The Focus ‘pull-out’ supplement
When you understand where you come from and the environment around you, you can take the future into your hands and contribute to a better destiny. Guest editors Paul Bucherer-Dietschi and Anke Schürer-Ries introduce the photographic collections on Asia in Swiss archives, comment on their significance to research and cultural heritage, and reflect on the technical and methodological aspects of building and maintaining such collections.
The Focus
Swiss photographic collections on Asia

Roland Steffan explores the mysteries of the Daniell collection at the St. Gallen Museum – the collector, the donor, acquisition dates and the way in which the pieces became part of the collection, are all unknown.

Dominic Wirz, Anke Schürer-Ries and Paul Bucherer-Dietschi introduce ‘Phototheca Afghanica’ (Swiss Afghanistan Institute). The aim of the project is to create awareness of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and to make use of this knowledge for the reconstruction of the country and its society.

Guy Thomas and Anke Schürer-Ries of Basel Mission/Mission 21 show how historical, but also modern digitised and born-digital images, have brought about a want for access to, and understanding of, the image as a key icon of cultural heritage.

Thomas Posta discusses how ethnographic artefacts are commonly found partnered with illustrations. The early hand-produced images were commonly substituted with photography once the technology was introduced and developed in the 19th century.
Calling all newsletter editors!

It is a busy time for the ICAS Secretariat; the countdown to next year’s conference in Macao has begun. The deadline for papers, panels and roundtables recently passed and an impressive 1500 proposals were submitted. Furthermore, more than 25 dissertations and 100 books from globally renowned publishers have already been entered for the ICAS Book Prize 2013, with the deadline for contributions ending on 15 October 2012 – so there is still some time to make sure your publication is included and to take a shot at one of the 5 awards!

Sonja Zweegers

AS THE EDITOR of one of the international newsletters dedicated to Asian studies, I thought ICAS 8 in Macao would be the perfect occasion to organise a roundtable discussion on the state of these newsletters: resources, submissions, editorial boards, hardcopy printing, online presence, distribution, and so on. As an editor of a newsletter you are faced with an array of wonderful opportunities and quite a few dilemmas – my hope is that a number of my peers and colleagues will join me in exploring some of these facets. Eventually we may even help each other with a few of the quandaries, and expand the possibilities of our chosen medium.

So, I am calling all Asian studies newsletter editors to please contact me about joining the roundtable that I am putting together for ICAS 8. Send me an email at iiasnews@ias.nl and let me know your thoughts about possible topics, and in which ways you would like to contribute to the discussion.

During the conference in Macao we will also be producing a daily ICAS newsletter, in cooperation with one of Macao’s morning newspapers, and a large team of on-the-scene reporters. In addition, IIAS will host a special booth in the exhibition hall for The Newsletter and the daily ICAS newsletter; all editors will be welcome to visit and join in our promotion of Asian studies newsletters as a whole.

My thanks

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Lu Caixia, who functioned as our regional editor in Singapore for the last few issues. She is moving to a new institute and we will unfortunately no longer be able to benefit from her editorial qualities; we will greatly miss her and her wonderful contributions to this publication, and wish her all the best in her future adventures. We are pleased, however, that IIESAS will continue the cooperation, and are grateful that Dr. Lee Heck Guan will be taking over as regional editor. Please contact him at iias_iiesas@iseas.edu.sg if you would like to contribute to our ‘News from Asia’ section, which includes a selection of short articles on local stories relevant to Asian studies (pp 40-43).

Finally, I have had some requests from individuals who would like to receive multiple copies of The Newsletter, so as to distribute them at their institutions and at academic events. These requests are more than welcome, so please feel free to place an order.

Sonja Zweegers

The Newsletter

The Newsletter is a free quarterly publication by IIAS. The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and the worldwide public interested in Asia and Asian studies. The Newsletter is a window into the institute, The Newsletter promotes national and international cooperation and the daily ICAS newsletter; all editors will be welcome to visit and join in our promotion of Asian studies newsletters as a whole.

ISSN 1421-8376

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Call for Papers:
The Newsletter #61 Autumn 2012
Deadline: 15 October 2012

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THE MOSQUE WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN BUILT in 1528 by Mir Baqra, a courtier of the Mughal emperor Babur. The structure, however, attracted a more recent notoriety, particularly in postcolonial India, as one that was allegedly built on the site of a destroyed mandir (temple) commemorating the birthplace of the epical Hindu deity Rama. Without going into the details of the contentious history of interreligious tensions around the site it will suffice to point out that since 1989-90, activists and volunteers of the militant ultra-Hindu lobby have repeatedly congregated around the site with the agenda of ‘liberating’ the ‘true’ birthplace of Rama (Ramjanmabhumi). For them this ‘liberation’ was possible only through redressing a historic injustice inflicted on the nation’s Hindu community by the Muslims centuries ago, by demolishing the sixteenth century mosque and making way for building a new Ram mandir, the foundation of which had been ceremonially laid in an adjacent site in 1989.

Since 1992, the rubble of the destroyed mosque has become the site of multiple readings. In the context of contemporary South Asia it highlighted, more virulently than ever before, the power of historic structures and the associated questions of heritage and patrimony in congealing or fracturing public spheres. At the same time, what the events of December 1992 brought to the foreground was the potential authenticating status, and also the question of professional integrity among practitioners of disciplines of history and archaeology. Both sides, the pro-Mandir ultra Hindu lobbyists and the opposing camp of left/liberal/secular historians and archaeologists took recourse to archaeology in proving or disproving their cases about the authenticity of Ayodhya as Ramjanmabhumi and the evidence of a prior vandalized Hindu temple at the site of the mosque. Central to all these debates was the status of archaeology as a science, and its potential for unearthing ‘true’ histories. As archaeologists and historians sought to retrieve the scientific method and scope of the discipline from ‘gross vulgarization’ by political leaders, what came to fore was the range of extra-disciplinary meanings and intents that could, and did, accrue around an academic field.

This article is not about the political and symbolic potential of the Babri Masjid as a monument. I use this moment of violent rupture in the public positioning of archaeology in contemporary South Asia as an entry point to reflect back on the claims of the discipline as a science around issues of its indigenization and translation in colonial India. The material focus of this study lies in a select body of Bengali writings published during early twentieth century. These writings in regional vernaculars sought to popularize the idea of heritage and the disciplinary field of archaeology and scientific history among non-specialist readers. Such translations involved remarkable transmutations of the parameters of methods and aims of archaeology as a discipline of Western/European ‘origins’. Exploring how a range of linguistic, religious and territorial identities came to be played around such texts, this study will look for a prior history of ways and forms in which disciplinary practices of archaeology came to be overlaid with a range of extra-disciplinary concerns.

The violent destruction of Babri Masjid. © AFP/Photo/Douglas E. Corren.

On a chilly winter morning of December 6, 1992, Ayodhya, a small town in eastern Uttar Pradesh (a province in Northern India), gripped the attention of the entire nation. On that day a mosque in the centre of the town, the Babri Masjid, became the target of violent destruction by the volunteers of a cluster of militant ultra-Hindu organizations, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bajrang Dal, and their common electoral forum represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century these very questions shaped the imagination of the Indian nation as an immemorially ancient community and informed the issue of Indian authorship over India’s past. As the colonial enterprise was grafted on the nation-building process, the material remains were rediscovered as replete with history and artistic heritage of the nation. In the process, several claims of the colonial archaeological discourse were contested. These contestations ranged from specialized art historical debates around questions of autonomy, origins and influence to heated public disputes on professional integrity or authorial intentions of the ‘Western’ versus the ‘Indian’ scholars. By the early twentieth century, along with English, regional vernacular texts on scientific history and archaeology emerged as a space where the Indian scholars could pit an entire range of authorial claims about India’s past.

Pratna-vidya (the science of archaeology), a Bengali article written by Akshay Kumar Maitreya, serves here as an illustration of both internalization and indigenization of the methods of a modern western discipline by a Bengali scholar. The central concern of Pratna-vidya is to demarcate the specialized terrain of the emerging discipline of archaeology by elaborating on its methods and aims. Writing in 1912, Maitreya’s citation was the renowned archaeologist and Egyptologist, Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie’s work Methods and Aims in Archaeology. Published at the turn of the twentieth century, the book sought to lay out the technical/disciplinary expertise in the field of archaeological research. For Maitreya, however, the prime attraction of this work lay in its rather strict exposition of the question of ethics in archaeology and in Petrie’s strong espousal of the values and integrity of character that he sought to instill among archaeologists. For Petrie proficiency in archaeology required a combination of disciplinary expertise in different branches of liberal arts, natural and social sciences. However, faced with a growing creed of relic hunting speculators in Egypt, for him, the integrity of the archaeologists ultimately lay in an almost fanatical devotion to the cause of science, their work being something more than a professional career, their commitment to research as being their ‘…honour and the end of their being.’
The field of archaeology in colonial India

Hindu Bengali archaeologists encountered in Gaur could be dated back to the Mughal period. To account for this absence, Maitreya substituted a counter-theory that re-invoked an emphasized trajectory of the destruction of India’s ancient pre-Islamic civilization by the iconoclastic raids of the Muslims. To this was added the revulsion of modern vandalism of archaeological relics by early colonial officials and native landlords.4 The only path to the recovery of an ancient pre-Mohammedan history was through the location of scattered traces of an ancient pre-Islamic Bengali civilization in the monumental remains of Islamic antiquity in which the city of Gaur abounded. "Jahangir jaha to taher unohonhod korte hoabe..." (roughly translated as ‘the search for the lost and elusive in the extant presence’). LOST traces of a pre-Islamic Bengali civilization of Varendra were traced among the scattered debris of the city of Gaur. From this collection of sculptures and epigraphs from Gaur and the neighbouring Buddhist site of Paharpur, these Bengali scholars now eagerly developed an archaeological chronology of the pre-Islamic Bengal, specifically of the Pala and Sena kingdoms between the eighth and twentieth centuries A.D.

The question of eligibility-ineligibility (‘satyanishtha’/adherence) in archaeological research brings to the forefront the location of Akshay Kumar Maitreya in an increasingly professionalized field, where ‘amateur’ gentlemen scholars could still claim themselves in the same status as their professional peers, on the grounds of their internalization of the scientific methods of the discipline. In this sense, Maitreya provides an interesting case study of how to make one’s self-positioning as a budding professional archaeologist exceptional, case study in colonial India. Trained as a legal professional, Maitreya’s chief claim to fame lay as an author of numerous historical and archaeological articles, essays and monographs in Bengali and English. His mastery over ancient languages and the modern science of epigraphy, Maitreya emerged as a towering figure among contemporary Bengali archaeologists. For Maitreya, Varendra was a domain of professional service. His self-positioning was among the ranks of those devoted researchers ‘...who live to work... as against those ‘...who work to live...’

Archaeology was Maitreya’s passion as well as his time-tested disciplinary tool for the recovery of his ancient Bengali ancestry. Fervently engaged in the recovery of ancient Bengali combined, in Maitreya, with a self-projected loyalty to truth and objective, unbiased and scientific analysis of excavated remains. Maitreya, as a Bengali archaeologist of his time was based on the rigorous fidelity to the methods and intentions of the modern science of epigraphy, numismatics, sculptural and architectural archaeology. His self-positioning was as a leading Bengali archaeologist of his time was based on the rigour of his scientific training, could effectively inject large volume of counter-evidence. Vernacular and regional identities were in use by him for mastering this craft were epigraphic and linguistic skills, out the main sources of archaeological investigation as practiced by archaeologists of his time. The idea of an Eastern school of sculpture and self-fashioning

In much of the non-Western world, archaeology and museums evolved as part of a grid of modern disciplinary and institutional practices, including cartography, utilizage, surveys, collection and order new territories.

The historian saw his own role as salvaging both the art and the history of the nation, of Swadesh and Swajati, which, for Maitreya, required a flexible category. It could extend to encompass the whole of India, the nation and her people and at the same time could speak of a distinctly regional identity of the Bengali. This became a shared concern of other prominent fellow Bengali historians and archaeologists of his time. The idea of an Eastern School of sculpture and self-fashioning emerged as a virulent critic of the new school of aesthetic research out of the reach of non-specialist method and historical analysis. Without going into the details of the debate, suffice it to point out that within the nationalist project of reclaiming art as the signifier of the emergent Indian nation, the field continued to be deeply fractured.10

For both Maitreya and Banerjee, the sculptures of the Pala and Sena empires stood as the clearest marker of a separate regional glory that he wished to recover for Bengal. With all its scholarly rigour, the book endeared as a tome of specialized empiricist research out of the reach of non-specialist literate audience.

To shift from this scholarly monograph in English to a spat of contemporary Bengali articles on the same theme by Akshay Kumar Maitreya was a shift in the core of his research. It was one that Maitreya and the other Bengali gentlemen scholars of the Varendra Research Society inherited from early colonial archaeologists, like Alexander Cunningham, in the late nineteenth century.1 The particular context of this historical quest was provided by the repeated colonial administrative and territorial reconfigurations of Bengal in the early twentieth century, the reconfiguration of Eastern Bengal and Asam and Western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as two separate administrative units in 1905, and then the bifurcation of the British Raj into the provinces of Eastern and Western Bengal in 1911 and the separation of Bihar and Orissa from Bengal as a separate provincial unit in 1912.

A search for sites of capitals in this ancient land took scholars like Akshay Kumar Maitreya and his fellow historians in the Society, like Rama Prasad Chanda, to the ruins of the city of Gaur (in northern Bengal, now in India). However, the search for the material remains of a pre-Islamic capital of an ancient Bengal and the ruins of Gaur proved elusive. The only monuments that the twentieth century

Notes
1 While the literature on this field is substantial, for a recent critical appraisal of the Ayodhya debate and the attendant contentions around the public positioning of archaeology in contemporary South Asia, see: Tapati Gaia-Thakurta. 2004. ‘Archaeology and the modern Bengali nation: questions of faith and history’, in Monuments, Objects, Histories: institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp.265-303.
2 The literature on the connections between cultural politics of colonialism, nationalism, heritage and the disciplinary and institutional fields of archaeology and museums is vast. In the context of colonial and postcolonial India a recent critical study of the field is Gaia-Thakurta’s book Monuments, Objects, Histories, 2004.
5 ibid., p.2.
6 ibid.
10 For a critical engagement with the nuances of this debate see Gaia-Thakurta. 2004. ‘Writing the nation’s prerogative: a history and nationalism in Bengal’, in Monuments, Objects, Histories, pp.140-771.
11 R. Banerjee. 1933. Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture. New Delhi: ASI.
Bali has always been popular with European artists; at the beginning of the previous century they were already enjoying the island’s ancient culture, breathtaking nature and friendly population. In 1932, the aristocratic Belgian, Jean Le Mayeur (1880-1958), made a home for himself in the tropical paradise; he mainly painted near-nude female dancers and was thus known as the ‘Paul Gauguin of Bali’. His colourful impressionist paintings and pastels were sold to American tourists for two or three hundred dollars, which was a substantial amount at that time. These days, his works are sold for small fortunes through the international auction houses.

Louis Zweers

Dutch artist, Willem Gerard HOFKER (1902-1981), was also found painting in pre-war Bali; he too painted lovely barely-dressed Balinese women. His fellow countryman, Rudolf Bonnet (1895-1978) produced large drawings, mostly character portraits, in a style resembling Jan Toorop. Walter Spies (1895-1942), a German artist who had moved permanently to Bali in 1925, became known for his mystical and exotic representations of Balinese landscapes. It is clear that the European painters were mainly fascinated by the young Balinese beauties, who would pose candidly, and normally bare from the waist up. But other facets of the island were also appreciated for their beauty, and artists were inspired by tropical landscapes, sawas (rice fields), temples, village scenes and dancers. The Western image of Bali was dominated by the idealisation of its women, landscape and exotic nature.

Arie Smit and Ubud

I visited the Neka Art Museum in the village Ubud, which is a bubbling hub of Balinese art and culture. In one of the rooms I admired the oil paintings by the Dutch painter Arie Smit (b.1916). He had moved to Indonesia in 1938 as a soldier in the Dutch colonial army, for which he was deployed to the topographical service. During the Japanese occupation he was forced to labour on the notorious Burma railway, also known as the ‘Railway of Death’. He later decided to become an Indonesian citizen, which meant that when the Dutch (including Dutch-Indonesians) left Indonesia after independence (at least 300,000 between 1946-1968), he was allowed to stay. The guard at the museum proudly stated about Smit, “He was the best”.

Down the road from the museum I came to the gate of the villa ‘Saing’, which is surrounded by a high wall. A Balinese young boy, with a batik scarf wrapped around his head, opened the door for me. I asked whether Arie Smit was home. Without so much of a word, but with a nod of the head, the boy led me through the spacious inner courtyard, copiously filled with well-nurtured tropical trees, plants and flowers. Through an arch in one of the plastered walls surrounding the courtyard we came to a squat building, upon which the boy called out excitedly that a visitor from Holland had arrived. I approached the old artist, standing in his full creative glory, and after apologising for my unannounced visit I told him I was interested in knowing more about the tragic life of the German artist Arthur Johann (Jo) König (1910-1953), who had lived and worked on Bali. Smit took a look at a number of old photographs of the artist that I had brought with me and said, “I knew him personally. He was a quiet man and lived outside Ubud”.

Ari König with a young Balinese model. He worked with various models, ca. 1950. B/W photo, National Archive.

Arthur Johann (Jo) König

The young German left to Java in the early 1930s; he had completed his degree at the art academies of Dresden and Leipzig. He was only planning on staying for a few months, yet he never again left the tropics. König, already a talented painter, went to work as a draughtsman at the printer De Unie, in the centre of Batavia (present-day Jakarta).

In October 1937 there was an exhibition of his oil paintings, depicting tropical landscapes and graceful young women, at the Hotel des Indes in Batavia. An art critic from the Dutch East Indies newspaper De Javaecho, was full of praise for his work. A second showing of his work took place during an exhibition in 1939, organised by the Batavische Kunstkring.1 His career was then interrupted by the Second World War.

When the German army invaded the Netherlands in 1940, all Germans in the Dutch East Indies were confined to internment camps. König was interned in northern Sumatra. Later, due to the encouraging threat of the Japanese forces, all prisoners were moved to British-India. The Brits took the young German couple established a new home in the cool highlands of the artists' village Ubud, on Bali. Ubud was considered to be the painters' paradise, and life was simple and cheap. König built himself a small studio on stilts and with a thatched roof; he had beautiful views of endless rice fields and the 3000-metre elevated volcano Gunung Agung standing proud on the horizon.

Every evening, in the nearby village of Platan, young girls danced to the light of oil lamps and to the beautifully smooth music of the gamelan ensemble. The married couple would walk home after the performances, through the dark woods, with no sounds other than the squeals of the monkeys in the background. König's paintings of exotic young women, gamelan musicians and local processions, displayed the island as a harmonious society. However, the image was rather deceiving; all the while the Balinese guerrillas continued their struggle against the Dutch military.

After the Dutch conceded independence for Indonesia in 1949, the chaos nevertheless endured. Armed youths terrorised the island; their attacks were mostly politically motivated. Their victims included Balinese village heads, Chinese businessmen, and former soldiers of the Dutch colonial army. Most Dutch people left, and took their families with them. Dutch schools and society buildings were abandoned. The remaining Europeans, including teachers, doctors, missionaries and representatives of KPM (the Dutch shipping company), were left alone, for the meantime.

König continued his work, but the Indonesian Nationalists made it known to all that the Balinese women were no longer to be painted by European artists showing their bare breasts. Tourists arriving at Denpasar airport were similarly warned that it was illegal to take any photos of half naked Balinese women. This would be judged as an insult to the Balinese women and the Indonesian postcolonial nation. This prohibition was later withdrawn again.2

Lost paradise

Shock waves rippled through the small European community still living on Bali in 1951, when Belgian artist Jean Le Mayeur was attacked in his home in Sanur. His Balinese wife Ni Pollock had managed to warn the staff, and together they were able to chase away the intruders. Le Mayeur was left with a serious knife wound to his shoulder. And then in 1953, König's wife took their daughter to see a doctor on Java; they were gone for a few days. Upon their return she found her husband's dead body. The house and everything in it had been completely destroyed, yet nothing had been taken. This had not been a common robbery-homicide.

As we sit in his garden, Arie Smit concluded his story, “König was having an affair with his young Balinese model. His Dutch wife was aware of this”. Rumours had it, that the white married artist had been killed by the infuriated family of his young and beautiful, Balinese model and lover. The case has never been solved. From the shade of the trees near his studio, we look out over the dense thicket of the valley, and we continue for some time to talk about Ball's history and culture. Then Smit says, in a near whisper, “That German artist lived too short a life. He left just a small oeuvre. I would leave the König-case be”.3

The Neka Art Museum doesn't have any pieces of work by König, and only very occasionally does one of his pieces come up for auction. Sukarno’s collection contains one portrait by König, of a young Balinese woman; its paint is badly distressed. Could this be his Balinese mistress?

Louis Zweers is an art- and photo historian, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Notes
2 (javaecho, 5 October 1937, 2; De Ochtend Post, 7 October 1937.
3 Het Dagblad, October 1947, Oorlogstijd, 22 November 1947 (2), 44.
As the history books have recorded, one of the world’s most cataclysmic volcanic outbursts was the 1883 eruption of Mount Krakatau, situated in the Sunda Strait that separates the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java. The eruption nearly wiped out the entire island of Krakatau, but after a number of submarine eruptions starting in 1927 it became clear that a new island was starting to emerge in the original location. Known as Gunung Anak Krakatau (“The Child of Krakatau”), it is, like its predecessor, an active volcano, which continues to grow consistently.

In 1883 there began a marked increase in earthquake activity in the Sunda Strait. On May 20th, volcanic eruptions began from the cone of Perbuatan and within a few days from a second newly formed vent. In July the violence of the eruptions increased and by the middle of August three main vents and numerous smaller ones were expelling large volumes of ash and steam. The last three days of activity, 26-28 August, were marked by a succession of explosive blasts, at first separated by intervals of ten minutes, but later becoming continuous. Huge quantities of pumice and ash were ejected together with rock fragments. On the morning of August 27th, more than three months after the first tremors on Rakata, enormous explosions took place at 5:30, 6:44, 10:02, and 10:52, bringing about the collapse of Danan, Perbuatan, and the northwest part of Rakata. Ash was blown to heights of seventy kilometers (fig. 2) and the accompanying tsunami swept the shores of Sunda Strait, with waves reaching heights of forty meters at the shore, taking the lives of—to cite the words of the colonial-era journalist, A. Zimmerman—“thirty-seven Europeans and over thirty-six thousand natives.” The waves reached Australia within five hours, Ceylon in six hours, Calcutta in nine, Aden in twelve, Cape Town in thirteen, and such was its force that it was felt even at Cape Horn seventeen hours later. The caldera formed as a result of the explosion was five to seven kilometers in diameter with a depth of 279 meters below sea level, it has been modified since by the emergence of the volcano Anak Krakatau on the northeast margin on the principal basin.

The effects of the eruption were felt not just in Indonesia and its immediate neighbors; the aftermath affected the global climate for months, which can be read about in an early extensive report compiled by the Krakatau Committee of the British Royal Society in London in 1888. Since that time numerous reports and scholarly publications have been devoted to the eruption and it is no exaggeration to say that because of the catastrophic intensity of the eruption and the devastation it caused, Krakatau has frequently been made the subject of writings, both scholarly and literary. A bibliographical compilation on Krakatau lists no less than 1083 references pertinent to its 1883 eruption, under a wide range of fields: geology, zoology, botany, meteorology, and oceanography to name just a few, not including some works that are relatively recent, such as Simon Winchester’s bestselling book, Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded: August 27, 1883 (London: Viking, 2003), suggesting that interest in Krakatau is still very much alive today.

In addition to scholarly works, there have been dozens of modern literary texts, mainly in the Western literary travelogue genre, and also cinematic representations. However, it may come as some surprise that one of the contemporaneous reports of the eruption was one that was written by a native son in the form of a syair, or classical Malay rhyming poem, titled Syair Lampung Karam (The Tale of Lampung Submerged). Although attention paid to Mount Krakatau since its devastating eruption in 1883 appears to be very much alive even today, little has been written about the aforementioned poem, which was published in four editions between 1883 and 1888, with four different (but similar) titles. The poem is not even recorded in the bibliography referred to above, the largest on Krakatau ever compiled. The reason for this apparent lapse is perhaps not only because the account was written in poetic form, the syair, but also because it was written in Jawi script, and consequently known only to persons who were interested in classical Malay literature and who were able to read Malay in Jawi script.

I beg you, good sirs, everyone and all, Do not deride me for erroneous recall. The reason this story I do now narrate, Is to remind all of Lampung’s sad fate.
The lithographed editions of The Tale of Lampung Submerged
Syair Lampung Karam [The Tale of Lampung Submerged], appeared as four lithographed editions that were published in Singapore in the late nineteenth century. The first edition of the poem was forty-two pages in length and entitled Syair Negeri Lampung yang Dinaiki oleh Air dan Hujan Abu [A Poem about Lampung when Engulfed by Water and a Rain of Ash]. The small book’s colophon notes that the edition was published in 1300 of the Muslim year (November 1883 to October 1884). One copy of this edition is preserved at the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, another lies in the Russian State Library, Moscow.

The second edition, entitled Ikih Syair Lampung Dinaiki Air [This is a Poem about Lampung when Engulfed by Sea Water], was published in Singapore on 2 Syafir 1302, the second day of the second month of the Muslim year 1302 (21 November 1884). A copy of this edition is preserved at Indonesia’s National Library in Jakarta.

The third edition, entitled Syair Lampung don Ayyer don Tanjung Karang Nok Air Laut [A Poem about Lampung and Ayyer and Tanjung Karang when Engulfed by Sea Water], was published by Haji Said on 27 Robu’ulawwal 1303, the 27th day of the third month of the Muslim year 1303 (3 January 1886). In some advertisements for this book, its title is given as Syair Negeri Ayyer Singgahlam [A Poem about Ayyer Under Water]. A copy of this edition is preserved at Cambridge University Library.

