Even as borders are increasingly being bridged today through international cooperation, many border peoples across the world live precarious existences in military battle zones. Bringing together essays by anthropologists, historians, and ethnomusicologists, this Focus section refocuses the readers’ gaze on militarized borderlands in Asia. The articles portray the far-reaching impacts of militarization on those who live in the immediate proximity of the border, as well as on those who move away. All the articles share a concern for the travails of the people living in militarized borders, and their attempts to cope or overcome, in symbolic, material, and imagined forms.
The Focus

Militarized Borderlands in Asia

Pages 21-35

Even as borders are increasingly being bridged today through international cooperation, many border peoples across the world live precarious existences in military battle zones. Bringing together essays by anthropologists, historians, and ethnomusicologists, this Focus section refocuses the readers’ gaze on militarized borderlands in Asia. The articles portray the far-reaching impacts of militarization on those who live in the immediate proximity of the border, as well as on those who move away. All the articles share a concern for the travails of the people living in militarized borders, and their attempts to cope or overcome, in symbolic, material, and imagined forms.

Pages 24-25 Alexander Horstmann and Tomas Cole provide a gripping narrative of the plight of the Karen people, straddling the Thai-Burmese border, one of Asia’s most battle-weary border regions. Trapped between rival militias and state military, Karen civilians wage a perpetual fight for survival, often in a no-win situation.

Pages 26-27 Ankur Datta’s article traces how the border figures in the imaginations of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits in the India-Pakistan border region of Kashmir. Coming at a time when debates are current regarding the proposed resettlement of Kashmiri Pandit migrants in areas they had been forced to flee, Datta’s piece is timely.

Pages 28-29 Malini Sur’s article underscores the violence of the border by drawing attention to a doomed crossing at the India-Bangladesh border – the shooting of a young girl by border security forces. Possessing neither legal nor financial wherewithal to pass through securitized checkpoints, many people negotiate the border under the threat of death.

Pages 30-31 Duncan McDui Ra’s article reveals a different kind of border effect by connecting the surge in private schools in Manipur (northeast India) with the popular desire to flee a militarized borderland. Since a mainstream education holds the promise of geographical mobility, it fuels the demand for private schools in troubled peripheries.

Pages 32-33 Swargajyoti Gohain and Kerstin Grothmann focus on military renaming of places in a disputed India-China border. Renaming of places, although often accompanied by physical settlement of military troops, is in itself a powerful symbolic force and political act, for it changes the local culturescape, and integrates ambiguous state-spaces into the national space.

Pages 34-35 The Focus ends with Masaya Shishikura’s article on the blending of diverse musical cultures in the militarized island of Ogasawara in Japan. Occupied and militarily settled by different political powers, Ogasawara nevertheless resists the epitaph of a remote and marginal border through its rich cross-border musical practices.
Reconsidering, intervening

With the two major IIAS-supported events of ICAS 9 (Adelaide) and the Africa-Asia Knowledge Axis (Accra) approaching, it is fitting for me to update The Newsletter readers on how our institute is progressing in its efforts to explore new research-led orientations through the programme ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’ and its five forums (urban, heritage, geographies, arts and Africa-Asia; more information can be found at www.rethinking.asia).

The Newsletter and IIAS

The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse, and continues to serve as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

The Newsletter and IIAS

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a post-doctoral research centre based in the Netherlands. IIAS encourages the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia and promotes national and international cooperation.

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

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS have seen significant activities taking place, all aimed at opening new pedagogical perspectives in the field of Asian studies. I shall focus here on two recent events: ‘Reconsidering Craft as a Pedagogy from Below’, a roundtable held in Jaipur on 16-17 March 2015, and ‘Artistic Interventions – Histories, Cartographies and Politics in Asia’, a workshop followed by a roundtable, held in Hong Kong on 30 March-2 April 2015.

The Jaipur event was organized jointly with the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the American Institute of Indian Studies (find reports and other information pertaining to this event at http://tinyurl.com/reconsideringpedagogy).

It was the last of a series of activities under the programme’s ‘Uses of Culture and Cultural Heritage’ forum, which also included a Summer School (Chiang Mai, 2014) and a roundtable on the ‘Politics of Craft Texture’ (Chiang Mai, 2014).

In Jaipur, the outlines of an educational programme that could combine the use of craft in its cultural location as ‘Asian’ – as an alternative method of research and teaching knowledge – were explored. Discussions were multi-leveled. Most participants agreed that craft as an autonomous ‘space of making’ could well be mobilized as an integrative citizen-focused pedagogy. Notions of ‘ecological sustainability’, ‘everyday life archives’, or even the question of time as a non-quantifiable value necessary for the conception of knowledge, were brought up. The kind of pedagogies that should result from the encounter of artisans, scholars, designers, non-governmental organizations and governmental structures should effectively connect workshops, households and classrooms, not just in the transmission of craft knowledge, but also in the mapping of local traditions through a focus on historical case studies, with an emphasis on building a methodology where various forms of social knowledge could inform each other. The use of trans-local (regional networks like those supported by IIAS, as well as the possibility of e-academic platforms, could well help validate craft practices as ethnically, economically and ecologically legitimate forms of knowledge of societies and their cultures. In sum, as one participant noted, the proposed process of learning should be understood as ‘an integrated pedagogy framed through the idea of the right to livelihood’.

In many ways, the Hong Kong forum ‘Artistic Interventions’ reinforced the conclusions of the Jaipur event (please find reports and other information pertaining to this event at http://tinyurl.com/artisticinterventions).

Resulting from a collaboration between IIAS, Hong Kong Baptist University, the Centre for Globalization Studies at Amsterdam University, California College for the Arts and One-A Space Gallery, as well as local civil society partners, the double event brought together participants from the academic, artistic and curatorial fields who set out to uncover new expression of art and social intervention, as well as the way artists could define unconventional modes of reading the histories and cartographies of Asia. The first workshop saw artists and scholars interpreting each other’s works in a dialogical fashion. The ensuing roundtable consisted of an interactive exercise that aimed to assemble concrete programmatic ideas. The various interventions sought to combine aesthetic and ethical exigencies, drawing on utopian thinking to question existing institutional constructions and established lines of social, cultural and political groupings. By transcending disciplinary borders, participants also sought to revisit the position of Asia as ‘a mobile vessel of connections and dislocations’, a political construction that can be deconstructed and re-created through artistic, curatorial, and scholarly practices, a point of ‘alternative global imagination’ to today’s Western-dominated model and its present crisis.

More specifically, participants agreed that art should be viewed as a unique space capable of questioning the liberal ideological determinism that came into dominance in the 1980s. As it is itself produced under the constraints of financial cuts and institutional disadvantages, it is well placed to think creatively about the conditions of survival of humanistic knowledge, while it is also capable of expressing ambiguities against what could lead to exclusionary counter-determinisms. Discourses on art, moreover, should help to push the boundaries of regional politics by revealing hitherto unnoticed connections, often restrained by the nation-state model. Quite devoid of the self-centered aestheticism often found in certain art milieus, the Hong Kong discussions – perhaps inspired by the recent ‘Umbrella movement’ in the Territory – carried an interventionist intention that aimed to reach out to communities and their social lives, to engage spectators as participants. In so doing they rejected the high-modernist idea of an artificial autonomy of art. Like craft, moreover, ‘artistic interventions’ shared a place-based focus, bringing up local genealogies, narratives and experiences, that otherwise find themselves concealed by linear national histories.

Through these two rich intellectual exercises, the Mellon-supported programme ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’ is helping to deepen IIAS’ intellectual humanistic commitment and providing it with potential future tracks of ‘interventions’.

Philippe Peycaam, Director IIAS
SOUTHEAST ASIA HAS BEEN A MICROCOSM of international health initiatives since 1945. Health conditions in this region were largely deplorable during the middle of the twentieth century, with a high prevalence of endemic diseases such as malaria, yaws, tuberculosis, leprosy, schistosomiasis, beriberi, and epidemics of communicable diseases such as smallpox and cholera. Most of the countries in the region lacked adequate expertise and financial resources to combat these diseases. After wartime devastation, the problem of national reconstruction was exacerbated by political and ethnic conflicts, and poverty. At the time, Southeast Asia served as a theatre for superpower rivalry between the US and the USSR, for hegemony over the region. A comparative study of disease eradication campaigns in Indonesia and the Philippines could help identify overlaps between nation-building and Cold War politics.

The US, given its post-World War II economic dominance, overshadowed the USSR in extending economic and technical assistance to the newly-independent nations of Southeast Asia, provided as a part of its larger strategy to subvert the growth of communist ideology. The US contended that disease led to poverty and poverty was the breeding ground for communism. US Presidents, particularly Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, had foreseen the political capital derived from funding disease eradication campaigns: the political allegiances of Southeast Asian leaders. The leadership of newly-independent nations of the region were aware that the acceptance of financial and technical assistance for disease eradication – funnelled primarily through the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) – would have political ramifications. Whereas President Soekarno of Indonesia (1945-65) sought to achieve an equilibrium between the country’s sovereignty in health and increased receptiveness of foreign aid, successive Filipino presidents (1946-65) – particularly Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, Magsaysay, Carlos Garcia, and Diosdado Macapagal – sought to align their health policies with US aid, with the view to lead their country towards a Western-led model of development.

This study offers an alternative to Randall Packard’s argument that post-World War II disease eradication campaigns launched by international agencies, particularly WHO, reflected the growing ability of Western science to transform the underdeveloped world. I would caution against presenting the history of disease eradication campaigns in such a simplistic fashion; it tends to overlook the geopolitics applied both within and outside WHO that affected the implementation of a regional health policy. Southeast Asia has lacked a fully effective institutional structure for regional cooperation in health. For historical and ideological reasons, WHO split Southeast Asia into two regions: the Southeast Asian Regional Office (SEARO), with its headquarters in New Delhi, and the Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) headquartered in Manila. The split posed challenges to regional cohesion in policy.

Building a utopian world free of disease: WHO and international health

With the creation of WHO in 1948, the idea of a world free of disease started to take shape, supported by particular medical and technological advances, such as DDT against malaria, and BCG (Barillus Calmette–Guérin) against tuberculosis. The preamble to the WHO Constitution was revolutionary as it stated that the achievement of the highest standard of health was a fundamental right of every person. Within WHO circles, planners had developed an economy-first policy. C.E.A. Winslow, who served as a consultant with the Public Health Administration for WHO, emphasised that public health was not limited to the control of diseases, but also sought to raise the general efficiency of the population. In the 1950s, WHO approached the problem of public health in Southeast Asia through projects to control endemic diseases, particularly malaria and tuberculosis. These projects intended to provide a technological fix to the problem of disease.

However, between 1948 and early 1950s, coinciding with the Cold War, WHO was faced with the challenge of establishing its niche within the UN system as an apolitical specialised agency. To this end, it toned over socio-economic causes of ill health, and instead, diverted its attention to narrowly conceived disease eradication campaigns. The geopolitics of the Cold War was in part responsible for WHO establishing regional offices in Africa, the Americas, Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the West Pacific. Moreover, regional conflicts among nations led to some countries joining WHO offices outside their regions. In South Asia, owing to tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the former joined the Southeast Asian Regional Office (SEARO), whereas the latter decided to join the East Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO). headquartered in Alexandria. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia signed up with SEARO in 1950 to cement further cooperation in health with India, with whom it shared a common asylum status. In contrast, Malaysia – engaged in a confrontation with Indonesia (1957-66) – decamped to the West Pacific Regional Office (WPRO).

The first regional WHO office was SEARO (1948), which, in the initial years, oversaw India, Ceylon, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma, Indonesia, and Thailand. WHO believed these countries to have a certain geographical unity shaped by tropical environment, poverty, and pathogenic conditions. The SEARO assisted member states through the assignment of short-term project consultants for drawing up epidemiological strategies for controlling malaria, tubercolosis, leprosy, and yaws. It identified malaria as the number one public health problem affecting member states. The WPRO (1951), with member states Japan, South Korea, Taiwan (Formosa), Malaya, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Australia, and New Zealand, experienced wider variations in health problems, quite unlike SEARO. Political disturbances in Malaya, Vietnam, and Cambodia were a major impediment to the development of public health services. For Southeast Asian member nations within its jurisdiction, the WPRO emphasized campaigns against malaria, tuberculosis, and yaws as these diseases debilitated the overall productivity of the population, and the after-effects of treatment were clearly visible.

Disease eradication in Indonesia: balancing national interests with international health

In 1950, Prime Minister Abdul Halim’s cabinet identified malaria, tuberculosis, yaws and leprosy as the penjant rakyat (the big four endemic diseases) that affected the overall vitality of the Indonesian population. National mobilisation around these diseases involved raising the living standards of Indonesians and presenting an image of the new Indonesian in accordance with pembangunan (nation-building ideology). Indonesian physicians adopted President Soekarno’s nationalist rhetoric; they metaphorically depicted disease eradication campaigns as battles that would lead the nation to further victories against poverty and disease, and cultivate a strong and healthy population. Indonesians refashioned disease eradication campaigns to involve a balancing of national interests with the agenda of international agencies during the Cold War.

President Soekarno conceptualised pembangunan to articulate Indonesia’s need for development after nearly three and a half centuries of Dutch colonialism. It envisioned the transformation of Indonesia into a just and prosperous society that also emphasised its contributions in public health. The disease aetiologies constructed by Indonesian physicians sought to rationalise the relationship between poverty, disease, and priorities of nation-building. Malaria, considered to be the musuh nomor pertama (the foremost enemy) of the newly-independent nation, was cast as a hantu (ghost) that haunted coastal areas causing malnutrition and infant mortality.
in Indonesia and the Philippines during the early decades of the Cold War

Between 1951 and 1956, Indonesia implemented malaria control projects with international support that sought to minimize the threat posed by the disease. Unfortunately, malaria control operations were impeded as mosquitoes developed resistance to DDT. In response, between 1959 and 1965, Indonesia implemented malaria eradication – a permanent elimination of the disease even in the absence of control measures - that consisted of: (a) mapping out the prevalence of the disease using surveys, (b) determining the resistance of anopheline species to DDT, (c) treating suspected cases with chloroquine, and (d) spraying the affected houses with DDT.

The beginning of malaria eradication in Indonesia looked promising, with a sharp decline in the parasitic index of children from 22.5% in 1962 to less than 0.5% soon after spraying operations began in 1953. But the programme failed to achieve the ultimate goal due to bureaucratic delays. Consequently, the US halved funding for the programme from $10 million to $5 million. The US was disappointed that venues for the use of mobile x-ray units to identify individual tuberculosis patients were not being integrated into rural health services. While it was one thing for the US, it was another for Indonesia, as the physical space for tuberculosis eradication programmes dominated the public health landscape of the Philippines during the 1950s. Despite Magaysay’s advocacy for the establishment of a new regional health programme, the local vision for rural health appeared somewhat ambitious as it lacked adequate funding from the Department of Health. Rural health units had not been relocated to rural health centers (headquarters of the municipal district at the sub-provincial level) leaving adjacent barangays bereft of basic health facilities.

Conclusion

This study does not chronicle individual disease eradication campaigns across Indonesia and the Philippines. Instead, it reveals how the US used disease eradication as a bargaining chip to purchase the loyalty of newly-independent countries of Southeast Asia in its fight against communism and draws a contrast between Indonesian and Filipino engagement with international health. A comparison between disease eradication in Indonesia and the Philippines sheds light on the nature of post-colonial sovereignty and the health trajectories of both countries during the 1950s were modest, the decade did manage to impart the political will to surmount problems associated with national reconstruction following World War II.

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5 In 1956, Philippines' first pilot project to control tuberculosis was initiated a pilot tuberculosis control centre at Bandung. Financing the project was a thorny issue from the very start as the Tuberculosis Division under the Ministry of Health, which initially administered the project, devolved administrative control to the West Java Inspectorate of Health in 1954. But, the Bandung municipal health service was not involved in the execution of the project itself, as it lacked adequate funds.
6 The Bandung Declaration of 1955, initiated a tuberculosis control project, the Ministry of Health in Indonesia initiated a campaign that involved the mass vaccinations of newborns with BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) to prevent tuberculosis. In 1952, the country launched a national programme to control tuberculosis in Indonesia. The Tuberculosis Division, under the Ministry of Health, took over the program under the leadership of field workers. The ICA requested Prime Minister Djuanda to speed up the campaign by providing funds. But then misallocated to doctors who did not participate in the programme. The ICA requested Prime Minister Djuanda to slow down the programme, while the then Minister of Health Satrio was fighting to expand it. SEARO Director General C. Mani (1948-68) faced the delicate task of ensuring the Indonesian Health Ministry’s compliance with ICA directives. Eventually, due to intense lobbying by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the Tuberculosis Division under the Ministry of Health was made responsible for the National Malaria Eradication Program, in line with Satrio’s vision of expanding the coverage for malaria eradication.
7 Tuberculosis was the second most prevalent endemic disease in Indonesia during the 1950s, with technical assistance from SEARO, the Indonesian Ministry of Health initiated the expansion of its control program. In 1956, Philippines’ first pilot project to control tuberculosis was underway on the island of Mindoro to determine the feasibility of residual spraying of malaria in the Philippines. However, by 1954, malariologists discovered that the mosquito species responsible for malaria in the Philippines (particularly in Mindoro), had developed resistance to DDT. In 1956, malaria eradication was extended nationwide, aided by large scale application of the insecticide dieldrin. Unfortunately, anopheline mosquitoes developed resistance to dieldrin as well. In 1960, the Filipino government decentralised malaria control to regional health districts, because the Central Division of Malaria Eradication could not exercise technical authority over regional staff, and the organisational aspects of the eradication program demanded closer supervision by the Central Office.
8 Pulmonary tuberculosis was the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the Philippines. In 1951, the US Public Health Service assisted the Filipino Department of Health in the establishment of a laboratory at Alabang for the domestic production of vaccines. Two years later, the country launched its first mass vaccination campaign against tuberculosis. In 1956, Philippines’ first pilot project to control tuberculosis was launched in Iloilo Norte province with technical assistance from the ICA on the condition that tuberculosis control would be integrated with malaria control. While it was one thing to use mobile x-ray units to identify individual tuberculosis patients and treat them withisoniazid and other wonder drugs, it was another to show how to control tuberculosis. Surveillance was a weak arm of tuberculosis control in the Philippines, particularly in Iloilo Norte. No nationwide program for the treatment of the disease was undertaken during the 1950s. Diagnosis for tuberculosis was based only on radiological findings and not bacteriological examinations. Patients could not follow-up on treatment as drugs were un-affordable. Tuberculosis treatment and control were diverted to rural health units in the mid-1950s. With ever-expanding public health activities, such as administering smallpox vaccinations, public health education, and environmental sanitation, the rural health units could not follow-up on treatment of individual tuberculosis patients. This meant that between 1954 and 1956, tuberculosis attributed to tuberculosis registered only a marginal decline, from 114 to 104 deaths per 100,000.
9 The previous paragraphs have shown that isolated disease eradication programmes dominated the public health landscape of the Philippines during the 1950s. Despite Magaysay’s advocacy for a new national health program, the local vision for rural health appeared somewhat ambitious as it lacked adequate funding from the Department of Health. Rural health units had not been relocated to rural health centers (headquarters of the municipal district at the sub-provincial level) leaving adjacent barangays bereft of basic health facilities.

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Unlike the handful of European texts that can truly claim global popularity, the influence of Valmiki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* has not been due to its ‘permanence’, but rather its flexibilities. Hundreds of variations blossomed across South and Southeast Asia for the past two and a half millennia, making the *Rāmāyaṇa* one of the most accessible texts in the history of literature. Known as the *Ramakien* in Thailand, the Rian Reamkerti in Cambodia and the *Phra Lak Phra Lam* to the Lao people, the text has inspired popular performance traditions and several schools of painters who worked on the canvases of royal halls and temple walls.¹

**William Noseworthy**

IN THE LATE 1960S, R.A. Olsson, one of the most renowned translators of the Thai *Ramakien* walked through the halls of Wat Pra Kao, in the royal palace in Bangkok. He marveled at the use of the magnificent paintings as prompts for parents orating the story to their children.¹ Today, visitors to Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Vientiane may be surprised by the remarkable similarities between the three royal palaces. All three palaces claim spiritual potency through the presence, historical or actual, of the famed Emerald Buddha relic, the presence of the localized version of the Rāmāyaṇa, and the palace space as the center of a new-cosmologically rooted mandala, pivoting at the localized version of the Rāmāyaṇa.

There were once at least three notable locations: Wat Bho in Siem Reap, the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh and Wat Phnom Preah Keo Morakot (Phnom Penh) at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh.² Known as the Wat Preah Keo Morakot (1903, 642x3m), Wat Phnom Del (Kampong Cham) and Wat Siouwath Ratanam (south Kandal) murals. Like Thai painters from the same period, he was famous for his European influenced treatment of vegetation and perspective. Although Thai influence on Oknha Top Nhim Pol Mak, would have been aware of the Thai equivalents that were created nearly a century earlier. Yet, he was so creative and influential that he was given due recognition through the establishment of his own ‘school’ of Cambodia’s painters.³ His three principal works were the Wat Preah Keo Morakot (1903, 642x3m), Wat Phnom Del (Kampong Cham) and Wat Siouwath Ratanam (south Kandal) murals. Like Thai painters from the same period, he was famous for his European influenced treatment of vegetation and perspective. Although Thai influence on Oknha Top Nhim Pol Mak has been acknowledged, he clearly had his own flare, preferring much brighter tones than most Thai murals from the same period.⁴ Therefore, his work is memorable to anyone who encounters it. Due to the tropical climate, lack of restoration funds and general neglect during decades of civil war that ravaged Cambodia from the mid to late twentieth century, the *Ramakien* murals fell into disrepair. As a ‘quick fix’ solution, some of the panels were removed and placed in storage. A Polish team began to restore the murals in the 1980s, during the closing years of the civil war. Yet ironically, as peace was declared in 1993, Polish funding for the project ran out.⁵ Furthermore, international aid at the time focused, necessarily, on abating the humanitarian crisis. Attention to the arts was barely given credence. Under-supported library staff, the decay of collections and the shutting of key works off to the National library and National Archives of Cambodia to save them, combined with a further lack of appropriate funding commitments by government ministries, have added to the decline of the Buddhist Institute; corners of the original site have even been redeveloped as a hotel and casino, appropriately named ‘Naga World’ (a Khmer reference to ‘the underworld’). Set against these realities, when wandering through the royal halls of Wat Preah Keo Morakot, visitors can begin to gain a sense of the intense cacophony of hybridity that gave birth to Oknha’s impressive works.

**Rian Reamkerti** and the many *Rāmāyaṇas* of Southeast Asia

The murals of the Rian Reamkerti, as well as readings of the *Ramakien* and the *Ramakien* versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, demonstrate a number of unique interpretations of Valmiki’s text. For example, in the Valmiki text, the half-monkey half-god Hanuman is a partial incarnation of Rudra Siva, protector and demon-dispeller. It is generally assumed that he ‘came from a bad family’, since being reborn as a monkey would have been a low rebirth. In the sub-continent (South Asia) the deification of Hanuman occurred only from the tenth century onwards.⁶ But in Cambodia the role of Hanuman is one of extremes. Hanuman’s karmic rebirth is even lower, and hence, his debt to the king Reem (Rāma), even greater. His tendency for promiscuity also makes him, along with the monkey king...
The dark tints of the Thai royal palace, constantly highlighted by an excess of gold, simply cannot compare to the soft, yet also, at times, vibrant pastels of the Khmer Royal Palace. While one is ominous and impressive, the other is warm and welcoming. These stark contrasts are of course by no means absolute, but rather points of comparison that may be used to provoke more detailed studies by historians, art historians, or even just enthusiasts. Perhaps, rather than ‘conclusions,’ these assertions simply provide lines of further inquiry into the role of the transnational epic in identity making. Encouraging further scholarly attention to these works, the history and the popular art of Cambodia, will continue to promote a greater understanding of the Rāmâyana among a global and scholarly public, as efforts continue in an attempt to restore the impermanent frescoes in Phnom Penh.

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Localization of the Rāmāyaṇa in mainland Southeast Asia

Sugih, a focal point of comedy in the epic, Hanuman is the unsung hero, dear friend of the noble Sita and loved even more by the audience than by Rama.6

Other Cambodian localizations include: the transformation of Agni’s steed from a ram, as it appears in south Indian versions, to a rhinoceros;6 the absence of the ‘death of Ravana’ sequence;7 and most notably, in the Rian Reamkerti Sita’s fidelity is not judged in a trial by fire.8 Hence, the Rian Reamkerti also contrasts strongly with renditions of the Thai Rāmāyaṇa such as Olsson9 and Tipaya10 translations, which not only feature a trial by fire, but also include this scene as only one element of a quite extended series of trials to test Sita’s fidelity. Meanwhile, in the Rian Reamkerti Sita becomes so furtive with Ream that she disappears into the netherworld, under the weight of his passion for her. Ream attempts to trick her by taking his own death, however, Sita discovers this. Hence both Ream and Hanuman are no longer in Sita’s favor as the king of the nether-realm gives her a home. Ream attempts to wear at lower positions. Wat Phnak Monivong (1993, Royal Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia). Photographed by author, 2014.


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References

Nineteenth century India was characterised by a plethora of pell-mell events that was to decide the fate of an empire where the 'sun never set'. Administrative cracks and fissures had come to the fore after the decline of the Mughal power in the eighteenth century where large tracts of north India lay outside state control evoking the famous epithet 'limited Raj.' Various exigencies both internal and external were weighing down on the metropole. Among others, it included the daunting socio-economic climate of the mother country and the pressure of accelerating 'moral and material progress' in her colonies through a new set of social and political policies.
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A DNT called the Nat

The Nat: criminalized past/prostituted present

In popular acceptation, the word nat means an actor and corresponds to a juggler or buffoon who performs sleight of hand and exhibits feats of agility, especially on tight ropes and trampolines. It corresponds to a juggler or buffoon who performs sleight of hand and exhibits feats of agility, especially on tight ropes and trampolines. The road that leads to the RLA has sprouted an array of hand and exhibits feats of agility, especially on tight ropes and trampolines. The road that leads to the RLA has sprouted an array of

Below: A young sex worker (probably trafficked from Nepal) with her daughter; she pays a nanny to care for her child while she is ‘at work’. Photo by Neewsha Tawakolian.

