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The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a global Humanities and Social Sciences institute and a knowledge exchange platform, based in Leiden, the Netherlands, with programmes that engage Asian and other international partners. IIAS takes a thematic and multi-sectoral approach to the study of Asia and actively involves scholars and experts from different disciplines and regions in its activities.

Our current thematic research clusters are ‘Asian Heritages’, ‘Asian Cities’ and ‘Global Asia’.

In this edition of the Focus

Online resources for Asia scholars

Sonja Zweegers and Alessandra Barrow

No one has escaped the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; we were forced indoors, sequestered to our ‘home offices’. The online world has become very familiar to all of us. And so, for this issue of The Newsletter, and as a way to highlight our ever expanding list at www.iias.asia/resources a Focus section like no other, designed specifically for the time in which we find ourselves: an exploration of online resources that may assist (or at least entertain) the Asia scholar.

Ute Jansen is the new IIAS Deputy Director

On 1 January 2021, the International Institute for Asian Studies welcomed Ute Jansen as its new Deputy Director.

Ute Jansen has longstanding experience as an executive manager in several development cooperation organisations, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education (NUFFCO) and Oxfam Novib. Besides collaborating with local partners on humanitarian projects, she was involved in higher education capacity building projects, with a special focus on Indonesia, Bangladesh and countries in Subsaharan Africa. Her interest in Asia started 30 years ago with first a Master’s degree in Japanese and Korean languages, and later, a position at the Embassy of Japan in Germany. After adding a Master’s programme in Humanitarian Assistance, Uta worked in numerous countries, including Uganda and Burundi. She has now lived in the Netherlands since 2004.

Uta takes over from Willem Vogelsang, who served IIAS as Deputy Director for more than 9 years. Willem plans to use his retirement to pursue his passion for researching, writing and curating.

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

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One of the disquieting questions the pandemic has forced us to consider is: What will universities, now partially if not entirely online, look like in the post-COVID world? The massive use of online virtual instruments means that the old model, in which universities were physical gathering spaces, is transforming. The tendency towards an online environment was already on the rise with the advent of s-learning, MOOCs, open universities, etc., and their increasing grip on the higher education ‘market’.

I recently revisited an article that appeared in June 2020, at the height of the first wave of the pandemic, by Rohan D’Souza. The author characterised the struggles between three university paradigms or ‘ideal types’, and what they mean for the future of universities: the original ‘Humboldtian’ model, built around the idea of turning students into autonomous ‘citizens’ by developing their own reasoning and deliberative pursuits best represented by the humanities and the social sciences – which were deemed less ‘useful’ – whilst it imposed an arsenal of managerial methods on in-person learning. For D’Souza, it is the struggle between those new overlapping value-imbued paradigms that will determine the future of higher learning. In his powerful account, the author described the ‘new model’ as a contradictory, unbalanced model experiencing a dramatic dematerialisation, and the gradual depletion of buildings, libraries or a vast number of employees, faculty included. Quite naturally, as already the case for other service businesses, we may see algorithm-operated platforms like Amazon or Google forge alliances with a handful of prestigious university names – turned into certification ‘brands’ – to lead the train to comprehensive digital education.

As we saw, even in its benevolent expression, the new model justifies a re-imagined new teaching and learning possibilities. It calls for universities to re-examine the way they do research and pursue collaborations. It calls for the sector to re-examine how it works. Higher education must re-define the rigid bureaucracies that characterise the system. Universities must also pursue bold responses to enhance their sustainability, relevance and contribution to the country’s socio-economic advancement.

Rethinking the university, on the basis of collaboration and situatedness

We must ask ourselves, Is there an alternative to the EdTech predicament? As we saw, even in its benevolent expression, the old university model may have suffered from an original hubris, a hubris reinforced by the post-cold war victory of the West, in which it was thought that total knowledge could be encapsulated in universities as repositories of all (Western or Northern) societies saw as valuable knowledge, as a mark of their ultimate superiority, exclusive of the values/education from which they emanated, and of the world in all its ecological and human diversity. But the pandemic (or reminded us, we live in an inter-connected, complex world, in which human interdisciplinarity and collaborative forms of knowledge drawn from them are all entangled. We now understand that the university’s agenda of new business encroaches on the environment and its biodiversity, and puts at risk of our anthropo-centric provisionality, along with our neoliberal obsessions, we can imagine a more sober, anchored, multi-centred, horizontal and inclusive experience of Academia. One that combines collective activities and timescapes, in which the human and natural, in dialogue with colleagues from other ‘ecosystems’ in the world, can bring about a new era of collaborative educational and research process. This modus operandi can make use of the university’s ‘them-and-us’ character, and the now renowned Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) system. Yet, those who benefit from this public system, even if it has continued to expand, remain a tiny minority of the population, which is a situation that has invited interventionism in a large measure by the higher education sector, not always synonymous with high quality.

The second contradiction lies in the neoliberal ‘corporate university’ model and its economic and human unsustainability. The incoherence in the wake of the ‘Washington Consensus’ is that it seeks to further the function of higher education services. Predicated on economic ‘usefulness’, the corporate model destabilises the ‘public’ discursive and deliberative pursuits best represented by the humanities and the social sciences – which were deemed less ‘useful’ whilst it imposed an arsenal of managerial methods aimed at evaluating, and quantifying, every aspect of academic work in the name of ‘marketability’. Built on the sacrificial belief in competition – between individuals (tagged as ‘human resources’), universities and countries – the new model justified a vertical ‘selection’, which was ultimately not different from the old selection tradition, ‘Ivy League’ US and UK universities showed the way by transforming themselves from public services, as we know them today, to vertically integrate, endowed centres and Professor Chairs. Yet, as D’Souza pointed out, the continuation of the neoliberal university is founded on students’ willingness, and capacity, to take on increasingly higher debts for their studies. This model is built on a deleterious system at a time when an inflation of diplomas faces a reduction of (good) job opportunities. The system is also built on a faculty and staff population in an increasingly precarious situation, most hired on a temporary basis.

Universities as EdTech platforms

D’Souza foresees this economically unbalanced model experiencing a dramatic turn when the classroom-campus ‘humanistic’ experience finally implodes, and is replaced by the new business model represented by EdTech. This new paradigm, EdTech, is based on the same competitive utilitarian ideology as the corporate university models, get’s it corresponds to a new level in that model: elitism through the commoditisation of higher education by using computing platforms (the ‘Tech Heg’) in order to virtually aggregate transactions between clients (the students) and providers (universities), thereby by-passing the traditional (public) role of the latter as part of the so-called new ‘platform economy’.

A key consequence for higher education is that therefore may be a trend towards its effective dematerialisation, and the gradual depletion of the physical campuses, and, with it, the communities of faculty and students forged through inter-personal encounters and interactions.

When EdTech reaches maturity, D’Souza predicts it will no longer operate on the basis of a cycle of semesters spent by the students at a physical campus, but mostly through online connections from anywhere in the world, driven to accrue à la carte courses provided by a few platforms. These platforms will attract much larger numbers of online ‘students’ without the hard costs of maintaining buildings, libraries or a vast number of employees, faculty included. Quite naturally, as already the case for other service businesses, we may see algorithm-operated platforms like Amazon or Google forge alliances with a handful of prestigious university names – turned into certification ‘brands’– to lead the train to comprehensive digital education.

During the first wave of COVID, we witnessed an surprising re-organisation of some flagship institutions – Cambridge, Harvard, MIT, Science Po, LSE – to shut down their physical activities and move everything online for at least one or two years. Even if these policies were later amended to allow students to partially return to classrooms, these renowned establishments could obviously not resist entering the new business fray. What they may lose in tuition fees, particularly from overseas students, they will eventually earn many times more in online course-based subscriptions.

The consequence of such a trend is not just the demise of an organisational, economic, and educational ‘identity’ but the ultimate atomization of individuals, faculty and students alike, and the unravelling of the civic educational experience that the universities, as we know them today, can provide, will result in a wasteland of digital development and coalescence. Unlikely of course, that the world will return to a pre-pandemic normal, in which universities reclaim their role as unique meeting-grounds, as was foregrounded in a South African academic periodical: “The pandemic is an infection point, it behoves universities to re-imagine new teaching and learning possibilities. It calls for universities to re-examine the way they do research and pursue collaborations. It calls for the sector to re-examine how it works. Higher education must re-define the rigid bureaucracies that characterise the system. Universities must also pursue bold responses to enhance their sustainability, relevance and contribution to the country’s socio-economic advancement.”

We envision a university that reclaims its rightful civic role and responsibility as a confluence of multiple nodes of knowledge exchange. Our goal as educators and institutions, is to identify and explore the expansive variety of modes at universities to have a richer, more hybrid, and on, the world. We propose to create border-crossing spaces within and outside universities where academicians, students, and communities learn from, and act and work with, each other, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition.

Notes

3. This was in 1985’s China, it is now over 30 years later.
4. We must ask ourselves, Is there an alternative to the EdTech predicament?
5. Suresh, S. & Wangenge- Ouma, G. 2020 ‘Citizenship and the Root of Inequality: Does the Type of Education One Receives ’, in a number of coalitions of willing partners such as ICAS, SEANET and HAB. Like IAS, such commitments and European partners recognise that only through cooperation, and through a number of coalitions of willing partners such as ICAS, SEANET and HAB, the Successes are not resist entering the new business fray. What they may lose in tuition fees, particularly from overseas students, they will eventually earn many times more in online course-based subscriptions.
6. The so-called new ‘platform economy’.

Philipppe Paycam, Director IAS

References

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What kind of history can we write of the Song dynasty?

Christian de Pee

What kind of history can we write of the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE)? The question seems naïve and limiting. Didn’t the spread of printing during the Song preserve more texts from that period than survive from earlier dynasties, and don’t these sources allow us to write almost any history we would like? The problem is that these printed texts are nearly all that remains, and that they are formal, generic, and public. They do not lend themselves to the kinds of narratives that historians of medieval Europe have written based on unique, individual manuscripts in monastic libraries and municipal archives.

This post-structuralist approach to text and culture challenges assumptions of the kind that historians of medieval Europe have made about the historical record. Since in these texts the inscription of the wedding ceremony constituted the primary historical act—its eventual performance instead of diminishing them. The analysis of letters of betrothal illustrates this most vividly. Although these letters present direct evidence of the practice of Song and Yuan weddings, previous historians of weddings and marriage had omitted them from their monographs, presumably because they are literary exercises that do not provide specific material details. Read as performances in their own right, however, these letters can be placed among written and material exchanges by which two families confirmed to one another that they had firm possession of the learning and traditions that they had advanced to each other through the matchmaker. The performativity of the act of writing that dominates the surviving texts from the Song dynasty may prohibit the kind of social history from the bottom up that historians of medieval and early modern Europe have written, but it does allow a lively intellectual history of social life, and a detailed knowledge of historical ways of seeing and thinking among the literate elite. As a Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies during the 2019-2020 academic year, I attempted a general history of eleventh-century China based on these historiographical insights. I hope to show that the history of the Song dynasty can be made accessible and interesting to a general reading public when it is told as intellectual history.

Notes

Explaining low crime Japan

Laura Bui

The introduction of Crime in Japan: A psychological perspective, my recent co-authored book, opens with the novelist Kazuo Ishiguro’s observation on British depictions of the Japanese.1 His observation is actually the start of his 1985 review, in the London Review of Books, of John David Morley’s ‘Pictures from the Water Trade: An Englishman in Japan’. Ishiguro remarked that the British were compelled to depict the Japanese as “extreme and bizarre” as to assure themselves that their way of life bore no resemblance to that of the Japanese. He then went on to review Morley’s book, and although generally complimentary, he found that old, imperialist ways still persisted: simplistic explanations for Japanese ways of living and a tendency to assume that anything unfamiliar must be uniquely Japanese. “Behind this”, Ishiguro wrote, “seems to lie the sadly familiar presumption that Europe-Asian cultures comprise world culture”.

The cultural explanation

Explaining low crime with culture is to say that collectivist traits like group-orientation, inclination towards harmony, and high self-control are why the Japanese do not murder, assault, and steal from each other as much as others in different countries. Evidence of this is limited, but commentary and speculation are many; so much so that Japan has been considered the country that endures the most stereotyping in comparative analysis by Western scholars. The frequent criticism is that the cultural explanation is simplistic, and does not provide a complete understanding of crime in Japan. Although this is true, it is also true of any single explanation for crime. Culture is not in itself the issue, but when it is used to reduce a group of people to a few characteristics thought to be inherent, it gives the false impression that it is easy to explain away any phenomena because of that group’s perceived lack of complexity, and therefore, that group’s inferiority. The cultural explanation used in this essentialist way is a familiar narrative with a long history of use to emphasise the irreconcilable differences of those who originate from ‘the Orient’. In the US, for example, those of Asian ancestry have long been considered to be an ‘invasion’ and the ‘Yellow Peril’, whose perceived foreboding, regardless of how long they and their families have lived in the country, is perpetual.2 The mass relocation and imprisonment of Japanese Americans by their own government during World War II comes to mind. When no longer perceived as a threat, a similar, though more positive, narrative of innate difference is bestowed: ‘the Model Minority’. Inherent cultural traits derived from a Confucian belief system are thought to be responsible for success across an array of social and economic indicators when the reality is that this narrative is used to shame other racial minority groups. Either narrative of innate difference sees outcomes, good or bad, as resulting from fixed cultural traits. The present pandemic has shown the tenuous nature of this narrative: anti-Asian hate crimes in the US rose tremendously in 2020 because of the false belief that COVID-19 is Intrinsic to anyone who is thought to look Chinese.3

The cultural explanation, when transformed into a narrative of innate difference, has also been used by the Japanese, but to demonstrate their exceptionalism, and at certain points in history, their superiority to other Asian ‘races’. Romantic and idealised Western understandings of Japanese crime and criminal justice have appeared alongside, and were possibly encouraged by, the discredited but enduring body of work called Nihonjinron, comprising theories on a distinctive Japanese national and cultural identity. Post-war, particularly during the height of economic prowess beginning in the seventies, Nihonjinron took on a favourable view of Japanese heritage, inherent characteristics, attributing interdependence and nurturance of group relationships to cultural achievements.4 The cultural traits, so much so that Japanese households and individuals were highlighted in a number of campaigns that provided opportunities for other countries to learn from Japan in its approach to education, management, and industry. Low crime, in this context, was considered yet another asset that supported Japanese exceptionalism.

A matter of translation

Whether Japan truly has low levels of crime, however, has been contested. As found in other countries, the fundamental limitation of official crime data, often derived from police reports, is its capacity to capture only the tip of the iceberg. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and white-collar crimes are likely to be underreported, and their prevalence are actually thought to be high. The use of self-reports, where information is given by individuals themselves, is one way to counter this limitation of official data.5 My early research compared the level of violence between Japanese and American male youths using self-reports, and unexpectedly found higher rates of violence among the Japanese. As the result conflicted with the prevailing understanding of low crime Japan, the paper had difficulty getting published. The study needed replication as it compared two different versions of interpersonal violence: “hit someone with the idea of seriously hurting them” was used in the pre-existing English version, but the direct “hurt someone in a fight” was used in the Japanese translation. Part of the challenge of making comparisons is that exact translations may not yield comparable results. The use of a forthright understanding for the Japanese translation was thought to be the equivalent of the meaning conveyed by the English version. Before, a 2009 study compared anger among Japanese and American children. Usually anger is understood as an expression, but when a measure that captured experience rather than expression was used, anger was unpredictably higher in Japan. As Japanese women – it seemed that they were better at self-regulating their anger so did not show it.6

Studying unfamiliarity

While Crime in Japan features culture as one of seven examined explanations, the explanation actually filters into the others – what behaviours are deemed illegal and the sort of responses towards them, not to mention what a justice system decides to manifest as, are dependent on cultural values and practices.7 The result is that each explanation serves as a glimpse into related idiosyncrasies that mingle with each other and might give rise to particular crime phenomena. It is evident that Japanese culture is the result of a sequence of a mistaken understanding of culture as a container of innate, fixed qualities. Similarities to other countries are perceived as a result of culture, and the very same culture are also identified in the book, and situating these explanations in the collective knowledge base while traversing varied cultural presumptions are the challenges of cross-cultural research. There is then the question of why bother? If studying unfamiliarity makes one susceptible to wrong presumptions or to conclude that it is impossible to make any interpretation, then such study must be fullfs. But wanting to understand others has been a characteristic commonality of humans. “Explaining” low crime Japan is misleading because explanations are never simplistic, and the same is true for all crime phenomena everywhere. Yet curiosity, the want to understand, can be a potent driver for fast in all its captivating complexity.

Notes

Sex and trade in seventeenth century Siam

Osoet Pegu and her Dutch lovers

The time was the seventeenth century and the place Ayutthaya, Siam’s celebrated royal capital, one of Southeast Asia’s leading port cities. Its centrally located market place consisted of a long, wide, spacious lane with on either side an array of stalls selling a wide range of goods. And here, in the heart of the city’s business centre, female traders played a key role, more often than not as prominent, large-scale commercial participants with the requisite capital and connections that enabled them to be successful. The wide gulf separating the Royal Court from the marketplace was precisely what brought the likes of Osoet Pegu into their own. Aristocratic ladies would look for women, often of low birth or non-Siamese identity, who could move linguistically and culturally across social boundaries to act as intermediaries. Osoet was of non-aristocratic descent with her perfect mediator and cultural broker. Over the years, Osoet had intimate relations with a succession of Dutchmen. Two of her three Dutch lovers were directors of the VOC’s Ayutthaya office. They would have been aware that a relationship with a well-connected and astute businesswoman such as Osoet, was crucial to the smooth running of the Company’s trade since she was well placed to mediate between the VOC and the Palace. And indeed, Osoet’s contacts and influence contributed in no small measure to the successful sealing of lucrative business deals beneficial to all parties concerned, not least the VOC.

Jan van Meerwijck

The first of Osoet’s Dutch lovers was Jan van Meerwijck. In 1621, he sailed East as an assistant in the service of the VOC. He left the Company in 1627 to become a private trader and joined a group of Dutch free burghers that was then very active in countries around the Bay of Bengal, Siam in particular. Jan van Meerwijck and Osoet Pegu met in Ayutthaya, perhaps at the Dutch compound. At 16 years old, Osoet moved out of the shadows and entered the VOC annals as Van Meerwijck’s wife or concubine. She bore a son shortly before his untimely death in 1635. The exact manner of his death is not certain; he was reportedly clubbed to death in Burma, but an entry in Batavia’s Dagregister (Daily Journal) records that he was captured near Martaban and hanged. Be that as it may, Jan van Meerwijck came to a sorry end leaving Osoet to embark on a remarkable and rewarding new life in Ayutthaya in which the Company and other Dutchmen would play a key role.

Jereimias Van Vliet

Jeremias van Vliet was Osoet’s second lover. He sailed from Holland in 1628 and was posted to the VOC’s Japan factory. Jan van Meerwijck was repatriated him. He went home knowing full well he would never be allowed to return to Asia. Van Vliet and Osoet probably began their relationship around 1633 and took over the directorship in 1636, a post he kept for five years. Charges of dishonesty were laid against him in 1645, but rather than putting him on trial, the Company repatriated him. He went home knowing full well he would never be allowed to return to Asia.

After about a century of Europeans steadily trickling into Ayutthaya, Siam’s capital city at that time, representatives of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC) arrived in 1604 and planted a factory (or trading post) there four years later. With varying degrees of success and intermittent closures, the post survived until 1677, when the city was razed by the Burmese. Siam was essentially an export market for the VOC and the mainstay of its Siam trade was without doubt the export of deer hides to Japan. Osoet Pegu, a remarkable woman of Burmese–Mon descent, was a formidable trader and force to be reckoned with in Ayutthaya. This article takes a look at the impact she made, based on VOC archives.

A tale to tell

Born in Ayutthaya around 1615, Osoet came to the Dutch compound at an early time and place. As one author pointedly viewed of white Calvinist males steeped in sources that overwhelmingly privilege the lustful, and immoral. Sadly, Osoet’s story others were VOC officials, westerners who came to the Dutch compound at an early time and place. Although Osoet was born in Siam, she lived without any personal records to build on, without any personal records to build on, and to allow her to be interred in the company’s cemetery in accordance with the place Ayutthaya, Siam’s celebrated royal capital, one of Southeast Asia’s leading port cities. Its centrally located market place consisted of a long, wide, spacious lane with on either side an array of stalls selling a wide range of goods. And here, in the heart of the city’s business centre, female traders played a key role, more often than not as prominent, large-scale commercial participants with the requisite capital and connections that enabled them to be successful. The wide gulf separating the Royal Court from the marketplace was precisely what brought the likes of Osoet Pegu into their own. Aristocratic ladies would look for women, often of low birth or non-Siamese identity, who could move linguistically and culturally across social boundaries to act as intermediaries. As far as we know, Osoet was of non-aristocratic descent with her perfect mediator and cultural broker. Over the years, Osoet had intimate relations with a succession of Dutchmen. Two of her three Dutch lovers were directors of the VOC’s Ayutthaya office. They would have been aware that a relationship with a well-connected and astute businesswoman such as Osoet, was crucial to the smooth running of the Company’s trade since she was well placed to mediate between the VOC and the Palace. And indeed, Osoet’s contacts and influence contributed in no small measure to the successful sealing of lucrative business deals beneficial to all parties concerned, not least the VOC.

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Osoet Pegu, a force to be reckoned with

Telling her story through the VOC archives
Eventually, their three daughters became the cause of endless wrangling between Van Vliet and the Company, on the one hand and Osoet and the King of Siam on the other. Disputes about children fathered by Dutchmen with local women were quite common. Upon leaving Ayutthaya, the Dutchmen usually sought custody of their children. Jan Van Vliet suggested that the Siamese authorities take their children by Dutchwomen with local women. In a letter to the then VOC director, Van Vliet petitioned the King on several occasions to allow him to take his daughters from his married to Osoet since her mother refused to let them go. He had sought custody of their children, give or take a year or two: Van Vliet’s daughter, her mother had much to do with Osoet’s influence. He held till 1650. A man of limited ability who had decreased considerably following the death of Ayutthaya in 1687. G.M. 20 January 1651, pp.449-450. The Company’s trade flourished, mainly due to the pair’s invaluable connections with the Siamese Court, particularly the friendship and patronage bestowed upon them by one of the King’s chief brokers, Osoet Pegu. In 1631, a senior and more experienced member of the New Amsterdam. The Company’s trade flourished, mainly due to the pair’s invaluable connections with the Siamese Court, particularly the friendship and patronage bestowed upon them by one of the King’s chief brokers, Osoet Pegu. In 1631, a senior and more experienced member of the Siamese mandarins, disgruntled at having been deprived of the high regard in which she was held from the Siamese authorities and insisted that good relations be maintained since, for a variety of reasons, Osoet Pegu was more deserving of their favor.4

In retrospect, it is astonishing that Van Goens, a high-ranking representative of a trading company with as its basis the acquisition of the highest possible gains, could have so readily ascribe a business relationship whereby Osoet made a killing! Especially since the high point of VOC-Siamese relations coincided with the period in which Osoet held the most influence over the Company’s affairs was at its peak (the 1630s and 1640s). Undoubtedly this had much to do with Osoet’s influence in royal circles, yet Van Muijden’s own positive contribution should not be underestimated. To show that the Siamese authorities and the Company’s trade flourished, mainly due to the pair’s invaluable connections with the Siamese Court, particularly the friendship and patronage bestowed upon them by one of the King’s chief brokers, Osoet Pegu. In 1631, a senior and more experienced member of the Siamese mandarins, disgruntled at having been deprived of the high regard in which she was held from the Siamese authorities and insisted that good relations be maintained since, for a variety of reasons, Osoet Pegu was more deserving of their favor.4

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Korean is an extremely phono-symbolic language, whereby the sounds themselves carry meaning. One of the biggest challenges when learning Korean is to understand and fully utilize this subtle character of the language, yet most non-native speakers will acknowledge the absolute importance of mastering this skill. For example, becoming proficient in the use of ideophones is vital for effective communication since a breadth of meanings and emotions are condensed into one word or phrase.

Idiophones, although found in most languages, are particularly abundant in Korean; and unlike in most in languages, in Korean, ideophones are even commonly used in more formal contexts, such as Newspaper headlines.

In contrast, ideophones can be easily found in South Korean newspapers, in both the headlines and throughout the article itself. This is not a matter of journalistic quality.

Korea’s main newspapers – Bukjeok Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Maef Gyeongje, Joongang Ilbo or Chosun Ilbo, among others – publish daily articles in which ideophones play a relevant role, especially when they are used in the headline. The examples provided here are only a few of the wide uses of these sound-synthetic terms in Korean journalism, more specifically, in newspaper headlines.

Kukmin Ilbo recently published the article “Bukjeok Ilbo: ‘most of the Southern Sun Belt’”. The ideophone eopchirakdwichirak (_pressing against pressuring_) has two contrasting, yet parallel meanings. It describes a person who tosses and turns in bed, unable to sleep; and it also depicts a domino, a row, a dose game or a fight at close quarters. It expresses a continuous change of positions: up and down. At the beginning of counting the votes for the US presidential elections, it was difficult to predict the winner, since the results changed every single minute. The one word, eopchirakdwichirak (_pressing against pressuring_), perfectly denotes both the flip-flipping and the struggle.

Chosun Ilbo issued the article “Baldeun seongnhamhyeon dolgagi-gemnatsa tsaudo”. Harim-Hanseong juga ‘deulsseok’ ( vibrating, trembling) has been used; it is also emphasized with quotation marks. This polysemic word refers to something that is intact, unscathed, sane or sober. Furthermore, it evokes in the receiver a particular feeling of strength, lucidity, power or robustness, which seems unstoppable or invincible. Thus, this ideophone conveys the sense that the Coronavirus remains unscathed and seems invincible. Ideophones have an extraordinary descriptive power that allows receivers to develop a deep emotional understanding of the message the headline is conveying.

The main objective of newspaper headlines is to attract and have an impact on the readers. They must be short and simple; yet attractive and impressive. Ideophones are equipped with all these features: they are short yet splendidly descriptive, and impressive in their ability to evoke emotional reactions and impressions. Joongang Ilbo published an article on the recent US elections with the headline, “Bundanwi eopchirakdwichirak Ttuesnopmu, nambu seonbelteu daebubun dwijeoteotda” ( 폰던히 여자치워자… 트럼프, 남부 선별료 따로 돈잡았을까?), (Fig.2) literally translated as: “Up and down minu by minute… Trump flips most of the Southern Sun Belt”. The ideophone eopchirakdwichirak (_pressing against pressuring_) has two contrasting, yet parallel meanings. It describes a person who tosses and turns in bed, unable to sleep, and it also depicts a domino, a row, a dose game or a fight.

