Can film directors be considered to be historians of some sort? Do documentaries capture the sign of the times? Do they act as agents of change? How do new generations of filmmakers deal with old histories? Scholars are familiar with close reading of texts, but do they similarly ‘close read’ images?

Through a dialogue on documentary film, Fridus Steijlen & Bart Barendregt spark the debate in this issue’s pullout section of the Focus.
During the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) last year, a seminar was held in the context of the theme program ‘Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia’, in which some of the filmmakers involved shared thoughts about each other’s methodologies and ongoing concerns with scholars studying Southeast Asian contemporary culture. Guest editors Fridus Steijlen and Bart Barendregt present a number of articles in this issue’s Focus section as a response and extension to the discussion.

22
Raul Nino Zambrano, the curator of the IDFA ‘Emerging Voices’ program reflects on his tour through Southeast Asia and his search for films to be included in the festival.

23
Gea Wijers’ contribution illustrates how a young generation of Cambodian filmmakers comes with its own preferences in writing history, focusing on the pre- and post-conflict periods, rather than the pain and trauma that accompanies the Khmer Rouge conflict for so many.

24-25
The best way for us to represent the often complex entities we are studying is to listen to the manifold voices trying to speak to us, which is what Farish Noor is trying to do in a new documentary series on Indonesian culture and politics he is currently directing.

26
Documentary filmmakers’ depiction of national history seems much dependent on personal experiences; see, for example, the divergent ways Rithy Panh and Joshua Oppenheimer chose to depict mass violence and genocide, both described in John Kleinen’s essay.

27
The essay by Nuril Huda shows how in Indonesia a novel genre of pesantren film is emerging from Islamic boarding schools, now that new regulations have enabled the insertion of more ‘secular’ subjects into the schools’ curriculum.

28-29
Keng Wu Koh acknowledges the relevance of film in addressing and redressing historical themes. However, as with teaching all history, an appropriate context is a top requirement if one is to understand such remakings of the past.

30
Erik de Maaker shows how changing conditions such as the rise of commercial TV and the resultant breakdowns of government control has provided Indian filmmakers with opportunities to gain control of their own agenda.
Studying Asian heritages

After the celebrations of IAS’s twenty year anniversary, I can now return to a more regular recounting of what the institute is up to and how the different programmes under the three thematic clusters are progressing (Asian Heritages, Asian Cities and Global Asia).

Philippe Peycam

I WILL DISCUSS HERE some developments within the Asian Heritages cluster, as the last six months have seen a number of projects taking a more solid if not institutionalised form, starting with the Asian Heritages cluster, as the last six months have seen a number of projects taking a more solid if not institutionalised form, starting with the Asian Heritages cluster. I will discuss here some developments within the Asian Heritages cluster.

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Before I do that, I would like say something about the first Africa-based conference on Asian studies that IAS, through the ICA Secretariat, was helping to organise in collaboration with the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASIA) next year. This international conference entitled ‘Asian Studies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interactions’, will be held in Accra, Ghana, on 15-17 January 2015. It will be an event of historical magnitude for what it means in terms of long term development of a corridor of intellectual exchanges between the two continents. I will like to thank the numerous people and institutions in Africa, Asia, the United States and Europe who have expressed interest in this pioneering event, and those who are supporting it. We have been amazed by the number of paper and panel abstracts already submitted and by some fascinating ideas that have emerged for proposed roundtables.

This enthusiasm is shared by people from US Liberal Arts colleges to prestigious academic centres in Senegal, India and Greece, and to the East Asian countries. It shows that a real ‘axis of knowledge’ between Asia and Africa has now become a necessity. In anticipation of the Accra conference, and on behalf of the organising committee, I express my gratitude and satisfaction (for more information about the conference: www.africaasias.org).

I am returning to the announcement I had made last issue to the effect that a discourse correspondence to the rise of the modern nation-state and its institutionalisation of knowledge – ‘heritage’ – and its contemporary uses. It is a challenge that the universities mentioned above have been willing to take on, with the additional objective of engaging their societies and peoples in the whole debate over heritage and identity, at home and in relation to ‘others’.

In parallel to these two initiatives in the field of heritage, IAS continues to help local partners in organising conferences on heritage politics in Southeast and East Asia, and with the participation of Achar Chayan, Aarti Kawlra, Pamela Smith and Françoise Vergès. The Summer School, to be held in Chiang Mai next August, this time on ‘Craft and Power’, in collaboration with Chiang Mai University, and in their interactions with each other. The first conference took place in Singapore in January 2014, focusing on the role of the state. It was a great success, especially for the network-building between the host partners, IAS, and National University of Singapore, to juxtapose situations occurring in various countries with that prevailing in Singapore, particularly in the aftermath of the planned destruction by the Government of the Bukit Brown Cemetery. The second event is to be held in Taiwan in December 2014. It will focus on the role of citizens, local communities and civil society organisations in heritage-making. It promises to be another landmark event, largely because of the vibrancy of Taiwan’s civil society.

The third meeting will most likely take place in the Netherlands towards the end of 2014. It will focus on the role of international organisations and global heritage activism. Each of the events will result in a collective edited reference volume.

The second major breakthrough in the field of heritage studies is the establishment of a trans-regional graduate programme on Critical Heritage Studies in Asia and Europe. IAS is here acting as a ‘middlesman’ between universities such as Leiden, National Taiwan University, Gaja Madah and Yonsei. Under the coordination (and teaching) of Dr Adele Esposito, the MA programme track started officially in September 2013 in Leiden. Its Taiwanese counterpart will begin in Taipei next September, under the coordination (and teaching) of Professor Hoang Liling. We expect to see our Korean and Indonesian colleagues to begin the following academic year. This undertaking has profound implications in the way faculty and students will frame their teaching and studies, but also, now that the participation of Professor Michael Herzfeld from Harvard University as IAS Visiting Professor has been confirmed, a continuing dialogic platform will be established, involving language-based and/or historically knowledgeable scholars. This model will contribute, in a truly contextualised fashion, to the study of the production of cultural knowledge – ‘heritage’ – and its contemporary uses. It is a challenge that the universities mentioned above have been willing to take on, with the additional objective of engaging their societies and peoples in the whole debate over heritage and identity, at home and in relation to ‘others’.

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Relevant to all our activities, including the IAS Summer/Winter Schools, is the continued collaboration with Asian universities. This model will contribute, in a truly contextualised fashion, to the study of the production of cultural knowledge – ‘heritage’ – and its contemporary uses. It is a challenge that the universities mentioned above have been willing to take on, with the additional objective of engaging their societies and peoples in the whole debate over heritage and identity, at home and in relation to ‘others’.

We ask you to send in a maximum of 5 photographs per person, for any combination of the EC categories above (find a description of each category on the contest site).

Please do read the rules and regulations before submitting. Good luck to everyone!!!
The defeat of the royal family in Klungkung by Dutch soldiers on 28 April 1908 marks the point at which the entire island of Bali was incorporated into the colonial administration of the Netherlands East Indies. Both the event and the painting discussed here are known as the *Puputan*, meaning the ‘finishing’ or ‘the end’ in Balinese, referring to the slaughter or ritual surrender of the Klungkung royal family. This painting sits within a corpus of oral traditions about the defeat of Klungkung yet it shifts conventional perspectives by describing local developments prior to the clash between the Dutch and members of the royal household at the site of the palace.1

### Entertaining the gods

The painting comes from Kamasan, a village of four-thousand people located between the east coast and the mountain ranges of Gunung Agung in the district of Klungkung in Bali. Formerly Klungkung was the seat of royal power, home to the court of the Dewa Agung, the preeminent ruler of Bali. Kamasan village is made up of wards belonging to the court of the Dewa Agung, the preeminent ruler of Bali. Kamasan village is made up of wards the court of the Dewa Agung, the preeminent ruler of Bali. The painting is divided into ten scenes over four horizontal rows. From the perspective of the viewer, the story moves chronologically from left to right beginning in the bottom left-hand corner and finishing in the top right-hand corner. The text in the first scene relates the movements of the Dutch troops. In the second scene there is a discussion between Ida Bagus Jumpung and his wife. The tree between them is a standard convention for shared roots with the shadow-puppet (wayang) theatre. While artists interpret the stylistic and narrative boundaries of this tradition in different ways, they maintain that they belong to an unchanging tradition of great antiquity.

### Sacred heirlooms

The text in the first scene relates the movements of the Dutch troops. As they seize the heirloom his corpse mysteriously disappears, so Ida Bagus Jumpung is not depicted in this scene. There are only two Dutch officers; they aim their muskets at the closed doors of the compound gateway (paduraksa). There are only two Dutch officers; they aim their muskets at the closed doors of the compound gateway (paduraksa), guarded by a pair of dogs. The latter two scenes emphasise the connections between the royal regalia and the ruling dynasty; the loss of sacred heirlooms also foretold the defeat of earlier Balinese dynasties. Here the capture of the kris is a sign that defeat was imminent. The fourth scene begins on the next row as the Dutch troops arrive at the Gelgel palace. This palace was re-established as a branch line of the Klungkung royal family during the reign of Dewa Agung Madia (1722-1738). There is a lone guard, a resident of Pasingganah, standing on duty outside the palace. He is shot dead. The other guards are eating rice cakes (lipit) in the courtyard, a detail related only in the text. They are all shot down as the troops enter the palace.

### Protecting the Gelgel palace

The plump figure of Kaki Rungking (grandfather of Mangku Mura) appears for the first time in the next scene. He witnessed the slaughter of the guards and covertly assembled his own weapon. It is mounted on a waist-high stand but is otherwise of similar appearance to the muskets held by the Dutch officers. Firing one shot, his bullet kills a lieutenant. His left hand rests on his hip and the thumb and index finger of his raised right hand are held together in the same gesture of defiance adopted by the Balinese figures in other scenes. Despite the show of bravado in his visual depiction, the text relates that Kaki Rungking was terrified to find himself all alone. He ran for cover as the Gelgel palace was destroyed around him. The people of jero Kapal, where the palace is located, also ran away to avoid being shot. This is the only scene in which Kaki Rungking is depicted visually. His position in the centre of the composition highlights his role as protagonist. Iconographically, little distinguishes him from the commoner figures in other scenes. All have thickset bodies, hairy torsos, dark skin, wavy hair and short lincelots with less ornate head-dresses and clothing than the nobles.

Kaki Rungking’s gallantry is reinforced by a detail in the text. It states that the target of his fatal shot was an officer of rank. By appearance alone the lieutenant is no different from his fellow officers, except that a chain binds his dead body. In fact, the only apparent difference between all of the colonial officers is their eyes. Most have the type of rounded (bulat) eyes associated with demons though a few officers have the same wavy (sipit) eyes as the commoners. This might refer to the composition of the colonial forces, which comprised both Dutch and indigenous officers. In relation to the veracity of Kaki Rungking’s role, it is worth noting that the death of a Dutch lieutenant and his officers did occur in the fortnight prior to the massacre during a routine inspection of the opium monopoly at Gelgel. The incident resulted in raised hostilities between Klungkung and the Dutch.
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Treacher

The third row, scene six, begins with the Dutch troops moving towards Tojan. They spent the night in a village called Carikdesa, the present-day site of Galiran market. While the troops were resting a commoner from Lekok appeared with a kris but was killed before he could attack. In scene seven, the text explains that key figures from the Gelgel palace went to Klungkung to discuss the critical situation with the king Dewa Agung Jambe. The lords of Gelgel were obstinately opposed to the Dutch. The father of the Dewa Agung is shown standing on the right with two servants seated in front of him. He advised the Dewa Agung that Klungkung must not surrender and that as nobles they must prepare to die. The Dewa Agung, on the left, is in the company of three women of the royal household whose different ranks are marked by their head-dresses. Tractors to the palace are depicted in the eighth scene, including the figure of a brahmana, a commoner (lawa) and a Muslim. The text explains that a lord (narkawi) was also secretly cooperating with the Dutch because he hoped to take over the role of the Dewa Agung. Mangku Muriati advised that when her father was initially commissioned to produce the painting he was instructed not to write the actual names of these traitors on the painting, even though they were known.

The action continues around the Klungkung palace in the ninth scene on the top row. The confrontation took place in the palace forecourt (bencengah) as the Dutch arrived from the south. Cokorda Bima attacked the Dutch, his loyalty to the Dewa Agung so great that when he lost his right hand he picked it up, tucked the limb into his waist-cloth and continued to fight. Although the visual presence of Kaki Rungking attests to the immediacy and integrity of the story, the story gains further elaboration with each retelling. Like some Balinese literary accounts of the puputan by the ruling families of Badung in 1906, the painting combines historical details, personal memory and conjecture. The most remarkable aspect of the painting is the way Mangku Mura embedded his ancestor in the centre of this historical moment. It is unusual for a commoner to take the leading role in a story commonly associated with the Balinese courts. Though Kaki Rungking is protagonist and story narrator, in the painting he appears alongside various commoners (jaba). Some loyally served and defended their social superiors, while others conspired against the royal family. Not only did Mangku Mura reverse conventional representation by giving the leading role to a commoner, he emphasised the disunity amongst the Balinese themselves in their opposition to colonial rule. Given the role that the puputan plays in Indonesian national histories as a symbol of resistance this was probably the most subaltern position of all, disrupting conventionally conceived histories of the conflict between colonial and indigenous subjects.

Siobhan Campbell, Department of Indonesian Studies, The University of Sydney. Siobhan spent six months as an IAS postdoctoral fellow researching collections of Balinese art in the Netherlands in 2013-14. (siobhan.campbell@sydney.edu.au)

References

1  These are the subject of an extensive study by Wijnen, M.J. 1995. Visible and Invisible Allies: Power, Magic, and Colonial Conquest in Bali. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Wijnen was doing research in Klungkung when Mangku Mura initially produced this narrative; after seeing his painting displayed in the office of the district head of Klungkung she commissioned a version of the painting, which became the cover illustration for her book.


4  The birth father of Dewa Agung Jambe was Dewa Agung Putra III who died in 1903. On this point the text of the painting is not necessarily incorrect as the reference to father might be taken to imply the close relationship between Dewa Agung Jambe and the Gelgel palace.


Above: Mangku Muriati, Puputan Klungkung, 2011, acrylic and natural pigment on cotton cloth.
Learning from Hong Kong: ‘place’ as relation

The Hong Kong-China border is slowly dissolving. In 2010 a part of the frontier area at Lok Ma Chau opened up for new urban developments. By 2047, 50 years after the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, the border will no longer exist. This project proposes an inhabited bridge at Lok Ma Chau, connecting Hong Kong and Shenzhen, that recognises both the global movement within the Pearl River Delta as well as the local sense of ‘place’. In an attempt to learn from Hong Kong I ask: What makes place in Hong Kong valuable? What is the influence of globalisation on the local experience of place other than ‘placelessness’? And how as designers can we work with this?

Placelessness

The Pearl River Delta is characterised by the intense movement between cultural, political and environmental differences. Due to Hong Kong’s history as a British colony and its recent transformation into one of the most important global urban agglomerations connecting Eastern and Western economies, the Pearl River Delta has become a space of transit. At Lok Ma Chau this is clearly visible in the urban fabric. The landscape is dominated by huge infrastructural elements that facilitate the transit between Hong Kong’s wealthy economy, with its beautiful wetlands along the borderland, and China’s cheap labour industry with standardised high rises.

In contemporary urban theory this sense of movement, the result of the parallel existence of differences, is often understood as a problem rather than a quality, resulting in the experience of ‘placelessness’. In this theory, the movement and the clash of differences are reflected in an accumulation and intersection of parallel urban atmospheres that prevent a local sense of place. As a reaction to this general shunning of place the question of a new sense of place arises. This often leads to a nostalgic desire for a traditional sense of place that is still visible in some historical villages, suggesting that the emergence of the modern metropolis has been a mistake.

But, in contradiction to contemporary urban theory, ‘place’ in Hong Kong is valuable. Not only in an abstract sense, reflected in the high land-prices, but also in an emotional sense as acknowledged by its visitors and inhabitants. In Hong Kong there is, despite the movement and differences, a possibility to experience what I call a sense of place within movement.

Place as relation

To understand the valuable sense of place within movement in Hong Kong, place has to be valued as a dynamic intangible singularity rather than as tangible object or reified identity. In other words place should be understood as relation.

A juxtaposition of Western and Eastern conceptions of space helped formulate this conclusion. Whereas Western place-conceptions are formed on object-based networks, the Eastern conception of place is based on relationality through movement manifested in the use of voids. One of the most helpful concepts to understand this quality of place, as a dynamic intangible relationship, is the Chinese bagua. The bagua are eight ‘trigrams’/symbols comprising three parallel lines, either ‘broken’ or ‘unbroken’, representing yin or yang respectively – signifying the relationships between the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water), which are often portrayed around a centrally placed yin-yang symbol, believed to have a void in its middle. This void is not empty, but filled with energy; relational movement between the elements. The bagua can be used as a ‘map’ to align all the elements in, for example, a house. The traditional Chinese courtyard is also an exemplary manifestation of this philosophy.

The seemingly problematic context of movement and differences has potential. Hong Kong cannot be described by differences such as east or west, tradition or modernity, global or local, but the valuable Hong Kong place experience is one in which the differences between its parts cause its rich and sensitive relationship and therefore a new sense of place; a sense of place within movement.

Personages

If place is understood as relation, as designers we not only have to engage with the physical qualities of place, but we also have to engage with the intangible qualities of place. We have to design for resonance. Resonance can be understood as emotional ‘vibration’ that is achieved by stimulation of latent experiences. Where the embodied experience of touching ice might cause a temporary cold feeling in your fingertips, the emotional response, the resonance, may be formed by means of transversal association; for example, previous personal or culturally based experiences, or even future dreams. Just like music instruments that, without being touched, vibrate in sympathy with another instrument being played at that moment, we too interact with our environment in this way.

To include latent experiences into the design process, I developed five personages, based on associative questions taken with the potential future users. In short: 1) a school child living in Shenzhen and who crosses the border twice every day to go to school, 2) a businessman living in Hong Kong and who crosses the border at least twice a week to do business in the Pearl River Delta; 3) a migrant who crosses the border only during Chinese holidays to visit his family still in China; 4) a tourist who crosses the border for leisure purposes to see the Hong Kong cultural highlights; 5) a local living in the frontier area, who currently never crosses the border, but who might find a job in the developing borderland eco-tourism in the future. These personages inspired a design of three atmospheres (see below) that defined by kinaesthetic differences, engage with a relational void, global and local program and the surroundings of the borderland.

Atmospheres

An atmosphere is a strong potential of a place that can influence one’s feelings and is achieved by carefully designing for all the senses. Just like specific colours in paintings will stimulate specific emotions, the use of specific architectural elements will stimulate the experience of specific atmospheres.

The first atmosphere is inspired by the fast economic movement between Hong Kong and China. It facilitates the users who wander around the region visiting various kinds of tourist facilities. The energy is associative and educationally oriented. This atmosphere houses tourist information points and a historical museum. The second atmosphere is inspired by the local landscape and is positioned as a place to enjoy nature and relax. It facilitates a natural walking route and the offices related to the border-control function.

Bridge in difference

The final design is for an inhabited bridge based on these three atmospheres that will through and around a local ‘void’ that is literary and symbolically connects Hong Kong and China. This relational void, as inspired by the ancient Chinese bagua, links the atmospheres to each other and to the surrounding landscape.

The quality of the relational void is further developed in the inner and outer façades. The rhythm of the inner void interacts with the rhythm of the outer routes in such a way that the experience of place within movement is further stimulated by the effect of anamorphosis. And the swirl of the outer routes takes the bagua concept literary by turning the experience of its architectural elements upside-down; roof becomes façade becomes floor. In this way, what might be valuable (a specific view or experience) for one person, might be insignificant for others. Thus, by means of different speeds and purposes the bridge will become place and movement simultaneously.

The Lok Ma Chau bridge therefore becomes a place to not only move through, but also to go to, and thus provides a sense of place within movement.

Learning from Hong Kong

Hong Kong inspired me to understand ‘place’ as relation instead of object. This opened my thinking towards a different understanding of architecture. It also encouraged me to enrich my approach to design from a very rational, pre-determined design process to an open-ended one, based on trial and error. This project gave me the chance to work with a concept that is, in my opinion, highly valuable for contemporary society: an understanding of place as relation.

It is my aim to develop this understanding of place and resonance in future research and design, since there is still much more to learn from Hong Kong.

Renske Maria van Dam is currently working as an architect for her own atelier SPICES and as researcher at ALEPH (autonomous Laboratory for exploration of progressive heuristics currently residing at the Royal Academy of Arts, the Hague) where she is preparing a PhD project on ‘the mechanism of non-local resonance in the experience and design of place‘.

(renskemaria@gmail.com)
Mobility has become a buzzword of our times. There is an increased sense that we are no longer constrained to live in one place throughout our lives, or even in one place at a time. Indeed, there is now a growing body of literature that advocates the concept of transnational mobility to make sense of the new fluid living patterns, the affective and instrumental relationships that cross national borders and span localities, and the conceptualizations of transnational “lifespaces” within the broader perspective of pluri-local attachments in late modern society.

TRANNSITIONAL PROFESSIONALS are part of this broader trend of mobile people moving either part-time or full-time, temporarily or permanently. These “transnational elites” – a term used to refer to the highly skilled professionals in global cities – have been described as the archetypal transmigrant, the nomadic worker, the embodied of a new cosmopolitan identity in cross-border spaces. They are able to take advantage of the flexibility in global labour markets, the ability to live and work in different places, and with these, increased leisure time in affluent societies, extended holidays, and flexible working lives. Yet we know relatively little about their motivations and actual experiences. Apart from a few notable exceptions, there is relatively little sociological work on what transnational mobility means for female expatriate professionals. Does it bring about greater freedom and security or social exclusion, improved or weakened social and financial status, better career prospects or new constraints?

Our two-year research study, ‘Home and Away: Female Transnational Professionals in Hong Kong’, looks at what transnational mobility means for female expatriate professionals, how and why they move from one place to another and under which conditions, their needs and aspirations, and the advantages and disadvantages of their mobile lives. The study involves in-depth interviews with forty highly educated, highly skilled female transnational professionals who relocated to Hong Kong either as lead migrants or as accompanying spouses on a dependent visa. The forty interviewees cover a broad spectrum in terms of age, Western and non-Western nationalities, employment status and sectors in which they or their partners work. About two thirds were married at the time of interview. Their length of residence in Hong Kong varies from three months to forty years. We used snowball sampling as well as a number of social institutions, non-governmental organisations, residential forums, internet-based blogs and expatriate websites as our recruitment sources. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, typically in coffee shops or the university campus; a number of respondents even welcomed us into their home or workplace to share their stories.

Meaning and practices of mobility
What is striking about these female transnational professionals is the extent of their mobility and how much this features as an integral part of their individual biography. Over half of the respondents have studied, lived and/or worked in other countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong. Their stories are full of intersecting forms of mobility and vivid memories of countries prior to relocating to Hong Kong.

I am not so sure if I want to go ahead to buy a pastry for myself using my own savings. It’s all very liberating!”

Negotiating mobilities
Our respondents’ stories highlight the ongoing nature of mobility plans as highly skilled transnational professionals make continuous decisions to relocate, cut short or extend their stay, leave and then return to Hong Kong, often in the context of practising mobility as a family project. Although many women feel empowered by their mobile lives, there are still concerns about the persistent constraints of professional women’s social lives and how these are exacerbated when the husband’s career necessitates or precipitates the move. Our study demonstrates the continued importance of understanding how female transnational professionals negotiate their mobilities and moorings and the gendered effects of transience on individuals and families today.

Maggy Lee, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong, (leesymh@hkucc.hku.hk)

References
4 The project ‘Home and Away: Female Transnational Professionals in Hong Kong’ (Maggy Lee) was funded by the University Grants Committee under the Public Policy Research programme.
PRESS CENSORSHIP, which led to a regulatory self-control among journalists, made it almost impossible for them to file critical pieces with their editors. It was difficult to escape the coercion and interference of the employees of the information services. The journalistic output of the majority of reporters, whose gaze was rather clouded by propaganda, served to undermine morale on the home front. Subsequently, the (photo)reporting about the Indonesian conflict was used to keep the grisly guerrilla war out of the media. Specifically, during the second military action (December 1948) and the subsequent guerrilla war in the first half of 1949, the (international) press was no longer granted access to operational areas. This was an effective means of curbing (international) attention for the Indonesian struggle for independence. The army and navy information services now dominated the production, selection and distribution of photographs and articles to the press. There were no longer any current images published. The military information services engaged their strategy to keep the grisly guerrilla war out of the media. Specifically, this meant keeping war operations out of the headlines and allowing absolutely no shocking photos of dead or badly injured Dutch soldiers or Indonesian fighters in the newspapers and magazines. These sorts of images were never shown in the Dutch media. By omitting relevant (visual) information they were trying hard to keep morale on the home front high, to please public opinion and to minimise any anti-war sentiment among the Dutch people. The media was used to retain the support of the civilian population in the implementation of the government policy and, effectively, to use propaganda against the enemy, usually referred to as ‘roving gangs’.

