Central and Inner Asia: New Challenges for Independent Research

The study of Central and Inner Asia faces a multitude of challenges, brought about by the break-up of the Soviet Union, the emergence of new states, the rise of China, the development of new national narratives, and a diminishing interest from Europe and the United States. This edition of the Focus addresses some of the problems, and proposes new policies to promote the proper understanding of a region that, to many, lies in a disregarded area on the map of the world.
The Focus: Researching Central Asia

Pages 23-25

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Page 26 | Irina Morozova discusses how the legacy of socialism and Soviet academic traditions is still very strong in numerous Central and Inner Asian states, yet many of the 'new' nationalist symbols are being used without a proper understanding of their background and evolution.

Page 27 | Nomadic societies have proved difficult to fit into Marxist theory, and their social and political organisation has always been hotly debated in Soviet anthropology and historiography. Nikolai Kradin shows how, with the fall of the Soviet Union, many scholars instead turned towards a new theoretical approach, namely that of a more nationalistic civilization theory.

Page 28 | Jigjid Boldbaatar puts forth that, since the early 1990s, Mongolian historiography has been productive in developing a new understanding of Mongolian history; away from the dogmatism of Soviet thinking and Marxist-inspired theories of successive formative stages, from the primitive to the socialist society.

Page 29 | Access to data on the history of Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang shows some great differences. Morris Rossabi illustrates how independent research on Mongolia, although certainly not without its problems, is very well feasible, yet how that of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang is still hampered by many obstacles.

Page 30 | According to Timur Dadabaev, the collection of oral history in Central Asia poses its own set of problems; the way in which people interpret their Soviet past is often determined by their current situation.

Page 31 | Ablet Kamalov discusses the bias and unreliability of archival documents, which are commonly regarded as independent and objective. Unfortunately, the Soviet archives are often determined by official narratives that need careful analysis and understanding.

Page 32 | Andrew Wachtel’s contribution discusses the enormous obstacles that Central and Inner Asian scholars face. A lack of disciplinary training, the language barrier (English), and their relative academic isolation in their own country prevent scholars from actively participating in global debates on, and publishing about, their region.

Page 33 | Margit Kacsonova presents a general trend in Central and Inner Asian Studies, which still remains largely determined by political developments: a growing interest from scholars from other Asian regions; a substitution of Soviet trained scholars by young academics with a better knowledge of English; and, simultaneously, more research conducted and presented in local languages.

Page 34 | Geo-political developments in the last twenty-five years have had a substantial influence on Central and Inner Asian Studies. Alexander Cooley discusses how the War on Terror led to an increased, but brief period of Western interest in the region, while the Colour revolutions of 2003-2005 in some of the former Soviet republics led to a growing mistrust by the local establishments of foreign (read: Western) presence and research.
2015 will be a year of deepening and consolidating a number of IIAS programmes. Three of the institute’s major flagship initiatives – the Urban Knowledge Network Asia, the Critical Heritage Graduate programme, the Asia-Africa connections – are in full swing, whilst IIAS’s engagement in the Mellon-funded research-led initiative, ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’, with its 17 events planned in a two-year span, is proceeding nicely. And last but not least, ICAS 9, scheduled for 5-9 July in Adelaide (Australia), will serve as another milestone in the already advanced process of globalising the IIAS vision.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

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Consolidating efforts

DURING A FESTIVE CEREMONY on 18 December, Chairman of the IIAS Board, Professor Henk Schulte Nordholt, awarded the 2014 IIAS National Master’s Thesis Prize to Annika Schmeding from Leiden University, for her thesis Who’s the real ‘nomad’ in Afghanistan? Socio-political considerations:

that would otherwise remain hidden, for perhaps many years to come. She has furthermore drawn attention to ethnic groups in modern Afghanistan that to date have received little attention, namely the peri-pastoral groups, often called the jogis and chori frosh, which have long remained outside mainstream Afghan society, and in fact, continue to do so. She rightly opposes this group to the pastoral nomads and semi-nomads, often known by the name kuchi, which due to their ancestry and language do form an integral part of Afghan society.

More information
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Information on the Prize and all shortlisted theses over the last years is available on the IIAS website. www.iias.nl/masters-thesis-prize

Annika Schmeding wins the 2014 IIAS National Master’s Thesis Prize in Asian Studies

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The politics of dancing in Japan

Dancing is illegal in Japan. That does not mean it doesn’t happen, and indeed nightclubs regularly stay open into the early hours. However, since 2010 police have begun reanimating Japan’s old fueiho cabaret law, dubiously used to crackdown on nightclubs. This has been a disaster for Japan’s vibrant underground music scene, an affront to freedom of expression, and evidence of a growing authoritarianism by elites who rely on vague legal and institutional practices. With a push back from Japan’s civil society in the form of the Let’s Dance Campaign, and a simultaneous alignment between domestic and international elites worried about the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics, things may be beginning to change. This article explores the structures of power underlying this issue and speculates on the degree to which recent developments may be cause for alarm or cheer.

Ryan Hartley

The fueiho law

The Meiji period (1868-1912) was a time of incredibly rapid change for Japan and its people. The country was in the midst of its catch-up phase, after having been forcibly pulled out of its sakoku period whereby contact with the outside world was restricted to a few key trading posts. As foreign contacts became popular, emerging as a place of ‘questionable moral virtue’ where strangers could meet, hold hands, and even dance clasply (public demonstrations of affection were a taboo at this time). Police felt that dancehalls initiated public health threat and a challenge to elite desires to redevelop and reform the country within the small normative framework. Occupation authorities in Japan, partly driven by a Christian reformist ethos, attempted to introduce not only ‘superior’ Western democratic institutions, but also specific social values. This was the context for the creation of the fueiho law. The law mandates that nightclubs that wish to allow dancing must apply for a license, and clubs with a floor space less than 66m² will not be issued one. Those with a license are required to stop all dancing at midnight (after the law was amended in 1984). This has led to some comical, and many not so comical situations.

Nightclubs and Japan

‘Every weekday, we DJ’s are breaking the law,’ DJ Emma.

Rising to prominence in the 1970s at venues such as Studio 54 (Manchester, UK) and The Warehouse (Chicago, US), and at The Hacienda (Manchester, UK) in the 1980s/90s, clubs ‘and clubbing’ are now an important channel of cultural and economic globalization. They are also large sources of revenue towards the ‘other’ of the nightclub dweller, reflectively feeding the early seeds of organized crime. The cabaret club transformed again, into the nightclub. Clubs began to open in greater numbers and greater sizes, with mega clubs such as Gold, Yellow and Mission emerging, and catering not only to larger audiences, but also audiences wanting to engage with this ‘cool’ non-mainstream culture. The scene continued to develop in a legal grey zone, with police rarely interested in clubs unless something very serious occurred. By the end of the 1990s and into the new millennium, previous trends in Europe between the developing underground ‘rave’ culture and the police had largely disappeared, as the music and the scene became more mainstream. Japanese club owners attempted to follow a similar path, legitimating and better monetizing the movement. By the turn of the century, super clubs such as Womb, AgeHa, and Air had opened their doors.

However, there were, and still are, domestic structural constraints on this developing culture, which are unique to Japan: the country’s shrinking and aging population, a public perception even among Japanese youth that nightclubs are obnoxious (dangerous, boring, etc), not aided by media perceptions of nightclubs as dens of crime and embarrassing behavior; and busy cradle to grave study/work lives, all present constraints on the scene that differ from other countries. These are in addition to fluctuating pressure exerted by police over the decades. As a result, the thriving nightlife and underground music scene began to change in December 2010, when police began raiding nightclubs in the southern cities of Osaka and Fukuoka, legitimated by the fueiho law. Soon spreading north to Tokyo, the raids became more widespread, with key nightlife institutions being harassed to the point of closing their doors, creating a trickle-down effect of fear upon the smaller institutions.

Nightclubs are more than just party venues. From post-Cold War divided Berlin to minority/jay freedom movements in New York, nightclubs represent key sites of social and political counter culture. They are also a sociological ‘canary in the coalmine’, as the attitudes taken by elites in power towards the ‘other’ of the nightclub dweller, reflectively demonstrates the space and limits of mainstream society at large. Furthermore, Japan’s political elite generates rafts of laws that lay dormant on statute books and unused by periphery state authorities. This has been the case with the fueiho law, whereby nightclubs have been tacitly condoned for decades. It becomes incumbent therefore to ask “why now?” It is posited here that there are three levels of explanations: the non-state (the yakuza), the state (the politics-big business nexus), and the international.

Non-state actors: the Yakuza

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They exist in plain sight, are connected with Japanese banks, property and construction (the Japanese state’s perceived golden goose of economic growth), and even the national sport sumo. They have headquarters (openly displayed with signs), business cards and even their own magazine.4 Largely a southern phenomenon, centered around the Osaka Kobe-Fukuoka triangle, there are many gangs of varying sizes, with three large syndicates representing most members – Yamaguchi-gumi, Sumiyoshi-kai, and Hoso-kai. Traditionally the yakuza have tolerated the yakuza as agents of street level stabilization, removing day-to-day petty crime functions from the police workload. In addition, the yakuza could be considered to be a form of social welfare and training for young misfits, school dropouts, and other potential social miscreants. In exchange, yakuza groups supposedly refrain from trading in firearms or drugs, and prevent internal feuds from spilling over into the public domain.

This balance seems to have been upset around 2009 when, as noted yakuza investigator Jake Adelstein points out, a perfect storm of events came together to break this implicit compact.7 The crackdown on nightclubs could be explained by police attempts to put pressure on yakuza revenue streams. Revenue may come from protection rackets, or narcotics, although Japan’s narcotics consumption is extremely low by international standards and so is not considered a significant enough explanation for the targeting of nightclubs. There is also the issue of an intra-group breakdown of structure, as differing yakuza factions began interecono fighting. Existing outside traditional hierarchies, a splinter group of Tokyo’s
Sumiyoshi-ko, called the Kanto Rengo-ko, are less than discrete about celebrity activities in nightclubs they protect, which has resulted in lurid newspaper front pages, thereby discrediting them.

The International: the US and the Olympics

International factors also play a role, especially with regards to Japan's ideational and political economy relationship with the US. In the post-9/11 landscape and concomitant US 'war on terror', the Obama administration began specifically targeting Japan's yakuza (Japanese mafia). In 2010, a梳理差了yakuza gang) to push up the fueiho (hostess bars), harassing many to the point of closure and going out of business. As in Japan, these laws have been anachronistic and counterproductive, resulting in an increased crime-related perception of nightclubs and other yakuza groups. Residents are now more active in their response to increased criminal activity. These are leading to an increased degree of local activism and perceived local troublemakers. Residents are now more active in their neighborhoods and complaints to police are taken very seriously. Nightclubs have this on stage, and going out on the street and along the street upon closing to push people as they leave.

Ishihara made no secret of his distaste for Roppongi, central Tokyo, Roppongi is a town of two halves. Its older half, also known as the 'Kanto Rengo-kai', are less than discrete about celebrity activities in nightclubs they protect, which has resulted in lurid newspaper front pages, thereby discrediting them. The police also have a political agenda. Many police forces, especially targeting the 'Kanto Rengo-kai', in Japan, there is a lack of any clearly defined laws concerning yakuza (it is not actually illegal to be a yakuza). Therefore, to meet targets it is easier to aim at easy targets (the nightclub) rather than difficult targets (a yakuza gang) to push up the fueiho law. The fueiho lawindustrial and commercial enterprises to gain control over the area. This is why the fueiho law, which is not a law at all, is so efficient in suppressing the yakuza. However, it may be the fueiho law that is the problem.

The police also have a political agenda. Many police forces, especially targeting the 'Kanto

References
1. The law (in Japanese, and yet to be updated) can be found here: www.tinyurl.com/fueiho
3. John Dower details how various cultures arose from this: a sexualized literature (kabuki literature), prostitutes or ‘women of the streets’ (such as the geisha or the Removal of the Kuala Lumpur Fueiho

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‘Strange peoples’

Writing in 1670, Cornelis Speelman offered one of the earliest descriptions of the Sama Bajo of eastern Indonesia preserved in the archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Though brief, Speelman’s account was most influential. His assessment of who the Sama Bajo were, and what they were capable of, formed the basis for later representations of these people in Company documents. Perceptions of the Sama Bajo changed little over the next century, and they continued to be portrayed as simple sea nomads and slaves of the landed kingdoms of Sulawesi. This enduring view influenced the manner in which Sama Bajo peoples were reported on and dealt with by Company officials in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it continues to be influential in more recent accounts of Sama Bajo history.

Lance Nolde

Above: Sama Bajo women returning home after harvesting firewood.

Below: Pile-homes in a Sama Bajo village off the east coast of Sulawesi at low tide.
The description of the Sama Bajo remained mostly unchanged, such as in a memorandum from 1727, where the Sama Bajo were described as “to serve mostly in regard to navigation... and can be compared only to freebooters”. “For their description, and regarding Gowa’s authority over them,” the author wrote, “your Honor shall refer to the memorandum of Lord Speelman in which these Bojos are mentioned foremost as wandering gatherers of goods from every place, formerly only in service for the Makassarese, but now also for the Bugis.”

Even after nearly a century of interaction with these “strange peoples”, the portrayal of the Sama Bajo in Company discourse remained largely the same with little or no augmentation. In a memorandum from 1760, for example, the governor describes the Sama Bajo as “a people who have no home”, who “dwell in any place where they can obtain a livelihood by fishing”, and who are “subjects of the Makassarese and used by them as slaves”. Just as his predecessors, this governor ends his piece on the Sama Bajo by referring his readers to Speelman as the primary source of information. Highly similar descriptions of the Sama Bajo appear in the reports and misives of each successive governor of Makassar until the dissolution of the VOC in 1799, and even in the colonial records of the nineteenth century.

Linking Company perception and policy

More than simply a discursive phenomenon, there is reason to suggest that this enduring impression of the Sama Bajo also affected the manner in which the Company administration in Makassar reported on and dealt with Sama Bajo peoples in areas under their jurisdiction. As mentioned above, the daily reports and misives produced by each governor were not routinely inspected upon entering or departing from Dutch-controlled Makassar. Where the Dutch administration in Makassar put forth tremendous effort beginning in 1671 to circumscribe and supervise the movements of traders from other Sulawesian ethnic communities, the smaller, less suspicious Sama Bajo boats apparently were not subjected to such stringent controls. Perceived as a relatively benign fisherfolk, it became de facto Company policy in Makassar for the Sama Bajo to come and go much more freely than other groups.

This aberration in Company policy proved detrimental to its commercial and security interests. Contrary to the conventional perception held by Speelman and his successors, the Sama Bajo were a vital element of the Gowa kingdom and its political and commercial dominance in eastern Indonesia. Since before the fifteenth century Sama Bajo groups were strongly allied with the Gowa kingdom and the relative isolation of Tallow, serving as fishers, sailors, traders, and warriors, and their elite held esteemed positions within the Makassarese court. Sama Bajo fleets sailed throughout the Indo-Malay archipelago collecting valuable sea products, transporting precious spices and other commodities, and helping to expand Makassarese influence through trade and warfare.

Not surprisingly, the Sama Bajo continued to serve these same functions with vigor even after Gowa’s defeat and they therefore took on a renewed importance in the changed political and commercial climate of eastern Indonesia. It appears that some Sama Bajo took advantage of their special political climate of eastern Indonesia. The strength of such political and commercial climate of eastern Indonesia. The strength of such

A series of events in the 1720s called into question the practice of letting the Sama Bajo travel more freely than other groups. Reports of Sama Bajo smuggling, slave raiding, and involvement in the contraband trade in Malukan spices, increased in this period, and several violent clashes took place between Sama Bajo and Dutch patrols. This surge in undesirable events forced the Dutch to reevaluate their conventional treatment of Sama Bajo peoples in and around Makassar. Yet, within discussions regarding the need to control the “excessively free” and “unbounded” movements of Sama Bajo peoples, the established description of the Sama Bajo remained little changed. Even in the face of these disruptive activities the Sama Bajo were portrayed as simple, benighted subjects forced to take part in the machinations of their Makassarese and Bugis rulers. Accordingly, while Company practice and policy in Makassar regarding the Sama Bajo began to change, the way in which the Sama Bajo were perceived and depicted in administrative records did not. In the eyes of the Dutch administration, the Sama Bajo remained, as one official wrote in 1759, “slaves of Bone and Gowa... such as was noted in the statement of the Honorable Lord Speelman.”

This dominant perception of the Sama Bajo also influenced the manner in which Sama Bajo people appeared, or did not appear, in Company records. As poor, wandering “vagabonds of the sea” [zeeschuimers] who lacked any sort of political or social organization, and who were little more than industrious slaves, Dutch officials apparently could not envisage Sama Bajo peoples holding any kind of status or authority in Sulawesi or elsewhere in eastern Indonesia. Thus, when a powerful Sama Bajo leader waged war against the Sultanate of Bima on numerous occasions in the eighteenth century, the Dutch administration in Makassar just assumed the leader was a Makassarese noble rather than the high-status Sama Bajo he was. Institutional wisdom suggested it was inconceivable that Sama Bajo could hold positions of such power, that they could lead Makassarese troops in war, or that they could govern coveted lands on behalf of Gowa’s king. The strength of such long-held perceptions apparently blinded most Company officials to the complexity of the Sama Bajo and prevented them from understanding the importance of these communities for Makassar and for Indonesian commerce more generally.

So much more

This view of the Sama Bajo as having been marginal sea nomads and slaves of Makassarese and Bugis kings remains common in popular and scholarly literature. Elements of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch representations of Sama Bajo culture and status are often strongly present in more recent scholarship and, as a result, much of what has been written reflects the Sama Bajo’s current socioeconomic marginalization more so than their historical significance.

Recent research in Sama Bajo, Makassarese, and other local oral and written traditions, in conjunction with a more thorough examination of the VOC archives, however, reveals an entirely different picture than these familiar, but inaccurate characterizations of the Sama Bajo. More than nomadic fisher folk, the Sama Bajo in the early modern period were a powerful and proud people who fulfilled a variety of roles critical to the creation and maintenance of Indonesian sociopolitical and commercial networks. They were not only the primary collectors of valuable sea products so crucial to international trade, but they were also navigators and explorers, traders and merchants, seaborne raiders, nobles and figures of authority within landed polities, and even territorial powers in their own right.

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References


This essay examines the iconography of an instructional DVD of GiCheon, a contemporary Korean mind-body discipline.\(^1\) Cultural practices such as these, commonly referred to as qi-gong in China and ki suryŏn (氣修練, cultivating life energy) in Korea,\(^2\) are often reconstructed in East-Asian modernity on the basis of ancient traditions. The DVD was produced to support GiCheon adepts and to advertise the practice to potential newcomers. As a practitioner myself, I am familiar with theories of self-cultivation in GiCheon; within this theoretical context I suggest interpreting the video as a ‘decoding’ of the call for self-development within a visual narrative located in the mountains, particularly through the images of water, wood and stone.

Victoria Ten

Banished, now rediscovered

In the West, practices of self-cultivation are reemerging, after having been banished to the fringes about four centuries ago. Michel Foucault categorized these and similar practices as epimeleia heautou, ‘the care of the self.’ He held that self-care (implying intellectual, moral and physical transformation) was a common ethical axis of Greek, Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. However, within the narratives of Western subjectivity Foucault also identified a ‘Cartesian moment’, climaxing in the 17th century with the relegation of self-care to the periphery of Western intellect, where it survived mainly in the occult realm.\(^3\)

Self-care is rooted in archaic techniques of purification, concentration of the spirit/breath, interiority through abstinence from the external, and practices based on the endurance of pain and hardship. These techniques were shared by a number of civilizations and, having travelled through a number of avatars, are visible in the contemporary era in practices characterized as ‘internal alchemy’. East-Asian and European civilizations share ‘operational (external)’ and ‘spiritual (internal)’ alchemical practices and principles. European alchemical knowledge arises from ancient Greek and Arabic alchemy, which, there is evidence to suggest, developed under East-Asian influences.\(^4\) If the declared goals of GiCheon are healing and ‘spiritual (internal)’ alchemical practices and principles. Turning for a moment to the theory of GiCheon, we could ask what meaning the images might have for the maker and the viewer. I suggest interpreting them as an explication of an alchemical transmutation of the self.

In 2014, an encounter with academic discourses on art and craft marked for me the beginning of the process of articulating my GiCheon experiences. Particularly important in this respect was reading Pamela Smith on the connection between crafts and alchemy and Rebecca Brown on the deployment of visual symbolism in nationalist movements.\(^5\) I do not elaborate here on the nationalist aspect of GiCheon – despite it being strongly present in GiCheon narrative – yet there is much in common between Gandhi’s use of a spinning wheel image for his anticolonial struggle, discussed by Brown, and the deployment of iconography in GiCheon internal alchemy and other mind-body practices. Instead, I focus on the simple semi-abstract images of mountain landscapes (including streams, lakes, trees), which anchor the conscious and unconscious perceptions of the viewer.\(^6\) These images carry extensive meanings; GiCheon flyers, books and websites abound with such visuals, most often focusing on mountains and mountain streams.

The DVD opens with a scene of streaming water. The viewer faces the stream from the front, seeing it cascade between two rocky slopes, down into a little lake, formed and bordered by large stones. The viewer appears to be standing in the lake, with the water streaming at and through him/her. The slopes are covered with greenery, the tree branches stretch out over the water, the passage is flecked by dappled sunlight. The camera then zooms in on the gushing water; splashing and spluttering over the rocks. This visual narrative focuses on the lively, dynamic, crude but graceful vigor of the water. We see the current circulating in a little basin, contouring the protruding boulders, which have clearly been rounded and weathered by the water.

Foucault also identified a ‘Cartesian moment’, climaxing in the 17th century with the relegation of self-care to the periphery of Western intellect, where it survived mainly in the occult realm.\(^3\)

The DVD presents a problem. In accordance with this sentiment, the ‘GiCheon Instructional DVD Volume One’ was produced in June 2002, by GiCheon teacher and practitioner Lee Ki-tae. The target audience are English-speakers, even though there is no English spoken in the DVD. Nevertheless, the visual narrative is rich with imagery, ‘speaking without words’. I argue that in producing this visual aid, Lee paid special attention to maintaining the dignity of the practice, not compromising its integrity, while ‘selling’ it to the general public. Below, I discuss the choice of images used in the video. Asking what meaning the images might have for the maker and the viewer, I suggest interpreting them as an explication of an alchemical transmutation of the self.

In 2014, an encounter with academic discourses on art and craft marked for me the beginning of the process of articulating my GiCheon experiences. Particularly important in this respect was reading Pamela Smith on the connection between crafts and alchemy and Rebecca Brown on the deployment of visual symbolism in nationalist movements.\(^5\) I do not elaborate here on the nationalist aspect of GiCheon – despite it being strongly present in GiCheon narrative – yet there is much in common between Gandhi’s use of a spinning wheel image for his anticolonial struggle, discussed by Brown, and the deployment of iconography in GiCheon internal alchemy and other mind-body practices. Instead, I focus on the simple semi-abstract images of mountain landscapes (including streams, lakes, trees), which anchor the conscious and unconscious perceptions of the viewer.\(^6\) These images carry extensive meanings; GiCheon flyers, books and websites abound with such visuals, most often focusing on mountains and mountain streams.

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of information) circulates within the lake, new water constantly comes in, and some water leaves. As the new ‘water’ – food, sensations, experiences, perceived words and actions of others, etc. – comes in, there is a constant need to ‘purify’ the water. There will always be ‘bad water’ left and some stagnation cannot be avoided. But the relative amount of ‘bad and stagnant water’ can be reduced, in an attempt to achieve ‘better flow’, which is the primary goal of GiCheon practice.

GiCheon stances are supposed to facilitate smooth passage of ‘information’ through the body and mind; heart; food and liquids are absorbed easily, sweat and excrements leave the body comfortably, thoughts and emotions are perceived and realized efficiently, words are said and actions performed with greater honesty and simplicity. In GiCheon this ‘flow of information’ is addressed as ‘flow’ and is metaphorically compared to the circulation of water, visually represented in the video.

The camera’s focus moves from the small waterfall towards the stone basin. This is a separate section of the stream, with a clearly marked beginning and an end. We can interpret this as a human lifespan. Every thing has a beginning and an end, and every form will be ‘unformed’ in the course of time. The flow of life occurring within an individual as a microcosm, and in the universe as a macrocosm, is exemplified in the visual narrative as a mountain stream, a little ‘world in itself’ illustrating an alchemical transmutation.

The view shifts towards the smooth slopes of tree-covered mountains. The camera zooms in on multi-colored wooden pavilions built in a traditional Korean style, Buddhist pagodas and bells, and then a Buddhist monk strikes a big drum in one of the pavilions. In a sense, this progression from a natural mountain panorama towards wooden buildings, metal structures, and the display of culturally engaged humans, is significant. This is the advancement from nature to culture, whereby nature is not discounted, but continues to connect harmoniously with culture. This is typical for an East-Asian worldview, usually categorized as Daoist. In one scene the viewer is shown a red and green leaves; culture and nature are not categorized as Daoist. In one scene the viewer is shown a red pagoda, Buddhist pagodas and bells, and then a Buddhist monk striking a big drum in one of the pavilions. In a sense, this progression from a natural mountain panorama towards wooden buildings, metal structures, and the display of culturally engaged humans, is significant. This is the advancement from nature to culture, whereby nature is not discounted, but continues to connect harmoniously with culture. This is typical for an East-Asian worldview, usually categorized as Daoist. In one scene the viewer is shown a red pagoda, Buddhist pagodas and bells, and then a Buddhist monk striking a big drum in one of the pavilions. In a sense, this progression from a natural mountain panorama towards wooden buildings, metal structures, and the display of culturally engaged humans, is significant. This is the advancement from nature to culture, whereby nature is not discounted, but continues to connect harmoniously with culture. This is typical for an East-Asian worldview, usually categorized as Daoist.

Conclusion
By analyzing the images used in the instructional video, this paper has examined the routes by which Eastern internal alchemy finds its way within Western societies. I explored how various visual images subsumed within overarching symbols of water, wood and stone, correlate with the ‘self’ placed at the center of the visual narrative, creating the dynamics of interactive knowledge and mutual transformation, thus continuing an alchemical tradition and the ‘care of the self’.

This paper looked at the two layers of knowledge involved in the alchemical process of GiCheon. The first is the alchemical operation in the body and mind of the adept, which are related in GiCheon theory, and the second is its visual representation on the screen. But the two layers are connected: visual images direct and shape the alchemical process inside the ‘self’, thus encouraging the transformation of the self. This is how visual depiction on the screen becomes a technique, a medium for self-transformation, a ‘technology self’ in Foucauldian terms. The instructional DVD portrays a practitioner performing static and dynamic stances. He is always in the center of the screen – a site of subjectivity, authenticity and personal power. The icons enveloping the performer include water, wood and stone (rocks); these are not only symbolic manifestations of the physical body, but also of the ‘cosmic’ body, which is nature, surrounding, containing, supporting, and nourishing the physical body. As the practitioner’s ki (qi) grows stronger, s/he reverses the process and starts, in turn, to nourish the cosmos – to carry, embody and transform it, thus effecting an alchemical transmutation on the levels of the microcosm and the macrocosm.

The visual representation of GiCheon theory and practice on the screen, revealing dialectic connections between microcosm and macrocosm, allows a glimpse into the reinvented Korean traditions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries currently exported to the West. GiCheon finds its inspiration and its power in the wilderness and mountainous landscapes of Korea and the alchemical traditions of past and present – traditions which continue to shape the topographical, physical, spiritual and moral lives of the Korean peninsula. The GiCheon instructional DVD is one medium through which East-Asian internal alchemy claims its place in Western or modern society, helping to maintain the global circulation of knowledge and practice.

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References
2 Other forms of Korean ku suryŏn include Kouksundo (고구스전도), Dahn World (단세계), Samseong (삼성), and Seok Mun Breathing (석문 유연 호흡).
8 Mountain worship in Korea is still vibrantly alive today (see Mason, D. 1999. Spirit of the Mountains: Korea’s San-Shin and Traditions of Mountain-Worship, Seoul: Hongmyen). The notion is intimately connected to the idea of sinsŏn (신선 mountain immortal god) from whom GiCheon allegedly originates. The instructors and some adepts of older generations identify GiCheon as techniques of immortality, simply (sinsŏn), another name for ‘internal alchemy’. Understanding this aspect is vital for grasping the significance of mountains in GiCheon imagery and narration; in East-Asian tradition a retreat into the mountains, the space of ‘anti-civilization’, is essential for a successful alchemical transmutation of the self.
Under the Umbrella

Umbrella sociology

Alistair Fraser

IN ENGLISH, THE NOUN UMBRELLA comes from the Latin umbrilla, meaning flat-topped flower, and from umbrum, meaning shade: a flower that protects. In written Chinese, however, the character used for umbrella is not a noun, but a verb, ‘to block’ (遮). While these roots share a common idea – of defence and safety – they also allude to divergent meanings. One is static and organic, the other mobile and proactive. Both represent something important about the protests.

While some – particularly international – reports have depicted the Umbrella Movement as being relatively homogenous and cohesive, the protests have in fact been extremely heterogenous. As the contributions to this issue demonstrate, participants have been focused on action rather than reaction; on the role of acts of resistance rather than a unifying narrative. Indeed, Cantonese-speaking friends tell me that few people actually used the terms ‘umbrella’ or ‘movement’ in everyday discussions. Conversations are more grounded in action.

