Local crop or foreign commodity? Guest editor Annelies Zoomers considers the food security debate in Asia, in the context of domestic and international land acquisitions intended to meet increasing demands for both food and (bio)energy. Various strategies, such as offshore farming, the creation of agro-hubs, and foreign investors, aim to increase food security, yet often have an adverse impact on local communities and their ecosystems.
The Focus
Food security and land grabbing

Pages 19-20
Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia

Guest Editor Annelies Zoomers introduces The Focus section on food security and land grabbing. Solving the food problem often proves to be incompatible with other priorities. With a variety of food securing strategies, the possibilities for regional solutions are limited, also because of the lack of coherent policies and competing agendas.

Page 21
Rethinking China’s ‘land grabs’

Irna Hofman and Peter Ho research Chinese land acquisitions. Safeguarding domestic food supplies is presumed to be one of the core motives underlying China’s foreign land investments, thereby infringing upon food security of vulnerable livelihoods in recipient countries, and now China’s neo-colonial image dominates over an altruistic portrayal.

Pages 22-23
A new equation for oil palm

Paul Burgers and Ari Susanti discuss how using crops for biofuels (e.g. palm oil) can be a route out of poverty for many rural people by, for example, generating significant export earnings. But the industry also displaces people from their land and leads to mass deforestation. And now, oil palm expansion is controversially competing for land with staple foods.

Pages 24-25
Food security and energy development in Vietnam

Pham Huu Ty, Tran Nam Tu and Guus van Westen suggest that policies promoting the development of sustainable energy sources, particularly hydropower, can paradoxically create problems of poverty and chronic food insecurity for displaced people.

Pages 26-29
Land acquisitions by non-local actors

Men Prachvuthy and Guus van Westen discuss how transfers of land to external investors and users greatly affect local communities’ existing livelihoods and development. The policy of agro-industry attempts to develop an intensive agricultural base and increase employment opportunities and diversification – the reality mostly involves disastrous outcomes for local inhabitants.

Pages 28-29
Forests and food security

Terry C.H. Sunderland shows how biodiversity provides an important safety-net during times of food insecurity, particularly during times of low agricultural production. If the current model of commercialised monoculture is to be followed, feeding the global population will require the conversion of yet more wild lands, at the expense of biodiversity.
The IIAS reaches out

The last few months have seen many transformative happenings at IIAS: a revamped website, the institute’s first summer school, a major EU grant for our urban initiative, and other important events. But I should start by welcoming my new colleague, Dr Willem Vogelsang, to the position of IIAS Institute Manager. Willem is an accomplished scholar – an archaeologist and art historian of Central Asia. After spending years in Afghanistan, involved in cultural-related post-conflict activities, he is now back at his alma mater to help IIAS pursue its growth into a more coherent and meaningful institution serving Asian studies.

WELCOMING A NEW COLLEAGUE often goes with a farewell. Willem’s appointment follows the departure of Dr Manon Oseweijer, formerly Deputy Director at IIAS. Manon was my working partner since my arrival at the institute eighteen years ago. She started working for IIAS in 2004. She was an invaluable source of learning, inspiration and support to me. Thanks to her, my beginning at the institute was a smooth and focused one. Dr Oseweijer decided to move on with her already impressive career. And so, on behalf of IIAS’s staff and board, I wish Manon the very best in her future endeavours.

Among the other major happenings of the last months, the ones surrounding IIAS’s communication overhaul must take prominence, especially with the airing of our new website. The new IIAS website (www.iias.nl), the result of a collective effort under Thomas Voorter’s skilful coordination and Sandra Dehue’s vital input, has already received widespread acclaim for its visibility and didactic mode of operation. The site vividly highlights the institute’s new programmatic and active profile – especially its new online initiatives. Functions that IIAS has been performing for years – fellowships, publications, The Newsletter, ICAS, etc. – are gaining in visibility while synergies between them are made more apparent. The new website is of course an ongoing project, during this trial phase we are eager to hear from users. Feel free to send your comments and suggestions to the IIAS network pages. The IIAS Branch Office Amsterdam is an invaluable source of learning, inspiration and support to me. It reflects IIAS’s new vision to serve as an effective conduit between policy making and social sciences communities.

The IIAS reaches out to its colleagues in academia and beyond. The new IIAS website (www.iias.nl), the result of a collective effort under Thomas Voorter’s skilful coordination and Sandra Dehue’s vital input, has already received widespread acclaim for its visibility and didactic mode of operation. The site vividly highlights the institute’s new programmatic and active profile – especially its new online initiatives. Functions that IIAS has been performing for years – fellowships, publications, The Newsletter, ICAS, etc. – are gaining in visibility while synergies between them are made more apparent. The new website is of course an ongoing project, during this trial phase we are eager to hear from users. Feel free to send your comments and suggestions to the IIAS network pages. The IIAS Branch Office Amsterdam is an invaluable source of learning, inspiration and support to me.

The Newsletter and IIAS

THOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR with The Newsletter are already aware of its successes as a medium for sharing scholarly knowledge, not only within the academic world of Asian Studies, but among interested parties worldwide. In light of its past achievements I am extremely proud to have been given the opportunity to produce this issue, #58 and my first as editor of The Newsletter, and I fully intend to repeat its success in the future. I have chosen not to make any significant changes to a formula that clearly works, but would nevertheless like to introduce a number of new features and ambitions.

Firstly, the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (ISEAS) and the IIAS have initiated a new section in The Newsletter that will provide readers with firsthand “News from Asia” that is of scholarly and intellectual interest. The information will be provided by a number of regional editors within Asia. The section in this issue has been compiled by our regional editor, Lu Caixia, a former print journalist and current research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (ISEAS). We are extremely grateful for all her input and effort she has put into this task. For future issues The Newsletter hopes to develop collaborations with other Asian institutes to act as regional editors, so that eventually the “News from Asia” section will represent Asia as a whole. We welcome recommendations for possible partners in this endeavour.

The following new item you will encounter in this issue is found in The Review section. It aspires to present the various regional actors involved in book/film production, websites, blogs, newsletters, poetry and literature, and so forth, relevant to Asian Studies. This issue presents to you a translator, carrying out his profession in Indonesia. The item explores: what the work as performed in various locations in Asia. We hope to make this a recurring item, and welcome contributions.

In the IASNetwork pages of this issue we have chosen to highlight three IAS fellows, who have written a short piece about their research and IIAS fellowship. A full list of IAS fellows can be found on the IAS’s website. You will also find in this section an introduction to the new research clusters of the IAS, reports of past events, and announcements. I wish to thank our guest editor for this current issue, for all her input and eventual success, despite the extremely limited time I gave her. Thank you!

I also thank Thomas Voorter for all his work on the new and improved IAS website, and for introducing it to us here. The IAS website and The Newsletter will become increasingly interactive as more and more of our readers are opting for the digital version – this will soon include our additional online images, audio/video, and opportunities for feedback on articles. In fact, we hope to receive constructive feedback from our readers in general, so as to work on improving The Newsletter.

I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the contributors to The Focus and in particular Professor Annelies Zoomers, our guest editor for this current issue, for her input and eventual success, despite the extremely limited time I gave her. Thank you!

I also thank Thomas Voorter for all his work on the new and improved IAS website, and for introducing it to us here. The IAS website and The Newsletter will become increasingly interactive as more and more of our readers are opting for the digital version – this will soon include our additional online images, audio/video, and opportunities for feedback on articles. In fact, we hope to receive constructive feedback from our readers in general, so as to work on improving The Newsletter.

Finally, we invite you all to find us on Facebook and Twitter – and to continue sending in your articles, suggestions, feedback, reviews (www.NewBooksInAsia.org), opinion pieces, etc. We appreciate all your good work, and hope that together we can continue to deliver a publication for us all to enjoy.

Philippe Pecyam
Director of IIAS

From the Editor

The IIAS network pages

THE IIAS NETWORK pages are a new feature of this issue. The IIAS network pages provide a platform for IIAS colleagues to communicate with each other, to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond. The IIAS network pages represent the IIAS network on the Internet – theIIAS’s global research infrastructure. They provide access to:IIAS news, IIAS research projects, IIAS publications, IIAS websites, blogs, newsletters, poetry and literature, and so forth, relevant to Asian Studies. The IIAS network pages are a new feature of this issue. The IIAS network pages provide a platform for IIAS colleagues to communicate with each other, to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond. The IIAS network pages represent the IIAS network on the Internet – theIIAS’s global research infrastructure. They provide access to:

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More information: www.iias.nl/publications

www.iias.nl
When King Airlangga divided his realm between his two warring sons in 1052, he asked the Buddhist sage, Mpu Bharada, to draw the dividing-line between the Janggala and Panjalu kingdoms in Java. For nearly a millennium, the legends about this remarkable sage and his mysterious hermitage-cemetery at Lĕmah Tulis were handed down from one generation to the next. In 1926, the archaeologist Henri Maclaine Pont claimed to have excavated the hermitage site. But his findings passed into a strange oblivion. Now, after three years of intensive detective work, the present authors have resolved this mystery in Trowulan archaeology and can confirm Maclaine Pont’s remarkable claim.\(^1\)

Amrit Gomperts, Arnoud Haag and Peter Carey

Maclaine Pont and the discovery of Bharada’s Hermitage

We have found compelling evidence to support our thesis. The Newsletter | No.58 | Autumn/Winter 2011

Our Journey Starts With A Stone Statue some 1.7 metres high and the quest for its original location. Joko Dolog is the local name of this statue. It depicts a Buddhist monk of expansive girth seated in the posture of an Aksobhya or ‘The Impeccable One’ (Figures 1, 2). According to our interpretation of the inscription on the statue’s pedestal the crucial javano-Sanskrit verses translate as follows: At daybreak on 21 September 1289, King Kĕrtanagara “with deep devotion established him in the form of a great Aksobhya who formerly established himself at the cemetery called Warure/Awurare\(^2\).”

We know from the Old Javanese text Colon Anong (1540) that the person “who formerly established himself” at the hermitage-cemetery of Lĕmah Tulis was the sage Bharada. After he had attained liberation, this sage’s Lĕmah Tulis hermitage-cemetery became known by the name of Murare, which is the locative rendering of Warur in javanese.\(^3\)

Therefore, the Joko Dolog statue portrays Bharada himself, and not, as previous scholars have argued, King Kĕrtanagara.\(^4\) We have found compelling evidence to support our thesis.

Oral Tradition

In the year 1817, the statue of Joko Dolog or literally “The Plump Lad” was moved from the site of the 14th-century Majapahit court-capital at Trowulan to a park in front of the then Residency office in Surabaya, now the palace of the Governor of east Java. Although the Trowulan inhabitants were almost certainly aware of the original position of the statue until well into the 20th century, they did not understand its archaeological significance. As a result the exact spot was never documented.

In a note in the proceedings of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in 1879, we find the first reference to the statue’s original location. According to the testimony of the late 19th-century javanese bupati (regent) of Surabaya, R.A.A. Colcondrogro (in office 1863-1901), the Joko Dolog statue originally stood on a spot locally known as Kandang Gajah, literally ‘The Elephant Stable’. According to the same testimony, the Trowulan legend referred to a Majapahit king who ordered Joko Dolog to wage war in Bali. But instead of battle, he entered a deep meditative state and vanished, leaving only the petrified ‘Plump Lad’ statue as a reminder of his former earthly existence.\(^5\)

On 22 August 1815, the British Lieutenant-Governor of Java, Thomas Stamford Raffles (in office 1811-1816) ordered the Dutch-Javanese army surveyor Captain J.W.B. Wardenaar (1785-1869) to map the remains of the 14th-century capital of Majapahit at Trowulan. In September and October of 1815, Wardenaar undertook an extensive survey of the archaeological site, then largely covered by tea and scrub. Considered lost for almost two centuries, we were able to track down Wardenaar’s Plan of the excavated medieval cemetery of Majapahit (1822) to the Old Javanese texts, the Nagarakĕrtagama. We document in stone the location of the statue which he clearly states that the excavated medieval cemetery at Lĕmah Tulis was previously set aside for the ordained Buddhist monastery. Another essential piece of evidence confirms that this local tradition is indeed authentic.

Intrigued by the possibility that parts of Bharada’s legend were still known locally in the community, we decided to ask the Kĕdungwulan villagers near Trowulan a few open questions. Their responses were illuminating. The old name of the Kĕdungwulan hamlet, they told us, was indeed Lĕmah Tulis which literally means ‘Delineated Land’. It measured an area of some 1.5 square kilometres. One of our local informants, Pak Mahsoen, even spontaneously showed us the exact spot of Bharada’s hermitage. According to the villagers, this area was previously set aside for the ordained Buddhist monastic community at the Majapahit court-capital in the Majapahit period. Another essential piece of evidence confirms that this local tradition is indeed authentic.

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With a father, who hailed from the Dutch upper-middle-class, and a mother with noble Buginese ancestry, Henri Maclaine Pont (1884-1971) trained as an architect at the Delft Polytechnic. In 1911, he was commissioned to design and supervise the construction of the Indische Technische Hogeschool, the famous Bandung Polytechnic, now known as the Institut Teknologi Bandung. Having sold his share in an architectural design firm in Java, Maclaine Pont turned to archaeology and moved to Trowulan in October 1924. He and his family settled in a former forester’s cottage situated on the southern perimeter of the Lĕmah Tulis area, some 400 metres to the southeast of the original spot of Joko Dolog. According to Wardenaar’s 1815 plan, from his writings, we infer that Maclaine Pont was actively searching for Bharada’s hermitage-cemetery. In 1925, he probably started asking the Kĕdungwulan villagers similar questions to our own. Based on the information provided by his informants, Maclaine Pont selected a small elevated earthwork, which he started to excavate, probably at the end of the monsoon in April or May 1925. In a published article a year later, the archaeologist made a passing remark that he had excavated ‘a medieval cemetery’ in an area called Lĕmah Tulis.\(^6\)

His 1926 article also included a map of the archaeological remains of the Majapahit court-capital at Trowulan on which the position of the Lĕmah Tulis cemetery is clearly marked. Analysis of the archaeologist’s 1926 map and Wardenaar’s 1815 Plan of Majapahit, using GIS (Geographical Information Systems) software led to the conclusion that the position of the Joko Dolog statue in 1815 exactly coincides with the medieval Lĕmah Tulis cemetery excavated by Maclaine Pont in 1925. Moreover, on 7 October 1928, Maclaine Pont wrote a personal letter to his friend Mr’s van der Does de Willebois in which he clearly states that the excavated medieval cemetery at Lĕmah Tulis once housed Bharada’s hermitage. Maclaine Pont also usefully included a sketch plan of the excavated the Lĕmah Tulis ‘Elephant’s Stable’. Now we were certain that we were on the right track. In search of further evidence, we stumbled upon one of the greatest unpublished archaeological finds of late colonial Java.

Henri Maclaine Pont

With a father, who hailed from the Dutch upper-middle-class, and a mother with noble Buginese ancestry, Henri Maclaine Pont (1884-1971) trained as an architect at the Delft Polytechnic (Figure 5). His family background and evident ability soon marked him out as a man to watch in the late Netherlands East Indies. In 1919, he was commissioned to design and supervise the construction of the Indische Technische Hogeschool, the famous Bandung Polytechnic, now known as the Institut Teknologi Bandung. Having sold his share in an architectural design firm in Java, Maclaine Pont turned to archaeology and moved to Trowulan in October 1924. He and his family settled in a former forester’s cottage situated on the southern perimeter of the Lĕmah Tulis area, some 400 metres to the southeast of the original spot of Joko Dolog. According to Wardenaar’s 1815 plan, from his writings, we infer that Maclaine Pont was actively searching for Bharada’s hermitage-cemetery. In 1925, he probably started asking the Kĕdungwulan villagers similar questions to our own. Based on the information provided by his informants, Maclaine Pont selected a small elevated earthwork, which he started to excavate, probably at the end of the monsoon in April or May 1925. In a published article a year later, the archaeologist made a passing remark that he had excavated ‘a medieval cemetery’ in an area called Lĕmah Tulis.\(^6\)

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The Aftermath

The case of Maclaine Pont’s discovery of Bharada’s hermitage-cemetery at Lĕmah Tulis is an intriguing one in the archaeology of Java. It relies fully on the method of classical archaeology. As such, one might have expected that the archaeologist would have received the plaudits of his peers. But that never happened. Although the Archaeological Service (Oudheidkundige Dienst) of the former Netherlands East Indies was formally involved in Maclaine Pont’s work and the head of the Service, F.D.K. Busch (in office 1936-1937), in particular, was fully aware of the archaeologist’s Lĕmah Tulis excavations, the Service never published any reports on his remarkable discovery. Bosch was subsequently involved in another mystery in Trowulan archaeology, the seemingly intentional obfuscation of the identification of the Majapahit royal palace. Personal politics and professional jealousies seem to have eclipsed the ethics of science and scholarship in these twilight years of the Netherlands East Indies.

Historical Significance

History has shown that dividing and reunifying countries are amongst the most dramatic events in the life of a nation. History has shown that dividing and reunifying countries are amongst the most dramatic events in the life of a nation. Bharada’s division of Java in 1052 and King Wijaya’s final re-unification of the Kingdom of Majapahit were amongst the most dramatic events in the life of a nation.

The sea, north and south were divided from each other [not far]. But as far as it separated by an ocean – and from then on Java had two kings.10 From the context, it is clear that Prapanca describes the boundary in proximity to the geographical positions of the 14th-century Majapahit court-capital and Bharada’s cemetery-hermitage Lĕmah Cita, a variant of the name Lĕmah Tulis. From present evidence, we also believe that Robson’s geographical identification of Bharada’s dividing line seems the most reliable. It plausibly proposes a natural boundary between the Kingdom of Janggala with its capital at Jawa (or Kahuripan) in the north, and the Kingdom of Panjalu with its capital at Daha (or Kadiri) in the south, on the river Brantas – from the present-day town of Mojokerto downstream to the mouth of the river Porong.11 This perhaps suggests that Bharada’s hermitage-cemetery was originally situated in the Panjalu area. Furthermore, three years after King Kĕrtanagara’s death (1284-1292) had erected the Joko Dolog statue, his opponent, King Jayakatwang of Kadiri (reigned 1271-1293), conquered Singhahari and killed Kĕrtanagara.

A few months later, Wijaya, a former commander in Kĕrtanagara’s army, pledged loyalty to Jayakatwang and began the construction of the Majapahit palace. In early 1293, a 20,000-strong Mongol-Chinese expeditionary force invaded Java. Wijaya, initially allied himself with this invading Mongol-Chinese army and participated in the sacking of the royal palace of Kadiri. But when the Mongol-Chinese commander then demanded the four daughters of Kĕrtanagara as his reward, Wijaya decided in resistance. These royal princesses were under his personal protection in the Majapahit palace and to hand them over would be a disgrace. Laying a skulking trap, he ensured that all 20,000 Mongol-Chinese soldiers were ambushed and killed in the city of Majapahit. This stunning action persuaded the three Mongol-Chinese generals that they had nothing further to gain from pursuing their military campaign in Java. Having lost around 3,000 of their total force, they returned to their homeland. By unifying Bharada’s divided Java, Wijaya became the first King of Majapahit after marrying all four of Kĕrtanagara’s daughters in 1294. He founded his royal palace just 1.5 kilometres to the southeast of the place where the Joko Dolog statue stood on the consecrated ground of the Lĕmah Tulis hermitage-cemetery. This sacred spot would one day become the historic centre of the future Indonesian Republic and the spiritual basis for its claim as a unitary nation-state (Figure 6).

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the former Bupati of Sragen, Mr. Untung Wiyono, for his sponsorship of our research; Professor John Miksic (National University of Singapore), Mr Noor van Mens (Stichting Maclaine Pont), Dr Aris Soiyani (Bali Pelestarian Peningsan Purbakala Trowulan), and Mr T. Richard Bruton (British Museum) for their assistance.

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Notes

1 This article highlights the authors’ further research on Majapahit archaeology. See also Amrit Gomperts, Arnoud Haag and Peter Carey, 2016 ‘Rediscovering the Royal Capital of Majapahit’, The Newsletter 453, pp. 12-13. Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies.


4 Kern, ibid., 196.


6 Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië, Oudheidkundige Verslag 1914, p. 57.


10 S.O. Robson. 1995. Desaawarnas (Vajrakirtitogama) by Mpu Prapanca, p. 75.

11 Robson, ibid., 134.
China’s recent emergence as a world power will undoubtedly be seen by future generations as one of the transformative events of our time. The country’s recent and remarkable re-emergence onto the world stage has startled everyone, not in the least China itself, whose leaders seem to be almost as surprised as the rest of us by its all-encompassing swiftness. The twentieth century was dominated by the West, particularly America. After World War II it even began to be known as the ‘American Century’, with the War representing the height of American values, not to mention their power and military might. The Cold War that ensued led to a somewhat tense stalemate that ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the domino effect of democratization in Eastern Europe, prompting Francis Fukuyama to go so far as to claim we had come to the ‘end of history’.

As it spread ever eastwards, the Western model of liberal democratic capitalism seemed poised to conquer the rest of the planet, but then the unexpected happened: the Chinese embraced Western capitalism, without dismantling their one-party Communist political system, which would have been unthinkable back in the 1980s when capitalism seemed premised on the notion of democratic freedom. ‘Capitalism with Chinese characteristics’ has shown us that financial systems can and do operate independently of any of the idealism driving the political ones.

Niall Ferguson thinks that Fukuyama was somewhat premature in proclaiming the end of history, pointing out that ‘this seems fundamentally to misread the trajectory of the past hundred years, which has seen something more like a reorientation of the world towards the East’ (2006, p.64). East Asia is one of the world’s fastest-growing regions, and has been for some time. Economically and politically the region’s increasing importance has led some to see the twenty-first century as the Asian century. We are certainly likely to see an increasing shift from an Atlantic-centred view of geopolitics to a Pacific-centred one, with all the ramifications that will bring.

One of the major factors fueling Asia’s remarkable growth is urbanization, particularly China’s recent and remarkable economic expansion. Shanghai’s trajectory in this is peculiar because, as Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom points out, the city is in fact wrestling with a process of globalization (2009, p.18).

Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms in 1978 sparked off a ‘second revolution’ in China, turning it into the world’s workshop and enabling the country to move into the frontlines of the world stage. The carefully controlled capitalist enterprise known as capitalism with Chinese characteristics has enabled China to overtake Japan as the world’s second-largest economy (in 2010). Some commentators even suggest that the country might be in a position to overtake the United States by about 2030 – America’s economy is still three times that of China, but if China manages to sustain its annual economic growth rates this could well be a possibility.

China’s economic miracle has had its downsides, however, something that is particularly obvious in the country’s cities. With a population five times that of the United States, its per capita income is only on a par with countries like Algeria, El Salvador and Albania (i.e. approximately $3,600 per annum; while the United States enjoys approximately $46,000). Despite this, China has become the world’s largest market for cars, reflecting an interesting new stage in the country’s economic development, in that it no longer relies on the export of the cheap toys and clothes that first earned it its nickname ‘workshop of the world’, and has instead begun to turn to domestic demand in an effort to boost production and encourage Chinese people to buy products that are made in the country.

While this may seem a step in the right direction it is having some negative side-effects, such as increased smog caused by increasing levels of coal consumption. The Chinese want, and have already begun to take steps to address them. Li Daokui (an economics professor at Beijing’s Tsinghua University) was quoted by Alan Wheatley in an article in the International Herald Tribune (17 August 2010) as saying that investment in a low-carbon economy, as well as urbanization and the development of the interior, will be the main factors in sustaining China’s projected annual growth rate of 9 percent over the coming decade. Professor Li sees the country about to enjoy a ‘golden period’ where there will not only be a new focus on energy efficiency, but also a shift to growth in the domestic sector. Red China, it seems, would like to be seen as Green China from now on.

**A multi-polar world**

A number of countries in the early stages of economic reform have experienced rapid growth, but nothing has been come close to what has been achieved by China in recent years. According to Ted C. Fishman, the country’s economy has doubled nearly three times over in the last thirty years (2006, p.12). This impressive rate is all the more remarkable for having been achieved not by right-wing capitalists, but by whom Niall Ferguson calls ‘card-carrying Communists’. Indeed, Ferguson points out that ‘the man responsible for China’s economic miracle was the same man who ordered tanks into Tiananmen Square’ (2006, p.635).

What has been happening in China is in stark contrast to Eastern Europe, where the Soviet leadership tried to introduce economic reform and ended up with a revolution followed by economic collapse. The Chinese wanted, and got, economic reconstruction without political reform. How were they able to do this? Ferguson maintains the answer is simple: when a potentially revolutionary situation developed in 1989, the regime did what Communist regimes have routinely done when confronted with internal dissent, they sent in the tanks; on 4 June 1989 the Democracy Wall movement was ruthlessly suppressed. But perhaps this answer is too simple. The Chinese authorities may have suppressed dissent, even brutally so, but they also managed to lift more people out of poverty in the last thirty years than any other regime in history, communist or capitalist. Hundreds of millions of people have seen their lives vastly improved thanks to China’s agricultural and economic reforms.

The IIEC and CSIS consider China’s rise as a global economic and political power to be ‘one of the transformative events of our time’ (Bergsten et al. 2006, p.635). Yet what do the other world powers make of this transformation? According to the
The Newsletter of migrants in China reached 211 million in 2009.2 Migrant What China has been experiencing in recent decades is China's 'floating population' and are flocking into urban areas airports, dams, and factories, with an additional two million to become displaced. According to a 2005 report by the in recent years. The infrastructure that is being created in order between urban and rural areas. One other area of inequality within the space of a decade (ibid., p.31).

China's urban population has ballooned by 200 million

process of partial accumulation may well be the key mechanism in ensuring an orderly transition from statism to democracy. In the search for one of the most immediate problem as being the massive rural exodus provoked by the modernization and privatization of agriculture, which has affected hundreds of millions of China. He sees this mass of uprooted migrants as unable to assimilate into the notion of a civil society and correctly identifies those inhabitants, who are not of a Chinese cultural and political heritage, as resources, as 'an extraordinarily volatile element whose potential rage could destabilize the whole process of transition to a democracy'. We need to come into contact with messianic leaders or with splintering factions of the Communist party', similar to what happened in the mid-nineteenth century during the Taiping Rebellion (1998, p.326).

A rising tide raises all boats Kishore Mahbubani tells us that the Chinese people are among the most industrious in the world. He cites as examples the successes that overcome the Chinese have had in almost every society they migrated to. In fact, he remarks that it was the apparent success of the average Chinese worker, seen against the low productivity of mainland China, that confirmed Deng Xiaoping's suspicion that China had adopted a wrong economic model. He tells us that 'by the mid-1990s, China had embraced the Marxist Leninist model (Mahbubani 2008, p.53).