For example, Harim and Hansung stock prices ‘loaf’. The ideophone deulsseok (vibrating) describes object stuck to something else, and thereby easily lifted, yet also evokes a feeling of flutter and excitement. It is astounding how one single word, formed by two syllables, can comprise a wide variety of implications, sensations and impressions. Again, the ideophone is enclosed by quotation marks to attract the reader’s attention and emphasize its meaning.

There are some cases where two ide-phones are used in one headline. For example, Segye Ilbo issued the article “Ogwangwangleun bujkaks, massakseun kweh… Jijeokgyeomuyom jehwaskun uroo” ( 꼬장을 끝낸 박재, 마스킹 제외… 이 지역은 제한선 밖이), translated as “The tourist spots are crowded, the masks are off… Regional infection proliferation is being worried about”. Bukjeok (적복) describes the sound of people moving and noisily talking. It is normally translated as crowded, yet it is more sensorial than that. Hweh (획), as most ideophones, is polysemic (it can have multiple meanings depending on the context). Normally it symbolizes the sudden and strong sound of an object flopping in the wind. However, here it equates that sound with the one made when energetically removing a face mask.

Maef Gyeongje is one of the main economic newspapers in South Korea. Recently, it published the article “Peolpoal kkeuljeulun Buja tajig, seokdalsae 100k ‘sa’uk” ( 발포할 봇물 짧은 집집, 석달 10억 ‘싸우’), or; "Boiling Busan house prices, 1 billion ‘rise’ in three months.”, translated as crowded, yet it is more sensorial than that. Hweh (획), as most ideophones, is polysemic (it can have multiple meanings depending on the context). Normally it symbolizes the sudden and strong sound of an object flopping in the wind. However, here it equates that sound with the one made when energetically removing a face mask.

In summary, and unlike in most in languages, in Korean, ideophones are even commonly used in more formal contexts, such as Newspaper headlines.
Creative ways to help believers

Indonesian female Islamic leaders offer COVID-19 relief to female and family members

Mirjam Künkler and Eva F. Nisa

1 A global infection levels continue to rise (total deaths approximated 2.1 million by February this year), societies have been hard hit by mounting economic, political and social costs. In Indonesia, Jokowi and his government were criticised for their slow initial response to the crisis, many have advocated the more effective responses by local leaders, who quickly imposed distancing measures and encouraged mask-wearing. Unfortunately, the economic hardship, faced by many Indonesians even before the crisis, has limited people’s capacity to confront these health risks, including the violence against children. Alimatul Qibtiyah, a KOMNAS commissioner, highlighted the need to report their cases and have kept service providers from handling cases effectively. In response, Fatayat, the young women’s wing of Nahdatul Ulama, launched a telephone hotline for complaints and consultation on domestic violence. According to Fatayat’s chairwomen Anggia Ermurid, the organisation mobilises resources from its central, provincial and district levels, in order to address the crisis. Physical, spiritual, and mental resilience

Digital media has become a key communication tool between religious leaders and constituents in Indonesia. Although the pandemic has sparked a rise in religious practice, during the crisis. Muslimat actively advocates educating the larger public during lockdown. Some organisations, such as the Alliance of Theologically Educated Women (PERUAT), organise fundraisers to financially help those most in need, while others, such as LK Perempuan Patu’i Learning Circle for Women, focus on people stranded far from home due to the pandemic and who are often living in temporary shelters. At the Islamic State University, Jakarta, an organisation led by women religious leaders has raised funds for students who can no longer rely on their families for financial support.

On the epidemiological level, women activists have urged the authorities to include gender-sensitive medical data at all administrative levels, from the national down to the villages. Women from many of the aforementioned organisations serve as representatives on the national COVID-19 task force. In that role, they have consistently stressed the ways in which the gendered challenges of the pandemic crises have affected women and girls, and how policies must respond accordingly. In most cases, women have been the primary caregivers in their households, taking on more responsibilities and families, disseminating scientific information, and communicating economic opportunities.

Conclusion

Women and girls have been particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rising levels of domestic violence have accompanied increasing economic hardship in households, worsened by women’s financial dependence and unemployment. Ulama perempuan and Muslim women’s organisations have been on the frontline supporting women through various initiatives: reaching out online to provide spiritual guidance, creating scientific information programmes, supplying face masks and hand sanitiser, and generating more sustainable aid through empowerment programmes rooted in religious practices. Spiritual, mental and physical resilience comprises the foundation of these women’s initiatives, while ‘digital religion’ enables the execution of such activities.

In the face of myriad crises, women’s Islamic organisations and the Ulama perempuan of Indonesia practice what they preach. As Pera Sopariyanti, head of Rahima, noted: “ulama perempuan have proved the agents of change in their communities. During the pandemic, they have shown their initiatives to synergise with various parties to serve their communities: young and old, women and men”. As the Indonesian saying goes, ‘Berakik-rakik ke hulu, beranang-aranang ke tepian’. Berakik-rakik dahulu, beraseng-sengkong lasih. Dispersi tanamannya di Raft upstream, to the shore. Pain will come first, joy will come later”, we can take this to heart, and hope that it will eventually be rewarded by rescue and salvation. In the pandemic, women religious leaders have been able to demonstrate that it is not only male ulama who can provide the raft.

Notes


3 The survey had 2282 respondents. It was a telephone-based survey which was conducted online and thus excluded people without internet access. In addition, surveys often mean women who are experiencing violence seek help.

4 Interview with Ala’i Nadjib, lecturer at Islamic State University, Sydney Hidayatullah Jakarta and board member of Nahdlatul Ulama’s Institute for Research and Human Resource Development, 1 October 2020.

5 Eva F. Nisa is a senior lecturer in anthropology at the Australian National University and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow. Prior to this, she was a lecturer in religious studies (Islamic studies) at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her research focuses on Islam and Muslim societies, gender and gender identity. She is currently writing a book on Islamic and gendered governmentality, New Zealand. Her research focuses on Islam and Muslim societies, gender and gender identity. She is currently writing a book on Islamic and gendered governmentality.

6 Interview with Alia Ridawati, lecturers at State Islamic University, Sydney Hidayatullah Jakarta and board member of Nahdlatul Ulama’s Institute for Research and Human Resource Development, 1 October 2020.

7 Interview with Alia Ridawati, lecturers at State Islamic University, Sydney Hidayatullah Jakarta and board member of Nahdlatul Ulama’s Institute for Research and Human Resource Development, 1 October 2020.

8 Interview with Alia Ridawati, lecturers at State Islamic University, Sydney Hidayatullah Jakarta and board member of Nahdlatul Ulama’s Institute for Research and Human Resource Development, 1 October 2020.
Indonesia in ‘3D’: development, dictatorship and democracy

On 17 August 2020, while the COVID-19 pandemic was raging, Indonesia celebrated less joyfully than planned the 75th anniversary of its independence. With more than 270 million people, it is the fourth most populated country in the world. It is also at the crossroads of the Indo-Pacific region where it occupies a uniquely strategic position. On the political front, it is the third largest democracy on earth and one of the few in the Muslim world to which it belongs, also counting the highest number of believers. At the economic level, well endowed with natural resources, it is one of the major emerging countries, with a rather good development record since the early 1970s, a member of the G20, and will possibly be the fourth or fifth biggest economy in the world by 2045, at which time it will be celebrating its centenary. In spite of all that, Indonesia remains certainly the most unknown and ignored among major nations. This article is a summary of a French-language book whose title can translate as “Indonesia: Garuda’s turbulent take-off”. It aims to fill part of a knowledge gap about this country, particularly marked in the French literature. Its main objective is to retrace the history of the archipelago’s economic, social and political development.

Ambitious objective

In the introduction, some methodological clarifications are followed by a short presentation of Indonesia’s favourable situation at the beginning of 2020. After a first chapter to set the geographical and the pre-colonial scene, followed by a second on the heavy heritage of 350 years of Dutch colonial domination, it focuses on the post-independence period with a different chapter devoted to each of the five major phases one can distinguish since 1950: the troubled Sukarno years of political instability and economic decline (1950–1966); the New Order authoritarian era of economic development and political repression under Suharto’s dictatorship (1966–1998); the chaotic but decisive transition to democracy known as Reformasi (1998–2004); the decade of economic stability and democratic stagnation during which Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono was president (2004–2014); and the six years that have elapsed since Joko Widodo was elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2019 to the presidency, where clear signs of democratic regression have started to accumulate amidst a positive economic situation until early 2020. The book ends with an epilogue showing how this favourable situation has turned to a deep economic and social crisis due to the irritation of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was managed ineffectively, as well as the consequences it had on the acceleration of democratic regression. However, it is preceded by a conclusion drawing the lessons from the Indonesian development process and stressing the possible links one can establish with the phases of dictatorship or democracy the country has known, including a brief comparison with the four other co-founding ASEAN members, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines.

However, the book also has a second, wider and more ambitious objective: to allow the reader, through what is considered as the emblematic case of Indonesia, to better understand the dynamics of development, this global process of change resulting in a nation’s economic, social, political and cultural transformation. The emblematic nature of the case study is not only linked to the fact that Indonesia started from a very low level of development and has reached a certain degree of success in this domain, but also to the complex and ambiguous relation that this process has entertained with dictatorship and democracy, the two political regimes between which the country has wavered since independence. As a matter of fact, this analysis of the relation in ‘3D’ between development, dictatorship and democracy constitutes the connecting thread of the book, with the ambition to clarify the following haunting question: which of the two political regimes has been more efficient in terms of economic and social development?

Sukarno: polarisation and recession

After independence, proclaimed in 1945, and the four following years of a devastating national liberation war against the colonial power, Indonesia went through two very different political experiences under the presidency of Sukarno from 1950 to 1966: the first was rather democratic and the second clearly more authoritarian. Neither of these two experiences put the country on the path of sustained economic and social development. Until 1959, in spite of the huge difficulties met from the start – resulting from the burden of colonial heritage, the iniquitous conditions for decolonisation imposed by the Dutch and the very poor state of the economy – the country seemed able to engage in a promising developmental process. However, the political instability inherent in the commandable but probably premature attempt to establish a regime of western-inspired parliamentary liberal democracy, ill-adapted to traditional Indonesian political culture, proved to be a major obstacle to the country’s development. Moreover, the difficulty to forge national unity and the various regional rebellions during the 1950’s in different parts of the archipelago monopolised all the energy and derailed this developmental process. In the end, parliamentary democracy resulted in a serious development failure. Furthermore, in 1959 Sukarno imposed his system of Guided Democracy, a presidential regime that was increasingly authoritarian and incompetent, giving priority to foreign policy objectives of national sovereignty and claims and struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism, but neglecting economic fundamentals. The economy became a victim of economic nationalism, nonsensical planning and inapt strategic choices guided by ideology and ignorance and reflecting the lack of concern by the president for such issues. This policy drove the country towards economic recession and resulted in a serious deterioration of living conditions for the population. To sum
A demand for democratic reform

This is precisely what happened in 1998. The Asian Financial Crisis (AFC), which started in Thailand in mid-1997 and reached Indonesia at the end of the year, served as a catalyst for this movement of revolt and opened the era of rupture that translated the authoritarian regime of the Soeharto era into a more open and more democratic one. The collapse of the economy, dragged into a 13% contraction, triggered the bankruptcy of thousands of enterprises and the explosion of social problems, with millions of people losing their jobs and a poverty rate jumping to over 20%, resulted in a deep political crisis. It is not difficult to imagine it turned into a ‘debauch’. The New Order’s only political option was to increase its capacity to continue ensuring economic stability and social peace. This being gone, it collapsed in the face of social unrest and the demands of the population for freedom and democracy. The electoral strategy of Soeharto was relinquished pitifully in May 1998. Starting from the experience of Indonesia (and other Asian countries) after the AFC, one can conclude that economic and social development goes hand in hand with political and social development. As for the second question, it is obvious that the six years of Reformasi have been certainly the most difficult and dangerous for the young Indonesian democracy. In reality, Indonesia has been beset with political and social conflicts. Constant crisis and political events have left the country in a situation totally upside down, like everywhere else on the planet.

Liberalism, conservatism, and populism

Manoeuvre, democratisation, and the liberalisation of the economy, achieved to tackle the massive poverty forced the authorities to acknowledge the return to favourable conditions for economic and social development. In their view, the type of reforms that has characterised Indonesia during the time of Reformasi generates its own internal contradictions. This process of change is threatened by the combination of finance in a more general context of globalisation on the one hand, and the narrowing of the options for a new social order on the other. The political and social consequences are difficult to anticipate.

Recovery with inequalities

As for the second question, it is obvious that after the 1998 Asian financial crisis, this crisis continues to be a threat to national integration and the beginning of a deadly wave of Islamic terrorism, Indonesia has moved to return to favourable conditions for economic and social development. However, contrary to the first six years of Reformasi, when Indonesia had been in 1997-98, one can imagine that things could have turned much worse. Indeed, the miraculous success of the AFC in Indonesia was a result of the capacity to continue ensuring economic stability and social peace. This being gone, it collapsed in the face of social unrest and the demands of the population for freedom and democracy. The electoral strategy of Soeharto was relinquished pitifully in May 1998. Starting from the experience of Indonesia (and other Asian countries) after the AFC, one can conclude that economic and social development goes hand in hand with political and social development. As for the second question, it is obvious that the six years of Reformasi have been certainly the most difficult and dangerous for the young Indonesian democracy. In reality, Indonesia has been beset with political and social conflicts. Constant crisis and political events have left the country in a situation totally upside down, like everywhere else on the planet.
Commodities, credit and luxury consumer goods
Insights into the structures that shape economic life in Southeast Asia

Su-Ann OH

The market for luxury goods has enjoyed phenomenal growth over the past few decades. In 2019, the global value of the sector was estimated to be around a staggering US$1.47 trillion. A carefully crafted illusion of hedonism, robust manufacturing processes and seamlessly integrated supply chains have allowed the industry to create an illusion of growth. While middle class Asian tourists remain the primary revenue source, young local adults or ‘Millennials’ form the much smaller backup target. However, with COVID-induced travel restrictions affecting the former group and rising youth unemployment impacting the latter, demand has flatlined for the much smaller backup target. However, with COVID-induced travel restrictions affecting the former group and rising youth unemployment impacting the latter, demand has flatlined off-guard. Annual sales of LVMH, the parent company of prestigious companies such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, TAG Heuer and Bulgari, plummeted 17 per cent year-on-year, while net profits were down by 34 per cent. Likewise, rival conglomerates Kering SA, owner of Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, witnessed a 17.5 per cent decline in revenues, and a 34.4 drop in recurring operating income. Although pricing strategies – including setting price mark-ups sometimes as high as 20 times the cost of production for a host of products – have allowed most industry stalwarts to remain afloat during the pandemic, a handful of high-end boutique brands are starting to shutter down. Among the American casualties of the crisis are retail giants Brook Brothers, Neiman Marcus and Lord & Taylor – all three companies filed for bankruptcy last year. Closer to home, Singapore’s Robinsons & Co., too, was unable to bear the brunt of the coronavirus fallout, announcing its closure after 160 years in the city-state. Other players that have come to terms with the peculiar nature of the ongoing crisis – the ease with which the virus spreads, the psyche of cautious consumers and the complexity of vaccinating billions of people – and that anticipate a long recovery process have finally started to abandon their change-averse mode of operations.

Economic homeostasis has been a signature trait of most luxury fashion houses. A self-sustaining ecosystem developed by nurturing a steady stream of loyal patrons has helped them attain unparalleled growth in the past. In order to do so, established brands have unreservedly backed textbook notions of fuelling ‘conspicuous consumption’ and generating ‘snob value’ to help their consumers distinguish themselves from the crowd. So entrenched is the prestige preservation philosophy that large-scale commoditisation has never even been considered a viable option. However, the lasting impact of the current pandemic is making them take the first steps towards setting aside the allure of exclusivity and embracing coping mechanisms rooted in mainstream economic principles. First, a number of companies are offering existing and new customers a greater range of products and prices that would – at least somewhat – justify heavy spending in this challenging period. Second, centre stage boutique brands are actively trying to develop a sense of congruity between consumer perception and their own values. And third, the ever-so-neglected digital engagement channels are finally being put to good use.

Greater variety
Most luxury fashion houses have been wary of diversification due to fears of ‘brand dilution’. But keeping such concerns at bay and unapologetically extending product and price ranges is now imperative for such firms. Given that recessions invariably heighten consumers’ price sensitivity, catering to financially fattered
shoppers should be seen by the industry not as a deviation from its ethos of maintaining inaccessibility but as an opportunity to inoculate loyalty into a new group of consumers. This should be supplemented with detailed analyses of market trends. Preliminary studies have shown that, in Southeast Asia, younger consumers have been affected less severely by the COVID-19 crisis than their middle-aged counterparts. Not allocating adequate resources to serve their needs just because they have traditionally accounted for a smaller proportion of the revenue stream would therefore be a misstep. Instead, by offering a greater variety of goods tailored to their preferences by utilising the underlying notion of ‘aspirational utility’, the industry stands a good chance of creating a new, permanent customer base in the future. Developing practical and durable goods – as indicated by some high-end brands – is a brilliant move towards diversification.

Pro-social behaviour

The literature on behavioural economics is replete with studies examining the idea of possessions being an expression of their owner’s extended self. With the ‘new normal’ forcing most individuals to stay indoors and unintentionally making them reflect on ‘what really matters’, materialism is bound to take a hit. It is the right time for the luxury sector to depart from its typical ‘wants over needs’ narrative and, instead, communicate to the buyers what it stands for. A host of new studies have shown that, in addition to the combination of willingness and ability to pay, luxury consumers now assign a lot of weightage to their preferred brands’ manufacturing processes, treatment of employees, commitment to saving the environment, charitable endeavours, inter alia. As shoppers begin to trickle out of their homes, they are likely to take their ‘pent up’ demand for luxury escapism, the ‘freedom of ownership’ and the desire to convince them of, say, the craftsmanship of the artist it supplies, its resolve to create a true masterpiece or to invest in genuine luxury. This would surely resonate with the genuine self of its pro-social behaviour.

In the early days of the COVID crisis, many big-name fashion companies had turned their production lines, usually meant for handbags and apparel, to manufacture personal protective equipment and hand sanitisers – a gesture that will undoubtedly add to their scollaring brand value.

Digital engagement

‘Experiential satisfaction’ has been the essence of the luxury sector. Consequently, enhancing the operations of brick-and-mortar stores has been the primary focus of most high-end brands. For years, digital marketing and sales channels were implicitly labelled as weak instruments – to the extent that most brands did not even list the prices of their offerings on the official websites. In order to obtain this key piece of information, consumers were expected to call the nearest outlet. Things are much different now.

The pandemic has forced the industry to elevate e-commerce sales to the same status as offline purchases, and companies are finally adopting digital engagement to not just showcase goods and services and relay their authenticity, but also to capture immediate customer feedback. A growing number of firms in the region have been live-streaming fashion shows, offering online appointment and adopting digital prototyping to unveil novel products. As social distancing measures are here to stay for the foreseeable future, more, further digital amplification can certainly help cushion the impact of the crisis. With these measures alone, to restore the luxury industry’s immunity overnight, they can help mitigate some of the challenges brought upon by the current crisis and prepare a new, sustainable modus operandi for a post-COVID scenario.

P ickly, creamy and pungent, durian (Durio zibethinus) is regarded by many in Southeast Asia to be the king of fruits. In fact, durian’s commercial sale has risen in recent years, especially since it became popular in China. In 2019 alone, China imported some US$3.2 billion worth of durians. Although Thailand dominates supply in this market, the Malaysian government aspires to increase the country’s market share to well beyond the current ten per cent. Two factors are likely to increase Malaysia’s durian exports to China in the future. First, Malaysia secured the right to export frozen whole durians to China in August 2018. Second, there is increasing demand for Malaysia’s premium durian, especially for a variety known as ‘Musang King’.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the demand for durians in China in 2020, the long-term outlook is likely to come from the supply-side rather than the demand side. Not only is there a long-lag period for durians to thrive in Malaysia, particularly in the Musang King variety, which only thrives in specific geographical areas in Malaysia. One of these areas is the district of Raub, located in the state of Pahang. As the durian industry booms, durian plantation lands in Raub have become the loci of contests among various parties. This is because many of the one thousand affected farmers have been cultivating durian on land that is state-owned.

The most recent struggle over land for durian cultivation in Raub can be traced back to March 2020, when the Pahang state government’s agency for agriculture development, Perbadanan Kemajuan Pertanian Negeri Pahang (PKPP) signed agreements with a private company, the Royal Pahang Durian Group (RPD), to form joint ventures to develop a durian processing centre and to legalise durian farming on encroached state lands. On 24 June 2020, the Pahang government awarded a 30-30 joint lease and the right to use over 5,357 acres of land in Raub to the joint ventures. A month later, the affected durian farmers in Raub were given the ultimatum of accepting a sub-lease of 10 years with the joint venture company at risk being taken over for negating land occupation. The proposed sub-lease contract requires each farmer to pay a levy of RM4,000 (US$742) per acre and to sell their Grades A Musang King to the joint ventures at a fixed price of RM20 (US$7) per kg for two years starting from 2021. Not surprisingly, the ultimatum and proposal were met with stiff resistance by the durian farmers who felt that the state had colluded with a private company to unfairly extract their hard-earned profits. The state and the private company have not previously invested any time and resources in the farmers’ ventures yet and, by way of flat, intend to extract rent from them. The case has since gone to the courts with the farmers seeking a judicial review on two matters – the state government’s order to vacate their lands and its decision to award the lease and the right to use to the joint venture company. A temporary reprieve was obtained by the farmers, who have also asked the court to order the state authorities to cease all enforcement and eviction measures against the durian farmers until the review is decided in December 2020.

At first glance, the case appears straightforward as a legal dispute. The implementation of land registration under British rule had abolished the practice of ‘adverse possession’, which was recognised under customary law. In adverse possession, an occupant of ‘waste land’ (tanah mati) has the right to cultivate the land provided a proportion of the produce is remitted to the rightful owner (the state). Thus, under the current legal system, the affected durian farmers have illegally occupied state-owned lands and have no legal recourse whatsoever. This would put the farmer at a disadvantage when bargaining for a more favourable lease term. Under the Federal Constitution, land-related matters are dealt with under state jurisdiction. It would perhaps be less controversial if the entire 30-30 lease year is given to PKPP because the land does in fact belong to the state. PKPP can then provide a sub-lease to each durian farmer. Why should another private company (RPD) be benefiting from the lease? As a state-owned agency, PKPP should have sufficient resources to develop the industry including financing the proposed durian processing plant. As part of a sub-lease agreement with farmers, the PKPP could also assist them in obtaining the Malaysian Good Agricultural Practices (MyGAP) certification, which is required by China for durian imports. After all, it is the role of the government to assist the private sector to overcome such non-tariff barriers. If the state government does not have the expertise nor the human resources to provide direct technical assistance, it can facilitate meetings on matters relating to MyGAP. It could encourage private provision of such services.

One potential complication is the involvement of the Pahang Royal Family as a shareholder in the private company RPD. The Sultan of Pahang is the de facto head of the state government. Some legal scholars and practitioners have argued that state lands ‘belong’ to the Sultan as a sovereign entity. This is debatable because changes in state land legislations require the approval of the state legislative body, implying that the state is in fact distinct from the sovereign entity – just as the Federal Legislative body (Parliament) is separate from the executive body and the king. Norms may, however, differ from actual practice as the Sultan commands the utmost respect from state bureaucrats and politicians.

On 23 December 2020, the High Court in Kuantan dismissed the farmers’ applications for judicial review on the basis that they are trespassers and hence have no legal standing. This court decision is likely to be contested by the general public to be unfair. Legal constraints aside, it might be worth considering economic efficiency. What arrangement would allow the durian industry in Raub to flourish whilst ensuring that the state government receives its fair share of revenues (lease payments, quit rents and tax revenues)? To do this, the courts should strike the ‘grabbing hands’ of the state and allow the ‘invisible hand’ of the market to do what it does best in commerce. This would require the court to recognise the right of the farmers to be fairly compensated (for past investments, should they choose to exit farming) or to a fair revenue-sharing contract (should they choose to continue farming). Such a contract should be negotiated without the threat of eviction.

To conclude, the boom in Malaysia’s durian exports has brought about a conflict between major players and institutions in the country – farmers, state and the royalty. A fair and just conflict can only be obtained through negotiations without threat of eviction.

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The gendered structure of moneylending in Vietnam

Nicolas Lainez

Moneylending is a vital source of credit for urban and under-banked borrowers in Vietnam. Despite its relevance, this credit sector is poorly understood and shrouded in negative stereotypes about loan shark practices. It is thought to be a masculine world, a universe of violent and cruel men belonging to poorly understood and shrouded in negative similitudes. It simultaneously reinforces gender ideologies that are both normative and strategic, as it expresses by male and female moneylenders respectively, reveals the gendered structure of moneylending in Vietnam. Not only do men and women run different types of lending operations, but they do so while deploying essentialist constructions of gender for moral and economic purposes. This deployment is both normative and strategic, as it simultaneously reinforces gender ideologies and sustains business practices.

Gangsters and fear tactics

Male moneylenders operate in gangs, which people commonly refer to as gang hố (outlaw), xã hội đen (lit.: ‘black society’), meaning gangster, or mafia) and (lit.: ‘gang from H bụi đen’). If they don’t pay me, it’s like if they steal from me. They must pay me in due course. They must be afraid of me even if I do nothing to them. I just need them to understand they must pay me back. Ganğ hố lenders’ use of extreme violence to recover loans stirs up public indignation and concern and a strong call for political action, to which the government has responded with persecution and has used as a justification for liberalising consumer lending. However, these male lenders embrace the stereotype of the ruthless and ‘evil’ usurer who crushes the poor with high-interest rates and strong-arm recovery methods. They also embody the xã hội đen image, the greedy gangster popularised in the campaigns against ‘social evils’ in the 1990s, a time when it was believed by the government that the market economy and the country’s insertion into the globalised economy would set off an irreversible process of cultural dilution and cause the proliferation of crime and greed. Chasing hố lenders also reinforces certain ideals of masculinity, in particular men’s ‘hot temper’ that can easily turn into aggressive and violent behaviour (and intimate partner violence) when they consume alcohol. Although confirming to these gender roles moneylenders have made it clear that they put at risk and stigmatisation, it allows them to generate enough fear and respect among borrowers to sustain their lending operation.

