Who is the New Asia Scholar?

Perhaps a scholar who is, among others, responding to a developing Asia, to the evolving inclusiveness of Asian Studies, to the significance of language, and to the increasing demand for alternative scholarship.

We put this question to our colleagues; their answers can be found within the pages of our Focus.
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The Focus
The New Asia Scholar

SONJA ZWEEGERS & PAUL VAN DER VELDE
Who is the New Asia Scholar? Perhaps a scholar who is, among others, responding to a developing Asia, to the evolving inclusiveness of Asian Studies, to the significance of language, and to the increasing demand for alternative scholarship. We put this question to our colleagues; their answers can be found within the pages of our Focus.
I am writing this just as we are completing, in collaboration with our African and international partners, what was perhaps the most daring initiative by IIAAS or by an institute of its kind: the extraordinary conference ‘Africa-Asia: A New Axis of Knowledge’ (Accra, Ghana, 24-26 September 2015). With more than 300 participants coming from 30-plus countries, mainly from Africa and Asia, about 60 panels and roundtables focusing on as many subjects, and despite all the logistical difficulties such an undertaking entails, something quite special took place during these three magical days at the University of Ghana, exactly 60 years after the historic Bandung conference. An “epiphany”, was how one of our Ghanaian hosts described it. The next issue of The Newsletter will go into further detail about this remarkable event.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAAS

Similarly, IIAAS explores new spaces of social agency through its appreciation of patterns of cultural transformation and their uses. IIAAS not only looks at how communities seek to withstand top down cultural discourses and policies imposed upon them (a theme covered by two international conferences, in Singapore in January 2014, in partnership with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; and in Taipei in December 2014, with Academia Sinica), it also encourages critical explorations of cultural policies (see the upcoming conference ‘Language, Power and Identity in Asia’, in Leiden, March 2016, in partnership with the LeidenGlobal platform; and the ‘Heritage as Aid and Diplomacy’ conference, scheduled for May 2016, also in Leiden).

At all levels, creative forms of expressions and representations are being explored: from the invention of a ‘heritage of shame’ (Professor Jing-Sung Han’s presentation ‘Making of Dark Heritage in Contemporary Japan’, September 2015, at IIAAS), to the discovery of the multiplicity of identity in today’s decentralized Indonesia (a collaboration between IIAAS and the Indonesian Heritage Society BPPI). If this recognition of multiple identities is somewhat familiar to the people of India, it is a new fast becoming common in a number of Southeast and even Eastern Asian societies.

Another IIAAS focus, on ‘global Asia’, interrogates the pervasiveness of Asia in the world, through Asian diaspora, Asian commodities, businesses, ideas, cultural productions, etc. What does this Asian ubiquity mean for the current trend of geopolitical realignment, with the erosion of Western references and models in all parts of the world? We consider this phenomenon by facilitating dialogue between African and Asian scholars (as per the Africa-Asia conference in Accra, and the A-Asia/IIAS roundtables ‘Asia through an African Lens’ and ‘Towards a Sustainable Model of Asian Studies in Africa’); and, within Asia, by exploring communities beyond the state’s reach, at the Asian Borderlands workshop and conference (Lyon, 2014 and Siem Reap, 2015).

This constantly shifting definition of Asian Studies is reflected in IIAAS’s flagship activities, including ICAS, the IIAAS Summer/Winter Schools, and The Newsletter. These platforms of intellectual engagement seek to bring together local and global perspectives, to de-centre their production, with the desire to promote new spaces of conviviality and sharing, and above all, an urge to weave together singular ‘interstitial’ elements with broader trends in time and space.

Take the IIAAS Summer/Winter Schools. After a number of very successful installments, IIAAS is now receiving requests from numerous universities and their cities to host this intensive weeklong academic exercise. They seek access to the unusually diverse range of participants and academic conveners (selected by IIAAS from its various networks), knowing that these participants and their conveners will not just engage with each other, but will equally interact with their hosts and the local place, to ultimately develop new knowledge and output. This is exactly what happened in Leiden in 2011 (‘Heritage Conserved and Contested in Asia and Europe’) and 2012 (‘Migrations and Interactions’), in Macau in 2013 (‘Postcolonial Urban Hybridity’), in Chiang Mai in 2014 (‘Politics of Craft’) and no doubt, what will happen in Kyoto in January 2015 (‘Building Urban Societies through the Arts’).

Out of these intensive training events, participants gain more than theoretical and factual content. They forge new and unexpected connections, thanks to the diversity of backgrounds and approaches, but also due to the places in which the Schools embed their activities. With some slight adjustments, I could say the same about the ICAS events or The Newsletter, all meant to serve as spaces of inclusive knowledge, exchanges, and shared experiences.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAAS
ICAS 9 Adelaide

The 9th International Convention of Asia Scholars took place in Adelaide, from 5-9 July 2015. ICAS 9 was jointly hosted by South Australia’s three public universities: the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia, and supported by the Asian Studies Association of Australia. The ICAS Secretariat is hosted by IIAS in Leiden.

The programme drew over 1000 participants from some 60 countries and took place at the astounding multi-award-winning Adelaide Convention Centre. “The programme not only ran very smoothly, it was also one of the most diverse ever”, says Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary. The programme included more than 200 panels, a book and academic exhibition, Asian country updates, film screenings, cultural performances, receptions by the Governor of South Australia and the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, excursions, and of course, the 2015 ICAS Book Prize Award Ceremony. In addition to being a great academic and (social) networking success, ICAS 9 was celebrated by the people of the Adelaide Convention Bureau, whose analysis report indicated the many local jobs created, and the very substantial income generated by the event for the city.

Embedded in the conference’s final day, was the special policy and action research summit ‘InterculturAdelaide’. ICAS 9 was held under the theme of ‘interculturality’. This relatively new term can be understood as the encounter between hegemonic and non-dominant cultures as well as frictions, overlapping, interdependencies, potentials for conflict and mutual interference caused by this. For ICAS 9, the central question was how interculturality and its principles can lead to new insights and understandings about Asia, Asian interactions with the world and the world’s interactions with Asia. Special attention was paid to how such academic insights can be used to help develop public policy in South Australia, while at the same time helping the general public to understand just how important academic insights can be in helping such policy development.

Needless to say we are looking forward to the tenth edition of ICAS, to be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand (20-23 July, 2017). We hope you will join us to yet again make ICAS a fantastic happening.

Jinghong Zhang and Kurt de Belder

Adam Clulow and Philippe Peycam

Tutin Aryanti and Michiel Baas

Khoo Salma Nasution and Purnendra Jain

Performance at the opening ceremony

Guests at the ICAS 9 opening reception

Takashi Shiraishi

Paul van der Velde

Jinghong Zhang and Kurt de Belder

Adam Clulow and Philippe Peycam

Tutin Aryanti and Michiel Baas

Khoo Salma Nasution and Purnendra Jain
The 2015 Jury Prizes and Accolades

The ICAS BOOK PRIZE (IBP) award ceremony took place on 6 July 2015, during ICAS 9 in Adelaide, Australia.

Jury prizes were awarded for the best books and dissertations in both the humanities and social sciences, in addition to the Colleagues’ Choice Award, which gives the academic community the opportunity to vote for their own favourite book.

Approximately 50 English-language dissertations, and more than 200 English-language books were submitted, by 58 publishers worldwide. We are in the process of including new languages to the ICAS Book Prize. Starting with the IBP at ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai (2017) we will be welcoming Chinese, Japanese, and German publishers.

This will mean taking a large step towards becoming a truly global competition that is not limited to the academic lingua franca English, but one in which all major languages with sufficient academic capacity can partake.

Below you will find the 2015 winning and shortlisted titles, in addition to the publications that received special accolades from the jury. The full list including all citations can be retrieved at www.asianlibraryleiden.nl.
The 2015 Africa-Asia Book Prize

The Africa-Asia Book Prize (AABP) was established by the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in 2013, in cooperation with the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-Asia). Its aim is to create an international focus for publications on Africa-Asia while increasing their worldwide visibility. Eligible academic books are those in the Humanities and Social Sciences, written either by an African scholar on an Asian topic or by any other author on Africa-Asia (transnational) linkages. The Africa-Asia Book Prize is awarded to outstanding English/French/Portuguese-language works in the field of Africa-Asian Studies.

Paul van der Velde

THE 1ST AABP AWARD CEREMONY took place in Accra (Ghana) during the ‘AFRICA-ASIA: A New Axis of Knowledge’ conference in September. Publishers were permitted to submit books with 2009-2014 publication dates. 25 titles were entered in total. With the exception of one French title, all were English-language. The publications came from 14 commercial publishers and 8 institutional publishing houses. Of the 25 books, a quarter fell in the Humanities category and the rest in Social Sciences. The themes Economy/Development and International Relations were most common, with 8 and 7 books respectively. Diasporas (Migration, History and Society) saw 4, 5 and 3 studies respectively, while the remaining categories Art/Culture, Environment, Health/Medicine, Literature, Religion and Urban were examined in just 1 or 2 studies.

Africa-Asian studies is an emerging field of studies. Most of the books in the running were published in the last two years and when looking through publishers’ autumn catalogues one cannot fail to note that there are a lot of books in the pipeline that will be eligible for the second edition of the Africa-Asia Book Prize.

The Winner of the 2015 Africa-Asia Book Prize


THE STUDY CALLS attention to a part of Afro-Asia that has often escaped the gaze of Anglophone researchers: the Hispanophone world. In so doing, the study also brings Africa and Asia into the orbit of Hispanic Studies, globalization a discipline which has hitherto focused on the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America. This highly innovative work foregrounds literary sources and archival material in Spanish, revealing a richness of perspectives on this part of the world that lie at the intersection of language, literature, culture, and history. Through an insightful analysis of two marginalized literary traditions (the Philippine and Equatorial Guinean ones), the Magellan Fallacy challenges ideas and concepts we often take for granted. In other words, globalization has many parents, including the literary exertions of the colonized who, through their pens, imagined and re-imagined the world in the metropoles. This is a work masterfully rendered, witty, original in its central thesis and seminal in its scope. A classic in the making.

Find the full list of title summaries on www.icas.asia/AABP2015
What often constitutes a surprise for Africans and many Indians is the discovery of largely forgotten settlements of Siddis, descendants of African diaspora in India, who number around forty-five thousand and live in closely knit communities spread out in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka and Telangana. Siddis possess a lively culture as revealed in their famous dance Dhamal and are often seen as symbolic of the rich, syncretic heritage of India. The cultural heritage of these Siddis is located within the historical process of their migration into the socio-economic landscape of India and has been reshaped by strong currents of acculturation and synthesis.

Karan Singh

Arrivals

The ethnonym Siddi, used for African communities living in India, is a considered a derivation of either ‘Sayyid’, signifying a captive of war in Arabic, or ‘Sayyid’, an honorific term for a person of noble descent.1 Sayyid, as a root of their ethnic name, also refers to Bilal, the first African disciple of Prophet Muhammad, while simultaneously designating owners of African slaves under the Omani Sultanate. Siddis are often called Siddi Badshah by local communities, a term that indicates their carefree, pleasant nature, though sometimes it may also carry connotations of careless and lack of responsibility. Although largely a consequence of Indian Ocean World (IOW) slave trade, Siddis arrived in India as mercenaries, sailors and traders also. During the peak of IOW slave trade, African slaves were transported to India through ports of Cambay, Cuttack, Bharuch, Surat, Diu, Cochin, Goa, etc., from different enclaves on the coastal areas of East and Northeastern Africa, the Horn of Africa as well as through the Red Sea. Some of the slaves entered India via the Middle East, in the company of Mughal and Turk armies, as elite soldier slaves or as domestic slaves, purchased by Muslim nobles from markets in Oman, Yemen, Baghdad or Mecca. Some of these elite soldier slaves played quite an important role in the history of India and their presence was felt in five major regimes of Medieval India: the Deccan states of the Bahamani (1347-1518), Bijapur (1580-1627), Nizam Shahi (1589-1626), Deccan Sultanate (1399-1440) and Bengal (1486-1493). Malik Ambar, perhaps the most famous Siddi elite slave became regent of Ahmednagar Sultanate and successfully resisted the attempts of powerful Mughals to annex the kingdom during his lifetime.

Deities and dancing

There is a remarkable vein of syncretism in the religious beliefs and cultural values of Siddis, who frequently married with native communities in India and participated in regional cultural and political systems. In Gujarat, the shrine of Bava Gor situated at Ratanpur, near Bharuch, constitutes a nucleus of the religious beliefs of the community and is a mosaic of cultural and political systems. In Gujarat, the cult of Gori Pir can be understood as a new, uniquely creolized cultural production that has been brought about through the interactions of Siddis with their social environment.2 Siddis have carried their distinct cultural identity to the modern period, allowing for the survival and eventual celebration of their unique identity in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural space of India.

References

3 P. Obeng, in Ethn. note 1, p.255.
What was the Cold War? The simple definition would likely be a 20th century international confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, which involved first Europe, and then Asia, Africa, and Latin America, eventually dividing the world into two camps. The key players of this global conflict are generally noted as a number of high-ranking policymakers, including Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong. We know this story. However, the full story is not so simple. It is time to change our ways of thinking about the Cold War.

Masuda Hajimii

Fig. 1 (Above left): The sudden revival and development of labor activism was one of the representative issues that shook social order in many parts of the world, not just in Japan and the United States but also in other European and Asian countries. "May Day Demonstration in Tokyo," May 1952." (Reprinted with permission. MacArthur Memorial Archives, Photographs Collection of Georgios Dimitrius. No. PH08072).

The company simply ignored this warning. Meanwhile, a 27-year-old worker, Ishijima Seichi, wrote a lengthy petition to Amis to ask for help, explaining that, although he was an active union member, he had never been a communist nor communist sympathizer. The letter, which included a detailed counterargument against the company’s charges, was translated and taken seriously. Amis examined the genuineness of Ishijima’s letter with the help of Japan’s Labor Ministry, which had one of its officials interview Ishijima. The official concluded that he was not a communist. Based on this information, Amis met with company officers and urged them to re-employ Ishijima. The company reacted by inviting Ishijima to a dinner and admitting that he was not a communist. Yet it still refused to re-employ him, instead offering him a deal, involving a sum of 250,000 yen — more than the average yearly income at that time — on the condition that he not challenge the management again before the QGH or the public. Ishijima was in a tough spot. Having a wife and children, and no possibility of returning to the company, he apparently accepted this offer. We do not have any further records involving him. QGH officials were confused and disturbed by the company’s refusal to rehire Ishijima, in spite of their repeated warnings. One Japanese official at the Labor Ministry explained that, even though Ishijima was not a communist, he might be considered a ‘troublemaker’ because, as one of the founding organizers of a union at his factory in Funami in the postwar years, he had actively criticized the management.4

Silencing troublemakers and creating domestic tranquility Such cases, in which companies took advantage of this vague definition of ‘troublemakers’, are numerous. One is that of Nippon Kokan, a small ironworks in Niigata Prefecture, where three dozen workers, mostly active union members, were fired for being “uncooperative, disturbing, and undesirable” elements at the company. One worker noticed that dismissals of workers were especially numerous where labor-management negotiations had been contentious.5 Another case was that of Fettu, a major transport company, where 800 ‘red purges’ were fired. Many, actually, were guilty only of participating in wildcat strikes earlier in the summer of 1955. In the case of Dai Nippon Best, a large local company, their actions were so conspicuous that a QGH official described the company as “one of the worst offenders in the field of textiles in taking advantage of the ‘red purge’ to dismiss anti-communists who were, in fact, aggressive union officers.”6
As this command shows, the implementation of the Red Purge went far beyond the control of the GHQ and, in practice, covered cases that were broader than just political and social disputes.

Moreover, in most cases the mass firings actually involved a filtering out of troublemakers, nonconformists, dissenters, and free thinkers, which suggest that the Red Purge developed less through the control of the GHQ and Washington than through local dynamics on the ground. The Newsletter,осторожнее!  

The procedure by which the Red Purge leads us to reconsider the nature of events. That is to say, was it really a red purge at all? In some cases, events fit well with the Red Purge narrative, but a large majority of other cases are better conceived broadly as social repression conducted by nameless and numberless local people in attempts to restrain social disagreements. Viewed in this way, the Red Purge is far more revealing of the aftermath of the Red War, rather it can be seen as part of a conservative backlash that silenced disagreements and created domestic tranquility, for example, across the island of Formosa.

Here we can develop our thinking by asking whether this situation was unique to postwar Taiwan or not. The answer is, of course, not. Similar suppressions and purges, indeed, simultaneously swept over many parts of the world: the suppression of counterrevolutionaries in China, the White Terror in Taiwan, anti-communist campaigns in Western societies, such as McCarthyism in the United States. Conventionally, these events have been studied primarily as symptoms of Cold War conflicts, rather than as means of pacifying various disagreements in the aftermath of World War II. Yet, as we will see, such suppressions and purges served broader and more diverse purposes of social control.

Reconsidering the White Terror in Taiwan

While exhibiting similarities across these cases here, let us briefly look at some examples that we usually think of as typical cases of Cold War suppression. Taiwan, for example, similarly underwent waves of anti-communist suppression in the early 1950s, commonly known as the White Terror; an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 people were executed, and 8,000 were imprisoned on suspicion of anti-communist activities. South Korea, the White Terror have increased in Taiwan since the 1960s, but it has received relatively little attention compared to the large volume of research on the "2.28 Incident" in mainland China against the Nationalist Party (KMT) government and subsequent repression in the weeks following 28 February 1947. Furthermore, as the name suggests, the White Terror can be considered a case of state violence, the KMT government’s political campaign to eliminate communists and communist sympathizers in Taiwan. Ordinary people have been described merely as victims under the specter of political repression.

Yet, the White Terror deserves more attention and fundamental reconsideration. To begin with, a large proportion of these repression were not only committed by communist sympathizers, but diverse groups of people, including members of local social elites, such as intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and even members of the armed forces. These groups represented not simply a particular ideology, but a desire to make social and political changes in postwar Taiwan. By examining the composition of each group, we can show that the phrase "anti-communist" might be misleading. In fact, the suppression of counterrevolutionaries, in which more than 700,000 people were executed and 1.5 million femily members were co-opted as informers, was far too broad to be contained in such a category. Conventionally, the movement has been described as the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) top-down, coercive, political-cleansing campaign, aimed at eliminating former Nationalist Party members and sympathizers. Yet, this needs to be further examined, as the CCP was not always the only actor, and the nature of the phenomenon was not necessarily a more political cleansing campaign. After all, it had been purely a matter of political repression carried out by the CCP and aimed at the elimination of adversaries, those who were supposed should have been mostly political and ideological ‘enemies,’ such as landlords and businessmen, as well as former Nationalist Party members and sympathizers. Yet, a large number of people in these categories, particularly those who had worked under the KMT government, including bureaucrats, policemen, teachers, and lower-ranking officials, were in fact allowed to retain their positions, and continued to work. Actually, those suppressed and eliminated included much broader and more diverse groups of people, which better fit the category of ‘social enemies’ than that of ‘political enemies.’

Reconsidering McCarthyism in the United States

How can we understand the similarities and simultaneity of these suppressions in postwar Asia? In order to further consider this point, let us briefly look at one more case. As noted, the phenomenon commonly known as McCarthyism in the United States. McCarthyism has generally been considered as an example of anti-communist purges from the late 1940s to early 1950s. By calling this phenomenon McCarthyism, however, our attention is focused on Senator Joseph McCarthy and congressional hearings, such as the HUAC hearings. By labeling and perceiving the phenomenon as such we miss other diverse social suppressions that silenced various local struggles, involving, for instance, racial, labor, and gender tensions.

As a matter of fact, victims during this so-called McCarthy period included not only communists and communist sympathizers, but African Americans, civil rights activists, labor movement activists, feminist activists, gays and lesbians, as well as advocates of various New Deal programs, such as public housing and universal health care. These groups represented not only suppressed communists, but also other elements of social change, which emerged from the experiences of the Great Depression and World War II. The rhetoric of anti-communism further fed the perception of such social elements of postwar change, and the ‘reality’ of the Cold War was not just useful but necessary to continue silencing such disagreements at home. Many suppressions were in fact carried out by official committees, but by ordinary people on local and community levels.

Ordinary people’s wars at home

These examples reveal certain commonalities. First, all of these suppressions escalated simultaneously against the backdrop of the Korean War and the Cold War. Second, the Cold War narrative was efficiently utilized in each case to suppress what were actually social and cultural disagreements, under the banner of national security. Third, the crux of the matter in each case was how to deal with social and cultural changes that had emerged from the chaotic experiences of World War II. Fourth, in these suppressions, different groups were used as efficient policymakers, but also ordinary people who engaged in the creation and maintenance of social order. Taken together, the wave of domestic purges in many parts of the world can be seen as a global phenomenon of nativist backlashes – a sort of social conservatism – that operated to contain and silence disagreements in a chaotic post-WWII world.

What becomes clear is the actuality of local conflicts, and the constructed nature of the global Cold War, as well as the social need of such a reality to overcome ‘war’ at home. In this sense, the Cold War divide that emerged during the Korean War existed less between East and West than it did within each country. Taiwan is a good example for us to study to maintain ‘harmonious’ order at home. So perhaps the Cold War was more than rivalry among superpowers at the international level. Consciously, it could be better understood as an imagined reality involving a role of social transnationalization, pacifying various disagreements in the aftermath of World War II. And with ordinary people participating in the maintenance of social order, justified through imagined realities such as McCarthyism in the United States. Conventionally, these suppressions were seen as part of a grander Cold War narrative.

Conclusion

We have tried to do here is to relativize the importance of the Cold War and reinterpret its meanings through an analysis of what we usually think of as the Cold War in Asia. Our analysis of various instances of Cold War purges is intended to show that the issues that mattered most had less to do with the global struggle than with local and social conflicts at home. In other words, the analysis of Cold War Asia (during the Cold War) gives us a chance to reconsider its very adjective, providing an opportunity to raise questions about the Cold War lens, and, thus, forcing us to see much more locally the specific realities in respective regions in the chaotic postwar period.

In presenting this analysis, I have also suggested a possible direction for thinking about the meanings of Asian Studies as a whole in global and comparative contexts. While only a few cases can be discussed in this article, a similar pattern might be observable in other places, particularly in the regions and countries that have gone through the Cold War lens, including, for instance, France and Italy, Greece and Iran, Kenya and South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam, and Guatemala and Mexico.

Cold War Asia, in short, might be able to shed new light on the post-1945 histories of many parts of the world. While we have seen quite a few new approaches and findings in studies of the Cold War in the past two decades, more is yet to come. Thus, let us continue to ask these questions: What was the essence of Cold War Asia? And what, really, was the Cold War?

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References

1 This article is based on research presented in my recently published book, Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World (Haward University Press, 2015)
2 Hilaire Turutus 2009, “Korean Identity on the Frontlines in Korea. This example shows that some people adopted and developed the CCP’s campaign to their own needs: as a mechanism of social change, to restore and maintain order in their communities.
3 “Shakai undo tsushin” [Newsletters for Social Movements], 17 October 1950 as an “unprecedented scandal.” (Author’s photograph. Mainichi Shinbun, 18 October 1950).
In 2008, Grand Lisboa casino opened its doors in downtown Macau. The eye-catching structure, radiant gold and ‘pineapple-shaped’, as residents mused, was one of the city’s newest gambling venues since the sector opened to foreign competition in 2002 (Fig. 1). It was but a glimpse of the extent of the urban and socio-economic transformations on which the city had embarked since it departed the Portuguese colonial era and became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (RPC) in 1999.

Casino development and urban transformation in Macau

Gambling liberalization

Gambling is not new in Macau. It has been a regulated economic activity since the mid-nineteenth century, when the incipient Portuguese colonial administration sought, via the legalization of a then very popular practice, a means to buy its way out of bankruptcy following the dissolution of Hong Kong by the British in 1843. The decision to use gambling as a policy to raise public revenue thus responded to the loss of Macau’s strategic position as a port city in the South China Sea. In this modern form, the commercial exploitation of gambling developed initially under individual concession and after specific years were granted in 1849 to the game of Fantan, then one of the most popular games in South China, and in 1851 to the Chinese lottery. From 1930 onwards, gambling licences took the form of monopoly contracts for a number of casinos, which have passed through the hands of three different groups until the sector was recently open to foreign competition. Heng Company, headed by Fak Chi Ting, was the first to win the monopoly license for the operation of all forms of approved casinos in 1930. Seven years later, the government license changed hands, being granted to Tai Heng Company, headed by Fu Tak Long and Kou Ho Neng. Finally, in 1962, the Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), controlled by Stanley Ho Hung-sun, won the bid for a monopoly gambling contract that would last forty years, the longest that existed in Macau.

The liberalization (liberalização do jogo, 禁博開放), then one of the most popular activities, was a means to buy its way out of bankruptcy following the domination of Hong Kong by the British in 1843. The decision to use gambling as a policy to raise public revenue thus responded to the loss of Macau’s strategic position as a port city in the South China Sea. In this modern form, the commercial exploitation of gambling developed initially under individual concession and after specific years were granted in 1849 to the game of Fantan, then one of the most popular games in South China, and in 1851 to the Chinese lottery. From 1930 onwards, gambling licences took the form of monopoly contracts for a number of casinos, which have passed through the hands of three different groups until the sector was recently open to foreign competition. Heng Company, headed by Fak Chi Ting, was the first to win the monopoly license for the operation of all forms of approved casinos in 1930. Seven years later, the government license changed hands, being granted to Tai Heng Company, headed by Fu Tak Long and Kou Ho Neng. Finally, in 1962, the Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM), controlled by Stanley Ho Hung-sun, won the bid for a monopoly gambling contract that would last forty years, the longest that existed in Macau.

The change in Macau’s gambling regulatory framework has come to be known, fundamentally changed the profile of an activity with more than a century of local history. Launched in 2001, it put an end to the monopoly held by Stanley Ho, opening up the once-exclusive realm of a tycoon, who became popularly known as the ‘King of gambling’, to other casino barons. The liberalization act defined that concessions to groups, which were permitted to began their operations in 2002, after the first casino after the liberalization, The Sands, opened its doors at the Outer Harbour, Macau was already the world’s richest gambling platform, beating Las Vegas at a game it has dominated for decades. Actively contributing to the average of 15 per cent growth Macau has enjoyed over the last ten years, the sector has rapidly transformed the dragging and morose economy that marked its handover to China in 1999. Macau’s economy relies predominantly on the tertiary sector. In 2013, services corresponded to 94.3 per cent of the city’s industrial structure, with gambling making up 41.1 per cent of the total. In 2008, gross gambling revenues generated MOP109,826 million (approximately US$14 billion), then corresponding to 65.4 per cent of Macau’s GDP, estimated that same year at MOP166,285 million (US$21 billion). Five years later, in 2013, gross gambling revenues had soared, generating MOP361,866 million (nearly US$47 billion), which corresponded to roughly 88 per cent of Macau’s GDP, estimated at MOP431,477 million that same year (nearly US$55 billion). While fostering economic growth, gambling became a strong engine for Macau’s tourism industry. It has stimulated the development of other related economic sectors and activities, hotels, renting and construction, restaurants, finance, and real estate, to name only a few, sustaining an economy increasingly focused on consumption rather than production (Fig. 2 inset).