For all the downswings that rapid economic development may have it is still overall a good thing. A rising tide should indeed raise all boats. Kishore Mahbubani likens what is happening in China to Renaissance in the West. A sustained period of rapid economic development and the accumulation of wealth is leading the country to reorient with its rich past, as well as develop new cultural perspectives as a result (ibid., p.158). As China, and indeed the entire world, is trying to catch up? However, according to the IEC and CIS, China's current pace of urbanization is unparalleled in history; the estimate is that China's urban population has ballooned by 200 million within the space of a decade (ibid., p.31).

One of the most important challenges facing China's government in the future will be to lose the income gap between urban and rural areas. One area of inequality that has been increasing in recent decades is the development of coastal regions and inland areas, a gap that has continued to increase in recent years. The infrastructure that is being created in order for the country to compete globally is also causing populations to become displaced. According to the 2005 report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1990, it is estimated that up to 40 million peasants have been forced off their land to make way for these new infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, airports, dams, and factories, with an additional two million being displaced every year (ibid., p.47). These numbers mean their 'floating population', a term that is used to refer to moving urban areas within a search of new means of livelihood. Very many migrant workers are described as 'toumin', or temporary residents, who are not legally classified as urban, and as poverty and rising levels of dissatisfaction with the way the country is being run.

What China has been experiencing in recent decades is nothing less than the largest mass migration in human history. According to the IEC and CIS, China's National Population and Family Planning Commission estimated the number of internal migrants to be 53.5 million in 1995 and well over 140 million by 2004 (ibid., p.46). Alan Wheatley estimates that the number of migrant workers in China reached 211 million in 2009. Migrant workers are said to account for approximately 20 percent of China's working-age population (15-64 years old) (ibid.).

In the early 1980s Deng Xiaoping dismissed any potential problems regarding future inequality with the memorable phrase: 'some people have to get to the front first!' Recently though, Chinese leaders have begun to take cognizance of the fact that such inequalities, if they are allowed to continue unabated, could lead to political instability that the Chinese have now begun to implement policies designed to accelerate the pace of farm-income growth and the economic development of interior provinces that have been left behind in the rush to the market.
The Dutchman Karel Frederik Mulder (1901-1978) lived as a businessman, journalist and amateur photographer in the Chinese treaty port of Shanghai. During the siege of the Shanghai International Settlement by the Japanese military (August 1937-December 1941) he wrote reports and letters to his family. But there are also snapshots of the chaotic events of the Japanese attacks of the Chinese districts of Shanghai, of his personal life as a member of the International Volunteers Corps and of the changing political and cultural atmosphere in the Shanghai International Settlement. Louis Zweers interviewed his daughter Tineke Mulder (born in 1927, in Daren, Manchuria), read the unpublished letters and researched the photographic material of his private collection.

**Shanghai under siege: letters and photographs of Karel Frederik Mulder**

MULDER STARTED HIS CAREER as a young planter of a tobacco-plantation near Medan in Deli (north-east Sumatra). The city of Medan developed rapidly as a trading centre, with a fast growing cosmopolitan population. In 1925 he moved to China as a businessman; first he lived in Dalian (Dairen), the commercial port of South Manchuria, then the region was occupied by the Japanese); and then, as of the summer of 1931, in Shanghai, the treaty port at the mouth of the Yangtze River. The city flourished as a centre of commerce between east and west and became a melting pot of finance and business in the 1930s. Mulder spoke fluent Japanese, Russian and Chinese (Mandarin) and some Chinese dialects, and was thus a kind of the popularly known “chinese-English.” But he was also a journalist and amateur photographer who delivered photos and articles about his travels in China to the Australian magazine Argus and the Dutch illustrated weekly magazine De Pels and Het Leven. In a letter to his brother Wim in Amsterdam, dated 20 August 1931, he wrote about his first impression of Shanghai:

> “All goes well here on zyn Amerikaans: full speed, hurry up and the devil take the hindmost. Behelpyke trains of autobussen er zijn niet. Ik heb een tweedehandige Chinees geverkt. Iedereen die geld heeft, houdt er zijn liefkozen op na. Verder Wili Russen, vroegere officieren die zijn geweest tijdens de Russische revolutie van 1917.”

In the 1930s Shanghai was a metropolis, the population stood at three million. The city had a cosmopolitan reputation with frivольous clubs, the famous Cathay Hotel in Art Deco style, the classy Shanghai Club with the longest bar in the world, popular night-spots, beautiful cinemas, theatres, restaurants and many shops and stores with luxury goods. Foreigners – mostly Americans, British, French, Russians, Japanese and a few Dutch – comprised one third of the local population. They resided in the villas of the French Concession, on impressive avenues lined by plane trees, and in the International (Anglo-American) Settlement with its colonial buildings, mansions and apartments located close to the waterfront (the area known as the Bund, near the Huangpu River, a tributary of the Yangtze). These areas of the city were under foreign jurisdiction and foreigners lived an extraordinary and wealthy existence. They enjoyed the bulk of the city’s riches and pleasures; the fashionable nightlife rivalled that of Paris or Berlin.

During the Sino-Japanese war, the occupation of Chapei (the Chinese area of Shanghai), and the siege of the International Settlement by the Japanese army in August 1937, life for most ‘Shanghailanders’ (as the expatriates were referred to) became hard but not unbearable. Although Shanghai found itself in the throes of war, every effort was made to carry on a semblance of the pre-war high life. But many immigrants like the European Jews (an estimated 30,000) and White Russians (20,000), although escaping Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, lived in desperate conditions in the poorest and most crowded area of the city.

The Jewish refugees sheltered in the small houses of the Chinese Hongkou district that sits north of the Bund and the Suzhou Creek. Most of them barely succeeded in staying alive. The situation was partly the result of the disappointing atmosphere of the Shanghai foreign communities towards the newly immigrated European Jews. They found themselves a target, their relations with the local Chinese residents were nurtured by economic and political fears. The former Jewish quarter became a ghetto in WWII.

In his unpublished typewritten letters (250 pages) Mulder wrote to his family about daily life during the siege of Shanghai, the activities of Chinese warlords and guerrillas, and the more convoluted episodes of modern Chinese history, but also the intensity of life experienced by the international community in the besieged treaty port of Shanghai.

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In the spring of 1939 Mulder made a trip by car in the area occupied by the Japanese army around Shanghai; he had been granted a special permit.

> “The Suzhou Creek, which flows through the town, divides what is left of the International Settlement from the Japanese occupied zone. Barbwire entanglements close the bridge over the creek with only a small opening at both sides for pedestrians and a larger one in the centre for cars. British soldiers guard the south side of the bridge. The Seaforth Highlanders form part of Shanghai’s British garrison and they make a picturesque show in their kilts. The Chinese call them ‘lady soldiers.’ Japanese soldiers and marines who keep a watchful eye on everything occupy the other side of the bridge. Chinese are carefully inspected but Europeans are not searched. The occupied area is deserted and quiet as the grave. The houses and shops are closed, most of them boarded up. First rains: shedded and burned houses, first isolated zones, then whole blocks. Tumbledown walls rise out of the debris. Here and there Chinese squatters have piled up bricks to make rough walls, using bamboo matting as a roof, and they live in these caricatures of human dwellings. It is remarkable how they manage to exist at all.”

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In his authentic reports he brings to life not only one of the most consolled episodes of modern Chinese history, but also the intensity of life experienced by the international community in the besieged treaty port of Shanghai.

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The goal of his trip was to visit an American factory in the open country to the Northwest of Shanghai.

> “I leave the ruins behind me and drive past neglected fields. The farmers have fled and the land looks waste. Not a single living being is to be seen. This part of the country is not entirely without danger as the country around Shanghai swarms with guerrillas and bandits.”

He reached the factory without mishap, but on his way back Mulder was forced to brake hard and suddenly to avoid crashing into a tree lying across the road. At the same time a number of Chinese soldiers in a lorry halted him in the road. He asked them what was the matter and they replied, “You are a foreigner, not a native.”

> “The car has stopped and my hand rests on the butt of the automatic weapon under my right thigh. Now to keep cool! The leader comes up to my car and starts to talk to me. He speaks the Shanghai dialect that I fortunately understand. With a wide grin he asks for cigarettes. I have half a tin in the car, which I give him. He thanks me politely and deduces the cigarettes among his men... They belong to the Chinese 19th Route Army and have been in the neighbourhood of Shanghai since November 1937, harassing the Japanese. Sometimes they stalk past the Japanese posts into the city, but most of the time they remain in the country. ‘We are going to win the war even if it takes us another ten years,’ grins the Chinese.”

In December of 1939 Mulder had the opportunity to visit Nanking, the former capital of the Republic of China, two years after the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians and the plundering of the city by soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. He wrote about his visit to this traumatized city that was still occupied by the Japanese military.

> “It seems that the Nanking Chinese lost the strength to go ahead. Everywhere is the sweet smell of opium. More than a third of the population is addicted to opium.”

It is impossible, Mulder reports, to give even an impression of the total sadness in Nanking.

His last ‘Shanghai Letter’, dated early May 1940, was sent to his family just before the Germans occupied the Netherlands. In the beginning of December 1941, after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese army invaded the Shanghai International Settlement with force. Some days later all the ‘hostile citizens’, such as the British, Americans, Dutch and Belgians, were ordered to register. Their factories, real estate, classic cars and bank accounts were registered too, later to be frozen or confiscated. In March 1942 they were ordered to wear armbands for identification purposes; the armbands were marked with a letter to indicate nationality: ‘A’ for Americans, ‘B’ for Britain and ‘N’ for Netherlands. Armbands were not worn by ‘non-hostile citizens’, such as Germans, Italians and Vichy-French. The ‘hostile citizens’ were forbidden to enter parks, cinemas, theaters, bars and hotels. In November 1942 the Japanese imprisoned Mulder, along with many other Anglo-Americans, in the prison camps at Haiphong Road in Shanghai and later in Fengtai near Beijing, under exceedingly difficult conditions. He became an interpreter because he spoke fluent Japanese. Then he lived in crowded, hellishly hot barracks until the end of the war. After his return to Shanghai he was reunited with all his documents, papers and photographs, which had been hidden and kept safe by a Chinese friend. When, in 1949, Mao Zedong’s Communist Party took over Shanghai, Mulder departed for America. He lived in New York until his death in 1978.

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The main part of Mulder’s photographic work covers the period 1920-1939; it consists of thousands of photographs taken by Karel Frederik Mulder and prints belonging to international press photographers. There are photographs of Europeans living in the enclaves in East Asia, depicting social gatherings, festivals and sporting events. There are also travel photographs with nature scenes, temples, pagodas, ethnic minorities, street scenes and city landscapes. The lives of the Europeans and those of the local Chinese populations are kept mostly separate in the photographs. When photographing people and things in the European enclaves, Mulder brought his Exacta-camera in close, and the captions underneath the photographs include names. However, when photographing the Chinese, Mulder clearly kept more distance. In his albums, the series of photographs, which can be ascribed to the private sphere of the photographer – such as the snapshots of his holiday trips, parties, picnics, friends and family – are interspersed by photographs of socio-political and military events.

Notes
2. Shanghai Letter, 12 April 1939.
All collection K.F. Mulder.

Additional photos from the collection can be viewed online at http://www.iias.nl
the-newsletter/article/shanghai-under-siege
The cultural crossroads: St. Petersburg, Batavia, Amsterdam

The archives and libraries of the Netherlands, Indonesia and Great Britain preserve many collections of Malay written documents: witnesses to the long history of presence and activity of Dutch and British trading companies in the Malay Archipelago. Our exploration of these documents brought us to three cities – St. Petersburg, Batavia and Amsterdam – and conjured past images of their 17th and 18th century histories.

Irina R. Katkova

St. Petersburg collection
Outstanding Russian collector and scholar N.P. Likhachev (1862-1936) presented a rare tradition and sophisticated knowledge in the fields of history, palaeography, diplomacy, sphragistics and numismatics; he made a great contribution to these fields and built an extremely rich collection of rare documents, maps, seals, stamps, pictures, charts, coins, ex libris and autographs. Among all these objects one can find both western and oriental samples including a rare collection of old Malay letters from the archives of the Dutch East-India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie – VOC). As indicated in Likhachev’s notes, he bought the Malay letters in 1910, from the auction house Muller in Amsterdam. A number of the letters that are in Chinese were purchased earlier, in 1890, from a famous Paris antiquarian, Safrae (image 2).

All but one of the letters had come from the family archive of Joan van Hoorn. They had been addressed to him as director-general of the Dutch Indies (1691-1704) and as governor-general of the Dutch Indies (1704-1709). The one exception was the letter addressed to his predecessor, governor-general Willem van Outhoorn (1691-1694). However, one could consider this letter to be a family heirloom as well, because Joan van Hoorn married Susanna Angela van Outhoorn, daughter of Willem van Outhoorn, in 1691.

VOC and Joan van Hoorn
Monumental changes occurred in the Chinese Sea region in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, as a result of dynamic transformations in China and Japan, and the expansion of European powers in Asia. These global forces found their expression in new port cities. The port of Batavia was established in 1619 as a typical colonial castle of Batavia Castle where they would be ceremoniously presented to the Gouverneur-Generaal and the members of the VOC collection.

All the documents mentioned above date back to a rather early period, namely 1680-1730, which is when the so-called “old” Malay letters were created. Their style of composition, inscription and decoration is of utmost sophistication and elegance. Some of Likhachev’s items, including the letter written by Joan van Hoorn himself in 1696 and addressed to Pangeran (Prince) Cahiramang at Madura. Several letters depict trade relations, for example, a letter written in 1706 by the first Balinese captain in Batavia Lempied, and a letter from the Spanish Company d’Olonde in South Sulawesi. One letter from Agra witnesses the trading activities of Joan van Hoorn and his mission to India.

Joan van Hoorn was born in Amsterdam, on November 16th 1653. In 1663 he departed to the Dutch Indies with his father Peter van Hoorn, Rood extraordinary van Indi, on board of the ship “Alphen”. At the age of twelve he started his career as onder assistent in the VOC, and eventually worked his way up to Director-General of the Dutch Indies in 1691, and Gouverneur-Generaal in 1704. He is known for assimilating a huge fortune during his lifetime, and famous for the written records of his extensive travels through Egypt, Persia, Jerusalem, Constantinople, India, Moscovia and Batavia, which are accompanied by fine drawings and portraits. After painting Peter the Great in 1704, he left Moscovia, and travelled through Persia, reaching Java in 1706. In Batavia he was introduced to the Gouverneur-Generaal Joan van Hoorn and painted his portrait, which is now exhibited at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Irina R. Katkova is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg, and was an IAS Senior Fellow from February to March 2011. Her research interests include Malay manuscripts and letter-documents as well as Sull literature in Indonesia. (katkova_irina@yahoo.com)

Notes
Chinese logic and Chinese philosophy: reconstruction or integration?

"Logic" derives from the Greek λόγος, meaning word, speech or discourse. Its translation into Chinese is 逻辑, which is merely phonetic. "Philosophy" derives from the Greek φιλοσοφία, meaning a love of wisdom. Its translation into Chinese is 哲学 (zhixue) "the study of wisdom", which strikes an odd note due to the Confucian sublimation of wisdom to more important virtues such as 仁 (ren) "humanity". These Greek words have played a defining role in Western intellectual history, so much so that it would be difficult to imagine the result of somehow subtracting them to see what remains. By contrast, attempts to find logic and philosophy in Chinese tradition meet with only partial success.

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The search for cultural uniqueness is understandably celebrated everywhere. We all want to know what special contribution we made to the sum of human history. Yet the associated tendency to ignore similarities is commonly an unnecessary and regrettable intellectual myopia. All but the most isolated and authoritarian societies show an abundance of diversity, and even when it isn't revealed, we suspect that it nevertheless exists, hidden and repressed.

In a recent book, George Nibbett claims that "to the Asian... the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than its parts, and subject more to collective than to personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue reference to context, and highly subject to personal control." But such gross generalizations, when lifted out of context, are obviously false. Those Chinese students, for example, who study logic and mathematics in Western universities do not actually think of themselves as "holistic thinkers".

Ferong Liu is currently associate professor of logic at Tsinghua University Beijing. His main research area is modern logics for rational agency; he also maintains active interests in both Chinese logic and Chinese logic.

Notes
Historically embedded beliefs can be reproduced or contested through art, rituals, myths, structures, people and sacrifices – and employed by different interest groups, in the context of war – to build up status, goodwill and power. The concept ‘heritage’ is an interesting entry point for recognising authority structures and power politics, whereby one must also explore and understand the ways in which ‘heritage’ is conceptualised, contested and applied in today’s globalised and rapidly changing world. Here the focus is on South Asia – Nepal in particular – and how heritage played a role in the quest for power before, during and after Nepal’s civil war (1996–2006).

TO COMPREHEND THE ROLE that cultural and natural heritage played in the Nepalese civil war, it is important to take note of the historical relationship between power distribution at the micro and macro levels of the physical world and the allocation of power in the supernatural world. Nepal’s ontology has traditionally been one of a cosmological order in which power is distributed by Hindu gods and deities. Natural heritage was assigned accordingly, and rituals and sacrifices reproduced and fortified the cosmological order of the Nepalese society. Religion stands in close relation to Nepal’s politics and at a number of points in history this form of capitalisation has been capitalised upon by power seekers and power holders.

Before, during and after Nepal’s civil war, the United Communist Party Nepal—the Maoists (UCPN-M) engaged in rituals to negotiate their position of power. So too did the Brahmins through their rituals of self-sacrifice (puja), or self-sacrifice, which they traditionally only performed at funerals. The Maoists meant to say to us: if you do not leave the village immediately, we will make sure that it will not take long before a bullet will find you. If you do not obey our commands, we will come to kill you and your family.

In the quote above, an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) from a village in the Rukum District explained how the UCPN(M) had made use of the symbolic power of rituals to demand obedience and establish a firm position of authority at a local level.

Nepal’s rich cultural and natural heritage

Nepal is a rich and diverse country in many ways. The UNESCO World Heritage list records 830 properties with outstanding universal value. Nepal was originally a Buddhist society, with a Mongoloid population from Tibet. Around 2000 B.C., the Licchavis (Hindu-Aryan) invaded from the north and spread Hinduism throughout Nepal. In general, Nepal’s long history of immigration from the north and the south has produced an ethnic and cultural diversity. The abundance of memorial sites, ritual places, temples, monasteries, shrines monuments, festivals, and 52 languages spoken as a mother tongue, are a good illustration of this. However, the ethnic and cultural differences not only indicate diversity, but have also led to struggles for social, political, and land tenancy survival and predominance.

Generally, the Nepalese people’s deep belief in Hindu, animist, and related traditions, is easily discounted by Westerners, who see them as merely superstitions, or quasi interesting, yet restricted to religious areas of life. But rituals, myths, and sacrifices play an important role in the everyday lives of Nepalis, not only within their religious lives. These forms of cultural heritage determine the rhythm of the day, divide the year into seasons, and structure the society into different castes and status groups. Even amidst the political turmoil of the civil war, “religious rituals at the Agnikundal, the Vedic fire temple in Patan, continue to be carried out, modestly and silently, with the belief that the ritual guarantees the continuation of the sun of the sun and the moon and thereby secure human existence on earth” (Shrestha & van Willigenburg 2006). Families with a morsel to spare will offer the best they have to a particular deity (e.g. spirits of the woods and rivers), or Goddess(es) such as Shiva (of fertility and life). The evident importance of these rituals for the Nepalese who have been strategically engaged in times of conflict to attain political power.

The UCPN(M) strategically played upon the first and third Warrior Kings’ rules: every king had the right and duty to wage war and enact blood sacrifices, and to thereby plunge his kingdom periodically into a state of temporary lawlessness.

Power and governance in Nepal’s history

The geography of power in Nepal was a collection of small states until the 18th century, and ruled by Hindu kings. According to Nepalese folklore, the god/goddess Gorkashahi command Drabaya Shaha to conquer the Kathmandu Valley (then known as Nepal), and two centuries later, between 1743 and 1775, Prithivi Narayan Shah completed the unification of the states into one Nepal. This 18th century power position of the kings of Nepal, the interaction between the supernatural world and the natural world has been significant.

Three Warrior Kingship rules can be identified based on the religious beliefs and traditions of Nepal’s past. It was, firstly, the obligation of the Hindu kings to enact blood sacrifices, by offering an animal and by initiating war “the sacrificial function of the monarch sovereignty: at regular intervals the king is required to carry out blood sacrifice, […] the god regenerates his power” (2004:15). Secondly, much emphasis was placed on the doctrine of bliss and the possibility to take part in the warfare. When the king declared war – after the gods had instructed him to do so – every household had to provide one man to fight. And thirdly, war was placed outside the Hindu law, and the country was plunged into temporary lawlessness. This meant that all rules of the caste hierarchy were allowed to be broken in times of mortal danger, including the murder of a Brahmin, a woman, a child, or a cow. Warfare also altered the usual norms of purity and impurity, whereby the slaughter of an enemy did not lead to impurity for the bedeguird, and animal sacrifices for the religious rites of the warrior who died as a martyr.

However, there have always been fractions that take another view on the effects of religious beliefs and practices on government patterns in Nepal. Some, for instance, indicate that the Hindu scriptures never literally identified the gods as kings, but that it has been merely a political manoeuvre right from the start. Another point of critique is that the elite has consistently refused to accept all religious Vedic literary works, focusing instead on the part of history which suits their own claim to power, according to the cosmological order outlined in the Puranas.

The Monarchy, heritage and its claim to power

The question of a god/determined sovereignty was a significant issue in the context of the Monarchy and the main political parties and the UCPN-M throughout the civil war. “Gyanendra, considered by loyalists to be a reincarnation of a Hindu god, ascended to the throne in 2001 after most of the royal family were slain by a drugged, drunk, lovelorn and suicidal prince. But the new king failed to win the support of the public, many of whom believed conspiracy theories linking him to the killing.”

— Steeped in the sea of blood which was the occasion for his [King Gyanendra’s] accession to the throne, and the father and of whoseince his inauguration, has been characterized by unruly and maoist blood sacrifices, the king is described by the Maoists with sanguinary imagery: “As to fulfill a predetermined quota of human sacrifice more than two dozen persons per day have been brutally massacred by the security forces.” (Leconte-Tilouine 2004:19)

Gyanendra made no attempts to disassociate himself from this bloodthirsty image; in fact he embraced it. At his first press conference he performed a small act of piety and threw a red star, which symbolized his commitment to the Maoist causes, at all the temples of the Nepalese territory (such as Lhasa, Gorhka, Nuwat, Dakain). With this sacrificial Gyanendra intended to reaffirm his sovereignty position as a godly installed king, a legitimate successor to the chief in command of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA).

On 29 May 2008, ‘Mail & Guardian Online’ reported that “The flag of Nepal’s 240-year-old Shah dynasty was taken down from the main palace in Kathmandu on Thursday after legislators abolished the world’s last Hindu monarchy. The royal flag was replaced by Nepal’s national flag inside the palace on Thursday morning. … The king has been given 15 days to vacate the sprawling pink palace and hand over the buildings of Kathmandu, which will now be turned into a national museum.” The symbolic meaning of flags makes them a common and forbidden tool in the quest for power between different fractions.

Anti-monarchism was not limited to the UCPN-M. Individuals frequently expressed their doubts about the royalty in general, and about Gyanendra in particular, often indicating their suspicion of Gyanendra’s involvement in the Royal Massacre. The situation was made even more chaotic by the Maoist movement in its unfulfilled promises to end corruption and to bring about development. Anti-monarchist civilians, whether UCPN-M members or not, began to use the word ‘royal’ on signboards (i.e. property, national parks, forests, army territories, temples and museums) – hereby declaring: “away with the king and royal properties.”

As people identified with the party and supported their call to take up arms and start a revolution. The legitimisation of their rule of law and the violence used to install it, was set in motion by reviving the Warrior Kingship rules.

Revival of the Warrior Kingship rules

Until the 18th century ‘bravery and war related sacrifices’ were associated with a confirmation or promotion of one’s position in the caste structure of the kingdom, and possibly also in terms of social stratification (for the rest of the Nepalese people), such as a shift from lower to higher caste. The UCPN-M strategically played upon the first and third Warrior Kingship rules: every king had the right and duty to wage war and enact blood sacrifices, and to thereby plunge his kingdom periodically into a state of temporary lawlessness.

The UCPN-M reasoned that their act of bravery (the initiation of war in 1996) placed them in the same position of sovereignty as the Shah Hindu kings. The UCPN-M leaders, as modern revolutionaries, placed themselves in the party and supported their call to take up arms and start a revolution. The legitimisation of their rule of law and the violence used to install it, was set in motion by reviving the Warrior Kingship rules.

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Marloes van Houten

— People of a political party other than the UCPN-M were not allowed to stay in the village. The Maoists compelled the Damais (Dalits) to play also drums, which they traditionally only performed at funerals. The Maoists meant to say to us: if you do not leave the village immediately, we will make sure that it will not take long before a bullet will find you. If you do not obey our commands, we will come to kill you and your family.

In the quote above, an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) from a village in the Rukum District explained how the UCPN-M had made use of the symbolic power of rituals to demand obedience and establish a firm position of authority at a local level.

The UNeSco World Heritage list records 830 properties with outstanding universal value. Nepal was originally a Buddhist society, with a Mongoloid population from Tibet. Around 2000 B.C., the Licchavis (Hindu-Aryan) invaded from the north and spread Hinduism throughout Nepal. In general, Nepal’s long history of immigration from the north and the south has produced an ethnic and cultural diversity. The abundance of memorial sites, ritual places, temples, monasteries, shrines monuments, festivals, and 52 languages spoken as a mother tongue, are a good illustration of this. However, the ethnic and cultural differences not only indicate diversity, but have also led to struggles for social, political, and land tenancy survival and predominance.

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Nepal’s civil war (1996-2006)

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The second Warrior Kingship rule commands that ‘every man is a potential warrior and thus expected to contribute to the war’. The UCPN-M capitalised on the traditional rule to justify their ‘involuntarily’ manners of recruiting people. In fact, they extended it to include women and children, so that at least one member of each household could take part in the UCPN-M meetings, forced labour and armed conflict.

Contesting national and supernatural heritage

Before, during and after the civil war, the UCPN-M damaged and destroyed national and ‘supernatural’ heritage to contest the authority structures they symbolised. State representations such as flags and signs were removed or destroyed by the Maoist forces; government buildings, police offices, government schools and any buildings embodying the Royal House were demolished or raided and used for UCPN-M purposes such as stocking of weapons or housing UCPN-M leaders. Murals, red painted messages on walls of houses, public buildings, buildings of historical value, and so forth, would exhibit rules and regulations, and broadcast threats to anyone who dared disobey them. Using murals to strengthen support for a political claim is a war strategy more often applied, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) Red Guards knocked down old buildings, burned Buddhist images, and destroyed old Buddhist texts, replacing them with red painted slogans such as ‘Long Live Chairman Mao’.