The Nat community in Forbesganj has been battling with abject poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and exclusion for a long time, and this has become their lived reality – their second skin. A major share of their earned money is spent on alcohol and gambling; the remaining sum is used to buy ‘boy girls’, so as to have a reserve supply of ‘sex slaves’ to boost income and display strength in the community. Financial matters are handled by the eldest male member in the family; males form the ‘leisure class’, resulting in the ‘maculisation of wealth’ and ‘feminisation of poverty’ among the Nat. Humiliation is a defining condition at an extreme level in the case of the Nat in Forbesganj. Money is earned through illicit means, such as trafficking, stealing and selling of new born babies from the adjoining RLA hospital; some are even purchased in village fairs, in circuses or theatres (peep show) at Dharamganj or during Koli Puja at the Mela grounds. It is interesting to note the use of pronouns and other social identifiers within the community: ‘us vs. them’; ‘insider vs. outsider’. The female members with Nat blood relationship are called mongts, and the males are referred to as ‘imposters’. Among women they prefer to address women as ‘nat’. Boys refer to as ‘by’. The non-Nat males, including the clientele, are referred to as ‘janago’. The notion of mongts and kajins, or ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ respectively, is important in the context of trafficking and domestic violence. Those who are blood members of the Nat community are not treated badly, and domestic violence that occurs is due to a female’s inability to bring in enough clients is minimal. On the other hand, since the kajins have been purchased, they are expected to deliver. Where mongts enjoy the security of family in times of sickness or old age, kajins become deadweight as they grow old and maintain no significance.

In common parlance, prostitutes are referred to as randi, and clients as patwari, to the lower strata of the society in terms of caste and caste, and are usually Muslims by faith. Clients vary greatly in age; they are either middle-aged and married, or else barefoot teenagers. Clients also come across from the border; these include military men from Nepal, or men from India who prefer ‘kinky’ or ‘unprotected sex’. A ‘casual’ client, such as a bumkin from the front of the thatched houses, serve as information kiosks where one can enquire about the arrival of new girls or fresh meat.

The health situation in the Nat community in Forbesganj is challenging as their complete neglect of hygiene and diet. It has become even more entangled due to alcohol consumption and the use of mild stimulants like paan (betel leaves with tobacco), gutka (a mix of crushed tobacco, betel nut, and other intoxicants), and tobacco. The Nat also consume hallucinogenic substances like ganja (cannabis or marijuana) and bhang (a mild preparation of marijuana made from young leaves and stems of the Indian hemp), or large doses of cheap but sedatives and pain killers in their numbers. In many cases, girls are drugged by family members to have sex with the clients. Terminally ill or frail children, and drunken prostitutes and men, are a common sight from outside the Nat community who have been trafficked from the Nat community in Forbesganj see a ray of hope in the crèche-cum-primary school run in the RLA by Apne Aap Women Worldwide, a Delhi based NGO, whose basic aim is to prevent child prostitution and child slavery.

Conclusion

The prefiguration of the Nat, from being Notified Criminals to Denotified Offenders has been laden with stigma, exclusion and humiliation. While the world debates the legalisation of the sex trade and battles over ‘respectful utterings’ in which to address women who are in the profession, the Nat community seems oblivious and far removed from all the clutter and clamour of modernity and ‘decency’ work. Their lives undergo several bouts of surreal moments every day and just like the exchange of shell necklaces and arm bands across Triborder Islands, women fall in the Nat community keep circulating in the Kula ring of the sex trade. The Nat in Forbesganj struggle with the triple jeopardy of caste, gender and prostitution, in addition to the burden of criminality, which hinders their search for better future prospects.

It remains to be seen whether the next generation of the Nat will inherit the same identity or have a renewed subjectivity.

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1. This article derives from my unpublished doctoral thesis, ‘Inheriting a Trade: A Study of Integrated Prostitution within a Community in Forbesganj, Bihar’, submitted in 2011 at The Centre for the Study of Contemporary India, Nehru University, New Delhi, India. I am indebted to Ms. Neewsha Tawakolian, a celebrated freelance photographer from Iran who took the pictures in the RLA. My sincere gratitude to the members of the Nat community in Forbesganj and Araria who shared their stories and food with me. I am grateful to Apne Aap Women Worldwide, a Delhi based NGO that works with the Nat community in the RLA and with which I was associated for a brief while.


Decoding a mysterious pavilion

It can easily be missed, driving along the scenic East Coast Road between Chennai and Pondicherry. An insignificant roadside structure, just six pillars deep and four wide, flat roofed and without walls (fig. 1). The brightly painted Ganesha shrine next to it is more likely to draw the attention. Right behind both constructions, that what is left of an artificial pond, a shallow depression which holds a little water after the rains. The road invites speed, and besides, passing travellers are unlikely to realise its significance from its simple appearance. This small mandapam, or pavilion, is actually a remarkable historical monument of astronomical events and of the close but little known relationships once existing between local authorities and Dutch VOC traders in the colonial period.

The pavilion

Even upon entering the open structure this significance does not become immediately apparent. We find the pillars are decorated with reliefs of an average quality depicting deities, people and symbols, including a few nice mathana, or erotic scenes. There is no spectacular art and a casual visit is not likely to generate much further interest. To realise the significance we have to look up, at the ceiling.

The general style of the construction and sculpture indicates it was built during the period of the Nayaka dynasty (16-17th centuries). It is structurally divided in a front porch and an inner area with a raised floor and is otherwise empty. The Ganesha temple is aligned to the east, facing towards the nearby coast just a few kilometres away. The orientation of the mandapam is not aligned with the cardinal directions, very uncommon for Hindu constructions. It faces slightly west from south, with a declination of 20° 9'.

The entrance would traditionally be the place where donors had themselves depicted as worshippers. Both the Indians and the Westerners portrayed show a large amount of individuality in dress and appearance. Even the two females can be easily distinguished on the bases of dress, hairstyle and jewellery. These donors have also been treated individually through their size (fig. 2). From left to right, the reliefs of the three Indian males and accompanying females become smaller in size and less well defined. Also on the basis of dress and attire it can be concluded that the couple on the pillar second from the SW corner must have been persons with the highest status here. On the next pillar to the right the couple is slightly smaller. The third Indian subject on the S/E corner pillar is smallest and least well defined. He is also unaccompanied by a female.

The donors

Portraiture is not very common among South Indian art, and the depiction of Westerners is actually very rare. Possibly because portraiture was mostly done as part of temple construction where the donors would be represented, sometimes in an almost abstract, general way. Only during the Nayaka period did the individual depiction of the kings and their wives and ministers as donors become a regular feature for temple construction. As can be seen for instance in the Bhuvaneshwara temple in Tirumushnam. It could be argued that the Westerners depicted could be generic. The situation and the individual features are arguments against this.

The conclusion would be that two Westerners were important participants in the construction of the pavilion, with its accompanying Ganesha temple and tank. Given the highest respect and honour through the inclusion of their portraits among the principal donors. Their dress exudes wealth and...
How astronomy brought together local dignitaries and foreign traders

status through the way they have been portrayed by the Indian sculptor. So who could they be?

The reason behind the construction of this pavilion makes this collaboration of even greater interest. Earlier I indicated that two gentlemen depicted were associated with Sadras, and were therefore VOC officials. On the pillars of the roadside mandapam we now find proof of extensive collaboration and interaction between the local population and authorities and the Dutch traders of the VOC.

Astronomical significance

The reliefs on the ceiling covering the three aisles of this pavilion unique is the inclusion of two Westerners among its significance together, in 2009. Raja Deekshithar passed away in 2010.


5 The discovery of this and other such pavilions and the astronomical significance of their reliefs has been discussed in 2009 and 2010 by Raja Deekshithar (1949-2010): http://tinyurl.com/myestrosnappal, http://tinyurl.com/myestrosnappal2


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1 Google Earth gives the coordinates 12°36’37.75”N 80°10’1.46”E.

2 Information shared with me by Raja Deekshithar, independent scholar and member of the hereditary community in charge of the Temple of Thirukallukundram, where they left their carved initials on the pillars and walls of a Palaiva Rock temple. As there were no other European settlements in this area, it is probable that the two gentlemen depicted were associated with Sadras, and were therefore VOC officials. On the pillars of the roadside mandapam we now find proof of extensive collaboration and interaction between the local population and authorities and the Dutch traders of the VOC.

Fig. 4: Westerner with cocked hat and sword.

Fig. 5: Serpent chasing the moon with the lunar hare depicted in outline.

Fig. 6: Lotus medallion with Indian Sphinx and Saint Kanappa.

Fig. 7: Bodiless Anura Rahi, the ascending lunar node, causing the solar eclipse.
Of Spices & Botany, Sanskrit & Bollywood

“What other people has written its history in its art?” wrote the nineteenth-century critic-politician Theophile Thore, about the Dutch. Quoting him, Simon Schama, in his Introduction to The Embarrassment of Riches, points out that “the quality of social document inherent in much of Dutch art does indeed make it an irresistible source for the cultural historian.”

If one has to tap that source, then the best place to visit is the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It is a veritable treasure-trove, housing more than two thousand Dutch masterpieces from the 17th century, the Dutch Golden Age. Some are more celebrated than others, making it into the popular museum ‘Guidebook’, whilst there are several that are neither acclaimed nor popular, yet which remain arresting nevertheless. Hendrik van Schuylenburg’s 1665 painting The Trading Post of the Dutch East India Company in Hooghly, Bengal, is one such example.

Hendrik van Schuylenburg’s 1665 painting The Trading Post of the Dutch East India Company in Hooghly, Bengal, is one such example.

VOC: point of first contact
Trade was what made Amsterdam great, and this canvas—which happens to be one of the biggest paintings in the museum—is but a small representative of the people and places that could make that possible, India being one of them. It is testamente to the maritime trade of the United Dutch East India Company, or VOC (Vereenigde Ost-Indische Compagnie), that was established in 1602, and encapsulates a very important chapter of the four centuries’ old-Indo-Dutch connection.

However, it was not only the Dutch who recorded their presence in India. Indian artists, too, shared in the enterprise. The Rajput painting Maharana Sangram Singh of Udaipur entertaining members of the Dutch East India Company led by Johan Jossé Ketelaar (c. 1711) is proof of that. Taken together, these pieces—one showing a coastal settlement, and the other a diplomatic meeting—illustrate important facets of the trade relationship between India and Holland in the 17th century.

India was one of the cornerstones in the all-Asia trading system that the VOC had developed during the 17th and 18th centuries. From here they exported pepper, cotton cloth, silk, opium and a host of other goods; and imported spices from the Moluccas, silver from Japan, and some European goods. Though this trading relationship with India did not evolve into a colonial relationship as was the case in Indonesia, it was undoubtedly important—especially along the coasts of the modern Indian federal states of Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. In Bengal, for instance, thousands of weavers depended upon the VOC demand for cotton and silk. In Kerala, the VOC played a significant role in the politics of the day; and in Goa, it established itself as the largest foreign trader at a time of stiff competition from other trading companies.

Company officials and cultural ties: Ketelaar, Drakenstein, and Haafner

The collapse of the VOC at the end of the eighteenth century marked the end of the formal Dutch presence in India. All that seemingly remained were factories, forts, churches, cemeteries and some garrisons. Seemingly, but not quite. For, though the relationship between India and the Netherlands started with trade, no doubt, it was later continued in other spheres. In fact, even at the time that the VOC was a strong presence in India, trade was not of that happened. As is so common in East-West encounters, trade actually became a starting point for eventual cultural ties. And this mostly happened through the conduit of Company officials.

In the case of the VOC in India, the first such figure was Johan Jossé Ketelaar (1659-1718) mentioned in the Rajput painting above. He was a native of Poland, and an envoy of the Dutch East India Company in India. But apart from being a diplomat, he was also a scholar, and is today chiefly remembered for writing the oldest Hindi grammar, in Dutch in 1688. Interestingly, his seminal work was never published, and was, until the 1930s, considered to have been lost. There are now only three surviving copies of the manuscript, of which one lies in the state archives of The Hague.

Ketelaar was the first in a line of very distinguished VOC officials who used their time in the Company to increase the knowledge of and understanding about the foreign lands in which they were stationed. After Ketelaar, Hendrik Adriaan van Rheede tot Drakenstein (1636-1691), a Utrecht nobleman, deserves special mention. As a VOC commander, Drakenstein compiled a series of books on the flora of Malabar (present federal State of Kerala), which were published between 1678-1703, under the title of Hortus Indicus Malabaricus. Controversi Regni Molubericus opus Indios celeberrimi omnis genera plantarum rariorum, usually referred to as just Hortus Malabaricus.

Hortus Malabaricus has become famous in the history of botany for various reasons—because of its ample size of twelve folio volumes, its detailed descriptions of plants, and its magnificently produced engravings; for the fascinating account of its genesis (which Drakenstein himself described in the preface to the third volume); but most importantly, for being one of Linnaeus’ main resources for his knowledge of the tropical flora of Asia. Drakenstein’s work was, and still is, consulted by taxonomists in their cultural studies of Linnaean species. Drakenstein is usually discussed alongside his contemporaries and fellow-servants of the Company: the Creol botanist Pau Hermann and the Ambon naturalist Georg Everhard Rumphius. The three men laid the foundations for Dutch knowledge of the tropical flora of Asia.

Quite contrary to Ketelaar and Drakenstein’s experiences as VOC officials, Jacob Gottfried Haafner (1755-1809), *witnessed the Dutch East India Company’s death agony and demise.* Haafner was German by birth, and quite early in life joined his surgeon father in the service of the VOC. While in India (in the 1780s and 90s) he served as a clerk of the Company, and later as a trader in Calcutta. He wrote prolifically during this time and produced a whole series of books about his adventures in late 18th century Malabar and Ceylon. During his lifetime, he published two travel stories on India, of which the two-volume Travels o’ a Poloquen is his key work. His biographer, Paul van der Veldt says: “His direct, catchy way of writing and his adventurous life made him one of the most popular writers of the beginning of the 19th century in Holland. His books remain attractive to this very day... because of its lively descriptions of everyday life in the tropics.”
Four centuries of Indo-Dutch connection

Jean Philippe Vogel (1871-1958) was an active archaeologist in India for more than 20 years. As the Art Historian Gerda Thesius-de Boer says in *A Vision of Splendour: Indian Heritage in the Photographs of Jean Philippe Vogel*, 1991:2, “If not for Vogel’s years at the A.S.I. ([Archaeological Survey of India](http://www.asi.nic.in)), the Kern Institute would never have been founded — it grew out of a wonderful Netherlands-India archaeological cross-fertilization.”

In the course of his 12 years at A.S.I. (1901-1912), Vogel had helped formulate the leading principles of monument care in India, been instrumental in increasing the number of monastic manuscripts in the subcontinent, and had contributed to a growing awareness of and appreciation for Indian heritage. Most importantly, he had excavated some of the main sites of Buddhism and Jainism and had carried on an in-depth epigraphical-archaeological study in Chamba.  

Back in the Netherlands, Vogel was fortunate to have access to Krom, who was the first director of the Archaeological Service of the Netherlands East Indies, and shared both Vogel’s passion for archaeology and vision about the institute they co-founded. In the initial years, both Vogel and Krom gave full priority to the acquisition of research material, and the Kern Institute in Amsterdam became a repository for books, manuscripts, lithographs, photographs and epigraphic rubbings. The acquisition of manuscripts for the Kern Institute started long before 1928, when Tibetanist and Indologist Johan van Manen added 380 manuscripts to the collection. Johan van Manen (1873-1943) had a strong India connection, having spent almost his lifetime in India — first in Madras and then Calcutta. In the words of his biographer, Peter Richardus, he was “a remarkable walk through life, which led from Dutch diaries to Hindu mysticism. Initially, it was theology that bridged this expatriate. In his youth, van Manen had become an active member of the theosophical movement, which introduced elements of both Hindism and Buddhism to the public in the West. As private secretary to Charles W. Leadbeater, the ideologist of modern theosophy, van Manen cut off for himself.”

He is the editor of the Society’s International Headquarters at Adyar near Madras, where he officiated for six years (1910-1916) as an Assistant Director of the Adyar Library. The next phase of his life in India started when he then settled in the Darjeeling District of Bengal in order to dedicate himself totally to Tibetology, in which he had developed a great interest, with the assistance of native tutors. Van Manen later moved to Calcutta, where he successfully held several important posts — first in the Imperial Library (1919-1921), then in the Indian Museum (1922), and finally, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, to which he was elected General Secretary in 1923 and served until 1939.

**Diplomatic relations since 1947**

From the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, the nature of the contact between India and the Netherlands had been primarily academic and cultural. However, diplomatic relations between the two countries entered a new era after India became independent in 1947. Their relations of six decades since then can be divided broadly into three periods: from 1947-62; the 1960s and 70s; and from the 1980s to the present time.

Indo-Dutch relations between 1947 and 1962 were generally distant and subdued. During this period both countries were busy recovering from their respective traumatic experiences. India, from the partition of the country and the Netherlands from the ravages of the Second World War; consolidating their economies and rebuilding their respective institutions. During this period, whenever India faced a natural calamity or any other emergency, the Dutch lent India generous and spontaneous support.

The next phase of the relations between the two countries started in 1962, when the Netherlands joined the ‘Aid India’ consortium of countries and India became the first, and in time, the largest recipient of development assistance. In the 1970s, the Dutch chose to concentrate on a few development projects, which were valuable for India and for which Dutch resources can contribute in a unique way. Reference. The Dutch development co-operation projects in the states of Gujarat and Kerala are noteworthy in this regard. In the 1980s, the Indo-Dutch relations witnessed a fruitful period and was characterized by a number of high profile visits between India and the Netherlands. The Dutch Prince Claus visited India in 1981; Mr. Ruud Lubbers, then Prime Minister of the Netherlands, visited the Netherlands in October 1985; Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and Prince Claus visited India in January 1986; Mr. Raul Lobbers, then Prime Minister of the Netherlands, paid a visit to India in March 1987; and then President of

Mr. Venkataraman, visited the Netherlands in October 1988. As a direct result of these and other intensive consultations, a number of important and important agreements were signed — and this, in turn, increased the interaction between the two countries substantially.

**Indians in the Netherlands**

Ever since the inception of diplomatic relations in the middle of the 19th century, there has been a substantial number of Indian immigrants from India. From 1950, an estimated 20,000 Indians have settled in the Netherlands. They are active in various professions and businesses — in the IT sector. In addition to the Indian population, there are about 150,000 persons of Indian origin who came to the Netherlands from Surinam, which was once a Dutch colony. The Netherlands is an active member in the Indian diaspora. Many Indians have settled in Surinam and have been a part of the Indian culture. In the Netherlands, there are, in fact, several institutes of Indian music and dance in the country. Indian food is also popular with the Dutch, attested by the fact that there are more than 100 Indian restaurants in the Netherlands.

In recent years, India has also become a popular tourist destination for Dutch people. India is a leading tourist culture in fact that has most captured the imagination in the last few years is Bollywood. In this, it no doubt reflects a global trend, but the hosting of the IFFA Awards in Amsterdam in 2005 was also a contributory factor in garnering greater interest in Hindi films.

The first decade of the new millennium, in fact, saw several new things happen on the Indo-Dutch cultural front. The Amsterdam Indian Cultural Festival was the largest celebration of Indian art and culture in Amsterdam, deserves special mention. It was followed soon after by the creation of ‘Indian Centre’ at the historic by the Indian embassy in the Netherlands, inaugurated the inauguration of the Gandhi Centre in The Hague in 2012 after a year-long commemoration of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore’s 150th birth anniversary in the country.

The Indo-Dutch connection has come a long way from the trading of spices and cloth in the 17th century. Their relationship has embraced a wide area of culture since then, and it is hoped that the two nations will continue to forge many more ways of understanding, exchange and cooperation in the future.

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5. An interesting IAAH Outreach Program in 2012 focused on the continuing relevance of the pioneering work:
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7. The latter initiative was funded by the Dutch Government.
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Japanese Brazilians traveling from Brazil to Japan constitute an interesting example of return migration, involving descendants of former Japanese migrants who belonged to a diaspora that was established in the past. Even after several generations the descendants’ identity is still primarily characterised by the preservation of elements that relate to their original Japanese heritage. Since 1990, following the reform of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in Japan, thousands of Japanese Brazilians were legally allowed to live and work in the country of their ancestors. In less than two decades, Japanese Brazilians became the third largest group of migrants in Japan, a status they would keep until 2007; the financial crisis of 2008 brought it to a halt. The drastic decline that followed shows that for the large majority of these return migrants the concept of ‘return’ has lost its significance.

Ingrid Van Rompuy-Bartels

The migration to Brazil

From 1908 until the beginning of the 1970s Brazil was an important destination for Japanese migrants, and became the country outside Japan with the highest number of Japanese descendants in the world. The Japanese migrants to Brazil has known different phases and different geographic concentrations. Many Japanese settled in the São Paulo province, and a smaller number settled at later stages in other region, such as Paraná, Mato Grosso, Rio de Janeiro, and Pará. (Fig. 1)

The migrants, mostly farmers, came to Brazil intending to stay for a short period of time, dreaming to go back to Japan with wealth. However, because of the difficulties they faced, slow returns on their agricultural investments, and the economic situation in Japan after losing World War II, the hope of return vanished for many Japanese. At the same time, a rising number of Nisei (second generation) succeeded in finding a way to settle in Brazil permanently and to adapt to Brazilian culture. In fact, among today’s second to fourth generations of descendants of Japanese immigrants, most are fluent only in Portuguese. Even though they still sustain ties that reflect their Japanese heritage, most are not familiar with the Japanese society and culture.

Return migration

The return migration to Japan started in the 1980s. Brazil was suffering a severe economic crisis, political instability and hyperinflation, while Japan was enjoying a strong economic growth, an abundance of wealth, and a rising demand for unskilled labor. As a result, the country saw an influx of illegal foreign workers. Japan’s politicians responded to this situation with a new policy in the 1980 revision of the Japanese Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. With this amendment the law gave government preference to ethnic return migration of the Nihonmata (descendants of Japanese who are born and raised outside Japan). The law made it possible for second and third generation Japanese Brazilians, and their non-nikkei spouses and children, to obtain legal status in Japan, allowing them to stay up to three years with unlimited access to labor markets and with the possibility to renew their visas. As a result Brazil, which had the largest number of Japanese immigrants and descendants overseas, started to see a dynamic inversion in the migration flows between the two countries.

The Japanese Brazilian migrants

For many Japanese Brazilians who migrated to Japan in 1990s, the motivation was based on a combination of factors, mostly related to the economic crisis in Brazil. This crisis affected the Japanese Brazilians belonging to the Brazilian middle and lower middle class; their standard of life decreased and their expectations of a future vanished, regardless of their level of education. The lack of better prospects in Brazil led to a situation of social and economic deprivation as well as estrangement, forcing people to leave the country and to find better opportunities elsewhere. Most migrants, when they embarked for Japan in the 1990s, were aware of the world and life situation that they were going to encounter as dekasegi (temporary workers) in Japan, about which they had been informed by their social network and intermediary agencies. Their decisions were based on the calculation that they would earn more doing manual work in Japan than if they would stay in Brazil continuing their studies or jobs. No wonder that, given the dire economic situation and political instability in Brazil, many Japanese Brazilians seized the opportunity to migrate.

The role of intermediary agencies

The Japanese Brazilians could rely on the intermediary agencies in Brazil to find temporary work and housing in Japan even before leaving the country. Once in Japan, most of them were contracted by the intermediary agencies, allowing Japanese firms to ‘indirectly’ recruit the migrants. The intermediary agencies support the migrants, and non-nikkei spouses, with work related issues and with problems arising in their daily lives in Japan, facilitating migrants to live and work in Japan without any command of the Japanese language. This indirect employment system has put the migrants in a vulnerable position allowing the Japanese firms to easily dismiss them as contract workers.

Despite the fact that most Japanese-Brazilian migrants had a short-term strategy when they first arrived in Japan, most of them, in particular those with families, did not succeed in earning the estimated amount of money in a short time, and to go back to Brazil. Due to their extended stay, many migrants started a family in Japan, thus creating a second generation of Japanese Brazilians born in Japan. Others became involved in a pendular movement between the two countries, returning to Brazil and coming back to Japan after a couple of years in Brazil.

The challenge of temporary migration

Migration means change. It affects the family structure and determines the future of successive generations of migrants. This is particularly the case when parents, who have a short-term strategy, are faced with the dilemma of choosing an education for their children. Japanese Brazilians have four options. One strategy is to send the children to a school in Brazil, where they are furthermore socially educated by family members, and thus become intimately familiar with the Brazilian language and culture. It appears that most of the parents who make this choice do not speak Japanese and do not intend to stay in Japan much longer. The other three options are situated inside Japan, namely, the Brazilian school, the Japanese public school, or no school at all. Despite the fact that the Brazilian schools in Japan are relatively expensive for the parents, not always easily accessible, and of doubtful quality due to their lack of resources, a number of parents do make this choice. Most of them are aware of this somewhat problematic situation, but they hold on to their dream of returning to Brazil and see their stay in Japan as temporary, while they continue to save money for their future in Brazil. Another reason why parents choose this option is that they feel their children cannot integrate well into the Japanese school system (see below).

However, most parents opt for the Japanese public schools, even if the children have already started their primary education in the Brazilian school system. The main reason for choosing the Japanese school system is the lower price and better quality, as well as the closer proximity to home. Some parents claim, however, that the decision for a Japanese school is related to the uncertainty about the future, as they still do not know whether the family will or will not stay in Japan. In the case of a future return to Brazil, they assume that their children will be able to adapt again to the Brazilian school system.

The difficulties of the second generation of migrants

The migrant children, some of whom started school at a late age, are at a disadvantage due to the absence of a basic familiarity with the Japanese language and culture. This shortcoming leads to problems such as alienation, marginalization and bullying, and, as a result, to a greater risk of dropout. Dropouts generally end up as the new generation of unskilled laborers in the factories.