The last known edition, on which the transliteration and translation of the poem that appear in this article are based, is entitled Ikih Syair Lampung Karam Aidone [This is a Poem about Lampung when it was Submerged] (Fig. 3 – see page 10). This edition was published on 10 Syafir 1306, the tenth day of the second month of the Muslim year 1306 (16 October 1888). Copies of this edition are preserved at the National Library in Jakarta; Leiden University Library; the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London; the University of Malaya Library; and the collection of Malay Books of the Methodist missionary Emil Luing in Frankfurt, Germany.

The authorship of the poem
The colophon of the 1888 edition reveals that the poem was composed by Muhammad Saleh (stanza 374) in the Bangkhuhalu Quarter (later Bencoolen Street) of Singapore (stanza 369) (Fig. 4 – see page 10). Elsewhere in the poem (stanza 4), the author states that he had come from Tanjung Karang and that he himself had witnessed the catastrophe caused by the terrible eruption (stanza 103). Very little is known about the author; he very well may have been one of those refugees who fled to Singapore carrying with them graphic memories of the disaster. Unfortunately he does not say where he was born.

In Lampung there is a story about an almost-legendary character by the name of Muhammad Saleh (or ‘Soleh’), a religious leader who was instrumental in the building of the Jamik al-Anwar Mosque in Teluk Betung, Lampung, of which construction had begun in 1839. (Destroyed by the eruption of Krakatau in 1883, the mosque was rebuilt later.) Muhammad Saleh was a migrant to Lampung from Bond, South Sulawesi. Due to his extensive knowledge on Islam, he became a prominent religious leader in Teluk Betung and later served as its regent. In an article by Zulkarnain Zubari and Syar Jarkasih, published in a newspaper in Tanjung Karang, Lampung, the two journalists suggest that the name of Mohammad Saleh, written in the colophon of the 1888 edition of the syar was possibly their former religious leader.* Unfortunately, no single bibliographical evidence has yet been found to support this claim.

The publisher of the 1888 edition was Cap al-Hajj Muhammad Tayob (or Talib). As to the book’s colypist, from its colophon we know that Encik Ibrahim, the copyst of the 1884 edition, was also the copyst of the 1888 edition. Encik Ibrahim was a prolific Malay copyst who lived in Riau before moving to Singapore where, in 1881, he began to work as a copyst for the lithographic printers there. As Ian Prodfoot mentions, for most of two decades “Ibrahim became the leading lithographic copyst in Singapore, working with most of the active lithographic printers of the day.”

In stanza 367 and 368 of the 1888 edition Muhammad Saleh tells us that he finished writing the poem on 14 Zulhijjah 1300, the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the Muslim year 1300 (15 October 1883), just three short months after Krakatau initially erupted. Given that the first lithographed edition of the poem appeared in Singapore almost immediately thereafter, it seems reasonable to surmise that the author had previously been approached and enticed to write down his tale by people connected with the Singaporean indigenous press, perhaps even by the copyst-publisher Encik Ibrahim.

As Ian Prodfoot described in his Early Malay Printed Books, the indigenous and Straits-Chinese (peranakan) printing firms in late nineteenth century Singapore were engaged in a cut-throat competition. Because Syair Lampung Karam contained first-hand and in depth information about the hugely devastating eruption that had recently taken place in the neighboring Dutch East Indies, the work may very well have become a prize in the struggle for such a publication among the publishers in Singapore at that time. An insightful publisher of the poem would have been able to profit greatly by printing it for the indigenous readership.

Interestingly, the first edition of this book sold very well indeed; as we know, the second edition was launched in late 1884, just a few months after the first edition had appeared.

The Tale of Lampung Submerged can be categorized as a “journalism poem” (syair kewartawanan), to borrow a term used by the late classical Malay scholar, Sri Wulan Radjapi Malayadi. This kind of syar typically contains eyewitness reports of diverse real-life events, including events of historical importance, political development, and natural disasters. Nevertheless, the purpose of the author of this poem was more to share his experience of witnessing the natural disaster, rather than to exploit it; he advised his readers to let their souls draw closer to the Almighty God.

Warning from the Almighty God
Composed as a syar – a prominent Malay literary genre that in previous decades had multiple functions, including the teaching of religious dogmas and reporting the factual news – the poem represents the native attitudes about the natural calamity that tend to be comprehended based on Islamic theology and philosophy. The aesthetic element of the poem is also able to arouse the emotions of its native readers.

In this poem, with its 375 four-line stanzas, from his native eyes, Muhammad Saleh dramatically relates the catastrophic situation, as it developed following the horrifying Krakatau eruption. He graphically depicts what happened to numerous towns and villages in the South Sumatra region where tens of thousands of people died as a result of the disaster. He describes how, even when faced with a calamity of such proportions, people still cared for each other. The colonial Dutch East Indies government acted quickly to help the victims. At the same time, he also gives a lively account of those who abused the situation for their own profit, and stole from others.

The author mentions in stanzas 12 and 13 that at four o’clock in the morning on 22 Sya’wal 1300, the 22nd day of the tenth month of the Muslim year 1300 (26 August 1883) he heard a thundering sound coming from the sea, which he assumed to be the horn of a steamship. Apparently, the sound he had heard was a precursor to the first huge explosion of Krakatau, which occurred one and a half hours later.
indeed, and are likely to be passed on to future generations. minds of the people of this archipelago for a very long time traditional beliefs influence public views about natural corruption and pornography, as well as to shun a consumerist will continue if Indonesians do not take steps to eradicate series of natural disasters that have affected Indonesia in the activities among the survivors of that disaster increased or moralistic terms. As reported by Reza Indria, religious Aceh in December 2004 expressed their feelings in spiritual survivors of the earthquakes and tsunami that devastated major country, people tend to view natural disasters as a warning or punishment from God. Thus, for example, immense natural disaster, people became increasingly devout and pain that make my heart burn.” So distraught the author his great sadness, “the melancholy within my brooding heart,” and how difficult it was for him not to dwell on the disaster: “Only Allah and His Prophet can truly discern.” The sorrow and pain that make my heart burn.” So distraught the author is, he worries that he might perish: “With all the images that pass my mind’s eye / I, in my fevered delirium, fear that I may die.” (stanza 334 and 373.) In various stanzas throughout the poem, he states that he witnessed the effects of the eruption with his own two eyes. To cite just two examples: in stanza 84 he writes, “So this is my story, dear sir, I tell you no lies!” (line that I witnessed, with my own two eyes), and in stanza 103, “I couldn’t believe what my eyes were seeing.” Since the poem is a rare written document casting light on local perceptions of the eruption, the description of the 1883 Krakatau eruption in it tends to differ markedly from those presented in Western reports. As a Muslim, and in accordance with the tastes of the day, the writer inserts moral observations and pieces of advice, suggesting that in the face of such an immense natural disaster, people became increasingly devout and mindful of Almight God. Perhaps it is a generalization, but in Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country, people tend to view natural disasters as a warning or punishment from God. Thus, for example, survivors of the earthquakes and tsunamis that devastated Aceh in December 2004 expressed their feelings in spiritual or moralistic terms. As reported by Reza Indria, religious activities among the survivors of that disaster increased exponentially. Numerous publicists and religious leaders have cited a decline in the nation’s morals as the reason behind the series of natural disasters that have affected Indonesia in the past decade. These same people have said that the disasters will continue if Indonesians do not take steps to eradicate corruption and pornography, as well as to shun a consumerist and hedonistic lifestyle. As is suggested by media and public discourse in Indonesia, both theological perspectives and traditional beliefs influence public views about natural disasters. If Muhammad’s thoughts can be said to be representative of beliefs held by the general public at that time, then such perceptions have apparently existed in the minds of the people of this archipelago for a very long time indeed, and are likely to be passed on to future generations.

The tale of Lampung submerged continued
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Internal child trafficking in China

Although transnational trafficking in children has attracted worldwide attention in the last two decades, internal trafficking has been relatively ignored. A number of geographical contexts have been largely neglected by the academic community and one of them has been China; a country with a remarkably long history of the phenomenon and one in which the particular practice is culturally embedded, to the point that it is viewed simply as tradition.

Supply, demand, facilitation

Child trafficking is a growing problem in China although it remained as a ‘new’ tendency in the last two decades or so. In addition to a change in scale, the characteristics of child trafficking have also transformed. As a result it has attracted the attention of some high echelons of the Chinese establishment who consider it a ‘lucrative business’. For instance, an expert from the Criminal Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) explains in no uncertain terms that, “compared with trafficking in women, trafficking in children is more profitable and easier”.

There are a number of supply, demand and facilitating factors involved. Some are common to other geographical contexts, whereas others need to be understood within the unique local historical, cultural, socio-political and economic context of China. These include: poverty, high profits and low risks for traffickers, loopholes in law and ineffective implementation of law, regional economic imbalance, movement of people and ‘floating populations’.

Of great significance is the ‘One Child Policy’. This particular policy is often the platform for the facilitation of internal child trafficking in a country that favours large families (primarily in rural areas) and that has a male-dominant culture, placing higher value on boys than girls.

Supply and recruitment

Recording crime in China is rather unsystematic and inconsistent. Although internal trafficking is an acknowledged issue and the media are not banned from reporting on it, it appears that annual official figures of internal human trafficking either do not exist, due to the lack of an operational recording system, or are kept confidential due to political sensitivities.

The various ways in which children are found and selected for trafficking depend on the age of the children, the purposes for trafficking and the specific circumstances. New born babies and extremely young children may be obtained through various channels, including: collecting abandoned infants, receiving unwanted children from their parents (with or without payment), purchasing children from other traffickers, stealing/kidnapping or even using force or violence to snatch them. Unwanted newborns can be bought from their parents, private clinics or illegitimate midwife services. Families suffering financial hardship may also seek to sell ‘additional’ children to exchange for money (this has been the case with the Uighur community in the west of the country).

For older children, abduction and/or deception are the most common methods used. In investigated cases reveal that female traffickers often play a crucial role in tempting children away from their homes. Teenagers (and sometimes their parents) tend to be deceived with fraudulent job offers such as working in factories, building sites, and restaurants.

Demand for children

Traditionally, children have mostly been trafficked from the economically underdeveloped areas (such as Yunnan, Guizhou, Schuan and Xinjiang) to the more developed urban regions in the east. Trafficked children are sold for a variety of purposes: - Negotiation. Both boys and girls are wanted for the purpose of adoption, but buying a boy is much more expensive than buying a girl. In urban areas, trafficked boys or girls are purchased by childless families. In a case that was publicised in 2005, the scheme involved the sale of babies to a legal orphanage (the Hengyang Social Welfare Institute). The orphanage official was willing to pay for babies because foreign adopting parents usually donate large amounts of money (US$ 3000-5000 per child) when they legally adopt a baby or child from a Chinese orphanage.

- Forced marriage. Traditionally, girls (and women) have been abducted and sold as wives for impoverished men. In many rural areas it is a tradition for a man and/or his family to buy girls for wedlock; in some localities this is known as ‘bought marriage’. Buying a wife is not seen as a criminal act, but as part of the culture of rural China.

- Labour exploitation. This form of exploitation has existed for centuries, however, trafficking children for the purpose of labour exploitation started to be a political issue in the 1990s.

- Street trading, begging and street crime. Trafficked children are sold to individuals who force them to carry out street trades, such as selling flowers, polishing shoes, and performing in street ‘kud donors’. Disabled children (primarily) are also used for begging, as they supposedly garner more sympathy. Some trafficked children are deliberately injured by their exploiters and forced to beg for money; this has become a distinctive feature of the local informal economy in the Henan and Anhui provinces.

- Sexual exploitation. Teenage girls are deceived by fraudulent job offers, such as factory or restaurant work, and are subsequently sold into prostitution. The Ministry of Public Security suggests that labour and sexual exploitation-related trafficking including of children is gradually replacing the more traditional purposes of human trafficking in China.

Traffickers and their process

Individuals traditionally involved in the trafficking of children in China typically act as middlemen or agents rather than professional criminals or even a history of trafficking. Many cases involve people who can abuse a position of trust, such as school teachers. In the case of systematic or large scale trafficking, the business tends to have a naturally defined horizontal ‘structure’ with independent, autonomous ‘entities’ involved in the process. In some cases individuals act as intermediaries who risk disconnected acts of the business or assist in the sale of children by identifying potential buyers. Generally, individuals or small groups from temporary collaborations.

There is some evidence that these collaborations often emerge through familial and ethnic ties (primarily among the Uighur community).

Different roles exist in the trafficking process, these include: (1) Organisers: individuals in the position to initiate trafficking usually have a good legal status and/or employment (e.g., director of orphanage); (2) Recruiters: often people from the same community as the children themselves; (3) Sellers: mainly local residents who are familiar with the market, its peculiarities and ‘needs’. In many cases the recruiter and the seller are the same person; (4) Facilitators: individuals who may otherwise not be involved in the sale or other aspects of the business. For example, some owners of homes rented by traffickers not only ‘turn a blind eye’, but they also assist by identifying (prospective) buyers.

Local protectionism plays a part in the existence and growth of child trafficking. Local officials of course recognise the illegality, yet appear ‘sympathetic towards the families who had spent money on purchasing, [and they suggest that] these families should somehow lose (loss of purchasing money as well as children purchased)’. Where significant profits are made from forcing children into work in local businesses, and even street dealing or begging, local officials choose to ignore the practice, and view these cases as successful local entrepreneurship. In addition, local government authorities do not perform their functions effectively in managing, supervising and inspecting small-scale private workplaces, coalmines, brick kilns, factories and other enterprises that regularly employ trafficked children, and in actual fact facilitate child trafficking business by hampering, or preventing altogether, anti-child trafficking investigations and operations.

Generally, internal child trafficking in China is the result of a complex interweaving of supply, demand and facilitating factors, heavily affected by the socioeconomic change in the country supported passively or actively by local officials, and embedded in the Chinese cultural milieu.

Notes

7 Zhu op cit.

The Study

SURVEILLANCE IS PERFORMED through various technologies. Practices are aligned with positions of power, because watching serves to control, regulate, categorise and unconsciously behave. Surveillance has not disappeared with the demise of colonial and authoritarian states, but is a practice that continually adapts and lends itself to varying conditions and circumstances. Surveillance is seemingly restrictive and prescriptive, yet in other circumstances it is creative and countering of dominant or mainstream narratives. So, does surveillance necessarily work in favour of a dominant political or ideological order?

Throughout the streets of Jakarta, and elsewhere, codes of ethics are placed at entrances to inner urban communities. In another case, Lippo Karawaci, a ‘private city’ west of Jakarta, has its own private infrastructure with its own security staff, acting as police. The signs suggest and invoke the values that has its own private infrastructure with its own security staff, acting as police.1 The signs suggest and invoke the values that are supposedly held within the particular community. At times they are no more than a simple recital of nationalist or religious sentiments. Elsewhere, large status of national symbols (such as the Canadian) symbolically invite the viewer or passerby to keep the nation in mind. That is, to remember that one is part of a great and grand imagined community – a particular nation, with its necessary memories, narratives and ideologies. Surveillance is, thus, something that one performs against oneself, as well as something that can be performed by an other, outside and external force. Surveillance may simply be performed on those who are wandering aimlessly, not being controlled by the hypnotists. With gleaming signs, displays and mirrors beneath cars as they approach the guard houses, smoking cigarettes, waving strong emotions; being a somewhat critical, but nonetheless enforcers of security. Hypnosis, real or otherwise, is common in anecdotes; it is a disturbance of daily behaviour. It is a slip from normal behaviour when one is in control, to an inexplicable situation when one suddenly finds oneself not able to control or determine one’s actions. A mall, with its formalisation and limitations on behaviour, disrupts established patterns of interacting with others and ways of relating to one’s surroundings. As van Leeuwen writes, one indeed needs to learn how to behave in a mall. And thus, despite allusions of frivolity and fun, malls may not be spaces that one can enter without a sense of caution. One may involuntarily withdraw large amounts of cash and give it to a stranger.

Malls in Jakarta, based on preliminary observations at Mangga Dua Square and elsewhere, are spaces that provide relevant case studies for the crossovers and problematic dichotomy of acting as one pleases and being subjected to a watchful gaze; malls are subject to the gaze of security staff and hypnotists. Nonetheless, malls are spaces in which identities can be shaped and where mingling with strangers takes place.2 Degrees of public and private are subject to negotiation. Practices of surveillance and security seek to maintain a degree of exclusion; these practices, however, are not impermeable to subversion. Andy Fuller is a post-doctoral fellow at IIAS. His interests include Asian cities and popular culture. (acfuller@gmail.com)

Notes
4 Fuller, A. 2012. Asian Urbanisms and Materialities in Recording the Future. Singapore: ARI NUS.

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Mall danger

Jakarta is dangerous – or, at least, many every day experiences make it feel so. Security guards are prevalent; in uniform, at guard houses, smoking cigarettes, waving mirrors beneath cars as they approach the entrances of malls and hotels. Surveillance is one means of creating both a threatened sense of security and a sense of fear. Part of the contestation and re-configuring of space relates to practices of surveillance, which is an act performed with an intent to trace, track and record the movements of potential and possible suspects. Surveillance, meaning to ‘watch over’, is a somewhat ambivalent practice; it seeks to prevent crime, yet simultaneously casts a suspicious gaze on those who are being watched.

Andy Fuller

New for review


IN ITS COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS of a wide range of primary and secondary sources in both Chinese and Western languages, this authoritative work stands as the definitive study of the theory, implementation and legacy of the Chinese Communist Party’s thought remodelling campaign. This decades-long campaign involved the extraction of confessions from millions of Chinese citizens suspected of heterodoxy or disobedience to party dictates, along with their subjection to various forms of ‘re-education’ and indoctrination. Hu Ping’s carefully structured overview provides a valuable insider’s perspective, and supersedes the previous core of Chinese communism. Hu Ping takes us on an empathetic logical insight and philosophical rigor, making a significant contribution to the literature on totalitarianism in the tradition of Vicki Havest. This book offers key insights for students of globalization and transnationality and policy relevance for development practitioners, governments, and NGOs.

Hu Ping is chief editor of the New York-based monthly journal Beijing Spring, and is on the Board of Directors of the NGO Human Rights in China. He has authored over ten books, including Chine, ès la démocratie? – les illusions de modernisation (2004; translated by Marie Holzman), and Malini Sur received her PhD from the University of Amsterdam in 2012 and is a fellow at the University of Toronto, in autumn 2012.

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As it approaches its hundredth birthday, the Chinese Communist Party faces a crisis of legitimacy. It has weathered the turbulent events of the twentieth century to emerge as the single dominant force in Chinese politics. Ruling over more than a fifth of the world’s population, the CCP is enmeshed with every organ of Chinese government and dominates the apparatus of state, from the military to the media. As Will Hutton notes in the foreword to Friends and Enemies, “‘Today’s China is the Party’s creation’ (Brown, p. x). It is impossible to understand contemporary Chinese society without addressing the role of the CCP within it.

The Chinese Communist Party, then and now

References


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The 1965-1966 killings

The study of the 1965-1966 killings in Indonesia, and for that matter the study of the country’s politics more generally, will never be the same again with the recent release of the documentary film *The Act of Killing* (21 August 2012, Toronto International Film Festival), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer with co-director Christine Cynn. The film’s protagonists are leading figures in the local paramilitary organisation Pemuda Pancasila [Pancasila Youth], who were responsible for the killings of hundreds of real or suspected communists in North Sumatera in 1965-1966, as part of a nationwide program that took approximately one million lives. Although testimonies and published analyses of the event have slowly emerged, it is one of those topics that most people have some knowledge about, but prefer not to discuss even in private.

Ariel Heryanto

THE RESULT OF SEVEN YEARS OF hard work, involving many hundreds of hours of footage, the documentary radically challenges some of the old and familiar assumptions in the study of politics and violence. It also demonstrates an ingenious method of documentary filmmaking that will be of special interest to students of media studies, history, visual ethnography, and the anthropology of media. Undoubtedly, human rights activists and institutions will have a deep interest in the way this film penetrates the entrenched impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of one of the worst massacres in modern history. Some of the leaders of the groups responsible for the massacre still hold government offices at local and national levels today.

All currently existing films with a focus on the 1965 killings and its aftermath (as distinct from those that present the same events only in the background of their story) are dedicated to giving a voice to the survivors and members of their families, occasionally with sympathetic comments from experts. These films have broken the general onscreen silence that has lasted for over a quarter of a century. To my knowledge, a total of 16 such documentaries have been produced, most of them in small circles, by individual survivors,1 local non-governmental organisations,2 and filmmakers,3 in addition to three titles by foreign filmmakers.4

All these documentaries show the ordeals of the victims and the various forms of their victimisation. Made with low budgets and very basic technology, most of these locally produced documentaries feature talking heads from among the survivors and eyewitnesses. Frail and aged-looking women appear in many of these films, speaking emotionally about their endless agony and portraying their condemnations against the past injustice and the continued failure on the part of the successive governments to acknowledge it.5

Individually and collectively, those films have merits of their own, and their importance to the fledgling efforts to unearth the buried history cannot be over-emphasised. However, due to their limited circulation, but also to the successful anti-communist propaganda that has been deeply embedded and normalised in the public consciousness since 1966, these documentaries have yet to make any significant impact in public. For now, their impact is certainly too limited to undermine the New Order propaganda. These previous films presented a counter-claim that boldly reversed the positions of goodness and evil that were firmly implanted in the nation’s history by successive governments and their supporters, best exemplified in the nearly four-and-a-half hour anti-communist state-produced film entitled *Pengkhianatan G 30 September* (1984). However, a reversal of this kind only reproduces, and does not eliminate or problematise, the fundamental framework of a good versus evil dichotomy that structures the government propaganda and public imagination. While giving voice to the silenced victims, the perpetrators of the 1965-1966 killings did not appear in these alternative films. In government-sponsored propaganda and off-screen statements, whenever these perpetrators (or their sponsors and supporters) speak of the events, their statements consist mainly of denials along with the frequent placing of blame on the victims.

In remarkable contrast, *The Act of Killing* is fascinating as much as disturbing for its radical subversion of the prevailing paradigm. In that it presents a narrative of the killings in a complex story, with multi-layered sub-narratives, rich with ironies and contradictions. An adequate discussion of the significance and problematics that this film brings to the fore is far beyond the scope of this brief article. Here I can only mention in the simplest terms some of the most obvious aspects that will have immediate impact for our current scholarship on the issue.

The Act of Killing graphically visualizes acts of violence that make the horrors in the previous documentaries (allusions to anti-communist captors, torturers, rapists), as well as in *Pengkhianatan G 30 September* (the evils of an allegedly communist-backed movement against rightist six generals and one lieutenant on the eve of 1 October 1967) pale into insignificance. In this respect, the Act of Killing incriminates the perpetrators of the 1965-1966 killings more seriously than any of the preceding films have done. But this new documentary goes much further than simply validating or reinforcing the survivors’ allegations about the cruelty of the military-orchestrated anti-communist pogrom.

Instead of submitting new ‘facts’ or a set of serious ‘evidence’ about the crimes against humanity in 1965-1966, *The Act of Killing* presents an abundance of extravagantly-styled self-incriminations by the 1965 executioners themselves, as they speak proudly to the camera about how they pushed their cruelty to the extreme when killing the communists and members of their families, and raping their female targets, including children. In front of the camera, they go on to demonstrate step-by-step how they carried out the killings at the original sites of their actions in 1965, thus making the survivors’ allegations of their crimes redundant. *The Act of Killing* exposes in a most obscene fashion what the successive Indonesian governments since 1966 have erased from official history and government pronouncements.

More than one of the perpetrators in this film observes perceptively that ‘their’ film will outdo the government’s infamous *Pengkhianatan G 30 September* in portraying scenes of horrendous violence. They remark that the general public is utterly wrong to assume (in line with New Order government propaganda) that the Communists are cruel or brutal. ‘We are crueler and more brutal than the Communists’, they claim. They elaborate what they mean in great detail, both through words and re-enactments on camera. The film contains some of the most violent scenes and language I have seen or heard, on or off screen, from or on Indonesia. Viewers need to have a strong stomach to watch this film.

Questions raised

However, violent scenes and perverted language are only a part of the image that this film presents. *The Act of Killing* is unusual in the series of documentaries on the theme to date; it is the first long film on the 1965-1966 killings to feature the perpetrators, instead of the survivors or their sympathisers, as the main characters. This is only possible with the consent of those individual executioners, especially as they appear without their identities being concealed. They recount their own crimes, most of the time laughing, singing and dancing, and only occasionally with remorse and reported nightmares.

Three closely-related sets of questions came up in my mind when I first saw two earlier and shorter versions of the film in 2010 and 2011. Some clues began to dawn on me after watching the final and longer version in 2012, and after having further conversations with Oppenheimer, the director.

The first set of questions concerns methods. How did the filmmakers manage to persuade these perpetrators to speak so freely, and in such self-incriminating way? Since it was evident

1 (above): Executemtor preparing for the film shooting, in which they acted in rotation as their 1965 victims. Courtesy of the copyright owner who wishes not to be named.
that there was no hidden camera involved, I wondered if some strategy of deception was being cleverly used. However, if we presuppose that these individuals were active participants in the filmmaking project, the question can be formulated differently from their perspective, viz.-à-vis the professional filmmakers: why would these perpetrators want to make all these serious self-incriminations, and literally so, presumably knowing full well that their statements would eventually be widely disseminated to the public? What did they wish to gain for themselves or give to the audience? While they might have been extremely cruel in their youth, could they possibly, some 40 years later, be so foolish as to not be aware of the risks involved in making their self-incriminations the way they did?

The second set of questions relates to ethical issues. Regardless of the political aptness and risk-awareness of these actors, I wondered for a moment if the filmmakers had given them viewing access to the recordings, so that they could judge reflexively for themselves how they appeared on screen, and could gauge the potential impacts both on themselves and on their audience. Had the filmmakers actually discussed these issues and confronted the actors with the kind of questions that the film audience would likely raise? Is it a relief to see in the long version of the film affirmative answers to these questions?

The third set of questions interrogates issues of truth. Regardless of what these perpetrators have said about what they did to the Communistists in 1965-1966, to what extent do their statements and re-enactments represent the actual events of 1965-1966? How do we know and assess this? How much fact and/or fiction have gone into the narratives in this film? Their statements and re-enactments are the actual long version of the film affirmative answers to these questions.