UCPN-M’s anti-monarchism had consequences for Nepal’s intellectual heritage. The government’s sphere of influence was relinquished in schooling programs, this included a ban on singing the national anthem and teaching Sanskrit.

UCPN-M’s aim to install an all-encompassing governance structure, included coming to terms with the power holders of the supernatural realm. Hence, the local faith healers and mediums (dhami-jhankris) were prohibited from doing their work. In addition, the UCPN-M did not appreciate the healers’ expressions of worship to Hindu gods and local spirits as they were a source of power that conflicted with the UCPN-M’s plans of total governance. The party propagated development and progress for the rural population, and opposed the anist and shamanist beliefs of the healers and spiritual leaders – considering them ‘backward’. These kind of shamanist practices and shamanist beliefs of the healers and spiritual leaders – functioned as (paid) brokers between ordinary people and the Hindu gods. Here, the UCPN-M strategically called on their shared cultural heritage, in particular by reviving the ancient Warrior Kingship rules, to legitimate the use of violence to impose their authority on the local population. Ramirez writes ‘[Nepal] accommodates a society where religion does not constitute an autonomous domain and the practice of Nepalese Maoism is hardly a secular affair’ (Gellner 2007:350). Different fractions have purposefully and opportunistically ascribed their own meaning to existing heritage, thereby invoking among the population the shared beliefs necessary to attain their respective goals. Whether through embrace or destruction – depending on which group was gearing up to take power – the significant meaning of heritage was contested.

Conclusion

Heritage is neither a thing, a movement or a project, nor does it exist by itself. “Heritage is about the process by which people use the past, a discursive construction with material consequences” (Harvey 2008:19). At different points in Nepal’s history the Monarchy, the UCPN-M and its opposition parties, called on their shared cultural heritage, in particular by reviving the ancient Warrior Kingship rules, to legitimise the use of violence to impose their authority on the local population. Ramirez writes ‘[Nepal] accommodates a society where religion does not constitute an autonomous domain and the practice of Nepalese Maoism is hardly a secular affair’ (Gellner 2007:350). Different fractions have purposefully and opportunistically ascribed their own meaning to existing heritage, thereby invoking among the population the shared beliefs necessary to attain their respective goals. Whether through embrace or destruction – depending on which group was gearing up to take power – the significant meaning of heritage was contested.

Notes

1. The UCPN-M was established in January 2009 when the Communist Party of Nepal-the Maoists (CPN-M) unified with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Center-Maoist).
2. For security reasons the VDC and village name are not identified.
6. For security reasons the VDC and village name are not identified.

References

Although many parts of Southeast Asia lag behind in terms of Internet penetration, recent years have witnessed an explosion of Internet use across the region, largely supported by the increasing accessibility of mobile technologies, growing digital literacy and the popularity of social media. As the information and communication technologies (ICTs) become more pervasive across the region, there are more and more young people who see their lives inextricably tied to technologies, not only as users, but also as creators. Software developers and hardware engineers, hackers, new media specialists or technology enthusiasts in general, who refer to themselves and each other as geeks, are not only to be found in Silicon Valley. Young men (and to a lesser extent, young women) in Singapore, Bandung, Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, also try to take part in and benefit from the so-called digital revolution, by exchanging knowledge, collaborating and celebrating the geek culture or ‘geekdom’.

The making of Southeast Asian silicon valleys

Zane Kröp

The formation of such groups of people should not come as a surprise in countries that have, during the last few decades, discursively and politically positioned the ICTs as the basis for prosperous development and deeper integration into global markets. However, the question now is how the geeks, upon which the realization of such development largely relies, see themselves? Do they align with the discourse pursued by the states or do they draw their understandings about what it means to be a geek in the 21st century from elsewhere?

This article is based on ongoing research, part of a wider project at Leiden University, for which various ideas and perceptions about the future, in relation to technology and the so-called digital revolution, are explored. As the research is in its infancy, it cannot yet provide any nuanced arguments; instead what I attempt to offer with this article is a peek into the early explorations of the field and the ways in which they inform our understanding of the formation of such communities, in which shared problems and socialization are both a reason and stimulus for further development. It is not rare that such spaces transcend the local boundaries and establish connections across borders within and outside the region. Intensifying communications and socialization are both a reason and stimulus for further development of such communities, in which shared problems surrounding ‘being a geek’ are addressed and more, or less, ambitious future aspirations expressed.

The notion of the English word ‘geek’ developed in meaning over the course of many years and only in the 1980s did it start being linked to people with a great passion for computer technologies (Bluh, 2010). The image of computer geek in the Western hemisphere has until recently been largely negative, connoting a person who is intelligent, yet socially awkward, with an ‘uncool’ or ‘different’ dress sense, and often with poor hygiene. However, since the late 1990s certain shifts have occurred, eventually transforming the perceived image of a geek into a more positive and even desirable one. As the notion of the English word ‘geek’ developed, so too did their economic appeal go global through mass media, they largely never been a better time to be a geek.” Although such images of geek appeal go global through mass media, they largely stem from the USA and do not necessarily represent the reality elsewhere. Is ‘geek’ also the new cool in Southeast Asia?

When geeks come together

The last five years or so have been filled with a growing number of geek activities in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Online platforms for the discussion of geek communities and entrepreneurship cover national, regional and international issues; events that bring together hundreds and thousands of geeks have been happening with increasing frequency, and even permanent collaborative spaces have been effectively established by geeks themselves, with no large company or governmental financial support. Geeks are a relatively mobile and very connected part of society; they are informed about successful activities elsewhere and often try to repeat them in their own contexts. In this way, they create new spaces for coming together - both virtually and physically. It is not rare that such spaces transcend the local boundaries and establish connections across borders within and outside the region. Intensifying communications and socialization are both a reason and stimulus for further development of such communities, in which shared problems surrounding ‘being a geek’ are addressed and more, or less, ambitious future aspirations expressed.

Discovering and interacting with a group of like-minded geeks often inspires and encourages individuals to present at a following meeting, or to pursue a project idea that had been abandoned.

There are many questions regarding the genesis and development of geek practices in the region and what such developments indicate in relation to globalization, knowledge economy and the state; yet for now I will take a brief look at three particular media that appear to be instrumental in strengthening and celebrating geek culture in the region.

BarCamp

In 2005 a unique form of social collaboration, designed to boost creativity after the burst of the Internet bubble, emerged in Silicon Valley, known as Barcamp unconference, it rapidly gained popularity throughout the internet-savvy world. The one or two day event is referred to as an ‘unconference’ to stress the lack of central authority – there are no invitations or registration fees and, most importantly, the agenda is set by the participants themselves as they arrive at the event. Everyone is a potential speaker, panelist, moderator and organizer, and topics discussed reflect the vast array of interests – ranging from very technical programming aspects, to discussing dating strategies.

BarCamps reached Southeast Asia in 2007, starting off in Singapore, the idea quickly spread to neighboring countries (under the same or different names) bringing together mainly young men aged between 20 and 35. Most of them come from a rather well-off background and have studied or traveled abroad. Usually they share a deep passion for technology and their technological knowledge and skills are their source of income. The main initiators behind BarCamps, or similar meetings in the region, are in most cases geek entrepreneurs, who either work as freelancers or have their own software or web companies. It is not rare for one’s organizing efforts to be compensated by the creation of new contacts, increased visibility and the authority gained through the process.

During the meetings knowledge and ideas are shared, new friendships established and many who only knew each other...
The perspective of the geeks

from online environments finally have the chance to meet face to face. The novelty of such meetings, combined with the bonding processes throughout the meetings, contributes to the high levels of excitement (see also Coleman, 2010) that are openly shared through social media platforms before, during and after the actual events. It is for good reason that Malayans BarCamps are described as “One big tech kenduri”, and that for the second year in a row the BarCamp in Yangon, Myanmar has hosted the world’s largest gathering of this kind with 4000 participants.4

Discovering and interacting with a group of like-minded geeks often inspires and encourages individuals to present at a following meeting, or to pursue a project idea that had been abandoned. It was in fact during the BarCamps in Singapore and Malaysia that the idea about more permanent collaborative spaces for geeks found fertile ground, and less than two years ago the first Singaporean HackerSpace was established, as well as two in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Vohor Rahns).

HackerSpaces

If BarCamps are creative and nearly ad-hoc gatherings, taking place within a limited time frame, then HackerSpaces are permanent establishments with a physical location where geeks can come together to work on their software or hardware projects and learn from each other.5 HackerSpaces are community-run and self-sustained, they eschew financial support from governments or companies. The origins of HackerSpaces can be found in the aftermath of the hippy-counterculture movement in the USA 6; they provide an alternative creative space, separated from state and market. To date there are approximately 500 active HackerSpaces around the world,7 and it is important to note that, in comparison to other forms of geek gatherings, sustaining a HackerSpace requires time, money and effort, and thus can be considered to indicate the existence of a more developed and substantial geek community.8

HackerSpaces appear to be gaining momentum in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, where within one year four new establishments have arisen: Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of Bandung geeks, gathering under the name FDNHA 6 visited the Singaporean HackerSpace and were inspired by the venue, activities and great vibes. It is no surprise that the Bandung HackerSpace remains one of the seed geeks in Indonesia to gather the resources, both human and financial, to establish their own places. Excitement levels are high and it is not rare to hear geeks from these countries discussing what steps are necessary to make their particular locality the “Silicon Valley” of the region.

Online platforms

Much of geek communication and learning happens through various online forums, discussion groups and news platforms. There are the twin spaces where they find each other and all relevant information on upcoming events. Online news platforms, such as dailysocial.net (Indonesia), sgentrepreneur (Singapore), and鬒ers.my (Malaysia), not only promote local geek activities, but also strengthen the connections between the geeks in various locations and are often the organizers of various geek events, such as BarCamps. Online platforms actually often act as network brokers on local, regional and international levels; they are normally the ones contacted when someone of importance visits, let’s say from Silicon Valley, and wishes to explore the creative innovation that could shake the technological universe. During the next four years I will be exploring these and other media and practices of geeks in the region – to gain insights in the ways geeks think about and act upon their futures. They are neither activists nor policy makers, yet geeks have a special role to play in the announced comings of the digital revolution.

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Notes

1 In this article ‘technology’ refers to hardware, software and the combinations of both.
2 This label is used, in literature and practice, interchangeably with words such as nerd, hackers, developers, coders, etc. Each has a slightly different connotation. In this article I chose to use the word ‘geek’ as an umbrella term, it is also the term most often used when referring to the raising popularity of geek culture – it tends to describe a person with entrepreneur characteristics, rather than just a technical tinkerer.
3 In September 2010, the research project ‘The Future is Elsewhere: Towards a Comparative History of the Futurities of the Digital (R)evolution’, commenced at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. This research is funded by NWO.
6 In ‘Bar’ and ‘Camp’, for more information see www.barcamps.org.
7 Xindur is a Malay term meaning a religious ceremony, celebration and feast.
8 Mong Palatino: “Myanmar: Barcamp Yangon 2011” mentioned policies are often part of the geek discussion. While geeks in Malaysia and Indonesia often look upon Singapore as the local, more attainable version of Silicon Valley, geeks in Singapore often joke that Singapore is too perfect and controlled to actually have ‘space’ for the next big thing: creative innovation that could shake the technological universe. Cultural explanations are sought to explain success or the lack of it. An excessive focus on prestige and success, risk aversion and unwillingness to share new ideas and collaborate, is often mentioned as the reason why Singaporean cultural environment is not well fitted for entrepreneurship.

Resources


Online platforms

Much of geek communication and learning happens through various online forums, discussion groups and news platforms. These are the twin spaces where they find each other and all relevant information on upcoming events. Online news platforms, such as dailysocial.net (Indonesia), sgentrepreneur (Singapore), andizens.my (Malaysia), not only promote local geek activities, but also strengthen the connections between the geeks in various locations and are often the organizers of various geek events, such as BarCamps. Online platforms actually often act as network brokers on local, regional and international levels; they are normally the ones contacted when someone of importance visits, let’s say from Silicon Valley, and wishes to explore the local, more attainable version of Silicon Valley. Furthermore, the four platforms mentioned above cooperate extensively with each other and effectively strengthen ties amongst geeks in the region.

Various sentiments

Meanwhile, being a geek in Southeast Asia doesn’t mean only hanging out with like-minded people at various places and events or reading online news and networking in addition to hours of programming coding. It also entails frustration and struggle. Much about learning ‘how to be a geek’ comes from the West – either as a result of following news from the Western mass media, traveling, studying abroad and/or inter-acting with other geeks (they form a rather large and active proportion of geek communities, especially in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore). This often creates tension. For example, one geek entrepreneur in Malaysia complained: “I am banana: yellow outside, white inside… I don’t belong here”. He was a following meeting, or to pursue a project idea that had been abandoned. It was in fact during the BarCamps in Singapore and Malaysia that the idea about more permanent collaborative spaces for geeks found fertile ground, and less than two years ago the first Singaporean HackerSpace was established, as well as two in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Vohor Rahns).
Pyongyang goes back to the Party

Glyn Ford

SEPTEMBER 2010’S PARTY CONFERENCE IN PYONGYANG was the first major meeting of the Korean Workers Party (KWP) since 1980, well before the death of Kim Il Sung. After his death in 1994, the Party was increasingly challenged as the most important decision making body in North Korea, by both the Military and the Cabinet. Its leadership had atrophied and died; of the 145 Members elected to the Central Committee at the 1980 6th Party Congress, over 60% were dead by 2010. At the lower levels this lack of direction and leadership meant posts were filled more on the basis of seniority than efficiency. The Party ran day to day affairs, but the key decisions made by Kim Jong Il were often driven by either the reforming zeal of the Cabinet or the deep conservation of the Korean People’s Army.

The first swill of the Party summer was sighted in October 2008 when Rodong Sinmun (the daily paper of the Central Committee of the KWP) published an editorial lauding the fact that 4.2 million Koreans and 200,000 foreigners visited the Party Monument in the centre of Pyongyang annually (an average of 12,000 a day). All a figment of a collective imagination; there were neither the thousands of visitors an hour, nor the necessary infrastructure to welcome and support this supposed flood of pilgrims. The function of this editorial – editorials are collectively read and studied by Party branches – was, by the very absence of any factual basis, to place on record a restored primacy for the Party after its earlier benign hour, nor the necessary infrastructure to welcome and support this supposed flood of pilgrims. The function of this editorial – editorials are collectively read and studied by Party branches – was, by the very absence of any factual basis, to place on record a restored primacy for the Party after its earlier benign hour, nor the necessary infrastructure to welcome and support this supposed flood of pilgrims. The function of this editorial –

In addition to the promotion of Kim Jong Un (Kim Jong Il’s third son) to the Party’s Central Committee and Central Military Commission, Kim Kyong-Hui (Kim Jong Il’s sister) and Jong Song Thaek (Kim Yong Ho’s husband) to senior – but not top – positions in the Party and the military, September also saw Kim Yong Il’s position further consolidated, keeping his Central Committee membership with promotion to an alternative member of the Politburo and the post of one of the Secretaries to the Central Committee. The new Central Committee and Politburo thus reflect both generational and political change, without Kim Jong Il. It has begun to delegate to a core group of family members and a few others to form the basis of a new collective leadership. Yet, none of the trilogy of sister, brother-in-law and son has access to all the centres of power. The sister is not on the Central Military Commission and her husband is not a full Politburo Member.

What does this mean for the future? First, the era of the ‘Great Leader’ is over. Kim Il Sung was a partisan general who made his name in the resistance movement against Japanese colonialism – as much in China as Korea – before being picked by the Soviets as one of Korea’s future leaders. Without less than fifteen years he had successively taken on and eliminated the other three factions within the Party and led alone for almost forty years. He started to prepare for Kim Jong Il’s succession in the early 1970’s; over a quarter of a century before his son formally took the reins in 1997 (three years after his own death). This time around, however, the long game is not an option. The biological clock is ticking. All the pieces have been put in place for a smooth transition at the appropriate time. The next steps – if fate does not intervene – will follow in 2012 or the celebrations of the centenary of Kim Il Sung’s birth kick off.

What does it mean for North Korean relations with the world? The whiff of opportunity is in the air. Pyongyang is open for engagement and business not out of the north’s need is not responding. Indeed, in addition to Kim Yong Il and the reform-minded brother-in-law (Jong Song Thaek), Kang Sok Ju, the long-time Chief Negotiator at the Six Party Talks and the main interlocutor with Washington, has also been promoted to the Politburo. There is also a positive thaw in relations with China. 2009’s year of Chinese-DPRK friendship in Pyongyang passed a pretty frosty year, with China allowing its resentment at Pyongyang’s military provocations of nuclear tests and long-range missile launches to show in the UN Security Council; yet in August 2010, Kim Jong Il – accompanied by Kim Jong Un travelled to his father’s old stamping ground, following the North in East China to be met by Chinese Premier Hu Jintao. After the September Conference leadership changes were announced, Hu issued a blanketed invitation to Kim Jong Il. Subsequently, further visits followed in May and August, the latter after meeting Russian President Medvedev in Siberia.

Equally, the tense aftermath in Sino-Korean relations consequent on KPA military adventurism – albeit provoked by Southern incursions into disputed waters – with the sinking of the South Korean corvette Cheonan in March, causing the death of 46 sailors and the artillery assault on Yeonpyeong Island, likely seems to be easing. The North did not get painted into the tight corner some had expected, although the message from the Party in Pyongyang is that no repeats are wanted. The question is whether the KPA wants to listen and learn.

While political reform is not on anyone’s agenda in the North, the economy is following or being driven down a path that is an amalgam of that of China’s Deng Xiaoping, who in the decade following his accession to power in 1978 brought the North from the brink of disaster. ‘White cat, black cat; who cares as long as it catches mice’. In China, reform meant that State operated Enterprises were matched by new industries run not by individuals, but by local government, by villages, towns and cities, and state entities such as sections of the Armed Forces, initially acting as contractors for the centre. These reforms lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, with the poverty rate falling from 53% during the mao era to 16.6% today.
In North Korea, the agricultural reforms of 2001 have already rejuvenated farming with new low targets for delivery to the state, allowing a significant increase in the markets that have sprung up in the North’s towns and cities. Out of North Korea’s 22 million people, one million are allowed to live in Pyongyang. Among them are the 100,000 who matter in North Korea. It is this group that is being best served by the new economy that is currently pulling luxury imports into the country despite the UN embargo. At the lower end the bustling Tong-il Market is full of mainly Chinese consumer goods, while for those with more means there’s the fast food restaurant that sells hamburgers and fries washed down with a cola flavoured drink, and where a meal can cost more than a six-month season ticket for the metro. Then there are the German, Japanese and Italian designer shops for handbags and high heels. You can even buy a €40,000 solid gold Omega Speedmaster. Some top officials now drive shiny new SUV’s rather than the tired Mercedes whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday on February 16th) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday) have been replaced by those whose ‘216’ number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il’s birthday).

The real question is whether the Party will reach its hands back on the levers of power or whether decisions made elsewhere will merely be hundred through its decision making machinery. Who will be the horse and who the rider is yet unclear.

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Left: The 105-floor Ryugyong Hotel in Pyongyang. Although construction commenced in 1987 the exterior has just been completed. The interior is due to be finished in 2012.

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Military, who had long been running the international trading companies, with standards of living way beyond the ordinary residents of Pyongyang. These nouveau riches began to form a new class separate from the political elite, arrogant and into conspicuous consumption. It was this that triggered the need to restore control; they were becoming too self-confident and too independent. This took the shape of the currency reform of November 2009, restricting amounts of old currency people were allowed to exchange for new: 150,000 Won in cash and 300,000 Won in bank savings (a total of less than €200); this was initially coupled with a ban on the use of foreign currency. It was presented as an attempt to rein-in and bring under control the negative consequences of the 2002/3 economic reforms. Yet the clumsy attempt broke down almost immediately as the move threatened the traditional ‘entrepreneurs’ lifestyle with their inability to spend their euros and dollars. This reform did serve to destroy the secret savings of the new entrepreneurs as the old notes became no more than waste paper; but the reaction was sufficiently strong that they received an unprecedented public apology of sorts and the sacrifice of the official in charge as it became clear that the economic reform genie could not be put back in the bottle. Now the ‘Kios’ Capitalists’ have learnt their lesson and are keeping their heads down and their Kim Il Sung badges on. Instead, the next wave of new enterprises is emerging from within the military, local government and the party. Inasmuch as we know anything, the new collective leadership that has been put in place tends to favour the former. Yet, the West’s obsession with the succession means new reforms have been overlooked.

US spy ship the ‘Liberty’ was returned to the US. The question is, when hijacker Moriaki Wakabayashi in Pyongyang on their way to Havana and never managed to leave. The last four Japanese hijackers from 1970 who made a stopover in Tokyo and Washington resisting any settlement. Japan’s neo-conservatives want to finally become a ‘normal’ country and abrogate the US imposed ‘Peace’ constitution, but that requires a referendum. The Japanese public are begging well behind their politicians in their enthusiasm for Japanese military forces being employed overseas. The only way to ‘get out the vote’ is to frighten people into the ballot box and for that North Korea is the only game in town. Similarly in Washington, where the military industrial complex wants to continue to ramp up the big hi-tech projects costing tens of billions. With the best will in the world the Taliban, Jihadis and Al Qaeda’s use of suicide bombs, bodies trapped in the reservoirs and the assassins’ bullet really don’t make the case for ‘Star Wars’. In contrast, just talk up Pyongyang with a new ‘dodgy dossier’ claiming North Korea is on the verge of getting its long-range Taepodong missile to work (despite three failures out of three attempts over the last decade), successfully testing a nuclear weapon (two failures out of two), successfully testing new ‘sharks’ (two failures out of two), merely adding them together rocket and bomb, thus leaving the Pentagon no option but to deploy Theatre Missile Defence (Star War’s Light) around Japan, so as to be in a position to launch a pre-emptive strike against the North, and to protect Japan in the event that this first strike missed any odd orphaned nuclear-tipped missiles.

There is a window of opportunity in Washington and Pyongyang. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula. Obama’s domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November’s mid-term election. This has given him time to put together his new diplomacy team and to come to grips with the problem of the North Korea Peninsula.
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Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia: Improving food security in a context of land grabbing?

In the 1960s and early 1970s, many countries in South and Southeast Asia were the focus of world attention due to their frequent occurrence of food shortages. These shortages were met by large amounts of food imported through food aid or similar programmes. Several pessimistic predictions were made about the future of food security in Asia on the basis of the severity of these shortages. For example, the Asian Development Bank’s 1977 survey predicted increasing food grains deficits unless remedial measures were undertaken in most of these countries, and by the late 1970s, India was categorized as a lost cause, since there was no hope for it to increase its food supplies.

Annelies Zoomers
Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia

Despite these gloomy expectations, most of the populous countries of Asia were able to achieve significantly higher growth in agricultural food production than in the 1970s. Thanks to the Asian Green Revolution, by the mid-1980s most countries had recorded significant increases in their food production through the widespread adoption of new agricultural technology, and had considerably improved their performance in providing food to their people. However, a number of problems remained: the per capita availability of grains (domestic production + imports) – or more specifically, the per capita and caloric availability – remained inadequate in most of the countries. In addition, many countries were unable to find an appropriate solution to the problem of wide year-to-year fluctuations in their food output, and – despite rapid economic growth and higher growth rates in food production – many countries were unable to provide a large number of poor people with access to food.

Current problems

This section of the Newsletter, brought to you by the IAS, provides an update on the food security debate in the context of Asia, by focusing on current trends in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and China. The FAO estimates of the world’s 925 million undernourished people, 62% are in Asia and the Pacific, where some 578 million people are suffering from chronic hunger. How does the ability to feed the people in India, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. Countries like China and India, which are home to 40% of the undernourished, have very little suitable land and climate, and many of their food commodities (FAO/WFP, 2010). According to a recent report on the MDGs, people in Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, North Korea, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan suffer from hunger crises and food shortages (FAO/WFP, 2010). Climate change is also having a negative impact on food security due to drought and the incidence of extreme weather conditions, making agriculture a risky business and leading to all kinds of expected and unexpected effects (plagues etc.) that have negative implications for productivity.

Although population growth rates are slowing down in most Asian countries, the per capita demand for food grains in such countries as China, India, Malaysia and Indonesia is increasing very rapidly as a result of higher incomes. Hence, despite notable acceleration in the growth rates of domestic production, food imports have become an important source of increasing the availability of food. China currently imports 15-18 million tonnes of food grains annually, the figure for Malaysia and Indonesia is 2 million tonnes each. Given the expected growth in consumption, the rapidly growing Asian countries, the surpluses originating in the region will not be sufficient to meet import demands.

Rapidly rising food prices are making food imports increasingly expensive for food importing countries, and rising import and domestic prices of food grains are likely to adversely affect the poor and vulnerable sections in these countries. Increasing numbers of urban poor are food insecure due to their lack of purchasing power. In most Asian countries, the per capita availability of food and nutrition continues to remain far below the required levels.

Food security strategies today

Today, decades after the Asian Green Revolution and despite rapid economic growth, food security is again high on the political agenda. In his opening speech, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia called for clear and concrete cooperation among ASEAN member countries to secure food supplies for their peoples. He urged immediate implementation of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework, which enables food security and food safety, including food shortage relief, sustainable food trade development, an integrated food security information system, and agricultural innovation and innovation. However, solving the food problem is in many cases incompatible with other priorities such as economic growth in Vietnam, Cambodia, China, the Gulf states and Central Asia shows an enormous variety in food security strategies, and the policies formulated by food policies are limited, also because of the lack of coherent policies and competing agendas.

When characterizing countries on the basis of their food security strategies, it is interesting to make a distinction between three groups, each of which has different strategies that will slowly materialize into new, internal and external political relations.

The first category includes the capital-rich, resource-poor countries that are investing in offshore farming in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Countries like China, India, Japan and the Gulf states (as well as e.g. Brazil, South Africa and Mauritius) are actively searching for land in order to guarantee the food security of their national populations, and are becoming and/or leasing large areas of land overseas. The most important host countries are that receiving large-scale farm investments are Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Sudan.