The global economy of tourism

The expansion of Macau’s gambling-led economy has strengthened the city’s global position as an entertainment destination in the new urban economy of tourism. Different from a time when gambling parlours were controlled by local monopoly or criminal syndicates,6 the new scenario saw the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, has launched a vast campaign against national corruption, calling for a tighter control of suspicious and illegal financial transactions in Macau. It has been argued that in no other era has gambling developed and institutionalized so fast around the world.8 Increasing political effort from governments worldwide to pass legislation that draws on the relaxation of gambling prohibition and/or strict control, signals the increasing reliance of national and local governments on gambling revenues to support public functions. In gambling, they see a new means of economic stimulation, job creation, and enhancement of tax revenues. This formula seems to have paid off quite well in Macau. Full employment was reached shortly after the liberalization and local wages progressively achieved higher standards. In 2014, Macau’s GDP per capita reached three times that of Hong Kong and nearly the double of Singapore’s.
sitting ahead most of the developed world, and falling behind only a handful of locations, kingdoms or countries, with international offshore reputations and bank secrecy traditions, e.g., Monaco, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg.11 The local government collected three times more tax revenue in 2013 than it did in 2008 (US$5.55 billion and US$17 billion, respectively). With 49 per cent tax on all casino revenue swelling the public coffers, the administration has been able to consolidate a number of social welfare programs - although residents complain its view has been rather narrow, say, in public health matters. For instance, a system of distribution of government subsidies based on socio-economic criteria enabled the implantation in 2008 of a nearly free-cost education program up to high school level for Macau residents (i.e., those in possession of the Macau Resident’s Card).

Gambling sprawls

With clear indications of5ocketing economic growth, the liberalization pushed Macau’s development to another dimension, cleanly weathered, but also more hectic and eventually problematic with regard to the scale of social and urban transformations it has entailed in its course. Residents pondered, arguing that, for better or worse, it has been overwhelming. From the onset, migrant workers from mainland China, the Philippines, and Indonesia, to name only a few, flooded into the city on a regular basis, occupying, among other, the ranks of low-paid, semi-legal job contracts at construction sites and factories, often living in workhouses then being transformed into ‘generic’ or standardized housing.12

As it spreads to other parts of the city, we should hence look beyond the initial gambling-led sprawls, to the broader economy of tourism.

Touristed spaces

Pushed by the economic boom that took over Macau after the liberalization, the development of other modalities of tourism has greatly benefited from the yearly arrival of millions of visitors to the city, enabled by the relaxation of human movement controls between Macau and mainland China. Although the majority of visitors seem to spend their time and money in casinos and related amenities, that phenomena such as real estate speculation, which arose from the liberalization, stem from economic growth in general rather than from the gambling economy in particular, the development of other sectors has contributed its share in transforming the cityscape. With thousands of people reaching places outside the casinos enclaves every day, namely, historic sites designated World Heritage in 2005, “cultural” or heritage tourism, for instance, has also emerged as a dynamic economic activity, casting different, but seemingly lasting material effects. Looking into space is thus a good way to grapple with the expansion and impact of change, economic, social or other, notwithstanding the type of development or political economic project that is being enacted in the city.

San Ma Lo (新馬路), a modern rectilinear artery cutting across the medieval portion of Macau’s urban fabric, is a good example of how economic growth and the expansion of mass tourism have affected sites otherwise geographically unlinked to casino enclaves. An act of modern urban planning, San Ma Lo – also known as Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro – was built nearly a century ago to connect Macau’s Inner and Outer harbours, linking at the same time the former Portuguese and Chinese territories. Its urban design has not changed until recently provided residents with an eclectic array of services: tailors have established trade there, lawyers have opened offices, pharmacies and banks have set up, jewelers have opened shops for modified and luxury goods. Old remaining shops, usually family-run, have thus either adapted to the change of clientele, in the attempt to capitalize on the new tourist trade, or risk the cessation of activities (Figs 3 & 4).

A similar trend has overtaken the Senate Square (参議院前), one of Macau’s largest public spaces and a favorite tourist site, contiguous to San Ma Lo. Here, heritage-classified buildings have lent their interiors and façades to sell fast food and foreign brands of cosmetics, jewellery, and apparel. People in Macau complain that this central area of the city was converted into a site for tourists, and many have been alienated by their influx. Residents recall places of their childhood, Macau’s pharmacies, antique stores, and toyshops, to had to close their doors due not only to changing demands in consumption and prohibitive leasing prices, but also to the pressure of corporate competition and the loss of the historic character of small and medium enterprises. In gradually converting parts of the city into touristed spaces, they have emptied the urban space from prior social, commercial, and cultural functions, that were more closely tied to the residents’ sense of place and cultural experiences of the city.

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4 Macau Industrial Structure 2013, DSEC.
7 Filitof, P. 1994. “One Country, Two Systems: Macau”, Hong Kong), International Relations 12:25-58 (p.54). Gambling on horses has been recently allowed in mainland China (it is also the only type of gambling permitted in Hong Kong).
10 Yearbook of Statistics 2013: 159.
13 Yearbook of Statistics 2013: 368.
14 The number of working class, semi-legally entering Macau reached nearly 137,830 in 2013 over a population of approximately 607,000 inhabitants for the same year. Yearbook of Statistics 2013: 47, 77.
Travels & tourists in the Middle Kingdom: two insider perspectives

Phenomena can be studied both as numeric data (trends) as well as practices, that is, cultural tendencies. When it comes to tourism in relation to China the first approach manifests a clear symptom: China is more and more at the centre of the global tourism sector, either as a tourism destination, or as the source of an increasing number of outbound tourists.

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How to then keep a balance between the bustling tourism sector and the saturation of those places around the country that attract a multitude of visitors? What about that never-ending debate between tourism and travel, between the massified and the "authentic" experiences? If you are asking me about authenticity, I do not believe that visiting, let’s say, the Forbidden City is not an authentic experience. It is Beijing, it is China, you cannot avoid it. But Beijing is also Sanlitun and Chaoyang, two very wealthy and modern areas. Authenticity, then, can be found both in the different perspective from which you look at the Forbidden City, as well as in the overall travel experience that derives from all these apparent paradoxes. Many tourists, mainly foreigners, think of China in terms of its imperial past, my goal is to show how they have shaken this legacy, China is something else nowadays.

I was curious about differences, if any, between the Western and the Chinese (self)perception of the Middle Kingdom: “Here you have to make some distinctions. As I said, foreigners who come to China for the first time have an already formed image of it; one that needs, to some extent, to be shaken. Their impressions of the country undergo a shift: in the beginning they usually have a very positive attitude towards the Chinese, then with the passing of weeks they begin to see those petty anomalies and annoying defects that are part of our society as they are part of any society... As the Chinese people looking at themselves, I think we are very critical towards ourselves. The level of tolerance is much lower than with foreigners, but it is also true that if you, as a foreigner, an expert of what he thinks of China, they will always show you a great patriotic spirit. These are the contradictions we are caught in!”

What do you, as an expert travel, look for when on the road? “I mainly look for traditions, that is, all those disappearing everyday practices that are often enshrined in small towns and villages. Let me be honest: when it comes to Chinese big cities, they are all alike. It is in small realities that you can find differences. I am writing a book now, which is in a way a travel book, although I am not a fan of the genre, maybe because I know China too well and when I begin reading one of them I rarely finish it... Anyway, this book is about the production of local ham in a Yunnan community. You know, food is a central topic anywhere you go in China, but understanding how it is made is something we tend to forget or overlook. So I went to this village and I met a lot of people, I stayed in their houses, I learnt from them. They live such different lives from mine, although we are not that far culturally speaking. This, for me, is the most enriching way of travelling. But you need time and knowledge to accomplish it.”

Stefano Calzati

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The Study | No.72 | Autumn 2015
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This collection of fourteen critical essays is an eclectic mix of scholarship which addresses, in the editors’ words, “the new corpus of writing” (9) in Indian English fiction (IEF). This ‘new corpus’ refers to contemporary IEF, that which emerged in the first decade of this millennium and can be distinguished from seminal novels such as Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and the work of well-known authors like Vikram Seth, Anita Desai or Shashi Tharoor.

The editors suggest in their introduction that contemporary IEF has freed itself from the shackles of traditional theoretical categorization including ‘postcolonialism’ or ‘postmodernism’, yet they acknowledge that it is evidently concerned with the issue of transnationalism and mobility as international borders, both real and imagined, become increasingly porous.

Louise Harrington

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**Burma’s foreign relations**

In recent decades, few regimes have been as secretive and reclusive as Burma’s. However, this pariah is hardly cut-off from the outside world, as the recent volume by Renaud Greteau and Larry Jargan make clear.

Shane J. Barter and Yoko Nakajima

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**Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma**

The introductory chapter from the editors of this book provides a review of criticism on IEF from 2000-2010, focusing on three categories of publications: broad discussions of literature, books on single authors or texts, and those on specific themes. After detailing a comprehensive list of the current critical field, the introduction adds to the extensive canon by revealing how critical material on IEF in the decade of 2000-2010, “a watershed in India’s history”, might write India anew (17).

The aim seems to be borne out of a desire to argue for the current, or lasting, importance of IEF with the goal of exposing the present trends and preoccupations in fiction writing from India as it evolves alongside the country itself.

The reader gathers this intention because, on the first page, the introduction asserts that IEF has been “diminished as derivative or disposable” (9); it does not however provide a reference for such criticism, thus leaving it unclear to which scholars or publications this edited collection is responding.

Despite this, those interested in Anglophone fiction will have no doubt that IEF continues to break new ground and that it offers inventive and varied creative readings of modern India. However, Indian foreign relations dyads are fascinating, especially the unique ways that Japan and several Western countries. The discussions of country relations with Burma, and Khin Nyunt’s 2004 purging. Next, while discussions of bilateral relations are interesting, it is not clear whether Burma’s relations with the Ukraine, Canada, or New Zealand demand dedicated discussions, let alone repeated ones. Another area that could have probably been trimmed relates to the authors’ tendency to incorporate literature reviews throughout the book, breaking from their own analyses to provide long, encyclopedic surveys. The authors also opt for a journalistic style, introducing writers in terms of their nationalities, professions, and sometimes home institution when making citations, despite already having footnotes. This is especially strange when authors are referred to repeatedly such as Andrew Selth, described as an “Australian veteran watcher of Burmese affairs” (8), although it dwarfs that of other countries and provides Beijing with immense influence in Burma, engaging largely with matters of (anti-)nationalism and (post)colonialism in novels including *Midnight’s Children*. From the outset of this volume, then, it would seem that the legacy of imperialism continues to feature in critical material from this recent decade.

Identifying trends in the new canon

The editors collection is divided into four sections: Re-Imagining the Nation; Revisiting the Past; Reviewing the Present; Reinforcing Home. These sections are not all equally created since they contain four, two, six, and two essays respectively. "Reviewing the Present" is the longest section with six essays, providing a historical survey of post-colonial foreign relations, including the UN’s early internationalism to Ne Win’s isolation and recent openings. The UN era in particular provides a useful history lesson, as Burma was at one point an outspoken international actor and a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. From here, the book examines Burma’s relations with specific countries, especially China, India, the ASEAN nations, and the United States, as well as the United Nations, Japan, and several Western countries. The chapters of country dyads are fascinating, especially the unique ways that Japan and India approach Burmese issues in ways that are distinct from their allies.

While maintaining an international focus, Greteau and Jargan never lose sight of domestic politics, noting the centrality of factionalism within the country’s security forces and the ways that personal connections drive foreign policy. The authors are quick to point out that much of Burma’s foreign policy since the 2010 opening must be explained by domestic factors. The book also delves into the ideational aspects of Burma’s security apparatus, noting the extreme xenophobic nationalism that reinforces the country’s isolationist tendencies. The book contains many policy insights. The authors suggest that the so-called great game between India and China, as well as the formidable Chinese influence in Burma, are exaggerated. Chinese investment in Burma is relatively limited, although it dwarfs that of other countries and provides Beijing with considerable influence. Burmese leaders recognize this and have worked to retain their autonomy, namely by purging pro-Beijing intelligence officers and pivoting towards the West.

Solders and Diplomacy in Burma unfolds through five chapters. Chapter one categorizes the regime while providing an extensive review of the related literature. Chapter two provides a historical survey of post-colonial foreign relations, moving from UN’s early internationalism to Ne Win’s isolation and recent openings. The UN era in particular provides a useful history lesson, as Burma was at one point an outspoken international actor and a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. From here, the book examines Burma’s relations with specific countries, especially China, India, the ASEAN nations, and the United States, as well as the United Nations, Japan, and several Western countries. The discussions of country dyads are fascinating, especially the unique ways that Japan and India approach Burmese issues in ways that are distinct from their allies.

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Solders and Diplomacy in Burma

**Reviewed title:**


**Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma** provides a thorough examination of contemporary and historical foreign relations between Burma and a variety of global actors. This sometimes sprawling volume brings together an impressive range of materials while remaining accessible to a variety of readers, making it the definitive account of Burma’s foreign relations.

The book’s core argument is that, while the country’s foreign policy has changed significantly between periods of openness in the immediate postcolonial era, isolation under Ne Win, and now something in between, a constant throughout Burma’s postcolonial history has been the pratautarian role of the military. The authors argue convincingly that Burma represents a pratautarian state instead of a junta, militaristic, authoritarian, or pseudo-civilian state. The army pervades the state and society, serving as guardians of their national vision against extreme xenophobic nationalism, which were exacerbated, but not caused, by colonial experiences.

Even if one is critical of colonialism, starting history with it may exaggerate its effect, blurring efforts to discover the roots of the pratautarian system. These qualifications do not detract from the impressive achievement. This is essential reading for those seeking to comprehend not only Burma’s politics and foreign relations. The product of a decade of research, the authors must be commended for unearthing a range of fascinating points and assembling such a detailed story of the foreign relations of this pariah.

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While the remaining sections of the book are less obviously connected to whether aolvency of the decade 2000-2010 might be, Bill Ashcroft's opening essay is commendable. His reasoned piece on contemporary Indian English novels is most effective in its argument that, following the (well-observed) anti-nationalist utopianism of Tagore and Gandhiji, prominent novels and novellists reveal a deep skepticism about the idea of the nation state in independent India. Taking Rusdi's book as a starting point, Ashcroft discusses some "inherited of Rusdi's prize-winning revolution" (29), that is, Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things", Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance Puzzle", Arundhati Roy's "The White Tiger" and Harini Kunnan's Transmission. He contends that these themes emerge in how these novels express their resistance to nationalism, class and socio-economic inequality, inherited colonial borders and boundaries, and mobility in the global era. The author concludes that the historical skepticism of nationalism evident in the writings of Tagore and Gandhiji abounds in contemporary literature, while it simultaneously maintains an eye on the past and the future, the home and the world.

Another compelling chapter which delves into theories about the nation-state in India, national allegory and literature is in Krista's essay on her dissertation of Rusdi's "Sheheraz and the Clown". Her argument is that the concept of 'desi' - "the land or place of one's birth or familial origins, and therefore of one's ancestral heritage and spiritual and cultural belonging" (76) - is more relevant when reading IEF, such as the novels above, than Western models of the homogenous nation. The two essays in the section called "Revisiting the Past" are also stimulating in their engagement with the historical. Paul Sharrad explains how some contemporary writers have tried (with little success) to rework stories like the Mahabharata for audiences today, while Rita Parna Roy considers Mohapatra's "Indraprastha, in her reading of Isis's novel The Minaret. In the former essay, Roy interestingly contends that a turn towards historical fiction is "a new trend of the decade 2000-2010" (112), as writers move past their preoccupation with the colonisation in the pre-colonial period. Unfortunately, there is little development of this claim which leaves the reader wishing for more, particularly because the edition collected as a whole often mentions potential trends in the recent canon of IEF without drawing any unified conclusions.

In the absence of editorial interludes at the beginning of each section and to create an argument for itself, as a whole and to link the ideas within the diverse essays, it becomes somewhat unclear what the critical or theoretical trajectory of the collection is. It would have been useful to have some guidance on how these fourteen disparate essays address the editors' initial questions: what makes this decade special? What is new about their approach? Alternatively, a concluding chapter would have been more appropriate to encapsulate these questions and in offering a reader a cohesive analysis of these contemporary essays on Indian English fiction in light of India's anti-colonial discourse in the mid-twentieth century. As individual chapters, however, many of these essays will be of interest to general readers, as well as to students and scholars of the individual authors and texts. The list of references at the end of the book is also a useful resource on contemporary writing from India and literary theory.

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Photography in nineteenth-century India

Afterimage of Empire is a rich and thought-provoking study of early colonial photography in the Indian subcontinent, drawing on extensive theoretical observations and interdisciplinary methods.

Eve Tignol

Reviewed title:

Photography by John Dannenberg and Harriet Tyler who memorialize British loss and death by reproducing in pictures the now empty spaces where tragic events had taken place, thus repeating patterns of traumatic shock. Chaudhary here addresses the "indexical" power of photography, which persuades us that the things photographed did really take place, in showing that photography is allegorical (and polysemic), and works along the same dynamics as those of humour. Despite its assumed objectivity, the author argues that the photographic media is in fact a technology of propaganda which does not provide any narrative in itself but needs "captions"; here colonialist ones. In chapter two, "Anaesthesis and Violence: Colonial History of Shock", Chaudhary continues his analysis of post-Rebellion photography through the work of commercial photographer Felice Beato. In pictures of unearthed bones and hung rebels, Chaudhary sees what he calls, in Walter Benjamin's terms, "a phantasmagoric aesthetic". As the author argues, photography participates in the "dialectics of invisibility" which enable the viewers to experience the violence of their own destruction and transform it into a commodity. This process, which compensates the bodily shock of modernity andnegates relations of domination by "managing" the colonized, is, for the author, symptomatic of a change in colonial ordering and "governmentality", to borrow Foucault's term. Here, Chaudhary argues that photography is a crucial role in the production of colonial knowledge and is instrumental to colonial governmentality: it perceptually alienates the colonized and the colonized and justifies the ideology of the colonial state's civilizing mission.

Chapter three, "Armour and Aesthesis: The Picturesque in Difference", examines the picturesque aesthetic and the nostalgia for home that unfolds in Samuel Bourne's landscape photography in the 1860s. By converting the Indian landscape into the familiar through the route to picturesque conventions, colonial photography reveals a perceptual change insinuating that the world was increasingly appreciated as "picture-like". This chapter also investigates the works of Indian photographers Lala Deen Dayal, Darogha Abbas Ali and Ahmed Ali Khan and their adoption of the picturesque aesthetic. Instead of seeing traces of resistance in photographic practices, Chaudhary emphasizes the differences displayed in Indian photographs by reading them as attempts to mould themselves in the terms of English picturesque conventions, while the continued invocation and re-adaptation of local artistic traditions are considered as examples of the evolution of Indian aesthetic expressions. In chapter four, "Famine and the Reproduction of Affect: Pleas for Sympathy", Chaudhary explores the role of photography in stimulating emotions and sympathy especially through photographs taken by Captain Wallace Cooper during the Madras famine in the late 1870s. The author argues that such photographs enabled a colonialist "aesthetic of the picturesque" in which the ideal shape or subjects progressed from a sense of belonging to a "benevolent nation", and thus served social cohesion. In Afterimage of Empire, Chaudhary impressively juggles both theoretical and historical material. Photography evidence is also always echoed by other contemporary sources like travel writings, memoirs, or newspaper articles which render the narrative lively. The author's detailed studies are insightful; chapter three and the analysis of the work of Indian photographers - notably his investigation of albums containing black-and-white "photographs" - is particularly captivating. Chaudhary's arguments, choice of examples and selection of photography, compiled in a glossy edition, render the book an engaging read. The reader may find the author's theoretical explanations relying on specialized jargon hard to follow, and a proper conclusion, rather than a brief coda, would have been more valuable in answering the above questions and in offering the reader a cohesive analysis of these contemporary essays on Indian English fiction in light of India's anti-colonial discourse in the mid-twentieth century. As individual chapters, however, many of these essays will be of interest to general readers, as well as to students and scholars of the individual authors and texts. The list of references at the end of the book is also a useful resource on contemporary writing from India and literary theory.

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Asian Expansions
[http://tinyurl.com/asianexpansions]
The New Asia Scholar

There have been many developments in the field of Asian Studies and among its scholars during the last few decades, and we have been taking note. Our particular observatory has been the biennial meetings of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), which had its first assembly in 1998, and its most recent earlier this year. After the first two meetings in Europe (Leiden and Berlin), ICAS was moved into Asia (with two diversions: Honolulu and Adelaide), not only to further increase participation of scholars from Asia, but also with the idea that the Asian case provides an ideal breeding ground to refine existing theories and to develop new ones.

Unlike other Asian Studies conferences, where the majority of participants come from the United States and Europe, ICAS boasts the greatest diversified cross-continental representation, and most of its participants come from Asian countries. One of our most obvious observations has been that Asian Studies is now more and more being produced in Asia. New ideas and research findings are discussed not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. This is important because so far the conceptual lexicons and theoretical tools used in social sciences and humanities have been derived almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their limitations are increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia (or Africa for that matter) with its long indigenous traditions of organising social relations, its own norms concerning power and order, and its legacies of implementing rule.
Reverse and Inclusive discourses

As Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world stage, we recognise that the region has something to offer for knowledge production. In his contribution to this Focus, in which various academics have joined our discussion of the current field of Asian Studies and the scholars involved, Tak-Wing Ng (University of Macau and local host of ICAS 8), comments on this realisation. He suggests that, recently, there has been an increasing demand for alternative scholarship within Asian Studies, for a move away from Western theory, and for the development of ‘reverse discourses’ in order for non-Western scholarship to theorise beyond the West. But as focal Asian centres and networks of knowledge emerge, seeking to interact with the rest of the academic world, they encounter the problem of languages that need to continue to be judged according to quality not quantity, and to, in Tak-Wing’s words ‘encourage internationalization without compromising indigenous scholarship’.

Not only is Asia a breeding ground for new knowledge and theory, it is also a new home for the many foreign Asian Scholars who wish to ‘get up close’ to the discussion. Lena Scheen (New York University Shanghai), a sinologist from Leiden University, moved to Shanghai so that she could experience the benefits of being among her research subjects, but has now also been forced to learn how to deal with becoming part of her own research field. Essentially, she considers it to be a benefit: “to be required to consistently question your surroundings and yourself in it, creating never-ending opportunities to learn”.

Besides the refreshing reversal of roles and locations, we are also seeing new levels of inclusiveness in many areas of research. In her autobiographical introduction, Priya Maholay-Jaradi (National University of Singapore) presents herself and her professional career path, as exemplary of a new Asia scholar involved in the arts. She discusses how, as museums and university programmes draw closer together, their shared resources are resulting in new pedagogical tools and exhibition programmes; new media, such as video and digital archives, are gradually becoming part of a new arc of ‘scholarship-archives-museum-publications-teaching’, and the politics and poetics of culture are being implemented as tools for development and community activism. As museum theory is being linked with practice, academic research on museums becomes more socially relevant to local communities, “in an academic climate where researchers are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate the social impact of their research” (Yun Ci quoted by Priya Jaradi).

Towards a multilingual level-playing field

A highlight of every ICAS is its Book Prize and accompanying award ceremony (see pages 4-5 in this issue). The ICAS Book Prize (IBP) has progressed from an experimental fledging in 2005, with just 3 prizes awarded, to an established institution in 2015, with 5 main prizes and 20 accolades. The first IBP attributed to an Asian scholar was awarded at ICAS 9 in Adelaide (2005). IBP 6 received 250 books and dissertation submissions, a clear testament to the growth of the study of Asia. IBP 6 (prizes awarded at ICAS 9 in Adelaide) promised wonderful opportunities for observation: the first unmistakable development has been a shift from humanities to social sciences; the second is the rise of Asian contributors from 20 to nearly 50 percent (compared to the first edition). This also mirrors the development outlined earlier: from western-based Asian Studies to studies coming from the region itself, enriched by indigenous research traditions.

The IBP organisers have recognised the growing ‘problem of language’ (discussed by numerous of our contributors to this Focus), and in response will be adding five eligible languages for the IBP’s seventh edition (prizes will be awarded during ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, 20-23 July 2017). Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, and Spanish. To celebrate this development we will be opening the first Asian Studies Book Fair during ICAS 10, involving not just English language publications but also those in the five languages listed above. This will hopefully make apparent that English language publications are but an iceberg slowly melting into an ocean of multilingual Asian Studies.

Language in fact plays an increasingly obvious role in Asian Studies; it is of importance for both collecting data and distributing it. Occasionally, language is the tool with which one must mediate, understand, or observe, or a relationship between cultures. And knowledge of a particular language will often mean the difference between being able to publish for an international audience or not. The pressure to publish is a familiar sensation for most academics, but it weighs heavier on some than on others. John Buhannon has gone so far as to declare “an emerging Wild West in academic publishing”, and Ulrich Kozok (University of Hawai’i at Mānoa), in his Focus contribution, comments on this development at Indonesian language universities as an example of the pressure to publish so as to advance one’s career. In addition, Indonesian academics find themselves in that disadvantaged situation of having to publish in a foreign language. With the pressure high and predatory publishers on the lure, their choices are perhaps understandable. But standards of quality control must be improved if the reputations of academics, and the scientific world of research, are to be protected.

Duncan McDoule-Ra (University of New South Wales) was a member of the IBP 6 Reading Committee and a former accolade winner. In his article Duncan comments on the benefits those roles have presented him. Although an immense task, judging the IBP gave him the opportunity to act as a clearinghouse, advise anyone he could on which books to read next, and to accumulate new names for peer-reviews. Significantly, he was able to observe the extremely broad field of Asian Studies, and the current state of its publishing. Duncan comments on the ongoing value of books (monographs in particular), produced despite the pressures of academic life, and notwithstanding the ‘phantom crisis’ in the humanities and social sciences. As a judge, wading through the 200 plus submitted books, he found that the field of Asian Studies is very much alive.

In their co-written article, Paul Kratitska and Peter Schoopert present a shift in Asian Studies publications they have recently been witnessing in their role as publishers located in Southeast Asia (NGS Press, Singapore). Western authors have in the past mainly written to explain Asian to audiences in their own part of the world, but Asian publishers have tended to find the appeal of that scholarship limited. However, distribution of research published by Asian scholars in local Asian languages has in its own way also been restricted, that is, until the recent developments encouraging Asian scholars to publish in other languages (mainly English). Their audience is evolving and is starting to include scholars in the West, but also scholars based in other Asian countries. The shift: authors from all over the world are embedding themselves in local discourse, publishers are going straight to the source, and innovative technologies are helping regional knowledge to reach new global audiences.

As a publisher and owner of Silkworm Books in Chiang Mai (Thailand), Travsin Jittidecharak is a suitable position to comment on the ‘problems of language’. In her article, she raises concerns acknowledged by many in the field: lacking funds for academic publishing and the pressures of writing in English for non-native speakers. But she also importantly mentions the problem of censorship in many Asian countries. Political systems are perhaps developing towards more liberal forms in many areas of ‘new’ Asia, but freedom of speech is still far from being a reality.

Also contributing to this discussion of language competence is Thomas Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), who asks if the ‘New Asia Scholar’ is perhaps motivated by, or even swept up in, ‘the crisis of area studies’, be it real or just an apparition. Has the scholar gone into survival mode, demanding innovation and adaptation? As a researcher of interethnic communication through language, Tom wonders what role language will play in the scurry to reconfigure the field. He follows the path that language-learning in area studies has taken in the recent past: from western researchers learning local languages in their attempts to become ‘regional experts’, to the centrality of English for academic theorisation, to the engagement of native speakers as fieldwork assistants, concluding with the undeniable importance of the study of language to help understand the rapidly homogenising world.