Boastfully self-incriminating
One immediate, if partial, answer to the first set of questions is evident throughout the film: these executors enjoy boasting. Off-screen, director Oppenheimer investigates this point further in a separate, but immediately related component of the larger project. The executors are well aware of the risks involved, and their discussions about these risks are on record. Perhaps we all enjoy some boasting sometimes, in front of some people. One would assume, however, that most people are careful not to do so about absolutely anything, at any time, and before the general public.

So the boasting thesis prompts further and more important questions. Under what conditions – real or perceived – did these 1965-1966 executors have the pleasure and the privilege of boasting so liberally about what they admit to as their ‘crimes’? What circumstances made it possible for them to enjoy a full and extended period of impunity? Selected scenes in The Act of Killing provide some answers. The protagonists in this film enjoy the patronage of their fellow executors and other anti-communist politicians who have climbed the political ladder, and who have been running the country or provinces in the past several decades. Top national and local politicians who serve as their patrons appear in the film, demonstrating their close relations with members of the local paramilitary, including the film’s protagonists.

A detailed study in English of the political roles of militia gangs and gangs of thugs (locally called preman, from the Dutch word wijnman [free man]) in New Order Indonesia and their mutually beneficial relations with the state apparatus, especially the military, is available in the work of Geron. Focusing on Permuda Pancasila, Geron emphasizes the salient role of the branch in Medan, the birthplace and the strongest base of the group, in the 1965-1966 killings. However, as a result of changes in the political environment, the group appears to have been less influential than it once was, and the group’s activities have been largely underground since the early 1970s. The group’s leader, Mochtar Romahurmuzia, was arrested in 1974 and sentenced to death. He was later released on parole in 1983 and died in 1994.

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A detailed study in English of the political roles of militia gangs and gangs of thugs (locally called preman, from the Dutch word wijnman [free man]) in New Order Indonesian society, including the film’s protagonists, especially the military, is available in the work of Loren Ryter.

We are crueller and more brutal than the Communists, they claim. They elaborate what they mean in great detail both through words and re-enactments on camera.

The Act of Killing is not a documentary film with a straightforward narrative structure of the kind that characterizes all the preceding films on the 1965-1966 killings. It is a documentary film about historical agents and also about how these agents make a film about themselves, based on their remembered actions in 1965-1966. Even as it presents an oral history investigation of that murky period, and the first-hand recollection from some of the executors, it is also about these executors’ consciously drafted fictions and re-enactments as a medium through which they articulate their memories and comment on those memories. Therefore, instead of relegating the protagonists to an object of someone else’s recording camera, the directors allow them to co-author their own self-incriminating narratives, which they do with considerable liberty, wit, laughter and pleasure.

‘We are crueller and more brutal than the Communists’, they claim. They elaborate what they mean in great detail through words and re-enactments on camera.

Towards the end of the propaganda?
One can never be fully sure of what the protagonists might wish to achieve from the project. On screen, they all claim that they simply want to ‘tell history truly as it is’ to the world, not just to Indonesia, but especially to Indonesia. But the true question is: ‘What lies behind the ‘truth’ of these narratives? Why do these perpetrators have the pleasure and the privilege of making their self-incriminations the way they did?’

The propaganda about the 1965-1966 killings has outlived the New Order government that authored it. The Act of Killing promises that we may soon see the demolition of that sanitized propaganda, if and when a copy of the documentary finds its audience among millions of Indonesians: through YouTube on the Internet (www.actofkilling.com), or through pirate smart phones across the nation, home of one of the world’s largest numbers of Facebook account holders and one of the world’s largest markets of pirated DVDs.

If and when such events transpire, we will witness the biggest irony that most people from opposing positions in the history of the 1965-1966 killings can imagine. The perpetrators’ biggest and most atrocious deception is being ripped apart not so much through the efforts of some extraordinarily resilient survivors with the moral courage of some experts who speak eloquently on their behalf, but by courtesy of a bunch of boofish killers that most of us would love to hate.

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Notes
1 This article was prepared when I was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. It is part of a larger work in-progress, supported by the Australian National University’s College of Asia and the Pacific and the Australian Research Council. I am very grateful to all these institutions for their support, as well as to Joshua Oppenheimer and the Australian Research Council for their support, as well as to Joshua Oppenheimer for the privileged access to his film prior to its release.
2 Examples include The Years of Living Dangerously (1983), Grind (2003), and Some Like It Hot (2006).
3 Lemnag Kratwitsa Kersanamaa (UKK) [Institute of Creative Humanity], led by poet-cum-novelist Putu Oka Sulakinta, is to date the longest-lasting organization that has been working to prevent the 1965 violence. Putu and several members of UKK were political prisoners for their active membership of the Institute of People’s Culture [Lembaga Kebudayan Rakyat, LKRB], which was affiliated with the PKI. The six titles that LKK has produced are, chronologically, Bennu neka tanam dalam kebun [Sowing light within the darkness] (2006); Perempuan yang tartual [The accused woman] (2005); Tumbuh dalam bumi [Growing in the storm] (2007); Senti ditengah jaman [Art that will not die] (2008); Tyudion 79, after the street address of the LEKKA office in Jakarta (2009), and Sang penari ungu [The purple dancer] (2011).
6 They are The Shadow Play (2001), Silence Breaking of a nation (2004), and 40 Years of silence: An Indonesian Tragedy (2009). In 2010, significantly on his personal capacity, President Abdurrahman Wahid offered an apology to survivors and the families of victims of the 1965-1966 killings. His statement provoked an uproar. Early in 2012 there was a news report suggesting that President Yudhoyono intended to make a public apology for state complicity in the past human rights abuses, with no reference to any specific incidents.
8 Notes
In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, NGOs poured into the Indonesian province of Aceh to assist in the recovery effort. The NGO that I worked for, like most others, imported a professional gender expert to ensure that gender issues were properly addressed in its aid programmes. She had never been to Aceh, or even Indonesia before. An Acehnese colleague, a Muslim feminist and social activist, unsurprisingly questioned the wisdom of spending a significant amount of our budget to fly in a foreign gender ‘expert’. Aceh’s history boasts a legacy of four queens, a female navy commander, and women warriors; in a more recent century, countless Indonesian women have campaigned for a more just and equal society.

Su Lin Lewis


The hiring of gender experts, usually from Western countries, is common practice in the world of international aid. While they often offer networks and ideas, they tend to have little understanding of the local historical conditions in which gender issues play out. The association of feminism with supposed cultural authenticity is one of the major tensions in women’s movements within each Asian country.

Roces maps out some of the challenges the authors faced in writing their pieces, including accommodating the plurality of voices within each Asian country. The appearance of Women’s Movements in Asia, edited by Mina Roces and Louise Edwards, is thus a welcome overview for scholars as well as practitioners. The book follows a previous collection from the editors, Women’s Suffrage in Asia (Routledge, 2004). They take their cue from Asian feminist scholar Kumari Jayawardene, whose path-breaking (Routledge, 2004) sought to challenge the notion of the ‘Western’ origins of women’s movements.

In both volumes, the editors argue that Asian feminisms must be viewed on a different timeline and context than Western feminisms. While Western women were living in relatively democratic societies, Asian women had to overcome a different set of struggles, including colonialism, authoritarian rule, and a lack of educational opportunities. Asian suffrage campaigns, as the first volume shows, emerged in tension with emerging nationalist movements, particularly in many early suffragettes were Western-educated, and the image of ‘modern women’ often ran counter to national projects to recover an authentic, pre-colonial past. These early activists reinvigorated national conceptions of the feminine, most visibly through dress and costume, with that of the babaylan, with that of the pre-Hispanic priestess abolished under Spanish colonial rule. According to Trudy Jacobson, Cambodian women activists today fight deep-seated perceptions of women as being inferior to men, and of politics being a ‘male domain’, with reference to the prominent role women played in the Angkor period and in rebuilding Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge era.

Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to dismissing feminism as a corrupting Western import. Lenore Lyons argues that Singapore’s AWARE has constantly battled stereotypes of feminists as ‘man-haters, lese-majestes’ and radicals taking on Western values. In Pakistan, Andrea Fleschenberg notes that women’s groups engaging in broad-based social work have been met with accusations of Westernisation, creating divides between Islamist women activists and secular feminists. Parity to evade charges of Westernisation, Asian women have drawn on the past to contribute to indigenous narratives of patriotism and female empowerment. As Edwards notes, early Chinese reformers drew inspiration from Mulan, who dressed as a man and became a Chinese general. Alessandra Chricosta argues that Au-co, the birdlike folk-heroine associated with the origins of the Vietnamese nation, has contributed to a ‘myth of uniqueness’ about the high status of Vietnamese women, while the Trung Sisters were repeatedly invoked as ‘patriotic women warriors’ in the socialist era. Roces observes that Philippine activists replaced images of doting, suffering women in their national epic, Noli Mi Tangere, with that of the babaylan, the pre-Hispanic priestess abolished under Spanish colonial rule. According to Trudy Jacobson, Cambodian women activists today fight deep-seated perceptions of women as being inferior to men, and of politics being a ‘male domain’, with reference to the prominent role women played in the Angkor period and in rebuilding Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge era.

The hiring of gender experts, usually from Western countries, is common practice in the world of international aid. While they often offer networks and ideas, they tend to have little understanding of the local historical conditions in which gender issues play out. The association of feminism with supposed cultural authenticity is one of the major tensions in women’s movements within each Asian country. Roces maps out some of the challenges the authors faced in writing their pieces, including accommodating the plurality of voices within each Asian country.

In the second half of the twentieth century, with thirteen authors examining the emergence of Asian feminisms within particular national contexts. Most articles begin with the emergence of early women activists, many of them suffragettes, and track the evolution of women’s activism through the decades, up to the groundswell of NGOs emerging in Asia from the 1980s. In her introduction, Roces maps out some of the challenges the authors face in writing their pieces, including accommodating the plurality of voices within each Asian country.

The authors recognise that the issue of ‘Westernisation’ and cultural authenticity is one of the major tensions in women’s movements. The association of feminism with supposed ‘bra-burning’ and Western radicalism is something that many Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to dismissing feminism as a corrupting Western import. Lenore Lyons argues that Singapore’s AWARE has constantly battled stereotypes of feminists as ‘man-haters, lese-majestes’ and radicals taking on Western values. In Pakistan, Andrea Fleschenberg notes that women’s groups engaging in broad-based social work have been met with accusations of Westernisation, creating divides between Islamist women activists and secular feminists.

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Ikeya’s study brought lectures of two of my former teachers to mind. A favourite topic of the ethnologist among us, a Burmese woman, she and Furnivall himself even became mixed and came out of the cocoon of their respective styles to hide the late-colonial opening up of those who actively sought a Burmese woman’s voice that was outside the Burmese language. Whereas Furnivall’s theorising is definitely an eye-opener, yet it is something that an interstitial room came into existence where people of colonial Burma as a plural society in which the Burmese words that are supposed to have settled unambiguously into statements about ‘Burmese women of the times’, such as Susan Blackburn notes, the 1950s saw the birth of socialist feminism under a period of parliamentary democracy. In Pakistan, women begged for legal reform over inheritance rights and the restriction of polygamy. As Susan Blackburn notes, the 1950s saw the birth of socialist feminism under a period of parliamentary democracy. In Pakistan, women begged for legal reform over inheritance rights and the restriction of polygamy. While the 1960s and 1970s are decades most closely associated with the ‘second wave’ of feminism in the West, this was a period in which theCold War cast its shadow across Asia, with many countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, falling under authoritarian rule. Roes recognises that these were ‘mammoth’ regimes by nature, that clamped down on women’s movements across the region. Rarely any dynamic women’s groups appeared in this period, apart from pockets of student activism in the Philippines. The outing of dictator couples such as that of Aung San Suu Kyi’s in the 1980s was a turning point as a growing and newly confident middle-class stimulus emerged from the emergence of a vibrant civil society. It was from this period that women’s groups in Asia came into their own and began conversing with each other within and across national borders over a wide range of issues. Women’s movements in Asia have shared many of the same struggles over the past hundred years, and the ability of Asian women to connect with each other across borders has often stemmed from these shared historical experiences. Overall, the book provides a rich collection of dense, critical histories detailing the overlapping of practices and discourses associated with women and gender. Whereas the argument that has been delineated to students involved in Southeast Asian-, cultural-, colonial- and postcolonial studies, plus the broad subject of women and gender. Whereas the association of feminism with supposed ‘bourgeois’ and Western origins is something that many Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to disavow feminism or as a corrupting Western import.

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The road

In Refiguring Women the focus is on such cultural brokers, on women who aspired to be abreast of the times and to partake in wider processes. Be that as it may, it is regrettable that we are left of the dark at the quantum of such participation. However often we run into the phrase ‘women students, journalists, intellectuals, lawmakers, nurses and teachers’, their numbers are nowhere accounted for, even as there must be records on school and university enrolments, and public professional careers. So, whereas we run up against times into which we were brought and how our statements remain unqualified while their working projects the idea of a powerful trend that only in the Conclusion is qualified as confined to the colonial capital Rangoon.

Apart from the lectures of my teachers, the composition of the book brought another admission to mind. It was the educational advice with which I was sent home to read: my first academic monograph: “Mister Mulder, there are four paragraphs to the page”. When I protested about this straightjacket, they pointed out that I should make it as long as I wanted. In the present work, two crows’-footed pages are the rule, even as these occasionally go on for more than the length of a full page. This makes for turgid reading. The very handicap often circular and repetitious arguments in those sections are burdensome, too, and retain the characteristic of the dissertation the blind ends up. The saner panacea lacked the oblique twist of Burmese words that are supposed to have settled unambiguously in the reader’s mind once introduced, but that are out of place if the text is to be of interest – it is claimed – and accessible to students involved in Southeast Asian, cultural-, colonial- and postcolonial studies, plus the broad subject of women and gender. Whereas the association of feminism with supposed ‘bourgeois’ and Western origins is something that many Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to disavow feminism or as a corrupting Western import.

The association of feminism with supposed ‘bourgeois’ and Western origins is something that many Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to disavow feminism or as a corrupting Western import.

In HER INTRODUCTION, the author draws attention to two dominant themes that provide the blinkers that restrict the common understanding of 20th-century Burmese history and society. The first is the deeply seated image that colonialism, specifically those that actively engaged with new and foreign identities, ideas, practices, and institutions, or, in a modernity that offered alternatives to the either-or choice between westernisation and ethno-nationalism.

Focus on the ‘new woman’

To unpack this image of a society that rejects foreign influences, which was restricted the common understanding of 20th-century Burmese history and society, the book examines what it meant to be or become modern in colonial Burma. As hegemonic national epics, such narratives tend to centre on the historic role of great men while freezing the image of the late colonial period and obscuring its coincident opening to the world. Whereas in such epical accounts women are at best ‘inserted’ as an afterthought, the role of women in colonial Burma as a plural society in which the Burmese lived side by side with the Europeans, Chinese, and Indians that each country and that monopolised the modern sector from which the Buddhist, agrarian natives were largely excluded. In Furnivall’s model, the separate groups kept apart and met only in the marketplace. Whereas Furnivall’s theorising is definitely an eye-opener to understand multiple colonial realities, it is like in the urban centres from view, especially the capital cities, while it is just there that schools, cosmopolitan communications, the press, the foreign presence refract at women’s lives and ideas not to mention nationalisms. – threatened. It is there that an interstitial room came into existence where people mixed and came out of the cocoon of their respective styles of life, while learning from each other. Through marrying a Burmese woman, she and Furnivall himself even became bridging figures.

As such, the book is an exercise in the history des mentalités that traces the evolution of thought in an ethnically plural urban colonial environment. In doing so, the author convincingly demonstrates that the analysis of the cosmopolitanity of practices and discourses associated with women is a formidable crowbar to crack the dominant narrative. Whereas the association of feminism with supposed ‘bourgeois’ and Western origins is something that many Asian women activists have often tried to distance themselves from, particularly in the face of male critics prone to disavow feminism or as a corrupting Western import.


Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma. Niels Mulder
Buddhist murals of northeast Thailand

From the classic Stanley Tambiah’s 1976 tone that blended cosmological and historical studies with a scientific mind in the application of the ‘galactic polity,’ through Professor Thongchai Winichakul’s widely celebrated Siam Mapped (1994), to Kenon Breazeale’s globalization of Thai history in From Japan to Arabia (1999), the field of Thai studies has remained innovative for at least the past three and a half decades of English language scholarship. This tradition continues with Bonnie Pacala Breeron and Somroay Yencheuy’s exploration of Buddhist murals of northeast Thailand. However, Breeron and Yencheuy’s contribution not only works within this tradition of Thai studies, it also creates a further bridge to the cultural flows between Lao and Thai through an articulation of the visual world of Isan.

William Noseworthy

Amidst the localized images depicted upon the mural walls of Lao sim, are the phi spirits. These potent local ‘gods of the soil’ have been explored most recently through John Holt’s latest Spirits of the Muis in Laos, where Holt argued that Spirit cults have survived amongst the lowland Lao Luom (ethic Lao, in Laos and Isan) through a process of Buddhistization. The presentation of Breeron and Yencheuy’s work therefore can be placed in conversation with Holt’s. While in Holt’s work the locality of Lao culture is the lens to examine the topic of Buddhism, in the work of Breeron and Yencheuy the lens of Buddhism is used to aptly explore localizations of Lao Luom. Amidst this localization of style and form, readers will not only note a detail-driven yet readable explanation of the Visantrone jokha, the Pho Lai Pho Lam or Pho Lam Sedok (the Lao Amoyen), and Sai Sin epics (presented in Chapter 5), but also the particularly soothing, earthy indigo and reddish brown tones of the Isan style.

The reddish brown and indigo tones of the Isan-Lao style are perhaps one of the strongest unifying themes throughout this well-organized ten-chapter work. Yet, other themes include the localization of practice and reinterpretation of culture as Isan moved from Lao control to be contested by the French and central Thai in the nineteenth century. At the same time, a rise of wandering forest monastics and millenarianism revised a reimagined Buddhist practice in the area.

As Breeron and Yencheuy note, local Buddhist practice still enjoys a relatively millenarian slant. Each year, sometime between April and February, the festival begins with a recitation of a local version of the artist (From Pali: an individual in the fourth and final stage of enlightenment; a ‘never-returner’). The monk Phoe Moei journeys to the hell realm and to the Tavatimsa heaven to bring back the admonitions of the Buddha of the future: Maitreya. The festival then continues through the fulfillment of a number of these admonitions, one of which is fulfilled as monks recite the Vessantara jokha, not in the scriptural language of Pali, but in Lao. Breeron and Yencheuy argue that this festival is portrayed in murals on thousands of wats throughout the Isan region. (48) The veneration of the future Buddha is certainly uncommon in the Theravadin world. At the same time, the popular conception of Maitreya is more often thought of in association to the Mahayanan texts of the Lotus Sutra (VN: Phap hiep kimh) and the Amithabha Sutra (VN: A Di di Kimh).

The veneration of Maitreya, combined with Breeron and Yencheuy’s assertion that Vietnamese workers constructed many of the sim, raises the question of long overlooked Vietnamese influence on Isan culture. This question is certainly worth pursuing through further cultural and historical research. Nevertheless, with a marvelous collection of murals depicted in full color photographs, clearly written descriptions, and a fine dedication to Isan-Lao culture, Buddhist murals of northeast Thailand represents a fine contribution to the fields of Art History, Thai-Lao Studies, Buddhist Studies, and examinations of localizations within Southeast Asian cultures. As such, Buddhist murals of northeast Thailand can be enjoyed by a wide audience of families, K-12 teachers, and academe alike.

References

Below: Details from murals discussed in the book.
Switzerland – a land-locked country and a nation without a colonial past – holds a surprising number of early visual documents on Asia. This Focus section of The Newsletter provides a selective overview of collections to be found in the Swiss archives, commenting on their significance to research and cultural heritage, and reflecting on the technical and methodological aspects of building and maintaining such collections.

Paul Bucherer-Dietschi and Anke Schürer-Ries

Swiss photographic collections on Asia

Afghan Day of Independence 1 August 1944 (jashen-e esteqlal) at Baghlan in Northern Afghanistan, showing the traditional Afghan national dance ‘Mamay’ performed by Afghan men belonging to the Zadran and Mangal tribes. Photograph by Swiss Architect Rudolf Stuckert. © Phototheca Afghanica.
Photographic collections on Asia in Swiss archives

Photography as a tool of Information

Early photographs – approximately up till World War II – are either portraits of people (often taken in studios) or they provide extraordinary views of landscapes or objects, which the photographer intended to document and to make known to a limited or broader public. Few photographers merely wanted to create a work of art. Due to the costs and necessary efforts needed to take a photograph, at a time when you had to place your heavy camera on a tripod and to carry delicate glass-plates, one hesitated to take everyday views – as is common practice today, either with a handy digital camera or even a mobile phone. It was, however, a technical development that provided everybody with the possibility to produce an accurate image within a short period of time, without being a trained artist. This resulted in a loss of artistic expression as early photographs were rarely spontaneous and allowed for very little interpretation. It also omitted the possibility to highlight specific features.

This limitation to extraordinary objects or events is one of the reasons why collections of old photographs have a high historical and cultural value. In the case of photographs taken at that time, a further significant point needs to be made: only a small number of people had the means, the equipment and knowledge to take high quality photographs. In most cases they were European foreigners or visitors, sometimes members of the local ruling elite, but almost never ordinary people – except for some few professional photographers.

In the case of photographic collections on Asia in Swiss archives, the photographers were either missionaries, Swiss or German diplomats, owners or representatives of trading companies or early development workers, like experts for road and bridge construction, etc. All of them took photographs in order to show the results of their work – or to demonstrate the difficulties they had to face.

If these Europeans remained in the same area for a while, and got into closer contact with the local population, they also documented outstanding objects, people and events to illustrate their diaries and reports. When departing their exotic fields, the original negatives as well as the prints were, in most cases, brought back to Europe. Few prints remained on the spot, but if they did, then even fewer survived the tropical climatic conditions and inadequate handling.

Photographic ‘losses’ are not only the collateral damages of war, but also the result of two waves of politically and religiously motivated iconoclasm, which saw the destruction of former colonial countries emerged, but so too an increasing interest in the sources of pictorial documents of the past. This is especially the case in our current era of globalisation, in which a growing fear of loss of ethnic and local identity is at hand.

However, this search for identity through historical images needs an additional element: the identification of the historical content of the photograph. Without the knowledge of the circumstances, the place, date and occasion of the taking of the photograph, much of its historical value is lost. These facts need a preservation similar to the conservation of the picture itself.

Furthermore, most photographs contain details that were included merely by chance, as they were the most natural things in the world at the time of taking the picture. Nowadays, it is often exactly such an unintended detail, visible only by enlargement, that becomes a very valuable historic or cultural piece of information.

Foundation Bibliotheca Afghanica

The initiative to put together such a focus on photographic collections on Asia in Swiss archives came from the Foundation Bibliotheca Afghanica, which has been documenting nature, culture and history of Afghanistan since the early 1970s. The recent Afghan history is one of almost 40 years of uninterrupted struggle against war. More than 80% of all the Afghans living today were born or brought up in this period. Photographic ‘losses’ are not only the collateral damages of war, but also the result of two waves of politically and religiously motivated iconoclasm, which saw the destruction of this specific part of Afghan cultural heritage. The project ‘Phototheca Afghanica’, which is supported by the Swiss, Liechtenstein and German governments, tries to revive the interest in the sources of pictorial documents of the past.

The preservation of early photographs in Europe was in many cases coincidental and should not be taken for granted. All images fade over the years, but even more often they were lost in times of war; others were disposed of on the occasion of a move or the clearing out of a flat or house after the room had passed away. Luckily, the awareness of the historical and cultural importance of photographic collections depicting long past times has been growing, and many such collections now find their way into archives of institutions and museums.

In the last 25 years the knowledge concerning necessities and possibilities of preservation of historical photographs has grown considerably. There is, on the one hand, the issue of preserving the original print. On the other hand, and perhaps even more importantly, the advancing technology over the past decade provides possibilities to digitise and digitally improve faded and discoloured pictures.

In Switzerland a group of specialists jointly dedicate themselves to such issues in the framework of the institution ‘Memoriar’. Its aims include:

- Preservation of and accessibility to Switzerland’s photographic heritage
- Initiation and support of projects: restoration and digitisation of collections, improvement of the accessibility of photographic records
- Description of the state of Switzerland’s photographic archives, in order to formulate a policy for their preservation
- Heightening of public awareness at special events and exhibitions of collections that have been saved
- Creation of a competence network, in which restoration and archiving experts tackle the preservation of the photographic cultural heritage of Switzerland

Photography as cultural documentation

In addition to the historical and technical aspects, photography is increasingly gaining cultural and ethnic meaning and importance. Not only has a growing self-awareness and an improved feeling of national identity among the people of former colonial countries emerged, but so too an increasing interest in the sources of pictorial documents of the past.

This is especially the case in our current era of globalisation, in which a growing fear of loss of ethnic and local identity is at hand.

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Securing the past for the future

Benno Widmer

WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND where you come from and the environment around you, you can take the future into your hands and contribute to a better destiny. This environment and its value systems are decisively influenced by the cultural heritage of a particular society. For this reason, the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (FOC) supports the preservation and disseminating of cultural heritage in all its forms as testimonials of human experiences and pursuits for future generations.

To FOC, cultural heritage comprises not only monuments and works of art. This heritage also includes mobile cultural assets, such as the findings of archaeological excavations, objects of ethnological or scientific value, rare manuscripts, rare books, furniture, coins, as well as archives that include audio, photo and film collections. Alongside these tangible objects, the FOC also advocates the preservation of intangible cultural heritage; for example, forms of expression of living cultures, such as legends, dance and theatre, music, rituals, festivities, craftsmanship, knowledge and others.

Switzerland boasts a stunning example for a multi-faceted institution for the protection of cultural heritage of one specific country: the Swiss Afghanistan Institute. It has been making a significant contribution to preservation of cultural heritage in different fields. The ‘Afghanistan Museum in exile’ in Bubendorf, initiated on the request of several Afghan groups in 1998, was a temporal safe deposit for archaeological and ethnographic cultural assets. In 2007, at the behest of the Afghan authorities and with the approval of UNESCO, 1423 objects, which had been entrusted to and held in trust by the institute, were repatriated to Kabul. The FOC as well as many other institutions and private persons supported this initiative.