Letters from the front

The information authorities and the compliant media emphasised reassuring images of the Indies archipelago. But the humanitarian mission, as it was portrayed in the propaganda, was not what the ordinary soldiers experienced, especially on Central and East Java, which were consistently under attack by Indonesian insurgents. And although the military information services were successful in keeping certain reports and images out of the media, they had no control over the letters from soldiers published in Het Parool, De Waarheid, Vrij Nederland and De Groene Amsterdammer, which revealed the drama that was taking place in the tropical archipelago. The letters and eyewitness accounts by soldiers reported extreme engagements with guerrilla fighters, but also the civilian population.

While these allegations of violent excesses led to widespread public outrage at the time, in the absence of any visual proof of bombed camps and dead civilians, and combatants, these acts of war remained hidden. Moreover, such reports were often denied, belittled or ignored by the government and the army leadership in Batavia. In reality, the colony found itself in a precarious position in the spring of 1949. The (photo) coverage of the Dutch daily and illustrated journals was, for the most part, a version of events propagated by the military information services and provided little independent and/or new (visual) information. This fit neatly with the desired image of the military top brass (General Spoor, spy chief Colonel Somer, the press chief Lieutenant-Colonel Koenders) and political elite (Catholic government leaders and HVK Beel in Batavia) about the military actions in the former Netherlands East Indies. 

‘Silence is the best solution’

This study surveys the Dutch (military) strategy versus the media, during the conflict with the Republic of Indonesia between 1945 and 1949. The Dutch (military) information services in Batavia had been slow to establish itself, and only a limited number of Dutch reporters and photographers were located in the capital. There was talk of embedded journalism; the majority of Dutch reporters stayed mostly in their comfort zone, never left their hotels in the centre of Batavia, visited receptions and press conferences and received their information via the diplomatic circuit, from briefings and the communiqués issued by the military and government information services. They were frequently hindered in their newsgathering, fact checking and the reporting of both sides, and if they did travel into the relatively unsafe conflict areas on Java and Sumatra they were accompanied by press officers.

Louis Zeevers

The military versus the media in the Netherlands East Indies 1945-1949

The Dutch government was receiving no support and international criticism was growing. The US even threatened to withdraw the promised Marshall aid for the reconstruction of the war-damaged Netherlands. Confronted with international isolation, The Hague and Batavia decided on a new media approach as well as spin-doctoring the effects of the conflict. The information services made common cause with an unexpected ally: the American media. In particular, Herman Friedericy of the NIB was active in the promoting of the Dutch standpoint in the American press. In particular, Herman Friedericy of the Netherlands Information Bureau (NIB) in New York, in order to portray the Dutch presence in the colony in a favourable international light via the press, newspapers, radio and films. And, when necessary, the secret services, such as NPM/CWR, were employed. Power always has the tendency to interfere with journalism.

At that time, the military press officers and spokesmen never spoke out against their superiors, and the often unethical Dutch correspondents never went against their editors. Exceptions included the left-wing journalist Chris Scheffer, who was summarily dismissed because he dared to stick his neck out. Because journalistic reports and photos were censored and the majority of reporters censored themselves, the full reality of the war never penetrated the wider Dutch public. It is also striking that the Dutch media – with the exception of Het Parool, De Waarheid, Vrij Nederland and De Groene Amsterdammer – published harmonious copy (the tone was primarily reassuring) and neutral, meaningless photos taken by military information services. Dutch citizens were not well informed. Indeed, there was little provision for transparent information and only biased images about the struggle in the Netherlands East Indies.

Louis Zweers was a former lecturer at the Department of History, Culture and Communication of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. He recently obtained his PhD and now works as an independent scholar and author. His thesis has been published: De gecensureerde oorlog. Militairen versus media in de Nederlandse koloniën 1945-1949. Uitgevermaatschappij Walburg Pers, ISBN 9789052730597. (Louis.Zweers@ziggo.nl)

Reference
1 This article is a translation of (an edited version of) the summary from Louis Zweers’ 2013 PhD dissertation: “Doodzwijgen leek de beste oplossing. Militairen versus media, Nederlands-Indië, 1945-1949” [Silence is the best solution. The military versus the media in the Netherlands East Indies 1945-1949].

The Study | 9
Political life in Asian countries is often characterized as a man's world, especially compared to its Western counterparts. Yet we have also seen increasing electoral opportunities for women in the region. Since 2000 alone, women have been elected prime minister in Bangladesh (Khaleda Zia in 2001; Sheikh Hasina in 2008) and Thailand ( Yingluck Shinawatra in 2011), and elected president in the Philippines and Indonesia (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Megawati Sukarnoputri both in 2001) as well as South Korea (Park Geun Hye in 2012). Furthermore, major parties, including the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan, have nominated a female presidential candidate (Tsai Ing-Wen in 2012).2

Male predecessors
One striking characteristic among many of Asia's most successful female candidates has been their familial connections to dominant male figures from previous elections or the democracy movement more broadly. Indira Gandhi, India’s first female prime minister, arguably benefited from being the only child of Jawaharlal Nehru. Srimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, the first female head of government in the 20th century, was the widow of a previous prime minister. Both female presidents from the Philippines (Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) as well as Indonesia (Megawati Sukarnoputri) were former heads of government or major opposition leaders. Park Geun Hye of South Korea remains intrinsically tied to the country’s former dictator, her father Park Chung Hee, effectively playing the role of first Lady after North Korean spies assassinated her mother. International coverage of her campaign echoed this connection, notably her dramatic name recognition, cracks in Asia’s glass ceiling

Executive structure
Evidence from Asia provides several challenges to broader claims about female representation. Arguments suggesting that certain cultural contexts restrict opportunities for women have some merit. For example, the Middle East sees the fewest elected or appointed positions for women in politics, with Northern Europe seeing the most. Yet, this should not be conflated with a homogeneous influence of Muslim culture, as predominantly Muslim countries, starting with Pakistan’s Benazir Bhutto in 1988 and followed by Indonesia and Bangladesh, have elected female leaders. Women have also found electoral success in more feminist regimes, where opportunities within the old regime partially translated into experience valuable in later democratic elections. Yet these cultural or historical experiences alone fail to explain patterns in Asia. Instead of refocusing arguments largely based on vaguely defined cultural distinctions or historical conditions, we present here additional factors that influence female representation. Global evidence suggests several institutional factors that contribute to female success in electoral competition. In terms of elections to executive office, women have been more successful in parliamentary systems than presidential systems. In part this is due to the ways in which heads of government are elected. In a presidential system, candidates must appeal to a broad cross section of the population, obtaining a plurality if not an outright majority of the vote. This presents a difficult hurdle for any candidate, but especially for women if large segments of the population view women as unfit for office. In contrast, parliamentary systems provide a potentially lower threshold as a candidate can either be elected to parliament through a constituency seat (e.g., United Kingdom) or a party list (e.g., Denmark) and if in the majority party or coalition, then be appointed as prime minister. However, the evidence from Asia shows little distinction by executive structure, suggesting additional factors.

From left to right: Sheikh Hasina, Park Geun Hye, Tsai Ing-Wen, Yingluck Shinawatra, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Lower level office
Democracies in Asia face similar demands for greater female representation. Women have found electoral success in most former colonies of Muslim culture, as predominantly Muslim countries, have elected female leaders. Female candidates have also benefited from gender quotas in lower house legislators in countries ranging from the United Kingdom to Denmark.

References
1 Other examples of women in national roles during this time include Pratibha Patil (President of India 2007-2012), Roxa Otunbayeva (Kyrgyzstan interim president 2010-2011), Pratibha Patil (President of India 2007-2012), and appointed vice premier in 2013.
4 Freedom House see a 28% chance of winning. European and Asian countries labeled ‘partly free’ differ marginally in female representation in lower houses (twenty-two and twenty-one percent respectively). Calculations do not include Taiwan. (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)

From left to right: Sheikh Hasina, Park Geun Hye, Tsai Ing-Wen, Yingluck Shinawatra, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.
Like wildfire

Yan Geling is a well-acclaimed and widely read Chinese writer and scenarist, especially in mainland China. Some of her short stories and novels have been made into films and translated into several languages. Yan Geling's stories mostly take place during the recent past in China, some based on her own experiences. She is now living in Germany with her husband and daughter, after having lived in the US, China and Nigeria since 1989. I had the opportunity to speak with Yan Geling in her Berlin home, in between her busy writing schedule and daily family life.

Ronald Bos

The Great Leap Forward
I only tasted the result of the Great Leap Forward, because when I was very little and in kindergarten there was famine in China and, as I remember, we had too much onion and cabbage. My parents did not live very hard, and they had no other experiences. This movement was parallel with the political campaign, who was against it became a Rightist. My father wrote stories about it, he saw people starving. He almost got beaten up, he was very lucky because many of his friends were condemned as Rightists when they saw what was going on in the country. They sympathised with the people that suffered, and criticised the Great Leap Forward and were condemned. My mother was more passive. As an actress she suffered, and criticised the Great Leap Forward and were condemned very suddenly. Some of the people that I became a writer. I was in a writing group for the railroad construction soldiers. In China the soldiers do all the hard work that I became a writer. I was in a writing group for the railroad construction soldiers. In China the soldiers do all the hard work.

Cultural Revolution
In the latter part of the revolution, the young intellectuals moved to the countryside to be re-education by the peasants, all the members of my family were talking about my older brother and me who had to go; my brother was four years older and he was more likely to go. Back then Chinese opera was performed and all kids liked to be in these performances. If you were lucky to be selected by the army you were very hard, you don't do anything. Like poor people hated rich people in China during the first and second national revolution. They have an ideal and they don't suffer of it. I was in a writing group for the railroad construction soldiers. In China the soldiers do all the hard work that I became a writer. I was in a writing group for the railroad construction soldiers. In China the soldiers do all the hard work.

Green blood (1985)
The novel Green Blood was my first book. It is a story about a group of performers who were sent to the front. It was basically my own story. It was called Green Blood because the army was circulating the country and we were green. Green blood is cold, meant to kill. Cold blood. The book is about my self-discovery in the army. The first four years we danced a ballet, later on we changed to Chinese classic dance, folkdance and minority dances. We had to learn many kind of dances. After that I became a peacemaker, I never wanted war again because I saw what casualties it makes. Whenever there is a war, I am against it. What problem you want to solve with war? I think there are other ways to solve problems.

USA
I got an invitation from the United States Information Agency in 1987 to visit the US the next year. So I went to the US in 1988. I think they invited me because I had published three novels and some movie scripts. One movie was made and I became known as a young writer. My most important interview was in China Daily, they gave me a big profile and not long after that I received the invitation from the international Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). I stayed in the US for six months and I started to learn English. Before my visit I saw many young writers. They were so free, they were never concerned about what could be published and what would be banned. I liked that challenge. The political oppression, the censorship is first coming from outside and later becomes self censorship. Subconsciously you wonder: can I write this? And that's very poisonous to a writer's mind. You become a victim. Why should I think about this? That's not a writer's concern. All the editors in China said: "Ah, this is harsh, be careful. Maybe we have to leave this out." Back then I was young and the editor’s opinion was important to me. So, there I was in the US and it was very good for a young creative person like me. But they have different poison. Commercialism. The US is producing a lot of reading junk. I think they give you freedom to write, but if you don't follow the commercial formula you can't get published. So it's the problem on the other end. That's what I realised later when I was in school in the US.

13 Flowers of Nanjing (2012)
The massacre of Nanjing in 1937 is a big story for Chinese. In six weeks 300,000 people were killed. This is something we must keep telling the world, which we didn't do. That's why I choose the narrator as a contemporary person, the voice is contemporary. I didn't want to make it a story that happened in the past. I wanted the storyteller to be someone who is aware of the past and wants to carry this legacy. It was a holocaust too, because of the race and the systematic killing. Also Chinese people were not fully aware of this. This story has a contemporary voice. In the English translation they cut it off for the story to flow more. But I didn't want to have it flow more. I wanted alienation, you stop and then you think, before going into the story again. I always like this alienation, I don't want you to read and cry and be carried away. I don't think this is necessary.

What's next?
Yan Geling is currently writing a new television series and a novel. Once again, one of her novels has recently been made into a movie. Coming Home by director Zhang Yimou. It had a special out-of-competition screening at the Cannes Film festival, and received rave reviews. See: www.filmbiz.asia/reviews/coming-home

Ronald Bos is a Dutch publicist and documentary maker, preparing a film with Yan Geling. (robonixx4all.nl)
In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Japan-Vietnam Diplomatic Relations, the Fine Arts Museum Ho Chi Minh City hosted the exhibition 'Sceneries remained forever in one's soul' from 23 November to 15 December 2013, displaying the works of the Japanese artist TOBA Mika. Deeply inspired by her various journeys to Vietnam starting in 1994, the artist creates colourful, impressive and thought-provoking images of a land in transition by using katazome – a centuries old unique Japanese dyeing technique.1

Stefan Jeka
BORN IN AICHI PREFECTURE, TOBA Mika 東バ美佳 graduated from Kyoto City University of Arts in 1987. At that time she had already developed her very own approach to the old dying technique katazome 剃絵, revising the traditional craft to use it for her contemporary art. Prior to her graduation she made several exhibited works shown in exhibitions throughout the country – at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art – and she won several art prizes in Japan, like the ‘Kyoto New Art Prize’ in 2003 and the ‘Urban Culture Incentive Award’ in 2003. Her remarkable works focusing on Vietnam were also exhibited abroad at the Vietnamese National Museum in Hanoi, and in 2005 TOBA Mika was eventually awarded with the ‘Cultural Testimonial Award’ by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. As a current professor at Kyoto Seika University of Arts, TOBA Mika is able to personally introduce this old tradition to her students.

Katazome – dyed patterns

Among the several elaborate dyeing techniques, katazome – the term could be translated as ‘stencil dyed’ – is a particular example of Japanese wits and craftsmanship. Resembling the expensive woven brocades, katazome was used to dye inexpensive cotton or linen garments. Therefore it gained wide popularity and was produced in large quantities to meet the growing demand among the commoners in early modern Japan. Like the famous batik dyeing method of Indonesia, the fabric is partially covered with a resist to hinder the penetration of the dye into certain parts where it is not desired. This technique produces well-defined patterns, that resemble sharp edged prints rather than painted designs. In batik these patterns are realised by applying liquid wax by hand or stencils. This method of using wax was not practiced in Japan, perhaps the production of wax was not sufficient or the wax was used for other purposes, for example, the fabrication of medicinal ointments. Instead, the wax was used in katazome mainly based on the abundant raw materials rice and rice bran.

To briefly describe the complex process used by TOBA Mika, the resist paste is applied to a textile by brushing it through the patterned stencil cuts of a sheet of mulberry paper, the katsuragi 剃絵紙. The paper is first treated with kakeboshi 剃絵豆, a kind of groundnut; this prevents the bluing of the dye and intensifies the colours. Then, after applying the dye and steaming the cloth at high temperature to fixate the colours, the spectacular moment of washing – mizumoto 漬洗 – to dip in water – comes. “Katazome is, indeed, a very dramatic process. The paper is then left to soak in soapy rice-water to wash the paste away and put into ground.” This procedure keeps the resist from cracking and, working as a kind of filter, prevents the bluing of the dye and intensifies the colours. Then, after applying the dye and steaming the cloth at high temperature to fixate the colours, the spectacular moment of washing – mizumoto 漬洗 – to dip in water – comes. “Katazome is, indeed, a very dramatic method because all of the colored patterns will appear at one single moment of removing the resist.”

Depending on the size of the picture, cutting the stencil – katadori 剃絵絵 – ‘dig out the pattern’ – can take up to two months from start to finish. As several of these steps are necessary when more colours or patterns are desired, the creation of even a single picture becomes a very complex and time-consuming endeavour. Though the katadori is quite durable and can be used several times, the overall process will be unique each time.

Fading old Vietnam as reviving inspiration

When TOBA Mika realised that the traditional katadzome designs – mainly flowers, abstract patterns or scenes of folk and popular tales – did not any longer contribute to the development of her artwork, she took a flight to Ho Chi Minh City in 1994 in search of new inspiration. She went there without any real idea about the country or people, but from the first moment she was charmed and enchanted by the vigour, the heat and the landscape of the city. From then on, she visited Vietnam every year and traveled around the north south, to tiny fishing villages, to paddy fields, the old imperial town of Hue and, of course, the cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon. It was the time when Vietnam began to undergo vast changes due to the rapid economic development the government pursued with the Đổi mới (‘renovation’) reforms. Starting in 1986 these reforms eventually led to a so-called socialist orientated market economy and the growth of private enterprises, emerging from the existing shadow market of family oriented enterprises. But, alas, this development had a very different influence on the scenes TOBA Mika witnessed and the places she selected for her paintings, and very often these would no longer exist upon her return. Stimulated by the rapid and dramatic changes in scenery, she felt she simply had to paint to keep hold of the memories of the moment – place and time. The objects of her pictures were present and yet so fleeting. The streets, houses, landscapes, they contained the real essence of the Vietnamese history. TOBA Mika explained: “The houses opposite the river were as if they were telling the history of the journey of the Vietnamese people. The decaying houses with the French colonial style buildings behind them seemed like living artworks. It was the scenery I painted for the picture ‘Monsoon’, but as time passed the scene was completely gone, replaced by a highway.”

Assembling the patterns of life

‘Monsoon’ (モンスーン, 1998) is an impressive work consisting of six panels, more than 5 meters in length. Many of her art works come in the form of a byôbu 叟悦, a traditional Japanese folding screen – reminiscent of the heritage of the Japanese arts TOBA Mika pays tribute to. Although the seemingly deserted colonial houses in ‘Monsoon’, with their dark empty windows, and the nearly collapsing roofs of the crooked stilt houses in front, give us a somewhat dreary and desolate impression, the focal point is a bright awning that covers the freshly laundered clothes hanging out to dry. The absence of people is a distinct feature of nearly all her works, but like in ‘Monsoon’ or ‘Labyrinth (迷宮, 1998)’ the decaying houses and empty streets are nevertheless filled with life – represented by the bright yellow lights shining from inside a shop, a set of chairs, parked bikes or motorcycles and boats floating on a river, all just waiting for the imminent return of the people onto the scene. In this regard, because of the intimate and personal relationship with the landscapes depicted, her pictures focusing on Vietnam are filled with neither nostalgia nor sadness, but rather with an idea of future expectations. TOBA Mika is witness to the inevitable historical process happening in Vietnam at this very moment, which in contrast to that process she tries to catch by using the elaborate and time-consuming process of the katadzome technique.

Keeping the before mentioned process in mind, large sized paintings require more effort. But, TOBA Mika felt as if the Vietnamese scenarios she wanted to draw demanded such proportions. “So, it requires a lot of hard work to produce a large scale painting, but somehow, the Vietnamese scenarios I wanted to paint seem to fit only to a large scale art work. The energy of the Vietnamese life and the heat of the city, they all gave me a lot of power.”

It is the large size of the paintings that allow the viewer to stand back, at a distance, and take in the astonishing effect of the abstract puzzle of sharp edged coloured fields forging themselves together into a coherent image. It is this combination of abstractionism and photo realism that makes her work such an impressive experience.

Current works and future projects

At the time of this interview TOBA Mika had already begun working on a special project; presumably for the first time, the katadzome technique would be used for the painting of fusuma-e 薔薇絵, a set of sliding doors for the Zen-temple Kennin-ji in Kyoto. In preparation for the 800th anniversary of the death of monk Eisai (1141-1215) in 2015, sixteen panels for the temple’s small library room will be decorated by the artist and shown in the exhibition ‘TOBA Mika – dyeing the ZEN spirit’ at the temple from 29 November till 14 December 2014. Again, much of her inspiration derives from her journeys to Vietnam, for it is the tranquil image of the mountains and waters in a small Vietnamese village that she finds most appropriate for the fusuma-e in the oldest Zen-temple in Kyoto.

In the project’s second phase another 36 panels of fusuma-e are to be completed for the temple’s large library room, depicting the four seasons in various Japanese landscapes. TOBA Mika also has plans to present her work in France in the near future. There she wants to show panels from her current project at the temple in Kyoto, as well as her works that where inspired by her various travels through Vietnam. This will be a fine selection from what she has produced in the past twenty years and the first opportunity to experience her art in Europe.

Stefan Jeka is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for Japanese Studies at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main with a focus on the history of early modern Japanese agriculture. (stefanjeka@ymail.com)

References

1  This article is based on both personal and online interviews with the artist and used with her kind permission. General information about the artist and her work was mostly derived from the artist’s websites (toba-mika.net) and the catalogue from the exhibition Nara and Hanoi bound together with Katadzome, held in commemoration of the 1300th anniversary of Nara Heijo-kyo and 1000th anniversary of T’ang Long-Hamn (at the Yakushi Temple in Nara and the Temple of Literature and the Vietnam National Museum of Arts in Hanoi in 2010. 2 Committee for the TOBA Mika’s Katadzome Exhibition (ed.) 2010. Nara and Hanoi bound together with Katadzome (Exhibition Catalogue), Tokyo: Sanshiki Shobusha, p.111 3 Interview, January 2014 4 idem

All pictures courtesy of TOBA Mika, reprinted with kind permission of the artist.
Satyamev Jayate: a quiet Indian revolution

On 15 August 2012, a special Independence Day episode of the reality show Satyamev Jayate (Truth Alone Prevails) was aired on Indian television. It was a rare event in the nation’s media history, as it showcased the immediate social impact that the show had had in India: a fast track court set up in Haryana to address long-pending cases regarding female foeticide in the state; generic medicine stores in Maharashtra; street-plays performed to increase awareness about toxic food; a long overdue bill passed in Parliament to protect children from sexual abuse ... the list was a long one.

Rituparna Roy

**Season 1 of Satyamev Jayate ran from 6 May–29 July 2012. The show was heavily promoted and garnered widespread attention. It began, of course, with the show’s host, Aamir Khan, one of India’s highest-earning actors and beloved by the nation. Khan was always a popular actor, dishing out Bollywood hits since 1988, yet he started to redefine his career – and the Hindi film industry – in 2001 by producing and (later) directing offshore, socially relevant films (Lage Raho, 2007; Taare Zameen Par, 2010; Dhobi Hathi, 2011). His audience has now come to identify his work not only with quality and substance, but also with newness. They are invariably (to use a Bollywood term) 'hotte' (different).**

**Awakening India**

That difference was admirably carried over by Khan from his filmic creations to his maiden TV venture in 2012: Satyamev Jayate (henceforth SMJ). Interestingly, the timeslot Khan chose for SMJ was Sunday morning at 11 am, in a bid reminiscent of the 1982 epic serial Ramayan and the 1993 Mahabharat a generation ago, when the whole country came together to watch the stories of grandmothers of yore habitually told to their grandchildren. Bringing India together was only one part of Aamir Khan’s agenda. In one of the promotion films for SMJ, Khan said “Remember, Sunday, 11 am – I am coming India, to awaken you.” He lived up to his promise. In a series of hard-hitting episodes over the course of the next three months, he did awaken India to issues that have been its bane for years, but have never received the attention they deserve: female foeticide; child sexual abuse; dowry; medical malpractices; persons with disabilities; domestic violence; child abuse; untouchability; old age; inequality.

With SMJ, Aamir Khan had taken media activism to new heights. Never before had the powerful medium of television been used to effect this in India. It may be noted here that until the introduction of Satellite TV in the early 1990s, the only channel that Indians were exposed to was the state-owned, rather staid, Doordarshan (or DD). Things changed dramatically with the opening up of the skies, and with the rapid proliferation of 247 channels thereafter. India went the way of most other countries in this respect, offering infotainment, though standard categories – soaps, news-based programs, film-based programs, sports (read cricket), dance and music competitions. And Reality Shows.

But SMJ was different. It was here that I was able to capture the collective imagination of Indians like SMJ. I am reminded of particular predecessors – each for a different aspect of the show. In terms of sheer newness and immediate audience impact, I am reminded of the World This Week – Prannoy Roy’s pioneering news show way back in the late 1980s, which was the hottest new topic for India’s young and something of the excitement that I felt as an impressionable schoolgirl anticipating the next episode of the World This Week I rediscovered over two more decades later for SMJ. But perhaps the most immediate predecessor of SMJ and one with which it could be fruitfully compared (though their program categories are different) is NDTV’s We The People, anchored by Barkha Dutt, India’s most popular TV personality. For the last ten years, Dutt’s program has been successfully debating contentious current issues facing the nation. But while We The People has consistently raised topical issues and highlighted India’s problems, Satyamev Jayate has gone a step further and has tried to find their solutions.