The New Asia Scholar

This changing field of Asian Studies brings with it a new academic, one we have termed the ‘New Asia Scholar’. Although, Marlon James Sales (Monash University) astutely remarks, in his opening words, that the term can both refer to a scholar who is attuned to the newness of Asia as a field of inquiry, and also be interpreted as a reconfiguration of ‘who studies Asia. Marlon is the “indigenous” Asianist, one of a variety of scholars whose specific fields of study (in Marlon’s case, linguistics/translating) draws them nearer to Asia by looking at the continent through a “new” set of lenses. He puts forth that both the area of the world and the scholars who study it are ‘new’. But more than that, Marlon discusses the limitations of interculturality in Asia (the acknowledgment of different cultures in Asia), and calls rather for transculturality, which alongside the differences also acknowledges the permeable borders of cultures and languages.

One of the platforms at ICAS this year was ‘Interculturality-Adelaide’, which aimed to bring together scholars, policymakers and other stakeholders to consider the idea of ‘interculturality’ – broadly defined as a set of cultural skills supporting openness and adaptivity. Cathy Monro (University of Sydney) calls attention to the oft-failing collaboration between the academic and legislative worlds, particularly in the context of interculturality. Anyone in the field of Asian Studies knows how diverse and vast topics of academic research can be. We’ve all seen those monographs come with exotic titles such as ‘yak milk preservation on the Mongolian steppe’, ‘embroidery from the Sumatran forests’, or ‘coconut collection from the beaches of some tropical island’. And as you pick up the book to delve into bizarre new worlds, a little voice in the back of your
New approaches and players in Asian Studies

Asian Studies as a field of research is constantly developing, but most approaches and recommendations need to be made to identity, define and design new approaches. IAS (The International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, publisher of The Newsletter, and home of the ICAS secretariat) is responding to the ongoing developments outlined above – new knowledge, new scholars, in a new Asia – as there are numerous other knowledge institutions in the field. In 2014, IAS initiated a programme, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’ (www.rethinking.asia). With the objective of exploring how the field of Asian Studies the programme seeks to foster new humanistic-focused research. In practice, this means adapting Asian Studies to an interconnected global environment built on the foundation of multi-disciplinary researchers from Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa. Educational opportunities are created by selecting cross-disciplinary methodological questions and paradigms they pertain to. Tita van der Maas (IAS) is the project coordinator of the ‘Rethinking Asian Studies’ programme. In her contribution to this Focus she points out how recent technology has improved communications and the sharing of knowledge, and how uniformity in this and in research methodology has increased. Although a field of studies will evolve organically in some ways, there are always good reasons to promote more deliberate developments.

In a similar vein of highlighting new players in the field, David A-I. Peires (University of Cape Town) delivers a wealth of bibliographic references in his demonstration of the changes occurring in the field of political science research in Southeast Asia. An ongoing process of unmasking is introducing comparative dimensions, crossing disciplinary boundaries, and juxtaposing theoretical arguments and observations drawn from various regions of the world, requiring us to rethink a number of assumptions and interpretations. New approaches and players are also emerging in ‘new’ regions of the world. Claudio Peixoto (Rio de Janeiro Federal University) provides a historical overview of Latin America’s curiosity about Asia, which challenges the hegemony of the Northern framework, helping to de-provincialize Asian Studies. This curiosity has passed through various phases; at first defined by Orientalist approaches emulating colonialist visions of Development and Modernity, from a diffuse 19th century aristocratic inquisitiveness to the professional academic interest of post-WWII; from dispersive connections between peripheral parts of the world to alternative models of modernization. Area Studies, in general, can both develop capacities of intellectuals dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of specific spaces, whilst simultaneously, there is an increasing self-contained reality. It has also validated the prevalence of a North Atlantic expertise, which has hindered the postcolonial peripheries from observing one another. Peixoto therefore advocates the institutionalization of Asian Studies in the Global South (particularly Latin America and Africa), which will help to improve the development of a new field, to de-provincialize Asia Studies, and to encourage debates that cross disciplinary boundaries. The institutionalization of Asian Studies in the Global South has recently seen fruition in Africa, where the African Association for Asian Studies (A-Aasia) was founded in 2013. Lloyd Amos (Asheville University College) is Secretary of A-Aasia and was one of the convenors of the recently held conference, ‘Africa-Asia: A New Asia of Knowledge’ (see page 6 in this issue). In his contribution, Lloyd notes that, despite the Asia-Africa relations that can be traced back into antiquity, there has always been a notable lack of an institutionalised pursuit of knowledge about Asia in Africa. He references Kierkegaard’s ‘midnight hour’ and declares that the hour of ‘unknown Asia’ has hardened its grip by a past of imperialist subjugation, both continuities of Asia and Africa are perhaps finally ready to see each other without the blurring mask of colonialism, struggles of independence, and the Cold War. New relations are being forged, ones that take their source from ancient connections, but which also attempt to craft fresh engagements befitting a rapidly changing world. At the conference the Chancellor of the University of Ghana was alerted to this development and understanding its significance announced that the institution planned to open an A-Aasia chapter in the beginning of 2016.

Habibul Khondker (Zayed University in Abu Dhabi) focuses on the challenges and potential of Asian Studies in the Gulf. He shares with us his take on the current state of Asian Studies in his region of the world. He concentrates mainly on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and paints a picture of hopeful future growth. Although initially established to cater to the human resource needs of a modernising world, the universities in the Gulf region are starting to ‘look East’ and to recognise the importance of global relations and developments, possibly encouraged by the inauthentic influences of Asia’s pop culture, which are emblematic of the ‘new’ Asia and can be gleaned from literary contributions to the latest issue of the Gulf Review.

One hears the expression ‘the Asian Century’ all the time, but what really is all about? Ask growing economies and evolving political systems? Or is the new ‘new Asia’ more than that? Johann Schultz and Jane Currey (the co-editors of last year’s ‘Re-thinking Asia’ and ‘The Gulf’) present an update of the latest issue of the Gulf Review, titled New Asia New. Put this question to 49 literary authors in Asia. A new Asia has been in the period of extraordinary change. This is in all respects ‘ground-breaking’ publication was reviewed by Richard Newman (The University of Queensland). He points out that the publication both react to and emerges from the pluralism and ambition of ‘the Asian Century’ and that the contributions consist of realistic and sceptical observations on political dogma, Asian orthodoxy and imported liberal ideology. Looking ahead

In his key-note address, ‘Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Asia in the 21st Century’, at the ICAS 9 opening ceremony in Adelaide, Takashi Shiraishi (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Hase University) and editor of IIAS Journal, sonja@iias.nl) communicated the following words to his speech, which we encourage you to read in its entirety (www.icas.asia/ICAS-keynote). His address, and especially his observation that “area studies cannot think beyond sum up our discussion of a ‘New Asia Scholar’ and the field of Area Studies better than we could ourselves, so we leave it to Professor Shiraishi to do so now."

“I have worked as a historian, an international relations specialist, a political economist, and a foreign policy expert over the last 40 years, but I have always studied Asia, Southeast Asia initially and Asia more generally in recent years. It is my conviction that Area Studies have a lot to contribute to our understanding of the region-including the political, economic, and local processes at work, precisely because our perspective is anchored in historical and comparative approaches to and across areas rather than the typical, the ‘area studies’ way of looking at the world. The ‘area studies’ area of studies has been talked about since the end of the Cold War era, with budget cuts, disciplinary compartmentalization and the impossibility to fund the research and standards borrowed from some of the natural sciences and now applied uncritically to the social sciences and the humanities. At the same time, we are very much aware that no discipline can account for the complexity of the lived experience and processes currently unfolding across different scales. Our understanding of the region these days is often based on a certain discipline, and disciplines are useful because they pose questions from which we can undertake our study of and engagement with the world. But I believe that area studies programs can help to forge new disciplines and learn from each other. At a time when we have all the more reason to need to learn about ourselves and our neighbors, this means that we can offer a new tool of knowledge and authority, or rather the way in which we go about producing, authorizing or validating, and sharing knowledge. We need to ask the question of whose crisis this is, and whether we are not ourselves guilty of thinking within a box, or even in a box within a box, and complicit in reproducing the inequalities that structure knowledge production. What is clear is that we can no longer go about doing area studies the way we have been used to: is to say, we go to ‘a field’ somewhere, do research and write about ‘other’ people not our own, publish in our own national language as well as in English but not the languages of the people we are talking about, talk to our fellow academics in America or Europe or Asia which can be found happening within communities in the region and in the different countries, not talking to nor citing the scholarship produced by our colleagues in this region, and then insisting that everyone should publish in English language journals with high impact factor. The point is that people in the region and the world move on and things are unfolding right in front of us, and that we are finding ourselves in an ‘area’ – in the many senses and contexts in which it is understood as such – that area is not something removed or other than. To give one example: the wars we have been involved in, the work, love, hate, have children, move about, grow old, and die. Let us be open-minded and stop thinking about Asian studies as something out of the box, but think about what we do together with our friends and colleagues here.”

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary, IIAS Publications Officer, and Founding Editor of The Newsletter (p.g.e.i.j.van.der.velde@iias.nl)

Sonja Zweegers, Managing Editor of The Newsletter (s.l.zweegers@iias.nl)
New scholarship from Asia

Theories in the social sciences are almost without exception developed in the West and based largely on the historical experiences of Western societies. For a long time, Asia and the non-West have been at best laboratories to validate universalized Western-based theories. In recent years, however, there has been increasing criticism against the hegemony of Euro-American scholarship. Advocates of alternative scholarship have urged for the provincialization of Western perspectives, the invigoration of autonomous social sciences outside the Western tradition, and the development of ‘reverse discourses’ in order for non-Western scholarship to theorize back at the West.

New centres of knowledge
Under the existing structure of global academic dependency and intellectual domination, in which the production of knowledge as well as the authority to define what constitutes knowledge is firmly controlled by the West, it is not surprising that the progress towards autochthonous scholarship from the non-West has been slow. But this is changing with the shifting gravity of scholarship in Asian Studies. The rise of Asia, more importantly the opening up of Asia, provides the most conducive setting for the emergence of new scholarship.

The opportunity for reinvigorated scholarship can be attributed to the increasing openness, accessibility, diversity, and connectivity of Asia, leading to the emergence of new research questions and agenda, new methodologies, and new perspectives and theories. The democratization of South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and the opening up of China, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, and others have allowed researchers, both local and Western, to conduct fieldwork studies not only in the capital cities, but also in peripheral regions of Asian countries. The study of Asia is thus now more confined to the study of the flatlands. As more and more researchers with local language skills decipher the specificities of their research sites, it becomes apparent that the plurality of regional dialects, indigenous norms and practices, and local forms of exchange and governance, as well as the varieties of connectivity among border communities with fuzzy boundaries that supersede nationalized borders, have posed serious problems for reductionist grand theories. New conceptual categories and grounded theories need to be developed through inductive approaches. New research questions and agenda have to be formulated to address issues that have hitherto been overlooked by the Western gaze.

Some quotes have been altered for the benefit of space, readers responded, for which we are extremely grateful.

EARLIER IN THE YEAR we sent out a survey concerning our topic, the “New Asian Scholar”. A large number of our readers responded, for which we are extremely grateful. We selected a number of quotes given in the survey, and have displayed them randomly on the following pages. Some quotes have been altered for the benefit of space, others have been left untouched.

MUCH OF THE SCHOLARLY RESEARCH and communications in Asian Studies, particularly as they relate to Northeast Asian countries, take place within national frameworks, i.e., among students of a particular country and not across broader regions. Even regionally framed research and communications tend to be dominated by national perspectives, with very little infusion of multi-national or regional perspectives. These tendencies unnecessarily limit possibilities of international collaboration and cross-national comparisons. “Area studies” should go beyond nationalistic focus and frameworks. Disciplinary diversions also are limiting the opportunity to expand the horizons of our scholarship. Another serious problem is the lack of introduction of research published in Asian languages to the English-speaking audience and vice versa, thus perpetuating the gap between English and Asian-language scholarship. There are some encouraging signs, however, as colleagues are beginning to look at “global” issues with regional lenses and those outside of Asia are bringing perspectives and insights into the region through scholarship and academic conference participation.

Traneo Akaha, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, takaha@miis.edu

AS SOMEONE INTERESTED in research at the interface of the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities (regarding humans and elephants in South and Southeast Asia), and who regularly engages with animal biologists and ecologists, I am particularly interested in understanding how human and non-human others have been left untouched.

THE IDEA of “cultural flows” that Appadurai brought together so persuasively a generation ago applies not only to the places and people we study, but to ourselves as knowledge workers, too. The image of New Asian Scholar has long carried elements of multi-site fieldwork, interdisciplinarity, and life histories of authors crossing borders and boundaries. But perhaps what is newly emerging in 2015 is a deeper picture of what that means: what it looks like to be an Asian Scholar in these times of turmoil, economic and environmental pressures and the simple friction of increasingly rubbing against people and things we are not used to. At different times, then, the need for specialists and those experienced in connecting ideas, places and people thoughtfully and articulately could never feel more strongly than now.

Of course there have always been cultural brokers, communicators, gatekeepers of knowledge and pioneers of research. But the change has been palpable, and the consequences for bad decisions or inaccurate understand- ing has not been too big of a scale. Now, however, the pace of change in many parts of the world is faster and the extent of being digitally connected is much wider than before. So any message, view or decision can reach people more widely and more quickly than before. Where the knowledge or wisdom is good, that is well. But where the understanding is partial or even wrong-headed, that can be terrible. Enter the individual scholar and the institutions for Asian Studies.

For more than 100 years many universities and colleges have declared their mission to be teaching the current knowledge, creating new knowledge, and applying knowledge in service of problem solving for the wider population through outreach education. Outreach, however, has not been the top priority. So a lot of valuable information, thinking, methods and findings circulates only among a handful of readers and their colleagues. The New Asian Scholar needs to be the first to promote his or her work more widely: making it easy to find, easy to acquire, and easy to apply or adapt by non-specialists who nevertheless are stakeholders in the subject matter. In other words, now is the time for each Scholar to be, and scholar newly retired to reach out with their work.’

Tak-Wing Ngo, Professor of Political Science at the University of Macau (twngho@umac.mo).

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The problem of language and rankings
There are of course major institutional constraints and challenges facing the rise of autochthonous Asian scholar- ship. One outstanding problem is that of language. From the outset, other scholars have indicated that the mediation of scholarly exchange will continue to be conducted through the English language, which is far from a neutral tool for the transaction of knowledge. Unspoken assumptions and values associated with the language will inevitably be imported into the exchange. Closely related to this impasse is the obsession of many Asian institutions with university rank- ings. One direct result is the overwhelming emphasis on the quantity of publications rather than the quality of research.

The preoccupation with quantity is often translated into a numerical count of articles published in SCI journals, because of which an indexing service run by a commercial enterprise, originally meant to facilitate literature searches, is now used as a yardstick for ranking journals. This intellectual fetishism has in turn displaced the ostensible goal of academic journals from one of communicating research findings, to that of an instrument for securing tenure, promotion, or higher ranking. Worse still, since journals indexed in SSCI are published exclusively in the English language, scholarly works written in indigenous languages are completely side-lined in the current academic publication regime. Some places do have their own local journal ranking system (for instance, CSSCI in China and TSSCI in Taiwan), but local journals are still considered inferior to journals ranked by SSCI. Young scholars who aspire to climb the academic ladder are therefore obliged to play the game.

Quality over quantity
These constraints are not easy to overcome. The best way out is probably the wisdom of the Golden Mean. Instead of seeing it as an either-or choice, the academic community should recognize the equal value of both English-language and non-English-language publications. The value of a piece of scholarship should be judged in terms of its content rather than by the language in which it is written. In this regard, the ICAS Book Prize is setting a good example by including Chinese and Japanese scholarly books in its future editions. Some journals have also begun to include book reviews of non-English language works. In the meantime, the popularization of the Internet has greatly facilitated the accessibility of non-English publications. There are positive developments. Hopefully, university administrators will come to realize the value of local publications, and will encourage internationalization without compromising indigenous scholarship.

Tak-Wing Ngo, Professor of Political Science at the University of Macau (twngho@umac.mo).
"What do you think about the recent news on minister Yuan Guiren?", a Chinese student asked the professor after her guest lecture on the history of Chinese civic education. I had invited the professor of East China Normal University’s (ECNU) Department of Politics to give a lecture for my course ‘Social and Cultural Debates in Twentieth-Century China’. Before the professor could answer, the student explained for his classmates that Yuan Guiren was the Chinese education minister who had allegedly stated that universities should not use textbooks promoting Western values. "Why would the minister say that?", an American student asked. "Do you agree?", a Pakistani student followed up. Other students joined in: “Has this happened before?”, “Will this also affect us?” While listening to the professor’s long and thoughtful answersfollowed by a vigorous discussion between the students and the professor I realized: Yes, this is why I wanted to work at NYU Shanghai, why I wanted to work in China. Lena Scheen

MY RESEARCH explores the social and cultural impact of China’s fast globalization and urbanization, focusing on Shanghai. In 2005, I began a project at Venture University between the American NYU and Chinese ECNU, it is itself part and parcel of this process. A global university like NYU Shanghai would not have been possible before China “opened up” and joined the global economy. Half of our student body hail from China and half represent countries from around the world. While I sometimes jokingly tell my students, “You are my research subjects”, you might argue that I have become myself an intrinsic part of my own research subject. As a matter of fact, my current research concentrates on the very district in which I live, and where NYU Shanghai’s campus is located: the Pudong District.

Lena Scheen

Living and working in your own research area obviously has its benefits. Take as an example my latest project on a group of people participating a prototyping in Pudong. Walking from home to work I noticed a group of old ladies burning incense in the middle of the road on a redevelopment along Century Avenue. Intrigued by this unusual sight, I asked them what they were doing and a new research project was born. However, during my first interviews it also immediately became clear that I could no longer play the “neutral” outsider’s role of a visiting researcher on fieldwork. One of the informants deliberately stressed the fact that “your” campus was developed by the same investment company that was behind this redevelopement project, followed up by the argument that most projects in the Pudong District were motivated by a desire “to attract and please foreigners”, and after a meaningful silence, “like you.” “Like me,” I replied realizing my role as an interviewer had suddenly changed. From being a researcher questioning her subject’s reality, I was turned back at me and became the object under scrutiny. I was pushed into the same role as my student of my own students gaining a deeper understanding for me, which is that language studies often take a back place in China’s fast urbanization, focusing on Shanghai. She is the author of Shanghai Literary Imaginings: A City in Transformation (AUP, 2015) and the co-editor of Spectacle and the City: Chinese Urbanities in Popular Culture and Art (AUP, 2013) (lms14@nyu.edu).

IN TRYING TO BE SUCCESSFUL the New Asia Scholar (NAS) must be highly motivated, mobile and flexible. NAS struggles with unfavorable employment conditions such as low salary and short-term contracts. NAS has to be reachable at all times and will use every opportunity to apply for a grant. How do young NAS juggle the demands of work, mobility and private life and to what extent are they successful? I argue that causal employment and uncertain working contracts add to the stress of young NAS. If they want to be competitive, they do not have to be excellent scholars but they must also be skilled networkers, managers and grant writers.

Monika Arnez, Universität Hamburg, monika_arez@yahoo.de

AM I REALLY STUDYING Asia just because my research is based in India? Is a social scientist in The Netherlands doing ‘European Studies’?

Cynthia Groff, University of Pennsylvania, cgroff@alumni.upenn.edu

THE MAIN DIFFERENCES between Asian Studies research in the seven decades of the 20th century and when I first began researching in the 1970s are as follows:

1. The trend now is towards disciplinary studies, rather than area studies. Disciplinary studies is often comparative, so that scholars will study topics like “population issues” or particular economic questions in various countries, not just one. The emphasis is on the knowledge of the discipline, not of the country or countries concerned. It is a perfectly reasonable approach, and it has produced very good scholarship, but it does have one problem for me, which is that language studies often take a back place to those of other studies. For me, the country I know best as Asia, the result is that many people use research assistants who are themselves Chinese and don’t bother to master the language or do so to the extent that extensive research requires

2. Research tends to be more money-based, because there are now far more grants available than was the case in the past. Moreover, judgments and outcomes on research are based far more on how much research money they have been able to gain.

3. Within the universities, tenure has become both more important and more competitive. Publishing has become an even more important all over the world, and it is not as easy to get tenure, let alone promotions, without extensive publications. Of course, the volume of these publications has expanded enormously over the period. Many of these publications are of very high standard, but I’m not sure that the standard overall has risen.

4. In China it is much easier to undertake research work than it used to be in the 1970s. It is of course true that many still complain a great deal that government authorities place obstacles in the way of scholars, especially those who are very critical of government and for topics considered sensitive. But it is still MUCH easier than it was. The number of places Scholars can go and live has expanded and the range of work they can undertake has gone up.

5. The range of scholars who undertake scholarship in Asian studies has increased. There are now far more women than there used to be, and the result is that gender studies has increased as a field of study. Of course, it is possible for men to undertake gender studies, but the reality is that most of the work on China gender studies, which I know best, is done by women.

6. There is nothing new about Chinese scholars moving overseas, including to Western countries. The older generation of scholars included Chinese who had left mainland China due to the commu-

nist victory. But after the opening up in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many more went to the West and were able to do PhDs in China studies and take up jobs, never going back to China.

I think I was lucky in getting into some fields that were not fashionable at the time, but have become much more so since. For instance, at the time I began my work on Chinese theatre, many scholars did not see it as a central issue worth extensive research. Similarly, when I started my work on ethnic minorities, it was still an unusual field that most people regarded as either too difficult or not central enough to China studies to be worth the trouble it required. Of course, there were exceptions. However, I think taking up a relatively new field was lucky. In particular, ethnic studies have now become very fashionable and in demand, fitting into the new politics of our era. Overall, I think the New Asia Scholar has it more difficult than the old. This is because competition is fiercer and, although opportunities are also much greater, the range of available employment is slim. I enjoy many of the younger scholars greatly and think they deserve better opportunities. Have I witnessed tensions between “old” and “new” scholars? Yes, I have, because good scholars tend to be both different and even hostile attitudes and have different experiences to those of former generations. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as tension can be productive. People, whatever their generation, can and should learn from each other.

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Demystifying Texts for China’s Scholars
Soon after completing my MA in History of Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, in September 2001, I applied for a doctorate at Columbia, at University of Pennsylvania, and at SOAS, all popular choices to pursue a study on South Asian Temple Architecture. Unfortunately, funding became a major issue after 9/11 and I was unable to secure a full grant.

After a few years as an independent scholar, and curator in Mumbai (working on a Parsi Zoroastrian project), my partner’s job transfer brought us to Singapore in 2005.

WITH NO JOB or appointment in hand, it seemed like that perfect time to revisit the idea of a doctoral study. My work as a curator had at the time taken me away from temples, and my research interests on religious architecture were slowly shifting to my doctoral studies. As I decided to follow this path once again. A proposal on collection studies was drawn out and fortunately accepted at the South Asian Studies Programme, NUS. However, at the time there was no suitable guide for my research plans, and so the proposal was saved to file for the meantime. Since I had to wait for my research programme to start, I began scouting for a job and I eventually went on to serve as curator at the South Asia Gallery at the Asian Civilizations Museum, one of Singapore’s National Museums. After two years, Dr Andrea Pinkney, a fellow Ph.D. student, who had completed her doctoral study at Columbia, joined the South Asian Studies Programme at NUS. Given her familiarity with the region, and her focus on religion and anthropology, she was seen as a suitable guide to groom my project on a South Asian collector.

A full scholarship further facilitated my candidature.

Eventually, the first few research ideas drawn out by my new guide, Dr. Pinkney, made me quickly question my place on an area studies programme. The topics seemed to be too far removed from my research interests, and I longed for a more art-based focus of my research.

A new guide to groom my project on a South Asian collector.

Dr Pinkney, who was a senior scholar in residence at SOAS, provided me with a new horizon on the role of an area studies programme. The topics seemed to be too far removed from my research interests, and I longed for a more art-based focus of my research.

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Cai’s work, based on reviewing the strategic focus of the National Heritage Board’s heritage establishments and drafting collection-related policies for National Museums, allows her to attract how Asian scholars and heritage professionals offer alternative ways of seeing and thinking about issues based on the philosophies and practices in Southeast Asia. In the field of museology, for example, while the origin of the museum institution has been widely traced to the 14th century, drafting collection-related policies for National Museums, archives and related projects, promote the view that different perspectives grounded in diverse knowledge systems and philosophical thoughts will likely have wider political, economic, social and cultural implications to the world we live in.12

As physical holdings of pictures and documents are digitized, they become decontextualized from their original locations, trunks and catalogues, thus finding a new virtual habitat. Consequently, they provide an altogether different vantage point, as observed by Gadhoke. Much like Vyarawalla’s collection digitized by the ACP Archives, several modern and contemporary Asian artists’ documents, diaries and correspondences form the bulk of materials at the Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. Schematic online catalogues afford condensed overviews of heterogeneous materials; they serve as a resource for research and also guide the making of new research proposals. The condensed online view of such an archive allows one to connect some very disparate records, materials and themes. Thus, a single ‘screen shot’, often overwhelming due to its underlying content, drives home the point that the new Asian scholar has a vast offering of physical and virtual spaces: archives, record rooms, digitized catalogues, museums and universities. Engagement with these rapidly proliferating resources can simultaneously erase in older materials, recent historians and living cultures, thereby making Asian/Area studies more relevant to the contemporary world.

Several disputes and challenges of the Asian world, such as continuing subordination of women, religious intolerance, cross-border terrorism and conflict zones, require a more nuanced understanding of people, cultures and worldviews from within. For instance, shared religious practices were part of South Asian civilisations and their cultures. Until the nineteenth century British census undertakings, people did not necessarily have to classify themselves along religious categories; cultural concepts did not translate into fixed numbers and appellations.41 While the plurality and inter-religiosity of South Asian civilisations can be comprehended and made part of popular imagination, the contemporary world can avoid episodes such as the razing of the Bahá’í Mausoleum in Haifa (Israel) and the Buddhas of the Bamyan valley in Afghanistan. Even a quick look at Homai Vyarawalla’s photographs of a pre-partition meeting held in Delhi will tell us of the many individuals who made an irreversible decision of drawing up political boundaries (on the basis of majority and minority numbers of religious groups), to decide the fate of entire nations and cultures. Pictures such as those shot by Vyarawalla, will have to be engaged in conjunction with scholarly undertakings at universities and academies, to encourage more nuanced readings of India and bring these effectively into popular spheres of consumption, be they textual, pictorial, pedagogical or exhibitionary.

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Publishing requirements for promotion

Indonesian universities have a four-tier academic ranking system: Asisten Ahli (Junior), Lektor (Lecturer), Lektor Kepala (senior lecturer) and Guru Besar (professor).1 Each tier (jabatan) is further divided into two steps (golongan), except for Lektor Kepala, which has three steps. The procedure for promotion to the next step or tier is regulated by the Directorate General of Higher Education (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi [Dikti]), and follows a credit point system (Sistem Penilaian Kinerja Dikti) [1], which is further divided into two steps (golongan), except for Lektor Kepala. An accelerated promotion (lencana jabatan) is also available for the 250,000 sub-professorial academic staff members (dosen) at Indonesian universities – only 16% of all academic staff members are professors. Promotion is granted based on merits in teaching and education, service to the community, and research and publications. One of the requirements for advancement from the rank of Lektor to Lektor Kepala is that the applicant has published an article in either an accredited national journal or in an international journal. If, however, the instructor who applies for promotion to the rank of Lektor Kepala is not a holder of a doctorate, then the applicant must have published at least one article as the principal author in a reputable international journal. Promotion from Lektor Kepala to the rank of Guru Besar requires a doctorate and at least one publication in a reputable international journal.