Sympathetic familiarity

On the contrary, women operate as small-scale ‘neighbourhood moneylenders’. They work individually, using savings to launch small lending ventures, and offer flexible borrowing conditions to handpicked clients. They use their extensive experience and connections to lend money in their social networks. A prerequisite to lending is familiarity with and trust in their borrowers, typically a neighbour, a friend, an acquaintance or a business partner. According to Quỳnh, a small-scale neighbourhood moneylender from Ho Chi Minh City, “I only lend small amounts of money, like 2-3 million đồng (USD129), to people I trust. I lend it to people who are very close to me or whose situation I am sympathetic to, mainly people having a small business. Even if I know they’re a easy moneylender, I only lend money to people I know and trust”. To issue a loan, female moneylenders need to know the borrower’s work and house address, but refrain from asking for an ID or a household certificate as collateral. Once they gain experience and contacts in the moneylending trade, build their reputation and increase their capital, they expand their operation to more distant circles in their social networks. Most argue that they ‘lend money for affectionate reasons’ (cho mua tình tâm), meaning at slightly lower rates and with more flexibility toward defaults than gang hố gangs. Nória, a neighbourhood lender, who lends money to sex workers, explained that: “I am familiar with the girls and understand their situation, so I can’t grab their money like gang hố gangs do. When they don’t have enough money, I go easy on them and let them slide for that month. If they aren’t able to pay me double next month, I let them pay one month and wait until they have enough money to pay for the missing month. But first, I go to their place to see how they’re doing. If they really cannot pay and are going through a hard time, I sympathise and don’t force them to pay”. As flexible as neighbourhood moneylenders’ practices are, they must also respond to the behaviours to sustain their business. When they run out of patience, they harass and insult late payers. This is how Phượng, a neighbourhood moneylender, pressures late borrowers: “I can say ‘fuck you or your mother, is it you or me now?’, or I could use more aggressive words like ‘fuck your mother, fuck your father’. I only swear at the borrowers themselves. I never insult their mother, father and ancestors”. As opposed to gang hố gangs, neighbourhood moneylenders rarely hit ‘stubborn’ borrowers or ‘make a fuss’ at their home and workplace. Inflicting physical violence on associates, friends and family members would damage their reputation in the neighbourhood and therefore their capacity to recruit new clients. In fact, the relationship between moneylenders like Nória and Phượng and their clients is framed within the terms of reference chi-em or ‘old sister-young sister/brother’. This referential system lends itself to the narrative of moneylending as a mark of ‘good sentiments’ (tín cảm) to each other. If they have reputation and increase their capital, they expand their operation to more distant circles in their social networks. Most argue that they ‘lend money for affectionate reasons’ (cho mua tình tâm), meaning at slightly lower rates and with more flexibility toward defaults than gang hố gangs. Nória, a neighbourhood lender, who lends money to sex workers, explained that: “I am familiar with the girls and understand their situation, so I can’t grab their money like gang hố gangs do. When they don’t have enough money, I go easy on them and let them slide for that month. If they aren’t able to pay me double next month, I let them pay one month and wait until they have enough money to pay for the missing month. But first, I go to their place to see how they’re doing. If they really cannot pay and are going through a hard time, I sympathise and don’t force them to pay”. As flexible as neighbourhood moneylenders’ practices are, they must also respond to the behaviours to sustain their business. When they run out of patience, they harass and insult late payers. This is how Phượng, a neighbourhood moneylender, pressures late borrowers: “I can say ‘fuck you or your mother, is it you or me now?’, or I could use more aggressive words like ‘fuck your mother, fuck your father’. I only swear at the borrowers themselves. I never insult their mother, father and ancestors”. As opposed to gang hố gangs, neighbourhood moneylenders rarely hit ‘stubborn’ borrowers or ‘make a fuss’ at their home and workplace. 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Long before COVID-19’s spread, Southeast Asia was already struck by the strange ailment known as food heritage fever. Tensions have erupted among citizens of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore over national claims on dishes like chilli crab, rendang, and chendol over the past decade. Accusations of cultural appropriation have been fuelled by concerns that globally connected urban centres like Singapore are more adept than their neighbours at commodifying food heritage for soft power and tourist dollars.

Less discussed but equally important is the relationship between consumer brands and Southeast Asia’s food heritage. It is now commonplace to see ‘home-cooked’ Asian foods being marketed under established brand names overseas, whether in the form of pre-made spice mixes or restaurant chain offerings steeped in nostalgia. But what about Asian food cultures based on established Western mass consumer brands? How does Western mass manufactured food become Asian national heritage? We can explore these questions in the Southeast Asian context through the curious case of Milo Dinosaur, a concoction whose identity is based on a brand belonging to Nestlé, the world’s largest food company.

Milo Dinosaur is a chilled beverage commonly found in casual eateries across Singapore and Malaysia. Vendors blend Swiss multinational Nestlé chocolate-malt Milo powder with sugar, water, milk and ice, before adding more Milo powder on top. Some recipes even include rainbow sprinkles (fig. 1). Milo Dinosaur’s name appears to have originated in Singapore-based Indian-Muslim eateries during the mid-1990s. Eateries claiming credit include ASA Muslim Restaurant, Al-Ameen Eating House, and Al-Azhar Eating Restaurant, all popular with youth and young adults. Many of these open-air outlets were already serving sweetened milk-based beverages like teh tarik, Milo and bandung, as staples. Labelling a turbo-charged version of Milo as Milo Dinosaur may have been a way to riff on Singapore’s cinema culture, which during the 1990s was saturated with the exploits of giant reptiles in Jurassic Park and its sequels.

A second origin story looks towards Malaysia. Singaporeans themselves remember a similarly cloying drink called Milo Shake being served in Malaysian roadside stalls by the mid-1990s. Toddlers in Malaysia may have been unreasonably excited that Milo Dinosaur is a Malaysian creation. A third line of enquiry focuses on Nestlé’s shifting global presence since the colonial era. The essential ingredient in Milo Dinosaur/Milo Shake – Milo powder – was developed by Nestlé chemist Thomas Mayne in Australia during the early 1930s. Milo was initially manufactured in Australia and marketed in British Malaya as a fortificated tonic food for aspirational households and professionals. Following independence, Nestlé began manufacturing Milo in both Malaysia and Singapore, persuading consumers on both sides of the causeway to picture Milo as their respective national drink. Present-day Malaysia is believed to have the world’s highest per capita consumption of Milo, with Singapore running a close second. In this telling, Milo Dinosaur was ultimately a child of Singapore and Malaysia’s joint colonial legacy andness to Swiss capitalism.

A fourth narrative enhances Milo Dinosaur’s regional popularity from below. Commercial eateries may have gifted Milo Dinosaur its catchy title, but families in Singapore, Malaysia and Australia were preparing versions of the drink at home in all but name beforehand, sometimes unintentionally. Part of Milo’s historic charm lies in the powder’s unusually coarse and crunchy grain, giving it an attractive mouthfeel when consumed ‘raw’. Even in the hands of children, Milo was a relatively easy beverage to prepare. One interviewee remembers having enjoyed cold Milo with extra powder on top while growing up in Singapore during the 1980s. As a child he was introduced to the concoction when visiting his neighbours who happened to be Australian immigrants. His parents also allowed him to make his own Milo at home, resulting in occasional happy accidents when the powder was unable to fully dissolve in refrigerated milk.1 Part of Milo Dinosaur’s initial allure thus stemmed from past culinary practice, recalling previous generations of children who furtively gobbled Milo straight from the tin like candy, or sprinkled it on bread as a sugar substitute. Whether at home or outside in each other’s company, later generations found in Milo Dinosaur an ideal concoction for recreation. As one Singaporean vendor observed, “[the Milo powder] falls all over the ice and they can lick it, roll it over their tongues and enjoy its texture.”2 We are essentially witnessing the emergence of a super-sized mocktail, occupying the grey space between childhood and the adult world.

Spontaneous play nonetheless co-exists with Nestlé’s guiding hand, though it is difficult to gauge the extent of the multinational’s influence from public records alone. Nonetheless, in 2009, Nestle Singapore’s managing director openly stated that Milo Dinosaur’s earlier development in Singapore coffee shops was partly due to input from a Nestlé sales team. Nestle has in fact long promoted alternative Milo consumption practices in Singapore and Malaysian households. Since the late 1950s, Nestlé’s Malayan advertisements have occasionally urged consumers to sprinkle Milo powder over bread. Nestlé even advertised a recipe for ‘Milo Milk Shake’ in 1990 bearing similarities to today’s Milo Dinosaur. Many Southeast Asians appear sanguine that their taste preferences have been remade by a Swiss multinational over several generations. In both Singapore and Malaysia, Milo Dinosaur has been embraced as a socially unifying food item. The beverage’s most high-profile episode in Singapore to date came when Joseph Schooling, Singapore’s first-ever Olympic gold medallist, drank his childhood beverage at his favourite hawker stall during his victory parade in 2016. Before Schooling’s performance, musicians in Singapore were already enrolling the beverage in songs channeling coffee shop cultures and nationalism. A Kuala Lumpur-based rock band went even further, renaming itself Milo Dinosaur.

Milo Dinosaur’s popularity can ultimately be traced back to Milo itself. Promoted in Malaya since the 1930s as a hygienic, nourishing, yet relatively affordable beverage, Milo insinuated itself into breakfast and night-time routines for time-scarce families. Cups of chilled Milo from roving Milo Vans remain a fond childhood memory for many. With each successive generation, Milo-drinking increasingly brought people together through space and time.

Milo’s image, however, is increasingly marred by biological and health concerns. Roughly one-eighth of Milo consists of lactose, limiting its consumption by lactose-intolerant individuals. In Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and beyond, public concerns about rising levels of diabetes and obesity have helped stigmatize Milo and other sugary drinks. It is perhaps for these reasons that Milo Dinosaur’s main clientele have been Asian youth, who sometimes still produce the enzyme needed to digest lactose in large amounts, and are probably less restrained in their consumption of sweetened beverages than grownups. Rather than dwell on its unhealthy physical effects, fans of Milo Dinosaur can take comfort from its more palliative qualities. Eating and drinking remain unrivalled ways to socialize, celebrate, reminisce, and escape the drudgery of everyday life, not least during these coronavirus-laden times.

Geoffrey K. Pakiam is a Fellow in the Southeast Asian National Heritage Research Grant of the National Heritage Board, Singapore. The author would like to thank Taha Abdul Wahed and Gayathrii Nathan for their research assistance. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Heritage Board.

Notes
1 Interview with Kun Chien Wen, 29 August 2019.
2 Down Lim, ‘Braving Milo and the Beast’., The Straits Times, 1 May 2006.
Translation is not merely a form of intercultural communication, it is a cultural encounter between two different worlds. The process of translation opens up an arena in which conceptual boundaries are expanded, meanings are contested, and power conflicts emerge. In this issue of News from Northeast Asia we examine how the act of translation can also shed light on the nature of the relationship between the countries in which the original and translated texts were produced.

As Hong Kong’s Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement in 2019 and the world’s attention, reports that the citizens of Hong Kong had sung “March for the Beloved”, South Korea’s representative grassroots and emerging song, led some to ponder upon the influence of Korea’s democracy movement on these demonstrations. Yet cultural exchange and practice should not be regarded as one-way phenomena; they are lifestyles constructed and modified according to their needs by various organizations and activists over a long time of solidarity and cross-reference. Indeed, “March for the Beloved”, recognized since the 1980s as a key cultural text symbolizing Korea’s democracy movement, had already become Asia’s “the transnational”, transcending time and space to be sung throughout Asia, in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Cambodia, and Malaysia. In China, the socialist state that has turned into ‘the world’s factory’, the active high concentration of workers reside. This organization and activism, which began in 2002, aims to build a commune that seeks “the construction of New Workers group culture, various educational activities, and the possibilities of community economy and solidarity”. Members have been developing an alternative cultural movement based on the realistic lives and needs of workers, under the following recognition: “Without our culture, our history is lost, and without our history, our future is lost.” This organization is headed by Liu Jianzhou, who first heard ‘March for the Beloved’ in 2005 and was so impressed that he adapted it into “Song of Praise for Workers” to encourage workers. The song gained popularity during the ‘New Workers Culture and Arts Festival’ celebrating the new year in 2012 and subsequently became the most popular among Chinese labor activism organizations and activists. Another legacy of Korean political and labor activism that spread throughout Asia is the Biography of Chun Tae-il (written by Cho Youngae in 1983). Recording the life and struggle of Chun Tae-il, an icon and martyr of the Korean labor movement who self-immolated in 1970 for the improvement of the poor working conditions, crying “Workers are not machines” and “Abide by the Labor Standards Act”, this book was translated into English in 2003 as A Single Spark. It has since come to be read in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Mongolia. It became a must-read text for Chinese labor organizations and activists following the publication in 2012 of the Chinese translation by Liu Jianzhou, A Single Spark: Biography of Chun Tae-il. Lü Tu, an expert in developmental sociology, who studied at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, was once a university professor in China, and now lives with workers at the Beijing Migrant Workers’ Home carrying out research, education and community activities, confesses that she felt an indescribable range of emotions after reading the biography. As she says, in the lives and struggles of China’s New Workers, it is possible to observe that the ‘Spirit of Chun Tae-il’ lives on, beyond borders and language barriers, in the hearts of people who respect the value of life. It should be noted that the experience and culture of Korean labor activism has not stopped at merely being accepted in China but, through the Chinese New Workers, it has evolved and become disseminated within Korea. All three books of Lü Tu on the Chinese New Workers have been translated into Korean. Among those, The Formation of Chinese New Workers and The Future of Chinese New Workers, for which the author of this piece served as the main translator, calls for the establishment of subjectivity in the New Workers as both individuals and groups through the analysis of the social structure that those workers are situated in, as well as their ‘life stories’. Moreover, We Are Justified (the Korean translation published in 2020) presents a detailed examination of the lives, work, and struggles of Chinese female workers. The fact that this book was published as part of the ‘Joint Publication Project Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Chun Tae-il’s Death’, which was planned by the Chun Tae-il Foundation and eleven Korean publishing companies for the continuation of Chun Tae-il’s spirit in the present age, is significant indeed.

In this sense, translation does not stop at the transferring of print from one country to another, but is a kind of cultural exchange that calls for the exchange of thoughts and experiences as a mediator of conversations and encounters. Thus the encounter of Chun Tae-il and Chinese New Workers through translation becomes a sign that promotes solidarity and cultural exchange of Asian workers, transcending industry types, regions, genders, generations, and borders. This was the true meaning of what Lü Tu said to this author during her visit to Korea in 2019: “Your paying attention to the realities and future of Chinese New Workers is paying attention to the fate of the world’s workers, and that is the reason why I am interested in the life and death of Chun Tae-il.” The encounter of Chun Tae-il and the Chinese New Workers continues strong into the present day. In 2020, Sun Heng and Lü Tu came together to compose the song ‘Brilliant Spark’ in commemoration of Chun Tae-il, a video of which was screened during the closing ceremony of East Asia People Theater Festival, held in 2020 in Korea to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Chun Tae-il’s death.

Notes
1 See, for example, Raymond Williams’ assertion that culture is ‘a whole way of life’, in: Williams, D. 1958. Work and Society, Chatto & Windus.
2 https://tinyurl.com/BrilliantSpark-ChunTae-il
The translation and cultural exchange of the Japanese classic Genjimonogatari

Nihei Michiaki

Translation entails the transmission of a text not only into a different language but also into a different cultural and historical context. Such things as a ‘perfect translation’ is possible. Furthermore, when the text to be translated is a work of foreign literature, it was written in an archaic rather than modern language, it would be needless to say as how its translation would be difficult and limited. It could be said that Genjimonogatari (The Tale of Genji), a fifty-four volume work written one thousand years ago, by the Japanese female author Murasaki Shikibu, has joined the pantheon of ‘world literature’ not only due to the masterful nature of the work itself but also because so many people from different countries and regions have dedicated themselves to the difficult task of translating this classic. The following overview of the major translations of Genjimonogatari published in Northeast Asia including China, Taiwan, and Korea, well illustrates the significance of ‘translation’ as a form of cultural exchange.

The Chinese and Korean translations of Genjimonogatari had initially been based on modern Japanese translations, rather than the original 11th century text. Genjimonogatari was written using the language and rhetoric of the Heian period and therefore the interpretation of many passages remains a contested issue among Japanese scholars. As such, it is not surprising that the earliest translations, which had taken place before the scholarship of Japanese classics had been well established in China and Korea, had relied on modern Japanese translations published in Japan.

In China, the translation of the first volume of Genjimonogatari, ‘Kiritsubo’, was published in a magazine as early as 1957, by Qian Daosun who, during his adolescence in Japan, had been educated in Japanese classic literature. Some say that this translation was based on the original text, but it seems more likely that annotations featured in the modern translations of the text had been referenced. The Chinese artist and cartoonist Feng Zikai, who had studied briefly in Japan, began to translate all volumes of Genjimonogatari over a half years, starting in 1961. His translation was published in three volumes between 1980-1983, after the Cultural Revolution and his subsequent death. This first full Chinese translation of Genjimonogatari was based on the modern translations of Yosano Akiko and Tanizaki Junichiro, as well as other Japanese translators, but remains greatly influential since it is easy to read and continues to be published by several companies. Most of the Chinese publications of Genjimonogatari in China have directly utilized Feng’s translation.

In Taiwan, an outstanding Chinese translation of Genjimonogatari based on the original text was undertaken by Lin Wenyou, a scholar of Chinese–Japanese comparative literature and Chinese literature. The translation was first serially published in a magazine from 1973 to 1978; the full translation first published in five volumes and then the revised edition in two volumes. Lin Wenyou’s education until early adulthood had taken place in Shanghai’s Japanese concession, and she later engaged in research at Kyoto University. Lin was knowledgeable in the interpretations of the original text, the modern translations of Yosano Akiko and Tanizaki Junichiro, and the English translations of F. L. Coolidge. However, her translation of the original text was based on her own interpretations and the style is in keeping with the refined atmosphere of the original text. Lin’s translation was highly regarded, even in China, and came to be published in simplified Chinese. Due to this achievement, Lin Wenyou was awarded the Japan Research Achievement Award in 2013 as the only Asian awardee.

The Chinese and Taiwanese translators were aided by the fact that Genjimonogatari had been influenced by Chinese literature and historical texts; translating into Korean, however, was inevitably more difficult. In addition to a general understanding of Genjimonogatari, an understanding of the background, institutions, and history that gave rise to the work, as well as an in-depth knowledge of the language and culture of the Heian period are required for Korean translators. Unfortunately, such knowledge and understanding was lacking in the earliest Korean translations of the original text, carried out by Yoo Jeong in 1973 and Jeon Yongshin in 1999. Fortunately, the 21st century has witnessed the publication of Korean translations based on the original text that have been written by researchers of Genjimonogatari. In 2008, a high-quality abridged translation of all volumes of Genjimonogatari was published by Kim Jongduck, the leading researcher in South Korea on this classic. Lee Milsuk, who has published a research monograph on Genjimonogatari in Japan, also began to translate the work in 2014. Her translation is based on an interpretation of the original text and various commentaries and two of six volumes have been published by SNU Press to present. The complete Korean translation of Genjimonogatari by a researcher of the work will hopefully be accomplished in the near future.

It would be wrong, however, to expect the above mentioned ‘outstanding translations’ to be ‘perfect translations’. A ‘perfect translation’ simply cannot exist. As an act of transferring a text into another language based in a different culture and with a different history, cannot inevitably only exist as a fusion of cultures. In its original form, ‘translation’ is above all cultural exchange.

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Aspects of Japanese publication translations in Simmunkwon’s magazines

Tomoko Mikea

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immunkwon (新文園) was a publishing company established in Seoul in 1908 by Choe Nam-seon (1890-1957), one of the key intellectuals of Korea. It grew to become one of the largest publishing houses of Korea (少年, November 1908 – May 1910), considered to be the first modern magazine, and Cheongchun (青春, October 1914 – September 1918), a comprehensive cultural magazine that was popular in the 1910s. Featured in these two Korean magazines were numerous translations of Japanese publications. An analysis of these translations sheds light on the nature of Simmunkwon’s relationship with the time with the Japanese publishing sector.

In Simmunkwon, many of the Korean translations of western works were based upon the Japanese translations of the original texts. Key characteristics of the Korean translations featured in Simmunkwon are the addition of explanatory comments and the tailoring of expressions for the Korean audience. For example, Choe Nam-seon added explanations about historical figures (such as the Macedonian King Alexander, the philosopher Francis Bacon), as well as on western concepts such as ‘materialism’ and ‘the Reverend’. In addition, he paraphrased ‘exemplary man’ into yangban (양반) with the records of his trials. As the oppression of Kim Ji Ha intensified in Korea, the power of loyalism grew so that the translation may be understood within the Korean cultural context.

Another characteristic feature of the translations in Simmunkwon is the revision of the text so that ‘boys’ – the magazine’s readership (sonyeon means ‘boy’ in Korean) – are addressed directly and the expectations for these ‘boys’ are clearly expressed. One example would be the addition of the following sentence at the end of the article ‘The Youth of Edison, the King of Electricity’ published by Hakubunkan (博文館, 中學世界) and Chugaku Sekai (中学世界) magazines produced by his publication house, so as to express an expectation for these ‘boys’: ‘We wish to know what kinds of trees and eggs of invention are being prepared and hatched in the future in Korea’ (新大韓, 1910) (left) and Cheongchun, 1914 (right) (published in October 1914) (right). In this case (and other similar cases), the article itself was not translated but the illustrations or illustrations of Japanese texts regarding world topics or events were referenced. Images of the original articles scanned by the author.

Across the Korea Strait and the Yellow Sea. Kim Ji Ha in the 1970s

Moon-seok Jang

Kim Ji Ha was a poet who resisted Park Chung-hee’s regime of developmental dictatorship in 1970s Korea. In 1970, he published a poem that criticized the military dictatorship and the Korean government imprisoned him under the outrageous claim that he had violated the Anticomunist Law. After being released, Kim Ji Ha published another poem that sang of democracy, and soon returned to prison. His life in the 1970s was a cycle of imprisonment, release, escape, and arrest, and he was not able to publish his work in Korea until 1982.

When Kim Ji Ha was sentenced to death in 1979, Japanese and Korean publications staged a hunger strike, and approximately a thousand Japanese citizens protested in front of the Korean Embassy and other international missions in South Korea. Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Howard Zinn, Edwin Reischauer and others participated in the International Committee to Support Kim Ji Ha, following the suggestion of Oda Makoto and Tsunami Shunsuke. In June of 1979, Kim Ji Ha was awarded the Lotus Prize for Literature from the Afro-Asian Writers’ Association as a writer of ‘free world’ country; this was also due to the help of the Japanese literati. As a result of the solidarity and attention of Japanese citizens, the complete collection of Kim Ji Ha’s works was published in Korean and Japanese in 1975 and 1976, respectively. Given that the publication of Kim Ji Ha’s works had been prohibited in Korea, their publication in Japan as a result of the solidarity of Japanese citizens became a huge international incident.

Some unexpected problems arose, however, in the process. As Kim Ji Ha – the ‘resistance poet’ of the former colonial – was being helped by the citizens of the former colonial empire, Japan, for over ten years, a ‘relationship of aid’ became fossilized. While the stereotypes of Korea as an underdeveloped country of dictatorship, Japan as a country helping the oppressed resistance poet, came to be reproduced, Kim Ji Ha’s literary themes of criticizing colonialism were no longer given due attention. Despite the fact that so many of Kim Ji Ha’s works had been published in Japan, it was only the sentiment that ‘Kim Ji Ha must be helped’ which flourished. The self-reflexive question ‘Why should I read Kim Ji Ha now?’ was omitted.

The paraphrasing of expressions to align with Korean culture or the presentation of Korea as the ‘subject’ through the replacement of terms can also be observed in the children’s magazines published by Simmunkwon. The final publication of Cheongchun and the first issue of Cheongchun, as well as Bulgu Haram (부글한함), Kojang (코장) and Saebeyeo (세배예), for instance, 大須賀 (Tano-san) from the original text is translated as ‘friend’ and the above names as ‘buddy’ instead of Jōdōhan ( 조도한) for ‘automobile’. Indeed, Choe Nam-seon urges the readers of Aideulboi to ‘make sure to write in Korean’ for correspondence. The creation of Korean expressions in the process of translation went hand in hand with him attempting to preserve a pure version of the Korean language that did not depend on Chinese characters.

As the translations of Japanese publications of various Japanese publications and the publication of these translations in the magazines produced by his publication house, Simmunkwon, illustraties, ‘translation’ was not merely the act of transferring a text from one language to another, but also involved active attempts to enlighten the people or to preserve culture.

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The Chinese magazine World Literature also included a translation of Kim Ji Ha’s works in June 1979, in this case in association with the novel El Señor Presidente by Miguel Ángel Asturias and the poet César Aira. Both Kim Ji Ha and Asturias’ works shared the themes of dictatorship and resistance, allowing the readers to read the two together in order to grasp the universality and specificity of dictatorship in underdeveloped countries from a new perspective. In this case, the Japanese publication of Kim Ji Ha’s works illustrates the fact that reading East Asian literature alongside Central European literature can expand the possibility of imagining world literature in a new way. Yet, it should be noted that the Chinese translation did not only use Kim Ji Ha’s original Korean works but also the versions that had been published in Japan. This shows how Japanese, the language of the former colonial empire, continued to play the role as a mediator in the process of East Asian communication, even in the Cold War era.

Kim Ji Ha’s work was prohibited in Japan due to imprisonment and dictatorship oppression. However, translated into Japanese and Chinese, his works were able to travel. The crossings of borders demonstrated by Kim Ji Ha’s works leaves us to question the task of solidifying the identity of East Asian citizens and the conditions for such solidarity. It also opens the door to imagining world literature in a new way and the possibilities of this endeavor.

Moon-seok Jang, Assistant Professor, Department of Korean Language and Literature, Kyung Hee University mjjang@khu.ac.kr
Apply for the position of ‘Chair in Chinese Culture and Institutions’

The University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences invites applications for the position of C. Maxwell and Elizabeth M. Stanley Family and Hua Hsia Chair in Chinese Culture and Institutions. The successful candidate will be appointed as a full professor with tenure to commence in August 2022. The position is an endowed chair with a reduced teaching load and a research fund. The chair will also hold a 0% appointment in International Programs and is expected to be an active participant in the activities of the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies.

**Education Requirement:** PhD in Chinese Studies or an equivalent field in hand by the start date.

**Required Qualifications:** Applicants must be internationally recognized scholars of Chinese studies, demonstratable by a distinguished record of scholarly publications, teaching, mentoring, and taking on leadership roles in administration, possess a native or near native fluency of the English language and standard Mandarin and may come from any disciplinary background in the humanities or social sciences.

**Desirable Qualifications:** Experience in joint research either inter-disciplinary or supra-nationally is highly desired and fluency in other languages and/or Chinese dialects.

Review of applicants will begin September 15, 2021

For more information and to start the Online Application process for this position, please go to [https://jobs.uiowa.edu/faculty/view/74096](https://jobs.uiowa.edu/faculty/view/74096) (Requisition #74096)

For more information contact: Alaina R Hanson  
alaina-hanson@uiowa.edu  Phone: +1 319 335 3015
In recent decades, ethnographies of transnational and diasporic migrations have become prominent across the social sciences. Within anthropology, this turn helps address the longstanding privileging of localism in ethnographic research, one that tended to treat categories like ‘culture’ and ‘place’ as static and bounded. The Ends of Kinship builds on this turn, yet in a way that beautifully retains the nuance and texture of one earlier generation of ethnographic writing. The book charts the changing lives of people in (and from) Mustang, a remote district in northern Nepal with close ties to Tibet. Sienna Craig began traveling to Mustang over 25 years ago. Since then, the region has undergone dramatic demographic, ecological, economic, and political shifts. Increased migration – to other sites in Nepal, but also to sites abroad – is both a driver and consequence of such transformations. As applied to together the mundane and metaphysical, two concepts, the ‘khora of migration’ braids samsara the khorwa, the social completion of kinship, the demise of life, and the world at large. The central question of the book is what kind of life does one lead as family members, new norms surrounding marriage and childbirth, a loss of connection to ancestral landscapes, the difficulties of making a living in New York, and the different difficulties of making one in Mustang. In Part III, focused on death, Craig writes of witnessing a village funeral procession: “I cry. Not because I knew this woman. Not because I understand the subtleties of this funerary rite or the complexities of this grandmother’s story. But because the dirges reverberate. They are less encumbered with overladen concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely, the lack of in-text citations and theoretical tangents lets the words breathe and reverberate. They are less encumbered by rigid frameworks, less burdened by overladen concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely.” The book will hold the attention of readers and undergraduates as well. Indeed, Craig has set up a website1 that includes, among other resources, a series of reflective writing exercises, pushing genres and conventions. There might have been, for instance, one book about contemporary Mustang and another about a South Asian diaspora in New York City. Alternatively, there might have been one book of literary fiction and another book of academic ethnography. Undoubtedly, its author has the knowledge, background, and ability to have pulled it off. However, in foregoing such arbitrary divisions, Craig has made a more hybrid, exciting, and true-to-life. As she has made clear, understanding the two main field sites requires understanding them together. They are interfaced through circuits of labor and exchange, of kinship and sociability. To consider them independently would miss something crucial about both. Likewise, placing literary short stories alongside ethnographic nonfiction joins a growing body of work challenging academic writing conventions. There is a beautiful literary quality to all of Craig’s nonfiction chapters, and a keen ethnographic depth to her creative short stories. In other words, but both genres speak to and strengthen each other throughout.

Notes

Pushing genres and conventions
There are at least two possible books contained within The Ends of Kinship. There are as well, for instance, one book about contemporary Mustang and another book about a South Asian diaspora in New York City. Alternatively, there might have been one book of literary fiction and another book of academic ethnography. Undoubtedly, its author has the knowledge, background, and ability to have pulled it off. However, in foregoing such arbitrary divisions, Craig has made a more hybrid, exciting, and true-to-life. As she has made clear, understanding the two main field sites requires understanding them together. They are interfaced through circuits of labor and exchange, of kinship and sociability. To consider them independently would miss something crucial about both. Likewise, placing literary short stories alongside ethnographic nonfiction joins a growing body of work challenging academic writing conventions. There is a beautiful literary quality to all of Craig’s nonfiction chapters, and a keen ethnographic depth to her creative short stories. In other words, but both genres speak to and strengthen each other throughout.

The Ends of Kinship does not delve deeply into contemporary theoretical arguments, and Craig offers only passing glances at extant literature. The literary short stories are the epitome of a Western intellectual cannon. Second, Craig offers only passing glances at the research context itself, meaning that readers may feel disappointed by this. It would have been welcome to see the rich ethnographic content situated more deeply within ongoing scholarly debates. On the other hand, the book’s approach has at least two critical benefits. First, Craig’s twin conceptual pillars (i.e., the ends of kinship and the khora of migration) emerge from the research context itself, meaning that her discussion is less beholden to the terms of a Western intellectual cannon. Second, the lack of in-text citations and theoretical tangents lets the words breathe and reverberate. They are less encumbered by rigid frameworks, less burdened by overladen concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely.

This book will hold the attention of anyone interested in Nepal, migration, or diasporic experiences. It is complex yet accessible, making it suitable for undergraduates as well. Indeed, Craig has set up a website1 that includes, among other resources, a series of reflective writing prompts. As she has made clear, understanding the two main field sites requires understanding them together. The book does include a glossary, Essay on Sources and Methods, and a Bibliography at the end of the book. On the one hand, some readers may feel disappointed by this. It would have been welcome to see the rich ethnographic content situated more deeply within ongoing scholarly debates. On the other hand, the book’s approach has at least two critical benefits. First, Craig’s twin conceptual pillars (i.e., the ends of kinship and the khora of migration) emerge from the research context itself, meaning that her discussion is less beholden to the terms of a Western intellectual cannon. Second, the lack of in-text citations and theoretical tangents lets the words breathe and reverberate. They are less encumbered by rigid frameworks, less burdened by overladen concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely.

The book’s structure echoes the cyclical existence it describes. Its 6 sections masterfully guide readers through different stages of life in Mustang and beyond: pregnancy and birth (Part I), childrearing and education (Part II), livelihood and subsistence (Part III), marriage and gender (Part IV), ecology and place (Part V), and finally death and loss (Part VI). Each of these sections includes one fictional short story and one ethnographic chapter. Those familiar with Craig’s career will know that she has published widely beyond academic formats. In addition to her scholarship, she has also written a children’s book, poetry, the text for a book of artistic photography, and more. In The Ends of Kinship, the line between the creative short stories and the ethnography is always clear, but the nuance, texture, and quality of Craig’s prose shines in both genres. The book is neither a staid academic ethnography nor a self-indulgent literary foray. Craig’s writing is empathetic and poignant, bringing to life the community and characters she describes, whether they are actual friends or fictional inventions.

We are told of new tensions and strains arising from accelerating out-migration: children who cannot speak the same language as family members, new norms surrounding marriage and childbirth, a loss of connection to ancestral landscapes, the difficulties of making a living in New York, and the different difficulties of making one in Mustang. In Part VI, focused on death, Craig writes of witnessing a village funeral procession: “I cry. Not because I knew this woman. Not because I understand the subtleties of this funerary rite or the complexities of this grandmother’s story. But because the dirges reverberate. They are less encumbered with overladen concepts. This allows the writing to resonate more freely.” The book will hold the attention of anyone interested in Nepal, migration, or diasporic experiences. It is complex yet accessible, making it suitable for undergraduates as well. Indeed, Craig has set up a website1 that includes, among other resources, a series of reflective writing prompts.

Writing Himalayan lifeworlds
The book’s structure echoes the cyclical existence it describes. Its 6 sections masterfully guide readers through different stages of life in Mustang and beyond: pregnancy and birth (Part I), childrearing and education (Part II),
Foodways of Macao

Robert Antony

Reviewed title
The Making of Macao’s Cuisine: From Family Table to World Stage

Annabel Jackson. 2020. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789885283497

In recognition of its unique cuisine in 2017, Macao became a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and its cuisine has since entered the world stage.

Fusion cuisine
As Jackson explains, because Macanese food had its origins in the fusion of many diverse cuisines and has continued to evolve over the centuries, it is impossible to pinpoint what exactly constitutes Macanese food. Even within the Macanese community at large, there is little consensus as to what comprises Macanese cuisine. For purists, in fact, it has become a lost art, yet for most ordinary tourists, who want to enjoy a different cuisine, it is simply the food prepared in restaurants in Macao. Indeed, today in most restaurants in Macao, whether categorized as Portuguese or Cantonese, they all include dishes on their menus purporting to be Macanese.

This raises the question of authenticity. What is Macanese cuisine? Is it draws from a myriad of influences? And tourists nowadays eat at home and in restaurants is a far cry from what the people living in Macao ate several centuries ago. People and their tastes have continually changed over the centuries and so have ingredients, flavors, and cooking styles. As the author rightly explains, the nature of Macanese food is adaptation. Cuisines are always evolving. From its origins in the Portuguese colonies, Macao’s early foodways followed the spice trade from Africa to India to Southeast Asia to Macao and Japan. Take the iconic Macanese dish, African Chicken, which was first invented only in the 1950s, believed to have been created by chef America Angelo at the former Pousada de Macao. In its earliest forms, it was blackened and spicy with a marinade of butter, garlic, and chilies, but today, in most versions, it is baked in a tomato and peppery peanut sauce. It is a typical creole dish that combines flavors from Mozambique, Goa, and Southeast Asia.

Macao and what role does food play in their identity? Food is an important cultural marker for most groups of people. To be able to tell a true tale of a group, the author points out, one must have some Portuguese ancestry. Like their cuisine, the Macanese people are an eclectic mixture of different and evolving ethnic groups. At first the Macanese were the offspring of the original male Portuguese settlers and females from their colonies in Mozambique, Goa, and Southeast Asia. Later, in the 20th century, the Neo-Macanese were the progeny of Portuguese or Macanese fathers and Chinese mothers. Thus, in terms of foodways, recipes included a large mixture of different culinary tastes and techniques yet were nonetheless considered Macanese. One can also see that in this time too did the perception of one’s identity.

Interestingly, today there are more people who identify themselves as Macanese. One of the reasons is that the Chinese who live outside Macao than inside the city itself. There is a large Macanese diaspora spread across the globe. As a critical part of the research, Jackson conducted a large number of interviews and surveys of Macanese living in Hong Kong, Europe, North America, and Australia. Because many diasporic Macanese people have a sense of rootlessness, memories of home foods and recipes have become important to them. Today, every Macanese person could be considered a “culinary tourist” in the act, the sharing of recipes and the production of cookbooks have become crucial. As the author explains, the act of creating and sharing recipes has moved away from being everyday food to something more symbolic and ceremonial. How does the authorization of certain foods is as important as the actual foods themselves. At the same time, with the diaspora Macanese cuisine has diffused around the world in trendy ethnic restaurants. For most Macanese both at home and abroad, food is decisively embedded in their notions of identity.

In conclusion, this is a concise and fascinating book on a little-known and often misunderstood cuisine that brings a new interest to anyone wanting to learn about Macao and the dissemination of food culture in general. It is indeed more to Macao than merely casinos and gambling.

Robert Antony, Shandong University, China

Above: Portuguese Custom Term ‘Ilha Macao’. Photo Agency in Dragon Light, Left: Guinea a Africans, African chickens killed to be cooked in India. An under CC license.
Invisibility by design

Sally Tyler

While reading Invisibility by Design for review, I was struck by two news items: 1) Forbes Magazine provoked controversy by downgrading its estimate of Kylie Jenner’s net worth to a scant USD 900 million, rather than the USD 1.7 billion previously reported when the magazine named her the world’s youngest self-made millionaire, and 2) LiSo Su became the first woman to top the S&P 500 list of highest-paid CEO’s.

Whatever the valuation of Jenner’s cosmetics line, launched while she was still a teen, it owes much of its stratospheric success to relentless social media promotion. And, Su, CEO of Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), achieved her compensation milestone at the helm of a corporation which manufacturers semiconductors for use in the digital gaming industry. Clearly, neither occurrence would have happened if not for the digital economy.

Author Gabriella Lukác is likely to characterize both these examples as outliers that do not typify opportunities for women within the digital economy. She uses her fieldwork exploring the experiences of young women in Japan who become digital photographers, net idols, bloggers, online traders and, cell-phone novelists to underscore the futility of the digital economy as a more democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive mode of production.

The growth of Japan’s digital economy in the 1990s through the first decade of the 21st Century paralleled its labor market deregulation and accompanying cultural shift in which rigidly-defined, lifetime employment opportunities were no longer the norm. At the same time, the role of women in Japanese society was rapidly evolving with greater expectation of their labor market participation, without social policies to support it, such as paid family leave and affordable childcare. As such, the development of the digital economy provides a flashpoint ripe for analysis in the context of cultural anthropology, labor, and gender, all of which Lukác does with vangenous success.

Some of the examples Lukác uses to illustrate her thesis that platform owners tap women’s unpaid labor and make it invisible do not serve it well. The work is weighed down by overreliance on disciplinarian jargon that does little to advance her case. She repeatedly asserts that the digital economy offers instances of feminized affective labor, yet occasionally undermines her own argument by allowing that most contemporary work reproduces both affective and intellectual labor and even allows that some aspects of the digital economy reflect forms of reproductive labor. Jargon aside, the type of labor exemplified within the digital economy is less relevant than the question of whether it is labor in the most general sense, as in did the women who undertook the activity have an expectation of earning a living through it? The fields that Lukác examines demonstrate a mixed bag in support.

The chapter on anna no ko shashin, sometimes translated as girl photography, which begins the book, offers a fascinating glimpse into the groundbreaking early digital work of Hiron mi, Minsawa Mik, and Nagashima Yurie. Operating before ubiquitous selfie culture took root, these young women frequently turned their cameras on the details of their everyday lives in a vision that was both artistic and political, declaring in effect that their lives were worth memorializing. While some of the women Lukác interviewed stated a desire to become famous through their photography, none explicitly expressed the goal of using the medium to become wealthy. In fact, she offers salient examples of instances in which they rejected commercial opportunity in order to stay true to their artistic vision. Some of them continued to work in other jobs part-time, even after achieving critical acclaim. Ultimately, their stories are ambiguous and could be used either as an illustration of the inherent limitations of the digital economy or to show that creative labor may embody goals beyond the financial.

Similarly, the chapters on net idols (digital content creators who sought branding opportunity via personal websites), bloggers and cell phone novelists fail to illustrate between motivation such as personal satisfaction, social connectivity, and desire for income. In societies where the views of young women are rarely sought or seriously examined, digital platforms can provide a platform for meaningful work. Illustrated by personal fulfillment, often eluded to by Lukác’s subjects, and the premium placed on work for income. In societies where the views of young women are rarely sought or seriously examined, digital platforms can provide a platform for meaningful work. Illustrated by personal fulfillment, often eluded to by Lukác’s subjects, and the premium placed on work for income. In societies where the views of young women are rarely sought or seriously examined, digital platforms can provide a platform for meaningful work. Illustrated by personal fulfillment, often eluded to by Lukác’s subjects, and the premium placed on work for income.

As digital platforms including Task Rabbit work opportunities in Japan, but ultimately is labor in the most general sense, as in did the women who undertook the activity have an expectation of earning a living through it? The fields that Lukác examines demonstrate a mixed bag in support.

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The chapter on online trading offers the best fit with Lukác’s broader thesis, in that the women who commenced the labor had clear objectives to make money. Although they were swayed by promotion of the digital realm’s capacity as a conduit to wealth through part-time, irregular or amateur work not afforded by the traditional Japanese employment system, it is also the only chapter that illustrates the extent to which platform owners derived profits from workers’ labor, an assertion she makes throughout the book.

And allows us to think about the neoliberal politics of caring (self-) employment, poetics of pleasure and the possibilities of unfolding value as a distributed yet often unacknowledged challenge – urban habitats. Being single gestures towards contexts of respectable economy and precarity at a particular moment and place in time.

How does a single lifestyle correspond with the highly demanding conditions of creative labor in globalizing urban environments? And how does the single woman fit into an Asian realm, particularly a paradoxical presence of Maoist notions of femininity, Confucian values and globalization and consumer-based patrimony of neo-liberal qualities of womanhood. With her book a single women in the creative industries of Shanghai, Chow Yu Fai enriches and expands the slender field of ‘single studies’ and challenges views of privacy that often dominate the debate by proposing an ethics of care. The Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing of Hong Kong Baptist University considers the perspective of journalists, musicians, artists, designers, and writers. Amongst the 25 interlocutors from various age, social and economic backgrounds were interviewed in Shanghai between 2015-17. Chow’s work as an ethnographically delineates how they experience precarity as stigmatization, stress and anxiety, but also nurture liberty, independence and choice. Care is defined as ‘a relational political of care (not to be confused with selfishness), for one’s well-being, agency and aspirations towards success and resources, socially valued, or upper middle class. The author considers intergenerational relations of single woman, how they are formed in the mediated, media-based representation – between glamorization and stigmatization, invisibility and visibility. He also considers the role of the city as a laboratory and catalyst but also a highly competitive and lonely space. The author takes the reader to the various empirical grounds he has defined in the concluding chapters. These provide small details, for vernacular utterances, and the ability to relate this to larger questions, marks the book as engaged and engaging.

But the book is also a remarkable read for its critical recalibration of certain Western-based assumptions of femininity, care and lived experience – that is to say – does not fall into the trap of Asianisms or the expectations of the Global South, and with respect to women. If there is, then much attention is paid to how this ‘abnormal’ lifestyle can be overcome, still pathologizing the single woman as ‘left over’ or off the shelf (self-trading) and ‘selfish’, to be normalized into marriage or at least a heteronormative relationship. But as Georg Simmel’s legacy of the stranger, or Benjamin’s Flaneur, the single (woman) is a fascinating – and urban – phenomenon that emerges almost hundred years later. The growth in online trading in the second half of the 21st Century’s first decade was to some extent consequent upon the Chinese government’s goal to implement an economic transition away from traditional saving to investment, and a new generation of non-threatening, trusted messengers, would become the single woman, ceptor children for this digital economy. A paradoxical presence of Maoist notions of femininity, Confucian values and globalization and consumer-based patrimony of neo-liberal qualities of womanhood. With her book a single women in the creative industries of Shanghai, Chow Yu Fai enriches and expands the slender field of ‘single studies’ and challenges views of privacy that often dominate the debate by proposing an ethics of care. The Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing of Hong Kong Baptist University considers the perspective of journalists, musicians, artists, designers, and writers. Amongst the 25 interlocutors from various age, social and economic backgrounds were interviewed in Shanghai between 2015-17. Chow’s work as an ethnographically delineates how they experience precarity as stigmatization, stress and anxiety, but also nurture liberty, independence and choice. Care is defined as ‘a relational political of care (not to be confused with selfishness), for one’s well-being, agency and aspirations towards success and resources, socially valued, or upper middle class. The author considers intergenerational relations of single woman, how they are formed in the mediated, media-based representation – between glamorization and stigmatization, invisibility and visibility. He also considers the role of the city as a laboratory and catalyst but also a highly competitive and lonely space. The author takes the reader to the various empirical grounds he has defined in the concluding chapters. These provide small details, for vernacular utterances, and the ability to relate this to larger questions, marks the book as engaged and engaging.

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Structure and composition

The book consists of five parts. The first, by the historian Michael Vann and the artist Liz Clarke, is a so-called graphic history: a historical treatise in a visual form consisting of cartoons with supporting texts. It centres on the presentation of the bubonic plague epidemic in French colonial Hanoi in 1902-03, and the French attempts – ‘darkly humorous’ as the jacket promises – to fight urban rats. This part of 122 pages forms almost half the book and is its hard core. The following four parts form a large extent supporting arguments to present history in a visual form. The second part consists of a large number of primary and secondary documents that pertain to different episodes of the French endeavour to govern the Vietnamese and rule the plague. Many of these documents have been translated from the French. Vann wrote subsequently in the third part a useful essay of the various needed contexts in order to understand why the French came at all, what they did in Indo-China, and why things went wrong now and then. This part finalizes with remarks on the character of the bubonic plague epidemic (a pandemic one rather). It originated in 1850s in South China and reached the Southeast Chinese coast and South Asia by the end of the 19th century and struck Hanoi in 1902. The French became notably nervous of an epidemic in Hanoi. A few years before he had come to Hanoi. A few years before he had co-developed a serum against the plague, and in 1902 he advocated successfully the mass killing of rats. The authorities offered a bounty for every dead rat, and later on for every rat tail when the piles of rats waiting to be incinerated became too high, but found subsequently profitable rat-farms around Hanoi. This is presented by the authors as Vann explaining on a blackboard to his students: “the French beauty and the Vietnamese reaction illustrate the economic principle of a ‘converse incentive’”.

Postscript

The Vietnamese were quick in removing the symbols of French colonial rule after their independence. Statues of French heroes were torn down, their street names, etc. were replaced by Vietnamese ones; at least more than a hundred. One street name still has French roots. The Institute of Epidemiology ‘Louis Pasteur’ can be found on nr. 1 Pho Yersin (the street named after the medical doctor who put the authorities on the right track to fight the plague). The Vietnamese have not forgotten his contribution to ‘modernity’ amidst all the folie de grandeur.

Notes

1 I use the word ‘rectangle’ to make a distinction between these background texts and balloons, which show spoken words, in a red balloon frame from Vietnamese words and in a blue one those from the French.
2 It is tempting to compare the happy rats in the sewers with the flâneurs along the Paris boulevards and subsequently those among the boulevards and cafés of the colonial district of Hanoi, which appear frequently in the book of Vann and Clarke, even a reminder of Yves Montand’s famous song: ‘j’aime flâner sur les grands boulevards’, etc., is hard to avoid.
3 A competing claim for the identification of an effective serum against the plague was developed by the Japanese physician Kitasato Shibasaburo.
4 The administrative processing of all these rats and tails triggered actually Vann to explore this episode in the French colonial history (see above).
Shane J. Barter (Soka University of America) has a continued interest in experiential education, combining interactive teaching with student field experience. He has mentored several of his students in reviews for newbooks.asia: some of the rich results can be read here.

F or political scientists, China is an important area of study, and the authors present a thought-provoking approach. In Chapter Seven, Heilmann and his colleagues present a thought-provoking discussion of the implications that Xi’s consolidation of power may have for the sustainability of China’s political system, as it may be less able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Potential critiques

Despite our enthusiasm, we would like to raise some potential critiques. For one, in the book’s encyclopedic approach, it sometimes reads like a reference volume. There is limited engagement with major concepts or academic debates surrounding China, as the emphasis is more on painting a thorough, somewhat descriptive portrait. Another potential critique is that, in an effort to provide a neutral, diplomatic account of Chinese politics, the authors may have acquiesced too much. Regarding the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, the authors observe a ‘lack of journalistic distance’ by the West (p. 97), noting that many Hong Kong residents felt the protesters’ criticisms of Beijing to be excessive. Regarding Tibet, the authors note that China justifies its claim due to the fact that the region has been an inseparable part of China since … the thirteenth century (p. 289). For some, this tone will be refreshing. For others, however, it may be seen as pro-government.

For students of Comparative Politics, Japan stands out as a fascinating case. It is one of Asia’s few liberal democracies, although one with little turnover in government. Japanese politics have been overshadowed by ever-increasing concentrations of power in the hands of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), whose dominance and ability to recapture power have been extraordinary.

Kōji Nakakita’s The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan: The Realities of ‘Power’ provides readers with an authoritative guide to the LDP’s inner workings and evolution. Nakakita is a renowned expert of Japanese politics, authoring many books and articles. Already a highly popular book in Japan, the English translation was provided by Stephen Johnson, who is to be commended for such a readable translation of a complex work.

Explaining political dominance in Japan

Reviewed title

The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan: The Realities of ‘Power’


ISBN 9781138303931
Familiar Properties

Vo Thanh Tran

Soka University of America


Reviewed title

Familial Properties: Gender, State, and Society in Early Modern Vietnam, 1463-1778

Nhung Tuyet Tran. 2018.


New Books in Asian Studies


The Review

5

to the decline of factions and the rise of party leadership. Chapter Four focuses on national electoral politics, using quantitative electoral and spending data to provide a more empirical analysis of party recruitment. Chapter Five explores party strategy, including policies refusing to allow married politicians to run, contributing towards an understanding of state-party relations. The book concludes with a detailed analysis of the LDP's electoral performance in the 2000s and its implications for the party's future.

Possible critiques

All told, Familiar Properties is an impressive achievement. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the LDP's role in Japanese politics and offers insights into the party's future. However, there are a few limitations to the book. For one thing, the focus on the LDP may obscure the role of other political parties in Japanese politics. Additionally, the book's treatment of international politics is limited, focusing on Japan's domestic political landscape.

Conclusions

Overall, Familiar Properties is a valuable addition to the literature on Japanese politics. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the LDP's role in domestic and international politics, offering insights into the party's future. It is highly recommended for students and scholars interested in Japanese politics.
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Roos Gerritsen. (2019). Intimate Visualities and the Politics of Fandom in India Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
ISBN 9789462985230
https://newbooks.asia/review/fandom-india

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Alexandra Green. 2018. Buddhist Visual Cultures, Rhetoric, and Narrative in Late Burmese Wall Paintings Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789883900885
https://newbooks.asia/review/buddhist-visual-cultures

‘The editors have been successful in compiling a compelling cluster of cases on some of the most pressing concerns for Asian urbanisation in the 21st century’
— Anubhav Pradhan
ISBN 9789463728812
https://newbooks.asia/review/future-challenges-cities-asia

‘Unlike other anthologies related to Japanese Cinema, this book avoids an excessive focus on the very well-known … to concentrate instead on transversal and transdisciplinary approaches on national identity, cultural industries and globalisation’
— Yves Laberge
ISBN: 9780199731664
https://newbooks.asia/review/japanese-cinema

‘The book brings together stories about disparate language groups and peoples in a new way of thinking about belonging in Sri Lanka’
— Farzana Haniffa
ISBN 9781108432724
https://newbooks.asia/review/banishment-belonging

‘An ethnographic look at how Filipino call center agents work around a job’s possibilities produced by its contradictions and complexities’
— Lorna Q. Israel
ISBN 9780822370598
https://newbooks.asia/review/nation-line

‘Nuanced yet detailed exposition of the political dynamics in one of the most hotly contested maritime regions in the world’
— Benjamin Tze Ern Ho
Daniel C. O’Neill. 2018. Dividing ASEAN and Conquering the South China Sea: China’s Financial Power Projection Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789888559164
https://newbooks.asia/review/china-financial-muscle
‘Offers fresh methods and approaches to study Indian politics’ – Mithilesh Kumar Jha


Visit newbooks.asia to browse the newest titles in the field of Asian studies. If you would like to review any of the available titles, of which you will find a selection below, please submit a review request through the website or send an email to our editor at newbooksasia@iias.nl.
Online resources for Asia scholars

Sonja Zweegers and Alessandra Barrow

During the past year not one of us has escaped the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; we were forced indoors, sequestered to our ‘home offices’ in order to work. Those of you used to being out in the field, roaming the earth, looking for the next research adventure, have now had to make do with Zoom meetings and Facebook groups and archival browsing. Those of us more accustomed to working out of a university building, chatting to colleagues during coffee breaks, and suffering our daily commutes, well, we too have now learned all about online meeting etiquette, and probably failing quite splendidly. The online world has become all too familiar to each and every one of us. And so, for this issue of The Newsletter, not a Focus section as you know it. Something a little bit different, designed specifically for the time in which we find ourselves: an exploration of online resources that may assist (or at least entertain) the Asia scholar.

To accomplish this, I reached out to IIAS alumni and fellows, and other friends made during the past 10 years as Editor of this publication. Their (your) input led to the compilation of useful spaces with regard to Asia presented on the following pages. Whilst this list is far from comprehensive, and some regions are more widely represented than others, we intend it to be a valuable start to a collection that we will continue to build upon on the IIAS website; hopefully with your help. The list is gathered by resource type, but we have tried, where possible and if relevant, to indicate to which region the resource most relates.

Throughout the collection we have added tidbits from the websites mentioned to provide some enjoyable reading in addition to the more practical information. Finally, the pages of this Focus (and other sections in this issue) were assembled with the outstanding help of Alessandra Barrow, IIAS intern for the past few months. Alessandra is currently completing the Research Master in Asian Studies at Leiden University. I am extremely grateful to have received her assistance for this issue, especially at a time when we all might be feeling rather disconnected. Let that be a reminder to reach out and work together! And with that in mind, if you know of any online resources that you would like to see added to this list, which we will be continuing to curate on our website, then please contact me with your ideas. You can find the ever-expanding list at www.iias.asia/resources.

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Key used throughout this section:
- CA Central Asia
- SA South Asia
- SEA Southeast Asia
- EA East Asia
- MENA Middle East and North Africa
Digital collections, databases, and archives

Appraising Risk [EA, SEA]
This is a historical database of climatic crisis in the Indian Ocean World. On this site, you can access articles, relevant maps, and visualizations. The Appraising Risk Partnership is an international collaboration of scholars and researchers dedicated to exploring the critical role of climatic crisis in the past and future of the Indian Ocean World. The partnership seeks to create a comprehensive spatial and temporal database of human-environment interaction and interdependence during periods of climatic change.

https://www.appraisingrisk.com

Archive of India Music [EA]
This site is a repositary of gramophone recordings of India set up in collaboration with the Manipal University's MCPF (Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities). If you wish to listen to the clips you may need to contact the archive directly.

http://archives.indiamusic.org

The Archive of the Institute for Taiwan History (ITH, Academia Sinica) [EA]
This website was launched in 2008. It stores personal papers and collections, family and folk papers and institutional archives that have been collected in the Archives of ITH for more than 20 years. The website can be accessed in Chinese and English.

https://archives.ith.sinica.edu.tw

Archipelagos [CA, SA, SEA, MENA]
This website is a resource focused on the Built environment of Muslim societies. Including architecture, urbanism, environmental and landscape design, visual culture, and conservation issues. It has a range of collections and books, city records, maps, architecture plans and the like.

http://archipelagos.org

ARTstor
The Artstor Digital Library features a wide range of multidisciplinary content from some of the world's top museums, artists, libraries, scholars, and photo archives, including rare collections not accessible anywhere else. New contributions are added regularly. The Artstor Digital Library provides straightforward access to curated images from reliable sources that have been rights-cleared for use in education and research. You are free to use them in classroom instruction and handouts, presentations, student assignments, and other non-commercial educational and scholarly activities. Artstor images come with high-quality metadata from the collection catalogues, curators, institutions, and artists themselves. Much of the site will require a subscription, but check to see if your institution/library can grant you access. In addition, Artstor’s ever-growing Public Collections offer approximately 1.3 million freely accessible images, videos, documents, and audio files from library special collections, faculty research, and institutional history materials, as well as hundreds of thousands of open access images from partner museums. Anyone may view and download these collections; no subscription or login required.

https://www.artstor.org

Asia Art Archive [EA, SA, SEA]
Based in Hong Kong, Asia Art Archive is a catalyst for new ideas that enrich our understanding of the world through the collection, creation, and sharing of knowledge around recent art in Asia. This website hosts online modern Asian art and archives. It includes a range of articles and opinion pieces relating to modern art in East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia.

https://www.aaa.org.hk/en

Atlas of Mutual Heritage [SEA]
This website hosts an incredible database and atlas of information, maps, drawings, prints and paintings of locations significant to the Dutch VOC (East Indies Company) and WIC (Dutch West India Company).

https://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl

Base Ulysses [EA]
This is an online digital archive of the National Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence. It contains over 45,000 individual photographs, albums, postcards, posten, drawings and maps documenting aspects of the French colonial empire.

http://soap.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ulysses

Bichitra: Online Tagore Variorum [EA]
This resource contains nearly all of Tagore’s writings in Bengali and English, and the search engine allows you to locate any word or phrase used in his works.

http://bichitra.pubuc.org.in/index.php

Biodiversity Heritage Library
Not Asia-specific, this site is the largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives including books on plant taxonomy and natural history texts. Most of the collection is public domain content but the BHL works with rights holders to obtain permission to make in-copyright materials openly available under Creative Commons licenses. The library has texts from 1450s to 2000s.

https://about.biodiversitylibrary.org

The Database of Religious History: Pre-Buddhist cults

Entry by Anna Sehnalova
Across the large geographical space of the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalayas, cultures and societies of speakers of Tibetan and Khalkhaic languages share certain religious notions and similar ritual practices which do not derive from Buddhism or Yungdrung Bön (gYung drung Bon) but rather relate to local natural environments and social structures. Being very variable and difficult to subsume under one term, these localised religious cults have been called ‘popular’ (Ball 1931), ‘nameless’ (Stein 1972), ‘folk’ (Toral 1990), often also ‘shamanism’ or ‘bön’ (bon), and in specific cases ‘pagan’ (Kababie 2008) and ‘mumandie’ (Huber 2020). They are concerned with mundane aims of well-being and prosperity, fecundity and progeniture, health, protection and warfare, and general worldly success; not with soteriology. They most likely represent indigenous, pre-Buddhist cults of Tibet and the Himalayas. Find full entry at:

https://tibetandhimalayadatabase.org/browse/PN3
British Empire and Commonwealth Collection

This unique resource includes objects, artworks, photographs, films, papers and sound archives. These were donated by British people who lived and worked in many parts of the former empire and Commonwealth and reflect their occupations and interests.

https://becc.bristol.gov.uk

Chinese Text Project

This website is an open-access digital library of pre-modern Chinese texts. With over thirty thousand titles and more than five million characters, the Chinese Text Project is also the largest database of pre-modern Chinese texts in existence.

https://ccht.org

Cologne Digital Sanskrit Dictionaries

This website hosts lexicographical material for Indologists including dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

https://sanskrit-lxелicen.uni-koeln.de

The Database of Religious History

This is an excellent resource for anyone studying the history of religion. The website hosts a large database where you can search by region, for specific religions or researchers. It also includes an interactive map, breakdown of beliefs and practices and sources.

https://religiondatabase.org

Delpher

This is a Dutch-language site that has digitised millions of texts from scientific, library and private collections. The sources are books, newspapers, journals, magazines, radio bulletins. Most relevant for this list is that the site also has a large selection of sources from the Netherlands Indies.

https://www.delpher.nl

The East Asia Image Collection

An open-access archive of digitised photographs, negatives, postcards, rare books and slides, hosted at Lafayetts College.


East Asian Scroll Paintings

This website is devoted to digitizing East Asian scroll paintings. In collaboration with a number of museums including the Tokyo national museum and the Beijing Palace Museum, here you can search for specific paintings, artists, theme, period or museum.

https://scrolls.uchicago.edu

Filipinas Heritage Library

As a one-stop digital research centre on the Philippines, its mission is to spark and stoke interest in the visual, aural, and printed story of the Filipino. The website hosts a large collection of sources focused on the formative period of Philippine nationhood (1930-1950s).

https://www.filipinaslibrary.org.ph

Hathi Trust Digital Library

The Hathi trust is a not-for-profit collaborative of academic and research libraries, based in the USA which began in 2008. So far, they have preserved 17 million digitized items. The library is focused on books, journals and long-form texts and includes a substantial collection of US-Asia and Asia related texts.

https://www.hathitrust.org

KITLV Digital Resources

The Royal Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) has entrusted the care of its world-famous collections to Leiden University Library, which makes it an invaluable repository. The resources include, among others, the Digital Media Library, the Chinese Indonessian Heritage Center project, and the Aceh Books collection.

https://www.kitlv.nl/resources

Indiacine.moe

An annotated online archive of Indian film. It is intended to serve as a shared resource for film scholars and enthusiasts in India and beyond.

https://indiacine.moe

The International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online

IDP is a ground-breaking international collaboration to make information and images of all manuscripts, paintings, textiles and artifacts from Dunhuang and archaeological sites of the Eastern Silk Road freely available on the Internet and to encourage their use through educational and research programmes.

http://idp.bl.uk

The Internet Archive

A database of sources not covered by copyright. The Internet Archive is building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, it provides free access to researchers, historians, scholars, the print disabled, and the general public. Its mission is to provide ‘Universal Access to All Knowledge’. Anyone with a free account can access nearly 500 billion web pages, 28 million books and other texts, 1 million audio recordings, 6 million videos, 3.5 million images and over a million software programmes.

https://archive.org

The 'Historical Photographs of China' Project

The project locates, digitises, and publishes online photographs of China held, largely, in private hands outside the country. The aim is to help make this virtual photographic archive of modern China publicly available, under a Creative Commons licence.

https://www.hpcbristol.net
The Loewentheil Photography of China Collection [EA]
This is the largest collection of early photography of China in the world. These include a large collection of historical photographs taken Beijing and Shanghai taken from the 1850s through the 1930s, photographs taken Beijing and Shanghai photography of China in the world. These narratives of tradition, culture and society of their collection. By tracing histories of objects on posts from contributors from all over the world and to facilitate researchers to perform inter-linked exploration from multiple sources.
https://ndl.iikkp.ac.in

New Silk Road (NSR) at IIAS [SA]
Based at IIAS in Leiden, the New Silk Road project is dedicated to promoting evidence research and education on national and international efforts to improve the infrastructure and connectivity among the countries of Asia and Europe. It brings together over 750 teachers and researchers from a wide range of disciplines and working in over 80 countries. Membership is open to all.

The site hosts eight different e-libraries, educational resources, with articles and news related to China’s BRI, Youtube lectures and podcasts.

http://newslknroad.info

The Open Heritage 3D Project [DA] [SA] [EA]
As 3D data capture becomes an increasingly common method for the documentation of cultural heritage there has emerged a growing need to assist with the distribution and open access of this growing library of 3D data while maintaining scientific rigor, respecting cultural and ethical sensibilities, enhancing discoverability, and addressing data longevity and archival standards. In response to these areas of need, the Open Heritage 3D project was developed to make primary 3D cultural heritage data open and accessible and remove the barriers for content producers to publish their data.

https://openheritage3d.org

The Panjab Digital Library [SA]
This digital archive holds sources relating to the Punjab area and Sikhs, including manuscripts, books, magazines, newspapers, photographs and pamphlets. Some of the resources are limited to specific organisations and registered users, registration is free.

http://www.panjabdigitlib.org

The 1947 Partition Archive [DA]
What began as an idea in 2008 to acknowledge and popularize the people’s history of Partition has been accomplished through the founding and building of ‘The 1947 Partition Archive’, which has preserved nearly 9,500 memories of Partition witnesses.

Through the sharing of thousands of witness accounts millions of times over the last decade, the ‘people’s history’ of Partition has been established and is now a growing and active area of research as well as new documentation efforts.

https://www.1947partitionarchive.org

People’s Archive of Rural India [SA]
PARI is a living journal and an archive, and they are currently creating a database of published stories, reports, videos and audio recordings. In addition, PARI hosts video, photo, audio and text archives on rural India. PARI’s content comes under the Creative Commons and the site is free to access. PARI is also open to new contributors to write and record.

https://ruralindiaonline.in/en

Philippine E-Journals [SA]
This is an online collection of academic publications from various higher education institutions and professional organisations. The database allows users to easily locate abstracts, full journal articles, and research materials.
https://ejournals.ph

PressReader.com
Not Asia specific, but with a subscription to this all-you-can-read service you will gain access to thousands of newspapers and magazines from more than 120 countries. PressReader’s proprietary technology makes it possible to process thousands of newspapers every single day, extracting text and images and making articles instantly translatable, searchable, and easy to read on mobile devices. Many libraries across the globe have a subscription to this site, granting library members access through their connection.
https://www.pressreader.com/catalog

The Public Domain Review
Not Asia specific, but this informative and highly entertaining site includes nearly 1000 annotated collections of images, books, and films from the public domain. You can also browse the current articles on themes including art, film, music, philosophy, religion and legends, and science, among others. If you prefer print to digital, head to the site’s ‘shop’ and order one of the ‘Selected Essays’ printed volumes, public domain ‘fine art prints’, or curated postcard packs.
https://publicdomainreview.org

Rare Books Society of India [SA]
This site is a virtual space for rare book collectors and history buffs to read, discuss, rediscover and download lost books, paintings, photographs and other objects. Importantly, it aims to highlight the understanding that

A Zebra, by Mansur, opaque water-colour and gold on paper, Mughal, 1621. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The focus

The Loewentheil Photography of China Collection

The focus

D uring the Edo period in Japan (1615-1868), crowded living conditions and wooden buildings gave rise to frequent fires – so frequent in fact it was said that “fires and quarrels were the flowers of Edo.” The socially segregated brigades formed to combat these fires were made up of either samurais (buke hikeshi) or commoners (buke hikeshi). Although experiments with wooden pumps were made, limited water supply rendered this mo re modern firefighting method impractical. Each firefighter in a given brigade was outfitted with a special reversible coat (hikeshi banten), plain but for the name of the brigade on one side and decorated with richly symbolic imagery on the other. Made of several layers of quilted cotton fabric, using a process called the sashiko technique, and resist-dyed using the ittsugadō method, these coats would be worn plain side-out and thoroughly soaked in water before the firefighters entered the scene of the blaze. No doubt the men wore them this way round to protect the dyed images from damage, but they were probably also concerned with protecting themselves, as they went about their dangerous work, through direct contact with the heroes and creatures represented on the insides of these beautiful garments.

The Loewentheil Photography of China Collection

The Public Domain Review: Japanese Firemen’s Coats

The Public Domain Review

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The Public Domain Review: Japanese Firemen’s Coats
there is always more than one truth in history! Sourcing from digital libraries such as The Internet Archive, Google Books, Wikipedia and the online collections of various museums around the world, RBFS has curated these rare books and images, and presented them in a context that gives them relevance and shows each piece as a part of a grander whole. All material posted on this site is sourced from the public domain and Rare Book Society of India explicitly states that it does not hold copyrights on any of this material.

https://www.rarebooksocietyindiafoundation.org

SEALang projects

This website hosts Southeast Asian language reference materials. The organization is focused on non-roman script languages, though more recently they have expanded their collection to include many languages of Insular Southeast Asia, including Malay, Indonesian, and the Philippines. The website contains a number of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and tools for searching and displaying complex scripts.

http://www.sealang.net

The CSIS Belt and Road Executive Course

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a $1 trillion flagship foreign policy effort of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, could reshape global networks of trade, transport, and political ties within and between countries for decades to come. But since its announcement, the BRI has remained shrouded in confusion and controversy, and it now faces major challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing insights from leading experts and the Reconnecting Asia Project, the most extensive effort of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, this platform provides global electronic access to culturally significant literary material produced from within, and about, the Southeast Asian region. It is not merely a repository, but a vehicle for targeted research, and one which will enable discovery, scholarship, and use.

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

South Asia Archive

The South Asia Archive provides an extensive resource for students and scholars across the humanities and social sciences. Focusing on South Asia, the Archive contains both serial and non-serial materials, including reports, rare books, and journal runs from noteworthy, rare publications. The South Asia Archive is a specialist digital platform providing global electronic access to culturally and historically significant literary material produced from within, and about, the South Asian region. It is not merely a repository, but a vehicle for targeted research, and one which will enable discovery, scholarship, and use.

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

The World Digital Library

The World Digital Library (WDL) was launched by the U.S. Library of Congress and UNESCO, with contributions from libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, and international organizations around the world. The WDL can be used to explore works of art, music, literature, and other cultural treasures and significant historical documents to enable discovery, scholarship, and use. The materials collected by the WDL make it possible to discover, study, and enjoy cultural treasures and significant historical documents including books, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, journals, prints and photographs, sound recordings, and films. Material on specific topics can be found by using the site’s search and filter features. For example, you can search by region, topic and/or time period.

https://www.wdl.org

Wilson Center Digital Archive

The Digital Archive, overseen by the Wilson Center’s History and Public Policy Program, contains once-secret documents from governments all across the globe, uncovering new sources and providing fresh insights into the history of international relations and diplomacy. The collection contains newly declassified historical materials from archives across the world—much of it in translation and including diplomatic cables, high level correspondence, meeting minutes and more. The website has a particular focus on Southeast Asia, East Asia, the Korean war, and the history of Nuclear proliferation.

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

Reconnecting Asia: Belt, Road, and Beyond

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a $1 trillion flagship foreign policy effort of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, could reshape global networks of trade, transport, and political ties within and between countries for decades to come. But since its announcement, the BRI has remained shrouded in confusion and controversy, and it now faces major challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing insights from leading experts and the Reconnecting Asia Project, the most extensive effort of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, this platform provides global electronic access to culturally significant literary material produced from within, and about, the Southeast Asian region. It is not merely a repository, but a vehicle for targeted research, and one which will enable discovery, scholarship, and use.

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

Researching Colonial History of the Malay World like a Millennial

This is a fabulous new resource and guide from the Cultural Centre of the University of Malaya. The focus of this resource guide is on digital resources that tell us something about the Malay Archipelago, stretching back to the 17th century. The guide also offers tips and ideas on how to find materials online, an introduction to historical thinking, as well as a guide to various communities, projects and initiatives related to the colonial history of the Malay World.

https://tinyurl.com/LikeAMillennial

World Digital Library: Ethnographic Turkestan

This photograph is from the ethnographic part of Turkestan Album, a comprehensive visual survey of Central Asia undertaken after imperial Russia assumed control of the region in the 1860s. Commissioned by General Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818–82), the first governor-general of Russian Turkestan, the album is in four parts spanning six volumes: “Architectural Part” (two volumes); “Ethnographic Part” (two volumes); “Trades Part” (one volume); and “Historical Part” (one volume). The principal compiler was Russian Orientalist Aleksandr L. Kun, who was assisted by Nikola V. Bogaevskii. The album contains some 1,300 photographs, along with architectural plans, watercolor drawings, and maps. The “Ethnographic Part” includes 781 individual photographs on 153 plates. The photographs show individuals representing the different peoples of the region (Plates 1–35); daily life and rituals (Plates 36–97); and views of villages and cities, street vendors, and commercial activities (Plates 98–143).

https://tinyurl.com/WDL-SurDaryaOblast

About ‘Sur Darya Obiast City of Dushanbe and the Types of People Seen at the Market’. Water Colour. Found by searching on ‘place’ Uzbekistan.

https://tinyurl.com/WDL-SurDaryaObiast
The Ancient India & Iran Trust

This organisation, in Cambridge, UK, occupies a unique position as an independent charity concerned with the study of early South Asia, Iran and Central Asia, promoting both scholarly research and popular interest in the area. Its primary focus is history, archaeology, art history, linguistics and ancient languages, but this often extends to more modern topics and disciplines. It has a library of over 50,000 items and organises a range of activities including conferences, public lectures and visiting fellowships.

https://www.indiran.org

The Asia Research Institute (ARI)

ARI, at the National University of Singapore, engages the humanities and social sciences broadly defined and especially interdisciplinary frontiers between and beyond disciplines. As a university-level institute, ARI brings together scholars from different departments, schools and faculties across campus for seminars, conferences and collaborative research projects. The institute hosts visiting researchers, organises events and maintains an academic blog called ARIscope. Its publishing department produces working papers, monographs, a number of journals and a Newsletter.

https://ari.nus.edu.sg

British Institute of Persian Studies

The British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) is the UK’s foremost learned society dedicated to promoting and supporting scholarship and research excellence in all aspects of Iran and the wider Persianate world, and to increasing public understanding and knowledge of this region. The Persianate world includes territories historically held by peoples of Persian culture and Iranian language and culture: Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Transcaucasia, Iraq, the Persian Gulf littoral, and South and Iranian culture and language: Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Transcaucasia, Iraq, the Persian Gulf littoral, and South Asia, Iran and Central Asia. BIPS supports humanities and social sciences research into this region. BIPS supports UK-based post-doctoral researchers and UK-based students to carry out humanities and social science research into Iran and the Persianate world through the award of research and travel grants. BIPS usually invites grant applications three times a year – in January, April and October.

https://www.bips.ac.uk

Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University (CSEAS)

CSEAS offers a wide range of resources, education and events, with a focus on Southeast Asia. Find for example their trimmed Newsletter here: https://newsletter.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp. The Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia: https://kyotoreview.org and the CSEAS Online Movie Project: https://onlinemovie.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/index.html. Also hosted at CSEAS is The Maritime Asia Heritage Survey (MAHS), which builds upon the pilot project that was based at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies to expand the work of documenting historical and archaeological sites across the broader region of maritime Southern Asia, including new field survey work in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brunei, and Vietnam http://maritimeasianheritage. cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp. See the article by Michael Feener et al. on page 14 of this issue to read more about this survey.

https://en.kyoto-cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

The Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) in Heidelberg

CATS is an Asian centre of a different kind. It is committed to studying Asia in a global context and through interdisciplinary dialogues. In CATS, four institutes from Heidelberg University, whose regional focus is Asia, are joined together. Scholars at CATS are specialized in a variety of disciplines such as Anthropology, Geography, History, Cultural Studies, Art History, Literary Studies, Musicology, Religious Studies, Politics, Sociology, among others. The centre maintains research projects, a media centre, a ‘digital humanities unit’, various BA and MA degree programmes, and has recently Inaugurated their Newsletter: CATSarena.

https://www.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/ media/catsarena.html

Clingendael Institute for International Relations

Clingendael experts conduct policy-oriented analysis and research on strategic international issues. They offer policy recommendations through our publications, events and presence in the media. Clingendael Academy is one of the largest international diplomatic training centres around the world. Every day, international professionals experience their unique training philosophy. The institute organises numerous events and publishes print and digital products. ‘The Clingendael Spectator’, the think tank’s magazine, which is freely accessible for all. The institute is interested in current developments concerning world politics.

https://www.clingendael.org

ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute

ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute is a research centre in Singapore, offering multiple projects, publications, and online resources: such as their commentaries at https://fukrum.sg: or their analyses of current affairs, or more in-depth analyses of contemporary geopolitical and socio-economic forces in the region - all to be found at: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/category/articles/commentaries

https://www.iseas.edu.sg

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https://en.kyoto-cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

The Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) in Heidelberg

CATS is an Asian centre of a different kind. It is committed to studying Asia in a global context and through interdisciplinary dialogues. In CATS, four institutes from Heidelberg University, whose regional focus is Asia, are joined together. Scholars at CATS are specialized in a variety of disciplines such as Anthropology, Geography, History, Cultural Studies, Art History, Literary Studies, Musicology, Religious Studies, Politics, Sociology, among others. The centre maintains research projects, a media centre, a ‘digital humanities unit’, various BA and MA degree programmes, and has recently Inaugurated their Newsletter: CATSarena.

https://www.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/ media/catsarena.html

Clingendael Institute for International Relations

Clingendael experts conduct policy-oriented analysis and research on strategic international issues. They offer policy recommendations through our publications, events and presence in the media. Clingendael Academy is one of the largest international diplomatic training centres around the world. Every day, international professionals experience their unique training philosophy. The institute organises numerous events and publishes print and digital products. ‘The Clingendael Spectator’, the think tank’s magazine, which is freely accessible for all. The institute is interested in current developments concerning world politics.

https://www.clingendael.org

ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute

ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute is a research centre in Singapore, offering multiple projects, publications, and online resources: such as their commentaries at https://fukrum.sg: or their analyses of current affairs, or more in-depth analyses of contemporary geopolitical and socio-economic forces in the region - all to be found at: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/category/articles/commentaries

https://www.iseas.edu.sg

The Kern Institute

This organization supports and promotes the study of South Asia, in particular India and Tibet. It organises lectures and occasions, its website provides subsidies for study trips, supports the expansion and public use of its library collections, and brings out a Newsletter and other publications.

https://www.insitstitaakn.nl

LeidenAsiaCentre

The aim of the LeidenAsiaCentre is to generate academic knowledge on modern East Asia that can find societal applications in the Netherlands. The LeidenAsiaCentre actively aims to expand its expertise and to use this in collaboration with a growing number of diverse societal partners, in particular the business sector, the social sciences broadly defined and the media. The centre is interested in contemporary textiles around the world. TPF is a collaboration of like-minded people who are passionate about textiles, production processes, weaving and dying techniques, symbols, patterns, cultural meanings, art, and history. TPF also provides an institutional home for researchers seeking to conduct original field research. The foundation maintains a blog, a mentorship program, a number of museum projects and also organises events.

https://tracingpatternsonline.org

Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) (Berlin)

MERICS has established itself as the go-to European think tank on China. With about 20 full-time research staff from different disciplines, MERICS is currently the largest European research institute focusing solely on contemporary China studies. Based in Berlin, MERICS plays an active role in informing European public debates on China and in providing senior decision-makers across Europe with in-depth China-related insights critical to their portfolios. Visit the site to explore their policy briefs, briefings, analyses, opinion pieces, etc.

https://merics.org/en

OXUS Society for Central Asian Affairs

This is the website of the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society based at the Australia National University. The Asia and the Pacific Policy Society is a community of scholars, policymakers, researchers, students and the policy-engaged public. The website hosts episodes of 4 podcast series and publishes articles, videos, books, articles and events and presence in the media.

https://www.policyforum.net

The Textile Research Centre

Based in Leiden, the Netherlands, the basic aim of the TRC is to give the study of textiles, clothing and accessories their place on the agenda of the humanities and social sciences. The TRC is a foundation providing courses and lectures, carrying out research and by the presentation of textiles and dress from all over the world. The two main focal points of the TRC are (a) dress and identity: what people wear in order to say who they are and (b) pre-industrial textile technology. The TRC has a large textile-based archive, much of which is now available online via their website.

https://www.trc-leiden.nl

Tracing Patterns Foundation

Tracing Patterns Foundation (TPF) is a community of scholars, artisans and textile makers (weavers, dyes, craftsmen, textile designers) who contribute towards building a body of research on both traditional and contemporary textiles around the world. TPF is a collaboration of like-minded people who are passionate about textiles, production processes, weaving and dying techniques, symbols, patterns, cultural meanings, art, and history. TPF also provides an institutional home for researchers seeking to conduct original field research. The foundation maintains a blog, a mentorship program, a number of museum projects and also organises events.

https://tracingpatternsonline.org

TU Delft Spatial Planning

Though not Asia specific, the website of the Spatial Planning & Strategy department at the Delft University of Technology presents their international research, book updates, blog posts and links to events.

http://www.spatialplanningatdeflt.org
Library collections

Bibliothèque nationale de France

The national library of France. This site gives access to a number of digitised collections and archives. The website is accessible in both French and English, although the English is poorly translated in places. The site also published a number of articles and free access to manuscripts.

https://tinyurl.com/Gallica-BNF-EN

Endangered Archives Programme

This project of the British Library gives grants to organisations to catalogue, preserve, and digitise archives in danger from across the world. Thanks to this scheme, over eight million images and 25 thousand soundtracks have been digitized till date. Collections span South Asia, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

https://eap.bl.uk/search/site

Laures Kirishitan Bunko Database

The materials contained in the database are collected and managed by Kirishitan Bunko Library of Sophia University. The focus of the collection is Japanese missionary items.

https://digitalarchives.sophia.ac.jp

Library of Congress Chinese Rare Book Digital Collection

This is the website of the Chinese Rare Book Digital Collection which draws from 5,300 titles of Chinese rare books housed at the Asian Division of the Library of Congress. The collection brings together printed books, manuscripts, Buddhist sutras and local gazetteers among other items. These materials encompass a wide array of disciplines and subjects in classics, history, geography, philosophy, and literature.

https://www.loc.gov/collections/chinese-rare-books

Endangered Archives Programme: Digitising Cirebon manuscripts

Cirebon was one of the important Islamic Sultanates in Java, together with Demak and Banten, and had been a centre for Islamic learning and the dissemination of Islamic teachings in West Java. Cirebon was also considered to be one of the cultural centres in the Indonesian archipelago, which can be seen in its manuscripts.

https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP211

Monash Collections Online: Japanese Fairy Tales

Effectively ending their self-isolation from the western world in 1853, Japan inevitably became the object of fascination for much of the English-speaking world. Innovative publisher and book importer, Hasegawa Takejiro, took advantage of this interest, producing the attractive and collectable, Japanese Fairy Tale Series (1885 - 1925). Initially, these “fukuro toji”, or bound-pocket books were produced for improving English literacy among the Japanese, however, the series became hugely popular in the West. The influx of “Yatoi” or foreigners employed by the Japanese government, saw Hasegawa develop key relationships with Western intellectuals, academics, and entrepreneurs. Read full description and find all items in this collection at:

https://repository.monash.edu/collections/show/108

Leiden University Libraries Digital Collections

This website is the digitised and digital born collections of Leiden University Libraries. A number of the collections are Asia specific, such as the ‘Balinese narrative drawings’, ‘Southeast Asian pop music’, ‘Colonial sources’, ‘Japanese agriculture in the early 19th century’ and the ‘Kong Koan papers’.

https://digitalecollections.universiteitleiden.nl

The Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library

This site can be accessed in Spanish. It is a digital archive and includes a history portal where you can find documents on Spanish colonialism. In addition, the site incorporates the archives of many Spanish libraries and museums. This site is connected with the Spanish State Archives, accessible in both Spanish and English, which can be accessed here http://pares.culturaydeporte.gob.es/pares/en/inicio.html

http://www.cervantesvirtual.com

Monash Collections Online

Monash University Library’s Special Collections are an integral part of the Library, spanning multiple genres and mediums. The largest of the Special Collections held at the Matheson Library are the Rare Books, Music and Multimedia, and Asian collections. The Slavic, Asian, Yiddish language and Jewish studies collections are also among the largest in Australasia. The collections include purchases, gifts, and donations, and are part of ongoing activities to promote the University’s research outputs. We are selectively digitising these collections to better enable access to these unique and valuable research materials. Monash Collections Online is the new home for the discovery, access, and engagement with these digitised collections. Most items are available to download and reuse, unless otherwise stated.

https://repository.monash.edu
Timothy Pwee enlightens us about the history of street lighting in Singapore, starting with the first flickering oil lamps that were lit in 1824. There is something special about Singapore at night. The glittering skyline of the Central Business District and Marina Bay is now an iconic image, while the annual festive light-ups of Orchard Road, Chinatown, Geylang Serai and Serangoon Road never fail to draw a crowd intent on taking selfies and wefies. Singapore did not always sparkle after dark though. The first streetlights relied on feeble, flickering oil lamps, which were limited to major areas in town. Streetlamps running on electricity were introduced in the early 19th century. Even then, street lighting was still very feeble. It was only after World War II that the authorities came up with plans to ensure that all of Singapore’s streets would be lit at night. Read full article at:

https://tinyurl.com/BiblioAsia-Pwee

Above: Lighted torches illuminating the evening sky as revolve transport boat to school at a stop, 1876. This Illustration first appeared in The Graphic on 4 November 1876. Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board.

Published on BiblioAsia: ‘Let there Be Light’, by Timothy Pwee, 1 January 2021.

The Focus

National Library of Singapore BiblioAsia:
‘Let there be light’

The Focus

Qatar Digital Library: The use of ‘Islamic’ seals

Cultural appropriation was as much a part of empire as military force. The use of ‘Islamic’ seals by British colonial officials is one example of this. In his record of nineteenth-century Egyptian society, Edward William Lane wrote that “[a]lmost every person who can afford it has a seal-ring, even though he be a servant.” The function of seals as symbols of textual authority and ownership is deeply rooted in the Islamic world, especially in Arabic and Persian-speaking societies. Historically, seals were used for authorising various documents, including letters and legal contracts, and for marking the ownership of books and manuscripts. Read full entry at:

https://tinyurl.com/QDL-Lowe

‘Performing Authority: the ‘Islamic’ Seals of British Colonial Officers’, by Daniel A. Lowe

National Library of Singapore BiblioAsia: ‘Let there be light’

This site hosts the newsletter of the National Library of Singapore’s archive. BiblioAsia features articles on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context, and has a strong focus on the collections and services of the National Library. The National Library of Singapore also maintains a few YouTube channels featuring a collection of lectures and talks across a wide range of topics including history, art, and current events.

https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg
https://www.youtube.com/NationalLibrarySG

National Diet Library (NDL) Japan

This library can be accessed in Japanese or English and is predominantly text based but includes over 600 audio-visual recordings. The archive also publishes the National Diet Library monthly bulletin each month, which provides comprehensive information about the NDL’s collection of books and its services: digitised versions of rare books, periodicals, dissertations, books and images. The digital collections include a vast collection of public domain books and images. The digital collections include over 35,000 digitised books and manuscripts as well as digitised photo collections, ephemera, and seed catalogs. Many of the physical collections have not yet been digitised, but you can browse the physical inventories of those collections on the website.

https://dl.ndl.go.jp

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OAPEN - Online library and publication platform

OAPEN promotes and supports the transition to open access for academic books by providing open infrastructure services to stakeholders in scholarly communication. They work with publishers to build a quality-controlled collection of open access books and provide services for publishers, libraries, and research funders in the areas of hosting, deposit, quality assurance, dissemination, and digital preservation. Browse by ‘subject’, ‘publisher’, ‘language’, or ‘collection’ – for example: ‘Asian history’, which has about 250 titles included.

https://oapen.org

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

The Austrian National Archives can be accessed in German and English. The collection is being digitised in conjunction with Google and includes titles from the early 19th century up to the second half of the 19th century. From this site you can also access physical books and journals that can be picked up from the associated Austrian libraries.

https://tinyurl.com/ONB-ANA

Qatar Digital Library

This website is an archive featuring the cultural and historical records of the Gulf and wider region. It is hosted in partnership with the British Library. The sources are freely available online for the first time. The archives include maps, manuscripts, sound recordings, photographs and much more, complete with contextualised explanatory notes and links, in both English and Arabic.

https://www.qdl.org/en

Smithsonian Libraries

The network of 21 specialised research libraries that make up the Smithsonian Libraries provide the Institution’s museums and research centers with resources and services that are as diverse and deep as the collections, exhibits, and scholarship they support. They truly span the range of scientific and cultural pursuits of humanity from aerospace, anthropology, and art history to business history and botany, cultural history, design, philately, zoology, and much, much more. These websites include a vast collection of public domain books and images. The digital collections include over 35,000 digitised books and manuscripts as well as digitised photo collections, ephemera, and seed catalogs. Many of the physical collections have not yet been digitised, but you can browse the physical inventories of those collections on the website.

https://library.si.edu

Online Resources for Asia Scholars

Published on BiblioAsia: ‘Let there Be Light’, by Timothy Pwee, 1 January 2021.

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https://dl.ndl.go.jp

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https://library.si.edu
The British Museum

The British Museum’s website has a large array of online resources, images of over two million records and artifacts. The site also includes a large collection of articles and explanation of artifacts (Collection Stories), with around 600,000 thousand records linked to Asia.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection

Chester Beatty Museum

More than a museum with outstanding collections, including those from Asia, Chester Beatty is also a research library for scholars from all over the world. Collections and exhibitions are displayed online, alongside a range of educational resources.

https://chesterbeatty.ie

Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland museum website contains a collection of their artifacts and records that have been digitised including a number that are linked to Asia. The museum particularly has a large collection of textile and art artifacts.

https://www.clevelandart.org

Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

Since 2017, the Met has made all images of public-domain works in its collection available under Creative Commons Zero (CC0), so around 406,000 images of artworks are freely available for use.

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection

National Palace Museum (Taipei)

Digital archives from the National Palace Museum in Taipei. From 2015 the National Palace Museum has made all images on the site free to download (CC BY 4.0). You can search by dynasty or category. Head to the tab ‘Open Data’ on the site.

https://theme.npm.edu.tw

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City)

The Nelson-Atkins Museum has various collections of images available online, some of which in the public domain. This includes large East Asia, and South & Southeast Asia collections.

https://art.nelson-atkins.org/collections

The Palace Museum (Beijing)

Established in 1925, the Palace Museum is located in the imperial palace of the consecutive Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. The magnificent architectural complex, also known as the Forbidden City, and the vast holdings of paintings, calligraphy, ceramics, and antiques of the imperial collections make it one of the most prestigious museums in China and the world. Fun item on website: download beautiful high-resolution images for free to use as desktop ‘wallpaper’ or to print out.

https://en.dpm.org.cn

The Rijksmuseum

The National museum of the Netherlands, featuring not only the Dutch masters, but a comprehensive and representative overview of Dutch art and history from the Middle Ages onwards, and of major aspects of European and Asian art. The museum’s website is a playground for art lovers and for those wanting to learn and discover.

https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en

Shanghai Museum

With a focus on collecting, researching, displaying and education of pre-modern Chinese arts, the Museum has built up a collection of nearly 1,020,000 items. Its multimedia section includes stunning videos introducing you to their exhibitions and collections.

https://www.shanghaimuseum.net/mu/french/index.html
Networking

Academia
A networking website for academics, it can be used to access and promote academic papers. Academia’s goal is to ensure that every paper, ever written, is on the Internet, available for free. It aims to build the fastest and most relevant paper distribution system in the world. Today its algorithms make about 20 million paper recommendations a day.

https://www.academia.edu

CrossAsia-Repository
CrossAsia-Repository is the full-text server of CrossAsia.org, the Specialised Information Service for Asian Studies, and provides an opportunity for publishing, indexing and long-term preservation of documents on Asian Studies. CrossAsia-Repository is a service of the University Library of Heidelberg, which within the scope of its special subject collection on Asian Studies offers members of the academic community worldwide the opportunity to publish their monographs, articles, lectures etc. in electronic format on the Internet at no charge.

http://crossasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de

H-Net Asia
Part of H-Net Humanities and Social sciences online. The primary purpose of H-ASIA is to enable historians and other Asia scholars to easily communicate current research and teaching interests; to discuss new articles, books, papers, approaches, methods and tools of analyzes; to test new ideas and share comments and tips on teaching. The site contains numerous articles, reviews, and an online database of resources on the Asian regions that can be found on the second link given here.

https://networks.h-net.org/h-asia
https://networks.h-net.org/node/20055/mx

ResearchGate
A professional networking site for scientists and researchers. Share your publications, access millions more, and publish your data. Connect and collaborate with colleagues, peers, co-authors, and specialists. Get stats and find out who’s been reading and citing your work. Ask questions, get answers, and solve research problems. Find the right job using the research-focused job board. Share updates about your current project, and keep up with the latest research.

https://www.researchgate.net

Vietnam Studies Group
The VSG website gives you access to a large collection of Vietnam studies related resources (books, journals, scholar directory, library collections, online guides, digital collections, and teaching materials). Significantly there is also a networking discussion board, which functions through an email list. The discussions are public, but you will have to join the group to participate.

https://sites.google.com/a/uw.edu/vietnamstudiesgroup

News sites

Asian Art Newspaper
This website focuses on what is new in the world of Asian and Islamic art, including exhibitions, events, and auctions. It is free to subscribe to their newsletter. The Newspaper is available in both digital and print formats, for a small price.

https://asiannartnewspaper.com

Eurasianet
This is an independent news organization that covers news from and about the South Caucasus and Central Asia, providing on-the-ground reporting and critical perspectives on the most important developments in the region. Published in both English and Russian, Eurasianet strives to provide information useful to policymakers, scholars, and interested citizens both in and outside of Eurasia.

https://eurasianet.org

JStor Daily
Occasionally Asia related, this interesting online publication contextualizes current events with scholarship by drawing on JSTOR’s digital library academic journals, monographs, and other materials. The service also offers a number of newsletters.

https://daily.jstor.org

New Mandala
New Mandala is an academic blog that provides analysis and new perspectives on the societies and politics of Southeast Asia. New Mandala is hosted by the Australian National University’s (ANU) Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs and is open to submissions from the academically orientated.

https://www.newmandala.org

North Korea News
Every day, NK News gets you behind the headlines with analysis from some of the world’s leading experts on North Korea, insight from both North Korean and defector voices, and opinions from academics, former residents and leading international observers. The site intends to bring authoritative news, opinion & analysis, research tools, data and subject specialists together in one convenient place. NK News also hosts a weekly podcast. Much of the site is freely accessible, but a subscription will give access to many more services.

https://www.nknews.org

PrachhaTai
PrachhaTai is an independent, non-profit, daily web newspaper established to provide reliable and relevant news and information to the Thai public, particularly with regard to human rights and Thai civil society. It has separate news sites in both English and Thai.

https://prachhatai.com/english

Coconuts
Coconuts is an alternative online publisher of news, culture and lifestyle commentary from Asia’s cities. They also have a YouTube channel called Coconuts TV, which focuses on the "weird and wondrous untold stories of Asia".

https://coconuts.co

Radhi
RADHI (rəˈdē-ə, -tē-) is an independent platform of artists, writers and creators dedicated to sharing vibrant stories from the rarely
explored sides of the new China. Founded in 2017, RADII creates multimedia content, events and interactive workshops that shine a light on the topics that connect the world’s young global thinkers together. This website publishes opinion pieces, commentaries, podcasts and video content on Chinese current affairs, society, art, and technology.

https://radii.china.com

Radio Free Asia (SEA EA)

Radio Free Asia’s mission is to provide accurate and timely news and information to Asian countries whose governments prohibit access to a free press. RFA is a private, non-profit corporation, funded through an annual grant from the United States Agency for Global Media.

https://www.rfa.org/english

Rice media (SEA EA)

This website publishes alternative commentary and opinion pieces on culture, current affairs, food, travel and video content in contemporary Asia. Or in their own words: Asia, Unfiltered. Rice is Asia’s alternative voice. From sex workers to politicians, contemporary art to street food, we bring fresh perspectives and bold commentary on everyday life in Asia.

https://www.ricemedia.co

Southeast Asia Globe (SEA)

This website publishes daily in-depth feature articles on power, money, culture, art and the environment. Southeast Asia Globe is a space for some of the region’s best writers and photographers to take readers behind the headlines and into the stories that shape people’s lives. The site is dedicated to producing engaging stories that combine world-class journalism with captivating art design. The Globe has a number of newsletters you can subscribe to, and a selection of articles that are free to access, but the site funds itself through subscribers.

https://southeastasiaglobe.com

SupChina (EA)

“We help the west read China between the lines”. SupChina is a New York-based news platform, that informs and connects a global audience regarding the business, technology, politics, culture, and society of China. SupChina publishes in a variety of mediums, organises large-scale events, and even hosts an extensive network of China-focused podcasts.

https://supchina.com

new mandala

New mandala: Duterte’s Tight Grip over Local Politicians: Can It Endure?

Weena Gera and Paul Hutchcroft, New Mandala, 19 Feb 2021.

The major trend in central-local relations in the Philippines under the regime of President Rodrigo Duterte has been the capacity of the presidential palace to exert a very tight grip over local politicians—arguably the tightest since the martial-law dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (1972-1986). This trend has emerged even as Duterte has done strikingly little to advance the reforms that many local politicians have been keen to champion. He abandoned the federalism agenda which he had touted in the lead-up to his presidential campaign in 2016, and which had been eagerly supported by local government coalitions. In addition, the president backpedaled in delivering a financial windfall to local governments as promised in a landmark 2019 Supreme Court ruling on the primary national revenue sharing program. This decision, known as the Mandanas ruling, is the only major win for local politicians since Duterte came to power. Yet its implementation has been conveniently pushed out to the very end of his term in 2022.

If Duterte has failed to deliver, why do so many local politicians remain beholden to him? Read more at New Mandala:

https://tinyurl.com/NewMandala-Duterte

Prachatai: Protest at Government House calls for justice for indigenous Karen community

Members of the Bang Kloi Indigenous Karen community and the activist Save Bang Kloi Coalition have gathered at the Chamael Maruchet Bridge for the past three days to demand protection for members of the Bang Kloi Community who are returning to their ancestral home.

In early January 2021, 60-70 people from the Bang Kloi community travelled back to the former location of the Chai Phaen Din village, the community’s ancestral home in the Khao Kradan forest. The community was forcibly evacuated from Chai Phaen Din in 1994, and for a second time in 2011, when park officials burned down their houses and rice storage barns.

At the time, the authorities promised the community that each family would be allocated 1 rai of land in Peng Luak Bang Kloi village, where they were relocated. However, they were not allocated the promised amount of land, and the land they were given is not suitable for agriculture. The Covid-19 pandemic has also made their situation worse, as many community members who leave the village to work lost their income, leading to the decision to travel to Chai Phaen Din to live according to their traditional ways. Read full article at:

https://prachatai.com/english/node/9077

Rice Media: Lessons from a circus performer about living with uncertainty

As a circus performer, 26-year-old Jonathan comes face to face with risk on a daily basis. In striving to perfect stunts like fire breathing and aerial performances, he has realized two things about life: one can never block out uncertainty, and it actually is possible to even appreciate life’s ambiguity.

These days, Jonathan adopts what he calls a “philosophical” view of life. To him, challenges and risks exist to show him that the path to growth is through accepting that nothing in life can be set in stone. It was the attitude he had adopted in 2020 that drew him so close, and as he enters a new year, he continues to define many of his experiences. Read full article at Rice Media:

https://tinyurl.com/RiceMedia-Circus

Foreign Affairs

https://foreignaffairs.com
issues, broadly informed by the beauty
Allegra welcomes contributions in different
on issues affecting the world today. As such,
with the originality of their own perspectives,
showcase their best critical thinking, replete
to provide its contributors with the chance to
and fast-moving public debates. Allegra seeks
academics to enliven the ‘dead space’
large number of anthropologists and other
Allegra Laboratory is a platform for a
CA   SA   SEA   EA
Asian Development Review
CA   SA   SEA   EA
The Asian Development Review (ADR) is the journal of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), published by MIT Press. It publishes research on development issues relevant to the countries of the Asia and Pacific region. ADR is Open Access. All content is freely available in electronic format to readers across the globe.
https://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/adev

The Focus
Open access blogs and journals

Allegra Laboratory
"Anthropology for Radical Optimism":
Allegra Laboratory is a platform for a large number of anthropologists and other academics to enliven the space between standard academic publication and fast-moving public debates. Allegra seeks to provide its contributors with the chance to showcase their best critical thinking, replete with the originality of their own perspectives, on issues affecting the world today. As such, Allegra welcomes contributions in different formats that speak to pressing socio-political issues, broadly informed by the beauty of ethnography and the critical potential of anthropology.
https://allegralaboratory.net

Asian Development Review
CA   SA   SEA   EA
The Asian Development Review (ADR) is the journal of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), published by MIT Press. It publishes research on development issues relevant to the countries of the Asia and Pacific region. ADR is Open Access. All content is freely available in electronic format to readers across the globe.
https://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/adev

British Library
Asia and Africa Studies Blog
CA   SA   SEA   EA   MENA
This blog site is written mostly by curators in Asia and African Studies (one of the ‘subjects’ at the British Library), but also includes contributions from guest contributors. The blog focuses on the collections in ‘Asian and African Studies’ that have their origins in the collections of the British Museum and in the Library of the East India Company and its successor, the India Office. Altogether more than 65,000 manuscripts and over 900,000 printed books cover over 500 languages or language groups, ranging from Chinese, spoken by one-third of the world’s population, to languages of New Guinea spoken by only a few hundred people. Additionally, the Visual Arts collection is made up of about 250,000 photographs, 12,000 drawings by Indian artists, 16,000 drawings by European artists and a sizeable collection of paintings, sculpture, furniture and ephemera.
https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/
index.html

Cafe Dissensus
CA
With a focus on Indian media, Cafe Dissensus (based in New York) is an alternative magazine dealing in art, culture, literature, and politics. The magazine also runs a blog, Cafe Dissensus Everyday.
"A very specific urge behind this magazine is to challenge the contemporary parochial attitude in Indian media. We want honest debate and discussion that should not be colored by any fear or favor. We are not a magazine for news reporting. We want to devote ourselves to analyzing issues that need to be discussed and debated."
https://cafedissensus.com

The Calvert Journal
CA
This journal was launched by the Calvert 22 Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation which focuses on contemporary art and culture of the New East (incorporating Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Russia). Today, the Journal is the world’s leading publication for culture, innovation, photography and travel in the New East. In its daily features, news, photography and travel reports, The Calvert Journal stands apart for its wealth of original research, striking photography, and clarity of insight on a region that, despite its richness, often goes under-reported.
https://www.calvertjournal.com

The Calvert Journal: Assel Kenzhetaeysa


As a fashion designer, she produces clothes that are meant to be a woman in modern Kazakhstan.

A woman rocks the cradle with one hand and provides for the family with the other. “It was only natural that I pursued an artistic profession.” But after giving birth to her first child in 2013, the new stage in her life inspired her to pursue painting. “It was a period of emotional growth. I wasn’t a little girl anymore,” she says. Now working from her home in Almaty, Kenzhetaeysa’s paintings depict women in costumes which combine elements of traditional Central Asian dress with modern clothing, including national Kazakh jewellery, skirts with ethnic prints from around the region, delicate straps, and lace tights. Each garment acts as a symbol: despite having integrated certain Western norms into their lives, Kazakh women still carry the load of ancient traditions.

Kenzhetaeysa’s works speak to the strength and difficulties faced by women who take on many diverse responsibilities, dictated both by her traditional role as a mother but also by the modern ideal to be successful and good-looking. Or, to quote the phrase that accompanied one of her paintings at the UN Exhibition #Artivism for Gender Equality. “A woman rocks the cradle with one hand and rules the world with the other.”

https://tingzil.com/Calvert-Kenzhetaysh
CoronAsur

This is a research blog hosted by the Religion and Globalisation Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Grounded in Asia, with a global and comparative outlook, Religion and COVID-19 curates reflections, analysis, opinions, commentary pieces, photographic essays and multimedia contributions written by scholars and practitioners at the interface of religion and public health. Read full article at: https://ari.nus.edu.sg/coronasur-home

The Hatha Yoga Project

South Asia focused, hosted by SOAS, this research project addresses the history of Yoga. The site contains access to a number of publications, a page devoted to resources on the topic and a blog.

Himalaya: The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies

HIMALAYA is a biannual, open access, peer-reviewed journal published by the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies. On this website you can access the journal and its archive of articles.

Life as Art Asia

This is a blog about art and artists based in Bali Indonesia.https://lifesaasoriaart.org

Made in China

The Made in China initiative rests on two pillars: the conviction that today more than ever it is necessary to bridge the gap between the scholarly community and the general public, and the related belief that open access is necessary to ethically reappropriate academic research from commercial publishers who restrict the free circulation of ideas. Starting as a monthly newsletter in Italian aiming to spread awareness of the complexities and nuances underlying socio-economic change in contemporary Chinese society, Made in China progressed into a quarterly journal with a specific focus on Chinese labour and civil society in English language. From that point on, the project quickly developed in previously unforeseen directions, including not only the journal, but also book series, summer schools, and other events. The Made in China journal that you see today is published in partnership with ANU Press and is freely accessible online.

Modern Yoga Research

This website is focused on modern yoga and is a great resource for finding established and current research into modern yoga and, more generally, about some of the most informative research on earlier forms of yoga. The website hosts a podcast, and provides access to a number of articles on the topic. http://www.modernyogaresearch.org

QueerAsia

‘Queer’ Asia is a collective of early career researchers, doctoral researchers, and activists, currently housed at SOAS, University of London. Their work to create a global platform for queer activists, artists, and academics is done in an entirely voluntary capacity. They strive to build a global platform from which to challenge dominant ideas, forms, and representations of gender and sexuality. The platform also has a YouTube channel.

Roadwork Asia

Research project conducting ethnographic fieldwork along roads that have been designated as key links at the Sino-Inner Asian Interface of the China-initiated Silk Road Economic Belt. The site tracks the project's research, events, publications, social media and even an online exhibition. The team has also been maintaining a personal blog (Viral Infrastructure) during the pandemic with their thoughts and feelings. As anthropologists of infrastructure, we turn our gaze to infra-structures and objects in the time of COVID-19. To empty park benches, closed borders and refrigerators exploding with their contents. To letterboxes, face masks, bottles of disinfectant, but also tractors, aeroplanes, television screens, balconies, camper vans and credit cards. Confined to our home offices in countries under lockdown, we write, in a freestyle manner, about these silent participants in our lives. And we marvel at how far humans can be called Homo infrastructuralis”.

Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Over the last two decades, the Sarai programme at CSID has arguably been South Asia’s most prominent public platform for research and reflection on the transformation of urban space and contemporary realities, especially with regard to cities, data and information, law, and media infrastructures. The website includes research on urbanity, media, and law and gives access to a number of their publications and essays. https://sarai.net

The Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

The platform also has a YouTube channel.

QueerAsia: What is ‘Queer’ in Korean?

“What is ‘Queer’ in Korean?” is a regular blog run by QueerAsia. Read the full article at: https://tinyurl.com/QueerAsia-Yoon

Serving’s Posts

The blog focuses on the history of domestic servants and service in South Asia. The project ‘Domestic Servants in Colonial South Asia’ (DOS), which ran from 2015-2018, is an attempt at two levels: one, to write the history of the servant-subalterns, which is almost marginal in South Asian accounts, and second, through the history of servants rewrite the social, cultural and labour histories of South Asia. The project’s temporal scope is from the mid-eighteenth to mid-twentieth century.

The South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal (SAMAJ)

This website is a double-blind peer-reviewed, open access journal devoted to research in the social sciences and humanities on South Asia.

The South Asian American Digital Archive

This archive is specifically focused on the history of South Asian Americans and includes 4,193 items ranging from journals, photographs to periodicals. The site allows you to search by topic, time, languages and states.

Do you have any more questions about the research project or anything else related to the history of South Asia?
The Asian Review of Books

The Asian Review of Books has an archive of more than two thousand book reviews. The ARB also features long-format essays by leading Asian writers and thinkers, excerpts from newly-published books and reviews of arts and culture. It provides an unparalleled forum for discussion of key contemporary issues by Asians for Asia and a vehicle of intellectual depth and breadth where leading thinkers can write on the books, arts and ideas of the day. The site also hosts a weekly podcast featuring interviews with authors.

https://www.asianreviewofbooks.com/content/category/podcast

The China in Africa Podcast by SupChina

This podcast is “A weekly discussion about China’s engagement across Africa hosted by journalist Eric Olander in Hanol and Asia-Africa scholar Cobus van Staden in Johannesburg”. If you are interested in learning more about China’s investment in Africa and about the newest developments in China-Africa relations. It provides interesting perspectives on China’s presence in Africa.

https://supchina.com/series/the-china-in-africa-podcast

Jaipur Literature Festival

The Jaipur Literature Festival is a flagship event of Teamwork Arts, which produces over 25 highly performing arts, visual arts and literary festivals across more than 40 cities globally. Every year, the Festival brings together a diverse mix of the world’s greatest writers, thinkers, humanitarians, politicians, business leaders, sports people and entertainers on one stage to champion the freedom to express and engage in thoughtful debate and dialogue. Described as the ‘greatest literary show on Earth’, the Jaipur Literature Festival is a sumptuous feast of ideas. The Jaipur Bytes podcast delivers thought-provoking ideas and meaningful debates from the iconic Jaipur Literature Festival, setting off conversations even when away from the Pink City. Their website hosts a number of South Asia related podcast episodes and they have a YouTube channel where you can watch past events and talks.

https://jlflitfest.org

The China in Africa Podcast: Three Asian Divas

Published 15 February 2021

COVID-19 vaccines are finally starting to make their way to Africa. The world’s poorest countries as production of Chinese, Russian, and Indian jabs ramps up. But it is the large-scale distribution of Chinese vaccines that’s causing a lot of people around the world, particularly in the U.S. and European countries, to become increasingly worried about the geopolitical ramifications.

Africa, the Chinese have exported vaccines to half a dozen countries and are in talks with dozens more to make jabs available in the coming months. Similarly, a new air bridge between the two regions, to facilitate the transportation and distribution of vaccines throughout Africa, is now operational.

Nwachukwu Egbanike, the sub-Saharan community manager for the independent journalism website Global Voices, says the West isn’t in a good position to complain about China’s ‘vaccine diplomacy’ given how little it’s doing to help the situation. Nwachukwu joins Eric and Cobus to discuss a two-part series he wrote on the geopolitical ramifications of COVID-19 vaccine distribution for China, Africa, and Western countries.

The Asian Review of Books Podcast with David Chaffetz, author of “Three Asian Divas: Women, Art and Culture In Shiraz, Delhi and Yangzhou”

The ARB podcast with David Chaffetz, author of “Three Asian Divas: Women, Art and Culture In Shiraz, Delhi and Yangzhou”, briefly explores how these ‘Asian divas’ could be seen as some of the first recognizably ‘modern women’. Read more and listen to this podcast at:

https://tinyurl.com/ARB-Chaffetz

Above: Gauhar Jân (1873-1930) was an Indian singer and dancer from Kolkata. She was one of the first performers to record music on 78 rpm records in India.
**Social media and listservs**

**Asian Feminist**

GA SA SEA LA MENA

A curated collection of the latest publications and news on sexuality and gender in Asia.

https://www.facebook.com/Thabeticfeminist

**Chinese Storytellers**

EA

Chino-USA journalists and writers keeping you up to date on the latest news stories.

https://twitter.com/CNStorytellers

**French Colonial History Society**

SEA

A private Facebook group, which offers a discussion space for French colonial history.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1037209484643791

**Indian Ocean Studies listserv**

SA

This list is primarily aimed at those involved in Indian Ocean Studies in the humanities and the social sciences. This does not exclude researchers from other disciplines, however, and all with an interest in the Indian Ocean are welcome to join. Subscribe here:

https://tinyurl.com/IOSlistservSubscribe

**International Institute for Asian Studies**

CA SA SEA LA

Keep up-to-date on the latest editions of the Newsletter, the latest publications, online events, calls for papers and news from IIAS! On the IIAS Youtube channel you can find recordings of webinars and conferences as well as updates about ICAS (International Conference for Asian Scholars).

https://www.facebook.com/asiastudies
https://twitter.com/AsianStudies
https://youtube.com/AsianStudies

**Raphael Rashid**

EA

Korean and English Language journalist with a focus on Korean news.

https://twitter.com/koreapdnasty

**Sinologists**

EA

The Sinologists Facebook group is a professional, scholarly community, and membership is open to all scholars and professionals working in Chinese studies.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/sinologists/about

**South Asian Studies Group**

SA

A large private group, useful for finding online lectures and latest books on SA, particularly from researchers based in SA.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/southasianstudies

**Webinars and MOOCS**

**Berkeley 2020 Conference on Post-Imperial Oceanics**

EA

Catch up on lectures from this 2-day virtual conference. The conference focused on the fragmented, layered and linked oceanic imperial processes, to think with the creative tensions between sociocultural processes across oceanic surfaces, and the mysteries of the submarine.

https://asuthasia.berkeley.edu/pio-videos

**Chester Beatty Museum**

SA SEA

Talks, audio tours, webinars, workshops and activities.

https://www.youtube.com/ChesterBeattyDublin

**IIAS Webinars**

CA SA SEA LA

The International Institute for Asian Studies hosts a series of Webinars and other events.

https://www.iias.asia/events
https://www.youtube.com/AsianStudies

**Mouse and Manuscript**

CA MENA

This website hosts lessons in codicology and palaeography based on manuscripts from the Middle East, Islamic Africa and Asia. Lessons are based on manuscripts held predominantly by Leiden university. The project is the initiative of Derrit van Dalen and Peter Webb, but includes other contributors with backgrounds in manuscript traditions.

https://mouse.digitalscholarship.nl/lessons

**Politics East Asia**

EA

Whether you are an academic, student, policy-maker, journalist, or East Asia enthusiast, this website and blog aims to help you get your bearings in the complex and often challenging field of East Asian politics. This site includes useful introductions to methods of online research orientated to East Asia, curated by Leiden university lecturer Florian Schneider.

http://www.politicseastasia.com

**SASNET**

SA

Swedish South Asian Studies Network at Lund University - with a newsletter, podcasts and webinars.

https://www.sasnet.lu.se
https://www.youtube.com/SASNETLundUniversity
https://soundcloud.com/sasnetlund

**South Asian Studies Group**

SA

A large private group, useful for finding online lectures and latest books on SA, particularly from researchers based in SA.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/southasianstudies

**SINUS**

SA

Sinologists Facebook group is a professional, scholarly community, and membership is open to all scholars and professionals working in Chinese studies.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/sinologists/about

**TU Delft**

SA SEA LA

An array of online courses, including Asia-related subjects.

https://online-learning.tudelft.nl/courses
In Southeast Asia a large number of handwritten manuscripts abound that contain a wide array of, mostly, religious subjects and that are written in a large variety of languages and scripts. A substantial number of these manuscripts have been preserved in public collections inside and outside Southeast Asia, but a surprisingly large amount of these culturally significant objects are in private hands or stored in semi-public collections of institutions, such as palaces, temples and other places of religious study and worship in the region. Deliberate or unintended neglect, climate, natural disasters and more, put an increasing number of manuscripts in jeopardy. The DREAMSEA programme was set up to ensure that the contents of the manuscripts are preserved for present and future generations.

Lost forever
In the largest country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, the number of manuscripts in private collections alone is staggering. They may be found from Acheh on the tip of Sumatra all the way east to Papua, and from the Minahassa in the north to the royal palaces of Central Java. In mainland Southeast Asia, manuscript lovers and guardians of temples have established repositories to store their highly valued and often venerated heirlooms. There is a network of Buddhist convents built around Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, that include small pavilions where the sacred texts are kept. The manuscript cultures in the region, with the practice of copying texts by hand, continued most pertinently in the religious culture, whereas the more secular parts of social life may be found from Aceh on the tip of Sumatra and are in agreement with ‘modern times’.

The manuscripts frequently remain the only witnesses of a substantial number of texts that are still unedited and therefore unknown in any other form. This means that when the manuscripts disappear or are destroyed, their contents are lost forever, not only for scholars but also for the general interested public. The loss of these texts means that part of the diversity in the cultural and religious outlook of the peoples in the region will disappear with them. Within the religious and cultural traditions there is a tendency for small groups, with their own esoteric practices, to be regarded as deviant by the majorities who are informed by the transnational mainstream religious practices that are considered to be in agreement with ‘modern times’.

means that they are often the victim of simple unintended neglect. The humid tropical weather conditions we encounter in large parts of the region are detrimental for the preservation of manuscripts, especially when they are written on paper. Insects and other pests, too, have that effect as these animals feed on the organic materials. Natural and social disasters further add to the circumstances that make handwritten manuscripts in Southeast Asia highly endangered, and put their physical existence in jeopardy.

Digitisation, metadata and preservation
The DREAMSEA programme was set up against the background of the ongoing degradation of cultural diversity and has the aim to ensure that the contents of the manuscripts are preserved for present and future generations. We have embarked on an ambitious course comprising the digitisation of as many endangered manuscripts as possible. It will involve storing these surrogate images on servers and converting them to other formats in the future. We will then upload these images to an open-access database, providing reliable metadata about the manuscripts to assist users of the database to form an impression of the physical manuscripts and supply information for their research. Although not included as one of our main aims, we also develop efforts to preserve the physical manuscripts by advising their owners about better ways to store and handle them. DREAMSEA has its regional office at the premises of the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. The programme is executed through a cooperation between the Centre for the Study of Manuscripts Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg in Germany, PPIM, and the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML), which is based in Minnesota, USA. The programme is funded by a generous grant from the Arcadia Foundation in the United Kingdom.

The fact that Southeast Asian manuscripts were written using a large variety of scripts and languages makes the execution of the programme quite challenging. One of the most complex issues is the metadata, which needs to be accurate and correct. To execute this in a satisfactory manner, we call in the help of experts who are informed and/or part of the manuscript traditions themselves to write down and check the information about the physical characteristics of the manuscript and the text(s) contained in them. In Indonesia, DREAMSEA works together with members of the Indonesian Association for Nusantara Manuscripts (MANASSA, Masyarakat Pernisahan Nusantara); they live all over the country and use their networks of manuscript owners and enthusiasts to help us detect and negotiate access to endangered collections in private hands. In mainland Southeast Asia, this kind of network does not exist, and DREAMSEA relies on help from academics and other groups of manuscript experts. DREAMSEA also cooperates with
the National Library of Indonesia staff to assist manuscript owners with improved preservation methods for their collections. In a nutshell, the DREAMSEA proactive procedure is as follows. DREAMSEA or MANASSA staff members approach manuscript owners, or they contact DREAMSEA or MANASSA themselves. After this initial step, manuscript owners or MANASSA members may submit a proposal to the DREAMSEA office in Jakarta for the digitisation of their manuscripts. The proposal is assessed, and, if approved, a mission is sent to the owner to photograph the manuscripts. A team usually consists of 5 persons: one photographer, one assistant photographer, an academic expert, and assistant academic expert and an assistant. Where necessary, manuscripts are cleaned before being photographed. The cleaning of the manuscripts needs to be done very carefully so as not to damage them even more. They are written on a large variety of materials ranging from different types of paper, palm-leaf, bamboo and tree bark. These writing supports come in all kinds of sizes, from extremely small to large scrolls of many meters long. To ensure that the team records crucial information about the manuscript themselves, the place where they are kept, their owners, and how they were used and transmitted, a special photographer cum videographer is part of the team. The information gathered is used to form a picture of the present manuscript situation, which is used to design a strategy to help owners better preserve their manuscripts. At various stages during the process, the metadata and manuscript images are checked for quality. The metadata is translated into English and, along with the images, is sent to HMML in Minnesota to be uploaded to the DREAMSEA cloud. This quality control is complex and very time consuming because of the large number of languages and scripts that need to be deciphered and, of course, due to the enormous diversity of manuscript contents. We regularly encounter incomplete manuscripts, often with missing pages at the start, which makes it very difficult to quickly identify texts contained in the manuscripts. Particularly in the case of the quite common Multiple-Text Manuscripts (MTMs), i.e., manuscripts containing a variety of (fragments of) texts, the identification of the items can be a very time-consuming effort. Frequently, the texts in the manuscripts are without titles, and the DREAMSEA staff has to provide one, so that researchers at least get an idea of what type of text it is. As a matter of course, these provisional titles may be inaccurate, and other mishaps can also occur. Therefore, we invite researchers and other interested parties who find mistakes in the online repository to report such inaccuracies, so that we can improve the catalogue. So for manuscripts have been digitised from Luang Prabang in Laos, Lamphun in Thailand and in many places in Indonesia in Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi and Bali. At present, more than 150,000 images have been processed, of which more than 27,000 are now available in the DREAMSEA Cloud. Cultural heritage and diversity Texts in Southeast Asian manuscripts have lost much of their initial practical value and relevance for everyday life, and much information can be gathered from books and, of course, from the internet; yet, as mentioned above, a substantial number of texts have never been edited nor have they appeared in book form, and therefore may reveal hidden treasures that add to the knowledge we have of the past. The manuscripts that act as containers of the texts can tell us much about how texts went from one place to the other and reveal the intercultural, interreligious and interhuman contacts throughout the region in the (recent) past, and sometimes even in the present since some manuscript cultures are continued. We should not forget that the majority of the manuscripts in the region were made recently and many, if not most of them, are no older than 100 to 150 years. This means that until recently, the contents of these manuscripts were disseminated in manuscript form only. This adds to their value as no other sources are available to tell us what people thought and how they expressed their thoughts in words. Manuscripts also feature prominently in the discovery and revived appraisal of nation’s cultural heritage, but perhaps particularly of specific individual small communities. They are often used as heirlooms of a community’s highly cultured past, that is almost forgotten but is worthy of being preserved and restored. In its attempts to preserve this cultural heritage and identity, through out Southeast Asia, DREAMSEA endeavours to find as many manuscripts from as many different back- grounds as possible. This work has been done. Not infrequently, people are ignorant about their content and value, or they are embarrassed or secretive about their existence out of fear of ridicule, or even physical threat because others believe the manuscripts contain deviant texts. In such cases, we will need to assess whether the manuscripts brought to our attention are indeed endangered. It transpires that most manuscripts brought to us are threatened simply because of the tropical climate and the fact that they are in the hands of people who do not know how to preserve them professionally. The fact alone that they are in private hands is another reason for their endangerness. Once the collector dies or decides to get rid of his collection, the manuscripts are either lost or end up in private collections that may not be accessible. This fact presented yet another dilemma for us. We had to consider whether to digitise entire collections or only certain parts of them. We solved this issue in a rather practical and straightforward way. Choosing only selected manuscripts would mean that our present-day interests would decide not to include what other in the future might deem to be of crucial importance. Therefore, we decided to digitise entire collections. The digitised manuscripts stay with their owners. As a token of appreciation of their willingness to have their collections digitised and for the very fact that they built these collections, they receive a framed certificate with a picture of one of the manuscripts. They also receive a hard disk with the digital images of their manuscripts, and sometimes we present them with cupboards or boxes to store the collection in a dust-free environment. Stay informed Building on a community of stakeholders and a network of informants is crucial to finding the smaller collections of manuscripts and to showing how much fun studying these manuscripts may be. DREAMSEA uses social media to inform the public what is being done and to attract attention for the study and use of handwrittan manuscripts. You can connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, whilst more about current and future activities can also be found on the DREAMSEA website.
The Maritime Asia Heritage Survey (MAHS) is a new five-year project supported by the Arcadia Fund to identify and document vulnerable heritage resources across maritime Southern Asia within an open-access and permanently preserved digital archive. The MAHS Project is a partnership between the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) at Kyoto University, the Earth Observatory of Singapore (EOS) at Nanyang Technological University, and national-level institutions in each of the countries where we work.

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The MAHS digital archive can be accessed at: http://maritimeasiaheritage.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp.

Participate

We are always open to considering new collaborations to enhance the digital documentation of heritage across this region. In each of these countries, the MAHS Programme and by local communities. The full project data set will also be made available through Creative Commons license.

Notes

In March 2018, I graduated with an MA in Asian Studies from Leiden University, opting for the IIAS Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies. Through this programme, I also graduated with an MA from the Department of Anthropology at National Taiwan University in January 2020.

My studies in Leiden and then at National Taiwan University (NTU) are experiences that I will remember for the rest of my life. I became interested in Asian Studies during my first year as a bachelor’s student of History at the University of Groningen. I soon got fed up with the Eurocentric approach to history, where everything eventually ended up with historians feeling the need to include Europe as the main protagonist, and I decided to change my direction and do a minor in ‘Non-Western History’. It led to a fascination for Japanese history, in particular Meiji History and Japanese colonialism. After this, as I had developed a more profound interest in the country, I decided to go to Japan and learn the language. It led to a year abroad at Osaka University, where I reached the N2 level in Japanese (B2/C1 according to the CEFR), and was able to conduct research in Japanese that would form the basis of my two theses; and later led to conduct research in Japanese that would be a misunderstanding about the language requirements, this Double Degree programme could still circumvent requirements: while the first candidates of the programme. I was trying to do it in one year, students usually spend three years on this programme. I was trying to do it in one year, a language I did not yet fully master. Several factors led to the completion of the degree. First of all, it would not have been possible without the kindness and flexibility of the professors. I was fortunate to have already received such kindness from IAS and again in Leiden. Secondly, the vibrant and dynamic country also helped a lot. For example, in Taipei and on Green Island, I visited heritage sites of the martial-law period. The way the country allowed me to reconsider many of my previous assumptions on topics I had already researched for years, something I had not imagined possible. Another bonus was the food markets, one found just across the street allowing me to have a moment of indulgence every day. Thirdly, I was equally blessed with my partner living in Thailand and our plans to meet every month, either in the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IIAS) and targeted Asian partners in the development of a special master’s (and PhD) track in the field of ‘Critical Heritage Studies’. The uniqueness of this programme will be combined with a parallel set of courses in a number of Asian universities, allowing for the students to attain 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. At Leiden University, students can opt for a 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 Heritage 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 views of indigenous, local communities and official state discourses are negotiated. 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.

Edwin Pietersma

Edwin Pietersma is a Dutch anthropologist, who after graduation he was allowed to sign his name on the wall, in accordance with university tradition.
freedom to pursue their research and artistic research and dissemination of knowledge. The University of Ghana, by the nature of its core business, should provide an environment that fosters the free pursuit of knowledge and artistic creations through teaching, learning, research, and dissemination of knowledge and artistic performances. The assurance of academic freedom is critical in pursuance of this goal. Further, “academic staff have the freedom to pursue their research and artistic creations, subject to the universal principles and methods of scientific enquiry, without interference from the university or the state”. This guarantees that both faculty and students can engage in intellectual debates without fear of censoring or retribution, thus establishing faculty members’ right to remain true to their pedagogical philosophy and intellectual commitments. Two significant problems emerged, however. First, the university has over the years been insulating itself from the wider society, thereby excluding local voices, and in so doing, has been maintaining and encouraging a coloniality of education. The university is clearly embedded in a contradiction, between the lofty ideal of advancing social progress and the apparent exclusion of locally-generated knowledge and voices, which are equally legitimate. This lopsidedness amounts to what Nyamnjoh refers to as “…unequal encounters and dogmatic propensities in the production and circulation of meaning and value, which has received far less encomiastic scholarly attention beyond proliferating spurious rhetoric and prescriptive lip service.” The second problem is that the university, based on the rational scientific method, appears to be acting against its and our own best interests. Humans act irrationally, as observed by behavioural economics, for example. Rational science ignores such long-established fact. In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni admonishes the African academy, and calls for “a radical turning over of a new leaf, predicated on decolonial turn and epistemic freedom.” Diagne appeals to African academics “to go beyond the simple denunciation of epistemic coloniality or the demand for epistemic freedom to produce affirmative, positive assertions that lay clear the presence of Africa and Africans in the production of an enlightening and liberating knowledge.”

For this to happen, the historical processes that have framed the African academy and intellectual space, the issue of autonomy and democracy has to be at the fore and centre of the discourses on scholarly freedoms in Africa. To better comprehend the nature of the research environment in Africa and to reflect on the social and material context of research as an intellectual activity, CODESRIA co-organised a major conference on academic freedom and research in Africa in Kampala in 1990. Claude Ake, touching on the material base of academic freedom, maintained that the democratic aspirations of the rationalist movement were betrayed when most post-colonial African leaders decided to inherit the colonial system rather than transform them democratically. And, in the course of dealing with the alienation and resentment that this produced, they became authoritarian, repressive and coercive.

Academic freedom and the coloniality of education

Academic freedom is basically embedded in the right to education. First, it means that both faculty and students can engage in intellectual debate without fear. Second, it establishes a faculty’s right to remain true to their pedagogical viewpoint and intellectual commitments. It is a preservation of the critical norm of intellectual integrity of the educational system. Thus, not only are debate and dissent critical to the pursuit of knowledge, but so also is the freedom to search for truth and to publish and disseminate what one holds to be true. This in itself is intrinsically linked to the notion of the rule of law and fundamental rights, most notably, free expression and free speech in general. It is important to point out that questions have often been raised about the role that coercive authoritarian governments may play on universities campuses, presumably believed to be strongholds of academic freedom outside their reach. Today, in parts of Africa, the ‘rule of law’ has become a code word for allowing governments to supplant ‘scholarly freedoms’. And this is accomplished by resorting to colonial laws that remain in the statute books of many post-colonial states. I would like to share a personal experience of how due process of law stifles academic freedom in contemporary Africa. On 17 May 2012, I was due to present a seminar paper at the Institute of African Studies (University of Ghana) on ‘How incomplete capitalism encourages capital accumulation via predatory trajectories: the case of the Woyome scandal’. This was a preliminary sketch, a contribution towards the view that underdeveloped capitalism engenders a primitive accumulation of capital via predatory, corrupt trajectories. The Woyome scandal in Ghana, described in the media as financial malfeasance, involved a leading financier of the then ruling National Democratic Congress, who in connivance with politicians and state technocrats managed to secure and pay judgment debts running into millions of Ghana Cedis. A day before my presentation, a group of lecturers and administrators at the university called for its cancellation on the grounds that since the...
matter was before a court of law, we could be cited for contempt of court. The seminar was called off.42

Clearly, the rule that was cited to me as law was one used by the British courts to stifle the Irish during the height of the British-Irish war. Imported without thinking, and applied quite rabidly and opportunistically by the courts and by a coterie that stepped into the shoes of the British when they left, this rule was clearly unconstitutional vis-a-vis the freedom of speech and academic freedom provisions of Ghana’s 1992 Constitution and the University of Ghana Act, 1961 (Act 222) which we unfortunately are still held in colonised almost everything.

The rule of law is being used to stifle scholarly freedoms in contemporary Africa.

In the past, coercive authoritarian governments employed violence, silence debate and dissent. That was easier to identify, classify and contest. The new trend seems to conceal the attack on element freedom and free speech under the cloak of democracy and due process of law. This new development is difficult to perceive or understand. Nevertheless, it constitutes a terrible abuse of academic freedom. For now, we can only take refuge in Bertrand Russell’s admonition, in praising Karl Popper’s “The Open Society and its Enemies” to be “vigorously and profoundly (in our) defence of democracy.”46 It is on the basis of such dynamic and reflective democracy that we will develop a quintessential ‘social laboratory’ through which to interrogate and heighten our comprehension of meaningful, critical and pan-Africanist ideals. The Ghana project relates to memory, migration, and pan-Africanism in connection with the historical, comparative and contemporary issues such as the Nlgirian, Malian, Senegalese diasporas in Ghana, and mobility in West Africa in general. The migration has tended to challenge the nation-state and also xenophobia. And, in some instances, they have even led to the construction of parallel political economies different from those under the influence of the states. Two things stand out, namely place-making and meaning-making. The project explores the existing body of knowledge on memory itself contestable and manipulatable, and the process and new ways of Pan Africanism.


A defining feature of post-colonial West Africa is increasing cross-border migration, making the region one of the quintessential ‘social laboratory’ through which to interrogate and heighten our comprehension of meaningful, critical and pan-Africanist ideals. The Ghana project relates to memory, migration, and pan-Africanism in connection with the historical, comparative and contemporary issues such as the Nlgirian, Malian, Senegalese diasporas in Ghana, and mobility in West Africa in general. The migration has tended to challenge the nation-state and also xenophobia. And, in some instances, they have even led to the construction of parallel political economies different from those under the influence of the states. Two things stand out, namely place-making and meaning-making. The project explores the existing body of knowledge on memory itself contestable and manipulatable, and the process and new ways of Pan Africanism.


Radio interview Kojo Opoku Aidoo discussed the HaB project on 26 October 2017 on Radio Univers’ ‘Interrogating Africa’ on-air show at University of Ghana. https://tinyurl.com/HaB-AidooRadio

Project update https://tinyurl.com/HaB-RGReview

Photos taken during the workshop: above, Dr Amponsah interacting with participants. Left, Mr Argeo sharing his lived experience. Below, Kojo Opoku Aidoo at the Kokrobitey Institute.