**Storytelling**

Its social commitment is the single most important factor that distinguishes SMJ from everything that has gone before. In the September 2012 TIME magazine feature on him, Khan did awaken millions to the problems that SMJ seeks to understand why Aamir Khan had gone on record saying: “Doing the show, my faith in my country and countrymen has only increased.” He actually transmitted that faith to others, through his show, Indians came to know of institutions they were not even aware existed – institutions like Unique Home for Girls, Humanity Trust, Himmat Mahal Samish, Love Commando, Azad Foundation, Sarvodaya Trust, Prajwala. Some of them are big and operate at national or state levels, but most are small initiatives by brave people wishing to eradicate injustices and redress problems. A quiet revolution Spurred by its success, SMJ came back with a second season in March 2014. Although fewer episodes than the first season, it once again successfully placed its finger on the pulse of the nation. It started with an issue that had shaken India in the intervening period between seasons – the increasing incidence of rape and brutalization of women, with the gruesome case of Nirbhaya in December 2012 as the starting point; and ended with two episodes on India’s povery in the walk up to the country’s 14th General Elections – urging Indians to be more responsible citizens in one, and presenting a stark picture of the extent of the criminalization of politics in India in the other. The remaining two episodes dealt with the Police in India and ways of garbage disposal. Like the previous season, the impact of the show lasted beyond the airing of the episodes, with the program organizers’ own intervention in the issues discussed testifying to their social commitment. For example, one of the main demands of SMJ’s fighting rape episode, aired on 2 March 2014, was the setting up of One-Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) for survivors of sexual assault (which was already a key recommendation of the Justice Usha Mehra Commission). This was further strengthened by a series of events launched by ActionAid India. SMJ’s partner NGO, including an audience with the President of India on March 7. Soon after this, on March 11, Aamir Khan and Uday Shankar, the CEO of STAR India, wrote an open letter to the Chief Justice of India, asking him to intervene on some issues that affect survivors of rape in India and delay the process of giving them justice.

Many more examples can be given, the point being SMJ’s pioneering media activism. In the very first episode of SMJ in 2012, Aamir Khan had declared: “It is our desire to be part of a change in India.” Well, that change did happen – and in a way and to an extent that is nothing short of a quiet revolution.

Rituparna Roy is an IAS Alumni and the author of two books: “South Asian Partition Fiction in English: From Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh” (AUP, 2010) & the co-edited volume ‘Writing India Anew: Indian English Fiction, 2000-2010’ (AUP, 2013). She currently works as a Freelance Editor and writes a blog on Indian Cinema – rituparnaroy.wordpress.com
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Uncivil society

This short book discusses what Shakespeare’s Hamlet [Act 4, Scene 4] might have termed ‘an egg-shell’, something small over which armies of ‘mass and charge’ might contend. But nationalism has made frontiers an even more sensitive matter than in the great playwright’s time, and the popularisation of politics can conduces to outright conflict. The tussle between Thailand and Cambodia over the temple of Preah Vihear – which led to some loss of life, notably in 2011 – is a case in point. As Dr Prangthong R. Pawakapan suggests, it raises other issues too, given, for example, the fact that the two countries are members of ASEAN and that the regional organization is aiming to make itself more people-centred.

Nicholas Tarling

Geopolitics of energy

Secure oil and alternative energy is the second and last volume coming out of a research project shared by the KNAW and the Chinese Academy of Sciences respectively. In their introduction, the editors argue that shared interests of China and the EU create conditions for cooperation between these large energy importers and point to the obstacles to overcome.

Henk Hoekwelling

The arrangements, however, became a focus for the political disputes in Thailand that pitted prime city against countryside, middle-class against peasantry, conservatives against Thaksin, and, on the streets and at the airport, ‘Yellows’ against ‘Reds’. The Yellows took up Preah Vihear as a national cause, sustaining it even after Thaksin was displaced in 2006, and indeed after the Democratic Abhisit became Prime Minister in 2008.

The geopolitical community, like others, was divided. The author of this book was one of a group headed by the respected Charnvivit Kasetsin that endeavoured to undercut nationalist misinterpretations and offer a more reasoned and better supported background to the affair. Her book now does the task for us. It is also a good advertisement for good history and its public importance.

As her title suggests, she raises several other considerations. Civil society organizations are widely thought essential to democracy, but the activities of the People’s Alliance for Democracy suggest that they may also undermine it. The events of 2008-11 are thus not only part of the turbulent history of democracy in Siam/Thailand since the original coup of the Provinces, but they also have wider implications for other would-be democracies and for ASEAN itself. Its essential basis is the burying, if not resolving, of inter-member disputes. Can that be sustained if they are dealt with ‘uncivilly’?

Nicholas Tarling, from the New Zealand Asia Institute (The University of Auckland), is an historian, academic, and author. (n.tarling@auckland.ac.nz)

Geopolitics of energy

THE WORK DIVIDES its 13 articles into two parts, respectively entitled “Geopolitics, geo-economy and energy” and “Renewable energy and sustainable development”. The papers are written by specialists, often drawing from their ongoing research, yet addressed a larger audience. The editors have cast their net wide. At the regional level, Cutler and Umbach each focus on Caspian-Central Eurasian energy, though from a different perspective, while Sun Hongbo studies energy linkages between China and Latin America with the focus on Venezuela. The work has three chapters on Iran as foreign policy actor and oil exporter. At the national level, Rakel reports on elite change and its impact on the foreign policy orientation of Iran since the presidency of Ahmadinejad. Yu Guangguo studies Chinese – Iranian relations since the conclusion of the 1942 Friendship Treaty between Persia and the Kuomintang government. Currently, Iran is a substantial oil supplier to China. Unlike China, Japanese – Iranian relations, studied by Raquel Shauli, are severely constrained by Japan’s alliance with the US. Despite America’s inability to supply oil to Japan, its government has duty supported US sanctions on Iran since 2005. Zhao Huining and Wu Hongwei follow up the theme of Umbach and Cutler with a case study of Chinese – Kazakh bilateral political economy of oil and gas deals, competing with the geo-political interests of particularly Russia. Chen Mo, reflecting on the long bilateral relations between China and Angola, writes on the current exchange relation between them of oil infrastructure. In the 1970s Chinese-Russian competition in Angola landed China on the same side as the US , both supporting UNITA of Savimbi.

Clean energy

Part two, on clean energy, comprises five chapters, four of which are at the national level. Scholten writes on green innovation, Li Xiaohua studies the Chinese solar energy sector; Lima reports on biofuel developments in Brazil and its contested sustainability. Vermeer investigates causes of the slowing down of the hydro-energy projects announced in the 2008 National Development and Reform Commission’s plan. Hydropower is the largest source of efficient renewable energy. He finds that the 2007 change from high to low electricity prices, affecting investor’s rate of return, is one cause; the fragmented policy making machinery, driven by conflicting national and provincial actor interest, rentevelopment costs and concerns about responses to environmental impacts of the often large projects, are part of the equation. At the same time solar and wind energy equipment producers pressure for the expansion of their business. The recent trade conflict between the EU and China about solar panel subsidies testifies to the link-up between the industry and the Chinese government. The disadvantage expressed by the US for the EU’s compromise with China, highlights the global importance of solar
Engaging the spirit world

As the contributions to this collection rekindled my early experiences ‘in the field’, reading through the ten chapters of Engaging the Spirit World was great fun. As the greenhorn I was, I laughed at my initial encounter with ‘spirits’ (phi) in Thailand, which so upset my girlfriend that she slapped me in the face. It spelled the end to my fun. I not only learned to take beliefs seriously – whether western, eastern, religious, or political – but also to realise that for the believers concerned these represented their living experience. In that sense, beliefs are as tangible as a bowl of rice and have to be explored concretely before we, ‘servants of science’, put any ‘theoretical a priori on top of them.

Korea, Malaysia, Burma, Southern Thailand, and on Thai ghost films-cum-horror movies.


Niels Mulder

IN SEVERAL EARLY CHAPTERS of the collection, researchers apparently struggled with the above caveat. Rather belatedly, they discovered that ‘modernisation theory’ about disenchantment, rationalisation, and its supposed correspondence with capitalism consisted of heaps of untenable hypotheses. This I experienced on Java while doing research among sophisticated man-made and man-made environments in the late 1960s. To them, the practice of mysticism or the development of the secretive ‘inner man’ (berkatina) was at least as real as their Dutch taught ‘rationality’. It spelled my escape from the intellectual straight-jacket of high-flown ivory tower assumptions.

I realised that the world is an enchanted place, with or without religion. Imagine the desert that life would be without fantasy and art, without dreaming and making love. We simply need these experiences. Besides, don’t most people in this world take the existence of an esoteric double – their soul – for granted?

The intention of this book is to illuminate the wider context of the contemporary dynamics of religion in South- east Asia. The flourishing of religion, urban medium ship, the worship of ancestors, heroes and deities, and the need to appease hosts of unfulfilled lives/souls evoked by unrestrained the worship of ancestors, heroes and deities, and the need to

imply a potential for conflict. They also create a bargaining field. They hint to potential areas of cooperation between these two large energy importers. For many, turning around the causal linkage between growing resource use from conflict towards cooperation instead, may come as a surprise. Why? According, middle-income, China is urbanizing its vast peasant population at an unprecedented rate. These low per capita energy consum-

Engaging the spirit world

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Potential areas of cooperation

What to make of this vast and multi-authored study?

The editors of the work under review hint to potential areas of cooperation between these two large energy importers. However, this theme does not figure explicitly in the work. I find that unfortunate. Relations between domestic growth and international conflict over raw materials got, and still gets, most of the scholarly attention. Take for example the still influential study of Nazli Choucri and Robert C. North, Notions in conflict. National growth and international violence. San Francisco: Freeman (1975). They developed a model, and tested its observable implications empirically, for the era of Europe’s second industrial revolution annex competitive colonization drive. They found strong linkages between and among the expansion of industry in western European countries, domestic pressure to go beyond borders to get access to resources, conflicting claims on territory and maritime trade routes, allience activity, military build-ups and militarized inter-state disputes. National level rival mobilizations around these conflicts were not mediated by parliament, leading to rallies and clashes between large, organized sectors of the domestic economy. These domestic contexts played role in conflict escalation. The editors of the work under review take exception to the inevitability of a repetition of such a development. They hint to potential areas of cooperation between these two large energy importers. For many, turning around the causal linkage between growing resource use from conflict towards cooperation instead, may come as a surprise. Why? According, middle-income, China is urbanizing its vast peasant population at an unprecedented rate. These low per capita energy consum-

aid China further improving its energy efficiency in the fossil sector. It would slow down the rate of resource depletion when current oil exporters with high population growth are increasing their domestic consumption. Today, Saudi Arabia is the only exporter with an oil-surplus production capacity. Another area of cooperation between China and the EU is the emerging clean energy sector. China and the European Union try to escape from the fossil-carbon emission trap by developing domestic sources of clean energy. If successful, developing domestic sources of clean energy should further reduce the level of lateral pressures in each of them to compete for access to sources beyond borders. The joint development of clean energy points to the shared long-term interest in viability of both societies in the face of climate change. In the European Union, international energy cooperation also serves the latent objective to contribute to the creation of energy policy competence at the EU-level, with the potential spin-off of for strengthening the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy. Supported by, among others, the Chinese Academy and the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, Aminesh and Yong Guang have currently underway a shared research project on the trans-nationalization of Chinese oil companies and their involvement with local governments and institutions. We are looking forward to seeing what is happening on the ground in several large energy exporting countries of Africa and Latin America.

Henk Houweling, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of Amsterdam; Instructor at the European PhD summer school in Macau (hwhouweling@gmail.com)

References


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November 2013’s issue of the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) included a theme program on ‘Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia’, featuring fourteen recent documentaries from the region and several Q&A sessions with some of the directors. In addition, Cambodian documentary film director Rithy Panh was invited to comment on a retrospective of his oeuvre. Coinciding with this program the KITLV, Leiden University, IIAS and IDFA organised the seminar ‘Making History, Everyday Life and Shifting Moralities’, in which some of the filmmakers involved shared thoughts about each other’s methodologies and ongoing concerns with scholars studying Southeast Asian contemporary culture. A supplementary roundtable, on the use of film in research and the classroom, took place on November 27th at the launch of LeidenGlobal.
Emerging voices from Southeast Asia continued

Discussions at both occasions proved stimulating but did not – and this won’t come as a surprise – provide us with definite answers to all questions we had initially posed ourselves. As we became increasingly aware of yet other themes that merited our attention we realized the need to instigate further dialogue between filmmakers and students of the region. This special Focus issue hopes to prompt such dialogue by referring to some of the discussions at the November meetings, but also by offering some of our colleagues, all experts in the field, the chance to comment on these discussions.

(re)Making the past

A first set of questions was related to historiography and the role Southeast Asian documentary films play in addressing and reinterpreting past events central to the societies they depict. At the seminar, Cambodian director Kavith Neang recounted how when making a film he first does extensive research on the themes addressed, adding that “it is about sharing and what I am learning about the history and about what is happening in Cambodia. By doing this I hope it spreads to other young people [enabling them] to learn about the history and what is happening in my country.” Can our directors indeed be considered to be historians of some sort, and if so, how are their materials to be used by students of the region in studying its recent history. In his contribution to this Focus, Keng Wee Koh acknowledges the relevance of documentary as well as feature films in addressing and redressing historical contexts. However, as with teaching all history, an appropriate context is a top requirement if one is to understand such remakings of the past. These remakings offer mostly an alternative to the nationalist and official histories these directors have been growing up with. In doing so they may help fellow citizens to navigate often obscured, painful to remember or simply ignored episodes of their own national or more local pasts, reinterpreting a history otherwise little owned.

In a similar vein, Gaea Wijers’ contribution illustrates how a young generation of Cambodian filmmakers, often supported by Pahon’s Bophana Audiovisual Center, has been “educating itself in expressing their views on Cambodian society through film documentaries.” This new generation comes with a shift in themes and its own preferences in writing history, focusing on the pre- and post-conflict periods, rather than the past and the future. She questions the Khmer Rouge conflict for so many. The role documentary filmmakers prefer for themselves as chroniclers of national history seems much dependent on personal experiences. A case in point are the divergent ways Ritthy Panh and Joshua Oppenheimer chose to depict mass violence and genocide in respectively Cambodia and 1965 Indonesia, both described in John Kleinen’s essay. Unlike Panh – himself a victim of the Khmer Rouge regime – Oppenheimer did not personally witness the atrocities of Indonesia’s 1965 ‘coup’ that his film deals with. This may help explain why he resists to depicting the perpetrators rather than the victims, although Oppenheimer himself has pointed at more pragmatic reasons: past victims are still too scared and traumatized to willfully figure in front of his camera.

Situating the everyday

The films compiled in the ‘Emergent Voices’ program are a far cry from the usual ‘drums and trumpets’ history seen in historical feature films. Yes history is being rewritten here, but in small acts, and by zooming in on small people. And it is through the everyday events that they are part of, that we witness social change in a Southeast Asian context.

During our November seminar one of the films featured proved to be illustrative of this. The Brick (2013) is a short documentary film portraying a local community producing bricks in a small Myanmar village. The film itself was the result of a Solidarity Shorts International Workshop in Rangoon, which teaches inexperienced filmmakers how to handle a camera. Director of The Brick, Polish filmmaker Jan Czarlewski, had expected the local trainees to exclusively focus on the brick making process as for the economic viable process it is to the community. Instead workshop participants had started to chronicle the periods in between work shifts, the lunch breaks and power naps or children’s play on the factory ground, with the social clearly overtaking more economic dimensions and thus stressing the power of the everyday. It does not necessarily show cultural differences between European filmmakers and Myanmar workshop participants, Czarlewski argued, but for him it did prove the lack of discussion when it comes to our call of documentary films capturing the everyday. Similarly, workshop participants had been asked to record their own family lives, something all of them refused. Underscoring the power of the camera, people explained it as being too intrusive in a country that only very recently started the process of (yet modest) democratization, and where filmmakers had been, just one year earlier, sent to jail for simply filming mass demonstrations. In such a context the (capturing of the) everyday almost automatically becomes a political act.

Documenting change

Does a good documentary capture the life sign of the times, does it forestall how it is to soon change or does it actively take part in changing the course of history? These were yet other questions raised in our panel discussions. In fact they may do all of this, but not in the ways we often simply assume.

The IDFA special program included at least two examples proving how directors and their films may act as agents of change, but also how, due to national contexts and cultural preoccupation, seemingly similar battles may be fought with different weapons. Both the film The Mangoes (2012) by Indonesian director Tonny Trimarananto, and the Thai documentary Consider (2013) by Panu Saeng-Nuto, deal with the topic of transgender. However, they do so in diverse ways. Both films are playing with concepts of gender and sexuality, at once commenting upon the bad fate of those failing to fit a neat and convenient categorization. But Consider does so by explicitly visualizing such bad fate of transgender in Thai society whereas: The Mangoes subtly defends the rights of Indonesian transgenders by depicting the life trajectory of one particular person, showing transsexual Rene on her first visit home to village and family, after having fled to the big city. Such differences in style may obviously be as much dependent on personal as well as societal tastes or preferences.

Documentary films and their makers are not seldom attributed with strengthening civil society, speaking for those otherwise little heard, and hence explaining the title of the program and it being sponsored by the foundation for Democracy and Media. Naturally, some critical reflection is required here. During the November seminar, questions were raised about the extent to which funding agencies, sponsors or festival organizers are doomed to impose certain agendas and (maybe even) Western liberal values on other people’s cinema? There is no denying that some of the Southeast Asian films that have made it to Western film festivals are successful precisely because they correspond to either (left) orientalist fantasies or the hopes of western audiences that such films may change these societies for the better, and that they read more in accordance with universalist demands of democracy and individual agency. However, today’s independent documentary scene in Southeast Asia is multiple in character and does not necessarily have to subject itself to NGO agendas or take notice of the tastes of foreign audiences.

In his contribution, Raul Niño Zambrano, the curator of the IDFA ‘Emerging Voices’ program reflects on his tour through Southeast Asia and his search for films to be included in the festival. He shows that, although not on purpose, some central themes pop up while curating. Raul also argues how the conditions for documentary film in Southeast Asia differ from, for example, regions like Latin America and what this means in terms of quality.

The essay by Nuril Huda effectively illustrates the multi-vocality of today’s Southeast Asian documentary ‘scene’. Nuril shows how in Indonesia a novel genre of pesantren film is emerging from Islamic boarding schools, now that new regulations have enabled the insertion of more ‘secular’ subjects into the schools’ curriculum. Sandi directors,

Below: Film crew interviewing the leader of a mass organization in Indonesia. Photo by Frédéric Steijlen.
mostly autodidacts making use of cheap handheld cameras, increasingly resort to themes and materials little known outside the context of the Islamic boarding school, providing outsiders with a glimpse of (changing) everyday life of these Muslim students. In the aftermath of such films, some cinema has also made it big on the national screen, with popular feature films such as 3 bros, 3 loot taking up similar strategies. Erik de Maaker – responding to the ‘Emergent Voices’ program by looking at historical documentary trends in the neighboring South Asian region – similarly shows how changing conditions such as the rise of commercial TV and the resultant breakdown of government control has provided Indian filmmakers with opportunities to gain control of their own agenda.

Old constraints, new challenges
Not everyone equally applauds the winds of change in and around their work. Among others he is responsible for the long term data study on ‘Emerging Voices’ of Nontawan Numbenchapol’s film Blocky (2011) – part of the IDFA program and dealing with the tense conflict in Thailand between red and yellow shirts, but also the 2011 border conflict with Cambodia – was banned by the Thai government for reasons of national security. But by now, all countries in the region have moved away from a 100% tight state control of its film industries, although some countries have only just started to do so. In Myanmar, for example, one still has to take into account opinions of the state apparatus or the pressure exercised by politically motivated parties. In most other places such pressure is, fortunately, only relative. For example, The Monger documentary about an Indonesian transgender is circulated within Indonesia, despite protests by rightwing Islam movements and accusations that the film is pornographic. Recent examples from Southeast Asia show how potential censorship can simply be avoided by screening documentaries in more informal settings, or by distribution through the internet, although the lack of broadband internet in many places still clearly hinders dissemination beyond the usual centers. Ismael Baabed, director of 400Words, doubts the advantages of internet for distribution and thinks it is better to screen films at festivals where they can prompt lively discussions; he also stresses the importance for himself and fellow directors to profit from ticket sales and thus secure investment for future projects. And yet access to cheap technologies and the shared skills that come with them are already changing the face of Southeast Asian documentary cinema, as are internet based platforms such as Vimeo and YouTube; new audiences are now able to watch Southeast Asian documentaries on a previously unknown scale and outside the usual context of festivals or private screenings. Our directors also mentioned efforts to successfully use social media for crowd funding, a model that in the nearby future may replace the need of selling tickets at international festivals and may provide for an even larger audience at home.

Also for scholars of the region, inter-documented documentaries prove a big challenge with many of the online posted amateur and short professional movies offering new insights into a region that is rapidly changing. John Kleinen thus told his audience that he is now able to track the rapid urbanization of Hanoi, and the inclusion of the village in which he has been conducting research since 1992, by using postings on YouTube. With new audiences and their respective demands, indigenous minorities and the rural past, a complex and very dynamic ‘field’ of Southeast Asian documentary film is offering itself to the world and is waiting to be studied. But in how can one see and study this changing region and its emergent voices? e.g., what new literacies are required?

Visual literacies and other agendas
An important prerequisite to our discussion was for scholars and directors to engage in each other’s methods. No longer can we hold on to a simplistic and rigid dichotomy between academic writing and film production, both deal with similar problems of how to faithfully tell our stories without having to resort to whole truths. The best way for us to represent these complex entities are we are studying is to listen to the manifold voices trying to speak to us, which is what Farish Noor is trying to do in a new documentary series on Indonesian culture and politics he is currently directing. By working both as an academic and in the media, Farish is personally very aware of the different languages spoken in the two fields, and notes how the “obvious power of the image...communicates meanings with an economy and effectiveness that words often fail to do”. It is a power that merits further study as diverse societies, and even groups within such societies, tend to read visuals in ways different from others and hence the call for ‘learning to read’ Southeast Asian documentary films, often heard in the two meetings we organized. Learning to read film is about understanding key scenes, the structure of language in stories told, but also intercultural varieties of editing styles – as Erik de Maaker points out in his contribution: audiences in the West tend to be interested in quite different themes than the societies or circles in which such films are produced, consequently failing to truly recognize what these films are about. In this case a solution is not so much sought in trying to escape a simplistic East-West dichotomy and resorting to produce for local audiences only, but to seek cooperation with counterparts from elsewhere to see how also foreign audiences may be familiarized with otherwise local concerns.

Scholars are familiar with close reading of texts, but do they similarly close read images? Many universities worldwide happen to have visual anthropology programs, but a solid method for reading images is still underway. We still do better to fully insert documentaries and still images into our curricula and stimulate students to use visuals in the class and their work. Also, a further engagement between directors and scholars may help facilitate the development of reading skills. The discussions triggered by the seminar and roundtable helped us realize the need for a closer engagement between scholars and filmmakers and a further focus on the themes they can explore together. A first step then is this edition of theFocus, which we hope may add and grow into a larger debate and potentially shared research agendas.

Fridus Steijlen is an anthropologist, working as a researcher at the KITV. His work concerns postcolonial migration and everyday life in contemporary Indonesia. Among others he is responsible for the long term data generating audiovisual research project ‘Recording the Future’. (steijlen@KITV.nl)

Bart Barendregt is associate professor at the Leiden Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, specializing in the popular culture of Southeast Asia and the field of Digital Anthropology. (barendregt@few.leidenuniv.nl)

References
1 See The Newsletter Issue #63, Autumn 2013, p.52
2 See participants list below

Participants Seminar
Aung Myai Hway, Myanmar | Ashraf Rodin, Malaysia
Bart Barendregt, Leiden University | Chairun Nina, Indonesia
Fridus Steijlen, KITV | Ismail Farish, Indonesia
Kavitha Neang, Cambodia | Khin Rithoe, Thailand
Kyaw Myo Lwin, Myanmar | Lynn Lee, Singapore
Min Thu Aung, Myanmar | Jan Carlewi, Austria
Nontawan Numbenchapol, Thailand | Panu Saeng-Xuto, Thailand
Philippe Peycam, IAS | Phuong Thao Dong, Vietnam
Ratna Saptari, Leiden University | Raul Niño Zambrano, IDFA
Soophak Sio, Cambodia | Tommy Trisvanto, Indonesia

Participants Roundtable
Bart Barendregt, Leiden University | Chairun Nina, Indonesia
Erik de Maaker, Leiden University | Fridus Steijlen, KITV
John Kleinen, University of Amsterdam | Ucu Agustin, Indonesia

Above: Ritky Fard. Photo by IDFA.
Below: Supplementary roundtable at the launch of LeidenGlobal.
Photo by LeidenGlobal.
As a festival IDFA is keen on paying attention to developments in film production around the world. Besides economic and political changes currently taking place in Southeast Asia we have noticed a rapid increase in film production throughout the region. We closely monitored how fiction films produced in that region gained considerable respect among critics and audiences in recent years.

Raul Niño Zambrano

The film Circle One Shooter Who Can Recall His Past Lives by Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul serves as an example here, winning the Golden Palm in Cannes in 2010, as does the work of Filipino filmmaker Brillante Mendoza, which has been selected several times for festivals in Cannes and Berlin. This has also been the case with a number of documentary films including An American and His Harem, which was selected for festivals in Cannes and Berlin, here, winning the Golden Palm in Cannes in 2010, as does director Apichatpong Weerasethakul serves as an example of documentary films obtained the IDFA award for best Mid-Length documentary. Additionally, there has been an increase in documentary film festivals such as Chagrin in Indonesia and Sokojeo in Thailand, but also the workshop-like DocNet seminars that are organized throughout the region and which have encouraged young filmmakers to start producing more documentaries of their own. Altogether, this justified the special attention during our festival for Southeast Asian documentary production.