According to Dikti, an ‘international journal’ must have an ISSN, an online presence, an editorial board with members from at least four countries, and it must be indexed by international databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, or Microsoft Academic Search. Dikti furthermore stipulates that the article must be written in one of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish) – notably, not a native Indonesian language such as Bahasa. ‘Reputable’ international journals also need to have an ISS Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) impact factor or a Scimago Journal Rank (SJR).

Potential, possible, or probable predatory publishers

The no-fee open access model with free downloads of scholarly articles has a number of advantages – the most obvious being the free accessibility of scholarly articles. In order to finance themselves, however, publishers either need a sponsor such as a university, or they must charge the authors. A study conducted in 2013 found that among the 9000 open access journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), only 28% charged a publication fee. Among humanities journals, only 4% required payment by authors.2 Yet, many authors – the vast majority of them from developing countries, but also from Russia and other former Soviet republics – choose journals that do indeed charge fees. The reason is that many of these journals accept articles with little or no scrutiny. In 2013, John Bohannon, as an experiment, submitted 304 versions of a fatally flawed ‘wonder drug’ paper to open access journals.3 121 papers were submitted to journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals. The DOAJ lists quality open access journals. Yet, only 72 papers were submitted to journals listed in the Beall’s List of ‘potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open access publishers’.4 By the time they had published his article on the outcomes of his experiment, 157 of the journals had accepted the bogus scientific paper and 98 had rejected it. 60% of the final decisions had been made without a peer review process. Of the 108 journals that had actually reviewed the paper, 70% accepted it as genuine.

Predatory journals have mushroomed since 2010 and this has created, in Bohannon’s words, “an emerging Wild West in academic publishing.” The Beall’s List of predatory open access publishers contains 639 publishers – an increase of 244 since 2013. Furthermore, many publishers on the list have portfolios that range from just a few, to hundreds of individual journal titles. Dikti is well aware of this issue and has started to create a blacklist of articles. Dikti’s advice is that authors should avoid predatory journals and its guidelines as to what constitutes an ‘international reputable journal’ are inadequate.

Exposing a predator

One journal that fulfills all of Dikti’s requirements for a ‘reputable international journal’ is the Journal of Language and Literature published by the Progress Publishing Company in Baku (Azerbaijan). The Journal of Language and Literature, and also the other five journals published by the Progress Publishing Company, became increasingly popular among Indonesian scholars. Hundreds of articles were published by Indonesian scholars, especially from smaller and less prestigious universities. In the February 2015 edition of the journal, every fourth article originated from Indonesia. The Progress Publishing Company became a convenient venue to accommodate easy acceptance and, with just US$250 fee, relatively inexpensive credits for tenure and promotion.

For his study on the no-fee open access model with free downloads of scholarly articles, Bohannon had 55 journals submit articles. He then invited them to publish a ‘reputable international journal’ that he had created, in questionable journals. He created an online money making scheme, not a single article had ever been printed. And so, with the dissolution of the com-
Asian Studies is a very broad field. A fairly obvious statement, but at no point does this become more apposite than when boxes and boxes of books contending for the ICAS Book Prize start arriving by courier. As a member of the jury for the Book Prize at ICAS 9 in Adelaide, I started to receive books at my office in late 2013. The final package arrived just a couple of months before the July 2015 conference. Over this period I developed a highly advanced system for organising the books; namely, piling them on the floor with spines facing up – like a library stack that has lost its balance. New packages would come and I would reorder the pile, at first arranging by country focus, then discipline focus, then (when procrastinating and putting off the completion of my own writing) by colour of the spines. Books would come and go from my office floor to home to conferences to fieldwork; some ended up being read through episodes of insomnia or jetlag, some during my daily commute, and while waiting for various appointments to arrive. No matter how much I read the pile on my floor grew.

Wading through a field of books

Duncan McDuie-Ra

The newsletter | No.72 | Autumn 2015

The Focus | 25

The field of books

The metaphor of ‘the field’ is apt when gazing at over 200 books on the floor over a period of many months. Asian Studies is a very broad field, the edges of which are almost impossible to see. The submissions for the ICAS Book Prize (IBP) affirmed this. Indeed, the only thing that united the books on topics as diverse as ‘post-Suharto media’ and ‘alcohol and drug culture in colonial Manchuria’, was that their subject matter was based somewhere, sometime, in this idea called Asia.

My experience on the jury brought three things about the current state of the ‘field’ into focus. First, Asian Studies is alive and well. The scholarly quality of the books submitted for the prize was astounding. Over the last two decades (or even longer) the idea that there is a crisis in the humanities and social sciences has gained traction as universities lose funding, and rankings-obsessed institutions track metrics and citation rates. Indeed, conversations among scholars in affected fields can rarely ignore crisis talk, even if the conversation started out as an innocent discussion about ‘Myanmar film stars’. The quality and originality of the books submitted for the IBP provide an alternative narrative about the state of humanities and social sciences, especially with regard to Asian Studies. Books are being written, lots of them. Scholars are writing them, many of whom have jobs in universities and research centres that give them the time, resources, and support to write alongside their other commitments.

This does not mean ‘crisis averted’, rather the quality of the scholarship needs to be used as evidence and be considered as part of the defence of the disciplines and fields under threat. Second, books have persevered as a form of presenting research and as a reason for doing research in the first place. Books, especially sole-authored monographs – which constitute the majority of books submitted for the IBP – take years of dedicated research, committed writing, revision and revision, and patience with the production process. They also take dedication and time to read – time that is shrinking under the demands of contemporary academic life. As the costs of production also increase and publishers seek out a guaranteed return on their investment in a book, some authors are wary that the pursuit of a book contract involves some compromise towards current trends, course adoption, and simplified scholarship. However, what becomes clear from the books submitted to the IBP is that publishers are prepared to push the boundaries into new areas – new topics, new scholars, new series, new conceptions of Asian Studies.

Books offer a form of presenting research like no other, and with many of the top university presses seeking to maintain scholarly quality, while also enabling open access to titles, the field is undergoing a shift, one that may catch on across the publishing spectrum. Furthermore, books remain such a crucial way of becoming known in a field. There is something about the material form of a book – even if it is a PDF – the cover, the blurb, the level of detail, the length of analysis and detail, that stays in the head of a reader, a fellow author, or a jury member in ways that other forms of research work are unable to do. Receiving an accolade (or 2 or 3) does amazing things for the reputation of a scholar in Asian Studies.

Third, the boundaries being pushed are – by and large – empirical. On the one hand this is unsurprising as the only thing connecting the vast range of titles in the IBP is their empirical nature. Where are the books on topics as diverse as ‘post-Suharto media’ and ‘alcohol and drug culture in colonial Manchuria’? How? If the content appeared at first glance to be quite specific.

The blurb? Was it chapter 6? Did they even get all the way to chapter 6? Being on the ‘other side’ this time made me think about the ways my previous book would have been discussed, debated, put on and taken off various long and short lists, recommended, and most importantly, read. Read by jury members who may not have otherwise read it. Receiving an accolade certainly boosted the profile of the book, especially if in a PDF – the cover, the blurb, the endorsements, the depth of detail has certainly influenced the choices I have made when it came time to select 10 books I found my long-list to be a wooden crate: the ‘long-list crate’. However, when it came time to select 10 books I found my long-list crate contained 20. This was halved with some tough love (and a few regrets), some negotiating with my fellow jury members got us to an agreed 10, and a few weeks later we agreed on 5 for the short-list – all of which deserved the main prize. Awarding accolades made it possible to bring some that had been in that long-list crate back into the frame, which made me sleep a little easier.

Benefits of judging and being recognised

Serving on the jury also made me reflect on my own writing. As a recipient of one of the IBP Accolades at ICAS 8 in Macau, I often found myself looking at books that I had read in my office and flogging a book in their face. ‘Have you seen this?’ A particular book would remind me of a colleague working in another country I had not seen for a while, or someone I met at a conference, or a former student – giving me a perfect reason to get in touch and mention the new title. My PhD students would stick post-it notes on books they wanted me to read. One colleague asked if they could have a particular book to give to their spouse for their anniversary! I found new scholars to approach. I scrawled down names of authors I wanted to keep in mind for a book series I am involved with. I read some of the books I was reading for the prize in my own writing. I passed on others to colleagues for use in courses they teach …

And then one day the books stopped arriving. The joy of discovery was replaced with the challenge of actually long-listing, short-listing, and writing citations with my fellow jury members. Throughout the process I had judiciously added titles to a wooden crate: the ‘long-list crate’. However, when it came time to select 10 books I found my long-list crate contained 20. This was halved with some tough love (and a few regrets), some negotiating with my fellow jury members got us to an agreed 10, and a few weeks later we agreed on 5 for the short-list – all of which deserved the main prize. Awarding accolades made it possible to bring some that had been in that long-list crate back into the frame, which made me sleep a little easier.
This year’s twelve-title shortlist for the ICAS Book Prize on social sciences and humanities included three books first published in Asia (two by NUS Press). For the new EuroSEAS Nikkei Book Awards given in Vienna in August this year, five of six finalists originated in Asia. And in March this year, the US Association of Asian Studies (AAS) awarded its Kahin Prize to M.C. Ricklefs’ Islamisation and its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, a book published in 2012 by NUS Press at the National University of Singapore. Remarkably, this was the first time any book published in Asia received an AAS book prize.

Peter Schoppert and Paul Kratoska

IT TOOK A LONG TIME to reach this particular milestone, and it is useful to explore what it might mean. Does it tell us anything about the shifts in Asian Studies? About new Asia scholars? Despite many predictions over the years that it would happen, we seem unable to say anything about the shifts in Asian Studies. Whether or not there is a noticeable shift in the geography of publication of Asian Studies remains to be seen. On-line publication has not yet developed a sufficiently sophisticated basis to allow real measurement of the phenomenon.

Positive changes in the fields in which I work: Indology, Thietology in South and South-East Asian studies -- include the elimination of gender inequalities among researchers and lecturers, movement beyond the overly theoretical Post-modernism that dominated approaches in the 1980s and 90s, and the broader understanding of Asian perspectives on the field. On the negative side, centre perspectives continue to dominate at the expense of those on the periphery, archival research is often neglected in favour of (Western) theoretical approaches, scholars all too frequently appeal to their own community rather than engage with the concerns and interests of their subjects, and critical approaches are rendered in favour of emic representations. In general scholars tend to follow trends rather than to take up original approaches or uncover original subjects. Probably the greatest challenge is to promote scholarship in the context of the universities, with economic demands overwhelming academic quality. Too often, grant application forms are not drafted by academics, but by bureaucrats. The end result is that a scholar on a one-year research fellowship spends much of that year filling in applications for future funding rather than actually carrying out research. The need for academics to publish on a regular basis has led to a proliferation of journals, many of which, while peer-reviewed, of necessity publish material that adds little to the field. Whether on-line publication is a problem or a solution remains to be seen. On-line publication has not yet developed the status of print publication, despite its value in allowing access to scholars in countries where many European publications are too expensive to obtain. None-the-less the field of Asian studies in general is growing organically and there remain publications and publishers who will bring out scholarship that is not commercially attractive, just as there remain institutions and individuals who continue to seek the highest possible quality of work. Fashions may come and go, and attract superficial scholarship as they do, but the field has never been stronger and the future remains bright.

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In the 1960s professors were told to teach in the vernacular. This type of history writing was called “panteopang pananaw” - the vision of ourselves by ourselves. Those who failed to comply were branded as colonial or outdated. Nationalist historiography has its advantages as it helps see history from the point of view of the natives. They see each other as rising from the grip of colonial rule and taking their place in the family of nations. Another trend was local history writing. This resulted in a plethora of histories of regions of the Philippines, the provinces and towns even down to the barangay or village level. Yet this mode of history isolates one from the region. When we go out to attend conferences abroad such as those organized by IAS, IAAS and ACAS, we find that we are being left behind as our neighbours are now writing about bilateral histories, and how their national histories are affected by regional events and vice versa. When Filipinos write their histories using their own national language, people of other nationalities cannot relate to us and we cannot relate to them.

I realized that by remaining isolated we cannot see the history of the region or the world in general if we just look at ourselves. We must realize that what is happening to the Philippines is probably a result of what is happening in the region. Events in the Philippines too, may affect the region.

Published by NUS Press, Singapore

POSITIVE CHANGES in the fields in which I work – Indology, Thietology in South and South-East Asian studies – include the elimination of gender inequalities among researchers and lecturers. While traditional library markets in the West are under severe pressure, it is possible for publishers in Asia to reach them with greater ease. Asian markets are becoming more open and transparent in response to the demand for access to information. The more savvy publishers from the West are sourcing more works from Asia, basing commissioning editors in the region and commissioning more local peer reviews.

Manuscripts written by Western authors are often written to explain Asia to the West, and adopt an ‘outside-looking-in’ perspective on matters of great import to audiences in the region. Frequently these manuscripts represent solid scholarship, but they position their discussion within the theoretical concerns currently engaging scholars outside of Asia and for a publisher like NUS Press, whose primary market lies in Asia, they have limited appeal. Where references in Asia indicate that the substance of a manuscript is well known within the country concerned, and that the material is not pitched appropriately for Asian readers, our conclusion is that the author should probably seek publication opportunities elsewhere.

At the same time, more and more younger scholars from all parts of the world see social science research as a co-creation of knowledge. If they do Asian Studies they wish to speak to Asian audiences, and while their books and articles may reach readers in institutions around the world, they also become embedded in local discourse.

The book prizes mentioned at the start of this piece reflect a noticeable shift in the geography of publication of Asian Studies. Whether this shift becomes a long term trend remains to be seen, but the remarkable output of research by Asian scholars cannot be ignored, even if publishers are grappling with new forms of ‘publication’ and new channels for delivering knowledge.

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The Newsletter | No.72 | Autumn 2015
This is how a young Thai university lecturer in Bangkok spends her semester. She teaches six hours a week in two undergraduate classes and one graduate class. She advises a couple of PhD students. She works on two research projects. She serves as advisor to more than ten undergrad senior-year Thai students and about twenty students in the international program. She provides advice to any students who need it, whether or not they are assigned to her, and she writes reference letters for them when requested. Her workload extends beyond her own university. She serves as thesis advisor to grad students from other Thai and foreign universities. I suspect that all Thai lecturers have similar responsibilities, although the number of students that they assist may vary. Add to this workload the daily commute of two to three hours through the city’s traffic gridlock and one wonders how Bangkok academics even find time to do research.

Travisin Jittidecharak

Burdens of writing and editing
But the Thai academy has been facing another challenge. After the Thai government’s economic crisis in 1997, the NRF advised the Thai government, as part of their rescue package, to downsize their civil workforce and to cut expenses. The result was the privatization of almost every state-owned university. In Thailand, being a civil-worker means ‘security’. The state covers most of your essential expenses, including your children’s school tuition and your parents’ medical bills. Privatization takes away this privilege. It makes it tougher to get promoted. And in the old days, no civil servant was ever fired for underperforming. Now, academic instructors are hired in a contract and risk losing their jobs if they don’t perform according to expectations. The resulting instability will hopefully eventually disappear as administration and management adjust their policies and procedures, and academics get used to the new situation.

The academy in Thailand is undergoing a more critical change these days. Take one look at the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and you see the rich ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. How well can these countries work across the cultural divides to provide support for their own scholars? Silkworm Books has experienced this issue firsthand. In 2006, we received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to promote the work of regional scholars in the broader English-language community. This project was fraught with two general difficulties.

The first was administrative. Every national government has some sort of policy to support its academics. Translation and publication funds are provided, but the rules and regulations were set up years ago, likely by an administrator with no practical knowledge or experience of translation, copyediting, and publishing. The conditions and stipulations are dated and need revamping. Policymakers and top administrators need to understand that translating a local language into English is not a simple undertaking. It is time consuming and very costly. I have miscalculated the cost more than once due to underestimating the time needed for copyediting. In cases where the translations were arranged by the authors themselves, our copyediting was often further delayed because the authors could not easily respond to our editorial queries in English.

This brings me to the second difficulty. In a regional association like ASEAN the common language for working and publishing is inevitably English. How will scholars who don’t speak English manage? It is tedious for non-native English speakers to produce works in English unless the writers grew up in an English-speaking country and were educated there. Not only do the unfamiliar English grammar and vocabulary cause problems. Structure and organization and flow are also huge hurdles. Even when a native English-speaker has been asked to check and correct the original work before submission, and even when the grammar appears to be fine at first glance, we have found that it may still need extensive copyediting or even rewriting. The rhetorical style may be back-to-front. The organization may not be coherent. The whole thing can be an editorial nightmare. As a matter of fact, we would have been hard-pressed to find a freelancer willing to copyedit this type of manuscript for us a second time.

At the end of the day, the question is simple: can we afford to promote the work of a Southeast Asian writer? How many editors and how many hours will we need to make it readable? Our local or regional academics may have brilliant ideas and brilliant writing styles in their native languages, but the quality of their English writing, or of their translators’, is, sadly, not up to standard.

Self-censorship
When all is said and done, there is a final, far more serious issue for academics in Southeast Asia: the lack of freedom of expression. In Thailand, Article 112 aka Lese Majeste, along with libel law, strongly affect the way people think and write. Since 1935, Thailand has had nineteen coup d’etats. Only during short periods in our recent history has the country been ruled by elected governments. We have become quite used to self-censorship, to sealing our lips. Since the 2014 coup, there has been less and less public debate and discussion. Some accusations have gone beyond reason, for example, when the military filed a complaint against someone who verbally criticized a sixteenth-century king. The sentences handed down by the military court for such acts are often absurd. I have even heard stories of people being arrested for writing a Facebook post. This is how the Thai government manages to control the media.

Indeed, other countries in the region are facing the same issue. Our various laws may have different names, but the control they exert is essentially the same. They only vary in severity. How can academics produce quality and respectable work under these conditions? I hope that by 2017, when ICAS 10 takes place in Chiang Mai, the situation will have improved and we will be able to discuss any subject openly and constructively.

Travisin Jittidecharak, publisher of Silkworm Books and Executive Committee Member of the International Publishers Association (2012–14, 2015–17) (Travisin@silkwormbooks.com).
As the ominous truism goes, area studies—and the humanities in general—is in crisis. Our last resort against the besieging hordes of reorganization-prone bureaucrats, we are led to believe, is a wholesale reconfiguration of its core tenets. Enter the New Asia Scholar, whose noble desire to innovate carries more than a whiff of Darwinian survival and adaptation. And, as the field of Asian Studies continues to reinvent itself, the question of how language will feature in its future manifestations becomes relevant once more.

Tom Hoogervorst

A roadblock to credibility
Language is central to an informed understanding of culture and cultural context. It facilitates research and in fact shapes it. At times, language proficiency may even offer some protection against the perils of over-analysis and over-interpretation. From the outset, several Asian Studies programmes prioritised teaching and acquiring competence in at least one widely spoken national language. Doing so, it was believed, would permit a deeper engagement with the people being researched. More controversially, it also enhanced observations and analyses of their history, economy, power structures and political climate. This idea went hand-in-hand with the expectation that (predominantly) western researchers would, at one point, indulge in long-term immersion in ‘the field’. At this almost ritual space, they developed what is now known as ‘regional expertise’. The cultural and linguistic credentials thus acquired would often sustain them throughout their further academic career. Asian Scholars from Asia—now in the majority—are clearly overqualified in this regard, unless they work on societies other than their own. From the very beginning, Asian Studies departments in Europe, North America and Australasia were quick to welcome these perceived insiders in their midst. Their knowledge of cultural and linguistic detail was superior, yet for long their alleged inability to maintain an objective distance lingered around as a point of contention.1 Over the past decades, such lines—between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, Asian and Western—‘self’ and ‘other’—have been blurred. The colonialization processes, waves of migration, and global trends in academia. Few scholars would now argue that non-westerners are unable to speak for themselves, although the stigma of voicelessness seems to have shifted to several types of ‘subalterns’.

Besides changes in the demography of Asian Studies programmes worldwide, the role of language is inextricably— and unsurprisingly—linked to economic considerations. In general, much funding now goes to team-based research projects. The delegation of fieldwork to native-speaking assistants or field data collectors has already become general practice in many academic disciplines, reducing the occasions at which direct communication with informants is needed. (These local collaborators are at best listed as co-authors and at worst acknowledged in a footnote, if at all.) In this light, today’s academic realities may well require the New Asia Scholar to just pick up some of the most important lingos before proceeding with the ‘real’ work. The question of how much language should be taught is increasingly turning into whether language should be taught, rather than outsourced to private institutions or relegated to the domain of self-study. In general, the push to learn foreign languages—other than Mandarin and English—is declining. In all honesty, so are the associated indispensables: a crucial language for the sake of language. Leaving aside such bonuses as ‘cultural fluency’, Alzheimer’s prevention, and the pedagogical advantages of learning how to listen, speak, read and write in multiple levels, the study of languages provides one of the most tangible ways to make sense of an otherwise rapidly homogenizing world. The westcentrality of today’s roughly 7000 languages is spoken in Asia and Africa. Some have become strong markers of local or trans-regional identity. Others are marginalized and vast disappearing. This should be a concern to all who seek to understand human knowledge in its full diversity. The death of each language, to end with another ominous truism, means the loss of a stored repository of history, story-telling, music, traditions, culture, and world-making.

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The fluent Asia scholar? Language and area studies 2.0

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2 Ibid., p.13.
3 See in the LeidenGlobal Lecture of 12 May 2015 by Michael Herzfeld. The professor admitted to only passing on his PhD students after they had given at least one academic presentation in the national language of the country they worked on.
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The Incidental Asianist

Despite all that has been written about the continent, the collective advances in the humanities, in the social sciences and even in science and technology have pushed the boundaries of our research, and have expanded our consciousness of Asia as a historical, social, political, cultural and mediated space. This interpretation likewise acknowledges the crucial role of the continent in the dynamics of an ever-changing world, where the issues of international security, regional cooperation, migration and territoriality, participatory citizenship, and the like, have continuously challenged what may be previously thought of as the foundational axioms of Asian Studies, and the essentialist portrayals of Asia as a locus. ICAS 9 (Adelaide, July 2015) was a testament to this. Apart from the more familiar discussions about the major players in the region and the usual emphasis on politics and economics, there were many panels that explored novel themes that linked Asia to a wider array of research directions, towards which many of us are heading. It was particularly encouraging for me to see panels on the engagements of Asia with Europe, Latin America, and Africa; on minority cultures and their practices; on the itinerancy of Asian bodies and texts; or on disaster preparedness and risk reduction in the face of climate change. At its most altruistic, the role of the scholar is to bring these issues to light, and to seek answers to questions that the newness of Asia forces us to ask.

However, ‘newness’ can also be interpreted as an attribute not of the field of inquiry, but rather of the person who chooses to look at Asia through a different set of lenses. The long-established approaches in studying the area now co-exist with alternative approaches that are either sourced from autochthonous scholarship, or borrowed from disciplines not traditionally linked to Asian Studies. This, to my mind, best describes my own case as an 'incidental' Asianist, given that my primary research interest is Philippine Hispanicism. In other words, I am able to draw near to the Philippines and to Asia through the tools of Hispanic Studies and Translation Studies, and often rely on this interdiscursivity to make sense of my experience as a Filipino and as an Asian.

Linguistic concerns

My approach is not without its challenges. Language, for instance, is pivotal in my research. Aside from the already complex relationship between Philippine languages and English, I am compelled to add Spanish to the equation, and thus submit myself to the issues of accessibility, legitimacy and perspectivism. What texts in Spanish can I include in my examination of Asian? How legitimate are the texts in Spanish that I include in my study? From which perspective do these texts articulate their stand? And more importantly, where do I find myself in relation to these texts? The ‘foreignness’ of Spanish also locates me at a different adiaphoric position, and I feel that this is the same crisis faced by any Asian scholar who writes outside the perceived spatial, chronological, ideational, epistemic or discursive boundaries of the region. Am I an outsider looking in? Or am I an insider who catches a glimpse of Asia from an0utlying point in the peripheries? By extension, how does the work of a European or Asian Asianist compare to that of his peers who are from the continent? Or should these questions even matter at all?

That these linguistic concerns are a subject of a continuing debate among Asia scholars indicates that there is so much to be gained from beyond the frontiers of English-language research. The peculiarity of Asia as a site of study is such that in order to participate in the discourse, one has to resort to using a language other than his or her own, a practice that can ultimately preclude many marginal voices from the discussion. For many Asian scholars, academic visibility entails that they be read and heard in English with all its concomitant discomforts and discontents. It is for this very reason that the announcement that Chinese and Japanese will likely be given their due space in the next edition of the ICAS Book Prize is a positive development. I hope that this is just the first of many steps towards a more eclectic appreciation of the discipline. I also hope that more Asian languages will soon find their niche towards a more eclectic appreciation of the discipline. I also hope that this is needed now more than ever. As was pointed out by our positionality in between disciplines and sites, and by our readiness to transgress them if there be need.

Creating Asia

Our individual experience of Asia, though discrete, must be taken as an interconnected sum that affects all of us, and reaches many other people at the fringes of academia. In order for us to sustain the relevance of Asian Studies, we must recognize how we change and are changed by Asia. The new Asia scholar knows that s/he translates Asia for the world, and it is through our work that Asia is understood, examined and instantiated. This association to Asia conversely translates us, and our academic activism should be informed by our postdiscursive in between disciplines and sites, and by our readiness to transgress them if there be need.

The newness of Asia and its discontents pose many questions that have yet to be resolved. I take comfort in the fact that the in-betweenness of the new Asia scholar and the translational-ness with which s/he explores the region can serve to do away with the reductive models of Asian Studies, and interrogate the many Asia that we continue to create for ourselves.

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Below: Calle Cristóbal is the most famous street in the City of Vigan, Province of Ilocos Sur (Northern Luzon). Considered as the most intact district during the Spanish colonial rule of the islands, the street has retained its cobblestone path and heritage houses of Filipino-Chinese families from the period. The UNESCO has declared Vigan as the best preserved example of a Spanish colonial enclave in Asia.

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The newness of Asia and its discontents

The polysemy in the phrase ‘The New Asia Scholar’ is particularly useful in evaluating the state of scholarship about Asia. On the one hand, it can refer to a scholar who is attuned to the newness of Asia as a field of inquiry. On the other hand, ‘The New Asia Scholar’ can be interpreted as a reconfiguration of ‘who’ studies Asia.

Marlon James Sales
Navigating our culturally interconnected world

The concept of interculturality between Asia and the world was a central theme at the 9th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 9), held recently in Adelaide, Australia. While the notion of interculturality is relatively new, its prominence at ICAS 9 highlighted the importance of rethinking the diverse cultural variations in existence and their impact on our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. The notion encourages mutual understanding between various interacting cultures. Academic researchers play a pivotal role in identifying, analysing and articulating the differing cultural phenomena, and all being well, they also help to increase levels of intercultural understanding.

Equally important is that policymakers take into account the effects of intercultural issues on societies, and consider findings produced by academic researchers.

(Dis)connect between research and policy

Many research findings presented at ICAS 9 were particularly relevant for our increasingly interconnected world. The findings would be valuable sources of information for policymakers in their efforts. However, practice appears to indicate that there is a lack of focus on the broader implications of academic research, and on policy strategies reflecting the relevant research findings.