Finding a solution for these problems requires looking inside the family context of these children as well as into the schools. It turns out that most of these parents are not able to offer the necessary assistance to their children in the Japanese school. The reasons are their busy work schedule, deficient linguistic skills, and lack of familiarity with the Japanese education. Moreover, the education of the second generation of Japanese-Brazilian migrants becomes even more complicated when parents turn out to have expectations that are not compatible with the reality of the children.

The parents expect the children to learn Japanese easily, as in their eyes they speak the language well. But they do not realize that speaking the Japanese language does not mean that the children have the same fluency in writing and reading. In the Japanese educational system, Japanese language proficiency is a challenge for the second generation of Japanese Brazilians. It has to be understood that the functional literacy that students should reach by high school corresponds to 2,136 characters (jōyō kanji). Part of the challenge is also the fact that Japanese schools are not well prepared to deal appropriately with the integration of children of Japanese-Brazilian migrants.

Return or circular migration?
The case of the Japanese Brazilians

It appears that the younger the children are when they enroll in the Japanese school, the better their chances are to integrate more fluidly than they will be in Japanese. However, differences in cultural baggage and appearance have a significant impact on the integration as well. It is to some extent the process of integration is less difficult for migrant children who do not have conflicts concerning their identity. These are the children who have a Japanese mother and a Japanese father who and who master the Japanese language as their mother tongue. The way these migrant children act indicates that the focus of their identity construction is the Japanese society. Most of these second-generation migrants deliberately transcend the cultural differences that are associated with Brazilian culture. Children of families with only one parent of Japanese descent and children with foreign names do not have this option. In response, they will develop a strong awareness that they are different from the Japanese and are gaijinku (foreigners). These children experience serious difficulties in their attempt to integrate into the Japanese school system. They are more likely to develop conflicts around their identity, mainly because of how they look and because of cultural differences.

It is still unclear how the future of this group of second-generation migrants will shape itself in Japan. Regardless of their outcomes, as long as a migrant is coming to a Japanese school does not guarantee future success or an effective learning process, since retaking a class after failure is not an option of finding a middle school. The future of these second-generation children will depend on how they develop their spoken language skills and, even more so, on their ability in writing and reading. Only when they fully master the language and can communicate sufficiently to compete with their Japanese peers.

Return or circular migrants

Migrants deploy different strategies that ultimately lead to either a permanent establishment in Japan or a decision to return temporarily or permanently to Brazil. A small proportion of Japanese-Brazilian migrants show clear signs of a more permanent residence in Japan, such as the purchase of their own house. These are the migrants who develop a certain degree of affinity with Japanese culture or who have been successful in adapting to life in Japan. They are the ones who have a positive perception of their life in Japan, even though most of them have remained in low-skilled jobs. They also have the expectation that Japan will offer better opportunities in the future for themselves and for their children. However, for the many families who have opted for the education of children in the Brazilian private schools or in schools in Brazil, or even for a couple of years in the Japanese school, it is still a temporary migration. Their going back and forth between Japan and Brazil is characteristic of circular migration.

The world crisis and the circular migration

The financial crisis of 2008 marked the end of the peak of Japanese-Brazilian migration to Japan. Prior to the crisis, the number of migrants from Brazil had increased from 56,429 in 1990 to 316,967 in 2007. Starting in 2008 it declined every year, to 177,216. The drastic decline involves a number of migrants who only had a short-term strategy anyway, but also includes Japanese Brazilians and their non-Nikkei spouses who felt compelled to go back to Brazil despite their intentions to permanently settle in Japan. Most of the temporary work in the manufacturing industry had been carried out by migrants contracted by intermediary agencies. Despite their structurally vulnerable position as temporary contract workers, employment opportunities were plentiful until the world crisis hit Japan in 2008. As a result of the crisis, they had no other option but to leave their jobs, and many intermediary agencies went bankrupt. Unexpectedly, many migrants found themselves in a desperate situation, as they lost their temporary (interim) agencies, their jobs, and the hope of a better future in Japan.

In response to the growing unemployment and problems among the migrants in Japan, the Japanese government worked out a plan for the Nikkei migrants and their non-Nikkei spouses who were willing to return to “their” country. According to this plan, each Japanese Brazilian adult receives 100,000 yen (approximately US$1300) and each non-Nikkei spouse and each dependent receives 200,000 yen (US$2500) for the purchase of a one-way ticket to Brazil. The migrants who accept this plan are not allowed to return to Japan, unless they receive explicit permission from the Japanese government.

Between April 2009 and 31 March 2010, just over 20 thousand migrants from Brazil accepted the financial compensation to leave Japan. Since the crisis hit Japan, an additional 12 thousand other second-generation migrants and non-Nikkei spouses have left the country voluntarily, without the aid of this plan.

Conclusion

The Japanese-Brazilian migrants constitute a heterogeneous group and the heterogeneity affects the diverse intrinsic motivations, and the many different factors that characterise their lives. For many Japanese Brazilians, migration is a temporary transnational experience. This is particularly the case for the migrant families who invest in Brazilian education for their children in Japan, families who indicate their intention to return to Brazil after their children graduate from Japanese school and reach adulthood, or families who send their children to Brazil for education. For many of these migrants the initial goal of their temporary migration has not changed, only the period of their stay has been extended, mainly due to their financial context and to the fact that they needed more time than anticipated to realise their plans.

The world financial crisis marked the end of the peak of the number of Japanese-Brazilian migrants and their non-Nikkei spouses in Japan. Since then, the wage difference between Japan and Brazil has become smaller. Moreover, high costs of life in Japan make it difficult to save extra money in Japan. Therefore, the motivation to prolong their stay in Japan disappears for many migrants (dekasegi) who came with the objective to accumulate capital and then migrate back to Brazil. Of those who have remained in Japan, a number have obtained a permanent contract, even when this means that they continue to be employed as unskilled factory workers. In their eyes, they have found a stable financial situation and life with their children in Japan, even though it may be at the cost to hear that many still plan to retire in Brazil. For others, the permanent contract has come to symbolize the dream of achieving a better life in Japan. The permanent contract allows the migrants to get a mortgage to buy their own house. With their savings of years of hard work, these families are able to leave their small rented apartments and realize the dream of home ownership in Japan. However, a significant number of Japanese Brazilians in Japan are still struggling in the search for a better life, wherever it may be, Japan or Brazil. Such cases remind us that the migration back and forth between the two countries can go on beyond the first generation of these migrants.

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7 Based on data collected during fieldwork done by the author between 2003-2010, as well as during visits to Japan in 2012 and 2014.

Fig 1: Japanese residents in Brazil 1920-2000 Source: IBGE, Censos Demográficos 1920(2001)2

Fig 2: Number of registered Brazilians in Japan 1988 - 2013 Source: Ministry of Justice of Japan

Including the Japanese-born naturalized in Brazil. Micro data from the respective censuses have been used since 1990. (i) Except dwellers of the Serra dos Aimorés area, a territory in dispute between the states of Minas Gerais andEspírito Santo. (ii) Data of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul for years 1970-2000 have been aggregated. In Resistance & Integração: 100 Years of Japanese Immigration in Brazil (2008).

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Protest and public space in Kuala Lumpur

“The Mansuh! Mansuh! Akta Hasutan!” (Repeal! Repeal! The Sedition Act!) chanted the lawyers marching towards the Parliament in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 16 October 2014. This protest, organised by the Bar Council, was one of the latest events since the 2007 Bersih rally kick-started a renewed protest culture in Malaysia. Most of these protests happened in the streets of Kuala Lumpur, even though since 1998, most government functions have moved twenty-five kilometres away to Putrajaya, a purpose-built administrative capital built in the heyday of the mega-projects of the 1990s. Despite this, the wide boulevards of Putrajaya remain relatively bereft of public claim-making acts, save for a few protests now and then.

The world’s first Intelligent Garden City

Political protests aimed clearly at particular authorities customarily take place where the authorities in question are. This is why protests take place in front of the White House or No. 10 Downing Street. In the Netherlands, which also has two ‘capitals’ like Malaysia, protests happen equally in The Hague, the seat of government and also in Amsterdam, the commercial capital, depending on the case. Not so in Malaysia, where Putrajaya hardly ever invites those wishing to demonstrate. In this instance, the case of Putrajaya is more similar to that of Brasilia, the capital Brazil designed and built from scratch. Protests in Brazil also happen mostly in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and not in the Modernist capital of Brasilia.

An instant city built over the span of ten years, Putrajaya prides itself as the world’s first Intelligent Garden City, claiming on its website that it advances Ebenezer Howard’s concept of the ‘garden city’. Just like Brasilia, Putrajaya is typically Modernist: the programs are separated accordingly in different precincts, and as an antidote to the notorious congestion of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya was planned with ease of driving (but not mass transit) in mind, hence a network of wide roads connecting the precincts. The centre of Putrajaya, a hundred metre wide boulevard, is lined with grand buildings which house ministries and government departments. A series of squares, or nodes, are placed intermittently along this strong axis, marking the importance of the Palace of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and finally the Prime Minister’s Office Complex, which is preceded by Dataran Putra (Putra Square). An overcrowded mall, away from the boulevard, becomes a focal point of convergence for those living in Putrajaya, and the public transport interchange is situated on the outskirts of the city, serving both Putrajaya and its equally desolate neighbour Cyberjaya, once envisioned to be Malaysia’s version of the Silicon Valley.

The difficulty to protest there, and the fact that Putrajaya claims to be an Intelligent City, brings us to the current debate of the Smart Cities concept, where the drive to be efficient should not turn us into an Orwellian society of high-tech surveillance to anticipate and avoid public disorder, however, does not apply to Putrajaya, which has managed to do it through town planning and with low-tech means.

Kuala Lumpur, the old capital

On the other hand, out-of-town protesters could take the night bus to Kuala Lumpur, arrive the next morning, do other activities while melting into the city crowd, attend the protest, get refreshments post-protest, and then take the night bus back to wherever they came from. Or they could stay in one of the many hotels in central KL. Thus, the organisers are free to focus all their attention on the running of the rally itself. This is all the more possible due to accessibility, the bus station is within the protest area, and central KL is well-served by rail and town buses; the mix of programs allowing for other activities before and after protest; the tight urban form allowing easy walking distance and the maze of backstreets for escape.

Kuala Lumpur grew organically from a mining town founded in the mid-19th century into the capital of Malaysia. The centre of activities in the early days was at the confluence of Gombak and Klang Rivers, and it was from these rivers banks the city grew. Its tight urban form was shaped by the fine-grained blocks of mixed-use shop-houses, and this was matched by the imposing British administrative buildings arranged around the Padang, a staid rectangular square, made all the more imposing due to the contrast with the narrow streets of old Kuala Lumpur. The Padang, renamed Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square), is one of the contested spaces of protest in Kuala Lumpur, along with other spaces of national importance such as Stadium Merdeka (Independence Stadium) and the Parliament, where the recent Sedition Act protest took place.

This is despite the speedy rate at which shopping malls have taken over as ‘public spaces’ (I am using the term very loosely here!) for people living in Malaysian main cities (on the ExpatgoMalaysia website you will find a list of top twenty shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur). In the controlled pseudo-urban environs of Publika, one of the newest shopping malls (it is on the list, you can even sample a slice of vibrant ‘public space’, albeit without the mess and friction you would get on a real street. But protest in a shopping mall, no matter how much it looks like your bog standard public space, is almost impossible due to the private nature of the place. In 2011, protesters who gathered in Suria KLCCE, the shopping mall at the base of the Petronas twin towers (once the world’s tallest building between 1998 and 2004, the towers are also part of the mega-projects of the 1990s) were met with threats of legal action by the management of the shopping mall, citing that the protest disrupted the business operations of their tenants. Ironically, the protest, called Kill the Bill, was about the Peaceful Assembly Act, which as the name suggests, regulates public gatherings in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, in addition to serving as the theatre of dissent for political protests, the urban spaces of old Kuala Lumpur continue to thrive as new immigrants use them as public spaces. The socio-spatial patterns of Kuala Lumpur have changed, and in doing so, it remains unchanged by delivering its historic functions of hosting new immigrants.

Public space, public life

Prior to protesting in front of the Parliament in October 2014, the lawyers had held a similar protest in Putrajaya in 2007. The busies carrying them were blocked by the police a few kilometres away from the centre, and as a result, the lawyers had to walk further to reach the Palace of Justice. Compare this to the 2014 event, the meeting place at Padang Merbuk was only one kilometre away from both the Parliament and the closest rail station, and the Bar Council office and many law firms are in this area. In Malaysia’s often scorching heat, this difference is crucial for a good turnout. During my fieldwork, I walked at the Masjid Jamek LRT (Light Rail Transit) Station at 10am, and joined the black and white throng heading towards Padang Merbuk. Shortly before 3pm, I took the LRT to Suria KLCCE, for another meeting.

Accessibility, mixed-use programs, and well-defined and comfortable urban spaces are also criteria that define a good public space, although the discourse on livability is normally framed in the perpetuity of everyday life; living, working, playing, and shopping. The notion that the ideal space for protest is the same ideal space for other urban activities, further cements the role of protest as an integral part of public life. One might argue about the effectiveness of treating protest as a day-outing, as those in Kuala Lumpur seem to do, but the point of a political protest is to broadcast grievances via disruption of the everyday, hence gaining the attention of the authorities in question, and also to instil awareness and hopefully gain support from those watching on the side. Being able to do this is part of public life, and as it also has the same spatial requirements of other urban activities, should be treated as such. The availability of high quality urban spaces, where public roles could be played, should take precedence over the proliferation of shopping malls. Perhaps by going to the streets to protest, the trend of substituting public space for shopping malls will start to reverse, and hence, the role of the public will change again from being consumers to citizens. Perhaps, the picturesque and ‘intelligent’ urban spaces of Putrajaya will also become actual public spaces.

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There are many myths about Myanmar that make it difficult for people to fully understand what is happening in the country, and what lays ahead. Through a mixed-method approach, Myanmar’s Transition, edited by Nick Cheesman, Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson, provides alternative ways to counterbalance some of the beliefs held about Myanmar.

Reviewed publication

This collection of essays features 7 thematic parts. In Parts I and 2, Monique Skidmore, Trevor Wilson and Thant Myint-U overview the historic transition in Myanmar, and outline the subsequent chapters. The next Part (chapters 3-6) covers the dynamics of Myanmar’s politics following the 2010 elections: Richard Horsey asks if it will be a revolution or an evolution? Nicholas Farrelly discusses ethnic armed conflicts; Marie Lall and Ha Hta Win look at the concept of citizenship, and Renaud EIgerneau explores Myanmar’s gem trade with China.

In Part IV (chapters 7-9), Khin Maung Nyin, Sean Turnell and Tin Htut Oo examine the different aspects of the economic landscape in Myanmar. Part V evaluates the role of the media in counter-corruption and explores the perspective of the weekly news journals in Myanmar. The next Part (chapters 12-14) re-examines the critical challenges facing the rule of law in Myanmar (i.e., the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Tribunal), especially corruption. Finally, Part VII (chapters 15-18) focuses on the challenges facing international assistance and stakeholders (e.g., INGOs and the EU) in Myanmar, such as limited access and funding.

Difficult to trace and control, for whoever aims to legally cut their activities” (p.105). In the case of the gem trade, it is increasingly based on transnational kinship networks, “with Myanmar and Chinese dealers having secured a quasi-monopoly” (p.107). Fourth, in Myanmar, evolution is more likely (and more preferable) than revolution, which has “a rather violent and unsuccessful history in Myanmar” (p.50). As Sean Turnell argues, the current change in Myanmar “does not yet constitute a reform moment” (p.152). In an evolutionary context, it will be more likely to establish a mechanism through which a vulnerable population could voice their needs. How to turn the present vicious cycle into a virtuous cycle? Urging the military elite or ethnic-based militias to abandon their vested interests would be no different than asking a tiger for its skin. Tin Htut Oo believes that it will be essential to turn to “an approach that coordinates public and private activities” (pp.167-168). In my view, this approach may refer to public-private partnership, i.e., the international community and Myanmar government should build a partnership with the private businesses operated by the military elites and their cronies. In the foreseeable future, no stakeholder could take over the role of the military-economic complex in Myanmar. I think the collection could give more attention to the impact of ethnic-based militias. Some militias have established their own parallel systems, such as ethnic-based administrative structure, websites, NGOs, schools and business. What tensions and interconnections exist between the system dominated by the Burmese and the ethnic-based system? If the editors and contributors would take this into account, their arguments and policy recommendations would be more inclusive. In short, as a well-documented collection, this book is timely enough to inspire scholars, students, and activists interested in Myanmar studies; it has provided a valuable addition to the literature on Myanmar, and has helpfully opened up more doors for future studies.

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Four books on Singapore

While Singapore is widely recognized as an incredible success story, the question of survival continues to be relevant to the policies and strategies it adopts as a city-state. Can Singapore Survive? is the fitting question Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, also poses on the cover of his latest book. “Can we survive as an independent city-state?” he wonders on the first page. In this article I will explore the implications of this question, and how it continues to guide the way Singapore reflects on itself, by engaging in three other recent publications on Singapore. What do these books reveal about the ‘Singapore story’ in terms of the country’s history, present and future?

The first of these publications is Rajesh Rai’s historical study Indians in Singapore, which covers the period of 1819-1945. Typically a history of arrival, departure and settlement its focus is on a ‘diaspora’ in the making, which would eventually become one of the four pillars on which modern-day multi-cultural Singapore firmly rests. This multidisciplinary study, however, has become considerably more complex in recent years with the arrival of an ever-increasing number of migrants. The second book, Immigration in Singapore (edited by Norman Vau and others), is in particular illuminating in this regard.

It discusses the impact that waves of migrants have had on the socio-cultural landscape of Singapore and the growing process of discontent. With respect to this, the third volume, Mobbing Gay Singapore, not only provides a detailed account of how LGBT rights have been negotiated, contested and pushed forward over time in Singapore, but also how through this a broader narrative emerges of the complexities of population management, socio-cultural sensibilities and Singapore’s quest for survival. As such, in the final section I will come back to the possible answers to Mahbubani’s question – Yes, No, and Maybe – and how all three are part of the same ongoing story.

The arrival of (Indian) migrants

For most of the colonial period migrants saw their stay in Singapore as temporary, as Rajesh Rai explains in the introduction of his book. “Toiling for years, often under arduous conditions, they held on to the glimmer of hope for a return to the warmth of their kith and kin, one day.” (p. 11) It seems that many did eventually return but a minority didn’t and it was here that the first seeds were planted of what would eventually grow into a sizable and highly visible Indian community. Rai’s study is basically the first to provide a comprehensive overview of Indian arrivals in Singapore and the subsequent formation of a local diaspora.

The first Indians to arrive on the island of Singapore were the lascars and sepoys of the 2nd Battalion 20th (Marine) Regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry who accompanied Raffles himself in 1819 (p. 3). These ‘Bengalis’ generally hailed from what is now modern Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and comprised mainly upper caste Hindus. However, Tamil Muslims from the Coromandel Coast had been active and influential in the Malay region as early as the fifteenth century and even occupied prominent positions in the Malacca Sultanate. As such they were in the vanguard when Raffles set foot on Singaporean soil (p. 8). Paris, who had already begun to venture to the Chinese coast from the mid-18th century onwards, exporting cotton and opium (p. 10), started to arrive on the scene during this period as well. And so did Nattukottai Chettiar, a merchant class initially involved in the salt trade and later also in cotton, pear and rice. It was in particular through money lending schemes that the “Chettiar” were able to amass considerable fortunes, something that also enabled them to make a more lasting imprint on Singapore’s cultural landscape through the building of temples such as the Thendayuthapani temple located on Tank Road. During the annually held festival of Thaipusam, the ‘Chettiar temple’, as it is locally also referred to, continues to mark the destination for devotees who have taken part in the four kilometre long procession from the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple in Little India. Piercing their bodies with spikes and carrying or dragging so-called kavadis adorned with images of Goddess Parvati and Lord Murugam, the devotees pay tribute to the spear (vel, also symbolic for ‘knowledge’) with which Goddess Parvati attributed her ‘son’ Lord Murugam and which allowed him to slay the demon Soorapadman, and as a result riding the world of evil.

Rajesh Rai’s well-researched study of how the idea of an ‘Indian community’ developed over time is not just revealing for the imprint it left on Singapore’s geographical setup, but also how it impacted the country’s socio-cultural make-up. His narration takes us past such staging posts as Singapore’s history as a penal colony (Indian convicts rarely exercised the option to return to India after completing their sentences); the employment of Indians in labour-intensive jobs by the Singapore harbour and river; the (initially unregulated) arrival of indentured labourers on the scene; and also the shift in attitudes to and heightened suspicion of Indians in Singapore after India’s first war of independence in 1857 (and the growing preference for Sikhs men for the maintenance of law and order in the colony), the concerns over Indian involvement in various
Tan argues that “there is limited appeal to the affective (aging population, low fertility rates, global competitiveness), on ‘material and pragmatic’ explanations for the policies country’s immigration policies. While the focus is largely Singapore’s population further can be explained by, as Eugene own ‘national’ language: Chinese, English, Tamil and Bahasa of Singapore (a carefully managed mix of four ethnically diverse building efforts (p. 10). As such, the influx of new migrants has force does not always agree with the country’s nation-state history with immigration, a ‘global city’ narrative is never a migration society all over again, referring to the fact that outfits’ that are directly influenced by political developments within the Subcontinent itself (p. 167). The influx of lower caste and Adi Dravidas laborers further adds to this as they lay bare caste divisions.

In the final section of Indians in Singapore Rajaih T. to the Japanese Occupation, a three year period during which Singapore became the nerve centre for the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia. In those three years Singapore played host to the Indian Independence and the arm of the Movement, and the Indian National Army, its military wing. Mid-1943 this would also bring the renowned Indian nationalist领袖, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, to Singapore. The end of the three potential forces 1945 marked the start of a ten-year period during which Singapore moved to partial internal self-governance. Independent Malaysia, the protectorate of Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak, grudgingly also welcomed Singapore on-board when it was formed on 16 September 1963. However, an unstable arrangement from the start, Singapore was expulsed less than two years later and had to face the reality of being an independent nation.

Migration society and national identity

Immigration in Singapore, the edited volume by Norman Voo, Yap Su Yin & Chan Wen Ling is an important insight into how Singapore subsequently developed post-1965, particularly with respect to its population strategy. Initially faced with high unemployment and a lack of new job opportunities across the People’s Action Party (PAP), under the leadership of its first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, embarked on an ambitious program to address these issues. With demand for labour quickly growing, the initially strict immigration rules – implemented to reinforce the idea of an independent and sovereign state – were relaxed and in the subsequent decades the arrival of an ever-increasing stream of newcomers became key to the country’s economic growth. Now firmly recognized as one of the greatest economic success stories, Singapore is also frequently described as a global city, open and competitive economy, one of the world’s richest nations, and one that ranks in the top of various quality of living indexes. With estimated population of approximately four thousand Singaporeans who joined a protest held at Hong Lim Park in 2017 the protests for the past, which various contributors in Immigration in Singapore also refer to, was the recently released ‘White Paper on Population’ in which the government proposed to increase the country’s population from 5.3 to 6.9 million by 2030.1 Citing concerns over an aging population and declining fertility rates, the Paper was widely understood as a plan to further increase the influx of new immigrants.

The introduction to Immigration in Singapore opens with a quote from the former Minister for Trade and Industry, George Yeo (2000), which argues that Singapore has become a migration society and that the fact that not only one in four marriages in Singapore is to a foreigner, but also that for every two babies every one permanent resident is welcomed (p. 8). In discussing Singapore’s ongoing history with immigration, a ‘global city’ narrative is never far away. Yet as the first contributions in the volume also make clear, Singapore’s ambitions of becoming and maintaining its position as a global labour force does not always agree with the country’s nation-state building efforts (p. 10). As such, the influx of new migrants has considerably impacted the makeup of Singapore (a carefully managed mix of four ethnically diverse groups – Chinese, Eurasian, Indian and Malay – each with their own ‘national’ language: Chinese, English, Tamil and Bahasa Malay). It seems that part of the opposition to increasing Singapore’s population further can be explained by, as Eugene K.B. Tan argues, a lack of ‘affectional connection’ with the country’s immigration policies. While the focus is largely on ‘material and pragmatic’ explanations for the policies (aging population, low fertility rates), Tan argues that “there is limited appeal to the affective dimension that a contested major public policy like immigration is so badly in need of.” In Singapore’s national state building efforts, which have fostered a growing sense of national identity and belonging, plays a part in this as well. Signs bringing slogans such as “Singapore for Singaporeans” and “I’m Miss Singapore” indicate the relationship with the national identity, which newcomers may not necessarily share. In this chapter, Bhik Singh unpacks the politics of immigration with respect to both official (PAP) policy and opposition received. It confirms the influx of an increasing number of Singaporeans appear to feel threatened by the policies implemented (p. 74) and that the suffrage of the integration related issues. Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho’s chapter makes this particularly ‘visible’ by discussing how this plays out in Singapore’s so-called Heartlands. Ho raises the question how migration impacts the cultural landscape and social complexity features of urban landscapes are called forth to impact upon other social relations and processes (p. 116). As such, she offers a starting point that within the context of the Heartlands, spatial proximity fails to promote meaningful social interaction and fosters social tension (p. 115). Ho’s focus is particularly rewarding as it regards the often-overlooked middle classes and local who are ‘locked-in’ between the realities and narratives of low- and highly-skilled migration, each category coming with its own concomitant associations and expectations. It is here that we realize how much Singapore’s multicultural landscape has changed. No longer is the divide simply one of Bangladeshi and Tamil migrant workers (remittance economy) and the ‘local’ (the one on the hand), and highly-skilled ‘expat’ professionals from Western nations on the other. In a historical survival of many PKR Chinese, Indians, and also those from Western nations competing with local Singaporeans for mid-level skilled jobs is clearly impacting dynamics between locals and newcomers. In the discussion that frames this contribution the Heartland has come to stand for the ordinary Singaporean of everyday, the embodied codification of which is represented by Singapore as a place that is actively seeking out to bring in ‘global talent’ (p. 124).