Research trip to Southeast Asia

A first step, in the beginning of 2013, was making a research trip in order to meet filmmakers and producers in the region. It took us to Indonesia, Cambodia, and Myanmar/Burma. In Malaysia, we were much inspired by The Asian Side of the Doc, a massive yearly documentary conference, where producers and directors from all over Asia meet. The documentary genre is clearly blossoming, and the need to exchange experiences and tell one’s own (histories) was apparent everywhere. Filmmakers and local funders (mostly from the world of broadcasting) were united in their ambition to realize more documentary projects, but this has not always been this way. In the past, funding for Southeast Asian documentaries often tended to be sought in the West. In spite of such conditions it was striking to see that most Southeast Asian filmmakers were hinging on to their own approaches and ways of doing things, rather than copying ideas imported from elsewhere. Southeast Asian filmmakers have been anxious to tell stories in their own way.

In Cambodia, we visited Rithy Panh’s Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, an institute that focuses on the research of mediated traces of the genocide that took place during the Khmer Rouge regime. The Bophane Center restores and preserves visual materials from the past, making sure it is available for future generations to use. Young filmmakers are trained here by professional filmmakers including Rithy Panh himself. Our visit to Cambodia was completed with a two-day seminar organized by DocNet, entitled The Voice of Southeast Asian Documentary - Reaching the World. This project served as a platform of exchange and was aimed at networking between various professional groups in Southeast Asia that are involved in the production of documentary films. It was a great opportunity to meet commercial producers, representatives of TV stations, governmental film board officials, representatives of film schools and NGOs, all of whom may be able to support the sector in the near future.

Burma was a different story all together. After years of military dictatorship, the country’s cinematic production is still in its infancy, but it is growing fast. That much was also proven by our visit to the Yangon Film School. With few resources, but with utmost dedication, students are carving out their own ways. A good example is Tyres (2013) by director Kyaw Myo Lwin, a well-crafted black-and-white short, portraying the recycling of car tires; a practice necessitated by extreme poverty. It is difficult to compare Southeast Asia with other regions, such as Latin America. In terms of documentary production Latin America seems at an entirely different level. Countries such as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil have strong documentary traditions and legislation and other facilitations have contributed to a climate in which the documentary industry is able to deliver high quality creative products. This is not yet the case for Southeast Asia where we are generally looking at independent productions or documentaries that have mostly been made possible with resources from abroad.

Curating the program

After the research trip it was clear that the focus of the program should be on recent films, films able to reflect on the current state of the documentary scene throughout the region. Noticeably, there is much eagerness among young filmmakers from the region to tell stories of their countries being in transition. That process is enforced with accessible cheap digital cameras now being widely available. It was also an honor to introduce Rithy Panh and his works to our international audience. We invited Panh as our special guest at IDFA, where he not only showed and commented on a retrospective of his own works, but also screened a program of films that have inspired him in his own work. We invited him to show us how films may well connect personal and regional stories, whilst the same time address universal themes.

For the ‘Emerging Voices’ program we initially had no specific theme in mind. All we wanted to do was to show how diverse Southeast Asian cinema currently is in its themes and styles. However, an important criterion in our selection process was the balance between cinematographic elements, differentiating documentaries from mere TV reports or home videos, but also their potential to resonate with international audiences. From this selection emerged personal stories that in oft creative ways address changes and challenges that the various countries in this region are currently facing.

The documentary House/Grandparent (2013) by Azhar Rudin, for example, portrays a grandmother in Malaysia having a hard time keeping her own tempo while her family is thinking of moving to a new place. Similar tensions and challenges were also evident in Ismail Bashein’s film 400WORDS (2013), showing a young modern Indonesian couple discovering their apparent very different approaches to wedding rituals and family values while attempting to produce a fiction film for their guests.

Out of more than a hundred possible films from the region we eventually selected fourteen; a number that proves the huge potential of filmmaking in and of that region. We were happy that the filmmakers of all fourteen selected films were able to attend the 2013 IDFA festival. They brought to Amsterdam the very same energy and enthusiasm we had already encountered during our trip, and they shared it not only with our audience, but also with other film professionals visiting the festival. The Southeast Asian directors met possible future collaborators and some of them were able to apply for our IDFA Bertha Funding, enabling them to develop follow-up projects. I am very hopeful that some of them will come back to IDFA to show their future projects.

Telling stories

In many ways the ‘Emerging Voices’ program showcased current events and developments in the documentary world of Southeast Asia, but it also highlighted the massive political, economic and social transitions that are presently taking place within the region. In Myanmar, for example, we visited the Yangon Film School. It was only five years old and had but limited means. The institute is nevertheless a hotbed of cinematic activity. It was here where we stumbled upon Aung Naing Htway’s Behind the Screen (2013), in which the filmmaker dissects the marriage of his parents - they were film icons in 1960s Myanmar. The film shows how the heartrending scenes acted out on the silver screen were a pretty accurate reflection of their real off-screen lives.

Although we were not looking for special themes, there is a common thread that is apparent in most of the fourteen films screened during the festival. The Screen is as such exemplary for the program as a whole, highlighting larger cultural themes by telling personal stories. Most of these Southeast Asian filmmakers are not responding to the oft threatening circumstances by retorting to political statements, but rather they focus on personal accounts, often about family life, to thus say something about changing conditions within their country. Consider (2013), by Pansu Saeng-Xuto, similarly confronts Thai society, reputed as sexually liberated, with the everyday hardships that transgender persons face.

The personal journey is yet another important theme in some of the films. The Indonesian film The Mengoni (2012) by Tomy Trimansanto provides us with the very personal story of another transgender person who travels from her new home in metropolitan Jakarta to the village where she was born, to face her family for the first time since her life-changing decision. While the filmmaker refrains from explicit comments, the road trip is telling for the conditions of modern-day Indonesia. Finally, Nontawat Numbenchapol’s Boundary (2013) portrays an age-old border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia through the motif of a road trip by the filmmaker, thus artistically blending his philosophical musings and sociological observations, with personal first hand experiences. While Boundary is the only film in the ‘Emerging Voices’ program to explicitly focus on borders, all fourteen films could somehow be said to deal with such a trope. Each film in its own way laid bare, and challenged, the borders of the societies these films were produced in.

Raul Niño Zambrano has been working at the Program Department of IDFA (the International Documentary Film festival Amsterdam) since 2008. His expertise relates in particular to Latin American documentaries and shorts. Other fields of interest include data visualization and multimodal metaphor. He was the curator of the IDFA theme program ‘Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia’. (raul@idfa.nl)

References

1 Rithy Panh’s Masterclass is available online at: http://tinyurl.com/rithypanhmasterclass

Below: Still from the Indonesian Film Tyres (2012) by Tomy Trimansanto.
In the early 1900s cinema arrived in colonized Cambodia. Mainly originating from its colonizer France, the first showings were documentaries that brought Western concepts and understandings to the Cambodian people. Documentary and fictional films started to be produced in Cambodia itself in the 1920s. This, however, did not halt foreign influence but, rather, incorporated it into distinct local products. After its decolonization from French tutelage (1863-1953), Cambodian cinema went through two decades of modernization inspired by Western examples. In many ways, the 1950s through to the early 1970s can be seen as Cambodia’s cultural ‘Golden Age’. 

WHILE PRINCE NORodom Shihanouk was in power (1953-1969), he proved a proud sponsor of the Golden Age. Fostering the postcolonial nationalist spirit, he instated governmental funding for indigenous cinematic productions and banned Western films. While foreign films would still enter the country from Thailand, India or Hong Kong, the local film industry blossomed. Remarkably, from 1970 to 1975, while the civil war that would bring the Khmer Rouge into power was raging outside of Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s cinema drew its largest audiences. However, most of the films that came out in these years were neglected and lost in the years of conflict that followed, as were the lives of many of the actors, directors and producers that had made the industry thrive.

Formally, the Cambodian conflicts came to a halt with the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. However, it took decades for the recreation of the Cambodian film industry to receive governmental attention. For example, in 2010 only two cinemas in Phnom Penh were showing mostly low quality Cambodian horror films from the 30 cinemas and an approximate 400 film productions in the period 1960-1975. Only in 2011 did two new large film theatres, Cinéplex and Legend, open up in Phnom Penh and start to feature international films. Until then, internationally produced documentaries and art house films were often shown to a largely expat audience in the small setting of NGO and café film rooms.

Reanimating Cambodia’s cinema

Yet it is not only the filmmaking trade that took place in post-conflict Cambodia. In the 1980s, video technology brought about a surge of regionally produced films that were watched at home or shown on local television. This small-scale revival, however, was already extinguished by the end of the 1990s. Larger international productions, such as of the Killing Fields (1984), were shot in Cambodia upon occasion, bringing technical expertise to the country and employing local actors. Additionally, the French Cultural Center (FCC) and other international NGOs, such as the German cultural center Metahouse (2007), started to focus on art, communication and media in order to serve as networking platforms and resource centers for the local creative community. The Cambodian film industry, however, suffered from negative perceptions as most films, and especially the documentaries about Cambodian subjects, were Western-made and conflict-focused.

As one of the first local measures to support the development of a domestic film industry, the Cambodian Ministry of Culture’s Department of Cinema initiated the foundation of Khmewong Films (KMF) in 2006. The Cambodian production company set out to produce Cambodian-made films that would not ‘suffer’ the foreign view on Cambodia. While KMF depends on international cooperation to build the needed capacity, its aims are rather nationalist in nature. The government aims to stimulate the production of non-political, non-social issue and non-conflict related pictures of Cambodia that will, in their view, bring forward traditional values and strengthen the nation. This initiative went hand-in-hand with plans to open a film school at the Cambodian Royal University of Fine Arts. Unfortunately, so far, neither company nor school can be said to have materialized in reality.

Kon Khmer Koun Khmer: Cambodian films, Cambodian generation

Parallel to this centralized development effort, a young and independent generation of filmmakers has been educating itself in expressing their views about Cambodian society through films and documentaries. Inspired by Western role models such as Martin Scorsese and mentored by Cambodian French returnee Ritthy Panh, individual members of this group have set about acquiring as much of the film-making skills available in Cambodia and on the internet as they can. Known for ethnographic productions like Rice People (1994) as well as documentaries that directly confront the national Khmer Rouge trauma, such as S-21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine (2003) and Oscar nominated The Missing Picture (2013), Panh’s support has been essential to the development of most members of this group, both locals and returnees.

As no extensive film academy training is available in the country, the locals have had to take their own education in hand. In addition to NGOs and the Cambodian Film Commission that enlists visiting film crews, the support of the Bophana Audiovisual Center, which Panh helped establish, has been very important in this process. Bophana provides many of the (im)material resources that are vital to Panh’s goal of giving Cambodian cinema its voice back.

This piecemeal building of their know-how, forced a new generation of filmmakers to become active cultural entrepreneurs who set out, individually and by teaming up, to make the most of the available (digital) resources and international (funding) opportunities. Independent of the government and formal institutions they found ways to develop their own cinematic language. The shifting of generations thus brought about a shifting of themes and approaches in filmmaking.

The new generation of collaborators and friends calls itself the Kon Khmer Koun Khmer (lit: Cambodian films, Cambodian generation) and may be distinguished by their own involvement in contemporary subject matters. If as carefully avoiding the pain and trauma that accompanies the Khmer Rouge regime, these filmmakers focus on the pre- and post-conflict periods, thus approaching but never touching on this painful cultural ‘void’ in Cambodian history. While the consequences of active civil wars are certainly present in their work, these do not take center stage. Carefully, the gap that was struck in Cambodian filmmaking history is now being filled by a generation in their twenties who are re-constructing of cultural histories or following small stories of everyday life linked to personal experiences of the filmmaker.

In this sense their way of storytelling are not ‘new’ but firmly embedded in Cambodian history, traditions and culture as well as in international practice. In contrast to the government-related KMF organization, however, they do not shy away from addressing relevant issues and do not hesitate to show their personal fascination with the subject under study.

A case in point is the celebrated documentary Where I Go, by Kavich Neang, which was presented at the 2013 IDFA ‘Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia program’. In his follow-up of the everyday life of an ethno young adult, while not passing judgment or explicitly recounting history, important aspects of the recent Cambodian past are revealed. Neang doesn’t attempt to answer the questions he brings forward, but simply acknowledges the fact that they exist. His motivation for filmmaking Neang states that, as a local, he has insights into current Cambodian culture that those born abroad would just not be able to put into film. He is emphatic, however, that his work is not meant to be political and can be said to practice mild ‘self-censorship’ in order to not suffer the scrutiny that government critics in Cambodia are subject to. Thus Neang illustrates how – as Hamilton aptly states in her text – her研究中心s are in work on the reconceptualizations of the new Cambodian documentary cinema – the Kon Khmer Koun Khmer opens up and expands on cultural continuity and does not carefully avoid an approaching an absent center. While recent developments in Cambodian society bring an unprecedented number of peaceful young activists, mobilized through Facebook, to the streets in a so-called ‘Cambodian Spring’, the cultural activism of this new generation of filmmakers brings the changing values of Cambodian society to an international audience.

After working at the Cambodian Ministry of Environment for several years, Caron Kon Khmer was able to returnees as institutional entrepreneurs in 2013. She now works parttime at Erasmus University College and is an active member of the Cambodia Research Group applying for a Postdoctorate position. (geawijers@hotmail.com)

Kavich Neang Hitting in Cambodia. Photo from private collection Kavich Neang

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1 The author thanks Kavich Neang and Davey Chou for their helpful insights and constructive feedback during the writing of this article.

2 In this article I consider the Cambodian film industry to include fictional as well as documentary filmmaking as the technical expertise and creative insights for their production are largely the same.


4 Bearing witness to the importance of filmmaking to Cambodian popular culture, it is a member of the new, generation of filmmakers, Cambodian French returnee Davy Chou (Chou, D. 2011. Le Sommeil d’Or – Golden Slumbers, film produced by Jacky Goldberg, Paris: Vicky Films).


7 In this article I consider the Cambodian film industry to include fictional as well as documentary filmmaking as the technical expertise and creative insights for their production are largely the same.

8 Barton, op. cit.


11 Hamilton, op. cit.


14 Barton, op. cit.

15 Hamilton, op. cit. p. 15


Gea D.M. Wijers
Exceeding the gaze of the scholar

Those who are familiar with the Hindu epic the Mahabharata, will be familiar with the episode in which the semi-divine warrior-prince Arjuna, on the eve of the fateful battle between the Pandawas and their cousins the Korawas, beseeches the God Krishna to explain how and why the battle between the two sides is necessary. Arjuna cannot reconcile his duty as a prince and his duty as a soldier, and is thus torn between two seemingly contradictory ends: to protect life and to destroy life. Krishna, on the other hand, warns Arjuna that he cannot hope to understand all, for his own mortal mind and faculties are finite, and that such an understanding would require the capacity to encompass the infinite. When Krishna finally relents to Arjuna’s plea, he reveals himself – and the universe – in all its complexity; this image of the infinite is so great in scope and magnitude that Arjuna is forced to beg Krishna to resume his mortal form. The lesson is plain enough for all to see: our knowledge of the world is necessarily limited, subjective and piecemeal so that we can comprehend some of it.

Farish A Noor

All knowledge is partial

The lesson is also instructive for those of us who inhabit the field of academia, and as every scholar knows no academic endeavour can ever hope to be exhaustive in its breadth and scope, and no work can ever represent the subject of research in its totality. This is the problem of full presence, as it has been articulated by successive generations of philosophers, and points to the obvious fact that nothing, nothing, can ever be fully reconstituted in its entirety for the sake of academic examination, no matter how sincere and comprehensive that effort may be. It is a caveat that ought to be attached to every sample of academic writing; ‘This work cannot and should not be taken as final, closed and exhaustive.’

In my other avatar as a full-time academic, such caveats have been brought into play in my drier academic writing. While working on two massive religio-social movements, namely the Tablighi Jama’at and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS, I was able to add further qualifications to the observations I forwarded in my books, namely that my research was necessarily partial, limited and shaped by the contingencies of the here-and-now. But no such provisions are available to me when I find myself in the unfamiliar terrain of media work.

I am currently in the process of working on a documentary project about Indonesia in the lead-up to the elections of this year, and it is proving to be a herculean task indeed. Despite the fact that the documentary series will include six episodes, there is simply not enough time to devote to the myriad of topics that make Indonesia the complex and hugely fascinating country that it is. Here one is confronted by a thorny question that is on the one hand practical and on the other hand philosophical: How does one ever capture the complexity of a composite entity such as a nation-state, and can such a project ever truly succeed?

Academics and the media

Academics such as myself have a long acquaintance with the media, and the fact that I have a weekly op-ed column in several newspapers already testifies to the fact that I do not underestimate the power of media in general. However, the dilemmas faced by the academic when working in and with the media are manifold. For a start, the usual degree of control that an academic has when presenting his work via lectures and tutorials is severely compromised by the practical limitations of the media – be it in terms of time or column inches. The academic is used to working in an environment where claims need to be proven and substantiated, often via cross-referencing, triangulation and the power of footnotes, endnotes and appendices. The luxury of the academic book is that despite the obvious limitation of pages, there are at least pages – in the plural. Whereas in the case of a regular op-ed, the word limit of a thousand words renders impossible the fall-back position of citations, references and extensive quotations to back up a point. These limitations are compounded in the case of visual media, where the relationship between the producer, cameraman and the academic is a complex one. On the one hand there is the need to capture not only ideas, but to translate them into visuals that are arresting and interesting for the viewer. The academic on the other hand is less concerned with spectacular images and more concerned with the need to get as much data crammed into the short space of 23 minutes (which is the average for any half an hour documentary, with advertising breaks thrown in). It is not an easy task. I have discovered, to reconcile these very different needs and agendas in a common project.

Imagine then the difficulties I now face while trying to do justice to a topic as vast as Indonesia today. How to bring to the forefront the manifold narratives of two hundred and forty million
The challenge of encompassing Indonesia

The Newsletter

The project I am working on now seems a daunting task, it is narratives and demands, and each of these will demand which I doubt—has given way to a cacophony of new process fuelled demands by hitherto-silent and marginalised positions that did not exist two decades ago; and in the middle class, have all contributed to a plethora of new subject autonomy have created pockets of local power all over that assume that the Indonesia of 2014 is the same country that it eventually end up on the screen will be selected. One cannot In trying to capture the diversity and complexity of Indonesia I cannot hope to capture it in its entirety, in some raw form that exceeds media/visual arrest. Invariably, so much will be left out thanks to the editing process, and much of what will eventually end up on the screen will be selected. One cannot hope to ever present Indonesia—or any country—in its entirety, be it in the media or in academic scholarship, but one can at least try to allude to that complexity that escapes the camera lens and the TV screen.

Indonesia documented

That Indonesia's complexity needs to be appreciated and acknowledged now is greater than ever, for the country has undergone so many changes that it would be wrong for us to assume that the Indonesia of 2014 is the same country that it was in the 1980s or 1990s. Decentralisation and demands for autonomy have created pockets of local power all over that vast archipelago, to the point where we may soon be able to speak not of a singular Indonesia, but of several ‘Indonesias’. The youth boom, the demographic changes, massive rates of urbanisation, and the emergence of a new educated urban middle class, have all contributed to a plethora of new subject positions that did not exist two decades ago; and in the process fuelled demands by hitherto-silent and marginalised groups for recognition and presence on the national stage. The singular voice of Indonesia—if there ever was one, which I doubt—has given way to a cacophony of new narratives and demands, and each of these will demand its share of air-time and column inches too. In short, if the project I am working on now seems a daunting task, it is only because Indonesia has become a daunting nation, including for Indonesians themselves. In the midst of this complexity, however, there is still the need for us to under-sta nd—no matter how fragmentary that understanding may be—the complexity of that vast and great nation-state known as Indonesia.

To this end, several narrative/media devices and strategies were incorporated in the Indonesia documentary series in order to cover as many bases as possible, and to foreground the possibility of criticism. The first hurdle to be overcome was the very title of the series itself (which is still being discussed one, which I doubt—has given way to a cacophony of new narratives and demands.

The singular voice of Indonesia—if there ever was one, which I doubt—has given way to a cacophony of new narratives and demands.
My movie and its title ‘The Missing Picture’ was partly inspired by my search for a photograph of an execution that a Khmer Rouge guard once told me about. The missing picture, maybe it’s the images of genocide that don’t exist. Maybe they’re lost, maybe they’re buried somewhere, maybe someone hid them.1

John Kleinen

THE CAMBODIAN-FRENCH FILM director Rithy Panh is never too tired to explain why he made his successful Oscar-nominated odyssey of loss and torment in the period 1975-1979, when Pol Pot’s regime of terror was accountable for the death of at least 1.7 million people. The movie is an unusual one in the genre, hundreds of carefully carved clay figurines tell the story of the many dead in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime as a result of medical neglect, starvation, slave-like working conditions and executions. The scenes are interspersed with propaganda materials of Democratic Kampuchea; footage that was recovered by the Vietnamese army after it toppled the regime at the end of 1979. Realist factual footage of mass killings is very scarce. We have exactly 1 minute and 59 seconds of moving images of the executions of Jews in Eastern Europe; similar visual representation of executions of Khukas during the Great Terror or the starvation of Chinese during Mao’s Great Leap Forward is equally absent. Panh’s choice to represent the trauma of the Cambodian democide by artificial means is justified by a well-known filming technique known as ‘distancing’ or ‘depersonalisation’. It disrupts the viewer’s emotional indifference and absorption in a taken-for-granted story, instead of a more general picture of extreme asymmetric power balance.

For Panh, the picture that was missing was a personal one that he never will get to see. “It’s the one that I miss the most. I’d like to see my parents get older, to be able to share time with them now, to help them, to love them, to give them back what they gave me,” he said to Le Point reporter Oto-Dit-Biot. “I would prefer to have my parents with me than to make movies about the Khmer Rouge” (Le Point 3-10-2013).

It is not Panh’s first movie about Cambodian’s national nightmare. Best known is his 52I: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine (2003), followed in 2011 by Dutch, Master of the Forge of Hell. In between he made movies about the colonial past and the return of refugees to his home country, among others. With his impressive Bophana, a Cambodian tragedy (1997), memorializing the victims portrayed in the thousands of mugshots that the prison guards left at Tuol Sleng, he said: “Now, since [ ], 52I has been made [ ]… there are several films [ ]... where they bring the victims and the guardians together. But often also against each other’s will. And that gives a kind of sense when you see that kind of encounter between people.”

Acts of killings

Panh shared: “The Act of Killing [jugal or ‘Execution(er)’ in Khmer] was the big surprise of 2012. Unlike Rithy Panh, Oppenheimer exclusively used the staged memory of criminal and paramilitary vigilantes who did the dirty business for the Indonesian army and the politicians who toppled President Sukarno in 1965. The Aduet of 30 September 1965 brought Suharto’s military junta to power. In a wave of killings lasting five months, members of the Special Forces, ad hoc criminal gangs and religious Muslim fanatics destroyed the lives of at least, and possibly more than, half a million people. Unlike the Khmer Rouge leaders, these people were never brought to justice. Instead, they continue to be feared and in a certain way respected, still enjoying the admiration of many in Indonesia. Two protagonists prominently figure in The Act of Killing – Anwar Congo (72) and Adi Zulkadry (69) – who re-enact their own roles during the murderous events. Anwar was a petty thug in the mid-1960s, trafficking in movie tickets. Adi was a leading founder of the paramilitary Pancasila Youth and a member of its elite death unit, the Frog Squad. Embarrassingly for Indonesia’s democratic rulers, Anwar maintained personal relations with a local newspaper editor who played a coordinating role during the massacre. But similarly uncomfortable is the appearance in the film of the current-day politician Jusuf Kalla, who is seen congratulating current-day politician Jusuf Kalla, who is seen congratulating

References

1 IDF master class in Amsterdam, 22 November 2013.
In Indonesia, over the last five years or so, a new generation of santri¹ across the country has demonstrated a progressive attitude toward film production. Mostly using new film technologies such as personal video recorders and digital cameras, many of these young students have made films about, but not limited to, the everyday lives of Muslims in pesantren. Some of these films have only been circulated within the pesantren circuit, but most of them have also experienced alternative public screenings, particularly through social media such as YouTube. A few of them have even been screened at local film festivals and commercial cinemas.

Voices hitherto unheard

Some scholars might have anticipated the emergence of these santri-made films in Indonesia,² yet the fact that the majority of these films come from a minority within the world of Indonesian film, and as far as the history of Indonesian cinema can be recalled, they have struggled to represent themselves within the national film arena. Significantly, this marginalisation may hint at the somewhat intrusive character of their cinematic activities, to the world of film as well as the world of the Islamic boarding school itself. Furthermore, when talking to these santri and watching their films, it is clear that they voice concerns that have hitherto been overlooked by major commercial film companies and other media players in Indonesia. This article highlights some of the ways santri have come to producing films and what kind of concerns are voiced by these films.