A study presented by scholars from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, for example, found that the indigenous Indian caste system continues to operate within Indian communities residing in Britain. The Dalits (untouchables) are at the base of this caste system, with the Vankar being the lowest of all Dalits. Members of the Vankar community are traditionally assigned to menial work only, such as sweeping and sanitation tasks. The Indian diaspora communities in Britain continue to observe practices related to the caste system despite the changing societal context, that is, a Western democratic society.

Several questions could arise from this particular research finding. For instance, what will happen in the British workplace where Indian Hindu employees, with different caste identities, have to work as a team? What would be the impact on the team when a person of a lower caste but in a senior position encounters a person of a higher caste but in a lesser position? The same questions would also arise in the event of similar scenarios occurring during international negotiations, socially or politically. Nevertheless, this particular study focused primarily on the Indian migrant communities in Britain, and their opinion of the practice of the caste system in general. While the study did state the importance of examining transformations of indigenous value systems for understanding various aspects of different societies, it would have been helpful to articulate the implications of indigenous value systems being observed under differing, transnational circumstances. In the case of the Indian caste system being observed in Britain, it would be critical to consider the impact of this inherent cultural system within an environment that is based on equality and individuality.

My own presentation at ICAS 9 articulated the fundamental differences between the Chinese and Western conceptualisation processes with a focus on the notion of democracy. My research demonstrated a conditional nature to the understanding of democracy in China. This conditional nature is rooted in China’s ancient Confucian philosophy and cultural practices that prescribe the rights and responsibilities of individuals in relation to their designated position in the societal hierarchy. These prescriptions are explicit in emphasising the supremacy of the state over society, and of society over the individual. This contrasts with the prominence of individuality that is fundamental to Western notions of democracy. While it is beneficial to identify the differences between Chinese and Western conceptualisation processes, it would also be useful to examine the implications of such differences. With regard to the Confucian construct, the impact of such prescribed conducts for individuals in a societal environment that emphasises individual rights and freedom should also be a focal point of research. However, my experiences seem to indicate that there is a lack of emphasis on implications of particular researches. In truth, I have spoken to Asia scholars in the past who admit to not concerning themselves with implications of their research in any way.

Reconnect research with policy

Making practical use of academic knowledge needs to be a concerted effort by researchers as well as public or commercial policymakers. It is important for academia and policymakers to function not as different entities, but with the intention of collaboration, while maintaining their respective independence.

Academic requirements for the element of research implications appear to suggest that simply contributing to academic debates, or providing fresh and under-explored aspects to phenomena, is sufficient. Yet academic research is conducted with scientific and systematic rigour, producing robust findings. Research is also strengthened by the academic peer review process to ensure validity and ability to withstand closer scrutiny. Adding practical applicability to the research process by articulating and providing examples of its relevance to the current society would further enrich the particular research, as well as ensure its constructive legacy in the society of the future.

For the policymakers of (Asia-related) multicultural societies, there needs to be an increased emphasis on how particular research findings relate to current and future societies, and what the advantages and disadvantages would be when the particular findings are incorporated into relevant public or commercial policies. In particular, considering the varying, inherent cultural values and practices that exist within any current national border, it is increasingly critical to identify and articulate where the particular differences lie between Asian and other various, co-existing philosophies and practices, why they are different, and how these differences would transpire and effect impact under differing social and political contexts.

Coming together

For the policymakers of (Asia-related) multicultural societies, conferences such as ICAS 9 offer ideal opportunities to access current research. Research presented at such conferences often emphasise findings rather than methodology. This is advantageous for the often time-conscious policymakers, allowing them to obtain a considerable amount of research information concerning a wide range of social and political issues within a relatively short period. Furthermore, they would have the opportunity to interact directly with relevant researchers who are able to address related policy issues immediately, or to collaborate in devising potential research plans that are both relevant to current policy concerns and to the researchers’ interests.

In sum, it is no longer sufficient for scholars of Asia to simply observe and acknowledge cultural or political phenomena. New scholars of Asia need to go further. They need to explore the idea of intervention through articulating their research impact on the society and encouraging considerations of academic research findings in policymaking processes.

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As an anthropologist, I recently found myself at a disadvantage while applying for funding from a government organization; another academic from the field of marketing and economic research, clearly had the upper hand in this case. Both of us were looking at the preferences of consumers in a specific country for a certain kind of commodity. The funder’s goal is to help the industry, and it was evident that the market researcher would be their first choice. I see two major reasons for this.

First, a market researcher demands less time than an anthropologist. When the former might ask for just one year of funding, the latter hopes to get at least two years. In fact, a two-year research is still very tight for an anthropologist, who usually would prefer at least twelve months of fieldwork, especially if the research is a new area. A market researcher is likely to declare that within one year, he or she is able to send two reports to the funding authority, publish one refereed journal article and release one trade magazine article. An anthropologist, even with a much reduced fieldwork, will still be analyzing field notes or drafting a paper, by the end of the first year. Information collected from informants needs to be ‘translated’ from concrete forms into abstract concepts.

Second, market researchers and anthropologists ask a different set of questions. The former asks ‘what’, whereas anthropologists ask ‘why’ and ‘how’. The latter asks ‘how’ and ‘why’. When the funder asks, for instance, ‘what’ products are favored by female consumers, or, on ‘what’ occasions do consumers tend to spend more money on the purchasing of products, the latter asks ‘how’ the social and cultural changes influence the purchasing preferences of female consumers, or, ‘why’ it matters that purchasing happens frequently at one time and not another. By discovering the ‘what’, and with a little bit of an explanation, a market researcher will offer specific research results, to be used by the relevant industry immediately and directly. Many questions raised by anthropologists or other social science researchers, however, could sound over-intellectual to the policy makers and the industry. Funding assessors regularly question anthropological proposals, and wonder how the research can be ‘translated’ into policy for the industry. Namely, even though you provide ‘why’ and ‘how’, then ‘what’? The anthropologist, if given the chance to respond, would answer: without exploring sufficient cultural contexts, namely the ‘how’ and ‘why’, the discovered ‘what’ could be wrong.

Pragmatic solutions or open interpretations

Relatively speaking, marketing research delivers practical guidance, whereas anthropological research offers alternative ways of thinking and of identifying new questions. Anthropologists are more concerned with understanding the fundamental cultural background behind a phenomenon, rather than hastily declaring the discovery of a truth or a fact concerning the phenomenon. In fact, anthropologists often refrain altogether from stating any truths or facts. They choose instead to present information provided by informants, analyze the general meanings revealed, leave it otherwise open for interpretation, and maintain the readers’ right to discern truth or falsehood. Unfortunately, this approach rarely attracts research grants that expect pragmatic solutions and quick benefits. Policymakers and industry people don’t enjoy indirect suggestions and would rather not bother with interpreting meanings themselves. In addition, government funding for academic research around the world has seen drastic cuts and the situation has resulted in many organizations turning to the world of business and industry, who regrettably demand direct benefits and swift outcomes. Under these circumstances, anthropologists and other social scientists are forced to compromise, changing their tone of writing and ways of asking questions. More and more, anthropologists imitate the ways of market research, for example, quoting numbers and using diagrams to disclose ‘facts’, and stating objectives as directly as possible. In other words, anthropologists are having to translate anthropological ideas into practical guides that are appreciated by policymakers and the industry. There are perhaps advantages to this transformation of knowledge: it will encourage anthropologists to explain profound theories in straight language. Yet the problem remains that anthropological applicants have to demonstrate absolute benefits to the industry before starting the actual investigation. Understanding ‘how and why consumers choose a product’ becomes less important than ‘how to encourage consumers to choose the product’.

Making it apply

If an anthropologist nevertheless still intends to receive such a grant, his or her research must have a strong applied aspect. If it is a linkage project, the anthropologist will work with a partner investigator from the industry. This cooperation provides useful assistance to the anthropological investigation, but perhaps also generates a lot of aggravation due to the divergence between the industrial and anthropological interests. The soul of anthropology – avoiding truth and falsehood, judgments, opening doors for interpretation, and critically reflecting-is somehow lost.

However, upon finishing the applied research, an anthropologist may have the chance to win back his or her anthropological soul. The process of interacting with industry partners provides interesting cases and data for the researcher to reflect upon and analyze. The anthropologist needs to conduct another translation of knowledge: the practical guidance offered to the industry back into anthropological thoughts and cultural critique. The only uncertainty, however, lies in whether such reflections could be published or if it involves the privacy of the industry partners.

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Notwithstanding reservations about generalising across regions, in this discussion I consider the notion of ‘new Asia scholars’ in connection with Southeast Asia. I look at two possible assumptions: either that new types of scholars have emerged that change the circumstances for knowledge production, or that new scholarship among Southeast Asian scholars may change or challenge the forms of knowledge produced about the region, I discuss both angles in relation to old and emerging regimes of knowledge production and their engagement with society.

Imran bin Tajudeen

Received legacies for research and publication
Before we may speak of ‘new types of scholars’ or ‘new scholarship’, I wish to begin with a survey of two regimes that have been inherited. First, without discounting the heartfelt passion, devotion and intrinsic motivation of individual scholars for the pursuit of knowledge, one may note that the underlying motivations for the patronage of European scholarship on Asia in the preceding centuries lay in the utility of such knowledge for European imperialism and epistemological control. The ‘old regime’ in scholarship on Southeast Asia was generated by institutions founded to serve and augment the administration and management of various colonial territories. They remain vital today. Scholarship was also generated through the exploration and record of peoples and languages for evangelism by various European and American religious groups. These centres of knowledge production and archiving, and their journals and monographs, continue to referee and shape scholarship on Southeast Asia. The Soem Society and its journal founded in 1904 under royal patronage in Bangkok is the notable exception of Southeast Asia that was ultimately modelled after the antiquarian societies of European colonial powers and is in fact linked to Siam’s own imperial ambitions in the Southeast Asian mainland and its anxiety to demonstrate its parity with European imperial powers.

From the 1940s to the 1980s, a second regime emerged, with North American and Australian universities joining European ones in developing centres or programs on Southeast Asia connected to strategic foreign policy imperatives. Benedict Anderson observed acerbically the contrast between the ‘entrepreneurial’ North American university researcher and the ‘unhurried’ European colonial civil servant-scholar, both of whom were creatures of their respective ‘ecology’. Significantly, Anderson does not discuss any other ‘ecology’ beyond these.

Both European colonial and Cold War North American scholarship fundamentally produced research with utility for Western knowledge consumers, at times within their national contexts. Yet, both legacies for research and publication shape contemporary scholarship in powerful and fundamental ways. Recent trends in promotion and tenure assessment for Asian universities based on American modes of knowledge validation through academic journal publication have renewed the power of both regimes of knowledge production. It is these traditions, in English (and to a limited extent, other European languages) and revered by Euro-American institutions, which form the received modes of scholarly enquiry, academic validation, career advancement, and financial incentives. Alternative discursive domains and traditions of scholarship remain very limited even today — and language medium and milieu play fundamental roles in their dissemination. We need only recall that while J.C. van Leer’s dissertation of 1934, with its well-known observations, destabilised not merely the epistemological assumptions but also the very ontological bases of knowledge about Southeast Asia, its fundamental revision gained wider recognition only after an English translation of his thesis had been published in 1955. His critique was then supplemented by those from Anglophone scholars such as John Smail calling for ‘autonomous histories’ in 1964. Likewise, influential critiques by Asian scholars such as Arjan Appadurai and Lila Abu-Lughod have a much reduced utility as mediums of scholarly communication in the relevant former Southeast Asian colonies today. It is revealing too that the Bjørgen has opted to use English since 1948. One may contrast Indonesia with the Philippines in this respect. Their former colonial languages, Dutch and American English respectively (notwithstanding the Filipinos’ earlier Hispanisation), enjoy vastly different fates in international academia today. While Asian Studies, issued by Manila’s Asia Centre at the University of the Philippines Diliman, has enjoyed continuous publication in English since 1963, the University of Indonesia’s Wacana, begun in 1999 as a bilingual journal for the humanities, in Bahasa Indonesia and English, chose to 2010 to use English exclusively. Gajah Mada University Press stands out in this regard — beginning in the 1960s, and particularly from the 1970s, it has published a number of English-language books despite belonging to a non-English-speaking milieu.

Pioneering ‘new scholars’ — PhD holders in the early post-independence milieu
Asian intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century were internationally-mobile individuals well-aware of their shared colonial predicament and attuned to the socio-political developments elsewhere — and they were mainly autodidacts. Subsequently, a different intellectual hegemony emerged, who underwent further formal education in Western universities leading to higher degrees. A parallel transition took place in Southeast Asia. For example, Wouter Wolters conducted his doctoral research at SOAS in 1961, under the supervision of D.G.E. Hall, who had an MA in English History. Hall’s entry into Southeast Asian scholarship began when the British government despatched him to assume the Chair of History for a newly-created University of Rangoon (Yangon) on the understanding it would promote and shape scholarship in Southeast Asia for Western foreign policy. Instead, much of their intellectual energy was directed towards serving their respective countries, especially through institution-building and diplomacy, and more importantly in public service and advocacy.

The stories of five pioneer Indonesian doctoral-degree intellectuals highlight this pattern. Sumtiro Djioyohadikusumo (PhD Netherlands School of Economics 1943) returned to Indonesia to fulfil several ministerial roles in the newly-independant regimes before becoming the second dean of the Faculty of Economics at University of Indonesia (UI) in 1951. His students, known as the so-called ‘Berkeley mafia’, received doctorates or masters in economics in the US by the late early 1960s, under a cooperative agreement with UC Berkeley facilitated by the Ford Foundation, and served Indonesia through public office or civil service. Strikingly, in this early post-independence period, academic programs in the US attracted, sponsored or courted the key Indonesian scholars. Koentjaraningrat, independent Indonesia’s pioneer anthropologist, was a Fulbright scholar who studied at Yale before returning to Indonesia for his PhD at UI in 1958, in 1974 Utrecht University bestowed upon him an honorary causa doctorate. He founded the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIP) in 1964, while his students headed Departments in various universities across Indonesia. Djarot (Muhammad Deliar Noer) (PhD Cornell 1963) taught in Jakarta for seven years before being sacked in 1974 just before delivering a lecture on ‘Participation in Development’, which the Suharto regime deemed seditious, and thereafter taught at AMU and CRIC in Jakarta. He has since founded a think-tank, LIPPM. Sartono Kartodirdjo (MA Yale 1964, PhD Amsterdam University 1966) returned to head Gajah Mada University’s History Institute before becoming the editor of the 6-volume set of Indonesian history textbooks published in 1975, and was conferred the first Harry J. Benda Prize in 1977. Finally, in Soedjatmoko’s words, in the fall: ‘...lack of autonomy — a statesman who was accorded several honorary causa doctorate degrees by US tertiary-level educational institutions. As a journalist he was critical of the Suharto regime; he served in various Indonesian think tanks and, when it was no longer safe to remain in New Order Indonesia, was guest lecturer at Cornell, and at the end of his career served as Rector at the United Nations University from 1980 to 1987.

Koentjaraningrat

Djarot (Muhammad Deliar Noer)
Indonesian scholars also founded the important think-tank LIPIES in 1971, which continues to produce academic publications and journals today. Meanwhile, the Singapore Planning and Urban Research (SPUR) Group was founded in 1965, but was disbanded by the state in 1975. Both academic think-tanks saw a mission in critiquing state planning schemes and in contributing alternative visions to policy. Both also served the UN in various capacities. As befits his generation, Jomo maintains his own website: www.jomo.ws.

New scholarship and post-bureaucratic frameworks? The early post-independence milieu was concerned with the application of intellectual capacities to the tasks of institution-building. Today scholarship in the US mould is concerned with what Benedict Anderson has cynically called “the rush to theory” that is driven by “two American peculiarities”, namely the “theory market in the academic marketplace” and “the link of theory to public policy”.

Scholarship with a concern for social engagement must now operate beyond and in spite of the contemporary shift of Asian universities towards this American “academic market-place” model. A new scholarship for Asia would also utilise not only the colonial written archives but also the living archive in its midst, through a dialectical relationship between researcher and community – with the latter as source of information and feedback, and the former performing the duty to inform and serving as a source of informed critique. To generate critical and socially-engaged scholarship, new avenues must be paved for forums involving the general public and institutions so that research may reflect concerns rooted in the locality studied, and for debates that engage Western scholarship and local circles of knowledge. These ideas can radically change the ontological basis for knowledge production, and have informed my public engagements since 2011. They align with the idea of the open university, and simultaneously involve direct encounters with, and field documentation of, foundational, embodied knowledge that cannot be accessed via written archives, may not be received conceptual frameworks, or defy immediate distillation into theoretical discussions. These ideas resonate with Dell Upton’s “cultural landscape” approach to architecture and urban history and the notion of the “flipped academic” where publication is delayed in favour of community engagement.

This year I was named ‘Most Promising New Civil Society Advocate’ for my sustained effort at public engagement and fieldwork on Singapore urban history and place histories. But these efforts take time and energy from work that adds to the academic publications record. Asian universities, particularly in Singapore, are currently driven to align with the “academic marketplace” model for international ranking. There is presently no motivation for universities to consider alternative grounds for assessment. If scholars must pander to the quick-turnover, theory-driven requirements of the “academic marketplace” regime, to the detriment of public engagement or long-term fieldwork, new scholarship and innovative teaching is thwarted – especially for areas of study that concern cultural landscapes connected with a living milieu, and that derive academic renewal precisely from sustained advocacy and painstaking, time-consuming foundational groundwork.

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AS ONE OF A RELATIVELY small handful of trained comparatists working in the field of Asian Studies from the disciplinary home of Comparative Literature, I find that some of the exciting ‘new’ conversations in Asian Studies have begun to develop from conversations with Asian/American Studies. These two fields have traditionally defined themselves in opposition to one another, with the former focused on an area-studies, nationally and politically oriented approach, and the latter examining epistemological categories, including ethnicity and citizenship, that drew mainly on the history of the United States. The past decade, however, has seen a series of rapprochements in which, for instance, categories ‘belonging’ to Asian American Studies (ethnicity, race) have been applied with increasing success to studies of Asia. For example, Asian Studies has responded to the postcolonial turn in the humanities and social sciences by becoming increasingly open to rethinking its national and regional orientations, and to work that pushes, often literally, on the boundaries of Asia as both a place and a concept. At the same time, Asian American Studies has become increasingly aware of the ongoing importance of Asia to the Asian American experience, and thus more open to that is transnational or multilingual, as well as to forms of scholarship that challenge the US-centrum of concepts governing the Asian diaspora.

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The increase in the number of Asians hailing from Asian nations is a wonderful development which inevitably enriches the diversity and quality of work in the field, ultimately contributing to better [global] understanding.

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As a somewhat naive undergrad majoring in Chinese I was often reminded that language was not political enough. The time was early 1970s and I was advised in no uncertain terms to deepen my knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and to adopt the department’s pro-Mao party line. So, I did a double major and graduated successfully. Fast forward 15 years to the late 1980s and the advice I received was of the same order but in reverse … The result was a confused graduate student caught up in the crossfire, not to mention a record of the way things once were in the field of modern Chinese studies and the personal price one pays in toeing the line. The emergence of the field of twentieth century China studies was loud and profoundly necessary, nonetheless, the strictufet of narrowly defined ideas that surrounded it was stifling. One might ask whether the prescribed set of paradigms differed only in kind from the orientalism that accompanied the earlier version of Chinese studies that focused exclusively on the text to the detriment of the culture that gave birth to it?

Today, the expansion and openness of Chinese studies is like a breath of fresh air. The field has grown tremendously due to the proliferation of knowledge about China and the critical theories, such as post-colonialism, postmodernism, the spatial turn, cultural studies, border studies, indigenous studies and the host of other ideas that has taken Asian Studies by storm. The freedom to pick and choose any of these paradigms and to apply them in ways that seem appropriate to the individual researcher stands in very stark contrast to the authoritative ways of the pre-liberalization days. The liberalization in modern and contemporary Chinese scholarship has brought deeper awareness about the nature of Chinese culture and society, which is surely the aim of the field in the first instance, and not to provide a platform for the bias or pre-conceived notions of the individual, whether a holder of a axe to grind. It is commendable that the wider field of Asian Studies has also taken a meaningful step forward to a future that is less constrained and authoritative. In short, as one of the members of the younger generation I remain envious of the younger generation who enjoys greater autonomy to think, analyze and write. It is a result that is more enjoyable, inclusive and open to different points of view and ways of thinking and being.

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Curiosity and consideration being the first requirements for contextualizing the studies of Asia in a contemporary setting, we would also need to think of how to substantialize our inspirations on this matter. From my experience of working in the field of Asian Studies from the managerial side, some observations spring to mind that are defining the work, and to some extent the course, of ‘the research project’.

**Alternative interpretations**

So what does a working environment characterized by uniformity mean for the advancement of a research network aimed at “framing” Asian Studies? As mentioned above, the current academic infrastructure facilitates multiple opportunities for exchanging people, knowledge and money, in a way that may have been possible two decades ago, but certainly not on such a scale and in such an efficient way as is possible today.

But this involves a challenge. Because how does one encourage alternative conceptual thinking in such an established scholarly world, in terms of research traditions, hierarchy on the work floor, and research funding requirements? When aspiring to provide the field of Asian Studies with alternative interpretations, this is in fact something to consider. The genesis of knowledge transmission remains the relationship between teacher and student. Recalling my own incentives to obtain an MA in history, I must mention the magnificent teachers I had for this subject both at secondary school and university. Their ability to visualize the past and explain it for this subject both at secondary school and university. Their ability to visualize the past and explain it, was something that I aspired to do. Even though factual knowledge and pedagogical skills are prerequisites for a lecturer, how does one teach their students to think independently or to be critical about the establishment? Even more so because the students are part of it themselves, or have the future promise of becoming so. During my time at university, the professors were all—without exception of a few—nearly pensioned, white men. Without being too cynical, here, they were generally inappreciative of any criticism about their field of interest and, moreover, their theories that we had to base our essays on. So imagine you learned on the job in a Starbucks franchise, but you’re eager to start your own coffee bar, thus competing with your former employer? It’s not easy to find an investor and to oppose the almost dogmatic popular coffee market—will you allow me to use this metaphor.

**Defiance required**

Parallel to the ‘franchised’ humanities and social sciences, which we benefit from for all of the above mentioned good reasons, institutes working on the advancement of Asian Studies should also facilitate ‘defiant’ thoughts, or at least stage alternative narratives. This will require getting out of our comfort zone in terms of interdisciplinary and inclusive thinking and with regard to the management of our personal and professional favorites. If we would like Asian Studies to remain relevant to a new generation of students and if we endeavor to link the field of studies to contemporary historical developments, we will need to invite the unusual suspects—young and creative people—into the existing academic infrastructure, promote new teaching methods, and provide scholarships—however small to start with—as seed funding for alternatives in conceptualizing, writing about and teaching Asian Studies.
Globalizing comparative political science research on Southeast Asia

From my point of view, the scholar of Asia today is a ‘global scholar’, embedded not only in his/her area studies specialization, but also in constant intellectual dialogue with others in the same discipline, but focused on other Area Studies fields.

In practice, by dint of the complexity of the ‘object’, we are studying to become interdisciplinarity leads to today’s Asia scholar making a more substantial contribution to his/her ‘home’ discipline. Below, I shall argue the case for political science.

David Camroux

References

There is an undisputable assumption among all Asian Studies scholars that Asia is a globally relevant topic. Most people, Asianists or not, are familiar with how Asia has affected global history and also with the history of global curiosity concerning Asia. But, how ‘global’ is this curiosity?

Cláudio Costa Pinheiro

Conceptual empires

European views of the Orient were greatly influential to global perceptions of Asia. Initially, those visions concerned forms of political, economic and cultural imagination organized through forms of knowledge, ultimately at the service of a colonialisist structure of power – which are indistinguishably associated to Western domination. This is essentially the critique made by Edward Said (and others before him) through the concept Orientalism: imagination is power and knowledge wields control over the other.

Likewise, we should not forget that in modernity, the imagination of contexts (territories and people) colonized by Europe, emerges as a privilege of the colonizers, their descendants and apparatuses of power. This circumstance reinforces a cleavage that opposes an imaginative – that produces imaginations as an attribute of power – to an imagined South – the very predicate of that power of imagination.

The area studies framework has somehow reinforced this scheme. On the one hand, it developed capacities to interdisciplinarity and the interdisciplinary study of specific spaces. Yet on the other hand, as Willem van Schendel suggests, it reinforces the insinuation of academic communities into self-contained realities and “conceptual empires” that, likewise, consecrated the areas to specific spaces. Yet on the other hand, as Willem van Schendel would say, but also politics of imagination. This is essentially the critique made by Charles Tilly when comparing to the South Atlantic commercial linkages between Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The beginning of Latin America’s interest in Asia

From the late eighteenth hundreds until the present, more than 120 institutions have been established (and some closed), more than 70 events have taken place and more than 20 journals dedicated to the study of Asia have been published (and some terminated) in Latin America. The current article presents a preliminary survey of the past and present state of Latin American curiosity concerning Asia – from a diffuse 19th century aristocratic inquisitiveness to the professional academic interest of post-WWII – and displays the diversity of views on Asia developed in Latin America.

Historically speaking, connections between these two regions were significant during Iberian colonialism, but decreased again from the 17th to mid-19th centuries when the British Empire controlled the global economic-political scene. In the eighteenth hundreds, relations moved through a gradual rapprochement and in the last 15 years have experienced a major revival. Broadly speaking, modern European colonialism and a pluralized economic-political system was decisive for establishing effective, yet dispersed and indirect, connections between the peripheral parts of the world.

In economic terms, the commercial flow between Asia and Latin America was not the most intense, especially when compared to the South Atlantic: commercial linkages to or the longstanding ties of the Indian Ocean, but it was still relevant. The commerce did not reach the same isolation, blindness and mutual ignorance that affected the underdeveloped. Africa, Asian and Latin American academic networks nearly never have direct contact and are largely ignorant of one another’s intellectual agendas. It has even affected the geographical perception of these regions, sometimes reinforcing imperial boundaries drawn by colonialism, sometimes dividing them through cultural areas, related to the post-1950s geopolitics of power.

Although the countries of Latin America (LA) share historical connections with Asia, LA has (with a few exceptions) never considered Asia particularly relevant to its reality. In fact, even after the bulk of 19th century’s independence, LA continued to hold Europe as its main focus. This has not only led to a mutual disinterest, but also to the silenced of histories that once linked Asia and LA. The deleterious effects of this obscurity comprise not only the loss of histories “stored in social relations”, as Charles Tilly would say, but also politics of “postcolonial amnesia” obliterating connections between peripheries of the Global South.

This condition is indeed damaging not only to the academic interaction between LA and Asia, but to the field of Asian Studies as a whole.

The 19th century is when LA’s autochthonous interest in Asia first became properly visible. This is the time of the first publications about Asia (at least associated with LA), the establishment of the first LA diplomatic missions, the presence of LA travellers in Asia, and of the preliminary efforts to institutionalize the continent’s curiosity for the Orient – through reading groups, religious societies, journals, associations, publications, etc. Clearly, the 19th and early 20th century Latin American imagination concerning Asia emulated that of Europe – through its Orientalist glasses. This was due to Europe’s rule as gatekeeper to colonial Asia and postcolonial LA. Colonization played a decisive role, not only in the way Asia and Latin America were connected, but also in the way Asia was framed by LA imagination.