Pragmatic resistance in a ‘global’ city

The site of the 2013 protests over the White Paper, Hong Lim Park, is also the location for the annually held Pink Dot, which raises awareness for LGBT-related issues in Singapore. Lynnette J. Chu’s account of Mobilizing Gay Singapore not only provides a fascinating account of how LGBT-activism and politics have developed in Singapore over time, but in more general terms also includes an analysis of how the issue of opposition and dissent are mediated within terms is also revealing in terms of how Singapore likes to celebrate its own success-story on the other. As much as Singapore appears to be a unique case in terms of its size and position, other highly-developed nations appear to face comparative issues. Singapore’s issues with its limited space, scarce resources, dependence on migrants and those that emerge from increasing population density and multicultural complexities, are not only comparable to issues that other city-states such as Hong Kong or Dubai face, but also, for instance, much larger countries such as Australia and Canada. In that sense, it would be a mistake to simply read Singapore’s opposition as a product of one of its unique socio-political setup, small size and short history. Singapore turns fifty this year. But even if this year’s celebrations acknowledge Singapore’s fifty years as an independent nation, four years from now it is likely the city will pay attention to the fact that Raffles arrived on its shore two hundred years ago. Meanwhile the National Museum has recently opened an exhibition that provides an overview of 700 years of Singapore’s ‘history.’ Taking such ‘temporal’ matters into account reminds us of the fact that although Singapore is a relatively young nation, its recent history is connected to, as well as the product of, a much longer and more complex story. As one of the world’s leading ‘global cities’ there is no doubt that Singapore’s national identity will continue to provide fertile ground for future research in terms of how it negotiates and engages with globalizing influences and local realities.

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1 In response to the protests the Singapore Government now argues that it does not see the number of protestors as a target per se and will again review the situation in 2020.
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The line of lights, with a distinctly orange hue, snakes from north to south. It appears to be more continuous and brighter than most highways in the view. This is the fenced and floodlit border zone between India (to the left of the line) and Pakistan (to the right). The fence is designed to discourage smuggling and arms trafficking. A similar fenced zone separates India's eastern border from Bangladesh.

Philosopher Georg Simmel uses ‘the door’ as a powerful metaphor of conscious borders. The door is an active boundary, for it can be closed and opened at will. While the closure of the door reinforces the feeling of separation, the fact that it can be opened symbolizes the freedom to transcend boundaries. The closed door quality of borders is most apparent in disputed territories and frontier conflict zones, where military structures and technologies of surveillance, such as border fences and security cameras, materially reorder space as well as reify the border in people’s minds and lives through psycho-sociological processes.

Swarajyoti Gohain
This Focus of The Newsletter looks at militarized border regions in Asia. Militarized borderlands are distinguished from militarization in that the latter is a process and condition in which the state justifies the presence and command of military troops as an insurance against foreign territorial threats, illegal immigration, illicit flows of arms and drugs or internal dissent from local militias. Militarized borderlands are those borders or national peripheries, where militarization has become a permanent feature. Here we examine how people living in militarized borderlands negotiate every day life, their fears, insecurities, and strategies of accommodation and acceptance, as well as their imaginations and aspirations for transformation.

Militarization without immediate threat

Often, when we speak of militarization, we assume that it is a natural process of securitization, and is somehow independent of political interest. That is, militarization is perceived to be a natural consequence for societies at war, internal or external. However, to recapitalize Michel Foucault’s argument: sovereignty, discipline and security are different economies of power that are exercised over different types of spaces with the intent of maximizing efficient state control. That is why militarization can exist even when there are no external or internal security threats.

For example, US militarization was justified in the post-Cold War period by moving the military into areas once considered civilian functions. By expanding the frontiers of military intervention and deploying military troops in evacuation operations, disaster relief, famine relief and such activities, the military and its industries were saved from decimation. Tisaranee Gunasekara shows how similar militarization in Sri Lanka today has enabled routine violence by military and paramilitary forces to become a natural consequence for societies at war, internal or external. Our focus on militarized borders reminds us that while militarization is more than the aggregation of military forces in a territory. It is a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimize the use of force and the organization of a large standing army. It has powerful spatial and ideological effects, changing the visual landscape, the language and social norms, and the local and global economy.

Militarization is characterized as a border effect that counters the state effect (of surveillance, incursions of state machinery, such as the military, or through semiotic codes disseminated by selected images, memories, and metaphors). Baun and van Schendel argue that border spaces acquire their character from the triangular interactions of state, regional elite and local people. Border dynamics are affected by networks that lie on the other side too, so that the border becomes the intersecting zone between a ‘double triangle’. What, then, are the kind of dynamics produced in militarized border zones, where state control is much stronger, and where the role of local people and regional elite – the other two points of the triad – diminishes considerably? How does the state take a pro-active stance in dispossessing relations with the national Other through surveillance and cultural politics?

The six papers in this Focus show that in militarized borderlands, the split between the two sides of the border occasions certain spatial and social practices that constitute different kinds of adaptation strategies. Borderland strategies rest on ‘defence and accommodation’ where border people both accept the conditions of bordered, restricted existence, and creatively seek to defy/brother the border for economic and commercial gain, often through the complicity of border guards.

Several scholars have attempted to understand border lives in militarized zones. Smadar Lavie’s work among the Mzenie of South Sinai is a classic study of a border region under occupation that had to shed previous elements of social life in order to adapt to life under two hostile nations. In the Arab-Israeli conflict in the twentieth century, the South Sinai was a ‘political football tossed at least five times between Egypt and Israel’. The Mzenie Bedouins of South Sinai could not maintain an independent Bedouin identity, because they were disenfranchised on their own land by continual military occupations, and could only perform their nomadic Bedouin identity allegorically, “for Mzenie to openly confront any armed or unarmed occupier could mean beatings, jail, even death.” In today’s Palestine, protest poetry is often the explosive release from oppressive conditions of military occupation. The Focus papers continue the engagement with militarized borders by looking both at state efforts to govern borderlands through military settlement as well as the strategies of accommodation or expressions of defiance devised by border people to deal with militarization.
This Focus
The paper by Horstmann and Cole describes the tangible and very poignant effects of the militarized Thai-Burmese border on the Karen civilians trapped in between. The most telling, and chilling, evidence of hyper-militarization is the proliferation of prosthetic limbs; everyday villagers are confronted with the dangers of the ‘killing minesfields’ where state military and rebel military wage battle. Escape remains a dream as even those who manage to cross over to the Thai side remain caught between the two warring armies.

Ankur Datta, discussing the Kashmir border, shows how militarization has far-reaching effects. He describes the border almost as if it has a radiating aura, expanding its sphere of influence and casting its shadow over a people who have been displaced far away from the zone of army occupation. The border is embodied in these people, and even as they move away and into non-militarized zones, they carry with them the traces, fears and insecurities of militarized existences for “the border came alive for them in terms of sightings and accounts of the movement of ‘unknown men’ with weapons”.

A different kind of embodiment is highlighted by Malini Sur in her discussion of the India-Bangladesh border, described as a ‘killer border’ by Willem Van Schendel, because of the frequent killings by security forces, of civilians trying to cross this border. Retrieving the story of Felani—a young woman shot by border guards as she was crossing into Bangladesh from India—from amidst the faceless statistics of undocumented migrants, Sur shows how studies of the border must take into account the lives of those who straddle divided worlds, and who, in negotiating and crossing these boundary divisions on an everyday basis “for trade, to shop or to maintain kinship ties”, physically encounter the violence that is the border. In embodying the border divisions, enforced by state security apparatuses, they are ‘divided bodies’.

Duncan McDui Ra’s article shows how geographical mobility is often the chosen strategy for the beleaguered inhabitants of Manipur on India’s Northeast frontier. For these people, acquiring a mainstream education becomes an unlikely ally — unlikely, because the military also represents the mainstream state. On the surface, one may not perceive the boom in private schools in Manipur, excellently detailed by McDui Ra, as a border effect. But gaining a mainstream education, supplied by private schools at a time when public schools have failed to deliver, is often the straw that people will clutch at, in order to escape conditions of entrapment.

Gohain and Groothem’s paper focuses on culturally Tibetan Buddhist regions in Arunachal Pradesh in India, bordering China, the subject of a protracted Sino-Indian border dispute for more than half a century now. They show how military settlements, as well as practices of renaming local place-names, map these areas as Indian territory, while marking them as discontinuous with cross-border circuits. But the state effect here, as elsewhere, is not a totalizing project, as defiance emerges in surprising ways.

Shishirukha’s article has a different cast. He shows how on the military island base of Ogasawara, people creatively defy the state appropriation of the border and injunctions on cross-border settlement by fusing musical practices divided by history and territory. Hybridity is not metaphorical but a lived experience here.

The papers show how strategies of adaptation can range from the poetic to the practical. In trying to find ways to attenuate existences circumcised by military occupation, borderlanders may opt for physical flight, or propose counter-narratives through poetry and music, yet they do not always find the refuge they seek.

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Below: Virgin Mary above a Karen refugee camp along the border with Myanmar. The Karens were converted to Christianity in Myanmar and have fled to escape the current regime. Mac Hong Song photograph, Thailand. Image reproduced under a creative commons license, courtesy of Alex Wright on Flickr.

References
6. In April 2015, the Indian government extended the AFSPA to Arunachal Pradesh (Northeast India) citing political unrest in the eastern parts of the state. This has been opposed by several sections of the public and political leaders who protested the unilateral imposition of the act in a region which is relatively peaceful. This action on the part of the Indian government is increasingly seen as an attempt to better monitor a border region that is also claimed by China. ‘India extends AFSPA in Arunachal Pradesh’, Reuters, 8 April 2015: http://tinyurl.com/arunachal-afsp; see also ‘Arunachal complaints that it was not even consulted on AFSPA notification’, Scroll.in, 11 April 2015: http://tinyurl.com/arunachal-complaints - both accessed 11 April 2015
10. Ibid note 4: p.723
11. http://tinyurl.com/afsp-intro
20. Ibid note 12
22. Ibid Lai, p.6
23. Ibid Lai, p.7
State violence, state building

Militarized borderlands come into being through a plethora of social, political, and economic processes. We see the borders of Europe, Australia and the US being militarized in response to the perceived threat of illegal immigrants. In Asia, too, we find a wealth of examples of militarized borders, yet these often emerge through different processes. In many cases the borderlands between two or more Asian countries become militarized where borderlines are highly contested such as the India-Pakistan border, the Korean peninsula or the sea border between China and Taiwan. In other instances, through the expansionist ambitions of the state violence, state building.

MILITARIZATION regularly follows violent armed conflict, which is exactly what occurred at Burma’s southeastern border when some elements of the Karen nationalist movement, the largest minority group residing here, took up arms in reaction to growing tensions with the emerging Burmese state. The state retaliated through a series of brutal massacres of the villagers which at one time controlled large tracts of land adjacent to the Thai border that it called ‘sensitive zones’. After a decade of instability the state of Burma came under a military regime in 1962 after a coup led by influential military general Ne Win. The new junta invested heavily in the military leaving little in state violence, state building. and community leaders either fought on the KNLA side or organized themselves into NGOs and benefitted from Western donors who supported them to the Thai border. Villagers also regularly participated in the emerging community based organizations that crossed the border illegally to provide assistance to the wounded and displaced. Their humanitarian engagement was impressive, organizing emergency healthcare and mobile schools for displaced Karen. As civil society organizations came under Tatmadaw surveillance and harassment, it was mainly Karen Buddhist monasteries that provided sanctuary for displaced villagers. Local missionaries also risked their lives by staying in villages as local development volunteers, engaging in teaching, medical assistance and rural development.

The perpetuating war slowly worked its way into people’s everyday lives, spawning militarization in Karen society. The KNLA and the many other factions and Karen militias in addition to the Tatmadaw. The increasing militarization and violence, together with the heavy taxation levied on villagers, caused a humanitarian and food crisis. It pushed people away from their homes and across the border into the Thai refugee camps.

When the first wave of refugees came over to Thailand they succeeded in bringing their communities largely intact. The strong local security networks and a high degree of cohesion and social organization that characterized most Karen communities allowed for the smooth day-to-day administration of the refugee camps and for little interference from Thai authorities. However, as the war went on, the KNLA established a growing presence in these camps. While partnering with international humanitarian organizations that provided vital material support, the KNLA largely controlled the camp population and recruited widely from the refugee households. Young boys disappearing from the camps became a regular phenomenon.

With greater state suppression of the Karen nationalist movement inside Burma, the process of the militarization of the camps in Thailand was exacerbated; increasingly more KNLA offensives were staged from within Thailand. Largely in reaction to this, between 1995 and 1998, both Tatmadaw and DKBA offensives were staged from within Thailand. Moreover, as is often the fate of militarized and violent borderlands, the population became squeezed between different armies. These factors, along with strong internal conflicts and tensions, led many Buddhist soldiers and monks to feel excommunicated from the predominantly Christian KNLA and thus they began to form a splinter group, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). The emerging DKBA quickly allied with the Tatmadaw, sounding the death knell for the already greatly weakened KNLA. From this point on, the civil population of the borderlands was forced to feed and provide taxes and free labor to an ever-growing multitude of armed factions and Karen militias in addition to the Tatmadaw. The increasing militarization and violence, together with the heavy taxation levied on villagers, caused a humanitarian and food crisis. It pushed people away from their homes and across the border into the Thai refugee camps.

In the 1970s, the military regime redoubled the militarization of these borderlands and launched its ‘four-cuts’ counter-insurgency strategy. This involved the forced relocation of huge numbers of Karen villages (effectively camps) into areas under the sphere of Tatmadaw control, known as ‘white zones’. The intention was to cut off support from the villagers to the largest non-government armed group, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). This mass relocation was conducted by serving villagers with relocation notices, before bombarding their villages with mortars, then burning down their homes and fields and littering the ground with landmines to prohibit their return. Those relocated to white zones, already greatly weakened by being unable to return to their farmlands to grow food, were subjected to heavy taxation and conscription for infrastructural services and recruited as porters to carry arms and to guide Tatmadaw troops safely through areas with high concentrations of KNLA troops and mines. Such coercive measures increased the suffering of the villagers to an undeniable degree. These offensives were, however, launched solely in the dry season, with the Tatmadaw troops retreating again every wet season. The villagers reacted to this arbitrary violence by escaping into the forests and higher altitudes, hiding rice-barns or fleeing over the border to Thailand. Many of the villagers and their livestock who stubbornly continued to use mines on the Tatmadaw but also on the non-state armies and villagers themselves who stubbornly continue to use mines on the grounds of self-protection. Landmine contamination is a major hazard in these borderlands and contributes to the general sense of insecurity and fear. Landmines are often seen as cheap soldiers, the poor man’s weapon; yet their victims are predominantly refugees and their livestock who regularly stumble on their ‘own’ landmines. The main objective of landmines is not so much to kill as to mutilate and cause disabilities; the idea is that an injured soldier is more of a burden for an army than a dead one. Moreover, whereas the improved devices deployed by the KNLA rarely end in a sea of death, the Chinese manufactured mines laid by the Tatmadaw and its allies can remain

Alexander Horstmann and Tomas Cole

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Civilian responses among the Karen of southeast Burma

How then can we understand the continued militarization of the borders between Burma and Thailand three years on from the ceasefire of Decha Tangeeja which prompted the Karen national movement presented, and continues to present “a threat to the territorial integrity of both Thailand and Burma” as well as to their “imagined communities.” From here it follows that the militarization of these borders is a strategy enacted by these states to tame this threat by placing the people residing here in “states of exception,” placed “beyond the law” — repeatedly demonstrating this with acts of state terror and economic exploitation. As Gergio Agamben argues, the ability to exclude certain lives from the sphere of law is the “hidden foundation of sovereignty” that substantiates the very power and territorial claims of the state. Moreover, as James C. Scott has argued, militarized zones often function as a “buffer zone” that mediate the relationship between two states. In this light, the Burmese government’s strategy of appeasing the different military factions and the Thai government’s strategy, until recently, of oblique support to the KNU, both politically and financially, which perpetrates the militarization of this area can be seen as a form of state building. The continued militarization of the southeastern Burmese border acts to simultaneously demonstrate the Burmese state’s ability as a sovereign to place certain lives in “states of exception” and to maintain a “buffer zone” that provides protection from Thai aggression. To this end, the Karen militias appear to have entered a kind of Faustian deal and impasse with the Burmese and Thai governments in which they are permitted a certain degree of self-governance on the grounds that they continue to figure as exceptions to state control, subject to state violence that substantiates its territorial claims.

Civilian responses and migrant imaginations in states of war

For the civilian women and men living in zones of chronic militarization and conflict, life has to go on. People somehow have to develop strategies to live with the war and to navigate therein. Those that can, continue to grow rice, while many others take up jobs as day laborers or forage the steadily depleting forests for bamboo and other jungle products to earn money to buy food and to rebuild their shelters. Many find it imperative to scrape enough money together to continue attending Buddhist rituals and preparing marriage ceremonies and funerals as a way of staying sane and holding the social fabric of society intact.

Migration has become a major strategy to access sources of livelihood that can no longer be generated at home. This strategy is especially prevalent among young people who traverse the borders in search of jobs in factories and as maids in Bangkok and other towns of Thailand. Moreover, the zone adjacent to Thailand has become a Thai currency zone, where it is common to pay with Thai baht rather than with the Burmese kyat. This has led to parallel levels of internal migration, where droves of both disenfranchised young Karen and Burmese flock to the former outlets of the ethnolinguistic movement on the border in search of work that will earn them Thai baht instead of the Burmese kyat. However, unless they otherwise could neither obtain nor afford. Through these translocal entanglements young Karen have become used to Thai TV and are literate in the Thai language. Many leave their young children with their parents and other siblings in search of work in Thailand or in the booming Burmese towns in the Thai currency zone. For young migrant refugees an important resource, spiritually as much as materially, and plays a key role in their itinerary. Migrants and refugees often depend on religious networks to support them in their new places of residence to procure jobs, lodgings, and a community.

Militarization of borders as state building

Despite a ceasefire being signed between all non-government armed groups (NCAG) and the Burmese state in 2012, a sustainable peace treaty has yet to be agreed upon at the time of writing. Conflict and the threat thereof continue to linger constantly on the horizon. As a consequence, militias persist, and thus, continue the need to feed their soldiers and provide them with some form of violence in order to maintain their loyalty. Fighting in the Karen borders has become a mode of livelihood and the war is profitable for many, allowing for gains in status, power and money, placing many militias in fierce competition for the control of territory. Earlier the KNU/NLNA financed its war through the extraction of natural resources, especially teak logging, giving away large concessions to Thai logging companies, such that whole areas became deforested. Following this, one of the most important forest reserves in mainland Southeast Asia and greater Himalaya has become depleted. These deforested mountain strands have been replanted with rubber plantations that, while being of little help to the environment, are an important source of income for warlords. The Burmese state’s strategy for appeasing the different military factions is giving them business concessions and turning a blind eye to their black market economy and the role that translocal entanglements with the international community, humanitarian organizations, and diaspora play in the reconstruction process. Some of the most pertinent questions in relation to this include the repatriation in regard to the eventual closure of the eleven refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border and the vast numbers of Karen diaspora being around the world, the question of transitional justice, and crucially, the question of ownership of the peace process. The state-led peace-building initiative, the Myanmar Peace Center, supported by the Norwegian government, somewhat naively aims to integrate unarmed and powerless communities into the peace process, raising the question of how far the communities are able to put pressure on the different armed factions.

Conclusion

In this piece, we have explored issues that look into the continuous presence of military forces, both from the Burmese governmental armed forces as well as the increasingly powerful Karen militia after the ceasefire. Our questions concern the slow recovery of the civil population and the role that translocal entanglements with the international community, humanitarian organizations, and diaspora play in the reconstruction process. Some of the most pertinent questions in relation to this include the repatriation in regard to the eventual closure of the eleven refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border and the vast numbers of Karen diaspora being around the world, the question of transitional justice, and crucially, the question of ownership of the peace process. The state-led peace-building initiative, the Myanmar Peace Center, supported by the Norwegian government, somewhat naively aims to integrate unarmed and powerless communities into the peace process, raising the question of how far the communities are able to put pressure on the different armed factions.

Alexander Horstmann’s projects have focused so far on the navigation of the civil Karen populations in the militarized borders and the engagement of Karen in alternative forms of governance, social support and security networks. In recent publications, he has examined the effects of the humanitarian economy and the role of religious groups and networks in delivering crucial social services and resources to the populations. Together, the aim of our project is to explore to what extent, and through which modalities, local and translocal communities can put pressure on armed groups and shape peace-building. The authors hope to contribute to a design of the future for young Karen migrants and hope that repatriation can be carried out with a human face. De-militarization will be a long and painful process and the question is whether or not former human rights violations and impunity of the state in Myanmar can be discussed in public.

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THE KASHMIR BORDER is one of the many sites where national sovereignty, especially of the Indian state, is enacted. The border between Indian and Pakistani administered Jammu and Kashmir, delineated by the infamous Line of Control (LOC), features regularly in regional media. Reports of shelling by opposing armies, or the killing of suspected infiltrators, are but episodes in the theatre of the Indian and Pakistani states. While the Kashmir border is a paradigm of sorts, it is marked by a tension, common to borders in general, between its use of state ideology and practices, and the arbitrariness of the latter's effects on everyday life.2

The Kashmir paradigm emerged during the end of colonialism in India, in 1947, and the consequent conflict between the new states of India and Pakistan regarding the accession of the former kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir to either state. From 1989-90 onwards, the Kashmir valley in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir has been caught in a conflict between a nationalist/secessionist movement – that finds expression in the form of a popular movement and activities by militant/insurgent groups - and the Indian state. I shall be looking at the period since 1990.

Due to geo-political formations in Kashmir, there has been a large presence of both Indian and Pakistani military forces in this region. In Indian administered Kashmir, military presence has expanded since 1989, ostensibly to maintain law and order, resulting in the highest soldier to civilian ratio in the world; with 1 soldier estimated for every 20 civilians.3 This has produced what Haley Duschinski calls "destiny effects" in Kashmir,4 which include, for example, constant frisking of civilians by soldiers, the possibility of being arrested without a warrant, or being forced indoors during curfews or strikes. Everyday life is thus transformed by extraordinary processes. I am especially interested here in communities that do not necessarily live on or close to a militarized border,5 but whose lives are affected by processes of militarization and conflict that spread from borders to interior areas. Even at a distance, the border figures in their imaginations as a transformative factor in their lives.

Writing from the valley

Since 2008, Kashmiri nationalist aspirations have been expressed through mass protests, spreading like wildfire across the valley. The figure of the ‘stone pelter’ – teenage boys and young men hurling stones and other projectiles at security forces and other symbols of Indian authority – has come to represent the face of Kashmiri nationalism. However, within the Indian mainstream, the dominant symbols of the conflict are the different militant groups that have been active from 1990. These militant groups, comprising Kashmiri men and foreign fighters, received training and support from the Pakistani state in camps and bases located in Pakistani administered Kashmir, or Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Within the narratives of militancy and revolution, is the recurring presence of the border. Sarhād pēr (the act of crossing the border) forms a trope in the Kashmiri imagination.

Kashmiris have been a part of border crossings in the face of conflict for some time.6 Crossing the border was a fact of daily life for pastoralists like the Bakarwals who, with the militarization of the LOC, suddenly found themselves cut off from areas they would seasonally migrate to in search of pastures.7 There have also been the occasional state measures to promote peaceful relations between India and Pakistan, such as cross-border bus services to facilitate trade relations and perhaps contact between communities on either side of the line.

However, during the early 1990s, the border came to signify something else for Kashmiri youths. It was by crossing the border that one could reach a camp to receive military training, and return to fight the Indian state as a revolutionary. The act of crossing the border was a source of excitement. This is evident in a memoir by Kashmiri writer Basharat Peer.8 One of the episodes he writes about features his cousin Tariq, who had crossed the border into AJK to become a guerrilla.9 Tariq's decision resulted in expulsion from his school and community.10 This message signalled to Tariq's family that he was indeed alive and well on the other side of the border. He eventually returned as a guerrilla. Family, friends, and acquaintances would visit him to listen to stories of his travels to treacherous territories in dangerous conditions, which included the weather, terrain and the possibility of being caught by Indian soldiers. His return was a moment of excitement for those who listened to his stories, as if he was a ‘Maico Polo’ like figure.9

One text that gives a sense of the scene in the early 1990s is the novel The Collaborator by Mirza Waheed. Waheed's novel introduces us to the border through the eyes of his protagonist, a young Gujar from a village close to the border on the Indian side. The protagonist is exercised to collaborate with the local Indian army unit tasked with eliminating threats from across the border, including young Kashmiri men returning to fight. One passage is especially moving: “The Kashmiri one, not too long ago, just two or three years ago, when everyone wanted to go sarhād pēr, to cross over and become a famous freedom fighter. Hordes and hordes went in the early days, everyone wanted to return and be a commander, a masked legend in their own right, a liberator of the Kashmiri, a hero. Bustle of city boys would be dropped off at the last bus stop in Kupwara. I got to know later – for months bus conductors in many towns were heard yelling their hearts out, ‘Pindi, Pindi, anyone for Rawalpindi?’11

In other words, one crossed the border to become a militant, a revolutionary and a liberator. This transformation is brought about by crossing the border – first to get to the other side to receive training and skills and secondly, to return and fight the oppressors. If we treat this journey as akin to a transformative ritual process or a pilgrimage, as suggested in the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner, the border is a ‘liminal zone’.12 It is by passing through the border, like initiates taking their rites of passage, that young Kashmiri men become revolutionaries.

Nation-states with their cartographic logic can only recognize discrete lines, causing communities who cross borders to remain in a position of liminality or in a state of “being neither here nor there”, a point raised by Lisa Malki in her work on Burundian Hutu refugees.13 Waheed’s protagonist gives another sense of the border, especially when he is forced by the local army commander to scavenge the landscape for bodies of men killed as militants by the Indian army, scavenging for weapons and documents, while leaving behind the corpses and items like clothes, family photographs and anything lacking strategic value.14 In Heonik Kwon's study of the afterlife of the Vietnam War, areas that were once battlefields, where countless people perished, are now home to the spirits of the dead. The spirits were Vietnamese, American and French, soldiers and civilians, who now inhabit these spaces together in a cosmos, respected by those who survived war.15 Waheed’s narrator, however, sees the dead as being trapped in a spiritual and physical landscape that has been transformed into a space of death. The dead lie, unclaimed and rotting, until at the end of the novel he liberates them by burning the bodies. Here the border traps one into liminality.