Film production has been introduced into pesantrens in various ways, yet there are some similarities. The story of Ali, a santri in East Java who in 2010 made the documentary film Para Penenong (The Sand Miners), is as such revealing. Coming from a rural area in the Western tip of Java, Ali had been living in his pesantren in Kidang, East Java, for over seven years. During his pesantren studies, he also attended a nearby Islamic college to obtain his bachelor’s degree in Islamic education. He was an avid reader and had much interest for writing and journalism. Ali had never seen a film in a cinema before, but one of his friends showed him the highly celebrated documentary film A Day in the Life of a River, which made him fall in love with the world of cinema. He then decided to make a film of his own.

Ali’s story exemplifies the emergence of a generation of ‘cinematic’ santri who are aware of the power of film and film technology in national debates. Importantly, the emergence of these filmmakers has been facilitated by changes in the pesantren curriculum, which now allows for more non-religious studies. In addition, the rise of the cinematic santri has been supported by film-related NGOs eager to introduce film literacy to particular pesantren.⁴

From texts to film

Pesantren films are by no means homogeneous. They use diverse narrative methods, tell different kinds of stories and also make use of a range of film formats. Pesantren films come as short and feature films, fiction or documentary, and there are amateur and more professional films. Nonetheless, and as far as I can observe, what these films share is that they pay attention to particular pesantren traditions, traditions much akin to santri everyday life, but often ignored or simply overlooked in mainstream Indonesian cinema.

References

1  The term santri generally refers to a student at a pesantren – an Indonesian Islamic boarding school. It can also be used to refer to a specific cultural ‘stream’ of people among the Javanese, who practice a relatively orthodox version of Islam. In this article, I use both definitions interchangeably.
1  Ahmad Nuril Huda is a NISIS PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University. His work is about “Santri Making Film: Muslim’s negotiation with the secular in an Indonesian pesantren”, under the supervision of Prof. Patricia Spyer and Dr. Bart Barendregt. (hasanmumb@yahoo.com)

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Visualizing Southeast Asia in the classroom through film

The expanding array in the last thirty years of documentaries, historical films, and fictional films on Southeast Asia, and produced from within the region, has provided an exciting resource pool for teaching about the region, not only for Southeast Asian cinema but also history, the social sciences, and other fields. The visual dimension is not new to the university classroom; images and films have become an important part of the teacher’s repertoire. Their effectiveness in terms of visualizing concepts, issues, events, and personalities and capturing the attention of student audiences has contributed to their popularity. Keng We Koh

FILMS, LIKE IMAGES, also pose interesting questions and challenges as a pedagogical tool. These would include the differences and parallels between film and the text as media of mass communication, issues of accuracy, perspective, and creative or ideological license in determining such ‘value’, as well as their relative importance in the classroom. For example, how do films differ from texts in the way they communicate ideas, concepts, and themes to the audience? Can film not also be read as texts? Are textual sources not subject to the same problems of factual accuracy, bias and creativity often associated with film? How is the value and authority of film in the classroom defined vis-à-vis text? To what extent does the power and impact of film in the classroom depend on factual accuracy and derive its authority from this? Are historical films or other fictional genres still useful in the history classroom with the mix of creative license and visual impact?

Fiction, fact and bias: genres and expectations

The main ‘value’ of films in teaching about Southeast Asia would be their ability not only to visualize the region, but to also bring the region ‘to life’, making it more immediate, dramatic, intimate, and ‘real’. Therein, perhaps, lies its potential and power; but also danger, namely that of substituting fiction, or at best, interpretation, for fact. This is especially so with respect to history. These issues are not unique to film. Academic and primary historical texts pose the same problems and challenges, although in the latter, it is often assumed that the peer review process and measures to police the standards of the field provide safeguards against factual inaccuracy, and highlight any biases in methodology. Films often enjoy greater leeway in terms of factual accuracy and truth, although expectations vary in terms of genre concerned. Expectations are greatest perhaps for documentaries. Historical films, however, are often assumed to take creative license in representing and interpreting historical events, personalities, and themes, although they are on some level still expected to provide plausible and accurate renditions of social, cultural, and political settings for their creative plots. Documentaries too, like textual sources, often suffer from bias and factual inaccuracies. Are such documentaries still useful for teaching? Are historical films and fictional films, with their penchant for dramatization and improvisation, still useful for teaching Southeast Asian history? These are some questions that I have grappled with in the course of using films in my classes.

Historical films: representing or re-inventing Southeast Asian pasts

Historical films, far from just recreating or representing Southeast Asian pasts, are often also about contesting these pasts, re-framing them, or recalling forgotten ones. The use of these films in the Southeast Asia classroom needs to locate them in their respective political, ideological, and historiographical contexts. We can perhaps divide the historical films that we use into two loose categories. The first genre encompasses the films produced outside of Southeast Asia, often in former colonial metropoles and Cold War centers. This would include films like The King and I, The Year of Living Dangerously, Mux Novelor: Mother Don The Turtle-Like, Indochine, The Killing Fields, and various Vietnam War movies, among others. Based on memoirs, real personalities and events or fictional reconstructions, these films were mostly concerned with the memories of these countries’ engagements with the region. Several of these films have achieved prominence (and sometimes controversy) in raising questions about the memories and perspectives of the colonizing or imperial powers in Southeast Asia, their relations to local elites and populations, and the perspectives of the latter. Indochine, for example, was as much an attempt to revisit the memory of Indochina in France, as the positioning of a different gendered perspective to this history, from the perspective of women, both French and Vietnamese. The relationship between Elaine Devries and her adopted daughter, Camille, can also be read as a metaphor for the relationship between French colonialism (represented by its fledgling business class) and Vietnam, with Camille the orphaned daughter of rich Vietnamese aristocrats. The story is also located in the
context of the political transformations in Vietnam in the late 1920s, with the Tonkin rebellion, the radicalization of the communist resistance, and the breakdown of the old Vietnamese socio-political order (especially the old elites asked to the French colonial elites). On the whole, the breakdown in the relationship between France and Cambodia, caused by her love for the young French officer and her journey in search of him that brings them to the Vietnamese communist resistance, mirrors the tensions between Vietnam and France in the context of the nationalist movements and their radicalization.

Historical films on the Vietnam War, produced in the United States between the 1980s and the present, have questioned the role of the United States in the conflict, and the suffering inflicted not only on the Vietnamese and Cambodians, but also the American personnel themselves. The Killing Fields not only highlighted the brutality of the Khmer Rouge projects of 1975-1979, but also sought to portray these events from the perspective of a Cambodian. The Year of Living Dangerously, produced in Australia, also drew attention to the atrocities of 1965-1966 in Indonesia at a time when political stability, economic development, and state propaganda had led to the gradual forgetting of these events in western countries.

These films provided important dramatizations of key events in Southeast Asian history. While often representing these events from the perspectives of people associated with the colonizers or imperial powers, they never offer interesting objectives or alternatives to standard narratives on the past associated with them.

Films from Southeast Asia

Historical films have been an important part of the early histories of the new nation-states and the nascent film industries in the region. Even as they make historical perspectives, we must take into account the political and ideological conditions in which they were produced. The nation-building travails and the Cold War challenges between the 1950s and 1980s, the political changes in the region since the mid-1980s, and the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, have created a new environment of debate and contestation over national identity, politics, culture, and the past in many Southeast Asian countries. This period also paralleled the revival and rapid growth of film industries in the region, and new narratives of historical films.

Besides films aimed at glorifying official narratives of national pasts, we also see the production of a series of films that have come to question the official historiographies of the preceding period, either for key events or personalities, or in discussing topics or subjects hitherto discouraged. The regional and global exposure of these films was aided by the changing global film market, which has helped several of these films to become commercially re-released in America and other developed European and Asian countries, with some of them not only picked up in prominent film festivals, but even emerging victorious as winners in key categories.

In Thailand, the decline during the 1980s of a previously vibrant film industry was reinvigorated in the late 1990s onwards, and we have seen the emergence of a new commercial and independent Thai film industry. Historical film productions such as Bong Rinop (2000), the Legend of Suryothai (2001), and the Nonneseen series (2007-2011) replicated the themes or issues of older historical films from the 1960s, namely the glories of Ayutthaya – regarded as the chartered state for present-day Thailand – and its contests and wars with Burmese rulers, but on a much larger scale and budget. They can be seen as attempts to revive national pride in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the painful economic restructuring in Thailand. Despite its nationalistic overtones, The Legend of Suryothai offers a compelling story of the politics of Ayutthaya from the perspectives of the royal women. The film also highlighted the cosmopolitanism of the polity during the first half of the 18th century, as pre-modern politics in the region, as outlined in the writings of Wolters and historians of Thailand and Southeast Asia, especially the importance of trade, shifting alliances, and the control of manpower in the cultural matrix of the region. Yomoda: Samurai of Ayutthaya (2010) provided a fictional account of the life of Yomoda Nagamasa, a seventeenth-century Japanese adventurer who served in the Ayutthaya court.

The Overturn was not only the retelling of the life story of a man revered in palace murals in the late 17th century, but also the revaluation of a period in Thailand’s history after the bloodless coup of 1932, during the 1930s and 1940s, a period dominated by military governments and their nation-building projects. The confrontation between the musical master and the military officer entrusted with enforcing the state’s ban on traditional musical instruments symbolized the tension between the old and the new in the context of the modernizing projects in this period. It led to a revival of traditional forms and, to present certain aspects of Thai culture to the world.
**The 9th edition of Film South Asia,**¹ a film festival held in October of 2013 in Kathmandu (Nepal), created a row that came not entirely unexpected. The festival presented 55 documentaries that focused on Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma/Myanmar. Days ahead of the start of the festival, the Sri Lankan government asked the Nepali government to prohibit the screening of three films about Sri Lanka.

**Erik de Maaker**

**THESE FILMS,** Broken (2013) and The Story of One (2012) by Sri Lankan filmmaker Kannan Arunasalam, as well as No Fire Zone (2013) by UK-based filmmaker Callum Macrae, deal with the violence of the Sri Lankan civil war and its aftermath. Some of these films had already been banned from theatrical screenings in Sri Lanka. The Nepali government gave in to the pressure, and banned all three films.

The organizers of Film South Asia were obviously upset, and protested against “this unwarranted intrusion into the cultural sphere” which goes against the freedom of expression and the right of documentary filmmakers to exhibit their work,” as festival chair Kanak Mani Dixit was quoted saying in the press.² But rather than altogether cancelling the screenings, these were instead shifted to a ‘private venue’. As was to be expected, the ban generated even more interest in the films. In addition, the organizers created an ‘improvised’ panel on ‘Censorship in South Asia’, which gave journalists and documentary filmmakers the chance to express their deep concern about censorship in the South Asian region. By moving the screening to a private location, which was accessible by ‘invitation’ only, the organizers of Film South Asia followed a well-established strategy to evade censorship, which has been in existence in South Asia over the last three decades. Controversial documentary films have regularly been banned, but that didn’t stop people from seeing them in large scale private screenings. While filmmakers have vehemently, and usually eventually successfully, resisted such bans, these have generally generated more interest in their films and emphasized the partisan nature of their work.

The turmoil described above is indicative of the impact that documentary films can have in South Asia. Documentary footage, and the analyses based on it, can be highly controversial. According to the Sri Lankan government, the last months of the war were characterized by ‘genocide’. But documentary films do not need to focus on ‘high’ politics or topics deemed newsworthy in order to raise critical and challenging questions. These are often found in relation to culture and religion as well.

**Sponsorship, censorship and evasion of control**

Below: I focus on the development of documentary filmmaking in India. Documentary filmmaking on the subcontinent started in the colonial period. During the Second World War, the government created a Film Division, primarily to produce films in support of the war effort. After independence, in India, this government body transformed into Films Division. From the early 1950s onward, Films Division (based in Bombay) commissioned films that had to contribute, in one way or the other to ‘nation building’. Topics were diverse, ranging from urban planning to communication campaigns to India’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage.² Producing up to one film a week, with a length of about 20 minutes on average, Films Division quickly gained the reputation of being the world’s largest producer of documentary films. Until the early 1980s, it still dominated the Indian market. The strategy was to screen a Film Division documentary preceding the main feature film, which ensured these documentaries of an audience.³ Censorship practices that had applied in colonial times, were more or less continued in independent India, and documentary films could (and can) not be screened in public places unless they had (and have) been cleared by the Censor Board. Theoretically, the documentaries produced by Film Division tended to avoid controversy. They would not explicitly critique the functioning of the state, nor would they contain materials that one community or the other might consider offensive.

Until the early 1990s, most documentaries were shot on ‘real’ film, which was very costly. Filmmakers’ dependence on Films Division implied that in a practical sense, the state controlled documentary film production. Since film projectors were seldom individually owned, but only available at ‘public venues’, ‘real’ film technology also implied the regulation of film screenings.⁴ When videocassettes and video recorders came onto the Indian market in the 1980s, these revolutionized the dissemination of documentary films, as they made screenings in non-public spaces possible. A circuit developed in which documentary films, whether they were certified or not, were screened at venues such as colleges and NGOs, attended by ‘invited’ audiences. Often, such screenings took place in the presence of the filmmaker, and discussions with the filmmaker afterwards were part and parcel of these events, which they still are.

By the mid 1980s, India also saw the emergence of the first independent filmmakers; such as the iconic Anand Patwardhan, whose films on, for instance, the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (In the Name of God, 1992) and on Hindu fundamentalists (Khetan, Son and Holy War, 1995) made waves in India and abroad. Many of his films were initially rejected by the Censor Board, but after lengthy trials they were eventually screened in public venues and on television.

**The liberalization of media space**

The 1990s saw a speeding up of the gradual liberalization and deregulation of India’s ‘controlled’ economy, and one of the sectors on which this had an immediate impact was the media. The compulsory documentary screenings in cinema halls came to an end, and television, previously the exclusive domain of state broadcaster Doordarshan, was ‘opened up’ to commercial channels. In a few years, scores of new channels entered the market. Most of these are dedicated to soaps, music videos, sports (cricket), Hindi movies and news, but they rarely program documentaries. The Indian state broadcaster, with its popularity rather dramatically reduced, gained new importance for the documentary circuit when it became the channel to air documentary films produced by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, which works with government funding.⁵ Since 2001, it has commissioned more than 500 documentary films, mostly from independent filmmakers.⁶

However, much more important than their TV screenings (mostly late-night slots), the films enter the ‘private screenings’ circuit that has continued to flourish, and continues to be a preferred way for the socially-committed middleclass to engage with documentary films (and the filmmakers that produce these). Unfortunately, with an average cost of about €800 to €6000 per film, production budgets are modest even by Indian standards, and the equipment used is often of a lower quality than what Western broadcasters consider acceptable.

**Winning the West?**

Tailored as three films are to a South Asian audience, they often lack the kind of contextual information that a Western audience requires. Consequently, such audiences generally fail to understand what these films ‘are about’, and are often unable to appreciate their making. As a result, these films rarely get accepted for major documentary festivals such as IDFA. The disappointment is mutual, in the sense that South Asian documentary filmmakers often fail to approach the selection committees of such festivals continue to prefer ‘orientalist’ documentaries that either emphasize South Asia’s mysticism, or its ‘communal’ violence. This holds also for smaller film festivals, such as the Amsterdam based ‘Beeld voor Beeld’ festival.⁷

To tap into the rich potential of South Asian documentaries, European producers have to do some quality work. Some of these films, tailored to Western audiences, have been international successes. An example is (2008), a reference documentary by Nishtha Singh on her relationship with her domestic helper.⁸ For a South Asian middleclass audience, whose prime concerns are corrupt politicians, Hindu nationalism, and the country’s growing social inequality, this is not directly a topic that conveys a grave West to East predicament, though the film provides valuable insights into the delicate balance between contract and patronage that characterizes so many social and economic transactions in a small European country like the Netherlands only once (in 1999).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Travelling Film South Asia has mostly been presented at UK and US universities, which maintain substantial centers for South Asian studies. So far, Travelling Film South Asia has come to a small European country like the Netherlands only once (in 1999).

Another increasingly popular way to make documentaries available, is to upload them in their entirety to video sharing sites such as YouTube. This is also a way for filmmakers which continues to be an issue for politically controversial films. Unfortunately, even online distribution cannot solve the problems of ‘context’. So far, too few of these films reach an audience in the world beyond South Asia. This definitively lies a task ahead for the programmers of major international film festivals. Rather than limiting themselves to the presumed tastes of their audience, programmers should – more than they currently do – screen films that have been made for circulation in South Asia, seeking to extend the referential framework of their audience. Documentary films can be more extensively viewed, to inform global audiences about the major challenges that the South Asian subcontinent faces, and the radical transformations that its people are confronted with.

Erik de Maaker is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University. His research focuses on the changing social implications of religious practices, and their growing importance in terms of ethnicity, indignity and the nation, in the contiguous borderlands of South and Southeast Asia. He also is a Visual Anthropologist, working on the possibilities offered by audiovisual means to strengthen the observatory powers of religious practices, and their growing importance in terms of ethnicity, indignity and the nation, in the contiguous borderlands of South and Southeast Asia.

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5  Malhotra, R. 2006. The Open Frame Reader, New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
6  For an overview of documentary films produced by PSBT, see: http://www.psb.org
10  See: www.lakshmiandme.com

Above: Making a documentary in a South Asian village. Photo by author.

**Why do South Asian documentaries matter?**
The People's Republic of China (PRC) has unquestionably risen to prominence in many different ways. Over the past decades China has firmly established itself as a major actor in both regional and global affairs, much to the discomfort of its neighbours and nemeses: Japan and Taiwan. The balance on the economic, political and military scales is shifting ever further in favour of the Middle Kingdom, which has already resulted in episodes of intense friction (e.g., the re-ignited Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute in 2011). Indeed, old grudges and a new division of power harness the potential to threaten regional security across the East China Sea.

In his works, Richard Bush discerns the causes of contemporary and (expected) future friction through the role each actor plays, while addressing the possible scenarios for crises and solutions. As such, he provides an indispensable framework for those interested in East Asian political affairs.

Matthijs de Boer

Reviewed publications:

A barrel of gunpowder
The current tense situation across the East China Sea is a remnant of a 20th century filled with conflict. Shortly after the Nationalists ended the Emperor’s reign in 1911, China entered a state of intense civil war between the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communists of Mao Zedong. In a spirit of opportunist imperialism, Japan took advantage of China’s internal struggles to occupy and subsequently ravage part of the country between the years 1937 and 1945. After Japan was defeated and World War II brought to an end, civil war continued in China until the Nationalists were forced to flee to the island of Taiwan. In 1949 the Communists founded the PRC on the Mainland, while the Nationalists’ Republic of China (ROC) continued to exist merely on Taiwan. As the Cold War engulfed East Asia, contradictory economic and political models saw the countries grow apart even further. While the PRC walked along the path of totalitarian communism, the ROC and Japan (gradually) walked towards liberal democracy, taken by the hand by the United States (USA). With past conflicts not resolved, the East China Sea currently compares to a barrel of gunpowder; there is always the potential that tension might combust into another violent chapter in regional history.

Playing with matches
In the latter half of the 20th century, Japan and Taiwan sped away from China in terms of economic and military development as a result of being backed by the USA. While Japan quickly boosted the second economy in the world, Taiwan ultimately thrived on the spoils of manufacturing consumer electronics, as it became known as one of the Asian Tigers. In addition, Tokyo and Taipei could both militarily outclass Beijing by means of their alliance with Washington. Consequently, China was forced to play inferior to its neighbours and historical adversaries for decades. Nevertheless, once China’s potential started developing in the late 70s, so did its political influence over the region. Particularly during the past decade, when it continuously developed and accelerated at a pace of economic development to ultimately overpass Japan and become the world’s second economy, the balance has tilted evermore in favour of the People’s Republic of China. This has resulted in an increasingly strong foothold of the Chinese in regional, international affairs. Officials are currently busy defining a new regional hierarchy in which they aim for China to assert the top position. In doing so, they often implement methods of political and economic coercion that border dangerously close to what is acceptable by its neighbours – and occasionally even cross that line. Across the East China Sea and Taiwan Strait, Japanese and Taiwanese officials and civilians have reacted to the inherent re-division of power in a similarly strong fashion. On both island nations there have been pre-emptive defensive aggressive moves on the political and civilian level. For instance, recently Japanese politicians have openly questioned the limitations implied by their current constitution, which forbids Japan from having a military system that is capable of doing more than defending their homeland.

In Taiwan, results in contemporary democratic elections have shown that the Taiwanese people do not wish to lose their independence. Through all these methods and moves, the Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese continue to play with matches in the easily combustible East China Sea region.

Current regional implications
It has been mentioned that the revaluation of regional hierarchy results in a series of implications regarding the security of the East China Sea region. Perhaps the most significant is that of Taiwan’s independence. Currently, the PRC refuses to acknowledge the ROC as a sovereign political entity, indeed, it considers Taiwan to be a renegade province. Naturally, the Taiwanese government begs to differ as its fears that assimilation into the PRC’s political and economic system will prove disastrous for the well-being of the country and its residents. Neither party therefore is particularly prone to make a concession regarding this matter. Taiwan has its powerful economy and backing from Japan and the USA to stand on, however, the increase of China’s global importance (including for the USA) means that Taiwan’s case continues to weaken. In fact, its efforts to have implemented strategies of ‘soft coercion’ through political and economic channels already, questioning Taiwan’s capabilities of existing as a sovereign nation. It is paramount that both China and Taiwan handle this issue with utmost care in order to prevent escalation of their political dispute into a military showdown; however, it seems that both have too much to lose at this moment to engage in armed conflict.

The above issue does not merely provide friction between China and Taiwan; indeed, it is in Japan’s best interest that Taiwan remains a sovereign according to the status-quo. Similar to China and Taiwan, Japan is heavily dependent on access to seaways to support its economic development. Would Taiwan be incorporated into One China then Japan is expected to suffer the consequences in an economic sense as a result of the Taiwan Strait becoming a domestic instead of an international sea lane. The territory and their nemeses would virtually expand onto their doorstep, as the island of Taiwan lies relatively close to the Japanese Ryukyu islands. As their political relationship is still far from smooth, an issue annually tested by Japanese officials visiting the Yasukuni shrine, the mere prospect of a Chinese expansion towards the Japanese homeland indiscriminately leads to increased political friction between the two.

Another issue that involves China, Japan and Taiwan is the access to possible oil and gas reserves under the East China Sea. In response to an ever-increasing demand for fossil fuels to support continuous economic development, particularly regarding rapid economic growth in the PRC, the right to exploit possible oil and gas reserves is rather important to officials in each of the countries. Recent friction concerning the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands therefore was not just the result of territorial demarcation by China and Japan, and to a lesser extent Taiwan, but most certainly represented a struggle for access to these possible reserves (albeit through territorial demarcation) as well.

Possible solutions
According to Richard Bush the numerous episodes of political friction between China, Japan and Taiwan reflect the fragile state of international relations along the East China Sea, however, it does not imply that the only possible future scenario that would solve this friction is a full-on military action between these actors that would eventually lead to the hegemony of one of them. Indeed, all parties have too much to lose in this scenario, particularly in terms of the stability of their economic development and their internal and international credibility and support.

Perhaps there will never be a completely satisfactory solution for all parties involved, since consensus is hard to achieve when all maintain opinions that are as imperative as any opposite. Many might consist of mutual engagement in certain confidence-building measures on all fronts, which includes political, military and economic cooperation. Once such a framework has been established on these matters, the public might follow and the general tendency of distrust could be partly removed. China and Taiwan, on account of their shared Chinese heritage, have ventured down this path already with significant successes. Nevertheless, their relationship remains sensitive and minor bumps still have the power to prove that old habits die hard. Among all three nations, there will be a pace at which confidence-convergence remains comfortable, however, this most likely is slower than the current pace of political and economic developments. Therefore, it is paramount that officials (including those of the four aforementioned important actors: South Korea and the USA) continue to value future perspectives while trying to close sensitive chapters from the past together to reduce any official or civilian suspicion before it occurs. It will not provide a definite solution per se, yet it will contribute to an improved stability of the current status quo.

Concluding remarks
While China asserts its leading role in the regional (and possibly global) hierarchy, the circumstances demand a revaluation of political relations between the main actors: China, Japan, Taiwan and the United States all need to reconsider their positions in order to not impair regional security in the East China Sea. As Richard Bush perfectly illustrates in Perils of Proximity and Unchanted Stroit, this causes serious issues that mainly result from unresolved past conflicts. Perhaps the single most important takeaway is that all parties aim to incorporate Taiwan within its ‘One China’ principle and fulfill its political ambitions as such, both Taiwan and Japan aim for an independent Republic of China, which they feel would guarantee the security of their economic activities and their populations. With some of the world’s major actors involved in political struggles in a region that some doubt the current gravity of for this part of the Asian century, a deeper insight into the historical context and former political relations in the East China Sea region should perhaps be considered essential to the current future generation of politicians and officials around the globe. Both in Perils of Proximity and Unchanted Stroit Richard Bush manages to provide exactly that insight, in fact, his works strongly complement each other to perhaps even go beyond that level.