Most of those first images and publications on Asia were European productions. Very few were by Asian authors – the first Asian author to be translated in LA was R. Tagore, after his Nobel nomination in 1914 in Brazil, he was the only Asian author to be translated until 1948 – and none of the existing translations came from originals in Asian languages. The people in LA who mastered an Asian language at that time belonged to migrant communities and the skill was not very common in intellectual circles.

Interest in Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries

At a time when Latin America was debating ideas of nation building, the construction of the people, the migration of peoples to replace slaves, and the possibility of an alternative pathway to modernization, a source for new civilizational and ontological models, in contrast to European positivism, materialism and nationalism. The spiritual-religious domain associated with the Orient appeared to have a particularly pervasive presence in LA. This domain did not only foster sharply any religion in particular, but focused rather on concepts of spirituality, transcendence and the universality of man.

LA’s identification with ancestral civilizations and ancient religious regimes, embedded the LA imagination of the Orient with a certain notion of incommensurable time and immemorial traditions, and the mid-20th century Asian movement for independence did not much affect LA’s curiosity concerning the continent. LA continued to be relevant for its past (pre-colonial and colonial), rather than for its present or future.

Although LA was not recognizable as a geographic entity or sociological category, but rather the ‘Orient’, which included the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Middle East and Asia. It was associated with the non-academic study of colonists, antiquaries, ancient civilizations and ‘oriental’ philosophies. LA’s interest in Asia was at the time very much confined to aristocratic elites (artists, writers, and dilettantes), to the religious/spiritual spheres or to communities of Asian migrants in urban areas. The source of interest was clearly reflected in funding for the circulation and translation of publications, or the creation of journals and associations. Religious and spiritual societies were particularly active until the 1940s. Also, aristocratic families and upper-class philanthropists were curious about things like the occult, spirituality and poetry, but not Asia’s political context.

Asia’s appeal, 1950-1980

The idea of Asia in LA suffered a radical change after WWII, in fact, all postcolonial peripheries were affected by how the development debate and the later area studies approach framed their existence in the global political and intellectual arena. In this period, Latin American Asia became a theme of formal academic investigation and teaching in disciplines such as history, economics and social sciences, literature and language.

While it remained a historically relevant topic with regard to post-colonial and colonial issues, Asia was certainly affected by the development debate. This is when A. Sauly developed the concept of the “Third World,” approximating Asia to Africa, Latin America and India, identifying these as a present devoid of development and modernity. Accordingly, views of history and narratives of time continued to classify Asia not only as the land of immemorial past, but as a space of non-development, where modernity never arrived and with restricted possibilities for change. In the 1950-80s, LA endured a number of dictatorships, and though the promotion of development was prioritized by military regimes, academic interest in underdevelopment (e.g., in Asia and Africa) was under scrutiny. Paradoxically, this period of time, when LA and Asia were considered to be unable to achieve the future (as developed societies), was the time when they became mutually interested in their present (of underdevelopment).

The profile of scholars interested in Asia changed from ontologists and curious dilettantes to professional academics. It did not mean that there were Asianists in LA, but at best “thirdworldnists” or “developmentalists.” Scholars skilled in Asian languages started to appear, though mostly speaking languages of migrant communities present in LA, such as Japanese and Chinese. Linguistic skills were still not seen as a mandatory part of academic capacitation in LA.
The Newsletter | No.72 | Autumn 2015

The changes in LA’s imagination of Asia again influenced its perceived geography (physical boundaries) of Asia, and accordingly, the public scholarship and institutionalization of Asian Studies in LA. From the late 1950s on, we see the inauguration of the first academic institutes, journals and centres for Asian Studies. The majority of these concerned Afro-Asian Studies—heavily influenced by the corresponding liberation movements and the spirit of Bandung and Non-Aligned Countries—or focused on individual countries (Japan, mostly). In both cases, the scholars concerned were interested in the development debate: Asia was inevitably linked to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and was framed as an indistinguishable part of the Third World.

A number of institutes and journals for Afro-Asian Studies had appeared in the late 1950s, but it was in the 1970s that this agenda became truly established. In 1978, for example, the ALADIN (Latin American Association of African and Asian Studies) was founded in Mexico, very much inspired by the ideological discussion on the consequences of colonialism and capitalism to peripheral societies. It was only in the late 1980s that local academic institutes began to consider Asia through other frameworks.

Funding in the 1970s and 1980s was not particularly abundant, and what there was came from Asiatic Foundations, public LA research funding agencies and, to a small degree, university departments and institutions. Asiatic Foundations focused on promoting the study and interest of the national sphere—such as the Japan or Korea Foundations. They restricted their support to language-training, and topics concerning the nation (not the region). Small grants were also managed by LA ministries and public universities to develop specific programs, journals or events on themes concerning Asia.

Institutionalization, 1990 onwards

From 1990 onwards, there was another interesting change in the perception of Asia in Latin America. Asia suddenly went from being the land of ancient civilizations, immobile time, and unchangeable realities of underdevelopment, to the land of forthcoming prosperity, and ultimate modernity and foreseeing futurity. Again, the change in perception resulted in a new ‘geography’ of Asia, and LA’s interest shifted from Japan to China, and places like Korea and India, for example, became more relevant for their present and future than for their pasts.

Asia continues to impact Latin America’s intellectual and political agenda through the debate on economic development, and research now includes configurations that accommodate discourses on emerging development, like the ‘Asian Tigers’ or the ‘BRICS’ countries, ASEAN, etc. Thus in the 1990s and 2000s Asia was reaffirmed as an increasingly advanced (and some sort of) modernity. Public foundations and governmental initiatives invested in research and academic cooperation, motivated by the belief that some regions of LA and Asia share a common future of prosperity. Although the institutionalization of LA intellectual curiosity for Asia has been visible since the late 19th century, it is remarkable that the bulk of this interest came after 2000. It coincides with the celebration of the so-called ‘emerging institutions’ does not necessarily improve the existence of a local academic community or of a continued debate concerning Asia. Unfortunately, only 5% of the institutes produce a journal and only 6% organize events regularly. Journals, publications and events are indicators of the ‘liveliness’ of an intellectual community, the constant circulation of funding and the production of research that feeds publications (journals and books). The consolidation of Asian Studies in the region should encourage the publication (of journals and books), the offer of research grants and simultaneously the participation of LA scholars in events of the area.

The advantages for the field of Asian Studies and for Social Sciences are potentially huge: to unfold forgotten historical connections, to compare theoretical frameworks, and to propose renewed vocabularies of analytic categories that do not share the historical background of the European Orientalist approach.1

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References

11  This is also the ambition of a consortium of institutions, led by IAS, when working with the African Association of Asian Studies (A-ASIA).

Institutions dedicated to Asia per LA country

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Masking has a long and rich history on the continents of Africa and Asia. In Africa the notable masking tradition of the Yorubas of West Africa comes to mind. In Asia the dexterity and speed of China’s face mask artists have intrigued and entertained theatre lovers for centuries. Merged, intertwined and entangled with ontology, epistemology and even meta-physics, masking has played cultural, philosophical and moral roles in these ancient societies. To be sure, in both societies and civilizations, to mask is temporally and temporarily transmutative; the masked take on another identity that only unmasking can reverse. As Africa and Asia interact far more intensely today I will argue that a Kierkegaardian unmasking moment, of an existential quality, has been reached: “Do you not know that there comes a midnight hour when everyone has to throw off his mask?” I will show that ‘a midnight hour’ has struck for contemporary Africa-Asia relations and why for Africa an unmasked Asia that reveals an authentic self (to borrow Kierkegaard’s word) is critical for Africa.

Lloyd G. Adu Amoah

Unmasking: from haziness to clarity

One of Africa’s leading thinkers of the 20th century, the Ghanaian Dr. J. B. Danquah, provided a useful (if not exhaustive) insight into understandings Africans held about Asia in his day. His insights have always been a quest for deeper knowledge about Asia and its people, beyond the surface. It is important to quote Danquah in full here:

“...with them. He asked me this question: “Tell me,” he said, “any time I take a photograph of some of your people, the negatives come out with a Chinese slant of eyes. But when the negatives are printed, the slant disappears. Why? Have you had any Chinese contacts in these parts?”

Dr. Danquah was known to be a careful observer. But who can ever know the divine or conceal nature from nature? Ghana and China, have they ever had organic, or cultural or biological connection through the ages? If so how and when?”

If the circumstances that brought China into the dialogue above seem simplistic and even tasteless, Danquah’s retort and subsequent reflection showed that Asia, and just what to make of, weighed on the consciousness of Africa’s educated elites. In Danquah’s vast world of thinkery as a natural extension of his contemplative hand, China’s Africa loomed large, even if mystical. He drew comparisons, however furtive, between the maternal Abusua system of the Akan and China’s maternal system and tried to unravel the complexity of the Akan seven day calendar in his research by positing links to China’s own. In the field of public policy, politics, economics and social organization Asia was also a constant reference point for Danquah. Japan was the best example of a world beater for Africa to emulate with its “consumer-oriented society” underpinned by a liberal economic and political system. In his view, small Japan had upstaged China economically because the latter was Marxist and state-led, and therefore undermined individual initiative, liberties and freedom. This last point manifests rather vividly the signs of the ideological struggles that came to define the Cold War and marked Ghanaian and African politics and policy formation right up to the 1980s. It is worth noting here that Danquah’s political contemporaries, Joe Appiah (father of the noted literary scholar and philosopher, Kwame Anthony Appiah) had visited China in 1971, and based on what he saw surmised almost presciently that “China’s best is yet to come.” In addition to the politics, economics and policy reflections, we must add the active contributions that Danquah made as an educator, such as in Hinduism and Buddhism, in 20th century Africa.

In the deliberately selected localization above a set of pertinent questions force themselves upon us. In Danquah’s cultural disquisitions on Asia, would his analysis have been sharper if there was a long tradition of Asian studies by Africans from which he could draw? If Danquah had been exposed to Asian values, ideas, history and culture more intimately and directly (he had to conduct some of his research in the British Museum and therefore deal with all the Euro-centric biases that the curation and organization of documents and artefacts bear), would his almost Manichaeian view of Japan and China have been tempered? To be sure these are questions that are all too simplistically counterfactually derived. The historical, material and technological conditions in Africa in particular (and the world generally) in the last two hundred years have inspired to make a pointed focus on Asian studies in many ways a virtual luxury. For one, Africa was trying to understand itself and reconstruct its past; both projects though still ongoing, have largely been successful. Today, blinding technological changes and altered geo-political and economic realities (in the mind by Asia’s ascendance) have enabled Africa to build itself its own tradition of Asian studies.

Unmasking: towards greater clarity

How (and why) should Africa at this juncture in history approach the study of Asia? Undoubtedly, this question has been reflected on by some of Africa’s leading minds, among them Chinweizu and Aji Kwesi Anakwa, but before Asia became ascendant in the last half of the 20th century. In one of Armah’s fictional works, Urs a Rising, the pursuit of a new Africa-Asia identity that features a deliberate collection of courses connected with Asian studies. Presently, two issues are pertinent for Asian studies in Africa: institution building, and with it making possible the emergence and sustainable of African Asianists. There have been some attempts at institution building, albeit very recently, for instance the Kwame Nkrumah University’s Centre for China Studies (set up in 2004) is one such example. Strategy (established in 2010), a private research firm based in Accra (Ghana), is the first and only think tank in the West African country explicitly founded with a clear focus on fostering and promoting Asian studies. Recently, Confucian Institutes (promoted in the main by the Chinese Government in the campuses of Africa’s universities. The Chinese Government, through the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), has been promoting the Chinese Confucius Institutes in Africa. I will not attempt a comprehensive survey here. It is clear, however, that in the last three decades attempts have been made in Africa to understand Asia via institutionalized entities. Two approaches seem evident. There are new institutions (private/state or a combination), purpose-built to follow, track and understand Africa’s Asia, and there are existing institutions (private/state or a combination), which have added an Asian focus to their portfolios, as Africa-Africa relations have deepened and expanded in the timeframe in question. A third approach may be added, which would include the Confucian Institutes, among others: public diplomacy, entities actively initiated, funded and supported by some Asian governments. The first two approaches have tended to be mostly directed at the political-economy of Asia-Africa relations and have thus focused on the evolving patterns in trade and economic interactions, development assistance, governance, migration, and the like. The third approach has focused on cultural matters, such as promoting the study of Japanese, Mandarin or Asian cuisine, fashion and creative work.

While all the above are useful, the institution building contemplated here on the Asia-Africa front has focused on higher levels of intensity, coverage and depth. Asian studies should therefore extend beyond the policy-political-economy themes (within the continent) and beyond the continent to explore the other very important parts of the continent such as the borderlands of Southeast Asia and Central Asia; a new focus is definitely called for. This new frontier of Asian studies should therefore aim to actively build expertise in these areas, from the undergraduate to graduate levels. This undertaking should open up a new vital axis of intellectual and cultural connections that would underscore the human experience, hitherto unjustifiably marginalized or totally ignored.

From 24-26 September 2015, the University of Ghana (Legon) hosted the first ever conference of the Association for Asian Studies in Africa, the International Convention of Asian Scholars, the International Institute for Asian Studies, and other organizations. The first conference was entitled ‘Asian Studies in Africa Conference’. This should offer fresh beginnings for sustained Asia-Africa intellectual dialogue. Under the aegis of the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASA), the plan is to continue this conference every two years. Publication of the conference proceedings through this conference with the initiation of the Africa-Asia Book Prize in 2014. Adam Libby of Georgetown University won the first Africa-Asia Book Prize of this issue. In addition, an Africa-Asia Book Series is planned from the many insightful presentations made at the Accra Conference.

The first step to learning

Chinese sages have said that ‘a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step’. Similarly, Africa is increasingly coming to the realization that an in-depth understanding

Long connections

It is often mistakenly believed that current Africa-Asia relations were initiated during the Cold-War or better still, post-Amercia world. However, Africa-Asia relations have deep roots going back into antiquity. The Chinese may have reached Alexandria (Egypt) overland in Han times and evidence of early Africa-China contacts in the medieval period is reflected in Chinese porcelain and coins found in and around the eastern coast of Africa. With regard to Africa’s eastern coast, the Indian Ocean in particular has proved the vital waterway linking Africa and Asia “melding... ideas, peoples and material objects that became the basis for conceptualizing the Indian Ocean as one of flows and fluidity.”

More recently, what has become known rather debatably as the East Asian Miracle, which has been followed by the increasing importance of China and India in the global economy, has concentrated attention on Africa-Asia relations. In the trajectory of interactions, traced albeit briefly here, it can be argued that a midnight hour of urgency has struck the path, on both continents, that has been marked by imperialist subjugation and the fight for self determination and freedom. To be precise, Western imperialist subjugation was to have a particularly telling impact in the way in which Africa has come to view and therefore engage Asia. The West’s cultural (and therefore ideological) imprints (however superficial) on modern Africa erected a glass wall through which Asia was viewed darkly, hazily and from a safe distance. This orientation was to be reinforced by the diplomatic, trade, economic, educational, informational, migratory and other ties that bound former colonial entities to the former metropolitan centers, long after the years of independence and liberation struggles. To overturn this historical intermediation imples a conscious, sustained, systematic and organic engagement with Asia in all its varied manifestations directly by Africans, as a matter of necessity and urgency.

Below: Kwame Nkrumah with Mao, photo courtesy of the Chinese Embassy in Accra.

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Africa and the unmasking of Asia

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The Focus
Asian Studies in the Arab states of the Gulf: challenges and potential

This is a preliminary exploration into the state of Asian Studies in the Arab states of the Gulf. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are the six countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): a regional bloc formed in 1981 on the basis of geographical contiguity for economic, technical, social and cultural cooperation. They share not only a common religious and linguistic heritage, they are also endowed with hydrocarbon resources that have fueled rapid economic growth and modernization.

Habibul Haque Khondker

EDUCATION - ESPECIALLY HIGHER EDUCATION - as an important aspect of modernization, though relatively new in this region, has received considerable state patronage. The first university in this area, King Saud University, was set up in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1957. Kuwait University was founded in 1966. University education began in Qatar in 1973, with gender-segregated faculties. The first university in the UAE, the United Arab Emirates University, was initiated in 1976, in Al Ain. The first public university in Oman, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), opened in 1986. And in the same year, the University of Bahrain was established to combine the existing College of Arts, Sciences, and Education (1978) and the Gulf Technical College (1968).

Meeting the demands of a modernizing world

Most of these universities were public institutions created to meet the challenges of the human resource requirements of the modernizing countries of the region; social sciences were not given a priority. In fact, throughout the Arab world the modern universities are relatively young. A recent report observed "... 97 percent of Arab universities –491 out of 508 – were created after 1950... 70 percent did not exist before 1991". One of the challenges faced by these universities is the singular focus on technical and skill developments, accompanied by a penetration of market ideology, which affects both the curricula as well as the structure of the higher educational institutions. In all, the corporatization of the universities takes a toll on liberal education. Yet, it is interesting to observe that social science education is likely to receive more attention with growing interest in East Asia, which has become a dynamic economic region. With growing trade relations between the Arab Gulf states and China, Chinese soft power is being felt.

Soft power

The first Confucius Institute to be established on the Arabian Peninsula was in Dubai, in 2011. The second opened in 2012. The third Confucius Arabian Peninsula was in Dubai, in 2011. The second opened in 2012.

The Confucius Institute was created following President Hu Jintao's 2005 call for "enhancing soft power of Chinese culture". Joseph Nye, among others, is skeptical about the success of the soft power offensive, since China applies oppressive policies against its own civil society. Nye's analysis may be inappropriate as far as the United States, and other democracies with a vibrant civil society are concerned, but for the rest of the Global South, China's cultural diplomacy may prove to yield positive outcomes.

The Confucius Institute at Zayed University, as it does elsewhere, offers Chinese language courses, which have in recent years grown in popularity. The University of Dubai (established in 1997) offers Chinese language training for various governmental departments of the UAE. The University of Bahrain is a mature university with a Japanese studies program, alongside French, German and American programs. Zayed University has also hosted the King Sejong Institute of Korea since 2010, which offers Korean language courses. In 2015, Sultan Qaboos University of Oman (SQU) became part of the Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), which was formed at Hankuk University in Jeonju, Republic of Korea. These are important steps that promise research cooperation and an exchange of students promising interests in East Asian Studies.

Popular culture

In the GCC universities, the initial focus was to train students for the rapid modernization taking place in their societies. Humanities and social sciences did not receive much attention. In recent years, however, that lacuna is being addressed. General education courses at a number of UAE universities are "going global" and now deal with not only western civilizations, but also include Asian civilizations. At Zayed University, a full course is offered within the Masters in Diplomacy program on East Asia, covering China, Japan and Korea and the Newly Industrializing economies. The UAE University in Al Ain also offers a minor in Korean language. Following the course structure of North American universities, many of the public universities in the region have introduced general education programs, designed to generate a higher global awareness. Many of these programs involve Asia, but more specialized courses on Asian regions are still rather limited.

The absence of advanced courses or programs on East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Central Asia in the Gulf universities does not indicate a lack of awareness of the importance of the emergence or re-emergence of (specific parts of) Asia. Japan and the Republic of Korea have already made significant impressions insofar as their popular cultures are concerned. Many academic institutions in the region celebrate Japan day. Al Zayed University, the Japanese Clubs and Korean Clubs initiated by the students who partake in various Japanese cultural activities. The Japanese cartoon genre manga has won the hearts and minds of many young Emirates and has made an impact on Gulf culture. The availability of Arabic versions of manga is proof of the popularity of East Asian pop-culture. There is also a growing number of fans of Korean drama and K-pop among the Gulf youth.

Insofar as Asian Studies is concerned, the influence of Bollywood as the pulsating heart of the media industry, has played an important role. Indian cinema has an appeal in the Gulf region beyond the expatriate South Asian audience. Many Gulf citizens are enamored by the dazzle of Indian cinema. The younger Emirates, however, do not necessarily share the same degree of enthusiasm of their parent’s generation, and prefer to devote their attention between the Hollywood-generated and East Asian popular cultures.

Looking east

In this exploratory paper, by no means an exhaustive survey, some challenges, i.e., an excessive emphasis on the corporatization of higher education is discernible, yet the changing economics-political realities of the world, and the recent ‘Look East’ tendency in the Gulf, may portend a bright future for Asian Studies in the region. But this is not going to happen on its own. A change of vision at the top decision-making levels, spurred by an understanding of the changing global realities, would be needed.

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of Asia has an existential value in a rapidly changing world. That is a crucial first step. Turning this realization into concrete measures involving around institutions, training and research programmes, backed by dependable sources of funding over a long period, should define the next vital steps, steps that the ACCA conference hopes to inspire. The African sages intone that “if you learn you will know”. That should be inspiring enough, as Africa begins the process of bridging the unacceptable intellectual gap that has existed between the two continents; it is a critical move for the mutual unmasking of both sides.

Lloyd G. Adu Amoah, Strategist3 and Ashesi University College, Ghana (Igaamoah@gmail.com)

Left: Kwame Frimpong with Zhou Enli, photo courtesy of the Chinese Embassy in Accra.
Much of the writing about Asia that is available in the west has come from an older generation of writers, and is often framed by earlier geopolitical situations. We were determined to showcase the voices of younger writers; not only did many of the authors address contemporary issues, a number wrote about the past, a past which was often glossed over as they were growing up. This edition presents investigations of the past in relation to China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Kashmir, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, and in the writing by Australian writers who have a connection by heritage or experience in the region. As we embarked on the task of selecting the articles to be included, we realised how brilliantly these writers were addressing the core issue of making sense of the reality behind the talk of the status of living in rapidly changing, yet traditionally informed societies were teased out. Similarities and differences were thrown into sharp relief. Reflecting on different forms of political organisation, the way democracy is evolving, the points of optimism and resistance, were all themes that recurred. Interestingly the fault lines also recurred – particularly around issues of corruption and dynastic power, and the place of women. This has been a hard and ambitious project, and a unique example of cultural diplomacy – some of the authors felt that they could say things in an internationally published journal that they couldn’t say at home. Many of the authors have expressed their gratitude for this opportunity and explained the formal and informal retribution they might receive if they published these essays at home.

One Indonesian writer said, “People are afraid of being censored, to write in her authentic voice was a life-affirming gift for which she was deeply grateful. By publishing in this way, not only are Australian and international audiences given an insight into the richness and diversity of regional writing, but it demonstrates Australian commitment to the exchange of ideas and artistic excellence and cultural ambition. New Asia Now is not only a beautifully written and crafted collection, but it is the starting point for a much deeper exchange.

Professor Julianne Schultz, Founding Editor, Griffith Review (www.griffithreview.com)
Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) aims to serve as a hub for Asian Studies by integrating regional studies and thematic research agendas across Asia. Since its establishment in 2009, SNUAC has been working on laying a cornerstone for Asian Studies at Seoul National University. SNUAC contributes to the cooperative relationship and mutual prosperity in Asia by advancing and sharing knowledge on Asian Studies. SNUAC is a global, integrated research center that combines academic research, international exchange, and human resource development. It is home to three regional research centers and eight thematic research programs: Northeast Asia Center; Southeast Asia Center; Central Asia Center; Asia Census; Civil Society and NGOs; Democracy and Economic Development; Environmental Cooperation; Popular Culture; US-China Relations; Transnational Asia; Asia Global Economic Order. For further information please visit: http://snuac.snu.ac.kr

AS THIS YEAR, 2015, marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, each country in the Northeast Asia region staged various memorials this summer, on different dates and in different ways. The services included official statements (executed by the presidents and prime ministers of each country), commemorative events (such as parades and exhibitions), and academic conferences held in South Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan. Such acts of commemoration not only serve to remember the past, but are also anticipated to rewrite the future of the region. Given that the countries of Northeast Asia hold varying perspectives and follow different directions, common ground for regional peace and prosperity can only be found if these differences are better understood. In South Korea, for instance, the meaning of ‘8.15’ has evolved over the past decades as the political powers have changed. In China, on the other hand, a large-scale military parade was held on September 3rd for both internal and external purposes, while in Japan, the repentance speeches about the past have turned into major political events and sources of conflict. In Taiwan, the textbook contents on the history of Japanese colonialism have been under heated discussion.

In these ways, history is not just history in Northeast Asia. History is evoked for different purposes and within different contexts. In order to understand the present and future directions of Northeast Asia, it is crucial to look upon the past, witnessing how the past is both remembered and rewritten constantly.

SNUAC Editorial Committee
(Managing Editor Joo Yunjeong, Research Fellow, SNUAC)

During the Victory Day Parade, Chinese helicopters fly the number ‘70’ to memorialize the 70th anniversary of the victory of the war (courtesy of People’s Daily Online, kr.people.com.cn).
Reflections on China’s memorial parade, on the 70th anniversary of Victory Day in the ‘Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression’

Fu ShaoQiang

In the ROK, numerous commemorations and memorial events encouraging North and South Korean national exchanges have been held on ‘8.15’ in recent years. However, given heightened military tensions between the two Koreas this year, Koreans experienced much anxiety on National Liberation Day. The building of East Asian community cooperation in the near future is becoming increasingly unrealistic.

TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS of the ‘9.3 Grand Parade’, China held eight consecutive press conferences in August this year, in order to demonstrate that the PRC was in full preparation for the 70th anniversary of victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as to emphasize the significance of this commemoration worldwide.

This event marked China’s first major war victory since the Opium War, regaining the lost international status and beginning a return to the center of the world. Chinese officials noted that China, the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom were all allies during World War II, and worked together to defeat the fascist aggression of German and Japanese forces around the world. Furthermore, considering that such alliances had been remembered not only by the people of the allied nations but shared by the peoples of the world. As a G-2 nation dominating the world economy, China endeavored to evaluate such a memory to present throughout the world China’s responsibility and aptitude for peaceful development.

Chinese diplomacy has indeed been a success, with 49 countries participating, including 30 heads of state from Belarus, the Republic of Korea, Russia and others, and 19 high-level government officials as envoys from Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Germany, the US and the EU attending the event. In addition, high-profile guests included 10 heads of international and regional organizations, such as the Secretary-General of the UN, both the Director-General of WHO and UNESCO, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, former Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone, and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

In their efforts to influence international public opinion, many international mainstream media outlets have recently observed that the Chinese people had made great sacrifices to ensure victory in the world war against the fascists, and contributed significantly to history, which had been rather ignored or underestimated in the past. The Economist commented that the parade would remind the world of how hard Chinese soldiers had fought to resist an imperialist Asian country. And that China’s dedication and sacrifice for this history deserves wider recognition.

The Wall Street Journal also noted that China had an earlier member in the war against fascism, since hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops invaded China and brought about disaster there in 1937. The Economist commented that the Chinese people had made great sacrifices for this history deserves wider recognition.

In the meantime, Russia’s Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper) also published an article stating that China had made significant sacrifices for victory during World War II. Exhibiting a strenuous will to fight against wartime imperialism, the Chinese people did not give up and fought back under great hardship.

Such historical facts have been largely overlooked and underestimated up till now. While many in the international media have interpreted the parade as a symbol of the ‘Rise of China’, China intends to hold the position dedicated to ‘China’s Peaceful Rise’. The parade on September 3rd was the first large-scale military parade held on a day other than National Foundation Day since the founding of New China, as well as the first military parade attended by foreign heads of state and friends, implying a great political significance.

The unprecedented parade announced the world that China intends to play an important role in the post-war world order. At the same time, an even more significant message was delivered to corrupt, anti-reform officials and groups, chiefly, President Xi Jinping’s strong power backed by the Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army. As a result, many socio-economic problems such as economic slowdown and anti-corruption campaign can be more effectively handled so as to provide a more solid ground for reform and development.