A view from the displaced

My doctoral research explored the experiences of the Kashmiri Pandits, the Hindu minority of the Kashmir valley who had been displaced from their homes with the outbreak of violence in 1990. This expatriate community has been a subject of much scholarship and debate, with many claiming that it is a new and recently formed identity that has been created by the Indian state. However, my research suggests that the Pandits have a much longer history in the valley, and that their presence in the region is rooted in the colonial period. The Pandits were brought to the valley by the British as a means of settling the region and suppressing local resistance.

The Pandits, who were mostly merchants and traders, were granted citizenship and were given access to education and services. However, with the partition of India in 1947, the Pandits were suddenly left without citizenship and were forced to flee their homes. Many were killed or abducted by local mobs, while others were forced to leave their homes and travel to India. The Pandits have been living in India ever since, with little support from the Indian state and with little hope of returning to their homes in Kashmir.

My research suggests that the Pandits have a much longer history in the valley, and that their presence in the region is rooted in the colonial period. The Pandits were brought to the valley by the British as a means of settling the region and suppressing local resistance. They were granted citizenship and were given access to education and services. However, with the partition of India in 1947, the Pandits were suddenly left without citizenship and were forced to flee their homes. Many were killed or abducted by local mobs, while others were forced to leave their homes and travel to India. The Pandits have been living in India ever since, with little support from the Indian state and with little hope of returning to their homes in Kashmir.

According to Willem Van Schendel, the South Asian sub-continent has been marked by the Wagah syndrome, “a show of aggressive territoriality based on frat sovereignty, developed to compensate for this frustration.”16 Wagah is the border crossing between Amritsar, Punjab in India and Lahore, Punjab in Pakistan. Van Schendel breaks the Wagah syndrome into further forms, including Kashmirian issues. This article is an attempt to consider the ways in which the Kashmir border is imagined by two communities from the Kashmir Valley.
of conflict. During the first year of the conflict, the vast majority of Pandits fled from their homes in the Kashmir valley to safety in the cities of Jammu and New Delhi. The exodus of the Pandits is a controversial chapter in the recent history of Kashmir. One set of explanations state that the Pandit exodus took place as they were targeted by militants and secessionists for their faith affiliation and their perceived support for the Indian state. Another perspective argues that the exodus of the Pandits was facilitated by the Indian state to disrupt the movement. Pandits are officially labelled as ‘migrants’, which is the official nomenclature for communities displaced by conflict and disasters in Jammu and Kashmir. My work paid special attention to Pandits who relocated to displaced persons camps in Jammu that were in existence from 1990-2011. Here I explore how the Kashmiri Pandits bring to the table.

During the time I spent conducting my research in Jammu, the city was seemingly in line with the Indian mainstream. As a Kashmiri acquaintance of mine had put it: “we in Srinagar are on this bank of the river and the people in Jammu are on the other side.” However, the borders lurk in the background, surfacing in snatches of conversations, and occasionally spilling into local papers. The violence of the border is largely represented in the conditions of villages and communities close to the border who are displaced from time to time due to the exchange of fire between Indian and Pakistani forces. In some cases, villagers were forced to leave their homes and seek sanctuary in Jammu city, they carried with them their experiences. The violence on the border thus intrude into the city with the arrival of these ‘border migrants’.

There are other ways in which the border features in conversations with Kashmiri Pandits. In my work, conversations at first took place with reference to those who came from districts such as Kupwara and Baramullah, which lay on the border. For these Pandits, the border came alive through sightings of ‘unknown men’ with weapons. The border was the source of something incomprehensible and dangerous, and this perspective travelled with them to Jammu where they encountered reports of conflict along the border. Hence, casual reports of border politics merged with memories of the early days of the conflict in Kashmir before the Pandit exodus.

However, my first engagement with Pandit approaches to the border conversation was with a middle-aged man who wanted to know my ethnicity. When I informed him that I was Bengali, he started to speak of cross border movements of the other side. The border may be located miles away, which often figure in the Indian media: “All these Bangladeshi cross over illegally. You must know that. We see it in the news. You Bengalis are not doing your duty. You should be catching these Bangladeshi. Otherwise you will face what we have faced here. We know. We know what such people do!” Hence, while I conducted my research in a city away from the border, the border was still a part of their lives.

Pandits had to contend with borders in other ways, such as the presence of ‘border migrants’. I once met with Neeru, a Kashmiri Pandit migrant, at her office. While waiting for her to arrive, I chatted with her colleague, who belonged to the local Dogra Hindu community. He asked me where I had come from and explained that I came to Jammu to do research on Kashmiri Pandit migrants. The following is from my field notes: “While we spoke, he asked whether I am looking at all migrants or specialising only on Kashmiris. The moment I nodded … he started to speak of border migrants in Ashur … He spoke of what little relief they get as opposed to the KPs (Kashmiri Pandits).” He stated that this was unfair and that KPs get preferential treatment. When he noticed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19 The conversation that followed Neeru returning, he quickly told me not to tell her of our conversation and left the room. 19

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References

5 Four districts of the Kashmir valley, namely Kupwara, Bandipora, Badgam, and Baramulla, are located along the LOC. Other districts such as Anantnag (also locally referred to as Islamabad), Kulgam and Pulwama, are most crucially the city of Srinagar, are located at a distance from the LOC. An ethnographic study by Cabrera Delboh Robinson explores the political life of Kashmiri refugees in camps across Pakistan administered Jammu and Kashmir, which in turn supported Kashmiri nationalism. The border was critical in framing the identity of the refugee on the one hand. On the other hand, the camps for refugees were places of nationalist political activity, see Robinson, C. De Bergh. 2013. Body of Victim.
Spectacles of militarization

In September 2013, a United Nations population factsheet reported that Asia hosted the second-highest number of international migrants (after Europe) and the largest number of refugees.1 The factsheet contributed to explosive debates on the India-Bangladesh border, a product of political events in 1947 and 1971. It corroborated that there were 3.2 million Bangladeshis residing in India. Indian political parties quickly used this data to validate India’s fear of ‘infiltrating’ Bangladeshis. Bangladesh predictably rejected the statistics. The release of the UN report in 2013 coincided with civil society protests in Bangladesh over India’s ‘shoot to kill’ policy at the border. The same month, an Indian border constable, Amiya Ghosh, who had shot fifteen-year-old Felani Khatun, was acquitted. Felani’s body hung from India’s new border fence with Bangladesh. The fence – a project under construction – substantially reconfigures the border landscape that cuts across heavily militarized northeast India, which shares complicated boundaries with Bangladesh.

IN UNDERSCORING THAT nine out of ten refugees were located within a small group of developing states, the UN reports echoed what Aristotle Zolberg argued thirty years ago. He advanced that tensions produced by the disintegration of imperial states and the emergence of new post-colonial states in the mid-20th century were refugee-producing processes and accounted for the large number of refugees in developing regions.2 Jaya Chatterji, in her recent photog-raphy of the Bengali diaspora, agrees with Zolberg. She convincingly shows that the partition of the Indian subcontinent (in August 1947) and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent Bengal nation-state (in 1971) led to significant internal displacement and international migration in South Asia. These population movements were greater in scale than from South Asia’s devastated borders to Britain and other advanced economies.3, 4

Given the global emergence of high security barriers and deep suspicion of Muslim migrants, it is important to realise that everyday mobility, political violence and territoriality need to be investigated in one analytic frame. Despite prolific scholarship on the partition of the Indian subcontinent that attended to violence, trauma and agency,5 the narration of border-crossings as interweaving locations of loss and abjection on the one hand, and material and social possibilities on the other, remains challenging. How do we write about people who cross borders without documentation, who experience state violence but also ‘work the border’? How do we engage with violence through bodies that move across borders as much as those that are trapped in abjection and inertia? How do we condemn border violence in one voice in regions where maps and migration precarious divide states and militarize small regions, adding to multiple border predicaments? I suggest that the term ‘divided bodies’ may be useful to engage with the socio-political and intellectual possibilities that are derived from unscripted/unofficial border-crossings in militarized borders. Without necessarily denoting causality, this indicates that border-crossers fall back on the structural deficiencies of barriers, while simultaneously being at the receiving end of state repression. Divided bodies enable scholars and activists to respond to the grief and loss that structure migrant lives, interrogate fragmented statistio- statified and citiologies of militarization. I will briefly engage with these themes along the border zone straddling northeast India and Bangladesh, whose old and new maps deeply trouble me. I will begin with Felani’s life.

Missing bodies

Felani’s life was unexceptional. Like many adolescents in South Asia, she had dropped out of school. Given the region’s interlinked geographies, her adolescence in India was to lead to an early marriage in Bangladesh. On a cold and foggy January morning in 2011, Felani was travelling with her father Nurul Islam, who lived in Assam in northeast India. Islam had paid money to border brokers for the journey.6 If Indian border guards had not shot her, she would have added another number to the United Nations’ population data on international migration and to the underreported fatalities of Bangladeshis in India. But her violent killing exposes how the United Nations’ classification of ‘international’ and ‘bilateral’ erases differences that shape migratory regimes and their precarious outcomes. Hilary Cunningham and Joseph Heyman have convincingly brought these distinctions to bear upon migration studies. They argue that since movement stands at the cross-roads of power and resources, it shapes mobility and enclosures. They also remind us that the opening and closing of borders testify to differential privileges and rights.7 While it is true that the lives of Bangladeshis and Indians with advanced degrees are vastly different from those of their less privileged counterparts, it is clear that the outcomes of their border-crossings label them as ‘knowledge’ and ‘labour’ migrants. With the United Nations computing ‘international’ and ‘bilateral’ migrant stock on the basis of where people were born and have come to reside, we are left speculating about their affluence, deprivation and injuries. Furthermore, since intellectual division of labour in computing data on migrants is based on the living versus the dead, migrants who face torture and die while crossing borders form another set of statistics gathered by human rights organizations.

Although borders that divide states such as Bangladesh and India are legacies of shared pasts, migration figures and questions of legality lead to explosive political debates. Bangladesh has questioned the United Nation’s enumeration on the grounds that it merely reproduced biased official Indian projections. Tellingly, apart from Indians imprisoned in Bangladesh, there is no discussion on unauthorized border-crossings from India to Bangladesh, despite the large numbers that travel for trade, to shop or to maintain kinship ties. The relative porosity of the border ensures that those escaping political persecution and natural disasters, or migrating for work (travelling without legal documentation) collapse in predicament and statistics. In this unstable landscape, India is constructing a new border fence with Bangladesh. The fence effortlessly shape-shifts from a matrix of wires and metal pillars through which Indians and Bangladeshis enquire about divided families and gossip, into a site of closure and suffering.8 An infrastructure of violence, it shapes migrant bodies, and reinstates Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson’s compelling formulation that in national cartographies impinging upon bodies, ‘border maps’ are also ‘body maps’.9 Materialized and dead bodies are found along the fence, bodies that are being increasingly photo-graphed and digitally circulated.

Digital bodies

Bangladesh activists circulated digital images of Felani’s tortured body with captions describing her journey from northeast India to Bangladesh, cross-border fringes, injuries, postmortem and burial. These images disrupted sequence and temporality, and Felani surfaced in various frames. A bleeding upside down female bodyly on a dustbin with hands and legs tied to bamboo poles, a horizontal body with a bullet to the chest; a dangling body and a ladder next to it; a partly stitched swollen body covered with a plastic sheet; a border guard looking away from the hanging body.

Felani’s tortured form supported a Human Rights Watch report. Aptly entitled ‘Trigger Happy’, the report underscores excessive militarization along the India-Bangladesh border and documents India’s indiscriminate use of force. It estimates that Indian border guards have shot dead at least 1000 undocumented travellers in the past decade. Felani’s post-mortem, which revealed a bullet to her chest is condemnable, given the large number of two-way crossings at the India-Bangladesh border.10 The statistics were alarming because the study was limited to a little more than half of the 4,096 kilometre boundary, excluded the heavily militarized border regions of northeast India and failed to investigate human rights abuses committed by Bangladesh border guards. Willem van Schendel called the India-Bangladesh border a ‘killer border’ long before Felani’s gruesome end due to excessive political violence, and Indian and Bangladesh border guards’ use of excessive force on both sides. Advancing that borders between ‘friendly states’ generate extreme violence, the author calculated 2,428 cases of injury, abduction and killings, including that of border guards, within a short span of five years.11

In projecting border violence and militarization as recent, escalating and limited to the Indian side, we forget that what is today the India-Bangladesh border, sits uncomfortably on a troubled zone. For centuries, this region has been armed in various ways, even as suspected traitors and diversities were disarmed. Here, rebels and militias have sought refuge, smaller territories have been coercively appended, and border guards and peasants have raided granaries and cattle. Village elders as well as the archives remind us that militias, the police, deserters and border residents have battled each other along these political margins, even as they collaborated on border vigilance.12

Furthermore, the zone straddling northeast India and the foothills and plains of Bangladesh is central for an under-standing of the India-Bangladesh borderland as a zone of affinity and contestation. India and Bangladesh officially sanctioned the first experimental border market the same year Felani Khatun was shot.13 An legacy of old trade routes, in weekly markets known as border haats, bordering the state of Meghalaya (northeast India) and Kurigram (Bangladesh), trans-border traders legally conduct business up to a maximum of 500 and officially travel without passports.14
life circumstances and dilemmas even as they engage in para-legal activities, predicaments that structure lives like Nurul’s and Felani’s. Even if India’s promised retrol of Felani’s case leads to a conviction, it may not resolve the issues of everyday travel and the livelihood of border residents, and trans-border and mobile communities such as fisherfolk and coolies. 4 Border residents’ dependence on predatory brokers and guards will persist till issues including de-centralized passports, trans-border identity cards and work permits for labour migrants - proposed long ago - are tabled for discussion again.

Conclusion
Felani reminds us that migrants include those travelling under precarious conditions alongside legally protected travellers. She compels us to recognize that scholarship and protest must engage with complicated and transnational lives that link homes, workstations and trading hubs straddling border fences. Felani’s tortured form correlates short and hurried walks through rice fields and forests that separate India and Bangladesh with migrant burials in scalding deserts that form a part of the United States-Mexico border. Since the term international migration obscures critical distinctions and profiles migrants on the basis of the living, the dead, refugees and others, scholars and activists must read across distinct statistical skits to compile and road migration-related data. Added, rather than subtracted, this will inform us about the diversity of moving, settling down, dying and grieving that shape migratory regimes. Felani epitomises South Asia’s complex game of territoriality and links Bangladesh’s troubled geography with Assam’s post-colonial history. As India and Bangladesh orchestrate joint parades along a border that was never a conventional war theatre, we are reminded once again that this border rests on uneasy friendships. Till we expand our dissenting horizons, images of Felani’s tortured body will continue to sporadically haunt our collective conscience.

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Below: Agricultural fields along the Northeast India-Bangladesh border - the elevated road path indicates the international boundary (2008)
Photograph: Malini Sur

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Many refugees such as Nurul Islam, Felani’s father, have made a home in Assam, long after India and Bangladesh mutually consented to a legal controlled migration (March 25, 1971). In the case of older settlers in this region and immigrants who have acquired Indian citizenship in Assam, frenzied detection drives led to end unauthorised migration (March 25, 1971). The state in older settlers in this region and immigrants who have acquired Indian citizenship in Assam, frenzied detection drives led to end unauthorised migration (March 25, 1971). The state in
Imphal, the capital city of Manipur – a former kingdom turned federal state currently situated on India’s border with Myanmar – is experiencing a private education boom. The boom appears counterintuitive. Imphal is a militarized and often dysfunctional city, yet enormous swathes of land are now occupied by relatively expensive private schools that draw pupils from all over the city and from other parts of the state. Private coaching classes are run out of homes. Education agents all over the city offer admission to universities and colleges in South India, Thailand, and Eastern Europe. Education providers from outside Manipur, mostly from other parts of India, recruit students from Manipur – most noticeably at the large education fairs held in Imphal in the spring such as Edufest, Edu-options, and Edu-expo.

School versus paddy: education and mobility in Manipur

The boom in private education cannot be appreciated anew, is very powerful. A kind of accidental liberalization in different ways. Yet the idea of cleansing, of starting afresh, is very powerful. A kind of accidental liberalization is evident – part pragmatism, part opportunism. Various ways of imagining the borderland pitch Imphal as the ‘gateway’ to Southeast Asia and stress the cross-border ‘potential’ of connectivity. In contrast, the education sector is symptomatic of, and instrumental in producing a counter directional flow towards India.

The boom in private education cannot be appreciated without some sense of what all the public system. Friends in Imphal would always begin telling me about the problem by discussing the ways jobs are acquired. A post in a school is advertised and the Department of Education is flooded with applications. To secure the post, applicants must pay a bribe (between 1000 and 5000 USD). With lots of people offering bribes, it is possible to offer a large sum and still miss out. The more desirable the post, the higher the amount needed, particularly if it is in the city. If an applicant does not have the necessary qualifications then the amount will be higher still. Applicants thus need to secure a large sum of money to land the post. In order to do this, many, though certainly not all, applicants or their families borrow money or sell assets. Once the post is secured, some – though not all, it must be stressed – teachers either do not attend their jobs, sporadically attend, or attend for only parts of the day. Often they work as private tutors or teachers in private schools while still drawing their public salary. A teacher may spend the day working elsewhere, or not at all, and pay another person a portion of their salary to appear at the school. In many cases, the proxy is unqualified and has little incentive to actually teach. The Manipur Government has attempted to deal with the problem by steadily increasing teacher salaries in the public system, though this seems to have raised the stakes for securing a post, besides providing teachers with more salary to distribute to proxies. Proxies do not exactly live a comfortable life – they face a continual anxiety of being found out, or of losing their income, if the person who actually holds the job disappears or dies – not an uncommon occurrence in Imphal where disappearances and extra judicial killings have marred everyday life for the past three decades. With the increase in the problem, the naming and shaming of teachers who do not report for work or appoint proxies have also become more common, especially in the print media. Furthermore, non-state actors, including student unions and some underground groups undertake physical inspections of schools in various towns and urban localities and take action against absentee teachers directly or report them to the government and monitor the response. The most well known and sustained campaign is the EAMAI Nongthina Tamsi (loosely translated as ‘Let’s Study Correctly’) run by the Manipur Students Federation since 2007. If we add to this scenario, the practice of teachers requesting money or ‘present’ to award high marks, teachers leaving the state to work in other parts of the borderland and beyond where the employment conditions are more stable, routine closures of schools for bandh(s) (strikes), and schools closing during blockades (Imphal city was blocked off from the rest of the country for over three months in both 2010 and 2011 by protestors demanding long-delayed autonomy in hill areas of the state), and it becomes clear why the public school system in Manipur has been declared “near impossible to run”.

The issue is not a lack of schools. Indeed Manipur has a relatively high number of schools per 100,000 head of population: 150 elementary and 31 secondary compared to a national average of 97 elementary and 14 secondary. The issue is the quality of education and facilities, attributes that the Manipur Government attempts to address by allocating funding, but which either fail to materialize in schools or even if they make any impact on the demand for private schooling. Demand for learning the national curriculum, especially at the higher secondary level (classes 11 and 12), is a crucial factor in the boom. The national curriculum is needed to qualify for tertiary study in other parts of India. It is an illustration of the inward pull of citizenship, a key factor in determining the long history of resistance to Indian citizenship in Manipur.

Transforming the landscape

The boom in private education has transformed Imphal, especially in the south through a counter directional flow towards India.

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The boom is much less visible; household debt, education scams, qualified young adults with no work, and the loss of peri-urban farmland. Even less visible is the murky world of land transactions, corruption in school licensing, and taxes paid to underground groups. The biggest cost to starting a school is acquiring land. And conversely those able to supply land, usually by first acquiring it at a low cost, are believed to make the most money in the industry.

Schools versus paddy

Diminishing agricultural land is a contentious issue throughout Manipur exacerbated by overlapping systems of land tenure, poor record keeping, and the closure of the Manipur State Land Use Board, and a history of mass land acquisitions by the Indian government, mostly for military use, and the government of Manipur for development projects.7 The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act was implemented in 1960 to make title and transfer of land simpler in the Imphal valley. Various attempts have been made to extend the law to the hill areas, which tribal communities in these areas have strongly opposed.8 A 2014 amendment to the act makes it easier to convert agricultural land of a half hectare or less for non-agricultural purposes by putting the decision for or against conversion (‘diversion’ in the policy) to a district committee to assess the ‘likely benefits’ and legislating only minor penalties for violations.9 However no rules are applicable in the case of acquisition of agricultural land by the state government.10

Somewhat contradictorily, the Manipur Legislative Assembly passed the draft Manipur Conservation of Paddy Land Bill July 2014. The bill seeks to prevent paddy land being used for another purpose, paddy land being differentiated from other forms of agricultural production. Critics have argued that the bill does not provide protection for land that is not classified as paddy but used for food production and that it encourages the conversion of forest and wetlands into farmland growing areas.11

In the last decade, several groups have taken action on declining agricultural land, most notably the Haingang Kendra Losumi Lup. Most recently the Conservation of Paddy Lands and Natural Resources Protection Committee (CPL) was formed for fight paddy land. The CPL mentions “the rampant construction of schools, brick fields, hospitals, development of roads by farm lands, and even churches” that have rendered high yielding farmland useless.12 Some of these structures are illegal or have been purchased from someone other than the rightful landowner, usually referred to as ‘land-grabbing’ in Imphal.

Some transactions are legal, some illegal, and others are legal on paper but involve some coercion. Much of the agricultural land is now transferred from smallholders to commercial entities on a large scale, as in other contexts where land-grabbing is studied – it is being transferred from smallholders to other smallholders, sometimes for a completely different usage. Manipur is already dependent on imported agricultural produce, a highly vulnerable position for residents in Imphal when the city has been cut off for months at a time during blockades. The profusion of imported rice, much of it from faraway states like Kamatamala and Andhra Pradesh, and the distribution of finding rice in the markets, exemplify the issue for many Imphal residents. Incidentally the rice yield in Manipur is 2100 kilograms per hectare and only slightly below the national average,13 but the area under cultivation is small and the accuracy of figures is continually disputed. The trade in food from outside the state has long been dominated by non-Manipuris, and thus food insecurity and identity insecurity are intertwined. Dependency on non-Manipuris for food is often raised in arguments for instating the Inner Line Permit (ILP) to restrict entry and settlement of non-Manipuris in the state. Cheap food, mostly packaged, comes from across the border with Myanmar and includes food manufactured there as well as from Thailand, China, and even Korea (the stock of Choco-pie biscuits in Imphal appears never-ending).

In areas like Sangaijupri noticed posters pasted onto walls of granaries and warehouses intermingled among the new school buildings read ‘Save Agricultural Lands. Save Manipur’. The same signs can be found in other areas on the edges of the city where farmland is being redeveloped. The issue highlights sharp divisions over land ownership between the agrarian population of the valley, especially on the outskirts of the city, and the new purveyors of private capital investing in education and also hospitals, spiritual retreats, and shopping malls. The boom in the private education sector is driven by the desire of residents to leave Manipur and pursue aspirations for a better life in other parts of India. The desire to leave is also symptomatic of life in this part of the borderland where violence, surveillance, insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities are pervasive. The desire to leave and a higher secondary education, as well as vocational training, is a crucial component. The privatization of the education sector stems, in part, from the dysfuncional state apparatus and the other sources of power that characterise life in Manipur.14

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Renaming as integration

Stories define the landscape in oral societies. Where landscape is named, each name expresses a meaning, and embeds a story. When names are changed, stories are forgotten, and histories are erased. This article draws on fieldwork conducted in Tawang and West Kameng districts of west Arunachal Pradesh (by Swargajyoti Gohain) and West Siang district of central Arunachal Pradesh (by Kerstin Grothmann) to show how militarization transforms landscape in the north-eastern border region of India. Physical settlement of military forces and renaming of local place names by the Indian army have symbolically and materially altered the local landscape in these regions. Unlike the majority of the population of Arunachal Pradesh, who follow various indigenous faiths, with a sizeable percentage among them being Christian converts, the inhabitants of the two regions discussed here are culturally Tibetan Buddhist, with a history of association with Tibet through trade, tax, and government.

The cave of the Gurus

For the Membas, Pema Shelphug (Lotus Crystal Cave) is one of the most important holy places in Mechukha valley. According to Memba oral tradition, Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who propagated Buddhism in Tibet, once came to the valley and recognized its extraordinary qualities for providing refuge for the followers of Buddhist teachings. He concealed it to be discovered at a certain time in future by a preordained Buddhist master (Tertön). The valley became known as the ‘Hidden Land of Pachakshiri’. For the Membas, Pema Shelphug cave is the place where this foundation myth of Pachakshiri is located. This cave connects the Membas with their past, and their homeland from which their ancestors once migrated, and where their belief system and moral values originated. It is a symbolic representation of what constitutes Memba society and Memba identity.

The annual pilgrimage to the cave is a major event for the Buddhist Membas. Along the circumambulation path are several spots that are connected to Padmasambhava’s sojourn in Pema Shelphug. The pilgrims stop at each site to present ritual offerings and prayers and then gather near the cave to enjoy the day with a picnic. Today, however, this cave has been re-invented as a retreat of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. In February 2007, Grothmann reached Pema Shelphug, accompanied by a Lama, a religious expert who is also knowledgeable about Pachakshiri’s religious history. They were welcomed by a signboard over the entrance gate to the cave that carried the Hindi words, ‘Taposthan Shri Guru Nanak Dev’ (Meditation place of the divine and venerable Guru Nanak). On climbing the hill, they came upon a small cement platform in front of a wooden shed that was wrapped in Tibetan prayer flags. In the middle of the enclosed space was a table and underneath, a signboard in English that said ‘Taposthan Sahib – Shri Guru Nanak Dev’. In the centre of the table was a picture of Guru Nanak and to the right a smaller one depicting Guru Rinpoche. In front of these two images was a plate with incense sticks. The Lama wiped the dust from the table and re-arranged the picture of Guru Rinpoche, placing it more to the centre of the table, and then burned some incense and offered prayers.