Matthijs de Boer holds a degree in Urban Geography from Utrecht University, yet his academic interests are of greater diversity. Throughout his career he has predominately worked on the East Asia region. (c.m.de.boer@gmail.com)
The cover of *Unconscious Dominions* deserves special mention. It displays a painting by Picabia titled *Face of a man and head of a horned animal*. It is appropriate to Freudianism: over a man’s image is superimposed an anxious animalistic creature, peering fearfully out at the world. This book is an attempt to explore how and in what ways the psychoanalytic subject – as a universalised ‘construct’ consisting of unconscious, ego and superego, which was created by Freudian psychoanalytic theories – is also a colonial creature.

Sigmund Freud is known as a product of his time, but scholars have paid less attention to the implicit colonial assumptions of early practitioners and theorists of psychoanalysis. For example, Freud’s famous description of female sexuality as a ‘dark continent’ was part of his whole conceptualisation of ‘primitive’ societies and the origins of civilisation, which was Eurocentric.

The Introduction by the editors positions psychoanalysis as a mobile technology of both colonialism and its critics. Insights from psychoanalysis shaped Western ideas about the colonial world, the character and potential of indigenous cultures and the anxieties and alienation of colonisers and sejourners. Moreover, engagement with the empire came to shape subjectivities amongst both colonisers and colonised. Yet the character of this intersection has scarcely been explored or examined. This book is thus concerned with the specificity of the relations of psychology and globalisation, seeking new historical depth and political nuance for psychoanalytic elements of postcolonial history – a project of retrieving and also uncovering.

Ethnology, colonialism, and the cosmopolitan psychoanalytic subject

The research reported in *Unconscious Dominions* is organised around two goals: (1) focusing on the history and practices of psychoanalysis in the colonial period and (2) referencing this ‘colonialised’ psychoanalysis in postcolonial critique. First, Hans Pols recounts Freud’s analysis of a famous case, the “Rat Man,” to explain how processes of abjection, narcissism and defence, fundamental to our becoming human, can cause recurrent splitting in our relationships. When these psychic processes are embedded within cultures and institutions, they constitute major hazards, and with globalisation these are multiplied. Pols suggests any democracy to come will not come of its own. It will emerge, recur, or appear as a movement, or a series of such, that citizens have to know how to encourage coming into being gives rise to counter movements determined to annihilate it. Current developments in the Middle East come to mind.

Alice Bullard’s chapter on late colonial French West African psychiatry illustrates how European psychiatrists drew on assumptions of the ‘primitive’ as a referent, often as a connection to psychoanalytic data, in Africa and Algeria. The colonised individual was not seen as an individual psyche by analysts, but was used through a Western conceptualisation of cultural analysis flavoured by racial stereotyping. This extends to the present in many places with regard to people outside or at the bottom of local hegemonies.

Joy Damousi’s chapter discusses the psychoanalytic anthropologist Geza Rehmann in Australia. It was believed that Australian Aborigines did not have depth of feeling or control over their adult emotions because they were primitive. Rehmann was no exception; but although he was unaware that much of what he observed was due to the effects of dispossession and dislocation, he perceived the psychoanalytic abduction, which was a potentially dangerous process, as an important early contribution to challenging colonialist assumptions.

Christine Hartnack’s chapter on Freudian and Bengali Hindu synergy in British India contrasts with the previous three. The reception of psychoanalysis in India was self-motivated and not imposed, and originated in continental Europe, not Britain. Moreover, cultural resistance in India could gain in strength by drawing on pre-colonial modes of thinking and behaviour. Grímraðskáler Bose was a charismatic psychoanalyst, a member of an elite caste of the dominant Bengali Hindu community, and founder of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society and Indian Psychoanalytical Institute. Patients were members of the British-educated urban elite and were among those most exposed to a dually British and Indian world where British and Indian cultures merged, co-existed, competed or clashed.

In Bengali belief, wishes play an essential role in the sourcing of psychic disturbances. Bose gave the concept of wishes a central place in his oeuvre. A major difference in relation to Freudian theory was that, in Bose’s view, resolution of psychic disorders could come about not by sublimation but by the recognition and gratification of repressed wishes. In the Bose model, psychoneurosis is the result of a conflict between repressing and repressed forces; thus, the essential task of the psychoanalyst is to liberate these repressed elements.

Hartnack points to differences between Bose and Frantz Fanon – of Algerian Front fame – to show that colonialism and its effects are not “natural” to India, for example, was exposed to Mogul domination in the past and developed a “rich patchwork” history of cultural influences. Fanon, another anticolonial and critical psychiatrist, had a very different life experience. As an African-Caribbean he was always an outsider, first in France and then in Algeria, confronted with racism, prejudices against non-Muslims, and resentment against intellectuals who came as members of the colonising mission. Bose was not limited to the binary concept of “Black Skin, White Mask”1; he strove rather to establish connections and could make a lasting contribution.

Manzoni Piotto’s chapter explains that in Brazil things happened differently indeed with regard to the influence of Freud’s ideas. In Brazil, psychoanalysis was ‘read’ through the filter of the Brazilian elite’s preoccupations with race relations and national identity. There were three overlapping areas of reception of psychoanalysis: its reception in medical circles, its impact in the artistic avant-garde modernist movement, and its influence on social sciences.

From the late 17th century, the Brazilian economy depended on black slaves imported from Africa in enormous numbers to work on sugar and coffee plantations. Due to widespread interbreeding, the construction of a national identity in Brazil was thus closely connected to the existence of a large mixed-race population. In the early 20th century the mostly illiterate
Encountering a new economic powerhouse

Emilian Kavalski

Grasping the nascent international agency of regional powers with global aspirations has become a dominant topic in the study of world affairs. The rush of attention for the emergent dynamics of international interactions has been facilitated by the break-up of the Cold War order, which has allowed a number of actors to extend their international roles and outreach. In this respect, thinking about the shifting contexts of global politics has often gravitated towards concerns of perception and fantasy.

Former slaves began to move into the cities, producing an urban underclass that fed industrialisation and rapid urbanisation. Housing conditions and public health deteriorated. The medical community was quick to的相关

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Syed Ahmed Khan travelled from Benares in India to London in England in 1869, spent seventeen months in England, and returned to India in 1871. He wrote an Urdu travelogue, in letter-cum-journal form, about his voyage, and this appeared in different issues of the Aligarh Institute Gazette. Mushirul Hasan and Nishat Zaidi have now translated these fascinating pieces, with annotations and a lengthy introduction. The text, originally titled the Safarnama-i-Musafiran-i-Landan, is all the more fascinating since it was penned by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the Aligarh educational institutions and leader of the Aligarh movement among Indian Muslims.

Barnita Bagchi


EARLIER EUROPEAN TRAVELOGUES by Indian Muslims include notably those by Mirza Abu Taleb Khan (1752-1806), and Lutfullah (b. 1802); Hasan, however, argues that Syed Ahmed Khan’s travelogue is different in nature, inaugurating a new phase in relations between South Asian Muslims and the West, in which the observations of modernity in England also contain the core of an argument for rapprochement between the British and South Asian Muslims. We find in these pages a constantly active, entrepreneurial mind, keenly interacting with the world around him whether in Egypt or in Europe, and thinking constantly about how to create channels and institutions for communicating messages of Muslim reform, and for fostering Anglo-Muslim relations. Syed Ahmed is known as one of the progenitors of the so-called ‘two nation theory’, whereby Hindus and Muslims were supposed to be members of different nations, a doctrine which led to the movement and eventual creation of Pakistan. Yet his mind as shown in these pages is sharp and dogma-free. When Major Dodd, a Director of Public Instruction in British India mentioned to Syed Ahmed that a particular man had not been made Director of Public Instruction because he did not hold any religion to be true, Syed Ahmed retorted that in his opinion precisely such a man should be appointed to the post in a country such as India, since otherwise, in a country of so much religious diversity, religious prejudice would impede the growth of secular education. Syed Ahmed thus shows his belief in such a broad, non-denominational, secular system of education. This impression is further strengthened by the cordial, admiring warmth with which he interacts with Mary Carpenter (1807-1877), the English Unitarian social reformer and educator who was travelling on the same ship as he was. Although Syed Ahmed himself did little to promote girls and women’s education, he says that he was keen to meet Carpenter because of her efforts towards furthering women’s education in India. The two of them spoke with the help of a translator since Carpenter spoke no Urdu and Syed Ahmed spoke little English. Syed Ahmed brings up one of the most striking transcultural episodes in the history of nineteenth-century reform, viz. the syncretic, monotheist reformer Rammoshan Roy’s visit to Bristol, where he stayed with Carpenter’s father, and where he died and is buried. Inspired by Rammoshan Roy, Carpenter started working for Indian education and social reform, and she visited India in 1866, 1868, and 1875. Her efforts resulted, for example, in the establishment of a Normal School to train female teachers in India. This reviewer was riveted by all the everyday details about diet, monetary and credit transactions that Syed Ahmed recounts. He makes detailed enquiries about how animals whose meat he will eat are slaughtered, whether on board ship, or whether in a hotel in Bombay, and gives descriptions of such methods. He gives helpful advice to those Hindus whose dietary practices made it difficult for them to eat food cooked by others on such a voyage to Europe: his advice was to carry enough dry food that would last the month of the voyage, and then to begin cooking once Europe was reached.

In Versailles, Syed Ahmed protests against the way in which Algerian women are shown to be humiliated, bedraggled, and bereft of dignity in a painting that commemorates the French victory in Algeria in the early nineteenth century. Again and again he protests against manifestations of colonial arrogance, as, for example, when he notices Major General Babington writing ‘ungrateful and heartless’ when Mary Carpenter asked him to jot down his opinion of Hindustanis (Indians) in her notebook. Syed Ahmed writes following this, “All this leads to the conclusion that there is no meeting ground between the British and the Hindustanis. Both carry strange assumptions about each other and the assumptions of both are undoubtedly most often misplaced.” [pp 119-120]. Such moments of perceived intercultural impasses on Syed Ahmed’s part need to be remembered, lest we think of him in an over-facile manner as the architect of an Anglo-Muslim alliance in nineteenth-century India. Syed Ahmed visits and makes notes about educational institutions such as Cambridge, all the while planning, gathering funds, racking up debts, and ceaselessly working to further his own educational reform plans in India. These would come to fruition when he set up the school and then the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College (1877) in Aligarh. Aligarh became, and remains, in the shape of the present-day Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, India) a key centre for the production of modern knowledge spanning disciplines, with research and teaching conducted in a rigorous, analytic, open-minded manner. Both Mushirul Hasan and Nishat Zaidi are themselves products of that Aligarh education and ethos, and it is thus fitting that they have produced such a useful, enriching, multifaceted translation and annotated edition of Syed Ahmed Khan’s encounters with Europe, written from Syed Ahmed’s own vantage-point as a key Muslim modernist figure of the nineteenth century.

Barnita Bagchi, Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature, Utrecht University (B.Bagchi@uu.nl)
HUTONG | Adaptation, Special issue of Abitare, on the Beijing Hutong

Bert de Muynck & Mónica Carrico (MovingCities)

SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Beijing has undergone several infrastructural and architectural makeovers that have altered the morphology of the city in strip-like commercial activities. In the last two decades this process has accelerated and the Old City, the terrain within the former city walls (turned second ring road) became a focal point for investors, co-living spaces, local residents and governmental institutions to think about — also to refute — the importance and need for preservation of its accumulated layers of history, in case the hutong, the typical narrow alleyways that provide China’s capital with its characteristic social life and construction culture.

Old city, new Beijing

Hutong life at the beginning of the 21st century has many faces, perspectives and shapes. Beijing’s inner city has become an arena for real-estate investment, courtyard urbanization and localized gentrification with building regulations putting literally and figuratively a cap on the height of construction. The decision, in 2001, that Beijing would host the 2008 Olympic Games set new pressures on the inner city’s traditional residential areas, the hutong, while also instigating queries on how to develop and preserve this urban tissue. Since then, the tension between the demands to consolidate an image of the ‘Old City’ and the yearning for a ‘new Beijing’ provoked discussions about the value and future of Beijing’s hutong traditional lifestyle and architectural qualities.

The hutong’s way of life is today understood as an endangered, local-identity preserving Chinese culture that needs to be conserved and/or adapted to contemporary needs. Decades of adaptations and inhabitations of the many courtyard structures not only obscured the original architectural structures, but also provoked questions about property ownership and rights, implementation of governmental policies, destruction by real-estate developers, ‘accidental’ demolition, gentrification and the need to secure people’s livelihoods in the centre of China’s capital.

During the past decade, tourism invested itself proactively as a program into this territory — it has brought new life, business and people to the hutong. It created new and localized scales of economies and activities. Hutong tourism celebrates and capitalizes on the intertwining of construction and destruction. Its architectural representation leads to a double-identity syndrome that balances heritage protection and consumption. Paradoxically, tourism does not totally oppose the discourse on demolition, but accelerates the hutong’s demise through a pastiche-like architectural redevelopment agenda. Replacing small-scale residential programs with strip-like commercial activities, tourism has given birth to a living culture, adapted to both the reality of and rumours about ongoing and sudden change. It is mutating to the demands of modern China, both negatively and positively, and some buildings are rusted and rain-damaged and ghostly. Even though facing rapid demolition, many areas have also been ‘protected’ from the 1990s onwards and strangely influence the rapid disappearance of those hutongs not included in these protection plans.

Abitare/MovingCities

Co-ordinating with the 2013 Beijing Design Week, Abitare China Magazine asked us (MovingCities) to guest-edit a special issue on the hutong. Rather than lamenting loss, or trying to turn back the tide, to a traditional understanding of heritage preservation, we tried in 100 pages (featuring more than 20 contributors) to look at the future by understanding the present. And rather than dealing with professional architects’ opinions on what needs to be done, we investigated and talked with those directly affected by, or those influencing, the development of the hutong: local residents, business people, artists, lawyers and government officials who have chosen to live and work in and with the hutong.

A living organism absorbing the demands and influences of its surrounding urban environment, the hutong sustains a uniquely evolving and localized living culture; a place where territorial changes abound, where new professionals move in, yet local residents remain; where traditions are continued and revived, reinvented and reinterpreted. It raises the questions of how, and why to preserve, demolish and renovate. As such, a new understanding emerges, despite all the destruction, the hutong continues to respond to the demands of twenty-first century Beijing, and, most importantly, new life is ceaselessly generated in these territories.

The hutong presents problems that eschew straightforward solutions, as all of its predicaments are interconnected: housing conditions and property issues, cultural and heritage preservation, commercialization and tourism, governmental initiatives and individualistic approaches, accessibility and environmental degradation, as well as the upgrading of basic public amenities.

Under the keyword HUTONG, MovingCities presents a volatile architectural, urban and cultural condition, concerning the transformation of a local Beijing spatial culture. Let us call this HUTONG/adaptation, so to encompass the multitude of strategies, visions and reflections flourishing in this urban tissue. Beyond the demand or desire for preservation, identity and territoriality, the role of architecture and urbanism in shaping the contemporary city. Exploring the urgency to debate the role and relevance of architectural and urban preservation in Beijing. In this special issue of ABITARE CHINA, MovingCities argues that the hutong does not demand utopian visions, but rather common sense and solutions for basic and tangible problems.

MovingCities is a Shanghai-based think-tank investigating the role of architecture and urbanism in shaping the contemporary city. Established in 2007 by Bert de Muynck [BE] and Mónica Carrico [PT], MovingCities’ varied work ranges from publications, creative collaborations, cultural consultancy and setting up new international architectural and urban relationships. Bert de Muynck is an architect and writer, and assistant-professor at the University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Study Centre. Mónica Carrico is an architect-urbanist, researcher, and a member of the Portuguese Architects’ Guild.

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For further inquiries, updates, background, interviews and lectures related to the special issue of ABITARE China (€34 Hutong/Adaptation), visit www.movingcities.org/projects/abitare-china-34-hutong-adaptation or contact MovingCities at info@movingcities.org

Adaptation is a common thread in the discussion on the future of Beijing’s hutong, in the many interviews conducted with professionals (architects, lawyers, urban planners, decision makers, journalists, writers and creative), entrepreneurs, and residents, living and working in and with the hutong. They speak of the urgency to debate the role and relevance of architectural and urban preservation in Beijing. In this special issue of ABITARE CHINA, MovingCities argues that the hutong does not demand utopian visions, but rather common sense and solutions for basic and tangible problems.
The present state of social science research in Asia

G.K. Lieten


The relevance of SSR has generated much discussion. Research funding, after all, is mostly financed by the so-called tax payers’ money, and answered with a rhetorical question of concern. There basically is nothing wrong with demand-driven, policy-oriented research (even with policy-supporting research by those who wish to do so). At the level of applied research demands (by the funding agency basically) would normally be accepted as the guiding criteria, but it was felt as a disquieting factor that these criteria were based on the calendar of the day and may have a very short-term horizon. They would also cover only a small portion of the entire gamut of research that needs to be done, and main attention, which nevertheless are important to understand. There are three other disquieting features related to a policy-oriented, research-driven agenda. One problem is that such research more often than not is consultancy-oriented. Whereas in quite a number of countries in Asia, universities are in a state of intellectual impoverishment, as some of the country reports have indicated, the private research establishment is flourishing. Since more openings, and better-paid opportunities, become available in private research foundations, the better qualified research staff, raised with taxpayers’ money, will be tempted to leave the publicly-funded and publicly functioning research establish. In the second place, such research is inhibiting the spread of knowledge in the public domain. If the output of research, by contractual projects, is not returned to the public, it hampers the intellectual development and understanding of social processes. In the third place, such research does not have a breeder function. Research projects go to the lowest bidder. It was mentioned by the director of an important high-quality research institute in New Delhi that presently 75% of its research project is acquired on the basis of bidding. The narrowly earmarked funding does not allow for a spread effect and internal capital formation within research establishments, nor does it extend into university education. A “process whereby the connection of research to policies is fragmented, non-systematic, involving a plethora of actors and institutions acting relatively independently and not necessarily in conscience to the light of the day because they are not published in the public domain, not peer reviewed and thus not scrutinised for their validity in contributing to sound policy.”

These hallmark issues of research agenda are summarised as Ravi Srivastava (New Delhi) with three epithets: privatization, marketisation and fragmentation. Examples from Pakistan, Thailand, India and Indonesia are cited in this regard to the triple process. If not reversed, the entire mission of SSR will be at risk. That mission was cursorily summarised by S.R. Deshpande (Bangalore) as the “understanding of social processes by an emancipatory interest in welfare and wellbeing”. Such mission is outside the purview of applied research. The issue of needs and demands would better be discussed at this level, rather than at the level of an alleged contradiction between needs (what researchers feel) and demands (what funding organisations see). Needs demands relate to policy issues of today, needs relate to the understanding of processes,
past, present and future. The latter are the core SSR concern, but a good SSR basis facilitates a demand-driven research agenda. Such an agenda should emerge in an autonomous process.

Nationally embedded SSR research in public institutions would help to provide insights in social processes and in turn would help to upgrade the applied research projects. It would help to challenge existing (western-dominated) paradigms, rather than validate what already exists, with only the addition of local circumstances, as Khalid Riaz (Karachi) argued. He framed much of present-day research in his own country as ‘imitative research’ and widely described how a history of funding through private sources has left the universities in Pakistan in a state of intellectual impoverishment. That point was also taken up by Léithi Dhiraevin (Bangkok) who, drawing on his long-standing experience with (the decline) in Thai research, reasoned similarly and even framed such commercialised, foreign induced research as ‘research delinquency’. Rehman Sobhan (Bangladesh) qualified the consequences of such a regime of externally driven research as ‘devastating’.

Relevance and impact

Even if it is readily accepted that SSR will never be in the driving seat of policy making, and that much of the research output is not directly useful (redundant, low-quality, not-in-tune with policy demands, etc.), social scientists would like to consider that they have an impact, and therefore need to be properly funded.

Core SSR may have a low direct impact on policies. It is safe to suggest that impact remains a mystery, and that a cost-price analysis is nonsensical. Direct policy-oriented applied research may have some relevance, but even there reports, even if they are of good quality, may appear or may get lost in the lowest drawer in the office, may eventually land on the office desk for a while and then be forgotten, or may be ‘executively’ summarised by an assistant; it may eventually also be glanced through by the person in charge who may lift the less relevant points for action and then subsequently realise that finances are lacking and then leave it to the implementing agencies, who have their own agendas and botheration.

The overall conclusion could very well be, as some have argued, that relevance and impact are fairly limited. But one should also measure the other way round: not assessing the forward linkages but the backward linkages as well; feeding societal knowledge and contributing to the knowledge society. In one of the sessions, the role of the media was emotionally discussed. The media reproaching the academia that they were operating in an ivory tower and did not use the media as a tributary of their findings, and the academia reproaching the media that, given the commercialisation in all the platforms, there was no real interest in academic experts or research results.

Intellectually, in the past, also in Asian countries, have played an important role in critical analysis and in the spread of knowledge generally. It is something that in the past was referred to as the ‘upliftment’ and ‘conscientisation’ of the masses, but such enlightenment, still on the policy agenda in the 1970s and 1980s, seems to have given way to entertainment and has narrowed the avenues for delivery of knowledge. At the conference, some voices advocated the hybridisation of higher education, with a lesser role for established universities and a bigger role for various types of private institutions. Whatever the argument, none of the institutes of (higher) learning can live up to their role unless they have transparent SSR as a feeding ground. In the knowledge-based chain, the developing and nationally-based insights can then be spread via the professional cohorts to all levels of society. Such a backward linkage of research is as important in terms of relevance and impact as the forward linkages to policy makers.

Funding

A number of international funding agencies – the International Development Research Centre (Canada), CNRS (France), the German Research Foundation DFG and International Development Research United Kingdom – dwelt on the various ways in which funding is available and the technicalities of the selection procedures. All funding has conditions attached and these conditions generally are the ownership of the funding agencies. The funding agencies by and large set the intellectual climate, concepts and parameters for research. This is where the shoe pinches. Not surprisingly, the modalities came up for discussion. Even allegations of western intellectual imperialism were thrown up by Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (Malaysia) and Léithi (Bangkok).

All (foreign) funding, Larry Strange (Cambodia Development Research Institute) argued “should be supportive of long-term commitment and to avoid the treadmill of reactive project opportunism”, which in his view is detrimental to institution and capacity building.

As an alternative to ‘fragmented, top-secret, short-term, non-enduring’ research, block funding to public institutions was advocated. A good example of such block funding in the last quarter of the previous century, it could be recalled, was the Indo-Dutch programme on Alternatives in Development. It was a joint effort in which ownership was properly divided and the funding agency, with its own set of needs and preferences, was not in the driving seat. Such an approach would be the way forward.

Summing-up

For various reasons, as stressed during the conference, many more funds will have to be made available for core SSR. It will ultimately help to lift the research capacity and relevance to a higher equilibrium. Reducing research to its instrumental function, namely applied research on topics and issues to be decided by policy, would be detrimental to the core SSR. SSR essentially provides the breeding ground for knowledge enlargement and enlightenment. The backward linkages of research, feeding into education and to in society at large, are irreplaceable. The contribution of SSR in this respect can only be neglected at a high social cost, hampering cohesion and development.

Block funding to public research institutions is mandatory. It feeds into publicly available knowledge and synergy. The present trend of diverting research funds to private firms and institutions hampers many of the direct and indirect benefits that SSR could deliver. Too often, it was also agreed at the conference, SSR is still at a low level setting. The setting up of a Council of Asian Research Institutes may help to mutually reinforce institution building and orientation.

Emeritus professor G.K. Lieten, University of Amsterdam.