The second category is composed of countries that are putting major efforts into becoming agro-hubs for certain commodities in order to achieve food security and to create a stable source of income. For example, Indonesia and Malaysia (co-financed by, for example, South Korea) are involved in massive investments in becoming world leaders in oil palm production, while Vietnam and Thailand are trying to become world leaders in rice, rubber, fish, and food, thanks to their foreign investments to strengthen food production in their own territories and to establish agro-hubs or develop corridors.

The third category comprises countries whose main strategy is to sell or lease out land to foreign investors. The ensuing economic development and increase in global food security by improving people’s purchasing power. Examples of such countries are Laos (investments in rice, rubber and coffee) and Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia and Gulf states. Cambodia (investments in rice, rubber and tourism development by Gulf states, Singapore and Vietnam), and the Philippines (investments in rice, corn, sugar, fish and dam construction by China, Gulf states and South Korea). Myanmar and Pakistan also fall within this category. Interestingly enough, while ‘selling’ the land to foreign investors, national governments sometimes play an active role in facilitating these investments and in ensuring that the inflow of remittances, and in strengthening linkages with the diaspora. Large numbers of people mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan, but also from Indonesia and China, work abroad, for example in the Gulf or Malaysia. Stimulating outmigration (or exporting labour, as in the case of the Philippines) can also be seen as a food security strategy.

Displacement and enclosure

As only three years have passed since the start of the most recent food crisis, it is too early to arrive at any conclusions. However, food security is increasingly at risk in all three categories of countries. The striving for economic growth and foreign investments is increasingly accompanied by development-induced displacement, namely the forced displacement of the local population. The World Bank estimates that in 2006, some 10 million people were displaced in China, India, Thailand and Cambodia as a result of economic growth (Cernea, 2000). Although countries like China might manage to secure food by buying and/or leasing land in, for example, Africa, Latin America or Kazakhstan (Ho & Hoffman, this issue), such investments can be at the expense of local food security. Within China, large numbers of people are displaced due to new investments in agriculture (in order to respond to China’s growing need for fresh water, electricity and flood control). For instance, the building of the Three Gorges Dam (Castles, 2002) speaks of a ‘war’ between the Chinese state and the local society, whose food security is threatened.

In Cambodia, some indigenous groups have become enclosed by rubber plantations as a result of government policies focused on attracting foreign investment, and are thus losing access to forest areas and local food and biofuel security (Nuthy & van Westen, this issue). In Vietnam, the expansion of cash crops and the protection of forests has restricted people’s access to woodland, while the construction of hydropower dams to meet the rapidly increasing energy needs often leads to the displacement or resettlement of local groups in more marginal areas (potential biofuel crops). In Indonesia, the government’s stimulation of oil palm production led not only to deforestation, but also to the spread of oil palms to environmentally more vulnerable peat land areas and to an influx of migrants that far exceed the carrying capacities of the local economy (Burges & Sanit, this issue).

In West Kalimantan, the area devoted to palm oil has grown from 500,000 to over 3.2 million hectares since the 1990s (an area as large as Taiwan) and caused a sharp increase in the number of land conflicts: about 400 communities in Indonesia are now involved in such conflicts, while the figure for West Kalimantan alone is more than 50. Foreign companies are also interested in investing in reafforestation projects in the context of the Clean Development Mechanism.

Conclusion: ways forward

Within Asia, food security strategies are very diverse and the situation is extremely heterogeneous: some countries play important roles as the drivers, while others are the hosts of large-scale investments demanded for the production of food and biofuels. What many countries have in common, however, is that massive urbanization (as an autonomous process) and huge investments in infrastructure, tourism and/or dam construction are responsible for land-use change at the expense of agricultural lands.

Despite the major efforts that many Asian countries are making to increase food security through investments, offshore farming, agro-hubs, etc., increasing numbers of displaced persons will move to and settle in vulnerable areas, where they will be more susceptible to climate change and local food security will deteriorate. More attention needs to be paid to both this human dimension and the environmental aspect, as heavy mono-cropping will impose a heavy burden on the environment, as happened during the Asian Green Revolution in the 1970s.

More attention must also be paid to the future implications of climate change. In Asia, 40% of the population lives within 60 km of the coast, and it is estimated that 200 million people living in low-lying coastal zones will be threatened by flooding or tropical storms. The number of environmental refugees is estimated at 10 million people, though not only by flooding, but also by scarcity of resources and desertiﬁcation. This will lead to large-scale, though probably gradual population displacements and new demands for land (Castles, 2002).

If food security is to be guaranteed in the long run, governments must protect the rights of local groups, ensure policy coherence (i.e. align food and fuel policies) and implement responsible land-use planning. Governments throughout the world should also remember that food security will become a great challenge not only for Asia, but for all of us. Annelies Zoomers is professor of International Development Studies at the Erasmus University and chair of the Academy on Land Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development (www.landgovernance.org; e.b.zoomers@uu.nl).

Notes

1 http://isdev.nci.in/pdf/fdst.pDF
2 http://www.apsri.net

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Bhalia, G. (ed.) Food Security in South and South East Asian Countries. Jawaharlal Nehru University. A paper prepared for the South South Commission, New Delhi, India.
In recent years, China's rapid economic growth has been coupled with a rising demand for natural resources. Great international concern has arisen over China's land acquisitions for agricultural and biofuel production, pejoratively called "land grabbing". Contrarily, when looking at China's land acquisitions in a global context, it is not that much different from land acquisitions by other countries and corporate players. In this sense, there are various parallels and differences between the governance of Chinese "land grabbing" versus a "globalization with Chinese characteristics".

China going global
For one thing, the significant rise in China's global activities in agriculture with particular reference to its alleged "land grabbing" should not be seen as separate from the country's global expansion in other sectors. Instead of "land grabbing" we prefer to use the more neutral term "land acquisition". The activities may interweave, for interests and preferences often align with governmental priorities. Chinese companies are involved in infrastructure projects, mining and oil extraction around the world, while smaller-scale private Chinese enterprises increasingly engage in overseas investment and production activities. The particular case of Chinese investments in the last decade follows the state's "going global" strategy, deemed crucial for national development by the central authorities.

Over the past decades China's sustained economic growth has put a rising pressure on the country's domestic natural resources. The oft cited numbers portraying the country's dire situation are that China boasts 21% of the world's population, while the country possesses only 8.5% of the world's available arable land, and 6.5% of the world's available freshwater resources. To complicate matters, China lost 8.2 million hectares of arable land between 1997 and 2010, due to urbanization and environmental degradation (UNOCHRO 2018). The pressure on the country's land and water resources is un-questionable. It is manifested in the different strategies that the authorities undertake to increase domestic food production. For the government, affordable food prices are perceived as being crucial to maintain social stability and guaranteed supplies are of utmost importance. To fuel its economic development, China increasingly projects its domestic shortages to other countries and regions abroad. The stimulus for this development has become even more pressing since the country's growing middle class pursues more luxurious life styles and consumption patterns. An increase in a range of particular food products, such as coffee, cacao, wine, but also animal feed, are more efficiently produced overseas, and thus imply new grounds for Chinese investments.

In the past five years, the country has become a major player in global land market. New unexpected agreements have emerged under which the Chinese government seeks to acquire large tracts of land and to access overseas resources.

"Land grabbing" or land acquisition?
Global land acquisitions are high on the socio-political agenda today. The recent developments have resulted in numerous research initiatives and reports in the last few years, with fierce debates about the impacts of the investments on local livelihoods and the environment. A frequently mentioned issue by critics is the so-called "land grabs" cases through which the land use changes are implemented are undermarginal and a testimony of "bad land governance".

There are several issues at stake here. For one thing, what "land grabbing" denotes is downhill defined. The term originally designates the lack of participation and ownership. However, the recent land acquisitions regularly contain formally arranged lease or concessionary rights, ranging from 30 to 99 years. Due to shortages in food and biofuel, rapidly emerging economies have begun to outsource agricultural production by leasing or buying rural land in developing and developed countries. Assessing whether these land acquisitions are entirely negative for local and socially vulnerable groups, or whether they might also bring positive effects for local communities, is the aim of our research.

The available information about Chinese land acquisitions is strongly determined by civic and non-governmental policies. For instance, an alarmist report by the NGO Grain in 2008 has identified approximately 18 million hectares of arableland related investments by Chinese investors up to 2008. Grain concluded that considering the total number of 100 identified international land deals by various investors worldwide, China could be labelled a major investor.

Securitisation of food availability?
Safeguarding domestic food supplies is presumed to be one of the core motives underlying China's foreign land investments. therewith infringing upon food security of vulnerable livelihoods in recipients' countries, this development is increasingly alarming. Moreover, China's investments are, amongst others, found in countries that receive aid from the UN World Food Program, whilst lack of verifiable data makes it difficult to identify if produce is exported back home. One of China's now emerging agribusinesses has announced to pledge large-scale investments all over the world, in which it is supported by its provincial government. The company's expansion is clearly given by in domestic demands.

The very fact that these large investments concur with China's aid projects in Africa makes that different appearances and ideas about "China's drives" intermingle. Clear is that China's neo-colonial image developed recently, with an emblematic portrayal of China's interest in Africa. This came to the fore plainly last July (2011), when a German government official accused China for having caused the current famine in southern Sudan (Schottkuijvy, 2011). Chinese officials have strongly contested this assault, and emphasised that Chinese teams working in Africa simply seek to enhance food security on the continent. The recently established agricultural training centres operated by Chinese teams are considered to support African countries in their securitisation of food supplies and interestingly, these recent projects mirror China's development aid projects in Africa in the early 1960s. How China's expansion affects land availability and food security of local communities is an essential point for further field research.

Filling the void
Yet, in fact we know very little about the range of Chinese investors involved, the motivations behind their investments, and importantly the actual impact of Chinese land acquisitions at the grassroots. In particular, China's upcoming presence in Africa in the last decade has received considerable attention. Is China a neo-colonial power in the making? Chinese companies and their activities are most often portrayed in a rampant sense as an aggressive resource extractor. For this purpose, our research started with a comprehensive inventory of Chinese land-based investments worldwide over the period 1990-2011. In a next step, in-depth fieldwork will be undertaken, for which our research does not aim to provide definitive answers or conclusions, but aims at framing our research questions: How do Chinese land acquisitions impact local communities? What stakeholders are involved, and how are customary rights systems affected by the Chinese land acquisitions?

Central Asia
One of the Central Asian countries targeted by Chinese investors is Tajikistan. The country is a typical economy in transition caught in the flux from a centrally planned to a market economy. In this sense, it is in certain ways similar to, yet, still lagging far behind the People's Republic of China.

In the Tajik context, two important land deals have caught the international media's attention. Firstly recently, the authorities of the Xingjir Uygur Autonomous Region in West China have acquired a land concession of 2 thousand hectares, while not long before that, the Chinese (central) government concluded a deal with the Tajik government for the acquisition of 110 thousand hectares, which subsumes around 1.8% of Tajikistan's total land area. According to the Tajik government, the Chinese companies' investment in the region will subserve agricultural production and the mountainous landscape is not suited for large-scale highly productive agricultural production. One could speculate that the Chinese investment is triggered by the crucial natural resources that the Central Asian state have to offer, as the Chinese government is increasingly active to foster trade and bilateral relationships with the Central Asian states. This is also given in the importance of Central Asia for China's "Belt and Road" Autonomous Region. The region is an important bridge between Tajikistan and China, and social stability in the region is of utmost importance for the Chinese government. From this description alone, one may understand that there are potentially various motives that underlie Chinese land-based investments.

Concluding remarks
When analysing China's developing "going global" strategy on the world map, we found a significant range of investments that are increasingly located further overseas. Investments in Southeast Asia have consistently occurred over the last decade, while many Chinese investments in African countries have taken place in the last years. Recently China's acquisitions for agricultural land have also been taking place in South America.

At the same time, however, the lacuna in precise data and information about Chinese companies' structure, size and government backing constrains a better and detailed overview of the activities based on Chinese foreign land investments. The activity of Chinese investments involves multiple Chinese actors which may have distinct interests to operate overseas and expand their endowments. The activity of Chinese private companies directly differs from the other Chinese companies, due to the Chinese investment landscape, which is divided within, political, economic, cultural and environmental aspects, as do the particular resources that Chinese companies pursue. In this respect, the activities of the Chinese companies influence the way Chinese companies approach the host society.

While it remains difficult to present a more complete picture than the hitherto speculative publications and anecdotal information, our research project aims to review the Chinese global activities in agriculture in a more comprehensive manner by lack of data and information about the development of Chinese private company overseas limits exact quantification, and a reliable qualification of the Chinese projects. Several studies have been conducted on China's expansion in resource extractive industries and other sectors. Yet, China's global expansion in general is still poorly understood. In this respect, our research does not aim to provide definitive answers or conclusions, but aims at framing our research questions: How do Chinese land acquisitions impact local communities? What stakeholders are involved, and how are customary rights systems affected by the Chinese land acquisitions?

This study is embedded in the larger China-CA (China's Global Expansion) research consortium, hosted by the Modern East Asian Research Centre (MEREC, www.merc.eu). The China-CA research consortium will look at China's Asian expansion in terms of its influence on a wide range of issues: land investments, deforestation, the trade in protected animals and plants, energy and dam building, mineral exploitation, and new modes of knowledge production.

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References
A new equation for oil palm

Never before have food, energy, and climate been so closely linked. Firstly, the world population continues to grow and will reach 9 billion by 2050. In order to feed the growing population, food production is estimated to have to increase by 70% (FAO, 2011). Although the exact amount of additional land required to meet the demands for food is unsure, the FAO estimates it will be around 70 million hectares in 2050. It is also said to be possible to grow maize and oil palm on the same land, providing food and fuel simultaneously.

Indonesia has a profound impact on the local socio-economic and environmental circumstances. On the one hand, oil palm expansion is shaping land use for food or fuel in the context of an oil palm driven changing population. For oil palm is being used as an important ingredient in the processed food industry. On the other hand, it also poses problems by displacing people from their land, and is said to be a major driver of deforestation and its associated biodiversity losses. Recently, oil palm expansion meets with new controversies as oil palm is increasingly competing for land with staple foods.

It is against this background that we are conducting a multi-disciplinary research in Riau province, Sumatra, entitled “New oil palm plantation established on previously peat swamp forest. It has been replanted several times due to poor yield.”

Palm oil and food security in Indonesia

“Food security will become a great challenge for ASEAN”, the Indonesian head of state President Yudhoyono said in his opening speech at the 18th ASEAN Summit held in Jakarta, May 7-8, 2011: “The competition for energy, food and clean water will become part of the global competition.”

Despite this recognition, oil palm has been the most expansive perennial crop in Indonesia. In 2010 around 8.4 million hectares of land was occupied by oil palm plantations, producing around 19.1 million metric tonnes of palm oil (Directorate General Estate Crop Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). Together with Malaysia, Indonesia controls over 85% of the world market. The export of crude palm oil (CPO) and its derivatives provides an increasing contribution to the national income (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011d). So far, almost 80% of the palm oil in Indonesia is being used as an important ingredient in the processed food industry and is by far the main cooking oil for the population. It is also an official regulation that around 85% needs to be used for the food industry, not fuel. With an estimated population of 238 million in 2010 and a population growth of 1.55% per year, maintaining food security at affordable prices is important to national security. Biofuel production, however, is strengthened by the commitment to reduce 26% of national GHG emissions by 2020. For this purpose, a national energy policy has been developed. Biofuels should have a share of at least 5% of the national energy mix in 2025. This rapid development of oil palm as a biofuel has raised concerns over land acquisitions to enable the growth of the oil palm sector to meet these demands. Balancing the need for large land areas to plant oil palm for biofuel purposes in combination with the need to add more land to feed a growing population, most notably rice cultivation, is an important challenge for the Indonesian government.

Indonesian rice policies

Rice has always been the main staple crop for more than 90% of the Indonesian population. At 139 kg of rice per capita per year, the Indonesian population is by far the world leader in rice consumption. This record, and the fact that the Indonesian population growth is 1.55% per year, makes food self-sufficiency in rice a hot political issue. Securing enough rice at affordable prices is critical to national security; this has been long reflected in Indonesian food policies. The National Food Logistics Agency (BULOG) is the most important national agency with the mandate to decrease vulnerability for price fluctuations. It manages issues of food security, buffer stock operations, and domestic food price stabilization through its monopoly over imports and distribution. This is even more important as the global rice market appears to be very thin. Less than 5% is traded internationally, and mainly comes from three countries: Thailand, India and Vietnam. Therefore, rice prices are very vulnerable to small changes in supply and demand (World Bank Jakarta, 2010). In addition to these volatilities in the market, the sustainability of rice production is also increasingly threatened by the irregularities caused by processes of climate change. For instance,
in 2010, the rice production did not meet the national target because of extreme weather and rainfall. BULOG imported 1.3 million tonnes of rice to supply the market. In 2011, the government issued a Presidential Instruction on rice production security. The Jakarta Post reported (September 29, 2011) that the Indonesian government has provided an additional USD 116.58 million to BULOG, to purchase rice from farmers and to increase rice stocks in the world market. In total about 1.5 million tonnes are expected to be imported, mainly from Vietnam and Thailand. Despite these rather costly measures, the Indonesian Government continues to aim at self-sufficiency in rice and other food crops through domestic production. Figure 2 shows that out of all food crops, rice contributes around 63% to the total area harvested for food commodities. In terms of production, the share of rice in the food production stock (Bawaslu Statistik, 2011b), the increase in rice production is mainly due to the expansion of the rice area in combination with an increase in productivity. Major improvements along these lines are needed to achieve a more food secure Indonesia under current population growth figures. This can, however, not be met by productivity improvements alone; there will be a high need for finding more suitable lands.

This is where Indonesia faces pronounced land use challenges, especially on the outer islands, which are believed to be able to absorb many of the land use needs. The expansion of rice cropping areas will have to compete increasingly with other, more attractive commercial crops, oil palm in particular. To what extent, in what form and how such competition impacts at field level, is shown in the next part. In this section some of the first findings from our on-going research in Riau, Sumatra.

Food versus fuel in Riau; findings from the field

Riau province is located in the centre of Sumatra along the Strait of Malacca (Figure 3). It has a total area of 8,867,207 hectares. The population of the province is around 4.7 million, with a population density of 50 persons per km². Around 49.3% of the labour force is employed in the agricultural sector. This includes small-scale crop cultivation, estate crop, live stock production, fishery, and forestry, both on large scale as well as small-scale enterprises (Badan Pusat Statistik Propinsi Riau, 2010).

Riau province is the major producer of palm oil in Indonesia. Oil Palm expansion has significantly contributed to (indirect) land use change in Riau. In 1975 the registered oil palm plantations only occupied 1,066 hectares or around 0.01% of the total area (Direktorat General of Estate Crops, Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). By 2010, oil palm plantations occupied around 2 million hectares, equal to about 21% of the total land area in the province (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Riau, 2010). Many plantations were established by converting forest areas. The plantations consist of both large scale state-owned and private entities and smallholder plantations. The smallholders plantations usually occupied 30,000-300,000 hectares. The plantations produce about 5.9 million tonnes of fresh fruit bunches annually, which is processed and converted into palm oil and palm oil products. In 2010, these impressive figures led to the classification of Riau province as one of the oil-chemical industry clusters, together with North Sumatera and East Kalimantan. The establishment of this cluster means that related downstream processing industries will continuously grow and develop. Oil palm related economic activities comprise roughly 18% of the regional GDP, generating USD 8-4 billion, only from export of palm oil (GDP) and its derivates. Employment figures for the oil palm sector in Riau are estimated at 690,000 or 14% of the total population in the province (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Riau, 2010).

Most of the oil palm has been planted by large companies or as part of government sponsored programmes. In order to regulate oil palm expansion, it could only be planted in combination with a processing unit. Therefore, smallholder involvement in large scale agricultural activities was mainly limited to the palm oil supply chain, associated with nucleus estate developments from the early 1990s onwards. Each smallholder palm oil smallholding covered 2 hectares, the smallholder being a kind of sub-contractor able to access small scale oil palm plantations. Provincial statistics show that this process started as early as 2002, when oil palm plantations started to boom. Between 2002-2010, all small-scale wet rice fields in Riau were converted into other uses, such as fish pond, mining, rubber plantation, coconut plantation - but oil palm plantation is by far the major reason for conversion (40%) (Dinas Tanaman Pangan dan Hortikultura Provinsi Riau, 2010). As a result, the provincial government of Riau has become a major importer of food commodities. Recent interviews we held with government officials in Riau revealed that regulations (such as hefty fines) are being developed to prevent the continuous conversion of rice fields into oil palm or other land uses.

Conclusions and further research

This research hopes to contribute to an understanding of the impact that global demand for fuel and food has on food security and sustainable management of natural resources at a local level. Our ongoing research in Riau province increasingly shows that the growing global demand for palm oil both for food and fuel has triggered complex processes of land use change at the local level, which are increasingly targeted at these protected areas, or comprises protected areas, Indirect Land use Change processes are increasingly targeted at these protected areas, and this time caused by small-scale producers. By using satellite images and GIS methodologies in combination with grassroots-level fieldwork, we are evaluating the extent of land conversion processes caused by small-scale migrants and local people, and whether land conversion is carried out for food or fuel production.

Oil palm induced forest frontier migration in Riau: the final blow for forests?

The ability to plant oil palm by smallholders themselves has made the small-scale oil palm plantations (usually less than 5 hectares) a highly attractive land use. Combined with relatively high financial returns, oil palm development increasingly attracts large numbers of job seeking migrants to Riau. Our research shows that not only Sumatrans migrate to Riau, large numbers of Javanese come to Riau to develop their own oil palm plantation. This influx of migrants has significantly contributed to population growth in the province (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011a). Where the development of oil palm in Riau province has already contributed significantly to land use change, this on-going process of large numbers of migrants is causing additional stress on “remaining” land in the province. For instance, in 2010, WWF Indonesia estimated that of the 83,000 hectares in Tesso Nilo National Park, some 28,000 had been converted into small-scale oil palm plantations and settlements. Looking at the type of people involved in this conversion, 96% appeared to be migrants (WWF Indonesia, 2010). Our research shows that the two largest groups of migrants consist of migrants from Sumatra and from Java. This could be used as an indicator of future population growth, as migrants also increase the overall population and this time caused by small-scale producers. By using satellite images and GIS methodologies in combination with grassroots-level fieldwork, we are evaluating the extent of land conversion processes caused by small-scale migrants and local people, and whether land conversion is carried out for food or fuel production.

Fuel instead of food: migrants versus local people

Our initial findings show that oil palm expansion in Riau has caused a complicated situation, mainly through the influx of migrants. For them, the objective to convert forest into cropping land is for a cash income. Forest areas are often not claimed by local communities, and changing regulations at national level have often made it unclear where protected forest areas begin and end. Although migrants seem to be mainly involved in forest conversion for oil palm plantation our fieldwork has shown another controversial development among the local people, who engage in wet rice cultivation as part of their agricultural system. Due to low profit margins of rice cultivation, a combination of high input prices and the increased risks in the context of changing climatic conditions, local farmers are increasingly interested in converting small scale oil palm plantations. Provincial statistics show that this process started as early as 2002, when oil palm plantations started to boom. Between 2002-2010, all small-scale wet rice fields in Riau were converted into other uses, such as fish pond, mining, rubber plantation, coconut plantation - but oil palm plantation is by far the major reason for conversion (40%) (Dinas Tanaman Pangan dan Hortikultura Provinsi Riau, 2010). As a result, the provincial government of Riau has become a major importer of food commodities. Recent interviews we held with government officials in Riau revealed that regulations (such as hefty fines) are being developed to prevent the continuous conversion of rice fields into oil palm or other land uses.

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Food security and energy development in Vietnam

FOOD SECURITY HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED as an important dimension of ‘development’ in Vietnam since at least 2002, when it was formally included in the national policy framework. Since the mid-1980s, Vietnam has shifted from a fundamentally agricultural economy to a multi-sector-based one, propelled by a policy of promoting industrialization and modernization more generally. The contribution to the GDP of industry and the service sector has reached 41% and 38% respectively, while the share of agriculture has been reduced to 21% of total GDP (GSO, 2010). The rapid industrialization and modernization process in Vietnam has caused a high and rapidly increasing demand for energy, especially for electricity. As a result, a range of policies and initiatives have been put into practice in order to secure the needs for development, including hydropower, nuclear energy, fossil fuel-based energy (coal, gas, oil), wind power, and also imports from neighbouring countries. In an attempt to limit the rapidly rising bill for fossil fuel imports, the exploitation of the hydropower potential of the country’s mountainous interior has received special attention in recent years. Currently, hydropower is the major source of energy for the country, accounting for more than 37% of the total energy supply (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2010). Hydropower dam construction, however, requires land to be converted into reservoirs, forcing the affected rural communities to move out of their homes and surrender their lands. Even before 1990, more than 120 thousand people were displaced due to the construction of the Thac Ba hydropower dam and approximately 90 thousand persons were displaced by the Hoa Binh hydropower project. In the mid-1990s, 60 thousand people and more than 24 thousand persons have been displaced respectively for the Ham Thuan – Da Mi and Yali hydropower dams. In the late-1990s, the number of hydropower dams increased threefold, with 400 thousand people being relocated. Between 1995 and 2009, Vietnam constructed over 20 large-scale hydropower dams (with capacity stations exceeding 100 MW), converting 200 thousand hectares into reservoirs and affecting 90 thousand households. As an example, construction of the Son La hydropower dam required the relocation of over 90 thousand people from 160 settlements in 17 communes and 3 provinces. This paper looks at the food security of such relocated communities before and after displacement due to hydropower dam construction. Data are drawn from our ongoing research on the impact of the Binh Dien hydropower project in Thua Thien Hue province, which considers three main aspects of food security, i.e. food availability, adequacy, and access to food by means of household surveys, focus group discussions and review of existing documentation.