As Grothmann wondered aloud about Guru Nanak being worshiped here, the Lama replied shortly, and with an obvious expression of dissatisfaction, that the Sikhs from the Mechukha military base claim that their Guru once stayed here and therefore, they come to this holy place to worship him. Discouraging any further questions, he parted the curtain at the back of the cave to reveal rock imprints of Guru Rinpoche’s and his consorts’ heads.

The gradual takeover of the cave by the Sikhs began in 1986-87 when Colonel (ret’d) Dr. Dalvinder Singh Grewal was posted as a Major at the army outpost in Mechukha. In an article first published in the Sikh Review in 1987, which also appeared in different reworked versions in several other Sikh publications and on the internet, Grewal details how he came to know of the Guru’s cave and how he forged out a plan to construct a proper place of worship there, including the establishment of a Gurudwara (place of worship for Sikhs) a short distance down the slope from the cave. As Grewal writes, the local people even agreed to donate land for the new structure, with their help and the support of the administration and the Indian Army and Air Force the work progressed quickly.

Signboard battle

Two months after Grothmann’s first visit, two signboards of almost the same size had been erected next to the entrance gate: a wooden plate reading ‘Gurudwara Taposthan’ and next to it, a yellow metal sign on which the Memba community welcomed all visitors to ‘The holy place of the Lotus Crystal Cave’, with the notification of the location written in Tibetan script below. The Lama accompanying Grothmann appeared quite proud of the sign and said that although they cannot expel the Sikhs from the cave, they, that is, the Membas, at least had a sign now that justified their claims to the cave. Six months later, the board announcing the Gurudwara was replaced by a green metal sign reading ‘Shri Guru Granth Sahib’, and the signboard of the Memba community had been taken down.

In January 2008 again, the former green metal sign was repainted in yellow with the caption ‘Shri Taposthan Shri Guru Nanak Dev’ in Hindi and English. There was still no signboard indicating that the cave is also a place of Buddhist veneration. In October 2009, all sides of the shed had been enclosed with planks, a door was affixed, and next to it, a board strategically placed to catch the visitor’s attention announced in Hindi that Guru Maharaj once visited the place and hence it is a sacrosant place. The picture of Guru Nanak was now placed in a shrine box decorated with artificial flower garlands and the image of Guru Rinpoche hung on the wall instead of its former place at the centre of the table. The only representation of the Buddhist community on the table was a picture of Tertön Chöwang Kunsang Dechen Rangdrol, who
Jaswant was assisted in his valiant battle by two local girls before being killed. The legend of the brave Jaswant has been distorted to Sela, and while the name change was made over the pass, Zela is a mountain god who resides on the hill, was apparently named after an army man called Jinda. 3 Monyul was divided into three tax-paas from which taxes in the form of grain and yak butter or cheese were carried to Tibet, in relay form, and the local Monpa communities were subject to Tibetan jurisdiction. After 1962, with the military closure of borders, the Monpa were barred from crossing over to Tibet for trade or pilgrimage. The army has since occupied vast stretches of prime land and grazing pastures for use as cantonment areas and firing ranges. Moreover, the army has renamed local villages and natural landmarks on the grounds that the mostly Hindi-speaking soldiers are unable to pronounce Tibetan-based toponyms, so much so that the new army-given names have replaced older ones in postal addresses. In some cases, patriotic zeal combines with narratives from Bollywood, the Indian film industry, to create new legends of territorial control. A case in point is the Zela Pass, a mountain pass that needs to be crossed in order to reach Tawang district, bordering Tibet, from the adjoining West Kameng district to its south. According to Tsering, headman of Seng village which directly overlooks the pass, Zela is a mountain god who resides on the pass, if the god has proxies, he causes rain to fall. Zela now has been distorted to Sela, and while the name change was initiated by the British colonial rulers, it has acquired a new significance through a legend that soldiers are fond of telling. When Gohain travelled in 2006 to Tawang, she was served tea at a small shed by two friendly sentries who enthusiastically played by beautiful actress Priya who dies alongside him during the India-China war of 1962 is aided by a local girl, named after Nura. This is a popular story and one he knows it originated. Whether or not army officers would validate the new version, it still circulates - among tourists, taxi drivers and lonely soldiers stationed in misty outposts who further help to circulate the story among fellow travellers. The old headman protests such acts of renaming, and yet, travellers from other parts of India are more impressed by the story of a possible romance between an Indian soldier and local girl than the story of an obscure mountain god. The new legend, not surprisingly, greatly resembles the plot of a classic Bollywood war film Haquepar. In a similar fashion, the name change of lake Tengchungtar. According to local memory, the lake was formed after an earthquake created a crater on land traditionally used as grazing pastures. It is now popularly known as Madhuri Lake, after top Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit who for a Hindi film in the Himalayas, place and identity, and border studies (Kerstin Grotthmann). References

1 Fieldwork in Tawang and West Kameng was supported by the Werner-Gren Foundation, U.S.A. and Emory University, Atlanta, U.S.A. Due to restricted entry to this sensitive border region, conducting extended fieldwork here is not easy. Toni Huber (Humboldt University, Berlin) has conducted fieldwork on clan-based rituals and Bon religion in this region (Tibet - a continent in the heart of Asia, 2011). Among communities in Mechukha and Monyul, people retain a strong territory-based identity, where place-name call is to a collective identity, and preserve a moral code for conduct.6 Renaming breaks these metonymic connections between name and identity by cutting the thread of oral lore that linked them in people’s minds. Elder people still remember the older stories today, but only few among the younger generation do.

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Local assertions over places and place names may be considered as the reappropriation claims of non-material culture of toponym and intangible heritage against the claim rights to native communities constitutes an answer, although partial, to material claims over space, what could the solution to military renaming of local places be? Naming in the post-colony, more often than not, has been a political act. Naming and re-naming of public spots, institutions, monuments, streets in and around the memories and the project of nationalist memorialization by commemorating a political leader or event in national history. In India, as in several other countries, place-names bear the imprint of colonial rule, and cities, in particular, abundant with colonially given names. In many instances, these names were given to commemorate a foundational act. Victoria Memorial in Kolkata built in 1921 stands as a famous insignia of British rule in India even today. In postcolonial India, therefore, renaming formerly colonial place names with new ones is an act of contestation, whereby history is re-adapted from the colonisers by the previously colonised. A good example is Connaught Place in the heart of Delhi city, which was renamed in the 1990s by the then Congress government as ‘Rajiv Gandhi Chowk’ after Rajiv Gandhi, slain of the ruling Gandhi dynasty who was assassinated by a suicide bomber in Coimbatore, and who reigned for only one generation. But it calls attention to renaming as a symbolic act of contestation, whereby history is re-adapted from the colonisers by the previously colonised. A good example is Connaught Place in the heart of Delhi city, which was renamed in the 1990s by the then Congress government as ‘Rajiv Gandhi Chowk’ after Rajiv Gandhi, slain of the ruling Gandhi dynasty who was assassinated by a suicide bomber in Coimbatore, and who reigned for only one generation. But it calls attention to renaming as a symbolic act of contestation, whereby history is re-adapted from the colonisers by the previously colonised. A good example is Connaught Place in the heart of Delhi city, which was renamed in the 1990s by the then Congress government as ‘Rajiv Gandhi Chowk’ after Rajiv Gandhi, slain of the ruling Gandhi dynasty who was assassinated by a suicide bomber in Coimbatore, and who reigned for only one generation. But it calls attention to renaming as a symbolic act of contestation, whereby history is re-adapted from the colonisers by the previously colonised.
The view from the islands

This article aims to present an alternative way to see the borderland beyond national boundaries.1 Through the case of the Ogasawara Islands, it explicates ‘the view from the islands’ that contests with the concept of the border defined by the nation-state. Just like many places in so-called borderland regions, the Ogasawara Islands have been marginalized and militarized for many years, and a major military base of Japan Self-Defense Forces still remains there. From the point of view of the state, it is crucial to militarily secure these islands, which lie on the edge of Japanese territory, for reasons of defense. However, in the islanders’ view, Ogasawara has never been located at the periphery of one single nation, preserving its own expanding locus towards many others. To clarify this view from the islands, the article suggests utilizing music and dance, vital media to illustrate human bonds that transcend national borders. Ogasawara musical culture exemplifies multiple connections of the islands with other places and peoples, and suggests an alternative vision of the borderland that celebrates crossing, mobility, and trans-border networks.

Masaya Shishikura
Iwo Tō. In 1968, the islands were returned to Japanese administration, deployed nuclear weapons on the islands of Chichi Jima and Iwo Tō during the Pacific War; against the Japanese non-nuclear policy, the US Navy took control of Ogasawara, together with Okinawa, Amami, Tokara, and other islands in Micronesia, and allowed only Western descendants to return to the islands. The Japanese settlers of the islands were excluded from their homes and became refugees in mainland Japan. During this period, the Japanese non-nuclear policy, the US Navy deployed nuclear weapons on the islands of Chichi Jima and Iwo Tō. In 1968, the islands were returned to Japanese administration. The reversion again troubled the Western descendants, who experienced difficulties and discrimination with the newly introduced social system. Today, the Ogasawara Islands are basically safe and at peace, but some social problems due to the frictional locality still remain unresolved. For instance, after the reversion, the Japanese government maintained the island of two Tō for military and other strategic purposes. So, the former Iwo Tō residents are still unable to return to the island even after 70 years; many who remained in exile died amidst nostalgia for home.

Militarization and marginalization of Ogasawara also appear in the politics of memory. Again, the island of two Tō is a good example. Since the Pacific War, a substantial number of records about the Battle of two Jima has been collected, including detailed statistics of the battle and strategies against the US military campaign. Yet little is known today about daily life on the island before the war; it is acknowledged, however, that the unique lifestyle and cultural activities are closely associated with the locality and landscape. For instance, as there was no stream or pond for fresh water on the island of two Tō, the people collected rainwater in huge tanks, in which goldfish were released to remove mosquitoes. Interestingly, there was little need to provide water for farms, which obtained enough moisture from the morning dew caused by the temperature differences between day and night. There were also rich and diverse cultural activities, including bon dance conventions during summertime, sumo wrestling tournaments dedicated to the two Tō shrine, film viewings in the elementary school’s courtyard, and dance events derived from Micronesia where many two Tō Islanders worked before the Pacific War. Former two Tō residents, who currently live in Chichi Jima, Ogasawara, revealed these facts during interviews. Interestingly, they all confessed to finding it difficult to recollect past stories without friends and family with whom to share memories of pre-war two Tō life, and who constitute the missing link in their narratives. Today, the airbase of the Japan Self-Defense Forces occupies most of the past Motomachi district, which was previously the largest residential area, in ironic representation of how the politics of memory acts.

Dynamic ‘frontier’

The case of two Tō is an extreme example, but the Ogasawara Islands too remain on the periphery of Japan within the conventional nation-state gaze. Within broader national discourses, the borderland is often located in a subordinate position, which is manipulated and militarized to accommodate a national ideology and security policy. To overcome this unequal status in politics, historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki proposes the ‘view from the frontier’ that contests with the concept of the national border. The national border is the line that must be protected by the law and forces, otherwise it could be overrun. As appears in this Focus of the Newsletter, the borderland is often secured and militarized, regardless of the crossing and mobility of people, their life and culture. In contrast to the national border, Morris-Suzuki conceptualizes the ‘frontier’ as a spatial designation that retains its own dynamic locus with living and moving people. The frontier is, thus, a more productive and fruitful space. In reality, as in the other articles of this section, the borderland remains under the control of national security policy and strategies. Nevertheless, it is still important to have the transposed view from the frontier, because it frees us from the confined discourses and suggests a recognition of the complicated webs of peoples crossing the borderlands. In the case of Ogasawara, it is true that the islands are like many other borderlands. For instance, public access to this remote place is limited; a boat trip of 25-55 hours from Tokyo metropolitan is the only way to the islands, which is available only once a week. The major armed forces that have remained on the islands of Chichi Jima and two Tō change the look of the landscape with their warships, helicopters, and military personnel. However, in their own view, Ogasawara people are never located in a marginalized border, and see themselves connected to many others.

Musical culture

The consciousness of Ogasawara’s expanding loci typically appears in their musical activities. For instance, the islanders perform traditional bon dance, and three folk songs with respect to the Japanese immigrants who began various cultural activities in this place of isolation and solitude. They also enjoy songs and dance derived from Micronesia (currently recognized as Ogasawara cultural heritage), and extend their sentiments towards past islanders who travelled around the Pacific, subject to the politics of different nation states. The summer rock music festival ‘jammers’ is a legacy of the American period; the so-called Western descendants islanders played rock ’n’ roll and country music during the US Navy era, and these activities continued and expanded on the islands after the reversion. The current Ogasawara residents even practice hula, in which they embrace nostalgia for the early Hawaiian migrants and their cultural practices that still remain on the islands today.

In their variety of musical activities, the Ogasawara Islanders preserve gratitude and affinity to many peoples: the early settlers who created a community in the middle of nowhere; Japanese immigrants who enriched the islands with music and dance; anonymous Micronesians who inherited the cultural heritage of Ogasawara; and numerous other migrants who crossed boundaries to bring a wide diversity of musical culture to this small and remote community. Without these multiple narratives of crossing, the variety of musical activities would never appear as it does today on the Ogasawara Islands. In the plurality of history and culture, Ogasawara people find sympathy and rapport with many others and identify themselves beyond the border or boundaries of a single nation-state. The border imagined through the nation and international politics creates tangible boundaries: fences, walls, and security gates with soldiers and militarized equipment. Even through national borders are imaginary and imagined constructs, they eventually regulate people’s crossing and mobility, and further confine our mentality to see the borderlands within one-sided nation-based discourses. However, as shown in this case of Ogasawara, people living in the borderlands indeed live beyond these boundaries. They may not be able to escape appropriation by the wider discourses and ideology of nation-states; nevertheless, we still recognize local collective politics that attempt to overcome the conventional gaze towards the borders. The view from the islands allows us to realize the borderlands in an alternative way in which music helps us to see crossing and multiple interactions of people beyond boundaries.

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References

1. This article is revised from a paper presented at an ISAS Lunch Lecture on 18 November 2014.
2. They are called ‘Western descendants’ (Ôbei-kei Tōmin, or literally ‘European[american]lineage islanders’), but many of them also have Japanese lineage, as well as ancestors from the Pacific Islands. So, the term is not precise and includes an arbitrary overtones.
4. The interviews were conducted during my fieldwork in Ogasawara in 2009.
6. Before the war when Japan established its mandate in Micronesia (1919-47), many Ogasawara Islanders travelled around the Pacific, seeking better job opportunities and quality of life. After the Pacific War, the US Navy controlled this area, where some Ogasawara Islanders also worked temporarily.
7. For instance, the islanders use tea leaves for hair making; it is believed that if tree is not indigenous in Ogasawara and was brought by the early Hawaiian migrants.

Musical crossings of the Ogasawara Islands

Map showing the remote location of the Ogasawara Islands. (Google maps)
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Reviewer: Cherry Amor Dugtong-Yap
The two books under discussion here were written by investigative journalists, and it is clear that the authors endured many discomforts and dangers in their pursuit of information in parts of the world where travel is difficult and even dangerous. Cardenal and Araújo claim to have undertaken eighty flights pursuing investigations for their book, conducting more than 500 interviews. French provides a map showing his routes through twelve African countries. All three speak several languages, e.g., English, French, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish, which clearly helped their research. Both books deal with China’s expanding influence around the world; specifically in Africa, Latin America, Middle East and Asia. The main theme is China’s struggle to secure supplies of natural resources, open new markets for its products and create strong alliances. There is a sense throughout that this is an existential struggle for the Chinese as individuals and as a nation. Chinese emigrants have consistently displayed the ability to make great sacrifices, work extremely hard, and take audacious risks. Chinese people also have a traditional system of lending money to each other and an ethic of repaying it. This gives them great economic power.

Reviewer: Julia Read

Quo Vadis China?

The discussion of China’s growing prominence in international life attracts increasing attention from publics, policy-makers, and scholars alike. Usually sidelined by the mainstream, such interest in China’s roles and attitudes on the world stage has grown exponentially in the context of the deepening concomitant economic, social, political crises across Europe and North America – which, until very recently, have been considered the traditional locales of powers and influence in world politics. Indicative of the emergent weight and significance of non-Western actors on the global stage, the trend set by China seems to challenge the conventional frameworks of both the study and practice of International Relations (IR).
Dissecting China’s international outreach

The growing prosperity and willingness of China’s international outreach presents an intriguing intersection of the discursive memory of the past with the dynamic contexts of the present and the anticipated tasks of the future. By bringing together Chinese-language sources rarely referenced in Western IR literature, the contributors to Shao’s volume manage to construct a thoughtful and extremely vivid picture of the complexity and diversity that mark Chinese IR scholarship. In fact, many readers would perhaps be surprised by the lack of a uniform and centralized IR discourse in China. The collection’s account deftly demonstrates such a change is reflective of particularly Orientalizing ways of imagining China in the West, which tend to remain detached from the nuanced socio-political, historical, and regional contexts of Chinese IR literature.

The collection includes a number of studies exploring the domestic and international changes and challenges impacting China’s worldviews. At the same time, other analyses probe a diversity of perspectives on the so-called nascent ‘China Model’ (p.69) of world affairs. According to its interlocutors, the China Model has simultaneously economic, financial, security, global governance dimensions. These dimensions – either individually or in tandem – are made apparent in the process and context of specific topics and practices of China’s international outreach. The contributors to the collection also discuss at length China’s interactions with a variety of partners – located both in China’s immediate vicinity and further away. In either case, perceptions of proximity appear to be created not according to the geographic distance from Beijing, but on contextual interpretations of the historical, cultural and socio-political record. Perhaps, unexpectedly, the topic of power transition and the alleged waning of American global power provide an important undercurrent of this conversation.

The final section of the volume offers a high profile interview with a well-known IR scholar. The interview demonstrates that IR scholars in Africa are well aware of the challenges and opportunities in Africa, China’s voracious appetites could lead to harmful intergovernmental and exploitation. However, growth and development are not the same in Africa and France’s concern is that while some well-governed African nations will leverage natural resources and population growth in ways that will lead to prosperity in the next 50 years, others who have fewer resources or are badly served by their leaders will end up nightmarishly crowded and politically unstable, with depleted resources and destroyed environments. Strong demand and plentiful investment from China could fuel growth and expand opportunities in Africa, or China’s voracious appetites could lead to harmful intergovernmental and exploitation.

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Above Detail - China's Silent Army cover.

Will IR with Chinese characteristics?

The collection edited by Shao offers ample evidence of the contested nature of Chinese discourses on international affairs. What emerges is a framing of world affairs premised on the fusion of complex innovation and its creative contextualization within the idiosyncratic experiences of China. In this respect, the contributors to Shao’s volume make a timely and extremely pertinent contribution to the discussion of Chinese IR (and, more broadly, non-Western) approaches to world politics. The erudite analyses included in the volume offer a much needed contextual understanding of how China views and interprets the world. In this way, the collection edited by Shao has succeeded to provide refreshing perspectives on the content, scope, and implications of Chinese IR scholarship. The accounts provided by the contributors provide a different understanding of China’s global roles as well as offer a wealth of solid knowledge and perceptive insights into the evolution, patterns and practices of China’s IR. The book further contributes to and enriches our understanding of China’s international interactions, Shao’s volume grants unparalleled access both to comprehensive overviews and a much-needed reassessment of the discourses animating China’s nascent global agency. To the beginners, it makes available accessible, yet rigorous, analytical and empirical engagements with the discourses animating Chinese IR thinking.

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I Gusti Nyoman Lempad is a remarkable figure from the advent of what is now known as Modern Balinese Art. He lived a very long life. He was born in Bedulu in Central Bali around 1862 and he died in 1978 in Ubud, at the astonishing age of 116 years. During his lifetime, Bali changed from a feudal island ruled by 9 kings, to a small part of the Dutch colonial empire, to finally a small province of the Republic of Indonesia. Not only that, from a predominantly rural and agrarian island it changed into what is popularly called a resort, attracting millions of tourists and other visitors each year. Bali was lost to itself; an intricate web of myths, stories and down-right lies increasingly came to change a once vibrant living culture into a living museum, all the while obscuring the real life and needs of a large part of its indigenous population. Although many Balinese reap the fruits of modern developments, it is astonishing that most Balinese, who do not live in paradisical conditions – what with poverty, unending traffic jams and horrendous pollution – have not loudly protested against this resort fantasy.

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The first *catalogue raisonné* of Balinese painting

inclined to do so himself. The relationship between the Hindu epics and so-called ‘folktales’ has never been properly explored but textual relationships, or absence thereof, may in fact be reflected in narrative painting art as well. For example, illustrated palm leaf manuscripts almost invariably depict stories from the Hindu epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana or texts directly based on them, rather than folktales. The difference between the depiction of the epic heroes, which is standardized throughout the arts, be they painting or sculpture, and the depiction of folktale characters, may be illuminating, especially since the latter tend towards standardization as well, but still offer the artist all the opportunities he needs to use his imagination.

Perhaps this juncture is the most interesting one. Not only was Lempad a painter who ‘made to order’ and who was thus inspired by foreign ideas of what to depict, he also had to find out how to do it. The astonishing difference in quality and craftsmanship between the makers of traditional sculpture and painting and those who started to make more naturalistic works of art is often overlooked in art history on the island. Perhaps by looking closely at how Lempad managed to bridge the gap, much may be learned from what really happened in the Balinese arts, in the 1930 up to now.

The book presents a ‘catalogue raisonné’, yet not all of Lempad’s works are reproduced in the book. Balinese social dynamics have gotten in the way. More comprehensive works on Indonesian painters must be published, to ensure that the study of the Indonesian painting traditions and modern paintings are paid their dues. As it stands, with the increasing international attention for and sales of Indonesian painting art it would perhaps be an idea to move them from museums of ethnology to art museums, also in the West?

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The creoleness of Betawi culture

Megacities of the 21st century have become contact zones where various cultures meet. These become places where not only commercial exchanges take place, but also where linguistic and cultural traits are translated between one culture and another. It is remarkable how often these sites of cultural translation include the great port cities of the age of colonization—like Lagos, Mumbai and the former capital of the Dutch East Indies, Batavia, present day Jakarta.

The creoleness of Betawi culture is what allows the non-Betawi inhabitants of Jakarta to identify with Betawi culture, “irrespective of their own identities.” (p.187) In other words, the Betawi have flourished regionally because they are sufficiently unique as to be defined as a culture, but mixed enough and open enough, so that other groups can recognize something of themselves in the Betawi. Consequently, Betawiess is in fashion, it provides Jakarta with something special. Plus, it draws in the tourists.

Thirdly, Knörr makes her argument with clarity and coherence, but I frequently found myself longing for punctuation. I failed to find a single semi-colon in the entire book; I’m sure there must be one or two. But even commas are used sparingly. The following sentence is an example: “Thus, in the context of the Betawi revival it is above all those on whose account of their relatively high social status or because they wanted to maintain or achieve such status used to conceal their Betawi identity who nowadays due to their social status are most likely to gain prominent positions both within the Betawi community and the public sphere more generally.” (p.102)

The creole group in question are the Betawi, a people descended from various 17th and 18th century immigrant groups from the Indonesian archipelago and elsewhere in Asia, but who are now “regarded as the original inhabitants of Jakarta.” (p.11) Although most of them can be reminded of the fact, they are descended from slaves of the Dutch, and this is a key to the low social status they were long held in, in independent Indonesia, further aggravated by their low level of education. In the first decades after independence their colonial heritage and low social origins “made them incompatible with [Javaanse] constructs of a precocious cultural community of Indonesians.” (p.64) Knörr puts forth that attitudes common among the Betawi - shunning education, deep religiosity, lack of investment in the future, a high regard for the simple life and an aversion towards official institutes - contributed to their further marginalization. But Knörr argues that a change occurred among the central authorities in the late 1960s and, by the end of the 20th century Betawi culture had been rediscovered, revived and was being actively promoted, leading to what she calls “a social upgrading of the Betawi.” (p.130) This process has contributed to a new national consciousness, a growing sense of Betawi identity and has proved popular in the tourist industry, Betawi culture now being one of the city’s attractions.

Most interesting about this process, is how other marginalized groups, whose work also stretches back to colonial Batavia, have come to attach themselves to the Betawi and have even been incorporated within the Betawi, hence enriching “the internal diversity of the Betawi as a whole.” (p.121) This is central to the Betawi integrative function, where “creoleness, on top of indigenity, may significantly increase the potential for transcultural identification.” (p.188) Knörr argues, and convinces the reader, that the creoleness of Betawi culture is what allows the non-Betawi inhabitants of Jakarta to identify with Betawi culture, “irrespective of their own identities.”

Documents as artefacts

For someone who has spent time consumed by the craft of making paper, in Tibetan Studies scholarship, and who has lived as a monk in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery (albeit a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Scotland), The Archaeology of Tibetan Books provides fascinating insights into the science, aesthetics and tradition of making books in Tibet. Helman-Ważyń’s approach is exhaustive, and it is her ability to make engaging even the most detailed and painstaking analysis of manuscripts as the physical manifestation of fibre and ink that renders her book essential to the study, not only of Tibetan material culture and textuality, but of Tibetan culture as a whole.

Functional and spiritually inspiring

Her intriguing use of the term ‘archaeology’ focuses on the fact that written documents can be read as artefacts, whose “physical properties can be studied using methods similar to those used to study sculpture, painting or common material objects.” (p.2) Using this as a basis for reading texts, Helman-Ważyń reveals a new dimension of Tibetan scholarship, showing not only how evidence regarding paper and ink manufacture can assist in establishing the date and provenance of texts, but also how issues of tradition, climate and locale have affected the creation, design and preservation of these manuscripts.

In considering the trajectory of the book, I was taken by how the author moved from the biological structure of plant fibres to the myriad technical processes in the design and printing of texts, from the sourcing of inks (a particularly arresting chapter, on illuminated manuscripts, is entitled “Indigo, Gold and Human Blood”) to the detective work required in analysis of individual texts. The breadth of interdisciplinary scholarship represented here acts as an ideal vehicle to show how the relationship between artisans, scholars and plant scientists created texts which were durable and functional, as well as frequently attractive, desirable and spiritually inspiring.