China wants to play a role in the world. China even sent an invitation to Abe Shinzo, though he did not attend. But, former president of the Korean National Party (Kim Dae-jung) did attend the parade, which was very much welcomed. Great power comes with greater responsibility. This Chinese parade was an effort to construct a blueprint for peace and security for both Asia and the wider world, moving forever beyond the facism of the past.

Fu ShaoQiang (Associate Professor, the Communication University of China)
Two types of revisionism: historical perceptions 70 years after World War II in Japan

Chong Young-hwan

IN REFLECTING ON historical perceptions in Japan as it passes the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, it is not possible to exclude the issue of an historical revisionism that attempts to justify colonization and imperial invasion prior to 1945. Regarding Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s official statement on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the war’s end, August 14th, it is important to note how his remarks have been evaluated and understood. Prime Minister Abe maintains the position that “judgement of history should be left to historians” and that we should “try to avoid viewing the Asia-Pacific War as a war of aggression”, while he at the same time continues to deliberately refuse to recognize Japan’s responsibility over “comfort women” for the Imperial Japanese Army. Such a course of historical revisionism still holds a strong social influence in Japan, and it is the radical right-wing groups that Prime Minister Abe is politically based upon.

Abe’s speech was limited to “the Manchurian Incident” in 1931, in which “Japan lost sight of the overall trends in the world” and “took the wrong course and advanced along the road to war”. “I bow my head deeply before the souls of all those who perished both at home and abroad. I express my feelings of profound grief and my eternal, sincere condolences,” said Abe. Without clearly taking responsibility for the war of aggression and colonial rule, he even claimed that “the Japan-Asia War brought encouragement to many people under colonial rule from Asia to Africa”. He also carefully avoided remarks that could incite controversies over the historical perceptions and conflicts between the war-time allies such as the US and the PRC, although he made sure not to miss the opportunity to pay homage to far-right historical revisionists. Consequently, criticism from the Korean media was quite apt, whilst the DPRK was not even mentioned.

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Meanwhile, another problem that cannot be set aside when reflecting on historical perceptions in contemporary Japan, is “historical revisionism of post-war history”. In his statement on August 14th, Abe Shinzo also declared, “with deep repentance for the war, we have created a free democratic country and consistently upheld the pledge never to wage war again.” In addition, he continued, “Japan has repeatedly expressed the feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology for its actions during the war.” That is to say that during 70 years post-war, Japan has been a ‘peace nation’, repeatedly expressing repentance towards Asian nations.

However, such historical perception is contrary to the facts. Post-war Japan was tied to the Japan-US Security Treaty, playing the role of a ‘base state’ for US wars in Asia. The land of Japan served as a military base for the US during its involvement in the Korean as well as Vietnam Wars. Moreover, it is widely known that the Japan Coast Guard participated in a naval action during the Korean War. The ‘peace nation’ Abe claims Japan to be is in clear contradiction to the fact that it was under the nuclear umbrella of the US. Indeed, contemporary historical research shows that in post-war Japan, awareness of Japan as a past perpetrator of military aggression has been lacking. To a certain extent, the Japanese people are more beholden to their position as ‘victims’ of war.

Compared to historical revisionism of the pre-1945 period, criticism in Japan against revisionism of post-1945 history is far less pronounced. This is partly because the Japanese population that is against the Abe administration shares a similarly complacent historical perception of post-war history, without a full awareness of Japan’s post-war structure. In other words, despite opposing the discourse of Abe, liberal critics are somewhat complicit in the revisionism. Moreover, without genuine reflection in Japanese society on a post-war history that does not take full responsibility for Japanese military aggression, a rather self-centered historical perception persists. Consequently, examining the ‘historical revisionism of post-war history’ will provide an important key to more properly understanding contemporary Japanese history.

Chong Young-hwan (Associate Professor, Meiji Gakuin University)

Seventy years after the war in Taiwan

Qiu Shijie

AT THE END of World War II in 1945, Taiwan was returned to its motherland, China, after years of Japanese colonial era. Five years later, however, separation came to the PRC and the ROC due to civil war and the KMT’s retreat to Taiwan, resulting in cross-strait confrontations between Mainland China and Taiwan. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War.

Within the past twenty years, the Taiwanese people’s national identity has more or less evolved from ‘one country on two sides of the Straits’ to ‘Taiwan is a single nation state’, while more recently, pre-Japanese colonialism sentiments have begun to appear in Taiwanese society. During the summer of this year, for example, heated discussions arose over Taiwanese history textbooks when local high school students ‘occupied’ the Ministry of Education and publicly insisted on the erasure of “compulsory mobilization of comfort women” from history textbooks (the current Taiwanese government is led by the KMT, which indocrinates the history of anti-Japanese movements). Moreover, many academics argue that the Taiwanese people regard themselves as members of a ‘defeated country’, given that Taiwan suffered from massive airstrikes during World War II. In Taiwanese academia, the emphasizing of Taiwanese identity is pronounced; consequently, the year 1945 is no longer regarded as an important historical turning point. Thus in history textbooks, many concepts related to Japanese colonialism and subsequent transformations have been abandoned. Previously in academia, ‘Taiwan Guangu’ (Taiwan Liberation) was frequently employed in describing the transformation of 1945; following the Japanese style however, “the end of the war” is now more often employed than ‘liberation’.

On August 15th this year, the conference ‘War and Taiwan Society’ was organized by Academia Sinica’s Institute of Taiwan History. It was the largest academic event in Taiwan, marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, and covered such themes as Manchuria, the Kinen archipelago, folk beliefs, memories of war and other complex issues, all in an effort to reinterpret history with an emphasis on the Taiwanese identity.

There were, however, efforts by the Taiwanese government and pro-unification groups to commemorate ‘the victory of the war’, even if the scale was somewhat limited. In July, the ROC government held a parade in commemoration of liberation, although its size was reduced and anti-Japanese colors were de-emphasized out of consideration for diplomatic relations with Japan, which is now an enmity. And on August 15th, civic and pro-unification groups protested against Japanese imperialism in front of the Japanese Interchange Association in Taipei. Comfort women, the Diaoyu Islands, Yasukuni Shrine, the Japan-US Security Treaty, and Abe Shinzo’s remarks during the war anniversary on August 14th, were all singled out.

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Qiu Shijie (Ph.D Candidate, National Taiwan University)
In 2014, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced plans to rename the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) to ‘ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute’ as a tribute to Encik Yusof Ishak, Singapore’s first President. In commemoration of the 105th anniversary of Encik Yusof Ishak’s birth, ISEAS was officially renamed on 12 August 2015. This issue features three articles from the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (NSC). NSC pursues research on historical interactions among Asian societies and civilisations. It serves as a forum for comprehensive study of the ways in which Asian polities and societies have interacted over time through religious, cultural, and economic exchanges and diasporic networks.

opportunities were few and limited to the occasional foray into construction sites within the boundaries of old colonial government quarters, particularly along the Singapore River.

As of the 2000s, local Singaporean archaeologists increasingly led and championed archaeology, and currently a small Singaporean team is based in the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. Formalized in 2010, the Archaeology Unit (AU) seeks to contribute to the understanding of Southeast Asia through the study of the material record. Since its inception, the AU has expanded its mission to develop Singapore’s archaeological capacity and today, it is the sole entity in Singapore capable of conducting the full suite of archaeological evaluations, heritage impact assessment, rescue excavations, post-excavation analysis, artifact collections management, public archaeologies, and academic research. The AU also has plans to roll out its past reports as part of the NSC working paper series and as standalone monographs. More crucially, the AU is training a new generation of Singaporean archaeologists who will be the future researchers and custodians of the buried past.

The AU’s work is not confined to Singapore. From 2012 the NSC Field School of Archaeology provided young university students in archaeology and related disciplines an opportunity to participate in a 3-week program of fieldwork and classes held in a partner ASEAN host country. While many field schools exist in the region, their participants tend to be from the sponsoring institution or country. The NSC Field School seeks not only provide adequate field experience for the participants, but more importantly recognizes and encapsulates interaction between aspiring archaeologists across national and cultural boundaries. The Field School, currently in its third installment is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, and is opened to East Asian summit member countries.

Back at Empress Place, the lumbering crane set a rain tree down in a cloud of dust, showering fine sediment over the yellow-helmeted linemen and their animated supervisors. With a shrill whistle of the all-clear signal, the archaeology team scrambled back into their trenches. The water pump spluttered back to life, drawing groundwater that had preserved the 700/800-year-old planks from the ancient settlement of Temasek was uprooted.

The iron was not lost, however, on those who inquired: 40-year-old trees were transplanted to celebrate Singapore’s golden jubilee, but also the murky chronology of the island. The irony was not lost, however, on those who inquired: 40-year-old trees were transplanted to celebrate Singapore’s golden jubilee, but also the murky chronology of the island. The irony was not lost.

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THE UNIMAGINABLE SIGHT of a 20-ton rain tree suspended 30m in the air caused the mid-afternoon downtown traffic to slow to a crawl. Smartly dressed office workers in pressed dress shirts and silk ties from the nearby Central Business District paused to photograph the phenomenon with their cellphone cameras.

A massive operation to transplant eight mature rain trees in downtown Singapore was initiated this past March, to create ‘plaza’ space in front of the Victoria Concert Hall and Theatre, on the occasion of the SG50 celebrations. The relocation of the ‘plaza’ space in front of the Victoria Concert Hall and Theatre, on the occasion of the SG50 celebrations. The relocation of the 'plaza' space in front of the Victoria Concert Hall and Theatre, on the occasion of the SG50 celebrations. The relocation of the “plaza” space in front of the Victoria Concert Hall and Theatre, on the occasion of the SG50 celebrations.

Despite the want of any regulatory requirements, the AU quietly went about digging on the island. The early days saw the reliance on expatriate archaeologists and volunteers, with American John Miksic, then with Gadja Mada University in Indonesia, who led the first systematic investigation on Fort Canning, followed by Greek museum consultant, Alexandra Avieropoulou-Choo. The first two decades of Singapore archaeology were sporadic and ad hoc, where digging

In 2014, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced plans to rename the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) to ‘ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute’ as a tribute to Encik Yusof Ishak, Singapore’s first President. In commemoration of the 105th anniversary of Encik Yusof Ishak’s birth, ISEAS was officially renamed on 12 August 2015. This issue features three articles from the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (NSC). NSC pursues research on historical interactions among Asian societies and civilisations. It serves as a forum for comprehensive study of the ways in which Asian polities and societies have interacted over time through religious, cultural, and economic exchanges and diasporic networks.

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On the origins of the Javanese mosque

Hélène Njoto

THE ARCHITECTURAL GENESIS of the ‘Javanese mosque’ has yet to be adequately studied. The earliest mosques date to the 15th-17th century transitional era from ‘Indonesiaisation’ to ‘Islamization’ in the wider Southeast Asian Archipelago. The most notable mosques are in Java, where some of the oldest remaining examples of Islamic material culture in Southeast Asia reside.

Common features of the earliest mosque type, found with variations throughout the Malay world, are superimposed roofs (generally three) and a concentric post-pattern. Four tall posts in the centre hold the highest roof. Around this centre, a gallery of 12 posts and a second gallery of 20 posts (in average) hold the lower second and third roofs (fig. 1). The oldest examples of this architectural type can be found in towns such as Crebon, Banten, and Demak along the North Java coastline. These settlements became important downstream international commercial centres between the 15th and 17th centuries. The mosque of Demak is considered to be the oldest.

In the 1940s and 1960s two Dutch scholars published differing hypotheses concerning the Javanese mosque type: G.F. Pijper (1893-1988) considered the Javanese mosque structure to be an ‘ancient native one [of prior Javanese Hindu and Buddhist temples] adapted to the requirements of the Moslem worship.’ However, he did not prove it; Pijper believed this type of mosque construction shared common features with Balinese architecture, as well as Javanese architecture and sanctuaries from the Hindu-Buddhist period.1

In contrast, H.J. De Graaf (1899-1984) initially suggested that early Indonesian archipelago Muslim converts ‘modelled’ this architectural type on early Indian mosques, citing three examples from Malabar and Kashmir.2 In his subsequent study of the historical Chinese diaspora communities in Java, De Graaf and his colleague Th. Pigeaud (1899-1988) suggested that Chinese pagodas could also have inspired Java’s earliest mosque builders.3

This day De Graaf’s and Pigeaud’s hypotheses of Indian Muslim or Chinese architectural influences are the most popular among historians of Javanese Islam. However, recent archaeological findings suggest that Pijper’s assumption seems more plausible, especially when paired with previously known examples of Java’s Hindu-Buddhist period architecture. Three temple remains in Western and Central Java, dating from the 7th to the 13th centuries, provide evidence of the existence of concentric patterned buildings that supported superimposed roofs, eight centuries prior to Java’s Islamization.

The first temple, Candi Blandongan, dating to the 7th-10th centuries, is located in West Java. It is a square terrace base measuring 25 meters wide, with an upper level bearing a smaller elevated square terrace in the center where a stupa once stood. The stupa was made of brick covered with stucco. The temple included eight bases and two postholes at the ground level (blue dots in the plan); 12 bases on the first upper level; and four bases closer to the stupa at the top (fig. 2). The distribution of the bases suggests the two-tiered terrace temple was sheltered under a timber structure with superimposed roofs.

Two sites in Central Java, the Ratu Boko and Candi Plaosan religious complexes, show even clearer concentric patterns. The syncretic Hindu and Buddhist Ratu Boko complex was founded in the 8th century. One of the largest structures of this site is a 20m wide square terrace built before a smaller rectangular terrace. Traces of 24 post bases placed in a concentric pattern were found on the platform of the main square terrace: four central bases surrounded by a gallery of 20 bases (fig. 3). As in the previous example, this pattern seems to document a structure with an upper central roof supported by four posts and a lower roof supported by 20 posts.

The final example (fig. 4), the ‘C structure’ of the Plaosan Lor complex, approximately 1.5km from Ratu Boko, is a rectangular terrace (21.7m x 18m). Two concentric galleries of post bases can still be seen: 16 bases in the centre, surrounded by another gallery of 24 quadrangular bases.

The three temple examples leave little doubt concerning the antiquity of concentric patterned wooden buildings with two or three superimposed roofs in Java. These examples collectively demonstrate they were each used for Hindu and Buddhist cult purposes from the 7th century in West Java, and from the 8th and 9th centuries in Central Java. A more thorough study of the distribution of this architectural type in South and Southeast Asia, as well as in the wider Sinicized world, will be carried out. It may well demonstrate that the Javanese and Malay mosque types should no longer be considered as sub-types of East Asian pagodas or Indian Muslim Mosques, but as worthy Southeast Asian innovations.

Hélène Njoto is a Visiting Fellow with the SIEAS-Vissof Iskham Institute’s Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre. 4

References
4 This paper is excerpted from a forthcoming article: Njoto, H. ‘On the origins of the ‘Javanese Mosque’’, BEFEO 100 (in press, 2014).
Esoteric Buddhist networks in Maritime Asia, 7th-13th centuries

Andrea Acri

Esoteric Buddhism – also called Mantramaya (Method of Mantra) or Vajrayana (Diamond/Thunderbolt Way) – had a tremendous impact on the religious and cultural history of Asia. Esoteric Buddhist traditions were vectors for the circulation of philosophical ideas, cults and ritual technologies, artistic motifs, material culture, and political paradigms. This circulation spanned across Maritime Asia – a vast swathe of maritime, littoral and landmass territory spanning from the Indian subcontinent to East Asia, the geographical fulcrum of which encompasses mainland and insular Southeast Asia. Perceived as an esoteric orientation within the Mahayana or as a self-conscious (Tantric) school, Esoteric Buddhism regarded its path as superior, and in any event faster and easier, than other Buddhist paths; it included an element of initiation, secrecy, transgressive devotional and ritual practice, the use (for both this-worldly and other-worldly purposes) of mantras, magical formulas and diagrams (mandala), possession, exorcism, etc. Esoteric Buddhism shared significant common elements with Tantric Shivaism, to the extent that the two religions participated in an interdependence of discourse in the domains of soteriology, ritual, and iconography.

Networks of Buddhist clerics of various ethnicities adhering to esoteric developments begin to emerge in the 7th century in disparate Asian locales, moving along the maritime routes plied since time immemorial by seafaring traders, religious specialists, and pilgrims. The expansion of Esoteric Buddhism was initially driven by a handful of monks – including the famous Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra – endowed with a remarkably cosmopolitan vision and ‘international’ ambitions, who crossed oceans and lands in search of esoteric scriptures in Sanskrit, initiation masters, as well as – perhaps most importantly – royal patrons. Those charismatic personalities, more often than not associated with a vigorous activity of translation, commenntarial work and initiation of pupils, travelled both eastwards and westwards along the sea routes linking the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia, China and Japan. It is probably these networks of monks and their disciples that acquired, transformed, and propagated images, texts and devotional practices associated with esoteric forms of such popular Buddhist divinities as Avalokiteshvara, Mahasiddha, Vajrapani, and Tara.

In spite of having suffered a sudden downfall in royal support in Tibet, Sri Lanka, Central Java, and China in the middle of the 9th century, Esoteric Buddhism by the 10th century had virtually become identical with Buddhist practice over much of Asia. Having died out in the Indian subcontinent by the late 13th century, it continued to live or even thrive (in its localised instantiations) until the late 15th century in Java and Sumatra, and to the present day in Nepal, Tibet, Bali, and Japan. Major centres of Esoteric Buddhism were the Northeastern areas of the Indian subcontinent, roughly corresponding to modern Bihar (itself the cradle of Buddhism since the time of the Buddha), West Bengal and Bangladesh. Bihar was the seat of Nalanda, the cultural powerhouse that dictated the predominant religious and aesthetic paradigm in the Buddhist Cosmopolis from the 8th to the 13th century. Other locales that played a role in the formation of Esoteric Buddhism and its overseas expansion are the Western Deccan, Orissa, South India, and Sri Lanka. The last two areas once hosted important lineages of Esoteric Buddhist masters and repositories of Tantras, and acted as hubs for the spread of esoteric traditions and their foundational scriptures to Southeast Asia and beyond. Monks of the calibre of Puja-prajna, Amoghavajra and Puja travelled from China to South India and/or Sri Lanka to get hold of some esoteric texts unavailable elsewhere.

Cutting across the natural boundaries and barriers of continental topography, sea-based routes (the so-called ‘Maritime Silk Roads’) formed a network of conduits that led to the formation of a medaevial global Buddhist Asia. Those routes played an important role in shaping premodern intra-Asian connectivity, and allowed both regional and cosmopolitan traditions of Esoteric Buddhism to participate in complex circulatory processes involving mercantile, diplomatic, and religious networks moving across the ‘Southern Sea’.

The appreciation of this ‘maritime dimension’ of Esoteric Buddhism reveals the limits of a historicography that is premised on land-based transmission of Buddhism from a South Asian ‘homeland’ across the Eurasian continent; furthermore, it advances an alternative historical narrative that overturns the perception regarding Southeast and East Asia as ‘peripheries’ that were mere consumers rather than generators of Esoteric Buddhism. Indeed, cults were transmitted from multiple centres across a much wider world of Buddhist cultural interchange than is usually assumed at present, and a strong point can be made for the re-evaluation of the creative and transformative force of (South)East Asian agents in the dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism across Asia.

Indeed Southeast Asia – and large areas of what are now the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago in particular – played an important, Asia-wide role as both crossroads and termini of (Esoteric) Buddhist contacts. The mention of pilgrims coming from Gurjaradesa (Gujarat?) in a Sailendra royal inscription from Central Java; the existence of a replica of the Sinhala monastic complex of Abbhayagiri-vahe in the same locale, and the presence of monks and pilgrims coming from Srivijaya at Nalanda and Nagapattinam (South India); the survival, besides the Chinese reports, of Sanskrit and vernacular textual materials of Esoteric Buddhist persuasion, some of which contain quotations traceable to Sanskrit Tantras; and the significant remains of statues, ritual implements, and monuments (such as the majestic Borobudur), all suggest that insular Southeast Asia was a recognised seat of esoteric cults in a highly interconnected Buddhist cosmopolis rather than a remote and backward periphery.

Andrea Acri is Visiting Fellow at the Nalanda-Srivijaya Centre.

Inset: Paths travelled by the monks between India, mainland and insular Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. Map by Isseit Chenchuburt and Andrea Acri.
Asian Studies Association of Australia Book Series

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For more information about the ASAA please visit our website at: www.asaa.asn.au
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

In May 2016, IAS will be hosting a conference focusing on the role of international organisations and global heritage activism. This conference will be the last in a series of three, jointly organised by IAS, Institute of Social Studies, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore.

The full text of the Call for Papers is available at: www.iias.nl/heritageaid

Summary
Cultural (heritage) diplomacy is a well thought strategy carried out by some states. Pioneer countries in cultural diplomacy include France, Italy, the Netherlands, but also India and Japan. Today, most Asian states are following that path: in the past years, China, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have considerably strengthened their investment in regional ‘heritage cooperation’. Some of them, like India or Japan, have had a long history of cultural international intervention.

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. The relative shortage of historical, sociological, political, and ethnographic researches on the multiple incarnations of ‘Heritage As Aid or as Diplomacy’, as extensively described in the full call for papers, 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 the 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’.

Submission requirements
Please refer to the website for a list of topics to explore in your paper, as well as for the requirements for your proposal.

Website: www.iias.nl/heritageaid
Contact: For enquiries about the conference, please contact Ms. Martina van den Haak at m.c.van.den.haak@ias.nl

New coordinator for Critical Heritage Studies

AS of 1 SEPTEMBER 2015, Dr Elena Paskaleva is the new coordinator of the IAS Asian Heritages Cluster. Elena will be paying special attention to the development of the Graduate Programme and Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe, for which she is also teaching the course Critical Approaches to Heritages Studies.

Graduate Programme in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

Over the last few years, IAS has been intensively engaged with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IUS) to target Asian partners in the development of a special master’s track in the field of ‘Critical Heritage Studies’. The uniqueness of this initiative is that the MA in Leiden is combined with a parallel set of courses at a number of Asian universities, allowing for the students to obtain a double degree at the end of their training. To date, the Asian partners involved are National Taiwan University in Taiwan and Yonsei University in South Korea, and contacts with other possible Asian partner institutes have been established.

MA programme at Leiden University

At Leiden University, students can already opt for the MA specialisation in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe within the MA Asian Studies track ‘History, Arts and Culture’. Inspired and supported by the IAS Asian Heritages research cluster, the curriculum allows students to explore the contested character of all representations of culture, the plurality of notions of heritage in Asian and European contexts, and the way distinct and conflicting values of indigenous, local communities and official state discourses are negotiated.

The programme is supervised by Dr Elena Paskaleva (IAS/LIAS), also teacher of the course Critical Approaches to Heritages Studies together with guest lecturer Prof. Michael Herzfeld of Harvard University. Elena Paskaleva works on material culture of Central Asia. Her latest interests involve architectural heritage along the Silk Roads. Michael Herzfeld has been intimately engaged with the Asian Heritages cluster ever since the IAS-ASEA roundtable on heritage in 2010, and is the Senior Advisor to the Critical Heritage Studies Initiative.

Double Degree

Apart from the Leiden MA programme, students can also engage in the Double Degree Programme offered by Leiden University, IAS and one of the Asian partner universities. Upon successful completion of the whole programme, the students will obtain three diplomas in total: the Leiden University MA diploma, the partner university MA diploma (two-year programme, of which the Leiden MA qualifies as one year) and a separate certificate for the Double MA Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe, issued by IAS.
IIAS Report and Publications

IIAS seminar report: International seminar: transnational religious and ideological influences in modern Central and Inner Asia

Regensburg, Germany
5-6 June 2015

IN THE CONTEXT of the three-year IAS programme ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’, which is sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York), IAS co-organised a seminar that discussed socio-political processes in Asia. These are intersecting with global ideological trends. Particular emphasis was put on the question how the global processes influence current nation-building policies, social identities and people’s loyalties. The seminar, supported by the International Unit for Central and Inner Asian Studies, followed up on a previous meeting, ‘Knowledge production and knowledge transfer in and on Central and Inner Asia’, which was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 5-6 August 2014.

In Regensburg, some twenty scholars from America, Central and Inner Asia, and Europe were welcomed by the co-organisers, namely the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies and the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, both of Regensburg University. During the two-day meeting, the participating researchers, invited by the convenors Dr Irina Morozova (Regensburg) and Dr Willem Vogelsang (Leiden), discussed their papers, which had been distributed in advance, thus providing ample time for thorough and sometimes very lively deliberations.

The intensive debates of the seminar highlighted some significant aspects of the transnational religious and ideological influences in modern Central and Inner Asia. One of these, not surprisingly, was the importance of the particular historical background of the pertinent country or region. The relationship for much of the twentieth century between Islam and the Soviet Union in Central Asia, whereby the Soviet leaders often tried to pacify the Muslim clergy, was very different from the generally very hostile attitude of the Mongolian communist government vis-à-vis Buddhism. Another aspect that was discussed at length was that of foreign influence, or at least international contacts. Mongolia was again taken as a very telling case study. After the fall of communism in the early 1990s, Buddhism, though regarded as part of Mongolian culture by many, was very dependent on foreign support. The Indian ambassador to Mongolia played an important role, and so did the Dalai Lama. There was, however, local opposition. Buddhism in Mongolia was and is closely linked to Tibetan Buddhism. On a governmental level, the close links with Tibetan Buddhism, and in particular the Dalai Lama, were regarded as perhaps hostile towards the Chinese government. But also ideologically, many Mongolian Buddhists preferred a more ‘Mongolian’ form of Buddhism. This wish for a more ‘local’ form of a global religion was also discussed in relation to Central Asia, where some governments try to regard and develop Islam as part of the, as it was called in one of the papers, ‘genetic blueprint’ of the state. Islam is being regarded as part of local ‘folklore’, and in some parts of Central Asia the government consequently supports traditional forms of Islam, rather than the fundamentalist forms so dominant in the world of Islam today. Whether or not these policies will prove successful remains unknown, but they conform to some of the issues also discussed at the 2014 seminar in Ulaanbaatar, namely the opposition in Central and Inner Asia between, on the one hand, a government-led push for nation-building and ethno-nationalistic symbolism, and on the other, the enormous expansion of globalisation.

Willem Vogelsang, Deputy Director IAS
(w.vogelsang@iias.nl)

Asian HERITAGES SEeks manuscripts of excellent quality and destined to become theoretically and descriptively significant contributions to the analysis of ‘heritage’ in the Asian context. All manuscripts are subject to a rigorous peer-review process, in which, in addition to the usual criteria of conceptual rigor and lucid, attractive writing, evaluators are asked to assess the work for its contribution to a critical rethinking of the key concept as it has been used in Asia. Contributions should be both intellectually innovative and empirically grounded. They should engage with critical perspectives that shed light on how the concept of heritage and the practices associated with it are used in Asia today or have been employed there in the past. We especially seek new approaches to the origins and politics of heritage production, the relationship of heritage to colonialism in all its varieties and after-effects, and the translation of ideology into conservation and other relevant forms of heritage practice.