Increased awareness for the importance of photographic documentation in the past decade brought about the need to understand its cultural importance. It became obvious that not only the physical preservation to avoid decay and loss of the original photograph itself is important. However, an in-depth understanding and description of its content is necessary in order to transmit contexts and relationships depicted in the photograph to future generations.

Based on this conclusion, the FOC supports the project ‘Phototheca Afghanica’, of which a first selection will be accessible online from July 2012. The images presented and extensively described are a treasure trove for the mediation of the cultural heritage of the war-torn country and society of Afghanistan. Subsequently, the project can serve as a vessel for the advancement of cultural identity and self-awareness of all Afghans, today and in the future.

Thanks to the incredible development in digital recording and communication during the last decade, it becomes possible today to provide such images of cultural and historic value not only to the visitors of such collections, but also to the general public, which creates an additional possibility of exchange of cultural assets. Switzerland harbours a number of photographic collections of historical importance concerning Asia. These collections are partially well-preserved, but not yet fully identified and described. Up till now, scientific research of photographs focussed mainly on technical aspects and/or photography as a work of art. Further research on its cultural values and context is a necessity and has still to be developed.

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A picturesque journey through India 1786-1794

Until recently, two large graphic portfolios containing 65 watercolours, each of respectable size, were part of the many unrecovered treasures of the St Gallen ethnographic collections. Their delicately and impressively painted motifs of the Orient, or more specifically, images of India, reflected the romantic style of the time, but the painters’ names, the dates of creation and their origins were at first a mystery.

Roland Steffan

The watercolour collection

Pure coincidence and close scrutiny of the images helped in identifying details. Whilst comparing each of the paintings, it became apparent that there were three distinctly different artistic signatures. Further and more in-depth research brought to light that most of the paintings in the portfolios were by Thomas and William Daniell – uncle (1749-1840) and nephew (1769-1837). Others included paintings of the West Indian rock sanctuaries by the Daniells’ mutual friend James Wales (1747-1795) and two South Indian vedutas by a younger contemporary, Henry Salt (1780-1827). It was now possible to attribute the paintings to the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and up to 1804. Unfortunately, it has still been impossible to locate the collector and donor of these valuable watercolours; acquisition dates and the ways in which they became part of the St. Gallen collection, are also unknown. It is, however, a known fact that both Thomas and William Daniell strictly refused to part with their numerous pencil drawings, washes and watercolours, as they used these as masters for their oil paintings and aquatint prints. Thomas Daniell’s collection was only sold off gradually after his death in 1840.

The images of this St. Gallen collection were first shown in the exhibition Malerische Reise durch Indien (image 1) in 1990. Despite being veiled in mystery, the unidentified collector determined the character of the exhibition in 1990 through his penchant for particular subjects. He (or she) collected only watercolours that were masters for the 144 aquatint prints of the six-volume Oriental Scenery, the opus that had a lasting influence on the image of India in Europe. As the collection shows, impressive images of historic Hindu and Muslim monuments seem to have appealed to him. There are only four landscape paintings, and they happen to be amongst the most beautiful of all the images in the collection. The collection allows for the observer to follow the almost forgotten meanderings of the English painters through India.

India and the arts in the eighteenth century

Thomas Daniell and William Daniell were amongst the first English painters who had enjoyed an education in classical landscape painting, and they had a flair for the Romantic. They travelled through the vast country from 1786 to 1794, partly because of India’s particular situation at that time. The East India Company had come to India as a trading company and stayed there until well into the eighteenth century. Administrators and trade adventurers had built forts and established themselves as tradesmen in India by the end of the eighteenth century. England’s rise as a trade power went alongside the downfall of the Mogul Empire. As a result, England had not only attained land, but also political powers on the semi-continent. It was thus a time of colonial takeover, but also a time of discovery of the exotic, and it defined how India was seen by painters such as Thomas and William Daniell.

Due to the fact that the painters had to rely on their Indian counterparts for the exact naming and interpretation of the painted objects, and the fact that many names of places were unknown to the English, many of the captions are faulty. They tried their very best to identify the objects directly at the sites and then stated the Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian names of places and people in a passably scientific manner, complemented by the more well-known English versions, which were rather misunderstood and mutilated.

A selection of the watercolours

The Qutb-Minâr (image 1) was a visible symbol of Islam victory over the ‘non-believers’ in North India. The foundations of the tower were laid down by Qutb al-Dîn Aâbak in 1199, a former slave who became the founder of the first Muslim dynasty in Delhi. The watercolour was the first image of the Qutb-Minâr and the only image that shows the tower in its original state with the marble replacements of the top two stories, which had been added in 1368 after it had been hit by lightning.

The observatory at Delhi (image 2) was built in 1724, during the reign of Moghul Muhammad Shâh. He was an avid scholar of astronomy and became the creator of 5 observatories in his realm. The Daniells were highly impressed by the ‘uniqueness’ of the geometrical and cubic structural dimensions of the observatory. The watercolour shows the Brhat-Samrât-Yantra and Misra-Yantra instruments.

The waterfall (image 3) near Courtallam (Kuttralam) is holy to Hindus and the many portraits offer protection and accommodation to the pilgrims. The panorama, and the masses of people flocking towards the water, made an impression on the Daniells. Thomas Daniell allowed his artistic freedom to balance the panorama by changing the dimensions considerably. An oil painting of this scene can be found at the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta.

The portico of the Câtya Hall of Kanherî on the island of Salsette (image 4) was adapted to the large relics of Buddhists in the fifth and sixth centuries and the changing ritual needs of the time. The front entrance contains very old reliefs with man-sized couples in a natural and naive style. The light shines into the inner sections of the place of worship.

Watercolours by Thomas and William Daniell

2 (above): The observatory in Delhi. Watercolour over pencil and ink (24 February 1789).

3 (right): The waterfall at Courtallam (Kuttralam), in the Tinevelly District. Watercolour over pencil (July 1792).

The visual heritage of Afghanistan

Photographs which tell of the times before the turmoil in Afghanistan are practically non-existent. Radical ideologists targeted the cultural roots of the country in the past decades and destroyed millions of images to make space for their own beliefs. Today, after thirty-five years of war, exile, collateral and intentional destruction, the country lacks a visual heritage with which it can display the achievements of the past to younger generations: something which is worth protecting; something on which a positive national identity can be based upon; moments of pride.

Phototeca Afghanica (www.phototeca-afghanica.ch) 
First, in 1978, communist activists burned all the pre-revolutionary photographs, which were seen as remains of a bourgeois past. Then, from 1996 onwards, religious fundamentalists hunted down all images of living creatures as they considered this sort of representation to be blasphemous. This is why the project Phototeca Afghanica, initiated and maintained by the Swiss Afghanistan Institute, plans to make approximately 5,000 mostly unique historical photographs from Afghanistan publicly accessible in the next few years. The aim of the project is not only the physical safeguarding of old photographs and related documents, but also to create awareness of the rich cultural heritage of the country and to make use of this knowledge for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and its society. For this reason, the photographs and the relevant descriptions have to be accessible for research, as well as for the general public, by exhibitions, publications, via internet or on CD.

The primary source for Phototeca Afghanica is the institution’s own image archives which comprise approximately 50,000 photographs. In addition to the visual materials, the archives also contain important written documents that were entrusted to the institute by private persons and other institutions. The oldest available images date from 1869 and document the visit to India by the Afghan Amir of the time. As mentioned above, the pre-1978 photographs have almost all been destroyed in their country of origin. So, even recent photographs stored at the institute in Switzerland are of a similar historic value as old ones. The overall significance of the institute’s visual collection cannot be anticipated at present, as many of the collections that have found their way to Switzerland have not yet been catalogued.

The Swiss Afghanistan Institute
The Swiss Afghanistan Institute (SAI), officially registered as Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghanica, is a politically and religiously neutral institution. Over a period of 35 years, the institute made its mark by systematically researching and documenting Afghan history and culture.

From October 1998 to March 2007, Paul Bucherer, head and founder of the SAI, curated the Afghanistan Museum in Exile. The objects for this museum were transferred to Switzerland by the Taliban to be salvaged from al-Qa’ida’s destructiveness. Moreover, the SAI is engaged in cultural rebuilding on the spot; old photographs from its archives provide the basis for reconstruction of historic buildings and other structures. For instance, the institute’s archive could be of assistance in reconstructing the Giant Buddhas of Bamiyan with the help of the only existing high-definition stereo-photogrammetric shots in the world. Other photographs kept at the SAI were previously used to restore the famous Moghul garden Bagh-e Babur, the buildings of the Afghan National Gallery and the Afghan National Museum, and even the oldest parts of the former Royal – now Presidential – Palace.

Due to such references, and international reputation strengthened by years of experience, the Swiss Afghanistan Institute became a rich source of images and photographic collections on Afghanistan. Today, organisations such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Swiss Department of Culture are numbered among the Institute’s most prominent partners and donors.

The aim of the project is not only the physical safeguarding of old photographs and related documents, but also to create awareness of the rich cultural heritage of the country and to make use of this knowledge for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and its society.

Preservation and identification of the visual materials
So far, selected collections have been scientifically identified, and currently comprise approximately 5,000 photographs. The vast cultural richness in the photographs, as well as the manifold interdisciplinary relations, soon became obvious as the identification proceeded. The visual documents raise questions of historical, cultural and political significance, including questions of media relevance and regarding the history of technological development.

In a first step, the basic archival work includes the conservation of the photographs, the digitisation and long-term preservation. Even more important, the identification done by the Afghanistan Institute serves as a necessary prerequisite to make the above mentioned interpretative connections. The scientific importance of the images lies in the possibility to analyse them according to chronological and geographical criteria, the producer of the images and the subjects and details in the images. It is, however, a major concern of the institute to create a systematic corpus of images as a point of departure for further research questions. For this reason, the Phototeca Afghanica will gradually be made available online. The first 400 images and accompanying data are accessible via an online platform (www.phototeca-afghanica.ch).

The following overview of the preliminary online series highlights the perspectives that could evoke further research and co-operation concerning the photographic collections.
While Burke’s photographs were commercially successful, the military photographs remained undiscovered in private albums, official documentation or had disappeared into state archives as confidentially classified material. Today, due to the work done at the Afghanistan Institute, the photographs can be read as visual documentation of the troop movement again. In co-operation with Brigadier Woodburn, and with the help of military maps and reports, the institute succeeded in recovering a chronological order, naming the places and identifying key personalities shown in the photographs. Now the collection tells us how the army advanced into the embattled country, crossed rivers, received the Amir and his delegation, and coped with the daily challenges that life in a foreign country brought with it. The identification process also made it possible to draw parallels to the reports in the press. An interesting aspect was the comparison of the official military photographs and the exaggerated engravings that were based on the sketches done for The Illustrated London News by William Simpson, who accompanied the troops moving toward Kabul as a war correspondent for some time.

However, although some unknowns are being solved, the process has also raised some questions. For example, questions about the technical and aesthetic conditions of war photography of the time, as in the case of the Royal Engineers who were assisted by Burke; or those concerning the social meaning of the photographs for a colonial power such as Britain; and what about the media implications of war photography of the time, as in the case of the Royal Engineers who were instructed by the Royal Engineers, were subsequently given the possibility to prove themselves in 1878. The Afghanistan Institute processed this photographic collection together with Brigadier Woodburn, he himself a former Royal Engineer. It may be of interest to note that John Burke, a famous professional photographer, had accompanied the expedition too. One could maintain that Burke, already in 1886, was practising ‘embedded journalism’. He was able to introduce Afghanistan to his guests and acquaintances. It may be of interest to note that John Burke, a famous professional photographer, had accompanied the expedition too. One could maintain that Burke, already in 1886, was practising ‘embedded journalism’. He was able to introduce Afghanistan to his guests and acquaintances.
The visual heritage of Afghanistan continued

Towers of Knowledge
Phototheca Afghanica also aims to reach the Afghan people; images are an important method to convey values, especially in a semi-literate society, as it still exists in Afghanistan. The people’s interest in authentic historical images – and thus the need to provide access to further photographs – has been demonstrated by a travelling exhibition called Towers of Knowledge. The exhibition consists of five separate units, so-called ‘towers’, each summing up a particular part of Afghan history. Showing important personalities and historic buildings, the travelling exhibition was designed to reach the Afghan public, especially children and young people. Therefore, sixty-eight copies of this exhibition – two for each of the thirty-four provinces of Afghanistan – are currently circulating through 11,000 schools.

The project was commissioned by the Afghan Ministry of Education in 2008 and opened in July 2010 at the German High School in Kabul. It was devised by the Swiss Afghanistan Institute and financed by the governments of Germany, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. The first exhibition turned out to be a real attraction as students started to take pictures of the historical photographs with their mobile phones. Even President Karzai was deeply moved when he looked at the first prototype of the exhibition.


On the other hand, the photos document former heydays, for instance by showing magnificent buildings that have been reduced to rubble since then. In close co-operation with the French Afghanistan expert May Schinazi, the history of some of these buildings could be retraced, which shows baffling parallels to the facades of British buildings of that time, as observed in photographs from The Illustrated London News.

Sample collection 3: A German ambassador behind hostile lines
The collection of the German ambassador, Werner Otto von Hentig, tells a completely different story. In 1913, his expedition to and through Afghanistan ended in “one of the most adventurous undertakings you have probably ever heard of”, as the Berliner Illustrirte reported in 1918. Up to this time, the country at the Hindu Kush had been sealed off from the outside world by Great Britain. During the First World War the German emperor, Wilhelm II, ordered an undercover diplomatic and military expedition to the Afghan Amir Habibullah Khan, suggesting an attack on British India. Therefore, von Hentig travelled to Kabul, keen to learn about the country, and open-minded as a petitioner always has to be.

Meanwhile, photographic technology had made some progress, which allowed von Hentig to take photographs more spontaneously. Von Hentig’s collection, however, yields another remarkable difference compared with the British collection: due to von Hentig’s good relationship with his Afghan hosts, they provided him with prints from the Amir’s own photo studio. The lion’s share of the collection originates from this photo studio and was assembled from the archive of Mahmoud Tari, who was the editor of the first illustrated weekly journal in Afghanistan Snjîl ol-鸠bîdî (in English, “The Great Light”). These photographs are among the very earliest Afghan images that have been preserved to date. They embody the Afghan perspective of their own country, expressing the upcoming interdependencies between an Asian culture and European technology.

A race against time: few witnesses to history remain
At the age of at least 94, Werner Otto von Hentig personally handed over his archive to the Swiss Afghanistan Institute (SAI). The photographs are considered to be significantly important to Afghan history. Furthermore, the detailed explanations provided by von Hentig’s notes and oral anecdotes were an unusual blessing for the researchers when identifying the photographs.

This example illustrates how witnesses to history are crucial for the SAI’s work with historical photographs. Destroyed monuments and buildings – as well as personalities – often cannot be identified and localised unless someone is alive who is able to recall what and who is shown in the pictures. The SAI counts on those witnesses to history every time its own archive and its own experience reaches certain limits. In view of a further cultural rebuilding, the preservation of knowledge will be crucial to the re-establishment of Afghanistan’s heritage.

Besides the scientific aim to document the visual heritage of Afghan history, at present the photographs provide the young generation with access to the pre-war life of Afghanistan. Each photograph shows a fact, a building, a landscape, or a detail on a piece of clothing, what counts for Afghan people is the fact that an element of the old tradition, a moment of former Afghan life, has survived as a testimony of an otherwise unimaginable world.

This, too, is a reason why the homepage of the Phototheca Afghanica is designed not only to meet scientists’ needs, but also to provide access for a broader audience interested in its own lost achievements, or its parents’ and grandparents’ world.

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Visualising history and space in the Basel Mission Archives

Research on historical images and their interdependencies has been well under way for almost three decades. Distinct aspects of the materiality and the relational character of images continue to surface as the role of archives as repositories for these delicate materials is profoundly put to the test. Images, both historical and more recently in digital form, find themselves in a tremendous, perhaps second phase of the pictorial turn, and relevant research is in the eye of the storm. The role of historical, but also modern digitised and born-digital images, has brought about a want for access to, and understanding of, the image as a key icon of cultural heritage.

Guy Thomas & Anke Schürer-Ries

The Basel Mission in China
Historical images have become part of a cultural and social experience in China. Based on the quest for visual mnemonics, the images have been allocated a new status, not only because of their materiality as remnants of technical advancement, but also as objects of cultural heritage that form a bridge between mental and physical worlds.

The historical images of the Basel Mission in China increasingly assist and replenish representations of cultures and histories of the country. They express both the dialogue between the missionary as the photographer and/or cartographer, and the mission field in which he was destined to spread the word of God. The main focus of missionary activity by missionaries of the Basel Mission in China was directed to the Hakka in the Guangdong Province, southern China. Missionary Theodor Hamberg began working there in 1846 and was catapulted from the patriarchal structures of education and Pietist values of all missionary families. It is, however, not without tension, an experience that gradually brought about the transcultural character of the Basel Mission. The collision of these multiple sets of values, although not entirely different, created tensions between missionaries and indigenous Christians. European missionaries allegedly remained strictly separated from indigenous Christians, though by contrast numerous images in our collections reflect the reciprocal trends of acculturation between indigenous interlocutors and Western missionaries.

The earliest images of the Hakka-speaking people in the collection date back to 1897 and most of them show architectural features, landscapes and everyday life. Images of Hakka-speaking Christians depict either people working their fields in traditional dress, or set in European photographic compositions of the time. Moreover, they reflect both European and Chinese hierarchies, and the extent to which indigenous Christians influenced the outcome of the photographic encounter. Consequently, these images do not merely evoke the standards and attitudes of the missionaries but also various levels of discourse and exchange between the two cultures.

Figure 1 shows the amalgamation of Eurocentric photographic practices and a sample of Chinese adaptation hereof. It is a striking articulation of the traditional European portrayal of the family, reflecting the innate identification of the indigenous Christian family with its own Asian background by wearing traditional clothing. It also constitutes the successful implementation of missionary family values in the Hakka community. The carpet and the setting confirm the constructed contemporary family photograph as was the case for depictions of all missionary families. It is, however, not without tension, as the family’s stance allegedly reflects an attempt to incorporate Chinese hierarchies by postulating its own standing in its congregation. By virtue of the continuous negotiation between Christian and indigenous values, these practices were extended to the congregational spaces such as the mission station.

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Mission station plans are another fine example for the entangled relations of mission and the mission field. They are, on the one hand, representations of Christian faith brought to China and mirror the influence of Pietist values. A mission station should be an iconographic marker of the values and principles the missionaries held in their centres of education, dispensaries, orphanages, and other social facilities for the neighbouring communities.

The plan of the Honen Medical Mission Station (Figure 2) follows the holistic understanding of missionary work by implementing order and structure, thus improving life circumstances for the community in which it was embedded. It is depicted as a station with a specific task: medical care in the shape of a hospital with extensive outbuildings, a recreational area featuring a landscaped garden and lodgings for guests and assistants. The mission doctor is an important figure, and his house lies in a central location with a separate garden and is slightly secluded by shrubs.

The layout of the station displays attention to detail by the architect in a colourful manner, which is otherwise only to be found in other mission station maps of China or of mission stations in India. It also depicts important facilities and cultivation areas that supported the compound community’s self-sufficiency and the development of a mission station, starting with the mission house, including a prayer hall and a few outbuildings. Further, the adaptation of the customary mission station layout to cater for a self-contained community is stressed by the sheer expanse of the compound, including facilities for medical care and staff.

The visual representation of mission work on maps is equally important as it strengthened their belief in the progress of their work and underlined all efforts that had been, and still had to be, made to assist those that had not found their way to God. They often supplemented sketches by missionaries who had enjoyed some basic training in cartography. The sketches and small maps were used to prepare their quarterly and annual reports to the Superior General and supported their accounts of basic everyday issues.

Figure 3 is a sketch submitted as a supplement to the minutes of the committee in 1909, during which the geographical location and accessibility of the mission house in Hong Kong were discussed. Without much further information we can clearly identify an island and a peninsula with transport routes, by road, rail or ferry. It also shows basic geographic information such as cardinal directions and the sea route to central ports such as Singapore, Macao and Canton. Furthermore, it depicts important points of reference for the mission in China, such as the mission stations Hongheu (marked by a small symbol for ‘church’), Hong Kong or Tukawan, and places that had been established by, or with the support of, the mission – for example, the Blindenheim (home for the blind) or the Erholungeheim (convalescent home). By putting all these places on the map in addition to important topographical features and transport routes, the person involved attempted to make his case quite clear: the mission house in Hong Kong lies at the end of a string of sites and closely connected institutions, and should have been located at the centre of the peninsula. This image contains more information than usually given on sketches, including the number of minutes submitted in the year concerned. It also states the key issue that needed to be examined more closely in relevant written supplements.

Basel Mission Tile Factories in India
1 March 2009: It was a foggy morning in Thrikapetta, a sprawling conglomeration of village wards in the District of Wynad, northern Kerala, on the lower slopes of the Western Ghats in India. My guide Daniel and his wife Reena were taking me around their house and premises. Having stepped into one of the annexes to the main part of their home, my gaze turned upwards to the inside of the roof where the following inscription was just vaguely discernible on one of the tiles in the dim light: “Basel Mission. The Commonwealth Trust Limited”. At the bat of an eyelid, traces of the Basel Mission’s history in this region of South-west India were brought back to life. It is a chapter of history that covers 50 years from 1864-1914 at which time numerous Basel Mission trade and manufacturing sites were confiscated after the outbreak of the First World War and later placed under the Commonwealth Trust. A sample of the roof tiles produced in India has been preserved in the Archives of the Basel Mission for many decades. It is an object of remarkable symbolic value, bearing the year 1862 and embodying a high-quality industrial trade-mark of the emerging Basel Mission tile factories in Jeggappoo (close to Mangalore) from 1865 and in Arcalata (next to Khokhod) from 1874. Other tile factories were to be opened up prior to the First World War. The thriving industry, regional dissemination and export of tiles is revealed both in the production figures and in a series of images depicting distinct facets and overviews of the growing number of tile factory sites along the south-west Indian coast, as well as the Indian labour force that was recruited from within Basel Mission circles or ostensibly harnessed to Protestant work ethics in the prevailing spirit of southern German Pietism. A visit to one of the Calicut tile factories, following the stop-over in Thrikapetta in March 2009, suggested that the core of the underlying historic zeal has survived right up to the present day, albeit in an industrial branch that has been condemned to become entirely covered by the dust of the past. Indeed, the Indian Basel Mission tile factories provide a useful point of departure for further investigations into social and economic effects of the history of technology, in conjunction with labour policies, practices and codes of ethics, within the broader realm of Christian missionary presence and activity on local communities, as well as society at large, in south-west India. The significant question arises here as to how the Basel Mission’s manufacturing and commercial initiatives altogether influenced industrial development in this region of the Indian sub-continent: “Visual historic representations of relevant tile factory sites, both photographs and site plans, offer useful insights about building techniques and material, means of transport, spatial order and social organisation and hierarchy in the factory compounds, many of which have succumbed to an inevitable process of decay and now often stand out as mere industrial relics. As such, they are reminders of an extraordinary series of impressively large industrial monuments – hubs for the training of skilled and semi-skilled labour and hallmark of economic transition. And it is notably from the detailed layouts of site plans that the division and use of space, as well as from the distinct buildings featured, that a clear picture of the exclusiveness, organisation, supervision and control of industrial work space, as a unit of combined discipline and spiritual commitment, can be discerned.”

A historical milestone in the course of the emerging tile industry in south-west India was the reassertion of the Basel Mission’s Industrial Committee (constituted in 1846) in 1852, following an extensive inspection trip by the Superintendent of the Basel Mission, Josef Jostenssen. Promoting merchandise also implied considering the establishment of a mission trading company, a decision implemented in 1859 when the Boer Mission’s Handlungsgesellschaft (BMHG) was founded. The report of Jostenssen’s inspection trip, along with subsequent minutes and annual reports of the Industrial Committee and the BMHG, and the pioneering decision by the Basel Mission to institute a social welfare system for Indian labourers, provide the bulk of written evidence for the task of reconstructing this chapter of the history of Basel Mission.1
One of the key people involved in setting the Basel Mission tile industry in India in motion was the German missionary Georg Plebst (1823-1888).11 He originally specialised as a mechanic before undergoing four years of training at the Basel Mission's home-based seminary. He arrived in India in 1851 and was put in charge of reforming the printing techniques employed by his predecessors. He was thus chiefly responsible for forging two well-functioning Basel Mission printing presses for the Kannada and Malayalam languages, in the modern Indian states of Karnataka and Kerala respectively. Whilst on home leave from 1861-1863 Plebst acquired prolific skills in firing and glazing clay. Meanwhile, several European factories had conducted experiments with clay samples from the surroundings of Mangalore. Upon his return to India, this experience inspired Plebst to apply his techniques to the manufacturing of tiles. He recorded his initial successful attempts in 1864 and thus laid the foundation for a flourishing new industry.12 We are reminded of this pioneering step by a faded photograph of the church (fig. 6), standing where Plebst started his tile manufacturing activity. It is an image that equally helps us understand interconnections between mission stations, outstations and industrial sites, as well as the intricate degree of interconnectedness between such symbols of mission- ary presence and the local populace, which constituted the core of the labour force and of the mission church congregations.

Admiration and respect

We must shift our gaze to the mutually complementary nature of visual – photographic and cartographic – sources and the available written, oral and material records. While it is fairly obvious that both the chronological and narrative strands etched into the abundant written archive cover a wide range of interests deriving from a primarily central European audience, we are just as obviously confronted with a very distinct side of history when we glean snippets of oral tradition surrounding the achievements and longue durée of the Basel Mission in south-west India, both as an institution and a medley of extraordinary individuals. Much as critical views are not to be overheard, notably with regard to theological debates and mission hierarchy, considerable admiration and respect come to the fore with regard to individual missionary know-how and inputs. Besides the tile factories and printing presses, many Basel Mission churches, schools and training centres, now under the auspices of the Indian successor church, the Church of South India (CSI), are reminiscent of their origins by the mark of omnipresent tributes to missionaries. This link between the past and the present is repeatedly articulated in the urge among Indian colleagues to obtain access to, and more detailed information about, images and cartographic material in the collections of historical photographs and maps in the Archives of the Basel Mission. Reinserting images into the original settings where they were taken has thus become – and will remain – a prime target of the Archives of the Basel Mission. By exposing single images or series of images to joint readings of, and reflections on, their content will help us move beyond our narrower archival delimitations into ‘the field’, where a wealth of indigenous knowledge and mnemonic devices is waiting to engage with the meaningful re-contextualisation of visual articulation.

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Notes
2  www.bmpix.org
3  www.bmarchives.org
4  Edwards. 2004. (p. 17)
6  Ibid, p. 43
7  Ibid, p. 41
11  Archives of the Basel Mission, personal file of Georg Plebst, BV 335
12  Der Evangelische Heidenbote, 1865, p. 94. 
WHILE TRADITIONALISTS seem to lay more stress on the verbal, supporters of technologically more inclusive ways of doing anthropology tend to disproportionately favor the visual. This paper attempts to take a stand for the middle ground by arguing for a joint application of both the verbal and the visual. It calls attention to the fact that one cannot sensibly be of use without the other. Even in visually based research the pencil remains an indispensable tool.

While it seems to be widely acknowledged that certain topics can hardly be studied without using visual instruments, the analysis of visual data is hardly feasible without recourse to auxiliary information. A common scene where the anthropological analysis of visual data occurs – and thereby where the absence of additional information is often just too painfully noticed – is the photographic archive. By analyzing the archival work with photography some guiding principles may be deduced, which may help to structure the contemporary engagement with photographic anthropology.

The text at hand will firstly delineate the theoretical background by situating archival work within the field of visual anthropology. Secondly, an experimental research process in the photographic archive of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich will be described. The effect of this experience will, thirdly, be applied to a series of contemporary photographs from Afghanistan selected to accompany this article. This practical example could lead to useful conclusions for the treatment of photography in contemporary anthropology.

Anthropology and photography – a strategic alliance

According to a widely accepted definition, the scientific endeavor consists in the answering of questions. The questions to be asked in anthropology seem only to be limited by the means by which the researcher tries to converge onto a chosen topic. Certain questions can hardly be researched verbally, either because they do not surface by verbal inquiry or because they cannot be grasped and described with words. The first kind might consist of data that surfaces by the visual stimulation of an informant, for example, in the form of photo elicitation where the discussion of a photograph yields answers to questions that the anthropologist would not have asked. The second variety might concern data that is not easily discerned or communicated, such as movement, position and posture. In these instances visual tools help to record and communicate data.

Photography can thus be understood as a part of an extended anthropological methodology. Yet, disregarding the relevance an anthropological text or tool to extract or record data, photography can play another role in the sense that it can constitute the object of anthropological inquiry. Photography can be seen as the material result of cultural practice; it is not the medium, but the expression of anthropological information. Any beneficial discussion of photography in anthropology – be they freshly made or drawn from archives – should preferably take these possibilities into account.

Having situated the archival work with photography within the broader confines of visual anthropology it is possible to briefly brush on epistemological debates on the visual in anthropology. Although the scope of the article at hand does not allow us to delve deeply into the matter, the disclosure of some of the constitutive postulates is necessary as a foundation for the subsequent theoretical deductions. The first one concerns the relationship of photography to reality. Many early theoreticians assumed that a photograph is the mechanical reproduction of reality (see e.g., Mead 2003 [1934]). As has been stated convincingly since then, this is not the case. One of the more obvious explanations for this shift of paradigm is the fact that photographic images involve a considerable amount of interpretation in production, as well as in collection and in analysis. Another reason not to imply that a photograph reveals certain facts is that it will only give the answer to the question being asked, which depends to a high degree on the viewer and his or her research agenda; any viewer can infer different meanings.

Since the receiver of this (visual) communication plays such an important part, the meaning that is transported by visual means can only be controlled by its producer to a certain extent. Furthermore, archivists do not only collect data – they also play a constitutive role in the creation of meaning.

Photography in anthropological archives – then and now

Anthropology was quick in valuing the potential of photography. As many an early traveler embraced the new technology almost immediately after its invention, the desire for storage and arrangement of this new form of information could be met by ethnographic collections, which was often collectively operated with a venue for exhibition, namely the museum.

In Zurich, Director of the Ethnographic Museum Prof. Dr. Hans Wehrli, as has been done in many other places, seized the opportunity as early as 1917 to complement the ethnographic collection of objects with a library and a photographic archive.

Today, this early initiative has grown to a collection of more than 40,000 photographs, which are continually being researched. Today most of the majority of historical photographs in the collection, the Ethnographic Museum has in the last two decades re-launched the effort to focus on contemporary visual anthropological output. Part of this program is an extended curriculum in visual anthropology which teaches students to research by focusing on, or including, the visual.

One result of this curriculum is my own research in Afghanistan which was conducted between September 2003 and April 2006. It consisted of two fieldtrips totaling ten months. The photographic collection of this project, the vast majority of which was produced during the first exploratory fieldtrip in September November 2003, can be described according to different sets of criteria. While a technical description does not seem to lead to considerable problems, any further attempts to give more information about the content of the collection appears more demanding. In order to find out some of the elementary principles guiding the existing material in the photographic archive of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, recent research on a similar topic was conducted.

Looking for Afghanistan – to no avail?

A search for the word ‘Afghanistan’, in the database of the photographic archive of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, yields no results. A second attempt searches the word ‘Pakistan’. The neighboring countries Afghanistan and Pakistan share a common border of considerable length whose present-day course is still controversial. Any geographical denomination concerning such disputed areas and unambiguously deciding in favor of one side or the other could be wrong and must therefore be considered with care. This second search produces six references, which are subsequently analyzed in detail. The preliminary revision of the 246 images shows a total of 242 with landscapes and views or details of immovable constructions (such as towns, buildings, temples, dams and bridges). Although these manmade objects constitute an important part of material culture of a society, in the research at hand they actually help to exclude these photographs; since all of these structures are clearly localized outside of the geographical confines of Afghanistan they lie beyond the region of interest. So, four remaining pictures are seen to be focusing on people. These are set aside in an envelope with the inscription ‘šukur’, but as can be demonstrated, this geographical information does not allow to make definitive statements about their content.
The social relationship he or she maintains with the subject collected and classified in conjunction with the image. A scientific valuable analysis of a photograph in anthropology the image and some cursory geographical classification. From the available auxiliary information.

we were thrown out of the moving cars and causing many an audacious bystander to leap amongst the closely driving convoy. At the bride’s place the excitement was somewhat stiff; reception only after the impenetrably veiled bride had been seated in the white wedding car. The convoy now even more fervently – rushed back into the city’s evening traffic. Back in town, near the Shah-i-Naw park, I was courteously released, presumably because my foreign presence would have disturbed the further proceedings of this familial event, this suited me well, because such events quite often prove to be rather exhausting experiences.

Concluding remarks
Notwithstanding visual anthropology’s ardent emphasis on the visual of the visual in anthropological research, my point is that photographs are hardly able to communicate valuable information by themselves. The extent to which valuable information can be read from images is dependent to a considerable degree on additional information, which very often is communicated by means other than visual. The purely visual data would have left the picture incomprehensible. Does not exclude the necessity to collect additional information.

Anthropological work with images therefore has to be considered as a work with the verbal and not as opposed to it. Visual anthropology, despite its focus on the visual, remains a discipline of words. On the other hand, no supply of additional information is able to exhaust the meaning of an image. The answer an image gives is highly dependent on the question being asked. This means that the kind of auxiliary information that is useful cannot be foreseen before determination of the research interest invests in a picture. Such auxiliary information may concern the context out of which the photographs came to be, as well as the trajectory by which they found their way into an archive. Especially in archival work with visual material, this can be gainfully taken into account.

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Notes
10 136 glass slides are retained in a wooden box marked with ‘Rajputana’, the pre-1949 denomination of the Indian state of modern Rajasthan. The remaining four references lead to collectors associated to ‘Sukkur Museum’.
Photographic partners for ethnographic artefacts

Ethnographic artefacts, dating back to the 17th century or even earlier, are commonly found partnered with illustrations to further explain their context and relevance. The earlier techniques of sketching, watercolour, etching, and other hand-produced imagery, were often replaced with photography when the technology was introduced and developed in the 19th century.

Thomas Psota

Photography developed further during the middle of the 19th century, and quickly became an accompaniment to cultural anthropological research, enriching the information collected on many aspects of the material cultures worldwide.

Photograph bequeathed by Henri Moser, the foremost photographer in the late 19th century, many photographers from Europe and America started to arrive there. Photos taken by Felice Beato (1833–1907) were some of the very first, and a small number found their way into the Bern collection.

Exhibitions of oriental objects and curiosities, held in Switzerland, and Islamic art shows in Paris, gave him the opportunity to present his collection and his view of the Islamic world in the context of the orient-enthusiasm of the 19th century. Already in Moser’s travel writings does his affinity for development efforts and technical innovations for Asia become apparent. He very actively spread the idea of an unlimited ‘civilisation progress’ during his travels through Bosnia and Herzegovina, which he undertook at the behest of Austria’s minister of finance, Benjamin von Kállay. As a diplomat of the k. und k. Monarchy he promoted a propagandistic view of these regions for Europe, which led him to become the exhibition-commissioner of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the World’s Fair in Brussels (1897) and the famous World’s Fair in Paris in 1900. Both events are prominently present in various facets of Moser’s photo-documented travel journeys.

Photographers in East Asia

When it comes to East Asia, Bern’s ethnographic photographic collection focuses mainly on Japan. As Japan opened up to the Western world in the second half of the 19th century, many photographers from Europe and America started to arrive there. Photos taken by Felice Beato (1833–1907) were some of the very first, and a small number found their way into the Bern collection.

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Artefacts and illustrations

The historical museum in Bern, a foundation supported by the canton, the city of Bern, and the Burgher community of Bern, was opened in 1894. Nevertheless, the extra-European collections are substantially older and date back to the 17th century. It is interesting to note that the first ethnographic collection in Bern was presented in combination with illustrations. This collection originated with a donation by Albrecht Herport to the town’s cabinet of curiosities (these ‘cabinets’ are often considered to have been precursors to museums). His ethnographic objects, from Java and Taiwan, were accompanied by his drawings from South and Southeast Asia. Ten etchings based on his drawings were published in 1669, in Herport’s book Eine kurze Ost-Indianische Reis-beschreibung, enriching his collection of extraordinary artefacts.

We again find this connection between objects and illustrations in the collection of John Webber, a draftsman and painter of Bernese origin, who travelled with James Cook during his third voyage. Webber collected ethnographic artefacts, which he later gave to his hometown; in addition, he tirelessly documented the Pacific world by drawing what he encountered. Many of his, over three hundred, paintings and drawings were published in the form of engravings.

Shortly before the technology of photography was established — in the first half of the 19th century — about 450 drawings, paintings and engravings from the New World came to the collection in Bern. Works by Rudolf Friedrich Kurz, Karl Bodmer and Charles Bird King, which documented the North American Indians, were entered into the Bernese collection together with artefacts from these cultures.

Introduction of photography

Photography developed further during the middle of the 19th century, and quickly became an accompaniment to cultural anthropological research, enriching the information collected on many aspects of the material cultures worldwide. Ethnographic collections were more and more complemented by photographic documents; an historical examination of the photographs shows that constant subjects were introduced in changing forms of representation and are open to interpretation. Landscapes, architecture, portraits, genre scenes, and people in everyday-life situations or during ceremonies, help to enrich the context of the collection artefacts.

In Bern today the ethnographic collection comprises 60,000 inventory numbers; about 13,000 of them are historic-ethnographic photographs from all the continents: Africa constitutes the main part with 38%, followed by Asia with 37%, the Americas with 4% and Oceania with 1%. The photos in Bern’s Oriental collection are generally attributed to Asia, including the photos depicting the Balkan in a time when it still formed a part of the declining Ottoman Empire. The photographs pertaining to Asia have a regional divide as follows: Central Asia with 40%, followed by East Asia with 30%, and South Asia and Southeast Asia with 15% each.

The Henri Moser collection

Photographs bequeathed by Henri Moser, the foremost donor to the Bern Oriental collection, form an important and rich part of this collection. The photos are rare early records of inner-Asian centres such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva in today’s Uzbekistan. Moser’s photos were taken by himself as well as by other photographers. Among the negatives there are 250 paper negatives, a technique developed in 1883 by George Eastman. Paper negatives were used instead of glass-plates, especially for travel photography and expeditions, until the late 1880s.

Henri Moser (1844-1923) was the son of an industry-pioneer from Schaffhausen. The family migrated for some time to St. Petersburg, where Henri was born. Crucial in his life were five journeys in Asia; one to Siberia undertaken in the year 1867, and four journeys to Central Asia in the years 1868–69, 1869–70, 1883–84 and 1888–89. He showed a widespread interest in different activities and he gained acknowledgement all over Europe as a specialist of the Orient, thanks to his narratives and photographic documents of Central Asia and Persia. In a way he was also a photo-pioneer and he experimented with the technical possibilities of early photography. The journals of his expeditions were published in weekly magazines and in scientific periodicals. This resulted in a report about his experiences in Asia, printed in his bestselling book A travers l’Asie Centrale, published in 1885 in Paris by E. Plon, and a subsequent German translation Durch Central-Aisien, published in 1888 in Leipzig by A. Brockhaus.

On his third journey to Central Asia Moser travelled in the company of the governor-general of Russian Turkestania, General Michael Tuchmajeff. On his fourth journey to Central Asia he travelled in the company of his wife and the Russian General Annenkoff. Before his third voyage, and the above mentioned publication, Moser had the opportunity to organise the state reception for the Iranian Shahshah Nasir-Edvin, by order of the Swiss government. This helped him to reach diplomatic recognition.

Exhibitions of oriental objects and curiosities, held in Switzerland, and Islamic art shows in Paris, gave him the opportunity to present his collection and his view of the Islamic world in the context of the orient-enthusiasm of the 19th century. Already in Moser’s travel writings does his affinity for development efforts and technical innovations for Asia become apparent. He very actively spread the idea of an unlimited ‘civilisation progress’ during his travels through Bosnia and Herzegovina, which he undertook at the behest of Austria’s minister of finance, Benjamin von Kállay. As a diplomat of the k. und k. Monarchy he promoted a propagandistic view of these regions for Europe, which led him to become the exhibition-commissioner of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the World’s Fair in Brussels (1897) and the famous World’s Fair in Paris in 1900. Both events are prominently present in various facets of Moser’s photo-documented travel journeys.
2 (top left): 'Mosques of Samarkand'. Photo taken by Henri Moser or other photographer on his third journey to Central Asia, in the years 1883/84.

3 (top right): Felice Beato’s album, ‘Views of Japan: Mr. Shōjirō’, about 1868.

Photographic partners for ethnographic artefacts continued

> Continued from page 34

Other East Asian photos in the collection are a little later, dating from around 1886–1910. These photos were collected by Swiss merchants and diplomats travelling to the new commercial spheres. They brought back with them to the Western world scenes and portraits of peoples from Japan, China and Korea, and also views of famous localities and buildings; these were the precursors to the picture postcard.

Paul Ritter (1865–1921), for example, was in the Swiss diplomatic service, posted in Yokohama in 1892–1902, and in Tokyo in 1906–1909. He was responsible for China, Japan and Korea and brought many photographs back to Switzerland. His landscapes and scenes from Japan are of remarkable quality, and his leporello album containing 136 everyday-life scenes in Seoul and studio-portraits of people from Korea in the year 1894, is particularly noteworthy.

Many portraits and genre-scenes were taken in studios and were often illuminated. Series made by the H. Suito studio in Tokyo show the step-by-step process of the two main economically important production activities of Japan in the style of the early 20th century: the cultivation of rice and tea. Photos depicting China are of the same genre as those from Japan, and document everyday-life and views of landscapes and famous architecture. Portraits and arranged scenes with people are generally taken in studios. The tendency to compare working and upper class people reflect China from a colonial point of view. The activities of the working class are portrayed with mundane daily activities, while the upper class are presented in fine clothes in photos taken in studios or luxury homes.

**Depicting reality**

Walter Bosshard (1882–1975) exhibited more of a journalistic quality in his photographs of Mongolia and Tibet. He was a member of the German Central Asia expedition in the years 1927/28 in Turkestan and Tibet. He became a pioneer of modern photojournalism and he worked hard to depict the reality in word and picture. Bosshard also reported from India and his portraits of important personalities of the first half of the 20th century became famous throughout the world.

Another significant part of the Asia collection in Bern are photographs from Southeast Asia. Especially noteworthy are photos documenting the first Dutch Borneo expedition taken by the Swiss Johann Jakob Büttikofer, in the years 1893/94. Büttikofer (1850–1927) was a biologist and head of the zoological garden in Rotterdam and he was a member of the expedition crew. He was experienced in fieldwork in the tropics and his photos chiefly document the contacts between the peoples of inner Borneo and the participants of the Dutch Borneo expedition. Above all, his work shows an insight into a world before the influence of Western colonialism became effective. The expedition went up the Kapus river into the depths of Borneo’s forest-world. The initial aim of traversing Borneo from West to East in one journey could not be realised; it was thus followed by successive expeditions on the Mahakam river to the East coast of Borneo, originally planned to be the second part of the first expedition. The results of the undertakings are published in two volumes by A. W. Niewenhuis: *Quer durch Borneo, Ergebnisse seiner Reisen in den Jahren 1893–94, 1896–97, 1898–1900*. Büttikofer did not take part in the second and third expeditions and his photographs of the first journey are regrettably not included in *Niewenhuis’* published report.

Another Bernese natural scientist in Dutch service was Walter Volz (1875–1907). He was active first in Indonesia, primarily in Sumatra, and later in West Africa (Liberia), as a geologist and zoologist. Whilst conducting research in Libyan villages with the local people, he was shot during a military operation by the French. Many other photo-documents show scenes and insights into the cultures of the mainland and the many islands of Southeast Asian archipelagoes at the end of the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th century. Cultural events including rituals, ceremonies and for example the Javanese theatre, are typical for this kind of outdoor documentations. Many photographs of peoples of all social levels and ranks are mostly arranged studio works. Besides Büttikofer and Volz we know only a few names of the photographers active in Southeast Asia at that time, as many were in fact local photographers who presented and sold their work to the many European travellers in countries such as Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. The local photographers offered a large number of photographs, which the travellers brought home, often together with collector items. The documentation of far-away regions resulted in masses of photographic documents; they were products of socio-historical and ethnographic research, but they are in all cases simply interpretations of the reality. Standing near the cradle of photography, Charles Baudelaire formulated in his 1859 essay, *The photograph and the modern audience*, a criticism of the acceptance that photography is a simple mirror of the world or a mechanical transfer of reality. Photography is always an interpretation of the reality. The photographic motive is connected to the subject that selects it, it is linked to the things and persons in front and behind the camera. The photographer and the collector transmit this mirror of the world creating a complex relationship between reality, interpreter, observer and beholder.

Dr. Thomas Pösta, Historical Museum Bern, head of the department of Ethnography. (thomas.poesta@bhm.ch)
In Science, War and Imperialism, Jagdish N. Sinha recalls that British rule focused overwhelmingly on India as a colonial possession useful for Britain. Government institutions of higher learning in India were largely practical in nature—concerned with stimulating agriculture, curing disease, or extracting natural resources. The colonial regime deliberately avoided introducing the modernist ethos, according to which practical results would stem from the prosecution of pure science. Over the first part of the century, Indians advocated for modernity—science education and industrialization—in the face of substantial anti-modernist sentiment by revolutionaries like Mohandas Gandhi. The Second World War tipped the balance in favor of science as, indeed, the war accelerated independence.


Why WAS MODERN SCIENCE SO LATE in coming to South Asia? Professor Sinha argues in favor of the decisive hand of the British Raj, which, whenever science came up, moved the conversation to technology. Part of this impulse should be attributed to the sensibility of the ruling classes in Britain. Into the twentieth century, Great Britain was struggling with the question of setting up institutions for promoting industrial development. It had nothing comparable to the prestigious and effective technological schools of France and especially Germany, which were, broadly speaking, accessible to students of all social classes and national origins. Until the decisive intervention of Labour well into the twentieth century, science in Britain was a calling for the scions of aristocratic or wealthy families.

Industrialization

In emphasizing the role of the government, Professor Sinha contrasts India to Australia and Canada (p. 167). Yet it can be argued that science was anemic in Australia (until the 1940s) and Canada (until the 1960s) as well. Professor Sinha attributes the lack of science in Australia to the nature of the program for promoting industrial training in India during the Second World War. The programs for promoting industrial training in India during the Second World War were part of a plan to preserve the British Raj by improving the Indian economy, on the one hand, and to prevent the United States from industrializing India "after the war in an effort to create for itself a market there" (p. 141, referring to the opinion of British Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin), on the other hand. The question concerning nearly everyone was not truth-seeking—what modernity understood as science—but rather industrialization, the implementation of technology. Wherever one looks during the war, there is a confusing pastiche of science and technology. This view extended to A. V. Hill, the 1922 Nobel laureate in physiology, who, after visiting India, penned a report advocating a new emphasis on technical applications there (pp. 156-7). Professor Sinha emphasizes how industrial capitalism overwhelmed traditional Indian economic rhythms and manufactures (pp. 161-3, 182), while at the same time observing the attraction of the Soviet Union and its state-directed industrialization to Jawaharlal Nehru and his advisors.

An emphasis on theory in science, whether in physics or biology, could have mitigated the impact of rapacious industrial development; indeed one could imagine significant points of rapport between “Western” theory and “Eastern” philosophy, as the connection was proposed during the 1960s in the United States. Professor Sinha is clear that such a synthesis failed to materialize. European technology overran India, dealing “a fatal blow to the indigenous knowledge and skill and a crippling knock to the indigenous creativity (p. 196).”

A central archive

I wonder how Indian scholars and scientists viewed the matter. Science, War and Imperialism prepares the ground for a parallel study, focusing on the non-governmental side of Indian society. It is true that Indian industrialists endowed scientific institutions early in the century. Did the prosecution of science in the private sphere depend on them alone? In Britain, endowments for science came from the landed gentry as well as from industrial families. I should like to know more about the worldview of Indian aristocrats, people who could well have funded a large private observatory or a cyclotron. It would also be good to learn about the development of research degrees at universities under the British Raj. These points can be recovered from private correspondence and writings, a portion of it no doubt in South Asian languages. Professor Sinha is well-situated for carrying out such a study to complement his fine treatment of the governmental side of science under British rule.

It is time to collect the unpublished papers of twentieth-century South Asian scientists in a central archive. One model is the “Archive for the History of Quantum Physics,” directed by Thomas S. Kuhn in the 1960s. The efforts of Kuhn and his colleagues sensitized scientists to the historical importance of their personal correspondence. The project resulted in the preservation of many thousands of letters providing vital insights into the formulation of quantum mechanics. The project also directly contributed to new standards for historical scholarship, notably in the pages of the periodical Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences. It would be wonderful to read intimate and frank thoughts from South Asians about the means and ends of science. By extension, such an archive would help resolve the extent to which science is universal and whether science is bent this way and that by the accident of creed, costume, and cuisine. My guess is that the resulting picture would obviate a great deal of the loose and silly writing of late about the distinctive appropriation of European science by civilizations beyond Europe. It would lend support to Joseph Needham’s affirmation of a universal frame, in the Modern Age, for perceiving the natural world.

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Creating places and connections

Spaces and places frame life; furthermore, the ways we use these spaces and places are framed by the ways we talk about them: scientifically, aesthetically, morally, politically, economically, etc. When the stories we tell, and are being told, about our cities gain a sense of inevitability they become oppressing. There always are – and should be – alternative points of view. The last decade or so, the dominant theme has been creativity: the creative city, creative economy or industry

for example, social behavior and the particularities of the political economy, which is too often overlooked in the ‘third wave’ literature, for example, it seems as if transition is an irreversible process from A to B if a country constructs the right institutions. In one of my classes I attempted with my students to accomplish the meeting of Indonesia’s national political philosophy Pancasila and the political theories of John Rawls, Richard Rorty and others. It was, however, not so much the local context I was missing, but the spatial component of public space in the writings of Rawls, Rorty and others. I am not saying that these theorists are too blame for this omission – some things need to be omitted to keep writings readable – but for me it meant a spatial turn, a turn to the writings of urban geographers and architects. So it was only natural for me to gravitate towards ITB’s Arte-Polis conferences.

Conference program
The British Council supported the second edition of Arte-Polis, and up to today it still organizes the Young Creative Entrepreneur awards. The ITB alumnus and architect Ridwan Kamil, founder of Ubike, was the 2006 winner. Some of the keynote speakers at previous Arte-Polis editions were professor emeritus Alexander Cuthbert from the University of North South Wales (in 2006); former Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs professor Dorodjatun Kuntjoro Jakti (in 2006), above-mentioned Alexander Cuthbert from the University of North South Wales (in 2006); former Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs professor Dorodjatun Kuntjoro Jakti (in 2006), above-mentioned Charles Landry (in 2008); professor Eku Wand from Braunschweig University of Art in Germany, which collaborates with ITB’s Department of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development (SAPD/SAPPK) at the Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB), Indonesia, took over the organization of the biannual conferences.

The Place-makers

The genealogy of the state university ITB
(www.itb.ac.id/en) dates back to colonial times and it has some illustrious alumni: for example, the first and third presidents of the Republic of Indonesia – respectively Soekarno (president between the declaration of independence in 1945 and his ousting in 1966) and Habibie (president between the ousting of Soeharto in 1998, to which many ITB students contributed with their protests – and the first post-Soeharto elections in 1999). Many ITB lecturers – who are civil servants if they have a permanent contract – work as consultants to the state and its central and local governments. The Indonesian state has had for decades a strong top-down developmentalist approach to modernize the economy, and the Arte-Polis conferences are an attempt to change this story. It therefore comes as no surprise that ministers are invited to deliver keynote speeches.

Arte-Polis aims “to bring together and to connect practitioners, academics, artists, community leaders, local government officials, policy-makers and other professionals from diverse disciplines and regions around the world concerned with the quality of life and collaborative nature of creative communities […]. Its objective is to share and learn from international and local experiences regarding current issues, best practices and policy implications of creative connectivity on place-making.”