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At the heart of Ian Condry's stimulating exploration of anime's global success is his attention to how the medium thrives through "collaborative creativity": various forms of social engagement and energy investment undertaken by individuals who operate on both the production and consumption sides of anime-related industries.

Turning to Hosoda's earlier film, The Girl Who Leapt Through Time (2006), for example, he notes how Hosoda introduced changes to the 1967 work of fiction by Tsubasa Yutaka on which the film is based in order to make the story open-ended.

Condry's behind-the-scenes attention to the negotiations occurring among those involved in creating a work of anime continues in his second chapter, which focuses on the production of several animated TV series. Whereas the intricacy of anime narratives is often adduced as the major reason for their popularity, Condry's real-time observation of the deliberations taking place at these shows' regular planning sessions leads him to conclude that elaborately-conceived narrative lines may be of secondary importance in guiding a work through the development process than other factors—chiefly the creators' basic conceptions of the work's characters and their interconnections. It is not surprising that distinctive characters, rather than narrative arcs, would be the principal factor in some of the very short animated shows Condry considers, but he also offers examples of longer-format series in which a work's complete narrative has yet to be determined (or even glimpsed), and yet the work begins to take shape around its distinctive characters, premises, and worlds.

An argument that Condry introduces and continues to develop throughout the remaining chapters of the book is that the anime character can fruitfully be considered a generative platform itself, conducive to migration across diverse media. While much of Condry's analysis focuses on the production and consumption of anime in the early twenty-first century, he also endeavors to place contemporary Japan's anime industry in both historical and comparative contexts. In the third chapter, for example, he discusses the postwar development of Japanese anime, focusing especially on the work of Tezuka Osamu. Rejecting accounts of modern Japanese anime that would describe it mainly as an autonomous outgrowth of earlier domestic visual traditions, he identifies various ways in which Japanese animators saw American animated films as both sources of inspiration and targets of rivalry: the Toei studio, for example, explicitly aspired to become the "Disney of the East." Attending to the embeddedness of the Japanese anime industry in this larger context, Condry also notes variant features of the production process that distinguish American and Japanese animated films. In the fourth chapter as well, Condry adopts a longer chronological view in recounting how Bandai was able to help popularize Grendizer plastic models in the 1970s and to unexpectedly transform a toy that had prematurely been judged a failure into one of its most popular products. Condry emphasizes the role that small networks of fans and the media that connected them played in achieving this remarkable success.

One of Condry's most interesting chapters concerns the practice of fansubbing: overseas fans' cooperative production of subtitled versions of anime works. While such activity is unmistakably prohibited by copyright law, Condry wryly demonstrates how overseas fansubs understand themselves to be acting in the service of anime rather than counter to the interests of anime producers. He describes these fansubbers' meticulousness and attention to detail, showing how they add value, for example, through annotation of supplementary historical or cultural information. Observing that some remove their fansubs from circulation once subtitled commercial versions are available, he argues that a set of ethical principles underlie their efforts.

Throughout The Soul of Anime, Condry shows how the anime production process often opens up various kinds of "empty spaces" that facilitate idiosyncratic forms of creative engagement and consumption that have been important to the success of the industry and to its fans, Condry's book is a timely addition that helps elucidate how the "collaborative creativity" that characterizes producers and consumers alike lies behind anime's success. Matthew Fraleigh, Associate Professor of East Asian Literature and Culture, Brandeis University (fraleigh@brandeis.edu).

In recent years, the invaluable work of Gene Smith and the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (www.tbrc.org) has made it possible for Tibetan texts to be reproduced digitally and reprinted endlessly on-demand. However, the TBRC's work preserves the ideas held within a text and its literary style, and not the text itself. The engaging explorations of Tibetan book culture, however, as presented in The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity, will open up to and engage with the readers new ways of appreciating and understanding the nature of these artefacts, the physical act of holding and turning the pages, an act that leaves over time the marks of many fingers, the exquisitely crafted script in selecting fibres and writing materials for different types of text, the religious and cultural vitality of texts, and the devoted commitment to aesthetics and textual accuracy of the various scribes, wood-carvers, editors and printers. The decoding of these elements is a vital aspect of a deeper understanding of Tibetan culture, and Helm/Navaz's research offers a most welcome contribution to this important work.

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Explorations of Tibetan book culture

WHEREAS SEVERAL of the pioneering academic treatments of anime have focused their analyses on the narrative content of specific works, the visual styles of particular directors, or the aesthetic features of the animated medium more generally, Condry is less concerned with a retrospective consideration of finished products than with the dynamic social processes by which they are created and consumed. This ethnographic approach is informed by several periods of fieldwork he carried out in Tokyo animation studios between 2004 and 2010, his interviews with numerous directors, artists, and other animation industry workers, as well as participant observations he undertook at fan conventions held in both Japan and the United States. Condry begins with an account of the production of director Hosoda Mamoru’s 2009 anime feature film, Summer Wars. He observes that rather than being focused on the actions of a single hero, this film is structured around the collective efforts of its various characters toward a common goal. The film’s wealth of idiosyncratic characters furnishes a diverse range of viewers with multiple potential points of entry into the story: an effect only heightened by the director’s decision to make the characters’ design simple, thereby affording viewers the opportunity to contribute something of their own. Parallelizing the inter-character cooperation depicted on screen is thus a process by which the viewers of the film are induced to participate actively as well: developing forms of connection with the work that ultimately produce a sense of “joint ownership.” Moreover, Condry identifies further forms of such creative collaboration taking place on the production side as well in the discussions among directors, designers, and animators, as well as in the creative staff’s engagement with its source materials.


Respecting Tibetan practices, in which texts are not conserved or restored but allowed to give themselves up to the elements, and writes that “[a]lthough the [Tibetan] Sambhogkarana Sutra was once written on papyrus, the gomantak used in its transmission was not intended to last forever, but was a temporary means.” In contrast, Condry notes that the quality of paper and the photographic reproductions are exemplary, and both the heft and character of the object are conducive to contemplating what, if produced with less concern for readability and aesthetics, might have become, given the nature of its technical and scientific content, a considerably less enjoyable read, at least for those not familiar with the arcane study of the book arts.

Below: Holy scriptures in the Pekhek Chode monastery of Gyantse in Tibet. Image reproduced under a creative commons licence, courtesy of Thriol on flickr.

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References

The ICAS Book Prize 2015 Shortlists

It is our pleasure to announce the shortlists of the IBP 2015. The prize winners will be announced during the opening ceremony of ICAS 9 in Adelaide on 6 July 2015.

Social Sciences

Bridie Andrews
The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine, 1850-1960.

Tina Harris
Geographical Divisions: Tibetan Trade, Global Transactions.

Manduhai Buyandelger
Tragic Spirits, Shamanism, Memory, & Gender in Contemporary Mongolia.

Robert Cribb
Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan.

Tina Harris
Geographical Divisions: Tibetan Trade, Global Transactions.

Philip Taylor
The Khmer Lands of Vietnam: Environment, Cosmology and Sovereignty.
NUS Press & NIAS Press: Singapore/Copenhagen 2014 - ASAA.

Jinghong Zhang

Humanities

Beverly Rossler
Courteens, Concubines, and the Cult of the Female Fidelity.
Harvard University Asia Center: Cambridge/London 2013.

Theresa Hofer
Bodies in Balance: the Art of Tibetan Medicine.

Michelle Caswell
Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, Photographic Record in Cambodia.
The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison.

John N. Miksic
Singapore & The Silk Road of the Sea 1300-1800.

Adam Clulow
The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan.

Khoo Salma Nasution
The Chula in Penang: Patronage and Place-Making around the Kapitan Kling Mosque 1786-1957.

Tallyn Gray

Dissertations

Social Sciences

Tutin Aryanti

Tallyn Gray

David Kloo
Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia.

Humanities

Deokhyo Choi
Crucible of the Post-Empire: Decolonization, Race, and Cold War Politics in U.S.-Japan-Korea Relations, (1945-1952).

Vanessa Hearman

Leonie Schmidt
Visions of the Future: Imagining Islamic Modernities in Indonesian Islamic-themed post-Suharto Popular and Visual Culture.
**Call for Papers**

**Political participation in Asia: defining and deploying political space**

Conference venue: Stockholm University  
Date: 22-24 Nov 2015

Organizers: Eva Hansson, Stockholm University, Stockholm  
Meredith Weiss, University at Albany, State University of New York

ASIA’S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IS IN FLUX. Conventional, institutional taxonomies are limiting: classifying regimes along an authoritarian-democratic continuum suggests a static, homogenous categorization that aligns imperfectly with the experience of most citizens. Policy access, civil liberties, and political empowerment are less broadly disseminated in the illiberal regimes predominant across Asia than in liberal democracies, however, unequal even in the latter.

Authoritarianism cannot preclude political participation but may push other types of participation into informal, less visible, more creative, less readily suppressed niches. Even in more liberal politics, the core attributes of ‘democracy’ are unevenly distributed; not all actors have equal chance of being heard or influential. What most characterizes these struggles across regimes is the asymmetry of resources, options and alliances available to each side. Moreover, a dichotomous division of civil society and political society fits poorly at best where new online media, transnational networks, and other dimensions of political space transcend or sidestep both territorial and institutional boundaries.

In the face of these changes, political space - the discursive and material terrain of politics - bears closer examination. That need is especially keen in authoritarian or hybrid (electoral authoritarian or semi-democratic) contexts, where political space may be obscured, manipulated, inconsistently influential, or subject to novel or subtle means of construction, policing, and constraint.

This conference aims to deconstruct and disentangle political space across interactive subnational, national and transnational scales; across categories of individuals and groups, including those with greater or lesser access to decision-making power; and across modes and media, from street protests and rallies, to documentary film and graffiti, to petitions and press conferences. Our focus is primarily outside formal, or electoral politics, although a given actor or group may also use available institutional channels for influence.

Among the key questions we aim to explore are: What actors benefit from new technologies of participation, and in what ways? How do categorical inequalities structure access to voice, given changes in available political space and allies? Who creates, controls, and polices political space – as some of these arenas may be outside the purview of the state itself? How does the interconnection or interplay of scales for political engagement change the distribution of channels and voice (though we are less interested in transnational civil society per se than in domestic implications)? How homogenous is authoritarianism, in the sense of state capacity to patrol or structure engagement, given economic development patterns, proximity to capital cities, or geopolitical considerations? To what extent are the repertoires or symbols that characterize political spaces path-dependent or modular – should we look for certain forms of engagement or discourses in certain places or arenas? Given the mutability of political space, how do we best conceptualize patterns of participation and representation across Asian political regimes?

Information on registration and conference updates will be available at http://www.asianstudies.su.se  
Please direct any questions to Eva Hansson (eva.hansson@statsvet.su.se) or Meredith Weiss (mweiss@albany.edu).

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iias@iias.nl
ON 19 MARCH 2015, the Kelantan Legislative Assembly amended the Syariah Criminal Code. This move was unanimously supported by both the state’s ruling party, PAS (Islamic Party of Malaysia), and opposition UMNO (United Malays National Organization). This was yet another attempt by the PAS Kelantan government to implement hudud laws in the state, something it has sought to accomplish since 1990. However, one more hurdle stands in its way before the laws can be implemented, namely, amendment to the Syariah Courts Act in the Federal Constitution. With this last obstacle comes another challenge for PAS. The secular DAP (Democratic Action Party) and non-Muslim parties (from East Malaysia) in the federal parliament would definitely oppose the move. PAS faces an arduous task to convince its partners to support hudud.

Knowing how difficult it would be to garner the required federal parliament support, what then is PAS’s agenda in bringing up the hudud issue again? There are two plausible reasons. First, PAS is testing the leaders of the ruling BN (National Front) and opposition PR (People’s Coalition) to see if they are sincere in their support for PAS’s brand of Islamism. Second, the ulama (religious scholars) faction in PAS seeks to strengthen its grip in the party. During the recently concluded 61 PAS Muktamar (religious scholars) faction in PAS seeks to strengthen its grip in the party. During the recently concluded 61 PAS Muktamar.
The ethnic party system in Malaysia

Lee Hock Guan

IN MALAYSIA, political expediency and racial democracy during decolonization led to the emergence of an ethnically dominated party system. An ethnic party typically champions the interests of a particular ethnic group. To gain political support ethnic parties would typically manipulate ethnic ties and raise fears of ethnic outsiders, thereby ensuring that voting choice becomes bounded by ethnicity. When voting choice becomes circumscribed by ethnicity, it reduces competition for electoral support to within ethnic groups and not across ethnic groups. This is, in part, economy, recognizing that it cannot count on defections from members of the other ethnic groups, has the incentive to solidify the support of its own group. The prevalence of ethnic voting hence will marginalize parties which organize and campaign along non-ethnic lines.

The Malaysian authoritarian regime has been aptly characterized as an 'electoral one-party state' where a dominant ruling coalition has won every election held since Independence and is habitually ‘equated with the state’. The ruling coalition is composed of ethnic parties where each of which still profess to be working for the interests of its own ethnic group. The coalition party formula was stumbled upon by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malay(s)ian National Organization (PAS) to be working for the interests of its own ethnic group. Thus, “each party, recognizing that it cannot appeal to one ethnic group as they failed to convince the other positions. Since the opposition ethnic parties could mostly contest that resulted in their adopting more ethnically extreme positions. The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) was only a threat to BN in Malay majority seats especially in the Malay heartland states and the Chinese dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) a threat to BN in Chinese majority seats. For BN to counter the electoral threat posed by PAS and DAP, the most effective way was to reduce the number of Malay and Chinese majority seats. The results of the 1999 election showed how risky the situation could be for BN in Malay majority seats when the Malay vote swung to the opposition parties. It would seem then the best strategy for BN to counter the opposition threats would be to increase the number of mixed constituencies where no one ethnic group voters dominate...}

The 1MDB controversy in Malaysia

Cassey Lee

ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES confronting Malaysia’s ruling political coalition, Barisan Nasional, is the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). Technically, 1MDB is a private corporation wholly owned by the Ministry of Finance, Malaysia. It was established in 2009 by converting a state sovereign investment fund, the Terengganu Investment Authority, into a federal entity. The 1MDB was assigned the role of a strategic investment company with the mission “to drive Malaysia’s economic development by allowing each component party to cast itself as a creative Commons

Above: Malaysian General Election, 2013. Image reproduced under a creative Commons License, courtesy of Pear de Leuf on Flickr.

Uighurs were part of the...
Sailing the waves of convergence: cultural links and continuities across the Bay of Bengal

Tom Hoogervorst

Symposium 3 December 2014, KITLV, Leiden

AMIDST THE GLOBAL DECLINE OF AREA STUDIES, the Bay of Bengal is booming. The past decade has seen numerous monographs, seminars and conferences devoted to this part of Asia, often with titles containing the words ‘crossing’, ‘transcending’, ‘crossroads’ or ‘passageways’. Indeed, in order to make sense of the past and present of this vibrant part of the world – encompassing Asia’s two largest democracies and a range of states long thought of as ‘problematic’, yet currently lifted by the optimism of economic development and democratization – it has proven essential to cross the boundaries of nation-states as well as academic disciplines.

The one-day symposium Sailing the Waves of Convergence was another modest step in this direction. This event served as an opportunity for a group of predominantly early-career scholars to present their research on transnational networks and cultural contact across the Bay of Bengal, foregrounding agents that have largely remained outside the European gaze and, therefore, outside the canon of conventional historiography. With a slight predilection to pre-modern and early modern times, the participants shared a refreshingly mixed perspective on the dispersal of religions, ideologies, artefacts, language and literature, and their genealogies to better documented times. Presenters covered a wide range of geographical and disciplinary backgrounds, yet were connected by a shared desire to bring focus to the full range of human activities connecting the shores, harbours and riversides of South and Southeast Asia.

Transnational connections explored

Introducing pre-modern religious contacts, Munir Hitami and Mohamad Kooria examined the renowned Qur’anic exegete (hoof) of Malay. This manuscript – written on late 16th century European paper and kept at the Cambridge University Library – contains a Malay commentary on the Qur’an. It displays some Sufi influence. The Dutch merchant Pieter Willemsen van Eibben has been identified as the copyist, but a closer analysis of the handwriting contradicts this theory. Although its original author remains unknown, the work must be considered the earliest documented effort to introduce Qur’anic exegetics to a Malay readership. Subsequently, pre-Islamic networks of religious and cultural exchange were highlighted by Natalie Ong (National University of Singapore). Focusing on the temple rituals of the Borobudur, she illustrated the offered reconstruction of daily life in pre-colonial Java through an iconographic analysis. The localized narratives from the Rāmāyaṇa and other classical texts illustrate the deceptions of sartorial styles, enabling an informed identification of different social ranks and political hierarchies through a comparative study of attire, ornaments, archaeological and textual insights.

The sites of Hindu-Buddhist grandeur retained their relevance in colonial and post-colonial times. Mariëke Bloembergen (KITLV) situated Java’s past within the larger framework of an ‘imagined geography of spiritual enlightenment. The island’s pre-Islamic heritage was contextualized in different ways by members of the Theosophical Society, Indonesian elites, Buddhist revivalists, and advocates of pan-Asianism, all entitled to competing notions of regionalism, spirituality, knowledge, and the role of the museum. Yet the discourse on classical antiquity was equally shaped by moving objects, in some cases across the length and breadth of the Bay of Bengal. Sraman Subrahmaniar (Leiden University) approached Islamic connections of the early 20th-century printer of the aquatic dimensions of the Bay of Bengal, including the very ships aboard which the foundations of interethnic contact were laid. The latter challenge was not met by this symposium, but ample opportunity exists.

Several participants underlined the importance of looking at the oft-neglected communities on the lower rungs of power structures. Notably Lanny Ratanapoj (National University of Singapore) highlighted the presence of geographically mobile scholars, semi-sedentary coastal populations, or labour migrants – impacted profoundly on the transnational histories of the Bay. The presentations on Islamic connections between South and Southeast Asia contain valuable new insights on the spread of multilingualism must be situated within the wider context of academic interconnectedness? South and Southeast Asia share a new area? If the Bay of Bengal is to be seen as a conceptually 'new region' is hardly a cartographic convenience. People, commodities, and ideas have travelled back and forth along the aquatic dimensions of the Bay of Bengal, including the very ships aboard which the foundations of interethnic contact were laid. The latter challenge was not met by this symposium, but ample opportunity exists.

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Cumulatively, the presentations and the ensuing discussion demonstrated the strength of bringing together researchers from different backgrounds to address the shared histories of South and Southeast Asia. One of the main intellectual challenges of examining so culturally diverse a region is to talk with each other, not past each other, and produce research that appeals to scholars across nation-states and in a wide range of disciplines, each entitled to their own conventions and interpretations of such key concepts as ‘culture’, ‘transnational connections’; ‘transcendence’; ‘crossroads’ or ‘passageways’. Indeed, in depth cultural knowledge – a skill quickly disappearing from the toolkit of area studies – is often the only way to access perspectives other than those left to us by the European colonial project and post-independence nation-states. In the absence of written records, clues to the history of daily life can be found in the rites of religions, the beliefs and relics of temples, and the vocabulary of languages. Linguists, philologists, anthropologists, art historians, and religious studies scholars could therefore be more vocal in ensuring that cultural and region-specific perspectives are not overlooked in the cockt of ‘big history’. In addition, we need the insights of maritime historians and archaeologists to sharpen our picture of the aquatic dimensions of the Bay of Bengal, including the very ships aboard which the foundations of interethnic contact were laid. The latter challenge was not met by this symposium, but ample opportunity exists.

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Steppe and the Silk Roads, China’s Interactions with its Neighbours

Elena Paskaleva

Lecture series delivered by Professor Jessica Rawson 4-9 May 2015

DAME JESSICA RAWSON, Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology at Oxford University delivered a series of lectures in Leiden and Amsterdam, from 4-9 May 2015, entitled ‘Steppe and China’s Interactions with its Neighbours’. The series was initiated and organized by the Leiden University research cluster Asian Modernities and Traditions. The last lecture in Amsterdam at the Rijksmuseum was co-organized by the International Institute for Asian Studies and the Friends of Asian Arts Association. The lectures were part of the new initiative on Central Asia at Leiden University, funded by Asian Modernities and Traditions.

Professor Jessica Rawson

Professor Rawson currently holds a five year (2011-2016) Leverhulme Senior Fellowship at Oxford University on China and Inner Asia, 2000-20 BC: Interactions that Changed China. Before moving to Oxford in 1994, she worked at the British Museum, where she became Deputy Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities in 1976 and Keeper of the Department in 1987. Jessica Rawson was the Warden of Merton College, Oxford from 1994 until her retirement in 2010. She was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2002 for services to oriental studies. The research interests of Professor Rawson involve perceptions of beauty and changing beliefs in Chinese society from 1500 BC to AD 1000. She also focuses on the archaeology of China and Inner Asia, on early Chinese material culture as indicators of new ideas, various concepts and beliefs, and on the development and function of ornament in all parts of Eurasia. Currently, Professor Rawson works on interactions between central China and its neighbours, on early Chinese material culture, and the so-called Silk Road, bringing many merchants and officials documented in carvings on their coffins buried within the confines of Tang China. The Tang period, renowned for its art and poetry, is now much better known, according to Rawson, and even more colourful for the multiple engagements that we now know the court had with its neighbours.

Elena Paskaleva is a post-doctoral researcher working on Central Asian architecture and material culture. She is the coordinator of the Central Asia Initiative at Leiden University (elpask@gmail.com).

Peoples of the steppe, and created a hybrid culture drawn from native Chinese and foreign traditions. As the northern peoples became all the more powerful and overwhelmed China in later centuries, Chinese inventions travelled west, above all guns and gunpowder, porcelain and paper.

Monday 4 May, Leiden: Warfare, Beauty and Belief, Bridging Eurasia

The opening lecture by Professor Rawson took place at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. In this talk she introduced her overarching ideas and showed how the apples themed in different periods to illustrate the ways in which central China was forced to interact, especially with the northern neighbours. This interaction resulted in the creation of new technologies, artefacts and ideas, which China then changed and adapted within the Chinese cultural framework. Professor Rawson introduced the term arc – a wide territory surrounding the Central Plains to the north and west that shared many characteristics of the steppe; the steppe was quite closely linked to Siberia. Based on recent archaeological excavations she discussed the role of the arc by mapping artefacts across Eurasia. In these discussions, she also stressed the importance of the horse as a unifying feature of the steppe and of armour, an element that was also brought from the steppe. Professor Rawson pointed out that the horse has the largest number of chariot burials in the world. According to her, the chariots had been also introduced from the steppe regions. Further, she focused on the craftsmanship of jade, largely used in burial rituals, and on the ritualizing of weaponry.

Wednesday 6 May, Leiden: The Lure of Iron and Gold, Interactions with the Steppe in the First Millennium BC

The second lecture by Professor Rawson took place in the Small Auditorium at the Academy Building. In this talk she concentrated on the impact of military interactions across Eurasia. As riding on horseback changed the structure of the lives and warfare of the mobile peoples in Eurasia, all settled states, including central China, were forced to adapt to these challenges and change their own methods of warfare, affecting society as a whole.

Friday 8 May, Leiden: Sculpture and Stone in the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220)

The last lecture in Leiden was also held in the main Academy Building. Professor Rawson drew comparisons between the usage of sculpture in the west and across Eurasia. Although sculpture and stone are major features of Western Asian culture, the early Chinese did not make use of either. Following the innovations of the First Emperor and the creation of the Terracotta Warriors, which owed their inspiration to both Western Asia and different steppe peoples, the Han emperors adopted both the sculpture and stone, primarily in burial contexts. Professor Rawson argues that stone armour, fitting mostly representatives of the highest rank, can only be understood in its relation to death rituals. These innovations then filtered down to lower levels of the elite, but again in the context of tombs.

Saturday 9 May, Amsterdam: Tents, Tombs and Horse Trade, the Tang (AD 618-906) and the Turks

The last lecture at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. The Tang period is renowned for its glittering court and the so-called Silk Road, bringing many merchants and foreign goods to the capital, Chang’an. The talk illustrated the very fine artefacts of this period in a much wider context. The Tang were engaged with several Turkish empires, at that period occupying large areas of the steppe. The Chinese were forced to purchase horses to engage with these mounted warriors, and they paid for the horses, coming from the steppe, in silk. This silk drove the silk trade, mainly in the hands of an Iranian people, the Sogdians. Today we have much evidence from archaeological excavations of the lives of the Sogdians who settled in China in the sixth to eighth century. Professor Rawson presented the fascinating scenes of these merchants and officials documented in carvings on their coffins buried within the confines of Tang China. The Tang period, renowned for its art and poetry, is now much better known, according to Rawson, and even more colourful for the multiple engagements that we now know the court had with its neighbours.

Below: Camel with rider, earthenware, Tang Dynasty.

Above: Detail Hall of the Ambassadors, Ashmolean. 17th-century Sogdian mural, discovered in 1985 in Samarqand [photo by author].

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Call for Papers
Heritage as aid and diplomacy in Asia

Application deadline: 1 November 2015
Conference dates: 26-28 May 2016
Venue: Leiden, the Netherlands

Organisation: Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan; Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore; International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the Netherlands

About the conference
In spite of a growing academic interest in the politics of heritage in Asia, few studies have directly questioned the role of international and transnational cooperation in the field of heritage conservation. First, even though the literature has widely addressed the role of UNESCO as a powerful disseminator of international standards of conservation (e.g., Askew 2010; Daly and Winter 2012), it has not yet tackled UNESCO’s sociological and institutional complexity, and the full panorama of its activities. Secondly, the various actors who have long had a major impact in the management of heritage in Asia are now joined by newly established Asian-based foundations, such as Korea’s Samsung Foundation, the World Monuments Fund and the Getty Trust, and a long list of other international and European institutions that have long had a long history of cultural international intervention. Thirdly, private ‘philanthropic’ programs like the Agha Khan Foundation, the World Bank, the European Union, the Asian Development Bank and many others — that have their own foundations, such as Korea’s Samsung Foundation, to mention just one. Finally, new connections have recently been drawn between the various development schemes explicitly linking ‘culture’ and ‘economic opportunities’, as part of the global capital-driven developmentalist discourse, as when World Heritage sites become objects of mass tourism and urban areas as labelled ‘creative’. This new model of ‘cultural capitalism’ is fast becoming prominent, as is the global campaign of systematic digitisation of library collections by the multinational Google, ‘responsible capitalism’, or micro-credit schemes. These essentially capitalist constructions now co-exist with the more traditional state-sponsored heritage practices and with elite-originated private cultural philanthropy.