HaB at the University of Ghana

Advancing humanist pedagogies

Structured along the lines of Cambridge and Oxford universities and established by ordinance in 1948, the University of Ghana has been a quintessential encyclopaedic one with a tradition of ‘bounded disciplines’. Seen largely as an ‘iron tower’, the university, since its inception, has placed a very high premium on rigorous, performance-oriented, test-dominated pedagogical approaches. Such approaches have tended to peripheralise, if not entirely negate, the humanistic pedagogical approach.

Nonetheless, two specific developments profoundly altered university-community relations. The first event was the establishment in 1963 of the Institute of African Studies as an autonomous body within the university to ‘engage in the regeneration of African and her peoples through knowledge production, dissemination, application and preservation’.43 Alimotu noted that Ghana’s founding president, Kwame Nkrumah, sought to transform both scholarly and public understandings of African history and culture locally and globally through the Institute of African Studies, and the Encyclopaedia Africana.44 During the launch of the institute, Nkrumah declared: "When we were planning this University, I knew that a many-sided Institute of African Studies which should fertitlize the University, and through the University, the Nation, was a vital part of it. It was W.E.B. Du Bois who conceived the Encyclopaedia Africana idea, as a scientific and comprehensive work on the history and peoples of African descent that "would refute the Enlightenment notion of blacks as devoid of culture and selected as the ‘hollowness of humanity’.”

The second development was the establishment of the radio programme ‘Interrogating Africa’, broadcast one hour daily on ‘Radio Univers’ since 2013, in which Institute of African Studies faculty share their research findings, and important developmental and educational messages, with not only the university community, but also members of the neighbouring communities. ‘Interrogating Africa’ is an interactive radio show that allows callers to contribute to discussions. An emergent system of co-creation of knowledge is, as a result, being institutionalised, thereby enriching the theory and praxis of humanistic knowledge production. Despite the criticisms towards coloniality of pedagogy, the University of Ghana seems to have made efforts at decolonising education, even if progress remains meagre. The establishment of a radio station is an indication of a movement towards community participation, and possible rectification of the colonial pedagogy mind-set.

The Humanities across Borders program

In 2017, the Humanities across Borders: Africa and Asia program (HaB) arrived at The University of Ghana, a colonially created encyclopaedic academy. The university’s initial response to HaB was ambiguous, simultaneously welcoming and hesitant. For the University of Ghana, HaB was intellectually potentially disruptive of its elitist history and standing, or even revolutionary. The biggest challenge was to get the Faculty of Humanities to buy into this new, pioneering, humanistic pedagogical model. Whilst the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the Director of the Institute of African Studies, and the Association of African Universities were generally receptive to the new programme, most faculty members remained incredulous, if not in total opposition. Two solutions presented themselves. First was the slow process of explanations required to highlight the efficacy of the humanistic pedagogy.

Second was to call on the principles of academic freedom on which the university was originally built: the freedom to pursue and disseminate knowledge and to determine the worthy object of the humanistic pedagogy.

The Humanities across Borders program represents an intellectually and methodologically novel — and not without controversy — departure from the pedagogical practices that I am familiar with. In the course of developing the humanistic pedagogy, I encountered griot-like figures (migrants in Ghana), intellectual activists and cultural instirts, who build their knowledge through their analysies of how the world is. They are regarded for their reflective philosophical knowledge, as ‘walking libraries’ with up-to-date knowledge and histories of their communities. With wide-ranging historical knowledge, they demonstrate unlimited possibilities for the formal educational establishments. Nonetheless, the objective is to: ‘go beyond classroom and textbook-based pedagogies and to deploy embodied teaching and learning practices; to seek non-textual, lived sources of knowledge and their modes of transmission’; and ‘to work with local communities and civil society actors to jointly formulate research agendas’. Thankfully, a clear promise. For the HaB enters its second phase, we at The University of Ghana will be able to consolidate, institutionalise, and build upon the achievements made so far.

Kojo Opoku Aidoo, Head of the History and Politics Section of the Institute of African Studies, The University of Ghana, and a Research Fellow at the same institute. He is also the Principle Investigator of the HaB project ‘Mobilities of Grassroot Pan-Africanism’. https://tinyurl.com/HaB-Mworkshop

Notes
1 https://www.uog.edu/gh/about/university-
2 Ndlovu-Gatsheni is referring to the epidemiological turn in the movement towards decolosisation education.
3 ‘The University of Ghana Guidelines for the Assurance of Academic Freedom, Creativity and Innovation’, accessible from https://www.ug.edu.gh
4 ‘Making space: Advances in Pan-African Studies, The University of Ghana, and a Pedagogical Project in the Black Star of Africa’, Kojo Opoku Aidoo blog/due-process-law-and-academic-
5 https://www.ug.edu.gh/about/university-
7 ibid., Ndlovu-Gatsheni.
8 Backlin Deegan’s review of: ibid., https://www.ug.edu.gh/about/university-
9 ‘The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Struggle for Pan-Africanism’, 29 November 1990, Kampala, Uganda; https://www.okeania.org/flip-
10 Humanities across Borders program, https://tinyurl.com/HaB-RGReview
11 ‘Humanities across Borders program, https://tinyurl.com/HaB-RGReview
12 Backlin Deegan’s review of: ibid., https://www.ug.edu.gh/about/university-
T his volume offers an organic discussion of Wang Bing’s filmmaking across China’s marginal spaces and against the backdrop of the state-sanctioned ‘China Dream’. Wang’s work has contemporary China as its focus and testifies to the country’s contradictions, not dissimilar to those of contemporary societies dealing with issues of inequality, labour, and migration. Without being an activist, Wang Bing gives voice to the subaltern. His internationally awarded documentaries are recognized as giving voice to the subaltern. His unique aesthetics bears reference to film masters, therefore this investigation goes beyond the divide between Western and non-Western film traditions.

Asian Alleyways: An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization
Marie Gilbert-Flutre and Heide Imai (eds), 2020. Series: Asian Cities
ISBN 9789463729604

This book analyses what Myanmar’s struggle for democracy has signified to Burmese activists and democratic leaders, and to their international allies. In doing so, it explores how understanding contested meanings of democracy helps make sense of the country’s tortuous path since Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy won historic elections in 2015. Using Burmese and English language sources, Narrating Democracy in Myanmar reveals how the country’s ongoing struggles for democracy exist not only in opposition to Burmese military elites, but also within networks of local activists and democratic leaders, and international aid workers.

Narrating Democracy in Myanmar: The Struggle Between Activists, Democratic Leaders and Aid Workers
Tamas Wells, 2021. Series: Global Asia
ISBN 9789463726153

How do rural Chinese households deal with the conflicting pressures of migrating into cities to work as well as staying at home to preserve their fields? This is particularly challenging for rice farmers, because paddy fields have to be cultivated continuously to retain their soil quality and value. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and written sources, Rural-Urban Migration and Agro-Technological Change in Post-Reform China describes farming households’ strategic solutions to this predicament. It shows how, in light of rural-urban migration and agro-technological change, they manage to sustain both migration and farming. It innovatively conceives rural households as part of a larger farming community of practice that spans both staying and migrating household members and their material world.

Rural-Urban Migration and Agro-Technological Change in Post-Reform China
Lena Kaufmann, 2021. Series: New Mobilities in Asia
ISBN 9789463729737

Since the 1990s, the Chinese-North Korean border region has undergone a gradual transformation into a site of intensified cooperation, competition, and intrigue. Drawing on existing studies and new data, Decoding the Sino-North Korean Borderlands brings much of this literature into concert by pulling together a wide range of insight on the region’s economics, security, social cohesion, and information flows. Drawing from multilingual sources and transnational scholarship, this volume is enhanced by the extensive fieldwork undertaken by the editors and contributors in their quests to decode the border.

Decoding the Sino-North Korean Borderlands
Adam Cathcart, Christopher Green and Steven Daner, 2021. Series: Asian Borderlands
ISBN 9789629756222

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We are excited to inform you that you can now find all issues of The Newsletter on our website, open access of course, going back to the very first one published in 1993.

Over the past 28 years, the paper version of The Newsletter has been through a number of redesigns and has enjoyed various ‘looks’, but so too has its online counterpart. The current issues are produced entirely digitally, and are simply sent to the printers by email, only to miraculously appear in print a few days later: But it was not always that easy. The first 26 issues, produced between 1993 and 2001, were done the ‘old-fashioned’ way. The paper version was put together at the printers, and a digital copy never existed. Now, thanks to the invaluable support provided by our colleagues at Leiden University Libraries ‘Special Collections’, we have been able to scan all of the earlier issues. The resulting PDFs are fully searchable, and have recently been added to our website’s section for The Newsletter. This was a vital step in our ambition to make all of our issues available to as many readers as possible.

The online versions of Issues 73 and onwards are currently the most complete: each item on the content page leads you to an ‘article page’ where a full printable version of the text can be found, alongside a link to the paper version PDF.

Issues 27-72 provide you with a content page where you can open individual PDF pages correlating to each article. Full text printable pages have not yet been created, but this will likely be our next step in the process!

We hope you will enjoy browsing through our previous issues, as well as catching up with our most recent. All of which can be found on www.iias.asia/the-newsletter.

Continuation of Humanities Across Borders (HAB)

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a third grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York to support the consolidation and institutionalisation of its flagship collaborative education program ‘Humanities Across Borders’ (HAB). From building a trans-regional network of partners, to testing out-of-classroom and community embedded experiential pedagogies in HAB 1.0, in this next phase, HAB and its partners will mobilise institutions into a new pattern of South-South-North collaboration in higher education.

The three institutional innovations envisioned for HAB 2.0 are:

1) a global consortium with its commitment to public humanist values in education;
2) a foundational curricular platform in ‘Humanities Across Borders’ co-created and co-taught across the consortium’s geographies; and
3) an interactive digital platform and pedagogical resource repository, made widely accessible through partner libraries.

In this way we hope to build a collaborative model of locally rooted, globally conscious, higher education that, until now, has been an aspirational ideal for many universities attempting to achieve educational justice goals. In the coming years, we will disseminate the programme’s situated learning approach extensively, via the consortium’s website, publications, conferences, and other pedagogical events, and hope to encourage other institutions to join our endeavour.

On behalf of IIAS and its partners, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its vision and support of higher education that, until now, has been an aspirational ideal for many universities attempting to achieve educational justice goals. In the coming years, we will disseminate the programme’s situated learning approach extensively, via the consortium’s website, publications, conferences, and other pedagogical events, and hope to encourage other institutions to join our endeavour.

Philipppe Paycar, IIAS Director

Follow the program activities here: https://humanitiesacrossborders.org

Textual Heritage

Online Symposium: 22-23 March 2021
Registration and further information: www.unive.it/textualheritage

Join the first symposium entirely dedicated to ‘textual heritage’, and explore the many facets of this new conceptual analytic!

How have literature, historical chronicles, music traditions, inscriptions, manuscripts, books and scrolls shaped our cultural heritage, and how will they change in the 21st century? How do the processes of reading, writing, copying, translating and performing texts inform and transform notions of authenticity, authorship, ownership, as well as the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage?

A dozen specialists from different disciplines and areas – many early career scholars – will discuss fresh approaches to textual sources, engaging with the latest developments in the field of heritage. On each of the first two days, keynote by Prof. Wibeke Denecke (MIT) and Prof. David C. Harvey (Aarhus University), will kick off the debate.

On the final day, a lively roundtable will bring the program to a close. Attendance is free, but registration is kindly required.

Organisation:
Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice
In collaboration with Waseda University Top-Global University program.

Registration:
For registration and further information, check out the dedicated website www.unive.it/textualheritage

IIAS webinar series

IIAS organises webinars on a variety of Asia-related topics, held by IIAS fellows and other speakers. All webinars (and updates to the schedule) are announced on our website at www.iias.asia/events.

You are most welcome to join (free of charge) by registering online in advance.

22 March 2021
Book talk
Fluid Jurisdictions: Colonial Law and Arabs in Southeast Asia
Speaker: Nurulidzah Yahaya

24 March 2021
Book talk
Contemporary Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West: Care of the Self
Speaker: Gregory Bracken

7 April 2021
Transculturality, Sensoriality, and Politics of the Decorative Arts of Kerala, India
Speaker: Deepthi Murali

21 April 2021
Speaker: Norah Gharala

29 April 2021
Book talk
Islands in a Cosmopolitan Sea: A History of the Comoros
Speaker: Iain Walker

19 May 2021
Speaker: Hedwig Waters

26 May 2021
Book talk
Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds
Speakers: Smriti Sinivas, Battina Raja, Neelima Jeyachandran

Follow the program activities here: https://humanitiesacrossborders.org

Above: Selection of previous newsletters available to view online.
IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

IIAS research and other initiatives are carried out within a number of thematic, partially overlapping research clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents and built around the notion of social agency. In addition, IIAS remains open to other potentially significant topics. More information: www.iias.asia

IIAS research clusters

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

Asian Heritages
This cluster focuses on the uses of culture and cultural heritage practices in Asia. In particular, it addresses a variety of definitions associated with cultural heritage and their implications for social agency. The cluster engages with a broad range of related concepts and issues, including the contested assertions of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’, concepts such as ‘authenticity’, ‘national heritage’ and ‘shared heritage’, and, in general, with issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage.

Global Asia
Asia has a long history of transnational linkages with other parts of the world, thereby shaping the global order, as much as the world at large continues to shape Asia. The Global Asia Cluster addresses contemporary issues related to Asia’s projection into the world as well as trans-national interactions within the Asian region itself. In addition IIAS aims to help develop a more evenly balanced field of Asian Studies by collaborating in trans-national capacity building initiatives and by working on new types of methodological approaches that encourage synergies and interactions between disciplines, regions and practices.

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

The Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) is an inclusive network that brings together concerned scholars and practitioners engaged in collaborative research and events on cities in Asia. It seeks to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. The UKNA Secretariat is at IIAS, but the network comprises universities and planning institutions across China, India, Southeast Asia and Europe. Its current flagship project is the Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET).

SEANNET is about research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge on Asia through the prism of the neighbourhood. Supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, NY (2017-2020), case studies were carried out in six selected cities in Southeast Asia (Mandalay, Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Surabaya). SEANNET seeks to engage the humanistic social sciences in a dialogue with urban stakeholders as co-contributors of alternative knowledge about cities. This is done through a combination of participatory field research, in-situ roundtables, workshops, conferences, publications and new forms of pedagogy developed in collaboration with local institutions of learning. Our second ambition is to help shape and empower a community of early-career scholars and practitioners working on and from Southeast Asia. The SEANNET research teams comprise international and local scholars, students from local universities, and civil society representatives, all working together with the neighbourhood residents.

Southeast Asia Neighbourhoods Network (SEANNET)

www.ukna.asia
Coordinator: Paul Rabé
e.p.rabe@iias.nl
Clusters: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD)

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FORHEAD) is an interdisciplinary network that brings together natural, medical and social scientists to explore the implications of environmental and social change for public health in China and beyond.

www.iias.asia/programmes/forhead
Coordinator: Jennifer Holdaway
j.a.holdaway.2@iias.nl
Clusters: Global Asia

Double Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

Initiated by IIAS, this programme involves Leiden University in the Netherlands, two Institutes at National Taiwan University in Taiwan and one at Yonsei University in South Korea. Discussions with other possible partners in Asia are ongoing. The programme offers selected students the opportunity to follow a full year study at one of the partner institutes with full credits and a double degree. The curriculum at Leiden University benefits from the contributions of Prof Michael Herzfeld (Harvard) as a guest teacher and the Senior Advisor to the Critical Heritage Studies Initiative of IIAS.

www.iias.asia/programmes/critical-heritage-studies
Coordinator: Elena Paskaleva
e.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: Asian Heritages
The Network

Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)

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

The 7th ABRN conference, ‘Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences’, has been postponed until June 2022.

www.abrn.org
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Cluster: Global Asia

Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies

The Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies brings together people and methods to study the ‘Indian Ocean World’, aiming to co-organise conferences, workshops and academic exchanges with institutions from the region. Together with IIAS, the Centre facilitates an inclusive and global platform bringing together scholars and institutions working on connections and comparisons across the axis of human interaction with an interest in scholarship that cuts across borders of places, periods and disciplines.

www.iias.asia/programmes/leiden-centre-indian-ocean-studies
Cluster: Global Asia

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The new joint research programme between IIAS-EPA and the Institute of World Politics and Economy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing is entitled The Political Economy of the Belt & Road Initiative and Its Reflections. It aims to investigate the policy, policy tools, and impacts of China’s Belt and Road Initiative. By focusing on China’s involvement with governments, local institutions, and local stakeholders, it aims to examine the subsequent responses to China’s activities from the local to the global geopolitical level in the following countries: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Hungary, the West Balkons, and Russia.

www.icas.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia
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Cluster: Global Asia

The New Silk Road. China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Context

The International Institute for Asian Studies has recently started a new project of interdisciplinary research on the ‘New Silk Road’ on countries, regions and peoples outside of China.

www.iias.asia/programmes/new-silk-road
Cluster: Global Asia

Peking University (IIAS)

Peking University, IIAS (IIAS) is the largest humanities research and development institution in the People’s Republic of China. IIAS has a total staff of 1050, of which 350 are PhD candidates. There are 21 research institutes, 27 research offices, 4 public key research institutes, and 16 international research institutes. IIAS has 67k volumes in the field of humanities and 21k journal papers.

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

With its biennial conferences, International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest academic forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. Founded in 1997 at the initiative of IAS, ICAS serves as a platform for scholars, social and cultural leaders, and institutions focusing on issues critical to Asia, and, by implication, the rest of the world. The ICAS biennial conferences are organised in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from 65 countries. ICAS also organises the biennial ‘ICAS Book Prize’ (IBP), which awards the most prestigious prizes in the field of Asian Studies for books in Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, and for PhD Theses in English. Eleven conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Philadelphia, Seoul, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, Singapore, Chongqing, Cham, and Bratislava). The next ICAS conference will be held in 2022 in Kyoto, Japan. However, we may need to consider virtual alternatives to an in-person conference. Please do keep an eye on the website for updates, or sign up to our mailinglist to stay informed.

www.icas.asia
https://icas.asia/forms/mailinglist
In early 2020, the Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA) was preparing for its grand opening, just as coronavirus grew increasingly ominous worldwide. The museum’s permanent collection of contemporary and traditional Nepali art would have to wait until October 2020 to welcome the public. In the interim, MoNA’s curator commissioned 19 Nepali artists to produce works dealing with the socioeconomic, ecological, psychological, and emotional impacts of the global pandemic. ‘Tangential Stress’ is the result; a free, fully virtual exhibition showcasing artwork depicting the multiple ways COVID-19 has transformed life in Nepal and around the world over the past year.

The Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA)
The Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA) finally opened its doors after eight months of delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent lockdowns. The new museum is housed on the grounds of the Kathmandu Guest House (KGH), one of the most iconic hotels in Nepal. The MoNA – curated by Rajan Sakya, CEO of the KGH Group of Hotels – aims to create a platform for Nepali artists working in a variety of media and styles. It dedicates a space for the public appreciation and dissemination of Nepal’s artistic heritage. The country has a long, rich history of creative production: Hindu devotional art, Thangka and Paubhā paintings, world-renowned statuary, meticulous woodwork, and more. Such traditions continue today, alongside modern artists working in more contemporary styles. Nepali artwork often hangs in private collections abroad or in foreign museums, such as The Rubin in New York City. Meanwhile, art that remains in Nepal often fails to reach a wider audience. The Museum of Nepali Art seeks to redress this, keeping Nepali art in the country and offering a committed space where the public can experience it.

MoNA originally scheduled its grand opening for February-March 2020, precisely the months when the scale of COVID-19 was clearly becoming a threat. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a veritable pandemic on March 11, and Nepal imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 24. MoNA’s permanent collection of art (religious and secular, traditional and contemporary) would have to wait. The museum, however, quickly shifted gears.

Its curator commissioned 19 works by Nepali artists, each addressing pandemic conditions in Nepal. These were swiftly arranged into a digital exhibition entitled ‘Tangential Stress’. The virtual interface simulates a walk through the manicured grounds of the Kathmandu Guest House, punctuated by icons representing pieces of art. It launched in May 2020, making it among the earliest exhibits focused on the virus’ impacts, and the first virtual showcase of its kind in Nepal.

‘Tangential Stress’ in Pandemic Times
The art of ‘Tangential Stress’ is diverse, though all of it hinges on the epidemiological, psycho-emotional, and socioeconomic effects of COVID-19. Several of the pieces...
take a more expansive view of such effects, depicting the resurgence of nature as humans stayed home, and highlighting human perseverance in the face of a biological threat. Sagar Manandhar’s Creativity Never Dies – composed of abstract flashes of color surrounding the fluid shapes of the world’s continents – is a testament to the persistence of creativity and nature during these trying times. Keshav Hamal’s Art In Lockdown depicts a line of multicolored flowers winding in sharp turns up a bright green canvas, with the blossoms representing the experiences and memories that comprise a life. Aisha Dangol’s New Avatar evokes the Newari Paubā style, depicting a deity with five heads: the artist and his wife, but also a pig, buffalo, and cow. The mixed-media Ekkais Din – 21 Days, by Pramila Bajracharya, shows the deity’s many faces, with the artist’s self-portrait representing the artist in quarantine to a healthcare worker in Vienna. Hers was a literal, spatial isolation as well as a psychological, emotional one. Her piece pays deliberate homage to Gustav Klimt’s The Kiss, yet with a clear difference: whereas Klimt’s famous painting shows two bodies entwined in embrace, KC’s self-portrait depicts only herself, looking somber. She is encircled by a ring of airplanes pointing in all directions, which surround a grid of scratchy buildings and temples, world landmarks and staircases. The ‘outside’ is menacing, the ‘inside’ is stifling. An unassuming golden key hangs in the upper-right corner of the painting, hinting at the possibility of opening the padlocks that enforce our confinement, as if the solution to COVID were simple and just beyond reach.

Considering how swiftly ‘Tangential Stress’ came together, it is admirable how well the commissioned works speak to one another. As a whole, they express the intersecting feelings that have come to characterise life during a global health crisis. Beyond the art’s aesthetic merits, the virtual nature of the exhibition amplifies the commissioned works speak to well the new reality addressed in the art. In that sense, ‘Tangential Stress’ is ideally suited to the present moment. Beyond this exhibition, the museum also launched a second virtual show entitled ‘Inception: A Collection of Nepali Masterpieces’ (https://www.360mona.com/inception), which highlights more traditional styles from Nepal. For those in Kathmandu, the MOA is now open for public admission.

Another theme addressed in ‘Tangential Stress’ is the toll of psychological and social isolation. Batas Gopal Yadav’s Lockdown and Ranju Yadav’s Pregnancy During Pandemic depict each portray a singular figure – a masked boy and a pregnant woman, respectively – to evoke the peculiar combination of fear and loneliness characteristic of the COVID era. Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha’s series of two-tone, puzzle-like images reflects a pronounced disorientation through optical trickery, a chaos that reverberates with the psychological upheavals wrought by lockdowns. Kiran Manandhar’s The Eternal Debate yields a similar effect through its poignant portrayal of internal struggles and the conflicting facets of one’s self. Among the most effective paintings in this vein is Bhadra KC’s Ekkais Din – 27 Days. The mixed-media self-portrait represents the artist in quarantine after returning to Nepal from a residency in Vienna. Hers was a literal, spatial isolation as well as a psychological, emotional one. Her piece pays deliberate homage to Gustav Klimt’s The Kiss, yet with a clear difference: whereas Klimt’s famous painting shows two bodies entwined in embrace, KC’s self-portrait depicts only herself, looking somber. She is encircled by a ring of airplanes pointing in all directions, which surround a grid of scratchy buildings and temples, world landmarks and staircases. The ‘outside’ is menacing, the ‘inside’ is stifling. An unassuming golden key hangs in the upper-right corner of the painting, hinting at the possibility of opening the padlocks that enforce our confinement, as if the solution to COVID were simple and just beyond reach.

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Benjamin Lindee, currently a Fellow at IASL, is an anthropologist focusing on socio-spatial transformations in urban Nepal. He previously worked with MOA curator Rajan Sakya and others at the Kathmandu Guest House to produce the coffee-table book Thamel Through Time: Commemorating 50 Years of Kathmandu Guest House and Thamel 1968-2018.
The Network

IIAS Fellowship

IIAS Fellowship Programme

In the spotlight

The International Institute for Asian Studies annually hosts a large number of visiting researchers (research 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. Meet our fellows at www.iias.asia/fellows

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Information and application forms: www.iias.asia/fellowships

From Mozambique to Mexico: forced journeys in the early modern Iberian world

Norah Gharala, University of Houston, Texas, USA

I began my fellowship in February and feel very fortunate to be here. The flexibility of IIAS has been generous, as has my digital reception from scholars in the Netherlands. I am working on a book manuscript about the forced movements of people from Southeastern Africa to Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, using a central story as a focal point. So far, I have found Leiden an ideal place for reflection and am grateful for the opportunity to research and write. I have online access to relevant materials through the Leiden University Libraries: maps of Southeast Asia; travel accounts; and cutting-edge volumes like Being a Slave: Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean (edited by Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe of Leiden University, 2020).

Brief references to enslaved people from ‘Mozambique in the Indies of Portugal’ in Mexican archives caught my attention a few years ago. Because the mentions were brief, my process of understanding this term has necessitated engagement with archives and libraries beyond Mexico. Part of the first chapter of my book explores early modern European descriptions of the Indian Ocean World and Southeast Asia. These texts collectively contributed meaning to the labels applied to enslaved people. Gold mining, maritime knowledge, loyalty, rebelliousness, and military prowess were some of the practices and traits associated with the term ‘mozambique’ in Iberian worlds.

Beyond analyzing how Portuguese and Spanish vocabularies incorporated Indian Ocean Africa, my project explores how Africans and Afro-descendants deployed labels. Men sometimes made oblique references to Southeastern Africa by claiming relationships with each other within Spanish colonial institutions. In Mexico City, Juan Bartolo told a priest that he had maintained a friendship with another enslaved man “from the time he was a young boy ... in Mozambique where they are from”. The two traveled “to China by boat” and then on to Mexico around 1588 (Mexican National Archive, LV. 1356 exp. 12). Such a rare friendship must have meant a great deal to both men as they were trafficked halfway around the world. A handful of these remarkable stories persist in fragments throughout the archives of the former Iberian empires. My first task while in Leiden is analyzing these fragments in order to draw out as much meaning from them as possible. People of East African origin or descent in Mexico had little opportunity to describe their homelands in the historical record. My research must reckon with those gaps in our historical knowledge and contextualize the clues East Africans left to their experiences of an interconnected world.

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