I should start with a disclaimer though; in 2008, I presented a paper at one of the parallel sessions at Arte-Polis 2. And in 2010, I organized a roundtable discussion on the political nature of, and the role of, artist initiatives in public space at Arte-Polis 3. In 2003, right after my graduation from the University of Amsterdam, I left for Indonesia and I started lecturing political theory at several universities in Jakarta and Bandung, including ITB. Very soon, however, I came to realize that what I had learned and what I was teaching was rather abstract. I am not just saying that we should pay closer attention to the context, and the creative class. Researcher and consultant Richard Florida has done much to popularize the concept of the creative class, and Charles Landry for the concept of the creative city. And theirs is a global appeal; Arte-Polis 1 was organized in 2006 by the Department of Architecture, and in 2008, the School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development (SAPD/SAPPK) at the Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB), Indonesia, took over the organization of the biannual conferences.

Roy Voragen
A review of Arte-Polis 4

northwards. Interestingly, when a representative of the museum opened Arte-Polis, no reference was made to the colonial use of the building, this art deco-styled building used to house Sociëteit Concordia, a club for plantation owners.1

In 2012, when Arte-Polis moved back to the campus, the conference had around a hundred speakers from over fifteen different countries, which made it smaller than the previous edition, which was a blessing in disguise as there are only so many presentations one can attend. However, if Arte-Polis is about exchanging best experiences then it is unfortunate that previous successful program elements were not repeated this time around; this time there was no art exhibition as was the case in 2006 (ITB has an on campus art gallery: Gallery Soemaradjie), no site-specific projects (in 2008, ‘Reclaiming Lost Space’ under the Pasupati Flyover, which is at walking distance from the campus), and no roundtable discussions (of which I organized one in 2010). The roundtable discussions were particularly missed as these offer an opportunity to interact and discuss on a more fruitful level than a short question and answer session after a presentation can provide.

Smart cities
Every few years or so new buzz words and lingo surfaces. This time around it was ‘smart’: smart cities, smart design and smart thinking. One of the two workshops was titled Smart Growth Workshop. And the first keynote speaker, professor Ulrich Weisberg from MPI School of Design Thinking (Potsdam, Germany), spoke about smart design and thinking. In his talk, which seemed a bit like a PR pitch to start a franchise of his institute in Indonesia, he explained that smart design and thinking focuses on multidisciplinary collaboration and co-production, he gave Wikipedia as an example.2 Due to a generally strong social conformism, Indonesia could perhaps use more individualistic spirit to achieve new ideas. However, just as with ‘creative’ cities, how are cities ‘smart’ – is that not a human attribute?

By far the most inspiring presentation was by the second keynote speaker, Anies Baswedan, the rector of Paramadina University in Jakarta, which was founded by Muslim intellectuals Nurcholish Madjid. Anies Baswedan stated that Asia is re-emerging, but that at the very same time there are many social ills that cannot all be solved by a top-down approach, even though it is our natural response to look at the state for action to deal with social problems. He tested this by asking the audience whose responsibility it is to deal with the Pasupati Flyover in Jakarta. And the general consensus was that it is the state’s responsibility. However, it is our garbage that fills up and blocks the sewer system, the rivers and canals. He told us not to wait for the government to step in just because we pay taxes. He continued to speak about a project he founded, Indonexia Mengopc (’Indonesia Teachers’), which deals with the very uneven distribution of high-quality teachers.3 University graduates who participate in the Indonexia Mengopc project are sent to remote areas to teach for a year; it is not considered an alternative career path, as the pay in it is not as high, but it is seen as a rewarding civic duty. This project, Anies Baswedan hopes, is to become a hub of trust (fitting and urban expanse are only two of the many signs that social trust has eroded in Indonesia) so that the fifth pillar of Pancasila becomes a reality: social justice.

Future urban design
The Indonesian government was represented by two keynote speakers: vice minister at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Saptia Newarand, and Imam S. Imamii (Ministry of Public Works). The first spoke about connecting tourism with the creative economy to improve the quality of life. He said very little how this is to be done other than the usual city branding through the use of landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower (but, as professor Elizabeth Patzer-Zyberk, another keynote speaker, pointed out, most of us don’t have a use for a landmark like Marina Bay in Singapore).4 And said nothing about whose lives could be qualitatively improved. Moreover, how can sustainability be a city if the focus is on tourism? Since the opening of the Cipularang toll road in May 2005, which connects Jakarta with Bandung, many tourists have been coming from Jakarta to Bandung, which benefits some, but causes problems for all (traffic jams are the most visible issue).

Imam S. Imamii, the second government representative, spoke about the plans developed by the Ministry of Public Works, but little about their implementation. The next keynote speaker formed, therefore, a good contrast. Professor Emeritus and founder of the Center of Urban Design Studies, Mohammad Daniwardjo, talked about the need to develop a MRT system in Jakarta.5 He has been discussing this topic since 1972, forty years and five presidents later he speaks about it again at Arte-Polis 4 (he mentioned that eighty percent of that time has been lost due to politics). He hopes that the MRT can be a catalyst to transformative processes. Unfortunately, he didn’t mention anything about the overlapping trajectories of the already existing Transjakarta Busway and the to be constructed MRT.6

The parallel sessions were conducted in more intimate settings, on average an audience would have twenty or so members. Quite a few of the speakers at parallel sessions had difficulties controlling their nerves and dealing with insufficient English proficiency (with this many speakers it wouldn’t work to use translators due to time constraints). Some of these speakers failed to realize that presenting a paper to a live audience is very different from writing one. The energetic presentation by Jeanne M. Lamin, adjunct professor at the University of Florida and guest lecturer at ITB, was a great example though, as she turned it into a mini workshop. She is developing a deck of cards as a playful and fun tool to help people make use of their cities, and she asked us to scribble drawings and keywords on a card we each received (the deck of cards is still in work progress). One issue that affected nearly all presentations is that speakers talked about their own projects; for some, more critical distance would have been welcome, which was amplified all the more in those presentations by speakers who were wearing two hats: that of the researcher as well as that of the consultant. The pragmatic consultant makes it difficult for the researcher to step back and question the parameters in which they work, the political economy is then taken for granted.

Creativity for everyone
Kathleen Azali, from Co2 library in Surabaya and one of the workshop leaders, gave a keynote presentation.7 She is developing a deck of cards as a playful and fun tool to help people make use of their cities, and she asked us to scribble drawings and keywords on a card we each received (the deck of cards is still in work progress). One issue that affected nearly all presentations is that speakers talked about their own projects; for some, more critical distance would have been welcome, which was amplified all the more in those presentations by speakers who were wearing two hats: that of the researcher as well as that of the consultant. The pragmatic consultant makes it difficult for the researcher to step back and question the parameters in which they work, the political economy is then taken for granted.

Notes
4 The five basic principles of Indonesia’s state ideology: the belief in one God, just and civilized humanity; the unity of the Republic of Indonesia; democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation; and social justice for all. At first, my students responded with some skepticism to my proposal to reinterpret their state philosophy as they have come to see Pancasila as a propaganda tool.
6 www.urban.co.id.
7 Built along the Grote Postweg (i.e., Great Postal Road), today called jalan Asis-Africa.
8 A parallel session speaker, Chong Kiem Hua, also emphasized this multidisciplinary aspect, which he oddly called crowd sourcing, but a group of dozen specialists is not a crowd.
9 http://kdbmasti.co.id.
10 Elizabeth Patzer-Zyberk and her partner Andrés Duany, also a keynote speaker, are proponents of New Urbanism, which is a socio-legal study on land, decentralization and the rule of law to ends urban sprawl and urban disinvestment. www.dcpz.com.
11 http://jwob.sund.ac.id.
12 http://transjakarta.co.id. The Transjakarta Busway is modeled after a similar system in Bogotá Colombia, and the first route has been operational since January 2004.
13 http://library.uwasa.co.id.
14 And if we speak in terms of class interests, we also have to speak in terms of class conflicts – which only occurs below the rade in Indonesia, it is become a tale after the elimination of the communist party in 1965-1966.
15 Richard Florida. 2012. ‘The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited’, The Atlantic, 25 June 2012. tinyurl.com/kipghap (accessed 13 July 2012). In the same essay he sweepingly writes: “The Creative Class has become truly global, numbering between one-third to nearly one-half of the workforce in the advanced nations of North America, Europe, Asia, and around the world.” That is for sure not the case in Indonesian (but I will use the term creative class for reasons of brevity). Further, he refers to the political scientist Ronald Inghelhart and his concept of the ‘post-materialist values’, but it is highly questionable whether it is applicable to Indonesia.
16 The academic term for this process is gentrification; Belgian artist Reinant Vanhee calls this the colonization of the city, which leads to a populist backlash. Reinant Vanhee. 2007. ‘A Pico for an Unresting Nation’, Metropoli M no. 1; tinyurl.com/crfhps5 (accessed 15 July 2012).
18 Dr. Tia Lautasi and her student Prananda Lussaffyana Malaivau presented a project, which they claim, reclains the street: However, it is one thing to criticize the middle class of spending too much time in shopping malls, it is an altogether different matter to claim that the streets are vacant. http://knekenbdg.com.

5 (below): Graffiti by Iwan S. Darmanito under the Pasupati Flyover.
A reappraisal of sources for Asian studies

Rila Mukherjee

THE MEETING ‘A REAPPRaisal OF SOURCES FOR ASIAN STUDIES’ was held in Kolka and Chandernagore (West Bengal, Hooghly) from 5-9 March 2012, with participants from four countries: India, France, the United States and China. The aim of the meeting was to showcase new findings that challenge older scholarship on Asia.

The first day, held in collaboration with the Department of South and South East Asian Studies, Calcutta University (joint coordinator: Dipak Chakravarty, Retd), saw Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (former Chair, University of Vienna) and Rila Mukherjee (former Chair, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University) deliver plenary sessions. The former focused on the role of archival material in fostering historical research, while the latter discussed the challenges posed by the digitization of archival sources. The day ended with a discussion on the importance of archival sources for research on Southeast Asia.

On the second day, the meeting moved on to Chandernagore, a former French colonial port on the Coromandel Coast. The day began with a panel on the Hooghly heritage zone, with presentations by Lipi Ghosh, the representative of the Ivan Polunin archive, and Misbach Yuna Bire (the founder of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia). The panel was followed by a presentation by Rila Mukherjee, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context.

The second day of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion on the role of archival material in fostering historical research. The day began with a panel on the Hooghly heritage zone, with presentations by Lipi Ghosh, the representative of the Ivan Polunin archive, and Misbach Yuna Bire (the founder of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia). The panel was followed by a presentation by Rila Mukherjee, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context.

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On the fourth and final day of the meeting, the focus shifted to a discussion on the role of archival material in fostering historical research. The day began with a panel on the Hooghly heritage zone, with presentations by Lipi Ghosh, the representative of the Ivan Polunin archive, and Misbach Yuna Bire (the founder of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia). The panel was followed by a presentation by Rila Mukherjee, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context.

Throughout the meeting, there were several opportunities to discuss the role of archival material in fostering historical research. The day began with a panel on the Hooghly heritage zone, with presentations by Lipi Ghosh, the representative of the Ivan Polunin archive, and Misbach Yuna Bire (the founder of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia). The panel was followed by a presentation by Rila Mukherjee, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context.

At the end of the meeting, there was a talk by Dipak Chakravarty, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context. The day ended with a discussion on the role of archival material in fostering historical research. The day began with a panel on the Hooghly heritage zone, with presentations by Lipi Ghosh, the representative of the Ivan Polunin archive, and Misbach Yuna Bire (the founder of the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia). The panel was followed by a presentation by Rila Mukherjee, who discussed the challenges of working with archival material in a post-colonial context.
The state of historical research in Myanmar

Alexey Kirichenko

The state of historical research in Myanmar has changed dramatically in recent years. More significantly, there has been a focus on the state of historical research in Myanmar and the challenges that lie ahead in terms of building stronger links between the international academic community and local scholars in Myanmar.

Like many other aspects of Myanmar, historical research has seen significant changes. The era between 1962 and 1988, when the country was run by the Revolutionary Council and Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), saw joint organization between local governments and foreign institutions.

Rangoon University, established in 1920, hosted the first excavations and started the Archaeological Survey and Rangoon University as two key institutions involved in the study of the country’s past. Until very recently, universities in Burma did not award Ph.D. degrees and those wishing to do postgraduate research had to go abroad. Thus, a great deal of pioneering and interesting theses were submitted at the M.A. level and not pursued further. Massive expansion and diffusion of educational facilities in the 1990s significantly increased the number of degrees awarded. Changing a lasting feature of higher education in Myanmar—most university graduates are never employed in the field that they have studied. Hence, most of the theses submitted are not converted into book publications and remain inaccessible for a broader academic community beyond Myanmar, though many of them are now in English and thus pose no huge language barriers to wider distribution.

V. Ekan’s bridge, Amarapura. One of the most popular tourist destinations in Myanmar. © Ania Blazejewska

Research into local and regional history that was very limited before the 1990s received a major boost with the development of regional universities but such research and these theses rarely go beyond the walls of these institutions. Accordingly, results achieved in studying local history have almost no impact on the writing and understanding of national history in Myanmar, which is still being written exclusively in local journals and commemorative volumes and are thus totally unknown to outside audiences.

Autarchic policies pursued by the BSPP government resulted in most of Myanmar’s historical research being approached from a domestic perspective with little effort to integrate it with research on Southeast, South and East Asia. The opening up of Myanmar and its membership in ASEAN started to change this situation and led to greater cooperation with researchers from neighbouring countries, particularly Thailand. A number of Burmese sources on Thailand were published and there were student and staff exchanges between major universities. However, much remains to be done to make Myanmar history better known beyond its borders and to align it with the history of a larger world which it is a part of.

The intensification of the reform process in Myanmar followed parliamentary elections in 2010 and the gradual opening up of the country after more than fifty years of relative isolation is not all about politics and economy. The scope for historical research and the study and preservation of cultural heritage is also changing as international agencies and the academic community engage Myanmar more directly and local institutions seek closer cooperation with the outside world.

Several recent developments are illustrative of this change. In January this year, the Japanese government granted €400,000 (about US$495,000) to a UNESCO project for cultural preservation capacity-building in Myanmar. The project was subsequently launched in March. In February, the Myanmar Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, launched a project that will inventory, document and catalogue branches and sections located in Yangon, Bago, Mrauk U, Pyay, Taungdwingyi, Magwe, Bagan, Pakhangyi, Mandalay, Sagayin, Shwebo and Tagaung. Among these, branches in Bagan, Yangon, Mandalay, and Pyay have the most personnel and go beyond routine operations. A field school of archaeology was established in Pyay in 2005 with the aim of promoting archaeology in Myanmar and training prospective recruits for the department. It runs a one-year postgraduate diploma course in applied archaeology. The reorganization of the Universities Historical Research Centre into the Department of Historical Research and its transfer from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Culture in 2007 helped consolidate the ministry’s position as the primary agent in understanding Myanmar history and setting priorities for what should be studied and how. The position of the Department of Archaeology was also augmented by its assuming control over the National Library and National Museum, two repositories of rare historic and cultural items.

At present, research conducted under the aegis of the Ministry of Education is done by students and researchers based in the University of Yangon, University of Mandalay (former Mandalay University of Arts and Science), University of Vadanagon (also based in Mandalay) and a host of regional universities established in the last twenty years. Until very recently, universities in Burma did not award Ph.D. degrees and those wishing to do postgraduate research had to go abroad. Thus, a great deal of pioneering and interesting theses were submitted at the M.A. level and not pursued further. Massive expansion and diffusion of educational facilities in the 1990s significantly increased the number of degrees awarded. Changing a lasting feature of higher education in Myanmar—most university graduates are never employed in the field that they have studied. Hence, most of the theses submitted are not converted into book publications and remain inaccessible for a broader academic community beyond Myanmar, though many of them are now in English and thus pose no huge language barriers to wider distribution.

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Long-term research initiatives running for decades are uncommon. It is difficult to find a theme or subject that has enjoyed stable and sustained interest of several generations of scholars. Under the Department of Archaeology, research in Pyu sites took off rapidly in the late 1950s and continued into the 1960s, but had almost waned by the 1980s. The 1980s and 1990s saw a concentration of efforts on Bagan while little new research on that city was done in the subsequent decade except for reconstruction and renovation. The excavations of Bronze and Iron Age sites have become the fixation since the late 1990s and there still needs to be a balance in research priorities.

Thus, for international actors seeking to broaden their commitment to Myanmar and initiate joint projects, it is important not only to provide the essential funds and training, but also to ensure the continuity of sponsored projects so that they would not be abandoned after initial interest. It is equally important to create more research opportunities for younger researchers and stimulate the study of neglected aspects such as material culture and archaeology of post-Bagan periods, among others. Last but not least, they should also promote active dissemination of knowledge created in Myanmar both locally and globally.

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As the 1990s dawned in Southeast Asia, social landscapes evolved. Economic expansion was brought on variously by globalisation, capitalist strategies of authoritarian regimes, growing middle classes spurred by advances in public education, and other factors such as the end of cold war polarities. Increased, if unevenly shared, prosperity fostered a degree of social progress as well as questioning and dissent.

With this assurance, a fresh social voice emerged at the individual level. Artists across the region increasingly began to use their work to explore inequality, corruption, environmental and aesthetic. In Singapore, the socially vocal artists Village collective was formed in 1988. In conservative Thailand, shockingly anti-establishment activist artist Navin Manandhar put up his incise 1995 ‘I Love Thai Culture’ at Bangkok’s National Gallery. In kajakarta, artists produced street art and performances to stir the masses, while FX Harsono and Dadang Christanto communicated the oppression suffered by the Indonesian people in the waning years of the Suharto era. In Communist Vietnam, some abandoned the mainstream as their paintings, performances and installations ran afoul of the censors, choosing to assault the status quo through the evocation of individualism, sexuality, and urban decadence constituted as oblique political critique. In Muslim Malaysia, Zulkifli Yussuf created the provocatively louche Ahmad charism, who already sullied by his dog, is depicted contracting HIV on his travels abroad.

Revisiting the strong relationship between art and social function that had always characterised regional expression, artists now moved beyond social realism’s didactic bent, abandoning the literal style of previous decades. Answering questions of national identity, they sought to define the parameters of the local and the specific, while FX Harsono and Dadang Christanto communicated the oppression suffered by the Indonesian people in the waning years of the Suharto era. In Communist Vietnam, some abandoned the mainstream as their paintings, performances and installations ran afoul of the censors, choosing to assault the status quo through the evocation of individualism, sexuality, and urban decadence constituted as oblique political critique. In Muslim Malaysia, Zulkifli Yussuf created the provocatively louche Ahmad charism, who already sullied by his dog, is depicted contracting HIV on his travels abroad.

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Thus, by the 1990s, Southeast Asian artists were offering critiques of, and sometimes alternatives to, current power structures. In countries without democracy, visual art was a potent and, in the case of Indonesia, a very real vehicle of popular empowerment.

Nationalism and nation-building discourses nurtured in the wake of mid 20th century decolonisation are recurring targets of critique, perceived to be enlisted by the state to justify authoritarianism and social conservatism. With their work, many artists question monolithic state structures, their ambush of nation overlaid with commentary about memory and history as official interpretations or misrepresentations of history conveniently justify abuse of power.

In Thailand, Vasan Sisthith, Suex Kunavichayanont, Manit Sriwanitchapoom, and In K. are particularly articulate on the themes of history, memory and nation, mounting several exhibitions at the turn of the century that prod their audiences to remember historical events deleted from official curricula. Manit’s 2001 manipulated photographic series Horror in Pink, Suex’s History Class series of engraved children’s school desks, and Vasan’s Blue October paintings, using different expressive languages, all appropriate graphic press images of the October 1976 Thammasat University student massacre instigated by the rightist military regime. Through various conceptual and narrative devices, and as a counter to repeating atrocities, with their art the trio makes these events relevant to a new generation of Thai ignorant of incidents revised or erased from the nation’s history books. They not only recall a key episode of modern political history, but also open up the question of the disputed ownership and writing of history.

In Malaysia, with its Bumiputera policy favouring the ethnic majority, the critique of nationalism is often taken up by non-Malay artists such as Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Yee I-Lann, and Wong Hoy Cheong. Wong’s works from the 1990s, investigate history and the shifting nature of inclusion and exclusion from gender, ethnic, and national vantage points. As an ethnic Chinese within a Malay/muslim majority, Wong’s viewpoint is laden with historical baggage. His 2005 minaret installation, erected on the roof of the Guangdong Museum of Art during the second Guangzhou Triennale, is a study of the perennially moving cultural framework that characterises the region. For while Wong is a minority Chinese in Malaysia, he is a Malaysian-Chinese in Guangzhou [an ancient Muslim enclave in China] reminding the PRC Chinese of their Muslim minority’s heritage. Concept, sign and history are elegantly entwined to produce a cogent work of art. Wong was commissioned to produce a second minaret installation crowning the Singapore Art Museum for Home, History and Nation. Singapore, like China, has a Chinese-majority population while ethnic Malays constitute the minority. Like China, Singapore experiences social tensions in the late 1960s and racial and religious issues are still taboo in the city-state. Indeed, had the proposed minaret been erected (the museum vetoed the commission), the project would have provided an extra layer of meaning because the building housing the art museum was once a Christian boys’ school, possibly problematic for the socially-conservative Christians who are an emerging political force in Singapore.

In Indonesia, critique of nation by artists changed considerably following the fall of Suharto and the question of the transition to democracy. Concerns about the cohesion of the state, the role of the citizen in a budding democracy, and the effect of newfound empowerment and expression of pluralistic, personal identities, all influenced visual art at the beginning of the 21st century. Commenting on History-in-the-making, Indonesia’s FX Harsono produced his 1998 performance-video Burned Victims even as riots continued around Java in the wake of Suharto’s fall from power. In Heri Dono’s 2000 documentary Legenda: Indonesia Baru, wayang (theatrical) puppets represent islands of Indonesia as the nation threatens to implode as a result of the break-down of centralised power. The installation alludes to uncertainty about a less cohesive nation, tinged with a sense of personal and relational identity politics in an Indonesia polarised by a newly-surfaced communalism.

More recently, Jompet Kuswandianto’s 2008 installation Jessie’s Mochine comments on the underlying tensions associated with cultural hybridity in democratising Indonesia. Through sound, visual practices.

Besides seeking to prove the existence of Southeast Asian contemporary art, the show had historical ambitions. Set up as a loose narrative of big regional themes, the latter operated to bind Home, History and Nation, while also proposing themselves as a framework for recent art history. Approaching Southeast Asian art from regional perspectives that transcended nationalist ones, the exhibition sought to illuminate ties between certain currents of regional art. These included aesthetic, discursive and conceptual strategies, a taste for narrative, communitarian outlook, materiality, figuration, and a series of specific thematic interests. Of these, history and nationalism were prominent. Singled out in the exhibition title, they figured for their importance in unfolding regional art history and for being central in the works of many Southeast Asian artists.

Home, History and Nation, through its art selection and the accompanying catalogue’s curatorial essay arguing the works’ seminal place in regional discourse, set out to establish some defining traits of regional contemporary art history. History featured both in the exhibits and the show’s structure. Regional history providing a frame was unsurprising: Southeast Asian countries, particularly those featured in the exhibition, are linked by numerous commonalities and these in turn underpin the artists’ contemporary practice. Their indigenous cultures, with residual strands of Chinese and Indian influence, a syncretic attitude towards arriving faiths, spiritual tendencies, capacity for conceptual thinking, and acceptance toward women as social actors, have, in various guises, coloured local contemporary art. The region’s pre-colonial maritime trade routes, trade-induced outward-looking ethos, population transfers, colonisation, and 20th century nation-building, have also inflicted today’s visual practices.

These shared historical threads explain why art from insular and mainland Southeast Asia lends itself to fruitful comparison and analysis. Further, by excerpting a continuing fascination, these themes rooted in regional history form the basis for artists’ queries of new social, political, and cultural paradigms at the turn of the 21st century.
variables, and kinetics, it combines references to Indonesian pre-modern, colonial, and post-colonial history, pointing to the past to explain the current malaise in the archipelago.

The country with the longest colonial history in the region, the Philippines, was also the first to discover a modern national consciousness, with history and nation apprehended through social realism throughout the 20th century. In recent years, works elliptically exploring the intersection of history, power, and personal identity have appeared. Dissecting Filipino history since the 1990s, Alwin Reamillo’s multiple-work Grand Piano Project of the last decade, autobiographical and densely referential in terms of national identity, is compelling for its invitation to audiences to sit down and play, suggesting all are owners and active agents of history.

Briccio Santos’s 2009 Heritage Tunnel is a metaphor for the illusory certainty of history. Visually poetic in its infinite display of stacked books, the tunnel alludes to the tussle over the ownership and definition of history in the context of post-colonial Philippines, and by extension, Southeast Asia and beyond. Brenda Fajardó’s graphically refined 14-part paper sequence Tarot Card Series from 1997 offers a critical view of Pinoys history through the ages. Narrated through the medium of tarot cards, the artist’s seemingly literal description of events is subtly tempered by ideas of chance, choice and play, suggesting the fluidity and complexity of historical readings. Roberto Feleo’s 2007 narrative wall installation Ang Retablo Ng Bantaoay cryptically connects colonial history, church power, and indigenous pagan beliefs as a means of examining the nation. Subverting the standard altar configuration by inverting it, and shrouding pagan beliefs as a means of examining the nation. Subverting the standard altar configuration by inverting it, and shrouding

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Critical heritage studies: IIAS summer school revisited

From 5-8 June 2012, over 500 renowned scholars, researchers, students, and heritage professionals from all over the globe gathered in Gothenburg, Sweden, to participate in the inaugural conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS). The organizers wanted to launch the ACHS and, in cooperation with the International Journal of Heritage Studies, establish an extensive network of scholars across the globe in order to debate and discuss cutting edge research in the field of heritage studies.

The summer school panel Eva Ambiss started with her presentation on ‘The Politics of Heritage in Sri Lanka’. She argued that purity is the main value around which heritage politics in Sri Lanka are centered and further discussed a shift in heritage politics from a multicultural to a transcultural approach. From her extensive fieldwork in Sri Lanka she used the kohombā kankāriya village healing ritual as an example to demonstrate that purity is localized as it embraces notions of a revitalized national Buddhism that excludes pre-Buddhist aspects, and elements of Tamil Hindu culture. She turned to the low caste performers to look beyond the official, national readings of kohombā kankāriya, and found that because of their marginal position they are able to escape the purity of nationalism to a certain extent. Although the low caste performers use the code of purity, they subvert it by essentializing a pure and authentic lineage, instead of national heritage.