The relative shortage of historical, sociological, political, and ethnographic research on these multiple incarnations of ‘heritage as aid or as diplomacy’ is all the more surprising when we consider how cultural and heritage management represents a major area of international cooperation as well as a powerful instrument of ‘soft’ influence by states, corporate forces and social elites on Asia-based heritage practices. This conference will address the relevant international and transnational actors as objects of study and will engage in a threefold exploration (see website for details): 1. Knowledge production 2. Geopolitics of heritage as diplomacy 3. Ethnographies of international agents and ‘cultural experts’

The three themes outlined above chart the area we wish to call ‘heritage as aid and diplomacy’. The relative shortage of historical, sociological, political, and ethnographic research on these multiple incarnations of ‘heritage as aid or as diplomacy’ is all the more surprising when we consider how cultural and heritage management represents a major area of international cooperation as well as a powerful instrument of ‘soft’ influence by states, corporate forces and social elites on Asia-based heritage practices. This conference will address the relevant international and transnational actors as objects of study and will engage in a threefold exploration (see website for details): 1. Knowledge production 2. Geopolitics of heritage as diplomacy 3. Ethnographies of international agents and ‘cultural experts’

Topics for papers
Please refer to the website for a list of possible topics to explore in your paper.

Requirements
Paper proposals should include a title, name of author, institutional affiliation, email address, an abstract (300 words) and a biographical biography (150 words). The proposal should be submitted via the form available on the IAS website at http://www.iias.nl/heritageaid by 1 November 2015. Successful applicants will be notified by 20 December 2015 and will be required to send a draft paper (6000 - 8000 words) by 15 April 2016. Four nights’ accommodation and (partial) travel grant will be provided for all accepted participants.

Conveners
Dr Philippe Pecyam, Director, International Institute for Asian Studies, The Netherlands

Professor Michael Hsiao, Distinguished Research Fellow and Director, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

Dr Hui-Yew Fooning, Senior Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

Conference series
This conference is the last in a series of three, jointly organised by the above mentioned institutions. For information on the series, see the website.

Contact
For enquiries about the conference, please contact Ms. Martina van den Haak at m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl.

Website: www.iias.nl/heritageaid

A-ASIA Inaugural Conference
Asian Studies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interactions

24-26 September 2015, Accra, Ghana

Organized by the Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASIA) in cooperation with The International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS)

In 2015, the A-ASIA in cooperation with ICAS will organize its first biennial conference. It will be the first conference held in Africa that will bring together a multilingual cadre of more than 350 scholars from all over the world with a shared focus on Asia and Africa-Asian intellectual interactions.

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

Registration
If you would like to attend this conference as an observer, register via the form provided at: http://www.africas.asia/registration-0

Travel and accommodation
The International Institute for Asian Studies provides hotel accommodation for three nights to all selected participants. Participants are expected to cover their own travel expenses. Very limited financial support may be available to specific scholars residing in Asia and some junior or low-income scholars from other parts of the world. If you would like to be considered for financial support, please submit the Grant Application form in which you state your motivation for your request. Please note that the workshop operates on a limited budget, and we will not normally be able to provide more than the minimal coverage of the travel expenses. The form should be submitted before 1 October 2015. Requests for funding received after this date will not be taken into consideration.

Contact
For enquiries about the workshop, please contact Ms. Martina van den Haak at m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl.

Website: www.iias.nl/indianmedicine

Call for Abstracts
Indian medicine: between state and village

Application deadline: 1 October 2015
Workshop dates: 23-24 June 2016
Venue: Leiden, the Netherlands

Conveners: Dr Maarten Bode, Adjunct Research Faculty at the Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam (UvA), the Netherlands, and Adjunct Faculty in the Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden University, The Netherlands; Dr Shouvik Chatterjee, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

About the workshop
The workshop takes the sensibilities of Indian medicines as its point of departure. Themes to be discussed in the workshop are: Indian medicines as tangible and intangible heritage; Indian medicines as health security for the poor; Indian medicines as identity markers (for the nation, for local communities, and for Westeriners in search of Indian spirituality). An important cross-cutting theme is the quest for legitimation and acceptance. For example by linking Indian medicines to the global project of ‘Evidence-based Medicine’ and to Indian knowledge systems. Contributions from medical anthropology (the actors’ point of view) and Science and Technology Studies (social construction of medical knowledge) are especially welcome. However, papers from other theoretical orientations are also welcomed.

An important question is if and how Indian nationalist politics affect the recognition, ownership, and management of the wide spectrum of traditional medicines in contemporary India. Social-cultural research shows that on the national level we see debateable – either unintentional or intentional – attempts at reifying, ossifying and nationalizing Indian medicines as Ayurveda. The suggestion is that Ayurveda as India’s national medicine is a discrete medical system and that it provides the codified substrate for the many local forms of herbal based Indian medicine practiced today. Though it has long been structured as an act of appropriation, labelling local forms of Indian medicine as Ayurveda can also be seen as an act of empowerment. What is needed is a dialogue with strong independent stakeholders: the medical community, state and local communities. By discussing the interactions between global, national and local forms of Indian medicine the workshop wants to contribute to such a dialogue.

The meeting, organized by the International Institute for Asian Studies, the Netherlands, will take the form of a series of discussions of new academic papers, submitted in advance of the workshop. A peer-reviewed selection of the (revised) papers will subsequently be prepared for publication in the scholarly journal Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity (JASTAM, Brill).

Submission details
Abstracts of no more than 300 words, with a short CV, should be submitted via the form available on the IAS website at http://www.iias.nl/indianmedicine before 1 October 2015. You will be informed before 1 November 2015 if your abstract has been accepted.

Selected participants are expected to submit their completed papers before 15 April 2016.

Website: www.iias.nl/indianmedicine

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IIAS Announcements
Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

DURING THE UPCOMING MONTHS several exciting and promising events will take place within the framework of the IIAS pilot-programme Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context.

The ‘Rethinking Asian Studies’ programme is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York and coordinated by IIAS in collaboration with numerous institutions in Asia, the United States, Europe and Africa. Its overarching objective is to reconsider conventional area studies and (as part of this effort) to enrich area study disciplines by fostering a greater appreciation for the humanities, in order to overcome what is considered to be a ‘general devaluation’ of the humanistic disciplines in the U.S., Europe and many parts of Asia.

More information: www.rethinking.asia

Upcoming workshops

Sharpening the Edges: Instating State and Power in Indian Ocean History. An Agenda for Critical Research and Teaching

Date: 17 August 2015
Place: Leiden, The Netherlands

Co-conveners:
Prof. Michael LaFahn, Princeton University, USA;
Prof. Nira Wickramasinghe, Leiden University Institute for Asia Studies (IUSK)

This workshop will bring together a group of fifteen scholars, some invited and others selected through a 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, than in the USA. In keeping with the overall Mellon programme, ‘Rethinking Asian Studies’, the workshop aims at triangulating a dialogue between Euro-American and South and Southeast Asian scholars.

Beyond the State’s Reach: Casino Spaces as Enclaves of Development or Lawlessness?

Date: 21-22 August 2015
Place: Siem Reap, Cambodia

Co-conveners:
Dr. Danielle Tan, Lyon Institute of East Asian Studies (IAS-CNRS); Prof. Brenda Yeoh, Asian Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore;
Prof. Tak Wing Ngo, University of Macau.

Partner and host:
Dr. Krissna Uk, Center for Khmer Studies (CKS)
Siem Reap, Cambodia

This part of the programme aims at studying Southeast Asia based on networks, processes, transitions, polyvalence, and fluidity, in opposition to the concepts of the ‘nation-state’ or the ‘region’. This workshop seeks to better understand the ‘transitional zones’ that have emerged in the wake of the encounter between local communities, new migratory circulations and the global economy. The multiplication of mega casino resorts in Asia is emblematic of these new spaces created across local and global scales. Over the past few years, the belief has taken root that the gaming industry is a powerful tool for economic development. The workshop purposes to bring together scholars from different fields and theoretical approaches to interrogates the immediate and long-term socio-political impacts of casino-oriented development in Singapore, Macau, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, where migration, employment, economic aspiration and social cohesion have been issues of contention.

City Theory for the New Millennium

Date: 26-21 October 2015
Place: Shanghai, China

Convenors:
The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS);
Prof. Paul Kabri, Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA);
Prof. Anupama Rao, Columbia University/Barnard College;
Dr. Philippe Pecoyam, International Institute for Asian Studies (IAS).

Partner and host:
Prof. Tu Qiyu, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS)
Shanghai, China.

The focus of this event will be the knowledge about cities (research approaches, theories, curricula, literature), specifically cities in Asia. At issue is how urban expertise can be framed in a more integrated fashion, by joining social sciences with humanities-based knowledge, to inform applied expertise, and vice versa. A second objective is to explore how these new forms of city knowledge and theory can contribute to re-shaping humanistic higher education including culturally and historically-grounded ‘regional studies’.

Asian Cities: Colonial to Global

Gregory Bracken (ed.)
ISBN: 9789089649317
Amsterdam University Press; Series: Asian Cities

When people look at success stories among postcolonial nations, the focus almost always turns to Asia, where many cities in former colonies have become key locations of international commerce and culture. This book brings together a stellar group of scholars from a number of disciplines to explore the rise of Asian cities, including Singapore, Macau, Hong Kong, and more. Dealing with history, geography, culture, architecture, urbanism, and other topics, the book attempts to formulate a new understanding of what makes Asian cities such global leaders.

Gregory Bracken is an Assistant Professor at the Architecture Faculty of Delft University of Technology and a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

Shanghai Literary Imaginings

Lena Scheen
ISBN: 9789089645876
Amsterdam University Press; Series: Asian Cities

This book draws on a wide range of methods – including approaches from literary studies, cultural studies, and urban sociology – to analyse the transformation of Shanghai through rapid growth and widespread urban renewal. Lena Scheen explores the literary imaginings of the city, its past, present, and future, in order to understand the effects of that urban transformation on both the psychological state of Shanghai’s citizens and their perception of the spaces they inhabit.

Lena Scheen is assistant professor/faculty fellow at New York University Shanghai (NYU Shanghai).
Christina Firpo

Christina Firpo is an Associate Professor of History at CalPoly University in San Luis Obispo, California. She was a fellow at IIAS during Spring-Summer 2013 and a fellow at the KITLV during Summer 2014. Her book, The Uprooted: Race and Childhood in Colonial Indochina, 1890-1975, will be published by the University of Hawai'i Press in 2016.

In May 2013, I arrived in Leiden where I would spend the last four months of my sabbatical at IIAS. My task was to finish writing my book on mixed-race children in 19th and 20th century Vietnam. IIAS provided a perfect writing atmosphere, and more. I was immediately charmed by Leiden, its museums, and the 19th century café that served delicate meringues. To my delight, I learned that the institute was located in a 17th century house on the elegant Rapenburg canal. The story goes that after the residents of Leiden resisted the Spanish, William of Orange rewarded them with a choice of either tax exemption or a university. They chose the latter—a people after my own heart. The original University building is a church converted into a lecture hall, symbolizing the sacrosanctity of knowledge in Leiden’s community.

At the Rapenburg office, I settled into a third floor workspace where I had a bird’s eye view of the canal below. Within a few weeks of arriving, I was entertained by watching a barge come through to pull rusty bicycles out of the canal—and it had a heaping pile. As the Spring set in, crocuses broke through the ground, the weather warmed up, and the sun set later each day. My new friends and I took advantage of the northern latitude to enjoy late drinks along the canal, discussing our research.

My fellowship at IIAS was fruitful. The institute was impressively organized: they took care of fellow’s housing, organized talks and field trips, and gave us helpful tips for getting around the Netherlands. The most valuable aspect of the IIAS fellowship was the intellectual community that the institute fostered. Director Philippe Peycam, also an historian of colonial Vietnam, offered me sage professional advice and introduced fellows to important contacts within the University of Leiden and the KITLV. He went above and beyond his duties as director to cook dinner for fellows, share his vast collection of mid-century Japanese music, and entertain us with jokes and slang in flawless Vietnamese.

Paul Rabé introduced me to new ways of approaching my research forced us to think about our work in broader Asian terms and from an interdisciplinary perspective. When we weren’t working hard, we geeked out, goofed off, and gobbled up the delights from the Wednesday market. I took advantage of the University of Leiden library and the KITLV collection. I made trips to The Hague to admire the architecture and visit museums. I took boat rides and tested every local cheese in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Haarlem, and other cities. I quickly fell in love with the complexity of the Dutch culture’s perfect simplicity.

IIAS offered more than the four walls of Rapenburg 59. I took advantage of the University of Leiden library and the KITLV collection. I made trips to The Hague to admire the architecture and visit museums. I took boat rides and tested every local cheese in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Haarlem, and other cities. I quickly fell in love with the complexity of the Dutch culture’s perfect simplicity. The exposure to varied types of research forced us to think about our work in broader Asian terms and from an interdisciplinary perspective. When we weren’t working hard, we geeked out, goofed off, and gobbled up the delights from the Wednesday market. IAS offered more than the four walls of Rapenburg 59. I took advantage of the University of Leiden library and the KITLV collection. I made trips to The Hague to admire the architecture and visit museums. I took boat rides and tested every local cheese in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Haarlem, and other cities. I quickly fell in love with the complexity of the Dutch culture’s perfect simplicity. The fellowship at IIAS also proved fruitful in ways that I could never have predicted. Writing flowed from my fingers. Before I knew it, my book was finished and it will be published with the University of Hawai’i Press in Spring 2016. In addition to finishing my first book, while at IIAS I made substantial headway on chapters for my second book on clandestine prostitution in colonial Vietnam. Through my contacts at IIAS, in the summer of 2014 I was invited to work on my second book at the KITLV. I also joined the book prize committee for the International Conference of Asian Scholars (ICAS) taking place in Adelaide, in July of this year. I see staff members almost every year at the Association of Asian Studies conference and other conferences. I look forward to seeing them again at ICAS 9, where my cohort will have a reunion in Australia.

Christina Firpo, Associate Professor of History, CalPoly University, San Luis Obispo, California. (cfirpo@calpoly.edu).
IIAS research and other initiatives are carried out within a number of thematic clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents—all built around the notion of social agency. The aim of this approach is to cultivate synergies and coherence between people and projects. IIAS also welcomes research for the open cluster, so as not to exclude potentially significant and interesting topics. Visit www.iias.nl for more information.

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 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 Borders

The Asian Borderlands Research Network (www.asianborderlands.net) 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 mobilization and conflict, market liberalization and market reforms. The ABRN organizes 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)

Asian Energy

The Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The EPA-research programme is designed to study the effects of global Energy Programme Asia (EPA) in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner.

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

Asian Cities

The Postcolonial Global City

This research programme examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have started to mimic global urban models while retaining their own unique characteristics. This programme invites research on the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times. Through an international knowledge-network of experts, cities and research institutions it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, EPA-ASias creates a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities ‘in context’ and beyond traditional western norms of knowledge.

Coordinator: Greg Bracken (gregory.corrlever@nuigalway.ie)

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) is an international network of scholars, practicioners and policymakers who are interested in the study of Asian cities. The network will examine the growth of major cities in Asia, and the development of new modes of urbanity.

Coordinator: Maarten Bode (m.bode@uva.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 values. 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, VAS has been intensively engaged with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IUS) and Leiden University 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 one of the Asian partners (currently National Taiwan University in Taipei, Yonsei University in Seoul, and Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta).

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

Indian Medical Heritage Research Network

The Indian Medical Heritage Research Network wants to stimulate socio-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 hosts a variety of research projects through the exchange of research findings and other information about India’s medical heritage covering diverse perspectives, interests and backgrounds.


Coordinator: Maarthen 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, America, 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, emphasizing the inclusion of young and aspiring scholars from the four 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 in large part by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The website provides a virtual space for Facebook (www.facebook.com/IndianMedicalHeritage) for collating research findings and other information about India’s medical heritage covering diverse perspectives, interests and backgrounds.


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

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 Borders
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 | The Newsletter | No. 71 | Summer 2015
IIAS fellowship programme

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

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1 May – 30 Jun 2015

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26 Jan – 8 Mar 2015

In the Spotlight

Valérie Gelézeau

Blogging time for my ‘New geographies of urban cultures in Korea’

As a Korean Studies scholar, I was already acquainted with IIAS publications, events, and bustling activities. But only recently did I decide to apply for a fellowship, after several effervescent years engaged at my mother institution, the EHESS in Paris. I1ooked for a few months to concentrate on a new project. Arriving in Leiden when the ‘Keukenhof’ is in full bloom, when other fellows arrive from all over the world, and with this project to focus on, seems just a dream come true! Combining the perspectives of cultural geography and Korean studies, my project seeks to better problematize what I call the ‘Korean world’ (North and South Korea, and the Korean diaspora) by entering the urban terrain comparatively. That North and South Korea greatly diverge is only too well known to all, but the known knowledge. Yet locally, I rather observe the convergence: the importance of housing as form and planning, the use of public parks, where having a picnic is a popular Sunday event for middle class families, the rehabilitation of the riverbanks in Seoul and Pyongyang, the importance of new history museums that tell a different story of the nation. At all these intertwined levels of urban space and practice, comparison triggers questions about how the fabric of cities articulates with two societies that share a common urban history on the longue durée, but chose radically opposite ways to modernize and urbanize since the division occurred midway through the 20th century.

While the main purpose and ultimate goal of this BAS fellowship project is to elaborate the synopsis of a monograph on urban cultures in the Koreas (which will be my third single-authored book), this project rests on three simultaneous works in progress. The first topic leads me to analyze scholarly geographical discourses on capitals in South Korea; I discuss how the Korean case challenges the capital as a single static center and the matrix/product of the territorial dynamics of nation-states. This chapter in the making will stand in a volume that I currently editing on Korean capital cities, which will be published in the fall by the new Korean Studies series of the College de France in Paris. In the second topic, an ongoing fieldwork, I focus on the development since 2003 of an urban mega-project (Songdo City in South Korea), studying residential neighborhoods where the planning of housing and public spaces meets the actual urban experience of the original residents. The final focus is grounded on very long term effects. But choosing radically opposite ways to modernize and urbanize since the division occurred midway through the 20th century. Like many scholars, I have several things growing in my garden, which will blossom during my stay at IIAS. The intellectual environment in Leiden seems perfect for that. I can develop long standing connections with Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IIAS), and benefit from the exceptional resources of the East Asian Library, especially the one developed on North Korea. Within IIAS, I also look forward to developing new active collaborations with scholars engaged like myself in the Asian Cities cluster, but also with other IAS clusters (Global Asia, and Asian Heritage).

My term here only just started and it has been a blooming time for my research – and not only because the BAS organized a friendly May 1st outing at the Keukenhof gardens! Already, the presentation I delivered on Songdo (just May) gave me useful feedback. I meet every day dynamic international scholars, with equally fascinating projects. Learning more about them at the BAS lunch lectures is a pleasure. Now that I think of it, the intense colors of the Keukenhof’s tulips are indeed a perfect symbol of my stay here, and I am extremely grateful to both the IIAS for granting me this fellowship, and the EHESS for letting me seize this great opportunity.
Tina Shrestha

Transnational suffering narrative: documenting Nepali migrant communities in Southeast Asia and Europe

MY AIM AT IAS IS TWOFOLD. First, I am working to convert my doctoral dissertation into a book manuscript Working the Paper: Nepali Suffering Narration, Compassion, and the US Asylum Process for publication. This project is based on 24 months of ethnographic fieldwork (among Nepali migrants and asylum seekers and their legal advocates in New York City) on socio-legal practices, particularly the co-production of suffering-testimonials and narratives. Second, I am initiating a new project—building on the theoretical foundations laid by my dissertation—on the emergence and conceptualization of dukkha, or suffering, at the intersection of specific transnational migration of Nepals to Europe and Southeast Asia.

In the book manuscript, I bring into conversation the scholarly literature on contemporary U.S. immigration and critical asylum regimes, using the frameworks in legal anthropology, humanitarianism, and phenomenology.

My analysis centers on two key issues: 1) the formation of diverse migrant subjectivities as refugees and asylum seekers in the US are forged in a dialectic between people negotiating the socio-legal category of ‘asylum seeker’ and integrating into the US society as ‘migrant workers’; and 2) the contemporary US asylum process as a paradigmatic case for the co-production of ‘suffering testimonials’, where asylum advocates and legal experts employ, embody, and self-consciously reproduce rationales to practice compassion as an important extension of the everyday performance of membership in a liberal, democratic state.

The new project expands the argument in my dissertation on the conceptualization of suffering as an unstable category that Nepals adhere to through shared social practices—as a concrete moral responsibility and an outcome of negotiating competing socio-existential values. In particular, it draws on phenomenological approaches and debates on suffering by re-thinking the conceptual divide between the moral and the material examine the specific ways that the term dukkha itself may extend across distinctly situated ambiguities and continuum in the context of transnational Nepali migration. More broadly, suffering as a lived-experience and a powerful narrative within the contexts of Nepali migration to Europe and Southeast Asia is of primary interest for me.

Being at IAS has provided me with a vibrant intellectual community and a collegial atmosphere to pursue my writing and engage with scholars. Since being at IAS, I have attended several academic events, including the Photo Exhibition titled Picturing Asia, the Asian Modernities and Traditions talk, and monthly presentations by IAS fellows. An invitation to give a talk (last month) allowed me to share my research with other fellows, where I received helpful comments and participated in an engaging conversation afterward. At the University of Amsterdam (UvA), I have also the opportunity to meet scholars working on their book projects and migration-related projects in Europe. I currently attended workshops organized by MoMat (Moving Matters) that bring together advanced graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and junior scholars working on the themes of migration. Recently, I was an invited guest speaker in the course titled Asian Perspectives in the Anthropology Department at UvA.

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

Asian Cities
The Asian Cities cluster explores modes of urban development, and deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows and fluxes, ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism and connectivity at their core, framing the existence of vibrant ‘civil societies’ and political micro-cultures. Through an international knowledge network, IAS aims to create a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities ‘in context’ and beyond traditional Western norms of knowledge.

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

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

For information on the research clusters and application form visit our website:

www.iias.nl
**Guan Di and Tin Mountain: Chinese temples in Northeast Tasmania**

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) in Launceston, Tasmania, houses a surprising collection. In a specially built room in the Art Gallery building is a Temple containing items from six Chinese temples from Tasmania’s northeast region.

In Tasmania, unusually, the Chinese were largely accepted by Europeans. The levels of antagonism experienced by Chinese miners on the Australian mainland were far less in evidence in Tasmania, although there was some conflict. Some leaders, such as Ma Miu Chinn (马秀全 / 马秀全) of Weldborough and Chinn Kau (焦某 / 焦某 / 陈高) of Launceston, became highly respected members of the community. For the most part this lack of antipathy in Tasmania was less a sign of tolerance and more likely a reflection of the fact that the tin fields were a signifiant proportion of the entire population of Tasmania’s northeast; they were at Weldborough, Garibaldi, Branchholm, Mooring, Gladstone, and Lefroy. All were in tin-mining areas, although Lefroy began as a gold-mining settlement. The temples were small wooden buildings, whose humble external appearances belied the wealth accumulated within.

All known Tasmanian temples were built during the 1880s, and were dedicated to Guan Di. Guan Di worship appears to have been almost universal amongst Australian overseas Chinese. The majority of immigrants were poor, illiterate manual labourers, and Guan Di worship was extremely popular in southern China amongst labourers. Guan Di as a deity also offered a number of other advantages to immigrant Chinese. As well as being a highly regarded ‘Emperor’ figure within the Taoist/Buddhist pantheon, with the ability to cast out demons, Guan Di has the key attribute of fostering brotherhood. This had great appeal in communities separated from their homes by both distance and cultural practices. The ‘Joss House,’ or Guan Di Temple (关帝庙 / 关帝庙) in QVMAG, holds the contents of a number of temples from northern Tasmanian mining towns. As the Chinese population gradually declined and many smaller towns were abandoned, the temples closed and key items from each were brought together, eventually ending up in Weldborough. When the Weldborough temple closed in 1934, the custodian transferred custody to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, as a working temple for the Launceston Chinese community.

The temple collection is a fascinating snapshot into the importance of religion as a social glue for the Chinese in Tin Mountain. Despite the buildings being simple weatherboard constructions, their contents reflect considerable expenditure. The inscriptions on many of the items in this temple tell us that they were donated by individuals, surname lodges, lodges of the Hong Men (洪门) or Triad, or district associations. Chinese on the Tasmanian tin fields would use membership of groups such as ‘surname lodges’ for support in hard conditions, and to provide some measure of social cohesion and sense of belonging in a strange and difficult new place. Some were part of brotherhoods or secret societies such as the Hong Men, which began in the mid-1860s in China as a revolutionary group. In Southeast Asia, they developed into the ‘Triad’ criminal organisation. In Australia Hong Men became more of a benevolent association, eventually forming Chinese Masonic lodges.

The items in the current temple collection mostly date from the 1880s. Items were given to these temples by those who had ‘received benefits and favour’ from the gods, and wished to reciprocate through the bestowing of high-value material. Items range from carved and painted plaques to信心牌, consoles, and candlesticks, large decorative floats of golden palaces, small shrines and ceremonial weapons.

In a specially built room in the Art Gallery building is a Temple containing items from six Chinese temples from Tasmania’s northeast region.

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*Jon Addison, History curator at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (jon.addison@launceston.tas.gov.au).*

**References**

1. New Chinese carpenters were brought to the colony as skilled labourers in 1839. They were probably the first Chinese people in Northern Tasmania. However, few other Chinese immigrants appear before the 1860s, and these early immigrants are not representative of the later influx of Chinese miners.