In 1959, the sociologist C Wright Mills published a now-famous book called The Sociological Imagination. In it, Mills outlines a way of thinking that links the micro-level of everyday life to the macro-level of structural change, between what he calls ‘private troubles’ and ‘public issues’. By shuttling back and forth between these levels, Mills thought it possible to relate large-scale political and economic shifts to personal decision-making. Cultivating this approach means not only an ability to analyse the emergent aspects of social life – of history ‘in-the-making’ – but also in grappling with the significance of individual action in altering its path. In demonstrating the contingent nature of life, Mills thought that sociology could promote social activism.

Fifty-five years later, this way of thinking remains an indispensable tool in understanding current social change and, importantly, one not reserved solely for academics. In many ways the Umbrella Movement involved the rapid development of a kind of mass sociological imagination, in which a direct connection between individual choice and structural change became obvious for a sizable population. The private troubles of individuals, families and communities became fused with the public issue of political representation, and it became clear that action was possible.

As the student contributions to this issue show, the forms of involvement varied tremendously – from steadfast occupiers – but were nonetheless unified under the banner of collective for a range of minority groups to have a voice. Indeed, what has often been missed is that this particular social movement has been a particularly social movement. Though many came to the protest sites for the politics, many stayed for the community. In a city so keenly focused on individual success, where living spaces are so incredibly cramped, the Occupy sites were a revelation. Collectively, participants redefined the space – from a spaghetti-junction choked with taxis, buses and fumes to a spontaneous space of quiet defiance and interdependent connection. The expansive spaces of the protests sites also proved to be fertile soil for the growth of creativity, as art and resistance came together in the form of sculpture, banners, and DIY post-its.

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As some of the other contributions here illustrate, however, people beneath this umbrella reveal a complex range of social divisions: the creation of community is both inclusive and exclusive. During the height of the protests, suddenly you were in or out, for or against, yellow or blue. In this context, the Chinese verb for umbrella, 'to block', helps to clarify more than the English. The umbrella, ‘to block’, helps to clarify more than the English. The Umbrella Movement can do for the Umbrella Movement, though, we might ask what the umbrella, ‘to block’, helps to clarify more than the English.

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Youth participation in the Umbrella Movement: the role of new media

Compiled by Carmen Tong

OCCUPIERS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE AUKIE, Hong Kongers found themselves glued to different new media since teargas swept the streets of Admiralty. News and updates diffused quickly beyond the territory through multilingual updates on Facebook. Working with almost 800 translators, I witnessed the eagerness of netizens’ engagement in the Umbrella Movement. Notwithstanding the reservations of its critics, new media play a crucial role in the mobilization of social movements across the world. Indeed, for the younger generation in Hong Kong, new media is the platform through which they exchange information and perspectives, engage in dialogue, make their voices heard, coordinate resource mobilization, hence enhance their rights and empower themselves as citizens. New media is indispensable as a public sphere for them, as the following 4 narratives testify.

Wing-sum Leung

Like many, I was only an “information receiver” at the beginning of the movement. Not until the birth of a particular Facebook page did I notice the power of technology. Different Facebook pages appeared simultaneously when protesters began occupying the streets. First-hand and timely updates, as well as information about locations of resource distribution and strategies of student organizations, etc., became available online. The overflow of news and rumours caught the attention of some students in journalism, who then set up a news bureau for the Umbrella Movement. This page soon attracted thousands of followers and made its impact by rectifying the inaccuracies spotted on other Facebook Pages.

This was a ground-breaking idea for me. Hoping to enhance communications between students, I came up with the idea of building a platform for students to share and discuss our thoughts on the movement and political reform in Hong Kong. Instead of sleeping on the streets, my friends and I began channeling our energy into talking and writing. We started our own language and shared interviews with scholars, and presented them on our own page. We also conducted our own interviews with other university students. I believe my experience is not unique. Social media helps democratize the communication and democrats’ participation both qualitatively and quantitatively, in a manner possibly no other medium can match.

Alan Yau

The ignition of the first tear gas bomb was not only witnessed by the protesters on the streets, but also online. As the discussions, the police’s action permitted, and the social networking sites and chat groups, constantly notifying and reminding me about the survival development in those days. There was no escape from the sense of urgency and emotion that drives the most inert person into action, in real or virtual reality. I largely a keyboard fighter’ behind the screen in the events, I joined one of my classmates, who witnessed teargas bombs unerringly tossed into a first-aid station, in forming a group dedicated to making first-aid packs for medical stations. With students and staff working together, resources were quickly gathered, and the first-aid packs were ready within a few days. I believe the act of creating an online ‘console’ became a method of the movement in making the space on the internet where they can meet each other. Instant,bottom-up coordination, as exemplified by the work of our group, is hardly a rarity. To maximize the use of resources between occupy locations, a centralized online spreadsheet was developed and circulated among netizens. Users remained anonymous to each other, yet worked together to optimize resource distribution. Although the movement has ended for now, efforts and the handiworks of Hong Kong citizens will forever be stored as zeros and ones on the internet, reminiscent of our glory.

Min-choo Zhou

The hubbub of the Umbrella Movement has gradually died down. While I was not a protester at the frontline, I still feel involved for what I did in transforming the movement via social media to family and friends in mainland China. In mainland China, official media did not report the movement and social media was placed under surveillance. When I typed “Umbrella Movement” in Baidu, China’s most popular search engine, you would be reminded that, “according to laws and regulations ‘none’ results can be found.” This means all information has been filtered. Despite this, government’s great efforts in blocking information, people in mainland China were not completely in the dark. Weibo, the Chinese Twitter, is the most fascinating platform – because of its most tactful users. You need to play with words, for example using allusion or puns, when conveying sensitive issues.

Amid rumors of an extra-territorial National Day, I voiced on Weibo my disappointment with some mainland students’ apathy and my concerns for those on the streets, in asupplementary comment named “Hong Kong is not the Umbrella Movement” or “Umbrella Movement”. This triggered my friends’ curiosity, even though not everyone was sympathetic. Afterwards, I elaborated on my concerns using “Moments” in WeChat, the WeChat app counterpart of Twitter, and defended it from censorship on Weibo. When I reposted pictures and articles from Facebook onto my ‘Moments’, they generated constructive responses, and I felt my efforts in bringing the truth and concern for Hong Kong to people in mainland China had not been in vain.

Hok-yee Siu

“I would like to do a documentary. Can I videotape your dream about your future and about Hong Kong?” This was my opening question to the interviewees in the documentary I made. During the Umbrella Movement, young people were constantly criticised, mainly by their elders, for being idealistic and selfish, idealistic, because their demands for universal suffrage are unlikely to ever materialise, and are certainly doubtful within the parameters stipulated by Beijing. Social media, because their activism was blocked for years, was the only available channel, and in all likelihood their parents to worry. Many critics furthermore argued that the young will eventually, when they grow up, abandon their “superficial post-materialist” values (unrealistic ideals, detached from material reality). I found such cynicism repulsive, but couldn’t help wondering what if such prophecies come true? I started to record young people’s ideas in their own voice for my documentary project. I discovered that, beneath the slogan “I want genuine election”, different protesters harbour different agendas working towards a better Hong Kong.

One protester would like to run a quality bakery with reasonable prices for ordinary people; some would like to become teachers who nurture creativity and critical thinking; others would like to be professional journalists who work for the public. It was most interesting to learn that some of these ‘ordinary’ people in their own voice for my documentary project. I discovered that, beneath the slogan “I want genuine election”, different protesters harbour different agendas working towards a better Hong Kong.

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“This is my choice, the right choice!” Police solidarity and power: some observations of police usage of social media

Leona Li & Josephine Sham

IN A WAY, the new media mobilizes and democratizes political participation. What we know less is how the new media also mobilizes participation in a counter-movement that defends police use of force and violence against the protesters in the sites of occupation. Some people speculated that police officers were ‘indoctrinated’, of which we had limited source of information for further investigation. However, thanks to our connections with the police force, we observed how, during the Umbrella Movement, junior police officers closely connected with one another via police forums and Facebook became bound together into a cohesive unit exuding solidarity. In the process, they shared articles arguing for the use of force and other related actions against the protesters.

On 5 October 2014, many of Leona’s police friends posted onto Facebook their photos in which they were blue, captioned with statements such as, “We wear blue, so what? This is my choice, the right choice!” Against the yellow colour adopted by the protesters, blue symbolizes opposition against the Movement, and, in turn, support for or defence of police use of force against the protesters. Nevertheless, aside from the unquestioned trust placed in police’s ‘professionalism’, Leona rarely saw grounds for such assertions provided. Posts like this drew many ‘like’ responses from fellow officers, but many respondents were actually not working at the frontline and knew little of what was really happening.

What is more disturbing is that Leona received a Facebook private message from a police acquaintance expressing his torn feelings. He disagreed with some police practices against the protesters, yet sympathized with frontline colleagues working for long hours. Such feelings were never publicly disclosed on Facebook. This blog the question: how many have been struggling to have their voices heard, beneath the façade of police solidarity that obscures differences? Police solidarity was shored up by a siege mentality against not only accusations of their excessive use of force, but also provocative anti-police criticisms. Frontline officers, overworked and stressed, felt indignant. “We are human. Why can’t we voice our anger?” Josephine became deeply troubled by the police’s problematic use of the social media. For example, a piece of news on Facebook about the assault against Hong Kong journalist Erik Mak, who was trying to capture an instance of scuffles in the Mongkok protest area, was shared by a police friend of hers. It was described with the statement, “Cool, feeling happy today”. Seeing the many ‘likes’ drawn to this post, Josephine, after prolonged discussion with this friend, eventually ‘unfriended’ the latter. Personal and political relationships have been brought into tension across the city, causing some to become concerned about an erosion of police ethics and officers’ dissipating sense of responsibility and concern for social injustice.

By collectively changing their Facebook profile pictures into ones with blue ribbons, in the same way the protesters/movement sympathizers did with yellow ribbons in the aftermath of the teargas bombing on 28 September 2014, the police officers made a political statement. How such infringement of the Police Force Ordinance, which mandates police neutrality of the police, actually won the consent of the officers’ supervisors is disquieting. The same can be said of the police’s claim for their entitlements to freedom of speech – as the protesters and their sympathizers did – at the expense of their professionalism. What seemed forgotten is that, unlike average citizens, the police is equipped with the power to exercise the highest level of violence as long as it is in the name of ‘maintaining social order’. Forfeiting political neutrality to exercise the abuse of power of the political authority, thus putting more citizens at risk of the routinized use of excessive force by the police.

The voices unheard: gender politics and LGBT activism in the Umbrella Movement

Liona Li, Candice Tang and Clara Tang

Primed for action – but to what extent could individual police officers act upon their will? Image courtesy of Kaok Wing-hei, Richard.

*Quotes were translated from Chinese to English*
Gender-biased and selective media representation is ever-present, and this is not helped by the construction of sites of protest as dangerous, hence ‘masculine’. With frequent eruptions of violent confrontations since 3 October, Mongkok has become a site ‘for man’: “One is not a real man unless he has guarded Mongkok”. Clara was often approached by male protesters in Mongkok for friendly conversations, but also for asking why she was there as a girl. She was frequently urged to go home, or to Admiralty, the other site located in a district of government offices, hotels and business. It was occupied by many university students and frequented by office ladies, thus perceivably ‘safer’ for women.

Women’s existence in the movement has been categorized as one of passivity, vulnerability and victimhood. Clara’s experience, alongside the sexual and verbal abuses directed at female protesters by both police and public, testify to how women’s freedom to exercise their bodies and strength in the movement is constantly policed. The gendering of sites of protests attests to the entrenched divide between the masculinity-coded ‘public’ sphere, i.e., economy and politics, and the ‘private’ sphere, i.e., family, housework and childcare, which seemingly continues to be where women ‘belong’. How unpaid ‘private’ labour limits the inclusion of many other women in the realm of the ‘public’, remains hidden from the purview of the public and many protesters.

The presence of the LGBT community

Since the de-criminalization of (male) homosexuality in 1991, the local LGBT community has been struggling for recognition of their identities and relationships. They have fought for legislation against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (2005/12), and for transgender people’s right to marry (2009/12), etc. Nevertheless, they are still excluded from certain social rights (e.g., couples’ eligibility for joint tax return or to apply for public housing). This is because citizenship in Hong Kong, as in Western liberal democracies, continues to rest on a (masculine – see discussion in the previous section) conception of a heterosexual individual, whose participation in the ‘public’ domain is supposed to be supported by the reproductive labour carried out in the ‘private’ realm of marriage and family: the institutionalized representation of a heterosexual individual, whose participation in the ‘public’ domain is supposed to be supported by the reproductive labour carried out in the ‘private’ realm of marriage and family: the institutionalized expression of heterosexuality. Despite the calls for ‘care’ if not ‘tolerance’ for sexual minorities, these belle the disgust and hatred directed against their alleged ‘threat’ to the ‘majority’, best exemplified in right-wing discourses mobilized during the controversy surrounding the government’s intention to initiate public consultation about legislation against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The LGBT community is not deterred from asserting their identity in the ‘public’, however. They are to be seen everywhere in the movement, be it at the frontline, in the first-aid or supplies stations, in the ‘rainbow village’ in Admiralty, or in Hong Kong Shield, a group established for the monitoring of the use of violence by the police during the movement. Liona and Candice, members of the inter-university activist group Action Q, have witnessed how the Umbrella Movement helps change perceptions and raises public awareness of LGBT issues. For instance, the arrest of a transgender protestor in the confrontations in Mongkok has led people to question whether members of the LGBT community are sufficiently protected by the law.

The linkage between the LGBT movement and the Umbrella Movement is not a mere coincidence. With their exchanges with numerous protesters coming from the LGBT community, Liona and Candice come to realize that the everyday experience of sexual minorities actually sows the seeds for their engagement in pro-democracy movements, something that has gone unnoticed even by the protesters themselves. For them, compulsory heterosexuality is as oppressive and unalterable as the 31 August 2014 decision by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (SCNPC) that rules out genuine universal suffrage (see article by Kwok). Collective struggles have always been the only way for the LGBT community to fight for their deserved rights; such spirit of resistance has been the driving force behind their participation in the Umbrella Movement.

One should also be reminded that sexual minorities are victims under the current undemocratic political system. Because of the presence of the functional constituencies (FCs) in the Legislative Council (Legco) (see article by Kwok), there have been hardly any achievements by the LGBT movement in pushing for the recognition of their rights as citizens. In 2012, legislator Cyd Ho proposed to urge the government to initiate public consultation regarding legislation against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Under the separate voting system, the proposal was vetoed; it secured the support of the majority of the directly-elected geographical constituencies (GCs) (21 votes), but 17 out of 27 of the votes of the FCs were against it. As of 2014, there remains no government plan to initiate the aforementioned consultation process.

We are in the same boat

Many Hongkongers may have clung to their institutionalized heterosexuality and male privilege in making claims for citizenship. However, with blocked access to decision-making through suffrage and rights to run for office in elections, everyone in Hong Kong is a second-class citizen. Without doubt, many have made their yearnings heard internationally in the Umbrella Movement, but the voices of women and the LGBT community are neglected. There is a long way to go for Hong Kong’s democratization, but without redressing the hypocrisy in excluding women and sexual minorities as viable political actors, the battle will only be made more treacherous.

The study | 13

Epilogue

Doing umbrella sociology

Beatrice Oi-yung Lam

FROM THE JULY 1ST MASS RALLY in 2003 to the Umbrella Movement, social activism empowers Hongkongers as citizens. The new media is often credited for how it pluralizes discourses and mobilizes action. Nonetheless, virtual communities remain susceptible to tendencies to exclude rather than include. This mirrors the apprehension towards diversity in the larger political society, rife with demonizing personal attacks that serve no more than to name and shame. In these pages, our colleagues and students from the Department of Sociology of The University of Hong Kong spoke of what happens under the Umbrella in the Movement, at the same time doing umbrella sociology: we share marginalized, if not unheard voices, so as to protect them from being swamped. From these voices we learn to understand our personal troubles, from not affording a decent shelter to being questioned about presenting one’s sexual identity in the protest area, as public issues. On this premise we learn to listen, put ourselves in others’ shoes, and examine our own values, assumptions, interests, and the larger social context in which we find ourselves. In this sense, (umbrella) sociology nurtures our capacity to engage in dialogue and to deliberate, respectfully and reflexively. It is in this way we enable ourselves to guide our communities to democratic decision-making and self-governance – just as what we witness in the flowering of the Umbrella Movement.

Sociology frightens because of how it often exposes the inconvenient truth, just as the Umbrella terrifies, for how it reflects upon and lays bare the cynicism that suffocates local politics. But get under the Umbrella, and we see possibilities of creating ourselves as actors who fight for human dignity, social conscience, and justice, in the process changing our politics and making history. Why should we be afraid of the challenges that the Umbrella brings to our city?

Below: Among others, the study space in the Admiralty occupy area is emblematic of democratic deliberation and organic self-governance from the bottom up. Image courtesy of Jimmy Wong.
At the closing reception of the First Indonesian National Science Conference in 1958, President Soekarno connected the ideals of the Indonesian Revolution (1945) to science, for the very first time. Soekarno proffered that science has always been revolutionary in its outlook as it is based on a meticulous investigation of facts. He noted that thirteen years since the commencement of the Indonesian Revolution, the country had not yet adequately applied science towards the realisation of the revolutionary ideals of a just and prosperous society (masjarakat jang adil dan makmoer), but that he had confidence in the contributions that science could make. However, in order for science to attain the revolutionary ideals, Soekarno urged that the Indonesians transform basic science into applied science. This study investigates the pivotal role of Indonesian medicine in furthering the Bandung Spirit, which advocated lifting people of the world from colonial domination and superpower hegemony, economic and technological self-sufficiency of newly-independent nations, and solidarity with newly-independent nations of Africa and Asia.

Vivek Neelakantan

DURING THE SOEKARNO ERA (1945-1967), medical sciences, particularly pediatrics and nutrition, which physicians related to the nationalist objective of achieving self-sufficiency in economic affairs, shaped the course of Indonesian scientific thinking. Soekarno maintained that the development of science would ameliorate the country’s entrenched problems. In 1951, he declared that Indonesia needed to mobilise in technical expertise and turn its people into a modern nation (berdiri di atas kaki sendiri), nascent nation was capable of standing on its own two feet (majuskul jang adil dan makmoer).

Science in the Soekarno era

Science in the Soekarno era was, firstly, a comprehensive programme of socio-cultural change intended to transform the prevalent mindset of the Indonesians. Secondly, it was the instrument to achieve a just and equitable society. Soekarno’s nationalistic agenda was to mobilise to address the nation’s pressing problems. Indonesia needed to invest in technical expertise and turn the minds of the people and scientists alike towards both existing and emergent problems. Science in the Soekarno era was science as was relevant. It was science as was national and universal, whereby scientific thinking was not restricted to solely Indonesia’s national orbit, but also embraced humankind. While intending to inspire national pride among Indonesians and to nurture the country’s developmental regime, science was also a negotiation tool in Indonesia’s international relations with both the US and the USSR. Soekarno understood science in relation to both Indonesia’s national needs and Cold War ambitions.

Within the existing historiography of Science and Technology Studies (STS) in post-World War II Indonesia, much attention has been given to the role played by technology in the formation of national identity and the institutional growth of science. The contribution of medicine to postcolonial Indonesian science, although significant, receives scant attention in comparison to the careers of, for example, biologists.1 The pivotal role played by medicine in furthering the Bandung Spirit in the Indonesian context – attaining technological and economic self-sufficiency by minimising dependency on either the US or the USSR, and strengthening the nation’s solidarity with the newly-independent nations of Africa and Asia – remains overlooked in mainstream historiography. In actual fact, during the 1950s, nationalist physicians – especially M. Sardjito, Sarwono Prawirohardjo, and Soedjono Djopoesopronjo – emerged as influential thinkers in Indonesia’s scientific establishment, due to their active involvement in the anti-colonial struggle since their training at the country’s medical school at Batavia. Below I explore the specific ways in which Indonesian physicians presented medical problems as national problems and aligned their practice, teaching, and research with Soekarno’s interpretation of science.

M. Sardjito’s nationalistic interpretation of science

The Batavia Medical School, also known as Dokter Ojop, began to train native medical assistants as smallpox vaccinators (meninggalkan) in 1851. The training lasted for two years. In 1953, the school was renamed STOVIA (School for the Education of Native Physicians). Sardjito was the first Indonesian to have obtained a university medical degree from the Netherlands. He inaugurated the new medical faculty that failed, despite its lofty aims. The chief obstacle was financial. The government. Prawirohardjo envisioned that MIPI would coordinate research undertaken in Indonesian universities; it would establish Indonesia’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Universitas Indonesia’s (UI) newly instated medical faculty in Jakarta. As the founder of the Indonesian Council of Sciences (Majelis Ruw Pengetahuan Indonesia, or MRP) in 1956, his focus turned towards imbuing Indonesians with a scientific mindset.

Soekarno’s address at the closing reception of the First Indonesian National Science Congress on Malang, dated 6 August 1958, ‘Pidato Pada Perhimpunan Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia di Malang’, (East Java Dept of Library and Archives, East Java Provincial Archives). The image is in the public domain.

Unfortunately, MIPI was yet another bureaucratic institution that failed, despite its lofty aims. The chief obstacle was financial. The government. Prawirohardjo envisioned that MIPI would coordinate research undertaken in Indonesian universities; it would establish Indonesia’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Universitas Indonesia’s (UI) newly instated medical faculty in Jakarta. As the founder of the Indonesian Council of Sciences (Majelis Ruw Pengetahuan Indonesia, or MRP) in 1956, his focus turned towards imbuing Indonesians with a scientific mindset.
and anthropology. To this end, he encouraged the stimulation of scientific curiosity among students through the independent study and identification of dominant health issues affecting the community. Poesponegoro was influenced by Soekarno’s proposition that every citizen of Indonesia had a stake in the latest developments in technology. He acknowledged the utility of the dictum ‘science for society’.

In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Paediatrics at the UI on 7 February 1953, Poesponegoro presented paediatrics as a nation-building endeavour. He expressed hope that with the advancement of paediatrics as an academic discipline in Indonesia’s medical schools, members of Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (Indonesian House of Representatives) would become more thoughtful of children’s health. And with women’s organisations volunteering to address children’s health issues, the Ministry of Health would hopefully come to approach malnutrition, infant, and neonatal mortality from a holistic perspective, i.e., coordinating paediatrics with nutrition. Indonesia would become a strong and healthy nation (negara kuat dan sehat) if it could reduce infant and neonatal mortality. As Minister for Research between 1962 and 1966, Poesponegoro was in charge of the Department of National Research (DURENAS), which sought to coordinate research undertaken in Indonesian universities with the activities of the research institutes (particularly the Nutrition Institute, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Institute of Biology) that were under the jurisdiction of MPI. For example, the Department of Paediatrics at UI, under the leadership of Poesponegoro, initiated interdisciplinary research into nutrition in conjunction with the Nutrition Institute (Lembaga Makanan Rakyat), an autonomous research institute directed by Poorwo Soedarmo. The aim was to discover cost-effective substitutes for milk that would combat kwashiorkor (protein energy malnutrition) and xeropthalmia (vitamin A deficiency).

Poesponegoro astutely aligned the concerns of Indonesian paediatrics with the socio-economic questions raised by the Bandung conference convened in 1955. The Conference considered problems of common interest for countries of Asia and Africa and discussed the ways in which the people of those countries could achieve fuller political, economic, and cultural cooperation. The Conference gave birth to the Bandung Spirit, which advocated peaceful coexistence between nations, liberation of the world from colonial and superpower hegemony, and solidarity with those who were weak and exploited. In 1964, under Poesponegoro’s initiative, Indonesia hosted the Second Afro-Asian Congress of Paediatrics (Jakarta). At the opening ceremony, Soekarno asserted that the Indonesian Revolution had a vision to establish a new world order of free independent nations, a new brotherhood of humanity, and the cessation of all forms of exploitation. The cooperation between Asian and African nations was not only political, but extended to other fields, particularly health. Soekarno maintained the proposition, “health not only for adults, but also health for the children.” Delegates to the Second Afro-Asian Congress of Paediatrics unanimously resolved that a concerted effort towards eliminating the socio-economic causes of ill health among children would achieve greater social welfare and consolidate the gains of national independence. They maintained that childhood malnutrition was a medical, social, agricultural, and educational problem that could only be alleviated with self-help initiatives of African and Asian nations, without international assistance. Poesponegoro demonstrated his statesmanship by successfully relating paediatrics to the socio-economic questions raised by the Asian African Conference at Bandung. Because of Poesponegoro’s excellent interpersonal skills, DURENAS was able to liaise between Indonesian universities on one hand, and research institutes under the jurisdiction of MPI on the other. Unfortunately, DURENAS remained underfunded throughout the early 1960s, due to the diversion of financial resources to the warfront resulting from Indonesia’s political confrontation with Malaysia, and because of the seventeen-fold depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah.

Conclusion

The salient features of Soekarno era science can be summed up in three points. First, Indonesian physicians used science to critique colonialism, enhance Indonesia’s respectability among the international scientific community, and marry intellectual endeavour with practical concerns of post-war national reconstruction. Second, Soekarno sought to contest the Western monopoly on scientific knowledge and he envisioned the development of Indonesia’s local scientific capabilities. While entailing the transnational nature of modern science, the President also understood science in relation to furthering Indonesia’s national interests during the Cold War. Third, given President Soekarno’s syncretism in assimilating the ideas of others, one of the difficulties when conceptualising a notion of Soekarno era science is to establish what the President’s own contribution to scientific thinking actually was.

In the previous paragraphs, I have highlighted how the demands of national reconstruction resulted in a bias towards applied sciences, particularly medicine as opposed to pure sciences such as mathematics or physics, during the Soekarno era. The practice of Indonesian science was infused with a mentality of mobilisation during the 1950s and the 1960s, in such a way that the pursuit of knowledge would not only address national concerns, but also broader socio-economic questions such as those raised by the Asian African Conference at Bandung, and nurture the country’s developmental regime. Vivek Neelakantan received a PhD in History and Philosophy of Science from the University of Sydney. His current research interests include the history of postcolonial science in Indonesia and the Philippines. (vivek.neelakantan@gmail.com)

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8 ‘Speech by President Soekarno at the Afro-Asian Congress of Paediatrics in Ibana Negara, Djakarta, 25 August 1964,’ Inventory Pidoto President No. 696, Arjo National Republik Indonesia (ANRI).
The first Chinese high-speed rail (HSR) connection opened in 2007, but by the end of 2013 the country had over 12,000 km of high-speed tracks (the biggest network in the world and about half of all HSR tracks in operation worldwide). Service levels among China’s high-speed trains are high; passengers play games on their phones and consume luxury foodstuffs sold on board, as they near their destination at 300 km/h. The perfectly air-conditioned, mostly quiet HSR environment stands in stark contrast to the bustling carriages of regular Chinese trains, in which passengers chat over card games and share life stories, eating instant noodles and sunflower seeds (not for sale on HSR). Influencing traveling cultures is only one of many ways in which the construction of the world’s most advanced high-speed railroad (HSR) network is changing China, a country in which access to travel is closely tied to socio-economic development.

Looking into the local contexts of HSR reform seems especially significant, as the top-down initiative does not allow much room for such enquiries itself. Based on a 2004 central government blueprint, and part of a larger state agenda to shrink China into an increasingly uniform and accessible area, HSR is said to realize a well-off society in all of China, presenting China’s HSR development as an example of the stable, modern and safe image that the leadership wants to be seen using (fig. 1), and although it perhaps illustrates some of my ethnographic research into the social impact of HSR in these two provinces, showcasing the variety of development speeds in contemporary China. I conclude that, while HSR is the ‘shiny name card’ of Chinese modernity, which you want to be seen using (fig. 1), and although it perhaps illustrates the strengths and speed of reform under authoritarian rule, it also demonstrates some of the weaknesses of such a hasty, centralized undertaking, most notably the neglect of the diversity of needs and opinions on the ground.

China’s HSR development

In 1995, government spending on transportation (0.6% of GDP) was one of the lowest in the world. However, HSR development took off at an incredible speed after the Middle and Long-term Railway Development was ratified on 1 July 2004. In 2008, a four trillion RMB stimulus package, which the central government designed to combat the financial crisis, triggered an even bigger ‘Liu Leap Forward’ (Liu Yuejin), named after strategy mastermind and former railway minister Liu Zhijian. The plan was to build a network in which all provincial capitals (except for Chaha and Urumqy) would be within eight hours travel of Beijing (fig. 2), China’s total railway length, for both passengers and freight, will be increased from 70,000 to 120,000 km by 2020, of which at least 16,000 km should be the much more expensive passenger-only HSR rail, a longer stretch of HSR than in any other country.

According to the 2008 blueprint, HSR would limit the negative impact of the global financial crisis and even out unequal regional development. It was presented as an economic game-changer, freeing up existing tracks for more freight capacity and driving regional integration by enabling fast and convenient passenger connections. The optimism surrounding the HSR strategy reached a peak in 2010. In media coverage from that year, a HSR-themed ‘language emerged, including terms such as a ‘HSR network,’ ‘HSR era,’ ‘HSR territory,’ ‘HSR strategy,’ and ‘HSR empire.’ But the project has also had its share of controversy, including the 2011 deadly train crash near Wenzhou that incited a nationwide debate on the speed and safety of China’s current development. After the crash, authorities attempted to bury one of the crashed train carriages before confirming that all victims had indeed been rescued from the wreckage. In addition, there was the scandal of rampant corruption within the now dissolved Ministry of Railways, leading to the suspended death sentences of minister Liu Zhijian and deputy chief engineer Zhang Shuqiang.

Even though the turmoil slowed down its execution, it did not significantly alter the ambitious development plan. With the backing of the new leadership under president Xi Jinping and premier Li Keqiang, investment picked up again in 2013, and soon domestic and international media once more hailed Chinese high-speed rail as a ‘success story’.

In its efforts to boost its soft power and present an attractive, non-threatening image to the world, the leadership has invested much in ‘rail diplomacy’ (tielu waijiao). Over 50 countries have expressed interest in Chinese HSR and deals or political agreements have been signed with at least 8 countries (although in some countries, including Thailand and Myanmar, Chinese rail has been rejected by the local population, delaying action). HSR development in recent years tends to be seen as a successful example of some of the more, and less, subtle mechanisms of China’s adaptive authoritarianism, that ultimately allows it to ‘get stuff done’. Within a few years, the HSR project developed from a symbol for everything that was wrong with China’s regime – from disregard for human life to the squandering of public funds – into an example of the stable, modern and safe image the new leadership would like to exude.

Welcoming HSR

In Jiangsu, just five years ago, a trip between Shanghai and Nanjing would take at least five hours; now, with most of the 200 daily connections taking less than an hour, residents are the envy of public transportation passengers around the world.
In Congjiang (Guizhou), however, no railway connection yet exists. Within a few years, the HSR project developed from a symbol for everything that was wrong with China’s regime [...] into an example of the stable, modern and safe image the new leadership would like to create.

Within a few years, the HSR project developed from a symbol for everything that was wrong with China’s regime [...] into an example of the stable, modern and safe image the new leadership would like to create. (jish), a term that tends to get used for sudden sickness or other mostly negative occurrences. College students who had just returned to both 2012 and 2014 only use HSR when the boss pays, and if they can get tickets – prefer slow trains for personal trips.

Guizhou

In Guizhou, conversations about HSR remain in the realm of speculation, as the HSR connection is still under construction. In the geographically isolated region, infrastructure development is considered a game changer. The plans for several projects tend to be major accomplishments (jingpi) for local officials. In 2012, Congjiang was filled with a ‘finally it is our turn’ sense of excitement about the coming train connection, without reservations. However, there is a lack of awareness of how high HSR costs are in Guizhou.

For once, the mountainous corner of the minority zone would not be ‘left behind’, with residents clearly displaying their excitement about the coming train connection. ‘I have always liked it here, at least since. Young people especially really need this kind of excitement (gijiang).’ Other residents, too, mentioned that they looked forward to watching the trains come by. Until today, travel decisions in Guizhou are based as much on availability as on cost. Migrant workers who work in China’s coastal areas – Congjiang’s most experienced group of 300-400 – trip by train to work. The 300-400 RMB ticket price would be prohibitive to about 93% of the Congjiang population. Locals living on an annual income of 2000-3000 RMB. However, since current long-distance bus prices are also high, the migrant workers themselves would consider using HSR to get to work in Guangzhou. White-collar workers in Shenzhen and Beijing also noted that a HSR connection would make it much easier to return to their Guizhou familial home during their short holidays.

In Jiangsu, the rapid replacement of slower and cheaper rail connections by HSR, has in fact disadvantaged parts of the population. While regular train tickets are heavily subsidized, HSR ticket prices have been set according to commercial standards and are about triple the price. Students – who previously benefited from train ticket discounts – and migrant workers, especially, are affected by the cancellation of cheaper services. As a hailing graduate student put it: “I can now hardly afford the really necessary travel I have to do to see my parents and attend weddings, let alone fulfill the dreams I had when I was young about seeing more of the country during my spare time as a student. Now I just go to the library and read American novels, by ways of my long-distance travels.”

In a relatively affluent province like Jiangsu, HSR does, however, clearly have a market. A growing middle class who travel for work and leisure, and many of whom used to travel by air, is discovering HSR. While the popularity of HSR among the Chinese has increased, with 70% of seats sold for urban populations in more developed parts of the country, for local offi cials, the lack of integration of diff erent modes of transportation. Ridership has increased, with 70% of seats sold for urban populations in more developed parts of the country, for local offi cials, the lack of integration of diff erent modes of transportation. Whether it is poor compensation for land and homes lost to make citizens stakeholders in the project. The contrasts between the regions are exemplary for China’s regime [...]

Looking at the plans for the field of urban development, my fi eldwork shows that transportation reform initiatives, such as HSR, can also serve as an example of the increasing “spatialization of class” taking place all over today’s China. “For me getting tickets – prefer slow trains for personal trips.”

Taking the train is increasingly visible, either you belong at an old-style station, with its broken plastic chairs, variety of snacks and drinks with Hu Jintao’s ‘Eight Honours and Eight Themes’, or you have made it onto the Harmony Express, for which there are also metal seats, while looking at advertisements for suburban “paradise-style” apartments. This separation of social groups in different parts of the country, remains an intentional, or at least inevitable, part of HSR’s branding.

Conclusion

Local experiences of China’s HSR development display a variety of opinions on the (perceived) need for HSR, both before and after construction. In Jiangsu and Zhejiang, respondents note that HSR is better for something to happen than to be waiting, which is still under construction. In the geographically isolated region, infrastructure development is considered a game changer. The plans for several projects tend to be major accomplishments (jingpi) for local officials. In 2012, Congjiang was filled with a ‘finally it is our turn’ sense of excitement about the coming train connection, without reservations. However, there is a lack of awareness of how high HSR costs are in Guizhou.

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For more information on different types of trains, see Seat 61: www.seat61.com. As a Congjiang government accountant put it: “Everyone knows that what they promise and what actually happens are two very different things. [...] But it is always better for something to happen than to be left waiting.”

At the same time, there were worries about the rail connection’s long-term impact. Would the new passenger line replace the old? The railway connection was cancelled in June of the national HSR strategy really benefit the local economy? Or would it only be of use to the Shenzhen and Guangzhou companies that were planning to enter the region? As the line is scheduled to open in December 2014, these questions can now be revisited.

Previous work in transportation studies has focused on accessibility and passenger safety – the 2011 Wenzhou train crash still fresh on people’s minds – stood out in the answers of my respondents. I also frequently came across newly built rail stations in Zhejiang and Shandong. There is a widely held belief that HSR is better for something to happen than to be waiting, which is still under construction. In the geographically isolated region, infrastructure development is considered a game changer. The plans for several projects tend to be major accomplishments (jingpi) for local officials. In 2012, Congjiang was filled with a ‘finally it is our turn’ sense of excitement about the coming train connection, without reservations. However, there is a lack of awareness of how high HSR costs are in Guizhou.

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1 Although ‘train’ (jish) is an overarching term for everything that riders travel on, in China regular rail and high-speed rail tend to be experienced as two different modes of transportation. I therefore distinguish between HSR (train) and (regular) rail for all other types of trains. HSR, usually referring to any commercial train service with an average speed of 200km/h or higher (UCD 2012). For more information on different types of trains, see Seat 61: www.seat61.com.

2 The 2012 research for this article was generously funded by the Rombouts Fund for Chinese Studies. In 2011, I was able to update and expand my research in an International Institute for Asian Studies grant that I was awarded for an MA thesis on the same topic.


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If you’ve been to China, and Beijing in particular, possibly you also went to visit the Temple of Heaven. I can only assume you were amazed at its layout, with numerous squares and circles cleverly combined, vibrant colors, dense and open spaces, exquisite paintings, wonderful architectural components, and so on. However, what you likely saw was just the beauty of the place, but perhaps not its intrinsic significance. Understanding the cosmological symbolism of the Temple of Heaven, will help you see its true value and splendor.

Chen Chunhong

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, or Tian Tan, is one of the largest altar complexes in China and a paradigm of Chinese mystical and cosmological symbolism. It was once a place for emperors to make sacrifices, to pay respect to their ancestors, and to pray to Heaven at winter solstice each year. As the son of Heaven and the ruler of the people, the emperor would intercede with the gods in the name of his people and pray for a good harvest.

The Temple of Heaven was built between 1406 and 1420, during the reign of Emperor Yongle, who was also responsible for the construction of the Forbidden City. The temple was enlarged and renamed “Tian Tan” during the reign of Emperor Jiajing in the 16th century. It was renovated in the 18th century under Emperor Qianlong. It is a spatial representation of Chinese cosmology and astronomy, on which the political power and legitimacy of the imperial dynasties were based for more than two millennia.

Magical layout of cosmology

The overall planning of the Temple of Heaven met with basic ancient Chinese architectural ideas. A double ring of walls enclose the compound of temple structures. The ‘north circular’ and ‘south square’ meet with the Chinese traditional understanding of the cosmos as a ‘hemispherical dome’, situated over a ‘flat earth’. Similarly, the north wall was constructed higher than the south wall, signifying that Heaven is higher than Earth. As the temple was where the emperor would pray to the heavens, the temple’s design needed to reflect this relationship. In accordance with the theory of Hemispherical Dome, the north wall of the temple was designed to be circular, a symbol of Heaven’s shape; the south wall was to be square, representing the Earth’s appearance. The main temple buildings line up from north to south along the central axis of the compound. All the temple structures have a square or circular design, again representing the shapes of Heaven and Earth. The Circular Mound Altar (38°13′) stands in the southern part of the compound, and was designed as a place of Heaven worship; it comprises a triple circular altar, surrounded by a square enclosure. The Hall of Prayer (祈年殿), with its three-tiered conical roof, is found at the northern end of the grounds, and was designed as a place to pray for a good harvest.

Heavenly number nine

According to traditional Chinese design theories, the Circular Mound Altar needed to establish a cosmic connection with Heaven, using the ‘heavenly number nine’ as an effective tool for this as Heaven is believed to have nine levels. The Circular Mound Altar is constructed of three circular stone platforms, each with its own white marble balustrade, and as a whole enclosed by first an inner circular wall, and then an outer square wall. Both walls have four gates; one at each cardinal point – north, east, south, west. Each platform is reached by walking up nine steps. The diameter of the entire altar is 45 Zhang (2⁄3 ten feet); in other words, nine multiplied by five. Those two numbers are often used together to represent the emperor. In the center of the uppermost platform lies the Tianxingshi (Heaven’s Heart Stone). Around this, flagstones pave the platform in nine concentric circles, with each circle comprising a multiple-of-nine number of flagstones; the first ring has 9 stones, the outer ring has 81.

Combined with the traditional calendar

Another remarkable feature at the Temple of Heaven is the link between architectural design and the traditional Chinese calendar. Most notably in the Hall of Prayer. The Hall of Prayer reflects the Chinese calendar with the number of its components. The total number of pillars in the Hall are 28: the four highest and largest columns stand at the center of the Hall, around that are 12 pillars, and again around those are another 12. The innermost columns represent the four seasons, the 12 middle columns the months of the year, and the 12 outer columns the 12 hours of a day. The 24 outer and middle columns represent the solar term, whilst the total number of columns signify the “Twenty-Eight-Lunar Mansions” (28宿), the Chinese heavenly stars, comparable to the zodiacal constellations recognized in western astrology.

Number eight and orientation symbols

The number eight is a Chinese symbol for universal unity, for rebirth or blessing. It also represents the eight cardinal and intercardinal directions: north, northeast, east, southeast, south, southwest, west, and northwest. The number eight is also present in the Chinese ‘Eight Symbols’ (八卦符号), which represent the fundamental principles of reality.

The Imperial Vault of Heaven (祈谷殿), located to the south of the Hall of Prayer, has a conical roof and stands on a single layered marble base. The Vault houses eight peripheral columns and eight internal columns, both sets reflecting the points on a compass. Inside, the floor paving is again a concentric pattern, this time nine rings with each a multiple of eight fan-shaped stones. Thus the first circle has 8 stones, the second circle has 16, and so forth, out to the ninth circle with 72 stones. The total number of stones is 360, signifying both the degrees in a circle and the days in a year according to the ancient calendar. In the center of the vault stands a shrine for the God of Heaven; on four other platforms in the vault you find memorial tablets for eight former emperors.

Cosmological meanings of colors

The various colors found on and in the structures of the Temple of Heaven are so well coordinated, are so harmonized and stunning, that you may be led to suspect that they were placed there by the gods. The colors indeed have a cosmological significance. The gates, walls and pillars of the temple are red, which indicate Chinese royalty. Red columns could only ever be used for imperial buildings; they were forbidden in ordinary houses, and homeowners risked being sentenced to death. All the roofs are covered with dark blue glazed tiles, which are a strong reflection of blue skies and Heaven.

The Hall of Prayer’s three-tiered roof used to be different colors; blue, yellow and green tiles were used to represent Heaven, the Emperor and the Earth. During the Qing Dynasty, the colors were unified into the single color cyan, making the symbolism more explicit: to highlight vibrant plants and good weather. Another building in the temple compound, known as Zhai Palace (齋宮), was built to house the emperor during ceremonies. As the emperor’s palace, its roof should be covered with yellow glazed tiles, but in fact they are blue. It was the emperor’s choice, as he wanted to reflect his pious respect of Heaven.

Conclusion

Many Chinese buildings, old and new, are related in various ways to cosmology, as it is seen as an effective way to establish a connection with Heaven. An old Chinese saying goes, “An object is a Tai Chi world (一物一太极)”, meaning that anything can be interpreted by using cosmological theories. Architecture is certainly one of the most significant ways in which this ‘small universe’ is expressed, connecting Earth with Heaven. So next time you visit China, and perhaps even the Temple of Heaven, take note of all the cosmological significance, and you will see how it enhances all the beauty.

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Translating twelfth century China

With James M. Hargett’s lucid translation of the text and meticulous annotations of the Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea (Guihai yuheng zhi, hereafter Treatises) by Fan Chengda (1126–1193), a renowned official and scholar of the Song, this work has doubtlessly become more accessible to a much broader readership. Together with his translations of Fan’s other three works, Diary of Grasping the Carriage Reins (Lanpei lu), Diary of Mounting a Simurgh (Canluan lu), and Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu (Wuchuan lu), Professor Hargett, a leading scholar in the fledgling field of Chinese travel literature, has accomplished his aim to provide English readers with translations of all four major prose works of Fan.

Hang Lin


CONSISTING OF 13 SECTIONS, each devoted to a particular category of objects, the book offers a wealth of geographical, historical, cultural, and ethnographical data about southwestern China – mainly Guangxi – in the twelfth century, ranging from landscape, minerals, flora and fauna to the history of various non-Han peoples and their cultures. In this review, rather than recounting the content of individual sections, I would like to touch upon some issues that emerge from the work itself.

The original text by Fan, appended in full to the translation, is not voluminous at all. As a typical example of the yuji (travel records) literature, the Treatises is written, as Hargett expounds, in a straightforward “reportorial-descriptive” language (p.xvii). But a closer look at Fan’s methodological approach and the work’s content reveals that it is not a conventional yuji but at once a gazetteer, an encyclopaedia, and an ethnography. It comprises both passages outlining the landmarks, vegetation, and people of particular localities, and reportorial accounts on those areas’ customs and products. For Hargett, the Treatises is not only “a personal memoir of Fan’s happy and restful days in Guilin [in Guangxi]”, but also “a serious and detailed scholarly study” (p.xxxvi). Like many of his contemporaries, Fan was not only a curious traveller but also a keen observer. Containing large amount of personal observations and detailed information from informants, many of them “not generally found in official gazetteers” (p.4), the Treatises reflects Fan’s strenuous effort to report information and to relate these facts to potential readers who probably knew little or nothing about these matters. In this sense, this work, like many other yuji, is extremely valuable as a source work (p.xxxv). The particular value of Fan’s accounts contained in the Treatises is enhanced by his relatively neutral attitude towards the area of Guangxi and the various non-Han peoples living there. For a long time in Chinese history, official offices were sent to the remote and mountainous region of Guangxi for demotion or political exile. The reason why Fan headed for Guangxi was of no exception. However, Fan did not harbor much fear or distress but was surprisingly enthusiastic about his assignment. Guilin was certainly far from the Song political center in Lian (today’s Hangzhou), but when he arrived in Guilin in 1173 he “found peace of mind there” (p.3), and even after his tenure, he still remained deeply attached to Guilin, so much that “he has compiled and edited this collection of minutia and trivia” (p.4). Furthermore, Fan did not find himself in “a strange, alien land” (p.xxx) populated by non-Han “barbarians” who had not been assimilated into the orbit of Han-Chinese civilization. Although Fan collectively termed them as men (literally: barbarians). In fact, he “refrained from ‘looking down on the locals’ people’, most of them probably non-Han, and “they in turn forgave my ignorance and trusted in my sincerity” (p.3). As the issue of political legitimacy became thorny again under the political and military pressures of the non-Han peoples from the north, in particular after the Jurchen seized the Song capital at Kaifeng and took over whole North China in 1127, there was a trend among Song literati to emphasize their cultural superiority over their non-Han neighbors to counteract their political and military inferiority and to strengthen legitimacy of their dynasty. Quite often too, those non-Han Chinese were described as “uncivilized barbarians.” But in the Treatises, Fan has clearly presented another pattern. In fact, Fan’s observations and attitudes reflect how the Song endeavored to “maximize its control” in the southwestern border regions of the empire by “minimizing military conflict with the large population of non-Han tribes-peoples in the area” (p.xxx). As the Song was already facing enormous pressure from the north, it endeavored to adopt a rather friendly diplomatic toward the tribes in the southwest. The Song followed the practice of “barbarian and halter” (jimi), to organize submissive tribal peoples (or peoples at least willing to submit themselves to the Chinese sovereign) into the Chinese administrative hierarchy. Although many of the non-Chinese people on the Song’s southwestern borders were considered partially “sincere”, but more often than not local chieftains still had near-absolute control over land distribution and tax collection within their jurisdictions. But as long as this “loose rein” could bring peace for the Song, it was ready to accept the fact that the tribesmen’s subordination existed only in name.

As is unavoidable in any translation of medieval Chinese text, some may have other suggestions for the translation or interpretation of individual words or sentences. For instance, on page 163, Fan’s original sentence, which Hargett translates as “they receive corn allowances and office appointments but only at the rank of senior or junior envoy”, would much better fit the context if it were translated as “many settlement chieftains […] purchased official ranks [from the Song], but [they got] only military ranks ranging from 9b to 10” Nonetheless, such minor quibbles should by no means diminish the remarkable achievement James M. Hargett has made in his conscientious translation and painstaking study of Fan Chengda’s Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea. Containing rich data about the natural world, material culture, and ethnography in China’s southwestern frontier in the twelfth century, the book is bound to attract both experts and students of Chinese History, culture, and ethnography.

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Reading the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Since its establishment in 2001, the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) remains a conundrum for many commentators. On the one hand, the organisation brings together a seemingly unlikely group of members – China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. On the other hand, the SCO attracts an equally disparate group of observer countries (Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan), dialogue partners (Belarus, Sri Lanka, and Turkey), and guests (Turkmenistan, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations, and the Commonwealth of Independent States).

Emilian Kavalski


THUS, WHAT CONFOUNDS MANY is that regardless of the disembursability between its participants, the SCO not only survives, but also has become the most prominent institutional framework in Eurasia – an area notorious for its aversion to any form of meaningful regional initiatives. At the same time, what makes the SCO even more puzzling is that it is an international organization developed, promoted, and maintained by China. Beijing’s rapid movement during the 1990s, from the difficult task of delineating and demarcating its shared borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, to promoting a multilateral organization and establishing growing economic and security ties with the Central Asian countries, attest to more than just conventional power politics. Instead, the creation of the ‘Shanghai Five’ – the precursor to the SCO – in the mid-1990s, promoted a climate that not only began to alleviate Central Asian (as well as Russian) suspicion about China’s intentions, but also laid the groundwork for a regional political community. As the volume edited by Michael Fredholm indicates, China’s engagement of Central Asian states in various collaborative initiatives during the 1990s, and the subsequent institutionalization of SCO, makes conspicuous Beijing’s socializing propensity. In this
Hindu kingdoms, to the Mughals

Sandhya Sharma’s pioneering volume investigates Mughal Indian society and politics, as well as family dynamics, and caste, through Riti Kal literature. The author focuses on a form of Riti Kal known as Braja basha poetry, which was predominant in Western and North-Central India from the sixteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, although this poetry was traditionally written by male poet-saints, those originating from Northern India are mostly penned from a female point of view.

Rachel Parikh


As A RESULT, Riti Kal a genre advocated the conventional roles of women in family and society, and did so with sympathy and understanding. In addition, the majority of Braja-basha poetry is mystical in nature, focusing on the spiritual union between a devotee and God. One of the most popular themes was the devotion of the female devotee to the Hindu god Vishvakarma and his chief consort Radha. Through a chronological and historical framework, Sharma traces the development of the female role and the evolution of the Krishna-Radha narrative against contemporaneous socio-political and religious environments respectively. As a result, she has found through her extensive research that the literature is a reflection of the changes in North India, from being home to medieval Hindu kingdoms, to being controlled by the Mughals. The author’s use of this traditional form of Hindut literature offers an innovative and fresh perspective of understanding the influence of the Mughal Empire on North Indian life and culture.

The introduction, which also acts as the first chapter, provides a sound foundation of understanding the genre of Riti Kal literature. It is made very clear, from Sharma’s concise overview, that Riti Kal is a genre that is diverse and complex, qualities that have prevented it from being used as a source for understanding Mughal impact on North India. In addition, this section of the book acquaints the reader with the wide variety of primary sources that are often used to examine the Mughals. In her discussion of familial ideologies and their position within society, she takes the opportunity to discuss the individual, and how conformist and nonconformist attitudes are indicators of continuity and change. At this point in the chapter, she shifts her attention to gender relations. What makes this discussion more insightful and especially profound is that Sharma looks at the issues of gender from a historical perspective and not according to our present day views. She also brings up an interesting point in her study, that the idealization of women in Riti Kal literature are not only to support the suppression of objectification of women in society. Her examination concludes with a look at how different poets viewed women and gender relations through sociological, political, and familial frameworks, and how that affected their writings.

Chapter Three, Krishna and Radha, recounts the attributes, influences, and myths surrounding the Krishna and Radha relationship. Her perspective on the different traditions of Radha, looks at different traditions of the duo, as well as their divine and human forms, through a comparison between Indian religious traditions and colonial perceptions. The author brilliantly combines her assessment of traditions by looking at the treatment of Krishna and Radha in devotional poetry and how their roles changed and developed over time. As a result, she demonstrates that Radha takes precedence over the god Krishna, which is an interesting juxtaposition to the contemporary views of women and religious practices.

Three works are acutely examined in Chapter Four, Narratives from the Past: Shakuntala, Prabodh Chandrodaya, and Gita Govinda. Sharma uses these texts to support her argument that either Riti Kal poets, their patrons, or their audience (or perhaps all of the above), were making attempts to revive their literary and traditional past. Her comparison of these eighteenth-century texts to the traditional narrative allows for her to successfully demonstrate the impact of socio-political changes, brought on by the Mughals and later by colonialism, on pre-modern India.

Chapter Five, Rulers, Regions, and Wars: Histories in Verse, is an analysis of political narratives of the pre-modern period. By looking at political works contemporaneous to the poetry that Sharma has dedicated this book to, she allows the reader to gain a greater understanding of how much influence the changing environment had on Riti Kal literature. In addition, this section allows for a more comprehensive view of the relationship between the Mughal court at the different regions of Northern India. Throughout this chapter, Sharma successfully shows how the poetry reveals shifting patterns of alliances and rivalries between different geographical regions and the Mughul Empire, particularly between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Sharma’s conclusion is an overview of the book. Her brief summary reiterates the necessity of her examination, and how important this research is to understanding the dynamics between the Mughul Empire and the indigenous society, politics, and culture of the subcontinent. Sharma has paved the way for future research and scholarship in using literature as a platform for understanding the changing environment had on Riti Kal literature. Her new perspective offers a more comprehensive view of the relationship between the Mughal court at the different regions of Northern India. Her fresh and new perspective only helps achieve a greater understanding of the extent of the Mughal’s socio-political impact and also proves that this type of material should not be treated so flippantly. This book, filled with wonderful color plates, is a necessity to scholars and anyone interested in learning more about pre-modern India.


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On 5-6 August 2014, a group of sixteen scholars from America, Central /Inner Asia and Europe, came together in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar to discuss the growing challenges posed to independent knowledge production and knowledge transfer in and on Central/Inner Asia. The seminar was organised in the context of a large-scale three-year (2014-2016) programme on the subject of ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’, managed by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) (Leiden, the Netherlands) and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York. Within the framework of this overarching programme, the Ulaanbaatar seminar was designed to strengthen the dialogue between American/European and Central/Inner Asian scholars in a rapidly changing world, in which new challenges are being faced by the emergence of new states, new alliances, new world views and national narratives, new modes of information collection and transfer, but also by diminishing funds available for research worldwide.

The three-day conference on Central and Inner Asian studies, focused on four related issues, namely:

a) the evolution of the study of Central/Inner Asian history and society in the past and in recent years, highlighting the problems being faced in a rapidly changing world (abstracts published in this Focus by Jigjid Boldbaatar, Nikolai Kradin, and Irina Morezova);

b) information collection and information accessibility for scholars worldwide in the field of Central/Inner Asian studies (abstracts published in this Focus by Timur Dadaabaev, Abekt Kamalov, Morris Rossabi);

c) the contextual and technical problems in publishing research findings by Asian scholars for a global audience (abstract by Andrew Wachtel published in this Focus);

d) the future of institutional academic research in and on Central and Inner Asia in view of recent global events and new political structures and ideological constraints (abstracts published in this Focus by Alexander Cooley, Nargis Kasenova).

**Challenges for Central/Inner Asia research and researchers**

The two-day seminar in Ulaanbaatar, impeccably hosted by Academician Boldbaatar and his team from Ulaanbaatar University, led to a large number of observations that were astutely summarized by Alexander Cooley of Columbia University at the end of the second day. One of the main points, not unexpected yet unfortunately still of paramount importance in the study of Central and Inner Asia, is the fragmentation of academic research. If there has been any change in this situation, it has been for the worse.

A number of factors that play a major role in this development came up during the discussions time and again. These include the tension between ethno-nationalistic historiography on the one hand, and on the other a more objective, and international academic approach to the study of the history and modern developments in the region; the Soviet legacies and the differences in academic traditions; the problems of access to archival materials; the collection and interpretation of orally transmitted information; the new assumptions after the period of perestroika; the geo-politicisation of Central and Inner Asia area research and its use for intelligence and security-related purposes; the existing hierarchies of knowledge production on Central/Inner Asia, and the problems for Asian scholars in gaining access to international debates, to online sources and databases, and in having their research findings published in international peer-reviewed journals and book series.

On top of these problems, the decline for the last 25 years, in post-Soviet and post-socialist countries, in educational standards and in previously developed academic traditions, paralleled the destruction of social institutions. Secondly, Central and Inner Asian scholars find themselves in an academic environment that lacks funding for independent research. Funds available for research in Central and Inner Asian countries are limited. There is also, in many countries, a fear of attracting foreign (Western) funds and expertise. This specific problem is exacerbated by the dwindling interest in the US and Europe for Central and Inner Asia in general, which translates itself in fewer funds being available for research. In a vicious circle, promising students in Central and Inner Asia are thus discouraged from pursuing independent research, in the end negatively affecting the number and quality of future researchers.

What also became clear during the discussions was the lack of cooperation and dialogue between Asian scholars themselves. They only seem to meet at roundtables and conferences organised from the outside, by mainly Western organisations. This situation strengthens the relative isolation of Asian scholars, who often have to compete with more nationally-minded scholars that are far better supported by politicians and the ruling establishment of their respective countries. The newly founded International Unit for Central and Inner Asian Studies (IUCIAS), with its regional centre established in an Asian country (Mongolia), would in this respect be a step in the right direction. It has the specific aim of regularly bringing together Asian scholars in an international context. In 2014, immediately following the seminar being discussed here, it organised together with IIAS and Ulaanbaatar University, an international three-day conference on Central and Inner Asian studies. Discussed at length during the seminar, on the basis of papers with sometimes very different topics, was the often rather ‘colonial’ relationship between Western researchers on the one hand, and local Asian scholars on the other. In many cases, because of their deficient academic training, lack of funding, and perhaps a lack of prestige in their own country, local scholars find themselves in the position of assistants to Western researchers, who not only have the funds, but also the academic background and training, and language skills, to ‘dictate’ the research programme and to publish their findings in international peer-reviewed journals, thereby delegating the role of Asian scholars to that of informants. The reverse problem is the appropriation by some Central and Inner Asian scholars of the ‘anti-colonial’ rhetoric in order to hide their own shortcomings and the lack of results in collective projects.

Soviet or Russian trained scholars often find themselves in a better position, since their academic training is in general far...
better than that offered to the younger generations in the Central and Inner Asian states. But they, when working in these states, are often regarded with some suspicion, not only because of their background, but also because they, and American and European scholars in general, tend to go against the ethno-nationalistic approaches that have been adapted by many of the governments in Central and Inner Asia. What is clear therefore, is that the tension between American and European research on the region and that by Asian scholars is not a clear-cut East-West division, but also a dissonance that is felt in Central and Inner Asia itself. Another tension that has affected the overall development of Central and Inner Asian studies is the division between ‘Western’ on the one hand, and post-Soviet/post-socialist scholars on the other, on their interpretations of the Cold War and its aftermath. Legacies of some of the Cold War ideologies seem to persist.

The way forward
What to do? The difficult situation in which more internationally minded Asian scholars have to work, with lack of funding, training, and prestige, are regarded as paramount obstacles to the development of Central and Inner Asian studies. Editors and editorial teams from the field’s journals are certainly aware of the problem and are increasingly requesting support to work with scholars from the region so that they better understand these publication and review norms. Donors and foundations could support the editorial and translation process, so that regional scholars are not at a disadvantage simply because they are not aware of Western publication norms. However, critically, the seminar moved beyond platitudes and general assumptions to pinpoint the specific problems, which require a more specific approach.

The IAS/Mellon seminar in Ulaanbaatar provided a somewhat pessimistic picture of Central and Inner Asian studies. However, critically, the seminar moved beyond platitudes and general assumptions to pinpoint the specific problems, so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation. Among the participants of the seminar (and ensuing international conference), there was an overall sentiment of rising up to the challenges posed. The next IAS/Mellon seminar, which will take place in Regensburg, Germany, in the summer of 2015, will again bring together Asian and non-Asian scholars, while IUCAS will continue its endeavours, together with IAS and the institutional assistance by Ulaanbaatar, to turn the international conference on Central and Inner Asia into a biennial event.

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In the fields of humanities and social sciences (particularly in Asian studies), individuals and collectives of Soviet scholars developed their research topics within the limits of international scholarship. However, their works were rarely known or recognised internationally. In the aftermath of the Cold War, in the 1990s, the dissolution of the former social institutions went hand in hand with the decline of many previously renowned academic traditions in the former Soviet Republics and especially Russia.

Irina Morozova

The followers of the concept of the “domestic East” started to acquire a wider social and political role inside the USSR in the mid-1970s; after the disclosure of Soviet historiographical biases became such a dramatic process for many vostokovedy at the beginning of the 1990s, that some of them, especially those who used to remain in socialism, had to give up their own literary legacy to the point that they potentially divide rather than consolidate the population.

References
8 Another “Middle Eastern experts” changing their research profile for Central Asia included L.A. Fridman. In 1963 he published the most famous work, Kipreshitchee razvitiye Egipta 1882-1939 [Capitalist development of Egypt], Moscow: MGU.
9 In the 1990s he became more known for his works on Central Asia. For instance, Ocherki erekhtsevskogo i sovetskogo razvitiya stran Tsentral'noi Azii posleзавершения SSDR [Remarks on economic and social development of Central Asia after the USSR’s disintegration] (Moskva: “Gumanitarii”, 2001).
The discussion in Soviet anthropology and historiography of the social and political organization of nomadic societies has passed through several stages. In the 1920s and early 1930s, many approaches were explored: some researchers spoke in favour of the primitive tribal nature of nomadic societies, while others persisted in stressing their statehood character. Since the mid-1930s, with the establishment of the Stalinist regime and the beginning of mass repressions and genocide against the Soviet people, the theory of nomadic feudalism came to prevail.

Fourth, there is a theory presented by the Moscow archaeologist, Svetlana Pletneva and her followers, who distinguished an evolution of nomadic societies from primarily democratic to semi-settled 'nomadic towns' with a stable feudal state. The main channel of establishing feudal relations, in the opinion of Pletneva, was the settlement of impoverished pastoralists in winter camps. The fifth theory is presented by a large group of researchers, who speak in favour of the existence of an independent feudalism among the nomads, without particular evidence relative to its internal nature.

Nomadic societies as early states
An intermediate position in the above discussion is occupied by those who discuss nomadic societies as examples of early states. They assert that it is necessary to consider nomads as part of a much wider macro-system that they shared with settled agriculturists. In this context, their development and internal organization were affected by successful or unsuccessful conquests and attempts to levy tribute. Therefore, the nomads may independently have reached the early-class stage, while their further development was determined by their relations with neighbouring farming communities. In the main, this approach in Soviet literature was developed by the well-known nomologist, Anatoly Khranov, now professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He proposed to call this theory the ecological approach.

Nomadism and Marxism
Nomadism, in general, conflicts with Marxism with the same fundamental problems as the Asiatic Mode of Production. Neither nomads nor the East (the Orient) fit into the common Marxist-hypothesized evolution of humanity, from the primitive stage to Communism. The problem arises from the impossibility of interpreting the superficially motileless and cyclically evolving nomads within the framework of progressivist (and would add, Eurocentrist) theories of human history, which also include Marxism. Another serious problem is the difficulty of representing the socio-political organization of nomads in terms of the Marxist conceptual system. How can we explain from the Marxist point of view such a paradoxical fact that, among the nomads, private property in means of production (i.e., livestock) has appeared practically in parallel with the formation of nomadism as an economic-cultural type, long before the advance of private property among the agriculturists, whereas, as their socio-economic level is concerned, the nomads were less developed than sedentary people? How accurate is it to assign the nomadic pastoralists to the primitive stage, when there was private ownership of livestock and persons was allowed to accumulate property in large quantities? Conversely, how can one consider nomads to be primitive, even if they had no state bureaucratic apparatus?

Finally, how should nomadism be interpreted within the framework of one of the basic methodological principles of historical materialism: the law of correspondence between basis and superstructure? According to Marxist theory, changes in the basis lead inevitably to the respective transformation in the superstructure (in this form, the so-called dialectic). The economic basis of nomadism-pastoralism has actually remained unchanged over the course of many centuries. Ancient, medieval and even more recent nomads have had a similar herd composition, strictly determined by the ecological conditions of habitat, primitive and easily transportable tools and ever changing household technology. However, pastoralism did not determine the permanency of the basis. The nomads sometimes created tribal alliances, but also formed the gigantic nomadic empires under the dominion of mighty leaders and then again disbanded into separate khanates, tribes and even smaller groups.

Civilization theory and nationalism
In the years of perestroika and the collapse of the USSR, many researchers from the countries of the former socialist block turned their back on Marxism. They turned instead to the civilization theory, because it appeared to many of them to offer a fresh look at history. Some scholars promulgated it as the universal paradigm that should replace Marxism. Others believed that civilization theory should substitute the obsolete approach of different modes of production. However, it should be noted that post-Soviet scholars do not share a common understanding of the civilization theory. One can identify several different interpretations. For example, in Kazakhstan and in Kyrgyzstan local scholars write about the Kazakh and Kyrgyz civilizations, where it became stylish to write about national statehood. If, in Soviet times, it was prestigious to show that people had ‘nomadic feudalism’, then after the collapse of the USSR, and Marxism being out of fashion, theories were proposed that referred to the historical development of the nation and state.

In many multi-national republics of Russia, papers have been published in which the existence of specific civilizations is substantiated. So, the Bashkir, Buran, Kalmyk, Tatar, Yakut and other civilisations emerged. Each of the ethnic groups, having achieved its statehood (as an independent post-Soviet republic or republic within the Russian Federation), aspires to having achieved its statehood (as an independent post-Soviet republic or republic within the Russian Federation), aspires to have its society recognized as a civilized state. The nascent nationalism in the former socialist countries aimed at escaping from the colonialism of the Big Brother. In this case, the features of nationhood included the process of forming a civilization, not only a nation. In the long run, this could lead to the construction of a separate nation on the area of the former Soviet republic, or even the formation of a separate state.

Essentially, the civilization analysis appears as a form of nationalism. It is, so it appears, a common ideology of speakers and economically less powerful countries, which wish to escape from the colonialism of the Big Brother. In this case, the features of nationhood included the process of forming a civilization, not only a nation. In the long run, this could lead to the construction of a separate nation on the area of the former Soviet republic, or even the formation of a separate state.

Thus, in conclusion, in the Soviet period ‘nomadic feudalism’ was a form of national identity for various minorities. For the scholars of the former Soviet republics, nomadism was a form of Orientalism. In the last quarter of the 20th century, many scholars in post-socialist countries believed that the introduction of the civilization analysis would allow them to differentiate themselves from their foreign colleagues in matters of theoretical developments. But these illusions must be abandoned. In practice, the civilizational analysis has become a form of nationalism only.

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PREVIOUSLY, the periodization of Mongolian history followed the formation theory, and led from prehistoric primitive societies, through enancement, feudal relations, to capitalism and ended with the social revolution. However, after the 1990s, the periodization acknowledged by the majority of Mongolian historians was changed drastically, below follows the new scheme with an overview of the pertinent academic works published since 1990.

Ancient and early medieval period
This period covers the time of human settlement in Mongolia up to the 12th century AD. The Mongolian scholar, G. Sukhbaatar, writing in 1992, expanded current knowledge of knowledge of the Mongolian Neolithic period (3300-555 AD). He argues that during the subsequent Turkic period (6th-10th centuries), Mongolian statehood did not disappear, but that the Mongolian Tatar Khankate continued to flourish in eastern Mongolia, while the Turks held sway over the western parts and beyond.

Medieval and post medieval period
This period includes a range of historical events, from the 13th up to the 20th centuries. This is a period of some 700 years. This period can be described as that of the rise and subsequent fall of Mongolian statehood. The period can be divided in three parts: imperial period; period of dissolution; and the Qing period.

The Mongol Empire (13th-14th centuries) – the imperial period
‘The Mongol Empire’ comprised some 230 different nations and states, and as such it was unique in the history of the world. A number of important works were recently published by Mongolian scholars, including The Great Mongol War, 1206-1260 (1994), by Academician Ch. Dalai; a revised version (2006). Another work is called Some Distinctive Features of the Great Mongol State, its history and ideology (2000), by Academician Sh. Briz. In this study Bira introduces three periods of imperial history, namely the initial stage of the Mongolian statehood (1206-1227); the imperial period or state development stage (1229-1239, time of Ogodei, Guyuk and Mongke khans); and the period of imperial growth, or the Mongol Yuan period (1260-1368). In this book, Bira stresses the ancient Mongol belief that their khans were mandated by heaven, and thus they performed a worship of heaven or Tengri. Sh. Bira claims that the basis for the ideology of the Great Mongol State was tengriism.

The formation of the Mongol Empire has led to a series of academic studies. Some scholars believe that Mongol society during the imperial period was in a pre-state formation, without any state structure, and it was merely a union of tribes under the charismatic leadership of Chinggis Khan. These scholars also claim that there was no legislative document, such as the alleged Great Yürü, Others argue that the state established by Chinggis Khan could be defined as an ‘early state’. Others again state that the Mongol Empire was a ‘sort of early state’, which was at its ‘inchoate’, ‘typical’, or in its ‘transitional’ stage. N. Kradin and T. Scrivinikova, in their joint book, entitled

epoch of Chinggis Khan (2006), consequently believe that the predominant character of the Mongol Empire can be classified as an early state. Yet other scholars hold the opinion that the Mongol Empire included a population, a territory, statehood and state power, and could thus be classed as a state.

Other important studies by Mongolian scholars include the Mongol Yuan State (2006), by scholars at the Academy of Sciences; The History of Mongolia, 1260-1388 (1992); by Ch. Dalai; The Mongol State of the Golden Horde (2006), by S. Tsolmon; The Mongol State of the Chagadaiids (2006); by T. Erchelchimeg; and The Mongol Wahnote (2006); by D. Arkhangay. These books were among the first attempts by Mongolian scholars to introduce the Mongol states as a separate subject matter. The monograph ‘The Mongol and the Armenians, 1220-1235 (2011); by D. Buyarbaa) represents a constructive work of the Mongol incursions into the Caucasus, Asia Minor and the Middle East. The work was written in English and published by Brill, Leiden.

Apart from the above studies, the study of Chinggis Khan has been continued. It is worth noting the Mongolian scholar B. Dukhrooj’s work entitled ‘The Mongol Social System’ (1991), which has been published in English and published by Brill, Leiden.

Political dissolution (end 14th century to beginning 17th century)
This period is commonly known as the ‘period of feudal dispersion’. The reason to abandon this term was its connection to feudalism, and that it was no longer thought appropriate to describe Mongolian society of that time in such a way. Therefore, having put aside the discussion of whether the medieval Mongolian society was feudal or not, scholars decided to rename the 14th-17th centuries as the time of ‘political dissolution’. In general, when the (Mongolian) Yuan emperor Toghontunurt was pushed out of Beijing in 1368, the pillars of the Mongol empire were shaken, the autocracy of Khan was undermined, and the individual nomads and nobles, using their economic powers, strove for political independence. A PhD dissertation, entitled Revising the Dissolution Period in the History of Mongolia, was recently written by D. Erkhembayarch. Unfortunately this is the only academic publication to date that addresses this topic.

The Qing period (17th-20th century)
The Manchus from China took southern Mongolia in 1636, Khalkha Mongolia in 1691, and Great Mongolia in 1755. In this process Mongolia lost its independence to the Chinese empire, marking the gloomiest period in Mongolian history. Considering Mongolia as a ‘colony’ of the Qing Empire, however, would not be correct. There were three different stages: a client stage (17th to beginning 19th century); the semi-colony stage (mid-19th to end 19th century); and a transition stage towards total Chinese control (end 19th to beginning 20th century).

The study of the Qing period in Mongolia is connected to these different stages and other issues such as trade. Recent Mongolian scholarship includes the publication

bright outlook
Since the early 1990s, more than sixty academic publications have been dedicated to the geographical study of famous individuals in Mongolian history. Apart from these, it should be added that historical philosophy and archival studies are flourishing. A new edition of thirty volumes with Mongolian primary sources was published as the result of the collaboration of many scholars. All what was said above is real evidence that Mongolian historiography is re-emerging. However, one should be aware that it is easy to slip backward toward subjective opinions and politicization.

J. Boldbaatar

The State and Trends of Mongolian Historical Studies

Dogmatism, lack of historical thinking and utilization of duplicating methods were three characteristics of Mongolian historical schooling for a long period. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s new approaches were introduced, and attention was focused on the dissociating of issues from politics and ideologies, and on looking at the problems objectively. The main factor that influenced this shift was a rejection of the Marxist approach and free access to archival materials.

J. Boldbaatar

"In this study Bira introduces three periods of imperial history, namely the initial stage of the Mongolian statehood (1206-1227); the imperial period or state development stage (1229-1239, time of Ogodei, Guyuk and Mongke khans); and the period of imperial growth, or the Mongol Yuan period (1260-1368). In this book, Bira stresses the ancient Mongol belief that their khans were mandated by heaven, and thus they performed a worship of heaven or Tengri. Sh. Bira claims that the basis for the ideology of the Great Mongol State was tengriism."
The differences between the source materials available for Mongolia and Xinjiang are readily observable in the possibility and accessibility of data from interviews. In one project, which continues to be translated into English, Professors Yuki Konagaya of the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan, and I. Lkhagvasuren of the National University of Mongolia, set forth initially to conduct interviews with some [Mongolian] representatives of the sociocultural and so-called autonomous regions to bound the social modernization plans to life." English translations of a set of interviews by Lkhagvademchig Jaadamba, of Buddhists in Mongolia, have also appeared. "Lkhagvademchig Jaadamba chose to interview Buddhists who were not part of the elite, in order to depict the course of Buddhist history in the social and post-socialist periods. Special attention must also be paid to the University of Cambridge’s Mongolian and Inner Asia Unit’s "The Oral History of Twentieth Century Mongolia," which has conducted more than six hundred interviews and has made them available.1

Personal and oral accounts

Complementing oral history projects, individual Mongolians have written invaluable autobiographies, which offer insights into developments in the pre- and post-socialist eras. Several of these have been translated into English. Bazaryn Shirendev, the First President of the National University of Mongolia (founded in 1942) and of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences (established in 1962), wrote a detailed account of his academic career as well as a description of some of the twentieth-century’s leading political figures. In his autobiography, J. Sambar Abaljumt, President of the National University of Mongolia, provided a withering portrait of the oppressiveness of the pre-socialist era and then an analysis of his later career, emphasizing his ambassador to the Soviet Union and North Korea. Ts. Namkhaiyambuu, the most renowned herder in Mongolia’s socialist period, offered a depiction of life in the pastoral economy and of the development of the nomad (or collective) and of their dissolution in the post-socialist era. Other prominent Mongolians, such as B. Jaraglakhant, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to a number of countries, and J. Uuganbaatar, the Minister of Defense through much of the socialist period, have also written autobiographies that await translation into English. Oral accounts can also be gathered through unregulated and unregulated field research. Both foreign and Mongolian anthropologists have had considerable access to the foreign and local country, resulting in an array of informative studies.2 The government has not interfered in any way to limit anthropologists in the field or to shape their conclusions.

Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang offer sharp contrasts concerning oral sources. No independent unregulated interviews of a wide swath of inhabitants have been permitted... measures of education, health, and society, which are then gathered together into an annual publication. Much of the information is also online. The Chinese Statistical Bureaus in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia and the Xijin Production and Construction Group issue similar data on the economy, population, and social matrices. Individual cities in these regions, such as Urumqi and Turfan, also have statistical bureaus that publish statistics on the economic and social conditions in their domains. All of this data is online and can readily be accessed. Thus, independent economists can also assess the credibility of these statistics.3

The early twentieth-century history of Mongolia, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia reveals the greatest differences in government and public transparency. Mongolia has opened up many archival sources concerning the socialist period from 1921 to 1990, and numerous public discussions by former government and Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) officials have been published. The opening up of Buryat and Russian Federation archives has complemented the Mongolian government’s policy of transparency. Dr. Irina Morozova has used these archives to write a recent book on twentieth-century Mongolia and has also consulted the Russian State Military Archives.4

The availability of both the Mongolian and Russian Federation archives, the accessibility of primary documents such as collections of the speeches of the dominant government and MPRP leader Kh. Choibalsan and his successor Yu. Tsidendal, as well as official correspondence concerning the Comintern’s activities in Mongolia, will all contribute to research on and understanding of twentieth-century Mongolia. Japanese archives are also accessible, offering valuable glimpses of Japanese efforts in the 1930s to entrench upon Mongolia, culminating in the 1939 battle of Nomonhon (Khalkhyn Gol), with General C. Czjzek of Russia, and J. Lkhagvasuren of Mongolia, trouncing the enemy. A number of researchers have consulted these archives to provide insights into Japanese policy and actions from the late nineteenth century through World War II.5

Archives in Inner Mongolia also offer significant insights into Japanese activities in the pre-WWII period. However, as shown by the case of an American researcher trying to access these archives to conduct research for her doctoral dissertation on Japan’s involvement in Inner Mongolia in the 1930s,6 considerable obstacles are presented when seeking to consult the archival resources. A stifling bureaucracy impeded her at every turn, demanding almost overwhelming paperwork to grant permission to use the archives. The slightest error

Hopeful

It will also be useful to end with one positive note concerning information collection and accessibility in Xinjiang. In 1996, I traveled with curators from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art in preparation of their joint exhibition "When Siberia Came to America."7 We were permitted access to the exhibits and to the storage areas in the Xinjiang Museum in Urumchi and to the Turfan Museum. In addition, a number of curators have been shown objects and have been allowed loans of objects from the relatively new Inner Mongolia Museum in Hohhot. However, in all of these cases, the foreigners had considerable grous (or connections), which worked in their favor. One can only hope that the Chinese national and local governments in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia also will start allowing access. Art is not as volatile as history and politics.

Morris Rossabi

The study of twentieth and early twenty-first century Mongolia on the one hand, and Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang on the other, necessitates the use of a multitude of oral and written sources in a variety of different languages; thus the first major obstacle for a scholar and an educated audience is the extraordinary diversity of the essential languages. No single person can master such a wide array of languages and scripts. A collaborative effort, which is not always optimal for scholars, would be one way of overcoming this difficulty.

More likely, however, scholars will choose individual topics based upon their knowledge of specific languages. A specialist who studies these various works would then be capable of devious an accurate appraisal.

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Morris Rossabi

Below: Museum of Inner Mongolia, Hotchot. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license, courtesy of Ushang Aikato.Ts @Pixda.com.
This paper presents a brief project that aims to collect, record and interpret personal experiences and memories of the Soviet past in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Interviews were held with elderly citizens in order to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the official historiography of the Soviet era and people’s private lives and beliefs. The aim of our study is to contribute to academic knowledge with regards to how people remember their Soviet past. In addition, this study may also shed new light on the transformations of present-day Central Asia, from the perspective of personal memories. The way in which people in Central Asia reconcile with their Soviet past is to a great extent through a three-fold process of recollecting their everyday experiences, reflecting on their past from the perspective of their post-Soviet present, and re-imagining their own history.

‘Retrieving’ the memory

The interviewees were chosen from an older generation, beyond retirement age, who had not been covered by any previous studies. Those selected had spent their most active years in a Soviet cultural and social environment. Their recollections were recorded on audiotapes (in the case of Uzbekistan) and video-recordings (in the cases of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), transcribed and translated, and are currently in the process of being archived. Methodologically, a critical discourse analysis was used for the processing of the interviews. The video/audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. These texts [interviews] were then treated as elements mediating social events that occurred during the Soviet times. In the process of the interviews, the topics that the respondents touched upon mostly related to the analysis of various actors, such as the Communist Party, the Soviet government, religious institutions, local communities and respondents, and their social roles. This study thus joins other research that analyses Soviet-era social actors, using techniques ‘to include or exclude them in presenting events; assign them an active or passive role; personify or impersonalise them; name or only classify them; refer to them specifically or generically.’

Our study in Central Asian oral history has resulted in a number of conclusions based on people’s recollections of Soviet times. The first conclusion is related to the patterns of history interpretation and the role of the public in this process. The public view of history in post-Soviet Central Asia, and particularly Uzbekistan, often falls between Soviet historiographies in the Soviet past, and Soviet historical discourses, rejecting the Soviet past. Public perceptions of history are primarily shaped by and related to the everyday needs, experiences, identification and mentality of people, in contrast to the ideologies and political doctrines of the time. They often reflect not only the perceptions of people regarding their past, but also their perceptions regarding their present and imagined future.

Second, recollections of traumatic experiences associated with the Soviet past are often placed within this dichotomy of depicting Soviet experiences. However, in terms of public experiences, the recollections of the public with respect to traumatic experiences, similar to the ones described in recollections of Stalinist repression, often reflect the positions of the narrators and their (in)ability to adapt to the conditions in which they were placed during those years. Different social, ethnic, educational, religious and/or ideological backgrounds greatly influence the selectivity of these recollections and explain why certain individuals recall their Soviet experiences with a sense of rejection, while others relate to it with the sense of nostalgia.

Third, in a related manner, although nostalgia in post-Soviet countries is frequently explained solely by the economic hardships and social pressures of the post-Soviet period, such explanations do not accurately cover this phenomenon. Economic and social explanations for the nostalgia of respondents are obvious. However, such explanations are not the only ones, and there are a number of other nostalgia-inducing factors that are rarely discussed in literature on this subject. From the narratives of senior citizens included in our project, one can conclude that many nostalgic views of the past reflect the respondents’ attitudes, both to the adaptability to the Soviet realities and also to various aspects of their present lives.

Fourth, in terms of specific issues such as ethnicity, oral-history research may contribute to the debate about how people in Central Asia recall Soviet ethnic policies and their vision of how these policies have shaped the identities of their peers and contemporaries. Such narratives demonstrate that people do not explain Soviet ethnic policies simply through the ‘modernisation’ or ‘victimisation’ dichotomy, but locate their experiences in between these discourses.

Their recollections again highlight the pragmatic flexibility of the public’s adaptive strategies to Soviet ethnic policies. Fifth, the hybridity produced as a result of Soviet experiences can be traced not only to ethnic self-identification, but also to the attitude of the public towards Soviet and post-Soviet religiosity. An analysis of the manner in which people have come to terms with their past and their recollections of anti-religious campaigns helps us to understand how life under the Soviet government not only resulted in changes in lifestyles, but also re-drew the boundaries of ‘proper/modernised’ religious life and of what are now considered to be the religious remnants of the past.

Challenges, limitations and biases

There are a few conceptual and logistic issues to be considered in connection with interviews of the type discussed in the preceding sections. First, the mentality of ordinary people has influenced the outcome of the interviews. The interviewers observed that respondents were often reluctant to speak about negative aspects of Soviet times in certain countries, for which there are several explanations.

One of the most important explanations is the issue of censorship, which can largely be regarded as a legacy of the Soviet past. In particular, the censorship of questionnaires and answer choices remains one of the greatest obstacles to the wider development of survey research in Central Asia. Even today, the same attitude towards surveys seems to prevail in a majority of cases in post-Soviet Central Asia, which often leads to a situation in which respondents are under either imagined or real pressure to provide socially desirable answers to impress interviewers or please authorities. In addition to potential political and other related pressures, respondents may be of the opinion that talking about one’s problems and expressing criticism outside of their own group is shameful and should be avoided as much as possible. Therefore, in many cases, interviewees may be inclined to speak more about the positive sides of issues than the negative sides.

Second, determining the language in which an interview should be conducted may be a challenge given the multi-ethnic nature of the environment in which our survey was carried out. Uzbek/Kyrgyz/Kazakh (depending on the country) was used by those belonging to the titular ethnic group, who preferred to answer in their own language. For the Russian and Russian-speaking groups (such as Koreans), Russian language questionnaires were used. In certain instances, questionnaires in alternative languages were drafted. Fortunately, the diversity of languages used for the questionnaires did not present a technical problem, beyond the logistical concerns related to translation. A much larger problem was the obvious correlation between the language of the questionnaire and the pattern of asking questions and answering those questions. In the Uzbek/Kyrgyz/Kazakh languages, the interviewer was required to go through the long procedure of first explaining at length the background of the issue and then asking the question. If not, the answers given would be inadequate, too short or shallow. In the Russian language, however, preceding the question with a long discussion of the background of the issues and their details irritated the respondents, who desired clear, short questions without a patronisingly long introductory interpretation and explanation of the problem. In the same manner, the answers in local languages were softer, long and extensively descriptive, with few short and clear-cut answers. Those responding in local languages preferred to give ‘middle-ground’ answers, which can largely be attributed to the mentality of the people. Even when respondents answered in a straightforward and critical manner, they still preferred to do so after extensive explanation and after ‘setting the stage’. In contrast, the Russian language responses were more direct, more critical or clearer in their message, emitting background information and offering very little explanation. In addition, certain respondents spoke about their lives in their local language, and then switched to Russian when they wanted to be more direct or blunt about certain events or happenings.

Third, in certain cases respondents clearly attempted to provide interviewers with the information that they believed the interviewers wanted to hear, which influenced the outcomes of the project, since the information did not always reflect the real lifetime experiences of people, but rather interpretations of history acquired from other sources.

The fourth problem is related to the issue of sampling. Because the population in the region is very diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, and lifestyle, compiling a representative sample of every Soviet-era experiences appears to be one of the greatest challenges.

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Below: Crying Mother Monument, Tashkent. Honouring the 400,000 Uzbek soldiers who died in World War II. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license, courtesy of Allen Grey on Flickr.com.
ARCHIVES BECAME A VERY IMPORTANT SOURCE for the revision of the past in post-Soviet Central Asian countries, within the framework of the construction of new national narratives. In this process, historians take an active part, introducing unknown or previously concealed documents from archives and re-interpreting the “old” ones. Historians working with materials of the state archives are quite familiar with both advantages and limitations of archival work and successfully use methods of source analysis. One of the challenges of archival work concerns specific “archival narratives,” a set story of the past, to which the existing archival documents are subjugated. The construction of archival narratives is difficult to reveal, because of an absence of alternative stories as well as the specific rhetoric of the narration, excluding a possibility of alternative interpretations. One of these archival stories of the early Soviet period is the tragic event of the massacre of the Taranchi Uyghurs in the Semirech’ye region (modern Southeast Kazakhstan and North Kyrgyzstan) in 1918.

The essence of the historical event in question is a mass shooting, in the summer of 1918, of the Uyghurs living in the villages located between the city of Verry (present Almaty) and the border with China in the east, by the Bolshevik Red Army. According to various estimations, the number of villagers killed amounted to some 20,000 to 25,000, almost 40-50% of the entire Uyghur population of the Semirech’ye. The tragic event of the “Ma’u (Shooting) was not excluded from collective memory of the local Uyghurs constructed in the Soviet time, but in Soviet historiography it was attributed to counter-revolutionary elements. While Soviet historiography failed to explain the fact that the massacre was carried out by the Red Army regiment led by Communist Commissar Murayev, who arrived with his soldiers in Verry from Tsakhkent to render assistance in solidifying Soviet power. Although archival documents contain more details on the mass massacre, they hardly add any essential information to formulate alternative interpretations of the events.

Nevertheless, since the massacre followed the anti-Bolshevik uprising of the Russian Cossacks in the city of Verry, which was successfully suppressed by the Bolsheviks, there are some hints in the archival documents that allow considering the massacre as a reaction of the Red Army to the Uyghurs’ support of the anti-Bolshevik uprising of the Cossacks. However, the dominating narration in archival documents does not leave room for the representation of the Uyghurs as a serious anti-Bolshevik force in the region; according to the archives, only a small group of the wealthy Uyghurs [bajus] and Muslim clerics [mullahs] joined the anti-Bolshevik movement in Semirech’ye. The general description in the archival documents of the massacre in 1918, based on a class struggle approach, depicts the majority of the Uyghur population as full supporters of the Bolshevik power in the region and only a small number of wealthy people as reactionary elements who finally had to flee to neighbouring China after the defeat of the Cossack uprising in Verry. Hence, the Bolsheviks could not have carried out the shooting of their allies – the Taranchi Uyghurs, therefore it was organised by reactionary elements who were hiding under the guise of Communists.

A revision of the massacre of the Uyghurs, which started in the perestroika period in Uyghur publications, finally accepted it as a Bolshevik act of terror, but without recognition of the role of the Uyghurs in the anti-Bolshevik movement in the Semirech’ye region during the Civil war period in 1918-1920. Although there is still no clear evidence of active involvement of the Taranchi Uyghurs in the anti-Bolshevik movement in Semirech’ye, which could be used as a pretext for the massacre by the Bolsheviks, a recently found document in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, namely a ‘Charter to the Taranchi people’ by Admiral Kolchak, allows us to assume that the real involvement of the Taranchi Uyghurs in the anti-Bolshevik movement in Semirech’ye has been misrepresented by the Soviet archival documents. This charter (spravokha) to the Taranchi people was written on behalf of a recognised leader of the White movement, Admiral Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak, who had been proclaimed as the supreme ruler of Russia on 18 November 1918 in Omsk (Siberia) and who headed the White movement until his arrest on 15 January 1920. According to S. Ikhakov, who published this charter in a collection of archival documents on the Civil war, the charter was printed as a leaflet and can be dated to 16 July 1919. The charter presented an official address of Admiral Kolchak to the Taranchi people, praising their contribution to the resistance against the Bolsheviks. He praised the Taranchis as “small in number, but strong in spirit”, for not having “gone on the false path of destruction of the Russian state” and “remained faithful to the Fatherland and its laws, and sealed that with the blood of many thousands of the best sons and their possessions in the struggle against the Bolsheviks”. Kolchak recognised the loyalty of the Taranchi people to the Russian Fatherland in fighting Bolsheviks and promised to honour their needs.

One should be critical about Kolchak’s rhetoric in the charter, for he might have had a clear political aim, namely encouraging various groups of people in the resistance against the Bolsheviks and attracting them to the White movement; the charter might therefore overestimate the real involvement of the Taranchis in the civil war in Semirech’ye. Nevertheless, the “Charter to the Taranchi people” deconstructs the existing archival narrative of the massacre of the Taranchis and allows for an alternative vision on the role of the Taranchi Uyghurs. We can assume that archival documents in the early Soviet period have gone through a special selection: alongside the Bolsheviks and attracting them to the White movement; the charter might therefore overestimate the real involvement of the Taranchis in the civil war in Semirech’ye. Nevertheless, the “Charter to the Taranchi people” deconstructs the existing archival narrative of the massacre of the Taranchis and allows for an alternative vision on the role of the Taranchi Uyghurs. We can assume that archival documents in the early Soviet period have gone through a special selection: alongside the Bolsheviks and attracting them to the White movement; the charter might therefore overestimate the real involvement of the Taranchis in the civil war in Semirech’ye. Nevertheless, the “Charter to the Taranchi people” deconstructs the existing archival narrative of the massacre of the Taranchis and allows for an alternative vision on the role of the Taranchi Uyghurs.

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Publishing challenges for local Central Asian scholars

Scholars of Central and Inner Asia who come from the region face two major hurdles in publishing their findings for an international audience. The first has to do with the constitution of their field of study and is related to problems faced by all scholars (local or foreign) who deal with fields that have, on the one hand high qualification requirements, and on the other appear marginal to most outsiders. The second has to do particularly with the training these scholars generally receive, the kinds of institutions they work in, and the need foreign scholars in this field have for local knowledge.

Andrew Wachtel

High qualification requirements

If we focus on the first, we see quickly that Central or Inner Asian Studies do not differ too much from Balkan Studies (which I happen to know quite well) or African Studies. What characterizes these fields? In order to be competent, the scholar needs to know much that few people know, and that knowledge takes a long time to acquire. First and foremost, I have in mind languages. Of course, it is possible to do work on Central or Inner Asia with only English and Russian, but what one can do is exceptionally limited. In reality, to do serious work, one should have English, Russian, a Turkic language, a Persian language and perhaps Chinese. Even for locals, the amount of time needed simply to amass the basic linguistic requirements (the ante price, we could call it) is large.

Because it takes so long to achieve what is needed for basic competence, however, and because life is short, the people who achieve it often do not have time to achieve other competencies that are absolutely necessary for dealing with international publishing. First and foremost, the time they spend learning languages and getting field experience is time they do not spend learning the basic disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourses that are the coin of the realm for their foreign colleagues, who have the good fortune to study less obscure fields where the entry requirements are lower or are possessed by more people (by the way, it should be noted that the situation of local and non-local specialists on Central and Inner Asia does not differ in this regard).

Marginal to most outsiders

At the same time, the field has no a priori interest to anyone outside it. This again is a problem faced by both local and foreign scholars. If you study the US or China or any other big place, scholars who do not work on your topic have at least a glancing interest in it (or at the very least they are embarrassed to admit that they don’t care about it). If you study Central and Inner Asia, you do not have the luxury of automatic interest.

You need to do one of two things to get it. Either you need to have a topic that is sui generis (and therefore that your colleagues in other fields might care about) or you have to show how your field of study requires a rethinking of (or at least a modification of) the basic paradigms of scholarly discourse, which are almost always developed by scholars focusing on ‘mainstream’ regions.

The former case is rare and only happens by chance. Thus, Islamic studies, which was once just as obscure as Central or Inner Asian studies, has over the past 25 years become a topic about which one can publish in all sorts of international journals, because world events have thrust it into the forefront of interest. However, the things one can say about the topic are limited by what scholars in more mainstream fields want to hear. Thus, it is easy to publish on Islamic fundamentalism, but much harder to publish on everyday Islam.

Central and Inner Asian studies, however, have few, if any areas that are of automatic interest to anyone outside the region (perhaps energy policy?). As a result, it is not easy to publish by focusing on sur geren issues, because these issues are so unique as to be utterly uninteresting to colleagues outside the field. Therefore it is hard to get a hearing in the kinds of disciplinary journals in which good colleagues from other fields get to publish.

Instead, what is left is to take the road of showing how material from Central Asia allows (or forces) scholars who work in other regions to reconsider what they think they know about their own fields. But here we again run into the problem noted above. Because local scholars have spent many years building up local knowledge, but have not had the necessary level of exposure to the broad questions of their fields, they often do not know how to use the material they have acquired in a comparative way. To be sure, this problem is also faced by their foreign colleagues, but these colleagues have the advantage of native fluency in a major foreign language and at least an undergraduate education in a relatively broad field of studies outside the Central Asian context.

The result of this situation is a strange kind of scholarly colonialism. The smartest outsiders use local scholars as ‘native informants’, who can provide information that can be used by foreign colleagues. In the best-case scenario, these local scholars are credited as co-editors on the papers of foreign scholars, while in the worst they merely become paid research assistants receiving minimal credit for their work. Either way, it is hard for the local person to become a full-fledged scholar in his/her own right.

Institutional setting

To break out of this trap is exceptionally difficult for local scholars. In most cases, they have done their undergraduate work at substandard local universities (for even the best of those universities, and I would count the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek among them, are not so great by world standards). When they go abroad to do graduate work, they bring with them good knowledge of one or two local languages and a working fluency in English and Russian. Trying to catch up with colleagues who have gone to better universities is not easy, but perhaps they more or less manage to do so. When they return home, however, they find themselves outside of the type of institutional setting that allows them to develop further. They often do not have good access to foreign publications, they do not have English language editors who can help them place their articles, they work in not very good universities and in not very good conditions, they may be paid enough to live reasonably well in their home countries, but not enough to be actively involved in international research, and they are in a limited amount of demand as ‘local informants’.

Small wonder then that they have trouble publishing independently and making a breakthrough on the international scene when they work in obscure institutions on topics that few people care about. They lack the leverage of knowledge but not much awareness of why it could be interesting to anyone else.

There is, unfortunately, no magic wand to solve the problems outlined above, many of which, as I have noted, are not limited to scholars of Central and Inner Asia but are pretty typical across a wide range of ‘obscure’ academic fields. The Academic Fellowship Program that used to be organized by the Open Society Foundations was one attempt to overcome the problems, but based on the experience of my institution, it seems to me it was not successful (at least in this regard – it was quite successful in other ways). In the long run, perhaps the best way is to make sure that local university graduates interested in studying their own region are told, as early as possible, what obstacles they will face and that they need to focus on making their work legible and relevant for non-specialists.

Andrew Wachtel, President of the American University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (a-wachtel@northwestern.edu)
Since both internal and external forces are interested in accompanied by growing political pluralism and youth activism, without major upheavals, and the decentralisation of power is personalised authoritarian regimes have been unravelling building processes, including strengthening of national of smaller economies.

demonstrate miracles, but they show an adaptive capacity create better conditions for investors and to develop some with a time lag, starts opening up within this scenario. These would be Kazakhstan, whose economy proves to be the most preventing full Chinese dominance.

in the region as the source of modernization, investments having an upper hand. The West is present and appreciated but to accommodate itself to the new situation of China would be Kazakhstan, whose economy proves to be the most parativists with a particular interest in underdeveloped areas: comes largely from the processes unleashed by modernisation is fragile. If within the first scenario, destabilisation potential remains fragmented and apathetic with marginalised pockets of dissident. The economies and institutions are extractive in nature. However, due to the lack of external and internal actors interested in destabilisation, the states manage to muddle through without major upheavals, although this order is fragile. If within the first scenario, destabilisation potential comes largely from the processes unleashed by modernisation and transformation, within this scenario it is mostly drawn from underdevelopment and stagnation. Central Asian countries join the ranks of chronically failing states. In this case Central Asian studies will be good for com-parativists with a particular interest in underdeveloped areas: former colonies, resource-cursed and dysfunctional for many possible reasons. Matters of social and cultural change, Islamic revival and transnational identities are likely to remain as the central themes for social, political and anthropological research in the region. Security and development communities will also find this area attractive. Political scientists interested in the study of political regimes will find it challenging to do first-hand research, since Central Asian regimes, being fearful of dissent and foreign meddling, will become even more paranoid and protective.

Overall the field, within this scenario, might not be of major interest to the international academic and policy community, and will have its niche in various broader research programs (Eurasia, Asia, etc.). A partial Western withdrawal and loss of interest in the region will be no help either. At the same time, interest from China and other Asian countries for more research on the region will remain and to some extent will offset the decrease in funding and interest from the West.

Scenario 3: ‘Conflict zone’ (pessimistic)
The last scenario assumes that one or several Central Asian states implode under the pressure of accumulated problems and challenges, or due to a conflict between regional states over natural resources. External factors that can contribute to this scenario are spills over of instability from Afghanistan and South Asia and/or highly hypothetical Russian interference along the lines of the Georgia and Ukraine crises. The region will be more and more considered part of the ‘South’ and ‘Greater Central Asia’, which includes Afghanistan. The discourse on Central Asia would include this area into the ‘arc of instability’ and the region might be excluded from the security architecture of the region.

No matter how affairs unfold, and which scenario presents itself, it seems likely that we will see the following general trends in Central Asian studies:
1) There will be growing interest and funding from Asia. This shift will result in more research on Central Asia from the Chinese, Indian, Pakistan, Japanese, and Korean perspectives.
2) The young generation of local scholars who received training in the West and abroad will substitute the Soviet cadre. This will result in better communication and more fruitful collaborative research between local and foreign scholars.
3) More research will be conducted through the use of national/local languages. The role of Russian as the lingua franca of the region will slowly decrease and the role of English as the international language of communication and science will increase.

Nargis Kassenova, Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations and Regional Studies of KIMER University (Kazakhstan) and Director of the KIMER Central Asian Studies Center (CASC) (nargis@kimer.kz)
The geopoliticization of Central Asian scholarship

On 16 June 2014 Alexander Sodiqov, a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, was taken into custody by Tajik security services while conducting a field interview for a research project on local responses to conflict management. Sodiqov was reportedly accused of treason and espionage – crimes that carry a possible 20 years prison sentence. On 22 July, Sodiqov was released from prison and his case was taken up by an international coalition of scholars, human rights activists and press freedom watchdogs, who viewed his detention as a fundamental infringement on academic freedom in Central Asia. After sustained international pressure, Sodiqov was allowed to return to Toronto in September, with the case still legally open.

Alexander Cooley

THIS MEMO ARGUES THAT SODIQOV’S CASE is the result of the decade-long shrinking of academic and journalistic freedom in Central Asia, a trend largely rooted in the region’s security concerns, and increasing concern with controlling the information space and narratives about political trends, in order to ensure their own survival and stability. In these efforts, crackdowns on information dissemination, journalism and, now, academic research have become justifiable responses to alleged foreign interference and ‘external meddling’ in internal affairs. The cumulative impact of this crackdown is likely to have chilling effects on future efforts by social scientists and regional specialists seeking to analyze, interpret and gather data in the region. The current assault on academic freedom can be considered the result of three distinct events in Central Asia, each contributing to the geopoliticization of scholarship and shrinking of the information space.

9/11, CWOT and the securitization of Central Asian politics

The first significant markers were the 9/11 attacks and the US-led military response in Afghanistan that immediately ensued. For the United States, Central Asia went from being a relatively isolated and low-priority area, to occupying the frontline of operations in Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror (GWOT). During the fall of 2001, the United States provided military assistance to the Central Asian governments, including formal military bases agreements (with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan), fly-over and emergency landing agreements, and refueling agreements.1 The United States also extended economic support for Central Asian economic reforms and political transition, through international financial institutions.2

The backlash led to the closing of a number of organizations surrounding images of supporters from various universities promoting the twitter tag #FreeAlexanderSodiqov. All images taken from the website http://freesodiqov.org

In this era of diminishing interest in regional studies and shrinking foreign influence, the lack of official support is likely to significantly curtail the growth of a new generation of scholars engaged with Central Asia across all disciplines.

Notes

1 ibid, appendix 2

References


2 ibid, appendix 2

About the lack of Western political commitment to these governments, but also ushered in a new level of concern about the potentially subversive effects of social media and online mobilization, for example, Facebook and Twitter. Bloggers and online communities were targeted throughout the region, as new tools to regulate, monitor and censor the internet were adopted. Regulating the ‘information space’ had become as important as cracking down on formal political opposition. As at the same time as local anxieties over US military interests and engagement, US and NATO withdrawal from the region in 2014, for example, will decrease institutional interest in separate Central Asian geopolitics, particularly in Europe (as a result of the Russia-Ukraine crisis). US policy makers have an acute boost of ‘Central Asian fatigue’, US Congress has dramatically reduced levels of assistance for all of Central Asia and Eurasia. More relevant to the issue of the future of Central Asian studies, the budget sequestration has led to unprecedented cuts in the funding of Eurasian scholarship. All this at a time when both Russia and China are increasing their cultural and educational engagement with Central Asia. Thus, the consequence of geopolitical interest in Central Asia and government support for Central Asian scholarship that characterized Western engagement with the region in the 2000s, appears to be gone.

Conclusion: blurring the lines, chilling the future

Ironically, then, Alexander Sodiqov finds himself at the unfortunate convergence of increasing paranoia and concern within Central Asian governments about the boundaries of political dissent, and growing Western indifference and disengagement from the region. Simply put, while regional security and intelligence services exaggerate the destabilizing role of so-called agents of foreign influence, and take concrete measures to further restrict the activities of foreign-based and funded organizations, the actual interest in the region is palpably waning. To be sure, some of this decrease is a corrective from the excessive security focus that was heavily supported and promoted in the 2000s. However, it is difficult to underestimate the long-term damage that will be inflicted on Central Asian studies in the United States from recent cuts in government funding. In this era of diminishing interest in regional studies and shrinking foreign influence, the lack of official support is likely to significantly curtail the growth of a new generation of scholars engaged with Central Asia across all disciplines.

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1 ibid, appendix 2

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2 ibid, appendix 2
Modernity experienced at an everyday level

Nira Wickramasinghe has published an important work that moves readers’ attention towards an aspect of Sri Lanka’s history that is often neglected in historical works on Sri Lanka, namely how modernity was experienced at an everyday level under colonialism.

Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits


Metallic Modern is written in a pleasant and playful manner. Yet it is a dense and serious book that touches upon the very nature of history writing and reworks our notions of time and place, of what makes an event important and what needs to be recorded for posterity. The richness and originality of this publication should not come as a surprise for those who are familiar with the author’s earlier works, all written in a style reminiscent of French social historians, where theory is never overbearing but insinuates itself in the narrative. Furthermore, in a period where Sri Lanka’s history is often assumed to be one single national narrative this book is a timely intervention to help our thinking into perspectives of the everyday.

Metallic Modern departs from conventional writings on the colonial history of Sri Lanka. By digging into new archives, visual, business, personal such as the police entry of a tailor called Pieterz in 1972, the Singer Papers in Wisconsin (USA), colonial records in Britain and newspaper advertisements in Sri Lanka, Wickramasinghe has beautifully captured the intersections of many histories; social, cultural, political and economic, criss-crossed by considerations of gender and religion, and most valuable, material and ideological histories, all in a single, small book. The style of writing and the way the materials are organized and presented, the way themes and objects reappear in chapters inadvertently, constantly challenge readers (in a positive way) to draw lines and connections.

In this book, the author has very successfully painted a picture of how non-elite groups in Sri Lanka encountered modernity most directly through their use and adoption of machines, e.g., sewing machines, tricycles and industrial equipment) and grew into modern day consumers. Further, this book is very much a reflection on the ‘State and People Work Together’ approach. Metallic Modern is composed of an introduction, 8 short chapters and a conclusion. The beautiful illustrations used in the book, some of which are original sketches obtained from private collections, tell us a unique story as we sift through the pages. In the introduction, the author provides a dense theoretical and methodological discussion to place her chosen approach in the wider field of history writing. She situates the book in a wide terrain and engages with scholarship on empire, the Indian Ocean and global history. By doing so, the author intentionally snaps readers out of their familiar mental boundaries of the ‘island’ Ceylon and its history. Chapter 1 tells the story of the invention of the Singer sewing machine and investigates how it travelled a world market in the British Crown colony of Ceylon. This chapter offers a different take from that of economists and economic historians, who tend to dominate the history of industrial capitalism and consumption, and shows how and why ordinary colonized people consumed global products in the age of industrial capitalism. While lamenting about the lack of sufficient data to write a history of consumption in South Asia, the author delicately extracts anecdotes from the Singer archive in the USA to illuminate the story of colonized people as consumers. Chapter 3 of the book, entitled Paths to Buddhist Modernism: From Siam to America, discusses how in colonial Sri Lanka, a first few men from Buddhist monastic communities and then larger and more diverse groups used ritual performances, language and travel to subvert the authors’ colonial state and in chapter 5, how Japan became the model of an Asian modern for people in colonial Sri Lanka. Using the gramophone (chapter 4), and trams, cars and bicycles (chapter 6) the author compares and contrasts how in the crown colony of Ceylon, and in other colonized territories, modernity was practiced through machines. Chapter 7, entitled Tailor’s tale, machines in the home, provides an interesting account as to how material modernity entered ordinary households. Although not explicitly stated, one of the main strengths of this chapter is the insights it offers into the gendered nature of modernity experienced and established in the context of the tailoring and the sewing machine and ‘job of the tailors’. Probing further into such questions along the gender-political-power intersections could have provided greater insights into history as ‘his-story and her-story’ too.

This book is academically rich, analytically sophisticated and full of insightful interpretations that make it a valuable source for scholars and students from multiple disciplines. It will also be a pleasant read for those who are simply curious about the dusty machines that sacrificially and majestically occupy a small corner of their grandparents’ homes, still covered with a cloth.

Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits, Research Associate, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands

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Living in the urban periphery of Hanoi

Hoa Muc, in the past a small village (203 inhabitants in 1929) in the urban periphery of the Vietnamese capital city Ha Noi, stands central in this book. Daniele Labbé, attached as urban planner to the University of Montreal describes and analyses with much detail the changes that took place in the village during almost a century.

Hans Schenk


IN FOUR CHAPTERS a chronology covering major periods in the history of Hoa Muc has been followed: early urban influences during the French regime (1920-40), the initial decades of the North Vietnamese socialist transformation (1945-65), the difficult period till the economic renovation of the Vietnamese economy (Boi’ n moi, 1965-80); and the current reform period from 1980 onwards. During each period a major theme is the interaction between the villagers and the spatially, administratively, economically and otherwise expanding forces originating in the nearby big city. Oral history is her major source of information. The voices (of elderly) villagers sound throughout the book (naturally supplemented by the usual primary and secondary oral and written sources of bureaucrats, planners, etc.) and make her study a mixture of a socio-geographical, historical, anthropological, political and planning monograph.

Villagers dealing with the state

During the French regime, villagers developed side occupations, especially weaving, by taking advantage of the close proximity of the Vietnamese capital city Ha Noi. Oral history is her major source of information. The voices (of elderly) villagers sound throughout the book (naturally supplemented by the usual primary and secondary oral and written sources of bureaucrats, planners, etc.) and make her study a mixture of a socio-geographical, historical, anthropological, political and planning monograph.

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A photographic journey into modern Indian kingship

Photography in colonial India has received a fair share of academic attention; this coffee table book is no less important than scholarly interventions as it creatively narrates the story of princely India. The photographs cover a large number of states across every geographical and political variations and generation of modern Indian rulers. Neatly divided into sections, with short notes accompanying every photograph, the book displays vividly the changes as to how the royals negotiated modernity, imperial administrators, the public, technological advances, and the art of producing self-images among things relevant.

Just as the princes dressed in ornamental traditional clothing, there was a tendency to pose in contemporary Western apparels. By the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, royals across India had started to wear riding breeches, knee-high leather boots, overcoats, jackets and caps, even in the warm months. The stunning photographs of several queens and princesses, particularly that of Rani Sita Devi of Kapurthala, show that royal women were more at ease with Western clothes and also that they were less tradition-bound when it came to adopting foreign clothes. Among the men, Maharaja Jitendra Narayan, Prince Nitendra, Maharaja Rajendra Narayan and Prince Hitendra stand out as the subjects who, unlike many other pretenders, carried the clothes effortlessly, due mainly to their British education. There were other ways of showcasing affinity for the West. A photograph of Maharaja Jagatjit Singh with a bicycle, a new mechanical marvel when the shot was taken around 1890, shows how the princes used even simple vehicles in order to associate themselves with the progresses of Western modernity. An even lesser vehicle, a perambulator, was the subject of another photograph from 1900, purportedly to commemorate a rite of passage for a royal child and its claim to use objects of wonder. Maharaja Jagatjit Singh should be mentioned again for the photograph in which he poses intimately with his wife, Rani Kanu, who is seen draped in a tightly corseted gown and long silk gloves, proof again of the prince’s fascination for all things Western.

Souvik Naha

Reviewed publication:

The Photographs reveal a dynamic history of kingship. For instance, a 1930 photograph of the Bikaner royal children – Karni Singh and Sushila Kumari – in informal clothes, stands in stark contrast with the visage of an unidentified young prince, who was photographed in 1890 in elaborate apparel and jewelry. This bears evidence of the erosion of artificial formality in royal photographs. A definitive change in how one approached inter religion marriage is evident in the photograph of the two wives of Maharaja Rajinder Singh of Patiala, one of whom was Florence Gertrude Bryan (renamed Harnam Kaur), who married the prince in 1893, adopted Indian clothing and tried to fit into the complex palace hierarchies. Portraits of traditionally dressed and heavily ornamented princesses exhibit the burden of normative behavior that weighed on most royal women, particularly in the nineteenth century as is evident from the photograph of the princess of Baroda from 1880. On the other hand, photographs such as that of Maharani Chimnabai II of Baroda during a hunt, taken in 1909, show that it was not uncommon for aristocratic women to come out of the inner domains of household and participate in outdoor activities, often wearing traditional costumes.

Top left: Painted photograph of Maharaj Kesari Pratap Singh (b.1859, r.1876-1942) of Kutch, 1929.
Top right: Painted photograph of Maharaja Shind Bendole (1863-1883) of Karanja, c.1870.
Below: Painted photograph of Maharaja Kishen Singh (b. 1869, r.1909-1929) of Bharatpur, c.1900.

Images taken from the book, reproduced with permission from themuseumblog.com

Just as the princes dressed in ornamental traditional clothing, there was a tendency to pose in contemporary Western apparels. By the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, royals across India had started to wear riding breeches, knee-high leather boots, overcoats, jackets and caps, even in the warm months. The stunning photographs of several queens and princesses, particularly that of Rani Sita Devi of Kapurthala, show that royal women were more at ease with Western clothes and also that they were less tradition-bound when it came to adopting foreign clothes. Among the men, Maharaja Jitendra Narayan, Prince Nitendra, Maharaja Rajendra Narayan and Prince Hitendra stand out as the subjects who, unlike many other pretenders, carried the clothes effortlessly, due mainly to their British education. There were other ways of showing affinity for the West. A photograph of Maharaja Jagatjit Singh with a bicycle, a new mechanical marvel when the shot was taken around 1890, shows how the princes used even simple vehicles in order to associate themselves with the progresses of Western modernity. An even lesser vehicle, a perambulator, was the subject of another photograph from 1900, purportedly to commemorate a rite of passage for a royal child and its claim to use objects of wonder. Maharaja Jagatjit Singh should be mentioned again for the photograph in which he poses intimately with his wife, Rani Kanu, who is seen draped in a tightly corseted gown and long silk gloves, proof again of the prince’s fascination for all things Western.

Visual Techniques
In addition to history, the book throws light on techniques of photography too. It shows how photography replaced the art of portrait painting at the royal court, creating a new category of artists that was so much in demand that many famous painters put aside paintbrushes and shifted to camera. Yet, when technology failed to satisfy royal demands of grandeur so professional hand tinting of photographs became the means to accentuate color and highlight the details of dress and jewelry, often at the expense of the subject’s face being blurred. Manipulating photographs by merging two negatives into one composite print or over-painting was widely practiced to introduce new subjects and effects. However, the book also admits the presence of cutting edge techniques such as selective use of ambient light diffused through strategically placed glass panels. The book is as much about history of camera technology as it is about social history of princely states.

Omissions
The book features very rare photographs such as that of the last Mughal Empress, Begum Zeenat Mahal, taken in 1857 when she and her husband Bahadur Shah Zafar were imprisoned at the Red Fort in Delhi. However, it underrepresents many aspects of princely India, such as some of the royals’ patronage of cricket and polo. It is not clear whether this omission was an editorial decision or was there simply not any photograph that showed princes playing or in company of players, which is quite unlikely given the level of involvement of the Maharajas of Patiala, Bhopal, Porbandar or other states in Indian sports. Conversely, paucity of photographs on sport or music leads to a number of speculations on why these subjects were largely absent from royal archives – such as whether or why princes considered being photographed with hunted animals, family or contemporaries as more important than with cricket or star players?

The photographs were an occasion when the ordinary could share the same frame with the royals. Still, these were also sites in which the grandeur of princely household glossed over mundane social realities like war, poverty and famine, thus reanimating in the present reader nostalgia for indigenous monarchy. Although the princes intended to make their bodies look affluent, dominant and progressive, most of them looked strikingly unattractive compared to their wives and even the average Indian men. The seriousness with which royals approached the act of being photographed and preserved the print for posterity is quite evident. It also leaves the reader wondering if at least some of them (except Raja Deen Dayal whose passion for photography was widely known) learnt the craft with as much interest. Despite the inconclusiveness of some aspects of royal household that the book raises, it remains an excellent compendium of photography in princely India.

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Institute of History. (souvik.naha@imw.ess.ethz.ch)
CinemAsia Film Festival 2015, the 8th edition

The Official Selection showcases exciting new films that are critically acclaimed or massively popular with audiences, covering a spectrum of countries and filmmakers to enable a presentation of the fuller picture of contemporary Asian cinema. The Country in Focus is a new section in the official program and explores the future of the country’s film journey in screenings and discussions. This year we’d like to focus on Korean New Wave Female Power Producers. Since the 1990s, Korean films reformed themselves due to a variety of factors including the emergence of a new generation of directors, producers and investors. From the New Wave period, Korean films have been winning on so many levels including critical success, commercial success at home and internationally, and also currently being the most progressive and prominent of the Asian filmmaking nations.

For its side programs, CinemAsia invites diverse guests to join discussions, Q&As and debates around the film screenings. The IIAS network will also be involved in CinemAsia’s side programming. More information will follow on the IIAS and CinemAsia websites.

IN OCTOBER 2014, Lorna Tee became the new festival director of CinemAsia. She is a film producer from Hong Kong, who produces films from the new generation of Asian filmmakers. She has a large network in the Asian film industry and is actively involved as a consultant for international film festivals like Berlinale, Busan International Film Festival and the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Lorna Tee: “The richness and complexities of Asian cinema still have a long way to be seen and experienced in The Netherlands. The growth in Asia, both economically and politically, in current times, places Asia as a territory that is not just a key trading partner, but also enables it to build strong and effective socio-political ties in the long run, through better understanding and cooperation, through the medium of cinema. Hence, the film festival’s vision for the coming edition will focus on quality of films that will find resonance with not just the Dutch-Asian audiences, but will also bring forth a better representation of Asian cinema, culture and contemporary issues, that will give more Dutch audiences the opportunity to get a better glimpse and exploration of Asia. The programme seeks to cover as much ground on the vast continent of Asia and gradually reduce the distance between them and us by creating dialogues, discussion and debates through the power of film.”

CinemAsia also has its own CinemAsia FilmLAB in which upcoming filmmakers can submit their films to be selected for the Competition. The winners of the competition will receive a grant to work at IIAS, in order to write a PhD project proposal or a research article. The winners also gain professional experience. After an intensive production process they will be world premiered during the festival in April.

For program and further information go to www.cinemasia.nl

IIAS National Master’s Thesis Prize 2015

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
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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 2014 – 30 September 2015
- 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 2015, 9.00 am
Submissions should be sent to: IIAS Outreach
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)
P.O. Box 9500
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands
iias@iias.nl
MUCH HAS CHANGED since the 22 May coup last year. However, in truth, Thailand has been experiencing several longer-term transitions which have been changing the complexion of the country. In all likelihood from now on, Thailand will be a polity of citizens and not subjects. For cultural, social, and economic reasons, a vast segment of the Thai population that long conceded domination of the country’s politics to officers of the Thai state or to their putative social betters is no longer willing to do so. I would like to offer a few thoughts on four major transitions taking place in the country.

First, the north, northeast and, to some degree, rural central Thailand—and not just political strongmen representing provinces in those regions—will play a larger role in national affairs than heretofore. Their role will in some ways resemble that long played by the upper south through its parliamentary representatives in the Democrat Party. This regional dimension of political change in Thailand also has a pronounced ethnic dimension: the ‘Lao’ people of northern and northeastern Thailand will play political roles more closely commensurate with their numbers. It had long been assumed, wrongly it is now clear, that the early and middle years of King Phumiphon’s reign had made this ethnic dimension of Thai politics practically irrelevant.

Second, northern and northeastern Thailand will continue to be marked by growing and, frankly, unprecedented prosperity. Already, between 2007 and 2011, economic growth in northeast Thailand outstripped that in Bangkok by 40 percent to 17 percent. To be sure, some of that growth was due to so-called ‘Thakinomics’, to policies branded ‘populist’. But some of it was also due to policies whose origins long predate Thaksin Chinnawat’s first premiership (2001-2005), to remittances from Bangkok and overseas, and to what may prove a self-sustaining intensification of economic activity in those regions. Inevitable investment in infrastructure and better links to China and Vietnam will only increase the prosperity of northern and northeastern Thailand. That prosperity is, to be sure, tied to China’s growth and to ASEAN’s integration. While the people of those regions will for some time remain, on average, poorer and less well educated than the people of Bangkok, their political orientation will be informed by aspiration rather than destitution, by feelings of stakeholdership rather than grievance.

Third, from WWII through to the 1970s, Thailand imposed heavy taxes on agriculture to the advantage of the urban sector. From the mid-1970s onward, successive Thai governments have reversed that flow of resources, in a policy shift typical of economies in which agriculture and the rural sector represent a declining share of total economic activity. Most famous, or infamous, among such policies as adopted by former PM Yinglak Chinnawat was the calamitously designed ‘rice pledge’ scheme, which cost in excess of US$20 billion and led to Thailand’s losing of its position as the world’s leading rice exporter. This policy was almost certainly unsustainable. Nevertheless, such inter-sectoral transfer payments will remain a central feature of Thailand’s political economy in the future.

Finally, the monarchy and its role in Thai life are central to Thailand’s current crisis. They will be central to developments in 2015 and beyond. American diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks revealed how concerned senior figures in Thailand’s network monarchy were about the coming succession. One needs, however, to understand these concerns in two particular contexts.

One of these contexts is historical. When King Phumiphon returned from Switzerland in late 1951 to live in Thailand for good, senior courtiers and others carefully managed his transition into the role of full-time king. The revival of monarchy as a central institution in Thailand and the leading role in Thai politics that King Phumiphon played for many years reflected the success of this sort of management. Members of today’s network monarchy and, it seems, of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) junta that took power in May 2014 understand that management of the monarchy during the transition to a new reign will be crucial to the monarchy’s survival. Today, the junta’s prioritization and a monarchy in transition show every indication of working together quite smoothly.

The second context for concern relates more directly to the future than to the past. The effort in the late 1940s and early 1950s to restore the prestige and influence of the Thai monarchy after the setbacks that it suffered in the wake of the end of royal absolutism in 1932 represented as much as anything else a feat of imagination. Simbly, the future of the Thai monarchy after the end of King Phumiphon’s reign will depend on the successful re-imagining of its relevance and the consequent refashioning of its role for a new era. The insularity that has marked much fretting over the succession represents not least a failure of imagination among figures influential in the later years of the current reign.

As, it seems, the NCPO junta eases some of those figures aside, there is little evidence of a determination to adapt the monarchy to the demands and realities of the times. But who is to say how long the junta will last or whether the cast of characters who will end up managing the next reign during its early years will suffer from a comparable lack of imagination concerning the place of monarchy in contemporary Thailand?

Michael J. Montesano, Visiting Senior Fellow at Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and co-coordinator of its Thailand Studies Programme
Populist policies and the rural-urban divide

Punngthon Pawanpakun

ON 22 JULY 2014, two months after a military coup d'état, the Thai military promulgated an interim constitution signed by King Bhumibol Adulyadej. With sweeping powers in the hands of General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, the current Prime Minister of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the interim constitution’s preamble promises to eradicate corruption and bring ‘reform’ and subsequently ‘genuine democracy’ to Thai society. The NCPO promises its interim government will boost middle-class support that it would put an end to corruption policies in all forms. However, with a narrow focus on the corruption of politicians, the question remains whether the interim charter is likely to bring genuine democracy, stability, and ‘happiness’ to a deeply polarized society.

Section 44 of the interim constitution, for example, provides PM Prayuth with extensive powers. They include the authority to issue orders and undertake whatever the NCPO deems necessary regardless of the laws of the land. The constitution also orders, “for the benefit of reform in any field and to strengthen public unity and harmony, or for the prevention, disruption or suppression in any area which undermines public peace and order or national security, the Monarchy, national economics or administration of state affairs, whether that act emerges inside or outside the kingdom.” The constitution guarantees that PM Prayuth’s orders are “legal, constitutional and conclusive,” thus rendering check-and-balance mechanisms unnecessary.

The NCPO’s far-reaching powers have, inevitably, led to allegations of human rights violations. By the end of July 2014, the NCPO had summoned 565 individuals and arrested 233. These include human rights defenders, academics, activists, journalists, students, writers and protesters. Meanwhile the NCPO banned public gatherings, enforced stringent censorship on individuals, groups, and the mass media, issued repressive orders, revoked the passports of those who refused to report to the junta and who have fled abroad instead. Those who face charges will be tried in the military court. The interim constitution also declares the NCPO’s use of power to be within the law and, at the same time, renders this illegality illegal.

The interim constitution also signals resistance to politicians and electoral politics. It barred individuals who have been members of political parties under three years prior to the date of appointment from becoming cabinet members of the coup-installed government (Section 20), members of National Legislative Assembly (Section 8); and members of the Constitution Drafting Committee (Section 33). Meanwhile, it channels political power to NCPO members, military personnel and government officials. In this context, Thailand may be argued to have returned to a ‘bureaucratic polity’, where the military, bureaucrats and business interests gain control over elected representatives. This negativity towards political and electoral politics is also broadly found among the urban middle class. Disturbers of politicians has grown steadily since the early 1980s when participatory politics and electoral governance began to entrenched itself in the political system.

One of the key reasons for the distrust of participatory politics and electoral government is the belief that rural and poor voters, who form Thaksin’s mass support, will sell their votes in exchange for short-term personal benefit or petty cash. The urban educated middle class blame rural voters for lack of good education and ‘proper’ understanding of democracy for the failure of Thai democracy. Many intellectuals and civic groups argue that holding elections does not necessarily mean adherence to democratic principles, and thus seek to undermine the legitimacy of electoral politics and the principle of one-man-one-vote. However, recent research has shown that vote-buying is no longer a decisive factor in determining election outcome. Instead the poor and rural voters are increasingly motivated by community development projects but this has been interpreted by others as being bribed by unsustainably populist policies. In addition, the urban middle-class believe that populist policies will cause long-term damage to the Thai economy. Ironically, they fail to see how multi-billion dollar projects catering to the interest of urbanites and industrialists have been contributing to uneven development and constitute exploitation of taxpayers. For many of these urbanites, a desirable political system does not necessitate to be the same as a western-style democracy with respect to freedom, liberties and equality of every citizen, but it must be built from corrupt politicians and, hence, be ruled by moral people.

As a result, antipathy for corrupt politicians, and a bias against electoral politics and rural development policies will be registered in the new constitution that the military-appointed Constitution Drafting Committee is drafting. Many Thai conservatives believe that the most efficient way towards a happy and peaceful society is to programme people with similar beliefs, and to view diverse opinions, demands and proposals with doubt. Initially the authorities tried to justify their junta is certainly creating happiness for some in Thailand, but not all.

Punngthon Pawanpakun, Visiting Senior Fellow at Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

A new politics in the making?

Porphant Ouyyanont

THAKSIN SHRIWATSAK’s overwhelming victory in the election of 2005 marked the start of a period of socio-political division in Thai society. The former Prime Minister’s way of exercising prison, authoritarian and business management were seen by many as a direct challenge to Thai traditions, and also as a threat to the monarchy. Certainly under Thaksin there was less emphasis on the King’s advocacy of a ‘sufficiency economy’ but, instead, more on maximizing growth and becoming competitive. Thaksin thus attempted to create a strong and populist state with power centralized around his own. In effect Thaksin was challenging the bureaucratic polity and network monarchy. Elite bureaucrats and the military, which played a key role in the Thai political landscape, were gradually marginalised under Thaksin. Viewed in this light, the present National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) government may be viewed as the “Thaksin junta”. It is thus no surprise in countering the influence of the NCPO, the Thaksin government is moving into uncharted territory. It is exercising traditional authoritarian control in the name of corporation and social media. What are the characteristics of the NCPO government?

First and foremost is the extent to which the military dominates the NCPO and its agencies. The coup of 22 May was led by the Commander in Chief of the army, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, who was named interim Prime Minister on 21 August 2014. In Prayuth’s cabinet, announced on 30 August, 11 out of 32 cabinet ministers, taking up 34 positions, were military figures. These were key positions in the ministries of justice, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Labour, Social Development, Commerce and Resources.

Secondly, the message of stability before democracy has been continually emphasised by the NCPO government, as can be seen in PM Prayuth’s weekly speeches. The coup is achieved by strong rule until such time as democratic processes like elections can be reinstituted. The denigration of Thaksin’s political system is explicit. As PM Prayuth noted in one of his televised speeches, “Many people still try to destabilize the situation by using the words ‘democracy’ and ‘election’. These people do not see that an incomplete democracy is not safe and it does not create confidence in the global community... the distribution of revenues is unjust, while corruption, wrongful activities, encroachment of natural resources and environment are encouraged, and the public will be told that these things are good, rightious, and beneficial to them”.

Thirdly, order and populism can go hand-in-hand. The NCPO government has taken action against gang-led motorcycle taxi racketeers, taxi scams at airports, and vendors on the beaches. These crackdowns have been met with public approval. Less popular are crackdowns on gambling, even at village level. Such crackdowns, of course, provide the occasion for military confronts for the third time, and for presenting the military in a positive light across the country. Other populist measures seem aimed at gaining public favour can be rather bizarre. The government forced television companies to screen World Cup football matches on free-to-air channels as well as offering 20,000 free tickets for a football match against Colombia. Such measures, under a general policy to bring back ‘happiness’ to the Thai people, also include free army concerts and haircuts. To many of these would indicate a codenducing attitude towards the general public.

Fourthly, the control of state-owned enterprises by the junta has been vital. There are 56 such enterprises and they include some of the largest commercial enterprises in the country such as the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PPT) and Thai Airways. Their combined assets amount to around US$360 billion. It was widely believed that Thaksin used his influence to give appointments in these companies to his political supporters. This was contrary to the long tradition of control which the traditional royalist elite had over state enterprises as well as their strong links to the military. As such, the new government’s removal of powerful business leaders in the state sector who were appointed under pro-Thaksin governments has been a key means of reducing pro-Thaksin influence in the corporate sector. Among such changes have been the resignations of the PTT Chairman, the Chairman of the Krung Thai Bank, and the heads of the Government Lottery Office and the Airports of Thailand.

Finally, the clampdown on dissent has been extraordinary. Martial law has enabled the government to ban, throughout the country, any protest gathering of more than five people. The authorities exercise control and censorship, or the threat of censorship, over newspapers and television channels, while some newspapers, radio stations, and television channels have been closed down. Initially the authorities tried to block Facebook and also called for meetings with representatives from Facebook and Twitter. These were unsuccessful but the junta let it be known that those posting anti-coup comments on social media will be monitored. Some websites, such as Human Rights Watch, are blocked. A well-publicized instance of the junta’s sensitivity to content was the recent last-minute cancellation of an event organized by Amnesty International and other groups at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Bangkok in September 2014. The junta has also summoned several hundred people, most of them former politicians and activists, for questioning and warnings. The current number is estimated at well over 600, and some of them have been detained.

In conclusion, the politics created by the present government marks a very fundamental departure from Thaksin’s politics. However, in doing so, the NCPO government is also hastening the end of the traditional bureaucratic polity, the demise of the Thaksin economically based, prime-minister-led politics, and perhaps the reduction in the influence of the network monarch.

Porphant Ouyyanont, Visiting Senior Fellow at Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Thailand Forum: ‘Society In Transition’

ISEAS, Singapore, 27 and 28 July 2015

ISEAS will be holding the Thailand Forum on 27-28 July this year. The overarching theme of the Forum will be ‘society in transition’ and its focus will be on developments in politics, society, culture and the economy. These developments will be explored from a broad perspective and in depth for the period 2005-2015. The Forum will be held at 12 Pathein Road, Singapore 169766. In addition to the papers presented by invited speakers, there will be discussions, and a Q&A session for participants. The venue is equipped with excellent conference facilities and there will be refreshments served during the event. To register, please contact Dr Tessa Sperling (t.sperling@iseas.edu.sg) or Dr Terence Chong (terencechong@iseas.edu.sg).

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Porphant Ouyyanont, Visiting Senior Fellow at Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

For more information please contact the two co-ordinators: Dr Michael Mackenzie (michael.mackenzie@iseas.edu.sg) or Dr Terence Chong (terencechong@iseas.edu.sg)
The ICAS Book Prize (IBP) was established by the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in 2004. It aims to create an international focus for publications on Asia while increasing their worldwide visibility. The biennial IBP is awarded to outstanding works, and dissertations, in the field of Asian studies.

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary

IBP 2015 ceremony

Jury prizes are awarded to the best books and dissertations in both the humanities and social sciences. In 2007 the Colleagues’ Choice Award was established following numerous requests to also give the academic community the opportunity to vote for their favourite. Votes can be cast online through the IBP Voting Booth from 16 March 2015–16 June 2015 (www.icas.asia).

The IBP award ceremony will take place on 6 July 2015, during ICAS 9 in Adelaide, Australia. So, of course, don’t forget to register for ICAS 9 (www.icas9.com). Registration is open!

Towards a multilingual ICAS Book Prize

In the past we received complaints about how it was not possible to submit books written in languages other than English. We are considering changing this rule as of the seventh edition of the IBP, which will take place in 2017. This would mean taking a large step towards becoming a truly global competition that is not limited to the academic lingua franca English, but one in which all major languages with sufficient academic capacity can partake. To start with, we anticipate setting up reading committees for the following languages: Chinese, Japanese, French and German.

We hope to realize this goal and present the outcome of this multi-lingual competition at ICAS 10 in 2017.

Shift from humanities to social sciences


Of the 204 submitted books, 115 were entered in the category social sciences and 89 in the category humanities. During the first edition of the IBP (2005) 65% of the books fell into the humanities category and 35% into the category social sciences; this sixth edition of the IBP (2015) has near enough reversed the numbers, with 60% of the titles now categorized as social sciences and 40% as humanities. This marks not only a shift in publishing on Asia, but also in the field of Asian studies: a move from traditional humanities research to the more contemporary social sciences.

Background of authors

Over the past editions there has also been a gradual shift in the geographical background of the authors. 10% of the authors were of Asian descent during the first IBP; and this number has over the years risen gradually. They now make up 40% of the almost 300 authors, editors and contributors who were involved in the publications submitted for IBP 2015. Thus one may conclude that Asian studies are more and more becoming an affair of Asian scholars. This change has so far not translated itself into the realm of publishing because Asian studies books are still predominantly published by Western publishers. There has been a slight increase in the share of Asian publishers in the past ten years, but this has been marginal, certainly taking into account the fact that many of them are Asian branches of Western publishers.

Trending Topics

It will come as no surprise that almost 50% of the submitted books are about East Asia, and in turn half of those concern China. The number of books on South Asia doubled in comparison to the 2013 edition, India being the most studied country. The number of studies on Southeast Asia was clearly larger in the previous edition. In this region it was Indonesia that was most studied, with its wake Singapore; significantly though, for the first time, several publications were submitted above all other ASEAN countries, e.g., Cambodia with 6 books. It is clear that Central Asia is understudied; as yet, no books from this region have ever been submitted for the ICAS Book Prize.

Popular themes, approached from different disciplinary or comparative angles, are: art and culture, diasporas and migration, East-West Relations, gender and identity, history and historiography, international relations and politics, economy, language and literature, religion and philosophy, and society. Economy, religion and philosophy were newcomers in these most studied fields. As upcoming fields of interest we see biography, education, health and medicine, law, media and technology, urban culture and heritage, and war and violence. Themes previously popular such as (post) colonialism, democratization, labour, nationalism and state formation, science and knowledge, either disappeared or are underrepresented in this edition. 16 edited volumes were submitted, which is a 10% increase from the previous IBP. This is partly due to the putting in place of a reading committee to accolade for ‘best edited volume’ at the IBP in 2013; it is one of 6 accolades awarded in each category, to which we will most likely add an accolade for ‘best art (history) book’.

Dissertations

In all 48 (2013: 99 / 2011: 43) dissertations were submitted by scholars who recently obtained their PhDs. Of the submitted dissertations 25 are humanities oriented, while the other 23 fall squarely in the broad rubric social sciences. The humanities dissertations include exciting contributions that examine issues relating to countries and historical times as diverse as eighteenth-century Persia, post-Suharto Indonesia and Mughal-India. As for the dissertations submitted under the category of social sciences, innovative and intriguing topics include gender and identity among Indonesian women, Ladakhi Buddhist youth in India and (flood) risk-handling styles in Jakarta. Although fewer dissertations were submitted compared to the previous edition the quality across the board seems to be considerably higher. As such the jury consisting of Lena Scheen (humanities) and Bobby Benedicto (social sciences) are faced with the difficult task of finding those two dissertations that stand out in terms of quality and originality, as such setting an example for the rest to follow.

New sponsorship

In October 2014, Leiden University unveiled plans for a new Asian library at Leiden University Libraries, scheduled to open its doors in 2017. On 23 January 2015, IIAS signed a cooperation agreement with the Leiden University Libraries, stipulating that The Asian Library will sponsor the next three editions of the ICAS Book Prize (IBP 2015, 2017, 2019). In return, ICAS will donate to The Asian Library the books collected during the previous and upcoming editions of the IBP (read more about The Asian Library on page 31).

For more information about ICAS and the ICAS Book Prize, please visit: www.icas9.com
Pictured above: A selection of the books submitted to the IBP 2015. Not all titles had been received at the time of taking the photo.
Hungry ghosts meet Ming bling: re-framing 50 years in the life of an empire

Anna Grasskamp

The conference, Ming: Courts and Contacts 1400–1450, brought together curators and university-based researchers, as well as historians of painting, architecture and ship-building, porcelainists and musicologists, specialists of scientific and religious systems, scholars affiliated with museums in Beijing and Taipei, experts of past Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Persian empires. While transnational and interdisciplinary in scope the choice of conference presenters was limited to scholars affiliated with institutions in the Anglo-American and Chinese regions of the world (with the exception of a single Korea-based scholar). This provokes questions on the connectedness of the global Ming academic community and the visibility and accessibility of research published in languages other than the world’s two most widely spoken ones. Focusing on the language of material and visual evidence the conference begins with the exhibition’s project curator, Lu Yu Ping, re-interpreted empresses’ headgear in an attempt to reconstruct symbolic meanings and aesthetic systems in addition to those documented in predominantly male-authored written records. In the same way as the painting described at the beginning of this review serves to evoke the presence of (oppressed) female voices in the exhibition, the hairpins and other components of female material culture that the show presents, are important artful testimonials of a practice that was predominantly access through primary sources written by and for male (elite) authors.

While the publication of the conference papers is scheduled for 2015, the exhibition catalogue can be found in the museum shop, where it is framed by a variety of ‘Chinese souvenirs’ (some of them slightly disturbing in their almost aggressive use of the modified dragon motif, repetitively copied and pasted to the surfaces of a variety of contemporary utensils). Naturally, choices related to the museum shop lie outside the curators’ ambit. One also imagine that reductions of the emperors’ personae along the lines of “Xuande – The Aesthete” might not have been at the core of the exhibition makers’ mission. Nevertheless, such ‘branding’ of historical figures might have helped the average visitor in dealing with the potentially confusing familiarity of Chinese empires, encouraging the fabrication of an inner image of what a Chinese emperor was like (supported by reproductions of famous emperor portraits). As some have pointed out, the exhibition shows traces of institutional and political constraints, in contrast to the catalogue that provides a more comprehensive ‘paper version’ of the actual show, adding significant pieces, elaborating on underlying frameworks and immaterial targets.

One of the declared goals of the exhibition lay in the public re-framing of fifty years in the life of a dynasty as ‘connected’ rather than isolated. In this regard, the display adds to various recent exhibits that highlighted the transnational aspects of the Qing Empire (in particular in relation to the emperors Kange, Yongzheng and Qianlong and their engagement with European Jesuits). While the connectivity of the world has become commonplace, inviting scholars to ponder on ‘early modern globalization’, the ‘Maritime Silk Road’ or the ‘East Asian Mediterranean’, such envisioning has previously not reached a broader non-scholarly audience with the same intellectual strength and material variety that the British Museum show presents.

Regardless of whether one is with Clunas concerning his long-standing argument on early modernity in China that shaped the framework of the show and has been criticized by some,1 Ming: 50 Years that Changed China significantly changes a broad museum audience’s perception of Ming material, visual and political culture. In an exhibition space where a hungry ghost meets a piece of the ‘Porcelain Pagoda’, and an elegant headress competes with the splendor of a sword, blue-and-white images of “the Ming” dissolve into a colorful bundle of interwoven strings of questions concerning (the display of) regimes – foreign and local, male and female, high and low, private and public, material and immaterial.

Anna Grasskamp, Post-doctoral Fellow, Cluster of Excellence Asia and Europe in a Global Context, Heidelberg
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References

New discoveries on Southeast Asia’s maritime and diplomatic history 1600-1800

Hendrik E. Niemeyer

The Newsletter | No.70 | Spring 2015

The Maritime Asia

The Digital Archives at ANRI (DASA) project in Jakarta is an innovative project in Indonesia. A specialized Dutch foundation, The Corts Foundation (TCF), funds the project, and the arrangements for technical assistance. TCF is also responsible for the development of databases, software and web applications.

Challenges

From a professional historian’s perspective, the more complex challenge is intellectual and linguistic. How to make these old and linguistically challenging 17th and 18th-century sources relevant not only for Southeast Asian historians and students but also for the wider public? The archives of the VOC have a reputation as a key resource for historians wishing to tell the story of the Dutch East India Company and the activities of its far-flung personnel scattered in a wide arc between Deshima and Java in the eighteenth century. But how did they serve to the Dutch fort in Batavia Castle. These have been professionally catalogued by outstanding scholars to interpret these diplomatic and political networks. The lack of local Asian archives will make it difficult to interpret the diplomatic and political networks that existed between Batavia Castle and rulers of Southeast Asia. Powerful political centres with strong interests such as Banten, Ayutthaya or Kartaura had their own political and trading networks. Indeed, it is still difficult to reconstruct the relationship between Batavia and many of the VOC officers. These additions are essential in alluring scholars to interpret this image and others with similar content.

Inset: Website logo.

Visualization and interpretation

In the visualization, the city of Batavia Castle is shown as the centre of the network, with lines representing the commercial and diplomatic relationships between Batavia Castle and other ports and political centres in Southeast Asia. The lines are colour-coded to indicate the nature of the relationship, with red lines representing military force and green lines representing commercial or diplomatic relations. The size of the lines is proportional to the volume of trade or the number of diplomatic missions between the two locations.

The visualization helps to understand the complexity of the network, and it is possible to trace the flow of goods and people between different regions. The visualization also helps to identify trends and patterns, such as the increase in trade with particular ports or the decrease in diplomatic missions to certain locations.

Finally, the visualization provides a tool for researchers to explore the relationships between different ports and political centres, and to identify new areas for research. For example, the visualization shows that the network was not static, but rather changed over time, with new connections being formed and old ones being severed. This suggests that the network was dynamic and responsive to changing circumstances.

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1. Daghger geghanen icht ce ratale. A. van Grinsven: Nijhoff, Batavia: Landsdrukkerij. 31 volumes edited by van Grinsven. The Corts Foundation in Indonesia and Guest Lecturer Dr. Hendrik E. Niemeyer is Chief Representative of the Corts Foundation in Indonesia and Guest Lecturer in Maritime History at Diponegoro State University in Semarang, Central Java.
Responses to the manifesto ‘Heritage beyond the boundaries’

The manifesto ‘Heritage beyond the boundaries’, published in the previous issue of the Newsletter (#69, Autumn 2014, pp.22-23), was compiled by a team of MA students and PhD candidates enrolled in the Leiden University program Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe. As a teacher, I supported this initiative, together with Ian Dull, an independent researcher working on the heritage of Southeast Asia.

Adele Esposito

FROM A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, I recognize two main positive contributions made by the manifesto: first, it has fostered the students’ capacity to make a statement to the field of heritage studies, based on their individual research; second, the students enthusiastically engaged in this extra-curriculum activity. The limits between a formal class and a passionate debate were blurred, late-afternoons were spent with exchanges about the articles, critiques flocked, responses, against each other. The manifesto encouraged interactions with an academic field, ‘heritage studies’, which is a source of heated debates.

The responses to the manifesto published in this issue of the Newsletter, show how current and thriving these debates are. The students and I have been happy to receive the harsh criticisms that will help to deepen the knowledge of heritage, but also the theoretical and philosophical foundations of ‘critical heritage’ as a field of study. We have also been glad to read those contributions that have provided new perspectives on the values and the forms of heritage in the contexts of Asia. Finally, we have been keen to publish those contributions that adopt a position contrary to one article, or to the manifesto as a whole. These will help the students evaluate the validity of their arguments, and imagine the response they would give if the community of authors were physically present in a conference room. We can only wish that this will in reality happen one day, in order to develop fruitful and hot debates about the politics of heritage.

Below is a selection of the responses sent to us. We would like to thank everyone who sent us their thoughts on this issue, and regret we could not publish everyone’s contribution.

Adele Esposito, Research Fellow at CNRS/AUSSER; lecturer at IASS/Leiden University; Lecturer of the MA Program ‘Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe’, BAS/Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University.

Cultural and natural heritage

Eric Jones

HERITAGE PARTLY CONSISTS of communal institutions used to allocate, conserve and harvest natural resources. Where humans have operated for millennia it is unthinkable to think of nature as independent of this traditional management. Yet these institutions are under threat. As Madhav Gadgil says, “the conservation of the rapidly diminishing pool of experience, a kind of cultural diversity, is as pressing as the conservation of biological diversity.” An appropriate theoretical framework envisages Asia’s heritage as a continuum with Europe’s experience, despite differences in timing both are shaped by economic growth. A model may be proposed like the familiar one where different waves of consumer goods are bought as successive thresholds of household income are crossed. Development likewise erases communal mechanisms for allocating resources. The model is mechanistic but is a first approximation; as usual in social science, deviations from its predictions are the greater interest.

Communal institutions for allocating resources are nearly extinct in Western Europe, ironically sometimes being ousted in favour of ‘pure’ nature conservation, despite the way specific ecosystems depend on historical practices. Two generations of development in East Asia, and population growth throughout Asia, have brought comparable effects. Environmental pressure has been externalised in part by importing forest products and seeking customary luxuries, like ivory, in other continents, not to mention in distant seas. But Asia itself has felt the effects, notably the commercialisation of exploitation where resources were formerly husbanded by local communities. Husbanded is the world: local people engaged in sustainable harvesting and it is their heritage of cautious management which is now, as Gadgil observes, under, as much threat as wildlife itself.

An example is the exploitation of cave swiftlets in Borneo to make birds’ nest soup. Small-scale management apparently existed in equiurbit for one thousand years, producing no ‘tragedy of the commons’. However, Suharto’s government replaced the system by annual auctions. After Suharto’s fall, reformers were frustrated by continued human (human) population and income growth, which raised demand and hampered the restoration of previous means of allocating harvesting rights.

Not all growth-induced changes are negative since they provide money for national parks. In addition, not every seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged because nowadays the seemingly archaic practice really is old: shorebird hunting in Thailand’s coastal villages has emerged 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Hong Kong street markets as living heritage

Maurizio Marinelli

IN MY WORK on urban redevelopment and gentrification in Hong Kong, I focus on the history of street markets and street hawking. Street markets and hawking are an organically constitutive part of Hong Kong’s history, culture, and socio-economic development. Since the inception of the colony, when the name ‘Hong Kong’ (香岛 Fragrant Harbour) became a synecdoche to refer to the whole collection of fishing villages, trading on riverbanks and around harbours, street markets have always played an integral role in shaping the landscape for population growth and urban development. Not only do they serve as localized and more cost-effective alternatives to supermarkets for fresh produce, but they also provide local customers with the chance to interact directly with the producers, the distributors, and, ultimately, with each other. In this sense, markets are spaces of social inclusion, laboratories for collective experiences of public space and ‘living heritage’, and in addition to that, they have progressively become the testing grounds for bottom-up practices of democratization thanks to the community’s battle to preserve this ‘living heritage’ against the profit-driven logic of domicile and memoricide (Porteous, Smith, 2001).