Food security policies

As an agricultural country, Vietnam has adopted and implemented a comprehensive poverty reduction and growth strategy, and the dimension of food security is included into the policy framework for economic development, health care, women and child care, environmental protection and sustainability since 2002. As a result, poor households have received considerable support from the government so as to be able to escape from poverty and improve their livelihood conditions. They are prioritized for participation in rural development projects funded by the government and international NGOs. Paddy rice production is the major agricultural activity in the country, and as such, development policies have launched a set of initiatives to secure the land area devoted to rice production and to increase productivity. For instance, the Directive 391/2008/QH-14 was issued to facilitate the implementation of the agricultural land use plan and allocate land for rice production. Also, a national land use plan was issued for the period up to 2020 and partly towards 2030 that prescribes that 3.8 million hectares of land be maintained for the purpose of producing paddy. Meanwhile, the land area under paddy production has in fact declined from 4.2 million hectares in 2000 to 4 million hectares in 2009 (GSO, 2009), due to competing claims on land use. As can be seen in Table 1, the poverty rate has decreased in both urban and rural areas, but most markedly in the countryside. In 2010, the reported rates were higher because of a raise in the level of income below which people are considered poor. The food security for the poor in both urban and rural areas is a critical problem. Although the productivity of many staple foods has increased significantly since 2000 (Table 2), a majority of poor households have remained trapped in insecure situations in terms of access to food on a temporary or chronic basis. Food security for displaced persons due to hydropower development

Displacement and resettlement due to hydropower development has caused transitory or chronic food insecurity for affected families. Displaced people cannot produce food to supply their families’ requirements because of their relocation to new localities with limited agricultural land, often of a poor quality. Food has often become less available compared to the old situation where they could easily obtain food from various sources, such as fishing, hunting, collecting from forests, as well as cultivating rice, cassava, and raising animals on common grass and forest lands. As a result, the quantity and quality of the main meal of the study population have declined, especially as a result of lesser availability of rice. Many of the afflicted households have to borrow rice and money from neighbours, a traditional food safety strategy that becomes less effective since most families in such exchange networks are also poor and also because the relationship between people is less cohesive than it was reported to have been in the past. The tradition of exchanging food and money among community members is disappearing gradually. Resettled families have received support from the hydropower companies, but only on a temporary basis, creating a problem in the longer term. Once temporary resettlement support is withdrawn, people have to rely on their own resources to acquire the necessary foods. Then they are confronted with a harsh reality.

Table 1: Poverty rate change between 2006 and 2010 in Vietnam (%) Source: GSO, 2010.

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that their access to income sources has dwindled. The transition from an agricultural livelihood to one that can be labelled as a limited-agriculture livelihood causes displaced people to lose out in terms of both income and sustainability of their livelihood, often leaving little alternative than becoming seasonal labourers.

Binh Dien hydropower dam construction project, Thua Thien Hue province, Vietnam

In 2004, the construction of the Binh Dien hydropower dam necessitated the removal of 50 households of Katu people, one of the ethnic minority groups in the central mountain range of Vietnam. They were moved to a resettlement site in Binh Thanh commune, Thua Thien Hue province. Their living conditions have changed considerably, especially when it comes to food security (see also Nuijen 2011). As stated by the villagers, their food situation had previously been more secure, because of several reasons. In the old settlement villagers were traditionally self-reliant, providing for their families through subsistence agriculture and harvesting of common pool resources by means of hunting, fishing, and collection of honey. In this way, most families could maintain their diet with three regular meals per day. They rarely worried about daily food supplies because forests were usually available locally. They could avail themselves of preferred foods without spending money and rarely needed to rely on borrowing from other households. After the relocation, however, their food supplies dwindled, became less adequate, and more difficult to obtain. In fact, many people are now relying on borrowing from other households. After the relocation, all families have experienced three successive stages in terms of food security. The first stage is the situation before displacement, when food was more accessible and adequate because there was sufficient land to grow food crops and further foods could be obtained from common pool resources. The second stage followed displacement, when the villagers received food support from the government and hydropower companies in the first and second year of resettlement. In this phase, food access was secured. Typically, in this phase, people are tempted to spend compensation money on buying foodstuffs has eroded their financial position based partly on compensation money. The household survey indicates that 33 out of 50 households have dropped below the poverty line and 4 more families have become poorer three years after relocation. Fourthly, they now need to rely more on wage work that is difficult to obtain in this remote area. Hence, the option of acquiring food by means of purchase has also declined. Resettled villagers mostly do seasonal work for other land owners in the region, but this is a temporary and insecure livelihood source. Especially the poorer households have to rely on this option.

Discussion and conclusion

Hydropower dam construction is not the only intervention that puts pressure on small-scale farmers in Vietnam’s interior highlands. Changes with respect to forestry management have at least as much impact as dislocation due to reservoir creation. Nevertheless, the policy to increase the supply of ‘sustainable energy’ has destabilizing consequences for the livelihoods of many thousands of people. Displaced households typically experience three successive stages in terms of food security. The first stage is the situation before displacement, when food was more accessible and adequate because there was sufficient land to grow food crops and further foods could be obtained from common pool resources. The second stage followed displacement, when the villagers received food support from the government and hydropower companies in the first and second year of resettlement. In this phase, food access was secured. Typically, in this phase, people are tempted to spend compensation money on buying foodstuffs, clothes, motorbikes, and other commodities at the expense of investing money in agricultural land to produce food or to learn new skills to find alternative jobs. The third phase is when they do not have food support anymore, and the small plots received in the compensation package are not sufficient to meet their needs. They then have to use their money to buy food or rely on assistance from other villagers as they find themselves without sustainable income sources. Food insecurity and poverty have worsened the displaced peoples’ living conditions, and they risk being caught in a poverty trap without perspectives.

The experience of the resettled people of the Binh Dien hydropower project shows the risks of assuming that standard compensation packages will be sufficient for displaced people to generate new livelihoods without more targeted assistance.
In Cambodia there is an increasing trend of large land acquisitions, inadequate protection of land rights, and a high incidence of land disputes. About 1.04 million hectares were approved as Economic Land Concessions (ELC) for foreign and domestic companies in 2010, as a means of increasing economic growth and employment. Much of this land is located in the North-eastern provinces, home to indigenous communities that may seriously be affected as a result.

Compensation
The findings revealed that 54% of all respondents reported losing land to a concession company. The average amount of land lost was 5 hectares per family (mostly shifting cultivation land). The situation was particularly worrying for poor families. 84% of respondents reported losing land to the company compared to 27% in Kalai commune. However, the village mapping exercise conducted in Kalai indicated that the company there is targeting community land and has been clearing community forest land for rubber plantations despite villagers’ protests. So the Kalai villagers will have lost as much land as they have in Bourea.

Economic land concessions in Northeast Cambodia
Large-scale agro-industry is an emerging trend, with the Government granting large tracts of land to international and domestic investors under the ‘economic land concessions’ scheme envisaged in the 2001 Land Law. The main purposes of this policy are to develop an intensive agricultural base and promote a high level of capital investment in agro-industrial activities, as well as to increase employment opportunities and diversification in rural areas. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) grants leases of up to 99 years with a yearly fee of $20 per hectare, depending on quality. According to the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) (http://www.maff.gov.kh/en/ - May 2010), 86 valid economic land concessions have been granted since 1995, covering a land area of about 1,041,144 hectares in 18 provinces. However, the NGO Forum database, using information from different sources, indicates 228 economic land concessions. But, out of the reported 86 valid concessions, 52% have been granted to Cambodians and 48% to foreign investors, mostly from China, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. An estimated 40% of economic land concessions are located in the Northeast of the country, populated in large part by minority groups. On paper, the indigenous people are fully protected by the Constitution of Cambodia (1985), the Peace Agreement (1991), and the lands such as the Land Law (2001) and the Forestry Law (2002) that allow collective land titling for Indigenous groups (Nuy, 2010). However, many of these reserve areas are de facto open to non-local actors …

Rice production is considered the main source of household income as expressed in cash, although most of the harvest is kept for consumption. A total of 88% of respondents reported an income from rice production (mostly in shifting cultivation), generating an average of $72 per year, 26% of total household income. Interviews revealed that rice yields have decreased dramatically since concession companies cleared the forest and took over community land; harvests had decreased by an average of 60-70% compared to years before. The second type of household income from agriculture comes from cash crop production. Indigenous people integrate sesame, beans and other vegetables into their shifting cultivation of (mostly subsistence) rice, earning on average $59 per household per year. Cashew nuts are a significant source of income, planted mostly in Ratanakiri province, but also expanding in nearby provinces. Cashew nut production can generate a massive average of $326 per year for a household, which is why most respondents had transformed their shifting cultivation plots to enable the growing of permanent cash crops such as cashew nuts, with an average cashew nut plot size per family of 1.8 hectares. This conversion unfortunately represents a challenge to the collective land titling of indigenous communities, as it may contradict the criteria for qualification (Andersen et al., 2007).

Livestock generates an estimated average income of $104 per family per year. Most indigenous households raise chickens, ducks, pigs, cows and buffaloes – whereby the latter three are rarely sold because most families use them in spiritual ceremonies, praying for regular rainfall and high yields, as well as giving thanks for a good harvest. The survey showed that indigenous families retained an average of three buffaloes and two cows, down from an average of 10-20 buffaloes or cows. In-migrants and company security workers were said to have stolen the animals, and most of the grazing land has been converted to rubber plantations. Furthermore, companies do not allow livestock to roam free on their newly acquired land.

Non-timber forest products (NTFP) are another source of income for around 96% of indigenous families, yielding an average value of $115 per year. However, availability of NTFP has decreased dramatically. Thousands of hectares of forest cleared for rubber plantations no longer provide NTFP, and any remaining forest lands are occupied by the companies and locals are prohibited from accessing them to collect NTFP. A male respondent in Kalai village said, “I was threatened that I would be shot when I was walking through the forest”. Hunting and fishing are also important livelihood activities for NTFP. On average, households earn $35 per year from NTFP collection, with an average increase of 8.4 kilometres. People complained of a shortage of raw materials such as rattan, bamboo and vines as a result of forest clearance.

Handicraft production is a further source of income linked to NTFP. On average, households earn $35 per year from this production. Most common products are bamboo baskets (kapla), chicken cages and rice cooking baskets (cha ang), among others. These products are part of the traditional culture and are mostly sold to community members and used at home. People complained of a shortage of raw materials such as rattan, bamboo and vines as a result of forest clearance.

Hunting and fishing are also important livelihood activities for indigenous households, mostly for subsistence. Families make an average of $151 per year from this, with 50% of survey households reporting some involvement. In fact, the percentage is probably higher as hunting is illegal and may well have been underestimated. Most respondents complained that concession companies had destroyed wildlife habitats, with the noise of bulldozers and tractors also being a factor in chasing away wildlife.

Land acquisitions by non-local actors ...
Economic
- Shifting cultivation and NTFP collection still the main forms of livelihood
- Cashew nut plantation expanded among communities, especially in Kalai, from 1996
- Deindustrialisation, affecting NTFP collection (especially resin production)

Environment
- Logging by local powerful people and foreign concession companies from 1998
- Still regular rainfall

Socio-cultural and security
- Local and international NGOs and Cambodian Red Cross promoting agricultural extension, human rights, community forestry, natural resource management, literacy
- Good security (no thieves)
- Feel practising traditional cultural and spiritual ceremonies
- Belief in spiritual forests and strict ritual practices
- Some indigenous families migrate to settle in indigenous communities

Infrastructure
- Some bicycles and motorbikes
- Travel across Vietnamese border possible without restriction (open border)
- Roads to provincial town still in poor condition
- Community paved roads started to be built in 1995
- School and commune health centers constructed in 1995
- Open shallow and pump wells and latrines constructed by government and NGOs

The 76% of respondents who declared themselves unwilling to work for the concession company gave several reasons for this. 26% of respondents complained that the work was too hard with too little freedom; they would have to get up in the middle of the night to travel to work and have limited time for lunch and rest. At least 12% were too angry with the company for taking land and destroying spirits forests to be able to work for them. In Kalai commune, a 59-year-old man said: “I am very angry with the company that destroyed our spiritual forest land and grabbed our farm land. I can say that I land my generation will not work for those concession companies even if we are starving.” At least 11% claimed the company cheated people when paying wages, and that wages were too low anyway because of competition from migrant workers. Another 4% of respondents said their health prevented them from working for the company. Health is a challenge for indigenous communities, as facilities are limited. However, local authorities and a company representative revealed that one company has allocated funds for upgrading the health centre in Boussa commune.

Discussion and conclusion
The policy of granting economic land concessions to outside companies in the North-eastern provinces of Cambodia has had a largely negative impact on indigenous communities’ livelihood and food security. Economic land concessions are not providing the benefits for local communities as promised in policy discourse. At least 92% of respondents felt that concessions had not brought any significant economic benefits to their families and communities and that they had in fact been harmed traditionally. Some wage employment has indeed been created, but local participation has remained limited and migrant workers actually appear to be preferred by the concessionaires.

Beyond the immediate impact on local livelihoods, economic land concessions have been found to raise even more issues than those discussed here. The allocation of concessions presents a challenge to the collective land titling process of indigenous communities. The concessions undermine the observance on a daily basis of indigenous traditions and culture, such as practices around spirits and ancestors, which are important criteria in granting communities legal entity status. Moreover, economic land concessions have created new challenges for the work of civil society and development organisations in support of indigenous community development. Civil society representatives complained that local people’s participation in development programmes was decreasing, as villagers see little point in taking part in natural resource management and preservation initiatives if companies are allowed to clear forests.

The most important recommendation that can be offered is to prioritise the registration of collective land titles of indigenous communities and halt the economic land concession allocation process, at least in areas where indigenous communities’ rights have not yet been registered. These initiatives could help minimise the negative impacts of concessions on indigenous livelihoods and eventually offer more opportunities for indigenous people to voluntarily access job opportunities with companies. Meanwhile, the food security of indigenous people in Northeast Cambodia seems better served by supporting initiatives from within local communities than by bringing in large scale investors from the outside.

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Forests and food security

Although long considered mutually exclusive, biodiversity conservation and food security are two sides of the same coin. Although ecologists and conservation biologists focus primarily on biodiversity conservation in non-agricultural lands it has been recognised that a strictly conservation focus is limited in scope, particularly in terms of fulfilling production requirements. This is pertinent given that the majority of the world’s biodiversity remains outside of protected areas, often in complex, multi-functional landscapes occupied by people and their associated farming systems, particularly in the tropics.

Terry C.H. Sunderland

The conventional model to achieve food security has been to convert wild lands to intensive commercial agricultural use, leading to the increased homogenisation of natural landscapes. An immediate result of this model of land use has been a drastic loss of wildlands, the biodiversity they contain and the ecosystem services they provide; some suggest that society has “traded off biodiversity” to achieve food security. Approximately 30-40% of the earth’s surface is now under some sort of agricultural system. Although the Green Revolution was intended to intensify production in existing agricultural lands, it is estimated that 20% of the yield increases resulted in direct land conversion. In addition, these increases in production have been achieved through industrial agriculture that is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and agro-chemicals, further indirectly affecting biodiversity and a wide range of ecosystem services, arguably contributing to climate change processes. With the human population estimated to grow to nine billion by the year 2050, it is suggested that there is a concomitant need to increase agricultural production two- to three-fold and that any marked increase in production will undoubtedly be at the expense of currently unproductive lands. However, further expansion of industrial agriculture through land conversion could have a continuing devastating effect of the world’s remaining biodiversity. This is no less the case in SE Asia.

Biodiversity: a fundamental feature of agricultural systems and human well-being

Biodiversity at three levels - ecosystems, the species they contain and the genetic diversity within species - underpins much of modern agriculture as well as the livelihoods of many millions of people. The majority of today’s modern crop and livestock varieties are derived from their wild relatives and it is estimated that products derived from genetic resources (including agriculture, pharmaceuticals etc.) is worth an estimated $500 billion/annum. Biodiversity provides an important safety-net during times of food insecurity, particularly during times of low agricultural production during other seasonal or cyclical food gaps or during periods of climate-induced vulnerability. Wild harvested meat provides 30-80% of protein intake for many rural communities, particularly in the absence of domesticated alternative sources of protein. The World Health Organisation estimates that in many developing countries up to 80% of the population relies on biodiversity for primary health care and the loss of biodiversity has been linked to the increased emergence and transmission of infectious diseases with deleterious impacts on human health.

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Many female farmers lack access to credit, despite evidence suggesting that investment aimed at women leads to the increase of both farm and non-farm incomes at the household level.

Around one billion people rely on wild harvested products for nutrition and income and the “invisible” trade in wild resources is estimated to generate $90 billion/annum. In India alone the livelihoods of around 6 million people are maintained by the harvest of forest products. In many rural locations, particularly areas that lack basic infrastructure and market access, the collection of wild resources provides considerable subsistence support to local livelihoods. In addition, the harvest and sale of wild products often provides one of the only means of access to the cash economy. Access to markets is particularly important for food security, it is not enough to be able to collect or grow food, but the ability to purchase food is also a major factor in ensuring food security, hence the more vulnerable and poorest members of society are particularly at risk from lack of access to food. Highly urbanised societies such as Hong Kong and Singapore that have no agricultural base are food secure because of their considerable purchasing power, while India, although self-sufficient in agriculture, has much of its population that is food insecure primarily due to social inequality and poverty.

Challenges to biodiversity-friendly agriculture

Population growth

The world’s population is expected to grow to nine billion by the year 2050. If the current model of commercialised monoculture is to be followed, feeding the global population is stated by the World Bank to require the conversion of yet more wild lands, at the expense of biodiversity and ecosystem service provision. Demand for meat is increasing globally, particularly from the burgeoning urban populations of India and China, and as the world becomes increasingly prosperous. Meat production is a notoriously inefficient use of resources and the implications of this are that a greater proportion of grains and oilseeds are being used to feed livestock and poultry, rather than people. A significant rise in greenhouse gas emissions is also a major side effect of the increased production in meat and dairy products. The diversion of foodstuffs to biofuel production also has an impact on food security. For example, nearly a third of all corn produced in the United States is now used for fuel and in 2010 this diverted more than 100 million tonnes of corn to ethanol production. Fuelled by considerable subsidies, ethanol production also contributes to price rises in grain and meat. Overall, it is argued, biofuel production does not improve energy security, increases environmental degradation, raises basic food prices and thus threatens food security. Finally, a considerable proportion of food is simply wasted in both developing and developed countries, but for different reasons. Loss of food in developing countries is often the result of post- and immediate post-harvest losses due to pests and disease and poor market access, while waste in developed countries is primarily due to the availability of large quantities of relatively cheap food, which is simply un eaten and discarded once it has reached the table, the household or the supermarket shelf. Reappraising the non-consumptive uses of agricultural produce and mitigating food waste could result in an equivalent rise in agricultural output, lessening the need for further land conversion and further biodiversity loss.

Climate change

Climate change and its potential impacts represent one of the greatest contemporary threats to food security. Extreme and unpredictable weather will affect crop yields and it is estimated that agricultural yields in Africa alone could decline by more than 30% by 2050. Such yield declines will primarily affect the world’s poor, who will not only lose direct access to food, but are less capable of absorbing the global commodity price changes that characterise a reduction in supply.

Climate-related events are being blamed for the recent spike in the price of staple foods, which are now an all-time high. Extreme weather can have a devastating effect on crops as the recent droughts in Russia and China, and floods in Australia, India, Pakistan and Europe indicate. The impacts of rising temperatures and more-extreme weather events will likely hurt the poor, especially rural farmers; the World Bank estimates that 44 million more people have slipped back into poverty since June 2010. Urban populations who are more vulnerable to reductions in purchasing power are particularly vulnerable to increases in basic food prices. Food riots in Cameroon and Haiti in 2008 and the recent regime changes in Tunisia and Egypt have been directly linked to increased prices of basic foodstuffs.

Biodiverse multi-functional landscapes are more resilient to extreme weather effects and can provide a natural insurance policy against climate change. Greater crop diversification by integrating a diversity of crops and varieties into smallholder systems in particular will increase resilience to severe changes in weather patterns leading to calls for “sustainable agriculture”.

Gender inequity

Women are pivotal to ensuring food security. It is estimated that women produce more than 50% of the food grown worldwide, primarily in small-scale farming systems. Indeed women tend to grow a greater diversity of products, experiment more with folk varieties and landscapes and are often reliant on biodiversity for the family herbal. Although women comprise up to 80% of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and 60% in Asia, ratios that are increasing due to male out-migration, their access and control over land and resources is generally inferior to that of men in the
Although it is argued that tenure rights in agricultural landscapes are less ambiguous for forested regions, greater clarity of tenure is needed across the entire biodiversity-agriculture nexus. Tenure rights have figured prominently in debates surrounding conservation; land tenure and food security have both, separately, been the subject of extensive research yet critical links between the two remain somewhat unexplored. Secure tenure is critical for food security in a number of ways. The lack of secure access rights and land tenure may be a disincentive for many poor or marginalised communities to invest in managing land more productively, investing in required inputs and making the raising of capital that much more difficult. Inadequate or unclear tenure regimes also limit the efficient delivery of payments for environmental services and other reward mechanisms.

**Agricultural investment**

International funding for agricultural development has dropped significantly over the last decade and is now at an historic low, representing around 3% of total overseas aid. Crop yields have fallen in many regions primarily due to declining investments in agricultural research, irrigation and infrastructure and the lack of agricultural development investment has led to yield declines in Africa of ca. 10% since 1960. National investment in agricultural development also remains very low, often representing less than 0.5% of agricultural GDP, despite the significant contribution of farming to most developing countries’ economies. This is primarily due to the gradual withdrawal of state support to agriculture under structural adjustment conditionals. Structural adjustment programmes also disaggregated agriculture from wider natural resource management (NRM) initiatives. Thus NRM and agriculture have been artificially divided. Unfortunately for the millions of small-holder farmers who are responsible for the vast majority of food production, bio-cultural diversity and agricultural production, these lines are considerably less well-defined.

**Conclusion**

Although food security is dependent on issues of sustainability, availability, access and utilisation, and not production alone, it is evident that a “new agriculture” needs to be found to feed the world’s population both efficiently and equitably. Increases in food production over the past fifty years have been at the cost of biodiversity and ecosystem service provision, yet there is considerable evidence that diverse agro-ecological systems can be equally productive, if not more so in terms of actual yield outputs, notwithstanding the biodiversity benefits of such approaches. As such, the United Nations envisions an “agro-ecological” approach that combines biodiversity concerns along with food production and provides a more compelling vision of future food production. The integration of biodiversity conservation and agricultural production goals must be a first step. Conservation and restoration in human dominated ecosystems must strengthen connections between agriculture and biodiversity.

Managing landscapes on a multi-functional basis that combines food production, biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of ecosystem services should be at the forefront at efforts to achieve food security. In order for this to happen, knowledge from biodiversity science and agricultural research and development, need to be integrated through a systems approach. This provides a unique opportunity for forestry and agricultural research organisations to coordinate efforts at the conceptual and implementation levels to achieve more sustainable agricultural systems. A clear programme of work on managing landscapes and ecosystems for biodiversity conservation and food security should be central to development aid.

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Indigenous history: an antidote to the Zomia theory?

As with the 19th century’s doomed plans to build a railroad linking India to China through the region, wild speculations and crackpot theories have blossomed forth from Western ignorance of “Upland Southeast Asia” – or, particularly, the mountains that isolate the ethnic minorities of Laos, Burma and Yunnan along the borders that join those countries. Social theories strike out on a bold course, and they head up into the mountains with European aspirations that are incompatible with local cultural reality – not to mention geography – much like the prospect of that abandoned railway.

Eisel Mazard


THERE IS STILL, however, a vacuum of knowledge to deter such expeditions: very few sources of indigenous history and local legal codes have been available to English-language scholars of Theravāda Southeast Asia (a fact lamented and, in some measure, meliorated by Huxley, 2006). In many cases, what- ever primary sources are available first emerged in fragmentary quotations presented through the distorting lens of modern (and modernizing) national histories. In the historiography of the region, skepticism is easily preached but difficult to practice without some contrasting source of information.

It is little more than a platitude to say that the history of any given ethnos within Laos cannot be known from the national history of Laos due to all of the distortions that arise from the creation of such a national history. The distortion and disparity can be even greater for the smaller kingdoms and ethnoi subsumed into what is now Thailand, South-West China and Northern Burma. Without the contrast provided by (uniquely local) primary sources, the researcher must attempt the impossible, as Susan McCarthy (2009, p. 50) admits, in trying to “rescue” local histories from propaganda that was created to “rescue” local histories from propaganda that is so strong in the Western literature, it is refreshing (and even startling) that the authors open their description of this strange crossroads of civilizations as a “godforsaken part of the world.”

Perhaps because the tendency to romanticize ruins (as representing something other than ruination) is so strong in the Western literature, it is refreshing (and even startling) that the authors open their description of this strange crossroads of civilizations as a “godforsaken part of the world.” In addition to my respect for the monumental burden of translation that the authors have undertaken with the Chronicles of Chiang Khaeng (noting every Burmese and Pali loan-word that creeps into the narrative, etc.), I respect the detachment and accuracy that they have had in depicting this strange world between empires all the more. In contrast to the ideologies that have imposed themselves onto the history of the region (including current attempts to rewrite the area’s history under the banner of academic “Anarchism”, and even McCarthy’s recent attempt to reconstruct local facts from national fiction) it is precisely here (in Grabowsky’s hands) that I recognize the world being described from my own fieldwork in the region. This is a culture and a history poorly suited to conjuring the banner for an ideology. In any event, as the last of the forests fall and highways penetrate the mountains, it is now ever closer to the brink of extinction, amidst peace rather than war.

I hope that other researchers will be inspired by Grabowsky’s work (as I once was myself) to conduct research by living in situ, working from the ground up, and using primary sources, instead of chasing after abstract theories that seek to join points on a map with the furthest horizons – to then end up, like the railroad of old, nowhere to be found.

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References


To it in Grabowsky and Wichaisri’s new tome are vastly more useful than all the wild speculations to be found in the self-proclaimed “anarchist history” of James C. Scott (2010).

While the “official history” of any centralized state (such as Manchus China or Leninist Laos) fail to give voice to the contrasting cultures and “dissonant histories” to be found along their rural peripheries, we can hardly redress this failure by looking to European colonial accounts of the same far-flung borderlands as if they represented the indigenous perspective. The latter is precisely the fashion that now dominates the anthropology of Southeast Asia, with quotations from colonial explorations taken as the primary sources to be extrapolated from, and the socio-political theories of Edmund Leach and Stanley Tambiah taken as guidelines for further speculation.

Although colonial archives are rich in precisely the sort of factual claims that one might elsewhere search for in vain, they certainly do not contribute at tasks they did not even attempt: they do not provide us with histories from the indigenous perspective. This is a deficit that cannot be compensated for with spurious comparisons between the Shan and the Berbers of Morocco (Scott, 2010, p. 29 & 277) nor with counter-poising evidence from the “maroons” of Jamaica and Brazil (ibid., p. 25, 121–1, 189–90). Such com- parisons cannot produce new facts for historians to consider; the careful work of both ethnography and philology that Grabowsky has offered throughout his career, can do just that.

Local history cannot be arrived at through logical induction from a general theory (whether one that unites “zomia”, nor one that unites all “maroons” the earth over), instead, generalizations must proceed from the facts – and, even so, theories will always tell us less than firsthand fieldwork and the study of primary sources, never more.

For this reason, I would urge Grabowsky and Wichaisri’s book upon many scholars whose own research is far removed from Northern Laos.

Although the work was written without any reference to Scott’s theories, it provides the contrast necessary to debunk them, and to instead situate the reader in the struggles that prefigured and produced the borders (and border-peoples) of Southeast Asia.
Documentary films reveal and conceal. They are truthful without necessarily telling the truth. A film always shows just a slice of reality, and is the product of choices made by the main characters (who reveal certain aspects of their lives on camera) and the filmmakers (who select segments of these revelations to construct a story). When the film is screened, the question is how the main characters, and other audiences, will then decode the narrative. Do they experience the result as truthful? What strikes them as significant and meaningful in the film, and how does this further our understanding of social reality?

The anthropological documentary ‘Living Like a Common Man’ (2011), which traces the lives of Indian youngsters who recently migrated to London, was shown to a varied selection of audiences in India and Europe, including the main characters. This article discusses their reactions, recorded by the filmmakers for further study.

Mario Rutten, Sanderien Verstappen and Isabelle Makay

OVER THE PAST DECADE, the total number of Indians entering the UK on a temporary work or study visa increased by more than 400 percent: from 18,578 in 2001 to 76,450 in 2008 (Entry Clearance Statistics UK 2005-2009). Most of these visas were issued to persons younger than 30 (Salt 2009). The documentary ‘Living Like a Common Man’ documents the struggles, hopes and despair of seven recently arrived young Indian migrants in London (aged 24-26), who moved to Britain for work and study less than three years ago. All of them come from relatively wealthy middle-class families in India and travelled to Britain on a student visa or a temporary work permit. Like many youngsters in developing countries, they dreamed of going to the West to earn money, to study and to get overseas experience to improve their positions at home. Once in London they ended up in low-status, semi-skilled jobs to cover their expenses, and were crammed into a small guesthouse with other newly arrived migrants.

‘Living Like a Common Man’ is a story about the contradictory faces of globalisation. Contemporary youngsters from middle-class backgrounds in India now have the resources and ability to move abroad for a few years for study or work. Their migration experiences are characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity, by both downward and upward social mobility. In Gujarat, they live in big houses with their families, but in London they face rather primitive circumstances and work in low-status jobs. Simultaneously, their stay in London has also increased their social status among family-members and friends back home. The situation creates an uncertainty about their future plans, i.e. whether to stay in Britain or return to Gujarat.

‘Living Like a Common Man’ is the visual outcome of long-term anthropological research in Gujarat and London. The film follows seven young Indian migrants in their daily lives in London, as well as their parents in the home region Gujarat, who have high expectations of their sons and daughters. The film is based on intensive interaction with the youngsters over a period of two years, between May 2008 and May 2010. During this period, we went to London ten times and stayed with the youngsters for three to five days at a time. We also visited India for three weeks to film the weddings of four of them, and to meet the parents of all seven. Initial contact with the youngsters was established through Mario Rutten, who has known the families of two of the youngsters for almost 30 years, having conducted research in their home village in Gujarat since 1983. Sanderien Verstappen and Isabelle Makay became equally close to the youngsters during our visits to London and India. As visual anthropologists, they operated the camera and edited the film.

Screenings and feedback

During the first six months of 2011, we had four public and six private screenings in India and Europe. The premiere of the film took place at the BFI evoq BFI festival in Amsterdam, in a sold-out theatre. Other public screenings with feedback discussions took place in London, Leuven and Bangalore. Four private screenings (two in London and two in Gujarat) were specifically aimed at eliciting responses from the main characters. The first private screening took place in the same guesthouse where the film had been shot. Present were those main characters who still lived in the house, as well as newly arrived migrants who had since moved into the house. Separate private screenings were organized for the main characters who had moved out of the house, elsewhere in London or back in Gujarat. In each case, family members or friends were present to watch the film with us.

Discussions after the screenings were revealing. It turned out that the main characters could identify with the story, and that we had portrayed their lives realistically. Other (unrelated) viewers, with a personal migration experience, also recognized themselves in the film. In fact, a discussion with Gujarati immigrants in the Netherlands revealed that the film elicited vivid memories of the process of downward mobility in the initial phase of their migration process forty years ago.

Downward mobility

One of the key themes of ‘Living Like a Common Man’ is the process of downward mobility experienced by newly arrived Gujarati migrants after moving to London. Living in a smaller house than accustomed to, they are suddenly expected to perform household chores previously done by their mothers or servants at home: ‘I never made beds in India, and now you can see, I’m doing it. This is London. I have to do all the things on my own’. At the workplace this young man had to do menial work that he would never have accepted in India: ‘At the first day of my job, my boss said, “You have to clean the garden”. I said, “what is this? Can I do this there?” I went into the bathroom and literally cried. I thought, “what am I doing here? Did I come to London to do all those things?”’ His move to London was a bad experience: ‘According to me, and from the culture I come, I think that I become smaller by doing all these things.’

The experience of downward mobility is expressed most clearly in the statement that gave the film its title: ‘Here in India I live like a prince, I don’t need to do anything, everything is ready for me. I don’t need to use public transport, because I got a car, I got a motorbike. It’s the life of a prince. But in London I live like a common man.’ The parents of the youngsters are also aware of this process of downward mobility. One father stated: ‘When he calls us, and we hear how he lives there, we feel a bit sad. Here he lived in a house with 10 to 12 rooms. We have four bathrooms. But there, they live with three in a room as big as our bathroom. So we feel a bit sad.’

Reflecting on downward mobility

When we showed the film to the main characters, they insisted that we should show the film to youngsters in India, ‘so that they know that life is not so easy in London and that we have to struggle’. It was also interesting to see the responses of newly arrived migrants during the first screening at the guesthouse. Although they themselves did not participate in the making of the film, having arrived only very recently, they could relate to what they saw and started to reflect on their decision to come to London. One girl who had arrived in London a few months before, told us after seeing the film that she felt a bit sad: ‘If I had seen this film in India I would have probably decided not come to London. Or, perhaps I would have come anyway, but if I had seen all of this I would not have been so disappointed.’
The parents in India also watched the film with great interest. They already knew that the living conditions of their sons and daughters in London were not very good, but they were very curious for visual information about their children’s actual housing situation. Many questions were posed about what they saw on screen. One of the fathers in India smugly informed us, after seeing the film, that “If you made a very good film, you portrayed the life of our son well, but the only thing that you got wrong is the title of the film. It should not have been ‘Living as a common man’, but ‘Living as a common man’ because they really live as common people in London.”

We also showed the film to a family of Gujarati migrants who had come to the Netherlands after they had to flee Uganda in 1972. The grandfather said that the film had reminded him of the time he had moved from India to Uganda in 1956. “I also faced many difficulties in adjusting to the new environment. At that time, I asked myself many times: ‘What am I doing over here?’ Just like that boy in the film.”

The film reminded his daughter of when they had left Uganda, in 1972, and had ended up in London before moving on to the Netherlands: “I was 12 years old and lived with my mother, brother and sister in the living room of a relative for three months. We had a nice house in Kampala and I felt that we had gone down by moving to Europe. The film reminded me of my disappointment as a young girl in the UK: ‘Is this Europe, will this be our future?’ At the time we of course did not know for how long that situation would last. So I could very well imagine that these youngsters felt that they had gone down by moving to another country.”

Dutch youngsters reacted very differently. They had to laugh when the Indian youngsters expressed their difficulties in the film and told us: “What’s the problem with making your own bed, doing your laundry or having to clean the garden? What’s the big deal?” A girl of the same age, but belonging to the youngest generation of the Gujarati family in the Netherlands, did not laugh, but said the film made it possible for her to see the past experiences of her grandfather, how it must have been for him as a newcomer: “My grandfather told us how he felt when he first came to Uganda from India. How difficult it was for him to adjust. We knew about it, but watching the film we could actually see for the first time that life is very tough, living in such a small house crammed into a room with four people. I could never really see my grandfather’s past but because of your film I was able to see it, how it must have been to start a new life in another country.”

Older members of this Gujarati family in the Netherlands shared this recognition. One man said: “Migrants always have to take a step back. Your language, your diplomas, everything is denigrated in a new context.” His wife, who migrated from Bombay to the Netherlands about twenty years ago, told us that we portrayed a common aspect of migration. “Migration is always a painful process. We know that because we have gone through that. The film portrays that well, but you as [film makers] are surprised by that and don’t know that, because you did not experience that. For us it is a normal thing. It is part of the life of every migrant.”

The rewards.
The audience of settled migrants commented on how a period of downward mobility can in the end lead to great rewards. “What you filmed is the primary school phase of migration. Every athlete in the Olympic Games has to go through hard times to accomplish something. He falls down while practicing, maybe he breaks things down, but in the end he wins the gold medal. Not everybody can take this. Not everybody is fit to struggle that kind of struggle that everyday has the discipline and willpower. That is why only a small number of people migrate. Migration is always accompanied by suffering and pain, but you accept it because you know that in the end you gain. You have to go through this situation before you can blossom. The youngsters in your film are dedicated to make it work. They want to achieve something. Maybe after ten years, when you visit them again, they are better off than the British youngsters of the same age who started out with much more, but always stayed in the same spot.”

From these varied responses we conclude that the process of downward mobility expressed in the film (by the main characters themselves and in the editorial choices made by the filmmaker(s)) rings a bell for past and present migrants, who recognize themselves and the difficulties they face during migration. The film does not show the whole migration process, but gives an in-depth view of the ‘initial phase’ of migration. It will be interesting to film the main characters ten years from now, to see how they handled the migration process over time.

Family pressure.
In addition to the conflicting situation of downward and upward mobility, the film calls attention to the social links between the youngsters in London and their family members in India. As filmmakers we attempted to portray London and Gujarat as connected somehow even interchangeable. In London, the youngsters live in a completely Gujarati environment. The youngsters make phone calls to Gujarat on a daily basis and parents send goods to their children by mail. Family links are mainly positive, but can also be hard to deal with when there is social pressure involved. Some of the youngsters migrated to London to escape that pressure. “No need to worry about other people, just think of yourself.” This aspect of migration as a strategy of avoidance is most clearly expressed in the film by the main characters themselves and parents send goods to their children by mail. Family links are mainly positive, but can also be hard to deal with when there is social pressure involved. Some of the youngsters migrated to London to escape that pressure. “No need to worry about other people, just think of yourself.”

Isabelle Makay

Resources


Reflection on family pressure.
Both the positive and the negative aspects of family linkages are acknowledged by viewers with a migrant background. One Gujarati migrant in the Netherlands said, “When I saw the scene about the box with food that the parents send to their son in UK every three months, I was touched because it reminded me of 1972 when my father was in Austria, after having fled Uganda, and we were in UK with my mother. At that time, he sent us a box with chocolates. That is so Indian, to show your love through food. England is of course famous for chocolates, but still my father sent chocolates from Austria to us in UK to show how much he loved us and wanted to be with us. The scene really brought back the emotional feeling I had at that time.”

Stories about social pressure seem to reverberate most with young viewers. A young Gujarati girl in the Netherlands explained how the film reminded her of a discussion she had had with her nephew in India a few months back. “My nephew is 14 years old and he has these fantasies about the West. He told me he dreams of going abroad for further study.” She asked him why, but there was not much he could say. “He has no idea about life here, except: ‘It is better over there. It is beautiful over there.’”

One of the key themes of ‘Living like a Common Man’ is the process of downward mobility... Living in a smaller house than accustomed to, they are suddenly expected to perform household chores previously done by their mothers or servants at home.

Below: London life: doing your own washing and ironing, watching TV together in the kitchen.

Above: The Indian youngsters in front of their London house. Parents back home in India.

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When over lunch, I observed that the authors of the books I had been asked to comment upon characterised the dominant culture as ‘heterosexist, masculinist, and macho’, my lady friend couldn’t restrain a mocking smile, “Macho? Most of these poor devils are decidedly mother dependent, many a wife referring to her consort as her eldest son! When you come down to it, this place is run by women. The big boy just remains that, a big boy, full of bravado, which needs his wife to prop him up.” Her sneer reminded me of Thailand, where the lady of the house is referred to as ‘the hind legs of the elephant’ that would tumble without its mainstay.

As a male of the effeminiate variety, Garcia knows what he writes about and, graciously, over the years in which the dominant discourse was imposed and gradually internalised, the seeds were sown for the emancipation from that very discourse, or, at least, of becoming a respected partner in the totality of the nation. Whereas a blatantly rampant and fabulous gay culture emerged in the 1970s, it seemed as if the same got bogged down in stereotypical comedy shows. Toward the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the pressure for emancipation in wider society gathered steam, and seen from the ‘Update’ added to the book’s 2008/9 editions, this movement toward full citizenship is well under way. Even so, the ‘coming out’ of the masculine gay, which is the perspective in which Garcia discusses the works of three authors, is a painfully slow process at the time that the capitalist juggernaut reduces the mother-dependent macho-males to puppets who need to shore up their egos through violence against women and boldy gays.

To be gay?
Before concentrating on being gay in the last five decades, we should be reminded that general ideas about homosexuality stem from a rather recent, Western psychiatric discourse that has infiltrated, but not radically subverted, the native Tagalog-Filipino understanding of, to use another imported idea, ‘gyneness’. In the West as elsewhere, culture, or the understanding of life, is always on the move, even as in this post-colonial yet imperial capitalist era of globalisation the current Western understanding of human behaviour – and much else – is colonially pervasive.

So, however frequently Philippine culture is characterised as ‘heterosexist, masculinist, macho’ (and effeminato and homophobic to boot), this current picture is no guide for understanding the past when, for example, power and dignity revolved around spiritual potency which was seniory rather than gender marked. From the extensive discussion of the pre-colonial female and the cross-dressing male babaylan (priest, medium, healer, spiritual leader), one might conclude that Cadet’s observation of the archaic natural power of mature females also held in the archipelago and that, over colonial history and into the present, this power persisted as mother’s (and wife’s) moral superiority.

Be this as it may, both Garcia and Tadjar suggest that the present-day cross-dressing babaylan is a prestigious carry-over from animist days in which gender, gender-crossing and sexual practice were conceptually far apart from the novel notion of homosexuality. Meanwhile, though, for most members of the educated classes such distinctions ‘have fallen away’ and vanished into an irretrievable past. Consequently, the babaylan is not only labelled ‘homosexual’, but becomes, in masculinist homophobic logic, the homosexual par excellence, whose interiority (bod, kalooban) is woman-hearted, and who enacts this inversion in everyday life.

It is this very enactment, this show of effeminacy, that makes the male homosexual a homosexual, not the sex act itself. Hence, his non-effeminante partner in sex remains ‘heterosexual’ or straight. This construction makes it plausible to suppose that the babaylan’s gender is not only consciously part and parcel of the dominant macho culture, including its internalised homophobia, which leaves him lovelorn, anguished and self-hating.

When you come down to it, this place is run by women. The big boy just remains that, a big boy, full of bravado, which needs his wife to prop him up.” Her sneer reminded me of Thailand, where the lady of the house is referred to as ‘the hind legs of the elephant’ that would tumble without its mainstay.

According to my acquaintance with the urban underdog, and the Makings of Globalization.


Niels Mulder

When over lunch, I observed that the authors of the books I had been asked to comment upon characterised the dominant culture as ‘heterosexist, masculinist, and macho’, my lady friend couldn’t restrain a mocking smile, “Macho? Most of these poor devils are decidedly mother dependent, many a wife referring to her consort as her eldest son! When you come down to it, this place is run by women. The big boy just remains that, a big boy, full of bravado, which needs his wife to prop him up.” Her sneer reminded me of Thailand, where the lady of the house is referred to as ‘the hind legs of the elephant’ that would tumble without its mainstay.

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To be an exportable lower-class woman?
This very juggernaut forms large in Tadjar’s narrative and dominates the current phase in the evolution of the permanent crisis of Philippine culture. In this period, prostitution became the central metaphor for export-oriented and tourism-friendly policies that prostituted the nation as a whole and in which prostituted women became the paradigmatic figure of the crisis of Philippine culture (pp. 25-45). Whereas this image, in which feminised bodies and natural resources are immorally used by multinational capital, pertained most saliently to the developmentalist policies of the Marcos period, under globalisation the crisis of culture comes to be expressed through the gendered and sexual imagery of overseas domestic work (p. 27). Within this Olympian context of the international production processes and their attendant division of labour, the author proposes to explore the socio-subjectivity of female overseas contract workers through her exegesis of relevant belles-lettres.

Through going overseas, mothers, daughters, wives not only abandon their customary roles while tearing themselves apart through the gendered and sexual imagery of overseas domestic work (p. 27). Within this Olympian context of the international production processes and their attendant division of labour, the author proposes to explore the socio-subjectivity of female overseas contract workers through her exegesis of relevant belles-lettres.

which, according to Bulatat, leads to lowly individuated personalities who incorporate certain others (bawiep) in their self-experience (1964:438). As such, this ‘tearing themselves apart’ and becoming ‘women alone’ reminded me of a statement by the psychiatrist Lourdes Lapuz, who lamented, ‘Perhaps, some day, the time will come when a Filipino no longer has to cross miles of ocean and continent to emancipate himself from his parents’ (1972:189). It could be that this ‘some day’ has arrived with the massive deployment of Filipino labour world wide which has opened the possibility for emancipation, individuation, and self-assertion.

First of all, this is illustrated at the poetry and stories of highly educated members of the middle classes in the capital that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives. I do not know how helpful these literary products are to induce madness. But they may affect her identity experience and results in a loneliness-induced madness.

To be urban underclass? In the second chapter of ‘Urbanisation’, Tadjadit seems to move closer to actual experience through reflecting on a novel by Jun Cruz Reyes that highlights ‘pedestrian testimony against the transnational spirit’ at ‘the time of catastrophe’. The person at the centre of the narrative is a university student who, because ‘students are communists’, is demonised as a danger to men, with Islam probably most associated with this character. The person at the centre of the narrative is a testimony against the transnational spirit at ‘the time of the revolution in the present’ (p.378). Revolution? Whereas the resulting observations take us to the fly-overs of the symbolic Manila of the 1990s, it still looks useful to reflect on the radical chapters to ‘Revolution’, and so we are exposed to the Maoist romanticism of revolution-inspired ‘masses’ that should be ‘served’ and ‘awakened’ and with whom (the urban, educated) cadres ‘become one’ in order to create ‘a cultural counterforce and a popular democratic movement’. As long as the Marcos tyranny lasted – and even as the great Chinese example had already crumbled – such demands and struggles for a new identity were held at a great distance. However, following the popular uprising of 1986, the revolutionary movement has been in steady decline, while the ‘sorrows of the people’ live on unabated. Even so, giving attention to the ‘undercurrents of experience’ is a legitimate exercise as it may reveal ‘cultural resources of the living past that bear radical political potentials for unfinished imaginations of the revolution in the present’ (p.378).

The living past Within the scope of this review of voices from the periphery, it is not possible to do full justice to two very complex, at times rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives. Even if an attempt is made to do so, that, in the tradition of literary critics, caused me sometimes rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that it is not possible to do full justice to two very complex, at times rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives.

In the second chapter of ‘Urbanisation’, the author wants to explore different voices and understandings of the modes of power and production that operate in postcolonial social formations and, therefore, for seeing the different forms that everyday struggles for emancipation are. These parallels are then visualised in individual cases of human ‘metropolitan debris’ who ‘endure life as excess matter’ (p.220), and whose misadventures and reflections are yet revealing of particular moments of Manila’s metropolisationism (p.229).

Revolution? Whereas the resulting observations take us to the fly-overs of the symbolic Manila of the 1990s, it still looks useful to reflect on the radical chapters to ‘Revolution’, and so we are exposed to the Maoist romanticism of revolution-inspired ‘masses’ that should be ‘served’ and ‘awakened’ and with whom (the urban, educated) cadres ‘become one’ in order to create ‘a cultural counterforce and a popular democratic movement’. As long as the Marcos tyranny lasted – and even as the great Chinese example had already crumbled – such demands and struggles for a new identity were held at a great distance. However, following the popular uprising of 1986, the revolutionary movement has been in steady decline, while the ‘sorrows of the people’ live on unabated. Even so, giving attention to the ‘undercurrents of experience’ is a legitimate exercise as it may reveal ‘cultural resources of the living past that bear radical political potentials for unfinished imaginations of the revolution in the present’ (p.378).

The living past Within the scope of this review of voices from the periphery, it is not possible to do full justice to two very complex, at times rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives. Even if an attempt is made to do so, that, in the tradition of literary critics, caused me sometimes rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that it is not possible to do full justice to two very complex, at times rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives.
Festschrift: Asia in three parts

Julia Read


Andrew Symon was an Australian journalist who was based in Southeast Asia, first in Indonesia in the early 1990s and then in Singapore from 1998. He specialised in mining and energy resources, although he also wrote about people and politics and had a deep personal interest in colonial history and its legacy which he also expressed in his journalism. His understanding of Southeast Asia was held in high esteem before his unexpected death in October 2009.

Writing from Asia has three parts, containing 49 chapters consisting of articles he researched and wrote. The first part, ‘Politics and Personalities’, contains twenty articles that explore major geopolitical issues that confront the countries of Southeast Asia, such as climate change, energy resources, environmental degradation, political developments and population growth.

The second part, ‘Energy and Resources’, contains the meat of Symon’s researches. These are detailed, carefully documented and wide-ranging studies of developments and issues related to mining and energy resources. The highlight of his career was probably a report commissioned by the Lowy Institute, an independent think-tank based in Sydney, in preparation for a conference dealing with Asia-Pacific perspectives on nuclear energy and global governance in April 2008. ‘Nuclear Power in Southeast Asia: Implications for Australia and non-proliferation’.

The third part of the book, ‘Book Reviews’, showcases his multi-dimensional interests in the society and history of Southeast Asia. The book reviews are mainly essays that paraphrase and retell the messages of the authors in a way that reflects his focus on the public interest. The books covered in the reviews are varied: the story of Chin Peng, leader of the Communist rebellion in Malaya, explores the nationalist thinking behind his existential struggle; in ‘The New Chinese Empire’, veteran China watch Roger Terrill forecasts likely future political developments in China; ‘Target North Korea’ explicates the development of the paranoid psychology of the North Korean regime and discusses the possibility of ‘bringing them in from the cold’ to end the suffering of the unfortunate populace. His review of Elizabeth Economy’s ‘The River Runs Black’ details the efforts of the Chinese to address their pressing need to prevent further environmental degradation. He also reviews Anthony Reid’s ‘An Indonesian Frontier’ by retelling the long history that preceded the Acehnese rebellion. He reminds us of the significance of the first great meeting of newly independent Asian and African states in 1955 in Bandung, explained by the late Jamie Mackie in ‘Bandung 1955’ as one of the first and most significant steps towards the emergence of a new multi-polar world that developed later as the sharp polarities of the Cold War disintegrated. He also reviews John Morison’s ‘Different Societies, Shared Future’, clarifying that it is the cultural differences between the two societies that are the root cause of the continuous see-sawing that is a notable feature of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia, which needs ‘ballast’ in the form of more institutional and ‘people to people’ links. Another article introduces us to the charm of the unique architecture of the Khmer modernist movement that flourished under Prince Shihanouk, which was characterised by diversity, subtlety and innovation, but is now being lost through demolition and unregulated development as more money flows into Cambodia (‘Building Cambodia’ by Helen Ross and Darryl Collins). These are a few of the offerings in the last section of the book, which – unlike the earlier sections – is imbued with humanitarian and aesthetic values, and this enhances the other chapters for the reader by displaying the underpinning basis of Symon’s world view.

The paperback volume presents well, appears well-edited and includes an index, although on closer examination one finds quite a number of mangled sentences, incorrect page references, and so on, which betray its hasty compilation. For students and scholars, the value of this collection is faceted, like the structure of the book. For those interested in the region, not just in terms of mining and energy resources, it provides an extremely well-informed and broad, yet deep, introduction to enhance their understandings in many disciplines such as economics, engineering, environmental studies, history, politics and public policy. For students and professionals in mining and energy resources it should be required reading, one would think.

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Notes
1 In 2000, he wrote a popular series of articles about STOVIA (the Vocational School of Medicine for Indigenous Doctors), an institution of the Dutch Colonial Government that produced many thinkers of the revolutionary generation in Indonesia, for the Jakarta Post.
2 The report is also available on the Lowy Institute’s website.
3 Published as ‘Fact and Fiction on Chin Peng’ by Andrew Symon, 1854 Newsletter 433, March 2003.

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Research sometimes serves to deconstruct power relations: to show how some groups are disenfranchised, marginalised or removed from histories of nations through literature, film or other cultural practices.

Academic work, in such cases, provides theoretical and direct criticisms of how power structures, institutions, politicians and others, assert power.

Andy Fuller

A review of two films on power: Performances of Authority and Being prominent in Indonesia, a day in the life of Ibu Mooryati

RESEARCH PROVIDES GROUNDS for rights, representation, equality – at least in the mind, if not beyond it. Research often seems inextricably linked to causes, despite an academic’s own claim to impartiality and objectivity.

Sometimes an academic’s cause, however, might just be to assert the importance of his or her field. The political significance or actuality of a subject helps an academic gain to assert the importance of his or her own field. The political academic’s own claim to impartiality and objectivity.

Performances of Authority

A review of two films on power: Performances of Authority (for short) by Frédik Steijlen and Deasy Simandjuntak, and Being prominent in Indonesia, a day in the life of Ibu Mooryati (Being prominent for short) by Henk Schulte Nordholt and Fridus Steijlen – present two different examples of inquiries into the power-plays and power structures of present-day Indonesia.

While both films are drawn from KITLV’s Recording the Future project, the two films were made in different ways. Steijlen and Simandjuntak’s film came about following a reviewing of recorded material made throughout the eight years of this ongoing audio-visual archive project. He said that they didn’t set out to film ‘performances of authority’, but that instead, performances of authority were revealed in their recordings of everyday life. As such, Performances is a gleaning of diverse material cut from recordings from different locations and years. Locations are named, and the credits inform us that filming was completed between 2003 and 2009; viewers are thus given a taste of some of the ‘performances of authority’ in post-New Order and perhaps post-reform Indonesia.

Being prominent, on the other hand, is an up-close and personal encounter with Indonesia’s rich. Ibu Mooryati is a member of the Solonese royal family, founder of Mustika Rutu cosmetics company and a political representative.

Recordings were made during several days in 2007. Andre Tracidputra (camera) and Lexy Rambadeta (camera and interviews) follow Ibu Mooryati on a tour of her ‘everyday life’. The film shows just how close, in her private, her personal assistant, her PhD supervisor, at a factory for her cosmetic products, at one of the Mustika Rutu spas, in parliament fulfilling the role of speaker, and at a promotional launch of traditional Javanese medicine attended by President Yudhoyono. The story of her everyday life is told in her own words and in responses to questions from the film’s interviewer, Lexy Rambadeta. She speaks mostly in Indonesian, yet sometimes elaborates in Javanese or English. Javanese seems to be her language of familiarity and intimacy, while her use of English appears to be invested with a sense of authority and power.

Ibu Mooryati glides through her day, fully in control of herself and her surroundings. Yet, for brief moments, the veil of control and order is slightly dislodged: in one instance she addresses her Lexy for asking too many questions, while in another she scolds her assistant for not being on top of matters. These are rare moments and the somewhat mancure vision of Ibu Mooryati suggests that the film was intended to be made with her full collaboration. The lack of unguarded moments and the relative uniformity of the elite circles in which she moves, makes the film somewhat sterile. But and lacking in conflict. But perhaps, that is the point. A different approach could have had the camera crew remaining in the background. Or, interviews could have been conducted in a more analytical manner. Perhaps these approaches could have provided a more nuanced perspective on her everyday life. But Being prominent shows Ibu Mooryati as she would like to see herself. As such, the film is given a first-hand experience of how she performs her authority – in this case, over the camera crew and over the viewer.

Performances, however, presents a greater opportunity for the viewer to derive meaning from the film. The film is fragmentary, questionning and postulating: it presents kinds of ‘performances of authority’ as practiced in everyday life in Indonesia. These range from the selected location for the new regional offices in Payakumbuh, the provision of security on the streets of Jakarta, the theft of small fees from bus drivers in Delangau, the singing of the national anthem in Sintang and the attitudes of civil servants in Northern Maluku province. The film is narrated through a multiplicity of voices, all representing different power structures. Interviews are carried out with both the disenfranchising and the disenfranchised.

In Bintan Buyu, a narrative is given by a worker involved in the construction of a new office building, in which he speaks of corruption and malpractice; the film then turns to a narrative with a resident who is about to be removed from his property against his will and with little prospect of being appropriately reimbursed for his loss.

Authority, the film shows, is performed in many ways and by many actors. The film is not an exhaustive collection of all kinds of performances: Lexy Rambadeta, however, it provides a model for ways in which the archives can be read.

Authority is performed through architecture, through uniforms, through body language, through paying protection money, through sitting around and guarding a foreign government representative’s house. The interview with Max Manca, a local tough guy (premon) in Pasur Bara, came about after he inquired as to what the crew were doing. His interview was with a skillful act to ingratiate themselves with the local and informal authority and also gave an insight into the way a local premon seeks to imagine his role amongst his community and how he seeks to imagine his identity. Max Manca’s manner of delivery, however, stands out from other encounters in the film – where he is smiling and opening up to the camera, others appear defensive and restrained in their comments; this is particularly evident in the ‘interc’ interview in Payakumbuh, when he whispers in reference to his semi-illegal role.

While Being prominent appears as the more complete and polished film, Performances raises more telling questions: it cuts closer to actual conflicts between different performers of authority and those who may or may not be the subjects of this authority. Indeed, there are moments when some of its subjects are either caught off-guard or in somewhat compromised situations. For example, the encounters between civil servant teachers and the candidates of civil service are particularly fraught; but is the bullying of one candidate strengthened by the presence of the camera – and the fact that the footage is being watched out of context? Elsewhere, a policeman responds in a confused manner to the interviewer’s questioning. This policeman is shown to be compromised and unsure of how to articulate what his work entails (antisipio). This provides a moment of humour and the viewer can ask: is one laughing at an individual, or is one laughing at a caricature of a representative of authority and power in Indonesia?

Being prominent, on the other hand, doesn’t contain the practical details of Performances, for it is made in collaboration with Ibu Mooryati. The two films, each with their own set of questions about authority and ways of documenting and filming, provide stimulating portraits of everyday life in Indonesia.

They present audiovisual analyses and narratives that counter the overwhelming majority of written texts on studies of contemporary Indonesia. Moreover, the critical aspect of KITLV’s Recording the Future project becomes apparent in these films.

This review is based on preview editions of the two films. Some minor details of the films may have been changed in the final stages of editing prior to the films’ public release in December 2011.

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Notes
1 Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies; www.kitlv.nl
2 See http://www.kitlv.nl/home/Projects?id=20
LONTAR: FOUND IN TRANSLATION

How do we get to know foreign cultures in general and Indonesian in particular? Through tourism? Tourists tend to scratch the surface and very selectively at that (many think the holiday ‘paradise’ Bali is an independent nation). Through the media? Media reports on the 2005 tsunami or the sporadic terrorist attacks do not offer a balanced perspective on Indonesia either. No, we can best become familiar with another culture by reading its literary works – and for that to work we need translations.

Roy Viragen

LITERATURE IS A USEFUL TOOL to gain insight into a foreign culture, and the rich history of Indonesian literature indeed offers, when translated, a valuable gateway to Indonesian culture. Knowledge of this rich history is limited (although this is unfortunately also the case for most Indonesians). During the Cold War, the works of Indonesian authors that were translated mostly followed the ideological agenda of the recipient country. And then, with the waning power of the Communist bloc in the mid-eighties, the West appeared to simply lose interest in Indonesian literature. Lontar was established in 1987 to step into this void.

Unlike the Cold War lust for power, Lontar’s aim is a humanitarian one and, as Edward Said wrote, humanism is a “knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sake.”

Slightly more than two-and-half decades ago the poet Sapardi Djoko Damono was appointed an independent, not-for-profit foundation based in Jakarta, which aims to promote Indonesian literature and culture to an English speaking audience by, among other things, translating and publishing Indonesian literature so it becomes accessible to an international audience. Furthermore, Lontar aims to preserve the history of Indonesian literature.

Anthony Reid, eminent historian of Southeast Asia, said: “Lontar has become one of the most important windows on Indonesia for the rest of the world.” Last June I went to Lontar’s office in the center of Jakarta to meet the chairman of the Board of Trustees and Wisconsin native John McGlynn, who had studied Indonesian literature at the University of Indonesia, to undertake some translations. The two invited the chief editor of Tempo Magazine and poet, Goenawan Mohamad for a discussion; subsequently two more friends were invited: poet and literary critic Subagio Sastrowardoyo (1924-1995) and sociologist and writer Umar Kayam (1932-2002). And out of their discussions Lontar was born.

Since that time, hundreds of Indonesian authors have been translated and published by Lontar. However, the approximately hundred titles produced so far sell only 2000 copies on average and mostly in Southeast Asia because of poor distribution, which represents a failure and hampers Lontar’s goals. Not only is shipping costly, the burden of distribution lies with the publisher, i.e. it is on consignment and unsold copies are sent back or pulped at the expense of the publisher. However, new distribution methods and technologies of recent years might alter this situation, especially for a niche publisher like Lontar: online bookstores (Lontar’s publications can since recently, for example, be purchased at Amazon.com). e-Books (Lontar’s publications are made available as e-books in cooperation with Book Cyclone), print-on-demand and online payment systems.

“Profit,” McGlynn says, “has never been the motive behind Lontar’s work, but how can Lontar survive if relying only on income from the sale of its books? Frankly, it can’t.” Lontar, therefore, depends for its survival on donors; sixty percent of Lontar’s resources comes from Indonesia and these donations are mostly in small amounts, for example, through fundraisers. Historically, some of Lontar’s largest grants have come from foreign donors, such as the Ford Foundation. Recently, however, Lontar has made more inroads into obtaining grants from domestic resources. One example is a substantial grant from the Djarum Foundation, which made possible the translation and publication of the first ten titles in Lontar’s new Modern Library of Indonesia series.

Lontar has a policy to not allow donors to push their own agendas, and will refuse grants if necessary. But so far, donors have not influenced Lontar in a negative way; in fact there have been positive interactions. For example, the Ford Foundation’s already existing focus on manuscripts led it to provide a grant to Lontar within this program, and which resulted in the publication of Illuminations: Writing Traditions of Indonesia.

Until today, Lontar has received no substantial support from the government of Indonesia, financial or otherwise. The Indonesian political elite “does not properly recognize the significant role that language and culture play in identity and nation-building.” As elsewhere in the world, “enlightened government policies” are not on the political agenda. Still, Lontar tries to convince the government that it has an important role to play in conserving and promoting culture through offering subsidies and financial incentives. While Lontar claims, for good reasons, that literature should also be valued on its own merits, McGlynn realizes that the Indonesian political elite has to be approached on their turf, because, with very few exceptions, the merit of literature is simply overlooked. And so, some of the instrumental arguments put forward: it could improve Indonesia’s image abroad (Indonesia is more than an abundant reservoir of cheap labor); and by improving its image, Indonesia’s power could increase (this is Joseph S. Nye’s soft power argument); and, in turn, it could bolster Indonesia’s GDP (this is Richard Florida’s creative industry argument). Even if the government of Indonesia is not interested in the translation and publication of literary works of historical significance; Based on past experience, McGlynn would not want to bet on it.

If the government of Indonesia decides to set aside a budget for this purpose – unlikely in normal times, even unlikely in times of upcoming elections – then it should be done sooner rather than later. A translation of a novel requires one to two years, and no matter how good a translation is, it also has to go through a lengthy editing process.

A great many Indonesian authors have written novels, poems, drama and essays on par with what the world of literature has to offer. While Indonesian literature should be read first and foremost as literature, it can at the very same time be read to learn about and to become acquainted with Indonesia and its cultures. A third reason for reading Indonesian literature in translation is to discover ideas which can be valuable in one’s own culture. One idea Indonesia could share with the world is that of tolerance – Indonesians could learn from themselves though – and if tolerance is not merely a cliché, we have to see how it is practiced in, for example, literature. In Indonesian literary works, tolerance is shown thematically, for example by showing the fluidity of sexuality, or as embedded in literary style. Indonesian “writers are versatile and have a consistent ability to cross genres.” And it is safe to say that Indonesians practiced hybridity long before it was theorized as postmodernism.

Sutat@Calzoum Bachri (1941)

What flows

With a thousand regrets
I search for You
With all means available
I search for You
With all potential
I search for You

A Poem

1953, complete

Why not believe in God?
Such sadness is poetry

On us he has no hold
In sorrow only does he stir
In our death
He too is stopped by silence
Publishing Indonesian literature in English

There is though a tension between, on the one hand, this practice of tolerance and, on the other hand, a very long history of censorship. According to McGlynn, censorship is mainly horizontal in Indonesia. Even during Suharto’s New Order (1966-1998), outright (or vertical) censorship was very rare (an exception was the forced closing of Tempo Magazine in 1994). However, this situation offers Lontar opportunities, especially in cases concerning sensitive issues or topics, which major publishing houses choose to steer clear of. Lontar’s Menongore has been a particularly excellent platform for muted voices, for example, a collection of stories from former political prisoners in Menongore 6, and a collection of gay literature in Menongore 7. Of the latter McGlynn said that the “Indonesian archipelago is as multi-sexual as it is multi-ethnic.”

Menongore aims to give an overview of the rich Indonesian literature by selecting, translating and publishing short stories, poetry and essays. Menongore is a “gradual construction, a step-by-step fitting together of the jigsaw puzzle that is Indonesian literature.” And as such, Menongore could very well be a never-ending story. Menongore was initially planned to be published once a year, but there have been an average of more than two years between issues. So far it has been book-format, but soon this will be changed to an electronic format due to the high costs. Producing Menongore is much more expensive than the usual publications, because so many authors and translators are involved for each issue.

Lontar has produced a “cogent body” of translations “to study the scope, range, and depth of Indonesian literary history.” Lontar likes to ensure that each piece of work it translates has already proven itself, and that there is already a consensus on its merits. Translating is dancing on a tight-rope: “respecting the integrity of the original while translating has already proven itself, and that there is already a consensus on its merits. Translating is dancing on a tight-rope: “respecting the integrity of the original while still honoring the intelligence of the reader is often very difficult.” McGlynn claims that “very few literary critics are qualified to review translations of Indonesian literature.” If they don’t like the book, they blame it on the translation, “It helps to give them a voice in the global (literary) community.”

Unfortunately, for Indonesian authors it is not financially beneficial to be translated; nonetheless, it is an honor. It helps to give them a voice in the global (literary) community.” Lontar will continue helping Indonesian authors by translating, publishing and archiving their work. Next year, Lontar will celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday. While questions concerning (financial) sustainability remain, Lontar certainly has shown the will to continue and so it will (with a little help from its friends and donors).

For more information on Lontar see www.lontar.org

Notes
2 Quoted in the September 2009 Lontar newsletter. All newsletters on the website are written by John McGlynn, see www.lontar.org.
3 Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes come from this interview, conducted on 22 June 2011.
4 March 2011 Lontar newsletter.
6 An exception is the current minister of foreign affairs, Marty Natalegawa, who bought Lontar’s books as mementos for foreign dignitaries, instead of the usual plaques; he was also the honorary chairman of the International Publishing Forum of which McGlynn was the chairman in 2010.
7 John H. McGlynn. 2000. “Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions: Indonesian Literature Today,” Mânoa 12, no.1 (Summer 2000), p. 43. Mânoa was founded at the University of Hawaii in the same year as Lontar, but there is no institutional connection. McGlynn is the Indonesian country editor for Mânoa.
8 In an email (9-8-2011), Simone Bühler, Director Guest of Honour Programme at the Frankfurt Buchmesse [http://www.buchmesse.de/en/], wrote that she is not yet able to provide confirmation of Indonesia’s invitation, because Indonesian literary organizations still have to go through the application process for this programme.
9 May 2011 Lontar newsletter.
10 For example, by one of its godfathers: Jean-François Lyotard. 1984. The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, p. 79.
11 For an excellent insight on Tempo’s case see: Janet Steele. 2005. Wars Within, The Story of Tempo, an independentequinox and ISEAS. Tempo was founded in 1971.
12 These political prisoners were alleged members of the former communist party and/or its auxiliary organizations. Ever since the bloody turmoil of 1965/1966 everything that smells like communist party and/or its auxiliary organizations. Ever since the bloody turmoil of 1965/1966 everything that smells like communism is considered taboo.
13 May 2010 Lontar newsletter. Menongore 7 was also published in Indonesian as Dari Balik Kiri.
15 And foreign publishers are herewith given easy access to consider the option for further translations of a book. Ideally, they still would have to translate from the original, which does not always happen – which, in turn, violates the rights of the first translator.
“News from Asia” offers you items of scholarly interest provided by our local partners in Asia. They can include, among others, information on regional events, art collections or places of interest. The news for this issue has been compiled by our regional editor Lu Caixia, a former print journalist and current research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre in Singapore (ISEAS). Other than being involved in research and editorial work, she is also in charge of organising workshops and conferences for the Centre. Her research interest is in comparing historical and contemporary interactions between China and Southeast Asian countries and how these affect current mutual perceptions. For matters related to editorial contributions to this section as well as requests to be included in events listings, please write to her at iias_iseas@iseas.edu.sg

A MUCH-AWAITED NEW NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM is set to open in 2014, bringing some of the best of Southeast Asia’s natural history collection to the public. This new museum is an expansion of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR), which is named after two former Singaporeans, John Raffles and William Innes-Su�ner. The museum’s collection was originally owned by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and was finally given a permanent home and renamed the “Zoological Reference Collection”. A further merger with the Botany department’s Herbarium in 1998 formed the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research. The museum’s focus was on research and to facilitate undergraduate and graduate education, which enabled it to retain its position as a leading biodiversity research centre in the region. However, the museum's collection was only accessible to researchers and not to the public, for whom the collection was originally intended. A 2,000m² public exhibition gallery was finally opened in 2001, but only started receiving an overwhelming number of visitors after news reports in 2009 highlighted the museum’s vast yet little-known collection.

With its new-found popularity, the museum realised that current facilities were inadequate to service public demand, especially after more than 3000 visitors thronged the gallery on International Museum Day in 2009. The local newspapers were a buzz with public demands for the establishment of a proper natural history museum. In response, an unnamed donor offered S$160 million (approximately US$7.9 million) to initiate the endeavour. This led to a major fundraising effort in which the museum had to raise enough funds within six months to secure a plot of land for the new building. Sufficient funding was finally obtained from various charitable foundations and organisations. The Lee Foundation pledged a massive S$25 million (US$15 million) and, in recognition of one of Singapore’s most prominent Chinese businessmen and philanthropists, the new museum will be named the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.

It has been two years since the first efforts were made to push for a new museum dedicated to natural history in Singapore, and a team of consultants has now been appointed to lead the new building’s design, construction and setup. The museum has recently also raised enough funds to buy the skeletons of three giant diplodocus sauropod dinosaurs from the United States as the centrepiece of its gallery. When the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum opens its doors to the public in three years, we hope that it will herald a new era of interest in natural history, nature conservation and appreciation of the natural environment in Singapore.

Sarawak Language Technologies (SaLT) Research Group – Preserving Sarawak’s Indigenous Languages through Localisation and Internationalisation Approaches

Alvin W. Yeo

THE SARAWAK LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES (SaLT) Research Group at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) has initiated a number of projects to revitalise and maintain the indigenous languages of Sarawak by making use of information communication technologies (ICT), and to bridge the digital divide between the rural and the urban communities by applying technology to local content. Sarawak is one of two East Malaysian states located on the island of Borneo, and the largest state in Malaysia. With over 28 ethnic groups, the three main groups Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu constitute 43% of the state’s population of 2.2 million. Each ethnic group in Sarawak has its own distinctive culture, lifestyle and language. Yet the Sarawak languages are slowly dying out due to the dominance of Bahasa Malaysia and English; these two languages are, especially in urban areas, considered to be the national language and the international language respectively. As listed in the database of the Ethnologue: Languages of the World, there are 46 Sarawak languages and 76% of them have fewer than 10,000 speakers.

SaLT has started a number of projects to preserve the indigenous languages of Sarawak through research and development in many areas of the Natural Language Processing (NLP) field. The objective is to digitise existing resources written in indigenous languages in order to build the corpora and processors, such as morphological analysers and part-of-speech taggers. These are necessary to develop applications such as spellcheckers and functions such as machine translation and speech recognition. Internationalisation (removing culture and language specific components from software so that it is language-independent) result in software that can accommodate the large number of existing indigenous languages – culminating in a single programme that could be run correctly anywhere in the world. This approach reduces the effort to build and maintain an application to accommodate multiple indigenous languages, thereby encouraging the provision of ICTs to indigenous communities by reducing the language barriers of using ICTs in other daily lives. Since the formation of SaLT in 2007, we have focused on six indigenous languages; namely Iban, Melanau, Kayan, Sarawak Malay, Bidayuh and Kelabit. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing process of adding documents in both the monolingual and bilingual corpus. The research work of SaLT is divided into three broad categories: language resources, NLP tools and applications. For example, the Banubuk Language Museum aims to explore the cultural benefits of ICTs in stimulating the production, protection and popularisation of Sarawak rural communities’ oral traditions; and Methodologies for Translation of Indigenous Languages: English-Ban (TriTe) serves to identify an effective approach to translate Iban to English by using a small Iban parallel corpus. Other ongoing projects include building a text-to-speech voice generator to read Sarawak languages.

SaLT researchers face a number of challenges. Most Sarawak languages have never been processed and do not have any electronic documents, with the exception of Iban and Bidayuh. Therefore, the digitisation of these under-resourced languages has to start from scratch, including building the spelling system. Another challenge is the standardisation of terminology. In order to localise a word processor to the Iban language, computing terminology is needed. Due to the absence of computing terminology in Iban, the researchers had to create this terminology and have Iban speakers verify it.

Through the collecting of local content, building the corpora and developing software tools and applications, the SaLT Research Group envisions the revitalisation of the indigenous languages and also an increase in the number of speakers. This revitalisation will only be achieved through close collaboration with the respective indigenous communities. Also, the research and development work conducted will culminate in a Cultural and Heritage Repository of Sarawak Indigenous Languages, which we hope will not only benefit the indigenous communities but also researchers domestically and internationally.

Associate Professor Dr. Alvin W. Yeo is Head of the Sarawak Language Technology (SaLT) Research Group; Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. (alvin@fcsi.unimas.my)
FOR TWELVE CENTURIES, a historical treasure lay untouched beneath the Caspian Strait, one of the northern entrances to the Java Sea, unknown even to the inhabitants of a nearby island who ply its turquoise waters. It was not until August 1998 that fishermen searching for sea cucumbers stumbled upon the amazing cache – the largest collection of Tang Dynasty artefacts ever seen, entombed in the oldest Arab vessel found in East Asian waters.

The Belitung shipwreck cargo, as it was later named after the island which lay a mere three kilometres away, has now encountered a fierce storm of another kind after emerging from its watery grave. The precious cargo – some 60,000 glazed bowls, ewers and other ceramics, as well as lead ingots, bronze mirrors and intricately gold and silver vessels – which survived the sea currents for more than 1,000 years and even the political turmoil following the fall of Indonesian President Suharto, is now caught in a maelstrom of strong objections, by some American and European archaeologists and museum representatives, to its exhibition in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (part of the Smithsonian). These objections were expressed earlier this year to protect the Smithsonian’s plans to exhibit the Belitung artefacts in Washington, D.C. They worry that the excavation was not conducted in accordance with the ethics governing underwater heritage and that the artefacts were excavated by a private company without proper recordings being made.

In 2005, Seabed Explorations, engaged by the Indonesian government in 1998 to conduct the excavation, sold the bulk of the cargo to Singapore for US$32 million. Subsequently, the Singapore Tourism Board, the National Heritage Board of Singapore and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery collaborated to mount the exhibition Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds. After it opened in February this year at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore, complaints by archaeologists, both within and outside the Smithsonian as well as museum associations, led to the postponement of the planned exhibition in Washington. They pointed out that the Smithsonian is bound by laws specifying that members shall “not knowingly acquire or exhibit artefacts which have been stolen, illegally exported from their country of origin, illegally salvaged or removed from commercially exploited archaeological or historic sites.”

Prominent among those who objected to the exhibition was Elizabeth Barmstek, president of the Archaeological Institute of America, who issued a strongly worded statement saying that while the excavation and disposition of the materials may be technically “legal,” involvement by the Smithsonian in the exhibition “will serve to blur the distinction between bona fide archaeology and treasure hunting,” putting it “in the indefensible position of aiding those who believe that antiquities are a commodity to be mined for personal or corporate financial gain.”

Echoing her concern, a group of archaeologists and anthropologists from the National Academy of Sciences wrote to Smithsonian Secretary Wayne G. Clough, cautioning that exhibiting the exhibition could “severely damage the stature and reputation” of the institution. Among the signatories of the letter was Dr. Robert McC. Adams, former Secretary of the Smithsonian. Some critics cited the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, which outlaw trade in marine heritage. However, others were quick to point out that the Convention only came into force in 2009 and that neither the United States nor Indonesia had ratified the Convention.

Not all experts criticise of the commercial nature of the Belitung cargo’s excavation object to its exhibition. James Delgado, director of the Maritime History Program at the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, is one critic who argues for a thoughtful exhibition that not only highlights the historical value of the exhibits, but also clearly indicates what cannot be learned, interpreted or shared as a result of looting and contrasts what non-commercial excavations have achieved in offering a more scientific approach. “I see a responsibility for the Belitung opportunity to educate and inspire discussion on the subject,” he said. Nevertheless, Delgado thinks that the debate is not simply about the Belitung. He said, “In many ways, the questions have more relevance in terms of discussing what happens with new and important shipwreck discoveries in Indonesia I believe, as do many of my colleagues, that significant shipwrecks should be excavated scientifically, with adequate funding to recover all artefacts and to preserve, study, and interpret them.”

Seabed Explorations founder Tilman Walterfang defended the company’s work on the Belitung, arguing that immense pressure to save the shipwreck in the face of heavy looting and a volatile political climate dictated the pace and manner in which the artefacts were retrieved. When first approached by the Indonesian government for help, commercial benefit was the last thing on his mind; it became an emergency operation to save as much of the cargo as possible before it fell prey to looters.

Paul Johnston, curator of Maritime History at the Smithsonian questions the reasoning that political, legal or cultural conditions in Southeast Asian countries justify a less than professional approach. He asked those who raised this argument: “Do they suggest that international professional ethics, or the principles of scientific archaeological investigation, should not apply, because something shines in Southeast Asia relating to culture or money is different?” He also feels that circumstances differed from country to country and case to case, pointing out that Cambodia has signed the UNESCO Convention, and that problems in conducting proper underwater archaeology do not apply to the region as a whole.

Continuous on page 42  

THE WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION (WHA) held its Twentieth Annual Conference at the Global History Center of Capital Normal University (CNU), Beijing, 7-11 July 2011. The conference drew 600 conferences from 36 nations, including 260 scholars and teachers from the PRC. To underscore its global reach, the conference is held outside the USA every third year, with the last three international venues being London (UK), Fraine (Morracco), and Seoul (Korea).

China was selected not only for having been a major force in the dynamics of world history, but also for a rising interest in global history at a number of universities in the country. Capital Normal University was chosen for its location in the historically and culturally important city Beijing. Also, its Global History Center is the single most important institution for advanced global history studies in the PRC, and the conference organizers expressed enthusiastic and generous support from its president, Dr. Lu Xincheng. The conference’s two themes, “China in World History,” and “World History from the Center and the Periphery,” were also chosen for their relevance to the host nation.

English and Chinese were the official languages of the conference, with English translations of Chinese papers, and simultaneous translation services provided for the three plenary sessions. The opening ceremony consisted of addresses by Professor Emeritus of History Qi Shining, past-president of CNU and founder of CNU’s Global History Center, the Honorable Hao Ping, the PRC’s Deputy Minister of Education; and Dr. Alfred J. Andrea, president of the WHA.

President Liu offered the first of two keynote addresses on the “Global History in China,” which focused on the manner in which the Global History curriculum was changing in China, while Dr. Craig Benjamin of Grand Valley State University in Michigan, USA, presented the second keynote address “Considerable Hordes of Nomads – The Conquest of Greco-Bactria – The First ‘Event’ in World History.”

A total of 103 panels were held, with contributions by more than 500 people. A sample of just five panels suggests the range of topics: “Internationalization of Chinese Art, “China and the World Trade System in Historical Perspective,” “Using Primary Sources to Teach China in the Twentieth Century,” “Silver, Silk and Things: Connecting Commodities beyond Centres and Peripheries”; and “Beyond the Edge of Empires: Locating Edges and Centres in Eastern Eurasia.”

Three topics that generated an especially high level of exchange were the relevance of the Silk Roads in the history of Afro-Eurasia down to circa 1500 CE; the usefulness of the “center and periphery” model to the histories of Afro-Eurasia and the Americas over the past six millennia; and the manner in which global history is taught in the schools of China and the USA.