(gklieten@gmail.com)

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Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien
Institute of Asian Studies
Rothenbaumchaussee 32 • 20148 Hamburg • Germany
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The return of the hồ ngoại artist and new art spaces in Vietnam

Hương LE THU

The art scene in Vietnam is undergoing a revival. Fast-changing socioeconomic trends brought about by the 1986 Đổi Mới have resulted in profound changes in every sphere of Vietnamese life, including the arts and entertainment sector. Economic growth followed by international cooperation, the advancement of technology, including new media, have seen a proliferation of new cultural activities, innovative forms of artistic expression and creative cultural exchange with other countries. Art has once more become attractive to a wider national audience. Nevertheless, this optimism was not always there. Indeed, the Đổi Mới may have even been detrimental in some ways to the traditional arts. For example, pro-Dới Mới, the arts and performing organizations were subsidized by the communist regime, but later, economic reforms saw a reduction in public funds available to the cultural sector. On one hand, the cultural sector saw a reduction of subsidies while, on the other, it failed to generate sufficient income because of the small portion of income an average Vietnamese spent on art and entertainment. Many art and cultural organizations were severely affected, including the film industry. Those who managed to commercialize and survive, however, also complained about the difficulties of preserving artistic standards. Meanwhile, state control over the content of artistic and cultural expressions hampered innovation and creativity. Mainstream art was harnessed by the state to inspire patriotism and represent “Vietnam-ness” through the themes of idyllic villages, peace, life and heroic people. Art served the purpose of promoting national identity, particularly important for a country that suffered years of wars and continuous foreign aggressions. The communist regime decided what artistic expressions to promote and what to prohibit. The political turmoil and wars resulted in a mass exodus of artists in the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of which originated from south Vietnam. This artistic diaspora formed a vibrant community of hồ ngoại (literally “overseas”), who sought freedom for their artistic and often political, expression. Hồ ngoại became a genre of its own, manifesting mainly in music, but also in literature and cinematography, and is popular among the overseas Vietnamese in France, USA, Canada, Australia and other western countries. These artists in exile were able to express what could not be expressed in their country and produced works of art that were full of nostalgia and idealization of a beloved, estranged motherland. Quite naturally, these overseas Vietnamese were influenced by western styles and artistic idioms whilst they continued working with traditional art. With the relaxing of state censorship and the return of the hồ ngoại artists to Vietnam, a new art form is being introduced to a domestic audience of 90 million. Many post-war artists have embraced forms of expression that transcend local traditional styles and themes, and have begun experimenting with contemporary art. Contemporary art, still marginal, is consumed only by a small and select community of art lovers. The Academy of Fine Art continues to focus on preserving traditional forms of artistic expression and hence is resistant to artistic innovation. However, new spaces for contemporary art are emerging. While only a small circle of cosmopolitan Saigoners, many of them Việt Kiều (overseas Vietnamese), was initially supportive of contemporary art, Hồ Chí Minh City is now offering prominent art spaces like Galerie Duyênh, Cactus Gallery or Zero Station. Not to be outdone, Hanoi also boasts Manoi, Hanoi Grapevine and Nhà Sàn Studio to cater to its contemporary art lovers. Foreign partners, like the Goethe Institute and the British Council in Hanoi, have been instrumental in promoting contemporary artistic expressions.

The changes wrought by hồ ngoại artists became more evident by the late 2000s. A new generation of hồ ngoại contemporary artists began to make their mark. One such initiative was Sàn-Art, based in Hồ Chí Minh City, established in October 2007 by four Vietnamese-born and educated artists who are now working abroad, namely Dinh Q. Lê, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, Phu Nam Thuc Ha and Tiffany Chung. Noticing a lack in the Vietnamese art scene of experimental and critically-informed curatorial work, they began Sàn-Art with the aim to promote and showcase their work, serve as a forum for contemporary art discussion, and to nurture new talent. Sàn-Art was for a long time the only such experimental art organization in Vietnam that worked with local and regional artists while offering education opportunities. It has been recognized as a good example of the UNESCO Convention on Promoting and Protection of Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Artists like Hai Nhi Pham, Nguyen Minh Quy and others, were instrumental in promoting the work of contemporary artists. Many Vietnamese artists have also begun experimenting with digital art, with a desire to reach international audiences. However, the scene is still small and the artists face many challenges. Many artists, like Nguyễn Văn Thuấn, are still struggling to make ends meet. The lack of funding and support for contemporary art in Vietnam is evident, and the artists are fighting to produce work that is both artistically and socially relevant.

The political climate in Vietnam has changed significantly since the 1986 Đổi Mới. The government has become more open to international cooperation and the arts have been given more freedom to express themselves. However, the arts still face many challenges, including funding, promotion and audience outreach. Despite these challenges, the art scene in Vietnam continues to grow and evolve, with new artists and new ideas emerging all the time. The future of the art scene in Vietnam is bright, and it will be interesting to see how it continues to develop in the years to come.
Culture and politics of the newly announced Vietnamese Independent Writers’ Association

IN VIETNAM’S HIGH POLITICS of Politburo and Party Con- gresses, the recent ‘Declaration to Establish a Vietnamese Independent Writers’ Association’ by 62 prominent Vietnamese intellectuals and writers outside the country might appear as a trivial event. Indeed, one is immediately confronted with the question of why such an Association would be necessary. When the so-called Vietnam Writers’ Association (Hội Nhà văn Việt Nam) has already been operating for more than a half century. Yet in the context of growing oppositional voices within the single-party state, the Declaration is another important event. It is a direct challenge to state censorship and control over the arts and literature, while also challenging all Vietnamese writers to take up the struggle of revitalizing the nation’s political consciousness and envisioning new alternatives.

While the dיתi reforms of the late 1980s brought Vietnam onto the path of a market economy, its political system has remained stubbornly communist. Jonathan London refers to this model as Market-Leninism, whereby “communist parties pursue their objectives through market institutions and market-based strategies of accumulation while maintaining Leninist principles and strategies of political organization.”1 One of these key strategies has been ‘state corporatism’. Under a corporatist approach, state authorities officially recognize certain organizations as the sole representative of their group or class to exchange for political influence.2

When the Vietnam Writers’ Association was established in 1957, it was designed as part of an elaborate institutional structure being rolled out at the time by the fledgling party-state – as newly recognized by the Geneva Accords of 1954 – to establish the basic structure of this corporatist approach.3 Organizations like the Writers’ Association were important not only for promoting a certain type of thinking that reinforced the party-state’s own political platform, but also as a convenient instrument for disciplining and punishing regime critics by divesting them of professional status and sullying personal reputations. Hence, when members of this new Association called themselves ‘independent’, it should have been very clear from what they were declaring their independence.

One has only to look at the author of the Declaration to understand well the political context and history of this initiative. At the age of 82, Nguyễn Ngọc is one of Vietnam’s most renowned novelist writers for his glorifying accounts of the contributive acts of highland ethnic minorities to the war efforts of the North Vietnamese. However, Nguyễn Ngọc was also at the center of controversy in the late 1980s, when he was dismissed as editor-in-chief of the Vietnamese Communist Party’s Arts and Literature Magazine for his role in publishing the satirical and irreverent writings of Nguyễn Huy Thiệp and other “bí mì” writers. Since then, he has earned a reputation as an outspoken critic of state politics and ardent supporter of many privately funded cultural and educational projects.

Other signatories to the Declaration include southern writers Bùi Minh Quốc and Tích Đào Bích Cơ, who, at the time of Nguyễn Ngọc’s dismissal, organized a protest march through the Writers’ Associations across the country to demand his reinstatement. There are also literary scholar Nguyễn Hải Chi and writer Pham Toán (aka Chu Đạo), who are famous for the online petition they drafted in 2009 that brought together 135 of some of the most well-known and accomplished Vietnamese intellectuals from inside and outside the country in common protests of a government policy for bauxite mining. Among them are well-known regime critics, such as poet Hoàng Hùng and writer Hả Si Phi, who have both been jailed for their writings and outspokenness. Yet there are others too, like writer Pham Dinh Trong, a lifetime Party loyalist until recently when he renounced his party membership and became an vocal critic of the party-state.

That this group of writers came together to protest state censorship and control over the arts and literature is significant. The last time they did so, in the late 1950s, they were brutally repressed by the party-state in what was known as the “Gâc-Fánh Affair,” named after the two short stories and literature journals around which they were organized. However, in the past few years, Vietnamese artists and intel- lectuals have re-emerged on the domestic political landscape. Through traditional and especially online media, they have been raising awareness and leading public discussions on many of the country’s most sensitive and important political issues. Their historically rich discourses and their own public prestige have played a vital role in bringing together diverse Vietnamese groups from across the country and even around the world in a common opposition to major policies of the party-state.

The Declaration for the new Association reminds its readers of “the most important functions of literature, which is to stir the moral conscience and build up the ethical values of society.” Its purpose is to help forge a “fundamental renewal” in the nation’s political consciousness, one that has not been possible up until now because of the type of state controls and political culture that has pervaded Vietnamese arts and literature since the Nhật Văn – Gâc Phân Affair. For this reason, the Declaration argues:

Facing this prolonged situation that has now become urgent, we, the writers who have signed our names below, have decided to establish an independent organization for Vietnamese writers from inside and outside the country called the Vietnam Independent Writers’ Association, with the hopes of contributing actively to building and developing an authentic, humane, democratic, modern, and globally integrated Vietnamese literary profession that can play a necessary vanguard role in the cultural renewal and renewal of the nation that our history demands.

The Declaration is less clear, however, on how the Association will be established and what exactly it will do. However, this is also indicative of the new politics that the Vietnamese intellectuals are leading. It is more performative than instrumental. It is more about raising awareness and exposing the limits of the current political system than a belief in genuinely influencing the system to transform itself. In this regard, the Declaration for the Vietnamese Independent Writers’ Association cannot lose. Either it finds a way to establish itself and flourish and thereby demonstrates the possibility of a more independent existence; or state authorities suppress it in the usual way, but in the process expose themselves to an increasingly vigilant public eye.

References

In 2013 Tran Vu Hai turned a Soviet-era pharmaceutical factory in Hanoi into an arts complex called Zone 9. Soon, it became the hottest spot in the city. “Here in the factory, we can make things from zero and do whatever we want to do,” said Hai in an interview with the Diplomat Magazine. This space, symbolic in the way it provides a sense of freedom and expression, is a unique atmosphere that attracts both Vietnamese and foreigners. The Zone 9 spirit spread beyond the artistic community to amass an impressive 60,000 ‘likes’ on Facebook.

Another new space is ‘Initiative - Contemporary Arts Museum’ (I-CAMP), which helps to exhibit and preserve contemporary artworks. Tran Luong, the artist and curator behind the idea envisions an exhibition space for contemporary artworks, including installation, video art, photography, conceptual art, land art and site-specific art. More than 10 artists in Hanoi have been involved in this project, including famous names like Trinh Thi Lu, Huong Hie Trinh, Huy An, The Son and more. They launched I-CAMP’s first exhibition in December 2013 at Muong Museum. A bold project of implanting modern technologies and consumer goods in under-developed settings underlined the gap between urban middle class and poverty-stricken areas in rural Vietnam.

The return of Hải ngoại artists and the creation of new art spaces is slowly changing the production and consumption of art in Vietnam and responsible for contributing to the on-going revival of the artistic landscape. As young artists, intellectuals and educators, these contemporary Vietnamese artists are leading the wave of experiments in cultural expressions.

Huong LE THU, Visiting Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

References
1. Hải ngoại music is of particular impact, promoting Vietnamese overseas art as well as bringing new generations of Vietnamese born abroad to the heritage of their ancestors. There are a number of studios, distributors and production centers, like Thuy Ngoc Films, Asia, Long Vien or Vien 5 in Studio. They have served as homes for ‘refugee’ artists and composers, centers of cultural and artistic community and providers of comfort to the Vietnamese political and economic emigrants. Some of Vietnamese most prominent modern artists, composers and writers have been creating ‘in exile’ and distributing their work ‘back home’ through these centers.

Nguyễn Ngọc
Source: http://bayanthinhquyen.vn

Above: Light Portrait 2013: Photography light box 70x 50 x 7 cm Source: San-Art

Japanese Porcelain Collection

References
The world's largest trade network for more than 1,700 years

The origins of the Silk Road are said to lie in the second century BC. China was under regular attack by nomads, the Xiongnu, and responded by building the Great Wall of China. In search of allies in this struggle, the Chinese emperor Han Wudi sent a diplomatic mission, led by Zhang Qian, to the west in the late second century. Zhang Qian's reports included descriptions of all the regions, kingdoms, and city-states that he visited. His journey resulted in China's earliest trade relations with the peoples to the west and Chinese products such as silk gradually spread to such far-off places as Rome. This was the start of a network of trade routes linking China to the Mediterranean over a distance of 7,000 kilometres. It branched to the north and south of the impassable and mostly barren Taklamakan Desert, running through the almost impossibly rugged mountain ranges of Pamir and Tian Shan to the fertile regions around the Oxus and Jaxartes Rivers (now known as the Amu Darya and Syr Darya). From there, it went south to Persia and north to the Caspian Sea, and through the Caucasus to Asia Minor.

Crossroads of civilizations

In the ancient and medieval worlds, Central Asia was at the crossroads of several great civilizations: India, Persia, China, and the Roman Empire. In the north, it bordered on steppes where nomadic peoples dwelled. The oases and kingdoms of the Far East were part of a transportation network linking China to the Mediterranean region in the west. This was the start of a network of trade routes linking China to the Mediterranean over a distance of 7,000 kilometres. It branched to the north and south of the impassable and mostly barren Taklamakan Desert, running through the almost impossibly rugged mountain ranges of Pamir and Tian Shan to the fertile regions around the Oxus and Jaxartes Rivers (now known as the Amu Darya and Syr Darya). From there, it went south to Persia and north to the Caspian Sea, and through the Caucasus to Asia Minor.

The earliest known examples of compound weave textiles were produced in their thousands and then sent in the form of small bales as wages, as these textiles and their technique travelled eastwards again. But the story of the compound weaves does not end at this point in time. Both the (Chinese) warp and the weft-faced forms from Central Asia travelled along the Silk Road to the Middle East and the Mediterranean, in the form of actual textiles or by weavers talking with each other, or indeed both. Of particular interest are the weft-faced compound weave textiles that were found at Roman-period sites in Egypt. Examples come from Mons Claudianus in the north of Egypt, from Qustul, Akhmim, as well as from Qair Qirim and Gebel Adda in the far south of this vast land. The compound weaving technique was used for particular textiles, including cushions, mattress covers and wall hangings. These were made in wool, while compound weave curtains were generally made of wool and linen.

In addition, archaeological evidence and extant textiles show that the compound weave was also used and adapted in Iran and beyond, during the Sassanian period (224-637 AD). These include the famous textiles with large circular designs often including singular or paired birds, animals or people, that are encircled by small discs or pearls. This form was made in both wool and cotton, as well as in silk. Examples of silk-woven compound weave textiles continued well into the Medieval period, when wool with cotton versions (Iranian influence?) are found at Egyptian archaeological sites, notably at Fustat (the early capital of medieval Islamic Egypt) and Quseir al-Qadim, an obscure port on the Red Sea coast of Egypt. And the tradition still continues.

IN RECENT YEARS there have been many books, articles and exhibitions about the so-called Silk Road and how ‘it’ was used to transport goods and ideas, notably silk and Buddhism, from one part of the world to another. Yet, this series of merchant trade routes also had another function. It enabled technology to move from one region to another.

An example of how the ‘Silk Road’ acted as a technology highway can be seen in the ‘history’ of one particular type of weave, and in the way its form changed as examples of the cloth gradually moved from Western China to Egypt and the Mediterranean. The type of cloth in question is technically known as a compound weave, namely a weave in which the warp or weft is divided into two or more series, which appear both on the face and on the reverse of the cloth. The design produced is identical on the front and the back of the cloth, except that the colours are reversed. The earliest known examples of compound weave textiles come from Western China and are of the warp-faced variety, in which the warp threads (the vertical, tension bearing threads on a loom, contrary to the weft threads, which are passed under and over the warp threads) are combined into series and the patterns appear in the warp. They belong to the Warring States and the Han periods. These textiles were produced in their thousands and then sent in the form of small bales as wages, trade goods and so forth, to cities and communities living in Central Asia and beyond.

Until the coming of (warp-faced) Chinese silks in Central Asia, the local weaving technology seems to have favoured cloths in which the pattern is in the weft. In addition, wool was widely used for textiles rather than silk. It would appear that some unknown weaver(s), being confronted with the warp-faced compound weaves imported from China, started to experiment and produced a technique for weaving compound weave textiles in the weft form using both silk and wool; examples of this type of textile have been found at sites such as Lou-lan, in Xinjiang. And weft-faced forms in wool (rather than silk and wool) were found at Niya, also in Xinjiang, dating to the first quarter of the first millennium AD. These and other pieces suggest that weft-faced compound weave textiles in either silk or wool (or both), were being produced in Central Asia sometime in the first to third centuries AD. Interestingly enough, shortly afterwards weft-faced forms of textiles started to appear in China, as these textiles and their technique travelled eastwards again.

The production of weft-faced compound weave textiles continued well into the Medieval period, when wool with cotton versions (Iranian influence?) are found at Egyptian archaeological sites, notably at Fustat (the early capital of medieval Islamic Egypt) and Quseir al-Qadim, an obscure port on the Red Sea coast of Egypt. And the tradition still continues.
The spread of Buddhism in Central Asia

Jonathan Silk

NOTHING CERTAIN IS KNOWN of the Buddha or his earliest communities. The reasons for this are numerous, beginning with the absence of writing in India until several centuries after the Buddha’s lifetime (setting aside the Indus Valley inscriptions, which may be writing, but if so, remain undeciphered). Whatever the Buddha may have preached, and whatever was said about him, therefore, was transmitted only orally for a long time.

The result is that we have a good idea of what certain communities believed about the Buddha, but we know nothing historical. In terms of his community, putatively originally nomadic, at some unspecified time it began to establish settled monastic institutions, but it was likewise hundreds of years before, what we assume to have been, the earliest monastic architecture in wood – long decayed to oblivion – gave way to edifices in stone. Therefore, even the earliest material remains of institutional Buddhism in India are forever lost to us. It is not until the time of the great emperor Asoka in the early 3rd century BCE that we begin to obtain concrete information, much of which comes to us from the inscriptions the emperor had erected throughout the Indian subcontinent. These provide our first clues of the geographical spread of Buddhism. Asoka is known for his sponsorship of the construction of monastic sites, and the establishment of monastic institutions that would become part of the basic structure of Buddhism. This form of the religion that we know from the time of Asoka is known as Hinayana Buddhism, and it was this form of the religion that spread to Central Asia and East Asia.

A relay race
Given the geography of Asia, the routes that Buddhism followed in its spread naturally followed the contours of the land, the paths already traced out since time immemorial. Many of the routes exist even now, although in some respects no doubt misleadingly, referred to as the Silk Routes. Of course, it was much more than silk that was traded. Moreover, refined silk is a Chinese product, and the implication that the trading routes invariably linked China with lands west is misleading, for these routes were certainly, in terms of volume, much more interregional networks of short-distance trade. This has implications for the transmission of Buddhism too, since it is very much the exception rather than the rule that individuals would travel long distances. We should think rather of a relay race, with a baton being handed from one runner to another, each member of the team remaining within a relatively limited area.

Most of the attention paid to the spread of Buddhism across Central Asia concentrates on its progress north out of the Bamiyan valley, through mountain passes, then eastward, along other than the main branch of the Taklamakan desert, through the oasis towns there, to the north through Keshgar, Kucha, and Turfan, to the south through Khotan, Niya, and Yarkand, to the southwest through Dunhuang oasis. However, Buddhism in fact also spread west, into Bactria, the Greek lands once conquered by Alexander, to places such as Termes along the Aral Darya (Izov) river. We do not actually know quite how far Buddhism spread west, or why, and when it stopped, and this remains an interesting topic for future research.

Multilingual literature of Buddhism

As Buddhism – its teachings, its scriptures, its practices, and ultimately even its monastic institutions – spread, one important issue was that of language. In what language would believers receive the Buddha’s word? There are two models: either scriptures were preserved in the ‘Church Language’, in the same fashion that Jews generally preserve the Bible in Hebrew in no matter what language they speak, or the texts may be linguistically localized. In Buddhism, we find both of these models, and not infrequently, we find them together. That is, texts might be revered in Sanskrit, but at this medium remained foreign to Central Asian people, the texts were either translated, paraphrased, or rewritten in a local language – often though with the preservation of a significant Sanskrit vocabulary, just as we do when we talk of the Buddha, his Dharma, and the like. This led to the production of a multilingual literature of Buddhism across Central Asia, in languages like Khotanese (Middle Iranian), Sogdian (another form of Iranian), Uigur (Turkish), Tangut (a Tibetan language, written in a variant of Chinese script), Tibetan, and of course, Chinese. The Chinese, as is well known, were relentless in their quest for Buddhist scriptures, and engaged, albeit entirely unsuccessfully, in the greatest translation project in world history, rendering huge numbers of very often arcane texts into an evolving form of written ‘classical’ Chinese.

By the beginning of the 21st century two main lines of production in the Middle East can be identified, namely the Egyptian and Iranian forms. The Egyptian versions are now totally in cotton, rather than wool or linen. The Egyptian form is loosen woven and flexible, which is not so surprising, as this type of cloth is also and is used in the production of monk’s clothing. A little more surprising, however, is that some of the designs being used can be traced back to Roman period forms. This form of compound weave cloth is often called ‘Ahmim’ after the middle Egyptian city of Ahmim where archaeological excavations of this type of weaving have been recorded from the Roman period. They are still being produced here, thus continuing a tradition. Some remains have also been found of Zoroastrianism – the first world religion, which was founded by the prophet Zarathustra (or Zoroaster). From this period we have obtained in China. But that does not mean necessarily that the objects themselves were produced even within the sphere of Chinese cultural, much less military and political, control. Rather, it is a tribute to the vitality of trade that such goods – luxury goods that they may have been – were widely available along these corridors.

The exhibition show on at the Hermitage in Amsterdam highlights a variety of aspects of the presence of Buddhism and its spread across Asia – and it is through the remarkable physical objects produced: sculptures, wall-paintings, banners, and so on. The latter were often produced on silk, a product that the artists could only have obtained in China. But that does not mean necessarily that the objects themselves were produced even within the sphere of Chinese cultural, much less military and political, control. Rather, it is a tribute to the vitality of trade that such goods – luxury goods that they may have been – were widely available along these corridors.

The Network | 41
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References
2 idem: 172
5 See for example, VA 780 1983 and 243 1890, Winterthur Art Gallery 8129 (joint exhibition with Galerie des Arts Asiatiques de Genève) Art de 2016 and Textile Museum 311 (mattress covers)
6 British Museum 21703

The spread of Buddhist manuscripts. While there is no question that Buddhist scriptures (sūtras) were transmitted orally, originally and even after the innovation of writing, in the states in which those oral texts existed were naturally entirely ephemeral. Even when we have texts, transmitted in Palin Sri Lanka for instance, which may in origin have been older, these have been subject to generations of revision. The Gandhari Buddhist manuscripts, written on birch-bark, provide us with our oldest sources of Buddhist literature, and demonstrate the highly literate and sophisticated state of Buddhism in the Northwest of the subcontinent from around the first century BCE.

The expeditions and the collection
The remains of the Buddhist art form rediscovered until the late nineteenth century, when Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Sweden and Japan organized the earliest expeditions and competed for the most important discoveries. The Russian expeditions hit their stride after 1905 under the leadership of scholars such as Mikhail Beresovskiy, Sergei Oldenburg and Pyotr Kozlov. Dozens of expeditions headed by Russian archaeologists set off for Mongolia, western China, and, in the Soviet period, to the new independent Central Asian republics. In numerous places, they uncovered treasures spanning many centuries, from long before Christ to the Middle Ages. In the Hermitage in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), these were put on display as ancient treasures of the Soviet Union with its slightly interest in this fascinating episode of human history is greatest. In terms of his community, putatively originally nomadic, at some unspecified time it began to establish settled monastic institutions, but it was likewise hundreds of years before, what we assume to have been, the earliest monastic architecture in wood – long decayed to oblivion – gave way to edifices in stone. Therefore, even the earliest material remains of institutional Buddhism in India are forever lost to us. It is not until the time of the great emperor Asoka in the early 3rd century BCE that we begin to obtain concrete information, much of which comes to us from the inscriptions the emperor had erected throughout the Indian subcontinent. These provide our first clues of the geographical spread of Buddhism, and indicate that already quite some time after the Buddha lived and taught in the North central Gangetic valley, his tradition had spread toward the Northwest, the area now known as Pakistan and Afghanistan, ancient Mathura and Gandhara. This region has also yielded our earliest written Buddhist manuscripts. While there is no question that Buddhist scriptures (sūtras) were transmitted orally, originally and even after the innovation of writing, in the states in which those oral texts existed were naturally entirely ephemeral. Even when we have texts, transmitted in Palin Sri Lanka for instance, which may in origin have been older, these have been subject to generations of revision. The Gandhari Buddhist manuscripts, written on birch-bark, provide us with our oldest sources of Buddhist literature, and demonstrate the highly literate and sophisticated state of Buddhism in the Northwest of the subcontinent from around the first century BCE.

A relay race
Given the geography of Asia, the routes that Buddhism followed in its spread naturally followed the contours of the land, the paths already traced out since time immemorial by traders. These were, of course, the main routes of commerce of central China and Mongolia. To this day, the Hermitage has continued its excavations in Central Asia – for instance, in the Sogdian city of Panjakent in Tajikistan. These projects are now led by experts from the Oriental Department of the State Hermitage Museum, who are also involved in the making of this exhibition.

Martijn van Schieven, press and publicity coordinator Arnold Bijl, exhibition staff member

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As noted above, the second line is the Iranian form. They are now called zilu and are being produced in various centres, notably, until this day, in the area of Maybod in Central Iran close to Yazd. Zilu are made in cotton and are produced on vast upright looms. These handweaving textiles are used as rugs and large floor coverings and are popular in mosques, where they lasted for decades. Although these textiles were in widespread use in the 20th century, by the beginning of the 21st century virtually every zilu loom in Iran had ceased to work and many were broken and burnt. Their demise after nearly two thousand years of history was due to another form of technological trade development, namely the import of vast quantities of cheap, machine made textiles,
Australia warmly invites Asia Scholars to ICAS 9 in Adelaide
The 9th International Convention of Asian Scholars
5-9 July, 2015, Adelaide, Australia
ICAS 9 will be hosted by an international team of experts, spearheaded by Adelaide’s three leading universities: University of Adelaide, Flinders University of South Australia and the University of South Australia; in cooperation with the Asian Studies Association of Australia. Interested parties can participate as commentators, speakers (paper, panel, roundtable), exhibitors, contestants (ICAS Book Prize), or presenters (books and dissertations).