‘Destroying or innovating tradition? The politics of authenticity in the Indonesian wayang puppet theatre’, by Sadiah Boonstra, demonstrated how standards of authentic, linked to boundaries of heritage, are fluid and constantly negotiated. Sadiah discussed how the innovations of one particular dolongan (wayang puppeteer), Ki [The Honourable] Enthus Susmono (b. 1966), led to co-signification by many who applied a standard containing an invisible essence of wayang. Innovation produces ‘discomfort’ for these viewers and leads them to claim that Enthus Susmono crosses the line; but the instant success of Enthus Susmono’s newest creation Wayang Senti demonstrates that boundaries are interpreted differently by various audiences and that they are fluid and constantly negotiated.

Adele Esposito’s paper, ‘The construction of heritage values in contemporary Cambodia: the case of Siem Reap’, dealt with heritage representations, such as dwellings, and commercial buildings. Since the listing of Angkor as a World Heritage Site in 1992, foreign experts working in Cambodia produced representations of these forms of heritage and designed conservation projects and management tools. Although the way of operating perpetuated foreign interference in heritage matters – also typical of the French regime – their projects had little impact on local spatial transformations. Measures they receive and react to these imported materials? Does the failure of heritage planning mean that the Cambodian authorities lack power? My analysis focuses on the case of Siem Reap province where the archaeological site of Angkor is located, but I also mention projects and programs designed for other Cambodian cities, such as Battambang, Phnom Penh and Pursat.

I argue that the measures aiming at conserving inherited buildings through inventory, listing and urban regulations have never been implemented in Cambodian towns. In contrast, the production of knowledge concerning wooden houses and villages, to which both foreign experts and Cambodian agents contribute, has stronger consequences. This knowledge describes architectural models and spatial organization and gives the technical and cultural reasons of these shapes. It does not aim to justify the conservation of existing villages, but to serve as a source of inspiration for creating new architecture and neighbourhoods. Heritage is conceived as a permanent model that can be represented and reemployed into new creations. It also nourishes an idea of the cultural identity of the Khmer people based on the purity of its rural origins.

While architectural magazines base the design of new types of houses on these models, national authorities used this knowledge for planning the relocation of a part of the population living around the archaeological site of Run Ta Ek. Unlike previously unsuccessful attempts in the field of urban heritage and management, Cambodian authorities were able to implement this relocation project. So, they displayed their power to act, while they had been deaf to the solicitations by the experts who had proposed conservation models.

This evidence challenges the actual power of exogenous concepts and tools as well as the pretended dependence of Cambodian agents on colonial paradigms; the conception of heritage as a model, more than as a collection of material remains, seems to be more familiar to the local culture according to which the demolition and replacement of inherited buildings is not a source of guilt. In this way, Cambodian authorities show their capacity to receive and reject external contributions according to their own interests.

Adele Esposito, Institut Parisien de Recherche Architecture Urbanistique Société (IPRAUS).

The construction of heritage values in contemporary Cambodia: the case of Siem Reap

Adele Esposito

We should first and foremost focus on the analysis of the context in which the idea of heritage is created, used and defined.

Since the colonial time, heritage construction in Cambodia has been dominated by the celebration of the outstanding value of Angkor. I focus on forms that are in the shadow of the archaeological site: dwellings, commercial buildings, public facilities and urban shapes, which are part of the contemporary landscape of Cambodian towns. In the years following the listing of Angkor as a World Heritage Site (1992), foreign experts working in Cambodia, in the context of bilateral cooperation agreements, have produced representations of these forms of heritage and have designed conservation projects and management tools. Not only were these representations influenced by the cultural inheritance disseminated during the colonial domination, but their way of operating perpetuated the foreign interference in heritage matters that was typical of the French regimes. However, their projects had little impact on spatial transformations.

I challenge this operational inconsistency because it has questioned the position of Cambodian national and local authorities as interlocutors of the foreign experts. How do they receive and react to these imported materials? Does the failure of heritage planning mean that the Cambodian authorities lack power? My analysis focuses on the case of Siem Reap province where the archaeological site of Angkor is located, but I also mention projects and programs designed for other Cambodian cities, such as Battambang, Phnom Penh and Pursat.

I argue that the measures aiming at conserving inherited buildings through inventory, listing and urban regulations have never been implemented in Cambodian towns. In contrast, the production of knowledge concerning wooden houses and villages, to which both foreign experts and Cambodian agents contribute, has stronger consequences. This knowledge describes architectural models and spatial organization and gives the technical and cultural reasons of these shapes. It does not aim to justify the conservation of existing villages, but to serve as a source of inspiration for creating new architecture and neighbourhoods. Heritage is conceived as a permanent model that can be represented and reemployed into new creations. It also nourishes an idea of the cultural identity of the Khmer people based on the purity of its rural origins.

While architectural magazines base the design of new types of houses on these models, national authorities used this knowledge for planning the relocation of a part of the population living around the archaeological site of Run Ta Ek. Unlike previously unsuccessful attempts in the field of urban heritage and management, Cambodian authorities were able to implement this relocation project. So, they displayed their power to act, while they had been deaf to the solicitations by the experts who had proposed conservation models.

This evidence challenges the actual power of exogenous concepts and tools as well as the pretended dependence of Cambodian agents on colonial paradigms; the conception of heritage as a model, more than as a collection of material remains, seems to be more familiar to the local culture according to which the demolition and replacement of inherited buildings is not a source of guilt. In this way, Cambodian authorities show their capacity to receive and reject external contributions according to their own interests.

Adele Esposito, Institut Parisien de Recherche Architecture Urbanistique Société (IPRAUS).
aiming at conserving inherited buildings through inventory, listing, and urban regulations were never implemented in Cambodian towns. In contrast, the production of knowledge concerning wooden houses and villages has had a stronger impact, and serves as a source of inspiration for creating new architecture and neighborhoods. In this way, Cambodian authorities receive and reject external contributions according to their own interests.

Shu-Li Wang presented three national archaeological parks in China. As the heritage industry has expanded alongside the rise of cultural tourism, the Chinese state nominated twelve archaeological parks. These sites face dilemmas regarding the conservation of heritage and the presentation of the past, such as how to visualize archaeological knowledge. Studies of nationalism in China generally take Chinese nationalism and cultural uniformity as monolithic; and China is often portrayed as a nation with a majority voice. Shu-Li argues against this assumption, and suggests that what constitutes ‘Han’ is in a constant state of flux. By analyzing the staging of three national parks, she demonstrates how pasts are utilized as resources in various settings in response to the state’s project. Based on her fieldwork Shu-Li argues there is need to re-think Han Chinese as a set of diversified, uneven and heterogeneous entities.

Analyzing the social cultural context
After the presentations of individual papers, Michael Herzfeld pointed out four recurring themes: the complexities of tradition, referred to as the ‘normative expectation’ by Proclamation confirms implicit standards for the management of the erstwhile colonial powers in the efficacy of the erstwhile colonial powers in the management of the postcolonial situation. Even in countries that were not technically colonized we see the same kinds of effect.

With his second point about cultural intimacy Herzfeld argues that heritage discourse as a contested space is always about the tension between which is presented to the world (self-display), and what is happening on the inside: dirty jokes, and a nasty sense of humor in the case of Enthus Susmono. With the social poetics of heritage production Herzfeld refers to the notion that when producing heritage, one is playing games with existing categories. Ephymologically speaking, the word ‘invention’ comes from the Latin root for ‘to discover’. To Herzfeld, invention is a mastery of conventional form such that you are able to get away with breaking out of it, and by getting away with breaking out of it, you start to change the rules of the game, as illustrated by the case of Enthus Susmono. Social poetics is revealed in stretching innovation, but not crossing the lines.

Discussions about convention involves the concept of purity, such as in the case of the retreat ritual known asわかさくら. Herzfeld points out that behind the creation of a ‘pure’ tradition, ‘pure’ national heritage etc., lies a battle, a contest, a desire to specify boundaries. By the same token, the definition of heritage also has boundaries – with the recognition and rejection of heritage – that are constantly negotiated. A temporal process is underway from Reap when versions of the postcolonial regime of truth succeeded another, all designed to, as Johannes Fabian put it, keep the production in a state of uncertainty, to make sure that the boundaries become part of the modern world. Heritage, as is tolerance, is a form of keeping people in a manageable situation; people are allowed to have traditions, temples, that can be framed.

Critical heritage studies are essential
Herzfeld concludes by instructing the audience to have a critical eye for all claims of benign ideology, to always ask the crucial questions by who these ideas of heritage are performed, under what conditions, and for whom. In this respect, Herzfeld is of the opinion that critical heritage studies are absolutely essential. Governments may become increasingly uneasy, and perhaps obstruct research that argues against monolithic forms of rules.

We should not let governments or other institutional form tell us what heritage is. We might end up by saying more about what heritage isn’t or what it shouldn’t be or what it is in danger of becoming. We should analyze what has already happened in discourses on heritage in various degrees of totalitarians and colonial discourses and reinforced by the continuing involvement of the erstwhile colonial powers in the management of the postcolonial situation. Even in countries that were not technically colonized we see the same kinds of effect.

THE WAYANG PUPPET THEATRE OF INDONESIA was proclaimed as UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on 7 November 2003. The UNESCO Proclamation confirms implicit standards for the wayang tradition, referred to as the ‘normative expectation’ by Richard Schechner in 2010, by describing it and framing it in the international heritage discourse. Such standards are informed by ideas of authenticity and urge critics to condemn dolok (wayang puppeteers), who do not meet these standards. However, audience appreciation of these dolok shows that these standards are fluid. To examine how standards of wayang are negotiated I focus on the dolok, KJ [The Honorable] Enthus Susmono [b. 1964], who is widely regarded by both friend and foe as a radical innovator. He is a particularly interesting case as wayang standards have prompted critics to refer to Enthus Susmono as Persuad (Destroyer) of wayang, but cause his fans to fondly refer to him as Crazy Dolong. By ‘othering’ Enthus Susmono’s innovations to an extent wayang, the standard is actually reinforced and emphasized.

One dimension of this dynamic is the postcolonial condition. As the western colonial powers defined and spread a set of social values around the world and tried to defy these as the ultimate good, much at work we see today represent attempts by various countries to live up to standards thereby created. Although not all of these standards were created in the West, the fact remains that western values have dominated this discourse, sometimes in the hands of Asian or non-European actors, because they were postcolonial and had learned the arts of self-definition from their colonial masters and perpetuated some of these models. In the case of Siem Reap a conflict takes place, among different levels, which is animated by reified assumptions that were generated by colonial discourses and reinforced by the continuing involve-

Drawing on 13 months of fieldwork in Indonesia, I will describe how Enthus Susmono innovates in the field of his puppet creations, the musical compositions he uses, his performance style, the language he uses, his personal or personality, the incorporation of Islamic elements in his work, and spectacular attractions (sketsa). These manifestations of innovation reflect Enthus Susmono’s overall approach of wayang. He told me several times that he is always searching for ways to buke pasar – open up new markets – as he calls it, and to reach new audiences. His newest creation is the genre of Wayang Satri, which became wildly popular straight after the first performance in August 2010. Enthus Susmono explained that the stories in Wayang Satri are locally situated and deal with Muslim daily life and are not derived from the wayang repertoire. In an obvious Islamic context he alternates Islamic chants with crude jokes, and a drunk puppet. Despite my own initial reservations when watching Wayang Satri for the first time, nobody in the audience seemed insulted. On the contrary, the crowd screamed with laughter, took pictures and recorded the actions on their mobile phones. Of course, not everyone approves of this new form of wayang. Some in this camp are actively involved in the preservation of wayang, including policy makers in the field of heritage management. Other people think that Islam should not be incorporated in wayang at all, but as far as the general audience is concerned, wayang and Islam are inextricably linked.

The case of Enthus Susmono demonstrates that performers and viewers inevitably identify the standard – and thus authenticity – differently, resulting in contrasting uses. Cultural policy makers and wayang aficionados in Jakarta identify a standard containing an invisible essence of wayang. Innovation produces ‘discomfort’ for these viewers. They expect something from the performer that appeals to their idea of wayang. The spectator’s expectations must be catered to, leading to an inherent conservatism as to how the performers can and should present themselves. Enthus Susmono, with almost unrestrained creativity, is not afraid to stretch his innovation to the limit and seek for the boundaries that are allowed to have traditions, temples, that can be framed.

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From multiculturalism to transculturality: the politics of heritage in Sri Lanka

Eva Ambos

AFTER THE OFFICIAL END OF THE CIVIL WAR between the separatist LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and government security forces in May 2009, a number of heritagized rituals took place in Sri Lanka. I discuss these heritage politics in Sri Lanka by drawing on my fieldwork with performer lineages. Through the analysis of a ritual to mark the 2nd term presidency of Mahinda Rāppakāsi, I argue that purity is the main value around which heritage politics in Sri Lanka are centred. I further discuss a shift in heritage politics, from a multicultural to a transcultural approach in scrutinizing the independence day celebrations in February 2010.

With my first example, I show that purity as a value is localized through the performance of heritagized culture in a village healing ritual, carried out by low caste ritual practitioners. A ritual from the region around the hill town Kandy – a kohombā kankāriya – was chosen to honour a president who originates from the low country, the coastal area of the South and West with its distinctive ritual traditions, and who never tires of underlining this, because Kandyan culture in general is associated with authentic culture and purity, with the latter serving as an axiomatic value and being part of a code, which conveys a dominant interpretation and masks alternative readings. It embraces in the case of the kohombā kankāriya notions of a revitalized national Buddhism, that excludes pre-Buddhist aspects and elements of Tamil Hindu culture, which are characteristic for Sinhalese Buddhism as a localized, syncretistic adaption of Theravada Buddhism. The related emergence of an idealized image of ‘Buddhism proper’, informed by middle class values, requires the purging from ‘non-Buddhist’ elements, which eventually leads also to a rejection of rural practices, often characterized by syncretism.

To step beyond the official, nationalist readings of the kohombā kankāriya under discussion, I turn to the performers who due to their seemingly marginal position ‘at the edge’ of this Sinhalese Buddhist nation owing to their low caste and their rural background, are able to escape – at least partly – this tight corset out of tradition, purity and nationalism. Purity as an axiomatic value linked to the kohombā kankāriya, imbued with elitist notions, appears to push the low caste and rural performers to the margins of society. But they use the code of purity in an alternative way, which subverts its dominant usage. While they embrace purity as a value as well, they essentialize a pure and authentic lineage tradition, instead of national heritage.

Looking at purity as a value in relation to interethnic and interreligious boundaries, I argue that the 2010 independence day celebrations reveal a shift in heritage politics from a multicultural to a transcultural paradigm, whereas both embrace purity as a value. Transculturality here should be thought of in a double sense: Firstly, as transcending culture, whereby an official image of a religious and ethnic neutral nation state is developed; and secondly, as an appropriation of the Other. While the multicultural paradigm consists of ideologies which exclude everything that is interpreted as ‘Other’ as invading and corrupting Sinhalese-Buddhist culture to keep it pure, the transcultural one is to absorb the ‘Other’, to incorporate it into a hegemonic Buddhism-Sinhalese framework and to redefine it in relying on purity as a value.

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Politics of displaying landscape: staging China’s three national archaeological parks

Wang Shu-Li

I PRESENT THE STAGING of three Bronze Age archaeological sites in China, as a point of departure in exploring how archaeological materials are re-interpreted in constructing local identities, and incorporated into the state’s grand narrative in post-Mao China. In China, the heritage industry has expanded alongside the rise of cultural tourism, resulting in the Chinese state’s nomination in 2010 of twelve National Archaeological Parks. In the Yinhe archaeologcal site (ca. 1400-1046 BC) there has been a debate over issues regarding conservation of heritage and the presentation of the past, such as how to visualize archaeological knowledge; notions of authenticity (should a site be more like a museum or a theme park?); national history (Han vs. non-Han Chinese culture); and archaeological interpretation. Two other sites, Shaxingshi (ca. 2800-3000 BC) and Jinsha (ca. 1200-900 BC.) in Sichuan province are facing similar dilemmas.

Studies of nationalism in China generally take Chinese nationalism and cultural uniformity as monolithic; China is often portrayed as a nation with a majority voice (Gladden 2004). I suggest that what constitutes ‘Han’ is in a constant state of flux. There is need to rethink Han Chinese as a set of diversified, uneven and heterogeneous entities. I would like to de-territorialize the boundary of Han Chinese empires and deconstruct the identity of Chinese-ness in terms of the oppositions between the national vs. local and central vs. marginal perspectives. What is the contemporary narrating of these urban spaces with the country’s rich archaeological heritage unearthed in terms of global vs. local and central vs. marginal perspectives? I take exception to ideas of Han Chinese as singular, unified, and heterogeneous entities in terms of place-making. I explore how place-based identity developed and how the identities of multiple locales have been formulated. Drawing on one year’s worth of ethnographical research, I examine the staging of China’s three national archaeological parks, focusing on how ancient pasts are utilized as resources in various local settings in response to the state’s project, and how the presentation of the sites is a possible means of achieving urban development.

Wang Shu-Li, Department of Anthropology, University College London. (shu-li.wang@ucl.ac.uk)
Archaeology of the southern Taklamakan: Hedin and Stein’s legacy and new explorations

Lukas Nickel and Susan Whitleford

It was the reports of the 7th century monk Xuanzang that steered the attention of the scholar of Indo-Iranian studies, Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943), towards Khotan in the late 19th century. He had also read the account of the Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin (1865-1952), who first went west to the Taklamakan in 1895. This was the start of a period of extensive archaeology in the region that opened up a whole new field of research.

Early archaeology

Until the late 19th century, travel in this region had been difficult because of the political situation; unrest in Xinjiang and clashes between the British and Russian empires in Central Asia. A series of treaties between Western powers and China as well as the establishment of a Russian consulate and a British representation office in Kashgar opened opportunities for exploration by European researchers. The Chinese Qing empire was also publishing in this area and the first monograph devoted to the Silk Road exhibition, curated by one of the conference organizers.

Cross-disciplinary research

At the same time as archaeological focus in China increased in the Taklamakan, historians in Europe and China returned to the “Silk Road”. Expeditions and publications at first concentrated on Dunhuang material but, over the past decade, more work has started to be done on the Taklamakan kingdoms. Khotan and Kroraina were both part of the 2004 British Library Silk Road exhibition, which also showed conference organizers and there have been numerous other exhibitions on this theme throughout Europe, America and Asia. Several historians are now publishing in the area and the first monograph devoted to the Taklamakan kingdoms is due to be published in 2012 by Valerie Hansen, one of the participants.

This is an area where archaeologists, art historians and historians cannot work in isolation; they need to understand each other’s sources to make sense of their own. The desert conditions also mean that climate, environment and history and geographical are also important factors to consider in any study – it is an area suited to landscape archaeology.

The southern Taklamakan, stretching into the Lop Desert and comprising the kingdoms of Khotan and Kroraina, is a coherent area of study, distinctive from the northern routes and kingdoms. It is also an area extremely well-studied and documented by Stein and Hedin. The recent archaeology has uncovered many finds that throw new light on these kingdoms, but there have been numerous other exhibitions on this theme throughout Europe, America and Asia. Several historians are now publishing in this area and the first monograph devoted to the Taklamakan kingdoms is due to be published in 2012 by Valerie Hansen, one of the participants.

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Stein’s fourth expedition (1930-31), funded by Harvard, was cut short by the Chinese authorities and the excavated finds were moved away from this region and the finds largely unstudied, with philological studies being a notable exception.

Chinese archaeology

Archaeology continued in the Republic Period and under the People’s Republic of China with Huang Wenbi, a member of the newly founded Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, leading several missions to this region. The results of this and other archaeological work were brought together in a volume published by the Archaeological Institute of the Xinjiang Academy of Sciences, heralding the start of more extensive work that continues to the present.

This period has also seen new international collaborations, the first occurring throughout the 1990s, by a Sino-Japanese team working at the sites of Niya and Dandanan-Ulig, and another working at Xahe. A Sino-French team worked at Keriya Darya, on the eastern edge of Khotan, and a Sino-Swedish team have been on an exploratory tour between Niya and Endere.

This was the first of three major expeditions by Stein to this region (second and third were in 1906-08 and 1913-16). Although he is perhaps best known now for his acquisitions at Dunhuang, all of his expeditions concentrated on the southern routes and Khotan and Kroraina. His work on these sites is at least as important as that on Dunhuang, but has received far less attention.

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THE NATIONAL STATE has been under increasing pressure to re-articulate and re-territorize in relation to both sub- and supra-national scales. A strategic response, often formulated in conjunction with mobilized business and other interest groups, involves the reallocation, nationalisation, regulatory, and spatial configurations to meet the demands of transnational investments, cross-country financial operations, internal and international migrations, and so on (Friedmann 1995, Brenner 2004). This sets off a highly contentious process that hinges upon a redefinition of state-market relations as well as a redistribution of state power between the national administration and the other levels of authorities. It also brings about severe competition between sub-national regions when they all attempt to attract the next epicentre of growth (Brenner 1999). New alliances between local authorities, domestic producers, and international investors are being forged, which in some cases has set off no small friction among forces opposed to these alliances and to globalization forces generally.

During this contentious process, the boundaries of the political are redrawn, and economic and political scales redefined. Many countries have experienced institutional voids with regard to the new challenges posed by state re-scaling. The current financial crisis in the Euro zone is a case in point. This also applies to the management of cross-border water and natural resources, the coordination of regional developments, the regulation of human and capital flows, and so on. Existing scholarship has long studied societies where the absence or weakness of particular institutions inhibits social and economic development. Yet until more recently sufficient attention was paid to the questions of how, and under what circumstances, institutional voids can be filled. Whereas a growing number of studies (e.g., Khanna and Palepu 1997) have documented how and intriguing cases where entrepreneurial actors – public and private, organizational and individual – have trespassed on the boundaries of formal rules and institutions to create new space of governance that performs important coordinating functions, there is still a dearth of evidence concerning the problems of void-filling during state re-scaling. This workshop seeks to address this gap in the existing scholarship.

The workshop is the third event in a series of joint symposiums and workshops. The first symposium on Institutional Voids and the Governance of Developing Economies took place on 16 May 2011. The second workshop on State Restructuring and Re-scaling in Comparative Perspective will be held on 3-4 Dec 2012. The fourth workshop is planned to take place in Dec 2013.

Objectives of the workshop

1) examination of empirical cases about the process of state re-structuring and re-scaling respectively. The goal is to look at the crisscrossing between these two frontiers of research so as to generate new research questions and scholarly agenda.

2) Identification of institutional voids as a result of scaling up or scaling down during the re-territorization of the national state;

3) analysis of the social, political, coalitional, and economic contexts that facilitate the filling of voids by the creation of alternative forms of governance and the consequences;

4) Reflection upon exiting theories of the state, sub-national and supra-national politics, and institutional spaces, as well as conventional concepts about the national international division, public-private boundary, and the state-market dichotomy.

Submission instructions

An abstract of no more than 500 words together with a short CV should be submitted in digital format before 1 Nov 2012. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified before 30 Nov 2012. The full paper should be sent in digital format before 15 April 2013.

The organizer will provide hotel accommodation for two nights (12 and 13 May 2013). Participants are expected to take care of their own travel expenses.

For enquiries about the workshop and submission of abstracts, please contact: Martina van den Haak, (m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl)
Cities. In the morning, the heritage contrasted with experiences in Asian Europe, will be critically compared and widely, the Netherlands and Western related to heritage in Delft, and more. Lessons from planning approaches the discussion will be the city of Delft. In the afternoon, a roundtable discussion, open to a wider audience of policymakers, academics, researchers and civil society representatives, will take place. The following questions will be debated:

- What is the position of heritage within modern urban planning?
- How do current policies and approaches in the Netherlands and Europe differ from those in major Asian (particularly Chinese and Indian) cities?
- How can the two learn from each other?
- On the final day (November 7), participants will attempt to come up with lessons from the discussions for research on urban heritage and development policy.

For the full programme and registration information see: www.ukna.asia/events.
To register email info@ukna.asia

Annual Report 2011 now available

THE IAS ANNUAL REPORT 2011 is now available in print and by download from the IAS website - www.ias.nl/annualreport

The report places particular emphasis on the three IAS’s research clusters Asian Cities, Asian Heritages, and Global Asia. The illustrative theme of the report is ‘Dress and Identity’.

IIAS Global Agenda: Submit your event to our online events calendar

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

We invite you to create your own account at www.iias.nl/ events and upload your information to our Global Agenda.

National Master’s Thesis Prize 2012

The International Institute for Asian Studies offers an annual award for the best national master’s thesis in the field of Asian Studies.

The Award
- The honorary title of ‘Best Master’s Thesis’ in Asian studies
- A maximum three month stipend (€ 3,500 per month) to work at IAS, in order to write a PhD project proposal or a research article

Criteria
- The master’s thesis should be in the broad field of Asian Studies, in the humanities or social sciences
- The thesis must have been written at a Dutch university
- Only master’s theses which have been graded with an 8 or higher are eligible
- The thesis must have been evaluated in the period 1 November 2011 - 1 October 2012
- Both students and their supervisors can apply

Submission
Please submit four hard copies of the master’s thesis and a cover letter including the grade awarded and your contact details

Deadline
1 October 2012, 9.00 am
Submissions should be sent to:
Secretariat
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)
P.O. Box 9500
2300 RA Leiden
iias@iias.nl
In the context of the IIAS outreach programme, intended to promote greater public understanding of Asia, a lecture on *Hortus Malabaricus* [The Garden of Malabar] was organised on 27 June 2012, in the Hortus botanicus Leiden [botanical gardens]. Three distinguished speakers discussed the present-day value of this stunning and insightful 12-volume work, printed in Amsterdam between 1678-1693, containing approximately 700 illustrations of medicinal plants and the explanations of their workings.

The book was the product of a remarkable collaboration between the former governor of Malabar, Hendrik van Rheede, and a large number of Ayurvedic doctors, botanists, translators and artisans from India and the Netherlands. This unique testimony of India’s immaterial cultural heritage remains significant today as an authentic and important source of traditional Indian knowledge of indigenous plants and their medicinal workings. 325 years after its first edition, *Hortus Malabaricus* has become topical once again, on account of its recent translation into English and Malayalam, by Prof. K.S. Manilal.

The former director of the Dutch National Herbarium, Prof. Pieter Baas, started the afternoon with an inspiring bio-historical lecture about the context and history of *Hortus Malabaricus*. Renée Ridgway, a visual artist based in Amsterdam, took over to speak about her interest in the subject on the basis of two exhibitions in the Netherlands and India, and also introduced a new online community platform (hortusmalabaricus.net). Lastly, Dr. Maarten Bode, medical anthropologist at the University of Amsterdam and the Institute for Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine in Bangalore, India, spoke about the practice, commercialisation, professionalisation and scientific approach of traditional Indian medicine, such as Ayurveda.

The afternoon was held at the Hortus botanicus Leiden. The Hortus works closely with the National Herbarium of the Netherlands (NHN), which houses original Latin and Dutch editions of, respectively, *Hortus Malabaricus* and *De Malabaarse Kruidhof*. The NHN recently merged with the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden (www.naturalis.nl/en), with 5.5 million dried plant specimens, Naturalis BC houses one of the largest herbarium collections in the world.
A bio-historical lecture

Professor Pieter Baas

GIVING THANKS TO HANS HENGER for his excellent thesis as the source of information on the hero of the story, Hendrik Adriaan van Rheede, Pieter Baas shares with us the exciting history of Hortus Malabaricus.

During the 16th century, the quality of the serious study of plants in Europe was given a huge impetus by Luca Ghini’s invention of the ‘herbarium method’: the pressing of plants between two sheets of paper so that they could be preserved in dry form. This signified a huge breakthrough, as it enabled easy comparison of plants found in different locations. It also led to the creation of ‘herbaria’ – collections, in book form, of dried plants and drawings – some of the earliest of which found their way into the collections of the National Herbarium of the Netherlands.

The VOC and botanical inventory

In 1602, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was established, and was the world’s first joint-stock limited liability company and commercial multinational. Carolus Clusius, renowned botanist and professor of the Leiden Hortus botanicus, immediately recognised this as an important opportunity to expand the plant collection of the Hortus and of the existing knowledge of the plant world. Through his influential contacts, he was able to persuade the central administration of the VOC, the Lords XVII, to send surgeons and pharmacists on its ships to Southeast Asia, to collect “laid between pieces of paper in vellum, collected leaves”. With an enormous shopping list of plants he wanted to be collected, along with records of their usages by the local population, Clusius fancifully dictated the botanical research agenda of the VOC.

The VOC also had a direct interest, namely the health of its employees in the East. The medicines that were sent from Amsterdam, mostly consisting of exotic and expensive products from Arabia, were highly susceptible to mould, and moreover, ineffective against the tropical diseases encountered in Asia. In 1671, VOC chief physician Cleyer, having learned from his colleague Padbrugge about the successful treatment of tropics with medicinal plants in Ceylon, urged the VOC to give more attention to indigenous plants for the treatment of its own sick employees. In 1672, the German VOC physician Paul Hermann put together an enormous herbarium of plants from Ceylon. Hermann would later also advise Van Rheede on the compilation of Hortus Malabaricus.

Hendrik Adriaan van Rheede

In 1656, at age twenty, Hendrik Adriaan Van Rheede joined the VOC and assisted Admiral Rijklof van Goens in his campaign against the Portuguese, mostly in Ceylon. In 1670, Van Rheede was appointed Governor of Malabar on India’s west coast. Here, he became fascinated by the enormous plant biodiversity, by what people knew about the plants and how they used them. Against the wishes of his patrons in Ceylon, Van Rheede set up a laboratory in Cochin for the extraction of plants and the running of tests. Then he met the ‘Discaled Carmelites’, Mattheus of St. Joseph, who had already produced a large collection of drawings and watercolours of medicinal plants. Together they agreed to compile an inventory of the most important plants of Malabar.

When, in 1677, the High Council of the VOC declared Malabar independent from Ceylon, Rijklof van Goens became a jealous rival. Faced with constant opposition, Van Rheede finally resigned and returned to Amsterdam where he continued to work on the Hortus Malabaricus. The first volume was printed in 1678, in Amsterdam, and Van Goens was furious; surely the VOC realised that, as demonstrated by Hermann, the best medicines came from Ceylon! The Lords XVII, however, were extremely pleased, and with their support and the help from botanists from Amsterdam and Utrecht, the final volume was completed in 1693.

Without doubt, Van Rheede was the driving force behind Hortus Malabaricus, but the creation of the book was the result of true teamwork. He was assisted by an advisory board of Brahmins, his own staff and soldiers, a board of local physicians, his assistant Isthy Achuden (who came from a family of Ayurvedic doctors), local coconut tree climbers, the already mentioned Carmelites, two translators, and in Holland by professional botanists from Amsterdam and Utrecht, and various artists and Latin translators. The result was a 12-volume treatise with detailed copper plate engravings and descriptions of 690 plant species, named in four languages (Latin, Malayalam, Arabic and Kanikar). It was recently established that 689 of these 690 species are still found in the contemporary flora of Malabar, and that the few omissions not listed in the book (one turned out to be a fantasy plant, probably based on a drawing of mixed flowers, fruits and leaves).

The Wanted Land: Investigating motive and meaning

I decided to explore Hendrik van Rheede’s motivation that drove him to produce such a book. Together with documentary filmmaker Rick van Amerongen I interviewed experts and local people about their opinions, anecdotes and documents. The more I filmed the more conflicting stories surfaced about the content of the book. Whose knowledge was it? Were the medicinal workings still valid in 2012? Were the botanical drawings accurate? What would be the contemporary use, or value, of such a 17th century book of spices?

The outcome of these questions were the exhibitions “The Wanted Land” and “Revisiting the Hortus Malabaricus” at the Zee in the Netherlands (22 October 2011-14 February 2012) and my solo exhibition “The Wanted Land” (15-22 February 2012) at David Hall, in Fort Cochin, India – the exact location where historians believe Hortus Malabaricus was originally produced. The exhibition consisted of 3 videos, each addressing different aspects of Hortus Malabaricus.

The video The Wanted Land examines the VOC’s taking, undertakings and un-doings that still form a part of Fort Cochin’s contemporary landscape. It gathers family genealogies, storytelling, and exchange of information as a re-viewing of history that favors oral traditions, participation and voice popular perspectives over the official written narrative of historians, social scientists, anthropologists and sociologists. The multi-channel video installation Commodore Odoede o.d. Hendrik van Riede tot Drakenstein raises questions about the legacy of Hortus Malabaricus in 2012: what is the contemporary value of the knowledge contained in this book, how and why was it produced, and what were the incentives for this nobleman?

Translation into English and Malayalam

325 years later, and the work has finally become available in English and Malayalam, the language spoken by over 30 million people in the state of Kerala, thanks to 30 years of arduous work by Prof. K.S. Manilal from Calicut University. Manilal saw the huge importance of Hortus Malabaricus as an authentic source of traditional Indian knowledge, of which all other sources had been lost or destroyed. As a well-deserved tribute to his scholarship, on 1 May 2012, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands presented Manilal with the highest Dutch civilian award, ‘Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau’.

Notes

The third video A study into (un)becoming Dutch part I exposes various aspects of Dutch bureaucracy faced by my Ayurvedic doctor and his decision to return to the country of origin. Part II addresses the treatment of my migration trauma, the cure being obtained through Ayurveda massage, which uses many of the herbs and plants from Hortus Malabaricus. Also on display were approximately 150 indigenous plants contributed by the local community, which are also found within Hortus Malabaricus. A copy of the original Latin edition and the recent (2008) Malayalam version were available for visitors to peruse the beautiful engravings and to view the first printing of the Malayalam language.

Flower Power

Renée Ridgway

IN MY WORK AS A VISUAL ARTIST I use the VOC and WIC (Dutch East India Companies) as a conceptual paradigm in which to map and address specific features of colonial encounters still visible today.

I arrived in Fort Cochin on the Malabar coast, in 2007, to investigate the remnants of Dutch colonial history, but also for my own wellbeing: to obtain a cure and to investigate more about herbal plants. The curative properties of these plants were first introduced to me in Amsterdam by my Ayurvedic doctor from Kerala, Thomas Punnen. While residing at Kashi Art Colony in Mattancherry I met with owner, Anoop Scaria, and it was he who first told me about Hortus Malabaricus.

Hortus Malabaricus

This extraordinary book, Hortus Malabaricus, is the earliest comprehensive work on the flora of Malabar, illustrating around 740 indigenous plants that explain their medicinal properties, with captions in 4 languages (Latin, Malayalam, Arabic, Kanikar). The former governor of Dutch Malabar, Hendrik van Rheede, collaborated with local physicians, botanists, translators, illustrators, engravers and clergymen to produce the publication. Yet, unlike many 17th century documentary local contributors of this knowledge – the vaidyas Itthy Achuden, RangaBhat, AppuBhat, Vinayaka Pandit – do not remain unnamed, but instead have contributed sworn and signed statements of their collaboration.

Upon returning to the Netherlands I went to visit the Herbarium in Leiden, which housed an original Latin version of Hortus Malabaricus. I became enchanted by its spectacular, detailed renderings of Malabar plants made from copper engravings based on original water-colors. Flowers, fruits, petals, seeds and even roots were magnificently detailed. Besides that, what makes this 17th century compendium so special is that it is perhaps one of the first documents archiving East-West collaboration, along with its manifold functions: an illustrated botanical garden, taxonomy of named plants, a medicinal bible, a translator’s dictionary, or some, such as myself, an object d’art.

Above website homepage.

Above: website inset: Manilal’s Stein (1636-1691).

HortusMalabaricus.net All research and interviews not only culminated in the two exhibitions, but also led to the creation of the online community platform ‘hortusmalabaricus.net’. This interactive website explores the creation of Hortus Malabaricus and extends its historical (re)archival, artistic, medicinal, botanical, linguistic and political importance. It attempts to collate all information about the project participants, and anyone else who would like to share their knowledge, are invited to upload personal texts, archives, images, videos and remarks to the site and comment on the texts and contributions of others.

Notes
Ayurveda in contemporary India

Dr. Maarten Bode

IN THE THIRD LECTURE OF THE DAY, Maarten Bode discussed ayurveda’s contemporary face. He began with the remark that middleclass urban Indians use ayurveda as a back-up when modern (bio)medicine fails to provide a solution to their ailments. For 30-40% of Indians, who live on one Euro per day, however, ayurveda is often the first option when one falls ill. Research suggests that the cultivation and use of their ailments. For 30-40% of Indians, who live on one Euro per day, however, ayurveda is often the first option when one falls ill. Research suggests that the cultivation and use of stress, ‘cooking’ food and expelling ‘poison’ (ama). Modern pharmacology does provide some evidence, though meagre, that supports the medical worth of chyawanprash’s ingredients. Chyawanprash and amlaki have both been in use in India for centuries and their biological and physiological effects have been empirically tested by many patients.

Practitioners

There are practitioners belonging to an ayurvedic oral tradition and those who are very scholarly and base their treatments upon a corpus of Sanskrit medical texts. There are those who practise at the margins of legitimacy and those who hold a college or university degree. At the moment India has approximately 600,000 college and university educated ayurvedic practitioners. Most of them, roughly 70%, use their ayurvedic degree as a backdoor into biomedical practice. A second large group of ayurvedic graduates are in government service – approximately 120,000 practitioners. The third category of ayurvedic practitioners consists of about 60,000 graduates, even though they sell ayurvedic medicines to their patients, they do not accompany these with strict regimens regulating food and lifestyle. Their patients usually expect their ayurvedic medicines to do the same job as biomedical pharmaceuticals, but without the harmful side-effects ascribed to the latter. Only a small majority of ayurvedic degree holders – probably no more than 10,000 – practice in an authentic way. These authentic ayurvedic practitioners have been trained in colleges and universities, but have importantly also taken an apprenticeship with a practitioner (often) belonging to a prestigious family line of traditional healers.

In addition to those holding a degree, there are approximately one million part-time ayurvedic practitioners, including half a million Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), who, besides delivering babies, mainly treat the health problems of women and children. There are hundred thousands of herbal healers who treat a range of common ailments and chronic diseases. They are also many specialists who treat ailments of the eyes, ears, skin, as well as muscular and nervous disorders. Others attend to emergencies such as snakebites and other cases of poisoning. Some manage broken bones and deformities of the legs, ankles and feet. And there are those knowledgeable housewives, who practise folk medicine for the benefit of family members and neighbours. They are often the first line of defence in the treatment of common and chronic ailments.

Pharmaceuticalisation and scientisation

Nowadays there is a focus on Evidence Based Medicine (EBM). Bode feels that, in general, we must conclude that there is not much modern pharmacological proof for the efficacy of ayurvedic medicines and treatments. On the other hand there is also no research that shows that ayurvedic treatments do not work and most western biomedical medicines and treatments are still not evidence-based either. There are three reasons for this lack of scientific proof: heavy underinvestment in research on efficacy, the lack of organised scepticism in the form of an ayurvedic research community, and the absence of treatment and research protocols that do justice to ayurvedic logic. Modern research models do not accommodate ayurveda’s therapeutic aims, such as building strong bodily tissues, cleaning channels, taking away blockages, ‘cooking’ food and expelling ‘poison’ (ama). Modern pharmacology does provide some evidence, though meagre, that supports the medical worth of chyawanprash’s ingredients. Chyawanprash and amlaki have both been in use in India for centuries and their biological and physiological effects have been empirically tested by many patients.

Health products

To show the contemporary relevance of the Hortus Malabaricus, Bode focused on amlaki or amla (Emblica officinalis, Phyllanthus emblica). In part of the Hortus Malabaricus this Indian gooseberry is portrayed and described on pp. 69-70. The berry is also the main ingredient of chyawanprash, India’s best-selling ayurvedic health product. In 2002 the sales were estimated at $70 million, almost one tenth of the total sales of ayurvedic health and beauty products at that time. Dabur India Ltd. is its largest producer and holds 60% of the market share of chyawanprash. Dabur has popularised the formula’s indications of use and converted the tonic into an ‘immunity booster’ for fighting ‘the stress and strain of modern city life’. Health products like chyawanprash, ingredient of amlaki, of the market share of chyawanprash, ingredient of amlaki, ‘gooseberry is portrayed in part I of the Hortus Malabaricus: the biological and physiological effects have been empirically tested by many patients.

Notes

1 The full article on which this lecture was based, can be downloaded from the IAS website: www.ias.nic.in/event/hortus-malabaricus-annee-2012
Amsterdam sojourns

Ooi Keat Gin is an award-winning author whose scholarly works have been published by internationally renowned publishers. He has held fellowships at institutions in the UK, Europe, and Australia. Elected as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (London), Dr Ooi’s fields of interest are the socio-cultural and socio-economic history of South-East Asia with particular preoccupation on Borneo. He has had several reference works commissioned by British and American publishers, including bibliographies and historical dictionaries. Presently he is professor of modern history and coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Research Unit (APRU) (www.hum.usm.my/APRU) in the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and founder-editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies (IJAPS) (www.usm.my/ijaps). He is series editor of the APRU-USM Asia Pacific Studies Publication Series (AAPPSS).

Meeting Amsterdam

Amsterdam conjures pleasant images for me. It has been more than a decade since I was first beheld with the picturesque canal scenery and cyclists whizzing through the cobbled, narrow streets of this enchanting city. The ‘red-light’ district was undoubtedly an attraction equal to the art museums showcasing the Dutch Grand Masters and the impressionable Van Gogh that bestowed to the world indeed an indelible ‘Impression’. Regardless of all the sirloins, museums, district and attractions, the real aim of my initial visit and subsequent sojourns was of an intellectual nature, relating to research, study, and writing. This intellectual preoccupation has led me to return to Amsterdam on almost all Julianian basis and to maintain an off-and-on relationship with this Dutch city.

My first short-stay in Amsterdam, more of a village than a city, was in 2000 when I was on an exploratory visit. My intention was then to survey the ground – the archives and libraries – for the possibility of embarking on work relating to the Pacific War (1941-45), on what was then termed Dutch Borneo. Having spent close to half a decade examining the war in Sarawak (now part of Malaysia) and North Borneo (present-day Sabah), it was only logical and inevitable that I moved onto the vast southern and eastern portions of the island, comprising Indonesia Kalimantan. I visited both the library of Universiteit van Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam) and the archives of the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD, Netherlands Institute for War Documentation). My first impressions were comical and daunting. I was initially not able to even find the bookshelves at the former, while overwhelmed by the collections at the latter.

My next visit was late November 2001. It was auspicious, as well as a little daunting because I lost my passport. It was a great honour to be an invited speaker at the conference ‘The Asia-Pacific War: Experiences and Reflections’, jointly organized by three Dutch institutions, viz. NIOD, International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), and The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). The venue was split between Amsterdam and Leiden. Dr Elly Trouwes Boussen of NIOD, who had invited me, requested that I deliver a paper for the conference, one in Amsterdam, and another in Leiden. It was during this trip that I met up with Dr Remco Raben who was instrumental in my return to the Netherlands.

Meeting IIAS

Back east again, over dinner at a hilltop restaurant in tropical Singapore, a gentleman guest to my right inquired about my current project. I was then in the preliminary stages of editing a three-volume reference work on Southeast Asian history. He immediately offered to launch this work upon my return to Amsterdam. He immediately introduced me to the archives housed at IIAV. Three years later in August 2010 I was again in Amsterdam as an invited participant of the 21st International Congress of Historical Sciences (ICHS). On both occasions I presented work related to female domestic labour.

In my more than a decade-long connecting and re-connecting with Amsterdam, the comings and goings of researchers at NIOD was as baffling as the continuous shifting of premises of the IIAS Amsterdam Branch Office. This mobility and change fortunately did not affect Amsterdam itself as well remained as they had been since my first arrival and Van Gogh’s masterpieces could still be admired. The never-ending renovations and/or numerous facelifts to Central Station were an enduring feature throughout my intermittent visits.

My Amsterdam sojourns in no small measure contributed to two of my book-length works, namely the Japanese Occupation of Borneo, 1941-1945 (London: Routledge, 2011), and Post-war Borneo, 1945-1965: Nationalism, State and Studying the Dutch (London: Routledge, forthcoming). And through the years there were numerous other journal publications here and there, in between Schiphol and Penang.

On reflecting, being an IIAS affiliate fellow, based in its branch office in Amsterdam, I could access immense opportunities to tap the resources beneficial for my research. This affiliation certainly ‘opened’ doors with institutions throughout the Netherlands. This affiliated fellowship allowed me to ‘refresh’ myself intellectually each year between 2002 and 2004, away from my home campus routine back in Penang. I am indeed grateful for this experience. And as an IIAS alumnus the Newsletter certainly keeps me ‘connected’, kudos to those whose efforts are greatly appreciated.

I am scheduled to return to the Netherlands for a sojourn in Leiden, during the second half of 2013. I will be based at the Department of History, Leiden University, but I shall certainly visit IIAV to hopefully reconnect with its many existing and thought provoking talks and seminars. If opportunity arises, I might deliver a paper or two. Amsterdam certainly will be on my itinerary; it is where Swee Lm, my wife and I spent wonderful and memorable times together. In the last week of February my grandson the succulent duck bought from Amsterdam’s Chinatown with which we home-cooked a most agreeable curry for that, and the fresh salmon at the Albert Cuyp Market, another visit is more than worth it. Dank u wel.

Ooi Keat Gin, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
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

Asian Heritages

Global Asia

The Postcolonial Global City

This research examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made the successful segue from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary approach bringing together architects and urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies. A key factor in the research is architectural typology. Architecture is examined to see how it can identify identity and ethos and how in the postcolonial era these building typologies have been superseded by the office building, the skyscraper and the shopping centre, all of which are rapidly altering the older (gregory@cortlever.com)

Energy Programme Asia – EPA

The EPA-research programme is designed to handle the effects of global geopolitics of energy supply security on the European Union and main Asian energy consuming countries, and their national strategies for securing supply. Part of EPA was the joint research programme ‘Re-evaluating Geopolitical Challenges to Energy Security of China and the European Union (2007-2011)’ between the International Institute for Asian Studies and the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, in collaboration with three other CASS research centres and four Dutch universities. The objectives were to analyse the (geo)political and (geo)domestic aspects of energy security challenges for the European Union (EU) and China, and their impact on energy security policy. The geopolitical aspects involved the effects of competition for access to oil and gas resources, and the security strategy supported by the main global consumer countries in the EU and China. The domestic aspects involved energy policy and energy supply, energy efficiency policies, and the deployment of renewable energy resources. Supported by CASS and the Asian Borderlands Research Programme, CASS, and IIAS.

The results of the joint research project have been published in two book volumes: The Globalisation of Energy: China and the European Union and Securing Oil and Alternative Energy: The geopolitics of energy paths of China and the European Union.

Preparations are being made for a second round of research under the title ‘China’s growing role in energy producing countries: company strategies, project embedment and relations with institutions and stakeholders’.

Coordinator:

Mohdi Parvizi Aminieh

(m.p.aminieh@vrije.nl)

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

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

Current projects specifically on the 6 volumes of these two series which are relevant to the study of the Japanese attack on and the status of the Asian heritages of the former Dutch East-Indies in the period of 1941 until 1945.

Coordinator:

Jan Bongenaar

(bas@iias.nl)

Ageing in Asia and Europe

During the 21st century it is projected that there will be more than one billion people aged 60 and over, with this figure climbing to nearly two billion by 2050; three-quarters of whom will live in the developing world. Agining in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steadily rising life expectancy. In Western Europe, ageing populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and healthcare, including restrictions on state transfers, unacknowledging substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing challenges of social change and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much slower time-span. Research network involved: Résié de Recherche Internationale sur l’Age, la Citoyenneté et l’Intégration Socio-Juridique (RésiéCtis) Sponsoring by: IAS.

Coordinator:

Carla Rissewee

(c.rissewee@iias.nl)

Senshi Socho

Project, funded and coordinated by the Philipps-Correns-Fonds, aims to translate a maximum of 6 official Japanese publications of the series known as “Senshi Socho” into the English language. From 1966 until 1980, the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo published a series of 182 numbered volumes on the war in Asia and in the Pacific. Around 1985 a few additional uncommon volumes were published. This project focuses specifically on the 6 volumes of these two series which are relevant to the study of the Japanese attack on and the status of the Asian heritages of the former Dutch East-Indies in the period of 1941 until 1945.

Coordinator:

Jan Bongenaar

(bas@iias.nl)

Plants, People and Work

This research programme consists of various projects that study the social history of cash crops in Asia (18th to 20th centuries). Over the past 500 years Europeans have turned into avid consumers of colonial products. Production systems in the Americas, Africa and Asia adapted to serve the new markets that opened up in the wake of the ‘European encounter’. The effects of these transformations for the long-term development of these societies are fiercely contested.

This research programme contributes to the discussion on the histories of globalisation by comparing three important systems of agrarian production over the last 200 years. The individual projects focus on tobacco, sugar, and indigo in India and Indonesia. Institutes involved: University of Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam) and IAS.

Coordinators:

Wilfried Gotsch (w.gotsch@xs4all.nl)

and Marcel van der Linden

(mvl@iias.nl)

Jatropha Research and Knowledge Network (JARAK)

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

Coordinator:

Dr. Jacques Vélo

(j.a.c.vel@law.leidenuniv.nl)
IIAS Fellows

IIAS 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.

Marina Marouda

Imperial pasts in post-socialist presents: ritual engagements with royal dead in contemporary Viet Nam

MY PROJECT aims to contribute to ongoing research on the factors that have played a role in the transformation of the imperial past to the imperial present. My focus is on the ways in which royal deities have been adapted, communicated with, and re-appropriated by the Vietnamese state and society, thereby creating the conditions for new regimes of power in post-socialist Vietnam.

I am particularly interested in the role of the Vietnamese state in the articulation of kinship and political power in post-socialist times. In particular, I am interested in the role of the state in the commodification of memory.

I received a travel grant from the IIAS to conduct fieldwork in Vietnam and to collaborate with colleagues at Leiden University. The research project is a crucial part of my ongoing research on the commodification of memory in post-socialist Vietnam. The research project is also part of a broader project on the commodification of memory in Asia.

Karuna Sharma

Family and support structures of Indo-Surinamese community in the Netherlands

MY PROJECT aims to contribute to ongoing research on the factors that have played a role in the transformation of the imperial past to the imperial present. My focus is on the ways in which royal deities have been adapted, communicated with, and re-appropriated by the Vietnamese state and society, thereby creating the conditions for new regimes of power in post-socialist Vietnam.

I am particularly interested in the role of the Vietnamese state in the articulation of kinship and political power in post-socialist times. In particular, I am interested in the role of the state in the commodification of memory.

I received a travel grant from the IIAS to conduct fieldwork in Vietnam and to collaborate with colleagues at Leiden University. The research project is a crucial part of my ongoing research on the commodification of memory in post-socialist Vietnam. The research project is also part of a broader project on the commodification of memory in Asia.

Melissa Crouch

“Faith in the law?”

WE ARE PARTICULARLY interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute’s three thematic clusters: ‘Asian Cities’, ‘Asian Heritages’, and ‘Global Asia’. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

Asian Cities: The Asian Cities cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows of ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism, métissage, and connectivity, framing the existence of vibrant “civil societies” and political urban microcultures. It is interested in such issues as urban governance in the light of the diversity of urban cultures.

Global Asia: The Global Asia cluster addresses Asia’s role in the various globalization processes. It examines examples of and issues related to multiple, transnational intra-Asian interactions as well as Asia’s projection in the world.

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For information on the research clusters and application form please see: www.iias.nl

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A palace of eternity: a Chu King’s tomb in Beidongshan

Considered to be the ‘classic era’ in Chinese history, the Han Dynasty was the first longstanding imperial power in China, spanning four centuries (206 BC - AD 220). My own research on Han Dynasty material cultures has taken me to the major royal tombs in eastern China. These tombs were dug horizontally into mountains and divided into several different functional chambers. Despite their fortifications, the majority of Han tombs had been looted in antiquity and so they were excavated in the 1980s and 1990s in an effort to protect the remaining objects.

James Lin