The WHA recognized two “Pioneers of World History” for their long-standing contributions to world history scholarship and pedagogy. Dr. Lu Xincheng was honored for his pioneering work in promoting and serving as an exemplar of first-rate global history studies in China, while Dr. Jerry Bentley was recognized for his 21 years as editor of the WHA’s flagship academic publication, which has, under his leadership, become known as the leading journal in the field.

The WHA, founded in 1982, with its headquarters in the University of Hawaii at Manoa, is dedicated to promoting research in and the teaching of a macro-history that transcends single cultures, regions, and polities. It currently recognizes for his 21 years as editor of the WHA’s flagship publication, which has, under his direction, become known as the leading journal in the field.

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Excavation of the Cargo

An information list produced by UNESCO noted that the cargo of the Belitung shipwreck was estimated to contain valuable artefacts, including parts of a Chinese ceramic dish worth around ten years' of solid gold, the cost of its material. The excavations, conducted during the 1980s and early 1990s, revealed a wealth of artefacts, including some of the earliest known examples of blue-and-white ceramics made in China, which are among the oldest complete sets of such ceramics in the world. The excavation was led by the Indonesian government, with involvement from a number of international institutions, including the National Institute of Archeology and the National Museum of Indonesia. The artefacts were then catalogued, studied, and conserved, and some of the most significant items were exhibited in museums around the world, including the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

The significance of the Belitung Cargo

The Belitung Cargo is considered one of the most important archeological finds of the 20th century. It is characterized by its high conservation and documentation standards, and it has provided valuable insights into the history of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean region. The artefacts recovered from the shipwreck include a wide range of objects, such as ceramics, metalwork, and textiles, which have been used to study the economic and cultural connections between China, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. The artefacts have also been used to study the history of tea, as the cargo included a large number of tea bowls, which have been used to explore the history of tea cultivation and trade in the region.

The excavation of the Belitung Cargo was a complex and challenging project, involving a large number of stakeholders, including government officials, archeologists, and private companies. The excavation was not without controversy, as there were concerns about the sale of artefacts and the potential for looting of the site.

The results of the excavation have been used to reconstruct the history of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean region, and have provided valuable insights into the history of tea cultivation and trade. The artefacts recovered from the shipwreck have been exhibited in museums around the world, and have contributed to our understanding of the history of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean region. The Belitung Cargo is considered one of the most significant archeological finds of the 20th century, and has provided valuable insights into the history of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean region.
May I introduce myself? My name is Willem Vogelsang. I recently succeeded Manon Ossenweiler at the IIAS. During the first few weeks I diligently worked through the files and instructions that Manon was so kind to compile for me. She left behind a very well-organized office, but the Asia Institute is an enormous place (as I quickly discovered). Fortunately, the Institute’s staff are very professional and a real pleasure to work with.

I am not entirely new to this field of work. For many years I acted as Executive Secretary of the Centre for Non-Western Studies at Leiden University, and since we were, at the time, located in the same building as the IIAS (Nonnenstein), I have been familiar with the Institute from its very beginning.

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Re-engaging Europe with Asia

Final conference of the Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia)
The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, the Netherlands.
14-15 December 2011.

The Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia) is a three-year programme set up with support of the European Commission to review Europe’s understanding of Asia and to provide a growing rapport between the two regions. It is based on an extensive academic network of institutes, universities and think tanks in both Europe and Asia.

More information including the programme can be found at www.euforasia.eu

Asian Borderlands Conference: Connections, Corridors, Communities

Call for Papers – Deadline 1 December 2011
3rd Conference of the Asian Borders Research Network Yunnan University, Kunming, China.
12-15 October 2012

Extensive land and maritime networks have crisscrossed Asia for centuries, providing the basis for encounters between diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, religious, and political groups. Today, developments such as new infrastructural projects, an increase in media access, and renewed interest in shaping cross-border cultural identities serve to both underscore these longstanding linkages and create new forms of connections across Asia.

The Asian Borders Research Network invites submissions that address continuities and ruptures along routes and borders in Asia, broadly related to the theme "Connections, Corridors, and Communities."

For more details: www.asianborderlands.net; info@asianborderlands.net

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The International Institute for Asian Studies has been awarded a grant of 1.25 million Euro under the Marie Curie Actions ‘International Research Staff Exchange Scheme’ (IRES). This is part of the European Union’s Research Executive Agency’s Seventh Framework Programme. Entitled ‘Urban Knowledge Network Asia’ (UKNA), the new IES-led programme consists of a network of 182 researchers from thirteen partner institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States. Currently in the negotiation phase, the project is due to start in April 2012 and will run for four years.

The UKNA is the only global urban knowledge network of its kind and one of its key objectives will be the nurturing of contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities. This will be attempted via a series of research staff exchanges and specifically targeted case-study based research, all of which relates to the network’s three main themes of Housing, Heritage, and the Environment.

The International Institute for Asian Studies will be the coordinating institute, with Gregory Bracken acting as overall coordinator. The partner institutes are the Architecture Faculty of the Technical University of Delft in the Netherlands, the École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture de Paris-Belleville in France, and the Development and Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London in the United Kingdom.

The Chinese partner institutes are the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD) in Beijing as well as the Beijing University of Technology, Tianjin University, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) and Hong Kong University. India is represented by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) in Bengaluru, Ambedkar University in Delhi, and the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University in Ahmedabad. The University of Southern California’s School of Policy, Planning and Development (SPPP) in Los Angeles is the UKNA’s partner in the United States.

The coming year we intend to make our online content – including thenewsletter – more accessible for mobile phones and tablets.

The new website will help IIAS in its ongoing endeavours to widen its global network, communicate knowledge and engage in new research projects, public service activities and outreach programmes. We hope that it will become your first online destination if you want to find out what is going on in your area of interest and in the field of Asian Studies worldwide.

The new flexible and solid design will help IIAS to achieve all these ambitions. We are continuously working on our website and we would love to hear your ideas for improvements. All your suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please go to our site (www.iias.nl) and send us your valuable feedback.
IIAS Research Projects

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

Asian Cities

WITH A SPECIAL EYE on contemporary developments, the Asian Cities cluster aims to explore the longstanding Asian cities as places where institutions that emerge from the urbanization of cities and urbanism in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times.

The Postcolonial Global City
This research examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made the successful segue from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary approach bringing together architects and urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies.

Projects and Networks

The Asien Borderlands Research Network
The Asien Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central and East South Asia. A conference is organised every two years in one of these border regions, in co-operation with a local partner. The concern of the Asien Borderlands Research Network is varied, ranging from migratory movements, trans-border flows of goods and money, and ethnic and religious questions, to political, economic and governance pertinent to Asian realities. The network is building a database of publications, both peer-reviewed and grey literature, and also wish to explore new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interaction in the form of transnational networks.

Coordinator: Willem van Schendel
Email: w.van.schendel@hum.leidenuniv.nl

The Global Asia Cluster
addresses contemporary issues related to trans-national interactions within the Asian region as well as its interactions with the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends will be addressed. The cluster wishes to contribute to a new academic understanding of the phenomenon by framing it within a framework of identity that addresses the power dynamics of the cluster. The cluster will address the variety of definitions associated with identity within the cluster context, while investigating how we determine who benefits or suffers from their implementation. It aims to engage with a broad range of concepts, that is, the “issues of authenticity,” “national heritage” of “shared heritage,” and, more generally, with the function of the political economy of identity. It will critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived, endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

Gender, Migration and Family in East and Southeast Asia
Developed from an earlier research project on “Cross-border Marriages,” this project is a comparative study on family and gender in China and Japan. It aims at studying the linkage between immigration regimes, transnational families and migrants’ experiences. To investigate these issues, local researchers bringing together scholars who have already been working on related topics.

A three-year research project has been developed with an empirical focus on Taiwan and South Korea as the receiving countries, and Vietnam and the Mekong River as the sending countries.

Coordinator: Melody Lu
Email: m.lu@iias.nl

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance in Asia
The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance in Asia is engaged in developing a research network on theories and practices – focusing on emerging markets of Asia. Its multi-disciplinary research undertakings combine theories from political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology in the comparative analysis of regulatory issues in Asia and in developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities.

Current projects at the Centre will focus on State Licensing, Market Closure, and Rent Seeking; Regulation of Intra-government Conflict, Social Costs, Externalities and Innovation; Regulatory Governance under Institutional Void; and Government and the Politics of Contested Territoriality and Sovereignty.

Coordinator: Tak-Wing Ngo
Email: t.w.ngo@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Pajtah Research and Knowledge Network (PAJRN)
IIAS has become a partner in this new network called PAJRN, the Pajtah Research and Knowledge Network on claims and facts concerning socially sustainable papaja production in Indonesia. PAJRN is a knowledge network that seems very promising: it can be used as a clean non-fossil diesel fuel and it can prove a large number of sources in marginal areas that will grow the crop.

Coordinator: Dr. Jacqueline Vel
Email: j.a.c.vel@fisius.leidenuniv.nl

Projects and Networks

Asian Heritage

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

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to trans-national interactions within the Asian region as well as its interactions with the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends will be addressed. The cluster wishes to contribute to a new academic understanding of the phenomenon by framing it within a framework of identity that addresses the power dynamics of the cluster. The cluster will address the variety of definitions associated with identity within the cluster context, while investigating how we determine who benefits or suffers from their implementation. It aims to engage with a broad range of concepts, that is, the “issues of authenticity,” “national heritage” of “shared heritage,” and, more generally, with the function of the political economy of identity. It will critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived, endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

Global Asia

Projects and Networks

Translating (Japanese) Contemporary Art
Takako Kondo focuses on Japanese contemporary art as a transnational exchange, as well as art historical translation. Her research is a subject of (cultural) exchange, translation rather than art historical translation per se. She is interested in the concept associated with architecture and ethos and how in the postcolonial period, from the late 1980s in the realms of art and philosophy, an increasing number of Japanese artists have turned into avid consumers of colonial products. Production of colonial products and the commodification of perceived “authenticity,” “national heritage” and “intangible heritage” and, more generally, with the function of the political economy of identity. It will critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived, endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.
IIAS Fellows hosts a large number of affiliated fellows (independent postdoctoral scholars), IIAS research fellows (PhD/postdoctoral scholars working on an IIAS research project), and fellows nominated and supported by partner institutions. Fellows are selected by an academic committee on the basis of merit, quality, and available resources. For extensive information on IIAS fellowships and current fellows please refer to the IIAS website.

IN THE LAST THREE DECADES I have conducted a number of anthropological studies on poetic knowledge, power, gender, children and education, with a theoretical framework based on the interface of signification and materiality. As an anthropologist, I am always interested in changing religious life for the people in a Lao-speaking village of central Flores in eastern Indonesia, where I have been conducting anthropological fieldwork since 1979. The changes are very apparent in the village economy, Catholicism, nation-state, new media and the re-emergence of traditions.

The ritual control of the swidden agricultural cycle was believed to be necessary not only for a good harvest but also for fertility recreation in the village. Although rituals have flourished, they are now less embedded in a subsistence pattern because cash crop cultivation and emigration for wage labour have spread since the 1990s.

Catholic practices have become part of the village life; but the localisation of Catholicism has been achieved by priests, based on the ‘inculturation’ policy since the late 1990s. Until the 1980s, villages as the realm of tradition were separated from towns. Town dwellers were hardly concerned with the village affairs. From the 80s, due to ideological limitations as well as misunderstanding generated from the 90s, village affairs including the localisation of Catholicism has been achieved. The localisation of Catholicism continues through the Post-Obscure Poetry and continues through the Post-Obscure Poetry (Third Generation poets) in the late 80s.

Although the comparative research on Taiwanese and Chinese poetry started in the 80s, due to ideological limitations as well as misunderstanding generated from the late 90s, related research accomplishments have remained scarce. Therefore I believe that a comparative study would make strides toward this understanding. I founded IAS as an ideal place to carry out the research of Chinese and Taiwanese modern poetry, due in part to its strong connection with Leiden University, which has an internationally unique collection of unofficial poetry journals from the People’s Republic of China by Professor Maghiel Van Creveld, who has made a long term contribution to the study of Modern Chinese poetry.

I greatly appreciate being in Leiden at the IAS for this year, as I have access to these documents and manuscripts (in Dutch, Indonesian, and English), and I have ample opportunity to discuss my research interests with other scholars.

I AM CURRENTLY carrying out research at the IAS, “The Return of Modernism: A Comparative Study between Modernist Poetry in Taiwan and Mainland China in the post-1949 era”, in which I explore how modernity has taken place in Taiwan and China effectively re-introduced modernism during the post-war period. I have been kindly provided in this project by the National Science Council in Taiwan.

Partaking in a global literary phenomeon, modernism was enthusiastically practiced by Taiwanese and Chinese literary circles in the 1930s. Poets from the Leiden Modernism in East Asia study in Taiwan upheld surrealism as their identifying marker, whilst in China magazines such as Modern Chinese Poetry Style emphasised literary modernity. Modernism had once served to broaden the aesthetic dimension for new poetry in Taiwan and China. However, such Western-inspired modernist poetry had lost its legitimacy after the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. Realism, which was believed to be able to meet the political and social demands of the time, had been sanctioned with camps as the literary orthodoxy. Modernism, in sharp contrast, was deemed a decadent middle-class phenomenon of the Left, and individualistic and irrational by the Right. Nevertheless, modernism returned to the realm of poetry when the government in both societies was still heavily intervening in literature. This re-emergence began in the mid-1950s, when the KMT government’s interfer- ence in art and culture was at its peak; in China, it began in the late 1970s just after the Cultural Revolution had ended.

My research primarily compares the phenomenon of how the concept of modernism was separately re-introduced to Taiwan and China. The return of modernism to poetry in Taiwan and China occurred at different times. However, instead of focusing on the lack of simultaneity in their development across the strait, my research centres more on the differing trajectories of the modernist movements. My research of Taiwan begins in the mid-50s, when modernism re-emerged at the forefront of the literary movement, and continues through the early 70s when the Modern Poetry Debate brought doubts on Western influence and re-directed poetry to a “roots/tradition searching.” As to China, my research starts in the late 70s with the emergence of Obscure Poetry, the beginning of avant-garde poetry, and continues through the Post-Obscure Poetry (Third Generation poets) in the late 80s.

In my largest text, Sahajaguddipothan, Guide to the Accommodation of the Inferno, Lakshmikanth sanctifies her religious authority by invoking the tantric lineage to which she belongs, particularly by describing it in a series of short biographies of her religious ancestors, disclosing the presence of a unique female heritage. Moreover, the Guide contains Lakshmikanth’s most profound explanations dealing directly with the innermost nature of meditation experience. She distinguishes her contemplative tradition from village shamanism, intellectual philosophising, as well as from a large range of bodily and breathing yoga-techniques. She states that she has actualised mystical insight in her own meditative practice. Further, she describes in particular how she served as the spiritual guide to her elder brother, the King of Udyan.</the_network>
WE ARE IN THE MIDDST OF FINALISING NEGOTIATIONS with the future host of ICAS 8 (2013), and by the end of this year we will be able to announce both the venue and the organizer. It will be a big challenge for all involved to surpass ICAS 7, the joint ICAS-AAS conference that took place in Honolulu earlier this year.

The number of visitors found at ICAS 7 will certainly be hard to beat, but there is no mark objective for ICAS 8. With slightly over 5000 participants the joint conference was the largest meeting ever held in the field of Asian studies and was a clear signal to the outside world that it is a vibrant and varied field of study. During nearly 800 panel discussions, Asia scholars from all over the world exchanged thoughts on a wide variety of topics – from popular culture to colonial history, and from postmodern literature to natural disasters.

We received a large number of book proposals for the ICAS Publications Series (IPS), which are now being reviewed by the editorial board. Where as we received approximately 250 articles as the outcome of ICAS 4 and 5, the number of articles submitted after ICAS 6 and 7 dwindled, leaving us with insufficient volume necessary for the publication of edited volumes. There has been a clear shift to full book proposals by the participants, instead of individual papers, and so as of ICAS 8 we will only be inviting full book proposals.

After the ICAS-AAS joint conference we conducted a small survey among participants to gauge their feelings about the proceedings. We asked them about various components of the meeting, including the panels, roundtables, keynote speakers, the book prize ceremony, their overall satisfaction and the intent to promote public understanding of present-day Asian societies.

It was decided to concentrate on Amsterdam in the first year of the outreach project and gradually extend its activities beyond the capital during 2012. Three fields of culture were singled out: literature, movies, and art. Strategic partners for each of these sectors were sought and found. In addition, ICAS will cooperate with a number of event partners, such as the Rijksmuseum, the Prince Claus Fund, Art Cinema Rialto, Cinemais, Foam Photography Museum Amsterdam and Spui 25, a centre in the heart of Amsterdam known for its lectures and lively discussions.

Asian Country Festivals

Besides the organisation of cultural events with an academic flavour, ICAS Outreach will be organising country-specific festivals with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in Amsterdam, a strategic partner that is fully equipped to facilitate such broad events. All activities related to these festivals, such as dance performances, movies, theatre and exhibitions can take place in this stylish building.

Currently, we are discussing the possibilities for a Cambodia Festival in Amsterdam. Plans are to hold the festival in conjunction with a similar celebration of Cambodian arts and culture entitled Seasons of Cambodia, which is to take place in New York in 2013. The festival will consist of different components such as dance, cinema, contemporary art, crafts, photography, and workshops. Information will be posted on the ICAS website in due time.

Literature - writing in China

The IAS strategic partner for literature is the Dutch Foundation for Literature (Het Nederlands Letterenfonds), which promotes literature in the Netherlands and beyond. The first joint activity was a discussion meeting in October at Spui 25 on ‘Writing in China’, with two famous Chinese authors: Su Tong (Rice. Women and Concubines, on which the movie Raise the Red Lantern was based) and the foremost ‘bad girl’ writer Mian Mian (Pandos Sex and Candy). Both authors were guests at the Residency for Writers in Amsterdam programme. In 2012 IAS will co-organise a number of launches of Asian-language books translated into Dutch, and in the Residency for Writers programme.

BAS was also involved in the organisation of two bigger events. IAS contributed to the Asian part of the World Cinema Festival – particularly to Soul of India, a programme compiled by film curator and film journalist from Mumbai, Meenakshi Shedde. A selection of independent productions, comprised of ten feature-length fiction films and seven short films, gave a vivid impression of India today. It took place at Art Cinema Rialto in Amsterdam from 10-21 August 2011.

With the EYE Film Institute, BAS organised a Thai Film Festival from 26 September-5 October 2011, where six contemporary Thai movies were shown. Most of these movies were introduced to the audience by film critics such as Dina Linsen. BAS invited Dr Rachel Harrison, of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, London), an expert in the field of Thai culture, who introduced the movies My Girl and Tears of the Black Tiger.

Next year BAS will also cooperate with Cinemais, which organises a biennial Asia film festival. And after the move of the EYE office to its new premises on the waterfront in the north of Amsterdam (in April 2012), IAS will cooperate in its Asia movies programmes.

Arts – Association for Friends of Asian Art

The Association for Friends of Asian Art (Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst) was established in 1918. Its main activities are the organisation of lectures and visits to Asian exhibitions. Furthermore, it publishes a newsletter and a quarterly magazine on Asian Art. Its broad collection of Asian art is on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. BAS and the association have already organised seven lectures on a variety of topics pertaining to Asian art and are planning to continue doing so in the future. These lectures mainly take place in Amsterdam, but also in other areas of the Netherlands. The association and BAS will be involved in the grand opening of the Asia Pavilion of the Rijksmuseum in 2013.

For the IAS Outreach Programme see www.iasnl.nl/outreach
IIAS Reports

Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives


THE SUMMER PROGRAMME in Asian Studies, Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives, took place in Leiden, the Netherlands, from 20-25 June 2011. Directed by Professor Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University) and Professor Nira Wickramasinghe (Leiden University), the seminar brought together twenty-four doctoral and master’s students from fifteen countries across Europe, North America, Asia and Africa.

The aim of the programme was to shed light on the various definitions, interests, and practices associated with cultural heritage in Asia and Europe. The interdisciplinary field of heritage studies has grown remarkably in the past decades, attracting researchers from the social sciences and humanities. Increasingly governed by state agencies and international organizations, heritage policies and practices retain an explicit socio-cultural and institutional dimension at the core of collective values and identity negotiation. Co-director Nira Wickramasinghe, Professor of Modern South Asian Studies, began her introductory lecture by quotingessential: “Heritage is not an inquiry to the past, but a celebration of it” (The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History, 1997). Exactly how, why, and by whom heritage is celebrated were just a few of the questions investigated by this year’s participants.

Renowned scholars, researchers, institutional leaders, and students from across the globe formed the broad spectrum of interdisciplinary approaches to heritage studies and practices. Lecture topics ranged from urban heritage and housing politics to institutional issues. Such issues were presented at the conference ranging from minority cultures and authenticity, to post-colonialism, conservation, and the institutionalisation of collective memory.

Thematic undercurrents of the program included state power and the view of heritage as a constructed, socio-political phenomenon. Participants explored how heritage policies are governed in order to negotiate power relations and legitimize official state narratives. In such contexts, competing narratives and alternative management strategies may be neglected or actively suppressed. “Heritage and cosmopolitanism are two sides of the same coin,” argued co-director Michael Herzfeld, Professor of Anthropology. In many ways, Professor Herzfeld explained, heritage can be seen as “the elevation of the fallen and displaced consciousness to the level of official policy.” Considering such circumstances, participants agreed that heritage scholarship has a special responsibility to scrutinize political categories, concepts of identity, notions of authenticity, and state/organizational methods.

The final two days of the program consisted of an international doctoral conference, where fifteen PhD students from eleven countries had the opportunity to present their work and gain feedback from the direction, peers. Topics presented at the conference ranged from minority cultures and authenticity, to post-colonialism, conservation, and the institutionalisation of collective memory.

Participants concluded that the concept of cultural heritage has taken on increased political urgency in recent years, as the processes of globalization continue to raise questions about identity, economy, power relations, and collective memory across Asia and Europe. Participants of the summer program Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives, continue their work and dedication to cultural heritage issues through research and practice.

Next year’s Summer Programme in Asian Studies, World Wide Asia: Asian Flows, Global Impacts, will take place from 27 August through 1 September 2012. As part of the organizing committee, the first author was given the opportunity to explore how case studies and theory may be linked with institutional demands and heritage management practices.

The IAS summer programme was concluded with a dinner, with IAS director Philippe Pozzo in the forefront and Professor Herzfeld heading up the table and showing no approval.

PRCUD Palembang Forum on Climate Change

The PACIFIC RIM COUNCIL ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT (PRCUD) held its most recent Roundtable Forum in Palembang, Indonesia, 24-27 July 2011. This was the eleventh such Forum organised by PRCUD since the series was initiated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1998. PRCUD was founded in 1989 in Los Angeles and has evolved over time into a global network of professionals who bring their expertise to bear on a range of urban development challenges throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Crucial support for the event was provided by the European Commission-funded EMPOWER project, a World Bank-funded project, and the International Institute for Asian Studies. This event was the first collaboration between IAS and PRCUD, as part of the institute’s Asian Cities research cluster; other such forums are likely to be organised with the new UNU programme Urban Knowledge Network in Asia.

This Palembang Roundtable was tasked with advising Deputy Minister Max Pohan, and others at the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) of the Republic of Indonesia, on how best to integrate local perspectives into a national strategy on urban resilience, and on the need to fill the institutional void. At the same time, PRCUD is working with several regional partners to fill the institutional void while at the same time addressing the need to fill the institutional void.

The presentations covered different regions, perspectives and approaches. The regional aspect included England, China, Indonesia, Brazil, India, Bangladesh and Ghana, providing a wide perspective on institutional issues. Such issues were tackled through a variety of academic lenses, including historical analysis, institutional entrepreneurship, ethnography, political economy, development economics, elite studies, management science and industrial organisation. Strongly driven by empirical evidence, this symposium has yielded a set of insights and questions for further research.

- Going beyond the state-market dichotomy
- Weak state as a condition for non-state actors to take over institutional functions
- Limitations of formal property rights: explanation in economic development; rather emphasis on self-organising systems
- Creation of fully functioning markets, a so-called state in a state, although non-governmental organisations do not become states but encroach into the realm of the state by providing public services
- States may appropriate successful new institutional practices
- Importance of experimenting with filling institutional voids. The context of experimentation matters a lot. For instance, there may be an extent of planned ambiguity in the context that allows for experimentation
- Political embeddedness may be strategic in the pursuit of filling voids rather than a given, as in the interpretation of Granovetter’s ‘local embeddedness’
- The importance of time and historical continuity in explaining and filling institutional voids while at the same time practices may be reinvented into different roles, limiting the continuity
- Institutional creation as a variation on the fallacy of misplaced concreteness to the level of official policy.
- Finding the institutional void involves incremental organisational action
- Non-state agencies can set up programs to create legitimacy for a new institutional void
- Importance of distinguishing between the accumulation versus distribution side of institutions

Questions for further thought:
- How to measure the need for management in a situation of institutional void?
- Why are certain organizations able to develop institutional capabilities?
- How are new institutional practices institutionalised?
- What are the boundaries of a state or market institutional void?
- How to conceptualise institutional voids?
- How to measure and empirically identify an institutional void?

General concluding remarks: there should be a move away from normative explanations, from functional assumption of institutional supply: voids should be understood as an absence of certain mechanisms – not necessarily a full vacuums. Institutional voids are a good heuristic to consider when academic fields that discuss similar problems.

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Institutional Voids and the Governance of Developing Economies


JONIY ORGANISED AND SPONSORED by the IAS Centre for Regulation and Governance, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the Centre for Governance, Institutions & Organizations at NUS Business School, National University of Singapore, and the Erasmus Research Institute of Management.

A common problem faced by many developing countries is the presence of institutional voids. While it’s an established wisdom that institutions matter in development, most developing economies are characterised by the absence of such needed institutional arrangements to regulate market exchange, mobilise economic resources, and coordinate social activities. The aim of the symposium was to explore the phenomenon of institutional voids, and of the role that systems of entrepreneurial agency, organisational principles of firms, nature of government-business relations, structure of social order, and the wider socio-political context are conducive to new forms of governance that fill those institutional voids. This underlines the importance of experimenting with filling institutional voids. The context of experimentation matters a lot. For instance, there may be an extent of planned ambiguity in the context that allows for experimentation
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George Chinnery comes home

George Chinnery enjoyed a double career in the Far East. The first phase was in India, where he rose to become the principal artist of the Raj, a hookah-smoking ‘old hand’ with an Indian mistress and a huge appetite for curry and rice. ‘Chinnery himself could not hit off a likeness better’, exclaims the Colonel back from India, as he admires a portrait in Thackeray’s Newcomes.

Patrick Conner