Since the 1970s, but even more so starting from 1989, the Government decided to stop issuing hawkers’ licenses, and then progressively turned the street markets into indoor public markets (1986s), in the name of progress and modernity, and, of course, for the sake of public health. The outcome has been the development of ‘modern’, more ‘civilized’ and ‘hygienic’ urban spaces, with the collateral damage of the annihilation of ‘living heritage’. In my work, I define living heritage as the complex of informal social activities and cultural practices, which characterize everyday life and co-existence in a specific locale. Therefore, my definition is very different from the UNESCO’s attempt to subsume living heritage as part of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which refers to the immaterial heritage of different cultures. Going beyond the UNESCO’s Cartesian definition’s dichotomy, I argue that the citizens have a role in shaping and practicing heritage: therefore, living heritage is material, since it includes embodied social relationships and cultural practices which become meaningful thanks to their co-existence in the street market. I argue that the street market (as opposed to shopping malls or luxury goods stores) is a perfect example of the living heritage, which is constructed and based on a collective civic identity: maintaining the street market vibrant and alive is the sine qua non to continue to bring disparate social, ethnic, and generational groups together, engendering a sense of social aggregate of the residents as a community.

Maurizio Marinelli, Senior Lecturer in East Asian History, History Department, University of Sussex

Above: Hong Kong Market. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license courtesy of Jo Baron on Flickr.com.
A manifestation beyond the boundaries is a timely introduction to the topic of heritage for many Asian cities that are undergoing a radical transition in the process of urbanisation. Particularly, the critiques of institutional heritage practices highlight the problems of the current approach. Actually, in Asian countries such as China, the concept of heritage-related to urban environment has been constantly shaped with various political and economic interests.

However, the institutional heritage practice remains a main avenue and is hardly challenged. As a designer and researcher involved in several large-scale urban renewal projects, I have witnessed this dynamic process in the past decade.

Felix Girke

A CONDEMNATION OF MEMORY — damnatio memoriae — is supported in the manifesto and implied that it may be a method in which a culture can begin to shape and control its own heritage. A proviso is given that it must be destroyed consciously rather than be the victim of an authoritarian deletion and the example specifically referenced is that of the Government General Building in the area of Kwanghwaemun around Seoul. I worry, however, that this willing destruction and acceptance of it in order to control heritage brings about some rather serious problems: first, it denies a truth; second, it puts the subjective opinion ahead of the objective. In terms of denying a truth, it surely cannot be supported that buildings, people, or ideas can be willingly erased from history. Our vision and understanding is never infallible and, furthermore, it is only in hindsight and with the gift of perspective that we can often understand the true value of things. How many things would we have lost — or even have we lost — throughout the course of history if we were to simply begin collectively erasing things because of ‘uncomfortable reflections on history and national trauma’. Korea, as an area which I research, is ripe for this and rather inconsistent in its approach. This inconsistency is the second point.

Fang Xu, Associate professor; coordinator of Environments/Spatial Design, UNSW Art & Design, The University of New South Wales

The subject is being valued over the objective means that whilst one culture might certainly agree with the erasing of an object in order to promote its own heritage, this might be at odds with the views and values of another. Korea has continually lambasted Japan for not ‘erasing’ the memory of the Yasukuni Shrine and any visits to it made by Japanese politicians will make the news in the Korean media. They seemingly want, first, Japan to disavow a historical fact and existence for the sake of their own peace. And yet, one of the biggest newspaper headlines in Korea is that of the ‘comfort women’ for which the country continually demands compensation from the Japanese: this issue has been decided will not be erased because it is of national ‘benefit’.

Critique without chauvinism from below? Maybe the key to this predicament lies in acknowledging that heritage does not exist in a singular vacuum but rather in a relationship with other heritages. Allowing distortions and subjective interpretations of history in favour of truth is, I believe, a dangerous path to follow.

David Tizzard, Professor at Seoul Women’s University

A new consciousness has emerged

Shysha Zandonai

MY CURRENT RESEARCH examines the discourses and uses that have been tied to social, cultural, and political struggles to protect material heritage in Macau, China. I am interested in studying people’s understandings and experiences of place in the advent of a global economy of gambling and mass tourism, and growing influxes of outsider populations, tourists and immigrant workers alike, who have no affective attachments to Macau. Once a vibrant port city, Macau’s urban fabric attests to a diverse history of interethnic encounters, and the lack thereof, in which different periods of urbanization and architectural styles coexist. Following China’s unification, Macau has entered the lives of people (from Macau), and its top-down management system, government bodies are only dealing with all the challenges from stakeholders, but also constructing an exchange platform on which all stakeholders can equally share their different views.

But I fully agree with the non-judgmental diagnosis that heritage itself is out of bounds. We are faced with a prolifera- tion of applications of the term in Southeast Asia, Myanmar being a case in point. There, the term itself blots out even ‘culture’ at times, such as its current appeal. But I am not persuaded by the rationalist gestus of unmaking that emerges from the manifesto, namely, the seeming preference to deconstruct the ‘politics of significance’ and to ‘undercut the invention of tradition inherent in it’. At the national level, while respecting the subaltern’s heritage efforts, this eman- cipatory drive is surely worth, but do only the governmental heritage regimes and the national bias of global institutions prevent a true multiplicity of heritages? Is there not also chauvinism from below? Maybe the key to this predicament is found in the little clause that heritage “as an institutional practice, is highly political and hierarchic” (my emphasis). Is it not always? Must not the yardstick remain the same?

Here, I want to invoke Christoph Brunmann’s recent call for “heritage agnosticism” as preferable to uncritical ‘belief’ and dismissive ‘atheism’, as the royal road towards
Responses to the manifesto ‘Heritage beyond the boundaries’ continued

‘Tradition’ or ‘traditionalism’ as a Chinese way to understand heritage

Zheng Yan Min (Cathy)

It is widely acknowledged that there is no equivalent translation from one language to another in various circumstances, especially when two languages come from different systems, such as ideographic Chinese and phonetic English. In terms of heritage studies, the officially accepted translation of ‘heritage’ as ‘yí chăn’ (遗产) does not properly reflect the Chinese attitude towards the past, since ‘chăn’ (产) in Chinese means ‘property or kinds of physical forms that can be constructed or produced’, which neglects the spiritual side of people’s efforts in preserving heritage. In order to define what heritage means, we need to make an initiative to understand ‘Chinese heritage’ as ‘Chinese tradition’ or ‘Chinese traditionalism’.

There are two reasons for doing so: firstly, the back-translation of ‘tradition’ or ‘traditionalism’ as two Chinese characters ‘chuán’ (传) and ‘tǐng’ (庭) can help understand Chinese attitudes towards the past, which imposes a significant methodological implication for undertaking anthropological research in Chinese societies, since ‘chuán’ (传) means ‘transmission, communicating or spreading’ and ‘tǐng’ (庭) means ‘governing, taking hold in restraint, exercising authoritative influence over and always being presented as an integral form’. In other words, Chinese heritages cannot be studied in their own right as physical remains, but also from ordinary people’s daily lives, since a great part of Chinese heritages have been internalised generation by generation. Chinese anthropological research epitomises the historical and cultural traditions and finds a new territory of anthropological research.

Secondly, the separate consideration of one Chinese word into two or more Chinese characters also follows Chinese academic tradition in interpreting texts, as we know, the enrichments and refreshments of Chinese academic thoughts come from those interpretations of those ancient Chinese academic articles in different historical periods of time. By way of technology in modern times, texts of various languages become more and more penetrating in people’s everyday life. Such interpretations of Chinese characters can activate mutual understanding by adjusting various perspectives of understanding, and for doing so, it is possible to open up a new territory in formulating institutional heritage-preservation initiatives by using the ‘language-mentality’ formation paradigm in its most original (mythological) form, such as English is an inductive language and Chinese is a deductive language.

Zheng Yan Min, PhD candidate at the University of Macau, researching non-resident workers’ daily commute between Macau and Zhuhai.

Toward an anthropology of heritage practices

Taku Iida

I TOTALLY AGREE with the manifesto issued in ‘the Newsletter #69’, which problematises Asian heritage after due consideration of local, national, and international actors’ different views. Keeping its significance in mind, however, I would like to place more stress on local people’s values and actions, which are our main concerns in the ongoing project “Anthropology of Heritage: Communities and Materiality in Global Systems” of the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Our pursuit started with the 2011 East Japan Great Earthquake. In the beginning of the recovery process, national agencies were occupied with rescuing material heritage. Intangible heritage, contrarily, was beyond their scope. Therefore, it was surprising for non-sufferers to know that some sufferers began to organize dance ceremonies, originally religious and annual, as their own action for recovery. The sufferers gathered to have exercise from temporary housings, made trips wherever their audience is found, and even filed applications to get grants. Their intangible heritage was not only a symbol of local history but also one of few handy resources to recover their everyday life.

Sure, the people decontextualized, showed up, and sometimes commercialized their cultural resources, and also allied with national and international agencies. Heritage here is therefore a product yielded by plural actors with different views and memories. However, we should not overlook the fact that some kinds of heritage are deeply embedded in local people’s hands.

They can create, inherit, repair, repeat, copy, diffuse, appropriate, conceal, and neglect their own heritage. In addition to these instrumental practices, people also make social ones; cooperate, compete, compromise, and break with one another. Such instrumental and social processes, rarely documented in the conventional heritage studies, remain to be described and analyzed ethnographically. Empirical research of heritage practices is expected to clarify modes of cultural transmission and super-generational communication in a globalized world, and thus to contribute to general theories in sociocultural anthropology.

This is favorable. UNESCO began to pay attention to the people in 1994 when the Global Strategy started. In 1997, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention recognized the involvement of ‘stakeholders’ as an element of effectiveness. In 2003, UNESCO’s General Assembly adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, where intangible heritage is supposed to provide ‘communities and groups’ with a sense of identity and continuity. Anthropological knowledge on local heritage practices is thus demanded by both local and international societies.

Taku Iida, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Critical Heritage Studies and the importance of studying histories of heritage formation

Marike Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff

THE CONCEPT OF ‘COLONIAL DETERMINISM’, coined by Susan Legêne, precisely labels one of the questions that she claims to be the same (much to the disagreement of Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff), that it was better not to (re)move site-based objects, was taken seriously by the colonial authorities. The regulation of that it was better not to (re)move site-based objects, was taken seriously by the colonial authorities. The regulation of that it was better not to (re)move site-based objects, was taken seriously by the colonial authorities. The regulation of that it was better not to (re)move site-based objects, was taken seriously by the colonial authorities.

Dance research has introduced me to great artists whose lives and works are largely known only in the periphery: Alfredo Dzul (Maya-based dancer with roots in an indigenous dance tradition, who has been representing the popular Dzul-Dzul Maya dance-tradition); Emilia Deminguu (famed dancer of the Tarairi bamboo-clapper dance of Sitangkai Island) and Mahail Hajan (Bougain-based dance master whose career spans more than 30 years of staging regional dances). Their marginalization is a function of lack of access to cultural capital and power. In a country of more than 70 major ethno-linguistic groups, how can ‘imperial Manila’ hold a monopoly of talent?

Recently, I have been engaged in a rather heated debate with another scholar. This scholar is famous for his work on the Tausug pongdong dance tradition, which she claims to be the same (much to the disagreement of Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff) as the Sama-Bajau gog dance tradition.

Above: Kalintang at Asian Festival. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license courtesy of Mr. Tim BMC on Flickr.com.

Her work in ‘preserving’ pongdong, which she claims to be the ‘temple of dance in Sambir’ (山比烣), has been the subject of at least three documentary films. Her writings reveal a discourse on heritage preservation that revolves around notions of ‘authenticity’ and ‘distinction’. Is it correct to attribute the preservation of a dance tradition to a single individual? Are the efforts of the people in the field not worth noting? Finally, I would like to draw attention to a contemporary Sama-Bajau dance form called gol pokaling. Instead of being accompanied by a traditional kulintang ensemble, this new form is accompanied by a singer and an electronic organ. Several Manila-based writers have dismissed this vibrant new form as “crass” or “unaccept- able morph of tradition”. Are the people of the field not allowed to change their own traditions? Whose aesthetics ought to be privileged?

The issues I raise reveal the highly conflicted nature of heritage production. Perhaps, conflict should be embraced. This may allow the unleashing of multiple voices that can balance that of the privileged center.

MCM Santamaria, Professor of Asian and Philippine Studies, Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman.

Embracing conflict, unleashing voices

MCAS Santamaria

AS A STUDENT OF ETHNO-CHOREOLOGY, I will limit my comments to dance research and practice in the Philippines. Indeed, heritage as practice is ‘political and hierarchical’.

For instance, all Philippine national artists in dance have done much of their work or have been based in the National Capital Region. Francisca Reyes-Aquino (University of the Philippines Folk Song and Dance Troop); Louisa Osnia Gonzales (Filipinas Dance Company); Lucrecia Urtula (Bayanihan Dance Company), Ramon Obusan (Ramon Obusan Dance Company), and Alice Reyes (Ballet Philippines). Dance research has introduced me to great artists whose lives and works are largely known only in the periphery: Alfredo Dzul (Maya-based dancer with roots in an indigenous dance tradition, who has been representing the popular Dzul-Dzul Maya dance-tradition); Emilia Deminguu (famed dancer of the Tarairi bamboo-clapper dance of Sitangkai Island) and Mahail Hajan (Bougain-based dance master whose career spans more than 30 years of staging regional dances). Their marginalization is a function of lack of access to cultural capital and power. In a country of more than 70 major ethno-linguistic groups, how can ‘imperial Manila’ hold a monopoly of talent?

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Critical Heritage Studies and the importance of studying histories of heritage formation

Marike Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff

THE CONCEPT OF ‘COLONIAL DETERMINISM’, coined by Susan Legêne, precisely labels one of the questions that initially guided us in our project on archaeological sites and heritage formation in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia: what made the archaeology of colonial times? (http://ghpwb.com/bsc.php) Investigating how Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, Chinese, pre-historic and colonial sites located in Indonesia transformed into heritage, we focused on site-related knowledge production, studying colonial sources in combination with local Malay and Javanese texts. Our findings made us realize that these sites are not primarily colonial, even when colonial relations shaped them profoundly.

The monument regulations on java of 1840 and 1842, for example, were the result of knowledge exchange between the colonial government and various Javanese parties, village heads as well as royal elites. For these – mostly Muslim – people also make social ones; cooperate, compete, compromise, and break with one another. Such instrumental and social processes, rarely documented in the conventional heritage studies, remain to be described and analyzed ethnographically. Empirical research of heritage practices is expected to clarify modes of cultural transmission and super-generational communication in a globalized world, and thus to contribute to general theories in sociocultural anthropology.

The wind is favorable. UNESCO began to pay attention to the people in 1994 when the Global Strategy started. In 1997, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention recognized the involvement of ‘stakeholders’ as an element of effectiveness. In 2003, UNESCO’s General Assembly adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, where intangible heritage is supposed to provide ‘communities and groups’ with a sense of identity and continuity. Anthropological knowledge on local heritage practices is thus demanded by both local and international societies.

Taku Iida, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.
On critical heritage studies

Mark Hobart

As a step towards rethinking cultural heritage, this manifesto is welcome, not least in stressing rival institutional interests and how local participants become marginalized. However, the manifesto draws upon a surprisingly conservative epistemology, which replicates the hegemony it questions and so undermines its own aims. This may not be immediately obvious because the manifesto deploys the trendy language of critical theory (critique, authenticity) and post-structuralism (discourse, deconstruction), but ends up as vacuous because it ignores what both are about. Further, it does not explore, as would Cultural Studies scholars, culture as a site (or moments) of struggle. Nor does it ask ‘who gets to represent what as culture to whom under what circumstances?’. Instead conflict is treated at face value, such as between rival stakeholders’ interests. If the authors fail to engage with the implications of the arguments that they side step, the manifesto risks becoming an exercise in theoretical evasion. The problems are evident in the fashionable use of the adjective ‘critical’ without apparent recognition of its genealogy. So the authors uncritically adopt the language of contemporary consumer capitalism in writing about culture as ‘stakeholders’ assets’ and plural views and dynamic struggles for possession in a ‘politics of significance’ (Herzfeld). Drawing on a well-established sense of critical theory, we could then inquire into the conditions of class and power under which culture comes variously to be represented, hypostatized or produced through the ‘culture industries’ of which heritage is one. Replaced in Cultural Studies’ terms, how do class, race (not just ‘post-colonialism’), gender, religion and generation impact on who gets to articulate heritage, how and why?

There is also a stronger post-Kantian sense of ‘critical’ (e.g., Deluze, Kant’s critical philosophy). This would require us to address not just who represents the ‘object of study as what, but also to criticize our own categories of thought and styles of reasoning within a historically and culturally conditioned culture.’ It is not the case for the critique of so singularly European a concept as heritage to include a critique of the Eurocentric which is constitutive of the whole argument? So perhaps the authors of the manifesto should reflect on what they mean by ‘critical’? So doing might help to provide a theoretical framework worthy of the manifesto.

Mark Hobart, Emeritus professor of Critical Media and Cultural Studies, SOAS, University of London.

Cultural villages as a source for science, education, fun, and identity building

Giulia Trommsdorff, Hans-Joachim Kornadt, Roswith Roth and Dietrich Albert

THE MANIFESTO addresses important questions and topics regarding the concept of ‘heritage’, its realizations and side effects. We agree on most of the propositions from a common sense point of view. However, we have to question its scientific basis. Such a manifesto should be based on systematic research, on meta-analysis, and initiate research. Regarding the methodology a clear distinction has to be made between (a) observed facts and data, (b) their interpretation, and (c) the derived consequences, e.g., recommendations. In case of ‘heritage’, scientific evaluation methods should be used.

We can ask our point of view targeting the concept of ‘heritage’ might be too narrow. Instead, the broader concept of ‘culture’ should be addressed in its many facets: e.g., scientific conceptualizations of culture, and how and why which cultural artifacts should be preserved? Beyond heritages, a long tradition in preserving cultural assets exists, e.g., in Asia and Europe, like private collections, museums, libraries, archives, restoring of buildings, area rehabilitation. Heritages are only one type in the context of other measures for preserving culture. Because connecting the different types of preservation is very demanding it should be supported by using modern information Technology (IT). Also, the reasons for preserving cultural artifacts are manifold. Four of them have been addressed in the title of this commentary. The facets of preservation are part of the goal of ‘meaning-making’, e.g., clarifying scientific hypothesis about cultural heritages, better understanding the current cultural, religious, political differences, and conflicts, and for comprehending oral history respectively. An isolated view on certain cultural assets cannot elicit ‘meaning’, the context in its different aspects has to be taken into account. Further, culture is a dynamic system undergoing changes while at the same time promoting some continuity.

Excellent examples of presenting cultural assets in their context can be seen in cultural villages, e.g., in Korea and Malaysia. They are excellent with respect to the above mentioned aspects, and they provide meaning-making. Cultural villages can give an insight into the indigenous cultural values possibly still relevant in the respective cultures while socio-cultural changes are abundant.

Accordingly, analyzing, comparing, evaluating and possibly generalizing the concept of cultural villages in different Asian and European countries should help to reduce ethnocentrism, and underline the need for scientifically based cultural heritages. This could be the basis for better understanding of indigenous cultures and for global recommendations aiming to save, document and present their great options for human mankind.

Giulia Trommsdorff, President of the German Japanese Society of Social Sciences (GJSSS), University of Konstanz, Germany.
Hans-Joachim Kornadt, Co-Founder and Honorary Member of the German Japanese Society of Social Sciences (GJSSS), Saarland University, Germany.
Roswith Roth, Past-President of the International Council of Psychologists (ICP); University of Graz, Austria.
Dietrich Albert, Chairperson of the European Japan Expert Association (EJEA); Graz University of Technology & University of Graz, Austria.

Protecting heritage as a whole

Chen Chunhong

HERITAGE IS AN IMPORTANT MEDIUM for the transmission of human civilization and human history. The people of any nation and country are willing to explore the significant events of the past. There is no doubt that rich historical information has travelled to the present from ancient times by means of the effective medium, heritage. For this reason we must protect heritages well; and not just the tangible material heritage, but also the intangible cultural heritage. In historic districts or traditional villages the two should be protected together.

Good heritage protection does not mean to enclose and isolate heritage far away from people’s touch and use; on the contrary, possibilities of being used should be assessed in advance, and encourage people to appreciate their historical values.

Heritage should be protected as a whole: the buildings, surroundings and also those who co-exist with it, such as the people who make use of it. The most effective examples may be traditional villages: simultaneously protecting the village’s architectural heritage, the people who live in villages, the traditional styles of living, the cultural content, etc.

Protection of heritage should be timely and appropriate, and not decided by rushed policies and regulations. Heritage evaluation systems should be developed alongside the different cultures involved. National heritage protection methods should not follow a unified theoretical framework. For example, we can’t assess the protection methods of the wood material heritage built in Asia by using the rules for stone heritage. Wood heritage is not eternal, it is inappropriate to evaluate it using eternal theory.

Chen Chunhong, Tianjin University, China; IAS Fellow.

Above: Morning Yoga. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license courtesy of Flickr user on Flickr.com.

For more information about the Leiden University program Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe visit http://tinyurl.com/CriticalHeritage or contact Adéle Esposito (a.delesposito@yahoo.fr)
Female Islamic authority in comparative perspective: exemplars, institutions, practices

International workshop, Leiden, 8-9 January 2015

David Kloos and Mirjam Künkler

Funded by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the Asian Modernities and Traditions Research Program (AMTR), the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS), and the Leiden University Fund (LUF).

The significance role of women participating in, and shaping, Islamic scholarly traditions through the centuries is still hardly reflected in either Western scholarly or public perceptions. Nearly all classic accounts of religious authority in Islam proceed from the assumption that this authority is male.1 The possibility that women might exercise various aspects of religious authority is usually not discussed. Yet, when we dissect religious authority into its various manifestations (leading prayer, preaching, providing religious counselling, issuing fatwas, transmitting hadith, etc.), historical, sociological, anthropological, political, and law. Publications have focused on such topics as female teachers, scholars, preachers and judges, women’s mosque and study groups, ritual leadership, the role of the state in shaping female religious authority, and Islamic feminism.2 Particular attention has been paid to the role of the state and higher educational institutions in training women as female religious authorities. These analyses tend to highlight top-down processes of recognition and certification, that is, how universities and training programs, grand muftis and bureaucrats in state ministries of religion develop curricula to train women in various roles of Islamic authority and certify those who have successfully graduated from these programs. In the workshop convened at KITLV in early January 2015, we sought to apply an alternative lens and instead focused on bottom-up initiatives of establishing female Islamic authority.3 Thus, papers explored how female Islamic authorities are embedded in local contexts, shedding light on community-based processes of certification and between actors throughout and even beyond it. The primary themes that emerged concerned freedom of migration and mobility, and the place of India in historical imagination. Indeed it became apparent that there are now some strikingly polarized northern and southern narratives that distinguish contemporary sojourners from ancestral gifters of world religion.

As Ludden noted, much of the grand historical interaction in the eastern Indian Ocean has been across its southern latitudes. One need only think of the 15th century Chola or the 16th century Ming incursions prior to the penetration of European power that saw the very naming and claiming of that space become Bengali. Anne Blackburn then demonstrated how Buddhists around that Bay have long regarded themselves as a ‘Southern’ (rather than Theravada) community, offering a longue durée history of monks in motion and rituals of ordination being deployed by states in contact with both sides of the Bay. Even so, a primary shift is signaled in the 19th century with the rise of non-regal sites of exchange and interaction; especially in Lanka, where the discourses of global Buddhism transformed into the language of reform. Such transitions are to be found in the history of Islam too, and there is a burgeoning literature on that subject that takes some of its cues from the encounter of Islam and colonizing West. In this sense Anne Hansen’s paper on khmer conceptions of religious salvation was salutary, given that ‘Indonesian’ Cambodia was never really a site of a Christian encounter. Rather some of its elite monks engaged with Orientalist thinking about the history of Buddhism, causing them to reimagine India as a historical rather than mythological place whose bequeathing of a world religion would play into their own nationalist thinking of Khmer superiority.

The workshop ‘Belonging Across the Bay of Bengal: Migrations, Networks, Circulations’, convened at Princeton University, 31 October 2014

The workshop ‘Belonging Across the Bay of Bengal’, held under the rubric of the Asian Spatialities forum of the IAS/Mellon-sponsored program ‘Rethinking Asian Studies’, followed an earlier meeting at Princeton in 2011 that had used a discussion of traditional texts and modern textbooks to bridge the gap between specialists of South and Southeast Asia. Now, armed with a sense of what the three historical moments were to be for our project—the long 19th century, the economic crisis of the 1930s, and the difficult period of emancipation after WWII—we were better able to come to grips with our subject in what was an incredibly fruitful discussion. After an opening paper from David Ludden (New York University) on the Bay of Bengal as historical space, a further eleven offerings explored vectors of connection and imagination crossing that arena, thinking about relationships between actors throughout and even beyond it. The primary themes that emerged concerned freedom of migration and mobility, and the place of India in historical imagination. Indeed it became apparent that there are now some strikingly polarized northern and southern narratives that distinguish contemporary sojourners from ancestral gifters of world religion.

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One of the reasons for Cambodia’s lack of engagement with a Christian challenge reflects its modern isolation from the web of coastal capitals that served the European empire by the late 19th century. And it was to these capitals that sayajegers and settlers came from the near west, though not always

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ‘BELONGING ACROSS THE BAY OF BENGAL: MIGRATIONS, NETWORKS, CIRCULATIONS’

The Newsletter | No.70 | Spring 2015
by ulamā, and diplomas obtained from state institutes of higher Islamic learning. David Kloo, in his paper on female ulamā in the Indonesian province of Aceh, further strengthened the image of female religious leaders navigating a multitude of social and political contexts, while underlining the importance of female agency as a determinant of their success (or failure) in achieving their goals.

A conspicuous new dynamic concerns the rising middle class and its impact on the creation of and experimentation with new forms of female Islamic authority. In Singapore, religious courses inspired by American self-help rhetoric, preachers and leaders inspired by American self-help rhetoric, have led to a significant religious courses inspired by American self-help rhetoric, with women taking on traditionally male roles in community leadership. In reality, however, the situation is more complex. In Jakarta, Anna Ciecielowska showed how traditional female leaders (ulamā) continue to provide important religious services to local communities, even though reform-minded state and religious institutions have been hostile to their religious interpretations and activities. Daniel Birchak, in his paper on (deceased) female preachers and leaders in Surabaya, Indonesia, drew attention to the importance of ascribed (rather than achieved) authority. Belonging to a local lineage of so-called (descendants of the Prophet), these women continue to be found in those areas who visit their mosques and perform prayers and Sufi rituals. Both papers show that there are important continuities at work in the ways in which local communities recognize and incorporate forms of female Islamic authority in their everyday lives.

In general, the workshop demonstrated the strength of ethno-graphic approaches, as these brought to the fore how female Islamic leaders negotiate the sphere of organized religion, the state, local and premodern spheres, and the family. In contrast to much of the recent literature, the papers in this workshop explored how local initiatives reinforce, clash with, or otherwise relate to the ways in which (state and religious) institutions have institutionalized forms of female Islamic authority. As such, they open up space for new questions, analytical frameworks and comparisons that will further develop the study of women in general, and female Islamic authority in particular.

David Kloo, postdoctoral researcher at KITLV (kloos@kittl.nl)
Mirjam Könkler, assistant professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, and senior research fellow at KITLV, winter 2014/2015 (kuenkler@princeton.edu)

References
3 Our workshop followed four other events with related interest, bringing together different constituencies: a conference of graduate students and junior scholars held at the University of Oxford in 2011, on female religious leadership more generally (including religious, theological and juridical authorities), a conference comparing advocacy for female religious authority in Islam and Catholicism held at the University of Buxhams, London, in September 2012, bringing together scholars and activists; a graduate student conference on female religious leadership in Islam held at UCSB in March 2013, and a workshop on female religious authority in Shi’ite held at Princeton University in March 2014.

Thus far, the papers of Fernea & Fernea have been hostile to their religious interpretations and activities. Daniel Birchak, in his paper on (deceased) female preachers and leaders in Surabaya, Indonesia, drew attention to the importance of ascribed (rather than achieved) authority. Belonging to a local lineage of so-called (descendants of the Prophet), these women continue to be found in those areas who visit their mosques and perform prayers and Sufi rituals. Both papers show that there are important continuities at work in the ways in which local communities recognize and incorporate forms of female Islamic authority in their everyday lives.

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A multi-disciplinary approach to analyzing climate change in Yangon

Report of training course given in Yangon, 3-14 November 2014

Paul Rabé

ON 10-11 DECEMBER 2014, the Studio-X space of the Columbia University Global Centers in the Fort area of Mumbai was the setting for a workshop entitled Urban Democracy: Informality, Precarity and Modes of Survival. This was the second in a series of discussions in the Idea of the City in Asian Contexts series, the urban studies oriented forum of the Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context programme, coordinated by IAS with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (www.rethinkingasia.org). The first workshop in the series, Public City, Private City, was held in New York in August 2014 and explored the politics of planning.

As in New York, the Mumbai workshop brought together a diverse group of around 25 scholars, activists, writers, architects, urban planners, journalists and PhD candidates – this time from around India, other parts of Asia, the U.S. and Europe. The objective in Mumbai was to critically re-examine theories and policies relating to the “slum” city, i.e., the practices of survival, persistence and illegitimized existence found in the so-called “slums” and ‘ghettos’ of colonial and late capitalist modernity, in order to find new ways of looking at these phenomena.

The workshop ended with a reception and a public programme moderated by Jared Stark (Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Eckerd College) and featuring artistic interventions by literary theorist Emily Sun from National Tsing Hua University (Taiwan), Mumbai-based documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan and writer and cultural critic Jerry Pinto.