Call for papers
To participate in a panel or roundtable, please visit our submissions site for further information and application forms.
Visit: www.icassecretariat.org
Submission deadline: 10 Sept 2014

ICAS Book Prize
Established in 2004, the ICAS book prize aims to create an international focus for publications on Asia while increasing their worldwide visibility. The biennial ICAS Book Prize is awarded to outstanding English-language works in the field of Asian Studies. Prizes are aimed at Asia scholars who would like an international focus for publications on Asia while increasing their visibility worldwide.

Prize aims to create an international focus for publications on Asia while increasing their worldwide visibility. The biennial ICAS Book Prize is awarded to outstanding English-language works in the field of Asian Studies. Prizes are also awarded to the best dissertation in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The Colleagues Choice Award gives the academic community the opportunity to voice their opinion as well. Votes can be cast online through the IBP Polling Booth from 16 Mar-16 June 2015.

Exhibition Hall
ICAS attracts participants from over 60 countries to engage in global dialogue on Asia that transcends boundaries between academic disciplines and geographic areas. Since 1998, ICAS has brought more than 17,000 academics together at eight conventions. During the convention, publishers and (academic) organisations in the field of Asian studies have the opportunity to display their products in the ICAS Exhibition Hall, which is open to the public.


ICAS Book Presentation Carousel
This new element at the convention is aimed at young doctors who would like a chance to pitch their dissertations at ICAS 9 (defended within the period June 2013 to June 2015). They will be allotted a half hour to make their presentation in a specially reserved meeting room. Presenting a PhD does not exclude any young doctors from participating in a panel or roundtable at ICAS 9.

ICAS Exhibition Hall, which is open to the public.

PhD Pitch
This new element at the convention is aimed at young doctors who would like a chance to pitch their dissertations at ICAS 9 (defended within the period June 2013 to June 2015). They will be allotted a half hour to make their presentation in a specially reserved meeting room. Presenting a PhD does not exclude any young doctors from participating in a panel or roundtable at ICAS 9.

ICAS Exhibition Hall, which is open to the public.

A-ASIA Inaugural Conference
Asian Studies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interactions
15-17 January 2015, Accra, Ghana

Organized by the Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASIA) in cooperation with The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)
In 2015, the A-ASIA in cooperation with ICAS will organize its first biennial conference with the theme ‘Asian Studies in Africa. Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interactions’. It will be the first conference held in Africa that will bring together a multidisciplinary ensemble of scholars and institutions from the continent and the rest of the world with a shared focus on Asia and Asia-Africa intellectual interactions.

The conference, through panels and roundtables, will seek to assess the prospects for Asian studies in Africa in a global context by addressing a number of theoretical and empirical questions that such enterprise will raise: How should Asian studies be framed in Africa? Is Asian studies relevant for Africa? What is the current state of capacity (institutional, intellectual, personnel, and so on) for Asian studies in Africa and can this be improved and how? How does (and must it?) Asian studies dovetail into the broader field of ‘Asia studies’ as it has been developed, mainly in Western institutions? Are new narratives required for understanding the very visible contemporary presence of Asia in Africa and Africa in Asia? What is the current state of research on Africa-Asia (transnational) linkages?

A-ASIA/ICAS Africa-Asia Book Prize
The A-ASIA/ICAS Africa-Asia Book Prize (AABBP) was established by the ICAS Secretariat and A-ASIA in 2013. The aim is to create, by way of a global competition, both an international focus for publications on Africa-Asia, while increasing their visibility worldwide.

Academic publications in the Humanities and Social Sciences which are eligible should either be written by an African scholar on an Asian topic or by any other author on Africa-Asia (transnational) linkages. Authors from Africa and Asia are strongly encouraged to submit their books. All academic books published in English, French and Portuguese between 2009 and 1 July 2014, on topics pertaining to Africa-Asia are eligible. The winner of the Prize will be invited to ICAS 9 in Adelaide (5-9 July 2015) to present his or her book during the ICAS Book Presentation Carousel.

The deadline is 1 July 2014. For further information, rules and regulations go to: http://africas.asia/asia-icas-africa-asia-book-prize

A-ASIA website: www.a-asia.org
Conference website: http://africas.asia
Announcements

International Conference
Changing Patterns of Power in Historical and Modern Central and Inner Asia
7-9 August, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

A THREE-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE organised by the International Unit for Central and Inner Asian Studies (Ulaanbaatar), in collaboration with IIAS, and hosted by Ulaanbaatar University.

This conference aims to highlight the current state of knowledge in research on the history of Central and Inner Asia since the twelfth century until the present day, and to contribute to the debate on the role and position of Central and Inner Asia during much of the second millennium.

Among other things, the conference seeks to address how patterns of power are reflected in the process of social adaptation, how this process allows former elites to retain their privileged access to resources, material and ideological assets, and how it enables new elite groups to emerge. The organisers stress the trans-regional character of communication and exchange of the socio-political concepts and cultures between Central and Inner Asia and other world regions, because patterns of power exercised by the Central and Inner Asian ruling elites have neither simply been imposed by external players, nor generated by the society in isolation. The geographical scope of the conference is, understandably, large. The organisers construe Central and Inner Asia to refer to the huge expanse of land from the Urals in the west to beyond Mongolia and deep into modern China in the east.

Registration and information
The call for papers is closed. People interested in the subject and who would like to attend the conference can contact Ms Martina van den Haak at m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl

More information: http://tinyurl.com/power-central-asia

IIAS National Master’s Thesis Prize 2014
IIAS offers an annual award for the best national master’s thesis in the field of Asian Studies, in the Netherlands.

The Award
– The honorary title of ‘Best Master’s Thesis’ in Asian studies
– A maximum three month stipend to work at IIAS, 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 October 2013 – 30 September 2014
– 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 2014, 9.00 am
Submissions should be sent to:
Secretariat
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)
P.O. Box 9500
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
iias@iias.nl

Professor Helen Siu

23rd Wertheim Lecture
When Village Meets Urban Tsunami: Cultivating Space, History and Cultural Belonging in South China
18 June 2014, 15:00-16:00
Agnietenkapel, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 229-231, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

THE 23RD WERTHEIM LECTURE will be held by Professor Helen Siu from Yale University. Based on archival research and fieldwork, she will focus on village life in a district of Guangzhou that has become a central business district. Villagers are rapidly absorbed by the thriving city while they cling onto collective rural statuses of a Maoist era. Excluded from city life for decades, they now carry a complicated historical baggage to join China’s fast forward march to modernity. They shrewdly employ a rural legacy to game big time real estate, and create new livelihoods, sociality, and cultural belonging.

The lecture identifies key features in China’s expanding urbanities. It challenges linear categories of development and highlights the use of history and multiple cultural-referencing by local agents as they face global restructuring, embrace nationalist aspirations, and confront state-market interface in their daily lives.

Honouring the legacy of Professor Wim Wertheim, the founding father of Asian studies at the University of Amsterdam, the annual Wertheim Lecture is co-organised by the Moving Matters programme group of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), and the Graduate School for Social Sciences (GSSS) of the University of Amsterdam.

Registration (required)
There are limited seats available.

Please register online via: http://tinyurl.com/wertheim23

More information: http://tinyurl.com/power-central-asia

Photo © Ania Blazejewska

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More information: http://tinyurl.com/power-central-asia

Photo © Ania Blazejewska
Announcements continued

New Website

Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

It is our pleasure to invite you to visit the new website www.rethinking.asia

As the programme evolves, the website will develop into a database on decentred knowledge of Asia in an interconnected global environment. In addition to the convenors, we will add the participants involved in each event and their biography and affiliations. The event reports will also be published on the website.

Coordinator: Titia van der Maas (t.van.der.maas@iias.nl)

New Publication

Globalising Migration History

Edited by Jan Lucassen (BSG) & Leo Lucassen (Leiden University), 2014

Globalising Migration History. The Eurasian Experience (16th-21st centuries)
Published by Brill
ISBN: 9789004271357
500 pp.

This publication is the result of the conference Migration and Mobility in a Global Historical Perspective, held at the National Taiwan University (NTU) in August 2010, and sponsored/organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the National Science Council (NSC) of Taiwan.

Globalising Migration History is a major step forward in comparative global migration history. Looking at the period 1500-2000 it presents a new universal method to quantify comparative global migration history. Looking at the period 1500-2000 it presents a new universal method to quantify comparative global migration history.

Contributors are: Sunil Amrith, Ulbe Bosma, Gis Kessler, Jelle van Lottum, Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, Mimelle Mazarid, Adam McKonen, Atsushi Ota, Vijaya Ramawamy, Genmu Saito, Jianfa Shen, Ryudo Shimada, Willard Sunderland, and Yuki Umeno.

Series

This volume is the third in a series on Global Migration History, which started with Migration History in World History (edited by Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen & Patrick Manning, Brill 2010) and was recently followed by Migration and Membership Regimes in Global and Historical Perspective (edited by Ulbe Bosma, Gis Kessler and Leo Lucassen, Brill 2013). These publications fit in the Global Migration History Programme of the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam and in the Leiden University interdisciplinary research profile Global Interactions (GI).

IIAS publications

Global Asia

book series

www.iias.nl/publications

Volker Gottowik, 2014

Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia. Magic and Modernity
Amsterdam University Press, ISBN: 9789089644244
225 pages, €79,00

Drawing on recent ethnographic research in Southeast Asia, the authors demonstrate how religious concepts contribute to meeting the challenges of modernity. Modernity is surrounded by an almost magic aura that casts a spell over people all over the world. In fourteen chapters, the authors demonstrate how religious concepts and magic practices contribute to meeting the challenges of modernity. Against this background, religion and modernity are no longer perceived to be in contradiction: rather, it is argued that a revision of the western notion of religion is required to understand the complexity of ‘multiple modernities’ in a globalized world.

Matthias Maass, 2014

Foreign Policies and Diplomacies in Asia. Changes in Practice, Concepts, and Thinking in a Rising Region
Amsterdam University Press, ISBN: 9789089645401
208 pages, €79,00

The observation of a rising Asia and of rapidly growing economic powerhouses in the region has become a truism. Nonetheless, the impressive economic development stories in the region provide the backbone for the growing political strength and assertiveness of Asian countries. Asia’s economic prowess is rapidly being transferred onto the diplomatic stage. In light of these larger developments, the authors of this volume investigate the regional and international implications of a rising Asia and problematize critical developments.

Film festival

37th Douarnenez Film Festival

22-30 August 2014, Douarnenez, France
www.festival-douarnenez.com

The first Douarnenez Film Festival in 1978 resulted from the mobilisation of a vast network of cultural, artistic and activist organisations. From the outset interest in world cultures led us towards the struggles and resistance of other peoples. The notion of cultural diversity, the other, elsewhere, was already meaningful 37 years ago well before negotiations led to the signing, a few years back, of the UNESCO charter for Cultural Diversity. This notion of human heritage, that of mankind, of language, of culture, of the particular expression of peoples and communities, underlay the festival from its inception, whether these peoples be marginalised or excluded, torn apart or deported, besieged or reduced to silence, dumped or displaced, colonised in manifold ways, dominated against their will or in rebellion. Many of these peoples are in a phase of reconstitution and are telling their own story through film, literature, photography and music. 37 years on, almost two generations later, the glamour of the world is still central to our preoccupations. Douarnenez Film Festival is a major cinematographic event combining creativity and collective reflection, art and criticism to explore the complexity of the world.

This year’s edition, taking place between 22-30 August, will be dedicated to the people from the Indonesian Archipelago, their culture, their rich history and the everyday struggle to preserve their identity. The Timorese people and Papuans will be equally honoured during the 9 days of the festival. Through the 60 to 70 films, features, documentaries, animation, short and long, the Douarnenez Film Festival will try to be a platform for these people and their culture. Among the guests will be filmmakers, journalists, writers, human rights activists, historians … from Indonesia, Timor Leste, Western Papua as well as Europe.

Photo: Still shot from ‘Shape of the Moon’ directed by Leonard Rettel Helmrich.
IIAS Research and Projects

Asian Borders Research Network (www.asianbordersnetwork.net)
The Asian Borders Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between Africa and Eastern Asia. The network ARBN are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental issues. The ARBN conferences held in these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. The fourth conference, organised with the Southeast Asia Research Centre of the City University of Hong Kong will take place from 8-10 December 2014 in Hong Kong, and is entitled: ‘Activated Borders: Re-openings, Ruptures and Relationships’.
Coordinator: Er de Maaker (emaaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)
The EPA-research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitics of energy security on the one hand, and policy to increase energy efficiency and estimating the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy resources on the other. EPA’s current and second joint comparative research programme with the University of Sydney and Australian Institute of Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is entitled The Transnationalization of China’s Oil Industry: company strategies, embedded projects, and relations with institutions and stakeholders in resource-rich countries (2013-2017). Involving various Chinese and Dutch research institutes, this programme will analyse China’s increasing involvement with governments, local institutions and local stakeholders in the energy sectors of a number of resource-rich countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, notably Sudan, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, and Brazil. It seeks to determine patterns of interaction between national institutions and Chinese companies, their relationships to foreign investment projects, and the extent to which they are embedded in the local economies. This programme is supported by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Social Sciences (KNAW), the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and IAS.
Coordinators: M. Aminieh, Programme Director EPA-IAS (m.aminieh@vu.nl) or m.aminieh@vu.nl, Y. Guobin, Programme Director EPA-IWAS/CASS www.iias.nl/research/energy-programme-asia-epa

The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance is engaged in innovative research combining approaches of political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology to explore the rescaling; and Regulatory governance under institutional voids.
Coordinator: Er de Maaker (emaaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Asian Studies in Africa
Since 2014, IIAS has collaborated with other partners from Africa, Asia and the USA. The AIAS has been working in an initiative to promote the study of and teaching about Asia on African universities and, equally, to promote African studies in Asia. The initiative constitutes a first attempt to sustain a humanities-informed South-South knowledge platform with connections between other academic centers in Europe and North Africa.
Coordinator: Tariq Wint Ngga (t.ngga@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Asian Cities
WITH A SPECIAL EYE on contemporary developments, the Asian Cities cluster aims to explore the longstanding Asian urban “tradition”, by exploring the origins of urbanism and urban culture in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times. Through an interdisciplinary research programme on migrant workers, cities, and urban culture, the research institutes it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, IAS aims to create a platform for scholars and practitioners interested in Asian cities: “in context” and beyond traditional western norms of knowledge.

IIAS Open Cluster

Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

WITH THE OBJECTIVE of reshaping the field of Asian Studies by adapting it to the new conditions of a more interconnected global environment, the three-year pilot programme Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context (2014-2016) seeks to foster new humanities-focused research and educational opportunities by selecting cross-disciplinary methodological questions likely to shift scholarly paradigms as they pertain to Asia. In practice, the programme is built on a wide, transregional network of academic partnerships.

The programme is incorporated in the overall research strategy of the IIAS, which focuses on these three thematic clusters, namely Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia. It includes a range of scholarly activities such as workshops, conferences and summer schools in five topical areas, or fora, that cut across regions and disciplines:

1. Artistic interventions: history, maps and politics in Asia
2. Issues of knowledge and the political economy of heritage
4. Idea of the City in Asian Contexts
5. Views of Asia from Africa

The programme is coordinated by the IIAS, with the participation of numerous institutions in Asia, the United States and Europe, and is funded with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York.

Coordinator: Tilla van der Maas (t.van.der.maas@iias.nl) www.rethinkingasia
IIAS Fellowship Programme

Along with the Research Fellows, who are attached to one of the IIAS research programmes, the Institute yearly hosts a large number of visiting researchers (Affiliated Fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, IIAS also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations.

CURRENT FELLOWS

Mehdi Aminieh
Coordinator ‘Energy Programme Asia’ (IPPA)
Domestic and geopolitical challenges to energy security for China and the European Union
1 Sept 2007–31 Mar 2017

Gregory Bracken
Coordinator ‘The Postcolonial Global City’
Colonial-era Shanghai as an urban model for the 21st century
1 Sept 2009–31 Aug 2015

Bernardo Brown
The circulation of Sri Lankan catholic clergy to Europe, transnational religious networks, and global Christianity in South Asia
1 Oct 2013–31 July 2014

Yung-mau CHAO
Visiting Professor, Taiwanese Chair of Chinese Studies (BICCR)
15 Jan–15 July 2014

Young Chul CHO
Visiting Professor, Korea Studies Chair (Korea Foundation)
i) Nationalism and cultures ofjährisecurity in East Asia
ii) Indigenous IR theory production in Asia
1 Sept 2013–31 May 2014

Romain Dittgen
Spatial aspects of the Chinese presence in Sub-Saharan Africa
2 Jan–30 June 2014

Ana Dragoljovic
Indoic genealogy and forms of relatedness: rethinking dynasty and citizenship
1 Dec 2013–30 July 2014

Swargjyoti Gohain
Imagined places: politics and narratives in a disputed Indo-Tibetan borderland
1 Sept 2013–30 June 2014

Jenna Grant
Technology, clarity, and uncertainty: an ethnography of biomedical imaging in Phnom Penh
20 Jan–19 Oct 2014

Pralay Kanungo
Visiting Professor, ICCR Chair for the Study of Contemporary India
Indian Politics
1 Sept 2013–31 Aug 2015

Viet Le
Representations of modernization and historical trauma in contemporary Southeast Asian visual cultures (with a focus on Cambodia, Việt Nam and its diaspora)

Duccio Lelli
The Paippalādasaṃhitā of the Atharvaveda. A critical edition, translation and commentary of.kāśyapa fifteen
1 Jan–30 June 2014

Rohit Negi
Parks or forests? A situated political ecology of the Delhi ridge
21 Mar–15 June 2014

Talk-wing Ngo
Extraordinary Chair at Erasmus University Rotterdam
Coordinator ‘IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance’
State-market relations and the political economy of development
1 May 2008–30 Apr 2017

Elena Paskaleva
Reading the architecture of paradise: the Timūrid Kosh
1 Sept 2012–31 July 2014

Gerard Persoon
Extraordinary Chair at the Leiden University Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Developmental Sociology
Environment and Development: indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia
1 Jul 2009–30 June 2014

Saraju Rath
Indian Manuscripts in the Netherlands: from forgotten treasures to accessible archives
5 Jan 2004–31 Jan 2015

Carla Risseeuw
Coordinator: ‘Ageing in East and West’
1 Jan 2008–30 Jun 2014

Masaya Shichikawa
Trans-border humanity through case studies of travelling music and migrating peoples in Northeast Asian contexts
1 Mar–31 Dec 2014

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jenna Grant
Technology, Clarity, and Uncertainty: Biomedical Imaging in Phnom Penh

I AM WORKING on a book manuscript about biomedical and technology in Cambodia, provisionally titled, Technology, Clarity, and Uncertainty: Biomedical Imaging in Phnom Penh. This project is based on ethnographic and archival research on ongoing practices of ultrasound use, primarily in a rural clinic, and in clinical settings, and in relation to uneven health-related development efforts since Independence. I have also begun work towards a new project on drug-resistant malaria in Cambodia. Across these projects is an interest in relations between knowledge and uncertainty, technologies and modernity, and in practices through which things become tied to a particular place and time, or not.

In the book manuscript, I use the framework of circulation to approach two key questions about imaging practices. First, how do biomedical images work in contexts where biology’s authority is unstable? By tracing image production in ultrasound wards and movements outside clinical settings, into personal medical files, fading family albums, and pagodas, I show how the promise of diagnostic clarity about illness or pregnancy is qualified by uncertainties. In different ways, doctors and patients are concerned about the quality of ultrasound images and interpretations, as well as how to relate biomedical images to other modes of knowing what happens inside the body. A second key question is: How does the current proliferation of imaging technologies relate to other postcolonial moments? A not-so-long durée of health-related development projects, such as hospital building by the USSR in the 1960s and US corporate philanthropy in the early 2000s, illustrates how technologies configure biomedical modernity despite vastly different imaginaries of public and private good.

It has been a vibrant spring, both in terms of the urban greenery (I grew up in and Southern California) and the intellectual environment. I have benefited from meeting with faculty and attending workshops and conferences at Leiden University and University of Amsterdam. A program of the ‘Bring Your Images’ working group and sub ‘Stance at Museum Volkenkunde provoked thinking about images as relations, and papers at the ‘Buddhism and Social Justice’ conference pushed me to reconsider the relation between material and moral goods in Theravada contexts. An invitation to give a talk at the Institute for Social Studies in The Hague allowed me to experiment with the ethno- graphy of biomedical technology ‘hand-over’ ceremonies as development rituals that illustrates tensions between charity and business.

Being at IAS has generated collaborations, too. IIAS fellow Doreen Lee and I co-organized a panel, ‘Technology, Clarity and Uncertainty: Biomedical Imaging in Phnom Penh,’ at American Anthropological Association meetings. By attending to specific temporalities, we hope this panel will shift debates about technology and modernity at the interface of anthropology and science studies. IAS itself is a wonderful place for independent research, and I am grateful to staff for creating an open and flexible environment in which to work, and for sharing their insider knowledge of Leiden.

ASC-IIAS Fellowship Programme

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

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

Application deadline: 15 March and 15 September each year. For more information and application form, go to: www.iias.nl/page/asc-iias-fellowship-programme
The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for a fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.

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 Heritages
This cluster concentrates on the critical investigation of the politics of cultural heritage, and explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a Europe-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values.

Global Asia
The Global Asia cluster addresses Asia’s role in the various globalisation processes. It examines examples of and issues related to multiplete, transnational intra-Asian interactions as well as Asia’s projection in the world. Historical experiences as well as more contemporary trends are addressed.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualised, multidisciplinary knowledge, with the capacity of translating this into social and policy relevant initiatives, will be privileged.

For information on the research clusters and application form go to: www.iias.nl
EVERY INDIVIDUAL FROM BIRTH, and each disease, comes with a particular elemental composition. Within this broad and interdisciplinary philosophical context, doctors and pharmacists have sought to understand how body and mind relate and how they interact with the environment. A crucial means to do so has been through taste. Sweet, sour, salty and hot taste substances counteract wind disorders and reduce the wind element; bitter, sweet and astringent tasting materials cure bile ailments; and hot, sour and salty tasting substances cure phlegm ailments.

Curating an exhibition on Tibetan medicine was never going to be easy; just consider the fact that its practitioners study the medicine and the philosophical context of at least four years. What helped in making this complex medical system accessible to visitors, and introducing them to some of Tibetan medicine’s core ideas, were the existing Tibetan medical illustrations used to instruct students and doctors: the so-called ‘medical trees’ (Fig. 1). These ‘trees’, through their trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits, detail the first few chapters of the core medical text, the Four Tantras, and aid students in memorizing and recalling the contents during exams and practical work. In the exhibition we present different iterations of these trees and utilise their colour scheme to guide visitors throughout: pale blue for wind, yellow for bile and white for phlegm.

Simultaneously, this exhibition also aims to present a range of truly outstanding works of art, medical instruments and texts – 140 in total – that have been, and still are being used and produced in connection with this learned tradition, which has spread alongside Tibetan Buddhism across the Tibetan plateau, the Himalayas and to Mongolia and Buryatia, on its way adapting to vastly different ‘social ecologies’ (Healing Elements, by Chelsea McCauley, University of California Press, 2012) and artistic conventions.

The exhibition begins on floor five of the museum with a section on the Medicine Buddha, a pivotal figure in the Mahayana Buddhist world who many Tibetan doctors still see as the divine source of the Medicine Buddha. Present-day Tibetan doctors contributed directly to this learned tradition, and the core Tibetan medical compound, ‘Three Fruits’, with 5, 8, 11 ingredients. It ends with a turquoise coloured silk-wrapped ‘precious pill’, which contains herbs and minerals, as well as precious substances, some of which have undergone complex chemical procedures to qualify as medicine. Present-day Tibetan doctors contributed directly to this part of the exhibition, bringing these medicines as well as 35 kinds of ready-made pills and powders, labelling each in Tibetan and English.

The exhibition is presented in such a way that visitors are free to choose their own path through the floors and sections. Visitors can also take a quiz that helps them determine their constitution and then follow a colour-coded path relating to their dominant type force, thus personalising their exhibition experience.

Bodies in Balance is open until 8 September 2014 at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York, 150 West 17th Street, Chelsea. (www.rubinnmuseum.org) The exhibition is curated by Theresia Hofer (University of Oslo) with the assistance of Elena Pakhoutova (Rubin Museum of Art). The exhibition catalogue, Bodies in Balance – The Art of Tibetan Medicine, edited by Theresia Hofer, features essays by leading historians, anthropologists, and practitioners of Tibetan medicine. It is a richly-illustrated volume, co-published by the Rubin Museum of Art and the University of Washington Press.