteng relief has a symmetrical composition that points skyward. Standing on a peaking foundation, the pair of bantengs face towards a tree, which has a curious outgrowth reaching the clouds, emblematic of the empyrean domain. Commonplace in Javanese animal symbolism, the banteng reflects the staunch character of the people. This popular association is relatively modern but not entirely unthinkable given banteng's endearing domesticity and its longstanding service to humans. The traditional *rampok macan* ceremony, which involved a battle between a tiger and a banteng (or a water buffalo), may have contributed to this signification. During colonial times when the ceremony was staged, the tiger was associated with the deceitful character of colonial invaders, while the banteng emerged as a symbol of the plebeians who would eventually triumph against all odds.¹⁰ In the main Cirebonese royal court *Kraton Kasepuhan*, a single door leaf at the gateway leading to the princes' quarter depicts a confrontation between an elephant and a banteng. This particular motif is likely to be a cryptic chronogram [*candrasengkala*] denoting a historic year, but the confrontation has been interpreted by locals as a balance of power between the ruler and ruled: if the elephant symbolises power and royalty, the banteng symbolises the unflinching spirit of the people. That this relief contains the only animal that exhibits sexual dimorphism—the male is depicted with horns while the female without—is positive testimony to the banteng's symbolic manifestation of the people.

Purity of fish

The relief depicts a total of nine fish encircling the word 'Allah' in Arabic. Kyai Tony

clarified that the seawater fish is immune to its salty environment. When consumed, its flesh has a "savourless" [*tawar*] quality, which is likened to a pure interiority sheltered from extraneous elements. Not by coincidence, his anecdotal account echoes a Qur'anic verse that regards the edibility of seawater fish as a bounty of God: "The two bodies of water are not alike—one is palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, the other salty and bitter—yet from each you eat fresh fish" (Surah 35: 12). Indeed, fresh fish are "not easily swayed", averred the late Kyai Achmad, since they "remain unsalted".¹¹ The animal is herein, to recall Claude-Lévi-Strauss's remark, both "good for eating" and "good for thinking",¹² since the savourless taste of the seawater fish mirrors the purity of the human soul. An individual with spiritual integrity is akin to a seawater fish, whose essence is impervious to outside contamination, detached from the cares of the material world.

Beyond what is intrinsic to all nine fish, the number nine itself denotes yet another spiritual significance. In Javanese Islamic mysticism, the number refers to the nine conduits of lowly passion [*nafsu*]. The human body is said to possess a total of nine orifices [*babahan hawa sanga*], which include the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, penis, and anus.¹³ All nine orifices provide access to worldly desires and hence have to be regulated or sealed.¹⁴ In this regard, the depiction of the nine fish oriented towards Allah takes on a metaphysical tinge. Apart from a demonstration of unquestioning loyalty to God, the fish signals a foreclosure of all sensory functions, a willful submission of the soul to God, not least insinuating the death of the corporeal body.¹⁵ Death, understood only as a termination of the present life, launches one into the Hereafter. As an aquatic animal roaming freely in the water, the fish is particularly pertinent for imagining a life beyond the present life.

Towards mystical union

From the snake to the fish, we are trailing a path from the netherworld to the empyrean domain. More can be gleaned from looking across the animal reliefs, which follow an order of reading that is by no means coincidental. With the stillness of a snake, one enters into prayer. With the disciplined concentration of a seated tiger, one retires into contemplation. Unique to both the snake and tiger reliefs are the undulating rocky terrain, otherwise known as *wadasan*. Beyond serving as the ground upon which the snake and the tiger rest and genuflect, the *wadasan* reflects the earth, the here and now.¹⁶ Life in the present world thus corresponds to the predatory beasts, who have bowed down before God to renounce all worldly passions.

Next come the two bantengs, awaiting a takeoff. Being herbivorous, they stand in stark contrast to the preceding beasts.

Their steadfast and slow-moving character testifies to their resolute containment of worldly passions. At the apex of the ground, the bantengs rally towards the tree that extends towards the clouds, otherwise known as *mega mendung*. The shift from *wadasan* to *mega mendung* blatantly demonstrates a movement from the here to the Hereafter, signifying a path towards spiritual enlightenment.

This journey culminates in the final relief where the *wadasan* foundation is entirely absent, leaving only the clouds. The nine fish wander in mid-air, for at this stage, the being is no longer burdened by the material world but stays afloat in the realm of eternity. The nine fish, symbolic of the nine orifices of the body, are completely sealed off from all worldly passions. Visualised with propinquity to Allah, the fish serves as a marker of mystical union with God.

Animal imagery, far from being a prohibited element in Islamic art, presents an array of creative configuration with which to render abstract concepts in Islam intelligible and memorable. Largely due to the animal's proximity to 'nature', the use of animal symbolism in religion often illustrates "how human nature should be and how it might be restored".¹⁷ The animal reliefs in the mosque of *Kramat Mbah Buyut Trusmi* are noteworthy objects of Islamic art, not only because of the intricate woodwork but for the ideas and interpretations they engender. Beyond what plain words could explain, animal attributes offer incisive demonstrations in the elaboration of complex spiritual concerns. They perform an idea with the least amount of effort. More crucially, animal imagery is a proxy for human thought. What is selectively deemed as natural or innate to the animal kingdom is not only used to prescribe moral wisdom, but to impart to Muslims the guiding principles for attaining spiritual union with God.

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Notes

- 1 It remains debatable as to whom the appellation 'Mbah Buyut Trusmi' refers. Muhaimin, A.G. 2006. *The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims*. ANU Press, pp.185-86.
- 2 *Brai* is a derivative of the word *brahi* or *berahi*. The word can be understood as excitement which usually bears sexual connotation, but in this context, it relates to the excitement evoked from the performance of devotion to God. To grasp the layered complexity of *brai* and how its perception was further compounded by colonial objectification, see Cohen, M.I. 2011. 'Brai in Performance: Religious Ecstasy and Art in Java', in Harnish D.D. & Rasmussen A.K. (eds) *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia*. Oxford University Press, pp.132-60.
- 3 For a detailed description of *berkah*, see Geertz, C. 1968. *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Yale University Press, p.44; Siddique, S. 1977. 'Relics of the Past? A Sociological Study of the Sultanates of Cirebon, West Java', PhD thesis, University of Bielefeld, p.182.
- 4 This space was built at a later date to accommodate the increasing population in Trusmi. Kwanda, T. 2012. 'The Tradition of Architectural Conservation and the Intangible Authenticity: The Case of Ki Buyut Trusmi Complex in Cirebon, Indonesia', PhD thesis, National University of Singapore, pp.138-43; <https://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/handle/10635/37828>.
- 5 Van der Plas was highly regarded in Indonesia for "taking an uncommon and knowledgeable interest in Islam and non-Western cultures". His approach was strongly influenced by the orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), who, in 1921, secured him "an appointment as consul for the Netherlands in Jeddah", thus paving the way for his subsequent career, from being the Assistant Resident of Blitar (1931-1932) to the Resident of Cirebon (1932-1936) and the Governor of East Java (1936-1941). His leadership in the mid-1930s in Cirebon coincided with the 'ethical period', where Cirebonese Sultans were allowed to maintain their influence and preserve their custom. Frederick, W.H. 1995. 'The Man Who Knew Too Much: Ch.O. van der Plas and the Future of Indonesia, 1927-1950', in Antlöv, H. & Tønnesson, S. (eds) *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism 1930-1957*. Curzon Press, p.36.
- 6 I am indebted to Djoko Nurkafi and Matthew Isaac Cohen for their comments.
- 7 Kwanda, p.366.
- 8 *ibid.*, p.365.
- 9 Schimmel, A. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. The University of North Carolina Press, p.428; Bruinessen, M. 1991. 'Haji Bektash, Sultan Sahak, Shah Mina Sahib, and Various Avatars of a Running Wall', *Turcica* 21-23:55-69.
- 10 Wessing, R. 1992. 'A Tiger in the Heart: The Javanese Rampok Macan', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 148(2):296; Ricklefs, M.C. 1974. *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749-1792: A History of the Division of Java*. Oxford University Press: 276; Holt, C. 1967. *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*. Cornell University Press, pp.22-23.
- 11 see note 7
- 12 Lévi-Strauss, C. (Trans. R. Needham) 1963. *Totemism*. Beacon Press, p.89.
- 13 The nine gateways of Lawang Sanga at *Kraton Kasepuhan* share a similar meaning. The nine orifices as a trope is widespread and reverberates through many other esoteric practices such as tantrism. In Hindu-Buddhist teachings, the nine orifices are called *navadvāra*. Becker, J. 1993. *Gamelan Stories: Tantrism, Islam, and Aesthetics in Central Java*. Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, pp.144, n.6.
- 14 Hadiwijono, H. 1967. *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*. Baarn: Bosch & Keuning, pp.146-47.
- 15 A little-documented Javanese funerary tradition requires that all nine orifices of a corpse be shut off with cotton prior to burial. Woodward, M. 1989. *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. University of Arizona Press, p.198.
- 16 The rough contour of the *wadasan* mirrors the different grades of worldly passion [*nafsu*]. Bambang Irianto & Dyah Komala Laksmiwati. 2012. *Baluarti Keraton Kacirebonan*. Deepublish, p.18.
- 17 Randall, C. 2014. *The Wisdom of Animals: Creatureliness in Early Modern French Spirituality*. University of Notre Dame Press, p.4.

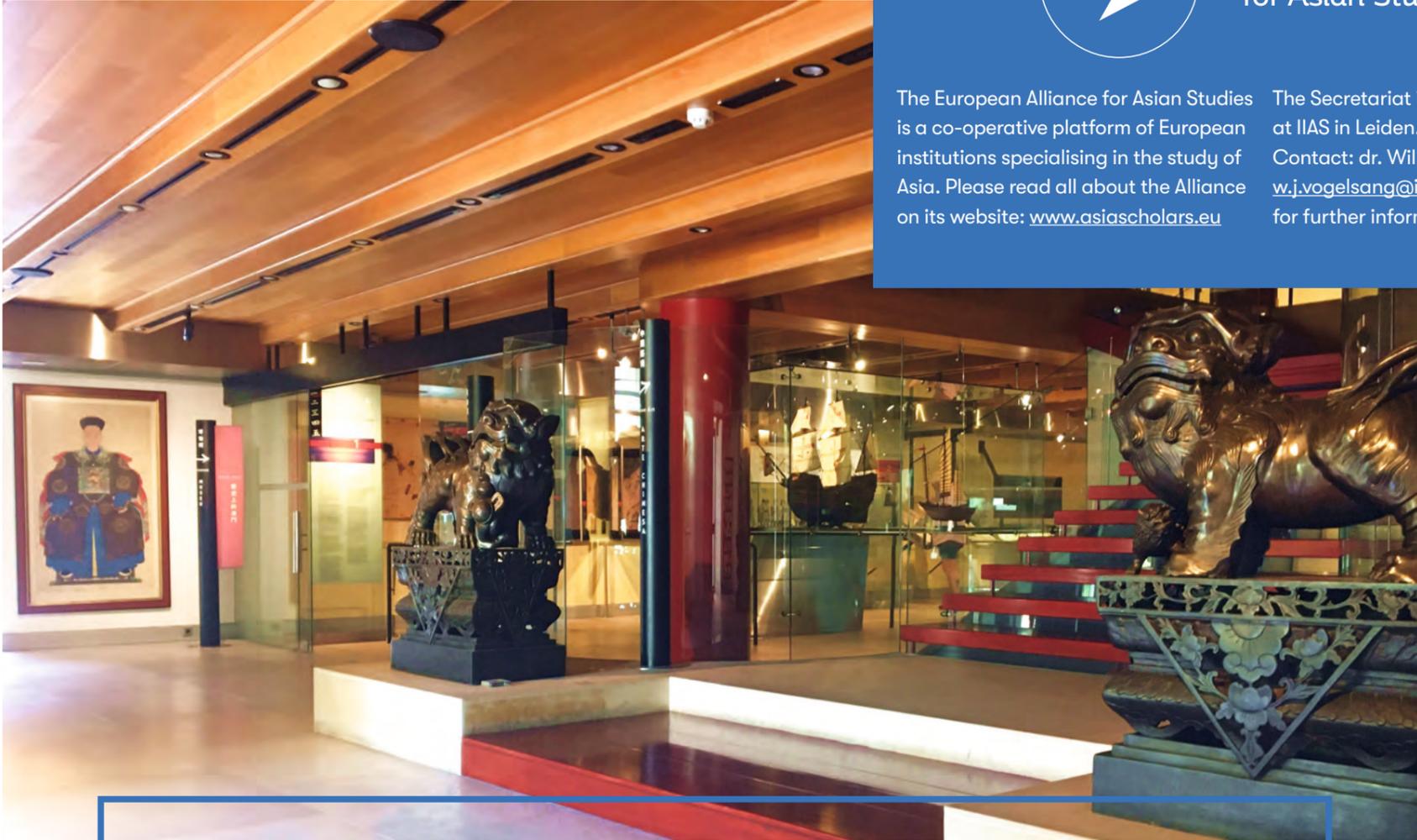




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Left: Entrance Hall of the Museum of the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre.
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New directions in Chinese Studies in Portugal

Since its inauguration in 1999, the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre (in Portuguese, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, which can be abbreviated to CCCM) has become recognized world-wide as an important focal point for research on Portuguese interactions with China since the sixteenth century. The CCCM is unique since in its premises it includes a richly-stocked museum, and also possesses the largest library in Portugal of research literature on China, along with a collection of rare and valuable manuscripts and archival documents.



Below: Opening Session of the 2019/2020 edition of the advanced course 'China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries in World Trade' on Oct 11, 2019. Property of the course.

Unique and extensive library collections

About the library, all that I will mention here is that it contains, in addition to a very large collection of relevant literature, an audiovisual collection of about forty thousand slides and five thousand photographs, and a unique collection consisting of about seven thousand microfilms containing more than fifty thousand documents, including the collection from the Holy House of Mercy of Macau, restricted books from the Historical Archives of Macau, the Parish Archives of Macau, and the Archives of the Municipal Council of Macau. This large collection includes essential documents for the study of Macau and its institutions, covering a time range from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the

twentieth century. Helena Dias Coelho, who has been present from the very first beginning of the Macau Centre and is the 'guardian' of the Library's funds, will be engaged on securing their digital version for years to come.

Richly-stocked museum

Research carried out at the CCCM in the first twenty years of its existence centred to a great extent on contacts between Portugal and China during the Early Modern Period or, in Chinese terms, the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the Museum, which is currently headed by Rui Abreu Dantas, the section of exhibits titled 'The Port City' reveals how the network of interests and relations between groups of Portuguese and Chinese residing there created the need for and the possibility of a city of services between

Europe and Asia, and between East Asia, and Indian and Atlantic oceans. Another section titled 'The Order of Transfers' displays some of the ecological and technological exchanges that made Macau a pole of dynamism in East Asia and Europe. New foodstuffs, new instruments, and even new ways of taking measurements entered China, and also travelled to Europe, through Macau, which has been, since its origin, one of the central points for continual openness and communication between East Asia and Europe, and the rest of the world. A third section titled 'Christianism and Culture' emphasizes the role of Macau as a place of religious plurality, with its Chinese syncretism of popular religiosity, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, accompanied by Christianity, and highlights the role of St. Paul's College, the first European university college in East Asia.

In the Museum's *Chinese Art Collection*, which spans a period of more than five thousand years, exhibits include a wide range of artefacts from Neolithic ceramics to nineteenth century ivories. *The Collection* includes terracotta, bronzes, stoneware, and various types of porcelain, such as blue and white, green family, pink family, emblazoned and monogrammed, as well as pieces of religious symbolic importance. Additionally, *The Collection* features Shek Wan ceramics, an important and significant collection of objects used to smoke opium, objects that were part of the *China Trade*, such as lacquers, paintings from Chinese and European schools that highlight views of the Praia Grande Bay, fans, silverware, costumes, and a significant collection of Chinese coins. Examples of special public exhibitions that have been organized in the Museum are *Ceramics*

of *Timor Loro Sae*, which was attended by the President of Timor, Xanana Gusmão; *Macau: An International Port*; *Tomás Pereira (1646-1708): A Jesuit in Kangxi's China*; *Bronzes and Jades from Ancient China*, featuring treasures from the José de Guimarães collection; and *Peace and Serenity: Song Ceramics from the Qing Jing Tang Collection*, curated by Robert D. Mowry, emeritus curator of Chinese Art of Harvard Art Museums.

Research at CCCM

Two major projects have been initiated at the CCCM, bringing together a large number of specialists, since 2006. One project is centred on the life and works of Tomás Pereira (1646-1708), a Portuguese missionary who resided in Beijing for thirty-six years from 1673 until his death. Pereira achieved renown as a cultural mediator between Portugal and China, as a consequence of his proximity to the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661-1722). Serving as a political and diplomatic advisor to the emperor, Pereira had a decisive role in the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk between China and Russia (1689). While residing in the capital, Pereira served as Acting President of the Astronomical Bureau, and was himself an expert craftsman, possessing competence in mechanics and European techniques for designing and constructing clocks, musical instruments and automata. Pereira also taught European music to the emperor, and these lessons came to play a crucial role in Pereira's relationship with the Kangxi Emperor. The project on Pereira was completed in 2011 with the publication of two volumes, amounting to more than a thousand pages, comprising biographical documents, one hundred and fifty-one letters, and a dozen reports and treaties. This project, carried out in cooperation with the Centre for Classical Studies of the University of Lisbon, also resulted in the organization of two international colloquia in 2008, one in Lisbon at the Centre, and the other in Beijing. The latter gathering was in cooperation with the Center for Mathematics and Fundamental Applications of the University of Lisbon and the Institute of History of Natural Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

A few years after the completion of this major work, another research project was initiated on one of the central figures in the field of relations between Portugal and Ming Dynasty China, namely Álvaro Semedo (1585-1658). He too was a Portuguese missionary with a lengthy experience of living in China, from 1613, with brief interruptions, until his death. Semedo possessed profound knowledge of the Chinese language and Chinese culture. Among his extensive body of works, a book he published in 1642, in the Spanish language, titled *Imperio de la China i Cultura Evangélica en él*, quickly became a bestseller in seventeenth century Europe. This large-scale project is still underway, and at the CCCM, Dr Isabel Pina is currently engaged in writing a major monograph on Semedo and his works, dealing with issues such as his seminal contribution to the long process of constituting and circulating knowledge in Europe about the Chinese empire. Her colleague, Dr Ana Cristina Alves, who is currently working on developing the Museum holdings, is herself a specialist in the history of Chinese philosophy, culture and religion, and resided for several decades in



Above: Black Ship Model at the Museum of the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre. © Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre.

Macau. In addition to research with specific connections to Portugal and to Macau, the CCCM has been the venue for a number of international conferences, including a conference concerning *Mazu*, the goddess of the sea, reputed to have lived during the tenth century; another on *Chinese Musical Instruments*, and a third titled *Eurasia: Trade and Finance (1300-2000)*.

New director, new direction

On 17 February 2020, I was appointed to the position of President of the CCCM, and was charged by the Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Manuel Heitor, with developing a strategic plan for the period 2020-2030 for the CCCM. In the MoU between the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education of Portugal, and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, it is stated that co-operation on cultural heritage, history of science and technology, and emerging contemporary interactions, may include, but is not restricted to, the development of a new R&D agenda and advanced training programs aiming to promote the history of science and emerging Europe-Asian scientific and cultural relations. These may include the analysis of the evolution of the 'silk route', from its origins to the prospective discussion of new horizons, as well as the promotion of the collaboration of China and Chinese institutions with the 'Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre, CCCM', located in Lisbon, together with the promotion of a new R&D alliance for the development of the history of science and technology, and emerging contemporary interactions between Europe and Asia.

Where the CCCM has previously tended to maintain an evident focus on historical issues, the significant resources at its disposal permitted me to take a new direction, and view the CCCM as simultaneously a forum

for research and education on historical encounters, and also as a forum for research and education concerning ongoing and future relations between Portugal and China, giving a special place to Macau, and also between Europe and Asia. Through engaging in a dialogue with colleagues, and facilitated by networks that, as a specialist in Contemporary International Relations with tenure at Coimbra University, I have been able to develop in Portugal, for example the Observatory of China, and actively participated in abroad, such as the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS), EastAsiaNet,

and the European Alliance for Asian Studies, I understood that the path previously followed by the CCCM could be expanded, and diversified. I developed my ideas from experiences gained organizing and teaching the course 'China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries in World Trade', and other similar initiatives related to China, that I organized at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Coimbra. The University of Coimbra is a longstanding official member of the European Alliance for Asian Studies and my experiences should be viewed as having taken place under the umbrella of the Alliance.

The CCCM Archive Network

To be able to advance in its assigned role as a national centre for research and education, the CCCM should engage in a range of activities, implemented both within and outside of the premises of the CCCM, in close collaboration with colleagues in Portugal and abroad, working in a range of academic fields. At the same time, recognizing the importance of new technologies for historical research, I realized the importance of networking for enhanced usage of the wealth of archival materials regarding Macau and historical contacts between Portugal and China that exist not only in libraries in Portugal, but all over Europe, in China, and indeed world-wide.

With this thought in mind, and in conversation with colleagues in Portugal and abroad, I designed a new project, the CCCM Archive Network, with the aim of making available as wide a range of historical materials as possible for researchers interested in historical contacts between Portugal and China, and thereafter Portugal and other countries in Asia. This project will commence later this year, and aims to produce results within twelve months. The plan is first to focus on holdings located in Lisbon, such as the Ajuda Library, the Overseas Historical Archive, and the Archives for Diplomatic History, the António Alçada Baptista Documentation Centre of the Orient Foundation, and the Documentation Centre of the Instituto do Oriente. The next step will be to construct a digital reference resource, to be placed on the server of the CCCM in Lisbon, that will be made publicly available. After this first stage is completed, the project will enlarge its scope to the national level, with the aim of identifying and establishing cooperation with national archives, libraries and documentation centres situated outside the capital, throughout Portugal. The third and concluding phase of the project will be identifying and establishing cooperation with international archives, libraries and documentation centres world-wide, for example in Europe, China, Japan, and the USA.

An increased understanding of our globalized society

At the same time, work on reinvigorating the Museum is underway, including the design and publication of a new catalogue, the creation of new multimedia shows, the organization of temporary exhibitions, the creation of a virtual digital Museum and the integration of the Museum in the Portuguese Museum Network, all of which will allow the creation of new understandings of contacts between Portugal and China over the centuries, and new thematic itineraries. The dissemination strategy of the Museum and its collection will involve greater participation from the League of Friends of the Museum, and will include the promotion of joint activities. A reason for the urgent necessity of bringing the Museum, and the access to important historical and archival sources, into the digital age is to counteract a continuing lack of knowledge in Portuguese society about Chinese strategic culture, which prevents any informed reaction

to its approach towards Europe. This task is especially important, considering that the promotion of scientific knowledge about Asia is a responsibility that the CCCM cannot knowingly leave in the hands of third parties.

Through offering non-degree courses taught on the premises of the CCCM, as a complement to the undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs that cover Asian Studies at Portuguese universities, the CCCM will contribute to an increased understanding of the globalized society in which we live. The offer of training programs, e.g., summer and winter schools for doctoral students, and short intensive courses, will enable an increased diffusion of scientific knowledge and allow professionals from a variety of sectors in the Portuguese economy to inform themselves on central issues in the global economy.

The special status of the CCCM as a producer and disseminator of knowledge about Macau and its contribution to Sino-Portuguese relations means that its main focus will be Macau and China. Regarding Portugal's relations with other Asian countries, some resources will be allocated to welcome proposed initiatives and to identify opportunities that contribute to highlighting the dynamism of the CCCM, and increasing its visibility. Particular emphasis will be given to large countries such as Japan, Korea and India, but attention will also be paid to Malaysia, considering the special attention that is paid to Malacca in Macau, and also to Singapore, viewed in Macau as the leading exponent of the concept of 'Asian modernity', as well as to South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and Timor.

In cooperation with partners world-wide

In conclusion, in line with the mission statement for the CCCM, over the coming ten years (2020-2030), under my leadership, and in cooperation with partners in Portugal and world-wide, the CCCM will endeavour to become an international reference centre for Asian and intercultural studies, and for scientific activities that lead to cooperation between Europe and Asia. The CCCM will develop international networks and promote aspects of the scientific and technological cooperation framework of the *China-Portugal Science and Technology Partnership 2030*, while restructuring and modernizing the facilities of the CCCM, making it a pole of attraction for researchers, students and the general public, while articulating and acting as a custodian of the three fundamental functions of the CCCM, namely research, documentation, and museology.

Carmen Amado Mendes, President of the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre
<https://www.cccm.gov.pt/en>



Above: Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra.
© Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra.

The histories and prospects of partnerships between New Zealand and Asia

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. In the current edition, we explore the histories and prospects of partnerships between New Zealand and Asia.

Articles are edited by Edwin Jurriëns edwin.jurriens@unimelb.edu.au and Andy Fuller fuller.a@unimelb.edu.au, from the Asia Institute in Melbourne <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/asia-institute>. A special thanks to Stephen Epstein (Victoria University of Wellington) for his invaluable support for this edition.

China's long-term Pacific ecological footprint

James Beattie

As well as exercising the minds of policy-makers and politicians, China's increasing role in Pacific affairs is generating considerable scholarly attention. Much of it centres on security issues as well as the PRC's access to resources and commodities.

Little acknowledged—and little understood—is China's long-term role in the Pacific. The project 'Making China's Pacific: Markets, Migration and Environmental Change in the Pacific, 1790s-1920s' challenges the presentism of policymakers and politicians. It demonstrates the key role played by China's market demand and exploitation of new resources in the Pacific. In doing so, it reveals China's considerable ecological footprint and role in stimulating Euro-American exploitation of a range of Pacific resources for Chinese markets since the late 18th century.



Above: Canton hoovered up products from around the Pacific. William Daniell, *View of the Canton Factories*, c.1805-10. Image wiki commons.

Based at Victoria University of Wellington's Centre for Science in Society, under Associate Professor James Beattie's leadership, the project draws in colleagues from Sun Yat-sen University, including Associate Professor FEI Sheng. It utilises archives on the Pacific, from China, Australia

and New Zealand. The project's originality lies in its trans-Pacific dimension and in its emphasis on the environmental history of the overseas Chinese, a group largely ignored by both Pacific historians and historians of China.

Voracious demand for luxury goods in late-eighteenth-century Qing China, combined with a balance-of-payments deficit with Europe, pushed Euro-American traders to find goods to sell in China. Australia's annexation by Britain in 1788 gave the East India Company and other traders a base in the southern Pacific from which to exploit a range of products for the Chinese market. Southern Ocean islands—including those in the Bass Strait area as well as those in and around southern New Zealand—supplied millions of sealskins, leading to the destruction of resources and long-term contact between sealers and local peoples.

Other resource booms emerged elsewhere in the Pacific. In Fiji and later New Guinea, for example, the sea-cucumber trade transformed environments and societies by linking together peoples, resources and markets. In Fiji, traders constructed large drying houses. American-built ones could measure as much as 100-120 feet in length, and 20 feet in width. Foreigners employed as many as 200 people finding sea cucumber, with as many as 100 cutting firewood, and 50 keeping fires burning.¹ Because sea-cucumber's drying required constantly lit fires, timber consumption rapidly reduced scarce island forest resources.

Overall, the trade associated with seal skin, sea cucumber and other enterprises, depleted a variety of resources, leading sometimes to

extinctions. Ecological impacts abounded, through the intentional and unintentional introduction of a variety of plants and animals. In these transactions, islanders usually gained new technologies, as well as economic advantages and travel opportunities, but invariably experienced high mortality rates through exposure to new diseases.

Migration, environmental change and the Pacific gold rushes

The next key step in China's role in the Pacific emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. A combination of British imperialism and a succession of Pacific gold rushes provided opportunities for people from southern China to work overseas. Under the British, Hong Kong became "Asia's leading Pacific gateway ... linking North America and Asia". By 1939—nearly 100 years after its establishment—an astonishing 6.3 million Chinese had embarked from Hong Kong, with 7.7 million returning to China through the island.² Around the Pacific, Chinese worked as goldminers, plantation labourers, railway navvies, market gardeners, and merchants.

The project frames Pacific resource demand, and later Chinese enterprises like market gardening and agricultural investment, as examples of ecocultural networks—interlinked labour flows, migrant connections, and capital systems which transformed Pacific environments, and made nature into commodities.³ It considers trans-local connections, rather than trans-national ones, to signal that only



Above: Map of Pacific gold rushes, indicating some routes taken by Chinese miners. Author drawn.



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The Asia Institute

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

Indian cultural research: an Auckland reflection

Alison Booth



The author at Britannia & Co.

My research portfolio includes studies that focus on event management, cultural performance and issues of cultural sustainability. I am interested in networks as the relationship between people, resources and events are key for viability. I strongly believe that ethnography depends on respect, honesty and love for people and their cultural expressions. In my PhD thesis *Performance networks: Indian cultural production in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, I wrote "It comes down to the trust you have in people and that people have in you" (2016, p.160).

Because of my San Franciscan heritage, I view the world quite differently than those identifying as 'New Zealand Europeans' in an Auckland context. My PhD at the University of Otago required me to position myself in my research not just as an ethnographer, but also as a member of one diaspora gazing into cultural performances through the eyes of another diaspora. My networks include close family friends of South Indian heritage in California, India and New Zealand; my husband, who is an ethnomusicologist focusing on the music and culture of India, as well as an experienced performer of classical Indian music; students at the

University of Auckland; and local Indian musicians and touring musicians in New Zealand. Without these networks, I would not be working on a Diwali project with Henry Johnson at the University of Otago's Centre for Global Migration, a Parsi food study, an event project in Rotorua, or a palliative care project with a local charity.

One of the projects that I am currently working on is with an Auckland-based Mumbai Parsi woman. We are looking at the potential of food in the cultural survival of the dwindling global Parsi population. When I was in Mumbai in early February 2020, I attended the Kala Ghoda Festival and participated in a heritage walking tour that focussed on Parsi culture from the perspective of food. I also jumped at the chance to meet a Parsi friend for lunch. We shared a meal at Britannia,

the well-known Parsi restaurant in Fort, in memory of her late father, who was a Bollywood musician and composer and a close family friend. I have found that many Parsis, in Mumbai and Auckland, have opinions about Britannia; too expensive, not the most delicious, not authentic, the owner was a royalist who admired the Queen as well as a publicity hound. As an ethnographer, I just listened and reflected on the quite emotive statements about quite a modest restaurant. In fact, my personal experience at Britannia, was a meal filled with reminiscences, laughter and delight, with my dear friend, who was sharing her heart with me; through recollections of love and grief. We indulged in her father's favourite dishes and lamented that he was not with us anymore. The Britannia staff wanted to know if I was also Parsi as I was adept at eating with my right hand and totally at ease at the table. This multi-generational and multi-cultural story frames my research profiles and my family experiences with performers and producing events over decades.

As I write, New Zealand is in a four-week Covid-19 lockdown, prohibiting any public events or family gatherings. With this in mind, I am reflecting on the impacts on the visibility of Indian popular culture in our current closed environment and from my personal family 'bubble'. Global conferences that were planned are cancelled. In New Zealand, Indian food stores have not been included in the essential services category of supermarkets, dairies, hospitals and banks. Places of worship and community gatherings are no longer accessible, a situation in strong contrast to only a couple of weeks ago, when we hosted a *sarangi* (bowed zither) player from Mumbai and a *tabla* (set of two hand drums) player from Australia, performing

at community events in New Zealand. They asked to stay with us, as we share performance experiences, friends and lineages that span the global musician networks and the Indian musical diaspora. Although both classically trained musicians, they have found the only formula for their survival has been to collaborate with western musicians on global tours. With India's borders closing on 20 March, the *tabla* player headed home to Australia and to a 14-day quarantine. The *sarangi* player cut short his New Zealand tour schedule, catching the last plane back to Mumbai before the Indian borders closure and further restrictions.

There will be no more live performances for the foreseeable future, as all venues and borders have been closed. What has appeared are more virtual performances, as online communities reform creative spaces for musicians. For instance, Shashank Subramanyam, a Carnatic flautist in Chennai, announced a free workshop through his Facebook site. The global challenge will be to manage the immense broadband connections to keep our networks and creative works alive.

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particular localities in China, the Pacific Islands and New Zealand were connected through Cantonese migration and business networks.

One example of this is the business enterprise of Chew Chong (circa 1828-1920). Arriving in New Zealand in 1866, Chong initially exploited a fungus (Wood Ear) growing in abundance in the forests of northwestern New Zealand that was prized in Chinese cuisine and medicine. Chong arranged to have vast quantities of the fungus dried locally and then shipped to Chinese consumers in Sydney and Qing China. Other Chinese merchants also took part in the enterprise, and from 1880 to 1920 New Zealand fungus exports reaped £401,551. While still sending fungus offshore, Chew Chong invested funds from this enterprise and his trading stores into pioneering the dairy industry in southern Taranaki. He bought the latest equipment, innovated several designs himself, and came up with the concept of share-milking.

In sum, Chinese resource demand and then Chinese people contributed to a great acceleration of environmental change in the seas and countries of the nineteenth-century Pacific. This project is one that gives back Chinese individuals their agency, and places them back into the narrative of the Pacific, its exploitation and integration. Their story is one that politicians and policymakers need to hear when they assess contemporary China's activities and resource use in the Pacific.

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Notes

- 1 Ward, R.G. 1972. 'The Pacific Bêche-de-mer Trade with Special Reference to Fiji', in Ward, R.G. (ed.) *Man in the Pacific: Essays on Geographical Change in the Pacific Islands*. Clarendon Press, pp.107-108.
- 2 Quote and information from: Sinn, E. 2013. *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong University Press, p.2.
- 3 Beattie, J., Melillo, E.D. & O'Gorman, E. (eds) *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*. Bloomsbury.

An absence of dissent. New Zealand's Asia-Pacific engagement, 1989-2020

Malcolm McKinnon

In 1989, led by Japan and Australia, several countries set up Asia Pacific economic cooperation – APEC. A slew of other regional institutions followed, in the security as well as the economic sphere, and 'regional architecture' became a catch phrase. New Zealand strongly supported, and fully participated in, these endeavours. At a time when the Commonwealth had frayed, and New Zealand had been demoted from 'ally' to 'friend' by the United States, the country found a new diplomatic home in a region (Australia included) that has come to account for 60% of its trade in goods and services and remained the focus of most of its security policies.

But where security and trade have developed, critical debate or dissent have not followed. At their most recent bilateral meeting in April 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Chinese President Xi Jinping "discussed a range of topics central to our bilateral relationship, and both welcomed the significant growth in recent years of trade, cultural and social ties, and other connections ..."¹ However, no mention was made of difficult issues such as human rights.

The recent ASEAN-New Zealand dialogue meeting was equally bland; it welcomed "the drafting of a new five-year Plan of Action next year to focus on strengthening the partnership through focused areas of cooperation such as, trade through the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA), food and agriculture, renewable energy, and governance and public sector leadership".² Tellingly perhaps, the ASEAN co-chair was the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to ASEAN, Yeap Samnang, the representative of one of the least democratic governments in Southeast Asia.

It is true that governments, in dealing with other governments, face diplomatic constraints. Moreover, since 1990 protest over global issues in New Zealand has waned, as it has in other Western countries. But two reasons for this absence of dissent are more specific, the first arising from New Zealand circumstances, the second, from the nature of the Asia-Pacific community itself.

First, where there has been dissent in New Zealand, it has not 'Asianized' or has been confined to an 'Asian' space. A New Zealand civil society campaign against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (2010-16) was directed primarily against the United States, taking no account of analogous protest in Asian countries (or for that matter the massive support for TPP in some, notably Vietnam). The West Papua movement has strong supporters among Maori and Pakeha (non-Maori) New Zealanders, but arguably this is a function of Papua's place in Oceania rather than testimony to strength of feeling on an 'Asian' issue. Conversely, recent disputes on NZ campuses over the Hong Kong protests arose primarily between Mainland and Hong Kong students. Moreover, while there are several Chinese-language media outlets, voicing dissent in them can be problematic.³ For its part, the English-language media tends to foreground US and UK news in international coverage and rely on UK and US-based news sources for reportage of Asian events.⁴ The contrast with a newspaper like the *Straits Times* (Singapore) is striking.

Second, the 'dissentscape' in Pacific Asia is harsh. History provides insights. Pacific Asia in the later 20th and early 21st centuries was shaped by three mid-century victories – the US victory over Japan in 1945; the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and – not quite a victory but significant nonetheless – the triumph of anti-colonial nationalists in Southeast Asia. ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), at its outset in 1967 straddled the pro-American/anti-colonial non-aligned divide and overcame the other divide when Communist states joined the grouping between 1995 and 1999. For most ASEAN states, anti-colonial or anti-imperial struggles have remained benchmarks for state authority and challenges to that authority, however crafted, are met with scepticism. Communist China's joining of APEC (1991) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (1994), in no way indicated a readiness to tolerate domestic dissent, as the suppression of student protest in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and many subsequent events, have made clear.

What next?

Nonetheless, change may be more likely in Pacific Asia than in New Zealand. The New Zealand government has supported some low-key initiatives in support of civil society activity in Southeast Asia.⁵ But recent surveys disclose minimal awareness on the part of the New Zealand public of, for example, APEC. There have been episodes of anti-Asian prejudice since the advent of Covid-19 and majority support for an ongoing blanket ban on travellers from China, first imposed at the outbreak of the epidemic, despite the extreme disruption this has caused many New Zealanders with family ties to China.

Democratic transformations took place in South Korea and Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s. Are others likely? In February 2019 Malaysia hosted a 'democracy festival' that attracted 400 participants from eight ASEAN countries. And in November 2019 Malaysian MPs from both government and opposition parties openly met Cambodia opposition leader Sam Rainsy despite his being barred from entering Cambodia, a ban that governments in both Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur complied with.⁶ The most recent communique of the ASEAN heads of government had one of the lengthiest-ever statements about human rights.⁷ Hopefully, as the dissentscape matures in Pacific Asia, New Zealanders will be prepared to contribute to it and support it more than is evident at present.

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Notes

- 1 <https://tinyurl.com/beeive-1april2019>
- 2 <https://tinyurl.com/asean-8july2019>
- 3 <https://tinyurl.com/NR-30sept2019>
- 4 For a scholarly analysis of this phenomenon, though from some years back, see Mathison, D. 2012. 'People like us: the cultural geography of New Zealand's international news', in Hirst, M. et al. (eds) *Scooped: The Politics and Power of Journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auckland: AUT Media, pp.128-140.
- 5 See <https://unionaid.org.nz>
- 6 <https://forsea.co/human-rights-for-all>
- 7 <https://tinyurl.com/asean-35summit-pdf>, see section 22.

New Zealand aid and dairy development in Sri Lanka

Jasmine Edwards

New Zealand aid funds dairy development projects in Sri Lanka to rebuild people's livelihoods and support New Zealand's trade interests. In October and November 2018, I conducted field research in the rural north of Sri Lanka, hearing from local female dairy farmers about how the project has impacted their livelihoods. While the economic impacts are clear, this micro-level research also captures an insight into the perceived environmental and social impacts of dairy development on female farmers in Sri Lanka.

Army checkpoints intercede long, quiet stretches of road in Northern Sri Lanka. The lush jungle gradually encroaches upon the weathered shells of abandoned homes. Their departed occupants fled or were killed in the brutal civil war that gripped the country for nearly three decades between 1983-2009. As one participant said, "There is not anyone here who has not experienced trauma". Persecuted Tamil and Muslim communities in the North – who were also worst hit by the 2004 tsunami – have suffered intense violence and loss, and efforts to address the war's legacy are needed to ensure livelihoods, wellbeing and continued peace.

My friend, a former refugee who has resettled in New Zealand, asked me to visit his family in Sri Lanka. His mother showed me her cows, dog-eared photos of her adult children, and her shrine, where she performed a puja (Hindu prayer ritual); his sister cooked Jaffna-crab curry – the local specialty – over red-hot embers; his nieces told me about their dreams to travel; his father asked me simply if his son was okay. My friend and his family, like countless others, have endured unimaginable losses and are attempting, with admirable resilience, to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

Any attempt to research and understand the experiences of Sri Lankan people, particularly relating to a development intervention, such as a New Zealand aid-funded dairy development project, is inextricably situated within the specific post-conflict context. Despite economic growth and social development in Sri Lanka since the end of conflict, a large portion of the population lives only slightly above the extreme poverty line and there is significant regional disparity with the poor being disproportionately rural. The dairy development project selected as a case study for this research originated in the intensely affected post-conflict zone, the Mullaitivu District, to address the needs of the community in rebuilding their livelihoods. Dairy development is recognised for its potential to improve economic, health and food security issues, as farmers can increase dairy production and sell milk to increase their incomes. My research focuses on understanding Tamil female farmers' perspectives of livelihood impacts of dairy development.

Understandings of the issues (and potential issues) of dairy development are predominantly represented by agricultural actors, governments, scientists and academics; are typically focused at the macro- and meso-level; and are reliant on quantitative data. This research, therefore, employs a qualitative methodology using interviews, observation



Above: A dairy farmer and her cows. Used with permission (2018, author).

and photovoice methods, which addresses a gap in the literature on subjective, lived experiences of participants in dairy development projects.

I carried out field research over a five-week period in October and November 2018. I used purposive sampling to identify the primary participants for this research. The primary participants – five female dairy farmers – provided in-depth data for this research and other participants – development partner organisation (NGO) staff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, academics and local dairy farmers – were interviewed to provide additional information on the project and to add depth and context to the understandings derived from this research. I wanted to find out how their lives have changed since they dairy project began. In addition to the positive economic impact of the project, which is well understood, I wanted to hear the women's stories, to build a whole picture that included social and environmental impacts.

First, I asked the women if they wanted to take photos of what is important to them. Photovoice is a qualitative method that asks participants to take photos that highlight their experiences to reflect research themes. They all participated, despite never having used a camera. These photos began our conversations about the ways that their lives have changed since they began the dairy project. In interviews later the women relayed with pride the significance of the images they had captured: a calf that will produce more milk than all the other cows, a partially finished cattle shelter, a beautifully kept home built without help from anyone, a homemade shrine.

I held seventeen semi-structured interviews, five of which involved in-depth interviews, photovoice and observation with the primary participants, and the rest of which involved interviews and observation with various project stakeholders and local dairy farmers. The women described their triumphs since being involved in the project – money earned to buy school supplies, a reliable income to help when their husbands were without work, being able to sell milk when their crops fail due to extreme weather, and feeling that they are independent women who do not need to beg from others to survive.

As a result of this success, the women all wanted to expand their dairy production. Private sector partners and the New Zealand and Sri Lankan governments also have plans for dairying expansion. On the one hand, dairy development is seen as positive for communities, companies and governments in this context and, on the other hand, this research explores the nuances of dairy development that include the potential long-term implications for farmers' environmental and social wellbeing.

The environmental implications of increased and intensified dairy farming, for instance, (such as livestock's impact on climate change, declining soil, air and water quality) are little considered in the dairy project or understood by farmers beyond small-scale production. The integrated nature of farmers' livelihood strategies is central to maintaining an environment in which resources are in balance as production increases – as has been the case for over a thousand years of dairying

in Sri Lanka – but this appears to be in potential conflict with farmers' priority to intensify livestock farming. However, farmers expressed concern for protecting and enhancing the natural environment, upon which their livelihoods depend.

I argue that it is critical that the impact of dairy development projects in developing countries on environmental factors – both local and global – receives adequate attention to ensure that short- to medium-term development outcomes are not at the expense of the environment and long-term livelihoods. Consideration of the full environmental impacts of dairy development initiatives is a fundamental responsibility of macro-level development actors who are supporting livelihood changes.

This field research in Sri Lanka provided rich, contextual data on female farmers' experiences and New Zealand aid. Reports provided to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and their partner NGOs in this project communicated the findings of this research, sharing knowledge across local and donor partners in development, and resulting in greater consideration of local, holistic impacts of dairy development.

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Left: Lost crop preparation due to the rains – dairy farming helps increase farmers' resilience. Above: a partially constructed cattle shelter. Right: A Hindu shrine – religion is an important factor in farmer's worldviews and farming practice.

Photos by female dairy farmers (identity confidential, 2018). The women had never used a camera before, and were proud of the significance of the images they had captured.



COVID-19 in Northeast Asia

Ilhong Ko

Northeast Asia was the first region to experience the fear and uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 virus. Yet this earlier introduction to the virus means that some Northeast Asian countries have passed through the worst – even though a second wave looms in the horizon – making it possible to look back upon responses to the global pandemic by the various regional governments and societies. Understanding these responses is necessary since not only do they have implications for future public health policies, they also provide important insights into key issues, central to each Northeast Asian country, which have come to light as a result of the disruption of the *status quo*.

In this issue of News from Northeast Asia, we explore how governments and societies have responded to the COVID-19 crisis in China, South Korea, and Taiwan. In 'The politics of COVID-19 in China. Examining challenges in social governance and diplomacy', Woo Park of Hansung University examines how ongoing debates resulting from COVID-19 are now affecting China's social governance and diplomacy. Jae-Hyung Kim of Korea National Open University maintains, in 'Mask dynamics between the Korean government and civil

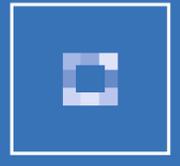
society in the COVID-19 era', that a key factor in South Korea's successful response to the virus was the belief held by Korean citizens that access to a means of self-protection against the virus is a basic right of citizenship and the government's acceptance of this duty. In 'Taiwan, COVID-19, and the fortuitous lack of politics', Chun-Fang Wu of National Quemoy University notes the various factors that have fortuitously come together to contribute to Taiwan's successful containment of the outbreak. In the fourth and final contribution

to the series, 'Negotiating the new normal in the COVID-19 era', Jongseok Yoon of Seoul National University introduces SNUAC's initiative to launch the Seoul National University COVID-19 Research Network (SNUCRN), a platform for global cooperation and mutual assistance in dealing with the cumulative effects of COVID-19.

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SNUAC

Seoul National University Asia Center



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



Left: An almost empty subway carriage in Shanghai, April 2020. Photo by author's friend.

The politics of COVID-19 in China. Examining challenges in social governance and diplomacy

Park Woo

On 30 December 2019, signs of an unexplained pneumonia were reported in Wuhan, a metropolis in central China. The symptoms were similar to that of the common cold, such as a fever, coughing, and respiratory problems. In reference to the earlier SARS virus of 2003, doctors on the first line came to refer to it as the Novel SARS or Novel Coronavirus. When the virus was first reported in Wuhan, experts from China and the World Health Organization said that there was no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission and that the situation was easy to control. It is not yet clear whether such a claim derived from a lack of information about the virus or from other reasons. However, China's way of dealing with the epidemic was met with much domestic and international condemnation after it was revealed that the whistleblower Li Wenliang had been admonished by local authorities, and as more and more confirmed cases were reported in other countries.

Viruses have always existed alongside human civilization and appear irregularly as plagues, regardless of region. Viruses that use humans and animals as their hosts, such as MERS, H1N1, and swine fever, have emerged in the past decade. Compared to these viruses, COVID-19 features significant

virological characteristics such as a marked ability to infect and transmit. This has resulted in considerable difficulties in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19, not only in China but also in other countries. However, the key debates sparked by COVID-19 have concerned the Chinese government's actions in dealing with this novel virus and the resulting epidemic/pandemic, rather than the unique virological characteristics of the virus. Although the Chinese government has managed to effectively control the virus at the state-level, ongoing debates resulting from COVID-19 are now strongly affecting China's social governance and diplomacy.

First, COVID-19 has created a political phenomenon in which lines have been drawn between those on the left and those on the right of Chinese society. For example, Fang Fang, a writer in Wuhan, recorded in her diary the daily lives of citizens, the deaths of the infected, the role of Shequ [neighborhood associations], the positive role of volunteer doctors and troops from the regions, and the material support from all over the country. Her diary was made public; what followed was scrutiny and disapproval by those who believed that she had revealed shameful aspects of Chinese society. Her statements that the irresponsible cadres and experts of this epidemic should be penalized were not

taken well and headlined as a negative issue. Leading the attacks were groups of Chinese old leftists who tend to reason everything from the perspective of Maoist class struggle. They recklessly declared Fang Fang to be right-wing and worthy of harsh critique. On the other hand, the nationalists were angry that the diary had been translated and published in the U.S. and Germany. They branded the author a traitor, subordinated by foreign influence. Among social media influencers, there were even those who went as far as to dig up the tombs of Fang Fang's ancestors. They also tried their best to establish a link between Fang Fang's ancestors and Kuomintang, highlighting that Fang's family were reactionaries. Some professors who defended Fang Fang were disciplined by university authorities. Fang Fang has counter-attacked, maintaining that the leftists are ruining China. However, many other Chinese citizens are sharing their support for Fang Fang and her diary.

Second, COVID-19 has amplified public distrust of the authorities, leading the relationship between the state and its citizens to be scrutinized. Those interested in public sentiment in China are aware of how many articles and videos presently exist regarding the state's perceived lack of authority. Such media were uploaded on platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Tik Tok in January and February of this year. The act of openly criticizing, with names and faces attached, rather than doing so anonymously has seldom been seen since 1989. In April, these online 'public sentiments', which I had saved as data, were deleted or became inaccessible as illegal content. The reformatting of data may be physically possible, but experience and memory are not easily erased. Chinese people had already seen the dead bodies on their screens, and experienced the fear of losing friends, relatives, and neighbors to the epidemic. Washing away the dread and anger of China's citizens will be difficult indeed.

Third, international opinions of China have deteriorated as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic broke out at a time when various conflicts between the Western world (led by the U.S.) and China concerning issues of trade, human rights, and the South China Sea were particularly tense. Thus, the pandemic became an 'opportunity' for other countries to demand accountability from China. Chinese diplomats promoted the conspiracy theory that the US military had brought the virus to Wuhan, but they have since realized that this was a terrible diplomatic mistake. In May, when Beijing formalized legal governance over Hong Kong, the U.S. and other Western countries

began sanctioning Chinese executives related to Hong Kong. In May and June of this year, there were bloody clashes between China and India at the border, and in mid-July, the U.K. decided to ban Huawei 5G kits. In addition to these conflicts on a national level, public hatred against the Chinese can also not be ignored. On 1 March 2020, a piece on so-called 'China Gate' was posted on Korea's largest online portal, NAVER. It was written that China was manipulating public opinion ahead of Korea's April National Assembly Election. The South Korean authority claimed that 'China Gate' was fake news, but public opinion about China in S. Korea, which had already been rapidly deteriorating since 2017, has changed aggressively as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. And in Southeast Asia, netizens of Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan formed a 'Milk Tea Alliance' to mock Chinese patriotic netizens, often using the new moniker *nmslese* (referencing an oft-used denigrating Chinese expression).

China's left-right and state-citizen relations are presently strained, to say the least. Before COVID-19, social development and changes in the state-citizen relationship produced new and diverse identities, but they were successfully forced into China's logic of social governance by authoritarian rule. Identities deriving from predictable changes could be governed by authoritarian politics that monopolized vast resources and information. However, COVID-19 brought about a sudden and different type of change. COVID-19 proved that the leadership of authoritarian politics fell far below the expectations of the Chinese public. Also taking place is the re-establishment of international relations against China. The U.S. and other countries are attempting to divide the Chinese Communist Party and China and are aiming to attack the former verbally, diplomatically, and economically. Anti-Chinese (social) sentiments that have been formed in other countries in recent years have sharply weakened China's soft power. In addition, the organizational movements of exiles from China residing abroad have also been active. Not only do they function within networks of Western political and economic elites, they also work together with Chinese sports stars and scientists to weaken China's position. In this way, the politics of COVID-19 are presenting simultaneous challenges to China's social governance and diplomacy.

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Mask dynamics between the Korean government and civil society in the COVID-19 era

Jae-Hyung Kim



Above: Sign attached to the front window of a pharmacy in Daejeon stating that all 'public masks' have been sold out for the day. Photo by Rickinasia, Courtesy wikimedia under a CC license.

More than seven months have passed since the World Health Organization first reported a novel coronavirus disease. On 5 August 2020, the accumulated number of confirmed cases in South Korea was 14,456 and the accumulated death toll 302. South Korea has been one of the most successful countries in controlling the outbreak, employing aggressive measures such as quick and large-scale testing whilst maintaining daily routines. The Western press has started to examine the reasons behind this success, with some crediting the Confucian collectivist culture as a fundamental ethical motivation. They have further argued that Koreans tend to be submissive to authority, willing to follow the government's strict measures without question. This article presents an insider's perspective of South Korea's successful response to the virus, focusing on the dynamics and debates surrounding face masks, in order to demonstrate how the interaction between the Korean government and civil society has played an important role in these critical times.

With the first case of COVID-19 confirmed on 20 January, the issues of most concern included the existence of asymptomatic cases and the fact that COVID-19's early symptoms were indiscernible from those of the common cold. Such uncertainty provoked anxiety and fear. There was also rage directed towards the Chinese government for their reticence in sharing information, which was seen to have contributed to the spreading of COVID-19. The fear that infected Chinese people would spread the disease within South Korea led many Koreans to demand a government ban on Chinese nationals from entering the country. Foreign workers, Korean Chinese, and Koreans returning from China also became subject to hatred borne out of fear. In such an atmosphere of uncertainty, anxiety, and hatred, face masks soon became an important commodity in Korean society as citizens regarded masks to be the only weapon of defense against COVID-19.

While most countries conducted lockdowns or strict social distancing measures in order to stop COVID-19 from spreading, the Korean government enforced relatively weaker policies. Many experts have cited thorough tracking, wide-range testing, and aggressive treatment as the reasons for South Korea's successful COVID-19 control amidst such

relaxed social distancing policies, yet it would be impossible to discuss Korea's response to COVID-19 without addressing the important role that masks have played. In the early stages of the pandemic, when the efficacy of the state's policy had yet to be proven, and with the hindsight of past experiences, the social consensus that emerged was for everyone to wear a face mask. A face mask used to be rarely seen in Korea, but after the 2009 Swine Flu epidemic and the 2018 MERS epidemic, mask wearing became common practice. In addition to the gradual increase of novel infectious diseases, the problem of air pollution resulting from fine dust particles led people to rely on masks as protective gear and to incorporate them into daily routine. On days with high pollution levels, more and more people began to wear masks when going outside. The South Koreans' familiarity with wearing masks, meant they naturally and easily employed this strategy to tackle the new risk of COVID-19.

In the very beginning, expert groups, including the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, did in fact not encourage mask wearing. This was because information on the novel disease was still scarce and evidence that mask wearing could prevent it was lacking. Arguments originating from the WHO and the US CDC, that masks do not help contain the virus and can even pose a bigger threat, were also espoused by some experts in Korea. From the end of February, however, the assertion that face masks could be an effective means of protecting the public from infected individuals by blocking the spread of droplets and aerosols began to persuade many. In a situation where carriers of the virus could not always be identified, encouraging everyone to wear a mask emerged as an efficient method to prevent the spread of the disease at a low cost.

Due to the fact that face masks could protect healthy members of the public from the infected, they came to be endowed with a new social meaning of being a 'public good' or 'common resource'. However, as mask wearing came to be established as an important norm in preventing COVID-19, the greater demand for KF80-KF94-KF99 face masks' by the public led to the risk of a supply shortage for medical professionals. This was not due to a supply shortage per se – factories were producing enough to go around – but rather due to the market logic of increasing profits at this critical time. Acts of buying in bulk and then reselling at a higher price meant that masks were not being fairly distributed.

The public's response was to demand that the government ensure a stable mask supply. This represented a fundamental shift in perceptions indeed since, for the government to acknowledge the need to intervene in the matter of mask supplies, the failure of the market also had to be acknowledged. Face masks, which had been personal commodities in the past, were now transformed into public goods; accordingly, the responsibility of ensuring their supply was handed to the government. In other words, the situation arising from COVID-19 led the citizens of South Korea to regard 'access to masks for self-protection' as a basic right of citizenship, and 'the provision of a stable supply of masks' as a duty that the government had to rightly serve. Criticism arose against the government when this duty was not properly fulfilled and mask supply became an important standard in evaluating state competence in controlling COVID-19. Even when the effectiveness of face masks had yet to be proven, the government accepted this demand made by its citizens and strove to supply masks through several measures, among which was the 'public mask' scheme – made possible with South Korea's public health system – which

ensured that all citizens could purchase two masks per week at selected pharmacies nationwide. As a result, most members of the public were able to gain steady access to face masks. This has been widely regarded as one of the reasons that South Korea was able to successfully keep COVID-19 under control.

Another issue arose, however, as the government came to replace the free market as the key supplier of masks. When the supply of masks had been left to the market, they had been expensive but could be bought by anyone; with their transformation into a common resource, individuals residing in South Korea but not documented by the public health system could no longer gain access to them. As a result, political debates emerged on the issue of Koreans and the 'Other' in the right to obtain masks, which expanded to a new discourse on inequality concerning citizenship in South Korean society. The National Migrant Human Rights Organization issued a statement on 7 March arguing that "hundreds of thousands of people are excluded, such as migrants who have stayed less than 6 months without health insurance, foreign students, migrant workers who work in un-licensed farming and fishing businesses, and unregistered foreigners". Also excluded from the 'public mask' scheme were refugees. This exclusion of foreigners was echoed in the Emergency Disaster Relief Fund provided to Korean citizens. Following aggressive criticism from civil society, the government expanded the eligibility for masks and the relief fund to foreigners, but some problems still remain.

Amidst the uncertainty caused by COVID-19, the South Korean government is building a better disease control system by reflecting upon past failures; civil society is also doing its part, striving for the well-being of both individuals and society. As the case of 'public masks' presented above has demonstrated, the dynamic interaction between the government and civil society – having little to do with Confucian culture – has been one of the key factors of success in dealing with COVID-19. The pandemic is ongoing and the future is unclear but South Korea's government and civil society, cooperating at times and contesting when needed, appear to be well equipped to acknowledge and handle problems such as economic downturn, discrimination at the margins of society, exclusion, and hatred that has accompanied the drawn-out crisis of COVID-19.

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Notes

- 1 KF80-KF94-KF99 face masks, produced in South Korea, respectively filter out 80%, 94%, and 99% of bioaerosols.

Negotiating the new normal in the COVID-19 era

Jongseok Yoon

On 12 August 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide had increased to over 20 million, and the possibility of a second or third wave looms in the horizon. At present, it is difficult to estimate the long-term accumulative socioeconomic consequences of this novel virus, but one thing is clear: the pandemic has laid bare the weakest links of society that have heretofore been ignored or neglected.

Faced with an uncertain future, Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) hosted an urgent roundtable under the



Above: Heated interest (with masks) at the 'Novel Coronavirus, Social Shock and Prospects' roundtable, 18 February 2020. Photo by SNUAC.

title 'Novel Coronavirus, Social Shock and Prospects' on 18 February 2020; collaborating with several research institutes and other institutions and with the participation of

Korean and overseas scholars, a further three academic conferences regarding COVID-19 have since been hosted. Comprising a total of forty presentations and seven discussions

covering topics such as infectious diseases and disease prevention, human rights issues and socioeconomic influences, governance and civil society, international



Left: A return to normalcy in Taiwan; scene from August 2020 when no more domestic COVID-19 outbreaks had occurred. Photo by author.

Taiwan, COVID-19, and the fortuitous lack of politics

Chun-Fang Wu

Following Taiwan's first case of SARS in March 2003, an internal outbreak occurred at Heping Hospital in April. As the hospital was urgently sealed off and isolated from the outside world, many hospital workers suddenly found themselves trapped in a dangerous situation, lacking any means of an effective response to the virus or procedures for treatment in isolation. Lee Yuan-teh, who served at the time as superintendent of National Taiwan University Hospital, recounts that a key factor contributing to the explosive increase in hospital outbreaks at the time had been the disagreement between Taiwan's central government and the Taipei municipal government.

Seventeen years have since passed but memories of the Heping Hospital shut-down and images of hospital workers holding pickets in protest still remain ingrained in

the minds of the Taiwanese people. Mask wearing has become a well-established practice in Taiwan as a result of this. With the appearance of a similar respiratory disease seventeen years later, the country immediately went into a state of vigilant, wartime preparation to avoid previous mistakes. Daily press conferences were held for the public by the central government in order to report on the current state of affairs in dealing with COVID-19, and all questions put forth by the press were answered with great patience. This led the Taiwanese public to become fully informed of the situation and actively follow government guidelines regarding the wearing of masks and social distancing. Consequently, Taiwan was able to successfully halt the large-scale spread of the virus. In June of 2020, the government relaxed social distancing measures, allowing the Taiwanese public to return to their normal daily lives. Given the current global situation

order and global governance, public diplomacy and international development cooperation, these events provided an opportunity for researchers to come together (on-line) to diagnose in detail the current situation of, and tasks facing, both individual countries and wider regions.

The experience of the past six months has made it clear that prospects for the future must emerge from a consensus that is shared beyond borders. It may also be suggested that when the dust settles, a 'new normal' must be created in the post-COVID-19 world. Lessons have been learned from the ongoing pandemic and new directions have been discovered amidst the chaos, the most important of which is that the negotiation of this new normal must take place based on an ethos of openness and sharing, alongside the construction of a database in which the curation of field experience as well as traditional forms of data occurs, and it must involve the expansion of multi-layered global cooperation.

Currently, SNUAC is seeking to contribute to the negotiation of the new

normal by forming the Seoul National University COVID-19 Research Network (SNUCRN; <http://snuac.snu.ac.kr/snuacr>) with local and international researchers. Research topics relating to COVID-19 that are currently being explored by this network include the comparative study of global metropolises and the comparative study of East Asian regions; the publication of Country Reports for major countries and the building of a database with the data from these reports is also taking place. However, in order to truly overcome the effects of the pandemic in the long-term and the cumulative influence of COVID-19, the building of a new paradigm with much more global cooperation and mutual assistance must take place. SNUAC anticipates future cooperation with overseas experts and research institutes and welcomes any suggestions for opportunities of collaboration in the creation of a new normal.

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brought on by COVID-19, it is almost a miracle that all schools in Taiwan were open and fully running in the first half of this year and have also re-opened in September after the summer break. It is now even possible to safely travel throughout the country.

Resistance against infectious diseases is, in theory, a matter of public health; in reality, however, it also happens to be the battleground of political warfare. It was once said by a member of the opposition party that "Taiwan was lucky". Although this phrase was used to mock the ruling party, I too wish to use this phrase when addressing Taiwan's basic success in resistance against the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit from a different perspective. Firstly, it is important to note that Taiwan's heated presidential, vice-presidential, and legislative elections were held this year on 11 January, prior to the global spread of COVID-19. This meant that opposition to the government's policies on COVID-19 based on political reasons, which would have hindered the fight against the pandemic, was mitigated to some extent. Throughout the world, elections that have taken place or are due to take place in the COVID-19 era have illustrated how the contesting positions of the ruling and opposition parties concerning policies for infectious disease prevention have led their respective supporters to maintain different perceptions regarding COVID-19 prevention, which has proved unhelpful in the fight against the virus. Given this situation, the fact that the Taiwanese elections had already taken place can be regarded as being fortuitous indeed.

Secondly, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)'s presidential candidate won re-election by a landslide margin of 2.64 million votes. This vote of confidence allowed the president to feel secure enough to step back, along with her administrative bureaucrats, and willingly hand over the task of fighting the spread of COVID-19 to those specialists, such as doctors and public health officials, who knew best. As a result, the public came to regard the government's policies regarding COVID-19 prevention with confidence and followed the guidelines accordingly.

Thirdly, there was a common basis of understanding shared by the central and local governments. The majority of the local governments were headed by members of the opposition party and questions and disagreement was put forth to the central government. This is, of course, to be expected in a democratic country. However, the opposition party was also keenly aware of the critical nature of the times and therefore, in the end, co-operated with the central government on issues of COVID-19 prevention. A notable event was the request made in early February by the head of the local government of the Kinmen

Islands, which had consistently supported the opposition party (Kuomintang), to temporarily halt connections between the islands and Xiamen, China, which had been established according to the Mini Three Links (小三通) policy. This was only the second time that links between the Kinmen Islands and Xiamen had been disrupted since exchange relations were first established nineteen years ago – the first disruption had taken place seventeen years ago, at the time of the SARS epidemic.

Fourthly, the Taiwanese public is well-informed when it comes to matters of public health. The experience of the previous SARS epidemic led not only to annual simulation training exercises at hospitals but also to a change of habits throughout Taiwanese society, the wearing of masks being a key example. Since wearing masks at the hospital or on public transport had become a norm, when the supply of masks was unstable in the early stages of COVID-19, the Taiwanese people offered to donate extra masks, which they had stocked at home, to medical staff. The government's swift decision to regulate the export of masks was also met with support from most members of Taiwanese society; those few who expressed opposition were met with great criticism. This is because the public was well-aware that wearing masks was the most effective means of preventing the spread of respiratory diseases. The ruling party's decision to hand over the reins to doctors and specialists in the fight against the virus also sent out the message that the government regarded with utmost importance the lives and well-being of its citizens. Accordingly, the public had few complaints in adopting to a new way of life that required constant mask-wearing and vigilant handwashing and disinfection.

Although COVID-19 is currently being contained with great success in Taiwan, constant vigilance is required until a vaccine is produced. This is the message that is continuously being stressed by the Taiwanese government. The fight against infectious diseases is a long one but when things are seen to have returned to normal, Taiwanese politicians will return to the political ring for another round of fighting. Once this happens, the current conflict between the US and China will inevitably have an influence on Taiwan's policies for disease prevention, as well as its political and economic policies in the post-COVID-19 era. If politics begin to gain the upper hand on disease prevention in the second half of 2020, the scenario that Taiwan may face is worrying indeed.

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India–China artistic engagements in the 20th century

Yu Yan

What is the first thing that comes to mind when we think of Indian elements in Chinese art? Without doubt, Buddhist mural painting, with its shading and highlighting techniques and its serial form of narrative painting, is the most glorious tradition that Indian art has brought to China since the initial contact was made between the two countries in the first millennium.

Unfortunately, these artistic interactions seem to have gradually disappeared in subsequent centuries. However, though it was long overshadowed by existing narratives, India in fact played a crucial role in the modern Chinese art reform of the 20th century. During this period, exchanges between Indian and Chinese artists entered their heyday, starting when the distinguished Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore visited China in 1924.

In this edition of 'China Connections', three scholars and a journalist share their latest research and newly discovered sources on 20th century India–China artistic interactions, attempting to re-examine how India interacted with China and in what ways it inspired Chinese artists during the modern Chinese art reform.

Yu Yan, Center for Global Asia, New York University Shanghai; regional editor of this issue's 'China Connections'.

Fig.1 (above): Zhang Daqian, *Indian Dancer*, 2019 Sotheby's Hong Kong.



Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

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

Asia Research Center at Fudan University

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

A forgotten place

Yu Yan

Chinese art underwent a period of thorough reform at the turn of the 20th century. It was a time when the self-confidence of Chinese culture was being shaken to its core by the influences of the West and the ensuing impact of Western civilization. Chinese art – with its age-old tradition of subject matters, techniques, aesthetics and materials – was inevitably confronted with the problem of how to respond to the needs of a changing society. The major challenge, as noted by Michael Sullivan, was “how to modernize, which has meant to a great extent how to Westernize, while remaining her essential Chinese self”.¹

Scholarship on 20th century Chinese art has hitherto concentrated much on the attitude of Chinese artists towards the West, the modernity, and China's own tradition. In the eyes of many art historians, the notion of the West in the discourse of 20th century Chinese art could be traced back to two sources – Europe and Japan – for these were the primary locations where most Chinese artists chose to study abroad at that time. Deemed as the trigger of the modern Chinese art reform, European and Japanese influences have thus long been occupying center stage of modern Chinese art studies.

However, at the same time that Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) initially advocated using the realism found in Western art to reform Chinese painting, European art was heading in the opposite direction, away from realism. So how to properly measure the impact of Western art on Chinese modern art reform? What changes did Chinese art go through in the pursuit of art reform? The pre-eminent 20th century Chinese artist Gao Jianfu (1879-1951) once suggested that the ‘new Chinese painting’ should embrace elements from all cultures. Yet in reality, owing to the dominant position of the Western-oriented modernity theory, the ‘new Chinese painting’ could hardly demonstrate the intended panoramic view of China's international artistic exchanges



Fig.2 (right): Xu Beihong, *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*, Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, Beijing.

of the 20th century. Overshadowed by the European and Japanese narratives, intra-Asia artistic exchanges have not received the attention they deserve. In the wave of 20th century anti-imperialism and pan-Asianism, interactions among Asian countries have been crucially important to China in finding its own way to modernize. Among these intra-Asia interactions, the engagements between China and India are worth exploring in more detail, particularly during a time when the two oriental civilizations were both confronted with pressures from the West and the problem of modernization.

Why India matters to the modern Chinese art reform?

Since at least the first millennium, Indian art, along with the introduction of Buddhism, had already taken root in Chinese art. The splendid Dunhuang mural paintings make an emblematic case that reflects how Indian figural elements of anatomy and linear perspective influenced Chinese figure painting at an early stage. In the 20th century, when traditionalism began to be held as a modern stance, the epochal artist Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) – who had a desire to seek for the primitive vibrancy of Chinese art – chose to re-examine the much more time-honored tradition of figure painting in the Sui and Tang dynasties, rather than sticking to the dominant landscape painting tradition that had flourished since the Song dynasty. From 1941 to 1943, Zhang sojourned in Dunhuang, dedicating himself to copying Buddhist mural paintings in the Mogao Grottoes. To further study the origin of Buddhist art he travelled to India in 1950 and encountered the precious opportunity to study mural paintings in the Ajanta Caves for three months. Zhang's 'Journey to the West', combined with his diligent practice of copying Buddhist mural paintings, to a great extent revitalized the study of China's very early artistic engagement with India after a thousand years of stagnancy, and in turn shed new light on modern Chinese art reform. During his time in India, Zhang also created a series of portraits of Indian ladies using Buddhist figure painting techniques. (fig. 1)

From the perspective of many modern Chinese art reformers, Indian art did not merely represent a mono-identity exotic element, but a convergence of multicultural traditions. Merging with the art of Egypt, Greece, Persia and China, Indian art maps out a significant bloodline of succession and evolution of various art traditions and techniques thereof. Leading 20th century Chinese artists, such as Gao Jianfu, Zhang Daqian, and Xu Beihong (1895-1953), all had the experience of studying art and holding exhibitions in India. Xu Beihong, one of the most famous 'westernizers' in China, once encouraged his student to go to India in the quest for the real essence of art. Gao Jianfu held similar viewpoints. In his vision of

the new Chinese painting, he believed that Chinese art should not only take in elements of Western art, but it should also embrace and absorb nourishments from all other cultures.

Having shared a similar experience of withstanding cultural pressure from the West in the 20th century, India inspired China not only in how to retain the confidence of Chinese culture while broadening its vision to a wider range of cultural traditions, but also in how to regard the motivation of making art. Holding compassion and caring for human beings and all living things in the highest regard, the remarkable modern Indian artist Nandalal Bose (1882-1966) considered painting to be a pure meditation on human nature. He noted that "the way of art is nothing but the way of loving things ... It is out of long contact that liking for a place or a thing slowly develops."² In terms of making art, Bose placed much emphasis on the 'very beginning mind' and solicitude rather than aesthetic tastes and techniques. One of his Chinese students, Chang Xiufeng

(1915-2010), under the inspiration of Bose, painted a series of Bengali everyday life driven by a passion for ordinary things.

The notable modern Chinese painting *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* was also created out of this truehearted humanity. Its major figures – the movers of the mountains – are essentially based on Indian models. (fig. 2) Xu Beihong once explained that while making this painting in India, he was deeply touched by the local workers, not only for their magnificent physiques, but also for their uprightness in character and sincere demeanor. In the ensuing period, the attentiveness for ordinary people and everyday life situations, especially for peasants and workers, was combined tightly with revolutionary thoughts, and gradually became an undercurrent of the following wave of left-wing art.

Here, we would like to pay special thanks to Professor Josh Yiu and The Chinese University of Hong Kong Art Museum, for offering us the opportunity to be the first to publish a rare set

of 20th century Chinese woodblock prints that were exhibited in India during WWII. These are the precious witnesses of the ties between Chinese leftist art and an Indian audience and greatly enrich the existing knowledge about 20th century India–China artistic interactions. Lastly, we also wish to express our gratitude to Sotheby's Hong Kong, Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Chang Zheng and Wang Yizhu for sharing their valuable visual materials. (figs. 3, 4 and 5)

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Notes

- 1 Mayching Kao (ed.) 1988. *Twentieth-century Chinese Painting*. Oxford University Press, p.2.
- 2 Bose, N. 1952. 'Art-Perspective', *East and West* 3(3):172-173.



Fig.3 (above): Li Fu, *Workers in Repair of an Airfield*, Gift of Professors Patricia and Thomas Ebrej, Collection of Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Fig.4 (left): Lu Tian, *A Group of Young Art Students*, Gift of Professors Patricia and Thomas Ebrej, Collection of Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Fig.5 (right): Xie Ziwen, *Fighting Spirit (Man with horse)*, Gift of Professors Patricia and Thomas Ebrej, Collection of Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In search of a forgotten dialogue. Sino–Indian artistic discourse in the early 20th century

Amitava Bhattacharya

In the early 20th century, Asia witnessed the growth of several regional art movements in which we find tendencies to integrate Western representational art with multiple traditional and indigenous sources, in an organic synthesis. This was in response to pervasive Western art pedagogy via rampant colonization in many Asian settings since the late 16th century. In this trajectory, Japan was the first Asian nation to achieve spectacular artistic success during the Meiji period (1894–1916). Japan had effectively internalized the stylistic elements from Western paintings, such as the Kano and Rinpa schools in the 16th century with a predilection for surface treatment and realistic observation; and the remarkable emergence of the new art school Nihon Bijutsuin, which was founded by distinguished art critic Okakura Kakuzo (1862–1913), painters Taikan Yokohama, Shimamura Kanjan, Hisida Sunso, Hasimato Gaho and other notable painters.

In India, the Calcutta-based Bengal School of Art (from 1896 onwards), led by the celebrated artist and aesthete Abanindranath Tagore, painter Gaganendranath Tagore (both nephews of poet Rabindranath Tagore) and Nandalal Bose, was supported by E. B. Havell, a British artist and principal of Government College of Art Calcutta, Sister Nivedita, A. K. Coomaraswamy and Rabindranath. The Bengal School of Art established a high-level aesthetic sensibility incorporating various elements from Eastern traditions, including the Persian and Indian miniaturist schools, the East Asian calligraphic tradition, and later on from new Nihonga, painting as well.

In the meantime, the emergence of the Lingnan School in China led by Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and other artists who had initially trained in Japan, marked the beginning of the modern Chinese art reform. They adopted artistic components from Japan with a desire to formulate a new version of Chinese painting. Gao's quest was to discover how the Bengal School of Art had found an eclectic

way to understand the entire Eastern art tradition with a notion of Okakura Kakuzo's pan-Asian doctrine.

My research pursuit is to revisit the mutual perceptions of Sino–Indian artists and scholars of the early 20th century, particularly after Tagore's significant visit to China in 1924. This event fostered a mutual understanding between Indian and Chinese artists and scholars. Their shared experiences hold major significance in the existing backdrop of Asian art, thus they should be re-examined in the context of earlier periods of Asian art. Artistic interactions between Japan, India and China in the early 20th century were conducted in pursuit of internalizing the artistic sources in the Mogao Grotto of Dunhuang and the caves in Ajanta.

In this scenario, Gao Jianfu's sojourn in India, during his visit to South Asian countries from 1930 to 1931, was as striking as it was assertive and introspective. He travelled from Ceylon to the Himalayas and made a remarkable study of the Ajanta caves and other ancient Indian historic sites. He also went to meet Tagore in Darjeeling. Gao Jianfu once had a long discussion with Abanindranath and Gaganendranath Tagore on the relations between the Chinese 'six methods' and the Indian 'six methods' in painting. It was a crucial conversation that touched upon the core discourse of Indian and Chinese artistic ties. As Ralf Crozier aptly said in his *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, Gao Jianfu was "open to influence from the ancient East". He tried to contextualize the relation between two methods, as he says in his lectures that

were published in his posthumous book *My views on Modern National Painting* (1955). What struck Gao Jianfu were the similarities of the methods. In India, the 'six limbs' had been formulated during the 6th century, in the *Vishnu Dharmottara Purana*. In China, Xie He's 'six principles' were used to understand and render the object presence of nature. Additionally, Gao Jianfu's intention was to review the Bengal School of Art's success in exploring wash painting techniques and in using Okakura Kakuzo's influence to promote the pan-Asian doctrine in India.

A number of Chinese artists visited the international university founded by Tagore in Shantiniketan. For example, the celebrated painter Xu Beihong visited (1939–1940) at the invitation of Tagore, primarily as an artist-in-residence during WWII and the Chinese Civil War. Due to the series of very impressive paintings created during his stay, Xu Beihong's visit to India has been publicized the most. However, the less known and silent sojourn by Gao Jianfu from the Lingnan School, who developed a new perspective in Asian modern art, actually holds much more significance. These artistic exchanges between Japan, China and India were not a coincidence, rather a set of historical circumstances that created the scope of mutual exposures of the artists from the three countries. And their dialogues should be revisited.

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Land of peace. Chang Xiufeng's decades-old paintings trace India–China links

Sowmiya Ashok



Fig.6 (above): Chang Xiufeng, *Indian Dance*, collected by Chang Zheng and Wang Yizhu.
Fig.7 (left): Chang Xiufeng, *Friends*, collected by Chang Zheng and Wang Yizhu.
Fig.8 (right): Chang Xiufeng, *Copy of Ancient Indian Painting*, collected by Chang Zheng and Wang Yizhu.

On a cold day in November 2019, I visited Peking University to look at an exhibition of paintings by Chang Xiufeng (1915–2010). As the first Chinese artist to travel abroad for long-stay study, Chang moved to India in 1947 to attend the art school in Shantiniketan in West Bengal, where he studied under the famous Indian artist Nandalal Bose. Chang remained in India for 14 years, until he was deported in 1961 after being imprisoned in Darjeeling under the suspicion of being a communist agent.

His life in India was an example of the vibrant artistic exchanges that took place between India and China throughout the 1930s–40s. While at Peking University, I met Chang's daughter-in-law Wang Yizhu, the curator of the exhibition, who had meticulously put together a collection of his paintings that beautifully captured Bengali everyday life. (figs. 6 and 7) In an article I wrote in *The Indian Express*, I quoted Wang Yizhu: "It was very difficult to go to India at the time. There were many Chinese people who had emigrated and were living in India at the time. Chang Xiufeng pretended he wanted to work as a teacher

in a Chinese Middle School in Kolkata, so that his visa would get approved." Guided by the famous painter, Xu Beihong, Chang went to India as a 32-year-old to attend the art school in Shantiniketan. "At the time, the university had Chinese students and teachers, but most were studying literature and Buddhism. No one studied art," said Wang.

With 2020 marking the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries, a glimpse into Chang's life in India through his paintings, was an eye-opener for how life once was for artists from across the border. The exhibition, titled 'Land of Peace', traces

cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries, highlighting Chang's paintings and his uncle and scholar Chang Renxia's writings from his visit to India. At the exhibition, I also interacted with Tansen Sen, a professor of history at New York University Shanghai, who has spent years researching Chang's life. He told me that it was important to focus on people who have been forgotten in the telling of the India-China story. To him, Chang Xiufeng was a great example of such a person. Unlike other artists, Chang was more involved in replicating the Indian school of art, learning from Indian paintings and incorporating it into his own work. (Fig. 8)

Barely two months later, in early January, I met Professor Sen and Wang Yizhu once more, but this time across the border in India in the Aurobindo Ashram in Puducherry. I joined them on a hot Saturday afternoon for a few hours to parse hundreds of paintings left behind by philosopher and Indologist Hu Hsu (1909–2000, also known as Xu Fancheng), who lived at the ashram for nearly three decades. He spent a lot of his time translating several of India's classical Sanskrit texts into Mandarin. During his time in India, he had translated the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and several of Sri Aurobindo's works.

Xu Fancheng: a Chinese scholar, artist and sage in 20th century India

Devdip Ganguli

A small coastal town in southern India and a former French colony, Pondicherry is best known for its association with Sri Aurobindo, née Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), India's foremost modern philosopher and revolutionary-turned-mystic, and his French spiritual collaborator, Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), popularly known as 'The Mother'. Since the 1940s, an increasing number of persons from India and abroad were drawn to Pondicherry by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the radiant presence of The Mother. Some of these visitors stayed on in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the community that grew around the spiritual masters. As a result, this small town transformed into a melting pot of people, and its quiet, sleepy exterior belied the rich spiritual and cultural life of its international residents. Among them was a most intriguing personality, a Chinese scholar and artist whose life and legacy are a fascinating study.

Xu Fancheng, more commonly known as Hu Hsu in India, was born on 26 October 1909, in Changsha, Hunan Province, into a well-to-do family. Coincidentally, the young Mao Zedong was his geography teacher in school. However, it was Lu Xun, the noted Chinese writer and literary reformist, who played the role of his early mentor. Xu enrolled at the Second National Sun Yat-sen University (today Wuhan University) in 1926, to study History, then shifted to Fudan University in Shanghai the following year to study Western Literature, before moving on to study Fine Arts and Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg in 1929.

When his father died unexpectedly, Xu returned to China in 1932. At the prompting of Lu Xun, he began the first of his major translations into Chinese – Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* [Thus Spoke Zarathustra]. He would go on to translate a number of the German philosopher's works. Xu settled down in Shanghai, where Lu Xun also



Fig.9: Xu Fancheng's Exhibition in 1967, The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

lived until his death in 1936, and taught at Tongji University. In 1939, as the Japanese invasion raged on, Xu moved to the National Academy of Art in Hunan, then to Kunming. In 1941 he moved to Chongqing, working at the Central Library and teaching at the National Central University. Finally, in 1945, Xu received a government grant and headed to Shantiniketan in eastern India. At Cheena Bhavan, the Chinese study center co-founded by Rabindranath Tagore and Tan Yun-shan in 1937, Xu joined a group of Chinese scholars, artists and pioneers in the re-establishment of the ancient cultural links between India and China. After five years at Shantiniketan, and a short interlude at Varanasi where he worked on his Chinese translation of Kalidasa's Sanskrit play *Meghaduta* [The Cloud Messenger], Xu arrived in Pondicherry in 1951. He was accompanied by a gifted Chinese female artist from Shantiniketan, You Yun-shan (lay name of Master Xiaoyun, later an influential Buddhist nun in Taiwan and the founder of Huafan University). While You left after a few months, Xu remained in Pondicherry for 27 years.

Xu never met Sri Aurobindo, who had already passed away a year earlier, but The Mother became a central spiritual figure in Xu's life, to whom he dedicated all his future books. The Mother treated him warmly and encouraged his tremendous potential. A master of many languages – in addition to German, Sanskrit and English, Xu also knew Greek, Latin and French – he was now keen to translate Sri Aurobindo's books into Chinese. The Mother arranged a large French colonial bungalow on the beach road for Xu; it was surrounded by a garden and overlooked the Bay of Bengal. Here, at *Villa Ophelia*, Xu lived a life of intense solitude and concentration. He worked intensively on his translations, sometimes for 14 hours a day. In order to support him, The Mother purchased and shipped a Chinese printing press, and appointed a salaried assistant for him from Hong Kong.

Xu published translations of numerous works of Sri Aurobindo such as *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *The Human Cycle*, and the translations from Sanskrit of 50 *Upanishads* (texts of religious teaching and ideas) and the *Bhagavad Gita* (Hindu scripture) as well. He also published commentaries on Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and the origins of Chinese characters. Xu combined in his person a rare mastery of both Indian and Chinese philosophy. Those who knew Xu in Pondicherry spoke warmly of him in interviews with the author. Many highlighted his indrawn, refined, yet humorous personality. Although he was not a social person, his small circle of friends fondly remembered the time they spent together playing Go, learning calligraphy and painting, and cycling through the countryside on Sunday afternoons. Even though he accepted very few students formally, the little children of the Ashram

school often came over to the 'Chinese house'. He was happy to allow them to play and run around in the garden even as he continued his work quietly, occasionally also surprising them with lemonade or a short calligraphy demonstration, much to their delight!

In his spare time, Xu was also an avid painter. His paintings are mainly brushwork depicting Chinese landscapes, flowers, and bamboos in color or ink. He also practiced Chinese calligraphy in mostly traditional styles. We know that he had exhibited his artworks at least twice in Pondicherry. The first was shortly after his arrival; the second major exhibition was held in 1967, which was given considerable prominence by The Mother. In the exhibition poster, there was a message written by The Mother in her own hand, which was displayed on the Ashram Notice Board. The message reads, "Here are the paintings of a scholar, who is at once an artist and a yogi, exhibited with my blessings". Xu offered about 300 of his paintings to the Ashram, which are still preserved, and are a testimony to both his artistic and scholarly achievements. (Fig 9)

Xu lived like a sage – simple, focused on his work, and with bare necessities. He had very little money of his own, and all his material needs were taken care of by The Mother. In a letter to a friend, Xu reportedly wrote, "If you want to experience Taoism, come to live in the Ashram, you will have the realisation of Lao-Tse's philosophy." The Mother passed away in 1973. A few years later, with China slowly opening up after the death of Mao Zedong, Xu felt he had a duty to take his books to the mainland, as his books could not be sold in China in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, Xu left for China and eventually settled in Beijing, a decision influenced by two friends from his time at Heidelberg who now taught at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. They encouraged him to join them; Xu agreed on the condition that he would not have to teach, so that he would be allowed to continue his work quietly. Thus, Xu finally returned to his homeland after 33 years in India.

In Beijing, Xu continued writing and painting, sharing his vast erudition with interested students. He soon came to be known as one of the foremost Chinese scholars on the subject of Indian philosophy. On 6 March 2000, Xu passed away. His younger colleague at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Prof. Sun Bo, recognized the importance of Xu's work, and became a moving force in publishing his books in China. Today his books attract a growing number of readers; his paintings too have recently drawn attention from many quarters. The full import of Xu's legacy will become clearer in the years to come. His life and work are a modern symbol of the ancient spiritual and cultural bridges that have historically spanned India and China.

Devdip Ganguli is a faculty member at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, India.



While Professor Sen's quest was to highlight little-known artistic interactions that took place between the two countries, as a reporter, I was intrigued by these journeys across the border prior to the 1962 Sino-Indian War, which has in many ways come to define the two countries' relationship with each other. I received a wide range of comments to the stories I filed, largely from readers telling me that they really had no idea that such exchanges had even taken place. In fact, the consistent feedback I received for most of my

reports was that these were interesting stories about Chinese people, who were largely unknown in India. My reporting on Chang and Hu was instrumental in opening my eyes to a whole new world of stories that could define the way the two countries view each other. Especially in the 70th year of diplomatic ties, this seems worth pondering over.

Sowmiya Ashok, former assistant editor at The Indian Express, now an independent journalist based in Chennai, India.

IIAS Publications: New titles in Asian Studies



The Maritime Silk Road. China's Belt and Road at Sea

Richard T. Griffiths. 2020.
ISBN: 9789082381030

The ancient maritime Silk Road that helped connect Asia and Europe has been reinvented as part of China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative. However, the seaborne international trade and shipping-lanes, that carry 80-90 per cent of world trade, were there long before China's intrusion on the scene. Even so, China's intention to build ports at key locations along these trade routes has caused considerable unease in the Western security community. This volume gives a vivid account of the many

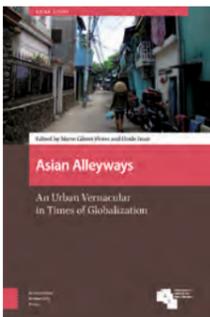
different mechanisms used by key players to maintain profitability. It also explores the future challenges faced by the industry, including that of the 'China threat'.

Read more about the author [Richard Griffiths](#) and his New Silk Roads project at the International Institute for Asian Studies: <https://www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad>

Purchase the book online: <https://www.amazon.com/Maritime-Silk-Road-Chinas-Belt/dp/9082381052>

Published with Amsterdam University Press

Amsterdam University Press (AUP) has a well-established list in Asian Studies, renowned for its solid source-based publications in the history, religion, politics, migration, and culture of the peoples and states of Asia. The Asian Studies programme is strengthened by a number of book series, focusing on a special topic or an area of study. <https://www.aup.nl/en/academic/discipline/asian-studies>



Asian Alleyways. An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization

Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai (eds). 2020.
Series: Asian Cities, ISBN 9789463729604

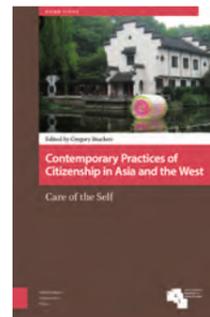
This volume critically explores 'Global Asia' and the metropolization process, specifically from its alleyways, which are understood as ordinary neighbourhood landscapes providing the setting for everyday urban life and place-based identities being shaped by varied everyday practices, collective experiences and forces. This turns the traditional approach of 'global cities' upside-down and contributes to a renewed conception of metropolization as a highly situated process, where forces at play locally, in each alleyway neighbourhood, are both intertwined and labile. Beyond

the mainstream, standardising vision of the metropolization process, the book offers a nuanced overview of urban production in Asia at a time of great changes.

[Marie Gibert-Flutre](#) is Assistant Professor of Geography in the Department of East Asia Studies (LCAO) at the University of Paris.

[Heide Imai](#) is Associate Professor at Senshu University, Faculty of Intercultural Communication, Tokyo, Japan.

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463729604/asian-alleyways>



Contemporary Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West: Care of the Self

Gregory Bracken, 2020.
Series: Asian Cities, ISBN: 978 94 629 84721

An urbanized world should be an improving place, one that is better to live in, one where humans can flourish. This collection of essays examines contemporary practices of care of the self in cities in Asia and the West, including challenges to citizenship and even the right to the city itself. Written by a range of academics from different backgrounds (from architecture and urbanism, anthropology, social science, psychology, gender studies, history, and philosophy), their trans- and multidisciplinary approaches lead to fresh perspectives. One thing that

unites all of these papers is their people-centred approach, because, after all, a city is its people.

[Gregory Bracken](#) is an Assistant Professor of Spatial Planning and Strategy at TU Delft and one of the co-founders of 'Footprint', the e-journal dedicated to architecture theory.

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789462984721/contemporary-practices-of-citizenship-in-asia-and-the-west>



Shadow Exchanges along the New Silk Roads

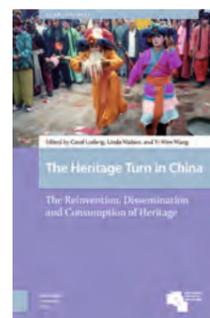
Eva P.W. Hung, Tak-Wing Ngo (eds). 2020.
Series: Global Asia, ISBN 978 94 6298 8934

Long before China promulgated the official One Belt One Road initiatives, vast networks of cross-border exchanges already existed across Asia and Eurasia. The dynamics of such trade and resource flow have largely been outside state control, and are pushed into the realm of the shadow economy. The official initiative is a state-driven attempt to enhance the orderly flow of resources across countries along the Belt-Road, hence extending the reach of the states into the shadow economies. This volume offers a bottom-up view of the trans-border informal exchanges across Asia and Eurasia, and analyses its clash and mesh with the state-orchestrated Belt-Road cooperation.

[Eva P.W. Hung](#) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social Science, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong.

[Tak-Wing Ngo](#) is Professor of Political Science at the University of Macau. He is the editor of the refereed journal 'China Information' and co-editor of the 'Journal of Contemporary Asia'.

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789462988934/shadow-exchanges-along-the-new-silk-roads>



The Heritage Turn in China: The Reinvention, Dissemination and Consumption of Heritage

Carol Ludwig, Linda Walton, Yi-Wen Wang (eds). 2020.
Series: Asian Heritages, ISBN: 978 94 6298 5667

This volume focuses on heritage discourse and practice in China today as it has evolved from the 'heritage turn' of the 1990s. The contributors show how particular versions of the past are selected, (re)invented, disseminated and consumed for contemporary purposes. They explore how the Chinese state utilises heritage not only for tourism, entertainment, educational and commercial purposes, but also as part of broader political strategies. They argue that the Chinese state deploys modes of heritage governance to construct new modernities while strengthening collective national identity in support of both its political legitimacy and its claim to status as an international superpower.

[Carol Ludwig](#) is Honorary Research Fellow in Planning (Civic Design) at Liverpool University, UK.

[Linda Walton](#) is Professor Emerita in the Department of History, Portland State University, and Visiting Professor at Hunan University.

[Yi-Wen Wang](#) is Associate Professor in Urban Planning and Design at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University.

<https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789462985667/the-heritage-turn-in-china>

Trading caterpillar fungus in Tibet

Tina Harris

The caterpillar fungus (*ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is a curious species, ubiquitous in the Himalayas and in southwest China, but almost unheard of in other parts of the world. In the Tibetan language, the term for the creature is *yartsa gunbu* (literally summer grass winter worm), due to its peculiar nature: it is a parasitic fungus that slowly takes over and replaces the body of the larvae of a moth. Emilia Roza Sulek's book explores the people, practices, and livelihoods that revolve around the harvest and exchange of this caterpillar fungus (*yartsa* in short). It is one of those wonderful ethnographies where complex economies unfold through a single important commodity.

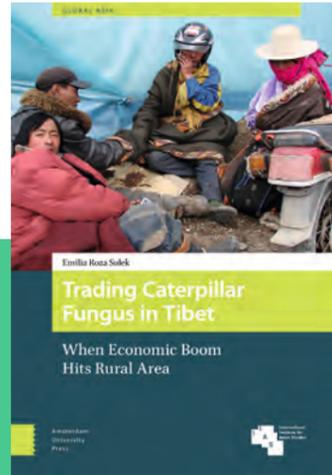
What is so special about *yartsa*? Mostly valued as a miraculous cure-all treatment in China and abroad, sometimes referred to as the 'Himalayan Viagra', it is rarely used as medicine amongst the Tibetan pastoralists themselves. In the early 2000s, spurred on by post-reform changes in China – increased infrastructural links in the region, rising consumerism, and a growing concern with health – its popularity and price skyrocketed “to such a degree that its market value overshadowed its other uses” (p.86). *Yartsa* began to be used and exchanged as currency itself and was said to have exceeded the price of gold up until the 2008 financial crisis. While other books about single commodities – for instance salt or jade or cod or tea – focus on

Reviewed title

Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet: When Economic Boom Hits Rural Area

Emilia Roza Sulek. 2019.

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
ISBN 9789462985261



the objects themselves, Sulek's book prioritises the people, the pastoralists in Golok, eastern Tibet, whom she dubs 'the protagonists'. Paying close attention to the contemporary transformation of their land and lives, the focus is less on the *yartsa* itself and more on the broader question, 'what happens when the land you live on suddenly increases in value and importance?'

According to Sulek, economic improvements in Golok had more to do with the caterpillar fungus trade than with state investments (p.19). While it can also be read as a book about recent rural development in Tibet, Sulek rightly avoids a linear or teleological understanding of the term. Sulek demonstrates that the *yartsa* trade reveals creative adaptation and 'flexibility of existing structures', showing how a single product can completely reorganise a society. This is especially clear when Sulek explores what happens when informal trading practices begin to be regulated by the state, although somewhat unofficially. While state discourse maintains that digging *yartsa* is environmentally detrimental, they put the onus on pastoralists to self-manage their trading land as 'protectors of the environment'.

What this meant in practice was that outsiders could not come to the region to help dig for *yartsa*. Sulek keenly observes that under the guise of giving the pastoralists more self-management, such regulations actually limited their management, justifying interventions into pastoralists' lifestyles, such as sedentarisation programmes (p.210).

Sulek's book is clearly written, even sensual. The author has a gift for descriptions of nature, somewhat reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki films. Take for example this passage: "Soglung is a long valley with a small stream murmuring on its stony river bed. The water swarms with tiny fish and there are swampy meadows with frogs" (p.52). Ethnographers will recognise the thickest of descriptions during an account of a day of *yartsa*-digging, preceded by milking the *dri* (the female yak), a methodological exemplar of 'deep hanging-out'. Sulek spends months on end living with and picking *yartsa* with families, providing us with rich, micro-level descriptions of pastoralist life, and pinpointing where the various flows of money are going – not an easy task unless one understands the ins and outs of daily exchange practices. This book also contains an excellent up-to-date

description of Tibetan bargaining techniques; negotiating the price of *yartsa* by grasping combinations of the buyer's or seller's fingers under long sleeves or a hat.

My only two minor qualms have little to do with the content of the book itself. First, the steep price means that only a small minority of readers will be able to obtain it, likely through limited access to a university library or interlibrary loan. It is a pity that the relative inaccessibility of Sulek's book may reproduce the idea that it is 'specialist', while it is in fact of interest to much wider audiences in Himalayan/China Studies, Development, Anthropology, Geography, and related disciplines. An open access version would be highly welcome. Secondly, the majority of the numerous footnotes contained fascinating information that I would have liked to have seen in the main body of the text.

This is a captivating and enjoyable book to read in its entirety. It may not provide cutting-edge theoretical arguments, but that was not Sulek's aim. Rather, it is a detailed ethnography that unfolds to reveal socio-economic change in a subtle, slower way. In fact, its focus on how capitalist change occurs in practice, long-term ethnographic engagement, and future outlook can be compared to other detailed ethnographies of rural change, such as Tania Li's *Land's End* (Duke University Press, 2014). Sulek captures snapshots of contemporary pastoral life in Tibet and provides a solid example of how a sudden influx of income can change lives. Since the Tibetan pastoralists hardly use or identify with *yartsa* in the same way its consumers do, Sulek shows how rural pastoralists can creatively capitalise on their own resources to their own advantage. *Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet* does not contain simple people-versus-the-state arguments. Much more complex, it exposes how pastoralists become the "creators of the transformations of their own socio-economic lives", but never in a uniform way (p.258).

Tina Harris, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Nomad's land

Simon Wickhamsmith

The relationship between Mongolian nomads, their animals, and the landscape through which they move is both complex and tender. Traditional nomadic life is based upon livestock herding, and upon the efficient and organic interaction between human and non-human persons. The slaughter of an animal initiates not only the production of nutritious food, but also of materials for clothing, sheltering, herding, and even entertainment: nothing is wasted, and no trace is left. This ecological imperative is driven by considerations both practical and spiritual: for a herding family to waste any part of one of their own animals is to lose out on vital and fragile resources, and to deny the natural cycles of the Earth, and so cause offense to their ancestors, to local guardian spirits, to the Buddha, and to the shamanic sky god Tenger.

Charlotte Marchina's new book is an important cross-border study of these relationships in two primary field sites: one in the region of Aga-Buryatia (in the Russian administrative division of Zabaykalsky Krai), and the other in Mongolia's Arhangai aimag. This distribution is particularly interesting in the light of how the Buryat nomads consider themselves in relation to Mongolian nomads: "I realised that, for [the Buryats], 'nomads' was a return to the livestock breeders who live in an 'old-fashioned' way and in 'encampments' – that is, to use their term, 'primitive' people." ["Je compris alors que les «nomades» renvoyaient pour eux à les éleveurs qui «vivent à l'ancienne» (jivut po staromu), sur des «campements» (stoibishche), bref, des

Reviewed title

Nomad's Land: Éleveurs, animaux et paysage chez les peuples mongols [Nomad's land: Herders, their animals and the landscape among the Mongols].

Charlotte Marchina. 2019.

Paris: Zones Sensibles
ISBN 9782930601397



gens «primitifs» (primitivnye), pour reprendre leurs termes." (pp.12-13) Reading Marchina's book with this distinction in mind makes her achievement in distilling the nature of Mongols' 'nomad's land' all the more admirable.

The book's four chapters deal with nomadic movement, the idea of homeland (Mongol *nutag*; Buryat *nyutag*), the negotiation of nomadic space between pasture and encampment, and the interactions between species within the nomadic space. This superficial overview fails to show the natural Venn diagram which develops among the chapters as the book progresses, and the conceptual cycles which connect and revisit the key elements of the narrative. Indeed, while this is a solid work of anthropological enquiry, there exists also the constant substratum of the nomadic cosmology, common to both Buryat and Mongol herders, in which extended transspecies space (of a family, of a community) is shared with awareness of different capacities, intelligences, and needs. So, when Marchina asks a herder why he places goats and sheep together in one herd, his explanation is both logical and (for western readers perhaps) surprising: "Sheep are stupid, they don't know

where they live. But the goats know. If we don't put the goats with the sheep, [the sheep will] head off without realizing they're not coming back home." ["Les moutons sont stupides, ils ne connaissent pas leur maison. Les chèvres, elles, savent. Si on ne mettait pas de chèvres avec les moutons, ils iraient toujours tout droit sans se rendre compte qu'ils ne rentrent pas à la maison." (p.81) I have now become used to watching cattle wandering home across the steppe in the later afternoon, but this transspecies collaboration of the nomadic community – though it might be "natural", and unrecognized perhaps by all but the humans involved – is striking in its simplicity, but also indicative of an inclusive attitude towards non-humans all but absent from contemporary human society.

The maps scattered throughout the book respond effectively to the text, and reveal the daily and seasonal movements central to the lives of herding communities. By showing the way in which different families cleave to much the same routes and herding trajectories, the graphics emphasize as much the significance of social interaction and community learning as how the landscape determines, and

even assists, herding behaviors. The maps, moreover, are complemented by black and white photographs, the majority of them merely indicating humanity by dint of their very existence, or by the occasional *ger* (yurt). Mongolia's landscape, as presented in these photographs, might appear empty to the eye of an untrained reader, but (as I can attest) the trained nomadic eye notices incremental topographical shifts, and the movement traced by the maps illustrates choices based upon such topographical features, like the ones shown (if you look closely) in the photographs.

The complexity of the ecological relationships which Marchina describes from her fieldwork on both sides of the Russo-Mongolian border resonate even in our own more urbanized and 'easier' lives. In her conclusion, she points out that Mongol nomads do not live "symbiotically" or 'in harmony' with their environment" ["«en symbiose» ou «en harmonie» avec leur environnement"], as some might wish to believe, but that their situation nonetheless offers us the chance "to reflect on the relations which we would like to enjoy with our own environment" ["de réfléchir aux relations que nous-mêmes voulons entretenir aujourd'hui avec notre environnement"] (p.206). This of course is key to a profitable engagement with such a work of anthropology: a book like Marchina's, while valuable as scholarship and as a way to broaden our understanding of how 'other people' live, also asks us to think about our own lives. The ways in which we interact with the non-human persons with whom we share our environment, our treatment of our shared environment, and our attitude towards tradition and innovation together define the 'broad vision' according to which we as a society move forward. Such are the questions which this book provoked in me, and for that – as well as for its eloquence and elegant production – it is to surely be recommended.

Simon Wickhamsmith, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, United States

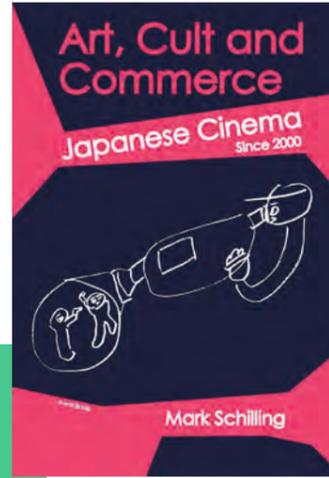
Reviews, essays, and interviews on Japanese cinema, 2000–2019

Jennifer Coates

Reviewed title
**Art, Cult and Commerce:
Japanese Cinema Since
2000**

Mark Schilling. 2019.

New York and Tokyo: Awai Books
ISBN 9781937220099



Mark Schilling's *Art, Cult and Commerce: Japanese Cinema Since 2000* collects essays, reviews, and interviews previously published in the *Japan Times*, *Midnight Eye*, *Variety*, *Newsweek*, and *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, as well as the catalogue of the Udine Far East Film Festival, which Schilling advises. The volume is a continuation of Schilling's work in his previous collection, *Contemporary Japanese Film* (Weatherhill, 1999), marketed towards students, teachers, and the non-professional cinema enthusiast. While Schilling's 1999 collection introduced writing on Japanese cinema to mainstream audiences who may have struggled to access reviews elsewhere, we might question the utility of this follow-up volume in an era where much of the book's content is freely available in the online archives of the publications listed above. The impact of this volume today will therefore depend on how it is used by scholars, teachers, and students. I believe that this collection will prove a useful resource for research and teaching if we approach the volume as an historic document and as personal testimony, as much as a factual guide.

The relative ease of access to writing on Japanese cinema afforded by the Internet has also sped up scholarship and research publication since Schilling's earlier volume, meaning that it is easier to access published work on recent cinema today than in 1999. There is a significant and growing body of scholarly writing on Japanese cinema since 2000.¹ The triple disaster in Fukushima prefecture in March 2011 and its impact on filmmaking practices and

exhibition has, if anything, sped up the process of research and publishing on contemporary Japanese cinema. Against this background of scholarly activity, Schilling's 2019 collection will not make quite the impact of his earlier 1999 volume, at least for research purposes.

Yet the volume has much to recommend it. Firstly, and quite significantly, the book is an enjoyable reading experience. Schilling is an engaging writer, often very funny, and the accessible style will be attractive to non-specialist and student readers, as well as useful for teaching purposes. The volume is arranged in three parts, beginning with a series of short essays, a section of interviews with directors, film industry personnel, and stars, and a longer segment of Schilling's *Japan Times* film reviews organised chronologically. The closing pages show 'Best Ten' and 'Best Five' lists from 2000–2018. The hundreds of films discussed and reviewed include lesser-known and rarer movies, some still unavailable outside Japan, which will be of value to student readers and researchers.

It is unfortunate that typographical errors in the introduction and early sections sometimes risk misinterpretation of the useful industry information contained therein, for example, missing \$ marks and their designations (millions, thousands, etc.) make budgets and box office takings a matter of guess work in places. However, with updates on alternative

distribution formats and emerging screening platforms, as well as information about co-production arrangements between Japan and China, the new introduction makes a significant contribution to the volume.

More than 60 interviews with directors and stars contain priceless anecdotes that paint a colourful picture of the industry, though it may be difficult to prove some of the claims, allegations, and downright boasts therein. Schilling is a talented interviewer, drawing out highly original responses from interviewees. Some are hilarious, for example, director Nobuhiko Obayashi's anecdotes about learning the differences between American and British English during a bathroom visit in the United States (p.153). Others are more poignant, such as director Umetsugu Inoue's recollection of the tough times that star Misora Hibari suffered due to family problems and bullying in the mass media (p.81). The stories such Golden Age directors recount of their early years in the studio system are invaluable for their information about the informal networks of influence in the industry during its peak period of production and audience attendance (pp.77–8). Some of the Japanese cinema's most famous directors were interviewed towards the end of their lives, and Schilling often asks them to reflect on the changes the industry has undergone during their working years. Shindo Kaneto's observations about

aging and loss, and the affordances of cinema to express such complicated feelings, are particularly emotional (pp.46–7).

The majority of the interviews give the impression of reading along with a lively conversation, often based on years of acquaintance or friendship built over multiple professional encounters. When interviews don't go so well however, Schilling is a self-reflective interviewer, considering factors such as the environment of the interview and his performance of his own role to contextualise the reluctance of directors such as Masaaki Yuasa to engage in the extended responses more common to older industry professionals (p.219).

While the interview section is perhaps the most valuable part of the book, the preceding short essays also offer some reflections on the role of a film critic which may be useful for students and non-specialist readers interested in developing their own film criticism practices. An essay on screen violence gives an account of the overlapping concerns of film reviewing as a job, and the life and experiences of the film reviewer (p.27). In an interview in the *Japan Times*, Schilling cited critic Manny Faber to the effect that, "The critic doesn't watch the film, the man watched the film" (Alyssa I. Smith, 'Want to know Japanese cinema? Get to know Mark Schilling', *The Japan Times*, 18 January 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2020/01/18/books/want-know-japanese-cinema-get-know-mark-schilling>, accessed 1 October 2020). The experiences and mood of the critic colour their review of the film, and critics may be drawn to films that reflect or confirm something in their own experience. I would suggest that the book is best used with this observation kept in mind. In places, judgements can seem overly subjective – for example, the later films of Takashi Miike are dismissed as "less interesting" (p.14) without justification or analysis. However, Schilling is transparent about the fact that he writes as an individual engaging with the films he reviews as a person with particular preferences and experiences, and as long as the reader does not forget this, the book will prove informative as well as entertaining.

Jennifer Coates, University
of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Notes

- 1 For a full reference list, please see the online version of this review: <https://newbooks.asia/review/japanese-cinema-2000>.

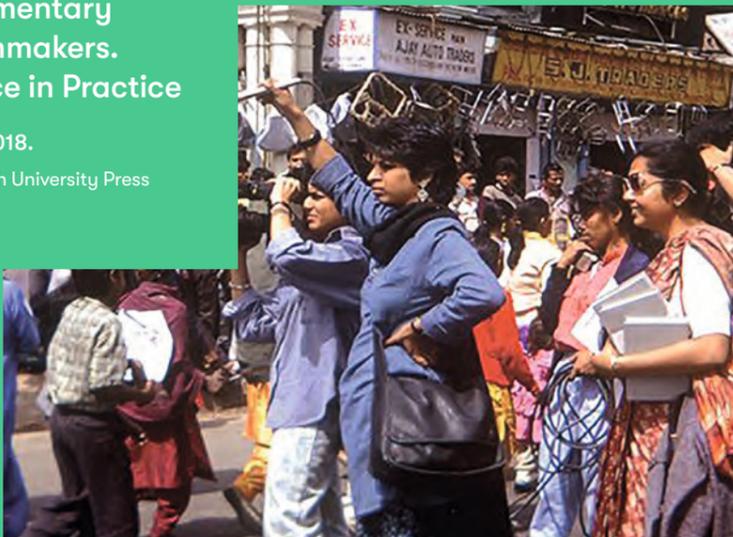
Indian documentary film and filmmakers

Nadja-Christina Schneider

Reviewed title
**Indian Documentary
Film and Filmmakers.
Independence in Practice**

Shweta Kishore. 2018.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
ISBN 9781474433068



The struggles of independent critical filmmakers in India

In the summer of 2019, when the central government in India denied permission for 'veteran' documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan's latest film *Vivek* (Reason) (2018) to be screened at the renowned International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala, the organizers of the festival, together with Patwardhan, did what he often did when his earlier films faced state censorship. They took the battle to court, won the case, and finally got permission to screen the self-funded and searingly critical documentary at the festival in Thiruvananthapuram. Structured in eight parts, *Vivek* scrutinizes the mainstreaming of violent Hindutva ideology and majoritarian nationalism in India during the last decade. While the successful litigation in Kerala could be seen as a glimmer of hope for the continued possibility for audiences to engage with critical independent documentaries in India, the fact that *Vivek*, along with a number of other critically acclaimed films, was not screened at the 16th Mumbai International Film Festival in January this year (MIFF 2020) may not have come as a surprise for many.

MIFF was launched in 1990 as Bombay International Film Festival. It is the largest biennial film festival of non-feature films in South Asia, organized by the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In the aftermath of the 2002 violence in the west Indian state of Gujarat, a censor requirement for Indian films at MIFF was introduced which, in turn, led to the

organization of the alternative Vikalp Film Festival in 2004 which ran parallel to it and where all the films rejected by the MIFF were screened (for a vivid account of the festival related politics, see Thomas Waugh's article 'Miffed! or "Gasping for [polluted?] air"', *BioScope* 3(1), 2012: 87–93). Thereafter, the censorship requirement at MIFF was withdrawn; of late, however, some notice a new form of indirect censorship vis-à-vis critical independent documentaries that simply do not get selected.

Not one, but many forms and practices

Instead of a universal understanding of the term 'independent', Shweta Kishore argues for a localized perspective that needs to be contextualized historically and spatially, and so her highly readable book starts with references to these two 'icons' of independent documentary filmmaking practices in India – Vikalp and Anand Patwardhan. It may be difficult to imagine another Vikalp Film Festival in the current situation, but it continues to exist as an important platform for "over 300 documentary filmmakers dispersed across India" (p.1) who communicate through the Vikalp Films for Freedom listserv. Yet, the coining of the term 'independent documentary film' dates back to the mid-1970s, when the Emergency declared by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi threatened the democratic political

Hayao Miyazaki

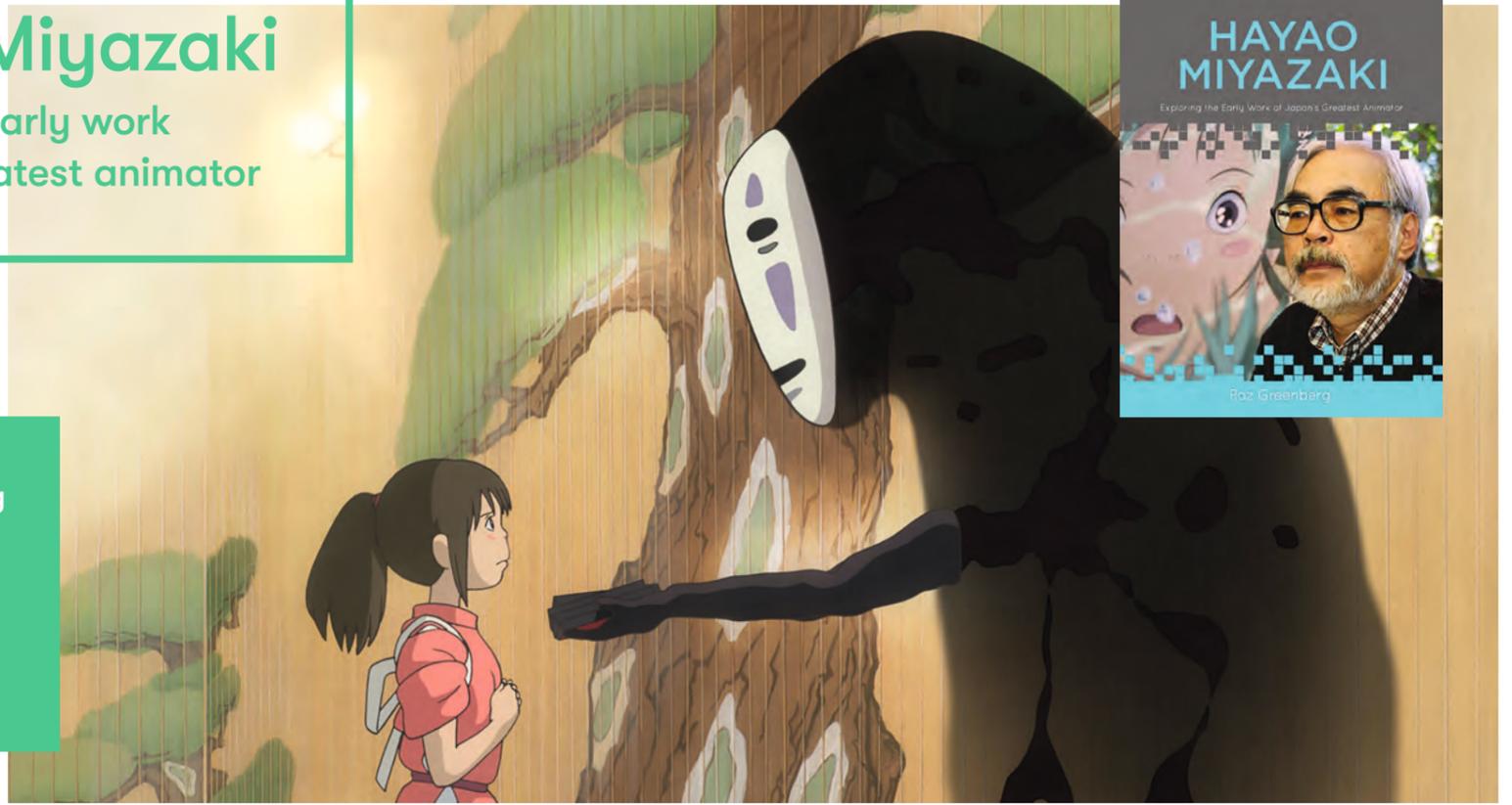
Exploring the early work of Japan's greatest animator

Mari Nakamura

Reviewed title

Hayao Miyazaki: Exploring the Early Work of Japan's Greatest Animator

Raz Greenberg, 2018.

New York: Bloomsbury Academic
ISBN 9781501335945

Still from 'Spirited Away' (2001). Reproduced with permission. © Studio Ghibli.

Studio Ghibli, led by Hayao Miyazaki and the late Isao Takahata, is one of the most celebrated Japanese animation studios and has attracted a global audience for over 30 years. Many books and articles have been written in English about Studio Ghibli's works, including Susan Napier's *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke* (Palgrave, 2001), Helen McCarthy's *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation* (Stone Bridge Press, 1999), Thomas Lamarre's *Anime Machine* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), and Rayna Denison's edited volume *Princess Mononoke: Understanding Studio Ghibli's Monster Princess* (Bloomsbury, 2018). Yet until very recently, Miyazaki's early work has been less explored by scholars outside of Japan. A notable exception is Susan Napier's recent groundbreaking autobiography, *Miyazakiworld: A Life in Art* (Yale University Press, 2018). Raz Greenberg's new book, *Hayao Miyazaki: Exploring the Early Work of Japan's Greatest Animator*, is a welcome

volume filling this gap in the literature in English. In this book Greenberg aims to offer "Miyazaki in context" in its reflection of how Miyazaki grew within the emerging post-World War II Japanese animation industry and how his rise within the same industry is a very important part of his country becoming an animation superpower" (pp.xii-xiii).

The book showcases the richness of styles, narratives and themes in Miyazaki's works and how his creativity has evolved over the 50 years of his career. It starts by tracing Miyazaki's early life – his childhood dream of becoming a manga artist, his encounter with Tōei Animation's first featured animated film *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (1958) – and his early years as an animator at Tōei, the first large-scale animation studio in Japan, between 1963 and 1971. The first chapter examines many works that Miyazaki was involved in and the studio veterans he collaborated with, including Takahata,

foundations of the country. By means of "guerilla filmmaking on a borrowed Super 8 camera, improvised editing and underground exhibition" (p.2), Patwardhan developed his unique form and practice of political filmmaking. His 1975 film *Kraanti Ki Tarangein* (Waves of revolution) is paradigmatic for the conscious positioning of filmmaking practices outside the Films Division of India, i.e. the "nationally dominant state-run documentary production and distribution agency" (p.2).

Subsequently, the term 'independent' was for a long time primarily associated with politically conscious (if not activist, see Arvind Rajagopal and Paromita Vohra, On the aesthetics and ideology of the Indian documentary film: A conversation, *BioScope* 3(1), 2012: 7–20) and privately produced documentary films that were distributed and screened outside the organized structures of the state or commercial film theatres. But, as Kishore convincingly argues, the distinction between independent and 'mainstream' or 'commercial' productions has become increasingly blurred (under which category would, for instance, NGO-sponsored films be classified?) during the last four decades, and the same holds true for the diversification and blurring of genre boundaries. Accordingly, Kishore selected filmmakers for her study who reflect the contemporary diversity of individuals, position(alities), artistic forms and aesthetic practices of independent contemporary filmmaking in India: Rahul Roy (New Delhi),

Amudhan R.P. (Chennai), Paromita Vohra (Mumbai) and the filmmaking partners Anjali Monteiro and K. P. Jayasankar (Mumbai). Monteiro and Jayasankar also co-authored a major contribution to the increasingly vibrant study of independent documentary filmmaking in India (*A Fly in the Curry: Independent Documentary Film in India*, SAGE, 2015).

However, instead of focusing primarily on the textual level of their films, Kishore explores the specific practices, relationships, techniques, and evolving structures that form around the independent mode of filmmaking of the directors in focus. All these aspects contribute to a changing notion and meaning of cultural production and the relation between visual culture, cultural producer, and society. Throughout the five chapters of her book, the author draws on a wide range of cultural, sociological and media theory and thus offers new perspectives on a field of research that for a long time had been under-theorized. Luckily, a number of important books and academic articles have begun to fill this gap since the last 10 years or so. Students and scholars who are interested in Indian documentary film studies or who wish to deepen their understanding of the multiple ways in which individuals continue to resist through an array of aesthetic and sociocultural practices will find this book very insightful and interesting to read.

Nadja-Christina Schneider,
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,
Germany

Yōichi Kotabe, Yasuji Mori, and Yasuo Ōtsuka. Greenberg also discusses how Miyazaki was profoundly influenced by Paul Grimault's *The Adventures of Mr. Wonderbird* (1952) and Lev Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* (1957) in terms of conceptual, visual, and narrative styles.

The second chapter examines Miyazaki's role in the animated adaptations of classic children's literature in the 1970s, including *Heidi*, *Girl of the Alps* (1974), *3,000 Leagues in Search of Mother* (1976), and *Anne of Green Gables* (1979) as well as the original short films *Panda! Go Panda!* (1972, 1973). Miyazaki's first trip abroad was an important source of inspiration, and his great love for the European landscapes were integrated into these shows. Linking these early television series and short films to Miyazaki's later films with Studio Ghibli, Greenberg argues that Miyazaki started practicing new forms of narratives, styles, and themes through these projects. The third chapter focuses on Miyazaki's directorial debut feature film *The Castle of Cagliostro* (1979) as well as the preceding animated television series *Lupin the Third* (1971, 1972), which are based on the popular action manga by Monkey Punch.

The fourth chapter offers a close study of Miyazaki's largest manga project, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1982–94), and the 1984 feature film adaptation he directed. This chapter examines how the world of *Nausicaa* was built upon a wide range of themes and tropes from Japanese and foreign literature and films. For example, *Nausicaa*'s character was inspired by the two literary classics *The Lady who loved Insect* from Heian Japan (794–1185) and Homer's *Odyssey*, while the post-apocalyptic world drew from American and British science fiction novels and films, including Brian Aldiss's *Hothouse* (1962), Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), and Douglas Trumbull's film *Silent Running* (1972). Greenberg suggests that Miyazaki's tendency to create strong female protagonists in his films can be traced to *Nausicaa*. Greenberg also finds a link between *Nausicaa* and the heroines of influential works such as *Panda and the Magic Serpent* and *The Snow Queen* as well as *Heidi* and *Anne*.

The fifth and sixth chapters explore Miyazaki's career as a feature-film director at Studio Ghibli: *Castle in the Sky* (1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Porco Rosso* (1992), and later works *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Ponyo* (2008) and *The Wind Rises* (2013). Greenberg finds many affinities in stylistic and thematic elements between Ghibli productions and the works that Miyazaki was involved in before Ghibli, including strong female characters, rich background designs, and complex narratives that were inspired by Japanese

and foreign literature as well as Miyazaki's own life. Miyazaki's later works, most notably *Princess Mononoke*, however, depict far darker and pessimistic visions, and Greenberg suggests that his later works reflect the sociopolitical uncertainty of Japan in the 21st century.

Here I would like to offer three brief critiques of this fascinating study of Miyazaki's early work. First, although Greenberg emphasizes Miyazaki's role in the animated adaptations of classic children's literature in the 1970s and links them to his later directorial productions at Studio Ghibli, more compelling and nuanced discussion of the animation production of these shows is needed. Miyazaki did play a key role in these projects by being in charge of scene design and layout, but it was director Takahata's idea to approach film and animation in a more realistic way by depicting the protagonist's everyday life in *Heidi* and other series (*3,000 Leagues and Anne*), according to both Miyazaki's and Takahata's writings. Second, including more primary sources – most notably, publications by Takahata and Studio Ghibli's Producer Toshio Suzuki – would be fruitful for contextualizing Miyazaki's career and works. These publications by key members of Studio Ghibli and their perspectives give insight into the studio and its creative process. Third, as Greenberg acknowledges, Miyazaki's sources of inspiration are indeed wide-ranging across time and space, from literary classics to children's literature, from Western sci-fi to manga to animation, and from his childhood memories to adult experiences travelling in Japan and abroad. Yet, what is less discussed is another important source: scholarly work. For example, *Princess Mononoke* is described as a historical fantasy set in Muromachi Japan and Miyazaki's "own take on the famous *Beauty and the Beast* legend" (p.136), but perhaps it is much more than that if we consider how Miyazaki was influenced by the works of archeologist Eiichi Fujimori, botanist Sasuke Nakao, and historian Yoshihiko Amino for many years. *Princess Mononoke* can also be read as an alternative historical imagination beyond the 'national history', as a Japan and its people that Miyazaki rediscovered and rebuilt.

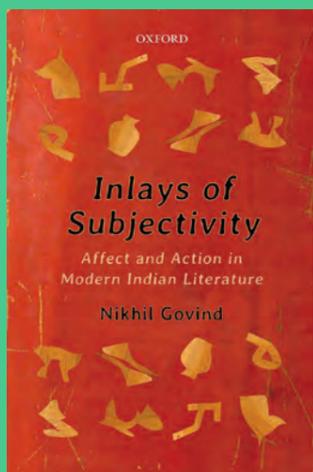
In short, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in Hayao Miyazaki and anime as well as animation studies and film studies. It is an accessible book that invites the reader into the worlds of Miyazaki and his sources of inspiration through the careful analysis of his works.

Mari Nakamura, Leiden University,
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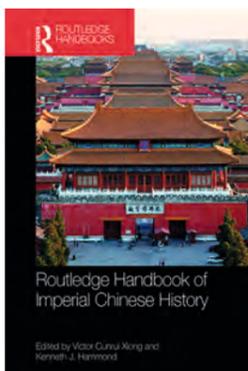
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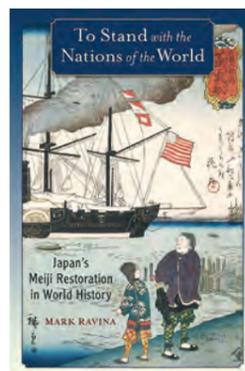
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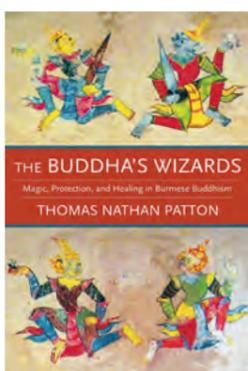
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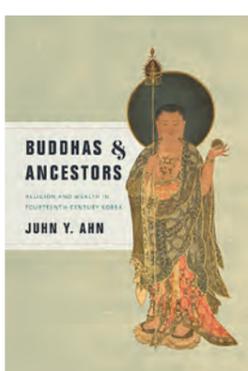
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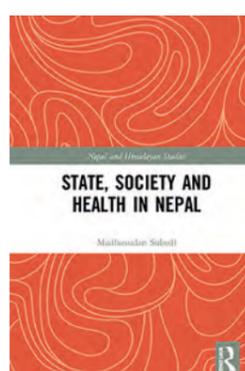
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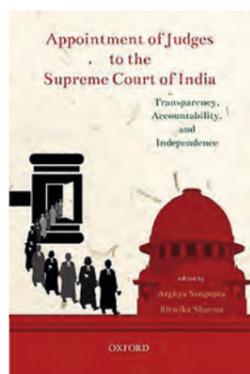
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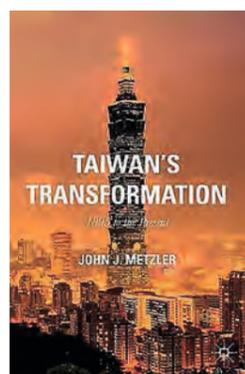


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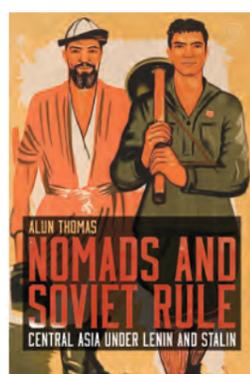


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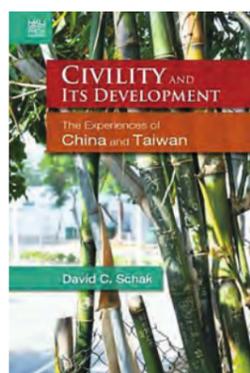


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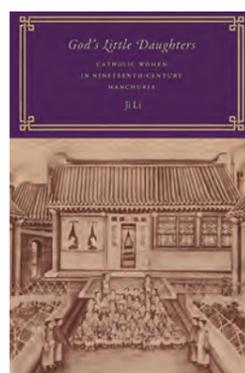


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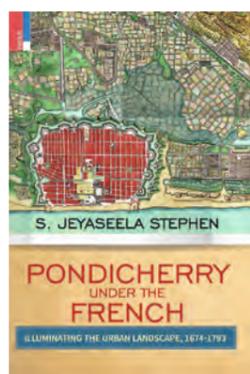


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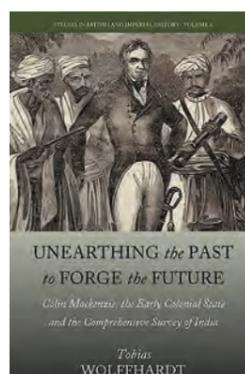


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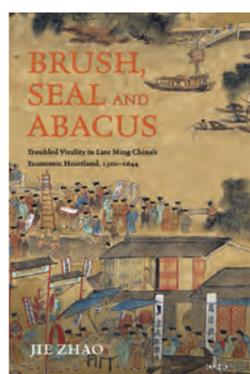


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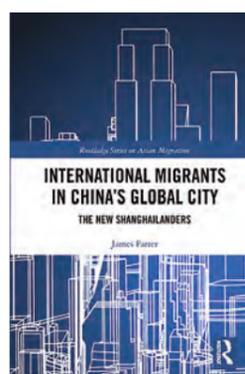


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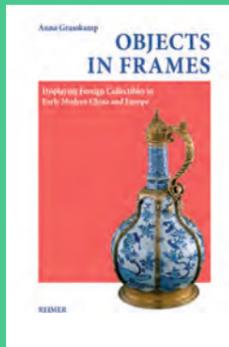
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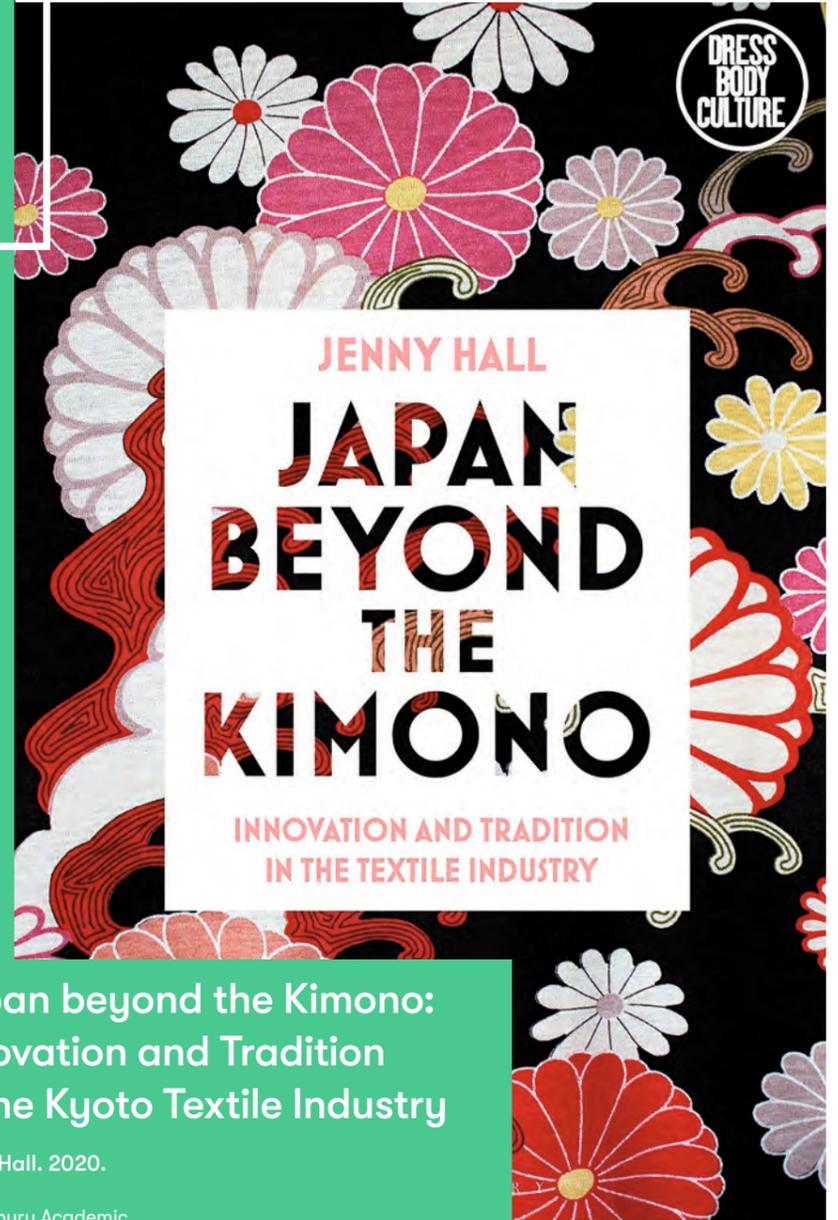


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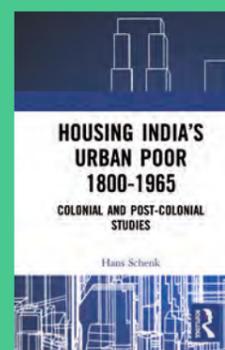
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The migrant fishermen of Phuket, Thailand.
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Combatting human trafficking in East Asia and beyond

Bonny Ling
and Isabelle Cheng

Human trafficking is a phenomenon that attracts much public attention, owing to the flagrant nature of the exploitation involved when individuals become lucrative commodities. The reality of human trafficking, however, is complicated. The underground nature of human trafficking, especially where it involves the clandestine dynamics of irregular migration, can lead to a poor understanding of its causes, processes and consequences and, resultantly, impede efforts to combat it. Human trafficking can be transnational, spanning different countries, or wholly domestic. In fact, most cases of human trafficking are domestic in nature and thus do not fall within the typology of ‘country of origin, transit and destination’ that is often used to describe trafficking when border crossings are involved.¹ The purpose of exploitation can encompass different forms and involve different victim profiles. Furthermore, human trafficking is a crime, but it can take place within legal channels of immigration and employment. In reality, the issue of trafficking and exploitation is multifaceted because migration is a process that can change over time in the types of facilitation and exploitation as experienced by the individual migrant.² The challenge of anti-trafficking, therefore, is based on the fundamental recognition that there is still much to learn—and much to do—to combat human trafficking.

The roundtable

The imperative of learning from each other about emerging trafficking dynamics and best anti-trafficking practices led to the hosting of a Chatham House regional roundtable, titled ‘Combatting Human Trafficking: The Situation in East Asia’, on 16 September 2019 in Taipei.³ Jointly funded by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, the Asian Exchange Foundation, University of Portsmouth and Chatham House, the roundtable provided a timely opportunity to examine and compare various domestic contexts with respect to the protection of trafficking victims, the role of recruitment

agencies in state-sanctioned labour migration systems and the responsibility of the private sector to address labour exploitation in their global supply chains.

At the roundtable, participants—activists, practitioners and scholars from Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and the UK—exchanged views on labour trafficking in different domestic contexts across Asia, legal and policy frameworks, the role of business and recruitment agencies and best practices in the prevention of trafficking in East Asia. Participants referenced the annual publication and ranking of countries based on their

anti-trafficking responses in the Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. Department of State. From this exchange of views at the Chatham House roundtable derives the scope of this Focus section, where we asked our contributors from different fields to reflect on the theme of combatting human trafficking in East Asia and beyond the region. The Focus consists of their reflections and contributions from these cross-disciplinary perspectives, including Richard B. Allen as a historian of slavery in the Indian Ocean, Michiel Hoornick as an advocate to eliminate global statelessness, Lisa Ko-En Hsin and Anna Tsalapatanis as scholars of law, Dennis Kwok as

a legislator in Hong Kong, Franziska Plümmer and Gunter Schubert as scholars of Asian studies, Tsai Tsung Lung as a documentary filmmaker and interviewed by Evelyn Hsin-chin Hsieh as a scholar of literature, Neil Wilkins and Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna from international civil society organisations that work on business and human rights and migrant rights advocacy, Gabriel Webber Ziero as a private sector analyst for corporate responsibility, and lawyer and photographer Ewa Dąbrowska who selected the photos to accompany our essay on the plight of migrants in Malaysia during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Continued overleaf

Contributions to this Focus

Tsalapatani begins with an analysis of why human trafficking is difficult to define in practice and even more challenging to arrive at reliable estimates of the extent of the global situation. She stresses the methodological difficulties associated with attempts to obtain a clearer understanding of the human trafficking landscape. Different purposes of exploitation, different victim profiles and different migratory dynamics depending on the elements of voluntariness and coercion can make statistical captures of the extent of human trafficking extremely difficult. Allen picks up on these themes of conceptual and methodological challenges inherent in studies of human trafficking. He ambitiously sketches a sense of the scale of human trafficking in Asia before the turn of the twentieth century, thereby providing the historical context to current discourse of combatting human trafficking in all its forms. Conceptually, Allen's essay connects the anti-trafficking challenge of today to the wider historical and comparative context of global slavery and of its abolition. In so doing, it serves as an important reminder that while the present-day imperative to address human trafficking is urgent, it is by no means a new phenomenon that the world has never seen. Instead, the intensity of our present-day anti-trafficking discourse is but the latest chapter in a long history of labour exploitation embedded in different migrant labour systems of slavery or practices and institutions similar to that of slavery.

Framing contemporary human trafficking challenges within the broader history of slavery is increasingly more important in light of the labelling of human trafficking as a modern form of slavery, ushered in by legislation like the UK Modern Slavery Act of 2015. The Act establishes a framework for a robust criminal justice response against egregious labour exploitation, known broadly as human trafficking, whose international definition encompasses the various purposes of exploitation such as "the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs".⁴ Involving the private sector, the Act notably establishes a mandatory requirement for commercial organisations operating in the UK with a turnover greater than £36 million to publish an annual statement on slavery and human trafficking. The momentum generated by the UK Modern Slavery Act has brought in similar legislation in other jurisdictions that call for mandatory human rights due diligence. Webber Ziero discusses the wave of regulatory developments worldwide to combat contemporary slavery-like practices and hold businesses responsible for negative human rights impacts of their activities. Webber Ziero observes this growing momentum in Asia, notably Hong Kong with its proposed Modern Slavery Bill, and opines that we may see similar legislation in member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) owing to growing cooperation between ASEAN and Australia, which has its own Modern Slavery Act since November 2018.

The essays from Kwok and Hsin provide detailed analyses of the Hong Kong Modern Slavery Bill, which is the most developed version of such regulatory developments in Asia to combat human trafficking. Hong Kong legislator Kwok provides a commentary for why he and fellow legislator Kenneth Leung proposed the bill outside the government's legislative agenda, notwithstanding the unlikelihood that it would be adopted by the government. Hsin argues in her essay that with Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre, a modern slavery law for the territory modelled after the UK Modern Slavery Act of 2015 could have considerable impacts in the Asia Pacific. It would bring Hong Kong into better alignment with other major international financial centres with similar legislation and also alleviate the city's poor rankings on the U.S. Department's Watch List in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report. In 2018, the U.S. threatened to lower Hong Kong's grading from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 3, the worst possible ranking. In 2009, the 'downgrading' of Taiwan from Tier 1 to Tier 2 led to an enhanced inter-agency coordination and the final adoption of the Human Trafficking Prevention and Control Act in 2010.⁵



Man brandishing his passport at the Migration Resource Center in Kathmandu, wishing to receive a visa in order to go abroad for work. © ILO/Crozet M.

Plümmer and Schubert examine the state-sanctioned labour migration systems in East Asia and argue that governments in East Asia should improve their regulatory frameworks towards labour migration and asylum protection to prevent migrants and refugees from being exploited by crime syndicates or unscrupulous recruiters. Specifically, they note how immigration policies of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan can exacerbate human trafficking risks. Meaningful efforts to combat human trafficking therefore can provide an indication of how willing these governments are to address victimisation in migration industries and migration-related exploitation. Wilkins' essay addresses the theme of combatting trafficking in regulated labour regimes and the fundamental flaws in the current labour recruitment system, where migrant workers are expected to pay heavy recruitment fees up front for the opportunity to work abroad and remit money home. This means that migrant workers are heavily indebted and begin their employment in a position of vulnerability. Wilkins writes of the urgency to move to a different industry norm, whereby the recruitment fee is borne by employers rather than the migrant workers, in what is known as the 'Employer Pays Principle'.

For migrant workers without documentation or the necessary permit for authorised entry, residency and employment, their position in the labour market is even more precarious. Hoornick observes in his essay that vulnerability in the labour market can be greatly exacerbated by the status of statelessness. Hoornick examines how the lack of a citizenship can be a risk factor for human trafficking and how lessons learnt in Thailand to combat trafficking by reducing statelessness are important for other countries in the region with significant stateless populations. For instance, in Thailand, poverty or illiteracy may lead to a child's birth not being registered. The subsequent lack of legal documentation for the child can become an impediment for him or her to later access the formal employment sector and more willing to take risks with dubious employers or employment agents.

Tsai, Hsieh and Cheng's contribution is an exploration of the precarity of undocumented migrant workers through a discussion of the documentary, 'See You, Lovable Strangers'. Filmmaker Tsai discusses with Hsieh the documentary he made in 2016 with Nguyễn Kim Hồng, which follows the plight of four undocumented Vietnamese agricultural workers who absconded from their arranged employment in Taiwan and instead found work in the informal agricultural sector. They speak of the exploitive nature of their work, the false promises made by job recruiters, their anxieties caused by the heavy debts they took on to secure an employment contract in Taiwan, the precarity of living conditions and the haunting fear of police raids. The documentary is a powerful testament for

why the current migrant recruitment industry whereby heavy fees are charged upon migrants for their employment is deeply flawed and must be changed, as echoed by Wilkins' essay.

Migrant workers under lockdown

Shortly after the Chatham House roundtable on 'Combating Human Trafficking: The Situation in East Asia' took place in Taipei in September 2019, the global community saw the outbreak of an unknown virus. By the end of March 2020, about one-fifth of the world population went into lockdown as governments worldwide sought to control the spread of COVID-19.⁶ Many of the contributions in this Focus were prepared during lockdown, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic and the exceptional measures undertaken to control the outbreak foregrounded the inequality between migrant workers and citizens, particularly with regard to the issue of health. For migrants who continued to work as frontline and key workers during the pandemic in the care, agricultural and other sectors in Italy, the U.K, the U.S and countries elsewhere, their insufficient, or lack of, entitlement to healthcare exposed them to a higher health risk. For those who were summarily dismissed from their jobs or have their wages held by their employers, such as Indonesians and South Asian migrant workers in Malaysia, their livelihoods were at stake when they were suddenly faced with the compounded threat of job and food insecurity.

As foretold by Michiel Baas in the previous edition of The Newsletter (#86; Summer 2020), COVID-19 and, more specifically, how governments' pandemic responses affected the rights and lives of migrant workers worldwide, will be an active ground of research for the years to come. Exclusion of migrant workers, especially those who are undocumented, will likely become even more contentious, as countries reel from the measures taken in the name of public health to control mobility and restrict the rights of those seen as vectors of the viral transmission. In ASEAN, the rights of undocumented migrant workers within the framework for the promotion and protection of migrant workers will need to be re-examined, since current standards of the ASEAN regional human rights system on the rights of migrant workers excludes most undocumented migrant workers from its scope.⁷

The last essay of our Focus is a photo-essay that attempts to capture the sense of uncertainty, frustration and urgency felt by migrant rights advocates as they watched how the lockdown measures adversely affected migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur. Originally posted on an NGO social media

site to bring awareness to the plight of migrants, the photos that accompanied the essay by Kishna and Ling were later taken down by the organisation due to the intensity of the negative reactions they generated amongst those who disagreed with the humanitarian actions undertaken to help migrant workers. We include the photo-essay on COVID-19 and migrants in Malaysia as a reminder that the challenge of anti-trafficking must be framed within the wider context of protecting the rights of all migrant workers.

With expected prolonged effects of an economic downturn worldwide, the pandemic has intensified the misery of those who were already marginalised and living in precarity. How we seek to better the situation of those most affected and meet the anti-trafficking challenge in light of the growing socioeconomic inequality will be the hallmark of our shared humanity in the post-COVID world.

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An uncertainty of terms

Definitional and methodological concerns in human trafficking

Anna Tsalapatanis



Left: Photo by author.

Trafficking in persons is exploitative, can cause immense harm - often to society's most vulnerable - and needs to be eliminated. Less clear cut, however, are the ways in which trafficking is defined in practice, and even less agreement exists on the best ways to measure and estimate these largely clandestine activities. This article looks at current best practice; it investigates the available methodologies and the many difficulties associated with getting a clear picture of the existing human trafficking landscape.

What is trafficking in persons?

Broadly, trafficking is the exploitation of people, most often for sexual exploitation or forced labour. The different elements are captured within the UN 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children',¹ adopted in 2000 and implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Protocol defines trafficking as: "[...] the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. [...]" (Article 3).

While some may associate trafficking with movement – as suggested by the terms 'transportation' and 'harbouring' in the above definition – it is not necessary for a person to have been moved to another location for trafficking to have taken place. According to the 2018 UNODC 'Report on Trafficking in Persons',² the highest numbers of trafficking victims are detected in the countries in which they are citizens, a departure from the reported cases in previous editions. In order to better understand the problem, some analyses have attempted to classify states into source, transit and destination countries, which may be useful to sketch out the routes for transnational forms of human trafficking, but may present a misleading picture when the highest numbers of trafficking victims are local.

Reporting shows that men and women are generally trafficked for different forms of exploitation, with women and girls more likely to be sexually exploited, and men and boys being forced for their labour. This does not mean that there are not also cases where the opposite is true – where men and boys are sexually exploited and women are in forced labour – however, available statistics show that these numbers are smaller.³ While to some degree generalisations are required to convey an overarching picture of the scope of a problem, they must be used with caution as they may not be representative

of the issues present at a certain location, and because policy and resources become directed towards these areas of concern at the expense of others.

There are other aspects which make identifying trafficking problematic, as actions or activities that may initially have been voluntary, can later be driven by force or coercion, making them examples of trafficking in persons. Take the distinction between smuggling and transnational trafficking, for example. While there is a clear difference between the two at a conceptual level – smuggling is voluntary, and trafficking is either forced or the result of some coercion or deception – in practice these are not as easily distinguishable, and the threshold between the two is not always clear. Despite this, how these individuals are defined (as a victim of trafficking, or as an individual who used the services of a smuggler) if they are discovered by authorities, can have enormous consequences on the types of assistance available to them.

Like most criminal activities, trafficking happens largely behind closed doors with perpetrators going to great lengths to hide their activities. Victims tend to not to come forward, out of fear or shame, or perhaps due to having normalised their experiences. This means that it is often very difficult to fully grasp the extent of human trafficking.

Why is reporting on human trafficking so important?

There are a series of global efforts against human trafficking. To take just one example, combatting trafficking falls under three sections of the 'Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)':⁴

5.2 (Gender Equality) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

8.7 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst

forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

16.2 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

While this is just one example, these efforts to eradicate trafficking in persons generate a demand for a clearer picture of the current trafficking landscape including better statistics; these goals require adequate reporting to track the progress that each country is making towards them. For this reason, statistics on human trafficking are at the heart of one of the Sustainable Development Indicators, with indicator 16.2.2 requiring states to provide the "number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation". A great amount of time and energy has gone into improving the reporting around trafficking in persons in recent years.

What methodologies can be used in order to understand human trafficking?

The most significant issue of reporting is trying to better understand this elusive number of cases that go unreported. This problem is exacerbated by two particular concerns; firstly, obtaining adequate data, and secondly, developing suitable methodologies with which to use this data to better understand the current rates of trafficking across the globe, including the impact of regional differences.

There are a number of forms of data that report cases of trafficking in persons. Perhaps an obvious example are the cases that come before the courts. These can be problematic as a data source though, as their focus is on the specific perpetrators rather than capturing data about the victims. Police reporting offers a slightly better set of figures as they include cases that have not made it to court, and those that remain unsolved; but once again their focus tends to be on the perpetrators. This means that our main sources of information on victims are the organisations who provide them with assistance. Obtaining information from these organisations also comes with a set of inbuilt complications. Who obtains assistance and what sorts of assistance are available very much depend on the political climate and a whole range of other uncontrolled factors, such cultural norms. Legislation may also focus on particular victims such as women and children, and those who have been trafficked internationally, meaning that others may very well be falling through the cracks. Therefore, cases that accept or receive assistance may not be representative.

Different countries also recognise different forms of trafficking in their reporting. Generally included are the categories of forced labour and sexual exploitation, but other forms of trafficking such as exploitative begging, illegal

adoption, organ removal or forced marriage may often not be included in the statistics submitted. Furthermore, each state has its own identification and referral mechanisms, which can impact on the cases that are picked up by courts, police and these assistance organisations. In many locations, assistance is more readily available for those who have been sexually exploited, which means that other examples such as debt bondage, which is often considered the most common form of trafficking, does not necessarily show up often enough in certain types of reporting.

There have been initiatives to help generate other data sources around trafficking in persons. Some organisations have circulated household surveys to gain insights into cases that may not have been reported through other channels. For instance, the Walk Free Foundation has used figures from household surveys to produce their 'Global Slavery Index', which estimated that on "any given day in 2016, an estimated 24.9 million men, women, and children were living in modern slavery in Asia and the Pacific."⁵ Unfortunately, the significant costs of these methods can make them highly prohibitive, and without an adequate sample size, their results can be misleading. They are also relying on honest responses and adequate understanding by primary respondents.

Even when useful data exists there can be issues with access, and there have been recent attempts at making these sources more readily available. The most notable of these is the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC),⁶ launched in late 2017, that compiles this data to make it more accessible for analysis and visualisation. They provide case management data for analysis that has been anonymised and can be downloaded by anyone, but also offer a range of visualisation methods on their website, though one must keep in mind the concerns with regard to reporting discussed above. For example, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of detected victims in Asia, but we cannot be sure how much these increases are due to a greater number of incidences, or just improved reporting techniques, as a number of states in the region have been improving their capacity to report on these cases.

Using these less-than-perfect available data sources, researchers have been trying to calculate the full extent of human trafficking. Some have used capture-recapture analysis, which has its origins in establishing the number of animals in a particular population, but there are a number of limitations with its use in human populations, meaning that it is a less than ideal method for establishing the number of trafficking victims. More recently, trials of a different statistical technique, Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE), have been used to get a clearer indication of this illusive number of trafficking victims. This uses the information that we have on victims that have been detected and has recently been tested in four different European countries, but is still limited by the need for adequate levels of reporting.

Trafficking in persons is a complicated though largely hidden social issue that is both difficult to define and to measure, though a great deal of effort goes into improving our capacity to do so. These are certainly not wasted efforts as reliable reporting and analysis are important steps in combatting human trafficking.

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Notes

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Right: Natives of Arrakan selling slaves to the Dutch at Pipely/Baliapal, India in January, 1663. Wouter Schouten, *Reys-togten naar en door Oost-Indien: in welke, de voornaamste landen, koningryken, steden, eylanden, Bergen, en rivieren, met haare eigenschmeten, beneffens de wetten, godsdiens, zeden en dragten der inwoonders, en watverder zoo van dieren, vrugten, en planten aanmerkelyks in die gewesten is; naauwkeurig word beschreven* [Travels in the East Indies...], 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Andries van Damme, 1708). Author's collection.



Human trafficking in Asia before 1900: a preliminary census

Richard B. Allen

The often egregious exploitation of South and Southeast Asian migrant workers in the Persian Gulf and East Asia is frequently cited as evidence that 27-32 million mostly Asian men, women, and children remain *de facto* slaves in the early twenty-first century.¹ That these workers are characterized as 'slaves' despite the abolition of slavery worldwide comes as no surprise. Many indentured labor historians, echoing the concerns of nineteenth-century British abolitionists, have argued that the 3.7 million contractual workers, mostly from India and China but also from Africa, Indochina, Java, Japan, and Melanesia, who migrated throughout and beyond the colonial plantation world between the 1830s and 1920s were the victims of a 'new system of slavery' that developed following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834.² A striking feature of discussions about the slave, indentured, and cognate labor trades that flourished during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries is the propensity to view them as historical developments separate and distinct unto themselves. Recent scholarship on European slave trading in the Indian Ocean demonstrates, however, that this conceptual apartheid is no longer sustainable, and that a deeper understanding of these migrant labor systems is contingent upon situating them in more fully developed historical and comparative contexts.³

The same can be said about human trafficking in Asia. While research over the last half century has established that some 12,521,000 men, women, and children were exported from sub-Saharan Africa to the Americas between 1500 and 1866,⁴ it is becoming increasingly apparent that transnational/pan-regional slave trading elsewhere in the globe was also massive. The trans-Saharan and western Indian Ocean trades exported an estimated 10.9-11.6 million Africans toward the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia between 650 and 1900.⁵ Perhaps one million enslaved Europeans from as far north as Britain, Ireland, and Iceland reached North Africa's Barbary Coast between 1500 and 1800, while 800,000-900,000 or more North Africans landed in Italy, Portugal, and Spain between 1450 and 1800.⁶ Europeans also trafficked large numbers of slaves beyond the Atlantic. British, Danish, Dutch, French, and Portuguese traders exported a minimum of 450,000-565,000 Africans, Indians, and Southeast Asians to European establishments within the Indian Ocean basin between 1500 and 1850, while the Manila galleons carried tens of thousands of Asian slaves to Central and South America during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷

Missing from this picture is a comprehensive sense of the volume of human trafficking in Asia. Assessing the scale of this activity is not an easy task. The paucity of archival materials on slaving and slavery in Asia compared to what exists for the Atlantic world is a major impediment to reconstructing these trades, all the more so when these sources are widely scattered, often fragmentary and difficult to interpret, and require a command of multiple European and Asian languages. Our lack of knowledge also reflects many Asian historians' reluctance to acknowledge slavery's existence in their own countries, much less examine local records for information about slaving and slavery in the locale under consideration. A review of recently published scholarship demonstrates, however, that these evidentiary hurdles are not insurmountable, and that it now is possible to outline a preliminary census of transnational human trafficking in a part of the globe that encompasses four major regions: Central Asia (including modern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan); South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka); Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand (Siam), Vietnam); and East Asia (China, Japan, Korea).

Importing slaves into Asia

At the heart of any such exercise must be an acknowledgement of the extraordinary diversity of peoples trafficked within and beyond Asia and these trades' complexity and multi-directionality. The presence of military slaves known as *Habshis* ('Ethiopians') in India between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries and the existence of *Siddi* communities of eastern African ancestry in modern India and Pakistan underscore that any history of human trafficking must include the African slaves imported into Asia over the centuries.⁸ Current estimates suggest that Arab, Muslim, and Swahili merchants exported an average of 2,000-3,000 slaves a year from the Red Sea and East African coasts to the Middle East and South Asia between 800-1700, and 2,000-4,000 a year during the eighteenth century. A paucity of data on the number of Africans in India at any given time makes it impossible to determine how many of these 2.0-3.1 million exports reached South Asia rather than the Middle East, but reports, such as those that Ahmadabad in Gujarat housed 5,000 *Habshis* between 1526-37 and that the chief minister of the Ahmadnagar sultanate in the Deccan purchased 1,000 *Habshi* slaves during the latter part of the sixteenth century, indicate that substantial numbers did so.

Europeans also transported Africans to South Asia, and beyond. The Portuguese shipped slaves from Mozambique to their establishments in India (e.g., Daman, Diu, Goa), China (Macau), and Japan (Nagasaki) as well as to the Philippines, especially during the union of the Portuguese and Spanish

crowns (1580–1640). Although Portuguese ships reportedly carried ‘great numbers’ of Mozambican slaves to India at the end of the sixteenth century, by most accounts these exports averaged 125–250 a year for a total of at least 42,000–84,000 exports between 1500 and 1834.⁹ Other Europeans began to participate in this traffic during the early seventeenth century. The scale of Dutch involvement is suggested by reports that the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC) shipped at least 4,700 Africans to its administrative center at Batavia (Jakarta), commercial emporia such as Malacca (Melaka), its spice plantations in the Moluccas (Malukus), and its settlements in coastal Ceylon (Sri Lanka) during the seventeenth century, and used 4,000 African slaves to construct a fortress at Colombo during the 1670s. British East India Company (EIC) ships carried a minimum of 3,100 Malagasy, Mozambican, Comorian, and West African slaves to the company’s settlements in India (Bombay, Fort St. David [Tegnapatam], Madras, Surat) and its factories in Java (Bantam/Banten) and Sumatra (Bencoolen/Benkulen/Bengkulu) between the 1620s and early 1770s.

Trafficking slaves in South and Southeast Asia

India not only imported but also exported slaves to other regional markets. Hundreds of thousands of enslaved Hindus crossed the Hindu Kush into Central Asia between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries,¹⁰ while Indian and other Asian merchants probably shipped a minimum of 600,000 Indians to Southeast Asia between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Europeans began to traffic Indian slaves no later than 1510, when 24 individuals were transported to Portugal from Cochin (Kochi) on the Malabar Coast. The size of the Portuguese trade is difficult to determine, but assertions that Portuguese ships exported as many as 5,000–6,000 slaves from India in some years during the second half of the sixteenth century suggest that this traffic was relatively substantial at the height of the *Estado da Índia*’s power and influence. The VOC actively traded Indian slaves as well, exporting at least 26,000–38,000 and perhaps 100,000 or more men, women, and children to Batavia (Jakarta), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malacca (Melaka), and elsewhere in Southeast Asia during the seventeenth century. Indians accounted for 26 percent (16,300) of an estimated 63,000 slaves imported into the Cape of Good Hope between 1652 and 1808. The British and French likewise trafficked South Asian slaves. Beginning in 1622, EIC officials shipped Indians to the company’s factories at Bantam and Bencoolen and its colony of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. The French exported as many as 24,000 slaves from Bengal and *comptoirs* along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts to the Mascarene Islands of Mauritius and Réunion in the southwestern Indian Ocean between the 1670s and 1790s, mostly between 1770 and the early 1790s, while slaves from the ‘coasts of India’ even reached Saint Domingue on occasion.

These trades were facilitated by the existence of large slave populations in the subcontinent.¹¹ Contemporary sources report an abundance of inexpensive slaves in northern India during the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), while hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children were enslaved during the Mughal wars of expansion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Warfare in southern India, for example, supplied many of the captives exported by the VOC during six boomlets during the seventeenth century, while the famines that ravaged parts of the subcontinent periodically generated additional tens of thousands of slaves for both export and domestic markets as desperate people sold themselves, and especially their children, into slavery in attempts to stay alive.

The incidence of involuntary bondage varied widely in Southeast Asia. While west Java housed relatively few slaves at the beginning of the eighteenth century, bondmen and -women comprised 10 percent of the population among certain groups in Sarawak,



In the early 17th century, Pulicat became the capital of what was known as the Dutch Coromandel, on India’s east coast. Initially established (first by the Portuguese, later by the Dutch) as a trading port for textiles, diamonds, and spices, it soon became an important trading hub of slaves from India. During the 17th century the VOC exported perhaps as many as 100,000 or more Indian slaves to its possessions in Ceylon, Indonesia, and South Africa. Image courtesy of Wikimedia, reproduced under a CC license.

15 percent of the population on the island of Nias off Sumatra’s west coast, and as much as 30 percent of the population among the Batak and Toraja on Sulawesi. Extensive trading networks moved hundreds of thousands of slaves throughout and beyond the region. Slaves from islands in the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos such as Alor, Buton, Manggarai, Mindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Timor reached Makassar from whence they were re-exported, together with Bugi and Torajan slaves from Sulawesi, to Aceh in Java, Banjarmasin and Sukadana in Borneo, Jambi and Palembang in Sumatra, and as far away as Ayudhya in Siam. Slaves accounted for 14.1–21.7 percent of the value of major commodity imports at Makassar between 1720 and the 1780s, and 22.5–33.7 percent of the value of the port’s major exports during the same period. Perhaps 200,000–300,000 slaves arrived in Batavia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one-half of whom were probably imported by the VOC, company employees engaged in private trade, and Batavian entrepreneurs, while Chinese and local merchants based elsewhere in the region supplied the balance of such imports. Other locales also handled large numbers of bondmen and -women. Bali exported an estimated 100,000–150,000 slaves between 1620 and 1830, while slave raiding generated 200,000–300,000 imports into the southern Philippines’ Sulu sultanate between 1770 and 1870.¹² Southeast Asian slaves also reached the western Indian Ocean. Some 14,300 ‘Malays’ were landed in the Cape Colony between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries. Thousands more, including individuals identified specifically as Balinese, likewise arrived in the Mascarenes during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, perhaps 3,800–4,750 of whom were exported during the illicit slave trade to the islands, which flourished between 1811 and the early 1830s.

Central and East Asian slave trades

Although information on human trafficking in Central and East Asia remains sparse, recent scholarship reveals the existence of extensive trading networks that handled large numbers of slaves.¹³ Hundreds of thousands of Persian Shi’ites as well as Indian Hindus reached Central Asian markets after 1500. Persians comprised the majority of the region’s slave population during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; the cities of Khwarazm and Bukhara, for example, each housed populations of 30,000–60,000 mostly Iranian slaves during the nineteenth century. Central Asian peoples likewise fell victim to enslavement. Turkic slave regiments

formed the nucleus of most armies in the eastern Islamic world by the eleventh century. The Mongols routinely enslaved and sold Kipchaks and other Turkic peoples during the thirteenth century, while Mongols themselves were sometimes reduced to slavery. Overall, an estimated 6.0–6.4 million Central Asians were trafficked into the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean world, and the Ottoman Empire between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries.¹⁴

Millions more were held in bondage in East Asia. Slaves comprised approximately 30 percent of Korea’s population from the eleventh into the eighteenth century. The complexities of defining slave status in China make it difficult to determine how widespread slavery was in the Middle Kingdom, but arguments that at least 2 percent of an early seventeenth-century population of 150–160 million were described variously as ‘slaves’ or ‘bondservants’ (e.g., *nubi*, *nuli*, *nupu*, *bandang*) suggest that large numbers of men, women, and children endured lives of servitude. Historians have long held that China housed one of the globe’s largest markets in human beings before 1949, a market supplied in part from foreign sources such as Vietnam, which exported thousands of women and girls to southern China during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and probably long before then as well.¹⁵ Recent research reveals the existence of well-developed domestic slave trading networks during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Guangdong, for instance, exported slaves from its coastal areas to inland regions while receiving the same from Guangxi and beyond. These networks also supplied slaves to the Portuguese *comptoir* at Macau, established in 1557, which, in addition to Chinese slaves, received perhaps 16,400–24,400 Japanese and Korean slaves via the Portuguese factory at Nagasaki between the late 1550s and 1600.¹⁶ Slaves flowed in turn from Macau to the Spanish-controlled Philippines, from whence thousands of South, Southeast, and East Asian slaves were carried across the Pacific to Mexico and Peru during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chinese slaves also reached Portuguese Goa and Mozambique as well as Mauritius during the eighteenth century.

Conclusion

These admittedly incomplete and problematic data highlight the need for migrant labor historians to transcend the current preoccupation in slavery studies with the Atlantic world, to recognize that slaving was a complex global phenomenon, and to appreciate that reconstructing the history of human trafficking in Asia is integral to understanding the human experience with

slave, bonded, and other forms of coerced labor. Equally important, these data highlight the need for students of modern slavery to be aware of the historical foundations upon which late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century human trafficking rests, and to situate this activity in more fully developed local, regional, pan-regional, and comparative contexts. Coming to terms with human trafficking in Asia requires us, for example, to consider the extent and ways in which trades in chattel or servile labor were linked to long-distance commerce in other important commodities or associated with ‘free’ migrant labor networks. There is reason to believe that many, if not most, of the Indian and Southeast Asian slaves who reached Mauritius and Réunion during the eighteenth century did so in relatively small groups who comprised just one component of cargoes that included large quantities of foodstuffs, textiles, and other manufactured goods. Research on migrant labor networks in pre- and early colonial India, especially Orissa, likewise raises questions about whether slave trading and free migrant labor networks overlapped and, if so, to what extent, in what ways, and why did they do so. In sum, coming to grips with human trafficking requires us to abandon the conceptual and other blinders that hinder our ability to understand the human experience with chattel and bonded labor, both past and present, in all of its challenging complexity.

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Possible avenues for legislation on modern slavery in Asia

Focus on corporate action

Gabriel Webber Ziero



Workers on an irrigation construction site, Myanmar, 2013. © ILO, Photographer: Crozet M.

A new wave of regulatory developments to combat slavery-like practices began in the early 2010s, eighty years after the adoption of the 1930 Forced Labour Convention of the International Labour Organization. This momentum is now also gaining traction in Asia, for example with the ongoing debates on the adoption of new legislation on modern slavery in Hong Kong. As with other new regulatory developments, a key feature of the discussions surrounding a possible Hong Kong Modern Slavery Act⁵ is placing corporate action at the centre of the regulatory stage. Since the 1970s, the international community has recognised that enterprises have a role to play when it comes to preventing human rights abuses, including efforts to combat child and forced labour.⁶ In recent years, expectations of corporate involvement with human rights have become clearer, particularly with the adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2011 and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

This contribution presents an overview of the major characteristics of the regulatory landscape in which business enterprises are compelled to take proactive measures to support the fight against modern slavery practices. By understanding characteristics of the current regulatory landscape, we can single out lessons that might be replicated or avoided in legislative efforts currently taking place in Asia.

Two main regulatory approaches

When looking across the globe for key examples of this new wave of regulation, it is possible to divide them along two main approaches. The first approach is characterised by non-specific regulatory action, i.e., action based on the use of generic regulatory frameworks in the area of business and human rights in order to regulate corporate responsibility related to child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery. These frameworks commonly encompass a broad range of corporate responsibility issues under the umbrella of mandatory environmental and human rights due diligence. An example of this approach can be found in the notable French Law Regarding the Duty of Vigilance of Parent and Subcontracting Companies.⁷ It requires large companies to establish, publish and effectively implement a duty of vigilance plan to prevent human rights

abuses and environmental damages, which must cover subsidiaries directly or indirectly controlled by the company, as well as the activities of long-standing sub-contractors and suppliers. It is in the context of their duty of vigilance plans that companies are expected to demonstrate the actions they are taking to avoid and/or mitigate their involvement in modern slavery practices. The same approach can also be found in the draft German Act on Mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence,⁸ as well as in the proposed Swiss Responsible Business Initiative.⁹

The second approach focuses on the adoption of slavery-specific regulatory frameworks targeting modern slavery practices. Within this stream, it is possible to find two different ways in which regulators tackle modern slavery. Regulators opting for the first type of slavery-specific regulatory frameworks focus on due diligence processes targeting the provision of products and services. According to the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, due diligence processes include transparency-related information, such as disclosures. In this context, two key examples are worth mentioning. First, the Dutch Child Labour Due Diligence Law¹⁰ adopted in 2019 is applicable to entities selling goods and services to Dutch end-users. These companies are required to determine whether child labour is present in their supply chains and, if so, design and implement action plans to remedy these practices and prevent future occurrences. As a consequence, the reach of the Dutch law extends beyond Dutch borders and has the potential to impact business operations elsewhere, such as in Asian countries, which are at the crossroads of global supply chains. The second example, focusing on due diligence, is the 2010 Brazilian Central Bank Resolution on Slave Labour,¹¹ which is the first regulatory framework targeting financial institutions integrating the National Rural Credit System and prohibiting them to have business relationships with entities benefiting from modern slavery practices. The operationalisation of the Brazilian Resolution relies on the publication of a list by the Ministry of Economy, naming (Brazilian) employers who have engaged in slave-like working conditions (commonly referred as the 'Dirty List'). However, this approach has been presented with a series of challenges since 2010, including the questioning of the legality of the Dirty List by productive sectors and the lack of governmental efforts to publish or update the Dirty List. Nevertheless, examples showing

According to some international estimates, there are currently 152 million victims of child labour¹ and 40.3 million victims of modern slavery in the world.² According to the Global Slavery Index, approximately 62% of the world's victims of modern slavery live in Asia.³ Efforts to eradicate child labour, forced labour, human trafficking, and modern slavery are among the top priorities of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda (SDG number 8). In economic terms, it is estimated that earnings derived from modern slavery practices amount to 150 billion US Dollars every year.⁴

the success of this approach can be found, for instance, in the conviction of a bank in August 2019 to pay compensation for collective moral damages for violating the prohibition of having relationships with entities benefiting from modern slavery practices.¹²

It is also important to highlight that, at the international level, a comprehensive framework and initiative were launched in 2019 focusing on financial institutions' role in fighting modern slavery in the context of their operations as providers of financial products and services. The Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) Initiative derives from the work done by the Liechtenstein Initiative for a Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, which sets out how financial sector actors can work towards eradicating modern slavery and human trafficking through individual and collective action set out in its roadmap, *Unlocking Potential: A Blueprint for Mobilizing Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking*.¹³

Countries opting for the second type of slavery-specific regulatory frameworks have shown a stronger reliance on a specific element of due diligence processes, namely transparency-related measures such as mandatory corporate disclosure obligations. The main representative of this regulatory approach is the 2015 UK Modern Slavery Act,¹⁴ which requires companies to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement describing the steps they have taken in the previous financial year to ensure that their business and supply chains (also outside the UK) are free from modern slavery and human trafficking. This approach has been followed in several jurisdictions across the globe, such as in Australia, Canada, Norway, and in the United States. Also, most regulatory-oriented debates in Asia today follow this approach.

Developments in Asia

Thus, the debates surrounding a proposed Hong Kong Modern Slavery Bill clearly follow in the footsteps of the 2015 UK Modern Slavery Act. However, the road ahead seems far from easy in Hong Kong. Commentators highlight the small likelihood of the current draft of the Bill being adopted, since it falls outside the government sponsored legislative agenda. In addition, in a recent decision the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal affirmed that Hong Kong's current legislative framework is sufficient to combat human trafficking and therefore, there is no positive obligation on the government to enact a specific anti-trafficking law (see also, article by Dennis Kwok in this issue).¹⁵

In addition, it can be expected that initiatives drawing on the lessons learnt from the Australian Modern Slavery Act start appearing in ASEAN countries in the near future. A major trigger for such a movement is the multi-million-dollar initiative, ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking Initiative,¹⁶ set to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking in the region and to support the implementation of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.¹⁷

Asian regulators can build upon a variety of regulatory models when seeking to combat modern slavery practices and do not have to limit themselves to the British/Australian example. Applying regulatory models developed for different contexts without further thought often brings (un)expected downsides, since context sensitive characteristics, which are key for the achievement of compliance and legal effectiveness, are not taken into account. Moreover, transplantation considerably diminishes the regulation's legitimacy and levels of engagement, leaving potential space for impunity and non-compliance to flourish.

To identify the best way forward, there is only one solution: get to know the situation from different perspectives by engaging in constructive dialogues with a large pool of stakeholders, who together can formulate the most suitable way forward for specific contexts. For modern slavery legislation in Asia, the choice is whether to place the efforts to combat modern slavery within a broader movement addressing a variety of corporate responsibility issues, as in the regulatory approach taken in France, or to prioritise efforts to combat modern slavery with a specific legislation, as in the UK and Australia, leaving aside other relevant topics in the context of corporate responsibility for other legislative initiatives in the future. As awareness for business responsibility to respect human rights grows across the globe, one thing is definite: jurisdictions across Asia will need to address human rights due diligence, especially concerning the challenge of combatting egregious labour exploitation, with ever increasing urgency.

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Legislation and other tactics

Combating human trafficking in Hong Kong

Dennis Kwok

At present, Hong Kong law prohibits certain forms of conduct, including the trade in chattel slavery¹ and trafficking in persons for prostitution.² However, regrettably, there are no specific offences under Hong Kong law of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, illicit sex tourism, human trafficking or of forced marriage. The Hong Kong Government claims that existing offences provided in different statutes are sufficient to cover all nature of crimes involved with flexibility, which law enforcement officers and lawyers who have handled cases of human trafficking disagree.

Human traffickers are notoriously difficult to prosecute. Often, they exploit older laws to avoid detection, pressure their victims to not give evidence against them, or to evade prosecution. Their crimes are transnational, making it difficult to procure the attendance of witnesses, and gather evidence. The hands of law enforcement are often tied because they are compelled to use out-dated offences designed for other purposes, they may find it difficult to understand archaic language, or they may be faced with victims unwilling to give evidence. In many cases, the only offences that can be prosecuted are accompanied by insufficient sentences, such as fines. Often, prosecutions cannot proceed because they are time barred summary offences.

“[The victim] was left floundering in a system in which concern for victims of human trafficking for forced labour is mainly a rhetorical manoeuvre”, wrote Judge Zervos. “[...] If this case is an example of the effectiveness of the Hong Kong’s regime in tackling human trafficking and forced labour, then it has failed to achieve even the most basic objectives”.

ZN v Secretary for Justice, Court of First Instance of Hong Kong, 2016.

ZN (a pseudonym given by the Court to protect his identity) is a Pakistani national who came to Hong Kong in 2007 after a fellow villager arranged work for him in the city, with the promise of good working conditions and a salary. He ended up working 15 hours a day without pay for four years, up to 2010, during which he was also subjected to constant threats and beatings before his employer tricked him into returning to his home country. ZN later returned to the city illegally in 2012 to claim more than HK\$200,000 (US\$25,480) in unpaid wages, but found himself shunted from one government department to another as each claimed his grievances were not in its remit.

ZN’s lawyers filed a judicial review against the Government arguing that the current absence of offences targeting human trafficking, including forced labour, is a violation of Hong Kong’s obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. The case went all the way to the Court of Final Appeal; while judges agreed that ZN was a victim of trafficking for forced labour in Hong Kong, the Court of Final Appeal ruled against ZN’s wish that Hong Kong was obliged under international human rights laws to introduce a comprehensive anti-human trafficking law, not least because China specifically excluded Hong Kong from the application of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol) when it signed onto it.

United Nations and Hong Kong

The United Nations’ human rights bodies have repeatedly urged the Hong Kong government to review its policy on preventing and prosecuting human trafficking, and protecting victims in order to comply with its obligation under international human rights treaties. Among other recommendations, they have urged Hong Kong to ratify the Palermo Protocol and to adopt comprehensive anti-human trafficking laws that prohibit all forms of human trafficking, etc.³ Before this, human rights treaty committees in the United Nations have already stated the same concerns in seven previous reviews of Hong Kong’s compliance of the treaties.⁴ In the United Nations’ Human Rights Council’s regular review of China’s human rights situation (the Universal Periodic Review), Ukraine and other countries also raised the concern.

Hong Kong Modern Slavery Bill

I have worked with human rights lawyers to draft the Crimes (Amendment) (Modern Slavery) Bill 2019 (the Modern Slavery Bill) modelled on the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015, and introduced it as a members’ bill together with the Hon Kenneth Leung, in order to show the Government what the current scattered legislative regime is lacking. The Modern Slavery Bill introduces clearly defined serious criminal offences for slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, human trafficking, forced marriage, illegal sex tourism, and related offences.

The first new offence in the Bill is that of “slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour” as new Section 162 to the Crimes Ordinance. The definitions of these new offences reflect international law and are directly imported from Article 4 of the Bill of Rights, which specifically requires that they be “forbidden”. At present, there are no equivalent offences in Hong Kong law.

The second offence introduced by the Bill as new Section 163 of the Crimes Ordinance replaces and expands the definition of human trafficking in Section 129. At present, the law only covers trafficking persons for prostitution. This new section would expand the offence to cover other forms of criminal exploitation such as exploitation of children, slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, or the removal of organs. This section brings Hong Kong law in line with international law.

The third new offence is “Committing an Offence with Intent to Commit the Offence of Human Trafficking”, an important new offence. Organised trafficking gangs often rely on breaches of regulatory legislation such as immigration and labour law.



Author speaking at the 2019 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, on a panel examining legislative approaches to eradicate modern slavery in global supply chains. Photo by the Office of Dennis Kwok.

They are able to act with virtual impunity because they do not face sentences with appropriate gravity until it is too late. This new offence serves to enhance the sentences available for traffickers; and makes them easier to prosecute.

The fourth new offence is “forced marriage”. Hong Kong is committed to the abolition of this practice but there is no such offence under the Marriage Ordinance. This new offence remedies this lacuna in the law.

The fifth new offence of “sex tourism” is completely new to Hong Kong law. Under the current law, extraterritoriality is extended to various sexual offences under the Crimes Ordinance.⁵ It is also an offence under the Crimes Ordinance to arrange or advertise the commission of sexual offences against children outside of Hong Kong.⁶ However, unlawful sexual tourism is very difficult to prosecute because the law enforcement must prove the specific offence, and the specific intention. There are no powers to stop someone before they commit offences. There are no offences against travelling with the motivation to commit offences overseas. Nor are there offences against arranging the travel of persons for sex tourism, even if a person knows that a person may be motivated to commit unlawful sexual acts during their travel. This new offence plugs the hole in the law by clearly criminalising illicit sexual tourism – making it much easier for Immigration and the Police to identify, investigate and prosecute these offences.

Furthermore, the Bill provides powers under Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance (Cap 455) for authorities to intervene in criminal related accounts and proceeds extend to cover those of slavery and human trafficking. Also, it provides a basis for court orders to prevent human trafficking and redress for victims, defence for victims of slavery and trafficking for the offences committed connected to their slavery or trafficking situation, requires sizeable companies to produce human trafficking reports in order to increase supply chains transparency, and to establish an independent anti-slavery commission to enhance and promote the measures to combat and prevent slavery and human trafficking, and to provide assistance and support to the victims.

We drafted the Bill with the understanding that it will not be passed into law, because Hong Kong’s constitution does not allow a lawmaker to introduce a bill that would incur public spending, and requires the Government’s consent when the bill is not in line with current government policies. As expected, in September 2019, the government replied that it refused to support the bill. The bill will, however, remain as a mark to measure the adequacy of Government measures and legislative tools.

Other strategies

In response to the international movement to combat modern slavery, the Hong Kong Government issued the Action Plan to Tackle Trafficking in Persons and to Enhance Protection of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong in March 2018. Short of statutory changes, it promised to broaden the application of victim identification to more government departments, and reinstated the prosecution code to not prosecute victims of modern slavery for crimes they committed as a result of being controlled.

The Hong Kong Government used to categorically dismiss reports that Hong Kong is a destination and transit point for human trafficking, thereby justifying the lax law on human trafficking. In August 2020, law enforcement busted a criminal syndicate that smuggled people into Hong Kong for prostitution, labour, and illegal activities, and arrested more than 100 people. For the first time ever, law enforcement recognised this to be human trafficking. This is a breakthrough in terms of the Government ending its denial attitude.

There is a global trend for the financial and business sector to take the lead in this issue. Supply chain transparency is key to uncover modern slavery and ensure its eradication (see also, article by Webber Ziero in this issue). Listing rules, for example, have been a driving force in enhancing transparency and accountability. The Hong Kong Stock Exchange has recently updated its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) disclosure requirements for all listed companies in Hong Kong. For financial years commencing on or after 1 July 2020, all listed companies would be required to make general disclosures on matters such as prevention of forced and child labour in its supply chains, the adoption of requisite employment practices and elimination policies.

As an international financial centre, Hong Kong needs to maintain a high standard of anti-money laundering regime. The Financial Action Task Force has in recent years put focus on modern slavery when evaluating countries. Hong Kong must be able to withstand their strict scrutiny; statutory changes would be inevitable.

It is reassuring that in such a difficult quest, we have the wealth of knowledge and support from a strong network of local and international civil society groups, such as, locally, lawyers like Patricia Ho and Azan Marwah, Stop Trafficking of Persons (STOP), Mekong Club, and regionally and internationally, the Walk Free Foundation, the Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (aka the Liechtenstein Initiative), and Thomson Reuters. The exchanges of knowledge and best practice, together with growing public awareness, will empower the changes we need to eradicate modern slavery, and to honour Hong Kong’s commitment to the protection of human rights.

Dennis Kwok, Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong.

Notes

- Section 44, OAPO, Cap 212.
- Section 129, CO, Cap 200.
- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, ‘Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China) (CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17)’, 19 September 2018, paras. 49-50, <https://tinyurl.com/treatybodyDB-ohchr>
- These are the periodic reviews under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2018, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2013, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) in 2009 and 2015, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2005 and 2013 and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2014.
- Schedule 2 and section 153P, CO.
- Section 153Q, CO.



Hong Kong Skyline.
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Hong Kong's modern slavery journey so far

Businesses must now take the lead

Lisa Ko-En Hsin

The UK's Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA)⁴ was heralded as a breakthrough when it was introduced five years ago; following its enactment, the law has generated considerable public awareness, shifted corporate priorities and created momentum for legislation elsewhere. The French *Droit de Vigilance* 2017,⁵ the Australian Modern Slavery Act 2018⁶ and the Dutch Child Labour Due Diligence Law 2019,⁷ were all enacted following the MSA, not only improving and clarifying the requirements, but broadening and increasing obligations on businesses to comply. Although not all focus on 'modern slavery', they address similar issues by requiring businesses to disclose information on how they plan to address exploitation and human rights violations in their supply chains. Fundamentally, they all require businesses to report on their supply chain activities and align with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Other jurisdictions, including Canada and Switzerland, have legislative proposals underway. In Asia, Hong Kong legislators Dennis Kwok and Kenneth Leung became the first to propose a bill on Modern Slavery in 2018, modelled on the UK MSA.

Modern slavery in Hong Kong

Modern slavery is a pressing and persistent issue in Hong Kong. From migrant worker exploitation to sex trafficking, modern slavery is fundamentally linked to our consumer habits. Because we want a bargain, and businesses respond by offering low prices. To lower the prices, businesses look for cheap labour, which has helped to fuel the growth of international supply chains in which goods and services are sourced from places where, among other things, labour is cheap and labour laws are lax. It is worth remembering that modern slavery is not just about human trafficking, it is a spectrum of exploitative behaviour that is especially pervasive in global supply chains.

With so many major corporations head-quartered in Hong Kong, the city's laws could have considerable impacts around the Asia Pacific region, not only to bring Hong Kong into alignment with other major economic centres, it would also alleviate the city's poor rankings on the U.S. Department's Watch List in its Trafficking in Persons Report.⁸

On average, a person living in the developed world will have about 73 slaves working to provide them with goods and services through a complex and pervasive network of global supply chains.¹ According to the Walk Free Global Slavery Index 2016, there is an estimated 40.3 million people enslaved globally.² This means that there are 5.4 victims of modern slavery for every 1000 people in the world. The highest concentration of 'modern slaves' is in the Asia-Pacific region, with about 24.9 million people trapped and subjugated.³

For three consecutive years, from 2016 to 2018, Hong Kong has been on Tier 2 Watch List, just one rank from the worst offenders of human trafficking. The 2018 U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report noted the absence of legislation against human trafficking in Hong Kong: "Hong Kong law did not criminalize all forms of human trafficking and the government relied on various provisions of laws relating to prostitution, immigration, employment, and physical abuse to prosecute trafficking crimes".⁹ The U.S. assessment is not an absolute standard, but it does matter. Around the world, businesses use the report as an indicator of risk. Any sensible business seeking to deal with Hong Kong-based companies would regard the lack of safeguards as having potential adverse impacts on business stability. A clear law on modern slavery would be an important signal to the business community. However, to date, attempts to enact legislation similar to the UK MSA have been dismissed based on the argument that a law on modern slavery in Hong Kong would be a mere consolidation of certain existing laws. But the same could be said for the UK MSA, which is also a consolidation of existing provisions. The argument simply does not work against the section on transparency in supply chains, which was a new and ground-breaking element of the UK MSA, targeting modern slavery in supply chains.

A possible MSA in HK?

The Hong Kong Modern Slavery Bill (Draft Bill)¹⁰ was discussed by the Panel on Security of the Legislative Council, on 5 June 2018. The Draft Bill introduces and defines serious

criminal offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, human trafficking, forced marriage, illicit sex tourism and related offences. Bodies corporate and partnerships conducting business in Hong Kong, whose annual turnover exceeds a threshold amount, would be required to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement, including details of the steps they had taken to ensure that modern slavery was not occurring in their business or supply chain.

A key purpose of the Draft Bill was to consolidate and address loopholes in the existing legal framework, including: the inability to trace and freeze proceeds of crime relating to human trafficking overseas; failure of the existing legislative framework to cover all forms of modern slavery including forced labour; inadequate penalties; and lack of protections for victims. Unfortunately, the government did not support the Draft Bill on the basis that it considers the existing legal framework to be adequate. However, the Panel did not discuss the requirement for commercial entities to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement.¹¹

The same reasoning was given by Hong Kong's Court of Appeal in January when a Pakistani victim of forced labour in Hong Kong lost his appeal to create a new human trafficking offence. The Court found that the administration had no duty to enact specific legislation against human trafficking for the purposes of exploitation, servitude or forced labour on the basis that it already had other 'patchwork' offences, such as criminal intimidation and assault, which could target human trafficking, and therefore did not need a bespoke offence.¹²

But one Judge agreed that the administration has been "disgraceful" in its treatment of the appellant and warned the relevant authorities not to take their victory as a licence to relax efforts against human trafficking.¹³ Despite this encouraging obiter, the Judiciary turned out to be another dead-end. The momentum behind the push for legislation has further waned as the government's attention and resources have been diverted to dealing with ongoing civil protests and the challenge of a worldwide pandemic. But in the case where states fail to provide for redress, corporations can still play a vital and leading role.

A new angle: harnessing the power of the business community

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights adopted in 2011 sets out a framework for states and businesses: the state has a duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including businesses, and to ensure victims have greater access to effective remedy, both judicial and non-judicial; corporations also have a responsibility to respect human rights. It is a ground-breaking first – international law no longer applies to just states, but businesses as well.

In some cases where the state lacks the conviction, corporations can be a major source for change. For instance, in the UK, major corporations not only supported the UK MSA, many asked for legislation to support their work, and empower them to do more. Not only did these companies feel it was the right thing to do, they felt that others should be made to do the same thing too – the bid to 'level the playing field' was a major factor in the UK conservative government's adoption of the MSA.

Many businesses operating in Hong Kong are multinationals with operations around the world. Some areas are already subject to one or many of the due diligence legislation mentioned earlier in the piece. Pushing for similar legislation in Hong Kong could further cement the positive reputation of those companies seeking to do the right thing. A law like this would ease the concerns of risk-averse and ethically-minded shareholders alike, further justifying the decision to do business in Asia. Although the UK MSA has been criticised for being too business friendly, its impact should not be overlooked. In less than five years, human rights have steadily climbed up the corporate agenda, with modern slavery leading the charge. Corporate social responsibility is not just about philanthropy anymore. The consuming public, progressive shareholders and prescient company directors are increasingly getting to grips with the risks lurking in international supply chains, and the benefits of identifying them early and proactively – perhaps Hong Kong should too.

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Notes

- 1 Nolan, J. & Boersma, M. 2019. *Addressing Modern Slavery*. University of New South Wales Press, p.36. Figure obtained from 'Made in a Free World' using software available on slaveryfootprint.org.
- 2 <https://tinyurl.com/US2018-TPR-HK>
- 3 <https://tinyurl.com/WalkFree-AP2018>
- 4 <https://tinyurl.com/UK-MSA-2015>
- 5 <https://tinyurl.com/legfr-2017>
- 6 <https://tinyurl.com/MSA-AU-2018>
- 7 <https://tinyurl.com/KA-NL-2017>; <https://tinyurl.com/NL-KA-2019>
- 8 Carvalho, R. 2017. 'Campaign Aims to Make Hong Kong a Key Player in Fight Against Slavery', *South China Morning Post*, 28 October 2017; <https://tinyurl.com/SCMP-28oct-2017>
- 9 <https://tinyurl.com/US2018-TPR-HK>
- 10 <https://tinyurl.com/HK2017-MSA-overview>
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Why flawed recruitment processes across Asia can lead to modern slavery

Neill Wilkins

There are an estimated 164 million migrant workers in the world, of which 56 million are working in Asia and the Arab States.¹ Working in all industry sectors, migrant workers are ubiquitous, yet an often unacknowledged or unappreciated part of global business. Their skills and labour provide the goods and services we take for granted. Their hard work helps to drive economic vitality, both in the countries where they find employment and in countries of origin through the remittances they send home.

Despite their undoubted contribution to economies around the world, in some countries migrant workers face many challenges and violations of fundamental rights. In particular, those employed in low wage occupations such as cleaning, agriculture, fishing, and factory work may encounter discrimination and prejudice, poor working and living conditions, scams and exploitation including forced labour and trafficking. Migrants' vulnerability to these exploitations may be caused and compounded by their lack of local language, knowledge and contacts. The information they do have is often inaccurate, incomplete or they are deliberately misinformed about their rights. In some occupations and some geographic regions such as the Gulf, they may have restricted or no access to supportive and effective trade unions. The main driver of exploitation, however, is often poverty. Lack of viable employment options in home countries results in people being willing to accept risk and a degree of exploitation in return for a job—any job—abroad.

And so we see migrant workers, the bedrock of many global supply chains, made vulnerable with whole systems and industries developed based on that vulnerability. It is significant that, for many migrant workers, their vulnerability begins while still in their home countries. Recruitment agencies across Asia find a ready market of candidates looking for opportunities to work abroad. They promise quick processing of paperwork to overcome government bureaucracy as well as good jobs, steady pay and substantial overtime. These are seductive promises when you have nothing.

Recruitment fees and exploitation

But of course, such things come at a cost. In return, recruitment agents often expect large fees from workers to manage the process. If migrants cannot cover the payments, they will usually arrange loans based on promises of future earnings. Before they know it, workers are committed and in debt, unable to get out of the arrangements they have made. They are now reliant on the recruitment agent to deliver on their promises and of course very often the recruitment agent does not. The process that migrants were assured would be quick and painless becomes long and torturous, with requests for additional fees to expedite the process. When workers finally arrive in the countries of destination, they see the reality of what they have signed up for. One by one, promises made by agents dissolve before their eyes. Wonderful jobs fail to materialise. The wages on offer are much lower than expected. The overtime on which they were counting is not at the rate they were assured would be the norm. Accommodation is cramped and

unsanitary. Food is low standard and meagre. But these workers are now trapped. They have paid large sums to get where they are, are now in debt and have no option but to take what is on offer.

This is the reality of exploitation and modern slavery. It is not the slavery of popular imagination, with victims forcibly taken and forced to work. It is workers themselves that today seek out employment and it is only once committed that they may find they have been deceived about the nature of the work, the pay and conditions, and they may find themselves subject to repercussions should they leave. Modern slavery usually looks like any other work. The chains that bind people are financial. It is about flawed operating systems and about poverty.

Why is such an obviously unfair system allowed to continue? Many migrant workers are employed in the supply chains of international companies, producing goods or delivering services upon which the global economy depends. No one working at the head office of that company would expect to pay money to get a job. If recruitment is undertaken through an agency, it is the expectation that the employer will pay the costs, never the person who seeks employment. Why should it be different for the very poorest, ironically those who can least afford the additional burden?

Once more, it is a systemic issue. A whole deeply flawed system of operation has developed that is difficult to overcome. In competitive markets, one key variable is labour costs. In many countries we see wages squeezed to a minimum. For migrant workers there remains, however, an additional place to squeeze: recruitment costs. If the expectation is that workers will pay these fees, we see costs moved off the company balance sheet until they no longer feature as a cost to the business at all. The genuine costs of production are now hidden from view, and false price points for goods and services have developed. These prices quickly become normalised but fail to reflect the reality. Once such practices are established and norms set, it becomes increasingly difficult to operate differently without impacting on your business.

A new business model – the Employer Pays Principle

So embedded is this system that there is an acceptance by many migrant workers that paying recruitment fees is a normal part of the process. Many also believe the more they pay, the better the job will be. In more recent times, pressure from consumers, civil society and governments on companies to prevent modern slavery has forced attention back onto this deeply challenging situation. International brands are beginning to take action and trying to operate according to a different business model. My own organisation, the Institute for



Photo by N. Wilkins (author).

Human Rights and Business (www.ihrb.org), has been working with a group of international brands as part of The Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment to develop new recruitment models based on a simple premise, the Employer Pays Principle, which affirms that "No worker should pay for a job. The costs of recruitment should be borne not by the worker but by the employer". Leadership Group members and increasingly other companies are trying to work with their suppliers to ensure that migrant workers are recruited ethically, with recruitment fees and charges the responsibility of the employer. This Employer Pays model of recruitment is, however, still far from the norm. The iniquities of the current systems of recruitment that predominate in Asia and elsewhere are frequently compounded by lack of effective government oversight. Recruitment fees to workers are not illegal in many countries that send migrant workers abroad. The recruitment industry can be an important part of the economy. Sometimes there are close ties between the recruitment sector and government. Even when regulation exists, enforcement may be inadequate or non-existent or adversely impacted by corruption. The international nature of migration for work also adds in additional complications for both governments and businesses attempting to undertake effective due diligence across international borders.

And yet, beyond preventing exploitation and forced labour, there are other reasons for addressing flawed recruitment processes. Migrant worker remittances contribute significantly to the GDP of many countries of origin in the global South (i.e., 11% in Bangladesh in 2012 and 31% in Nepal in 2015-16).² This can have a significant impact on development outcomes. In 2018, US \$529 billion was remitted to developing economies.³ However, if the value of a significant proportion of this revenue stream is eroded through debt repayment, the benefits of working abroad are lost.

Ethical recruitment is good for business

For international companies and their suppliers, exploitative recruitment processes present significant commercial and reputational risks and inefficiencies. An ethically recruited workforce represents a more stable basis of

sustainable productivity and growth based on respect for human rights. Mapping labour supply chains and working with suppliers to move to an Employer Pays model of recruitment is a necessary long-term investment in risk management and business efficiency. It will require significant ongoing engagement from brands and their suppliers as the costs of recruitment transfer from worker to employer. Accommodating this increase will require some adjustment, especially amongst buying teams working to maintain competitive margins. It is, however, an inescapable challenge. Companies must also advocate and work with governments to ensure that practices that exploit workers are prohibited.

Addressing modern slavery and protecting worker rights must always be about more than looking for those individuals in need of help. It is about recognising and tackling the systemic issues that enable abuses. Corporate engagement, underpinned by appropriate government legislation and effective enforcement, can meaningfully reduce the risk of severe forms of labour exploitation. Preventing the charging of recruitment fees to migrant workers is one very significant way that companies and governments can take action. Sustained collective action can and must shift the mainstream model of migrant worker recruitment to one based on the Employer Pays Principle whereby no worker bears the cost of securing their own job.

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Notes

- 1 International Labour Organization (ILO). 2018. *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers—Results and Methodology*, 2nd ed. pp.ix, 20; <https://tinyurl.com/ILO-IMW-2018>.
- 2 Remittance data from the World Bank Open Data portal, indicator 'Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)' by country, <https://tinyurl.com/WB-PR-PC>.
- 3 The World Bank. 2019. 'Press Release: Record High Remittances Sent Globally in 2018'; <https://tinyurl.com/WB-RHR-2018>.



Left: Highly-guarded Sino-DPRK border in Jilin Province. Photo by F. Plümmer (co-author).

Human borders?

Regulating immigration and human trafficking in East Asia

Franziska Plümmer and Gunter Schubert

With participants from various disciplines, such as area studies, history, anthropology, sociology, political science, and law, we discussed in what manner the East Asian region is characterized by intraregional migration patterns, how national immigration policies are reformed under the pressure of demographic change and global migration flows, and in which ways these policies show similarities in discourses and practices of immigration regulation. During 2017 and 2019, we held several workshops scrutinizing how (international) norms travel within the region and the different local contexts, how citizenship is constructed and how identity is negotiated in the diversifying local communities. The project produced an edited volume that brings together fascinating contributions addressing these questions from cases in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. The book is planned for publication by Routledge in November 2020.

One major revelation to come of our discussions (and contextualizing the findings of our book) revolved around the mechanisms of how governments label immigrants and determine who is legal or illegal, ultimately producing graduated citizenship and social hierarchies. For instance, Taiwan and Hong Kong implemented specific immigration regulation for Chinese mainlanders. Many countries installed talent programmes to attract high-skilled workers, and care workers are increasingly put on the fast lane, even in the immigration late comer Japan. All East Asian countries face similar dilemmas in integrating immigrants into the labour markets and managing demographic developments against often rising nationalist and xenophobic discourses. In fact, governmental responses to illegal immigration dominate election campaigns and political discourses around the world, including in Asia, and have become hot topics for migration scholars. Human trafficking figures prominently here as it shows to what extent governments are willing to consider immigrants as victims of migration industries and migration-related exploitation.

Every year, millions of migrants move across borders pursuing better lives, or at the least safety. These migratory mobilities follow patterns largely shaped by unequal capitalist development and social conflict, often accompanied by excessive violence. Legal access to a host country is only available for the few who are well educated or 'desirable' for the local society for other reasons. The decision whether an individual can stay is made by bureaucracies that enact often very rigid immigration regimes. The question what role the nation-state plays within these regimes and how standards travel between these regimes was the starting point of our Einstein project at the FU Berlin: 'Sovereignty and International Law in the PRC. Global Migration, Global Terrorism and International Law: Chinese Perceptions and Responses'.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking constitutes a contemporary form of slavery, most notably in the form of exploitation of people through forced marriages or forced labour. In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two supplementary protocols on the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking in persons (Resolution 55/25). The resolution, along with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Trafficking Protocol), acknowledged women as especially vulnerable to human trafficking and forced labour. In 2015, ASEAN implemented this approach issuing the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) and the respective Plan of Action. The latter document is based on the Palermo Trafficking Protocol and similarly addresses women and children as victims of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and organ trafficking. Although none of the East Asian countries is a member state of ASEAN, the Action Plan strongly builds on international and regional cooperation, especially regarding the fight against organized crime.

China has tackled the issue since the early 2000s; the All-China Women's Federation embarked on cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in a pilot project in Yunnan fighting human trafficking of women and children. Foreign women being forced into marriages with Chinese husbands remains the biggest challenge for the Chinese government, especially in the border regions with North

Korea and Southeast Asia. However, human trafficking is also a domestic problem in China as selling women from poor places in the inland provinces to more affluent localities elsewhere in the country has never been eradicated and bespeaks a long tradition of dealing with poverty, particularly in the rural areas. In South Korea, the legal system struggles to regulate the influx of foreign sex workers. Because prostitution is generally prohibited, these women struggle with 'double illegality': illegal as sex workers and illegal as immigrants. In 2016, the National Human Rights Commission issued guidelines to identify victims of sex trafficking. Labour exploitation, however, remains under-regulated.

The COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in border lockdowns around the world, has put migrants under stress. Illegal (sex) workers have become isolated even more as civil society organizations were increasingly unable to deliver assistance across borders. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports show that human trafficking increased during the pandemic. Although cross-border trafficking has become more difficult due to travel restrictions and quarantine regulations, traffickers have found ways to overcome such obstacles and increase their social media presence to prey on potential victims. At the same time, it has become much harder to detect exploitation when everyone stays at home, communities are separated, labour inspections are suspended, and resources are withdrawn from online help centres that often are the only contact points for victims to report on their situation and get help. Victims of human trafficking are also more exposed and vulnerable to COVID-19 infections as they

often lack proper access to health care services and testing. Moreover, domestic violence against women in forced marriages has gone up during quarantine isolation. Sex workers have lost their income due to the lockdowns and are often forced to leave their apartments and workplaces which they are no longer able to afford. Leaving these communities deprived them of the minimum security they offered. Some brothels were stripped bare overnight, leaving the workers in existential limbo and making them ever more vulnerable to exploitation. Governments rarely address these groups directly in their measures to counter the pandemic. In South Korea, however, the government acknowledged already in April 2020 that undocumented immigrants could create a blind spot in anti-pandemic measures and provided testing and treatment.

Monitoring anti-trafficking efforts

In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) instigating the U.S. State Department to globally monitor countries' efforts to counter human trafficking. Since then, the latter's annual Trafficking in Persons Report distinguishes between Tier 1 countries (indicating governments' efforts to combat trafficking and its willingness to acknowledge responsibility taking corresponding measures), Tier 2 countries (whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards), a Tier 2 Watch List that sharpens

the focus on countries whose case numbers worsened compared to the previous year, and Tier 3 countries (whose governments are not meeting TVPA's standards and are not making considerable efforts to do so). This way, the international community can monitor each countries' development in terms of anti-human trafficking policies despite not having direct enforcement mechanisms to make them change their practices. How governments react to this classification varies.

Japan, for instance, was classified as a Tier 2 country when the report was first published. In 2004, the classification worsened, setting Japan on the Tier 2 Watch List as the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the U.S. State Department urged the Japanese government to step up its efforts to meet its growing numbers of trafficking cases. Following these allegations, the Japanese government introduced human trafficking crimes into the Criminal Code and formulated an intra-ministerial National Action Plan. In 2017, Japan finally ratified the above-mentioned UN Resolution 55/25 including the supplemented Palermo Trafficking Protocol, which was followed by a Tier 1 upgrade in the following year. Although the 2019 report acknowledges Japan's anti-trafficking efforts such as conducting labor inspections, it still evaluates as insufficient the political efforts to enforce prison sentences for sex traffickers and to protect the victims, as Japan remains a major destination for forced labour and sex trafficking.

Taiwan, unable to ratify any of the mentioned Conventions and Protocols due to its lack of international status, is nevertheless included in the U.S. Report and was classified as a Tier 2 country in the early 2000s. After 2005, Taiwan actively responded to 'external shaming' by the U.S. by stepping up its efforts to counter human trafficking. Until today, however, Taiwanese authorities are criticized for insufficient efforts to combat forced labour on fishing vessels, problematic enforcement procedures when interviewing forced labour victims and failing to implement a comprehensive anti-trafficking law.

Publicly reporting on and criticizing a country's efforts has thus shown to have positive effects on governments' behaviour and make them step-up their anti-trafficking efforts. Besides this indirect mechanism, the Palermo Trafficking Protocol motivates international cooperation: if country reports continuously show bad results, ad hoc working groups could be installed bringing together experts to formulate more concrete policy recommendations. For instance, in 2014, the Bali Process Ad Hoc Group (AHG) was established to combat human trafficking in the most affected countries in the Asia Pacific region. The AHG promotes ministerial cooperation among its member countries (Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam, among others) and is supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UNODC. These working mechanisms show that although the East and Southeast Asian countries follow different timelines in implementing measures to combat human trafficking and although there are still considerable shortcomings in enforcing them, abolishing slavery and illicit trafficking has become an accepted norm in the region.

Regional efforts to managing immigration in East Asia

The most common tool for governments to control immigration is through designing and enforcing differentiated regulatory systems towards immigrant classification. Diverse criteria are set up to determine who is a low or high-skilled immigrant or 'talent', who is a student, a tourist or a refugee. Naturalization remains mostly closed (and is often ethnically informed) by citizenship regimes that deny immigrants access to the political community of their host society. Moreover, all East Asian immigration regimes build on employer-based systems, making 'employability' the major precondition for legal (temporary) immigration.

The concept of refugees is notoriously flexible. Among our cases, only Japan and South Korea comply with international norms on refugees and asylum-seekers. Although due to different reasons, Taiwan and China practice rather ad-hoc refugee policies, whereas Hong

Kong, while at first sight complying with the UNHCR regime to protect asylum-seekers, has arguably the most restrictive refugee regime in the region. Taiwan, although not a member of the UNHCR, accepts political refugees; not as a matter of (constitutional) principle but in an ad hoc, case-by-case fashion. China rarely does so. Although the Chinese government acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, it violates the principle of non-refoulement enshrined in those documents by sending back North Korean defectors who are labelled as economic migrants. The principle, which has become customary law, suggests that states that receive asylum seekers should not expel or return them against their will to a territory where they face threats to their life or freedom. The Chinese government works around this claim by privileging a preceding bilateral agreement with North Korea that requires the government to send back North Korean defectors, and not give them the status of asylum seeker. Similarly, the Chinese government classifies Myanmar refugees as 'border residents', thus expediting their return across the border. Hong Kong, for its part, hardly grants political asylum to any refugee and keeps asylum-seekers in a state of limbo until they are transferred to a third country that is willing to accept them.

The issue of refugees is linked to the human trafficking question on a practical level as it shows how governments are willing to allocate resources towards non-citizens. Often, victims of human trafficking fall into the same category with refugees and by not providing asylum status to them, the victims are denied legality. Consequently, North Koreans cannot seek legal assistance to apply for an official status in China as immigrants or for further travel to other countries but are often forced into marriages with Chinese citizens as the only available option to avoid repatriation. Particularly in China, refugees are securitized (seen as having illegally entered the country), though local governments often find ways to 'legalize' them and their children temporarily, hence providing them with access to basic health care at least. In her upcoming book on governing the Chinese border (to be published by Amsterdam University Press), Franziska Plümmer argues that the reason local governments often apply exit and entry regulations in a more inclusive way, thus easing temporary immigration from across the border, is foremost economy; cross-border migrants are a valuable and indispensable resource to spur local development, hence border regulations are selectively, and temporarily, relaxed. Often, these migrants work in near-by Chinese farms or factories, providing relatively cheap labour. The migrants are not allowed to leave the



Above: Advertisement for a marriage agency in the Sino-Laotian borderland.

border area and travel further inland to look for more profitable job opportunities. Some local governments extend these practices, which are not officially sanctioned by higher administrative levels, to foreign wives, by issuing locally valid registration cards for them. This way, local governments hijack immigration control from the central state and, to some extent 'normalize' cross-border mobility. The central state, for its part, is well aware of these local border regimes but gives local authorities the necessary leeway to comply to upper level development targets. This example also shows how immigration norms and standards domestically travel between prefectures and counties at the Chinese border. Local governments compete in attracting immigrants to satisfy labour demand. While it suffices to supply basic social services for them in the border areas, larger cities elsewhere compete with each other in attracting high-skilled workers and talent immigration to boost their often highly specialized industries.

Immigration policies undoubtedly exacerbate risks of human trafficking in East Asia, and the intersection of seeking refuge and human trafficking should be regulated in a more cooperative and coordinated manner among the different countries and across government departments. Although the international prohibition of slavery stands, the victims' reality of life often remain dire because officials turn a blind eye and legal regulations are often lacking. The 2018 verdict by the Seoul High Court, stating that the South Korean government was responsible for not properly monitoring the living and working conditions on Sinui Island is telling testimony to how victims are able to seek redress through

the legal system, but also how local police and governments can support systems of exploitation. This case on Sinui Island revolved around two disabled persons who were recruited by an unregistered employment agency that later sold them into forced and unpaid labour in a salt farm, where they experienced severe abuse for several years. After several escape attempts, they finally managed to get help from outside and went to court. The role of the local police remained unclear. While the prosecution believed, but could not prove, that the police had helped the farmers keep their victims enslaved, the local authorities certainly did not comply with their responsibility of monitoring labour conditions properly on the island. Following the victims' rescue, a nation-wide investigation of labour conditions in salt farms was conducted in which dozens of more unpaid workers were found. The role of local officials and police was investigated but did not result in arrests.

Our look at different East Asian immigration regimes has highlighted the overlap of labour, social, industry, and immigration policies, which must be coordinated to bring about protection, fairness and justice to immigrants. Whether they are welcome or not, the selective admission of immigrants is a widely practiced strategy to reconcile labour market requirements and demographic change pursued by every government in the region. This approach, however, leans towards the rule by exception, normalizing the admission of specific groups of workers who are needed only in the short-term and therefore grading citizenship within a society in an ethically and politically most problematic way. If governments seek long-term solutions for the inevitable (and needed) influx of immigrants, they should rather adopt transparent immigration procedures and reliable asylum processes in order to avoid private migration agencies which do exploit legal loopholes, so as to effectively prevent organized crime and ensure international human rights standards. However, as long as immigration regulations continue to follow employment-based policies, victims of human trafficking and other irregular immigrants will continue to blend into the same legal category and be exposed to discriminating social stigmatization. Given the fact that many East Asian societies foster latent or explicit ethno-nationalistic and even xenophobic attitudes, legal change to heal this situation will be a protracted process.

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Above: Work at a garment factory in the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This factory has benefited from the Better Work Programme of the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation. ©ILO/Aaron Santos/CC License.



Above: Rohingya displaced Muslims. Photo S. M. Hosseini/Tasnim News Agency. CC by 4.0 license on Wikimedia.

The statelessness- trafficking nexus

A case study in Thailand

Michiel Hoornick

While it is difficult to estimate how many people worldwide are stateless, owing to its invisible nature, statistics from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) point to around a total of 3.9 million stateless persons in 78 countries, over half of whom are believed to live in the Asia-Pacific region. The international NGO Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI), in an analysis of global statelessness statistics published in June 2020, notes that the total tally might actually be closer to 15 million stateless persons worldwide.¹ In some countries such as Thailand, the statelessness situation is particularly worrying. UNHCR's Global Trends data records 475,009 registered individuals who are stateless in Thailand as of end 2020,² a number approaching 0.7 per cent of the total population of Thailand of around 70 million, with the actual number of those stateless believed to be much higher.

Compared to other statelessness situations across the globe, there is a relative large amount of information available on statelessness in Thailand. Citizenship issues in this context are largely due to the long history of exclusion of minority groups in the country, such as the 'Hill Tribes' – many of whom have been historically excluded from Thai citizenship – and the Rohingya, who come from neighbouring Myanmar to find refuge but remain without citizenship. Stateless members of both groups are more vulnerable to exploitation and to being trafficked as well. Precisely this nexus between statelessness and trafficking in Thailand will be addressed in this article in order to examine how statelessness can be a factor of vulnerability for human trafficking. Further, it will look at what lessons can be drawn from Thailand in terms of its efforts to combat the statelessness-trafficking nexus for other countries in the region facing similar challenges.

What is statelessness?

A stateless person is, following Article 1 of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law". Inherently a legal issue, the lack of citizenship has very real consequences for day-to-day life.

In the summer of 2018, media from all corners of the globe reported daily on the plight of the 'Wild Boars', a Thai youth football team that for 18 days was trapped in the *Tham Luang Nang Non* cave in Northern Thailand, two kilometres away from the Thai-Myanmar border. All the boys were saved, but two rescue divers died during and after the mission. In the aftermath, the team was invited to star in their own movie about their rescue, and the cave itself was turned into a museum and a tourist attraction. Despite the boys' widespread fame, lesser known is the fact that the teammates were not all Thai citizens. In fact, three of the players and their coach were stateless when they first entered and became trapped in the cave. Unfortunately, statelessness is a major challenge in Thailand and across the Asia-Pacific region. Statelessness, being a problem in itself, is also an issue that has broad implications for addressing trafficking in persons, as stateless persons are more vulnerable to fall into the hands of traffickers.

It is not hard to picture the last time you had to identify yourself. This might have been to board an airplane, to sign a new labour contract, open a bank account or to vote. It might even have been to sign your marriage papers or to register your child at the local city hall. Your passport or ID card is the proof that you belong to a country and its people. For many, it is the confirmation of their identity. Citizenship enables you to access healthcare, formal employment and education, and generally should include you into the legal and administrative systems of a State and its bureaucracy. Conversely, the lack of citizenship excludes you from it. While "human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 1, the right to a nationality in practice can become the "right to have rights".

Statelessness can have many causes, including poor birth registration, migration, state succession or gender or ethnic discrimination. Particularly the last issue, discrimination, remains a key root cause of statelessness in many contexts worldwide. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, over 75% of the world's stateless belong to a minority group.³ As Thailand exemplifies, however, statelessness is often caused by a mixture of multiple causes.

Nationality and statelessness in Thailand

The stateless communities in Thailand can be categorised into a few groups. They include the so-called 'Hill Tribes' living in the northern and western parts of Thailand, the 'Moken' along the Andaman coast, and the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Children of migrant workers, who over the last decades travelled from surrounding countries in search of better work opportunities, can also run into citizenship issues in cases where they are not properly registered and fail to gain citizenship from either Thailand or the country of their parents. Such is the case with Nopparat Kanthawong, the 25-year-old coach of the Wild Boars football team, who belongs to the Shan tribe, a community from the Shan region in Myanmar. For these groups, the main causes of their statelessness include poor civil and birth registration, gaps in the nationality framework, illiteracy, poverty and discrimination. In Thailand and the wider region, many of these causes can overlap with those of trafficking.

Under international law, Thailand has a number of key obligations to ensure the right to a nationality under, among others, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 18), the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (Art. 5(d)(iii)), the Convention

on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Art. 9), the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (Art. 18) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Arts. 7 and 8). Moreover, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (Art. 18) stipulates that every person has the right to a nationality, as prescribed by law.

In domestic law, citizenship in Thailand is covered by the Nationality Act from 1972 and was primarily based on *jus soli*, the 'law of the soil'. Following this principle, the place of birth determines who is a Thai citizen. However, after successive alterations in the law, it excluded anyone whose parents were considered to be illegally residing in the country. In an effort to close the legal gap that arose, Thailand passed its 2008 amendment to the Nationality Act. This should make it possible for stateless persons to acquire Thai nationality if they can show evidence of birth and consequent domicile, and if they have shown good behaviour. While this was a positive step, there remain two issues with this solution. First, in many cases evidence is hard to acquire, as it often concerns rural communities and complicated bureaucracies. This is particularly relevant when it comes to birth registration, a lack of which leaves children vulnerable to statelessness. A second issue is the criteria of 'good behaviour', a highly discretionary term. This is problematic for ethnic minorities living in the highlands of Northern and Western Thailand, who are subject to discrimination and stigmatisation.

For the children of undocumented migrants, Thailand introduced a 'Nationality Verification Registration' in 2006 to regulate the status of migrants from the surrounding countries, allowing irregular migrants to receive identity documents. Although this benefited many persons, corruption and complicated bureaucracy make the implementation difficult in many cases.

Trafficking in Thailand

For many years, Thailand has been a source, destination and transit country of forced labour and sex trafficking. This can take the shape of working in factories, begging on the streets or being put to work in massage parlours, just to name a few. In the 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, published yearly by the United States Department of State, Thailand remained in Tier 2 out of 3, meaning that the government of Thailand is making substantial efforts to eliminate human trafficking but does not yet meet the minimum standards. This demonstrates some improvements compared to 2015, when Thailand was placed in Tier 3. Yet, there are some serious challenges that still need to be addressed, and the Guardian reported that in 2019 Thailand was hit by a record number of human trafficking cases.⁴ For example, Thai law permits recruitment agencies to charge recruitment fees to Thais seeking overseas employment. Excessive fees make them more vulnerable to debt bondage or other exploitative conditions (see article by Wilkins in this issue). Moreover, obstacles in tackling trafficking in persons in Thailand include fear of prosecution amongst victims and survivors, but also corruption and the lack of investigation or prosecution. As is the case for statelessness, a big hurdle in fighting these injustices is bureaucracy and a complicated government civil registration system.

Relationship between statelessness and trafficking

Globally, there is a strong link between trafficking in persons and statelessness. For instance, abuses by traffickers can include the withholding of work and identity documents, which can put the person in a more dependent position and at risk of statelessness. In Thailand, this particularly applies to migrants from surrounding countries who fled conditions of poverty and/or oppression, particularly those from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.

Conversely, statelessness can leave a person more vulnerable to trafficking as well. In Thailand, a stateless person often faces travel restrictions domestically or may not leave his or her province without permission, has less access to formal job opportunities and cannot

own land. Stateless children are particularly vulnerable when they are not able to access education. With few prospects of a better future, stateless persons can be forced to look for better work elsewhere and – as labour migrants – can be easily deceived by brokers.

Internationally, there is an increased awareness of the statelessness-trafficking link. In 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommended that Thailand address the root causes of trafficking, “including poverty, lack of economic opportunities and statelessness”.⁵ The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC-CCPR) in the same year called on Thailand to “strengthen its efforts to effectively combat trafficking in persons” and “recommended Thailand to ensure the promotion and protection of rights of stateless persons and protection against trafficking.”⁶

The ‘Hill Tribes’ and Rohingya

The biggest stateless population in Thailand belongs to the ‘Hill Tribes’, an umbrella-term used for ethnic minority groups living in the northern and western parts of the country close to the borders with Myanmar and Laos, including the Karen, Hmong, Lahu, and others. For these ethnic minority groups, statelessness is not an isolated challenge. They are often subjected to discrimination and are associated with the negative stereotypes of being involved in drugs trafficking, communism and deforestation.

The Hill Tribes have become stateless, or rather remained stateless, by a combination of issues in civil registration, discrimination and immigration regulations since Thailand first started to document its nationals in the 1950s. For many members of the Hill Tribes, the concept of citizenship was not known, in particular for those living in poor and remote areas. The lack of awareness of the importance of registration is a common problem in such areas around the world, both in Asia and beyond. Moreover, in the process of Thailand’s nation-building in the mid-twentieth century, Thai ethnicity became the centre of the national Thai identity. This excluded the Hill Tribes, who are of different ethnic groups and are often seen as foreigners. Not registered and therefore without any proof of identity, generation after generation of Hill Tribes individuals failed to gain Thai citizenship.

The consequences of being stateless and the root causes of trafficking overlap in a number of ways for the Hill Tribes communities in Northern Thailand. These include poverty, the lack of education and other rights, as found by an empirical research conducted by Tilburg University in 2014.⁷ Stateless persons face travel restrictions and have limited access to the labour market, particularly in those sectors where permits are needed. This, together

with discrimination against these ethnic minority groups and corruption among state officials, can leave members of the Hill Tribes particularly vulnerable to trafficking. The said research also noted that traumatic events, such as financial issues or the inability to receive adequate medical treatment at moments of dire need, often place an unbearable burden on a stateless person’s ability to cope with such crises. In this regard, the COVID-19 crisis and its effect on all aspects of life on a global scale is a worrying development. Situations of this kind and limited coping mechanisms of those who are already the most vulnerable in society, including stateless persons, may force individuals to take serious risks, such as migrating through a dubious middleman, rather than relying on established state structures. Without alternatives, stateless persons are more likely to become trapped in a cycle of exploitation.

The Rohingya are perhaps one of the clearest examples of how statelessness can lead to other human rights violations. It also demonstrates how a lack of citizenship can be an aggravating component of trafficking and exploitation across the region. The Rohingya is a Muslim group that lived as an integrated community in Myanmar well before the country’s independence in 1948. While there have been ethnic and religious tensions in Myanmar throughout its modern history, most Rohingya called Myanmar their home and actively took part in all parts of society, including the economy, police forces and politics. However, they were made formally stateless after the amendment of Myanmar’s Citizenship Law in 1982. Subsequently, the Rohingya lost many of their rights and have been regarded as Bengali immigrants by Myanmar’s authorities ever since. This exclusion accumulated in a ‘clearance operation’ by the Myanmar military – the *Tatmadaw* – between 25 August and 31 December 2017, using insurgent attacks on 30 police posts to legitimise what former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad al-Husseini referred to as “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing”.⁸ For these events, Myanmar is currently appearing before the International Court of Justice on account of genocide. With the exodus that followed, most Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, while others found refuge in other countries in and outside the region, including Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

It is, however, not the first time the Rohingya left Myanmar in fear of persecution. The Rohingya have spread across the Asian region and the Middle East in the last decades. In Thailand, the total number of Rohingya refugees is estimated to be comparatively low, yet it plays an important role as transit country for those who aim to reach the neighbouring Malaysia. This country currently

hosts over 100,000 Rohingya refugees and over 50,000 others, including many Christian Chin from Western Myanmar.⁹ To get there, some Rohingya refugees pay traffickers large sums of money for travel documents. In 2015, dramatic events played out on the waters of the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea when thousands of Rohingyas were taken on boats to Malaysia, only to be abandoned at sea while the traffickers and smugglers escaped arrest by Thai authorities. Although Thailand cracked down on the trafficking of Rohingya refugees after this event, there are concerns that old trafficking networks are reviving. Particularly worrying are reports of Rohingya who have been unable to pay their smugglers or traffickers and are sold into forced labour.¹⁰ Furthermore, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, boats carrying hundreds of Rohingya refugees were denied entry by both Malaysia and Thailand over fears of passengers carrying the virus.

Rohingya who reside in Thailand are also vulnerable to trafficking. With no or very little documentation, they risk being deported by the authorities or put in Thailand’s immigration detention camps and ‘temporary shelters’ for months on end. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new aspect, and authorities across the region have quoted public health reasons to detain individuals. In this light, Thailand has detained 35 Rohingya children, women and men and is threatening to return them to Myanmar, in violation of the international prohibition of *refoulement* where one is returned to a country where he or she is likely to face persecution and suffer harm.¹¹ In other cases, they can fall in the arms of smugglers and be held in captivity in inhumane conditions. Already in 2014, the UNHCR reported that Rohingya “were kept for months in overcrowded camps and sometimes even cages until their families could pay for their release”.¹² Thailand has no domestic refugee law framework, and all situations of foreigners entering the country are regulated by Thailand’s Immigration Act of 1979. Thailand also has not signed or ratified the Refugee Convention nor its Protocol and refuses to recognise the Rohingya as refugees. In fact, Thai authorities have in many instances avoided mentioning the term Rohingya – speaking rather of ‘Myanmar Muslims’ – in an effort to protect their political and economic ties with neighbouring Myanmar.

Future

According to the 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, Thailand is showing its commitment to address human trafficking, although great challenges remain. It has convicted and sentenced increasingly more traffickers based on its 2008 Anti-Trafficking Law, invested in data collection and facilitated the ability of undocumented migrant workers to register with the government. Thailand has also made an effort on the issue of statelessness amongst children born to migrant workers and people belonging to the Hill Tribes. For the three previously stateless players of the Wild Boars, they were finally granted Thai citizenship in August 2018. They will be able to enjoy all the opportunities and rights any Thai citizen enjoys, including access to education like the other boys on the football team. However, it should be noted that this was an *ad hoc* gesture, as a celebration of their successful rescue, and that Thailand remains one of the countries where both statelessness and human trafficking are particularly problematic.

At the international level, Thailand made commitments to address statelessness. At the United Nations Offices in Geneva, it is taking the lead in the Group of Friends of UNHCR’s so-called #Belong campaign to end statelessness by 2024. In October 2019, it made a series of pledges during the High-Level Segment on Statelessness with respect to enhancing the effectiveness of systems that facilitate stateless persons’ access to civil registration services and adjusting regulations for granting nationality and rights to target groups for them to access the naturalisation process equally and equitably.¹³ While government statements specifically mentioned the ‘hard-to-reach populations’, they again remained short of specifically mentioning the Rohingya. The country has a long way to go before eliminating statelessness by 2024.

While the Hill Tribes, Rohingya and other stateless groups face specific situations in Thailand, their destiny is not unique. With over 7.5 million stateless persons living in the Asia-Pacific, it is an issue that deserves more attention across the region. In the same vein, the nexus between statelessness and trafficking in persons is not unique to Thailand. With overlapping root causes, and the mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities that both stateless persons and victims of trafficking face, citizenship issues must be taken into account in the efforts to combat trafficking. COVID-19 poses an entirely new threat for those already in fear of being arrested and mistreated. We are only beginning to understand the long-lasting effects of the pandemic on those most marginalised and unable to access basic healthcare and other provisions.

As with the fight against trafficking in persons, civil society plays a central role for advocacy of the issue of statelessness. Since November 2016, the Statelessness Network Asia Pacific (SNAP) is the leading organisation in the Asia Pacific region to work with governments, with about 100 members in over 20 countries, including Thailand, to address statelessness. Organisations, such as the Hill Area Development Foundation, travel to Northern Thailand to help members in stateless communities gain citizenship by submitting the necessary documents, one village at a time. With NGOs and local activists such as these at the frontline, Thailand should ensure that it can translate political will into nationality solutions. Only then can it fully eliminate the injustice of statelessness and its associated vulnerabilities by 2024 and serve as a positive example for other countries facing the same challenge of eliminating statelessness in the region.

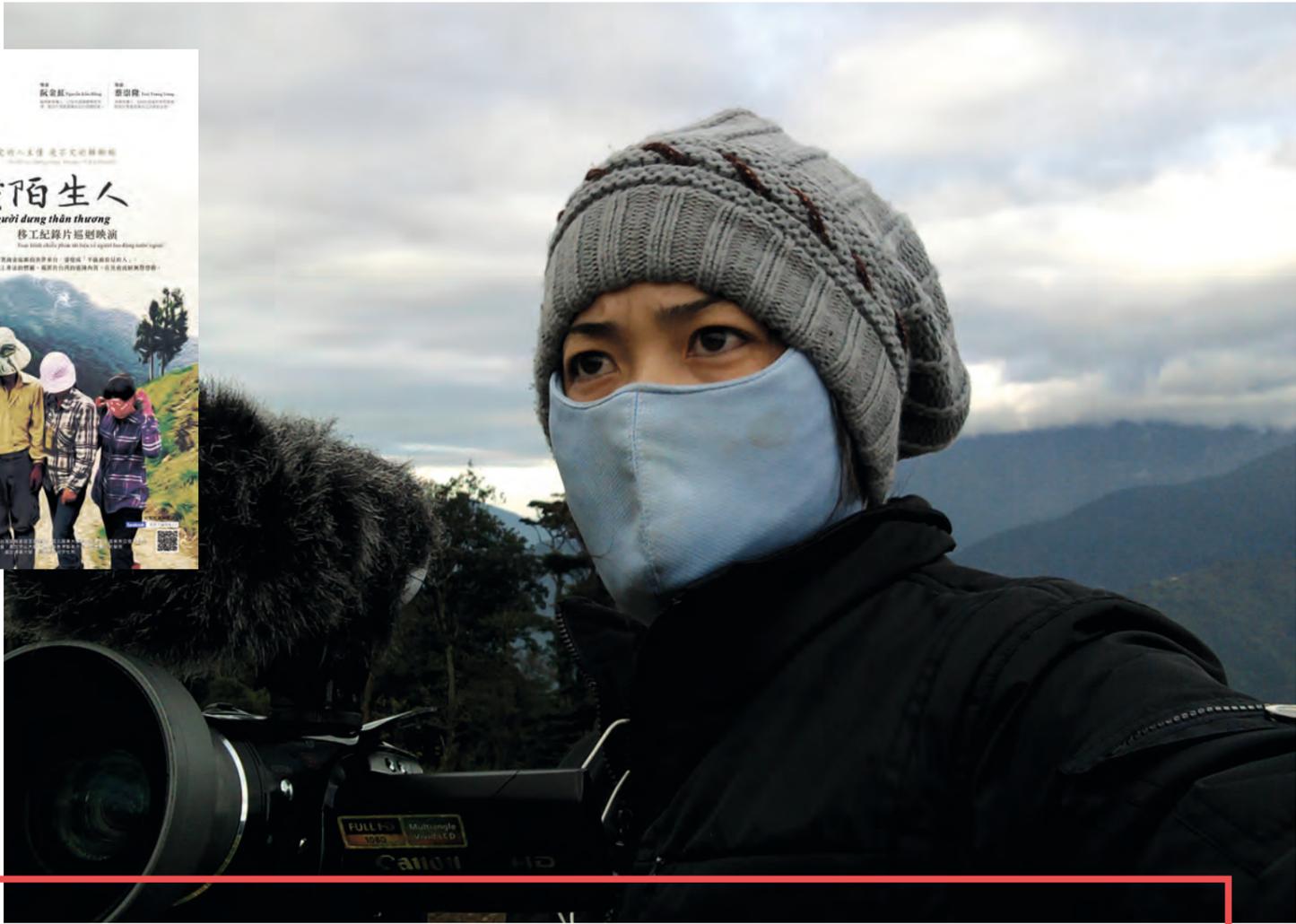
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Photo of a Rohingya girl, taken in Myanmar, May 2013. UNHCR estimates that a stateless child is born somewhere in the world at least every 10 minutes. Photo reproduced under a [CC license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), courtesy of [Steve Gumaer](https://www.flickr.com/photos/stevegumaer/) on Flickr.



Left: Film poster of 'See You, Lovable Strangers'. The belief behind the making of the documentary is to let the people of Taiwan know that they are not different from ourselves in spite of being economically worse-off.

Right: The co-director had the advantage of sharing the same background with her protagonists. Having worked together for a long time, they trusted her and appreciated her motives.

All photos by the directors, Nguyễn Kim Hồng and Tsai Tsung Lung.

'See You, Lovable Strangers'

Exploring experiences of Vietnamese irregular migrants in Taiwan through filmmaking

An interview with Tsai Tsung Lung, by Evelyn Hsin-chin Hsieh.
Translated from Chinese and introduced by Isabelle Cheng

'See You, Lovable Strangers' is a 2016 documentary about four undocumented Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan who decided to take matters into their own hands after the prospect of saving for their families became dim because of monthly deductions, reduced payments or employers' maltreatment. Filmed by a Vietnamese migrant, this documentary traced the four workers' footsteps up into the mountains where they built their 'villa' with plastic sheets, tree branches and flattened cardboard boxes. The director caught a rare moment when the workers enjoyed a seemingly carefree outing on the beach, and another, when the migrant workers' demand for justice at the Vietnamese embassy in Taiwan fell on deaf ears. Witnessing how one of the men's dreams were shattered after his arrest and subsequent repatriation, this documentary informs the audience that the man's departure from Taiwan and return to Vietnam did not end his migration journey since he was still in debt. As the sequel to the award-winning 'Lovely Strangers' (2013), this film enabled these men and women to tell a story, shared with other migrant workers, about their desires, fears and endurance.

Taiwan has been one of the major destinations for migrant workers from Southeast Asia since 1992, when the recruitment of migrant workers was legalised. In February 2020 the number of migrant workers in Taiwan equalled 719,487. A total of 263,533 workers, the great majority of whom are women, provide around-the-clock care in private homes or nursing homes. Another 455,594 are employed in factories, on construction sites, on fishing vessels, with a very small number on farms.¹ Operating a strict guest worker system that denies citizenship to migrant workers, Taiwan is a place where Southeast Asian men and women find themselves permanently on a temporary basis, and where they can only obtain employment after paying a high recruitment fee. Shared between brokers in their home country and in Taiwan, the recruitment fee is often paid with loans provided at a high interest rate or by deduction from their monthly salary. Even where this has not spiralled into a situation of debt bondage, exploitation or abuse can reach such a degree that migrant workers abscond at the price of becoming undocumented and thus working illegally in Taiwan.

Hsieh: What motivated you to make this documentary, and specifically, why did you choose to focus on undocumented migrant workers?

Tsai: Migrant workers are rarely the focus of media coverage in Taiwan. When they do make it into the spotlight, they are often projected negatively. There is limited

video documentation about them made by Taiwanese filmmakers, due to language and cultural barriers. Obviously, the filming cannot be done properly without interpretation if a filmmaker intends to explore their inner world. On top of these difficulties, practically, undocumented workers, particularly those who have escaped from abusive employers, are mostly out of reach of Taiwanese documentary makers. Frightened by the prospect of being caught by the police, when approached by Taiwanese filmmakers, they are not easily convinced that the inquiries come with good intentions. Taiwanese filmmakers who have wished to document their experiences have only been able to do so in writing or audio-recording. However, these media are less intuitive; readers, viewers or listeners are less likely to empathise with the subjects.

My wife Kim Hồng and I are migrants. I am an internal migrant; I moved from agricultural Changhua to metropolitan Taipei and am now settled in agricultural Chiayi in southern Taiwan. Kim Hồng is an international migrant; she moved from Vietnam to Taiwan, and is now settled in Chiayi with me. As a long-term

activist, she sees filming as part of her daily life. In 2012, she was working as an hourly paid garlic picker, together with farmers in our village. On one occasion, she met a group of 'illegal migrant workers', who were taking on jobs in our village. To start, influenced by the stereotype projected by the media, Kim Hồng did not like them. However, in time, she began to understand the hardships they endured as migrant workers in Taiwan, and came to see that her fellow migrants, who originated from northern Vietnam, were kind, honest and hardworking people.

Picking up jobs here and there, Kim Hồng's migrant friends shuttled between the village and the mountains, where they had made themselves a home. Kim Hồng became a close friend to them and they kept in touch. They told her about the dangers of living in the mountains, such as evading police raids and hiding in the woods. To better understand their work and life, Kim Hồng decided to visit them in the mountains. Grasping this rare opportunity to explore the world of undocumented workers, we began to film them for three long years.

Hsieh: How did you decide what to include in your film?

Tsai: All documentary makers know that the key is to win the trust of the filmed subjects. For this film, for me, the most immediate difficulties were the barriers of language, culture and class differences between them and me. For them, knowing that they were seen as 'illegal' added another layer of complications. All of these issues made this film more challenging than the making of *Out/Marriage* (2012), the documentary made by Kim Hồng that focuses on women's stories of marriage migration.

We did not intend to reveal anything sensational or unusual that was worthy of an eye-catching headline. Kim Hồng simply joined them as a co-worker and, for a long time, she kept to her commitment of working with her fellow migrants. At the crack of dawn, they would pick garlic in the village; at night, they were transported back to the mountains. In the mountains they would also be hired to harvest highly-priced cabbages on a farm 3,000 metres above sea level. Kim Hồng's

desire to document their lives sprouted soon after she became a close friend to them. However, the migrant workers were on the lookout for potential dangers posed by someone like her who showed uninvited interests in them. Kim Hồng was cautious not to do anything that could raise the police's suspicions. She began by taking photographs of the workers and giving them these photos as gifts. They were very happy with the images and soon agreed to be filmed. In return, we promised to protect their identities: we would not share their images; at screenings, we would not allow the audience to take photos or film, or we would blur out their faces.

When making the documentary *Out/Marriages*, Kim Hồng, as the filmmaker, had the advantage of sharing the same background with her protagonists. This also worked in her favour when filming these undocumented migrant workers. Having worked together for a long time, they trusted her and appreciated her motives. They were at ease with being filmed by her and did not see it necessary to hide or conceal anything. This was critical to the success of this documentary. After all, they have been stigmatised by the media, and it would not have helped to rectify their negative

image if they had not been able to be who they are or if they could not speak for themselves. In terms of cinematography, we took a realist approach and did not use any special effects. We believe that to present them as they are is the best way to restore their dignity. We believe that our mission is to let the people of Taiwan know that they are not different from ourselves in spite of being economically worse-off.

There are two versions of this documentary. The shorter version uses Kim Hồng's voiceover; the longer version does not employ any narration – the story unfolds on its own. I used to be an investigative journalist, so I edited some critical information and inserted it as captions in the film. Displayed at relevant moments, these captions inform viewers of migrant workers' socio-economic contributions as well as their exploitation by brokers. I believe that this additional information creates a space for public debate, whilst viewers are led by the humanitarian undertone of the story.

A Cheng and A Fu are two protagonists in this film. To pay for the extortionate recruitment fees, both of them took out loans at a high interest rate in Vietnam before coming to Taiwan. They worked in the village in southern Taiwan and in the mountains in central

Taiwan. They were nomads chasing after job opportunities, most of which were laborious and involved unforgiving long working hours. They rarely had time off. Unfortunately, in early 2013, A Fu was arrested by the police but A Cheng managed to escape. A Fu was transferred to the Chiayi Immigration Brigade, where he stayed for 12 days in detention before he was repatriated to Vietnam. I tried to negotiate with the police and was allowed to film the police's transfer and repatriation of A Fu.

After A Fu's arrest, Kim Hồng lost contact with A Cheng for a while. But we met other undocumented workers, who stayed in Taiwan longer, and we were able to film them. Two years later, Kim Hồng returned to Vietnam to visit her family. She went to visit A Fu in central Vietnam and interviewed A Fu's mother and wife. Her visit (on film) allows viewers to observe the circumstances of family poverty under which A Fu decided to run the risk of working in far-off Taiwan.

Hsieh: What impressed you most as a filmmaker when filming these undocumented workers?

Tsai: Before we started, I was hesitant and cautious. Obviously, I could not communicate, as Kim Hồng did, with Vietnamese workers in their language. I had heard a lot of stories about Vietnamese men's drinking problems or their alleged crimes. However, when I first met them, I was surprised by how they interacted with me. Most of them were either shy or treated me with respect. The way they looked at me felt familiar; they reminded me of the apprentices at my mother's hair salon, who had looked at me in the same manner. I did not understand that look when I was little. I now know that it is the look of feeling 'less-than' the person standing in front of you. It made no difference that I was not their employer; they felt to be 'lower', even though we are all human beings.

I talked to an immigration officer about their raids on undocumented workers. He explained that most law enforcement agents are reluctant to arrest undocumented workers. They know that they are hard workers whose only wish is to earn and save money. Vietnamese workers, heavily in debt, run for their lives when pursued by the police. Some of them have broken limbs, others have lost their lives.

It is public knowledge that Vietnamese workers, out of all Southeast Asian workers, pay the highest recruitment fee, which is somewhere between TWD \$120,000–200,000 (approximately US \$4,000–6,600). Off-the-record, I asked an experienced broker whether this high fee also included bribes for governmental officials. He confirmed that this was so: textbook corruption. Although the brokering industry in Taiwan is regulated by law, the under-the-table deal between Vietnamese and Taiwanese brokers is that the recruitment fee of US \$4,500 paid to Vietnamese brokers in Vietnam includes US \$2,200 given to their Taiwanese partners in Taiwan. He finished his explanation by reminding me, in jest: "You've learned too much! Be careful about being visited by law enforcement agents!" I knew he was joking, but his 'reminder' still sent a chill down my spine. If those over-charging Vietnamese brokers are criminals, their Taiwanese counterparts are conspirators. As for those corrupt officials in Vietnam and Taiwan, I have no words to describe them.

Hsieh: Would this documentary have any impact on the Taiwanese society?

Tsai: Taiwan became a destination for marriage migration from Southeast Asia and China in the late 1980s. It has imported labour from Southeast Asia since 1992. When manufacturing and construction industries were hit hard by the rise in labour costs, migrant workers became a critical source of supplementary workforce. They opportunely filled the gap in these industries, which were shunned by local workers. In addition, the population of Taiwan has aged rapidly since the 2000s. The critically needed care in homes and in nursing institutions is provided by Southeast Asian care workers. Replacing Taiwanese carers, they take care of the elderly and the sick. The agricultural and fishing industries also experienced chronic labour

shortages, which farmers came to solve by employing undocumented workers; for some, their contribution to sustaining the country's food production is accompanied by exploitation and abuse.

It is not difficult to understand the significance of migrant workers for the development of Taiwan. Had it not been for their contributions, the economy would have slumped further and faster. Nevertheless, a casual search online feeds you with plenty of postings of discrimination and hate, as well as stories of abuse. You can find these posts on Facebook, blogs, news outlets and readers' responses to news reports.

I hope this documentary makes the Taiwanese government and people think about how migrant workers have been marginalised in the capitalist economy. These workers, who are perceived as an underclass, as the 'other', pursue the dream of having a better life for themselves and their families, a dream that was also embraced by the Taiwanese ancestors who migrated from southeast China to Taiwan three centuries ago. Why do we see these two groups of migrants so differently?

We have organised several screenings of this documentary at universities, community colleges and other venues. One of the common reactions from our audiences has been their surprise at the hardships endured by migrant workers. Some suggested revealing more of the exploitation or illegality of brokers or employers. Others enquired what they could do for migrant workers. Our responses have been the same: There are 'good' and 'bad' migrants as much as there are 'good' and 'bad' Taiwanese people. We do not intend to portray all brokers and employers as abusers; likewise, xenophobic Taiwanese people should not deprecate all outsiders as inferior. By showing the suffering of migrant workers, we hope this documentary poses a significant question to the audience: What feeds and sustains the discrimination against migrant workers? We hope watching this documentary is a humbling experience. We hope this documentary can generate empathy amongst the audience and empower them to take action. Emotional sympathy is good but it is insufficient if we aim to make a difference. Our goal is to motivate Taiwanese viewers to use their political rights and participate in the making of migration policy. If they are willing to be part of the advocacy campaign that calls for the improvement of migrant workers' plight, their political actions will contribute to making Taiwan a multicultural and civilised nation. This is the impact we hope this documentary can, and will, have.

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About the Directors

Nguyễn Kim Hồng is a marriage migrant in Taiwan from Vietnam. *Out/Marriage* was her first documentary and was nominated for Best Documentary in both the Taipei Film Festival and the South Taiwan Film Festival. It won the Best Newcomer Award at the South Taiwan Film Festival.

Tsai Tsung Lung is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communications at the National Chung Cheng University and works as an independent documentary producer and director. He is known for his award-winning works, including *Killing in Formosa*, *Behind the Miracle*, *My Imported Wife*, *Oil Disease: Surviving Evil* and *Sunflower Occupation*
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Above: At the crack of dawn, they would pick garlic in the village; at night, they were transported back to the mountains. In the mountains they would also be hired to harvest highly-priced cabbages on a farm 3,000 metres above sea level.

Below: We believe that to present them as they are is the best way to restore their dignity.

There was a lot of health publicity on washing hands, but the migrants told us that soap was a luxury to many of them. So we added body soap, detergent, face masks and hand sanitiser to our food packages.



Photo-essay on migrant rights in times of emergency

Migrant workers in Malaysia during COVID-19

Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna and Bonny Ling
(photos taken by the volunteers and partners
of Our Journey and selected by Ewa Dąbrowska)

On 16 March 2020, the Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced a Movement Control Order, locally known as an MCO, during a live television broadcast.¹ Authorised under the 1988 Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act and the 1967 Police Act, the MCO sets out a wide-range of measures to try to stem the spread of COVID-19. The order banned movement nationwide and mass gatherings, including all religious, sports, social and cultural activities. Friday prayers for the country's estimated 20 million Muslims also featured on this list of restricted activities. Initially planned for two weeks, the MCO was extended and modified several times, eventually easing movement restrictions in June 2020.

Under the MCO, establishments supplying basic living needs or public amenities such as transport, water and electricity, were allowed to stay open. Banks, supermarkets, grocery stores and other small food stores remained operational. So too did hospitals and companies providing essential services or products, such as medical equipment. Schools and universities, public or private, were closed. Malaysians were no longer able to leave the country, and those who returned from abroad had to self-quarantine for 14 days after undergoing a health screening. Due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases, the government imposed mandatory quarantine at government-designated hotels for incoming travellers. Restrictions were placed on the entry of foreign nationals into the country. Like the experiences of so many elsewhere in the world, daily life came to a standstill, with great uncertainty about when and how lockdown would be lifted and about what would come after.

Malaysia has a population of about 32 million. There are around 2 million documented migrant workers, with an estimated 2 to 4 million additional undocumented migrants in the country, according to the International

Organization for Migration.² Malaysia's migrant workers come mainly from Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

This essay and accompanying photos explore the COVID-19 lockdown experience from the perspective of the migrant workers and the frontline workers who have long advocated for migrant workers' rights and protection. Whilst the photos are unique to Kuala Lumpur, the common theme of a vulnerable group, long acquainted with hardships, being pushed even more towards the thin margins during a time of emergency and stigmatisation, is not unique to Malaysia. No matter where we are in the world, we will recognise shades of these common experiences in our own communities, of those already struggling, looking for food for their families and worrying about their livelihoods with an uncertain future.

Below is a summary of email conversations between Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna (Director of Our Journey) and Bonny Ling, during April-May 2020, accompanied by photos taken by the volunteers and partners of Our Journey, an NGO in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and selected by Ewa Dąbrowska. Together, they give insight into the extraordinary challenge of protecting the migrant population during a global crisis.

LING: What was the MCO (Movement Control Order) like in Malaysia, when it came in on 18 March 2020? Were people prepared for it? It was around then that lockdown became the norm for so many others in the world as well.

KISHNA: It has been crazy here. We're on a semi-lockdown and this has left thousands of migrant workers without access to food, especially those who are daily wage earners. This includes very strict movement, as well as an 8 AM to 8 PM curfew within a 10 km radius

from their homes. The Government of Malaysia announced food packages but limited only to Malaysian nationals. Can you imagine that? So this has been a disaster for the migrant, refugee community, the stateless and undocumented. Many were left without their daily wages. This means many are without food. The migrant community had reached out to us for food and we had to do something.

LING: Can you describe how your organisation Our Journey came to the idea of providing food aid for the migrant community? Have you done anything similar in the past?

KISHNA: In all honesty, I didn't think food was an issue. How wrong I was. An Indonesian community leader had reached out to me asking for cash to buy food for the community, so I called up some mosques and Members of Parliament for help, but they all said their aid was for Malaysians. So I put up

“The migrant communities have been amazing as well in assisting us. We have PERTIMIG (Indonesia), AMMPO (Philippines), Bhalobashi Bangladesh, and PNCC (Nepal), who have been on the ground speaking to the migrants and collating the names.”



Apart from migrants in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor who were our primary recipients, we also provided food aid to migrants in Penang, Perak Melaka, Pahang, Sabah and Sarawak.

a plea in WhatsApp groups and sent it to my closest friends ... they have been amazing and the donations have been coming in to help the migrant community. That was when we started coordinating teams to take calls, and teams to source for provisions at different places (as there are restrictions on bulk buying) and distributing... I was able to bring in the Bar Council Migrants, Refugees and Immigration Affairs Committee as a partner, so that if any legal issues cropped up they can help. Thankfully so far we did not face any legal hurdles.

LING: Can you describe how you go about delivering food aid to the migrant community on a daily basis?

KISHNA: An informal charity group of friends called WeLoveWeCareWeShare was the first group that helped me in my venture. We coordinated a team of friends and migrant community leaders and we have been raising funds and distributing provisions daily since 26 March 2020. We obtained the necessary permission from the government to move around to distribute the aid. So here we are having to feed the needy migrants. We have given provisions to over 7000 migrants and many 1000s more are on my list. It has been a monumental task to coordinate the migrant community leaders and friends to get the names, addresses and contact details of those who have been reaching out, raising the funds and then sourcing the provisions in bulk and lastly distributing. This is what I am currently doing day and night! I have an amazing team that has taken no pay and spent their own money traveling every day to distribute food aid.

LING: There is a sharp disconnect between the rhetoric of 'One World' when we talk about the vast percentage of the world's population experiencing the uncertainty and the mental stresses of a lockdown versus the responses of governments worldwide being very much divided on the lines of citizenship and nationality. As countries closed their borders, the stigma was on anyone who was not a national, seen as virus vectors and a threat. How are the foreign workers you have met feeling and coping during the MCO? Are their own embassies providing some assistance?

KISHNA: People are literally starving here. Some employers [are] abandoning their workers. Some [workers are] not given food, many not given salaries to buy their food. Some asked to buy their own. The ugly side of some humans. The embassies are doing their part, but they also lack resources and manpower. There are embassies who had reached out to us to aid their workers, and we have no problem taking on these extra names. We have provided food aid to [nationals from] 10 sending countries. We have yet to provide for Sri Lankans and Thais, as no needy migrants from these countries have reached out to us yet. The migrant communities have been amazing as well in assisting us. We have PERTIMIG (Indonesia), AMMPO (Philippines), Bhalobashi Bangladesh, and PNCC (Nepal), who have been on the ground speaking to the migrants and collating the names.

LING: Are the migrant workers being fired from their jobs or kept in a perpetual holding position of great uncertainty, and without pay for the foreseeable future?

KISHNA: I am actually appalled that some companies have been withholding salaries since February, which has left the migrants unable to pay for food and their rent (another bigger headache we had to eventually tackle). While I understand that the employers are being hit hard, the government has announced plenty of economic stimulus packages even as far as deferring car loans, business loans, housing loans and personal loans for 6 months, including giving companies soft loans at very minimal interest to recover after this crisis is over. If they look after their workers in times like this, the workers will continue to work for them and help build their companies. What are these companies without the workers? You need a healthy workforce to come back to work at your companies. I cannot fathom how these employers never gave a second thought how the workers were coping during the lockdown. Even if they can't provide the food, the companies could have partnered with us to provide the same.

LING: Is there any example of a responsible company during this time that thought about their foreign workers' wellbeing? And what would you say was the ingredient that got them to act differently - is it corporate leadership or some external pressure?

KISHNA: One construction company reached out recently and asked if we could provide [meals] for his 30 subcontracted workers. I mentioned that I only spend RM50-60 [for] provisions per head and these provisions last a month for the migrants. So we gave him that details and he has since gone to buy the provisions for his workers. RM50 X 30 workers = 1500 (a one-time cost) for the employer. Well assured his workers are fed and

ready to work once the restriction is lifted. It's really that simple to feed your workforce. More than wanting funds, I want the companies to take responsibility of feeding their workforce.

LING: How did the state overlook its own obligation to protect migrant workers during this time of a health emergency?

KISHNA: The government's stand on not providing for the migrants is disappointing. However, government has given concessions, such as free COVID-19 screening and free treatment for all migrants regardless of legal status, as well as committed to not arrest the undocumented at the beginning and allow those with expired visas during COVID to renew after the restriction period is over. Of course, if there is no free screening and treatment for all, the containment can't take place effectively. No detention because of fear that it may spread in the detention centres. However, the government has conducted several raids since 1 May 2020 and detained hundreds of migrants, which resulted in a COVID cluster in the detention centres.

LING: It wasn't so long ago that we met to talk about combatting human trafficking in East Asia and what lessons countries like Malaysia, with its complicated and mixed migratory situation, can offer as a comparative example. That was from a different age, pre-COVID-19, but the challenge of effective anti-trafficking has not disappeared in the meantime. Where do we start to pick up the thread of the advocacy work from before to hold states accountable to their obligation to prevent, suppress and punish the trafficking in persons?

Continued overleaf

Over 500 migrants collecting their provisions while their families watch from the semi-constructed exclusive condo, where the workers also live and work.



“With poor migrant children dependent upon schools for food and shelter while their parents work, we could potentially see many children on the streets begging for food ...”



Distribution of food aid through the Welfare Department for Migrants at Selangor Mansion and Malaya Mansion, Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur, which was placed under an Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) from 7 April to 4 May 2020. These locations were raided on 1st May by authorities who arrested scores of undocumented migrants. This was the beginning of several raids that the authorities carried out in EMCO areas.



Combating human trafficking in East Asia and beyond

KISHNA: It's crucial that we understand the impact of COVID-19 on trafficking issues and address them [from] a human rights perspective. A week after the lockdown in Malaysia, the government reported that crime rate in the country fell by 70%.³ This is not surprising since the police and army were down on the streets full force and patrolling around for MCO violators. That does not mean that human trafficking activities have ceased. The lockdown shifted the focus of the government and civil society to combat COVID-19. Curfews, movement restrictions and lockdown measures which were seen as effective measures to flatten the COVID-19 curve also impacted on the state's and civil society's capacities to address the needs of trafficked victims. Government and service providers had to expand their focus to address the needs of many communities and not only the trafficked victims. Shelter providers have had to stop taking in new migrants in need of shelter or impose a mandatory COVID-19 testing, which is costly.

Another example is that tighter border controls have not deterred smugglers or traffickers. Under the government's Ops Benteng [a government operation aimed at undocumented migrants under the stated goals of safe-guarding Malaysia from cross-border crimes and preventing the spread of COVID-19], the authorities arrested almost 2000 persons who attempted to enter the Malaysian borders without proper documents.⁴ They were stopped and sent back, and many were also arrested as well. The primary focus was not to identify if those entering were smuggled or trafficked victims, but rather as potential COVID-19 carriers.

Further, the lockdown resulted in many daily wage migrants losing their only source of income and post lockdown saw many companies winding up or downsizing, potentially rendering many migrants jobless. In desperation, many migrants are taking on work with wages lower than the minimum wage as a form of survival. Child trafficking may heighten as well. Many community schools are still in shutdown. With poor migrant children dependent upon schools for food and shelter while their parents work, we could potentially see many children on the streets begging for food or being brought to work with parents.

LING: And what about the corporate sector? There is a lot of hope that with the growing recognition of the important roles played by the many low-paid, unskilled workers—for instance, like those in farm work, delivery, supermarkets that kept the food supply chain going during COVID-19—that this will translate into tangible improvements in the situation of migrant workers worldwide. What are your thoughts? Are you hopeful?

KISHNA: I want brands and associations to take note of how their supply chain has been poorly handling the crisis. We have seen this pandemic categorising some sectors as essential sectors, sectors where many migrants work, sectors that the country needed to stay afloat. Migrant workers kept the food sector, cleaning sector and many other essential sectors running. How can we not recognise their contribution to the nation? Unfortunately, when COVID-19 clusters of migrant workers were found in the wet markets, the local councils saw it fit to ban migrants from working in the wet markets. Even documented workers were not allowed to work, which is an affront to their labour rights. Once this is over, we must come together to share what some governments did well and what CSOs and other non-government actors did. Such a wealth of knowledge, to be better prepared next time.

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Notes

- 1 Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia. 'The Prime Minister's Special Message on COVID-19 - 16 March 2020'; <https://tinyurl.com/PMSM-covid19>
- 2 www.iom.int/countries/malaysia
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Climate change in coastal cities. Centring the voices of urban residents in Asia and Africa.



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This Call for Papers is for an institutional panel of the IIAS-Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), to be held at the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12), Kyoto, Japan, 24-27 August 2021.

Call for Papers

Deadline: 15 November 2020
Application form:
www.ukna.asia/events/climate-change-coastal-cities

Climate, political economy and society

The notions of adaptation, mitigation, resilience and vulnerability through which climate change is commonly approached in public policy and discourse are predicated on the positioning of the climate as something outside of society—an external threat that can be addressed through policies and practices that maintain the underlying status quo.

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of people in both continents, are widely recognised as being particularly vulnerable to rising waters and extreme weather events.

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Interested scholars and practitioners should submit an abstract of no more than 250 words and a short biography of no more than 200 words by 15 November 2020, using the online application form: www.ukna.asia/paper-proposal-form-climate-change-coastal-cities.

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News about the journal

Lifelong learning with indigo in Mali

Seeing blue and more with Groupe Bogolan Kasobane

Baba Coulibaly and
Mohomodou Houssouba

In December 2019, the Institute of Humanities in Bamako initiated conversations with a central figure of artisanal indigo dyeing and artistic creation in Mali, as part of their wider interest in understanding the role of indigo as a pedagogical tool of social transformation, under the Humanities across Borders programme.¹



Above: Klétigui Dembélé (far) and Kandiora Coulibaly (near) are working on bogolan paintings. The cloths have been mordanted (dyed) with *ngalama* so that the black color that is the result of the clay slip will be fixed to the cloth. Kandiora is painting on a bleach mixture to remove the *ngalama* color and expose the original white color of the cloth as an element of the artwork. Klétigui is painting bogo (clay slip) onto a cloth with a quill. The clay is in the black ceramic bowl. The white lines are a chalk sketch of the planned art work. Photo by Janet Goldner, 2005.

Indigo, as well as other dyeing plants, constitute the foundation of traditional textile production in Mali. Indigo, in particular, has played a pivotal role in structuring an endogenous value chain in local and regional systems of production. To some extent, it has fashioned some trade routes crisscrossing today's West Africa: from the Guinea-Mali road in the southwest to the Mali-Burkina-Côte d'Ivoire triangle in the south and center. The 'indigo arc' spans the savannah region of a historical heartland, in which migration, trade, and the continuous introduction and adaptation of new tools and techniques structured relationships of economic and social interdependency. Yet, exploring the technical, economic, social and spiritual dimensions of indigo cultivation, processing, dyeing, and commercialization beyond the few artisanal households has been a very recent phenomenon in the region. How did this space of diverse and complementary livelihood practices associated with indigo come to public attention? Who were the protagonists in Mali?

Born in Zerbala, Koutiala (Sikasso), in southern Mali, Klétigui Dembélé is a pioneer plastic artist and herbalist. As a founding member of the 'Groupe Bogolan Kasobane', he belongs to the generation of Malian art students, who, after independence, rebelled against the curriculum inherited from the colonial school system. As he attended the National Institute of the Arts in the 1970s, practices in graphic arts, kept in lockstep with the French syllabus, still relied heavily on imported material, tools and techniques: canvass and other art paper, watercolor, paintbrush, etc. Created in 1933, the National Institute of the Arts itself was initially a center dedicated to training in arts and crafts in the colony then called 'French Sudan'. It became an art college in 1963 and quickly turned into a center of excellence for young music and visual art students. To date, many of its graduates have become internationally renowned artists and musicians. In the spirit of the time, some formed collectives to experiment with new techniques based on ancient practices. One of them, Groupe

Bogolan Kasobane – five men and one woman – advocated the introduction of textile and dyeing traditions into the visual arts curriculum. By that time, with the economic crisis deepening after the great droughts of 1972-1974, imported material became too expensive, and the supply lines uncertain. However, beyond material considerations, the return to the roots was a daring act of cultural self-assertion and intellectual responsibility on the part of the younger generation. To them, the program was bound to perpetuate the path of dependency and economic extroversion inherited from the colonial era.

Still, in order to successfully subvert the established order, the activists had to find viable alternatives. This is how they turned to the materials and tools used in different local traditions. Groupe Bogolan Kasobane itself included members of the Soninke, Minianka, Fulani, Dogon, Bambara, and Malinke traditions of textile production and dyeing. In this regard, it represents a microcosm of Mali and, to some extent, West Africa, when it comes to textile and dyeing practices.

Klétigui Dembélé comes from the Minianka region in southeastern Mali bordering with Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. It is located at the crossroads of Bambara/Jula, Senufo and Fulani cultures. Unlike most parts of the country, the area is well watered and rich in tree and plant species. Its forests, clearings, crop fields and grasslands provided him with an initial open-air apprenticeship as well as a lifelong learning environment. In the mid-1970s, interactions with other art students awakened him to the value of his early initiation to the knowledge about plants. For example, learning their properties covered the full range of possible uses: as food or decoration; as medication or poison; as daily stimulant or hallucinogen in special rituals and ceremonies. The learner acquired holistic skills that could be deployed in ordinary and emergency situations. Dembélé's traditional training started accordingly, and his college experience coincided with a period of intensified activism toward decolonizing the curriculum, especially the arts and crafts syllabi. These circumstances enhanced his own determination to continue his 'village' schooling as herbalist and dyer in Bamako. The exchanges with classmates and future members of the collective encouraged him to experiment further with plant varieties from other parts of Mali.

This way, from 1978 on, the group focused its research on natural dyes. In the first phase, they did a survey of the raw materials and local tools used to produce colors. Dembélé thus describes the starting point: "We have done research on traditional techniques. These are natural colors [extracted] from ingredients that are found here. The [*ngalama*] trees grow here, the cotton is cultivated here, the cotton is ginned, spun and woven by men. So, you see, we have all the technical support at hand. With regard to tools, we do not need modern brushes. We can cut and split thin bamboo stems, or palm twigs [*palmyra* tree]. We work with spatulas ordered from our local blacksmiths, who design them for us. As for the clay, we have plenty of it here in Mali. So you see, absolutely nothing comes from elsewhere".

Urbanizing the bogolan

By all accounts, Groupe Bogolan Kasobane's collective work on the bogolan technique laid the groundwork for the worldwide popularity of this material two decades later. The Bambara word *bogolan* is a combination of *bogo*, meaning 'clay' and *lan*, a suffix of agency. In this regard, the term 'mudcloth' dyeing is an unfortunate misnomer given that the process has nothing to do with 'mud'. Traditionally *bogolan* was women's work. With urbanization, men took it over.

The name Groupe Bogolan Kasobane by itself signifies the team's initial dedication to a traditional dyeing technique used mainly by craftswomen in villages across southern Mali. It involved immersing cotton cloth – from strips sewn together – repeatedly into a vegetal decoction, usually of leaves of *ngalama* (*Anogeissus leiocarpus*) or *cangara* (*Combretum glutinosum*). The leaves and barks of a few other plants can be used to produce particular colors. Still, the *ngalama* is the dye commonly used to bond the clay to the white cotton cloth. It has a high tannin content and functions as a mordant, which is necessary for most natural dyes. The cloth is dyed with *ngalama* multiple times before the clay – from a pond or riverbank – is applied to draw patterns from a repertoire of signs and symbols. Once the cotton cloth is dyed with *ngalama*, it takes on a brown color. The clay gives the cloth a black color. Bleaching the cloth back to the original white color produces the white in the finished cloth. This often results in intricate patterns of geometrical figures, symmetrical or asymmetrical, uniform or mixed, but always an elaborate ensemble.

Traditionally *bogolan* comes mostly in black (clay) and white (cotton), but it can also be dark yellow or brown to dark red depending on the decoction used to fix colors or create them. The production process was geared toward self-consumption, though limited exchange or barter was not excluded. The production is fully controlled by the local population, from the cotton, cultivated on plots in the villages to the trees, plants and other natural dye sources and painting substances. The market used to be equally local; orders from the neighborhood or limited volumes sold at local markets. For example, traditional hunters wear *bogolan* apparels sewn with a battery of protective amulets; it is also a favorite costume in traditional theatrical performances like the *Koteba*, as well as in many rituals and spiritual ceremonies. However, the *bogolan* remains a cloth for everyday life. This combination of commonness and spiritual association makes it an expansive and variegated field of patterns and meanings.

By the 1990s the clay-dyed cotton cloth was further popularized by visual artists, film decorators and costume makers, especially fashion designers. Among the later, Chris Seydou turned out to be the most influential fashion maker. From Bamako to Paris and on many other international stages, he made the *bogolan* a much-demanded material. The new market had domestic as well as international ramifications. In Mali itself, tourism gained increasingly in importance with the relative democratization of the political system and progressive liberalization of the economy. By then, many cultural sites in Djenné, Timbuktu, Dogon Country and Gao had been added to the UNESCO cultural heritage registry. Cultural tourism grew to become a pillar of many local economies in the mid-2000s.

Market *bogolan* brought about its own revolution, particularly with the increasing use of synthetic dyes to expand the traditional color spectrum. But the success of the material made it prey to industrial reproduction without any compensation. There was actually no legal protection against large-scale piracy of traditional creations. So, in a tragic twist, huge amounts of printed *bogolan* shipped mainly from Chinese factories started invading the markets, including in Africa. One could argue that Mali's traditional textile companies, COMATEX and ITEMA, could have spearheaded this revolution. Then, at the very least, the country of origin would have benefited from the industrialization, even if it turned out to be at the expense of traditional craftsmen and women. In any case, by the end of the 1990s, the traditional production of *bogolan* was nearly annihilated.

In all this, the promoters of traditional dyeing techniques, who never prospered during the boom, continued to experiment with organic materials and colors in their work. The spun and woven cotton yarn, natural fibers and local dyes figure at the center of their efforts. These are becoming increasingly rare, and the border between natural and synthetic fibers or dyes is constantly blurring. In this regard, industrialization has had a damaging impact on traditional textile and dye production. It nearly dried the well of inspiration from which a long history of creativity, innovation and exchange had sprung. In the end, only the determination of the pioneers and guardians of the tradition helped prevent its total demise. Research and social engagement enabled new possibilities for practitioners and scholars to reinvest in the field of experimentation and innovation.

Indigo in a multidisciplinary syllabus

At the International Convention of Asia Scholars in Leiden, ICAS 11 (15-19 July 2019), the roundtable 'Place, Practice and Nature: Indigo' shed light on the versatility of indigo in its uses in Asia and Africa. While on both continents the plant has a long history of use in dyeing, the different perspectives illustrated the need to collaborate at the regional and trans-regional levels for a shared syllabus that surpasses the habitual compartmentalization afforded by educational departments and disciplines. In this regard, the Malian team, which had so far mainly studied indigo through geographical surveys, discovered potentially far-reaching ramifications of their activities. Unlike Mali, nation-states have played a central role in promoting traditional textile and dye sectors elsewhere. In neighboring Burkina Faso, for example, after three decades of consistent policy of protecting the national artisanal cloth, *faso danfani* has become a value-added product sustaining many families and communities.

The role of public universities in India, Taiwan and Thailand in supporting artisans was particularly eye-opening, since such university outreach work is possible in Mali too if only there is sufficient awareness and commitment. All these lessons triggered questions about a potential shift in orientation in the Institute of Humanities' HaB research on Malian indigo and artisanal textiles. The groundbreaking work of Groupe Bogolan Kasobane inspired important exhibitions in France and Switzerland, among other places: 'Boubou, c'est chic', Musée des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie in Paris and Museum der Kulturen in Basel (2000); 'Textiles du Mali', Museum der Kulturen in Basel and as a permanent exhibition of the Musée National du Mali (2003); 'Textiles bôgôlan du Mali' in the Musée d'ethnographie in Neuchâtel (2004); 'Woven Beauty: The Art of West African Textiles' in Museum der Kulturen in Basel (2009). These generated scientific publications and contributed to the growing interest in, and knowledge of traditional textile and dye.

Klétigui Dembélé's expertise was a valuable source of information at the final HaB workshop held at the Institute of Humanities, which focused on integrating the Kasobane experience in fieldwork conducted in Mali and joint experiential activities with the research team of the Institute of Social Studies (INSS) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. To this end, the two HaB partners signed an agreement to coordinate their activities more closely. Thus, ahead of the late-2019 workshop, the Institute of Humanities team met with Klétigui Dembélé on different occasions to debrief him on the ICAS experience, from the lessons of the pre-conference experiential school 'Reading Leiden' to the 'indigo soup kitchen'. In return, he presented the genesis of the Kasobane collective, the initial impetus to not only reject a colonial curriculum but also propose a new approach, which would rely first and foremost on local materials, tools, techniques, and the practitioners of this knowledge base.

Reflecting on his personal experience, Dembélé noted that getting the younger generation interested in ancestral arts and crafts would require a different approach. Present-day students grow up away from the fields, looms and dye pits, so they need a more structured introduction to traditional materials and techniques. While in the 1970s students had to fight to be allowed to use *bogolan* and indigo, these materials have become standard in use, if not taken for granted. These days, Mali has two established public art colleges, the National Institute of Arts and the more recent Conservatory for Multimedia Arts and Crafts, where, for example, indigo could be taught, researched and further refined in its uses. New varieties and techniques learned from other countries, from Burkina Faso to Taiwan, India to Thailand, could be tested and compared. Still, the focus would remain on the local terrain: "Students before graduation could at least go out and conduct field research on the [indigo] plant. They could then present the results through original drawings and patterns they will have created". To him, this approach is all the more urgent since college graduates, especially in the arts, nowadays face massive unemployment after graduation. With sufficient sources of raw material still at hand, young practitioners can learn ancestral techniques, develop their personal styles, and bring about innovations that could enhance the artistic quality and commercial value of indigo and other dyed textile creations. In passing, it is paradoxical to note that the Conservatory is presently more in favor of going back to European painting techniques and materials and multimedia than to explore the potential of indigo plants, dyes and dyeing in its curricula.

A localized strategy of indigo preservation

Yet Mali's rich and diversified plant and forest cover has been severely depleted over the last five decades. Recurrent droughts and decreasing rainfall have set the trend, but

human action plays a decisive role. Extensive land clearing, overgrazing, uncontrolled logging, poaching and bush fires devastate fragile ecosystems every year. Population growth and urban expansion put constant pressure on rural land and threaten the reservoirs of biodiversity. A telling example is the zone of Siby, a traditional indigo-growing territory. Located at about 50 km south of the capital Bamako, which has long held the dubious record of the fastest-growing city in Africa, its vegetation shrinks continually. Since the construction of the paved road to the border with Guinea in the early 2000s, Siby has suffered from speculators keen on acquiring land to develop houses, camping grounds and commercial farms.

Additionally, affluent city dwellers increasingly buy plots to build country homes with gardens and even stables to escape the stifling pollution in town. With little control over these schemes, the result is an already fragmented landscape from which whole species have disappeared in just two decades. To be sure, indigo varieties can still be found in the wild but they are increasingly few and far between. The once abundant raw material is increasingly difficult to find in Bamako. Dembélé reflected: "Once I went to the main market to buy indigo balls. They sent me from one stall to another. In the end, no one had had any. I couldn't find any indigo!"

This scarcity is unlikely to encourage young students to work with indigo. So, to remedy the problem, he has decided to plant domestic indigo trees: "My strategy is to grow the indigo tree. So, I send the seeds to my village, Zebala, where my relatives have enough land to grow indigo for me during the rainy season. After the harvest, they send me my crop". This initiative is still an experiment, but it could be the blueprint for a new approach. In the end, the aim is to plant more significant surfaces and grow sufficient indigo to cover the different needs. Cast in the 'Humanities across Borders' framework, it can be the starting point for experimenting with outreach programs that are based on the long-term collaboration between an academic institution and a local community, in the way, for example, that Chiang Mai University accompanies agricultural and crafts cooperatives in northern Thailand. This way, the Institute of Humanities will work with Dembélé and Groupe Bogolan Kasobane to turn his personal strategy of indigo preservation into a larger effort to attract and commit young scholars to the revitalization of ancestral practices through documentation, experimentation and even cultivation.

Baba Coulibaly and Mohomodou Houssouba, Institut des Sciences Humaines du Mali.

Publications accompanying major exhibitions on Malian and West African textiles

- Duponchel, P. 2004. *Textiles bôgôlan du Mali*. Neuchâtel: Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel.
- Gardi, B. et al. 2009. *Woven Beauty: The Art of West African Textiles* [Mali, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana]. Basel: Museum der Kulturen Basel / Christoph Merian Verlag.
- Gardi, B. (ed.) 2002. *Le boubou, c'est chic. Les boubous du Mali et d'autres pays de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*. Basel: Museum der Kulturen Basel / Paris: Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie / Christoph Merian Verlag.
- Gardi, B. (ed.) 2003. *Textiles du Mali*. Bamako: Musée National du Mali.

Notes

- 1 'Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World' is a programme for global collaboration on humanistic education, carried out by a consortium of twenty-three leading institutes in Asia, West Africa, Europe and the United States. It is co-ordinated by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden, Netherlands) and principally funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York and IIAS, with the support of Leiden University. www.iias.asia/programmes/hab



Above: Klétigui Dembélé tends a real botanical garden in his yard. The ngalama tree stands in the foreground, the npeku tree in the background. Photo by Karim Diallo, 2020.

Middle: Klétigui Dembélé is working with ngalama that is in the clay jar. It is green because the ngalama leaves are still in the dye bath. The small blue basin at his feet has the strained ngalama dye (without leaves). The cloth in the blue basin is beginning to be dyed with the ngalama. Photo by Janet Goldner, 2005.

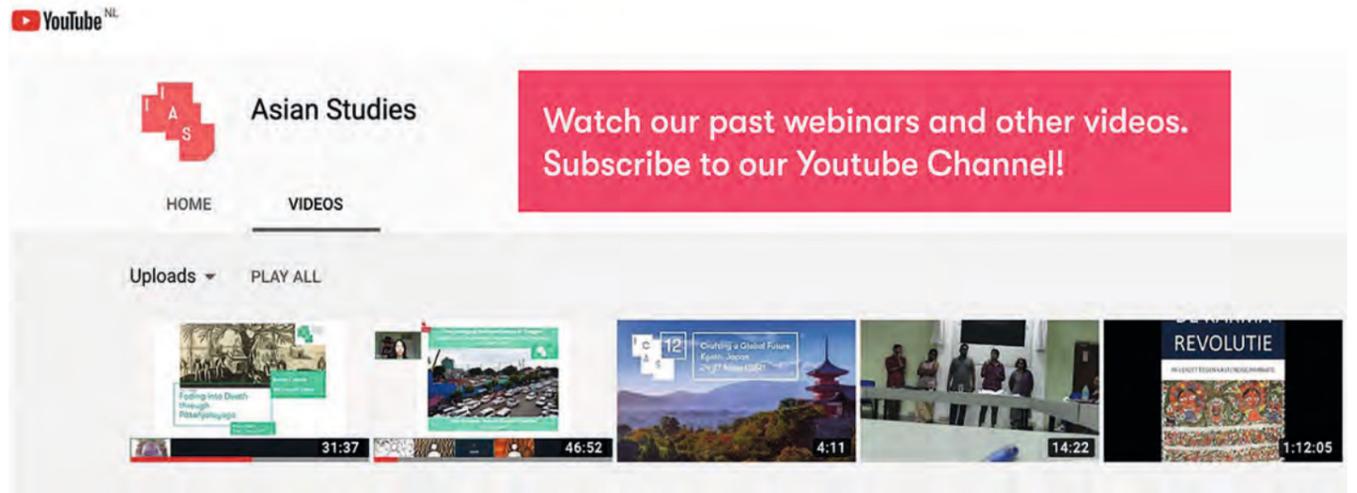
Right: A scarf dyed blue is hung to dry in the open. Photo by Karim Diallo, 2020.

IIAS webinars: A new experience

Willem Vogelsang

Every two weeks or so, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) organises a lunch lecture at which one of our fellows, or another interested speaker, presents the developments of his/her research to an often very lively and interested audience. The atmosphere is informal, which stimulates the discussion afterwards. And of course, we provide a free lunch, which promotes a general feeling of well-being. At least, that is what we used to do, until the middle of March, which is when the corona pandemic reached most of the world, including Leiden. We were forced to cancel all in-house gatherings, and like so many other organisations, we switched to online meetings: the ‘Webinar’ entered our vocabulary.

Sometime in the middle of May, we set up a series of online lectures by our fellows, on a wide range of subjects that reflect the diversity of Asian Studies as promoted by IIAS: from aerial navigation in precolonial India, the position of Pakistan in China’s Belt and Road Initiative, to the migration of Baluchis from Iran to eastern Africa in the nineteenth century.



We use the Kaltura system, which is supported by Leiden University and has proved to be a reliable medium and easy to use, not only for the organisers, but also for the participants. The webinars are opened by a moderator who welcomes the participants, introduces the speaker and explains the ‘rules’ of the game. All participants can use the chat module to type in their questions during and after the talk, and the moderator selects a number of them to put to the speaker. The talk itself takes some thirty minutes, which is then followed by a Q&A.

For the speakers who are interested, we offer a course specifically designed for

people who find it difficult to talk in front of a camera. Our fellows are taught how to present themselves, look into the camera rather than read from a written text, be aware of the physical background and the lighting. It is fantastic to watch how professionally some of them present themselves after attending the course and learning some basic tricks.

In general, the system works well. On average we have some 100 participants that log in for each lecture. The questions that are typed in and passed on to the speaker are often very to the point, motivating the speaker to elaborate on the issues raised. We do not know what the future will bring. We would like

to re-instate the in-person talks, but only when it is safe again. Even then, we are seriously considering continuing the online webinars as well, to attract a worldwide audience and help our fellows make new contacts.

Information

Our upcoming webinars are announced at www.iias.asia/events Previous webinars can be viewed on our Youtube channel (‘Asian Studies’): <https://tinyurl.com/YT-AsianStudies>

Willem Vogelsang, Deputy Director
International Institute for Asian Studies

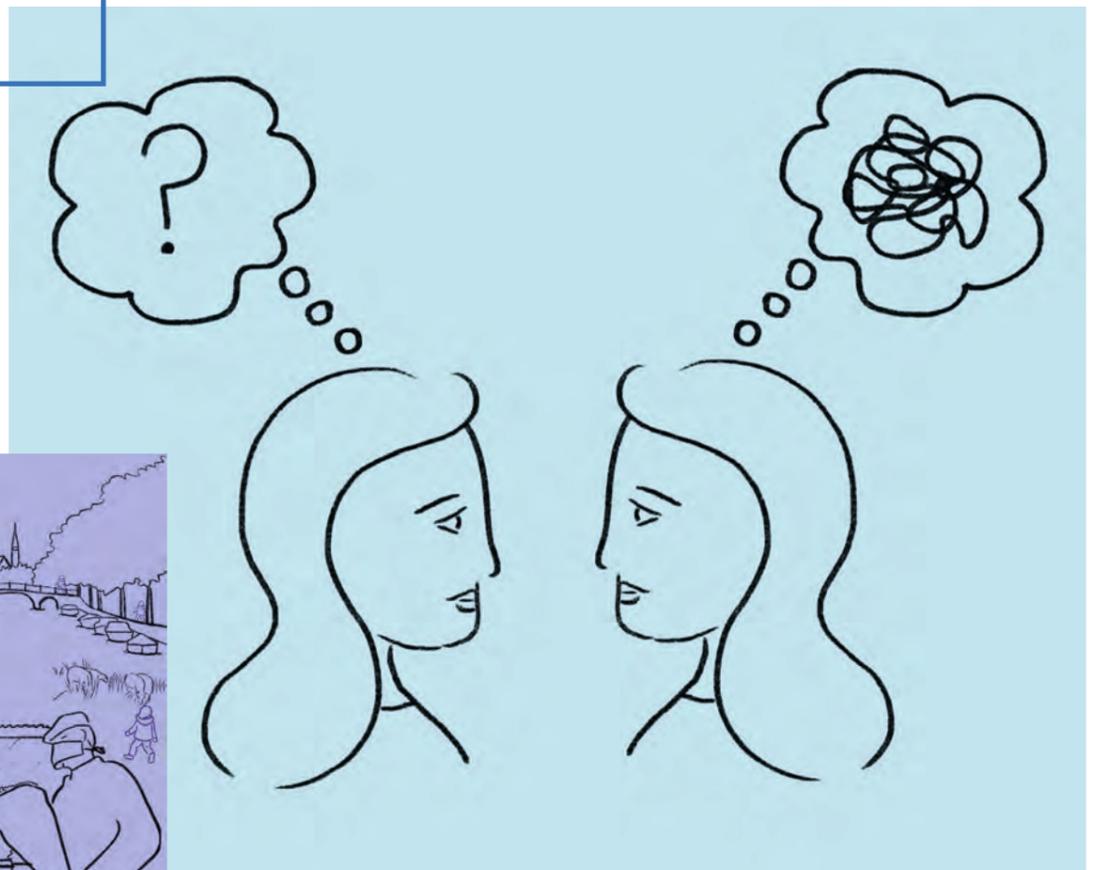
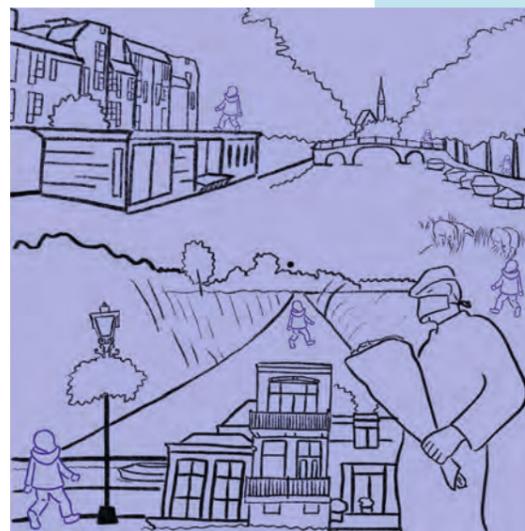
Picture this: Visual methods and migrant lives between Asia and Europe

Lisa Caviglia

My time at IIAS has coincided with extraordinary circumstances: a global pandemic that has enormous repercussions the world over. Whilst the experience has been unsettling for all, I became acutely aware of the privileged position I was (and am) inhabiting in this context. The stillness that progressively accrued as of March 2020 felt like a wave that was gradually slowing down and quietening the idyllic landscape that Leiden has to offer. It almost seemed to mock us with extraordinarily crisp weather and intensely blue skies. Despite bubbling fears, a daunting sense of insecurity, the dramatic reports on the news and from family and friends in particularly affected areas, I felt a sense of relief and gratitude for still being able to own some agency and freedom of movement; long urban and countryside walks characterised this time. I began to build a very intimate relationship with the city and immersed myself in my project.

I am working on an illustrated ethnography based on life narratives collected during research with South Asian women in Europe. My attempt is to visually depict how, both at ‘home’ as well as abroad, gender, class, racial violence and oppression, but also astonishing strength and resilience, characterise their lives. The time at IIAS allows me to experiment with the embodied forms of research and analysis that creative methods afford. With this project I attempt to understand how illustrations might benefit the research process and output, all the while trying to find out whether pictures might offer an opportunity for joint know-ledge production; can those researched be more involved and intervene upon the researcher’s interpretations? At the same time, I am monitoring the drawing process. Does it enhance my comprehension of the life experiences I depict? Many questions remain, and more will ensue, offering further opportunities for reflection as the project evolves.

Beyond my project-related investigations with visual tools, the new landscape afforded further opportunities for embodied research and self-reflection, which – even if somewhat tangentially – spilled into the above. My own, very mild, experience with seclusion during



Above: “A good friend told me the confusion should be bigger”.
Left: “Get out before it’s too late”. Images by Lisa Caviglia (2020)

this period made me think of the lives of the women involved in domestic work with whom I spent a significant amount of time over the years. Many frequently complained about the long hours of confinement required to fulfil household chores for their employing families. Most are left with only one day a week to let loose. I wondered how this new normal was affecting them; what happens when even that one day disappears? Did it make their sense of isolation even more intolerable? Or has their labour (unwittingly) trained them for these circumstances, making the shift unnoticeable or irrelevant to their lives? Whilst I was not able to investigate these questions in much detail from afar, from some of the conversations I was able to have remotely, these conditions and perceptions appeared to coexist. Could the current situation allow me to tap into anything that might resemble their

experience? The short answer is ‘no’, of course. I have not had – even in these extraordinary circumstances – even so much as a mild taste of what their lives might be like. Only the stories from my family in Italy gave me an inkling that could get me closer. Whilst blessed with scenic views of the Mediterranean, cast on the backdrop of sharp green hills, their lives suddenly became characterised by a level of restriction unknown to them to date. As the months went by, I sensed that isolation was progressively altering their mood.

I observed that the underlying fear in the Netherlands, that it “might happen here as well”, was also affecting my behaviour. Daily drawing sessions were interrupted by frequent outdoor activities. I would storm out of my flat to walk, think, walk – again and again. The speed and suddenness at which other countries had shut down compelled me to get in as much of the

outside air as I could. I felt a sense of urgency, “tomorrow might be too late”.

Drawing this now makes me realise how life in the past months has been about the micro, the particular and the reiterated, and alas it was (almost) never boring. Forced to slow down and dig deep, I got to know the small details of a new place and how they are navigated by the people who live in it, which might not have been possible with a more outward-looking lifestyle under normal circumstances. It has allowed me to see very clearly what I have always appreciated about ethnographic research: getting to know.

Lisa Caviglia, IIAS Fellow, is working on a graphic novel based on life narratives collected during research with South Asian migrant women in Europe.
www.iias.asia/profile/lisa-caviglia

Textiles on the Move: An online meeting



Above: Final discussion – 7 October. Top f.l.t.r.: Christopher Buckley (convenor and roundtable moderator), Lee Talbot (presenter), Barbara Köstner (roundtable participant). Bottom f.l.t.r.: roundtable participants Zvezdana Dode, Zhao Feng and Eric Boudot. Left: Moroccan/Japanese women's kaftan; collection Textile Research Centre Leiden.

From 6–9 October, IAS organised an online conference entitled 'Textiles on the Move'. Not only could the conference be attended by people from all over the world, but we are now also able to share the digital recordings with you on our website. These will be publically available until 15 November 2020.

A (minor) victim of the COVID-19 pandemic was the IAS conference 'Textiles in Motion & Transit', which had been planned to take place in Leiden in October 2020 and was organised together with the Tracing Patterns Foundation in Berkeley, California, and the Textile Research Centre (TRC) in Leiden. A Call for Papers had been circulated, some 80 lecturers from all over the world (from a total of more than 200) had been selected and invited, and a fringe programme of workshops, displays and demonstrations had been set up. Unfortunately, it all had to be postponed, probably until the middle of next year.

We subsequently decided to organise an online conference, on the same theme and around the same time, with some of the confirmed speakers. We did so in close collaboration with the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., and using the advantage of an online event, we opened participation to anyone interested, worldwide. To share even more broadly, we also decided to make the recorded online sessions available via our website as soon as possible after the conference.

The theme and title of the virtual conference was 'Textiles on the Move'. The programme focused on the role of textiles beyond their primary function, namely to provide warmth and protection. Textiles and clothing also speak volumes about the hierarchy of power relations among their users, and they may act as repositories of spiritual power that can be tapped into by following the correct rituals and prescriptions. These meanings and values of textiles are culture-specific, often unspoken, but fully understood within a given tradition. Due to their portability, however, textiles regularly move to and pass through foreign places. On these journeys and in their new environments, they often lose their original values, acquire new significance, and/or communicate altered messages.

The 'textiles on the move' concept was used to explore the lives of textiles—their displacements and transformations—within the Asia-Pacific region as well as between this region and the rest of the world. During the conference, scholars investigated the materiality, the making, and the use and reuse of textiles outside the context of their original cultures. In broad terms, they looked into the agents that facilitate textile movements, the forces that contribute to accumulating new meanings, and the circumstances that allow these transformations to take place. One entry point of discussion was the global trade network that resulted in so many

cultural exchanges, as in the case of the trade between South Asia and Europe from the sixteenth century onwards, but also in Asia itself, between Indonesia and India. Fascinating in this respect is the spread of the (in)famous *buteh* motif from Iran and India, which in the West became known as the Paisley motif, named after the Scottish town with the same name. The same motif can now be found in Indonesia, but also on men's underwear from America and women's wrap-arounds from Zanzibar.

The programme of the virtual conference included a series of different contributions, including a roundtable discussion, two video recordings, various brief presentations on a plethora of subjects, and even a recorded guided tour of a museum exhibition on the *kimono*, in London's Victoria & Albert Museum. In almost all cases, people could join in and discuss the subject of the talk with the speaker(s). The conference also included two key-note speakers, namely Sumru Belger Krodoy of the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum (Washington, D.C.) and Dale Carolyn Gluckman, former Head of Costumes and Textiles of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and former senior consultant to the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in Bangkok.

Please feel welcome to switch on the recorded sessions of the four-day online event, and enjoy listening to a roundtable

discussion on new directions in Silk Road studies (with Zhao Feng, Director of the China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou), or a lecture on Javanese textiles in the Thailand court, or a talk on prayer rugs and their changing meanings. Another subject that was covered is the production of a seventeenth-century nightgown produced in India and its context within the broad global trade network between East and South Asia, and Europe. Or, you may be interested in the development of specific textiles in the French Provence that are based on seventeenth and eighteenth-century Indian chintzes. And what about a video of the production of *kantha* covers in northeastern India, or a talk with the title 'Textiles with two parents', about cloths that combine two completely different traditions, such as a Moroccan wedding curtain embroidered in *chikan* work from Indian Lucknow? These are just a few examples. The world of textiles is indeed highly fascinating and reflects many aspects of human life and the worldwide interaction between users and producers.

The online conference was attended each day by some 150 participants, and the general appreciation of the varied and lively presentations augur well for future online conferences. IAS and its partners, in the face of future travel restrictions, were fortunate of having the opportunity to learn enormously from this conference. Its formula of an interactive programme with relatively brief items, a moderator for the day, and the possibility for participants to ask questions, offers hope and inspiration for future events.

Information

The recorded sessions will be available to watch until 15 November. www.ias.asia/events/textiles-move

The convenors

Sandra Sardjono, Director Tracing Patterns Foundation, Berkeley

Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, Director Textile Research Centre, Leiden

Christopher Buckley, Wolfson College, Oxford

Willem Vogelsang, Deputy Director at the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden

Webinar 14 May 2020 Princely Airs: Aerial navigation and the question of sovereignty in colonial India

Joppa George

As the world began to be gripped by the pandemic, arresting everyday life to the confines of home, this webinar hosted by IAS offered a measure of relief in reaching out to the world outside my window, thereby bringing together, albeit remotely, scholars and avid enthusiasts of the history of aviation and the princely states. Participants logged in from locations as far and apart as Kansas and Kochi, offering a rich variety of questions and comments, encouraging me to look into scarcely accessible work and prompting me to make connections with books in the making. This was the first in a series of webinars that helped rekindle our scholarly fellowship and expand the dialog more democratically under lockdown. While this thoughtful and timely initiative to maintaining a scholarly community under the duress of the global pandemic continues to keep alive the foundational directive of open exchange of ideas at IAS, it also attests to the undiminished spirit of camaraderie around the world.

The webinar

In the long march of the history of India in the 20th century, from under the constraints of the colonial yoke to the postcolonial pastures it promised itself, the princely states managed a vanishing act. Various called the Native States, Indian India, and the Indian States, the princely states formed about two-fifths of the area of the subcontinent and one-fifth of its population. Colored yellow in the colonial maps, in stark contrast to the pale pink of British India, the princely states under the personal rule of the princes were also under the suzerainty of the Crown. In the webinar *Princely Airs: Aerial navigation and the question of sovereignty in colonial India*, I traced the interest that the princes had in aviation since the start of its career in India circa 1910, their oft-forgotten initiative of the gift of airplanes for imperial defence during World War I, and their continued involvement in interwar aerial navigation in the British empire.

If the presentation of airplanes as machines of war served to highlight the fealty of the princes to the imperial cause, they did not shy away from exploiting the potential that aviation held in store. In representing India in international fora such as the Imperial War Conference and the Paris Peace Conference, the princes had found themselves adding luster to their prestige. The Government of India, tasked to forge aerial regulations in keeping with the provisions of the international aerial convention under the remit of the Paris Conference in 1919 and with an eye on the imperial commercial gains, found that the exercise of policy-making often exceeded the legal ambit of aviation. The government's administrative and legislative vexations were not limited to drawing up the aerial routes but extended to the constitution of airspace, the law of the air, and the question of aerial rights. In the interwar years, as Britain began to develop its imperial skyways from London, via Cairo to Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta all the way to Darwin, the princes galvanized under the aegis of the Chamber of Princes to demand that their concerns be addressed or the government risk upstaging the imperial aviatric plans.

Most urgently, aerial navigation complicated the extant understandings of imperial sovereignty in the mosaic of colonial geography, where the territories of the princely states were often contiguous with those of British India. Aviation unsettled the traditional dimensionality of the concept

of territorial sovereignty, which began to assume the characteristics of volumetric space extending into the air. For an airplane leaving England to arrive at its destination in Australia, the Government of India had to maintain both its expansive aerial routes as well as their relations with the princes. The need to accommodate the imperial arrangements of aerial navigation within the structure of the governmental provisions in British India without upsetting the princely order remained a contentious issue in the political deliberations. The question of empire-wide aerial mobility offered the princes a template to articulate their discontent of the treaties and engagements that bound them to anachronism and irrelevance. In the opinion of the architects of the resurgent princely order, the colonial Indian treaty map was in dire need of revision. The quest for this revision inflected the law of the air in India as the princes staked a claim to their aerial sovereignty. The webinar explored how the compromise between the Government of India and the princely states tilted the scale and scope of aerial navigation in the interwar years.

Joppa George, IAS Fellow, historian of modern South Asia with a keen interest in exploring the transformations of colonial society under the impact of science and technology. www.ias.asia/profile/joppa-george

Crafting a Global Future Kyoto, Japan 24-27 August 2021

ICAS 12



The global impact of COVID-19 is enormous, and the world of Asian Studies has not gone unscathed. We cannot but ask ourselves if the pre-pandemic way of working is future-proof. Taking the meeting side of Asian Studies (workshops, lectures, conferences, etc.) into consideration it is clear that we will have to scale down the number of physical gatherings. Although disruptive to the advantages of personal contact, there are potentially several benefits to this as well. Firstly, less air travel means a reduction in CO2 levels. Secondly, virtual meetings open up new possibilities to those colleagues and institutes hitherto unable to shoulder the costs of travel and accommodation involved in face-to-face meetings. With the improvement in quality of online meetings, these have become both feasible and bearable.

The ICAS vibe

I might be prejudiced, but I believe that (small) gatherings of specialists can more easily become virtual, since they aim to consolidate and expand their acumen within a certain discipline, and do not expect to transcend borders of disciplines and regions. They tend to work within their own well-defined areas of expertise. However, anyone who has ever attended one of the ICAS biennial meetings knows that 'the ICAS vibe' is the result of the multiple interactions between participants, who are open to engage with others beyond their own discipline or region, and also to interact with the (human and natural) environment of the particular location in which that year's conference is being held.

Virtual elements are not something completely new to ICAS, since we have streamed opening sessions before. But, future editions of ICAS will aim to incorporate many more virtual and hybrid elements (combining in-person and online characteristics). At this very moment the ICAS team is studying the various ways in which to ensure a vivid and highly interactive hybrid conference format for ICAS 12. My hope for the future is that the lines between physical and virtual presence will increasingly blur, to the extent that presenters, participants and organisers will not remember a time we did things any differently.

The Olympics of Asian Studies

Nevertheless, currently people still have the desire to meet in person; this was made abundantly clear when we closed our

submission lines for ICAS 12 at the beginning of October, and were blown away by the sheer numbers: nearly 1200 proposals were submitted, involving around 2000 potential participants. We had definitely not expected this level of optimism and enthusiasm in the current state of the world! Of course, we will have to see what is possible come the summer of 2021, hopefully many travel restrictions will have been lifted by then, but we do intend for ICAS 12 in Kyoto to be the first post-pandemic large Asian Studies conference!

The results of the submission reviews will be communicated to all relevant parties per email before the end of 2020. Since the registration fee for both physical and virtual attendance will be the same (hybridism comes with a price tag) you can decide whether to participate in person or online at a later stage.

Shamsul A.B., the local host of ICAS 5 in Kuala Lumpur (2007), unforgettably referred to ICAS as the 'The Olympics of Asian Studies'. And now, by chance, ICAS 12 will coincide with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, which was postponed by one year. ICAS certainly does not convene to break records, but we definitely aim to create an event that facilitates as many human interactions as possible, across disciplines and regions, so as to inspire border-transcending interdisciplinary ideas. ICAS never only involves academics, but also other practitioners such as artists, artisans, musicians, museum curators, librarians, civil society representatives, advocates, and many more. Additionally, ICAS always connects with the citizenry of the place in which it is held, with the aim to share the knowledge on Asia with the local community, but also to benefit from the local knowledge on Asia. For ICAS 12 in Kyoto, this knowledge abundantly resides in its great culinary, garden and craft traditions, just to name a few. The motto of ICAS 12, 'Crafting a Global Future', was not casually chosen!

Stay updated

As preparations for ICAS 12 advance, and as we observe the developments of the pandemic, we will be continuously adjusting our programme, accommodating any and all possibilities and global restrictions. To stay informed, please make sure to add yourself to our mailing list and receive our 'ICAS Matters' updates. You can subscribe here: <https://icas.asia/forms/maillinglist>

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary and IBP General Secretary

The ICAS Book Prize 2021

Alongside the astonishing number of submissions for ICAS 12, we have also been observing another record-breaking interest in the ICAS Book Prize (IBP). Each year the number of titles rise!

The IBP was originally launched to bring a focus to academic publications on Asia; to increase their worldwide visibility, and to encourage a further interest in the world of Asian Studies. Organised every two years, together with the ICAS conference, the IBP has grown from a small experiment, to one of the largest book prizes of its kind. Along the way, we expanded to include, in addition to the English Book and Dissertation prizes, prizes for publications in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The English language edition is the most mature, and naturally receives a substantially larger number of submissions. But the other language editions, still in their infancy, are proving to be worthy contenders. Each language edition has its own secretariat and sponsor. The intention is to create sustainable and lasting partnerships with secretariats and sponsors who make the prize 'their own'. You can find all details on their respective pages online: <https://icas.asia/icas-book-prize-2021>.

This year we have added yet one more prize to the group. Organised and sponsored by the Society for Hong Kong Studies (SHKS), the newest addition to the ICAS Book Prize family is the IBP for Best Article on Global Hong Kong Studies. According to the prize's description, scholarly articles in any social science or humanity discipline are eligible as long as they take Hong Kong as the primary subject of inquiry. SHKS particularly welcomes articles that place Hong Kong in global, comparative and theoretical perspectives. Although an entirely new format for us, we find this to be a timely and exciting category. We have no doubt it will attract a large number of article submissions in the coming months.

We feel strongly that the various language editions can grow into substantial Book Prizes, just as the English edition has done. For that to happen we encourage our readers to take part, spread the news, motivate colleagues and peers to submit their publications! Winners receive not only substantial cash prizes, but also invaluable exposure and credibility, and potentially a trip to the winners' stage at the ICAS conference. Please join us in strengthening and developing the various IBP language editions, as you have successfully done in the past for the English instalment.

We look forward to seeing you all in August 2021, whether at the live opening of ICAS 12 in Kyoto, or online in our ICAS 12 virtual environment.

Sonja Zweegers,
Secretary of the IBP English language edition and Editor of The Newsletter.

The deadline to submit your books or dissertations to the English language edition of the IBP has passed. However, you are still able to take part in the other language editions.

The deadlines are:
1 Dec 2020: French language edition
1 Feb 2021: Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish/Portuguese language editions
1 Feb 2021: Hong Kong article prize

Submission instructions:

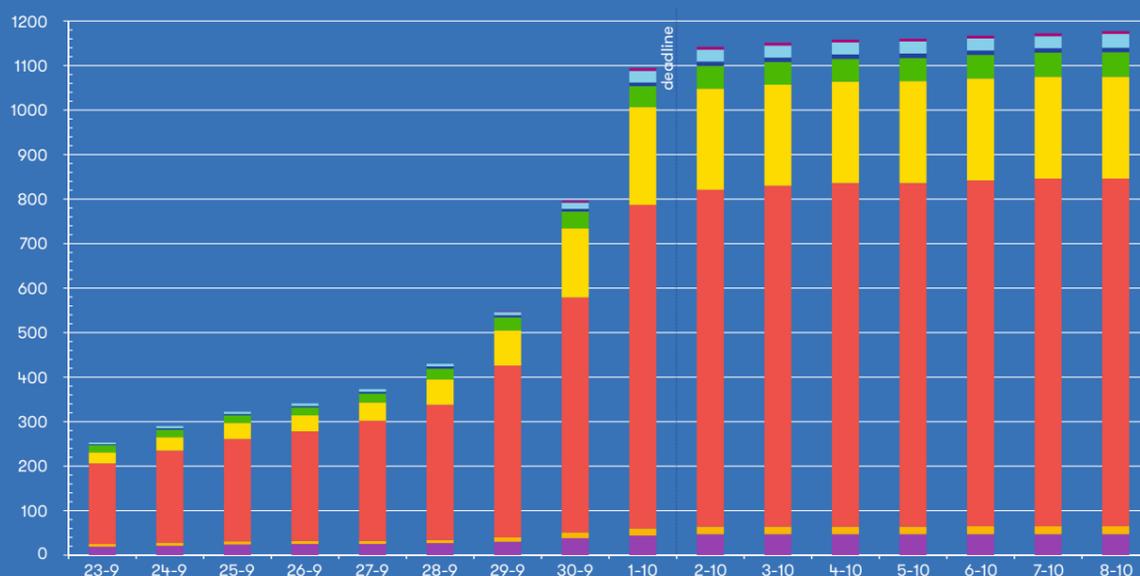
1. Go to <https://icas.asia/icas-book-prize-2021> for the guidelines.
2. Create an account here <https://icas.asia/user/login>
3. Log in to your account.
4. Select 'your' language
5. Click on the button 'Submit publication'.
6. Fill in the form and click on 'Save'.

The secretariat will follow up per email with instructions for shipping hard copies.

Questions can be sent to ibp@iias.nl or to the relevant language secretariat (find contact details online).

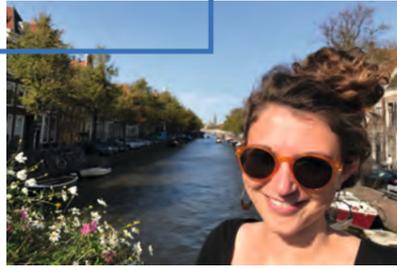
Total ICAS 12 Submissions 23 sept - 8 oct 2020

- New Format
- Roundtable
- Poster Presentation
- PhD Pitch
- Panel
- Individual Paper
- Documentary/Film
- Book presentation



Snapshots of a city: Leiden through the eyes of an IIAS Fellow

This is a city built on wool and words: the old Brill publishing house still stands grand on Oude Rijn.



Above: Author Zoë Goodman

'There's no aristocracy in the Netherlands' some say, although the façades of the canal houses suggest a different story – their step gables rising up in Golden Age glory.



Graves bear witness to long histories of colonialism: Born in Paramaribo, Died in Leiden. A statue to the Pilgrim Fathers commemorates the beginning of their bloody journey – sailing forth from just south of the illustrious Rapenburg.



Stories of entanglement are everywhere: There's something of Cordoba in Morsport,ⁱ a touch of Ottoman on the Stadhuis clocktower.ⁱⁱ

Staircases can be impossibly steep and the supermarkets are full of pre-sliced cheese. If chocolate sprinkles aren't your thing,ⁱⁱⁱ there's a variety of *stroopwafels*^{iv} to please every palate.

Living rooms are street-side and curtain-less, architectural legacies of a Calvinist ethic: 'We have nothing to hide'.

The poetry of Lorca, Adonis and Langston Hughes adorn the walls. The Lipsius Building, an homage to 90s brutalism, divides opinion – as do the modernist turrets of the University Library.

The Burcht rises to a proud 9 metres above sea level. A beer can easily be 9%.

The frat boys ooze entitlement, waltzing through the city in packs, or lazing around in makeshift swimming pools, perfectly placed for preening in front of ageing student mansions.

Their house parties certainly produce ambivalent relations with sleeping neighbours, but I've never heard a woman being catcalled on Leiden's streets.

Saturday market before Covid would heave with customers, jostling for cabbages, houmous and deep-fried fish. Some shops have closed in the midst of the pandemic, but Het Klaverblad has been open since 1769 – Marion's customers queue for coffee and a dose of her charm.

Black Lives Matter posters hang in windows, but people of colour are few and far between; it can be hard to decipher where anyone working class might live.

The ravioli at Bocconi will soothe any a lost soul, as will the jackfruit at Toko Bunga Mas. Pilgrimages to Saravanaa Bhavan are a must for those with a desire for *dosa*.^v

The vintage shops will produce holes in your wallet, and the shop assistants won't hesitate to tell you exactly what they think: 'That dress is not for you'.

Streets can feel deserted on a Saturday night, until you find the square in front of Café de Uyl – perfect for a *biertje*,^{vi} under the stained glass of Hooglandse Kerk.

The loquacious locals at Jantje will enfold you easily into their drunken chat, while the cows peer down if you get to De Bonte Koe.

Saint Peter's red keys are hard to lose, and that winter wind lays bare the logic of windmills.

Willows weep gently at the shores of the Singel, and the evening light twinkles through the plane trees at Plantsoen.

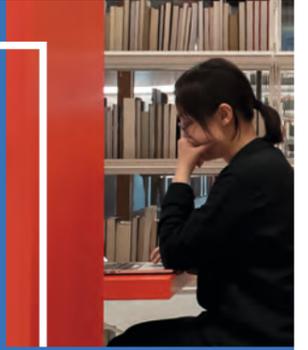
7pm at the canal is the hour of flight: a pandemonium of parrots sweeps across the sky taunting you with freedom. The ducks and coots glide along with paddleboards and kayaks – a boat is the ultimate summer accessory.

The many pathways of Polderpark Cronesteyn are good for getting lost in – a trail might lead to the forest of wild garlic, or in the direction of the odd lone saxophonist.

16th century rebellions produce wild annual parties – although October 3rd of this year, will be a very different story...^{vii} even if there's still barely a face mask in sight.

The bridges bloom with hanging baskets, laden with petunias, fuchsia and white. Pavements are for parking bikes – pedestrians are an afterthought in this two-wheeled town.

IIAS Fellowship possibilities and requirements



Apply for an IIAS fellowship

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for an IIAS fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.



Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.

The next application deadline is 1 March 2021.



Apply for a Gonda fellowship

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.

The next application deadline is 1 April 2021.

Information and application forms: www.iias.asia/fellowships



Seagulls encircle the canal-side cafés, ever-ready to steal a *bitterbal*^{viii} or a delicate slither of herring.

The younger seagulls sulk on street corners like nonchalant adolescents, bored with the mundanity of their parents demands.

An albino peacock rules the roost at Leidse Hout, an old heron sits majestic on his regular streetlight perch.

And at a little-known 'castle' along Hogewoerd,^{ix} rests a balcony just made for plotting, cloud-spotting and pleasure.



Zoë Goodman is an urban anthropologist, and fond of ethnographic poems as a means of capturing city life. When not strolling through the streets of Leiden, her research focuses on the Kenyan port city of Mombasa. She explores the way Muslims of South Asian descent (Muslim Kenyan Asians) have shaped urbanity and piety at the Kenyan coast, and how these are in turn being affected by pervasive security discourses. Zoë is a Research Fellow at IIAS and a Research Associate in the Anthropology department at SOAS, University of London. www.iias.asia/profile/zoe-goodman

Notes

- i Morsport is Leiden's western gate.
- ii Stadhuis refers to the Leiden City Hall.
- iii Known as *hagelslag* in Dutch, chocolate sprinkles are commonly eaten on bread for breakfast or as a snack.
- iv *Stroopwafels* are wafer cookies with a caramel filling.
- v A *dosa* resembles a large crepe, and is made from fermented rice and dhal batter. The dish has origins in South India and is eaten with curries and chutneys.
- vi *Biertje* is a small beer.
- vii The city-wide festival on 3 October celebrates the end of the Spanish siege of Leiden in 1572.
- viii *Bitterballen* (pl.) are ball-shaped snacks, filled with beef and a creamy roux that is then battered and deep-fried.
- ix IIAS Fellows often live in a building along this street.

IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

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

IIAS research clusters

Asian Cities

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

Asian Heritages

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

Global Asia

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

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)



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

See p.47 of this issue for a Call for Papers from UKNA.

www.ukna.asia

Coordinator: [Paul Rabé](mailto:Paul.Rabé@iias.nl) p.e.rabe@iias.nl
Clusters: [Asian Cities](#); [Asian Heritages](#)

SEANNET is about research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge on Asia through the prism of the neighbourhood. The programme is supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, NY (2017-2020). Through case study sites in six selected cities in Southeast Asia (Mandalay, Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Surabaya), SEANNET seeks to engage the humanistic social sciences in a dialogue with urban stakeholders as co-contributors of alternative knowledge about cities. This is done through a

Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

combination of participatory field-research, in-situ roundtables, workshops, conferences, publications and new forms of pedagogy developed in collaboration with local institutions of learning. SEANNET's second ambition is to help shape and empower a community of early-career scholars and practitioners working on and from Southeast Asia. SEANNET's research teams comprise international and local scholars, students from local universities, and civil society representatives, all working together with the neighbourhood residents.

www.ukna.asia/seannet

Coordinators: [Paul Rabé](mailto:Paul.Rabé@iias.nl) p.e.rabe@iias.nl
and [Rita Padawangi](mailto:Rita.Padawangi@iuss.edu.sg) Singapore
University of Social Sciences
ritapadawangi@iuss.edu.sg
Cluster: [Asian Cities](#)



The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD)

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD) is an interdisciplinary network that brings together natural, medical and social scientists to explore the implications of environmental and social change for public health in China and beyond.

www.iias.asia/programmes/forhead

Coordinator: [Jennifer Holdaway](mailto:Jennifer.Holdaway@iias.nl) j.a.holdaway.2@iias.nl
Cluster: [Global Asia](#)



Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe



Initiated by IIAS, this programme involves Leiden University in the Netherlands, two Institutes at National Taiwan University in Taiwan and one at Yonsei University in South Korea. Discussions with other possible partners in Asia are ongoing. 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 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.

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

Coordinator: [Elena Paskaleva](mailto:Elena.Paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl) e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: [Asian Heritages](#)





Humanities across Borders: Asia & Africa in the World

Co-funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York, USA) this IIAS programme (2017-2021) for global collaboration on humanistic education is carried out by a consortium of twenty-three leading institutes in Asia, West Africa, Europe and the United States, and their local partners in Asia and Africa. Its goal is to mobilise the development of a global consortium of universities and their local partners interested in fostering humanities-grounded education. Its substantive vision is that of an inclusive and expanded humanities. To this end, the program will initiate methodological interventions in teaching and research to surpass narrow disciplinary, institutional and ideological agendas. The programme facilitates border-crossing meetings, workshops and other collaborative pedagogical formats in its partner geographies. Jointly conducted, these events aim to shape a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education across borders.

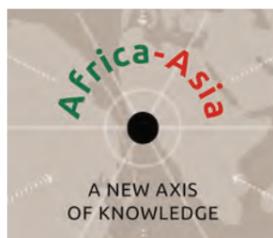
Read the IIAS Director's editorial on p.3 of this issue for a programme update.

Follow the stories on the [Humanities across Borders Blog](https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog) humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog

www.iias.asia/hab

Clusters: [Global Asia](#); [Asian Heritages](#)

Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge



'Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge' is an inclusive transnational platform that convenes scholars, artists, intellectuals, and educators from Africa, Asia, Europe, and beyond to study, discuss, and share knowledge on the intricate connections and entanglements between the African and Asian world regions. Our aim is to contribute to the long-term establishment of an autonomous, intellectual and academic community of individuals and institutions between two of the world's most vibrant continents. We aspire to facilitate the development of research and educational infrastructures in African and Asian universities, capable of delivering foundational knowledge in the two regions about one another's cultures and societies. This exchange, we believe, is a prerequisite for a sustainable and balanced socio-economic progress of the two continents. It is also an opportunity to move beyond the Western-originated fields of Asian and African area studies—something that would benefit Asian, African and Western scholars alike.

www.africasia.org

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)



Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)



This network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. The concerns are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilisation and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns. ABRN organises a conference in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner.

The 7th ABRN conference, *Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences*, will take place in Seoul, South Korea, 24-26 June 2021.

www.asianborderlands.net

Coordinator: [Erik de Maaker](#)

maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The new joint research programme between IIAS-EPA and the Institute of World Politics and Economy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing is entitled *The Political Economy of the Belt & Road Initiative and its Reflections*. It aims to investigate the policy, policy tools, and impacts of China's Belt and Road Initiative. By focusing on China's involvement with governments, local institutions, and local stakeholders, it aims to examine the subsequent responses to China's activities from the local to the global-geopolitical level in the following countries: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Hungary, the West Balkans, and Russia.

www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia

Coordinator: [M. Amineh](#)

m.p.amineh@uva.nl, m.p.amineh@iias.nl

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)



Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies

The Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies brings together people and methods to study the 'Indian Ocean World', aiming to co-organize conferences, workshops and academic exchanges with institutions from the region. Together with IIAS, the Centre facilitates an inclusive and global platform bringing together scholars and institutions working on connections and comparisons across the axis of human interaction with an interest in scholarship that cuts across borders of places, periods and disciplines.

www.iias.asia/programmes/leiden-centre-indian-ocean-studies

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

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

The International Institute for Asian Studies has recently started a new project of interdisciplinary research aimed at the study of the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government, with special attention given to the impact of the 'New Silk Road' on countries, regions and peoples outside of China.

See p.22 of this issue for details of the newest publication by project coordinator Richard Griffiths.

www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)



With its biennial conferences, International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest global forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. Founded in 1997 at the initiative of IIAS, ICAS serves as a platform for scholars, social and cultural leaders, and institutions focusing on issues critical to Asia, and, by implication, the rest of the world. The ICAS biennial conferences are organised in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from 60 countries. ICAS also organises the biennial 'ICAS Book Prize' (IBP), which awards the most prestigious prizes in the field of Asian Studies for books in Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish; and for PhD Theses in English.

Eleven conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejeon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden). ICAS 12 will be held in Kyoto, Japan, 24-27 August 2021.

See p.52 in this issue for an ICAS 12 update.

Website: www.icas.asia

IIAS/ICAS secretariat:

Paul van der Velde icas@iias.nl





Left: 'Silent Plea' (2019),
Saira Wasim.

Right: 'Nabog' (2014),
Hayv Kahraman.

Below: 'Shah Abbas
and His Page Boy' (2017),
Fereydoun Ave.

Bottom: Shadow painting
by Rashad Alakbarov.



A means of resistance

Miniature 2.0:
Miniature in Contemporary Art
11 August 2020 – 17 January 2021
Pera Museum, Istanbul
<https://www.peramuseum.org>

The Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation Pera Museum brings a new exhibition to both traditional and contemporary art lovers during the pandemic period. 'Miniature 2.0: Miniature in Contemporary Art' presents contemporary approaches to miniature painting by 14 artists from different countries. Contemporary miniature goes beyond its former context in terms of form and content; the artists do not treat miniature solely as a historical object, they emphasise its theoretical potential as a contemporary art form.

'Contemporary miniature' as a means of resistance

This exhibition traces the rules unique to miniature painting as well as its modern-day conditions. Using various media such as sculpture, video, photography, and installation, the artists give old miniatures new dimensions, and search for ways in which they can reside

in the contemporary world. The works argue for action against the nostalgia that freezes miniatures in time and detach them from their cultural context. Action against the current tendency to problematise the past for a better present and a better future. There are similar creative forms of resistance popping up all around the world, updating the way we see the world, just as the miniatures have been updated.

The exhibition takes contemporary miniature as a means of resistance. Going beyond the familiar East-West comparisons, the works that answer questions about art and society show the audience that other forms of living and thinking are possible. The exhibition creates fertile ground that helps us understand the changing structure of society and repeating patterns as well as notice cultural meanings. It does so by tackling issues such as colonialism, orientalism, economic inequality, gender, identity politics, the struggle against traditional prototypes, social violence, compulsory migration, and representation.

Miniature as sculpture, video, textile and installation

Saira Wasim's 'Silent Plea' (2019), refers to *Madonna*, the famous nineteenth century painting by the French painter William Bouguereau. In the United States 1300 children are killed by firearms every year, while at the same time the American government has no qualms about meddling with the arms policies of other countries. The work presents a social perception in which guns are more valuable than children.

Fereydoun Ave defines 'Shah Abbas and His Page Boy' (2017) as the borderline between the public and private, and finds inspiration in the miniature of the same name drawn by Muhammad Qasim Musavvir in the seventeenth century, now at the Louvre Museum. This miniature takes a look at the private life of the Shah Abbas, a powerful and fearsome character, and Ave chooses as his material the quilts used in traditional Persian tents for protection against harsh

winters. Everything above the quilt is public, whereas what happens beneath is a mystery.

Rashad Alakbarov, who exhibited his works to large audiences at the Azerbaijan Pavilion during the Venice Biennial in 2013, creates unexpected scenes with found objects. He uses light and shadow as fundamental elements of his works, which can be described as shadow paintings. Appearing to be heaps of metal or plastic objects haphazardly thrown away, these compositions can be seen only with the help of a light source.

In her work entitled 'Nabog' (2014), Hayv Kahraman remembers the house she left behind, the language she forgot, the accent she tried to hide and being 'the other', which she denied. The artist changes the stories in 'Maqamat al Hariri', which was created in the 13th century and features stories mostly about men, to stories about women and strives to create areas of resistance for women today and leave them to the future.