The third and last of the urban workshops to be convened from 3-14 November 2014 was facilitated by Paul Rabé and Anupama Rao in the context of the Rethinking Asian Studies programme will take place in Shanghai in October 2015 on the theme of the ‘Future of Urban Studies’.

The co-conveners will close the workshop series with a presentation of the discussion themes from all three workshops.

Paul Rabé, IAS, coordinator of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) (paulrabé@gmail.com)

Re-examining the ‘Subaltern’ Workshop in Mumbai, 10-11 December 2014

Paul Rabé

FROM 3-14 NOVEMBER 2014, a team from India with members from IIAS, the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education (Delft, the Netherlands), and the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), jointly organized a tailor-made training programme for the YCDC’s development partners, including the 26 course participants were from YCDC itself; the other half were from the YCDC’s development partners, including the Department for Human Settlement and Housing, the Department of Public Works, the Yangon Heritage Trust, and the Yangon Technical University. The international focus was on the natural history and ways of life of riverside communities for spatial justice.

The workshop was presided over by the Mayer of the Yangon City Development Committee, H.E. U Maung Maung, and was attended by representatives of various municipal departments, national environmental agencies, and academic institutions. One of the remarkable legacies of the tailor-made course is that it demonstrated the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to the causes and impacts of flooding and climate change, including the natural sciences, engineering, the social sciences, as well as the humanities.

The three groups of participants presented their flood risk analyses and plans at a major ceremony at Yangon City Hall on 14 November 2014. The ceremony was presided over by the Mayor of the Yangon City Development Committee, H.E. U Maung Maung, and was attended by representatives of various municipal departments, national environmental agencies, and academic institutions. One of the remarkable legacies of the tailor-made course is that it demonstrated the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to the causes and impacts of flooding and climate change, including the natural sciences, engineering, the social sciences, as well as the humanities.
The Asian Library will bring together the following collections:
1. Leiden University Libraries’ notable Southeast Asian Collections;
2. The internationally acclaimed collections of the Sinological Institute Library, one of the leading libraries for Chinese Studies in the Western world (now part of Leiden’s East Asian Library);
3. The rich collection of the Centre for Japanese and Korean Studies (now part of Leiden’s East Asian Library);
4. The Kern Institute Library, the national centre of expertise for South Asia and the Himalayan region, more specifically India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan.
5. The colonial collection of the former Library of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT);
6. The collection of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

The Asian collection will be immediately available on-site through digital access, an open-stack collection and through fast delivery of the Asian collections stored on-site. But the plans don’t stop here. Among the further ambitions and plans for The Asian Library is the establishment of an international fellowship programme, the creation of an Indonesian Digital Library, and named curatorship for digital collections. The Indonesian Digital Library will bring together the extensive digital collections on Indonesia of Leiden University Libraries, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). It will also intensify the digitisation of other Indonesian materials. This Indonesian Digital Library is to be made available to a worldwide audience and will allow for scholarly research using the latest e-science and digital humanities techniques. It will also collect and incorporate born-digital materials.

To expand the already present in-depth subject expertise into new exciting areas that are rapidly becoming of the utmost importance, The University Library is seeking funds to establish an endowed and named curatorship for the digitised and born-digital Asian collections. The curatorship of these collections will ensure their availability to the general public worldwide, their usability for advanced digital humanities techniques such as image recognition, text and data mining and their long-term durability.

For more information visit: www.asianlibraryleiden.nl

IIAS Annual Lecture 2015
Life and Death in Asia and Africa – Amartya Kumar Sen Laureate of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 1998

Tuesday, 10 March, 15.30 hrs. De Rede Hoed, Keizersgracht 102, Amsterdam

The ANNUAL LECTURE 2015 of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden) will be delivered by the renowned Indian economist and philosopher, Professor Amartya Sen. His lecture will focus on the morbidity and mortality rates that remain exceptionally high, both in Africa and parts of Asia. The explanation lies partly in the absence of epidemiological interventions, but also in the defective way public healthcare is organised. There are, however, exceptions from which other countries can learn. Thailand, China, Rwanda, Bangladesh and the Indian state of Kerala provide lessons of different kinds of relevance. Life and death depend not only on human predicaments beyond our control, but also on policy wisdom.

Professor Amartya Kumar Sen was the 1998 winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, for his work in welfare economics. Professor Sen has made contributions to welfare economics, social choice theory, economic and social justice, theories of famine, measurement and evaluation of well-being and freedom, and moral, political and legal philosophy. Professor Sen is the Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University. Until 2004 he was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Amartya Sen’s awards, other than the Nobel Prize, include Bharat Ratna (India), Commander de la Légion d’Honneur (France), the National Humanities Medal (USA), Ordem do Merito Científico (Brazil), Honorary Companion of Honour (UK), Aztec Eagle (Mexico), the George Marshall Award (USA), the Eisenhower Medal (USA), and the Edinburgh Medal (UK).

This lecture, which discusses developments in both Asia and Africa, coincides with new initiatives taken by the International Institute for Asian Studies in the field of African-Asian interactions, including the organisation (in collaboration with the African Association for Asian Studies), of a large international conference on the subject of Asia Studies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects of a New Asia of Intellectual Interactions, which will take place from 24-26 September 2015 in Accra, Ghana.

Programme
15.30: Welcome by Dr Philipp Peycarn, Director International Institute for Asian Studies
15.45: Lecture by Prof. Amartya Sen, ‘Life and Death in Asia and Africa’
16:45: Questions and Answers
17:15-18:30: Drinks reception

Registration
The number of places is limited, and registration beforehand is required. Please register via the web form provided at the following url:


Burma/Myanmar in transition: connectivity, changes and challenges
Conference, Chiang Mai, 24-25 July 2015
Deadline for proposals: 15 April 2015

The 1st International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies will be co-hosted by the Centre for Myanmar Studies (CMS) and Chiang Mai University, the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD). Myanmar Center, the Faculty of Humanities at Chiang Mai University and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden. The conference will provide a forum for scholars, journalists, NGO workers and observers from Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and other countries across the globe to share the latest updates on Burma/Myanmar Studies.

The aims of the conference are to: deepen our understanding of the social and political transformations occurring in Burma/Myanmar, and their impacts on the environment as well as on the economic and social lives of local/ethnic communities; to examine Burma/Myanmar’s nexus and connectivity within the regional and global context, as well as the internal interplay taking place among state actors, society and culture; to provide a platform for the exchange of academic ideas and dialogue among Burma/Myanmar scholars from around the world; to allow young and mid-level scholars/researchers to participate in an international academic forum.

For the full call for papers, visit: http://rcsd.soc.cumu.ac.th

Language, power and identity in Asia: creating & crossing language boundaries
Deadline for proposals: 15 May 2015

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden), an international conference to explore the interrelations between language, power and identity in Asia. Participants are invited to submit a paper to address aspects of this topic, with a particular emphasis on Asia, but papers that illustrate the subject from other parts of the world are also welcome.

This Conference explores how linguistic differences, practices, texts and performances are of critical importance to political, social and intellectual power structures among communities in the past and in the present, especially through processes of identity formation. How do (and how did) languages shape borders – social, ethnic, religious, or ‘national’? Likewise, how do languages and linguistic communities move across these limits? In what ways do processes of hybridisation and multilingualism affect the formation of transnational or translocal identities, and how have they done so in the past? How have policies of language standardisation impacted on the political and intellectual spheres? What is the power of orality and performance vis-à-vis a variety of textual productions, through manuscript culture, epigraphical practices, print media, and the Internet?

For the full call for papers, visit: www.iias.nl/language

Sharpening the edges: instating state & power in Indian Ocean history. An agenda for critical research & teaching.
Workshop, 17 August 2015, Leiden, the Netherlands
Deadline for papers: 15 March 2015

A workshop funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and enabled by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). This workshop will bring together a group of fifteen scholars, some invited and others selected through this call for papers, to discuss the state of research and teaching in the burgeoning field of Indian Ocean history. For historical reasons linked to former colonial empires and continued relations between them and their erstwhile colonies, interest in the Indian Ocean is more visible in the fields of teaching and research in institutions in Europe and Asia rather than in the USA. In keeping with the overall Mellon programme, Rethinking Studies in Global Context, the workshop aims to triangulate a dialogue between Euro-American and South and Southeast Asian scholars. We especially welcome PhD students, postdocs and early career professors to apply with papers that reflect upon the spatial shifts visible in imperial and area studies with the purpose of developing approaches in teaching and research on the Indian Ocean.

For the full call for papers, visit: www.rethinking.asia
De Courter of Leiden University. This workshop had as its theme, Margins and marginalization in the production of Korean histories, with the goal of examining the margins of Korean history from different methodological, political, geographical and social perspectives. As the only archaeologist, and the only presenter to work outside the present-day boundaries of the Korean state, I talked about the Liao Dynasty, focusing on the use of material culture to present the PRC’s perspective on and insights into, the ancient history of Korea as it is practiced in different institutional contexts. In this talk, I used the case of the remains of the Koguryo kings, who were identified as members of the Balhae Kingdoms. This workshop also included a visit to the University’s Bibliotheca Thysiana, where we introduced it to our archaeological exemplars; I was also analyzing the museums and the messages about the past that they were conveying to their visitors.

Inner Mongolia, the autonomous region (equivalent to a province) where I work; and Liaoning, the neighboring province where I lived, have in the 1980s, home to a particular ethnic culture that is being presented in the region’s museums as having direct historical continuity, from the Neolithic past 5,600 years ago to the Chinese present. This society built large mound stone tombs for their leaders that can be filled with extraordinary jade carvings, and the remains of structures have been found that contain human shaped pottery statuary. The fascinating mounds surrounding these remains are intimately tied to how these two regions present themselves in the context of the present-day People’s Republic of China, and form the basis for my writing, which incorporates ideas from theoretical work on museums, memory, identity formation, and nationalism. The Leiden University Library was an excellent resource for books on these ideas, and the opportunity to present my work at IAS’s monthly noontime talks was also very valuable because of the audience’s insightful questions and suggestions.

As I look back now, my time at IAS was intellectually stimulating beyond my expectations. Much of this was due to a rich and diverse cohort of scholars at IAS and the University who were working on fascinating projects themselves, and who were equally willing to explore ideas and learn from each other as I was. We often talked about each other’s research at the Institute, but probably spent as much time doing it at the many dinners we shared with each other. Cooking became an international affair with shopping trips in Leiden and beyond to find the spices and foodstuffs to make Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Italian, and Austrian dishes to be served to friends, all paired with wine to make the thoughts flow, of course! These close interactions with colleagues over meals at the institute or over dinners gave me fresh perspectives on my own work and the chance to learn about areas of the world and areas of study I had not yet had exposure to. I came to Leiden to study China, but I ended up learning just as much about India and Indology from my friends and their projects. I came to IAS under its Asian Heritage research cluster, and the many activities that the Institute and University held around this theme meant that there was always something to attend. Some of the most interesting events were the roundtable discussions held by the Leiden Initiative on North Korea, organized by Remco Breuker. Experts from many venues and perspectives, which refreshingly included several non-academic professionals with deep experience in Korea, took this opportunity to strategize on how to make North Korea more visible both in and outside of the academy. I was also able to attend a five day intensive course for graduate students on Korea organized by Remco Breuker and Dr. Koen
Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to trans-national interactions within the Asian region as well as Asia's projection into the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends are addressed. The cluster aims to expand the understanding of the processes of globalisation by considering the various ways in which the Asian and other world regions are interconnected within a long-term historical framework. Acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global Transformations, it challenges western perspectives that underlie much of the current literature on the subject and explores new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interactions in the form of ‘south-south-north’ and ‘east-west’ dialogue models. In principle, any research dealing with Asian global interactions is of interest.

Asian Borderlands Research Network (www.asianborders.net)

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

Coordinator: Eric de Maaker (emaaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The EPA’s research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitics of energy security on the world’s economy 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 is the Belt and Road Initiative – East Asian and African Studies. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is entitled The Transnationalization of China’s Oil Industry: company strategies, embedded projects, and relations with institutional and state stakeholders in resource-rich countries (2015-2017). Involving various Chinese and Dutch research institutes, this programme will analyse China’s increasing involvement with governments, local institutions and communities in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Coordinators: M. Amineh, Programme Director EPA-IIAS (m.p.amineh@uva.nl or m.p.amineh@iias.nl), Y. Guan, Prudence IIAS (prudence@iias.nl), www.iias.nl/research/energy-programme-asia-epa

IAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

The IAS Centre for Regulation and Governance, Asia is engaged in innovative and comparative research on theories and practices – focusing on emerging markets of Asia. Its multi-disciplinary research undertakings combine approaches from political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology in the comparative analysis of regulatory issues in Asia and in developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities. Currently the research projects fall within the following interlocking areas: State licensing, market closure, rent seeking. Regulation of intra-governmental conflicts; State restructuring and rescaling; and Regulatory governance under institutional voids.

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

Asian Studies in Africa

Since 2010, IAS and other partners from Africa, Asia and the USA have been working on an initiative to promote the study of and teaching on Africa at 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 America, but also Latin America and Oceania.

In 2012, a roundtable in Chicago, Zambia, led to the establishment of the ‘Association of Asian Studies in Africa’ (AASA). AASA’s development is headed by a steering committee of scholars, mainly from Africa and Asia. AASA’s inaugural conference will take place from 24-26 Sept 2015 in Accra, Ghana, under the title ‘Asia in Africa: The 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 Africa intellectual interactions.

More information: www.africaasian.org

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 urbanisation and urban culture in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern and central. The research projects fall into four distinct categories: Times through an international knowledge-network of experts, cities and research institutes it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together space and practice, IAS aims to create a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities ‘in context’ and beyond traditional Western norms of knowledge.

The Postcolonial Global City

This research programme examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have managed to transform from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. Intended as an interdisciplinary research endeavour, the Postcolonial Global City has brought together researchers from the humanities and social sciences, including architects and urbanists, but also people from other disciplines, such as geographers, socio-logists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies. A key factor in the research is architectural typology. Architecture is examined to see how it can create identity and ethos and the post-colonial era their building typologies have been superseded by the office building, the skyscraper and the shopping centre, all of which anchor Asian cities within the urban fabric of the city.

The research programme organises a seminar every year.

Coordinator: Greg Bracken (gregory@cordлевer.com)

Urbane Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

Consisting of over 100 researchers with affiliations at 17 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest global academic network on Asian cities. UKNA’s objective is to nurture contextualised and policy relevant knowledge on Asian cities, seeking to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. To this aim, the programme hosts a variety of research projects through the exchange of researchers of the participating institutions, focusing on the three research themes: 1. Ideas of the city; 2. Cities of the 21st century: The past, present and 3. Future of the cities. UKNA is funded by a grant awarded by the EU and runs from April 2012 until April 2016. IAS is the coordinating institution in the network and the administrator of the programme. For a full list of UKNA Partners please refer to the UKNA website (www.uknna.asia)

Coordinators: Paul Rabie (p.rabie@iias.nl) and Gomnia San Tan (g.o.tam@iias.nl)

Asian Heritages

THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER critically addresses cultural heritage practices in Asia. It explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and value. This includes the contested distinctions of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in defining one’s own identity or identities vis-à-vis those of others. It addresses the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for social agency. It aims to engage with the concepts of ‘authenticity’, ‘national heritage’ and ‘shared heritage’ and issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage. It will critically address the dangers of commodification of perceived endangered local cultures/heritages, languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

Graduate Programme in Critical Heritage Studies

Over the last few years, IAS has been intensively engaged with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IUS) and IIAS in encouraging Asian and African partners in the development of a special master’s and PhD track in the field of ‘Critical Heritage Studies’. The uniqueness of this initiative is that the MA/PhD in Leiden will be combined with a parallel set of courses at a number of Asian universities, allowing for the students to obtain a double (MA and PhD) degree at the end of their training. Students can already opt for the focus on ‘Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe’ within the Leiden MA in Asian Studies, but can also engage in a Double Degree, offered by Leiden University and IIAS, in collaboration with the Asian partners (currently National Taiwan University in Taipei, Yonsei University in Seoul, and Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta).

The MA heritage focus is supervised by Dr Adèle Esposito (IAS/ULS). Prof. Michael Herzfeld (Harvard) is a guest teacher and the Senior Advisor to the Critical Heritage Studies Initiative of IAS.

Indian Medical Heritage Research Network

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

Coordinator: Maarten Bode (m.bode@uva.nl)

Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

A research network supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

With the objective of reshaping the field of Asian Studies, the three-year pilot programme (2014-2016) ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’ seeks to foster new humanities-focused research. In practice, this means adapting Asian Studies to an interconnected global environment built on a network of academics and practitioners from Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa.

Educational opportunities are created by selecting cross-disciplinary methodological questions likely to shift scholarly paradigms as they pertain to Asia. In the process, the initiative seeks to shape academic communities around new themes of research, emerging trends of knowledge production and aspiring scholars from the five world regions and beyond.

The initiative is coordinated by IAS, in collaboration with numerous institutions in Asia, the United States, Europe and Africa, and is funded with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York. The pilot programme 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: Histories, Cartographies and Politics in Asia
2. Uses of Culture and Cultural Heritage
3. Asian Spatialities: the Indian Ocean World, Central Eurasia and Southeast Asian Borderlands
4. Idea of the City in Asian Contexts
5. Views of Asia from Africa

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

Website: www.rethinking.asia
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 independent 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

Rosilina Abu Bakr
Social interactions in the Malay Manuscripts
1 Nov 2014 – 1 Nov 2016

Hajime Akikami
The comparative study between the Netherlands and Japan on employment, labor and globalization
1 Apr 2015 – 31 Mar 2016

Mohd Aminish
Coordinator
‘Energy Programme Asia (EPA)’
Domestic and geopolitical challenges from North-Africa to the southern tip of the continent.
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Gregory Bracken
Coordinator
The ‘Asia in Global City’ Colonial-era Shanghai as an urban model for the 21st century
1 Sep 2009 – 31 Aug 2015

Hannah Bulloch
Intimate relationships and the politics of personhood in the Philippines
13 Apr – 12 May 2015

Chunhong CHEN
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Yuehtsen (Juliette) Chung
Visiting Professor, Taiwanese Chair of Chinese Studies
1 Sep 2013 – 31 Jul 2015

Nicole Kradin
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1 Sep 2013 – 31 Aug 2015

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Visiting Professor
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jie GUO
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1 May – 15 Aug 2015

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A comparative study on social policies between the Netherlands and Japan

Yoko HU
Quantitative study of the urban national park, boundary marketing, design and management
1 Feb – 30 Nov 2015

Nirajan Kaffe
Critical edition and annotated translation of the Nivāsavatāra
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Visiting Professor
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Yangwoo Lee
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Chris Moffat
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Lance Nolde
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1 Aug 2014 – 30 May 2015

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

Dian Shah
Constitutionalizing religion and religious freedom: a comparative study of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka

Tina Shrestha
Transnational suffering narratives: Documenting Nepali migrant communities in Europe and Southeast Asia
1 Mar – 31 Dec 2015

Yongwoo Lee
A Study of Legend of King Afgalotra/Kísticas in Indian Buddhist and Jaina Traditions
1 Jan 2014 – 30 Jun 2015

Xiaomai Jiang
Spirit of urban heritage: Place-making in the metropolis in the globalized age

ASC-IIAS Fellowship Programme

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

THIS FELLOWSHIP is intended for researchers specialising in Asian-African interactions. It aims to attract researchers whose work is informed by current theoretical debates, in the social sciences and humanities, on global connectivities and who are able to critically engage with shifting paradigms in ‘area studies’ beyond the ways in which these have traditionally been conceived in the West. We are particularly interested in receiving fellowship proposals that go beyond a mere analysis of current issues associated with 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

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Yongwoo Lee

GLOBAL POPULARITY and the transnational Hollywood boom continue to spread beyond Asia, inspiring critical questions regarding cultural nationalism, cultural imperialism and musical authenticity and hybridity. Using postcolonial aspirations of Koreans and the Hollywood campaign, my manuscript critically re-examines the genealogy of a “cultural modernity of sound” in colonial Korea (1910-45) as it intersects with the Japanese popular music industry and lingering colonial mentalities of Koreans after liberation until the 1950s. The narrative of Korean popular music echoes an implicit submission and colonial interiority, empowered by modern western technologies such as the gramophone, radio, and the phonograph record, while also appropriating various foreign popular music genres in relation to the spatial reorganization of the colonial metropole and its surroundings.

This research primarily explores the ways in which the socio-cultural practices of consumption of Korean popular music became imbricated with the colonial structure of Korean cultural modernity. More precisely, I bring to light aural, quotidian experiences of Koreans who, through popular music narratives, gradually embraced their collective sentiments and mass perceptions regarding heuristic concepts of western and American modernity in a colonial context. Colonial Koreans’ ambivalent position between two empires and the continuity of ontological colonial mentality casts valuable interrogations on: (1) the embedded structure of Japanese colonialism represented in Korean popular songs in relation to socio-historical genealogies of specific racist and gendered perceptions, production of imperial knowledge, and the concept of the nation-state, and (2) the impact of Americanization and the invention of modern subjectivity through consuming/performing popular songs as circulated via collective memory in colonial, postcolonial, and cosmopolitan discourses.

For the completion of my book manuscript in Leiden, I am pursuing an interdisciplinary research project on compressed modernity and the impact of Americanization in postwar Korea during the 1960s/70s under Park Chung-Hee’s dictatorship. The book is entitled Politics of Subversive Modernity: Americanization, the Vietnam War, and Korean Popular Culture in the 1960s-1970s. It is focused on symbolic representations in relation of American, American pop culture and its hybridized local adaptations in 1960s South Korea, with particular attention given to rhetorical tropes of the American cultural influx as a universalized corporeal modernity via U.S. military stationing, the collective ethos of dispatching Korean troops to Vietnam, and American signifiers of Korean homosocial brotherhood. Korean popular culture in the 1960s vividly represented the rhetoric of South Korea’s political and economic “miracle” by sacrificing healthy sons and husbands in the Vietnam War, while also providing domestic female sex workers (Nongongja) for U.S. troops and exploiting subaltern factory workers. This rhetorical military-sex-economy complex worked well as the gendered signifier of an imaginary nationhood of South Korea’s modernization in the 1960s/70s. It articulated the discourse of Korea’s economic growth by way of sub-imperialistic rhetoric while also suggesting collective hostilities and dismantled sentiments against Communism on behalf of the discourse containment of the Cold War regime.

My joint fellowship at BAS and IIAS provides an intellectually stimulating work environment to exchange ideas with many brilliant scholars and postdoctoral fellows. Following my terms at BAS, I will be an affiliated fellow at IIAS, National University of Singapore, where I will continue work on my book project, as well as develop a new exhibition project entitled Asian Divas: Acoustic Modernities in Asia.
DURING MY IIAS FELLOWSHIP I aim to write a number of articles as well as a book concerning the varieties of religiosity among the Nepalese diasporas in the UK and Belgium. As a Research Fellow at the University of Oxford (UK) I have been carrying out relevant research since 2009, acquiring materials related to the religious practices of Nepalese communities in the UK and Belgium.

The Nepalese people have a long history of out-migration. After the Sugauli treaty was signed between Nepal and the British East India Company in 1816, we observe a gradual increase in Nepalese migration, especially to Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, and even beyond, as far as Burma and Thailand. During the twenty-first century, in response to and in the aftermath of conflict, the cachet of migration is such that more Nepalese are leaving Nepal than ever before. The Centre for Nepal Studies (CNS) UK survey, finalized in 2010, established that in fact more than 72,373 Nepalese reside in Great Britain. Their number has since considerably increased. Not only many ex-Gurkhas and their families, but also growing numbers of students, nurses and other professionals have settled in, for example, London, Manchester, Reading, Swindon, and close to army bases (Ashford and Folkestone in Kent, Farnborough and Aldershot in Hampshire). The Nepalese diaspora community in Belgium is much smaller and has a different history, far fewer ex-Gurkhas and more asylum seekers. Their number is currently estimated at between 7,000 and 10,000 with concentrations in Antwerp, Brussels, Leuven, Gent and Bruges. A current study into two parallel diasporas in adjacent, but culturally as well as politically distinct settings, permits us to compare (a) the British, European and South Asian understandings of ‘religion’ and (b) the balance with regard to the types of religion in each location. Most are Hindu, some are Buddhists, others ‘animists’ or shamanists, and yet others are Christians. The research reveals how the Nepalese in diaspora define themselves religiously. It helps bring into clear focus the very question of what religion is, by showing how different definitions are presupposed, brought into play and perpetuated by different contexts and purposes. Migrant populations living in diaspora situations offer particularly interesting cases for the study concerning the ways in which religions are created and recreated by their followers.

The results produced from the critical analysis of survey data, in-depth ethnography, examination of complex rituals and texts will be of wide interest.

MY WORKS HAVE AN ENDURING INTEREST in the issues of modern biopolitics and governance. With the focus on Chinese eugenics, my previous works investigate the relationship between science and society through a historical comparative study of eugenics moments as they developed in both Japan and China from the 1890s to the 1940s. They embody specific case studies of eugenics against a greater background of the global transmission of Western science and its local transformation. In the last three months at IIAS, I have published an article (Isis, 2014, 105: 793-802) and I argue that eugenics, race theory, and Social Darwinism unfolded as counter-imperial discourses, as they were deployed as self-improvement to resist external imperial impositions, and within internal cultural and political disputes. In China, intercultural and interethnic was celebrated for introducing better germplasm and wider cultural heritages. On the one hand, to locate a scientific turf for eugenics, Chinese eugenicists expanded the field of investigation from biology to sociology, from economics to ethnology. On the other hand, we see that eugenics has carried so much weight that it now justifies state ideologies promoting the monitoring of individual bodies for the sake of national health.

Currently, I am working on the Quarantine Service of the Chinese Maritime Customs from 1873 to 1949. The practice of quarantine was embedded in the interest of rendering populations governable through public health projects in the modern world, as commerce extended worldwide. Such practices were also bound up with the development of administrative governments that captured the imagination of a national ‘geo-body’ as they outwardly classified, communicated and enforced artificial territorial boundaries, and inwardly projected a series of expectations for modern citizenship of healthy individuals on their populations.

In addition to this project, during the next couple of months, I will be preparing the workshop ‘Governance and Challenges in China’s Peripheries and Ecology’, sponsored by IIAS and convening on 27-28 May 2015. This workshop focuses on the issues of ‘governance’ and questions if China can achieve modernization without re-localization and exploitation, and whether China’s economic growth can be equally redistributed and can reduce ethnic tension, on par with other nation-states that have been striving to achieve this balance since the post-war era. This workshop includes papers that, historically and contemporarily, analyze territorialisations of peripheral regions in Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, south-western and maritime south-eastern China, and discuss topics of social equity, politics of resource allocations, constructions of people and nature, and contestations over ecological imperialism. I am so grateful for all the supports and help from the IIAS staff and the Leiden community, without whom this workshop would not be possible at all.
By transforming personal journeys and distant places into familiar routes and iconic destinations, images depicting travel reveal and shape ideas about beauty, culture and foreign lands. Featuring more than 100 works created over five centuries, the objects exhibited in The Traveler’s Eye are by travelers, artists, photographers and scholars who recorded actual journeys, as well as imagined voyages, to and across Asia. Curated by seven experts, the objects range from masterpieces of Asian art to quirky souvenirs – woodblock prints, ink paintings and art photography, to archaeological drawings, vintage postcards and diaries.

The Smithsoniam’s Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

“WHETHER THEY WERE COLLECTED AS MEMORIALS, or whether they provided virtual experiences for those who remained at home, each has an extraordinary immediacy […] Encountering these works invites our visitors […] to think about how they might record and remember their own journeys,” says organizing curator Debra Diamond.

The exhibition concludes in the fourth gallery with records of journeys to and in Asia during the early 20th century. Western adventurers, archaeologists, and scholars were already traversing the globe to conduct research and explore foreign lands, but the advent of commercial travel brought a flood of photographs, drawings, postcards, mementos, and other means of recording scientific and sentimental experiences abroad. Museum founder Charles Lang Freer’s enthusiastically scribbled diary entries, photos and pedestal-mounted rock collection, tell of a man enamored with China’s artistic glories. In 1910 he made his final journey to China; this time drawn into the country’s interior to explore the Buddhist cave temple complex at Longmen Gorge in Henan province. Freer’s destination was remote and largely abandoned, and so Chinese officials insisted that an armed guard accompany him. When he set out, his party had grown to more than twenty people, including porters, a cook, a photographer (Yutai), and six soldiers. (fig. 2) Many of the more than one hundred large-format photographs (and relief rubbings) produced on this trip are the best in situ visual documents of sculptures that were looted over the following decades.

The exhibition’s final installation features perhaps the most recognizable artifact of travel over the past 150 years: the picture postcard. During their golden age (1890s–1920s) postcards were requisite souvenirs. They were collected as mementos or mailed from abroad, accruing the additional prestige of a foreign stamp and postmark. Armchair travelers also acquired postcards, compiling them in specially made albums. They eventually became so ubiquitous that they created enduring and iconic representations of Asia for global audiences. Postcards could advance political agendas, whilst others romanticized a vanishing way of life for tourists’ benefit, such as those showing rickshaws. With travelers and residents visiting the same photography shops, however, views intended for tourist markets also served to redefine local communities’ perceptions of their own pasts and traditions, as well as their own modernity. (fig. 3) Postcards remained popular throughout the twentieth century, but with the advent of mobile phones, they are becoming harder to find. Millions of posts on Instagram, Facebook, and other outlets, however, prove that the appeal of recording travels with a striking photograph and brief message has not diminished.