Among the many more specific topics that can be addressed by the series, we especially invite manuscripts on the following themes: processes of heritagization and gentrification in relation to ethnic and national dynamics, including those involving post-conflict reconstruction; reflections on the nature of materiality (‘tangibility’) and its relevance to the preservation of multiple pasts; development policies and the clash between heritage and economic security; heritage as neoliberal target and resource; heritage and rights; the social and cultural roles of museums; legal dimensions of collective cultural property; illegality as heritage; nationalism and its discontents; the role of marginalized groups, self-determination, and heritage as ethnic resource; the impact of natural disasters on heritage and its evaluation; heritage and international conflict; infections of heritage in contemporary art and media, language as and in heritage; local and national terminologies of heritage in comparative perspective; and the geo-politics of gastronomy and franchising. We also warmly encourage prospective authors to suggest additional themes that will enrich the critical perspective we intend as the hallmark of this series.

Interested authors should in the first place submit a short (two to five pages) summary of the book, indicating major content and themes and a chapter breakdown with a brief paragraph explaining the content and purpose of each chapter; intended audience; probable length, and expected date of submission. Proposals should also be accompanied by a brief bio-note if possible.

Please send your proposal to Adèle Esposito (adleeesposito@yahoo.fr).
discrepancy between the interests of the firms, which engaged in cross-border trading, and those perceived by the local society, was evident. The papers in this issue are an issue to be developed in future history writing. One means of overcoming the resulting tensions was discussed by Kuo Hsien-Ying (Johns Hopkins University), namely the building of cross-border business networks through the cultivation of hometown ties; such was the case with Myanmar businessman Aye Boon Hau’s Hakka network, and the Hikken network of Aoi’s competitor in Singapore, Tan Ka Hee.

Similarly, the papers by Leo Douw (University of Amsterdam and VU University Amsterdam) and Dian-Hsiung Liu (Asia Sinica, Taipei) discussed the social position of the Taiwanese who migrated to China and Southeast Asia during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). The predicament of these “registered Taiwanese” was caused by the claims laid on them both by the Chinese and the Japanese governments during that period: being Taiwanese, but registered as Japanese nationals, they were subject to Japanese rules and restrictions, but they also profited from that status, especially when they worked and resided in China and South East Asia. The resulting jealousies and accusations of non-patriotic and even criminal behavior, which were largely justified, were forgotten during the Cold War period, but were again remembered during the late 1980s, when in Taiwan the indigenization movement emerged and the issue of multiple nationalities and identities was posed once more. Lin maintained that no understanding of the rift between “mainlanders” and “native Taiwanese” in Taiwanese society is possible without remembering that many Taiwanese during the colonial period cooperated with the Japanese against China’s interests. Forgetting and remembrance as major motives in the construction of historiography were already noted in the forgetfulness by Chinese nationalism of Dinkl’s paper; these were also present in the arguments made by Dian-Hsiung Liu (University of Amsterdam) in his presentation on the memorial monuments in Jakarta and Amsterdam for J.B. van Heutz, the general whose massacres at the native population of the Netherlands East Indies have been largely forgotten by mainstream Dutch historiography, but actually were already a topic of contempt in Dutch politics during the Interbellum, and in Mark’s view should be better remembered at present.

It seems clear that the revisionism that informed the history-oriented papers of the workshop can contribute significantly to dialogues on the Dutch and Sino-Japanese interactions: trading has been indirect and strictly controlled since the sixteenth century at the latest. Therefore we may say, that the present-day reluctant cooperation between both countries is part of a long-lasting pattern. This pattern in its turn may be a starting point for historical analysis than the “balance of power” approach, which has recently emerged in public debate, and threats to sham the apparent Sino-Japanese antagonism rather than soften it.

Several of the papers in the workshop will be published in the University-released academic journal Translated Chinese East Asian Perspectives (TCEA), nr. 10.1 (Spring 2016), published by Brill Academic Publishers. The journal is meant to provide a platform for academic debate and concerns of which those treated in the workshop are an important part. For further information on the journal’s institutional embedding and editorial policy, please see: www.brill.com/tcea (see also the announcement on page 5).

Leo Douw, Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam (L.M.Douw@uva.nl).

References
1 The workshop was held at the occasion of the author’s retirement and was kindly sponsored by the Program Group Moving Matters at the Royal Netherlands Institute for Social Sciences, University of Amsterdam, the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, and the Faculty of Arts at the VU University Amsterdam.
2 For a publication of Dinkl’s paper, see http://tceajnl.com/ boundaryDinkl
3 The workshop of course was much richer in content than could ever be done justice in a summary article, and all misrepresentations are the author’s responsibility. Valuable contributions, aside from those by the paper presenters, were provided by the other participants, in particular the paper discussants and session chairpersons. For shortness sake only their names follow here, in alphabetical order: Jadi Leder (University of Amsterdam), Otto Holman (University of Amsterdam), Gerd Janne (University of Amsterdam), Susan Legène (VU University Amsterdam), Chris Lorenzo (VU University Amsterdam), Paul Nye (VU University Amsterdam), Peter Prot (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation), Willem van Schendel (University of Amsterdam), Sikko Vischer (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands Institute for War Sciences), and Harriet Zurndorfer (Leiden University).

AFTER THE APPE MEETING in Beijing in November 2014 a series of pictures taken by Japanese and Chinese nationalist papers showing their political leaders shaking hands with their Chinese counterpart, during their meeting at the APEC meetings in Beijing, 10 Nov 2014. The formal talks signaled a breakthrough in ending a two-year rift between Asia’s biggest economies over history and territory. REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon. Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (Right) shakes hands with China’s President Xi Jinping (Left) during their meeting at the APEC meetings in Beijing, 10 Nov 2014.
Asia in Amsterdam,
exotic luxury in the
Golden Age


“When I saw the Store-houses, and Magazeens (…) full of Spices, Silk, Stuffs, Porcelaine, and what ever China and the Indies afford that is most rare, I thought Ceylon had sent thither all its Cinamon [sic] the Moluccas all their Cloves, the Islands of Sumatra and Java, all their Spices, China all its rich stuff; Japan its excellent works of several kinds, and the rest of the Indies its Pepper and Silk.”

THESE ARE THE WORDS of the German traveller Johann Albrecht von Mandelso, after visiting the warehouses of the Dutch East India Company (VOC – founded in 1602) in Amsterdam in 1639. The Dutch were not the first to travel to Asia. But unlike their Portuguese predecessors the Dutch ventures into Asia were directed purely towards trade. They brought Asian luxury goods to the Netherlands in much larger quantities than before, in a wide range of qualities and prices. Large numbers of the burgeoning Dutch middle classes were able to buy Asian luxuries, and so they did. The far distance trade to Asia caused a lot of excitement and Dutch citizens wanted to be part of its success by owning one or a little group of Asian treasures.

This enthusiasm for things Asian is further very visible in contemporary works of Dutch craftman and artists. Dutch potters were not able to produce the high fired, very hard, thin and white porcelain, but they set out to create a type of earthenware that resembled the outward appearance of porcelain. They adjusted the thickness of their wares, applied a white tin glaze over the clay surface and decorated that with Asian motifs in cobalt blue. They even called it ‘Hollands Porcelaine’ or Dutch Porcelain. Amsterdam burger Willem Kick obtained a patent to produce lacquerware in 1609. He produced caskets and other objects with gold decorations on a black background. The motifs were not even necessarily Asian, but the shine, the look and feel certainly was.

Still life painters started to incorporate porcelain into their work. With their very keen eye for materials, colours and textures they were fascinated by the Chinese material of which the recipe was unknown. They went to great pains to render the shine, and various hues of blue, experimenting with colorants and surfaces. They also had a selective eye in choosing special and high quality pieces for their paintings. This connoisseurship certainly mattered. Asian luxury goods were imported in large quantities, and art lovers and painters alike needed a discerning eye to find the real treasures.

The exhibition ‘Asia in Amsterdam’ presents a selection of the highest quality Asian luxury goods produced for the Dutch market in the 17th century, together with the work of Dutch craftsmen who worked in an Asian fashion, their imagination fuelled by the sudden abundance of new shapes, materials and motifs, and by the work of Dutch painters who likewise were charmed by the Asian imports. Together these exhibits can give us an idea of the sensation caused by the increased Asian-Dutch connection.
Religious violence in South(East) Asia: domestic and transnational drivers of intolerance against Muslim minorities

Maaike Matelski en Marit van Liejen

BUDDHIST AND HINDU MAJORITY SOCIETIES of South(East) Asia are not traditionally associated with conflict and intolerance. Yet recent years have seen a surge in international reports of religious tensions and violence perpetrated by Buddhist and Hindu majorities against Muslim minorities in the region. A seminar on this topic was organised by VU University’s Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology and the International Institute for Asian Studies on Monday 15 June 2015. The seminar was opened by Ton Salman and Maaike Matelski from VU University, who explained the department’s interest in the apparent rise in intolerance towards Muslim minorities in the region. Recent news reports of Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing Myanmar by boat are a reminder that this has now become a matter of regional or even global concern. Jonathan Spencer (University of Edinburgh) explained the precarious position of the Muslim minority population in Sri Lanka caught between aggressive Buddhist nationalism and aggressive Tamil separatism during the decades-long conflict between the government and the LTTE. Significantly, open anti-Muslim sentiments actually increased after the conflict ended, particularly as the Bodu Bala Sena (‘Buddhist Power Force’) gained societal influence in 2013 when it started a public campaign against the labelling of Halal-food in supermarkets. Spencer’s presentation ended on a somewhat optimistic note, as he identified a decrease in hostility towards Muslims under new President Maithripala Sirisena, who came to power in January 2015 with significant Muslim and Tamil support. However, he argued anti-Muslim sentiments are unlikely to have disappeared completely.

In her role as discussant, Nira Wiekramaasinghe (Leiden University) questioned whether the term ‘religious violence’ adequately sums up what is happening in Sri Lanka, as various forms of communal violence have been taking place in the country for decades. Based on her experiences at the University of Colombo, she signalled a growing disconnect between Buddhist monks and Sri Lanka’s liberalising society since the 1980s, while the monks are still considered an authoritative voice in society. She also highlighted the connection between the growing anti-Muslim rhetoric in the region and the global discourse on the ‘war on terror’. The afternoon session focused on Myanmar and Thailand. First, Khin Mar Mar Kyi (University of Oxford) described the impact of the increasing intolerance towards Muslims on the position of women in Myanmar. She referred specifically to four draft laws on the protection of race and religion, some of which have already been approved by Parliament. These laws are seen as directly targeting women from the officially unrecognized Rohingya minority group, and also infringe on women’s right to interfaith marriage. Khan Mar Mar Kyi further described the heightened sense of fear and insecurity as the country opens up to the outside world, which has highlighted intergroup differences and sparked a fear of Muslims as a threat to national (Buddhist) identity. Increased internet access in parts of the country has led to the emergence of Facebook as a new forum for discussion, but also a potential site of misinformation, which can give rise to further rumours.

Next, Matthew Walton (University of Oxford) presented recent findings from a project on the prominent narrative of Islam as a threat to contemporary Myanmar. The project team identified a consistent set of justifications which present Islam as a threat to society, and Buddhists as acting out of virtuous self-defence. These narratives have emerged since the eruption of communal violence in 2012 and have since remained uncontested by the state. Walton questioned the widespread understanding of communal violence as resulting from hate speech, arguing that the narrative of Muslims as a threat is so dominant that it does not even need to be publicly articulated in order to have a social impact. He highlighted that it is important to recognize the limitations of human rights language, as many Buddhists in Myanmar do not consider human rights standards incompatible with the narrative of Muslims as a threat to society.

The last presentation by Alexander Horstmann (University of Copenhagen) focused on local experiences in Southern Thailand, where Buddhist and Muslim populations have been managed to co-exist despite a history of religious tensions. This changed in 2004 when the conflict in Southern Thailand escalated and violence flared up on both sides. In seeking to increase its presence in the region, the state created Buddhist settlements and imposed its linguistic and religious dominance on the local population. The increase in violence in the region has resulted in an atmosphere of insecurity and mistrust in which the space for mutual exchange is reduced. Horstmann concluded that local religious discourses in themselves are insufficient explanations for the emergence of conflict, and emphasized the importance of examining extra-communal processes, as well as the role of external influences.

Maaike Matelski, PhD candidate at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, VU University (amsterdam (maai kematelski@gmail.com).
IIAS Research and Projects

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 in terms of development of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends are addressed. The cluster aims to expand the understanding of the processes of globalisation by considering the various ways Asia and other world regions are interconnected within a long-term historical framework. Acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformations, it challenges western perspectives that underlie much of the current literature on the subject and explores new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interactions in the form of ‘south-south-north’ and ‘east-west’ dialogue models. In principle, any research dealing with Asian global interactions is of interest.

Asian Borderlands Research Network (www.asianborderlands.net)
The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South China, 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, maritime roadmaps, border politics and security concerns. The ABRN organizes a conference in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. Next conference: Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities and Flows, Kathmandu, Nepal, 12-14 December 2016. Deadline Call for Papers: 15 January 2016.

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

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)
The EPA research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitical movements, contact with ‘outside’ hand, and policy to increase energy efficiency and estimating the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy resources on the other. EPA’s current and second joint comparative research programme with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is entitled The Transnationalization of China’s Oil Industry: company strategies, embedded projects, and relations with institutions in China and resource-rich countries (2017-). Involving various Chinese and Dutch research institutes, this programme will analyse China’s increasing involvement with governments, local institutions and local stakeholders in the energy sectors of a number of resource-rich countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, notably Africa, China, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, and Brazil. It seeks to determine patterns of interaction between national institutions and Chinese companies, their relationships to foreign investment projects, and the extent to which they are embedded in the local economic programmes. This programme is sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen, KNAW), the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Coordinators: M. Aminieh, Programme Director EPA-IIAS (m.p.aminieh@uva.nl or m.p.aminieh@iias.nl), Y. van Kalmthout, Programme Director EPA-IWARACESS www.iias.nl/research/energy-programme-asia-epa

IAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

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

Coordinator: Tsi-Wei Ngoh (t.w.n@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Asian Studies in Africa

Since 2010, IAS and other partners from Africa, Asia and the USA have been working on an initiative to promote the study of and teaching on Africa at Asian universities and, equally, to promote African Studies in Asia. The initiative constitutes a first attempt to sustain a humanities-informed South-South knowledge exchange network between other academic centers in Europe and North America, but also Latin-America and Oceania. In 2012, a roundtable in Chisamba, Zambia, led to the establishment of the pan-African ‘Association of Studies on Africa’ (A-ASA). A-ASA’s development is headed by a steering committee of scholars, mainly from Africa and Asia. In September 2015, A-ASA held its third-day inaugural conference, in Accra, Ghana. A New Axis of Knowledge: It was the first conference held in Africa to bring together a multidisciplinary ensemble of scholars and institutions from the continent and the rest of the world with a shared focus on Asia and Africa intellectual interactions.

More information: www.africans.asia

Asian Cities

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

The Postcolonial Global City

This research programme examined the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made their selection to live in roles in formerly colonial cities as their own right. Intended as an interdisciplinary research endeavour, the Postcolonial Global City has brought together not just architects and urbanists, but also people from other disciplines, such as geographers, socio-logists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies.


Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)
Consisting of over 100 researchers with affiliations at 17 institutions in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest global academic network on Asian cities. UKNA’s objective is to nurture contextualized and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities, seeking to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the center of urban governance and development strategies. To this aim, the programme hosts a variety of research projects through the exchange of researchers of the participating institutions, focusing on the three research themes:

1. Ideas of the city;
2. Cities by and for the people; and
3. Future of the cities.

For a full list of UKNA Partners please refer to the UKNA website (www.ukna.asia)

Coordinators: Paul Rabé (p.e.rabe@iias.nl) and Glenn Tan (g.tan@iias.nl)

Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

A research network supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

With the objective of reshaping the field of Asian Studies, the three-year pilot programme (2014-2016) ‘Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context’ seeks to foster new humanities-focused research. In practice, this means adapting Asian Studies to an interconnected global environment built on a network of academics and practitioners from Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa. Educational opportunities are created by selecting cross-disciplinary methodological questions likely to shift scholarly paradigms as they pertain to Asia. In the process, the initiative seeks to shape academic communities around new themes of research, emphasizing the connection of ‘Asian and aspiring scholars’ from the five world regions and beyond.

The initiative is coordinated by IAS, in collaboration with numerous institutions in Asia, the United States, Europe and Africa, and is funded with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York. The pilot programme includes a range of scholarly activities such as workshops, conferences and summer schools in five topi cal areas, or, that cut across regions and disciplines:

1. Artistic Interventions: Histories, Cartographies and Politics in Asia
2. African Studies and Cultural Heritage
3. Asian Spatialities: the Indian Ocean World, Central Eurasia and Southeast Asian Borderlands
4. Idea of the City in Asian Contexts
5. Views of Asia from Africa

Coordinator: Tita van der Maas (t.v.derman@maas.nl)
Website: www.rethinking.asia
IIAS Fellowship Programme

Along with the research fellows, who are attached to one of the IIAS research programmes, the Institute yearly hosts a large number of visiting researchers (Affiliated Fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own 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 Apr 2015 – 1 Apr 2016

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Coordinator ‘Energy Programme Asia (EPA)’
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Coordinator ‘IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance’
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Shilpa Suman
Preparing the second volume of the critical edition of Śrīdhara’s Karmapañjikā (Pāṭaliputra):
Basic rituals for one who has been born
1 May – 31 Oct 2015

Lidia Szczepanik
1 May – 31 Oct 2015

Chuanhong Zong
1 Dec 2015 – 28 Feb 2016

Shilpa Suman
Decan College Post Graduate
and Research Institute
Unveiling ritual culture of medieval Orissa: critical edition of Śrīdhara’s Karmapañjikā

ASC-IIAS Fellowship Programme

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

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

Application deadline: 15 March and 15 September each year. For more information and application form, go to: www.iias.nl/page/asc-iias-fellowship-programme

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Farabi Fakhri
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
Colonial participation in the creation of urban spaces.

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Shilpa Suman
Decan College Post Graduate
and Research Institute
Unveiling ritual culture of medieval Orissa: critical edition of Śrīdhara’s Karmapañjikā

BRINGING UNKNOWN TEXTS to light is extremely important for discovering our cultural past. At IAS, I am preparing a critical edition of Śrīdhara’s Karmapañjikā, a ritual manual written in priestly Sanskrit language around the 16th century CE in the eastern Indian state of Orissa. The edition is planned in three volumes in collaboration with Professor Arno Griffiths (Leiden University). It is based on six palm-leaf manuscripts written in Oriya script, each containing approximately 175 folios. We have photographed five manuscripts from private collections of the priests and reviewed the scans of one from the State museum of Orissa.

The Karmapañjikā belongs to the genre of medieval religious texts. It is a guide-book for the priests to carry out domestic rituals according to the Atharvaveda Paippalada school. The text represents a stage of development from ancient Vedic to modern-day Hindu ritual. Very few texts of this genre have been studied in India in general and Orissa in particular. A thorough study of linguistic and religious aspects of the Karmapañjikā and of its inter textual and intra-textual intellectual traditions will certainly contribute to the cultural and literary history.

This is my second opportunity at IAS as a Gonda Fellow. During my first term in 2008–09, I prepared a preliminary draft of our edition of the first volume. It is almost ready for publication after several refinements during the past years. Now, I am working on a draft of the second volume, which will pass through many stages of improvement during joint editorial sessions.

The academic atmosphere in Leiden, and peaceful and well-equipped working conditions at IAS provide suitable environment to carry out concentrated research work.

My stay in Leiden enables me to make use of the Leiden University Libraries for reference work. I also attend a weekly discussion group initiated by Professor A. Lubotsky.

This group was initially intended to discuss the editorial work of the Paippaladasaṅhiti, a text containing collection of mantras that serve the basis of rituals discussed in the Karmapañjikā. The discussion group serves as a platform for scholars to share their research work and get feedback from other members of the group. Being a fellow at IAS gives me the opportunity to get introduced to and interact with like-minded scholars throughout the world working on topics related to Asian culture and heritage. This certainly helps to broaden my sphere of experience and knowledge.
in colonial society. In particular, I look at the rise of the municipality of Bandung, a city that was built around the image of modernity during its nascent rise in the early 20th century. Understanding the workings of the municipality in forging links with both the business world (real estate companies, the tourism industry) and central government, the linkages between individual members of the municipal council to wider local, regional and international networks, and the discourse produced by people in the municipal council and the wider civil society in the effort to ‘sell the city’ as one of the economic models of the city.

The main sources I use are the municipal council minutes and the various municipal publications on the city, including brochures and advertisements to entice newcomers to buy land and live in the city. I also consult the tourism magazine, Moei Bandoeng, in order to understand the strategies used by both the municipality and the civil society interested in the selling of the city. Data on companies and their management in various Indonesian cities, various population data, economic reports of the municipality’s land company, housing companies and their financial condition, are also consulted.

One major reason why the IIAS fellowship (1 July-31 Aug 2015) has been very worthwhile for my case is the availability of primary sources located at the excellent Asia Library of Leiden’s University Library. It has one of the best collections of Indonesian resources in the world. I have been able to meet and discuss with scholars interested in similar topics both within IIAS and at other institutes in the Netherlands. My three months stay in Leiden has also allowed me to forge links and collaboration with other scholars in order to develop this research further. I plan to develop the research with others in a more comparative manner, including European cities and the extent to which their development mirrored what was happening at the time in Java.

Hajime Akitomi
Aoyama Gakuin Women’s Junior College

The comparative study of employment and labor between the Netherlands and Japan

AS IT IS WELL KNOWN, Japan is famous (or, notorious) for its long-hours working culture. Indeed, since the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, the total work time of the Japanese people has fallen superficially. But this is only because, within the last 25 years, the number of part-time workers (needless to say, they tend to work less) have been increasing. Japan is still the country where full-time workers with employment security (lifetime employment etc.) work the most hours and have a strong influence on the economy and society as a whole.

Since staying in the Netherlands as an IIAS fellow, I more and more suspect that the long working hours on the one hand, and ‘consumer convenience’ on the other, are two sides of the same coin. Let me give a few examples. In the Netherlands, supermarkets close early on Sundays or are even closed all day. In Japan, supermarkets are often open until late at night, even on Sundays. Moreover, there are more than 50,000 ‘convenience stores’ all over Japan, and most stores are open 24/7. If you find yourself in need of a meal in the middle of the night, you will certainly be able to satisfy your hunger in Japan.

Another example. In the Netherlands, the date and time when a parcel is delivered is determined in advance, and, if you miss the first delivery, you cannot choose a date and time for the second delivery. However, in Japan, you can choose any day and time you wish. You can even ask for the second delivery to take place on the same day as the first missed delivery, simply by calling the cell phone of the parcel deliverer. I am not saying that either country is superior to the other. The meticulous services for consumers in Japan, which may thought to be unnecessary by Dutch people, are possible thanks to the long working hours of Japanese people (convenience store clerks, parcel deliverers etc.). These days, more and more eyes are focused on the many problems brought about by the long working hours in Japan, and they have been attributed to the special employment status of full-time workers. If Japanese people wish to work less from now on, does this mean more part-time workers and the acceptance of less meticulous services, as in the Netherlands? This question is one of the themes I wish to research at IIAS.
Ai Weiwei is no ordinary artist. Over recent years he has become a household name. His activities are widely reported, as witnessed by the recent coverage when his passport was returned to him by the Chinese authorities. Ai’s international profile emerged following the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008, when he started openly questioning the building standards of the local schools which collapsed, killing thousands of children. As part of a Citizens Investigation, Ai compiled the names of those children and recorded the impact their loss had on their families. These moving events include “Straight” a monumental memorial constructed of steel rebar recovered from the construction of reinforced concrete buildings that he reclaimed from the destroyed buildings. The whole work weighs 150 tonnes and stands in silent testament to the victims of the disaster, and serves as a very visceral reminder of the fabric of those buildings within which they lost their lives.

In April 2011 Ai was detained at Beijing International airport and was prevented from boarding a flight to Hong Kong while on his way to Taipei, Taiwan, where he was planning a major exhibition. For the next 81 days he was illegally detained at a secret location and kept in a small padded room, under the watchful eye of two silent guards. On his release Ai’s architectural company Fake Design Ltd. was charged with tax evasion, presented with a demand for over £1 million and given fifteen days to pay. Public donations helped him settle this bill and soon after a number of art works commemorated these events. These events, widely covered by the international press, elevated Ai’s profile around the world.

Ai’s life has over recent years overshadowed his art. His position as a political dissident, a champion of free speech and human rights, as well as a spokesperson for the ordinary Chinese, may have brought him global attention, but at a high personal cost. However, throughout these years and despite all these challenges Ai has continued to express himself through his art. He embraces a broad range of materials, many of which have a rich association with China’s Imperial past, such as marble, jade, porcelain and wood. Through his choice of materials and co-curators of the Ai Weiwei exhibition.

Celebrating the past, looking to the future
19 September-13 December 2015
Royal Academy of Arts, London

Ai Weiwei is pleased to announce the exhibition of this major work by China’s renowned contemporary dissident artist. The installation consists of a dozen gilt bronze sculptures representing the animal symbols from the traditional Chinese zodiac. Ai Weiwei drew his inspiration from an original set of zodiac animals located at Yuening Yuan (Old Summer Palace), an imperial retreat of palaces and European-style gardens built outside of Beijing in the 18th and 19th centuries, under Emperor Qianlong. Designed and engineered by two European Jesuits, Giuseppe Castiglione and Michel Benoist, the animals originally functioned as an ornate fountain clock that would spout water at two-hour intervals. They were part of the Hall of Calm Seas (Haiyan Tang), the most elaborate of these palaces, which were apparently used mostly as showplaces for the emperor and his court rather than actual residences.

Once accessible only to the elite of 18th century Chinese society, the palace was destroyed and looted by Anglo-French troops in 1860 during the Second Opium War, displacing the original Zodiac Heads. Of the seven heads that are known to still exist (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Horse, Monkey and Pig), five have been repatriated to China and the ownership of the two remains contested. Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads engages issues of looting, repatriation and cultural heritage while expanding on ongoing themes in Ai’s work of the ‘fake’ and ‘copy’ in relation to the original. The Zodiac Heads have become fodder for the reinterpretation of cultural objects from the artist’s own cultural knowledge and artistic fantasy.

In his own words, he was able “to produce something that is a copy of an original but not an exact copy—something that has its own sensitive layer of languages which are different, and that bears the mark of our own time.”

Ai Weiwei (born 1957) is an artist, architectural designer, and social activist who employs a wide range of media. Ai lived in New York City for more than a decade during the 1980s and 90s, where he became interested in grass-roots activism and protest art. He has been openly critical of the Chinese government’s stance on democracy and record of human rights violations, investigated government corruption and cover-ups, and was held for 81 days at an undisclosed location in 2011. After four years of house arrest, Ai’s passport was returned to him in July 2011, whereupon he departed for Germany in August, where he is currently residing with his wife and son.

The display of this gold-plated 2010 edition of the Zodiac Heads at Phoenix Art Museum will be accompanied by a video about the artist and the production of the works as well as 18th-century examples of Chinese bronze and cloisonné works from Phoenix Art Museum’s collection. These works demonstrate the skill of Chinese craftsmen at the time that the original bronze Zodiac Heads were created in China, as well as being examples of the type of objects that were carried off during the destruction of the Old Summer Palace during the Second Opium War.

Sponsors for the exhibition include Heather Sacre and James Carona, Phoenix Art Museum’s Asian Arts Council, CFWC Desert Jade Woman’s Club Endowment for Chinese Art Program, Marilyn A. Papp, and The Marilyn A. Papp Endowment for Chinese Painting.

Janet Baker, Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum.