

# The Newsletter



The Study

## Contested Historical Narratives

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## In this edition of The Focus

# Asian Migrations

Gregory Bracken

The current global waves of migration are marked by their sheer scale. Cities act as magnets for opportunity, and also benefit from the hard and often badly paid work migrants do. The relationship between cities and migrants is symbiotic and can be a win-win situation, or cause social and economic problems. The “Asian Migrations” Focus section compiles five articles by recent graduates of the Masters of Urbanism track from TU Delft’s Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. Four papers deal with migration in Asia, and the fifth paper looks at Asian migration to the West. Asmeeta Das Sharma’s paper considers the Sundarbans, and examines the human face of climate change. Cassie Sun Woo Kim’s paper focuses on Semarang, which is sinking at an alarming rate. Qiyao Hu highlights African enclaves in Guangzhou, to show how they have formed and what problems they are facing. Xiaojun Liu’s paper takes us to Hong Kong’s Sham Shui Po district, a magnet for Mainland Chinese migrants, most of whom are non-skilled workers. You Wu looks at Amsterdam’s Chinatown and elaborates on what to do with this characteristic but threatened district. All papers propose strategies for dealing with problems through spatial design.



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 multisectoral 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.

Information about the programmes and activities of IIAS can be found in The Network pages of each issue of The Newsletter.

## On The Network pages

On page 45, you will find a most interesting report on the In-Situ Graduate School ‘Cultural Precarities: Reading Independent Art Collectives and Cultural Networks in Asia’ (organised by IIAS, LASALLE College of the Arts and KUNCI: Forum & Collective). Originally conceived as a weeklong on-site study in Yogyakarta, it had to pivot to an online programme spread over ten months. Final presentations took place in December 2021 and discussed the collectivism essaying into the personal, the existential, and the world to be. The participants presented a new way of envisioning collectivism through a rich palimpsest of storytelling, podcast conversations, interviews, moving images, and performances. The report includes a link to a selection of the presented work. ‘Meet the Author’ (page 44) entails the article ‘Laos: The Long View’ by Phill Willcox. She is the author of the book *Heritage and the Making of Political Legitimacy in Laos: The Past and Present of the Lao Nation* (2021). She will also be giving an online book talk on April 7th.

On page 50, Eric de Maaker introduces the recently established Leiden Anthropology of Asia Network. Our other announcements are on page 46, including an item about Paul van der Velde, who has been closely connected to the institute’s development and will remain so after his recent retirement. You will find information about our fellowship programme on page 47, along with two ‘fellows in the spotlight’. The IIAS research programmes and other initiatives are briefly described on pages 48-49.

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 opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

Postal address  
PO Box 9500  
2300 RA Leiden  
The Netherlands

Visitors  
Rapenburg 59  
Leiden  
T +31 (0) 71-527 2227  
iias@iias.nl

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Chief editor:  
Paramita Paul

Assistant editor:  
Benjamin Linder

Guest editor for The Focus:  
Gregory Bracken

Editors for The Region:  
The Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (Tallinn University),  
Ping-hsiu Alice Lin (Harvard University),  
Oh Su-Ann (ISEAS),  
Edwin Jurriëns and  
Cathy Harper (Asia Institute, The University of Melbourne)

Editor for The Network:  
Sandra Dehue

Digital editor:  
Thomas Voorter

Graphic Design:  
Paul Oram  
Lava

Printing:  
EPC, Belgium

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Submission enquiries  
theneWSletter@iias.nl  
More information:  
iias.asia/the-newsletter

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[iias.asia](https://iias.asia)



International  
Institute for  
Asian Studies

# Connecting worlds

Paramita Paul



As the Spring 2022 issue of *The Newsletter* goes to print, Leiden, our home base, begins its year as the European City of Science. Every two years, the European Association for the Advancement of Science and Technology in Strasbourg awards this title to a different city. As European City of Science, Leiden will host the Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF), as well as organize activities, exhibitions, and events related to science, knowledge, art, and skills. Leiden's ambition as European City of Science is to inspire curiosity, share insights, and connect science and society.<sup>1</sup>

Inspiring curiosity, sharing insights, and connecting worlds of knowledge and people have always been central to IIAS and *The Newsletter's* endeavors. When the new editorial team, consisting of Assistant Editor Benjamin Linder and myself, took over last year, we aimed to continue to pursue those goals, as well as to explore new ways in which to do so.

We envision *The Newsletter* to be an essential site for the Asian Studies community, where Asia and its place in the world are freely discussed, debated, and redefined. *The Newsletter* responds to current issues, and it offers space for in-depth analyses and alternative perspectives. We welcome and solicit articles from underrepresented groups of authors and from underrepresented parts of Asia, and we are actively seeking institutional partnerships to ensure regional, topical, and disciplinary diversity. Moreover, the print version of *The Newsletter* serves as an anchor for multiple new digital platforms and modes of engagement. The first of these is *The Blog*, a forum in which scholars and practitioners can collaboratively explore a given theme in a less formal, more conversational style. Another of these new digital initiatives is *The Channel*, our first podcast, which we launch in this issue, and which features a wide variety of Asia-related content.

## In this issue

This issue's diverse collection of articles reflects *The Newsletter's* commitments. In "The Study," our collection of research essays, three authors respond to recent headlines. Chris Goto-Jones elaborates on the role of the 'Mindfulness Movement' in systemic anti-Asian discrimination. He writes that the "May We Gather" event – held on 4 May 2021 by 24 different Buddhist organizations in Los Angeles in honor of the victims of the mass shooting in Atlanta on 16 March 2021 – is one of several interventions by Asian-American Buddhists to recognize themselves and their experiences in the depictions of Buddhism in the media. Richard Griffiths and Susann Handke both respond to the November 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. Griffiths argues that the conference was condemned to failure from the start and proposes a smaller, more concentrated approach to the problem of climate change, with negotiations limited to the largest GhG emitters and conducted with a well-defined

ultimate global target and deadline. Handke investigates the climate negotiations from the perspective of the transformation of the energy system. She notes that the Asia-Pacific region will be the ground-zero of meaningful global climate action in the decades to come, and she calls for an appreciation of the contribution of women in this effort: many of the local climate change activists in the Asia-Pacific region are women, and "their voices are as important as the accomplishments of female entrepreneurs in the renewable energy business, and rural women, whose knowledge is essential to help their communities adapt to the consequences of global warming."

The remaining four articles in "The Study" are dedicated to various forms of representation. Amal Chatterjee asks whether former colonial languages are now really of the formerly colonized regions themselves. Are they fundamentally an imposition or alienation, or might we think otherwise? Naoko Adachi explores the exotic in visual representation, through the complex meanings of souvenir photographs from 19th-century Japan. These photos are often described as "fake images of Japan," but Adachi's essay shows that there are other, more nuanced ways of looking at images for foreign viewership. In Aditya Kiran Kakati's article, we find out how the Second World War in Manipur and Nagaland is memorialized through war tourism. A once "forgotten war" in a "remote" frontier region has recently attracted state interest and has become tied to regional aspirations of inter-Asian and global connectivity. Finally, in "Marginal Yet Free," Catherine Chan considers the self-representation of Macanese in 19th-century Hong Kong. What did it mean to be a "true" Macanese? How does a community make its own history under pre-determined circumstances?

"The Focus," our guest-edited special section, has been compiled by Gregory Bracken and brings together five articles that deal with Asian migrations. Migrations are of all times, but the current global waves of migration are unprecedented. The five papers of "The Focus," which have all been written by recent graduates of the Masters of Urbanism track at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), investigate relationships between different types of cities and migrants across Asia and Europe, and some include planning and design proposals.

## New sections in the printed newsletter and new online platforms

This issue's "The Portrait" section is the last of its kind. It showcases an online exhibition by 14 Indonesian artists, who reflect on the importance of diversity in the Indonesian archipelago.

Starting from the Summer issue, we introduce "The Tone." While "The Portrait" detailed museums, exhibitions, or installations that concerned Asia, "The Tone" begins with



Left: Featured collections from The Blog.  
Above: Leiden European City of Science 2022.

a more open conception of artistic output. It will feature works of creativity and curation in the broadest terms: from film and literary festivals to street art, digital media, musical recordings, crafts, and more. Curators, artists, and third parties are invited to pitch an article for "The Tone" by reaching out to the editorial team.

In "The Region" pages of this issue, editors from the Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai and the Asia Research Center at Fudan University, The Asia Institute of the University of Melbourne, and the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, bring us the latest research in Asian Studies from their respective regions. We are also happy to introduce Tallinn University, a new regional connection. Tallinn University is a young university and its Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies presents its four research units: Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Border Studies.

*The Newsletter*, and IIAS, are also expanding online. Many readers will be familiar with *The Blog*, our online platform where scholars and practitioners are invited to discuss topics in their field or weigh in on a special theme. *The Blog* is regularly updated with new collections of conversations, and may be accessed here: <https://blog.iias.asia>.

In addition, in this issue, we are delighted to launch our new podcast, *The Channel*, with the goal of connecting scholars, activists, artists, and the broader public through a mixture of interviews, lectures, discussions, readings, and more. On pp. 42-43, we introduce *The Channel* through excerpts from two different interviews: (1) Caroline Grillot and Nelcy Delanoë talk to us about intertwined histories and the coincidences that shape research, while (2) Michael Herzfeld discusses the politics of culture and national heritage. The transcripts are heavily abridged. Listen to the full interviews at <https://shows.acast.com/the-channel>. New episodes on diverse topics – from Japanese pottery to Brazil-China relations – are coming soon, so be sure to subscribe to *The Channel* via ACast or on your preferred podcatcher app.

We are enthusiastic about extending *The Newsletter* into new domains, and look forward to expanding our diversity, both in terms of our authors and readership. We hope this publication and its digital extensions can inspire, share, and connect in new and different ways. Join us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to stay up to date about new initiatives, and share and connect with us by submitting your research articles and pitching your proposals for *The Newsletter* and our online platforms.

Paramita Paul,  
Chief Editor of *The Newsletter*

#### Notes

1 <https://www.esof.eu/about-european-city-of-science>

# Doing No Harm

## Mindfulness, (Western) Buddhism, Appropriation, Systemic Racism

Chris Goto-Jones

### My mindfulness is better than your mindfulness

Anyone who has engaged with the so-called 'Mindfulness Movement' will have encountered the question of the relationship between contemporary mindfulness practices and Buddhism. Buddhism is vastly more than mindfulness (right mindfulness is only one step along the Eightfold Path), but is mindfulness *Buddhist*? To this, we must give a qualified answer, even if only because the term mindfulness has become so elastic that it now incorporates a range of practices that are almost completely unrecognizable from those drawn from Buddhist traditions. Today, the word 'Mindfulness' (like Buddhism) isn't only one thing.

It is not uncommon to hear mindfulness practitioners claim to be Buddhists simply on the basis that they practice mindfulness for 20 minutes every morning, sometimes using an app like *Headspace* or *Calm*. The commercialization of mindfulness today has contributed to the idea that being a Buddhist is cool (and perhaps isn't really a religious identity at all). I experienced a variation on this when a renowned neuroscientist confessed in a research seminar that people used to think she was a science nerd, but now that she calls herself a 'neuro-Buddhist' they all think she is cool. She gets invited to more parties.

Conversely, it's just as common to hear both advocates and opponents insist that, in its contemporary form, mindfulness has no necessary connection with Buddhism at all. For the advocates, this makes contemporary mindfulness into a secular technology that can benefit (and be sold to) anyone from any background without prejudice. Advocates today have a wealth of data to support the universal benefits of the practice. For the opponents, the deracination of mindfulness makes the contemporary practice ethically and spiritually vacuous; making mindfulness into something popular and mass-market exchanges its true value for a dollar value. For these opponents, calling contemporary mindfulness 'Buddhist' insults the dignity of Buddhism. It would be akin to saying that making a wish as you blow out birthday candles is the same as Christian prayer.

It is easy for scholars in various disciplines to get so wrapped up in the intellectual gymnastics that they forget that mindfulness is a practice that impacts the lives of real people. That said, one thing that nearly everyone in the field seems to accept is that mindfulness in various forms appears to have generally beneficial impacts on the people who practice it. That is, whatever else we can say about it, at least we can say that contemporary constructions of mindfulness *do no harm*. But is this true? In particular, what definition of 'harm' must we maintain in order for that to be true? Where are we looking for harm, and whose harm is neglected? And is that neglect already harmful?

### What does it mean to do no harm?

The mindfulness field is increasingly attentive to the dangers of doing harm. However, the conception of 'harm' is largely limited to the possibility of 'adverse' experiences of individuals on the cushion in various contexts, be they clinical, spiritual, recreational, or religious. These range from rather common and mild feelings of

The word 'Mindfulness' has become so pervasive today that it's almost impossible to keep track of all the different ideas and practices that it is used to label. It is neither my purpose here to survey them all nor to trace the philosophical, philological, or cultural histories of the different usages. Rather, my concern is to identify some of the ways in which the so-called 'Mindfulness Movement' might touch on or even participate in systemic anti-Asian discrimination and other forms of harm. I do not claim that any such harm is intentional, but I would like to suggest that it might be avoidable. And I claim neither that this account characterises the entire field nor that it exhausts all the possible systemic harms, but it identifies a current for which the mindfulness field should take responsibility. Paying more attention to Asia, Asians, and Asian Studies might be a good way to start.



Fig. 1: Graphic of "May We Gather: A National Buddhist Memorial Ceremony for Asian American Ancestors". Photo downloaded from [maywegather.org](http://maywegather.org).

dissociation to quite rare and profound episodes resembling psychotic breaks. Willoughby Britton of Brown University has even established a clinic devoted to supporting repair and healing after such damage has been done.<sup>1</sup>

For as long as mindfulness has been deployed in therapeutic and clinical settings, such as in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), there has been guidance about circumstances and conditions in which mindfulness should be contraindicated for specific individuals, lest it exacerbate rather than relieve suffering. In this context of therapeutic mindfulness, 'do no harm' means the alteration of practices and practitioner groups based on evidence of beneficial outcomes.

For example, recent work by Elizabeth Stanley has produced protocols for mindfulness-based treatments for trauma, initially focussing on military veterans and first-responders in the USA.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, David Treleaven's Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness (TSM) has helped clinicians and other mindfulness vendors to adapt the delivery of mindfulness to minimize the likelihood of triggering traumatic memories (whether the client is conscious of having such memories or not).<sup>3</sup>

Looking a little closer, however, the attention to trauma also opens the door to the possibility of systemic, cultural, and racial harm. Can the Mindfulness Movement do harm to identities, communities, cultures, and to the individuals who inhabit those categories? Like so many other areas of knowledge and practice

today, should contemporary mindfulness be striving to be more mindful of its location in and contribution to systemic prejudices and violence?

One place where these questions edge into the categories of harm already outlined is in the field of trauma-sensitive mindfulness. For example, there we find compelling and copious evidence of the ways in which the unexamined or accidental Orientalism of (often well-meaning) mindfulness teachers, writers, and vendors can trigger the deep-rooted trauma of having been subjected to consistent patterns of racism in society more broadly. Common examples that I have witnessed might involve a teacher's (often well-meaning) remarks that the only Asian-presenting participant in a group will have a natural advantage in mastering mindfulness, perhaps even noting that this participant probably grew up meditating all the time at home.

### May we gather

4th May 2021 marked the 49th day after the killing of eight people, six of whom were Asian-American women, in Atlanta. This mass shooting followed a surge in anti-Asian racism and violence, especially (but certainly not only) in the USA, with thousands of reports of harassment, discrimination, and physical attacks since March 2020 and the emergence of the COVID pandemic.

In some Buddhist traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, 49 days after a death is believed to be the longest time that a person can reside in the intermediate stage between death and rebirth – it is sometimes known as the *bardo*. Because of this, in such traditions, a special ceremony will be held on the 49th day, completing a cycle of 7x7 funerary rituals, marking the final passage of the deceased from their previous state into whatever follows for them. This is traditionally also a moment of release and healing for those left behind.

On 4th May 2021, leaders and followers of two dozen different Buddhist traditions gathered at Higashi Honganji temple in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. Reflecting the demographics in the United States in general, where more than two-thirds of Buddhists are Asian-American, the vast majority of people in attendance were of Asian descent. One of the organizers, Rev. Duncan Ryuken Williams, explained that an assembly of so many different Buddhist traditions for one event might be historically unprecedented, and perhaps it would only be possible in California, with its rich religious and ethnic diversity.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of the ceremony was not only to mark the end of *bardo* for the eight human lives lost in Atlanta on 16 March, but also to offer some healing to Asian-Americans, Americans in general, and the whole world that is suffering from the harm of racial hatred. The ceremony included an acknowledgment that Higashi Honganji was built on Tongva territory, which was stolen from the Indigenous people of the area in a period of colonial violence. It included acknowledgments of the anti-Chinese violence of the 19th century, the anti-Japanese violence of internment during WWII, and the discrimination against South and Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees in the 1970s.

The ceremony ended with each of the Buddhist leaders painting a line of gold-gilt onto a cracked porcelain lotus flower, a ceremony inspired by the Japanese tradition of *kintsugi*, and then processing out of the temple with each person clasping a point on a single, unbroken length of thread. The lotus is pervasive in Buddhist traditions as a pristine beauty that emerges only from the dirtiest, swampiest conditions. In Thich Nhat Hanh's famous phrase: no mud, no lotus.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, *kintsugi* is an art that seeks to demonstrate the ongoing beauty of shattered and broken things. Both are icons of acceptance and perseverance, of beauty emerging from ruin. In the language of therapeutic modernity, we might see them as metaphors for post-traumatic growth.

It was a beautiful, powerful, and moving event in multiple ways. A few days later, NBC News characterised the ceremony, at least partially, as a response by Asian-Americans to the mainstream white-washing of Buddhism in USA, especially since its recent surge in popularity on the back of the so-called Mindfulness Movement. Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil cites the high-profile conversion of Richard Gere and covers of *Time Magazine* as samples of

the mainstream.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most illustrative cover of *Time* was on 13 October 1997, which bears the headline, “America’s Fascination with Buddhism,” and shows a photograph of Brad Pitt from the 1997 movie *Seven Years in Tibet*, about the Austrian explorer who escaped from a prison-camp in the Himalayas and smuggled himself into Tibet in 1944. The point here is that Buddhism has been given a series of beautiful white faces and bodies to represent it in the media, especially as it has grown in popularity in the so-called West. If this case can be made for Buddhism, it’s even easier to make for Mindfulness, especially in its commercial forms.

Kandil also suggests that the history of Buddhism in the United States tends to focus on the role of white converts, especially those in the countercultural movements of the 1960s, rather than on the hundreds of thousands of Asian immigrants and Asian-Americans who brought Buddhism to the country and cultivated it. The story of the “Westernisation” of Buddhism is presented as the story of its adoption by white Americans, including by white scientists, rather than the story of generations of Asian-American Buddhists. Where Asians or Asian-Americans do appear in such stories, they often appear in Orientalised ways, as lost in pre-modern superstition and magical thinking, while the white converts are shown as having brought Buddhism into the light of reason and modernity.

In fact, the “May We Gather” event was not Asian-American Buddhists’ first intervention into this mainstream narrative: groups such as the Young Buddhist Editorial<sup>7</sup> provide a forum and profile for young Asian-American Buddhists. The idea is partly to help build community amongst Asian-American Buddhists, who often struggle to recognise themselves and their experiences in depictions of Buddhism in the media. In part, the strategy is to showcase images and experiences of real, living, young Asian-American Buddhist lives to combat the stereotypes.

My point here is that there are clearly some systemic social and cultural factors around (Western) Buddhism that demand we consider the dimensions of potential ‘harm’ more broadly than directly induced experiential dis-ease, adversity, or even trauma on a meditation cushion. “May We Gather” points towards the possibility that there are systemic issues in and around Western Buddhism that do harm to Asians and Asia, and perhaps also to Buddhism itself. If this is true of Buddhism, how much more true might this be of mindfulness – the exemplary case of white-washing Buddhism and Buddhist practices more generally?

### An Asia-shaped hole in mindfulness and (western) buddhism?

We must accept that anti-Asian racism is a powerful current in many Western societies today, and also accept the lived experience of many Asian-American Buddhists as marginalized from the mainstream narrative of Buddhism in the West. So, what do we find when we explore the situation around so-called secular mindfulness? Outside Buddhist communities, are there aspects of this secular narrative that potentially cause harm? If so, what are they and what can be done about them?

One of the most immediate issues involves a consideration of how the kinds of secular mindfulness that we see today have entered the marketplace. A fairly conventional narrative in the world of “secular mindfulness” would start this story in the late 1970s with the groundbreaking work of Jon Kabat-Zinn. Indeed, in some communities of practice, the story of Kabat-Zinn establishing a mindfulness clinic in the basement of Massachusetts Medical Center to support patients with chronic pain is teetering on the cusp of legend today.

In the 1970s Kabat-Zinn made a strategic decision to present mindfulness as a simple technique or technology that could be practised by anyone from any background without any ethical or religious connotations. So, even though Kabat-Zinn was a practicing Buddhist himself, the decision was made to develop a language to describe, teach, and practice mindfulness without employing references to Buddhism or Buddhist terms. The rationale for this was simple: in order to



Fig. 2 (top): *Time Magazine* cover showing of Brad Pitt from the 1997 movie *Seven Years in Tibet*.

Fig. 3 (middle): *Time Magazine* cover “The Science of Meditation”

Fig. 4 (bottom): “The Mindful Revolution”.

make a therapeutic technology palatable to clinicians, hospitals, and patients in the United States, mindfulness had to be stripped of any necessary connection with any religion, and with a non-Christian religion in particular. When we talk about ‘secular mindfulness’ today, we’re talking about a version of an originally Buddhist practice in which the language, trappings, and textual framing of mindfulness have been modified strategically to accord with a modern scientific context that is itself situated in an unevenly Christian polity. This is another way of saying that, at least at that time, Buddhism was seen as something of a liability. Buddhism was like mindfulness’ embarrassing, older, first-generation-immigrant relative who threatened to show up and dance at the highschool prom; nobody look at grandpa, you’ll just encourage him.

Thankfully, this allergy to acknowledging the Buddhist roots of contemporary mindfulness has diminished. However, a factor in this diminishment has been the trend towards arguing that Buddhism itself isn’t really a religion. That is, not only can one construct secular mindfulness, but one can also fashion a secular Buddhism. The implication of this is that even if clinicians, scientists, and commercial vendors of mindfulness admit that it has Buddhist origins, this need not involve associating it with a religious worldview, which is often depicted as pre-modern, unscientific, and superstitious. That is, “Buddhist modernism” involves the Western liberation of Buddhism from the murky category of religion.

There are various possible ways to make the argument that it is inappropriate to call Buddhism a religion. As scholars of Asian Studies will know well, it is relatively common, for instance, to argue that the category of ‘religion’ was developed to encompass Abrahamic traditions and that non-Abrahamic traditions just got forced into that category through a process of colonial, epistemic violence as European scholars encountered other cultures. Historically, Buddhism might

have performed a range of religious functions in various societies, but perhaps calling it a religion is forcing a circular peg into a triangular hole?

In general, though, the mindfulness movement does not appeal to anti- or de-colonisation in this way. Instead, the most pervasive argument in that field is usually about the discovery of scientific evidence that some of the therapeutic claims of Buddhism have reliable neurological correlates. The discovery of neuroplasticity in particular has opened this door. The argument is something like this: because various aspects of Buddhist philosophy have now been shown scientifically to be ‘true,’ Buddhism no longer demands belief or faith from its adherents and thus is no longer a religion. On this account, Buddhism is really a branch of experimental psychology; so, mindfulness is a psychological technology even if it is Buddhist. Leaving aside the question of whether belief or faith are necessary or sufficient conditions for categorisation as a religion (which they are not), this argument does reveal that faith and belief are the issues that risk making a practice unpalatable to clinicians, scientists, and commercial vendors in contemporary modernity.

Important in this context is that this orientation towards Buddhism as a form of psychology rather than religion implies two allied positions: first, mindfulness and Buddhism can be rooted in science rather than religion, and, second, that mindfulness and Buddhism *should* be saved from the darkness of religion by science. So, removing religion is not only technically possible, but it is a form of good. That is, on this account, science is a superior form of knowledge, bringing enlightenment into the darkness; modern science can save Buddhism and mindfulness from their extended history of superstition (in Asia). Asia, Asians, and scholars of Asian Studies might contest this saviour-narrative.

In the context of the attempt to excavate issues of systemic injustice in this field, this kind of approach to secularisation carries a host of important implications. Perhaps the most glaring is that more than two millennia of the lived history of Buddhism and the practice of mindfulness meditation is effectively bracketed out of the field as pre-modern, superstitious, or religious; instead, Western scientists are held to have discovered the truths of Buddhism and mindfulness for the first time, just as Columbus discovered the Americas. Indeed, many of the contemporary trainings in therapeutic mindfulness that do include references to the ‘original’ formulations of mindfulness in Buddhism refer directly back to the Pali canon, leap-frogging 2500 years of scholarship, interpretation, commentary, and experience in order to show that contemporary science has discovered the veracity of some of this “ancient wisdom.” The tremendous sophistication and diversity of the myriad Buddhist traditions – so richly showcased at the “May We Gather” ceremony and so carefully explored in the field of Asian Studies – is largely flattened into a couple of classical texts.

### Territorial acknowledgments

I am very lucky to be able to live, work, and learn on the unceded territories of the Lekwungen peoples, here on Vancouver Island, Canada. It is the normal practice of universities here to acknowledge this living territorial heritage whenever there is a public event. The practice is not perfect, and it is sometimes performed in a routine and bureaucratic way, but at least it is an attempt to prevent denial from doing further harm to those Indigenous communities whose identity was subjected to systematic attempts at erasure. When I teach meditation or mindfulness here, in the university or elsewhere, I always start with a territorial acknowledgment and also with a heritage acknowledgement, recognizing the millions of Asian ancestors over thousands of years who preserved, cultivated, and developed most of the techniques upon which contemporary practices rely. In a secular context, I explain that this does not mean that contemporary mindfulness is necessarily Buddhist in all/any of its popular forms. It simply means accepting that we would not be sitting on these cushions in Victoria without the remarkable lives of generations of Asian

Buddhists, including those who sacrificed so much to bring it to North America and then to preserve it here in the face of violence and discrimination.

It is certainly true that this acknowledgment causes some people who might otherwise have benefitted from practicing mindfulness to stand up and leave. They do not wish to participate in something Asian or something with Buddhist associations. If I were a commercial vendor, I would not be maximising my market by explaining the heritage of this product. But I am not, and I immediately recognise my privilege in that respect.

More complicated in this context is the dilemma of healthcare providers. Often, such workers are still encouraged to obscure the Buddhist origins of the techniques they teach precisely so that they can help anyone whose suffering might be alleviated by the practices, regardless of their personal commitments. If revealing this heritage story means that some people refuse even to try the practices, is telling this story potentially doing them harm?

It’s such a complicated question. Consider the possibility, for instance, that it is the practice itself that contains the meaning, the knowledge, and the seed of transformation, as Mahayana Buddhist teachers have argued for at least 800 years. That is, unlike the privileging of text, doctrine, and language that is so central to the Western philosophical tradition, there is a thread in Buddhist epistemology that clearly emphasizes how none of those things matter in the end; what matters is just that you sit and practice. The practice itself transforms us. So, if we persuade someone to practice mindfulness today who is anti-Asian or anti-Buddhist on the basis that the contemporary practice has been freed of those connections by science, are we simply tricking them into becoming practicing Buddhists? Is this bad faith? Expedient means? Is this doing no harm?

Perhaps the most complicated dilemma is the question of weighing the various possible harms against each other. On the one hand, we might consider the various ways in which contemporary mindfulness can benefit diverse populations by constructing itself as a value-neutral form of scientific technology, and thus the potential harm of erecting obstacles to accessing that technology by associating it with an ethnic and cultural group that is subject to discrimination in many Western societies. On the other hand, we must consider the various ways in which deracinating mindfulness risks inflicting further harm on populations that are already subject to systemic harm in many contemporary societies.

I’m more than aware that mindfulness is not the only field in which the balance of potential harms must be balanced. However, in this case at least, there appears to be a non-trivial current of opinion that it is a mistake to think that there are no (or perhaps even minimal) potential harms to be balanced. It seems to me that these emerge, at least in part, from a marginalization of the voices of Asians, Asia, and Asian Studies, and thus affect harm in themselves.

Chris Goto Jones is Professor in Philosophy at the University of Victoria (Canada) and Honorary Professor in Asian Studies at UBC. He teaches the award-winning MOOC, *De-Mystifying Mindfulness*, for Leiden University. E-mail: [chriscgottojones@uvic.ca](mailto:chriscgottojones@uvic.ca)

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# How Global War Memory in the Indo-Myanmar Border-Zones is Refashioning “Remote” Places

Aditya Kiran Kakati

Memorialization of the Second World War (WWII) in Manipur and Nagaland through tourism in India was fueled by ground-up initiatives in the past decade. This reveals contested historical narratives co-existing with newly re-invigorated transnational commemorative circuits enabled by legacies of a “global” war. This challenges perceived historical amnesia about the war in South Asia, which is encapsulated by a Eurocentric trope of “forgotten war.” Simultaneously, some of these efforts to re-excavate history situate the centrality of what was considered a “remote” frontier region into a place of global commemorative relations that acquire greater significance in light of regional desires for inter-Asian connectivity.



## A “forgotten” global war

At a hotel in the city of Imphal in January 2014, I came across a small brochure by a local battlefield tourism company, which offered a “battlefield tour” of sites in and around the city as well as other areas in Manipur. *Battle of Imphal Tours* was my first encounter with WWII history within the tourist landscape of India’s “Northeast” region. That year coincidentally marked the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Imphal and Kohima that had begun in March 1944 with the Japanese invasion from Burma. Memories of this battle were propelled into the limelight in 2013, after the National Army Museum in the United Kingdom voted that this event was Britain’s “greatest” battle. A host of public events on a relatively grand scale have commemorated the 70th anniversary (2014) and the 75th anniversary (2019).

Such commemorations include the establishment of the Imphal Peace Museum in 2019, funded by the Nippon Foundation and endorsed by the Japanese government, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe [Fig. 2]. War tourism in Northeast India draws from experiences of becoming part of the China-India-Burma Theatre of war, another “home

front” of a global conflict, which was until then governed as the British Indo-Burma frontier. War tourism is a useful entry point to probe questions of broader significance about how historical pasts are constantly amenable to appropriation, particularly by postcolonial nation-state projects and minority resistance to them. More importantly, in Manipur and Nagaland, WWII memorialization and tourism have opened up possibilities for shifting the historical narrative in a manner that seeks to transcend regional and national competition in favor of fostering global connections of nostalgia and memory.

War memorialization and tourism have enabled a peculiar sort of globalization in the past decade, one in which the relevance of war memories transcends nationalizing discourses (and resistance to them). WWII’s global nature has been the subject of increasing attention by historical and international relations scholarship. In recent years, ground-up initiatives have re-excavated (sometimes literally) historical pasts, revealing narratives that challenge the highly Eurocentric trope of a “Forgotten War.”<sup>1</sup> As such, tourism represents a genre of history production that can reframe historical genealogies made possible by the experience of a “global war.” Some such alternative genealogies may be informed by a nostalgia for empire that remains under-recognized.

These instances become starker in frontier areas, such as the present-day Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland, whose accommodation within national historical narratives after decolonization has been problematic. The problem of WWII memorialization – or *Japan Laan* (Japan war), as it is called in Manipur’s Meitei language – is fraught and has been in competition with other conflicts (e.g., Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891, Kuki Uprising of 1917) that are interpreted by historians as “anti-colonial,” particularly in the postcolonial context. The resurgence of war memorialization, particularly through tourism, has re-kindled global circuits of memory. Unlike in other Asian contexts, here, WWII tourism – fueled by ground-up initiatives – has largely departed from nationalistic agendas and rekindled connections with British, American, and Japanese tourists, for instance. These international connections with Manipur and Nagaland often bypass the Indian nation-state and articulate distinct genealogies created by global imperial warfare. Fraught historical relations of Manipuris and Nagas with Indian national projects can be transcended in favor of these alternative genealogies that posture these places directly with British, American, and Japanese history. Thus, the legacy of global war afforded narrative possibilities through which Manipuri and Naga history are recast as “global” and not solely tied to India.

## Resurgence, revival, and remembrance

The resurgence of memories of WWII in the region is most visibly manifested in the realm of tourism. War tourism in Manipur since 2012 was driven by amateur explorers and professional tour entrepreneurs on the ground. More recently, they have been increasingly usurped by state-driven projects, sometimes funded in part by foreign governments. Eventually, private entrepreneurial organizations such as the *Manipur Tourism Forum*, in collaboration with state and foreign governments, came to dominate war commemorations and related tourism infrastructure. The increased interest of the state in upgrading the war memorials of Imphal (Manipur’s capital) is a stark departure from previous policy. It can be read as an attempt to signal the local government’s ability to control what has been a highly militarized landscape of precarity and counter-insurgency. It is also an attempt to brand the city as a world “destination.”<sup>2</sup> The dynamics here diverge from nation-centric war sites like the memorials in Kashmir commemorating the Kargil War, where border securitization and tourism have come together. In such cases, a peculiar form of military tourism deliberately encourages the celebration and consumption of nationalist sacrifice, thereby creating greater presence of state and populations in areas where the territorial integrity of India is fraught with anxieties of Chinese and Pakistani occupation.<sup>3</sup>

The “supply” of war memories is rather diverse, and it is not only catered towards the tourism industry alone. In fact, war memorialization has been a site of global interconnection. On the one hand, it is a phenomena that privileges nostalgia for imperial pasts, while, on the other hand, it manifests ruptures and tensions within minority histories of ethnic nationalism as opposed to histories proffered by the Indian nation-state. For example, the Naga armed political resistance movement against India is based on the founding myths of collaboration and loyalty to the British and Allied forces during WWII. Contrary to this, in Manipur, the royal family sided with the British, while the minority Kuki community is largely held to be disloyal to the Allies. In the Kuki context, scholars and ground activism have interpreted and presented Kuki “disloyalty” as “anti-colonial” credentials. Thus, Kuki soldiers in the pro-Japanese Indian National Army (INA) have claimed compensation in independent India as “national” war veterans.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to Manipur, institutionalized war memorialization linked to tourism has arguably had a longer presence in Nagaland, although this is now changing with more foreign investments (especially from Japan) in Manipur.<sup>5</sup> For instance, state-endorsed mega-events such as the Hornbill Festival cater largely to a big foreign tourist clientele. During this event, a primitive past and “tribal” culture

Fig. 1 (above): B.K. Sachu, in his late 80s, converted a part of his home in Kohima into a museum that houses relics and memorabilia of World War II (Image reproduced courtesy of Tora Agarwala /The Indian Express and captioned by the author).



Fig. 2 (above): The India Peace Memorial, built in 1994 by the Japanese government to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Imphal (BOI). The central shrine of the Memorial includes Japanese inscriptions and the phrase *Jai Hind* ("Hail India"), which was a slogan used extensively by the Axis-Allied Indian National Army (INA) as well as a nationalist slogan today (Photo by the author).

are juxtaposed with wartime memorabilia, including a WWII themed car rally.<sup>6</sup> The Nagaland state-funded Kohima War Museum was built adjacent to the site of the Hornbill Festival in Kisama village. Its architect, Ronojoy Sen, said that he combined the structural features of an airplane hangar with the indigenous architectural features of a Naga *Morung* (male dormitory) to create a design that reflected the global encounter of WWII in Nagaland.<sup>7</sup>

The war encounter is often posited as the coming of "modernity" to Naga Hills and Manipur. This echoes recurring Eurocentric tropes as well, notwithstanding the fact that new material and technological transformations did come into the region as a result of WWII. Previously, the material remains of war were mobilized for quite different reasons than they are today. In 1947, over 300 petitioners from Utluo and Laijram Sabal villages in Manipur sought war compensation from the Indian government for the wartime destruction of property. These villages preserved the military structures like trenches and barbed wire, and they collected remains of battle as evidence for their claims.<sup>8</sup>

Public as well as individual initiatives to collect material remains of war have continued over the last decades. For instance, B.K. Sachu, a Naga octogenarian in Kohima, has been collecting wartime artefacts and created a small but remarkable museum [Fig. 1]. However, Sachu said that he had not heard about the government-sponsored year-long commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the war in 2019 in Kohima and Imphal. He made sense of these exclusions by suggesting that the "celebrations are at ministerial level, so they are not inviting villagers."<sup>9</sup> Other groups, like the 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation – led by Yumnam Rajeshwar and Arambam Angamba Singh, with support of the Manipur government – have been engaged in the researching and collection of relics since 2009. More recently, the Japan Association for Recovery & Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC) visited Nagaland and Manipur to collect remains of Japanese soldiers and has been facilitated by the Imphal Campaign Foundation and Manipur Tourism Forum.

War tourism in Imphal initially came from ground-up entrepreneurship in Manipur, pioneered through the *Battle of Imphal* (BOI) tours started by Hemant Singh Katoch and Yaiphaba Kangjam, both of whom are long term informants for my research. Hemant is an entrepreneur, international development professional, and author from Delhi. Through his work on this war, he wants to regularize and professionalize "battlefield tourism" in the region, going beyond the usual "remembrance tours" that do not really cover the wider and expansive landscape beyond war cemeteries and usually excludes stories of individuals. He expressed his desire to see Manipur emerge "as India's pre-eminent destination" for WWII "remembrance tourism" as well as to contribute to Manipur's growth after decades of insurgency and wars with India since the mid-1960s.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, Hemant is reviving a memory repository that draws from an alternate historical genealogy of Manipur, one which moves away from the traditional emphasis on Manipur as an ancient Hindu civilization and/or a Princely State. It also engages the question of belonging in India, as well as the state's troubled past, marred by brutal counterinsurgency undertaken by

Indian armed forces.<sup>11</sup> Hemant has published two books with well-known international publishers. Intended as "battlefield guides,"<sup>12</sup> both books underscore how Manipur was arguably the part of India most affected by WWII. Yaiphaba, who now leads most of the tours in Imphal, has authored a collection of oral histories of the war.<sup>13</sup>

### Locating a forgotten war in time and place

Hemant opined elsewhere that, after the war, Manipur supposedly went back to being a "quiet corner" of the world, despite having been globalized by wartime encounters. Scholars tend to view the wartime experience as a critical event. The war momentarily opened up trans-regional connections across the frontier, thereby challenging the exclusion of tribal inhabitants from modernity caused by colonial frontier policy of territorial enclosure since the 19th century. This brought them greater material and political leverage. This was concomitant with a uniquely intensified form of Allied state-extension, through road-building for instance. Additionally, there was a humanitarian crisis caused by the mass exodus of refugees and troops from Burma after the Japanese occupation of most of the former British territory in 1942. The encounter with modernity was thought to be short-lived. With the re-imposition of a single, Old Standard Time upon the region in 1945, the region was thought to return to a "less modern" temporality as some historians tend to suggest. The idea of a temporal break due to war and to the official end of colonial rule in August 1947 is also problematic since it obscures the continuities of violent militarization and policies that continued to resemble colonial frontier-style governance.

Moreover, Independence – followed by the violence of Partition – created conditions for "forgetting" the war and creating greater distance from it. WWII was portrayed as irrelevant in Indian national history narratives because it was, after all, a war between imperial powers. The Indian political establishment, led by the Indian National Congress, had sided with the British in return for a promise of Independence, while the Bose-led INA allied with Nazi Germany and Japan to overthrow British rule. These dynamics created complications for national memory and thus presented a vested interest in forgetting. In short, war memory in the late 1940s did not serve either British interests nor Indian national ones.<sup>14</sup> In Northeast India, however, war tourism – as a means of transcending the territory's historical relegation as "peripheral" – is key to the current rhetoric of development in the region. In light of recent decades of political and policy desires for inter-Asian connectivity, it is important to note such transnational aspirations that inform demands for the revival of wartime infrastructure like the Stilwell Road that began from Ledo in Assam. This road once connected a larger transport corridor from Kolkata in India with Kunming in China.

Excavation of war memories and materials from the ground seeks to retrieve something that had been "lost" and is to be salvaged and recovered. Such attempts at memorialization incorporate WWII within local historical geography, and in so doing lay claim to a

Fig. 3 (below): Hemant and Yaiphaba at the India-Myanmar border, between the "Twin Cities" of Tamu and Moreh. BOI Tours expanded into Myanmar in 2018 (Image courtesy of Hemant Singh Katoch).



globality and modernity long claimed to be absent. The past can be brought back to life through the excavation of other memories, thereby producing a new narrative of place. The idea of "recovery" may resonate with "imperialist nostalgia" (among other nostalgias), particularly because tourism narratives are deeply embedded within Eurocentric triumphalism of Allied victory and Japanese defeat. It is also true that multiple nostalgias and competing temporalities co-exist in the memory landscape. For instance, the postcolonial Indian state and local Manipuri state (incepted in 1972) privileged movements that were later interpreted to be "anti-colonial." For example, the Anglo-Manipuri "war" of 1891 is commemorated preeminently by the Hindu Meitei majority with support of the Manipuri state. Such narratives celebrate the valor of Prince Tikendrajit as a martyr of the anti-colonial cause. However, opposition to the official narrative of this "war of Independence" has been met with violent public reactions in the past.<sup>15</sup>

After the release of his first book in the form of a battlefield guide, Hemant appeared in a video interview, where he highlighted two key ideas. First, he pointed to the ambivalent attitudes of Indians, especially in Manipur, towards WWII: despite mass participation in resisting the Japanese, the conflict is hardly thought of as "our war." Second, the well-researched battlefield tours – and, subsequently, the books authored by both Hemant and Yaiphaba – have underlined the need to go beyond the identifiable British, INA, and Japanese war cemeteries and memorials. Instead, such resources explore how battlefield sites are embedded in Manipur's landscape. According to Hemant, some of these sites could be a short drive from home for residents of Manipur, who could look at a familiar place (and its connections to the rest of the world) differently.<sup>16</sup> Hemant and Yaiphaba emphasize the battlefield landscape of peaks, streams, and abandoned airfields that dot the Imphal valley and its surroundings. This is a unique feature of their tours, whereby battles can be brought back to life, beyond the typical memorials and museums. They recently expanded the scope of battlefield tourism across the border in Myanmar with the *Burma Campaign Tour* circuit, but these excursions could not continue due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil strife after the Myanmar's 2021 military coup.

The tours in Manipur are often customized. For instance, some clients come in search of a particular family member who fought there. They are also personalized and lively due to the interesting oral histories collected by Yaiphaba, which are often peppered with amusing anecdotes and his sense of humor. It is the rootedness in local historical geography, the human stories, and the simultaneous connection to a shared global wartime past that advance alternate renderings of history [Fig. 3]. These alternative renderings are more subtle than top-down historiography, and they allow navigational possibilities that state-owned sites and narratives lack. However, while such ground-up initiatives scale up local places and histories, there are also limits to being able to transcend triumphalism and colonial knowledge based stereotypes. This is partly due to the fact that such narratives are still based on Anglophone sources (although this may now change with greater Japanese and local participation).

The past and present are intertwined, and different, often competing histories overlap with each other as well as with global connections that are not limited to linking memory to particular places. War tourism and the resurgence of these memories has ultimately stirred local recollections of WWII, and these are, in turn, producing new knowledge and a remembrance culture. On the one hand, these can challenge and diversify predominant Eurocentric and nation-centric narratives; on the other hand, there is a danger of reproducing and perpetuating tropes that are easily appropriated by nationalistic jingoism. On a parting note, Hemant tells me, "It is interesting to see how often Western authors and media use the word 'forgotten' to describe the battles of Imphal and Kohima or even the entire Burma Campaign in general. But this is a very Eurocentric perspective and, until recently, even an Indian one."

Far from being a 'forgotten' war in a remote periphery, the view from India's Northeast also suggests how the region was the epicenter of a global imperial war, one that shaped a new international order. Even if momentarily, Manipur, Naga Hills, and adjoining areas in Burma had become a center of worldwide significance, and today the memory of that significance is also tied to regional aspirations of inter-Asian and global connectivity.

Aditya Kiran Kakati is an affiliated Research Fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, and an Early-Postdoctoral Mobility Fellow, granted by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) in the University of Amsterdam and SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom. Email: [aditya.kakati@iheid.ch](mailto:aditya.kakati@iheid.ch)

#### Notes

- 1 This term that was in use in the 1940s and was popularized more recently by two classic and wide-reaching books by Cambridge University historians. See Christopher A. Bayly and Timothy N. Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) and *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).
- 2 Duncan McDuie-Ra, *Borderland City in New India* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 90.
- 3 Alexander E. Davis, "Transboundary Environments, Militarisation and Minoritisation: Reimagining International Relations in the Himalaya from Ladakh, India," in *Environmental Humanities in the New Himalayas*, ed. Dan Smyer Yü and Erik de Maaker (London: Routledge, 2021), 220–38.
- 4 Jangkhomang Guite, "Representing Local Participation in INA–Japanese Imphal Campaign The Case of the Kukis in Manipur, 1943–45," *Indian Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 291–309.
- 5 Yaiphaba Meetei Kangjam and Hemant Singh Katoch, "Northeast India, World War II and Japan: Past, Present and Future," in *Northeast India and Japan*, ed. Mayumi Murayama, Sanjoy Hazarika, and Preeti Gill (Routledge India, 2021) 252.
- 6 Arkotong Longkumer, "'As Our Ancestors Once Lived': Representation, Performance, and Constructing a National Culture amongst the Nagas of India," *HIMALAYA* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 51–64, 56.
- 7 Interview Ronojoy Sen, December 2015. The *Morung* was a political center in a Naga village and place where training to hunt and fight were imparted.
- 8 Deepak Naorem, "Remembering Japan Laan: Struggle for Relief, Rehabilitation and Compensation," *NeScholar* 4, no. 2 (2018): 21–26, 25.
- 9 Tora Agarwala, "In Kohima Village, an Octogenarian Is Preserving a Treasure Trove from World War" *The Indian Express*, September 20.
- 10 Hoihnu Hauzel, "A Walk Through Battle of Imphal" *NE Travel and Life*, March 19, 2014.
- 11 For instance, the controversial and draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 that gives unbridled extra-judicial powers to the armed forces, creating almost martial-law like conditions for use of force.
- 12 Hemant Singh Katoch, *The Battlefields of Imphal: The Second World War and North East India* (Routledge India, 2016) and *Imphal 1944: The Japanese Invasion of India* (Osprey Publishing, 2018).
- 13 Yaiphaba Meetei Kangjam, *Forgotten Voices of the Japan Laan: The Battle of Imphal and the Second World War in Manipur* (New Delhi: INTACH: Aryan Books International, 2019).
- 14 Indivar Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945," *Past & Present* 176, no. 1 (August 1, 2002): 187–221.
- 15 Jangkhomang Guite, "Monuments, Memory and Forgetting in Postcolonial North-East India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 08 (February 19, 2011): 56–64, 61.
- 16 "Video and Podcast: Imphal, Scene of the Greatest Battles of World War II," *Hindustan Times*, 26 August 2016. Hemant also refers to the fact that it was now possible to travel places like Manipur, which was formerly restricted on account of insurgency, and more places of leisure were necessary not only for visitors to the state but also for local residents.



Fig. 1: Hope, Tian Widjaya, web art, 2021 (Image courtesy of the author).

# Copping Out of Climate Change

Richard T. Griffiths

The Glasgow climate change conference (COP26) solved nothing, leaving all the issues on the table for the next conference to resolve. To use the vernacular, it was a cop-out. The noun cop-out is defined by the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary as “a way of avoiding something that you should do, or an excuse for not doing it.” This article starts by examining the biodiversity challenges involved in the renewable energy alternatives needed if dependence on fossil fuels is to be addressed. It then explores the reasons why the Glasgow conference failed. It suggests that the size and diversity of the conference condemned it to failure from the start and that a smaller, more concentrated approach is both feasible and desirable. It ends by describing the word of the IAS “New Silk Roads” project in this field.

## Dark portents

In August 2021, the UN’s International Panel of Scientists produced a 4000-page report confirming that human activity had already contributed to a 1.1°C warming of the planet beyond pre-industrial levels. Moreover, in all five of the scenarios it modelled, temperature increases by 2040 would exceed the 1.5°C target agreed to only five years earlier in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the effect of the report should have been to prompt countries to set themselves more ambitious targets, but as the pledges rolled in, the news was bleak. An examination of the plans of the 15 largest producers of fossil fuels showed that they were on line by 2030 to produce twice as much as would be consistent with 1.5°C.<sup>2</sup> The pledges from the consuming countries would propel the world towards a global temperature rise of between 2.2°C and 2.7°C by the end of the century,<sup>3</sup> and that was assuming that countries were actually reporting correct data – which many clearly were not. The portents were clear for all to see. The previous seven years had been the hottest on record and weather events related to climate change produced both record rains and record droughts.

## The false dawn of renewables

There was one bright light amongst all the doom and gloom. An Oxford University Report suggested that the costs of renewable energy were falling so fast that, even without changes in policy, a “green transition” was within reach. Indeed, the new technologies would soon be cheaper than fossil fuels, saving the world trillions of dollars.<sup>4</sup> One problem, however, is that while renewables may have a beneficial impact on green-house gas (GHG) emissions, they often have a negative impact on biodiversity.<sup>5</sup>

Let us start with windfarms. The first issue is that their huge 35-metre blades form a mortal danger for any birds or bats that fly nearby. Of course, the solution is not to build them near nesting colonies, or along bird migration paths. A second issue is that wind farms take up a large amount of land (solar power is less demanding in this respect), and so they are often built in isolated locations away from concentrations of human population. The problem is that you need roads to carry the huge amounts of heavy materials. An 80-metre-tall wind mast comprises almost 1000 tons of concrete and steel, and the foundations needed to anchor it firmly in place require, on average, comprises another 1000 tons. So, you need well-made roads for the construction, as well as to maintain the site afterwards. These roads often pass through isolated locations, where they fragment habitats and heighten the risk of invasive species, mostly carried by ourselves.<sup>6</sup> The problem with roads, as opposed to railways, is that people can stop anywhere along the route, inadvertently bringing invasive species with them.

Hydroelectricity is another renewable often touted as a game-changer. At present there are over one thousand dams under construction, mostly in Asia. The International Energy Agency (IEA) expects the supply of hydropower to grow by 50 percent by 2040. However, hydroelectricity has a huge biodiversity footprint. Most people are aware that river dams act as impassable barriers for migratory fish travelling upstream to their traditional spawning ground. Less appreciated is the fact that dams replace the rich biodiversity in the natural river flow with “ecologically dead” water – the water is pumped from dark, cold depths where little life exists, and then filtered before it is passed through the turbines. It is no surprise that the largest loss of fish-stocks is among fresh-water fish.

One issue faced by alternative power sources (as well as electric vehicles) is the need for batteries. These batteries need “rare metals” that are in limited supply on land. However, vents at the bottom of the ocean have been spewing out lumps of rare metals for centuries in the form of polymetallic nodules, which contain nickel, copper, cobalt, and manganese. The problem is that mining them will disturb a unique ecosystem. At huge ocean depths, as much as six kilometres below the surface, there is no light, the biometric pressure is extremely high, and there are huge variations in temperature. Yet, near vents in the earth’s crust, a rich habitat survives of which we know virtually nothing.

Fortunately, in September 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) voted in favour of a moratorium on deep-sea mining. However, the resolution is non-binding. Provisional deep-sea mining licences have already been granted, and work is well advanced in developing the machinery capable of collecting the nodules and conveying them to the surface. Once operational, all of this will create noise that will interfere with mammal communications and spread sediment over a range of several kilometers, burying the life underneath.<sup>7</sup> It will be as though we had discovered life on another planet, with attributes of which we know absolutely nothing... and we kill it.



Fig. 2: Renewal, Raisal Shuvo, web art, 2021 (Image courtesy of the author).

## The COP 26 blame game

The Glasgow conference spent little time on new, alternative energy sources. It had enough problems deciding anything on limiting traditional fossil fuels. At the end of the day, the conference managed to agree on the *Glasgow Climate Pact* with 97 paragraphs, enabling, again, the “COP process” to record yet another success. Never mind that almost all the paragraphs started with “invites” (7), “requests” (8), “notes” (9), and “urges” (14) – but never once with “decides.” Never mind that there were no obligations, no monitoring mechanisms, and no cash. Not to worry that the goal was receding faster than the measures taken to reach it. The process had produced more than there had been before. Mankind would have another chance, next year, at the balmy Egyptian sea-side resort of Sharm El-Sheikh.

It was all too predictable. For a start, for all of the optimistic bombast of the UK presidency, the country was not exactly a paragon of climate-change virtue. The UK’s own carbon-neutral plan was bereft of all costings.<sup>8</sup> The UK also had 40 fossil-fuel projects in the pipeline awaiting approval, including the Cambo oil-fields off the coast of the Shetlands and a new coalmine in west Cumbria.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps most damaging of all was that the UK government had produced only 80 percent of its expected contribution to the annual \$100 billion promised to developing countries for climate change adaptation and mitigation.<sup>10</sup> Worse still, when it did announce its intention to comply, it was stated that the funds would come from the current aid budget,<sup>11</sup> which was not the ideal!

On the ground, the UK president Alok Sharma did his best to maintain momentum with a string of announcements. It was not his fault that they became successively less impressive. He made a good start with an agreement by over 100 nations (responsible for 85% on the world’s forest) to halt deforestation by 2030.<sup>12</sup> It was not his fault that before the ink dried, Indonesia’s environment minister was clawing back on its commitment or that, a week later, a group of senators explained that Brazil’s commitment referred only to *illegal* deforestation. The ambition to sign a second 100-nation strong pledge, to cut methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030, was passed over by countries responsible for half of the global total.<sup>13</sup> The third, a non-binding pledge to phase out coal-fired generators, attracted only 23 signatories and did not include the top six users jointly responsible for 80 percent of global coal power electricity generation.<sup>14</sup> When at the last day, China and India changed a call to “phase out” unabated coal power to “phase down,”<sup>15</sup> Sharma must have been pleased that the fortnight had come to an end.

The truth is that it was always going to be difficult to get over 200 nations and over 2000 NGOs, represented by 25,000 delegates, to agree anything. The interests were always too diverse: fossil fuel producers versus advocates of renewables, developing countries wanting more energy versus rich countries responsible for the GhG emissions crisis, poor countries disproportionately experiencing the impact of climate change versus rich countries disinclined to pay. Matters were not helped by long-simmering tensions between the USA and China, and between the EU and Russia. In addition, the USA had lost credibility as a reliable negotiating partner after the Trump administration’s unilateral withdrawal from the Paris Agreements. Confidence was not restored by President’s Biden’s announcement of the doubling of the USA contribution to the climate fund – it still left the country more than 60 percent adrift of its calculated contribution.

## Time for a new approach

We cannot go on like this, COP 26, 27, 28... each step forward meaning two (if we are lucky) further removed from the goal. We do not have to keep enshrining a broken model. The COP “process” is not working. The plain fact is that we do not need everyone at the negotiating table to solve the problem. What we do need is a recognition in advance that the problem exists and a commitment to finding a solution. The idea would be to limit the initial representatives to those nations most responsible for global GhG emissions

and ready to acknowledge both the problem, that there is a limit which global warming should not exceed, and the solution, that this requires a reduction in GhG emissions within a specified time-frame. Leaders that refuse to do this should say so openly and publicly, and answer to whatever forces keep them in power. Removing them from the process stops them diluting/sabotaging any results. All the other parties should commit themselves to finding a solution. Failure should not be an option because such a negotiation is not a win/lose, zero sum negotiation, but an all win/all lose opportunity.

If we were to limit the negotiations to the largest GhG emitters, then China, the USA, and the European Union would already take us to over 50 percent. Adding five more (India, Russia, Japan, Iran, and South Korea) would raise the share in contribution to the problem/solution to just under 70 percent. A further three (Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Canada) would take the total to over 75 percent – in other words, ten countries plus the European Union.<sup>16</sup> Not all of these would join, but some of their ranks could be filled by countries whose emissions fall under this cut-off point. The important thing is that they must be agreed on the object of the negotiations. Of these countries, China’s participation is a key to success. It is the largest emitter – albeit that part of this is the result of taking the GhG footprint for products consumed by other nations – but it is also the largest green energy builder. The USA’s presence would also be desirable, but its ability to deliver results depends on the tenuous voting balance of its Congress and the (very real) possibility that the next presidential election could lead to its withdrawal. The European Union is also unmissable because it has a track record of achievement and, like China, actually imposes a cost on carbon emissions. Admittedly, there are tensions among this group – arising from differences in systems of government, real and perceived security threats, and different exposures to the power of vested interests. These need to be set aside because of the overarching nature of the end goal. At this stage, other countries committed to the goals could also join (and compensate for those that refuse the initial invitation).

As we have already said, the negotiations should start by defining the ultimate global target and setting a deadline for achieving it. This is not difficult. It is a question of political will. The next step would be to identify the main polluting agents. After that, they should try to agree upon the easiest polluting agents to remove, and so on along a scale of difficulty. Once again, there is plenty of evidence available. At this stage, the negotiators should lock a timetable into place. Up to this point, the frame of the discussions should have remained global.

The next stage of negotiations involves assessing the geographical spread of the change required on a national basis. The negotiating parties could then start tweaking the timetable, building in formulae for compensation, and constructing funds for poorer countries. Parallel to this, the experts should identify technological solutions and divide them into short-term and long(er)-term, according to their probability for success. Negotiators should then build a research and development fund, distribute the financing, and establish rules, whereby a distinction is made between universal and optional projects, and there are guarantees that the contributors to the fund would receive a proportionate amount in its expenditures. By now, nations responsible for a significant proportion of GhG emissions will have agreed upon a plan for their elimination. The next step is to invite smaller countries, applying the formulae agreed by the majority and dispensing any extra assistance that might be required. The main objective, when this stage has been reached, is to start. It is better to begin with an imperfect plan that works than with a perfect plan that doesn’t. Moreover, actually working together helps build familiarity and trust that may spill over into other areas.

It is possible that such an approach might not work, but the prospects are better than limping along with the COP process. There are also historical precedents for this approach. The most obvious was the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community,



Fig. 3: The Last Judgement, Valentin, inspired by Aert Pietersz 'The Last Judgement' (1611), web art, 2021 (Image courtesy of the author).

In 1950, a German delegation sat at a negotiating table with five countries that it had occupied militarily only five years previously, at the cost of hundreds of thousand lives and much economic damage. The negotiations took place with one prior condition: that the countries pool their responsibility for making the outcome work. The largest economy in Europe (the UK) refused, and the negotiations continued without it. One year later, the new community was created, the forerunner of the European Union. There are other examples from this early post-war period. The Organisation for European Economic Cooperation – forerunner of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – staggered through the 1950s with constantly ratcheted targets until it eliminated all quantitative restrictions on intra-European trade and payments. The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) pioneered shared use of its facilities and return flows of revenues, which was also applied to European space research.

## Climate change and the New Silk Roads Project

The New Silk Roads project was started in the wake of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but the use of the plural in the title is intended to convey an interest in infrastructure, communication, and connectivity from whatever source. Having worked to describe the contours of the overland and maritime Eurasian networks, it subsequently moved into looking at environmental impacts. Perhaps a personal word of explanation is in its place. Towards the end of 2019, I had been invited to a ‘horizon scan’ meeting on BRI. I expected the meeting to be all about the nuts and bolts of China’s infrastructure investments, but, instead, half the participants were ecologists and environmentalists. I sat in stunned silence as I heard how my beloved infrastructure was fragmenting unique eco-systems, how my renewable energy sources were endangering migrating birds and fresh-water fish, and how we were probably wiping out life that had not yet even been identified. So it was that I became one of the authors of the “Horizon Scan” of BRI,<sup>17</sup> and how I initiated a collaborative project on the ecological impacts of infrastructure, which has resulted in the publication of a book on the subject.<sup>18</sup> I then attracted Dr. Elanor F. Tracy to become an IIAS Fellow, to work on “shadow ecology” along the corridors of the new Silk Road – a process whereby national green transitions ride on the back of environmental degradation abroad. At the same time the project started collaborating with the research team led by Dr. Jojo T. Nem Singh (International Institute for Social Studies, The Hague), which is researching the implications of the exploitation of rare metals in the development of green technologies.

In the build-up to the biodiversity and climate changes conferences, held this autumn in Kunming and Glasgow, respectively, the project launched a new website: [resources4climatechange.com](https://resources4climatechange.com). Its “Milestones” page provides direct links to the originals

of authoritative reports contributing to the conferences (and beyond) – over eighty this year alone, including all those cited in this article. It also has fifteen eLibraries devoted to different issues, including some of those dealt with in this article: biodiversity loss, dams and hydroelectric power, deep-sea ecology, emissions trading, methane. It also has three regional libraries, devoted to the destruction of the Amazon, the degradation of the Mekong, and the melting of the Arctic. It also has eLibraries devoted to climate change denial, on the one hand, and to youth activism, on the other. These give access to over 1000 free online scientific articles and reports, as well as to short explanatory videos. Finally, the website has its own art gallery featuring creative works, including those featured on these pages, focussing on different aspects of the Earth’s environmental challenges.

It is the hope to expand our work on environmental issues and we welcome any initiatives for innovative, collaborative work in that direction.

Richard T. Griffiths is Fellow at the IIAS and director of its New Silk Roads project. Email: [r.t.griffiths@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:r.t.griffiths@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

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# Marginal yet Free

## The Macanese in British Hong Kong

Catherine S. Chan

People make their own history but under pre-determined circumstances outside of their own choosing. Karl Marx implied this in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* from 1852. Echoing Marx, historian Richard J. Evans suggested exploring how much free will people had in building their lives to recover alternative versions of the past. It is from such a place that I reconsider the experiences of Luso-Asian migrants<sup>1</sup> who found unprecedented opportunities, spaces, and freedoms in colonial Hong Kong to advance and to thrive.<sup>2</sup>

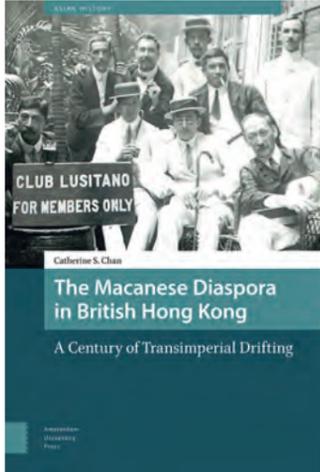


Fig. 1 (above): Book cover of *The Macanese Diaspora in British Hong Kong, A Century of Transimperial Drifting* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

Fig. 2 (right): Brian Edgar's parents, British baker Thomas Herbert Edgar and Macanese Evelina Marques d'Oliveira, in their wedding ceremony at St. Joseph's church, Hong Kong, c. 1942 (Photo courtesy of Brian Edgar).



1842 marked the year Hong Kong formally became British territory. For some Luso-Asian (hereafter Macanese) residents of a decaying Macau, which was then leased by the Chinese government to the Portuguese as a settlement, this development signified the opening of new doors to better careers, business opportunities, and educational facilities. In less than three decades, more than 1300 Macanese had crossed the waters in search of new beginnings. In the process, they took part in the establishment of Hong Kong, from what British statesman and later Prime Minister Lord Palmerston (1784-1865) dismissed at the London Parliament as a “barren rock” into a vibrant multicultural port city. While the latter has been retold in numerous writings, some of which have flattened the kaleidoscopic experiences of the Macanese under the umbrella term “Portuguese,” my narrative of the Macanese touches upon the normative realities of a marginal community living under a foreign colony. In my monograph, I discuss the impacts of transimperial migration on individual aspirations, social mobility, communal segregation, and identity construction. As opposed to the general picture of solidarity and oneness, the Macanese community had diversified by the late 19th century into a complex community torn by class differences and differing allegiances. Their story speaks not only of the freedom exercised by subjects living on the fringes of colonial cities, but also of the power to constantly decide one's identity by harnessing new and old imperial and cultural networks.

### Time, place, and chance

Colonial cities provided spaces to rework rules of inclusion and exclusion, allowing marginal subjects to navigate new worlds of sociability and confrontation. When the Macanese arrived in 1840s Hong Kong, many found employment using their knowledge of English and Cantonese, which earned the community the general reputation of loyal administrative assistants in public and private offices. This secured the Macanese with promising careers but simultaneously barred them from higher-ranking jobs that were reserved for Europeans. Leonardo d'Almada e Castro (1815-1975), one of the first Macanese to enter the Hong Kong waters with Captain Charles Elliot's entourage, wrote unsuccessfully to the Colonial Office with a complaint against his British colleagues. He had hoped to become the next Colonial Secretary; but only less than a decade into the establishment of the colony, the Britons were neither expecting nor ready to let an “alien” take on such a prominent position. Nonetheless, D'Almada spent his life working as the chief clerk of the Colonial Secretary's office and clerk of the Executive and Legislative Councils. Well-paid by the government and respected in his community, he focused on providing for his family and, in 1865, generously sold a plot of land to the Italian Sisters at a low price to build a convent. Despite encountering restrictions in the workplace, an effective and mutually-beneficial collaboration remained: Macanese men like D'Almada found career opportunities unavailable in Macau while helping to run the colony's basic operations at an affordable cost.

For some, the shift from a Portuguese imperial sphere to a British colony entailed opportunities for further migration and/or social mobility. Shortly after Brian Edgar was born in Hong Kong in 1950, his Macanese mother and British father decided to move to England [Fig. 2], where Edgar was raised and eventually graduated from Oxford. In another example, Major-Generals Sir Cecil Pereira (1869-1942) and Sir George Edward Pereira (1865-1923), known in most existing studies as “British” men who fought for their country, came from a family of Macanese opium traders. Their great-grandfather was a prominent businessman and politician in Macau. Their father, Edward (born Eduardo) Pereira (1817-1872), moved within the worlds of middle-class Britons: he was the only Macanese to establish a partnership with a foreign firm and become a resident member of the short-lived China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Edward Pereira left Hong Kong in the late 1850s. He would reappear in London, having already revived his Portuguese background, and subsequently enter low nobility upon marrying the Honourable Margaret Ann Stonor, daughter of Lady Frances Stonor and Thomas Stonor, 3rd Baron Camoys of Stonor Park, Oxfordshire. Owing to its connectivity to other port cities and British territories, Hong Kong served as a springboard for a wider world of opportunities for adventurous spirits that willed to venture.

Those who settled down in Hong Kong explored the city's urban spaces and soaked up its multicultural atmosphere. From the lesser-known Clube Portuguez to the long-standing Club Lusitano, middle-class Macanese men established organisations based on British club culture. Such spaces emerged as platforms for middle-class Macanese to elevate their social visibility. By networking with British officials and prominent merchants, some would eventually be acknowledged by the colonial government as leaders of the “Portuguese” community and as representatives of Portugal in Hong Kong. Solidarity amongst the middle-class Macanese, however, came with new forms of exclusivity as well. From the 1890s to the 1930s, Club Vasco da Gama, Club de Recreio, and Liga Portuguesa de Hongkong would emerge as alternative social spaces for Macanese individuals and families. Club Vasco da Gama and Liga Portuguesa, in particular, were aimed at countering the Anglicisation of the Macanese, a characteristic that had been tied to Club Lusitano. Liga Portuguesa de Hong Kong, further encouraging a revival of Portuguese patriotism, had a considerable following that stretched from Shanghai to Kobe to Manila.

Across the pages of the British colony's English- and Portuguese-language newspapers alone, contributors debated on what it meant to be a true Macanese. This was demonstrated by a heated discussion that lasted three years regarding Montalto de Jesus (1863-1932). A Hong Kong-born historian, Montalto suggested the passing of Macau from the hands of an impotent Portuguese colonial government to the tutelage of the League of Nations until its people could self-administer. Was Montalto a traitor of the Portuguese nation or a Macanese martyr who fought for a more progressive Macau? As readers grappled with each other over questions of political loyalty, none seemed

to care about Montalto himself, who was left a penniless man and a broken historian.

By the 1930s, the Macanese had diversified into various strands: first-generation Macanese migrants maintained a stronger attachment to Macau, whereas Hong Kong-born Macanese tended to be more Anglicised. A quarter of the latter were naturalised as British subjects, and two Anglophile Macanese men successfully entered the Legislative Council as unofficial members. Those who grew up in Macau and moved to Hong Kong as adults despised the buttoned-up British culture of Club Lusitano. Of those born and raised in Hong Kong, some preferred to remain “Portuguese” and openly expressed their love for the Salazar government and the Portuguese nation. Overnight, all of these would appear insignificant when the Japanese occupied Hong Kong in December 1941. The ensuing war shattered pre-existing lines of social inclusion and segregation, making way for new allegiances and shifting patterns of identity and allegiance to emerge.

### Free will, identity, and greater inclusivity

Transcending the narratives of cities, of nations, and of empires, the Macanese experience in British Hong Kong speaks of the fluidity of individual and communal identities. By exploring the freedoms they exercised as a marginal community and the various ways they responded to pre-determined circumstances, we are given the opportunity to recover the voices of ordinary women and men, whose experiences have been generalised as those of “the colonised.” I do not deny that these people were tied to the realities of colonial life, which could be prejudiced and cruel. Even so, the Macanese demonstrated the power to build their own lives and create new forms of sociability that eventually resulted in intra-communal disputes, the diversification of the Macanese community, and the emergence of alternative and sometimes overlapping strands of Portuguese and Britishness.

We make our own history, though not always as we please. We do not choose our parents, our natal country, nor the era in which we are born. Nevertheless, as the Macanese narrative has shown, we are not completely without agency. Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) once wrote: “I am I and my circumstances.”<sup>3</sup> To different extents, we all have the free will to decide what we are going to be in the next moment by realising that we get to choose how we respond to pre-determined circumstances. If we can acknowledge this very point, then perhaps we can stop condemning one another for taking on alternative identities and navigating new affiliations. Instead, we might start to appreciate each individual as a unique combination of their life experiences and see identity as an ever-expanding entity composed of our daily encounters with unfamiliar cultures and with one another. Through this lens, the more we see and experience, the more our identities expand, and hopefully, the more we gain the potential to value and respect diversity more than we did.

Catherine S. Chan is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Macau. Her research is centered on Asian urban history, with a specific focus on human communities, heritage, and human-animal relationships. Email: [cathchan@um.edu.mo](mailto:cathchan@um.edu.mo)

#### Notes

- 1 Luso-Asians here refers to persons with Portuguese ancestry in Asia. This article focuses on the Macanese, a community that took root in Macau through generations of inter-racial marriage between the Portuguese or Portuguese Eurasians with Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Malay, and Eurasian people in the Portuguese territories of Goa, Malacca, and Timor.
- 2 This topic is explored in greater depth in my recent monograph [Fig. 1], *The Macanese Diaspora in British Hong Kong, A Century of Transimperial Drifting* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021).
- 3 The original was ‘Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia’ from José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote*, ed. Julián Marías (México: Catedra-REI, 1914), p. 77.

# A Question of Entanglement

## The Transplanting of Colonial Languages

Amal Chatterjee

The spread of former colonial languages – English in particular, but also others like French, Spanish, and Portuguese – has advantages but also makes us uneasy. By using them, are we being held back from the rest of the world? People claim those languages are now of the formerly colonised regions themselves, but can they be? Aren't they fundamentally an imposition, a drawing away, an alienation? There's another way to see it.

فَامَئِيْنِ اِنَّكَ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ قَارِبُكَ  
 اَوْ اَوْ اِسْحَابِ رَيْسِ اِنَّ اِسْحَابَ رَوْطِ  
 اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ يَا اَللّٰهُ فِرْمِيْرِيْ مَا اَوْ  
 بِرِ مَتَّحِيْتٍ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ اَوْ بِرِ مُحَمَّدٍ  
 وَعَلٰى اٰلِ مُحَمَّدٍ اِنَّ اَوْ بِرِ سَمِيْنٌ فَا مَلِيْ  
 كَمَا بَارَكْتَ نِيْتِ صَوَالِمُسِ اَوْ خِيْدَانِ  
 هِتْ عَلٰى اِبْرٰهِيْمِ اَوْ بِرِ نَبِيِّ اِبْرٰهِيْمِ

15 waarliek ouai ies gha pierais ien ies ghoeriet .....  
 Ja Allah viermeerdie ouai barmataghait ..... op  
 Moegammad ien op sain faamielghie ..... niet soewals  
 ouai ghiedaan hiet op Nabee Iebraheem (..... truly  
 thou art praised and elevated ..... O God increase  
 your generosity ..... on Muhammad and on his family  
 .... just as yyou had done for Prophet Abraham).

The idea that language and culture are closely linked is a familiar one. Languages are often referred to in terms of the cultures associated with them, and, unsurprisingly, with their famous writers: English becomes the language of Shakespeare, Spanish of Cervantes, French of Hugo, Portuguese of Pessoa, German of Goethe, and so on. Yes, those are all European languages. That's what this is about: languages that began as European becoming... what? Of where? If anywhere? The reality is that writers and researchers today express all manner of cultures in languages that are – or were – not of or from the cultures they write about. Does this mean that what they write is intrinsically “external,” potentially (and terrifyingly) Orientalist, or similarly flawed due to the origins of the languages? We know that that

often isn't the case; we know that there are writers who write with empathy about places, people, and cultures in languages that were once alien or imposed. And we also know that there are now many who write from within those other places, peoples, and cultures. I am one of those, as I write here in English, a language with origins distant from my own in South Asia. While I see and describe myself as mainly Indian, or South Asian, I do so mainly, often, in English. That once-non-Asian language arises for me, not from England but from a range of places: Calcutta, where I grew up; Colombo, thanks to family; Amsterdam and Glasgow, with traces of Darjeeling, and also of other spaces, languages, and traditions I've encountered, from Spain to Brazil. All those are in me and my writing, yet none is intrinsically “English,” not even Glasgow. Instead, it's a web of strands, connections, and coincidences, all entangled together, not woven but overlapping, winding through and around, knotting too. As I said, entangled.

Fig. 1 (above): Student notebook, 1860, with Afrikaans in Arabic script (Public domain, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons).

### Colonial hangover?

Where I grew up, English was, of course, a colonial injection, an “injection” because it was introduced actively, pushed like a drug, to isolate and addict. It did not settle in any way naturally, not at first. But by the time it came to me, it was, for me and those around, ours. In fact, it was entirely ours, for though we knew and read of other cultures and places, our references and connections were wholly immediate: Calcuttan, Bengali, Eastern Indian, Indian – at most South Asian. Thus, my English arose, like my other languages, and was formed, again like my other languages, from the context, from the entanglements that I and it existed within. And that is the case for the languages of others, and for other languages. Consider Afrikaans, a language with origins wrapped up in colonialism. The first, or certainly one of the first, texts in Afrikaans was, as it happens, in the Arabic script, by and for Muslims of Malay origin: Sheikh Ahmad al-Ishmini's 1856 *Kitab Al-Qawl al-Matin Fi Bayan Umur al-Din* (The Book of the Firm Declaration Regarding the Explanation of the Matters of Religion). That is, of course, a very different set of entanglements than those structuring the Afrikaans of a contemporary white writer. For white writers, Afrikaans is entangled with their very culture, traditions, community, religions. And those two aren't the only cultures of Afrikaans; they aren't the only two entanglings. In fact, they are minor ones, the larger is the reality of the majority of users of Afrikaans, a complex community of people with a multitude of origins, religions, practices, cultures.

To imagine how languages entangle with diverse cultures, consider the analogy of something else familiar that entangles



Fig. 2 (left): Book cover for *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah (Bloomsbury Press).



Fig. 3 (below): Book cover for *Another English: Anglophone Poems from Around the World* (Tupelo Press).

and is transformed: food. Corn or maize, chillies, potatoes, and tomatoes, for instance, are now everyday ingredients in lands and dishes far from their origins. Tea and coffee and chocolate are proudly – and incorrectly – labelled as being from former coloniser nations that do not even grow them. But those foodstuffs aren't as they originally were. Chocolate, for instance, is mostly sweet now, stripped, or relieved, perhaps, of its original connotations and entangled with sugar, itself an import. That is what has happened with language, too. English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and others have become entangled in regions where they were once impositions. They have been adapted, co-opted, and re-imagined into new versions, from more distinct instances like Haitian French, Brazilian Portuguese, Caribbean Englishes, to less distinct ones like Sri Lankan English and Moroccan French.

### Entangling with others

For writers and those communicating in entangled languages, there's another layer: the relationship with the audience. Because the writers don't always, or only, communicate with those in the same context and similar entanglements, their writing often reaches out to places they are not of. And as it does, the shared physical and contextual connections strain. Even relatively locally: in India, for instance, a writer in Bengal may have readers in Delhi, with different references, because Durga Puja isn't Dussehra, and Kali Puja isn't Diwali. Farther afield, across the Arabian Sea in Sudan or Kenya, the threads can snap, and different strands of entanglement can arise between the writer and the reader. The writer can thus choose to assume their readers are familiar with their own entanglements, or to refer to the entanglements of particular groups of readers, or to explain or interpret. Whatever the choice, conscious or not, how the writer acts – makes allowances, challenges, demands, or assumes familiarity – their writing is affected by the entanglements beyond their own context, entanglements with culturally distinct or separate readers. Of course, distance, physical or cultural, can be a barrier, but it can also be an opportunity to look back, to consider, and to portray with intent and understanding. A writer does that anyway, or should, so awareness of entanglement, whatever they may call it or however they may think of it, is another prompt to do so.

Accepting that, understanding and working with the reality of entanglements means that language can be used as language should: to communicate, to tell. After all, today English is as much Fijian and Jamaican as French is Moroccan or Guadeloupean, as Portuguese is Angolan and Mozambican, and as Spanish is Peruvian and laced into Tagalog. Whether they are minority or majority languages, these languages are now entangled, familiar, interior, to those places – each in their own way, in their own entanglement. So it is that the 2021 Nobel Prize laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah writes of Tanzania and Zanzibar in English. He is doing what writers do: using the language, an entangled one like all others, for his own ends, to say what he wants and what he sees, to say it as he wants, with knowledge of the past and the present. Such writers recognize that that is how things are, and that what we need to do is use language with conscious intent – considering the entanglements, working with those that work, working against those that don't. This applies to all of us, whatever we write, in whatever language. After all, in the end, it is awareness and active involvement that counts. Write then, as writers do, in the language of your choice, entangled as it is with you and your surroundings, and entangling, as it does, you with your readers.

Amal Chatterjee teaches at the University of Oxford, UK, where he is a Senior Course Tutor for the Masters in Creative Writing. He also teaches academic writing to researchers, mainly in the Netherlands and Europe. He has published fiction, history, and opinion, and his plays have been staged. Email: [amal.chatterjee@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:amal.chatterjee@conted.ox.ac.uk)

# Asia's Contribution to Post-Paris Climate Action

## Putting Equity, Transparency, and the "Phasedown" of Coal Use into Perspective

Susann Handke



Fig. 1 (above): Mitzi Jonelle Tan.  
Fig. 2 (below right): Farzana Faruk Jhumu.  
Fig. 3 (above right): Young climate activist, Pakistan, September 2019.  
All Watercolours by the author, 2022.

In November 2021, the most recent round of multilateral climate negotiations took place in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Among this summit's accomplishments are a declaration by the parties to the UN climate regime to work towards a "phasedown of unabated coal power" and the completion of the Katowice Rulebook, which contains detailed guidelines to bring the 2015 Paris Agreement into effect. How should the international community engage with the – now complete – legal rules to implement the Paris Agreement; and what does the institutionalised cooperation mean for the transformation of the energy system and climate activism in Asia, especially regarding the position of women?

### The Glasgow Climate Pact

The adoption of the Paris Agreement in late 2015 was a major milestone in the history of institutionalising international cooperation on climate change mitigation and the UN climate regime.<sup>1</sup> The Agreement reverses the previous approach to international climate action under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol in two important ways. First, under the Paris Agreement all parties have to make commitments to mitigate climate change. The Kyoto Protocol limited emissions reduction obligations to developed countries – i.e., mainly the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at the time. Thus, in Asia only Japan was obliged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

However, during the period from the Kyoto Protocol's adoption in 1997 to the start of the first round of implementing measures to reduce emissions in 2008, the reality of Asia's political economy and regional emissions patterns changed dramatically. China's economy in particular experienced an enormous growth. Therefore, including developing countries in a new legal framework to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions became the primary focus of multilateral negotiations about restructuring global climate cooperation.

Interrelatedly, a second adjustment that distinguishes the Paris Agreement from the Kyoto Protocol is the Agreement's acknowledgement of divergent socio-economic circumstances that the parties to the UN climate regime face, with respect to both mitigating climate change and adapting to the consequences of global warming.

Therefore, climate action commitments under the Paris Agreement were no longer negotiated emissions reduction obligations. Instead, the restructured approach relied on so-called nationally defined contributions (NDCs) that the governments of the parties have to submit to the registry of the UN climate regime. These submissions

contain their national plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, primarily consisting of national future energy trajectories. Accordingly, for the first time, all governments that preside over large emerging economies in Asia also had to present their energy and climate plans to a global public.

The first round of collecting the parties' NDCs coincided with the adoption of the Paris Agreement. Yet, the sum of these commitments was woefully inadequate. The parties failed to prescribe a pathway to obtain the objective of the Paris Agreement that aims to keep

global warming within the limits of 1.5 to 2° C, compared to pre-industrial levels.<sup>2</sup> As a result, they agreed to present updated NDCs by 2020 and subsequently every five years. This adjustment illustrates that the cooperation under the Paris Agreement will be a continuous process. It requires ongoing international coordination, oversight, and a regular strengthening of commitments.

The decisions contained in the Katowice Rulebook (hereafter Rulebook) seek to provide guidelines for this ongoing process, by establishing monitoring and review mechanisms. The publicly available assessments of the parties' performance that derive from the review procedures will then inform further negotiations. They will form the basis for directing the parties' work to achieve another important objective of the Paris Agreement: the realisation of global climate neutrality in the second half of this century, "on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty."<sup>3</sup> In other words, by about 2050 the global economy should be a better place, ecologically and socially.

When negotiating the provisions of the Rulebook, the parties struggled to agree on rules that seek to ensure transparency with respect to national governments' performance regarding the implementation

of their self-chosen NDCs. Some gaps were left open by previous climate summits regarding monitoring and review procedures to enhance transparency with respect to the implementation of national plans as well as the length of the plans' implementation periods. Moreover, the completion of the Rulebook was delayed by the postponement of the Glasgow summit following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020. After tedious negotiations, the Glasgow Climate Pact finally fills the regulatory gaps and enables the parties to engage in a global

debate about improving national energy policies and climate change measures from 2023 onwards.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of national energy sectors will be the foremost concern of policymakers in the years to come. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the share of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has been increasing, in particular from the second half of the 20th century onwards. The energy sector is mainly responsible for this increase, while carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), a highly potent greenhouse gas, dominates those energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. Because CO<sub>2</sub> is primarily emitted in the course of burning fossil fuels to produce energy, efforts to stabilise the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere need to start with the energy sector. Hence, when the parties to the UN climate regime presented their first NDCs to mitigate climate change, these policy plans generally focused on the energy sector.

National energy policies also touch upon important matters of economic security. Preserving policy space beyond rigid international and domestic scrutiny seems vital in an era of political, economic, and ecological uncertainty. Still, accountability in the form of an open global debate about best practices and necessary improvements are the basis for trust among the parties to the UN climate regime. In this context, the main focus will be on the transformation of the energy system, especially on whether – and to what extent – economies use coal to produce electricity. Parties will be eager to see how their peers' national energy sectors are performing in terms of emissions reductions. The Glasgow Climate Pact finalised the institutionalisation of this debate, and Asian leaders will play a prominent role in these deliberations.

### Asia and the global governance of the low-carbon energy transition

Emitting 16,778 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2020, Asia-Pacific accounted for about 52% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (32,2284 million tonnes). Despite the impact of the pandemic and slightly lower emissions than in previous years, Asia-Pacific continued to increase its

share in global emissions. The largest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> in this region are China (9,899 million tonnes), India (2,302 million tonnes), Japan (1,027 million tonnes), South Korea (578 million tonnes), and Indonesia (545 million tonnes).<sup>5</sup>

This brief overview shows that developing countries now dominate the region's emissions patterns. Accordingly, their efforts to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are essential for achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement and preventing dangerous climate change. No doubt, industrialised countries in North America and Europe will still be expected to take the lead in reducing their emissions. Their experiences with governing the decarbonisation of industrialised economies while preserving societal resilience will provide valuable input in the global debate. However, industrialised economies' share of annual global emissions is declining rapidly. Despite all efforts that these countries will make, only additional emissions reductions in large emerging economies can prevent dangerous climate change in the future. Thus, the Asia-Pacific region will be the ground-zero of meaningful global climate action in the decades to come.

In order to understand the transformation processes that are unfolding, it is essential to assess national energy policies and legislation, including frequent adjustments. National governance systems matter, as the transition from the vast utilisation of fossil fuels to a climate-neutral economy is different from previous energy transitions. In the past – for instance, when coal replaced wood to drive locomotives, or later when diesel was used instead of coal – it was the new fuel's cost-effectiveness or more advantageous utilisation that instigated the fuel transition. The deep decarbonisation of the entire energy system, however, requires government measures to incentivise the shift to non-fossil fuels and low-carbon technologies. Thus, the consideration of nationally governed transitions requires a long-term assessment of national policies and legislation beyond occasional high-level pledges.

This is particularly true in the case of China. The Chinese leadership pledged to peak CO<sub>2</sub> emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon-neutrality by 2060. Yet, the country's NDC and internal energy policy documents, such as the recent 14th Five-Year Plan, do not provide any

**"More often than not, the notion of a just transition solely takes into account the fate of coal-producing regions, while injustices that result from delaying the low-carbon transition are not part of the debate."**

concrete measure that outlines the path to accomplish the necessary transition process. In addition, the lack of public scrutiny of policy design and implementation in China will be a great challenge for the global debate.

For industrialised and big emerging economies, the transition to low-carbon energy generation implies a shift away from the current fossil economies to climate neutrality as the main feature of the energy sector. This transformation not only entails numerous technological challenges but also comes with socio-economic collaterals. All economic systems that are prevalent in the world today are based on the combustion of fossil fuels. In fact, the fossil-fuel based industrial revolution brought forward capitalism as a socio-economic system, and this advancement was largely a “masculine” business. Coal miners and workers in factories that built locomotives and generators were all men; and the financiers of these activities and capitalism’s worldwide expansion were men as well. Thus, the global fossil economy is a stereotypically “masculine” endeavour, and the incumbent fossil energy system maintains structures of inequality and injustice in national economies and globally.<sup>6</sup>

During the final moments of the Glasgow climate summit, the male leaders of the Indian and Chinese delegations scrambled to change the wording in the final document of the Glasgow Climate Pact, which describes parties’ tasks, from “accelerating efforts towards the phase-out of unabated coal power” to “accelerating efforts towards the *phasedown* of unabated coal power” (italics added). In this moment, the Indian and Chinese delegation leaders were clearly driven by the interests of domestic coal-processing industries and their local political constituencies rather than the future generations of their nations. In fact, current trends in the energy business and the International Energy Agency’s scenarios<sup>7</sup> to achieve the Paris Agreement’s temperature goals point to a rapid decline in coal use. Notwithstanding the complicated path to phasing out coal power in these two big Asian economies, with this textual rabbit punch the Chinese and Indian delegation heads were fighting a rearguard action. Watching representatives of the “masculine” fossil economy proceed in this manner, one might ask whether emerging paths to a decarbonised economy and societal movements suggest alternative, more inclusive imaginaries of the future?

### From law-making to climate action

The distribution of global emissions puts negotiation strategies and policies adopted by governments in the Asia-Pacific region in the spotlight. Yet, it also highlights the role of civil society and in particular the growing role of climate activism in the region. In fact, in many Asian countries young women have taken the lead and are actively demanding profound policy changes. It is thus worthwhile to consider how the Paris framework for climate cooperation positions the Asia-Pacific region in global climate governance, including the region’s civil society movements.

In the process of implementing the Paris Agreement, two issues stand out. First, the interaction of national policies and standardised international review mechanisms, whose outcomes will be publicly available and discussed, inspire a further consideration of the Paris Agreement’s bottom-up approach. This notion of “bottom-up” would not only point to “nationally-determined” commitments to mitigate climate change but also to the contribution of citizens and civil society organisations to the debate. No doubt, non-state actors are playing an increasing role in the global conversation about future energy and climate governance. Their voices are crucial. Second, the principles of the Paris Agreement, combined with the call for a “phasedown” of coal power, propose a new approach to the concept of intergenerational equity in the context of climate cooperation, which the final part of this section will elaborate.

In 2023, the first global stocktake, a broad assessment of the implementation of the parties’ NDCs, will be held in the context of the annual climate summit. This global stocktake essentially

determines whether the parties are in sum on path towards achieving the Paris temperature goals and climate neutrality by about 2050. The provisions of Article 14 of the Paris Agreement do not intend to discuss individual countries’ performance. However, at least in the public domain beyond the summit meeting hall, this will be difficult to prevent, especially if large emitters of greenhouse gases lag far behind in implementing their self-determined policies and if new policy proposals do not reflect their “fair share” in the global effort. Thus, the monitoring and review mechanisms under the Paris Agreement and its Rulebook will provide valuable information that climate activists in Asia-Pacific can use to target their activities, raise awareness, and increase the pressure on domestic fossil-bound elites.

More often than not, elites in developing countries justify delays in limiting greenhouse gas emissions with the notion that economic development must be achieved first, before environmental measures can be implemented. Fast and cheap development relies on coal. Indeed, during the 1990s, the global approach to climate change mitigation tolerated developing countries’ carbon-intensive development on the basis of equity considerations, quoting the right to development. Developed countries had to take the lead in reducing emissions. In fact, many provisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol reflect this line of thought. Furthermore, at that time, the consequences of climate change were expected to materialise only in a very distant future.

This equation has changed dramatically. Technological advancements have made the low-carbon energy transition feasible. Moreover, the effects of global warming (e.g., extreme weather events, strong typhoons, and prolonged periods of drought) are increasingly felt in many parts of the world, including in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, in the Paris Agreement, developing countries agreed to contribute to the transformation of the global energy system. Obviously, in the course of the low-carbon transition, equity issues loom large. They concern several aspects of this process. The Paris Agreement seeks to address the issues by obliging developed countries to provide financial and technological support and contribute to capacity building. This support is crucial, and developed countries definitely need to double down on their efforts.

However, for developing countries the low-carbon energy transition also constitutes an investment in the future. The prospect of creating a climate neutral global economy by the second half of this century forces governments and the public in developing countries to re-imagine their place in the global economy. If developing countries can find ways to embrace this evolving reality, they can successfully elaborate more inclusive pathways to prosperity in the changing global economy.

Investments in the coal sectors of developing countries illustrate a downside of this evolving reality. In recent years, political elites in Pakistan and Indonesia chose to expand their coal sectors by adding mining, coal-fired power plants, and/or coal export facilities. They considered these investments as a boost for their national economies, creating revenues and supplying electricity to urban centres. Yet, these achievements only bring short-term gains, while environmental impacts of the projects’ mining and transport infrastructure are also considerable.

When fully appreciating the Paris Agreement’s objectives, a choice for the expansion of the coal sector during the second or even third decade of the 21st century cannot be justified by referring to the right to

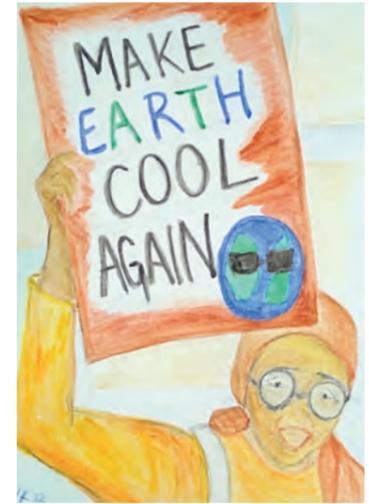
development. The increase of greenhouse gas emissions that result from the implementation of these projects contributes to the global climate crisis. Furthermore, national budgets are burdened with high costs without a real prospect of recovering the investments, as the facilities cannot be operated unabated much longer than 2050. The implementation of measures to address their emissions and other environmental impacts will even increase the costs. Hence, coal investments today negatively correspond to the concept of intergenerational equity, as they lock in a carbon-intensive economic development trajectory, including gender-based inequities. Leaving behind these polluting assets will hardly benefit the next generations. Intergenerational equity today is about a meaningful national strategy to achieve climate neutrality. Opting against carbon-intensive energy production and related infrastructure is an urgent need not only in industrialised countries but also in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

### A novel research agenda

With its worldwide activities, the Fridays for Future movement has inspired a new generation of climate activists. Many of the local leaders in the Asia-Pacific region who are engaged in this global movement are women, such as Disha Ravi in India, Farzana Faruk Jhumu in Bangladesh, and Mitzi Jonelle Tan in the Philippines. Their voices are as important as the accomplishments of female entrepreneurs in the renewable energy business and rural women, whose knowledge is essential to help their communities adapt to the consequences of global warming. Wandee Khunchornyakong Juljaren, for instance, pioneered the solar farms business in Thailand, financed by an investment from the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Wonder Women (*Ibu Inspirasi*) live in off-grid communities in Indonesia and support their friends and family to gain access to renewable energy.<sup>9</sup>

The provisions of the Paris Agreement strongly promote the role of women in climate governance and gender equality. No doubt, in order to keep hearing their voices, non-governmental organisations will need to cooperate with Asia’s climate activists. Support from international financial institutions is needed to realise the visions of innovative entrepreneurs and strengthen the resilience of local communities. These bottom-up efforts are vital to imagine an energy future that can overcome the shortcomings created by the fossil economy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Academic research also has an important task. It concerns the way in which scholars engage with and present the narrative of this



enormous transformation. More often than not, the notion of a just transition solely takes into account the fate of coal-producing regions, while injustices that result from delaying the low-carbon transition are not part of the debate. The energy basis of the global economy is shifting to new fuels that will alter the way energy is produced, transported, and consumed. The story of the Asia-Pacific region will be central to this global tale. Energy sector analysts and economists are carefully watching how regional developments influence global markets and energy flows. Yet, interdisciplinary academic research is necessary to grasp the enormity of this great transformation. In this regard, feminist methodologies will be essential to understand the variety of actors who drive this socio-economic and societal transition and to fully appreciate women’s contribution to this generational effort in Asia. Ideally, the story that is told about abandoning the fossil economy in the Asia-Pacific region also considers this system’s persistent gender-based inequities. To be sure, phasing down the male-dominated fossil economy gives rise to new perspectives on the future in Asia and beyond.

**Susann Handke** is an independent scholar. Her research focuses on legal and geopolitical aspects of international and EU energy governance. Email: [susannhandke@yahoo.de](mailto:susannhandke@yahoo.de)

#### Notes

- 1 The UN climate regime consists of three treaties – the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1997 Kyoto Protocol, and 2015 Paris Agreement – as well as the decisions taken by the bodies of the regime under these treaties. See for the treaties, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 9 May 1992, 1771 UNTS 107, 31 ILM 849 (1992), Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 11 December 1997, 2303 UNTS 148, 37 ILM 22 (1998), and Decision 1/CP.21 – Adoption of the Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1), 29 January 2016.
- 2 Article 2 (1) (a) of the Paris Agreement.
- 3 Article 4 (1) of the Paris Agreement.
- 4 United Nations Climate Change, “Glasgow Climate Pact – Advance unedited version,” [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3\\_auv\\_2\\_cover%20decision.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3_auv_2_cover%20decision.pdf).
- 5 BP, “Statistical Review of World Energy 2021,” <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/business-sites/en/global/corporate/pdfs/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2021-full-report.pdf>, p. 15.
- 6 Brown, Benjamin, and Samuel J. Siegel, “Coals, Climate Justice, and the Cultural Politics of Energy Transition,” *Global Environmental Politics* 19, no. 2 (2019): 151.
- 7 International Energy Agency, “World Energy Outlook 2021 – Report Extract: Phasing out Coal,” <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-outlook-2021/phasing-out-coal>.
- 8 International Finance Corporation, “A Women Entrepreneur Creates a Brighter Future in Thailand,” August 2016, [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_corporate\\_site/news+and+events/news/helping-thailands-emergence-as-solar-power-leader-in-se-asia](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/helping-thailands-emergence-as-solar-power-leader-in-se-asia).
- 9 IRENA, “Indonesia’s ‘Superheroines’ Empowered with Renewables,” 22 April 2018 <https://irena.org/newsroom/articles/2018/Apr/Indonesias-Superheroines-Empowered-with-Renewables>.



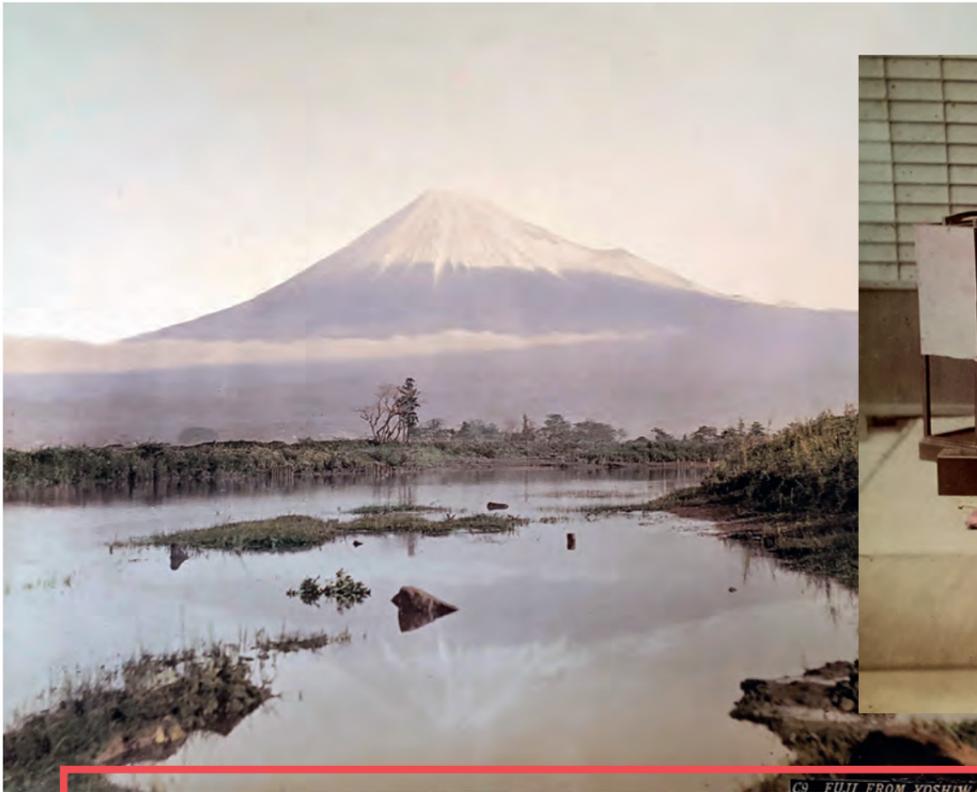


Fig. 1 (far left): "C9 Fuji from Yoshidawara," photographer unknown, late 19th century, Album 32, Courtesy of Kurokawa collection.

Fig. 2 (left): "Sleeping beauty," Raimund von Stillfried, late 19th century, Furness collection, Courtesy of the Penn Museum.

# Exotic and Modern

## Representing Meiji Japan in Photography

Naoko Adachi

Japan's first encounter with photography was likely in 1843, when a daguerreotype arrived in Nagasaki from the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, Japanese scientists studied the technology with the resources from abroad and with local support to master this new form of visual representation. By the 1860s, wet-collodion albumen printing became a popular method for producing photographs in Japan, used for portraits of important people and for commercial purposes. In the mid-19th century, when Japan lifted international trade restrictions, many foreign diplomats, scholars, and merchants came to Japan through select port cities like Yokohama. Photographs were popular souvenirs for these visitors, a way to bring back the views that they encountered while they were in Japan. The prints were hand-colored and then bound into an album with luxurious lacquer covers. The market expanded significantly from around the 1880s until the 1900s. Today, tens (or even hundreds) of thousands of these souvenir photographs exist around the world, suggesting that this was an extremely lucrative market. These images still shape the impressions and stereotypes about Japan around the world today, making them an important subject of study. This article examines these photographs to consider how Japan was represented for foreign audiences during the late 19th century.

Souvenir photographs conveyed a wide variety of messages about Japan in the Meiji period (1868-1912). As commercial products, they reflected what the consumers would have liked to see. Many examples emphasize the famous landmarks of Japan, such as Mount Fuji. Some images highlight the distinctness of Japanese customs, establishing stereotypes of Japan that are still persistent today.<sup>2</sup> Extensive scholarship on Orientalism has shaped the ways in which we think about representations of "Eastern" images found in the "West." This postcolonial discourse has focused on how Western representations of the East disregard or even disrespect the native cultures in favor of foreigners' imagined fantasies. While the souvenir photographs played a part in exoticizing Japan, they also reveal various aspects of Japan beyond mere imagination.

In addition to the images that highlighted the exotic distinctness of Japan, souvenir photographs also emphasize the industrial progress of the time. Moreover, these photographs connect to visual representations about Japanese culture from an earlier period. Specifically, I look at paintings by a Nagasaki

painter, Kawahara Keiga (1786-1860?), who was commissioned to paint Japanese customs and natural life for a Dutch audience in the early 19th century. The visual similarities between the Japanese souvenir photographs and Keiga's paintings reveal that accuracy to detail was as important as showing exotic views in these photographs. Through this discussion, I argue that Japanese souvenir photographs served a variety of complex purposes, reflecting the intentions of both the Japanese makers and European viewers.

### Landscapes and everyday life

The most popular subjects of the souvenir photographs are landscapes and everyday life. Landscape images show famous places and architectures, such as large castles and religious sites. Albums were suitable for collecting a series of famous places around Japan or various images of a certain location from different angles. Landscape images often documented the places that the collector had personally visited, or wanted to visit, following a geographic pattern. Furthermore, as Japan was going through rapid change

during the Meiji period, landscape photographs documented the remnants of the Edo period (1603-1867), working as archival resources of the depicted locations.<sup>3</sup>

Another significant role of the landscape images was to establish a typical Japanese view. Mount Fuji, for instance, is a common subject in the souvenir photographs [Fig. 1]. Most photography studios owned images of Mount Fuji from various angles, and many extant albums include at least one view of the mountain. While Mount Fuji had been well known prior to the Meiji period, these photographs reinforced the image of Mount Fuji as the symbol of Japan.

Images of everyday scenes, meanwhile, depict the lives of Japanese people. The images portray men and women from all ages, including children. They show Japanese people dining, working, performing, and so on. Popular photographs show young women in kimono. One image of sleeping women, titled "Sleeping Beauty" [Fig. 2], shows two young women sleeping in a Japanese household with a small painting screen and a lantern. Carefully composed to show the women's faces next to each

other, the image documents their elaborate hair accessories as well. These images of Japanese women shaped the idea that, as Mio Wakita writes, "beauty of Japan is beauty of Japanese women."<sup>4</sup> This image follows the common choice of subject in Orientalist images, which often show vulnerable and sexualized women in exotic settings. These photographs provided an artificial peek into the private lives of young women, offering detailed visual descriptions of them and their clothing. These everyday pictures often highlight the costumes or distinct and sensual customs, rooted in the Japanese past, before industrialization and the imperial government.

The carefully planned compositions and hand-coloring of these everyday-scene photographs seem to imply that these photographs are fabricated scenes set up by the photographer. Indeed, the photographs "capitaliz[ed] on the West's romanticized notion of an 'Old Japan.'"<sup>5</sup> Christine Guth also argues that "the ultimate effect [of these photographs] was to create a fantasy of a simple, primitive Japan that appealed to foreign tastes."<sup>6</sup> However, I propose that there are more to these photographs than only the fabricated, fake images of exotic Japanese life.

### Japan's modernization

Another remarkable role of these export photographs was to display Japanese modernization. Previous studies, which focus on the images that highlighted the exotic culture of Japan, have overlooked a large portion of images that in fact emphasize, instead of hide, Japanese modernity. Many albums, indeed, include images that clearly indicate Japan's latest developments in transportation and engineering. This type of image is not as common as the landscape or everyday scenes, but a significant number of albums contain photographs that show signs of modernity.

A popular topic in this type of photograph is the train station in Yokohama. This is how the foreign travelers who arrived in Yokohama would have traveled to Tokyo, the capital of the new Japanese imperial government and the center of cultural and technological developments at the time. The photographs of the Yokohama station include the view of the bridge leading to the station, contrasting the brick train station and the wooden boats in the canal [Fig. 3]. While the station building itself stands behind the bridge, the title of the image written on the bottom right indicates that the station is the main subject of this image. The image shows people, mostly Japanese people in kimono, on the bridge going to and from the station. With the large mountains in the background, this photograph shows the latest transportation technology changing the landscape of what used to be a small village.

Another example centers the newly built iron bridge while people enjoy a boat ride [Fig. 4].

The title and the prominent placing of the iron bridge explicitly indicate the main subject of the photograph. The contrast with a wooden bridge in the background further highlights the advancement of modern engineering in Japan. The people on the boat seem casual and relaxed, showing two men drinking. This image presents how Japanese daily life embraced modern technology in the late 19th century. Western-style brick buildings or steamships in the bays are also popular photographic subjects that signify European and American presence in Japan. These images highlight that the technological development of Japan was far-reaching in the era.

Looking at a variety of images that appear in Japanese souvenir albums, the photographs clearly show more than just fabricated exotic scenes. Views of Mount Fuji or of beautiful young women were indeed popular subjects that reinforced exotic Japanese images. Some previous studies have suggested that the photographic images were “purposely avoiding the new Western-style buildings, railroads and other technological advancements that indicated the changes taking place in nineteenth century Japan.”<sup>7</sup> However, as I have clearly shown with multiple examples, the souvenir photographs also revealed the development of Japan as a modern nation. As a travel guide from this period explains, travelers could easily travel on the train by the 1890s.<sup>8</sup> Such development in transportation technology was in fact the result of foreign advisors, who were scholars, engineers, and politicians who were hired by the Japanese government. They brought to Japan the latest technology from their home countries. These photographs showed how Japanese people embraced the achievements of foreign advisors around this period.

## Documenting Japan before photography

Even before photography, current and accurate documentation of foreign countries was an important part of European visual culture. Here, I look at the documentation

of Japanese people for the Dutch audience made in the early 19th century as a prehistory to photographic representations.

Today, several Dutch museums own significant collections of Japanese images that were made for export.<sup>9</sup> Philipp F. von Siebold is particularly known for amassing a large collection of Japanese objects, which makes up the Siebold collection as well as the foundational collection at the Museum Volkenkunde, both in Leiden. Siebold was a German physician and botanist, who traveled to Japan from Holland in 1823 and lived in Nagasaki as a teacher and a researcher. He hired the professional painter Kawahara Keiga, to make detailed depictions of Japanese people, customs, architecture, and natural life. Keiga was a prolific painter who likely had a large workshop to cater to the Dutch commissioners. Keiga’s paintings traveled to Europe after they passed the strict censors of the Japanese government.<sup>10</sup> His paintings of Japanese people and their occupations are particularly interesting as a comparative example with the souvenir photography.

Keiga produced multiple series of portraits that feature various occupations in Japan. These are descriptive illustrations that focus on one person or a group of people, highlighting their clothing and belongings with little details of their surroundings. For instance, an image of a blind masseur is from a series of ink paintings from the 1820s that show individuals in their respective occupations at the Museum Volkenkunde [Fig. 5].

The choice of subject and the simple composition of this illustration resemble photographs made after the 1870s. Felice Beato and other photographers produced many images similar to this type of occupations images, though it is unlikely that photographers in Japan would have had access to Keiga’s illustrations. Figure 6 is a photograph of a blind masseur. The illustration and the photograph both show the bald men with their eyes shut. Their closed eyes and the canes signal the blindness. The postures of the models and the things they are holding correspond to each other. Rather than creating an imaginary scene with specific



Fig. 5 (above): “Blind musicians and a blind masseur” (RV-1-4483-15), Kawahara Keiga, 1823-1829, Courtesy of Museum Volkenkunde.



Fig. 6 (right): Untitled (Blind Masseur), photographer unknown, late 19th century, Furness collection, Courtesy of the Penn Museum.

settings, this pair focuses on the costumes and bodily characteristics. Though space is limited to discuss other examples, there are other pairs that show similarities between Keiga’s illustrations and souvenir photographs.

These comparisons suggest that the producers of these images likely understood that their clients liked simple and legible illustrations. In these depictions, exoticization, or the exaggeration of how distinct Japanese culture is from the Dutch, is a part of the visual rhetoric but not the central purpose of the image.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the images provide information about how various individuals are dressed for respective occasions in clear ways.

These examples show that the Dutch observed Japan decades before photographs documented Japanese lives. Through this comparison, I do not intend to suggest that Keiga’s paintings had direct influence on the souvenir photographs. Rather, I suggest that the similarities of the visual elements in both contexts suggest that they likely had similar roles. These images demonstrated not just the exotic fantasy about Japan but also the simple and clear documentation of the current industrial and cultural developments in Japan. In addition to fulfilling Western curiosities about Japanese culture as exotic subjects, these images that traveled abroad also helped frame Japan’s current status for the Dutch audiences.

## Conclusion

Japanese souvenir photographs have often been described as fake, artificial images of Japan. While this is true for some of the photographs, this is not the only type of images that these early Japanese photographers produced. The photographs show the latest industrial and cultural developments of Japan as well, highlighting the engineering and transportation technologies in Japan. These photographs were an arena for a wide variety of images, and they had various purposes according to the desires of both the makers and the buyers. The motive to present the candid state of other nations was common even before photography, as Keiga’s paintings have shown. Close examination of the Japanese photographs unfolds nuanced ways of looking at images for foreign viewership.

The complex meanings of the souvenir photographs are important to grasp a holistic understanding of the relationship between Japan and the Euro-American visitors during

the Meiji period. In addition to imposing buyers’ imaginary views on Japan, the photographs showed Japan as a competitive industrial nation quickly learning European science from European visitors themselves. As Japan adapted European science, fashion, and politics, Japan was also becoming a military empire as well. As representations of the tumultuous transformation that was the Meiji period, the souvenir photographs deserve multifaceted perspectives for analysis.

**Naoko Adachi** is an Associate Fellow of Interpretive Contents at the Tokyo National Museum, and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. She was a Dr. Anton C.R. Dreesmann Predoctoral Fellow at the Rijksmuseum until September 2021. Her research focuses on Japanese photograph albums made for export during the Meiji period (1867-1912). Email: [nadachi@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:nadachi@sas.upenn.edu)

## Notes

- 1 *Nihon Shashinshi Gaisetsu* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 6.
- 2 David Odo, *The Journey of a Good Type* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum Press, Harvard University, 2015).
- 3 Morihiro Satō, *Topogurafi No Nihon Kindai* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2011).
- 4 Mio Wakita, *Staging Desires* (Berlin: Reimer, 2013) 82.
- 5 Anne Nishimura Morse, “Souvenirs of ‘Old Japan’” in Sebastian Dobson et al. *Art & Artifice* (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2004) 41. David Odo described these photographs as “imagined Japan, ... material manifestations of foreign attitudes about Japan during the period” Odo, *The Journey of “a Good Type,”* 4, 27.
- 6 Christine Guth, *Longfellow’s Tattoos* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004) 41, 51.
- 7 Karen Fraser, *Photography and Japan* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011) 40.
- 8 John Murray, Basil Hall Chamberlain, and W. B. Mason *A Handbook for Travellers in Japan* (London: J. Murray) 1891.
- 9 Though the Netherlands was the only European nation to participate in trade with Japan, Japanese objects traveled all across Europe after arriving in the Netherlands. The export objects thus targeted European people beyond the Dutch.
- 10 Ken Vos, Matthi Forrer, *Kawahara Keiga: Photographer without a Camera* (Leiden: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 1987).
- 11 Kobayashi Jun’ichi, *Siboruto to Kawahara Keiga - “Edo jinbutsu gajo” wo megutte* (Asahi shinbun shuppan, 2016).



Fig. 3 (above): “18 Railway station, Yokohama,” photographer unknown, late 19th century, Album 63, Courtesy of Kurokawa collection.

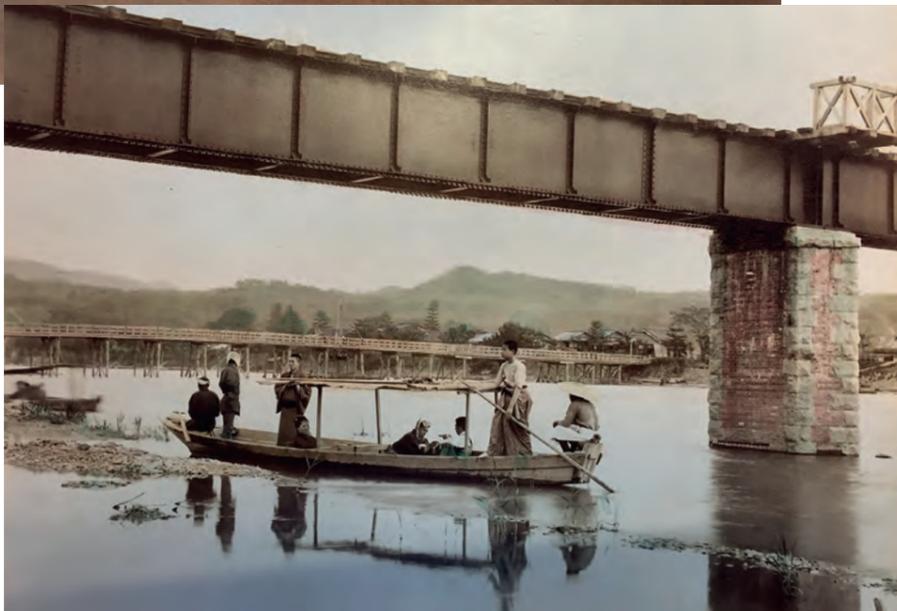


Fig. 4 (below): “702 To look over iron bridge from Uji river” from *Photograph album of a trip to Japan* (Ms. Coll. 833), photographer unknown, late 19th century, Courtesy of the Kislak Center for Special Collections, University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

# The Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Tallinn University

The Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Tallinn University is part of the School of Humanities and comprises four research units: Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Border Studies. We currently offer three B.A. programmes in Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies; and two M.A. programmes in Japanese Studies and Asian Societies and Politics.

Always attuned to the interests of new generations of students, the educational needs of society, and the evolution of the job market, the university has now approved a quinquennial development plan that will allow us to further grow and expand our curricula through three brand new programmes: a B.A. in Korean Studies, an M.A. in Chinese Studies, and an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies.

In what follows, we are pleased to present our first contribution to The Region. Each of the essays introduces one of our four research units, and we look forward to deepening our

engagement with IAS and *The Newsletter* in future issues. We have a rich calendar of both online and onsite national and international events planned for the years to come. We hope to have the chance to welcome colleagues and friends in Tallinn soon and we would like to extend our warm invitation to join us at the upcoming conference of the Baltic Alliance for Asian Studies (BAAS) that we are hosting on 23-25 September 2022.

For more information, go to <https://balticasianstudies.wordpress.com/2021/09/29/5th-baas-in-tallinn-2022>



Tallinn panorama.



TALLINN UNIVERSITY

## Tallinn University

Tallinn University is a young and vibrant higher education institution that builds on the longstanding, solid academic tradition of the Estonian Institute of Humanities, which in 2005 was merged together with Tallinn Pedagogical University and other research institutes to establish this new modern comprehensive academic reality. With its 7000 students, 11% of whom are coming from outside the country every year to study in green "digital Estonia," the university has a multicultural student population and is a growing centre of knowledge in constant evolution.

## Japanese Studies at Tallinn University

Rein Raud, Maret Nukke, and Alari Allik

Although there have been many notable scholars working on various aspects of Asian Studies in Estonia since the 19th century, the discipline was first established as an academic programme only relatively late, when the hold of the Soviet regime on intellectual activity began to relax and the Estonian Institute of Humanities, the first officially recognized independent (non-state and non-church) university, was established in 1988. One of the Institute's founders, Professor Rein Raud, had a degree in Japanese Studies from St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) University and began to develop the discipline in Estonia as well. Thus, Japanese Studies became the core to which specializations in other regions of Asia and the Middle East were added in due course.

Japan had a particular allure among the Estonian reading public. Several translators, notably Agu Sisask and Ülle Udam, had translated works by Kawabata Yasunari, Abe Kōbō, and even Mishima Yukio into Estonian,

to great popular acclaim. There was also a boom of haiku poetry, and although no reliable translations of Japanese authors had been published to date, many Estonian poets began to experiment with the genre on their own. Another sphere of interest was classical aesthetics, and several people had studied the art of flower arrangement on their own. However, as there were virtually no opportunities to travel to Japan at the time, most of this interest was not backed up with serious study.

In 1989, a Japanese Studies programme was thus set up for the first time in Estonia at the newly established Estonian Institute of Humanities, and a small group of students began to study the language, history, literature, and religions of Japan. The Japanese language curriculum was developed in 1996, and courses in Japanese theatre, arts, society, folklore, and politics started to be taught in 1998. The beginnings were difficult, as there were virtually no study materials or dictionaries, and nearly all teaching had to

rely on Rein Raud alone. However, through his Finnish contacts, in the period between 1989-1996, he managed to invite several qualified native speakers from the University of Helsinki to teach courses. He also secured donations of second-hand dictionaries and study materials. The discipline began to grow and eventually reached the level to qualify for Japan Foundation support. Many among the students from the first cohorts have by now become the pillars of the discipline, which has been prospering especially after the Estonian Institute of Humanities merged with several other universities and research institutions into Tallinn University in 2005. When that occurred, the programme in Japanese Studies became part of the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Finally, in 2009, the M.A. programme in Japanese Studies was established with 12 enrolled students.

During its early years, the Institute of Humanities was known for its theoretical outlook and its effort to import into the country new forms of cultural theory and methods of research that had been banned under the Soviet regime. This meant that all teaching and research in regional studies had a strong theoretical orientation. Raud's own work is an example: in the early 1990s, he started using deconstructionist and Foucauldian methods on classical Japanese poetry, which was something not normally done anywhere else in the world at the time. His students followed suit – the problematizing of self-writing in Dr. Alari Allik's work on Heian (794-1185) recluses literature deserves special mention. Allik works on Japanese Medieval writings, and his research focuses especially on how translators have constructed the image of authors through commentaries and rhetorical stylistic devices. He has also produced several Estonian translations of Japanese texts, spanning from the Heian period to contemporary times. This includes his two latest publications, a translation of Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* and of Yōko Ogawa's *Memory police*, both released in December 2021. He has also been especially active in the field of translation studies and is currently a team member working on the prestigious interdisciplinary research project "Translation in History – Estonia 1850–2010: Texts, Agents, Institutions and Practices,"<sup>1</sup> sponsored by the Estonian Research Council.

Another fundamental figure of the department – and a former student of Raud who has been a part of the team since its beginning – is Dr. Maret Nukke, Associate Professor of Japanese Studies. Nukke gives lectures on Japanese culture, society, and politics. She was the coordinator of the Japanese language program in the years 1996-2017, and she has been teaching Japanese language at the university since 1994. Her research interests involve new developments in Japanese classical *nō* theatre, especially contemporary plays (*shinsaku*) as adaptations that expand the traditional canon of the art. Since 2000, the Department avails itself also of the linguistic competence and expertise of Akiko Masaki-Kadarik, who is Lecturer in Japanese Language.

The input of the department into the development of the image of Japan in Estonia, as well as for the development of the discipline in the country and the region, has been considerable. Many of the department's graduates now work in various areas, from foreign relations to private business. Quite a few have made a name for themselves as translators of Japanese literature: thanks to their efforts, Japanese literature remains one of the best-covered non-Western literatures in the Estonian cultural scene. Several of the department's graduates have even advanced to academic positions in Japan. In 2011, the European Association of Japanese Studies held its triennial meeting in Tallinn University, and Rein Raud was elected the president of the association for the following three-year period. He has also been awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, for his research and work in promoting Japanese culture in Europe.

Rein Raud, Tallinn University, Estonia.  
Email: [rraud@tlu.ee](mailto:rraud@tlu.ee)

Maret Nukke, Tallinn University, Estonia.  
Email: [maret.nukke@tlu.ee](mailto:maret.nukke@tlu.ee)

Alari Allik, Tallinn University, Estonia.  
Email: [alari.allik@tlu.ee](mailto:alari.allik@tlu.ee)

### Notes

1 <https://translationinhistory.tlu.ee>



Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion) temple in Kyoto, lake and garden. Photo downloaded from [freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com).

## Chinese Studies at Tallinn University

Lisa Indraccolo, Jekaterina Koort, and Margus Ott

Chinese Studies in Tallinn dates back to 1992, when the first systematic Mandarin language teaching program was established as a part of the already existing major in Asian Studies at the Estonian Institute of Humanities, the first private higher education institution founded in Eastern Europe (1988). Chinese Studies as an independent major was opened in 2005, after several academic and research institutions in Tallinn, including the Estonian Institute of Humanities, were merged into Tallinn University (TLU). Today, the Chinese Studies programme at Tallinn University is a part of the Asian Studies academic unit under the School of Humanities, while the Mandarin language teaching is provided by the Confucius Institute (founded in 2010), a separate non-academic unit administered by the TLU Rector's office. Tallinn University's partner university in the People's Republic of China is Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, which provides us with highly qualified Mandarin teachers. The Confucius Institute is currently headed by our graduate Anete Elken, who, after spending several years working and perfecting her knowledge of the Chinese language in the People's Republic of China, is currently about to graduate our M.A. programme in Asian Societies and Politics. The Chinese language program at the TLU Confucius Institute includes three proficiency levels (A, B, and C), and is supervised by the Estonian-based Chinese language teacher Wu Zhuoya, who, besides being a refined tea expert and a tea ceremony practitioner, has actively participated in the development of our programme in Chinese Studies since she moved to Estonia from the People's Republic of China in 2000.

At the moment, Tallinn University offers a B.A. programme in Chinese Studies, which is solidly based on an interdisciplinary Area Studies approach, with strong focus on Chinese philosophy and its political, social, and cultural developments and outputs. We employ most recent teaching methods that integrate digital resources into our classes to offer our students a lively and stimulating learning experience. The current portfolio of courses on premodern and modern China includes lecture and seminar series on a wide variety of topics. These range from contemporary society and politics to urban life; from religions and intellectual history to culture and philosophical thought, just

to quote a few examples. Students are writing their final dissertations on topics as diverse as Chinese investments in African infrastructure development, women's condition and female education in contemporary rural China, and the intricacies of poetic language in Classical Chinese texts. We are also in the process of developing an M.A. programme in Chinese Studies that is expected to be active in less than two years as part of TLU's quinquennial development plan.

The long-term Chinese Studies Lecturer, Dr. Jekaterina Koort, defended her PhD thesis at TLU in 2016. Her dissertation is a good example of the interdisciplinary approach that characterizes our programme, as it examines the impact of revived Confucianism on the perception of the environment and on the evolution of the representation of landscape during the rule of the Song dynasty (960-1279). As a lecturer, Koort teaches a wide range of courses on China, including the history of Chinese culture and Chinese philosophy and religions. Koort has also translated several Classical Chinese texts into Estonian, the most recent of which is Gan Bao's (fl. 315, d. 336) *Soushen ji* (*Anecdotes About Spirits and Immortals*), a Chinese Medieval collection of supernatural short stories and anecdotes about ghosts, spirits, and immortals. The translation has just been published in December 2021 by the Estonian publishing house Ema & Isa. In recent years, Koort has also developed an interest and expertise in contemporary Chinese politics with a focus on its ideological aspect, and is often invited to comment on crucial political issues in the Estonian media.

The interest of the Chinese Studies unit at TLU in the exploration of the Chinese world of thought and its intellectual history is also witnessed by the research of other members. In 2020, Dr. Lisa Indraccolo joined the team at Tallinn University as Associate Professor of Chinese Studies. Indraccolo has several years of research experience and a solid background in Classical Chinese thought, literature, and intellectual history of premodern China, with a focus on the Warring States and early Han periods (ca. 5th century B.C.-2nd century A.D.). Her research brings together and combines a rigorous philologico-hermeneutic analysis of early Chinese texts with a philosophical approach to describing their content, using an interpretive framework informed by the categories of thought and

the methodology of conceptual history. She is interested also in the analysis of textual patterns and text-structuring devices in early Chinese texts, an approach promoted by most recent trends in textual studies in the field of Sinology. Her main research interests include the early Chinese "Masters" of thought, in particular the Logicians (the so-called "School of Names"), Confucian moral and political philosophy, and Classical Chinese rhetoric. Indraccolo earned her PhD from Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2010 with a dissertation on the early Chinese "sophistic" text *Gongsun Longzi*. She has been invited to provide contributions and encyclopedia entries on the *Gongsun Longzi*, on early Chinese paradoxes and language jokes, and on Chinese legalistic thought. Her most recent publications include, among others, the invited contribution "Argumentation (*bian* 辯)" in *Dao Companion to Chinese Philosophy of Logic*<sup>1</sup> and the chapter "Argumentation and Persuasion in Classical Chinese Literature" in the edited volume *Essays on Argumentation in Antiquity*,<sup>2</sup> which is an extensive study of the two early Chinese rhetorical techniques of argumentation and persuasion. Indraccolo is currently a board member of the European Association for Chinese Philosophy (EACP) and a board member and the Vice-Secretary General of the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS). In 2021, Indraccolo and Dr. Alessandro Rippa, Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at TLU who works across Chinese Studies and Border Studies,<sup>3</sup> submitted a successful bid proposal to host the 25th European Association for Chinese Studies Biennial Conference 2024 at Tallinn University. This will be one of the largest gatherings of Chinese Studies scholars organised by an Estonian University, and a major milestone in the development of Chinese Studies at TLU.

Finally, Dr. Margus Ott, who has extensive expertise in philosophy, has also been actively contributing to the programme in Chinese Studies for many years. He has been teaching courses on Classical Chinese thought and the history of Chinese philosophy through the ages, providing a complete overview that goes beyond the traditional focus on the earlier periods of Chinese civilization to also include the Medieval and mid- to late imperial thinkers and trends of thought in a more comprehensive, overarching perspective. Dr. Ott earned his PhD in Philosophy from Tallinn University in 2014 and is currently working as Research Fellow on the research project "Around the World and Back: Typology of the Reception of Estonian Semiotics in the World," sponsored by the Estonian Research Council.<sup>4</sup> He has a rich publication record and has published several research articles on Confucian, Neo-Confucian and Daoist



Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai. Photo by Lisa Indraccolo, 2004.

philosophy, among other topics, also from a comparative perspective. His solid background in and broad knowledge of both Western and Chinese philosophy allow him to carry out research and work productively across different cultures and traditions. Dr. Ott has also produced several Estonian translations of Western philosophy (Bergson, Deleuze, Jullien, Spinoza, Leibniz) and Chinese philosophy (an anthology of texts on music and divination, including *Yueji* and *Xici*, among others).

Lisa Indraccolo, Tallinn University, Estonia. Email: [lisa.indraccolo@tlu.ee](mailto:lisa.indraccolo@tlu.ee)

Jekaterina Koort, Tallinn University, Estonia. Email: [geja@tlu.ee](mailto:geja@tlu.ee)

Margus Ott, Tallinn University, Estonia. Email: [margus.ott@tlu.ee](mailto:margus.ott@tlu.ee)

### Notes

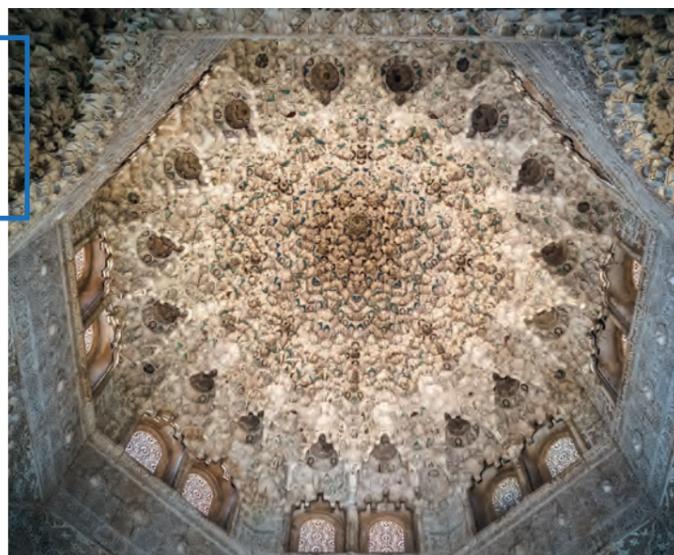
- 1 Fung, Yiu-ming (ed.). 2020. *Dao Companion to Chinese Philosophy of Logic*. New York: Springer.
- 2 Bjelde, Joseph Andrew, David Merry, and Christopher Roser (eds.). 2021. *Essays on Argumentation in Antiquity*. New York: Springer.
- 3 For a detailed account of Dr. Rippa's background and research, please see the section on Border Studies.
- 4 <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/d400a82f-ef3e-41fd-b723-7710a754bc86>

## Middle Eastern Studies at Tallinn University

Helen Geršman

Our B.A. programme in Middle Eastern Studies is grounded in two earlier disciplines: (1) Turkish studies, the beginning of which dates back to 1994 in Estonia; and (2) traditional Arabic studies, which was founded in Tallinn University by the renowned Semitist and dialectologist Dr. Otto Jastrow in 2007. The students' compulsory language is Arabic, while Turkish is optional. At the moment, the university is planning to further expand the programme and enrich its offerings by developing a dedicated M.A. programme in Middle Eastern Studies. Although we do not yet offer an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies, we enjoy the luxury of four students at the doctoral level.

Middle Eastern Studies relies on the dedicated work of three enthusiastic lecturers, whose primary research language is Arabic. The programme draws strength from the diversity and richness of the research topics in which the three of them are engaged. The



Mesmerizing muqarnas in Alhambra, Granada. Image courtesy of Tallinn University.

pool of subjects that are traditionally part of a Middle Eastern Studies programme – such as the history of the Middle East, its culture, and its religions – is covered by junior lecturer Üllar Peterson. With his knowledge of both Arabic and Persian, Peterson's research mainly concentrates on a critical study of the available collection of texts on Syrian Alawites and related topics, namely the varieties of Islam and the intricate history of the Islamic world. The two main umbrella topics that bring

together the research of the lecturers and the current pool of doctoral students are the study of Arabic or Persian orations and their consistent rhetorical analysis. This research direction is inspired by the PhD topic of our Lecturer in Middle Eastern Studies, Dr. Helen Geršman – that is, the rhetoric of Usāma ibn Lādin's speeches. Although Dr. Geršman started her career as a Turkologist, she chose to move forward in the field of Arabic rhetoric, motivated

by the possibility of building a programme in Arabic Studies at Tallinn University together with Dr. Otto Jastrow. It is well-known that parallelism is a pervasive rhetorical feature of the tradition of the Arabic oration. Dr. Geršman has been studying specific orations carrying out a systematic rhetorical analysis of their composition. This is an innovative approach that employs a hermeneutic methodology of textual analysis mutated from Biblical studies, which is founded on parallelisms and

concentric construction. This methodological approach has inspired Helen Geršman not only to analyse the traditionalists' orations, but to also go further back in time, to the roots of the genre of the Arabic oration, and to apply the same analysis to pre-Islamic prose literature as well. The fascinating poetics which arises from the clear concentric formula of Arabic prose texts motivated our teacher of Arabic, Alice Volkonski, whose secondary research language is Hebrew, to compare the language features of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and Old Testament Wisdom literature, basing her study also partly on a rhetorical analysis of the same type. Our doctoral students' research includes rhetorical and content analysis of either Arabic or Persian orations.

Apart from maintaining our unique Middle Eastern Studies programme in Estonia, we also consider it one of our primary responsibilities to reach out to the Estonian public. We do so by making available both academic and more popular translations of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature, where literature here is meant in the widest sense possible. We regularly contribute to the special translation series *Bibliotheca Asiatica* of Tallinn University Press. Also, Helen Geršman and Üllar Peterson are the cofounders of the "Islam in Context" Series at Tartu University Press.

Helen Geršman, Tallinn University, Estonia. Email: [helen.gersman@tlu.ee](mailto:helen.gersman@tlu.ee)



Fig. 1 (left): Kachin amber in Myitkyina. Virtually all of it is traded into China (Photo by Alessandro Rippa, 2015).

Fig. 2 (below): Kachin timber at the China-Myanmar borderlands (Photo by Alessandro Rippa, 2015).



## Border Studies and the China-Southeast Asia Interface

Karin Dean, Alessandro Rippa, John Buchanan

For well over a decade, Tallinn University has been spearheading research on Asian borderlands, attracting researchers through various funding initiatives, developing undergraduate and graduate courses, and hosting events on the topic. Most recently, this culminated in the establishment of the Asian Cluster on Bordering in 2021, a study group discussing the newest developments in Asian borderlands.<sup>1</sup> While rooted in Asian Studies, the Cluster on Bordering plans to include researchers from various departments at TLU to bring together scholars who are thinking with and through borders in order to unveil broader social, political, or environmental processes and phenomena, but also aspects of the everyday that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

Such inquiries are rooted in the growing field of border studies, and they germinate from broader inquiries into contemporary cultural, social, and political meaning-making processes at the School of Humanities. With the most prominent scholarship on borders originating from research on historico-political developments in Europe and North America, scholars at Tallinn University, while contributing to the emerging study of Asian borderlands, are further working to bring these two lines of inquiry into dialogue. Asian borderlands are places where an array of active and trend-setting political developments are underway (e.g., China's Belt and Road Initiative and the persistence of non-state spaces), potentially challenging normative understandings of sovereignty and governance.

This research is particularly relevant as national borders and identities, including religious ones, are by no means disappearing anywhere in the world. On the contrary, current developments clearly indicate that rather than fading away, borders have gained further prominence in how nation-states and individuals order, divide, and understand the world we live in. With new plans for border walls frequently generating news headlines, fears of migration "crises" echoing from places as distant as Mexico, the Mediterranean, and Myanmar, and the sword of Damocles of future exit referendums hanging over the EU's head, border studies is emerging as a crucial discipline to critically understand current times.

Within this broader aim to de-centre scholarship on borders and borderlands, Tallinn University has developed particular expertise in the study of the China-Southeast Asia interface, and particularly of the Yunnan-Myanmar borderlands. This effort has largely been led by the work of Dr. Karin Dean, who has worked on the Kachin-Yunnan borderlands for well over a decade. Her work, in particular, focused on contested territorialities in northern Myanmar, and contributes to our understanding of complex issues around ethnicity and armed conflict. Rooted in political geography, Dr. Dean's most recent interest revolves around the impact of Chinese-funded economic development zones on state-making processes in Kachin state's contested borderlands. Recently Dr. Dean joined Dan Smyer Yü to co-edit the book *Yunnan-Burma-Bengal Corridor Geographies: Protean Edging of Habitats and Empires*, a text which offers a wider perspective of the connected spaces stretching from Yunnan, Tibet, and northern Myanmar to northeast India and Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2020, Dr. John Buchanan, another scholar of Myanmar's ethnic politics, has been based at Tallinn University with support from the Mobilitas Pluss postdoctoral grant. Dr. Buchanan completed a PhD in Political Science at the University of Washington – Seattle in 2017, held postdoctoral positions at Yale University and Harvard University, and is a founding member and the Director of Research for the Institute for Strategy and Policy, a Myanmar-focused think tank. His publications include *Militias in Myanmar* (2016),<sup>3</sup> which provided the first comprehensive study of the country's system of militias. His current research examines the overlap of opium capital accumulation, militarized violence, and state formation in mainland Southeast Asia. His current book project, based on his doctoral research, looks at the history of opium farming in Southeast Asia's highlands. In November 2021, he organized a workshop at Tallinn University focused on the legacy of the US-led war on drugs that examined opium production in Burma's Shan State. The event featured the screening of rare documentary films by Adrian Cowell shot in the opium producing regions of Shan State followed up discussions led by Bertil Lintner.

Dr. Alessandro Rippa, Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at Tallinn University, has also been working at the China-Southeast Asia interface. Based on research carried out mostly on the Chinese side of the Myanmar-Yunnan borderlands, Dr. Rippa has been particularly interested in the nexus of infrastructure development, trade, and securitization. His most recent book, *Borderland Infrastructures: Trade, Development and Control in Western China*, shows how large-scale investment in transnational infrastructure led to small-scale traders losing their historic strategic advantages.<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, the volume shows how local ethnic minorities have become the target of radical resettlement projects, securitization, and tourism initiatives, and have in many cases grown increasingly dependent on state subsidies. At the juncture of anthropological explorations of the state, border studies, and research on transnational trade and infrastructure development, *Borderland Infrastructures* thus aims to provide new analytical tools to understand how state power is experienced, mediated, and enacted in Xinjiang and Yunnan. Additionally, Alessandro Rippa is also one of the editors of the *Routledge Handbook of Asian Borderlands*,<sup>5</sup> to which Dr. Karin Dean also contributed a chapter and curated a section.

This interest in Asian borderlands is reflected in both teaching and mentoring at Tallinn University's School of Humanities. Several courses at both the BA and MA level include sections on Asian borderlands and transnational dynamics within the region. At the same time, Dr. Dean and Dr. Rippa are actively seeking opportunities to involve more early career scholars through Estonian and EU-wide funding initiatives.

This approach, centered around borderlands, thus contributes to our programme's understanding of Asia as a region of study. First of all, it brings to the fore the constructed nature of scholarly areas and highlights the need to address transregional and transnational dynamics in the study of the region. In doing so, a borderlands approach helps us de-construct simplistic assumptions and views that are still common in mainstream representations of Asian communities and cultures. In our work at the China-Southeast Asia interface, we show that even the most

seemingly remote areas are part and parcel of global patterns and dynamics: from land dispossession to the global circulation of capital. Dr. Buchanan's research, for instance, shows how analyses of opium production and circulations need to move beyond its exceptional status as a valuable, illicit narcotic drug, and focus instead on opium as an agricultural commodity, subject to market forces of supply and demand as well as state regulation and agro-ecological conditions. This, in turn, can add nuance to our broader understanding of nation-building and ethnic separatism in northern Myanmar, further showing the importance of non-state spaces in the study of state-building processes and mechanisms. Lastly, Asian borderlands are a privileged place from which to observe the growing impact of China's economy across the world and how this materialises through particular infrastructure projects. "Global China," as this process is increasingly referred to, requires us to re-think both area studies and the ways in which global processes are approached and understood. A view from the borderlands might achieve just that.

Karin Dean, Tallinn University, Estonia.  
Email: dean@tlu.ee

Alessandro Rippa, Tallinn University,  
Estonia. Email: alessandro.rippa@tlu.ee

John Buchanan, Tallinn University,  
Estonia. Email: jbucho@tlu.ee

### Notes

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- Yü, Dan Smyer and Karin Dean (eds.). 2021. *Yunnan-Burma-Bengal Corridor Geographies*. London: Routledge.
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# Friction and Collaboration in Asian Borderlands

Borders, borderlands, and frontiers are not new concepts. They each carry different meanings in different disciplinary contexts. While borders are most closely tied to conceptions of state sovereignty, they are also exceptionally salient devices across and within which resources, commodities, and people move, and in so moving, define, reinforce, or contest claims to national sovereignty and territory. Scholars have moved from a study of the hard territorial line separating states within the global system to the processes of bordering through which people, commodities, and territories are managed differently, and the processes of change within what are labelled “borderlands.” For anthropologists, the primary interest lies in studying the daily practices of ordinary people in the borderlands. Instead of a clearly demarcated concrete physical space (near a border), borderlands also symbolize a cultural and geographical periphery.

How should we approach borderlands in Asia? A continent that is both vast and amorphous, with nation-state systems formalizing after decolonization, borders in Asia became increasingly hardened and securitized in efforts to mark oftentimes contested territorial sovereignty. While borders may have a beguiling logic for many, a consequence of the Westphalian system, these arbitrary divisions have meant different things for the people dwelling along Asian borderlands; in the case of the flowing rivers, lofty mountain ranges, sacred landscapes, and wandering wildlife, state demarcations of territory could be potent barriers to mobility or hardly noticeable at all.

In a world of presumably clear and established borders, a dive into the everyday experiences of ethnic communities living on both sides of borders, partitioned and divided along lines of nationality, offer a useful reminder of the cultural complexity of people beyond borders and the reinvented entities of nation-states. Beginning from the viewpoint of the communities residing in borderlands along the southwest of China – neighboring Pakistan, India, and Myanmar – Hasan Karrar, Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, and Sun Rui contribute to our understanding of borderlands by capturing different aspects of life in these spaces across time. For them, borderlands are not conceived

as predetermined geographic spaces, but rather as places where the control of the state has had material and immaterial consequences on lives, livelihoods, and ecology. Together, they show how communities on both sides of borders have been shaped by colonial histories or postcolonial states, as well as their infrastructural or proselytizing projects, broadening our range of understanding of borderland lives in Asia.

Ping-hsiu Alice Lin is a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University. E-mail: pinghsiu\_lin@fas.harvard.edu

## China's Western Borders since the Reform Era

Hasan H. Karrar

Owen Lattimore famously coined “pivot of Asia”<sup>1</sup> to describe Xinjiang's position amidst new geopolitical configurations resulting from the onset of the Cold War, decolonization in South Asia, and consolidation of power by the Chinese Communist Party. Seven decades later, Xinjiang remains critical both for how Beijing projects its economic and political influence abroad – China has eight land borders in Xinjiang – as well as for the country's self-projection as a harmonious multiethnic state. Situating myself variously in north Pakistan and Central Asia, regions adjacent to Xinjiang, I describe how, since the reform era got underway in the 1980s, bordering China has been contoured by frontier capitalism, geopolitics, and recently, securitization.

October 2020. Afiyatabad commercial centre, north Pakistan. “Our livelihoods are tied to the border,” was the matter-of-fact reply when I commented that the bazaar was quiet [Fig. 1]. I had been glancing out from a roadside restaurant. Seventy-five kilometers up the road was Pakistan's land border with the China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; throughout 2020, the border had remained closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The last time I was in Afiyatabad, in 2017, container trucks with Xinjiang licence plates had been rolling past on their way to the nearby dry port. Although independent cross-border trade between Pakistan and China had been declining, heavy cargo had increased. Visiting Zharkent on the China-

Kazakhstan border later that same year, I had driven past a line of container trucks – my partial count exceeded fifty – coming from China. I had seen these cargo vehicles as evidence, admittedly superficial, of enhanced circulation, undergirded by new or upgraded infrastructure. Since 2013, China had been unrolling the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a broad mechanism for global investment and infrastructure, capital and information flows via economic corridors that transit countries that neighbor China, such as Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

But Afiyatabad in 2020 seemed to suggest a different story. Looking through the frosted window, I saw shuttered shops. A few ambling locals, predictably men. The occasional vehicle, barreling through the market, horn blaring. Then silence again.

That damp afternoon I witnessed how the Covid-19 pandemic had altered – for the time being, at least – cross-border mobilities. But

what to make of this? Had Covid-19 changed bordering? Within a wider vista – going back to the reform era in China, when cross-border mobility between Xinjiang and Central Asia, and Xinjiang and Pakistan began to flourish – would the recent pandemic still be significant?

Although it is tempting to think that Covid-19 has transformed the latest Silk Road, at least three successive border regimes have variously facilitated and restricted cross-border exchanges since the 1980s: frontier capitalism, new geopolitics after the Cold War, and recently, securitization.

### Frontier capitalism

The reform era in China saw deepening exchanges between Xinjiang and Pakistan. In 1986, the Karakoram Highway, which connected Xinjiang to Pakistan, opened to commercial traffic. Previously, since 1969, there had only been official cross-border

trade.<sup>2</sup> After 1986, anyone domiciled in Pakistan's border areas and in possession of a locally issued border permit could travel to Xinjiang for trade.

Similarly, reform in China, accompanied by Sino-Soviet rapprochement, also led to the resumption of exchanges across the China-Central Asia border after a hiatus of about two decades. Besides regulated exchanges, in the mid-1980s, traders and transporters engaged in a parallel trade where consumer goods purchased in the open market were shipped across the border by being declared as “gifts.”<sup>3</sup> By the end of the 1980s, the façade had dropped, and the large number of shoppers arriving from Kazakhstan were reportedly creating bottlenecks at the Kazakhstan-China border.

This frontier capitalism was undergirded by a market economy stripped to the basics: self-financed small traders leveraging arbitrage with minimal regulatory oversight. While some



Fig. 1: The Afiyatabad Commercial Centre – a border market on the Pakistan-China border – wore a deserted look during the Covid-19 pandemic (Photo courtesy of the author, 2020).



上海纽约大学  
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### Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information about the contexts of the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

### Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Since its formation, the center has made extensive efforts to promote Asian studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with Asia Research Centers in mainland China and a multitude of institutes abroad.

traders expanded their operations – I have heard such success stories in Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan – mostly, traders contended with small margins. Profits financed the next trip. One summer, during a visit to Afyatabad, I stood in front of a small stall piled with items shuttled across the border: electric pliers, flipflops, thermos flasks, batteries, small toys. Border trade laid out on a table.

This cross-border trade was enabled by public infrastructure: borders, open to the public; regular public transport; cargo forwarding services for those times when the merchandise could not be self-imported by traders on buses and trains.

### New geopolitics

In 1991, five new states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – appeared along (or just beyond) Xinjiang's borders. New geopolitics, which included settling the disputed borders and acquiring energy security, initially framed

Chinese policy towards Central Asia. While cross-border trade by independent traders in fact increased in the 1990s, it was eclipsed by wider strategic concerns, as China and newly-independent Central Asia built regional diplomacy.

In the unipolar world of the 1990s, China led the way in assembling a confidence-building multilateral mechanism between itself, Russia, and Central Asia. In 2001, this mechanism was institutionalized as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that was described as a model for broad multilateral cooperation, which allowed China to extend assistance to the Central Asian states, including in the commercial realm.

The new century was also when China started “going out,” that is, Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and private businesses were encouraged to invest abroad. Xinjiang became a bridgehead for investment in Central Asia and Pakistan. Some were large-scale investments requiring extensive injections of capital, such as the

2006 partnership between China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Kazakh KazMunayGas to import Caspian oil. Other investments were comparatively modest, such as the partnership between logistics provider Sinotrans Xinjiang and hereditary elites in north Pakistan to build and operate a dry port. This dry port also became operational in 2006.

Such engagements came to be seen as the realization of a “new Silk Road,” a term that was popularized following Premier Li Peng's visit to Central Asia in 1994. In the quarter-century since, the Silk Road narrative has become curated. Today, historic figures such as Han dynasty envoy Zhang Qian (d. 114 BCE) and Ming admiral Zheng He (1371-1433/1435), along with images of camel caravans, reference a past prior to European imperialism in Asia, and they signal a present, Chinese ascendancy.

Silk Road tropes are becoming commonplace in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan, suggesting how neighboring countries are adopting this particular geopolitical aesthetic from China [Fig. 2].

But the new Silk Road is markedly different from past connectivity in one crucial respect: earlier, the so-called Silk Road brought communities together. But now, under BRI, it is primarily finance and heavy cargo moving between distant nodes. Traders and shopkeepers I have spoken to in Afyatabad – have visited five times in a decade – describe how, under BRI, independent cross-border mobilities have declined, both due to stringent tariff regimes and, more recently, to increased securitization in Xinjiang.

### Securitized borderlands

The large-scale internment of Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang has mostly remained out of public conversation in Pakistan, a result of how Pakistan's civilian and military leadership has deliberately steered clear of the topic. But for small traders who cross into China overland, heightened vigilance, security checkpoints, and heavily armed security personnel in Xinjiang are impossible to overlook.<sup>4</sup> I have also heard traders grimly describe the internment of Uyghur women married to Pakistani traders, complaining that Pakistani authorities should have done more to secure their release.

The pall of security hanging over Xinjiang discourages independent trade. Small traders

I spoke with complained of long waits and humiliating body searches at the border. They also face increased restrictions on mobility within Xinjiang, and in terms of where they can stay once they are there.

Similarly, cross-border mobilities between China and Central Asia have changed. Although Chinese authorities had long been cautious about independent cross-border ties fomented by Uyghurs and Kazakhs, until a few years back, Uyghur and Kazakh small traders were shuttling goods between Xinjiang and Central Asia. In my fieldwork in bazaars in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2013 and 2014, I met Uyghur traders who were importing garments and shoes from Xinjiang; this was a cross-border commercial network rooted in ideas of community and social well-being.<sup>5</sup>

But in 2017, I began hearing how it was becoming difficult for Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang to leave China. Thus, while container trucks, railways, and ports are one face of the BRI, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that another defining feature of the current Silk Road – taking shape in the fifth decade since the reform era began in China – is securitization. In this long, complex story, Covid-19 may end up being little more than a wrinkle.

Hasan H. Karrar, Lahore University of Management Sciences,  
Email: hkarrar@lums.edu.pk

#### Notes

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Fig. 2: Silk Road imageries – here depicted on the outskirts of Zharkent, Kazakhstan – are commonplace in Central Asia (Photo courtesy of the author, 2017).

## Friction and Collaboration in Borderlands: Framing the Sino-Indian Borderlands along the Eastern Himalayas

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman

The Sino-Indian borderlands straddles multiple strategic and securitized territories, and they span across diverse community worldviews and perceptions. As one travels from the northernmost borders of Ladakh through Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh in the easternmost fringes of the Himalayas, there are multiple layers of understanding of the borderlands, across spaces and temporalities. What we call the borderlands between the modern nation-states of China and India – framed in conflict and contestations over territoriality and sovereignty claims – intersect multiple scales of community and ecological worldviews and understandings. The forests, mountains, rivers, and sacred landscapes of communities who inhabit them, who have shifted along and moved across as the Himalayan landscape formed and crumbled over centuries, characterize transboundary spaces between China and India.

### Sino-Indian borderlands and borderlines

Willem van Schendel depicts the India-China border as a “sensitive border” marked by uncertain sovereignty and apprehensive

territoriality, with remarkably frayed edges. He goes on to argue that such a border cannot be called a border at all, as in official parlance it is referred to as the “Line of Actual Control” (LAC) or, more famously, as the “McMahon Line.” It is based on the ground presence of the respective militaries along the border, or what is the perception of the borderline by them, usually negotiated on a regular basis by “long range patrols” which perform “area domination exercises” and monitor and inspect border pillars, some perhaps once in a year or two, given the remoteness of the borderline. The way ahead, according to van Schendel, is to approach such borders across transboundary spaces from the lens of “anthropology of frayed edges” rather than with the definite “geography of lines.”<sup>1</sup>

Along the Sino-Indian border, there are several interesting tri-junctions, which underline the presence of a third country at the borderlines. Such tri-junctions involve Nepal and Bhutan in many different sectors, and these are nodes of traditional migration and trading routes across the difficult terrain of these mountainous regions. These tri-junctions have also been sites of territorial claims, contestations, and conflict, as we have recently witnessed in the Doklam plateau, involving the three countries of Bhutan, China and India.<sup>2</sup> The community imaginations,

understandings, perceptions, and worldviews along these borderlands are based on memories of migration, trade, and pilgrimage routes; regular activities such as hunting in the forests, sources of daily livelihood such as transboundary rivers, wetlands and transborder community linkages. They are broader than that of the nation-state's perception of borderlines marked by mere border pillars.

The practice of marking borders on the ground, along which border contestations and claims are made, has followed natural geographical features such as mountains, hills, valleys, forests, plateaus, plains, and watersheds in the Himalayas. The “water-parting principle,” wherein the edge of a watershed was used to establish the border, was a key marker of international boundary-making around the world in the 20th century, especially in mountainous areas where the dominant cartographical understanding was in terms of border points rather than borderlines.<sup>3</sup> The historical perception of border points in a mountainous area – such as border points across the length and breadth of the Himalayas – was bypassed with the “water-parting principle” as an imposed colonial marker to draw regional borderlines. We can therefore see that the Sino-Indian borderlands have several divergent markers.

### Shepherds, hunters, and shamans

The Mishmi community along the Sino-Indian border in Walong and Kibithoo speak about their meetings and exchanges with Mishmi people across the LAC in the grasslands, where they regularly take their sheep to graze. They say that their brethren living in Chinese territory across Kibithoo are prosperous. They note that the Mishmi villages on the Chinese side enjoy better living conditions, housing, and sanitation facilities mostly made up of pre-fabricated structures. They can see the Chinese villages across the border and wonder why they cannot be opened up and allowed to travel to the other side. Some Mishmi community elders with whom I had conversations say that they do not feel intimidated by being close to the border and will want to visit their relatives across the border as and when such an opportunity comes. While the Mishmi recognize nationalist framings, the perception of the border at the community level is based primarily on shared tribal affinities.

Hunting is common amongst the Mishmi, as it is connected to their animist religion and traditions, which require wild meat to appease the spirits and protect deities in their festivals and family offerings. Mishmi hunters often spend weeks in the forests along the Sino-Indian border, and they come into contact with Chinese hunters who often cross into the Indian side. Apart from consumption and religious needs, hunting in the Mishmi hills is also done for commercial purposes, where musk deer and black bears are hunted for their pods and gall bladders, respectively; these are sold to businessmen from mainland

## Border Crossing and Border Maintaining among the Kachin in Ruili

Rui Sun

A few days after I arrived in Ruili – a border city in southwestern China’s Yunnan province – Ah H pang, a Kachin friend I met earlier from the Sunday worship of Pa Se Christian Church, invited me to lunch. I was amazed by how she sophisticatedly procured several specialty dishes from the vendor in fluent Burmese. After lunch, Ah H pang took me on a city tour of Ruili, where Burmese outfits – flip-flops and *longyi*<sup>1</sup> – were a common sight. There were also roadside billboards that advertised tutoring in Burmese or solicited Burmese translators. I grew up in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan, one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in China. While there are 25 officially recognized minority groups in Yunnan among the total of 56 in China, the inhabitants of Kunming are predominantly Han-Chinese. Arriving in Ruili filled me with a sense of the unknown: for once I was a “guest” in my province. This acute sense of unfamiliarity in a neighboring town led me to be interested in Ruili as a research site, where several ethnic communities – Han, Dai, Jingpo, and Kachin – currently reside.

Much of my fieldwork took place at Pa Se Christian Church, frequented by many Kachin people in Ruili. Historically, Kachin people have been inhabiting Northeast Myanmar, particularly Kachin State and Shan State, bordering Yunnan. In the 1870s, missionaries established their first stations in Bhamo in Kachin State, and since then, Kachin people have gradually converted to Christianity and are primarily Christians by birth.<sup>2</sup> While there is no census data on the percentage of Christians among Kachin, the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) comprises about 400,000 members. Pa Se Christian Church became a place where Kachin communities establish and maintain their social connections, perform cultural identities, and seek livelihood possibilities in a foreign country.<sup>3</sup>

In 2016, roughly 500 Kachin people went to the sermons at Pa Se Church on Sundays,

which were conducted in the Kachin dialect. A Kachin interlocutor said, “everything here [religious rituals at Pa Se Church] is an imitation of our KBC practices. Because ours are better, and we are the majority here [among the worshippers].” After the sermons in the afternoon, there were various fellowship activities such as birthday parties, choirs, or dinner get-togethers. These activities proceeded in the Kachin language, accompanied by Kachin food, and were exclusive to the Kachin community. Such exclusivity was initially derived from the language barriers between Kachin dialects and Han Chinese, and it was further enhanced through religious practices.

Only a few members of the Kachin community felt the necessity to learn Chinese and integrate into the local society. For most of them, Ruili was the place for “working” and not for “living.” I knew a couple – living in Ruili for almost 20 years, working in the tailoring business – that spoke close to no Chinese. Their customers were also mainly from the church’s Kachin community. For them, the Chinese language was only helpful when bargaining at the wet market, for which only a few pronouns and numbers were sufficient. The couple said to me during an interview, “We are going back to Bhamo when we retire. Here is not home.”

In Ruili, more than 80% of the Kachin made a living by trading raw jade stones. There are many uncertainties embedded in such a business.<sup>4</sup> Kachin jade traders often sought their customers through church networks to reduce business risk and avoid fraud. Thus, the church further bound members of the Kachin community and limited cross-ethnic interactions.

Kachin people in Myanmar, Jingpo people in China, and Singpho people in India share the same ethnic origin and live in a similar landscape.<sup>5</sup> During the 1960s, a border demarcating China and Myanmar was established through diplomatic negotiations between the two countries. The Jingpo-Kachin people were separated into two distinct

between the transboundary Mishmi community. Mishmis in Arunachal Pradesh say that they know that their Mishmi brethren cannot openly follow their animist religious rituals and practices in China due to the prevailing communist ideology. They accord a high value to cross-border interactions between shepherds, hunters, and shamans, in order to preserve their common Mishmi animist religion, culture, and identity, which illustrates a sense of belonging that is socio-spatial.

Borderland community relations effectively look across the borderline, be it contested or otherwise, to take in both sides of the borderland.<sup>6</sup> Such transboundary human relations help create, maintain, undermine, and even evade borders. They also challenge the idea of a national homeland that is sacrosanct and only determined and controlled by the nation-state. The lived social realities and community imaginations in Arunachal Pradesh can be effectively described by social and ecological framings and worldviews, which are in stark contrast with the strategic securitized framings and worldviews offered by the nation-states. The borderland communities across the Eastern Himalayas negotiate multiple identities to imagine geographies straddling nation-state borders.<sup>7</sup> In so doing, they foreground a sense of belonging based on transboundary ecologies.

“imagined communities.”<sup>6</sup> But cross-border interactions have never ceased. Many of my Kachin interlocutors have relatives in Yunnan, while Jingpos have relatives in Kachin State. Border-crossing is by and large only a political ideology, vaguely looming over the daily transnational activities of borderland inhabitants for whom the border is more of a social and cultural boundary than a definite demarcation of geography and nation-states. Some Kachin women married Jingpo men but still have minimal interactions with other inhabitants of Ruili. They crossed the geographical boundary of the two countries but maintained the social and cultural boundaries of the Kachin community.

My ethnographic work in Ruili explores the intricacies of cross-border interactions. Consider Awang Seng’s experience, for example. Thirty-five years ago, Awang Seng’s mother married his father from Myanmar and moved to Ruili. Awang Seng, instead, grew up at his grandmother’s home in Myanmar until he turned nine years old, when his parents decided to bring him to China for primary school. Awang Seng recalled that he understood no Chinese initially and experienced difficulty keeping up with school. By the time I met him in Ruili in 2016, Awang Seng had just graduated from college in Kunming at age 28. By then, he had mostly forgotten Burmese or Kachin dialects.

Awang Seng self-identifies as Jingpo, yet he felt a sense of “dislocation” – a sense of being outside one’s own familiar cultural space – much like how I felt upon arriving in Ruili. On the one hand, he is a Jingpo man who speaks fluent Mandarin but lives within a circle of friends and relatives who are Kachin with no knowledge of Chinese. On the other hand, his Christian belief separates him from the local Han and Jingpo community, who worship ancestors and ghosts. Awang Seng attended the Sunday service at Pa Se Christian Church each week. “Preaching in Kachin dialects is ambiguous,” he said, “it is mainly for releasing emotions rather than learning the Truth.” Awang Seng’s mother also went to the Sunday service: it became their weekly meeting place.

In 2021, when the Covid-19 situation in most places of China was more or less under control, Ruili frequently emerged on the news due to resurgent outbreaks. Many confirmed cases were traced back to stowaways who sneaked from Muse (Myanmar) to Ruili (China). However, it is a paradox to call these border crossers stowaways. In the local context, crossing

the national border and entering China from Myanmar (or the other way around) is nothing more than visiting another town nearby. When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, nation-states immediately tried to restrict international movement, but they have been largely unable to control the seasoned border-crossers of Ruili.

The actual border that divides Kachin from other peoples in Ruili is an intangible one, shaped by Christian practices and their strong self-identification as a distinct Kachin community. As one interlocutor puts it, “The identity of Kachin and that of Christians is inseparable. It is the church [KBC] that takes on the responsibility of preserving Kachin’s traditional culture such as teaching Kachin youngsters our language.” Religious and linguistic affinities reinforce ethnic identity and community among the inhabitants in Ruili. While Kachin people can easily cross the borderline between China and Myanmar, the boundaries between them and other local inhabitants are maintained.

Rui Sun, Ph.D. Candidate at Department of Anthropology, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Email: sunrui@link.cuhk.edu.hk

### Notes

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Fig. 1: The eastern Himalayas stretching from the Mishmi Hills to Tibet, straddling across the Sino-Indian borderlands. (Photo by the author, 2013).

India or across the border in China for the traditional medicine market.<sup>4</sup> The nation-state of India invokes the hard border in the Sino-Indian borderlands; in practice, however, this border is quite fuzzy and fluid, with Mishmi hunters and shepherds having sporadic interactions across it. However, such interactions happen not through defiance by the local communities, and the nation-state is often cognizant of such transboundary encounters and interactions.

The number of Mishmi traditional shamans (priests), who conduct the animist customs in community festivals and family ritual offerings, has fallen significantly on the Indian side. Meanwhile, almost none exist in the Mishmi villages on the Chinese side. Mishmis from the Chinese side pay tribute to Mishmi priests from the Indian side to conduct rituals. This points towards a unique transnational exchange of rituals, offerings, and animist belief systems

## Infrastructuring shared borderland ecologies

The securitized calculations of China and India have brought both countries to gather their strategic footprint along the borderlines through infrastructuring the borderland. The natural features that mark these borderlands (e.g., forests, mountains, and rivers) cannot by themselves serve as sovereignty markers on territory; rather, they have to be infrastructured in certain ways in order to be able to serve as effective sovereignty markers. The process of securitizing and infrastructuring these borderlands has brought roads, railways, mega hydropower dams, oil and natural gas drilling projects, and mining activities to both sides of the border. Several dams are already constructed and commissioned by China, and many are in the pipeline in India. In a race to dam the transboundary Brahmaputra, both China and India have put the shared borderland ecology of the Himalayas and its communities at risk.

The hydropower development plans by India on the Tawang Chuu and the Nyamjang Chuu are a case in point. These have faced continuing protests by the Monpa community, who straddle the transboundary spaces around the tri-junction between India, Bhutan, and China. The dams threaten sacred sites revered by transboundary communities in the region. They also threaten the habitat of the black-necked crane, considered to be the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama, who was born in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. The frictions we witness in the Sino-Indian borderlands operate at multiple levels. Dominant among them is the friction between the nation-states in a securitized framing.

The friction is evident between, on the one hand, infrastructuring borderlands to achieve state presence, order, and control, and, on the other hand, the worldviews of borderland communities. This needs reconciliation through a sustained process of dialogue to protect shared ecologies across the transboundary Himalayas.

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, Visiting Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, India. Email: mirzalibra10@gmail.com

### Notes

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# Indonesian Studies in Melbourne: Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Future

Australia has a history of more than 65 years of formal tertiary education in Indonesian language, culture and society. The University of Melbourne has played a foundational role in this area of studies. On 28 and 29 September 2021, the University's Indonesian Studies program organised a public lecture and international conference to celebrate and reflect on the development of Indonesian Studies in Australia. The two-part program aimed at generating international dialogue, intergenerational knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary discussion by bringing together Language, Culture and Area Studies experts as well as the broader Indonesia and Southeast Asia-interested community. A central focus point and source of inspiration was scholar, public intellectual and Foundation Professor of Indonesian Studies at The University of Melbourne, the late Arief Budiman (1941–2020). The event marked the start of an annual Arief Budiman Public Lecture series.

Indonesian language teaching commenced at The University of Melbourne in the mid-1950s. This development took place in a dynamic era of regional cultural diplomacy, in which Indonesian cultural activists and intellectuals declared themselves 'heirs to world culture'. These were also the formative years of Budiman, who became a signatory of the so-called Cultural Manifesto in 1963. This manifesto, which emphasised creative and intellectual freedom, was subsequently banned by the government. In Budiman's spirit, the Indonesian Studies program at The University of Melbourne today aims to educate a new generation of world citizens: cosmopolitan, socially engaged, and with a deep understanding and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The inaugural Arief Budiman Public Lecture, titled 'Arief Budiman and His Family: Cultural Politics under Guided Democracy',

was delivered by Prof. Charles A. Coppel, who himself has played a key role in the development of Indonesian Studies at The University of Melbourne. Coppel explained how national politics under President Sukarno's Guided Democracy (1959–1965) was polarised between the 'progressive revolutionary' forces including communists and radical nationalists on the one hand and those opposed to them including anti-communists in the military and religious parties on the other. Opposing views about ethnicity, literature and culture in general were caught up in the hothouse of national politics. In his lecture, Coppel showed how Arief Budiman and his family illuminated this process in Indonesian modern history.

The international conference in the second part of the program, titled 'Citizens of the World: Indonesian Studies in Australia', steered discussions about past, current, and future directions of Indonesian Studies along the

various types of border-crossing epitomised by Budiman and his students: between various disciplines, between academia and activism, and between Indonesia, Australia and the World. Consisting of four panels, each with their own subthemes, it sought to address the following key question: how to respond to the challenges of teaching and researching languages, cultures and regions in the context of late capitalism?

The first panel, titled 'Border-crossing Literature and Language', had presentations by Dr Intan Paramaditha (Macquarie University), Dr Lily Yulianti Farid (Monash University) and Ms Dewi Anggraeni (independent author). The second panel, with Dr Irfan Wahyudi (Universitas Airlangga), Dr Hellena Souisa (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and Mr Tito Ambyo (RMIT University), discussed 'The Digital Turn in Media and Communication'. The participants in the third panel, titled 'International

Relations and Development in the Anthropocene', were Dr Poppy Sulistyaning Winanti (Universitas Gadjah Mada), Prof Nyoman Darma Putra (Universitas Udayana) and Dr Ina Hunga (Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana). The fourth and final panel, with Dr Inaya Rakhmani (Universitas Indonesia), Prof Bernard Arps (Universiteit Leiden) and Dr Seng Yu Jin (National Gallery Singapore), specifically focused on 'Area Studies under Late Capitalism'.

Overall, the conference confirmed that Indonesian Studies is much more than a pragmatic, external tool for communicating elsewhere defined solutions in the international arena. Instead, it is at the very core of generating complex approaches to the difficult issues of our times.

Edwin Jurriëns, Convenor, Indonesian Studies, The University of Melbourne  
Email: [edwin.jurriëns@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:edwin.jurriëns@unimelb.edu.au)

## Arief Budiman and his Family: Cultural politics under Guided Democracy

Charles A. Coppel and John R. Maxwell

Arief Budiman was appointed as the Foundation Professor of Indonesian Studies at the University of Melbourne in 1997, holding the Chair until his retirement in 2008. This essay provides an overview of him and his family in the political and cultural context of what Sukarno, Indonesia's first President, called *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (Guided Democracy).

Arief's original name was Soe Hok Djinn, but for convenience here Arief Budiman will be used throughout. (He changed his name in 1967 with his marriage to Leila Chairani Baharsyah.) In discussing the Soe family, the focus is on Arief himself, his father Soe Lie Piet, and his younger brother Soe Hok Gie. These three men were all precocious readers and writers. They were all ethnic Chinese born in Jakarta in the 20th century, oriented to the land in which they were born, and not at all oriented to China. None of them was Dutch-educated.

Arief later described the family in which he grew up as "lower middle-class" with "no academic background whatever." His father Soe Lie Piet [Fig. 1], a writer and journalist, was often "unemployed or only half-employed."

There are some important generational differences between Soe Lie Piet and his sons. Soe Lie Piet (1904–1988) grew up when the colonial Netherlands Indies was at its height, while his sons were the product of the Japanese occupation and the turmoil in which the Indonesian Republic was born. Although Soe Lie Piet was brought up in the household of his grandfather, an immigrant from Hainan, he was cared for and indulged by his maiden aunts, who spoke the Malay language typical of *peranakan* Chinese in Jakarta. His schooling was in an ethnic Chinese environment, primarily in the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (THHK) school, where he was instructed in Mandarin Chinese and later in English. From the 1930s he became a prominent Chinese Malay writer of popular romances in which the leading characters were Chinese, although the settings were often in different parts of the Indies and influenced by local magical and mystical beliefs.

His sons were brought up in a Malay-speaking home in Kebon Jeruk, an ethnically mixed part of Jakarta with a significant Chinese component. When they were young, their mother read them Chinese Malay stories,

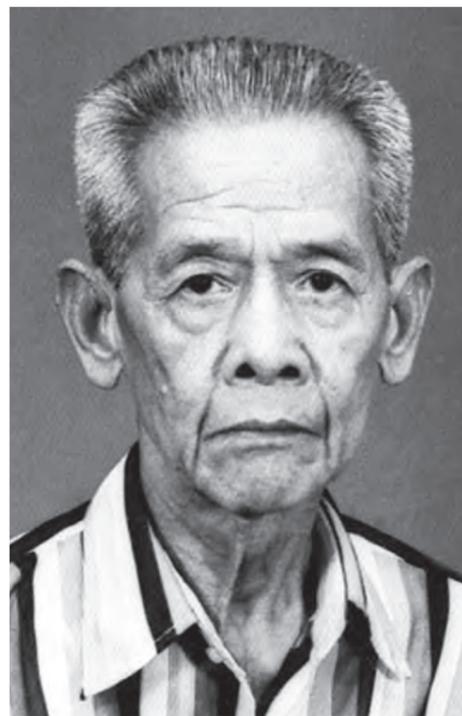


Fig. 1: Soe Lie Piet, 1982  
(Photo courtesy of John Maxwell).

leading them to seek out comic books and then more serious reading from nearby lending libraries. Almost all of their schooling was in the new national language (*bahasa Indonesia*) with an Indonesian curriculum. They were taught to speak and write standard Indonesian and to avoid the kind of Malay that their father had used professionally. They may have found

their father's stories an embarrassment, both in terms of style and subject matter, if they had bothered to read anything he had written.

Soe Lie Piet was apparently never interested in politics, let alone politically active. In later life he withdrew into an introspective absorption with mysticism and the supernatural at a time when his two sons were becoming politically aware and active, taking courageous public stands on matters of principle. Their own writing engaged with politics at the national level, and they were both secular in outlook.

In his twenties, however, Soe Lie Piet had been a man on the move in search of employment as a journalist and writer. This took him to Medan and Palembang in Sumatra, to Surabaya in East Java, and to Bandung in West Java, where he married Nio Hoei An in 1933. In August 1934, they moved to Bali with a baby daughter, living there for nearly a year while Soe Lie Piet acted as correspondent for several Java-based publications. He also wrote several works based on his experiences there, including what were probably the first guides to Bali written in Malay, both published in 1935. His travels in search of gainful employment led him to places that also inspired several of his novels or short stories.<sup>1</sup>

After Bali, the family moved to Jakarta, where their second daughter was born in 1936, followed by their first son Soe Hok Djinn (Arief) in January 1941. Although Soe Lie Piet published several more novels, the family's economic position soon became precarious. Under the shadow of war, his wife and her children returned to her mother's house in Bandung, while he stayed in Jakarta. In 1941, he joined the editorial staff of the newspaper



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### The Asia Institute

The Asia Institute is The University of Melbourne's key centre for studies in Asian languages, cultures and societies. Asia Institute academic staff have an array of research interests and specialisations, and strive to provide leadership in the study of the intellectual, legal, politico-economic, cultural and religious traditions and transformations of Asia and the Islamic world. The Institute is committed to community engagement and offers a dynamic program of academic and community-focused events and cultural exchanges that aim to promote dialogue and debate.

Hong Po. During the occupation, Hong Po urged the Chinese community to support the Japanese war effort. There is nothing to suggest that the apolitical Soe Lie Piet himself was pro-Japanese, but the job gave him some protection at a time when prominent Chinese journalists were interned or went into hiding.

In 1942, his wife and children returned to Jakarta, for Soe Lie Piet at last had found a simple timber house in Kebon Jeruk, which would be the family home for the next four decades. Soe Hok Gie was born there in December 1942 and lived there until his death a day before his 27th birthday in December 1969. Kebon Jeruk was the neighbourhood where both brothers lived throughout their schooling and university years.

Arief lived on for another half century after his brother's death [Fig. 2]. It is an extraordinary and sad irony that when Arief died in Semarang on 23 April 2020, the headlines in the Indonesian press almost universally referred to him as Soe Hok Gie's older brother. Soe Hok Gie seems to have had an afterlife as an almost legendary figure [Fig. 3]. Why was this so? First, he had started to keep a diary in early 1957 at the age of 14, and an edited version was published in 1983.<sup>2</sup> The final entry is 6 December 1969, ten days before his sudden death from toxic gas near the summit of volcanic Mount Semeru. The diary is a fascinating insight into the maturing mind of an intelligent young man whose life was cut short prematurely. Then, in 2001, John Maxwell's biography of Soe Hok Gie was translated, published, and widely read in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in 2005, Riri Riza's partly fictionalised biopic film *Gie* was released, receiving three awards for best film, best leading actor, and best cinematography at the Indonesian Film Festival. The public attention given to the short life of Soe Hok Gie through the film, the publication of his diaries, and the detailed biography help to explain those headlines when Arief died.<sup>4</sup>

The two brothers were close in age and experience but were clearly very different in several ways. Although Arief was the older by nearly two years, they were contemporaries at school and university. They were in the same class at primary school, completing in late 1955 with such high grades that they were able to apply for admission with reduced fees to the best secondary schools in Jakarta. Arief attended the prestigious Jesuit Canisius College throughout his secondary education, but Hok Gie was only there for the last three years. Arief was in the science stream while Hok Gie was in the humanities.

Their academic performance at Canisius enabled them to gain entry to the elite University of Indonesia in late 1961. Arief went to the Faculty of Psychology at the main Salemba campus, and Hok Gie to the Faculty of Letters at the Rawamangun campus. These separations – different lower secondary schools, different streams at Canisius, and different Faculties at the University of Indonesia – went beyond different developing interests. They also reflected an estrangement that lasted a decade, in which the two brothers virtually stopped speaking to one another.

At Canisius and the University of Indonesia, the brothers may have been to some extent outsiders, but not because they were ethnic Chinese. Neither was ever attracted to joining an association defined by their Chinese ethnicity since they clearly regarded themselves as Indonesian. Their socio-economic background was probably lower than most of their peers, but at the same time they were unusually well read and intellectually sophisticated for their age. They made strong friendships with those who shared their interests.

### The political context of “Guided Democracy”

In 1959, using a Presidential decree, Sukarno returned Indonesia to the 1945 Constitution (which was weak on human rights and strong on presidential power) in a system he called “Guided Democracy.” In 1960 he suspended the elected parliament and replaced it with appointed members. No further elections were held. Unelected himself and with the backing of the military, Sukarno ruled by decree, using ideological formulas and slogans to

silence opposition and to ban critical media. The move to an authoritarian state grew over years, but from late 1963, with the support of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and radical nationalist parties, Sukarno promoted a strong turn to the left. Any person or institution whose loyalty was doubted was subjected to demands for “retooling.”

In many respects the late Guided Democracy regime embodied a personality cult. Sukarno was beyond public criticism, and in May 1963 was made President for Life by a body he had himself appointed. Those newspapers that were still allowed to appear were required to include extracts from his writings. Anti-communist Indonesians with close Western connections were under attack, especially if they dared to challenge the PKI or organizations close to it by trying to persuade the President to take a less leftist or authoritarian position. Arief Budiman and Soe Hok Gie moved in these circles during their university student years, and each took a public stand contrary to the increasingly radical spirit of the times.

There were two very large organizations that are relevant to this discussion, which were closely associated with Sukarno and the PKI. The first was LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* - Institute of People's Culture), claimed in 1963 to have 200 branches and 100,000 members. LEKRA took the “socialist realist” line that Indonesian culture should express Indonesian identity and serve the mass of the Indonesian people. It worked to suppress art and writing that failed to conform. The second was Baperki (*Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia* - Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship), established as a broad-based organization in 1954 to promote Indonesian citizenship for ethnic Chinese and oppose racial discrimination, and claiming a membership of over 280,000 by 1965. Under the leadership of its leftist chairman Siauw Giok Tjhan, Baperki supported Sukarno's Guided Democracy and was widely regarded as a member of the “progressive revolutionary forces.”

### Arief, Sastra magazine, and the Manifesto Kebudayaan

When Arief entered the Psychology Faculty in 1961, he startled other students by discoursing on Jean-Paul Sartre and existentialism when he underwent the customary initiation process for new students. In fact, he had already translated a chapter of Albert Camus' novel *L'Étranger* into Indonesian. Arief had a passion for Camus. According

to his friend and fellow Psychology student Goenawan Mohamad, Arief's anti-Utopian worldview and determination were strongly influenced by Camus' book on *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He was already able to mix easily with established artists and intellectuals, and it was Arief, the boy from Kebon Jeruk, who introduced Goenawan to such circles.

In May 1961, the first issue appeared of *Sastra*, a literary magazine under the leadership of HB Jassin. Arief and his friend Goenawan were both contributors to the magazine, which was soon subjected to a sustained attack by LEKRA and other leftist writers. Indonesia's most famous novelist, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, accused *Sastra* of having a bourgeois character and slammed those like HB Jassin who sought “to seek shelter from the tumult of the revolution, and to dull themselves to sleep with the theory of ‘universal humanism.’” In 1963, *Sastra* awarded Arief a prize for his essay on “Man and Art.” The twenty-two-year-old Arief was a potential target.

In August that year a group of anti-communist artists and intellectuals issued a Cultural Manifesto (*Manifesto Kebudayaan*). Many of the signatories were writers, including Arief, Goenawan, and Jassin. It was intended as a statement of their beliefs and aspirations for Indonesian national culture, based on the principle of freedom of expression in art and literature and what they described as “universal humanism.” The Manifesto was derided by LEKRA and their supporters, who gave it the derogatory acronym “*Manikebu*” (“buffalo sperm”). A full-scale culture war broke out with calls for it to be crushed. On 8 May 1964, President Sukarno issued a decree banning the Manifesto. Calls followed for a purge of counter-revolutionary forces from all educational institutions. Jassin was removed from his lectureship at the University of Indonesia and *Sastra* ceased publication.

The young student-philosophers Arief and Gunawan were not prime targets of this campaign but nor were they completely safe in this increasingly restrictive environment. Thanks to their international connections, they were each in turn able to escape and gain safe haven for a while in Europe. The Congress for Cultural Freedom had set up a committee in Jakarta in 1956, which offered scholarships for study in Europe. Arief secured such a scholarship in 1964 and went to Paris and the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. The Congress continued the scholarship for a second year, and this time the choice was Goenawan, who left Indonesia just days after the dramatic events in Jakarta on 1 October 1965.



Fig. 2: Arief Budiman in Canberra, 1997 (Photo courtesy of John Maxwell).

### Soe Hok Gie and the assimilation movement

When Soe Hok Gie became a student in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Indonesia in late 1961, he met fellow history student Ong Hok Ham (1933–2007). Ong had written a series of articles in *Star Weekly* about the situation of the Chinese community in Indonesia. These culminated in February 1960 with an article arguing that the only way for the Chinese to overcome prejudice and discrimination was for them to “assimilate” themselves into the majority Indonesian population.

In late March 1960, a group of ten Chinese Indonesians published a Statement in *Star Weekly* under the heading “Toward a Proper Assimilation.” It was a provocative document. It quoted the President as approving intermarriage between Indonesians of different ethnic groups, and a statement by Baperki chairman Siauw Giok Tjhan that solving the minority problem by name-changing and biological assimilation was unwise, undemocratic and violated basic human rights, implying that Baperki was trying to impede the process of assimilation. As controversy mounted and the assimilation movement developed, Hok Gie was drawn in through his friendship with Ong. This was made easier because he had never been involved in exclusively Chinese organizations and also because of his own modest class background. In addition, many of the assimilationists had Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI) or Catholic connections, like Hok Gie himself.

On 22 February 1963, Hok Gie was one of a small group of assimilationists who visited President Sukarno to seek his endorsement for their activities. He had no suitable clothes, but a jacket several sizes too large was borrowed for the occasion. Sukarno gave them a statement that they were happy to use against Baperki.

This achieved, the President regaled the group and members of the palace circle with political gossip and talk about sex. Hok Gie had never been a fan of Sukarno, but he was even more appalled by the evidence of the President's lechery and venality – all duly noted in his diary. The President, however, was impressed by him, and later offered him a position in a history museum planned as part of the National Monument in central Jakarta. Hok Gie ignored the offer.

On campus, Hok Gie was active in the small Socialist University Students Movement (*Gerakan Mahasiswa Sosialis* - GEMSOS). They formed a study group in which they were addressed by prominent PSI-connected intellectuals, although GEMSOS was not formally affiliated with the banned PSI. Hok Gie was unimpressed by a number of the older PSI figures, who lived comfortable bourgeois lives. He dismissed them as “salon socialists.”

From his diary entries it is clear that his opposition to communism and totalitarianism was influenced by early exposure to the writings of ex-communists like George Orwell and Arthur Koestler. Despite this, he had some admiration for aspects of the PKI: its radical reform agenda; its attacks on big business, bureaucratic capitalists, and official corruption; and the reputation of its leaders for dedication, hard work, and moral probity as compared to other political figures.

Soe Hok Gie was very wary about stepping into the political arena. In a diary entry on 16 March 1964 he wrote:

In politics morality doesn't exist. As far as I'm concerned politics is something that's utterly dirty, it's filthy mud. But at a certain moment where we cannot restrain ourselves any further, then we will leap into it. Sometimes the moment arrives, as it did previously in the revolution. And if by some chance this moment comes I'm going to leap into this mud.

When the cataclysmic events of 1 October 1965 erupted in Jakarta, Hok Gie was actually with a group of his hiking friends heading for the slopes of Mount Merapi in Central Java. It was only after several days that they heard the news of the attempted coup against the army leadership and of the showdown between the army and the PKI that was underway.

Upon his return to Jakarta, he joined with a militant Islamic youth group in ransacking and burning of buildings associated with the PKI. By early 1966, he was an active leader in student demonstrations on the streets, expressing the Tritura (*Tri Tuntutan Rakyat* - Three Demands of the People): calling for the President to ban the PKI, to reshuffle the Cabinet, and to lower the price of basic commodities. This was part of a wider campaign by the newly formed KAMI (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia - University Student Action Front*), but his group of campus-based students from the Faculties of Letters and Psychology acted both autonomously and in concert with others. Among other activities, the demonstrators took their protests to cabinet ministers and even to the President. This was a risky business because Sukarno was recalcitrant and tried hard to restore his authority, encouraging those still loyal to him to confront the protesters.

Arief was unable to take an active part in these demonstrations because he had fallen seriously ill with tuberculosis. Nevertheless, behind the scenes, he worked with a group of writers and artists preparing placards and posters that were used by the demonstrators.

After Sukarno was compelled to surrender powers to General Soeharto on 11 March 1966 and action was taken on the students' demands, Hok Gie and Arief both engaged in preparing and writing scripts for broadcasts on the student Radio AMPERA. They worked together harmoniously and effectively. This was an important turning point in their personal relationship. The two brothers were also contributors to the two new student newspapers that appeared in mid-1966—the Jakarta daily *Harian KAMI* and the Bandung weekly *Mahasiswa Indonesia*—that were intent on attacking all aspects of the Old Order and its leadership.

In July 1966 the journalist and novelist Mochtar Lubis was released from detention. He had been visited in early March on several occasions while still in detention by both brothers who admired him for his principled opposition to Sukarno. Mochtar soon launched the magazine *Horison*, destined for a while to become Indonesia's leading literary magazine. Arief (still under the name Soe Hok Djinn) became a member of its original editorial board together with luminaries like the literary critic HB Jassin. At around the same time Hok Gie's very first article in the press appeared in the student weekly *Mahasiswa Indonesia* under the title 'Why I chose gaol – Mochtar Lubis and politics'.

Both brothers went on to become noted columnists in the mainstream press, particularly in *Kompas* and *Sinar Harapan*. But unlike many of their contemporaries, they

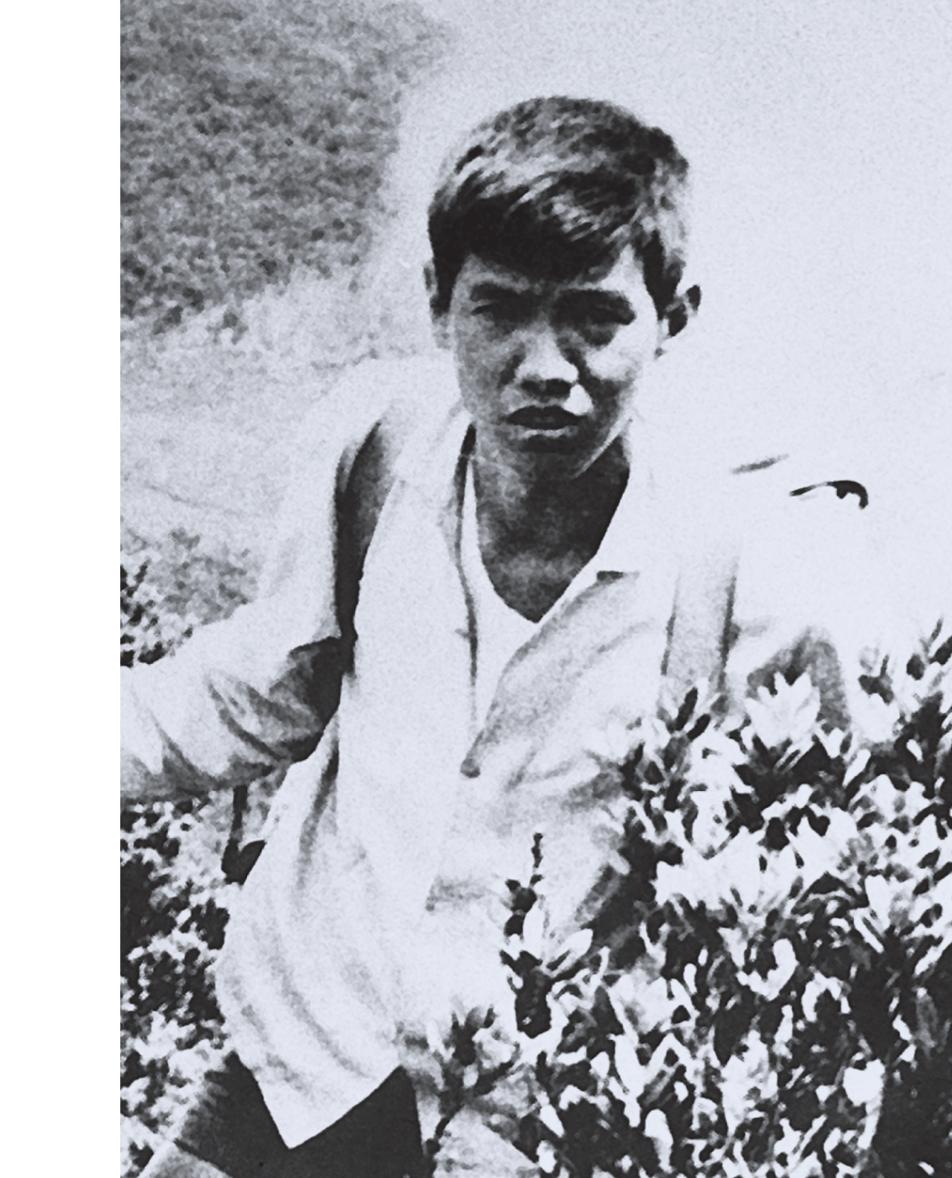


Fig. 3: Soe Hok Gie, approx. 1968 (Photo courtesy John Maxwell, original source unknown).

did not remain silent in the face of injustices. In particular, Hok Gie's two-part *Kompas* article in July 1967 on "The future social consequences of the Gestapu affair" was probably the first time that the horrendous scale of injustice and human suffering caused to the victims of the drive against the PKI and its affiliates after October 1965 was raised in the Indonesian press. In contrast to their friend Mochtar Lubis, both brothers took up the cause of the many thousands of political prisoners detained without charge or trial.

In the last phase of his life Hok Gie felt alone in his struggle. But as Arief stood beside his brother's coffin in East Java, he declared "Gie, you are not alone." Arief soon assumed

the mantle of the activist, moving beyond the spoken and written word by leading campaigns against corruption, boycotting the stage-managed New Order elections, and opposing the expensive Taman Mini theme park.

Both brothers were public intellectuals who were steadfast in their courage and consistent in their defence of freedom of expression and human rights. We can only speculate about what Hok Gie would have done had he lived. In the case of Arief, during a period of graduate studies in the United States, he was influenced by a wider range of ideas, including neo-Marxism. When he returned to Salatiga, his teaching of development studies and contextual literature during

the 1980s was anathema to some of his old friends and comrades.

Arief also came to regret the assimilationist movement and embraced the concept of a multicultural Indonesia in which Chinese culture had a place. He also recognised that the role of a public intellectual came at a cost to himself and his family. In his inaugural professorial lecture at the University of Melbourne, he paid tribute to his wife Leila, saying, "You all know it is far from easy to live as the wife of a person like me." And yet, despite that statement to his dead brother – "Gie, you are not alone" – the title of that lecture was "The Lonely Road of the Intellectual."<sup>5</sup>

Charles A. Coppel,  
The University of Melbourne.  
E-mail: [c.coppel@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:c.coppel@unimelb.edu.au)

John R. Maxwell, biographer  
of Soe Hok Gie (see endnote 3).  
E-mail: [johmaxwell@gmail.com](mailto:johmaxwell@gmail.com)

#### Notes

- 1 Soe Lie Piet, *Melantjong ka Bali (dari pengalaman sendiri 1 taon berdiri di Bali)* (Sightseeing in Bali based on a year's personal experience living in Bali), Penghidoepan XI, 131 November 1935, 80 pp; and *Pengoendjoekan Poela Bali atawa Gids Bali (Guide to the island of Bali or Bali Guidebook)*, Malang: Paragon Press.
- 2 Soe Hok Gie, *Catatan Seorang Demontran*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1983.
- 3 John Maxwell, *Soe Hok-Gie, Pergulatan Intelektual Muda Melawan Tirani*, Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 2001, based on John R. Maxwell, "Soe Hok-Gie: A Biography of a Young Indonesian Intellectual", unpublished PhD dissertation, The Australian National University, 1997.
- 4 Despite the newspaper headlines when he died, Arief Budiman was certainly not unrecognised in Indonesia. A tribute for his 77th birthday published in 2018 includes 26 contributions and runs to 267 pages: KH. Mustofa Bisri et al (ed), *Arief Budiman (Soe Hok Djinn) Melawan tanpa Kebencian*, Yogyakarta: New Merah Putih, 2018. Another tribute published posthumously has over 50 contributions and runs to 434 pages: Syaefudin Simon and Swary Utami Dewi (ed), *Idealisme dan Kearifan Arief Budiman*, Jakarta: Global Express Media, 2020.
- 5 This is an abridged version of the inaugural Arief Budiman Lecture delivered at the University of Melbourne on 28 September 2021 by Charles Coppel. The full lecture may be found at <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/asia-institute/news-and-events/inaugural-arief-budiman-lecture>. John Maxwell made major contributions to the lecture and to the abridged version.

## Arief Budiman, Chinese Indonesians, and Indonesian Studies at the University of Melbourne

Jemma Purdey

Arief Budiman arrived in Melbourne in the late 1990s, in the midst of something of a boom in Indonesian studies in Australian universities. Enrolments in Indonesian language at the University of Melbourne were reaching a near all-time high. The array of Indonesia-related subjects and researchers with an Indonesia interest – not only within the Faculty of Arts but across the university – offered students the opportunity for a rich and deep level of engagement with "Indonesia," then on the cusp of monumental change and democratic reform. When Arief arrived in 1997, I was completing my BA Hons year and making plans to undertake a dissertation under Charles Coppel's supervision. As historian Heather Sutherland remarked to me years later, the convergence of timing and interest is an especially crucial combination for scholars embarking upon their path of deep research.

I'd not yet met the new Foundation Professor of Indonesian Studies, but from my vantage point on the South Lawn, I immediately recognised Arief Budiman from the photos I'd seen in the newspapers and magazines I read every day in the basement of the nearby Baillieu Library. He was walking slowly along the yellow brick path running parallel to the reflection pool, dressed casually in a patterned shirt and sandals, gently swinging a calico bag over his shoulder. He struck a lonely figure, or was he simply in deep contemplation, or was it just a post-lunch haze?

In early 1998, as I turned my mind to a dissertation topic, Charles Coppel's attention was decidedly preoccupied with the fate of ethnic Chinese Indonesians, about whom he had written his own thesis and spent many years researching. As we sat down to consider my options, the Indonesian economy was in the grip of the Asian Financial Crisis, and Indonesian-language news agencies were reporting small but increasingly frequent



Fig. 1 (above): Book cover, *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, edited by Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury, Monash Asia Institute, 1999.

attacks on businesses owned by ethnic Chinese Indonesians. The government rhetoric was turning decidedly nationalistic. Sensing something far more profound was afoot than I could have imagined, Charles set the scene, and I began to see the possibilities for a merging of my interests in the politics of Indonesia and human rights. It was at this point that Charles suggested we immediately head upstairs to meet the new Professor of Indonesian Studies, Arief Budiman. He would, Charles suggested, make a very good advisor for such a research project. I recall that Arief's

response was enthusiastic and informative, but also deferential to Charles' knowledge on the subject of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese. I'm pretty sure I was not aware at that time that Arief was ethnic Chinese, nor did I know about his famous brother Soe Hok Gie, though I had heard of his protest against his former rector and his eventual dismissal from Universitas Satya Wacana.

The wave of anti-Chinese sentiment and violence in early 1998 erupted into rioting and mass violence across Jakarta and other cities by mid-May of that year, leading to the eventual fall of Soeharto's New Order government (1966–1998). Arief easily stepped into a role as media commentator and, luckily for us, he provided up-to-date analysis on the day-to-day machinations at play during this period of transition.<sup>1</sup> Our cohort of Indonesia-followers in Melbourne shared the sense of euphoria felt by the students and pro-democracy leaders on the streets of Jakarta, but also the devastation for the victims of the violence, including mostly ethnic Chinese but also the urban poor.

Together with Tiong Djin Siauw and others, Arief established the Committee Against Racism in Indonesia (CARI) to bring attention to the plight of the victims and to open conversations long taboo in Indonesia about underlying, systemic, and structural racism. In Melbourne in late 1998, CARI held a series of important community meetings and seminars with visiting speakers from

## Cold War Tropes and Cultural Politics in Indonesia, 1950-65

Stephen Miller

Cold War anti-communism and the tropes that accompany it continue to be a part of Indonesian politics in the 21st century.<sup>1</sup> These tropes are not only part of public discourse in Indonesia, but also infuse discussions of Indonesian history, both inside and outside of the country. They dehumanise the victims of the political genocide of 1965-66 and also distort and obscure our view of the politics of the period between the recognition of Indonesian sovereignty and the emergence of the New Order regime under Major-General Suharto.

This was a time when different visions of the new republic's future were considered, debated, and struggled over, including an intense struggle in cultural arenas. It was also the period of the most intense Cold War competition between the "West" on one side and "Communism" (i.e., Stalinism) on the other. In Indonesia both sides of this struggle comprised broad and diverse fronts. Not only this, both sides, generally in complete sincerity, presented themselves as champions of "democracy" or "justice" against the "oppression" of their opponents (whether this was presented as an opposition to imperialism, or an opposition to Stalinism, amongst other possibilities).

In the context of the ongoing influence of Suharto's anti-communist regime and the collapse of the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it has continued to be common to present one side of this conflict as naively representing a struggle for freedom in opposition to Russian-style authoritarianism. This essay is to counter any naive presentation of the role of the more liberal elements of the cultural anti-communism before 1965-66.<sup>2</sup>

Given what we now know about the cultural Cold War, and especially given the actual historical outcome of the wider political struggle in Indonesia – one of the bloodiest political genocides in history and the establishment of a regime clearly more authoritarian than its predecessor<sup>3</sup> – this seems like an attitude that is not only unsustainable and arguably ethically problematic, it also distorts our understandings of key elements of Indonesian history. The events of 1965-66 and the regime that they instituted were a culmination of prior developments. Basically, the repression and bloodshed of 1965-66 did not fall from the sky.



Fig. 1: Members of the Lekra National Secretariat workshop in the early 1960s. Jane Luyte and Oey Hai Djoen, the key patrons of the secretariat are standing in the back row, second and third from left (Photo courtesy of Oey Hai Djoen).

While participants may have sincerely felt that they were fighting for "democracy," "freedom," or other just causes, it is clear that they were also part of manoeuvres that did not prioritise these ideals, and arguably led to authoritarian outcomes in Indonesia (and elsewhere). There is plenty of evidence for this. Charles Coppel recognises the key alignment of the Cultural Manifesto with the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF).<sup>4</sup> The role of the army in developing and supporting the Manifesto was obvious to many contemporaries (for instance, in the army's material support for the pro-Manifesto All-Indonesia Writers' and Artists' Conference in 1964). The "conceptor" of the Manifesto has admitted that he worked covertly with the army intelligence during this period.<sup>5</sup> In a 1993 paper responding to a liberal anti-communist, Sitor Situmorang, the leader of the radical nationalist Institute of National Culture in the 1960s, presented the period as one of diverse and competing poles of power, in which artists across the political spectrum, not least those who were Lekra-aligned, could and did suffer suppression before 1965.<sup>6</sup>

While we still need further research into anti-Left repression from 1950-1965, it is clear that there was regular repression throughout the period. This included jailing prominent figures, such as the novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the poet Agam Wispi. It is also clear that the success of the Left (e.g., cultural groups like Lekra and the women's organisation Gerwani), like that of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) itself, was the result of its ability to attract and organise members on a voluntary basis. The PKI was never a party of state, nor were any of its "fellow traveller" organisations (such as Lekra) state institutions. People joined freely

for a variety of reasons, but clearly among them was a belief that these organisations would contribute to the creation of a society with less inequality and more social justice. And it can be argued that in areas such as the arts, women's rights, and labour, such organisations did have at least some positive influence.

Cold War tropes not only misrepresent the politics of culture; they also tend to distort our view of the art works produced by artists and cultural workers sympathetic to the PKI. If, instead of seeing the cultural Left primarily as championing Stalinism, we understand it as a part of a popular movement, it becomes easier to see and understand key elements of cultural activity around Lekra. For example, it makes sense that critics should develop a vision for Indonesian cinema inspired by Italian neo-realism and progressive elements of classic Hollywood,<sup>7</sup> rather than focusing on pat ideas of "Socialist Realism." The focus on the reportage literature of amateurs, rather than on sympathetic established authors like Pramoedya or Utuy Tatang Sontani,<sup>8</sup> also makes sense if literature is seen as integrated with the building of a mass movement. Similarly, Lekra's enthusiastic and early engagement with popular arts, such as folk theatre and dance, is best understood as part of efforts to build grassroots political engagement.

This is not to say that many leading figures (and ordinary activists) did not hold and perpetuate illusions in the authoritarianisms of Stalinist countries. Rather, it is to say that there was not a monopoly of authoritarian politics on one side. The power of the PKI and other organisations, like Lekra, relied on their ability to attract voluntary support, and they never held any significant institutional

Indonesia, positioning the status of Indonesia's ethnic minorities, women, and other marginalised groups at the centre of academic and community discourse. In a rare example of such a focus in his own academic work, a few years later, Arief wrote a short chapter titled, "Portrait of the Chinese in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" for Charles Coppel's *Festschrift Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*.<sup>2</sup> In it he examines the proposition that 1998 had led to some positive changes in *pribumi* (native Indonesian) perceptions of the Chinese, who were slowly abandoning one-dimensional stereotypes. Likewise, he argues that there was a shift in the "self-perception" of the Chinese themselves, who now felt emboldened to emerge from their "cocoon," as Arief described it, and assume their rightful place as citizens. Nonetheless, after what he saw as the initial phase of "euphoria," Arief went on to observe that a "correction" was underway within a community wary of a backlash: "Chinese Indonesians are still trying to find their place in Indonesia, but now, within a still unstable society undergoing a slow transition towards democracy, this is not a simple process and its outcome cannot be predicted."<sup>3</sup>

A few months after the New Order collapsed, I distinctly recall huddling in and listening attentively to Arief's advice on the significant barriers still before a researcher embarking on investigations like those I was

planning – namely, to examine the position of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese and especially the recent violence ushering in the reform era. Despite the hopefulness of the early post-New Order mood in Indonesia, he advised me to keep a low profile and consult with only trusted sources, which included many of his own close contacts. As a fledgling fieldworker and outsider seriously nervous about tackling the task ahead, I clearly remember him conveying this rather frightening set of instructions with his characteristic smiles and giggles. A cool, calm approach to a problem he'd faced with courage so many times himself. It was a reassurance that I very much needed at the time, and one that I often remembered with appreciation throughout my time in the field. Not to mention the doors opened to me by the mere dropping of his name!

Arief's presence as a senior academic in Melbourne at this critical time in Indonesian history certainly played a large part in generating a high level of energy and dynamism within the wider Melbourne, and indeed Australian, Indonesianist academic community. At this time, Arief was at the centre of a renewal of connections across institutions, which led to a number of seminal events and collaborations, beginning with one of the earliest major conferences held after the fall of the New Order. Titled, *Democracy in Indonesia? The crisis and beyond*, the conference was held at the ABC's Southbank studios in Melbourne in December 1998, convened by Arief, Damien Kingsbury,

and Barbara Hatley from Monash University. The conference included speakers – both scholars and activists – from Australia and Indonesia, and the event resulted in the book *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia* [Fig. 1].<sup>4</sup> In his own chapter in the book, Arief's observation of this moment in Indonesia's history reflected his consistently optimistic outlook;

"Even though there are many uncertainties and difficulties facing Indonesia over the short term, it is not too unrealistic to hold an optimistic hope for the more distant future."<sup>5</sup>

In the early 2000s, the University of Melbourne's standing as a centre for Indonesian studies and related activity was also greatly enhanced by an influx of Indonesian students, largely due to the opportunities offered with the expansion of Australian and Indonesian government scholarship programs, but also significantly due to the pull of Arief himself. The energy, dedication, and deep knowledge of Indonesia available to those who were lucky enough to find ourselves in Melbourne at this time provided a rare opportunity then (and even rarer today) to immerse ourselves in and embark on deep study of Indonesia.

An emblematic figure in Indonesia, Arief represented an intellectual and social activism that fuelled many young adult Indonesians in this *reformasi* period, further enhanced

civilian or martial power (a fact underlined by the ease with which they were swept away by the emergent Suharto regime and its supporters). Presenting them as primarily authoritarian, therefore, misrepresents what these organisations meant to their members, misrepresents key features of anti-communism, misrepresents the struggles of the 1950-65 period, and, in the process, comes dangerously close to justifying the repression of 1965-66.

Stephen Miller is a lecturer in the College of Indigenous Futures, Education, Arts, and Society at Charles Darwin University, Australia. Email: [stephen.miller@cdu.edu.au](mailto:stephen.miller@cdu.edu.au)

### Notes

- 1 Stephen Miller (2018). *Zombie Anti-Communism? Democratization and the Demons of Suharto-Era Politics in Contemporary Indonesia*. In Kate McGregor, Jess Melvin & Annie Pohlman. *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (pp. 287-310). Palgrave Macmillan.
- 2 For an articulate elaboration of such an approach by a figure close to Budiman, see Goenawan Mohamad and Harry Aveling (ed. and trans.) (2011). *The 'Cultural Manifesto' Affair Revisited: Literature and Politics in Indonesia in the 1960s*, a signatory's view. Monash Asia Institute Press.
- 3 See Jess Melvin (2018). *The army and the Indonesian genocide: mechanics of mass murder*. Routledge; Kate McGregor, Jess Melvin & Annie Pohlman. *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (pp. 287-310). Palgrave Macmillan; John Roosa (2020). *Buried histories: the anticommunist massacres of 1965-1966 in Indonesia*. The University of Wisconsin Press; amongst many others.
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- 5 See Keith Foulcher (1986). *Social commitment in literature and the arts: the Indonesian "Institute of People's Culture", 1950-1965*. Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, p. 125-126; Bodden, M. (2012). "Dynamics and tensions of LEKRA's modern national theater, 1959-65". In J. Lindsay and M. H. T. Liem (Eds.), *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965*. KITLV Press.
- 6 Keith Foulcher (1994). "The Manifesto is not dead": *Indonesian literary politics thirty years on*. Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.
- 7 Stephen Miller (2015). *The communist imagination: a study of the cultural pages of Harijan Rakjat in the early 1950s*. PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, Australia.
- 8 Foulcher (1986); Miller (2015).

when Ariel Heryanto arrived at the university a little while later. Arief initiated a series of Friday seminars on all manner of topics related to politics and society, which generated a dynamic and vibrant discourse between students and scholars, Indonesians and Australians, a spirit of exchange and inquiry that continues until today.

Jemma Purdey, Australia-Indonesia Centre, Monash University.  
E-mail: [jemma.purdey@monash.edu](mailto:jemma.purdey@monash.edu)

### Notes

- 1 <https://www.insideindonesia.org/friend-or-foe-2>
- 2 Lindsey, Tim and Helen Pausacker (eds.). 2005. *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- 3 Budiman, Arief. 2005. "Portrait of the Chinese in Post-Soeharto Indonesia." In *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*. Singapore: ISEAS, p. 101.
- 4 Budiman, Arief, Barbara Hatley, and Damien Kingsbury (eds.). 1999. *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*. Clayton, Australia: Monash Asia Institute.
- 5 Budiman, Arief. 1998. "The 1998 crisis: change and continuity in Indonesia", In *Reformasi: Crisis and change in Indonesia*, edited by Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury, Clayton Vic., Monash Asia Institute: 57.

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Funded by the Social Science Research Thematic Grant of the Singapore Ministry of Education, Terence Chong at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and Daniel Goh at the National University of Singapore set out to conduct research on the growth of Pentecostalism in Southeast Asia between 2016 and 2020. They had three main objectives.

First, they wanted to understand the reasons for this growth and the ways in which these churches navigate the changing political and economic environment. Second, they sought to examine these churches' participation in national debates and identify the strategies used to deal with their marginal status. Finally, the researchers were interested in tracing transnational connections between the churches within Southeast Asia and beyond.

The fascinating results of their study are summarized in the following essay. They begin by charting the waves of Pentecostalism in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore, thus providing the wider context for its non-linear growth. They then introduce the term 'minoritarian politics' to explain the way in which this mostly ethnic Chinese and wealthy Christian community advances its interests.

Finally, the authors provide a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of mall Christianity, moving beyond the idea that these megachurches celebrate consumer capitalism. The study finds that there are, in fact, various practical and strategic reasons for their choice of location depending on the country and demographics.

In all, the article provides a timely and refined description of the way in which Pentecostal megachurches in a number

of Southeast Asian countries respond organically and strategically to the challenges of the state, other religions and the market.

Dr. Oh Su-Ann is the regional editor for News for Southeast Asia section of IAS newsletter and Visiting Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.  
E-mail: [oh\\_su\\_ann@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:oh_su_ann@iseas.edu.sg)

## Navigating Hostile Landscapes: Pentecostal Megachurches in Southeast Asia

Terence Chong and Daniel Goh

In a ballroom of a popular mall in central Jakarta under coloured spotlights, the young suited Indonesian pastor raises his hand to quiet his musicians. He speaks softly in Bahasa Indonesia, and then whispers in English for the Holy Spirit to descend on to the congregation. As if on cue, the congregants, with outstretched arms, begin to speak in tongues. The noise reaches a crescendo and then fades into silence. "I believe God is here with us this morning," says the pastor.

Over the last three decades, economic development in Southeast Asia has ushered in material affluence and heightened connectivity with global forces. These trends have laid the conditions for the growth of Christianity in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. These countries have seen an increase in Protestants, Pentecostals, and Catholics as their national economies become more intimately intertwined with the global market. Indeed, the expansion of the middle class in these countries has seen a strong correlation with the expansion of this faith community.

The growth of Christianity in this region will impact national culture and politics in different ways. At stake are the faith community's relationship with other religions, both monotheistic and polytheistic; the demographics of its congregations and the suspicions they may arouse from the state or other institutions; the way in which it may exploit local or national politics for growth or even participate in the political sphere, whether overtly or covertly; the production of urban and civic spaces that may affect secularism and traditional religious identities; and its bearing on the multicultural identity of these countries.

To date there has not been a comprehensive survey and sociological examination of contemporary Pentecostalism in Southeast Asia. Indeed, much of the scholarship on the region has either been

initiated by western academics or applied to single countries, thus depriving us of a big-picture approach to the faith as it engages distinctively in different national landscapes. Beyond the need for comparison, the single country focus does not allow for the study of transnational connections that have fed much of the growth of Christian churches in each locality.

We embarked on our research on independent Pentecostal churches in Southeast Asia in 2017 with support from the Social Science Research Thematic Grant from the Ministry of Education, Singapore. Extensive fieldwork was conducted in the urban centres of Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore to understand

how different conditions and politics gave rise to a heterogenous form of Pentecostalism in the region.

We were interested in several overarching questions, all of which are broadly concerned with historical explanations for the growth of Pentecostalism in Southeast Asia. We sought to investigate the political, economic, and cultural reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in the region. How did Christian leaders or communities navigate sometimes hostile landscapes as minority groups? What were the strategies and tactics employed by independent Pentecostal churches in circumventing unreceptive Islamic groups or the state? We were also interested in whether or not Pentecostal churches participated in

national debates and if they used their faith to alleviate their marginal status in society. How did their presence influence the production of sacred spaces in urban communities?

Finally, we were interested in mapping the transnational connections between churches within Southeast Asia and with those beyond the region. The transnational circulation of guest speakers, Christian literature and music, theological teachings, and immigrants within the region for work and study, has made it possible to speak of a Southeast Asian Pentecostalism that is constantly shaped by economic patterns, digital technology, linguistic cultures, and developmental aspirations.<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 1 (right): Praise and worship at Graha Bethany, Surabaya, Indonesia (Photo by Terence Chong, 2019).

## Section 1: Three historical waves of growth of Protestantism in Southeast Asia

Protestant Christianity is arguably the fastest growing religion in Southeast Asia. From a low base at the turn of the 20th century, non-Catholic Christians have grown to over 9 percent of the population in Indonesia, almost 14 percent in the Philippines, over 4 percent in Malaysia, and close to 15 percent in Singapore in 2015.<sup>2</sup> This adds up to almost 40 million Protestants in a region characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, Muslim majorities, and historical eras of colonialism, decolonization, nationalism, democratization, and globalization.

This growth has not been linear or progressive. The history of Christianity in Southeast Asia is a history of Asianizing practices, transnationalizing innovations, and independent formations. Southeast Asian Christianity experienced three distinct waves of growth: the late colonial period, the Cold War period, and the contemporary inter-Asian period. These three waves were driven, respectively, by the revivalist impulse (innovating practices that engage changing social contexts to produce or renew identities), the postcolonial impulse (the struggle for autonomy from Western theological and ecclesial authority), and transnationalism (the way churches secure strength as vulnerable minorities through cross-border expansions and networking).

The first wave, the late colonial wave, took place in the early 20th century and saw Asianizing missions and evangelical movements rising to make sense of modernization. Meanwhile, colonization ushered in Western knowledges and practices as elements of modern civilization, Southeast Asians adapted and indigenized many of these to create an Asianizing modernity. With respect to Christianity, there are three groups of Asianizing agents, namely, natives, returnees, and migrants. Natives encountered the Gospel in their homelands through contact with missionaries and sought to understand its truths vis-à-vis local cultures. Returnees were those who traveled to colonial metropolises, converted to Christianity overseas, and sought to transform local societies upon their return. Finally, colonial trade networks brought an influx of migrants from East, South, and Southeast Asia, some of whom, especially the Chinese, embraced Christianity through their own cross-border networks. The influence of the early Asianizers was certainly not uniform across the region. Natives played a greater role in the East Indies and the Philippines, for instance, whereas the role of migrants was more pronounced in the East Indies and Malaya. Returnees made their mark in Malaya and the Philippines.

The second wave, the Cold War wave, came at the height of geopolitical tension, when American evangelical revivals and the Charismatic Renewal Movement made their presence felt and paved the way for the emergence of independent megachurches. In the two decades after the Second World War, decolonization, economic rebuilding, and American ascendancy redefined Southeast Asia. New nation-states were established, with the Philippines leading the pack in 1946. Indonesia followed after a brief revolution against the Dutch in 1949. Malaya was formed after the suppression of the communist uprising in 1957, giving way to Malaysia when it federated the Malayan states, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore in 1963. Finally, Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1965. Cold War fault lines were clearly drawn by then. The Americans intervened in Vietnam after the French colonial forces were defeated in the First Indochina War. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore were drawn into the American

orbit and formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967.

Cold War politics pulled the churches in various directions. In the 1970s, Christians in the region were left with three sets of choices. In the political realm, Christians had to choose between ecumenical social action, anti-leftist ideology, or apolitical conservatism. The choice made would result in either investing church energies in active proselytization which reflected the latter two or focusing on community church building which reflected the former. The Charismatic Renewal presented the question of whether to reject Pentecostalism, accept some changes to modernize the liturgy, or embrace it totally. These decisions had to be made in order to better position the Church to respond to the changing political and economic environment. It was a time when authoritarianism and American support gave rise to economic development, urbanization, and the growth of the middle classes. New theological outlooks and relations with the state were needed to respond to consumer capitalism and the pressures of democratization.

The third wave, the inter-Asian wave, is the contemporary period in which the limits to church growth and the challenges of being a religious minority are met by renewed missions and intensifying inter-Asian Christian networking. At the turn of the 21st century, independent megachurches, fueled by Christian growth among urban youth, became Christian success stories in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Many megachurch leaders rose to become influential public figures on the national and international stage, with the will and power to affect political, social, and religious trends. Rather than seeking inspiration from the West, churches in the region started to more consciously learn from success stories amongst themselves and to innovate new practices and theological content.

However, by the 2010s, they began to hit the limits of growth. The aggressive met with backlash. In the Muslim-majority countries of Malaysia and Indonesia, increased Islamization had heightened inter-religious and ethnic sensitivities, and the Islamic pushback took on increasingly violent expressions in recent years. Even in self-consciously multi-religious Singapore, similar misgivings about church growth and the insensitivity of its methods, such as proselytizing to Muslims, were raised.

At present, megachurches are faced with the pressure to calibrate their growth and outreach strategies in order to retain their social standing whilst indulging their instinct to expand. Despite the backlash, some churches have doubled down on conversion efforts within their home countries. These efforts are often city-centric, directed at marginalized and vulnerable urban groups, or young Christians whose changing needs are not met by their old churches.

Other megachurches have decided to focus on overseas expansion. For example, as a favored destination for many regional immigrant workers, Singapore is a place where branches of megachurches from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines are present to offer services in the home language. No longer content to remain national or even regional organizations, these churches have made deliberate efforts to translate their identity and theologies across an assortment of local contexts. The church leaders and members are thinking and acting in increasingly inter-Asian ways, transcending old ethnic boundaries and national identities.

These three historical waves of growth of Christianity in Southeast Asia set the scene for the contemporary study of Pentecostalism in the region.



Fig. 2 (above): Praise and worship at Calvary Church, Calvary Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Photo by Terence Chong, 2018)

## Section 2: Evangelical Christians and 'minoritarian politics' in democratic Southeast Asia

As a minority but often affluent community, Protestant and Pentecostal Christians in Southeast Asia have often been targets for suspicion and abuse. In Singapore, the government has had to debunk beliefs in the Christian capture of the state. In Malaysia, Muslim hardliners have openly accused the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party of a Christian conspiracy to take over the state because a number of its prominent leaders were Christians. In Indonesia, the 2016 protests in Jakarta – stoked by Islamists against the former governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Chinese Christian popularly known as “Ahok” – were revived after the 2019 presidential elections when rumors spread that President Joko Widodo was a closet Christian.

How has the Christian community navigated hostile landscapes to survive and, in some cases, even flourish? What types of strategies are deployed to circumvent the asymmetrical balance of power stacked against them? We looked at churches in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore to understand how they leverage prevailing structures, economic forces, and local practices to advance their own interests in what we term ‘minoritarian politics’.

### Indonesia: existential security and complex patronages

Indonesia enjoys a relatively open, democratic system in which religious institutions participate in the political system. However, political Islam plays a big role in shaping political discourse in the country. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are two of the largest Islamic organizations in the country, estimated to comprise over 100 million members between them. They were formed in 1926 and 1912, respectively, and played a big role in fostering reformist modernization that underpinned nationalism during the colonial era.

Interfaith relations have deteriorated because of the increasing Islamization of politics and the growth in evangelical churches. This has led to a heightened sense of existential insecurity for all Christians. In response, Christians have sought to improve their security in various ways. In general, mainline Christians have continued to engage the political elites by directly participating in politics and the public sphere, while evangelicals have sought to minister to the middle political ground by cultivating social capital at two levels: governmental and local community. Instead of entering the political arena themselves, Indonesian evangelicals have opted for patronage relations with the

political elite. Some younger evangelical pastors have become local board members of political parties; but as scholars have argued, these memberships have occurred upon invitation from political parties that wish to burnish their pluralistic image. Evangelicals also use well-connected congregants to establish important contacts within the political elite and administrative bureaucracy for support during periods of emergency. A couple of pastors we interviewed in Surabaya mentioned that “being nice” to these non-Christian authorities, which may involve gift-giving, has been instrumental in protecting their churches from hostile Islamists. In a 2014 youth concert organized by the National Prayer Network, a retired army general was invited to attend, his presence used as insurance against potentially unruly Islamists.

Developing patronage relations with local communities is a more common strategy. Many churches provide aid to local communities as a way of cultivating Muslim goodwill. Pentecostal churches in Jakarta reach out to neighboring local communities through free clinics, donations of food and cattle during Islamic Eid al-Adha holidays, and pro-bono law assistance. Others reach out to villages to provide sources of clean water and electricity. Some churches in Surabaya run accredited kindergarten, elementary, and junior high schools, which are open to non-members to serve the broader community. The schools also offer tuition-free classes to children from the surrounding Muslim community every Saturday morning.

The price of being embedded and accepted by local communities so that evangelism can be fulfilled is the investment of funds and efforts into the cultivation of complex patronages with local government and communities. The resulting stock of social capital can be converted into emergency contacts during extraordinary periods and into goodwill during normal times.

### Malaysia and Singapore: racial politics and associational activism

Malaysia experienced an acceleration of Islamization processes in society and politics from the 1980s onwards, triggered by the Islamic revolution in Iran. Unlike in Indonesia, where political elites have resisted the Islamization of the state, the Malaysian government under Mahathir Mohamad, who became prime minister in 1981 and again in 2018, embraced the Islamization of government.

Malaysian Christians, including evangelicals, responded by forming associations and civil society organizations. Evangelicals came together to form the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) in 1982 at Luther House Chapel. A year later, the NECF banded together with members of other non-Muslim religions to form the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism, with the inclusion of Taoists (MCCBCHST) in 2006. In 1986, the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) was founded, comprising the NECF, the Catholic Church, and the ecumenical Council of Churches of Malaysia. These associations became the public faces of the non-Muslim religious communities, writing open letters, issuing press statements, and advocating against discriminatory policies and regulations. Unlike Indonesia, where the *Pancasila* framework of state recognition of religion offered a legitimate space for non-Muslim associations, Malaysian evangelicals were compelled to join hands with other Christians and other faiths to develop political intermediaries. This was because the Islamization of the Malaysian government demanded a stronger platform for non-Muslim groups if they wished to be heard and accounted for. Evangelical church leaders spoke to favored signing up with NECF because it had the clout to “deal with government authority.” Compared to the alternative – registering with the Registrar of Societies, which meant the government could easily disband the church – joining voluntary associations was the safer way to register as a church.

Evangelicals in Singapore have also been involved in associational activism, but for a different reason. Instead of joining with other churches and Christian organizations to defend their collective interests against the state, evangelicals in Singapore seek to defend the state against its imminent capture by liberal and progressive forces. Such forces are seen as advancing a “secular fundamentalism,” a term coined by Thio Li-ann, a law professor and Nominated Member of Parliament in 2009. Such antagonism increased after evangelicals from an ultra-conservative church carried out a hostile takeover in 2009 of the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), a feminist civil society organization. The takeover sparked a bitter fight between evangelical activists and progressives calling for the enforcement of secularism in the public sphere.

The associational activism was made possible because of intensive networking between evangelical churches that has been taking place since the 1990s. In 1995, the LoveSingapore movement was launched, led by the Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC), the largest megachurch at the time. The movement’s vision was to “catalyze Kingdom transformation in the Seven Gates of Cultural Influence in Singapore,” from the intimate sphere of “Family and Home” to the highest echelons of “Government and Leadership”<sup>3</sup>. LoveSingapore was also the inspiration for the Love Penang Network. In 2010, Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship Singapore, a network for Christian businessmen, was renamed Gatekeepers Singapore, inspired by Biblical passages that saw gates as key sources of influence on cities and nations. Associates of these two networks were responsible for other initiatives such as the Daniel Fellowship, a prayer meeting for public servants.

The political reticence of evangelicals is a key driver of their minoritarian politics in the cases above. These evangelicals prefer to focus on church growth, proselytization, and inward-looking discipleship. In all of these cases, the degree to which evangelicals shed their political reticence depends on the severity of the threat to their practices or their very existence. The direction of the political action is towards the source of the threat, whether it is the government (Malaysia), local communities (Indonesia), or a liberal civil society (Singapore). Our study shows that scholars need to look closer at the sociology of social capital formation in the complex exchanges between churches, local communities, civil society, and the political system. Doing so increases understanding of the underlying social networks and connective actions of religious minorities so as to avoid simplistically painting evangelicals in Southeast Asia as irrevocably politically conservative or apathetic.

## Section 3: Megachurches navigating Southeast Asian cities

We noted above that Indonesian megachurches – opting not to cultivate social capital with government officials and local communities to secure their interests – tended to withdraw into securitized shopping malls. Here, we consider this relationship in the larger process through which megachurches seek to navigate the cities they are located in. Southeast Asian cities have seen phenomenal growth in tandem with the economic boom that accompanied globalization in the past few decades. The rapidly growing megachurches have not only ridden this economic boom and urban explosion; they have also had to manage their growth in an often hostile urban landscape. How did the megachurches use secular spaces to grow their sacred communities? Again, we limit our comparisons to Indonesian and Malaysian megachurches.<sup>4</sup>

It is a common impression, in both academic scholarship and popular media, that mall Christianity is becoming widespread. Megachurches and other fast-growing churches, many of them denominationally independent Pentecostal churches led by charismatic pastors attracting young members, have located their churches in shopping malls, convention centers, and commercial developments in booming Asian cities. This is a departure from the older practice of building standalone facilities, often with splendid grandeur, out in the streets and embedded in local communities. Many associate this mall Christianity with the teachings of the Prosperity Gospel. Thus, the megachurches are seen as reveling in the consumer capitalism that their middle-class members indulge in, giving spiritual meanings to new-found wealth.

What we found was more complex. Firstly, megachurches were responding to hostile Muslim-majority neighborhoods that did not welcome the presence of new church buildings. This is most evident in Indonesia, where permits to build a place of worship entailed a strenuous bureaucratic process of approval from the municipal authorities with the consent of the local community. The highly popular Jakarta Praise Community Church is housed in the Kota Kasablanka mall in Central Jakarta. When we visited in early 2018, one of its pastors provided one of the reasons why they preferred to be located in a mall: “Muslim radicals are much less likely to protest outside to demand that developers close down the mall.” In Surabaya, Masa Depan CERAH church stopped using its building in the neighborhood for services, which were now held in the Ciputra World mall a short distance away, in a ballroom tucked away in the upper floor. We found multiple churches housed in Lenmarc Mall and the nearby Pakuwon Mall, the largest in Indonesia. The churches, such as the highly popular Gereja Mawar Sharon with just the tagline “Welcome Home” emblazoned on the wall, had shopfronts that looked ordinary and shorn of religious symbols. The malls were gated facilities with security guards.

A megachurch that remained in the neighborhood had security guards checking our bags when we visited in 2019. It was housed in an ordinary shophouse row without religious symbols, and the name did not even sound like that of a church. The pastor we interviewed told us that the church was still quietly concerned after the suicide bombing of three churches by a local branch of the Islamic State in the city the year before. One activity of the church was the provision of educational and social services to the surrounding local communities, which was seen as a crucial way to minimize hostility, so as to continue its operations in the neighborhood. The megachurches did not embrace mall Christianity unreservedly. A pastor of one of the churches housed in the mall told us that they continued to preach and plant house churches in the neighborhoods. He was rather anguished about the urban stratification along class,

ethnic, and religious lines that separated the church from local communities.

The hostility of neighborhoods was less marked in Kuala Lumpur. There, the metropolitan region of Klang Valley was demographically balanced between Malays and non-Malays, and much of the population was made up of new residents from increased internal migration to the capital region in recent decades. Therefore, the location of megachurches was more diverse. Calvary Church moved its main services from its old church building in the gentrified suburb of Damansara Heights to its newly built Calvary Convention Center. With its 5000-seat auditorium, the church envisions it to be a convention and meeting hub for globalizing Kuala Lumpur, with both religious and secular events taking place there. Three other megachurches – Full Gospel Tabernacle, Full Gospel Assembly, and Damansara Utara Methodist Church (DUMC) – constructed simple, functional buildings with few religious symbols in the neighborhoods. DUMC’s Dream Center is styled as a community center with classrooms, a cafeteria serving no-pork food, and a bookshop for the local neighborhood to enjoy. Its fastest-growing congregations are those attending the Mandarin and Myanmar services, showing that the church is attracting the Chinese-speaking working classes and migrant workers. Another church, Collective, is based in a converted warehouse in a light industrial estate. Among its members are many Malaysian college students who migrated to the capital region in the 2000s and then settled down with families.

These megachurches tend to have an aging profile relative to the youthful character of Asian megachurches in general. Younger congregants are flocking to new churches that have adopted new approaches and are based in trendy shopping malls in Damansara and Sunway districts. For example, Kingdomcity offers rave-style concert services, focuses on personal healing, and employs livestreaming video connections to link up its different locations in Malaysian cities as well as branches in other Asian, Australian, and African cities. Meanwhile, Acts Church has its central building – called Dream Valley Community – located in an upper floor in The Summit Mall in Subang Jaya, complete with a hipster booksore and café. These churches are strategically housing themselves in the shopping malls not to avoid hostile neighborhoods but to target the current generation of young people who have grown up in malls and neighborhood squares.

The examples in Kuala Lumpur show that mall Christianity is not the default option for the megachurches and that the Christian subjects of our study are actively exercising their agency to navigate the multifaceted new urbanism emerging in the booming cities of Southeast Asia. The same can be said of the Indonesian megachurches, whose actions are deliberate and purposeful and cannot be reduced to the fear of hostile neighborhoods and the need for camouflage and security. Their anguish about being separated from local communities and their attempts to overcome urban stratification suggest that



Fig. 3: Pastor GT Lim praying for congregants, Sarawak Blessed Church, Kuching, Malaysia (Photo by Terence Chong, 2019)

they are seeking to engage this specific feature of Indonesian urbanism. Finally, it should be observed that the megachurches are not merely responding to the urbanism; they are also actively helping to forge it, contributing to gentrification, stratification, and attempts to overcome these, as well as spiritualizing shopping malls and the urban mobilities flowing through them.

In conclusion, the expansion of Pentecostal megachurches in Southeast Asia must be contextualized with the historical waves of growth and revivalism in the region. As historical cases have demonstrated, the nature of such expansions is dependent on how the Church has responded to the prevailing political, economic, and socio-culture conditions as various countries made the transition from colonial to postcolonial status from the 1950s to the 1960s. The emergence of the Pentecostal megachurch in the 1990s may be seen as the response to capitalism and mass consumption; a reconciliation of spirituality and materialism. As a highly organic institution blessed with theological nimbleness, the Southeast Asian Pentecostal megachurch will continue to respond to challenges and leverage on contemporary trends as it navigates hostile landscapes in the region.

**Terence Chong** is Director (Research Division) & Deputy Chief Executive Officer at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. Terence has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Warwick. His areas of interests are religion and religiosity in Southeast Asia, multiculturalism and race, Chinese labour and capital in mainland Southeast Asia. Email: [terence\\_chong@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:terence_chong@iseas.edu.sg)

**Daniel P.S. Goh** is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Associate Provost (Undergraduate Education), National University of Singapore. Daniel has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Michigan. He is interested in Race and ethnic relations, multiculturalism, sociology and anthropology of the state, interpretive sociology, cultural studies, and urban studies. Email: [dsong@nus.edu.sg](mailto:dsong@nus.edu.sg)

### Notes

- 1 This project was funded by the Social Science Research Thematic Grant from the Ministry of Education (MOE), Singapore. The authors are grateful to Research Officers John Choo and Evelyn Tan for their valuable fieldwork support, and Dorcas Gan for her post-fieldwork assistance.
- 2 Johnson, Todd M. and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. *World Religion Database*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2019.
- 3 LoveSingapore, <http://www.lovesingapore.org.sg/curiousaboutus2.html> (accessed 23 Dec 2021)
- 4 A comparison of the megachurches in Jakarta, Surabaya, Kuala Lumpur and Manila and detailed theoretical explication is currently under review with an academic journal.

# Asian Migrations

Gregory Bracken

Cities attract migrants. The relationship between the two can be symbiotic, with the city acting as a magnet for opportunity and also benefitting from the hard (and often quite badly paid) work migrants do. When properly managed, this can be a win-win situation; when misunderstood or mismanaged, it can cause social and economic problems that become entrenched and hard to fix. The papers in this Focus section examine several migrations in Asia (in China, India, and Indonesia) and also Asian migration to the West (in the form of Amsterdam's Chinatown) to see what the current unprecedented wave of migration means for the people themselves and for the cities they move to.



Fig. 1: Migrant street vendors, Hongqiao Market, Beijing (Photo by Gregory Bracken, 2004).

## Arrival City

Monica L. Smith identifies “the human propensity for migration [as something that] continually enables our species to adapt to new circumstances.”<sup>1</sup> She thinks that urban migration is not only “the only viable form of concentrated human population but also enabled cities to be incubators for other new phenomena,” which sees relationships between economies of production and consumption, the development of infrastructure, and the emergence of the middle class.<sup>2</sup>

Peter J. Taylor sees cities as places of opportunity because while “migrants may start at the bottom [...] they had hope, if not for themselves for their children, of a better life.”<sup>3</sup> Migrants can, given the right circumstances, be upwardly mobile, even if this takes a generation or two. Even poor migrants send money home. This helps their places of origin. Saskia Sassen has noted that “in many cases the remittances sent by low-income immigrants to countries of origin are now larger than foreign aid to those countries.”<sup>4</sup>

Even when upward mobility is slow in coming, Edward Glaeser points out that “[u]rban poverty should be judged not relative to

urban wealth but relative to rural poverty.”<sup>5</sup> This is a vitally important distinction because he also points out that “[c]ities aren’t full of poor people because cities make people poor, but because cities attract poor people with the prospect of improving their lot in life.”<sup>6</sup> He sees this as why cities attract “continuing waves of the less fortunate, helping them succeed, watching them leave, and then attracting new disadvantaged migrants,”<sup>7</sup> something we will return to in a moment when we come to the concept of Arrival City.

Not all migrants are successful, however. Some return home. Others fall into chronic poverty with “insecure, often part-time and disorganized low-paid labor,” what David Harvey calls the “precarariat,” which he sees as displacing the traditional “proletariat.”<sup>8</sup>

What is remarkable about the current global waves of migration is their sheer scale. Mike Davis tells us that cities have “absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950, and are currently growing by a million babies and migrants each week.”<sup>9</sup> While Doug Saunders thinks that “[w]hat will be remembered about the twenty-first century, more than anything

else except perhaps the effects of a changing climate, is the great, and final, shift of human populations out of rural, agricultural life and into cities.”<sup>10</sup>

Saunders is the man who coined the term “Arrival City,” which he sees as “readily distinguished from other urban neighbourhoods, not only by its rural-immigrant population, its improvised appearance and ever-changing nature, but also by the constant linkages it makes.”<sup>11</sup> He sees these linkages as having two directions: (1) to the migrants’ originating villages, where people, money, and know-how move back and forth, and (2) to the city itself – to “its political institutions, business relationships, social networks and transactions [that] are all footholds intended to give new village arrivals a purchase, however fragile, on the edge of the larger society, and to give them a place to push themselves, and their children, further into the centre, into acceptability, into connectedness.”<sup>12</sup>

The mistake is to look at the Arrival City as something fixed, which can lead to the misperception of seeing them as “cancerous growths on an otherwise healthy city.”<sup>13</sup> This

point of view ignores their success at creating the new middle class we saw highlighted by Monica Smith earlier, and also in abolishing what Saunders calls “the horrors of rural poverty.”<sup>14</sup> The inhabitants of the Arrival City are in transition from “one condition to another.”<sup>15</sup> They want to stop living there “either by making money and moving their families and village networks out or by turning the neighbourhood itself into something better.”<sup>16</sup> Socially and economically, they are constantly in flux. The only thing that remains, if the Arrival City is functioning in a healthy way, is the bedrock of social networks that they sustain and which enable new waves of migrants to find a foothold in the life of the city. Saunders urges us to “devote far more attention to these places, for they are not just the sites of potential conflict and violence but also the neighbourhoods where the transition from poverty occurs, where the next middle class is forged, where the next generation’s dreams, movements and governments are created.”<sup>17</sup> This is exactly what the following papers try to do.

Continued overleaf



Fig. 2: Female agricultural workers, the Sundarbans, Bangladesh (Photo by Asmeeta Das Sharma, 2019).

## The papers

The contributors to this Focus on Asian migrations are all recently graduates of the Masters of Urbanism track from TU Delft's Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. Their articles highlight some of the main findings, and planning and design proposals, of their thesis research. All of them deal with migration in Asia, with the final paper looking at Asian migration to the West.

The first paper is Asmeeta Das Sharma's "Recentering Climate Migration in the Bengal Delta," which examines the human face of climate change. Migrations that result from environmental disasters in Low Elevation Coastal Zones (LECZs) see developing countries most adversely affected, with marginalized populations being the most vulnerable. Her paper looks at the Sundarbans, a mangrove area in a delta formed by the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers in the Bay of Bengal. Circular migration has been the dominant adaptation measure here for decades, but the movement of people puts pressure on both destination cities and the development of the region. Informal urbanization and a "floating" population put excessive pressure on resources and cause uneven development. Moreover, the undocumented nature of these people's movements makes them invisible to governments who would be in a position to help. This paper proposes a strategy to bring alternate livelihoods closer to people's homes, trigger polycentric development, and reinforce traditional cultural knowledge. Working across three scales – the regional, urban, and local – this approach defines a new region with a network of clusters protected by traditional water-management systems. This could redefine the functional relationship between the city (Kolkata) and new urban-rural clusters, and relate both to the villages of the Sundarbans.

Cassie Sun Woo Kim's paper, "Establishing a Regional Framework for Migrants in Semarang," highlights the serious problems this city is facing. The capital and largest city of Central Java, Semarang is sinking at an alarming rate (six to seven centimetres per year, with up to 19 centimetres in some places). There is also a major problem with water source depletion. To address these issues, the city is constructing a polder system as part of a coastal defence master plan, with a large dyke circumscribing the urbanized region as well as the shoreline and mangrove areas. This seawall will also serve as a highway connecting the city to the regional traffic of

East and West Java. Semarang's population is increasing, but the city is running out of land to develop in order to house it. People are also migrating to the hinterland, wanting to get away from the flooding danger zones by moving to higher elevations (which also have fresh water supplies and more greenery). Kim's paper proposes a regional framework for this migration. Choosing a site in suburban Semarang, it explores the possibilities of increasing green and blue areas within an urban context, as well as preserving the natural qualities of the mountainous areas to create safe new areas for the city's residents.

We move to China with the next two papers, beginning with "Planning for African Migrants in Guangzhou" by Qiyao Hu. Globalization, and the transnational migrations that are part of it, have begun to see foreign settlements take root in China's cities. This paper highlights an interesting and little-known phenomenon – African enclaves in Guangzhou – to show how they have formed and what problems they are facing, particularly that of social-spatial segregation. The paper proposes a strategy for dealing with these problems through spatial design and takes account of realistic planning to try and produce a more socially-minded city. Through its three-pronged aims of allowing African migrants participate better, live better, and stay better, we see how actions for improving the living environment, and for promoting the integration of the Xiaobei Road community, are based on five basic principles: accessibility, quality, efficiency, diversity, and identity. The goal is to transform the entire city of Guangzhou into a place friendly for African (and other) migrants, with spatial regeneration and governance strategies actively mobilized to help them participate in the life of the city. This is an urban development strategy that thoughtfully considers the living habits and cultural background of the Africans themselves to ensure that their new home in the city is a friendlier and better place to live.

Our second Chinese paper is Xiaojun Liu's "The Impact of Hong Kong's Urban Renewal on Chinese Migrants," which brings us to the Sham Shui Po district, a magnet for Mainland Chinese migrants, particularly females, children, and the elderly, most of whom are non-skilled workers. Lacking economic or other resources, these migrants tend to cluster in central areas, where building quality is poor but where they can find strong social networks. Urban renewal, however, is threatening these networks. This paper questions Hong Kong's current development-led urban redevelopment, which is leading

to gentrification. It identifies four main elements that are particularly problematic. First, in the name of housing and commercial renewal, old buildings are torn down and, despite household numbers increasing, small affordable residential units are reduced. Second, new projects' commercial podiums limit low-skill job opportunities because, while the number of shops remains the same, their average size increases such that migrants can no longer afford them. Such shops also face inwards towards the shopping malls, not the street, meaning they no longer function as a public space supporting informal social networks. Third, developers provide public services (as they are obliged to do by the authorities), but they locate them on upper floors and behind gates so that migrants do not even know they are there. Fourth, there is a spillover effect from nearby gentrification (especially on Haitan Street), whereby small businesses are pushed out by higher rents. Migrants who come to places like Sham Shui Po see them as an Arrival City, a place that helps integration. Redevelopment, even when well-intentioned, is damaging the very networks on which these people rely. This has the danger of turning Sham Shui Po into what Doug Saunders calls a place of "failed arrival."<sup>18</sup>

Staying on the topic of Chinese migration, but this time to the West, You Wu's "The Death and Life of Amsterdam's Chinatown" looks at ways of giving this fascinating yet disappearing part of the city a vibrant future. Her paper begins by looking at Chinatowns generally, observing that they tend to appear very similar wherever they happen to be in the world, yet they cannot be associated with any particular location or time period in Chinese history. Amsterdam's Chinatown, known as Zeedijk, was once a reputable area populated by wealthy merchants. It then degenerated into a migrant district in the 19th century and is now next to the city's red-light district. Identifiable by its decorative characteristics, mostly in the form of exaggerated Chinese-style ornamentation, the number of Chinese stores has decreased in recent years. This is tied to the fact that the face of Chinese migration to the Netherlands has changed in the 21st century, with newcomers tending to be better educated and better off than their predecessors, and so without the need to cluster in an Arrival City. The question of what to do with this characteristic but threatened district is answered by a vibrant proposal that frees itself from the stereotypical image of Chinatown. Wu proposes replacing it with

a vision that is contextualized and varied and which could transform the area into a series of collaborative public spaces, rather than the current tourist-oriented destinations, where locals (Chinese and other) can be involved in the transformation itself. The proposal's collaborative public spaces promote peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding among these different groups, which make a refreshing change from the distinctly Orientalist view of Chinatowns that we are used to.

## Conclusion

All of these investigations, some with their planning and design proposals, offer new insights into the increasingly important issue of migration. They show the continued importance of exploring these issues through education and, more importantly, disseminating that research to as wide an audience as possible so that their new ideas have a better chance of being implemented.

**Gregory Bracken**, Assistant Professor of Spatial Planning and Strategy, TU Delft, the Netherlands, E-mail: [G.Bracken@tudelft.nl](mailto:G.Bracken@tudelft.nl)

## Notes

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# Recentering Climate Migration in the Bengal Delta

Asmeeta Das Sharma

Mohammed Kabir Hossain, a rickshaw-driver by profession, is one of many environmental migrants who moved to the second-tier port city of Mongla, Bangladesh. “Because of salinity and flooding, there are limited livelihood opportunities in my village. But here, I can make good money,” he says. He returns home during the cropping and harvest seasons and Ramadan. Kabir is one of the thousands of people who are displaced every year in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta due to the rising sea level, dynamic shoreline, and annual cyclones. Due to the lack of a global legal definition, it is impossible to acknowledge the existence of this group of displaced. Can the climate migrants be recognised – in this case in the Bengal delta?

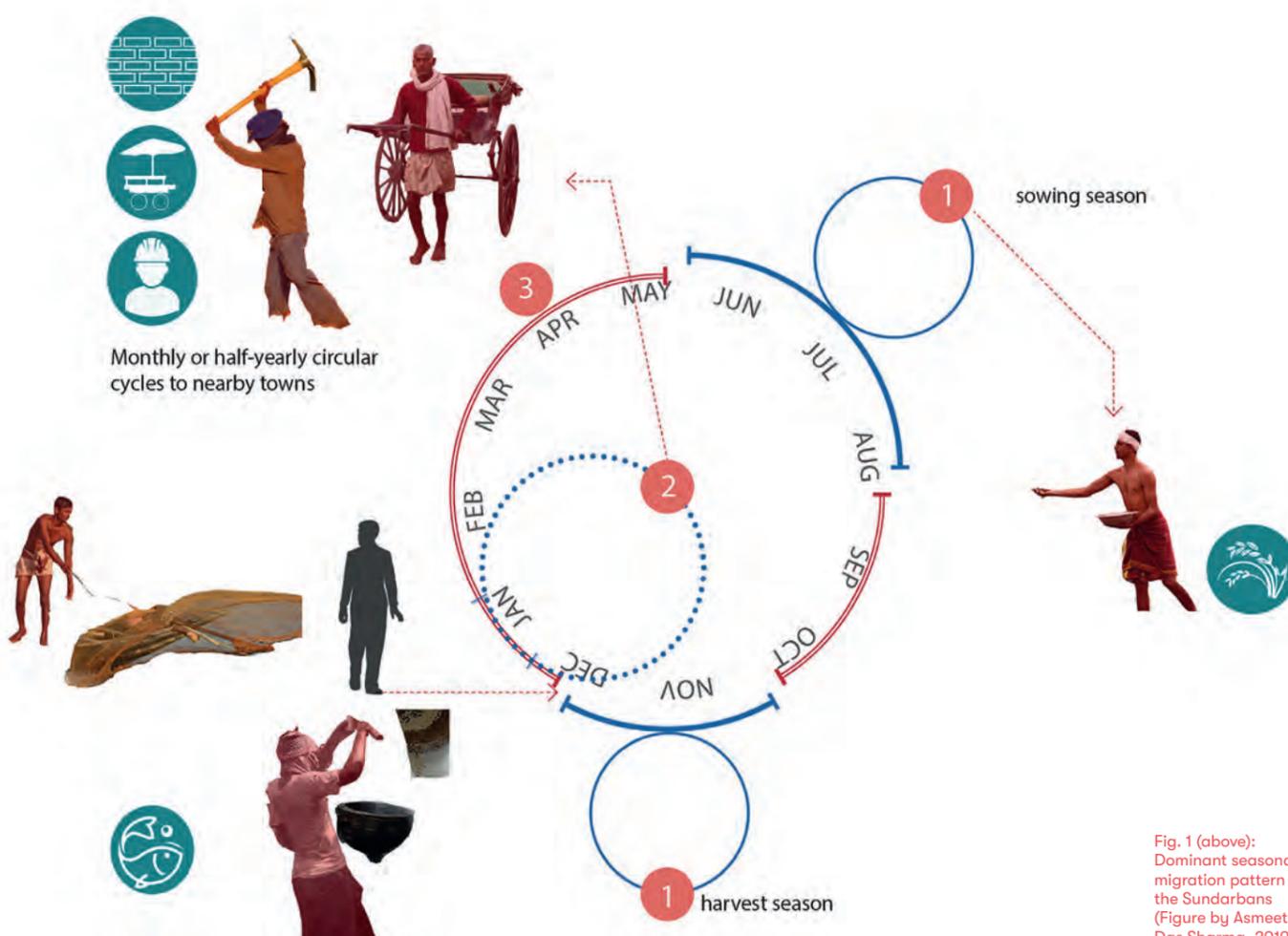


Fig. 1 (above): Dominant seasonal migration pattern of the Sundarbans (Figure by Asmeeta Das Sharma, 2019).

## Climate migration: definition and consequences

In 1985, Essam El-Hinnawi placed human migration in the context of climate change for the first time by coining the term “environmental refugees.” Since then, numerous scholars and international agencies have scrutinised the term and put forward their own definitions. The lack of a cohesive legal definition has led to reduced visibility for the migrants, further exacerbating their loss of identity, culture, and at times even citizenship.<sup>3</sup> Circular migration has been noted as the most common initial form of adaptation, with working members from displaced populations moving to nearby urban areas. These areas are usually an overnight journey away, allowing the migrants to maintain social capital at source. They undertake semi-skilled or unskilled informal jobs, which give them an unreliable source of income and no stability.

The movement of people puts immense pressure on the destination urban areas and the development of the larger region. Informal urbanisation and “invisible” floating populations put excessive stress on the resources of the region. The demographic shift from the rural to urban leads to extended urbanisation in the destination urban areas and stunted development or abandonment of the source urban or rural areas. This disproportionate regional development causes an imbalance in the economic and infrastructural growth within the region. Population density, food and water security, and the infrastructural capacity of the urban areas are all adversely affected, creating a sense of insecurity in the host population. Due to the undocumented nature of these movements, the migrants remain outside the scope of governance structures in most countries. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of resources impacts the economic stability and safety of the region. Increased poverty levels lead to the reallocation of resources to mitigate this rise and to stabilise the labour surplus.<sup>4</sup> This reduces market opportunities and salaries, pushing higher skilled classes to emigrate. This “brain drain” further hollows out the economy.<sup>5</sup> Overburdened with these complex challenges in addition to climate change, developing nations struggle to achieve equitable quality of life for their citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Circular migration has also been a dominant adaptation measure in the Bengal delta. Migrants oscillate between source and destination until they collect sufficient resources to settle down legally (or illegally) in one of them.<sup>7</sup> This cyclical movement has been noted to create a triple-win situation by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. When carried out formally, it has been found to be beneficial for the destination, source, and migrants alike. The migrants contribute to economic production and alleviate labour shortages in cities, while remitting support back home in the form of financial and human capital. Countries

## The human face of climate change

Climate-induced migration is the human face of climate change. Rising temperatures and changing weather patterns are causing sea-level rises, flash floods, forest fires, unseasonal rains, and drought. Depriving millions of people of their homes and livelihoods, these gradual or sudden changes in the environment are yet to be recognised as legitimate reasons for forced displacement. They force the affected to undertake arduous journeys to nearby cities in search of new means of sustenance. Their families are forced to undertake adaptive measures in the hope of reconstructing their lives, livelihoods, and homes. The cyclical movement between the source and destination is a common pattern adopted by the migrants to retain their assets and social capital at source, while constructing new livelihoods in the destination city.

Twenty-five million people have already been displaced due to environmental disasters,<sup>1</sup> with Low Elevation Coastal Zones (LE CZs) in developing countries the most adversely affected. These zones are less than 10 metres above sea level and yet host 10 percent of the world’s population. In developing countries, the marginalised populations in these zones are often the most vulnerable. Due to weak governance systems and lack of support resources they are pushed into a “negative

vulnerability cycle.” Environmental disasters deprive them of their livelihood and/or their home, forcing them to move to nearby urban areas within or across borders to find sustenance for themselves and their families. They are forced to inhabit the informal fringes of destination cities, which invariably keeps them outside formal governance systems. Insufficient support at source pushes them into exploitative and discriminating conditions in cities. Such movement, while offering them immediate cash flow, does nothing to strengthen their socio-economic condition. It leads, rather, to debt, pushing them further into poverty. The consequent loss of land, tangible and intangible assets, and cultural identity stunts the growth and development of affected families for generations.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant populations has reaffirmed the appalling lack of support systems or resources that makes these the worst affected people during a crisis. Cities across the world witnessed the vulnerabilities of their temporary residents during the various lockdowns of 2019-2021. However, the Global South, especially India, was confronted with the stark inequalities and policy gaps that caused the mass exodus of migrants from cities. The fear of the disease, mistrust in the system, and job and housing insecurity forced migrants to undertake arduous journeys back home. Municipal governments were scrambling for data and

resources to facilitate relief for the workers who were emerging in huge numbers. The crisis highlighted the inherent role of NGOs and civil society organisations in stabilising the situation, as they had maximum outreach and impact. This refined the discourse on internal migration, calling for inclusive development, policy reforms, and collaborative action between all stakeholders at the destination and the source.

The 2021 Haiti Earthquake is another example of displacement and loss caused by a climate crisis. While the Caribbean nation has always been prone to natural disasters, their pace and ferocity has increased due to climate change. With the government struggling to provide healthcare, aid, and shelter, the affected were left to fend for themselves in an environment where their immediate community was their only support. This comes at a time when people were still recovering from the 2010 earthquake, with over 32,000 people (official estimate) still residing in camps.<sup>2</sup>

The proposal in this paper presents a regionally inclusive development strategy for climate migrants from the LE CZs in the Ganges-Brahmaputra and Bengal deltas. Through a multi-scalar strategy, it defines a new region with a network of clusters protected by traditional water-management systems. This strategy redefines the functional relationship between the city (in this case Kolkata), the proposed urban-rural clusters, and affected villages in the Sundarbans.

Fig. 2: Regional vision for the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta (Figure by Asmeeta Das Sharma, 2019).

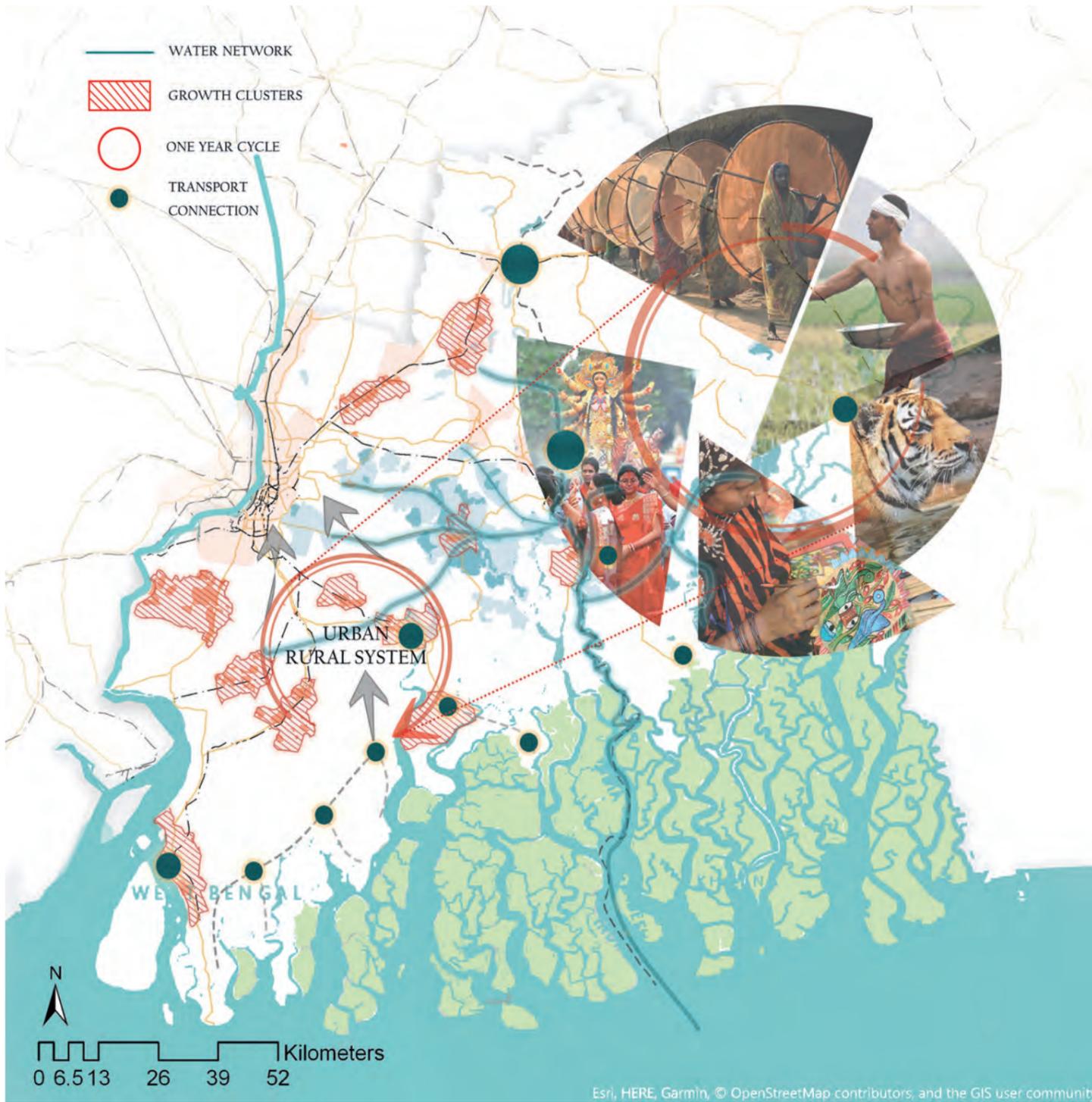
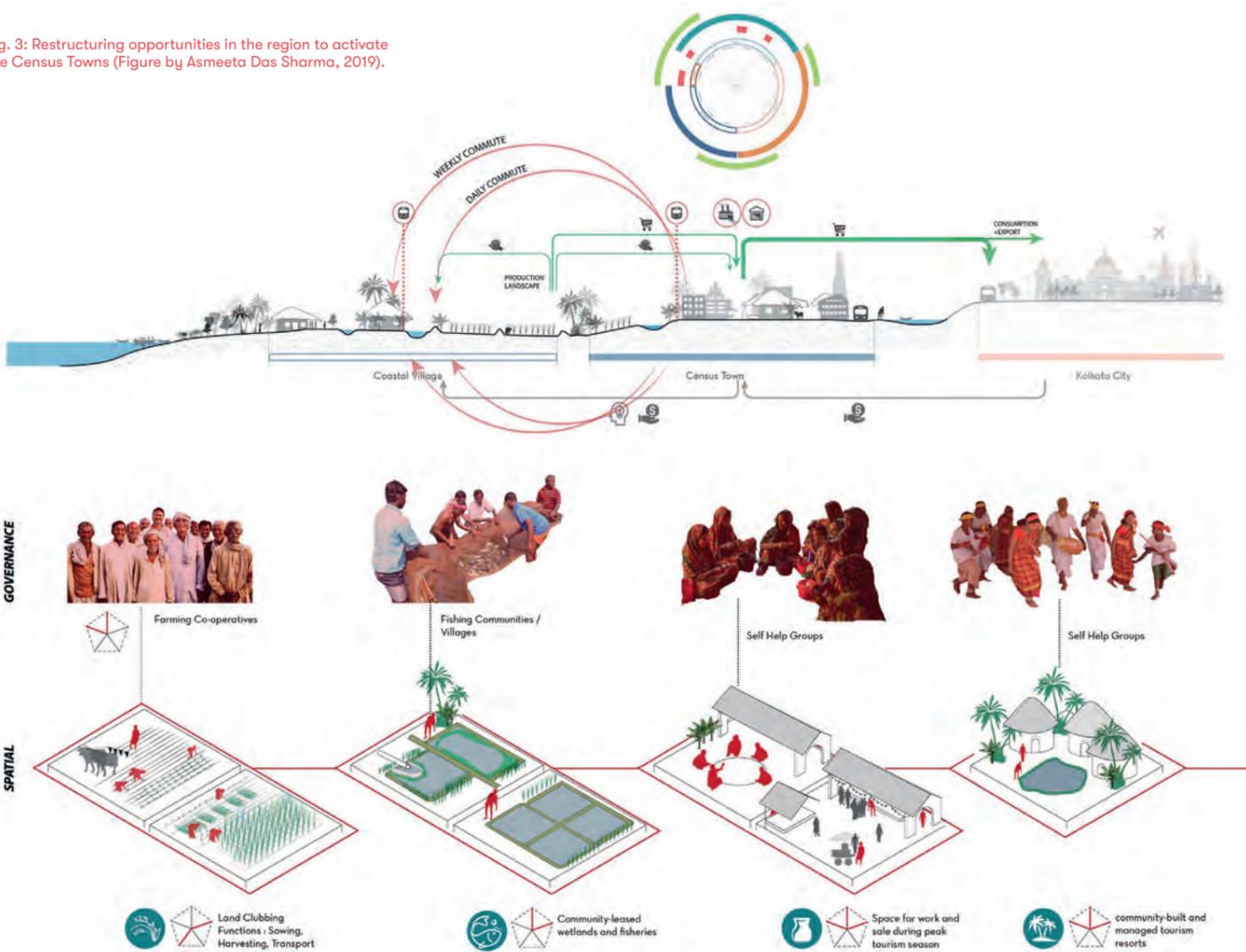


Fig. 3: Restructuring opportunities in the region to activate the Census Towns (Figure by Asmeeta Das Sharma, 2019).



like New Zealand and Canada have formal seasonal worker programmes, which allow circular movement of workers to bridge the labour gap in the horticulture and agriculture sector.<sup>8</sup>

However, in developing countries, this phenomenon is yet to be formally recognised and incorporated into policy frameworks. This leads to the marginalisation of the migrants and burdens the region rather than triggering comprehensive development. Undocumented movement and employment fuel informality in the city, causing a resource crunch for the host population and further deteriorating the quality of life for all citizens. The temporary nature of the employment, and the limited cash flow, leaves migrant families with minimal savings, forcing them to take loans in times of need. This triggers a debt cycle that pushes families into increasing socio-economic vulnerability. In this situation, repeated environmental changes or disasters cause further damage, often pushing them into poverty.

### The plight of the Sundarbans

The Bengal delta is the largest transboundary geological delta in the world. With an area of more than 105,000 square kilometres, 60 percent of it lies in Bangladesh while 40 percent is in West Bengal. Home to two mega-metropolitan cities – Kolkata and Dhaka – the delta has an average density of 200 people per square kilometre. The high population density of the region is partly responsible for its inadequate infrastructure and disproportionate access to amenities and institutions. Due to its geographical location, the region has been constantly under threat of natural disasters like cyclones and earthquakes. Climate change has exacerbated this significantly through tidal inundation, rising sea levels, heavier rainfall, river erosion, water salination, and increased cyclonic activity. This highlights the area as one of the most vulnerable to climate risk in the world.<sup>9</sup>

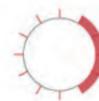
Plagued by annual cyclones, which disrupt life for three to four months of the year, the coastal areas in the region are the worst hit. Known as the Sundarbans, this is the largest mangrove forest and swamp in the world. Spread over 54 islands, this eco-terrestrial zone is home to tribal villages (on the Indian side of the delta) as well as to a unique variety of flora and fauna. The population's primary occupation is agriculture, making the region's economy, food security, and social structure highly dependent on the physical environment. With rising sea levels and the changing course of river streams, the islands (known as "chars") constantly gain and lose land mass. The soil is increasingly plagued by salination, making it unfit for cultivation and slowly diminishing sources of fresh water (something also seen in Sun Woo Kim's paper, "Establishing a Regional Framework for Migrants in Semarang"). Research estimates that 40 million people will be displaced from the region by 2050.

### Restructuring the Bengal delta

To address this situation, this article proposes a strategy to bring alternate livelihoods closer to people's homes, trigger polycentric development, and reinforce traditional cultural knowledge. This is a regional spatial and governance strategy which implements the Sustainable Livelihood Framework to pre-emptively accommodate climate migrants and their circular lifestyle in the spatial and economic development plans of the delta. It presents a two-point perspective on the problem with the aim of empowering migrants and triggering positive development.

The proposal works across three scales: the regional; the functional relationship between village, town, and city; and the local (town) level. Clusters for potential development are defined between the city and coastal villages to accommodate the displaced and to decongest Kolkata. These clusters are connected to the city and villages to enable easy market access for migrants as well as for the towns' industries. These towns are the hubs of the clusters, where functions have been added to activate town economies and generate livelihoods for the migrants.

Fig. 4: Seasonal occupations practiced by migrants (Figure by Asmeeta Das Sharma, 2019).



## The region

A new region has been defined to restructure the movement of the climate migrants. It is based on an urban-rural system that identifies and respects the spatial integrity and functions of the city, emerging towns, and the villages, but which re-focuses on the towns as engines of economic development. It boosts town economies to accommodate livelihood opportunities for the migrants and to meet the demands of traditional economies. This makes the town a processing unit and economic hub for the rural hinterland and a supplier of finished goods and services to the city.

This regional strategy has four key principles:

**1. Polycentric Development:** There is an urgent need to shift to polycentricity in this predominantly monocentric region. This region is primarily dependant on agriculture and aquaculture for employment, with limited processing and storage facilities (concentrated in the city). This concentration of economic activities in the city has led to extended urbanisation. The new strategy proposed here introduces alternative clusters for urban development, which form a network with existing road and rail infrastructure, connecting them directly to the city of Kolkata. They have been termed Growth Clusters and consist of urban and rural settlements. Together, these act as processing units for the surrounding hinterland. They not only act as economic hubs, but also as a safe haven for climate migrants in times of disaster. Stable economic opportunities on the mainland allow migrants to practice sustainable livelihoods and in turn increase their resilience. The boundaries of the clusters are defined by analysing the existing economy, processing industry, demography, and the nature of the towns.

**2. Connectivity:** Given the lack of transport infrastructure in the villages, direct road and ferry connections from the highway are proposed to smooth movement. This will enable migrants to make daily or weekly trips home and pre-emptively evacuate during a disaster. A central organising body will manage all existing ferry routes to connect the coastal island populations to the mainland. Small multi-modal hubs are proposed in demarcated growth clusters to connect to the city and the village. A public-private-partnership model will fund the infrastructure and manage the transport.

**3. Flood and Water Management:** Floods disrupt people's lives for three to four months of the year. Traditional flood-management systems of small ponds and canals have been disrupted due to rapid urbanisation. To make room for flood water, a system of wetlands has been designed to carry water from the household scale to the cluster and

connect to the main river stream. The wetlands will be owned by communities and will generate economic value through pisciculture and organic waste treatment.

**4. Traditional Knowledge Economies:** An analysis of existing industries and small-scale processing units highlights the existing economic strengths of the Growth Clusters. These functions were mapped on a timeline to create a seasonal calendar for livelihoods [Fig. 1]. New processes are proposed to fill in gaps in the calendar, generating a year-long demand for labour. This will ensure that traditional industries will be protected through a demand for traditional knowledge and expertise. This will allow migrants to freely practice their trans-local lifestyles and propagate their traditional knowledge systems.

## Functional relationships

The Growth Clusters are meant to localise the processing of raw materials produced in the hinterlands. They provide infrastructure and expertise closer to the producers. Each cluster has a starter group consisting of local NGOs, technical experts, and local government officials. This group generates a business model after assessing the potential of the surrounding region and implementing the framework provided. It then pitches this model to the local governments of the surrounding towns and villages within the defined cluster. Contracts or memoranda of understanding will procure materials directly and share profits from the processed and distributed products.

With the aim of decentralising power, this partnership will create a competitive environment within and between the clusters to boost their industries and generate more livelihoods. The industrial spaces allocated within the clusters will be multifunctional in nature. They will host the various activities of the seasonal industries as well as provide social support, like skill-development programmes, disaster training, and women and child welfare programs. This structural spatial plan of Growth Clusters will be fed by local area plans developed by local governments in the towns and villages and will further inform the overall plan for the new region.

## Local

At the local level, the proposal defines guidelines for spatial growth via a set of six land-use principles that will regulate the growth of the Growth Clusters, prevent extended urbanisation, and promote sustainable development:

**1. Connectivity:** Each town should have a minimum of two access points to regional transport services like trains or busses.

These should be inviting and equipped with information points to enable migrants to orient themselves upon arrival. Existing roads should be refurbished to service 800-metre-wide blocks, and original informal pedestrian pathways should be retained to maintain existing social nodes.

**2. Zoning:** A zoning plan marking commercial zones, public space, land for new industries, and supporting social infrastructure should be generated through a participatory process.

**3. Preservation:** Wetlands and water-bodies should be marked as Preserved Zones with strict regulations against building activities. All water-bodies should be connected through bio-swales, depending on the slope of land and the road infrastructure. This storm-water network will carry excess water and reduce flood risk.

**4. Community space:** Each 800-metre block should have a community space (existing or new), which should be demarcated as a no-build zone.

**5. Economic Zone:** These zones should be planned at the edges of towns and are to be directly serviceable by public transport and closer to production landscapes.

**6. Organic Sewage Treatment:** Each settlement has adjacent natural wetlands (some of which have been covered by urbanisation). These wetlands should be used for organic sewage treatment and managed by contracted migrant communities who can use them to practice traditional forms of pisciculture and hydroponics.

## Creating a safety net

Current post-disaster response mechanisms have been constantly scrutinised by researchers and practitioners. This project presents a more inclusive, development-based approach by advocating the need for including spatial planning and mindful governance in collaboration with disaster-management regimes. There is a need to pre-emptively include disaster vulnerability in planning tools for affected regions to safeguard residents.

The model proposes one such method of doing this. It functionally reconfigures the Bengal delta to strengthen its existing and adapted social, human, and natural capital. Emphasising the need to demarcate ecological and functional regions, it builds on the transitional nature of urban and peri-urban settlements (including towns) and redefines their relationship with the city and the village.

Climate migrants need a robust safety net to be able to recover and grow. At the frontline of disaster, these populations silently face the wrath of environmental change. With every

country battling these consequences in its own way, a renewed focus on the human, social capital of ecological regions will help mitigate the negative impacts on people's lives. As climate change increasingly becomes a stark reality, climate migrants – the human face of these disasters – urgently need global action to minimise the impacts.<sup>10</sup>

Asmeeta Das Sharma,

urban planner and strategist at NACO, Royal Haskoning DHV, the Netherlands. Email: [asmeeta\\_das@hotmail.com](mailto:asmeeta_das@hotmail.com)

## Notes

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- 10 I would like to thank my mentors Dr. Gregory Bracken and Dr. Verena Balz for their guidance and support throughout this research.

# Establishing a Regional Framework for Migrants in Semarang

Sun Woo (Cassie) Kim

## Semarang: an introduction

This study begins with a question: can a regional framework for migrants be established in Semarang? In order to answer this question, the current status of the city needs to be analysed, beginning with the population. The current population is increasing at a rate of 1.41 percent annually. Out of a total of 1.65 million people, 77,800 are considered impoverished. A large number of Semarang's economic activities are considered "informal", and the unemployment rate is 7.76 percent, considerably higher than the Central Java average, which is 5.86 percent.<sup>1</sup>

Greater Semarang (Kedungsapur) has a population of close to 6 million. This population is predominantly Javanese, with a significant Chinese population. The Chinese population is the result of Chinese migration in previous centuries, with the descendants of these early migrants still living in Semarang. The city has an annual economic growth rate of 4.6 percent, and 30.38 percent of total economic activities consist of trade, restaurants, and hotels. The second biggest economic sector is the processing industry, which accounts for 27.37 percent of the economy.

Another important issue is the migration of city residents to the hinterland. It is clear to see that people are moving out of the danger areas, mostly to places with higher elevation, fresh water supplies, and more greenery. This could indicate the kind of living environment the people deem to be "good."

Water source depletion is another issue related to migrants and the environment. The urban landscape of Semarang is largely characterised by its water bodies. The Java Sea borders the city to the north. This coastal area used to be bordered and protected by mangrove forests, but much of the natural mangrove forests are now lost, causing even more flooding, erosion, and sedimentation in the coastal area (a problem we also see in Asmeeta Das Sharma's paper, "Recentering Climate Migration in the Bengal Delta"). The Semarang river runs through the heart of the city. Starting at Mount Ungaran, it runs through the centre of the cityscape before debouching into the Java Sea. This river plays a crucial role in battling flash floods caused by sudden and intense rainfall when water flows from the mountainous areas into the city. However, hardening the river edges and improper maintenance have only contributed to the flooding and have hindered the ability of water to discharge effectively in the case of flash floods. To assist with these problems, two canals (to the east and west of the river) were built.

Semarang is in danger. The capital and largest city of Central Java, Indonesia, is sinking at an alarming rate: up to six or seven centimetres per year (with up to nineteen centimetres in some areas). Enthusiastic future developments are underway to reinvigorate the city, but solutions need to be found, and new frameworks developed, to properly meet this challenge. In addition, people are migrating south, where there is fresh water and less risk of flooding or landslides. Migration patterns show how the availability of fresh water plays a crucial role in Semarang's urban-development patterns. Urbanisation needs to be guided by freshwater availability. This article outlines a development plan that addresses these issues and situates the plan in its wider regional context.

Semarang is currently being transformed into a polder system.<sup>2</sup> The coastal defence master plan that is currently underway consists of a large dyke structure circumscribing the urbanised region of Semarang as well as its shoreline and mangrove areas. This seawall will also serve as a highway, being an important connector for Semarang and the regional traffic between the east and west of Java. A series of pumps and water basins will drain the new polder system, although the weakest links within this vulnerable approach of coastal defence still need to be examined.

This is the reason why a regional framework for the migrants of Semarang is needed. The fact that Semarang is sinking at an alarming rate also gives this need an added urgency. The city is running out of land to develop, but the population is increasing. However, Semarang is filled with opportunities that make it an interesting site for study, and which also makes this paper's proposed framework for migrants even more important.

The city of Semarang currently faces many natural and built infrastructural problems, yet there are more opportunities to be harnessed than dangers to be overcome if only further development can be channelled effectively. The future of Semarang is enthusiastically anticipated by locals as well as the citizens of the rest of Indonesia. The following three sections highlight some of the main reasons why Semarang's future is potentially so bright, and why we should revive the city.

## Semarang in context: history

The first factor is the city's history. The old city of Semarang has been called the "Sleeping Beauty of South-East Asia," and plans are underway to have the central historical district of Kota Lama declared a UNESCO World Heritage City.

Located on the north coast of Central Java, it is the largest city in this province, and the fifth largest in Indonesia. The deep, rich history of Semarang city is still "sleeping," awaiting the moment when it will be awakened. There is great economic and cultural potential in Semarang, especially taking into consideration the Kota Lama-Semarang old town. Heritage buildings and the surrounding nature preserve areas are in danger of deterioration and damage by haphazard development and a lack of urban planning by the central government. The historical city centre and the profound natural beauty of Central Java are in continuous decline, and therefore need a structured development plan to preserve their values.

The reason Semarang has such a rich history is because it was – and still is – known as Indonesia's gateway to the world. Its extensive port facilities act as a hub and connecting point to the world beyond the

Java Sea. Thanks to this history as a trading hub and port city, Semarang has a mix of Asian and Western culture and architecture. The city's social heritage is very rich thanks to its mixed ethnic and religious groups, making the city even more prominent than some other international port cities, such as Penang, Vigan, and Batavia, which also have similar international architectural and cultural identities. What makes Semarang unique is that it possesses a strong connection to the development of locomotives and transportation. Further railway development through high-speed trains is planned, thus making this identity even stronger, and making Semarang even more important locally and regionally.

Now that it is aiming for UNESCO World Heritage City status, more attention is being placed on the history of the city. The delegation of the Republic of Indonesia submitted its documents to have Kota Lama turned into a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2015.<sup>3</sup> Kota Lama has been the carrier of the political, social, and economic representations of different historical phases of human civilisation, from its diverse architecture styles to the development of the old fortified city into the international cosmopolitan city it is today. Although still on UNESCO's tentative list, Kota Lama is the heart of Semarang, helping to enrich the city's deep cultural identity and history. In the future, the city of Semarang will continue to strive to become a UNESCO World Heritage site, and this will help it to continue to preserve and protect its historical core of Kota Lama.

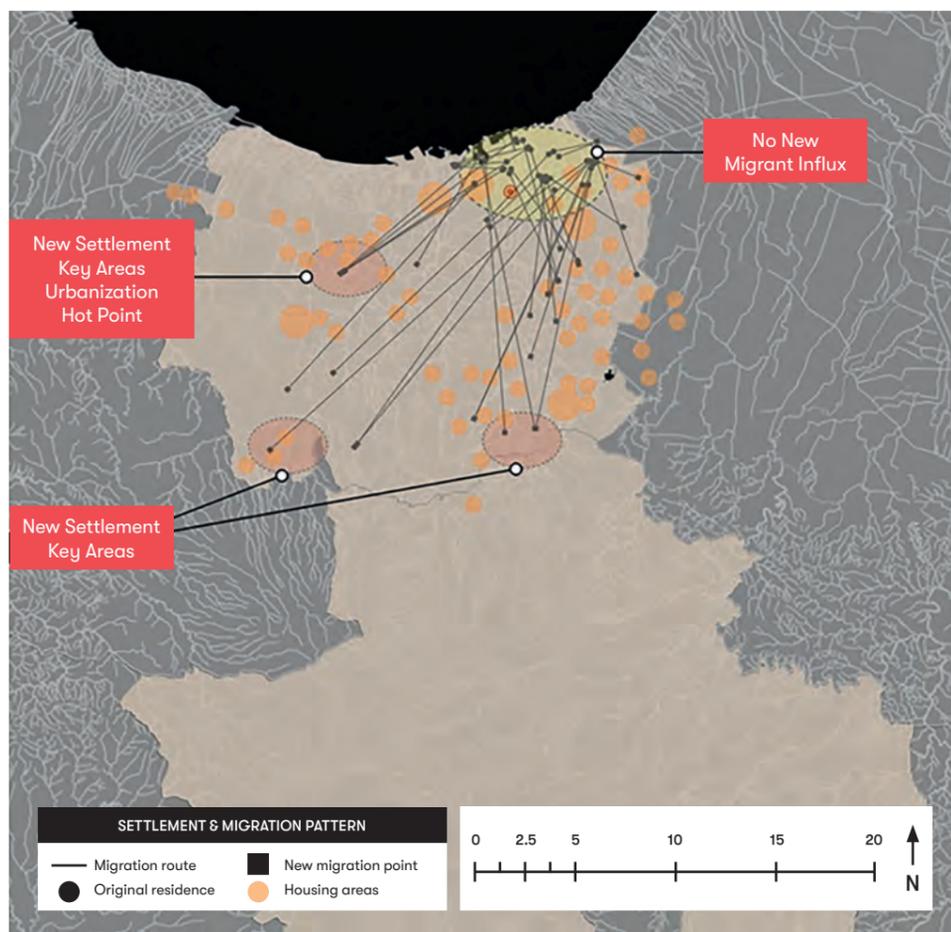
Semarang in context: ecology/geology

There is much to be considered regarding the ecology of the area. Mount Ungaran encompasses primary forests and biodiversity conservation areas which are home to many exotic species of animals. Most of the mountainous areas around Semarang have high ecological significance, this is why the mountain areas should be preserved as much as possible.

This study's analysis of the hinterland's volcanic activities was crucial because it has a strong bearing on the new settlements that will be made in the up-hill areas. Geothermal activity affects settlements: not only does it create tectonic movement, but hot spring activity can be harmful to people. In addition to this, up-hill activities affect land subsidence in lower areas: the whole landscape is connected, all parts to each other.

The relation between Mount Ungaran and the surrounding water landscape was also investigated [Fig. 2]. This was also a factor when examining the urban status of areas to see which were the most urbanised and which were in need of alteration. The mountain landscape seems – so far – like it is full of potential for development in the future.

Fig. 1: Settlement migration patterns (Figure by Sun Woo Kim, 2019).



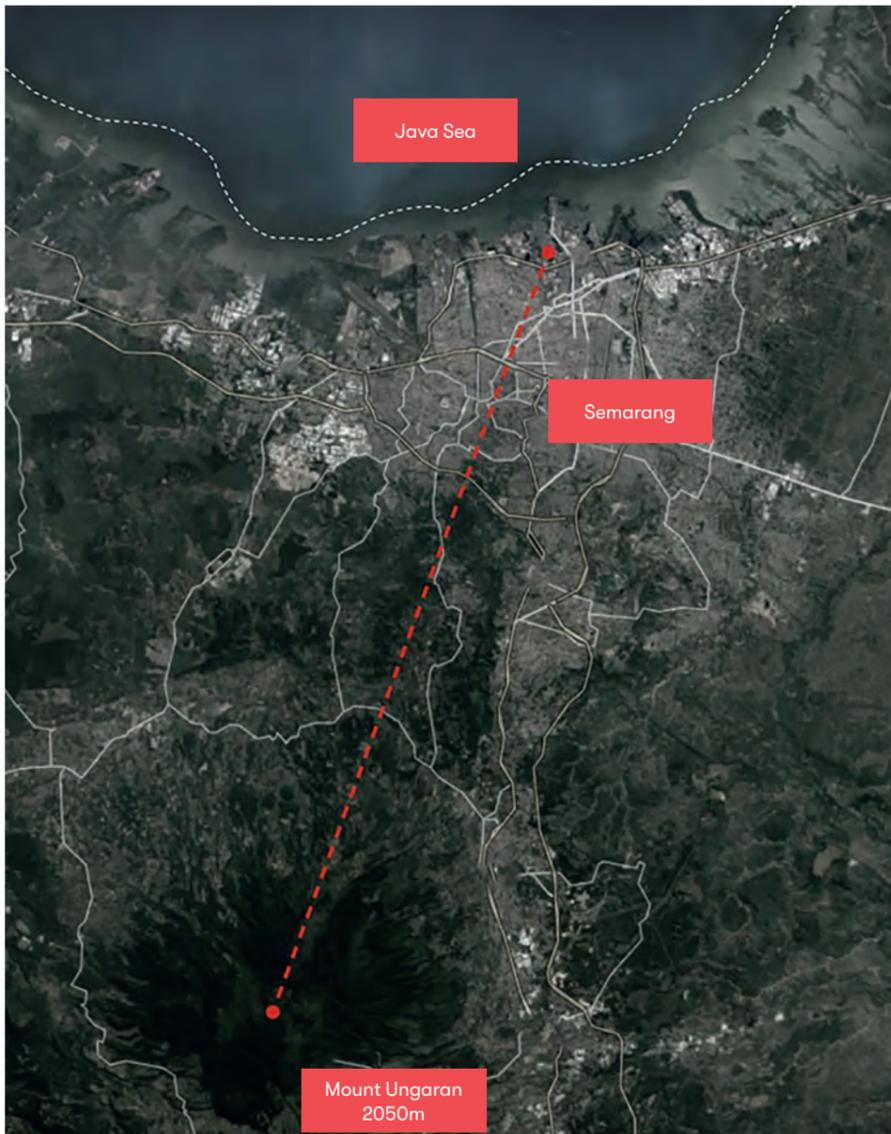


Fig. 2: Movement to the south (Figure by Sun Woo Kim, 2019).

### Semarang in context: society

Community-level organisation in Indonesia is very tightly knit compared to some other countries. Community-based early-warning systems for disasters and their responses are well organised through self-governing systems called *Rukun Tetangga* (“neighbourhood association”) and *Rukun Warga* (“citizens’ association”). Because not every household can be reached through the government’s top-down system, the *Rukun Tetangga* and *Rukun Warga* systems are efficiently used in people’s daily lives.

*Rukun Tetangga* denotes a group of 18–20 households, with monthly meetings held by their leaders in order to discuss issues of everyday life that affect the community. Each *Rukun Warga*, on the other hand, consists of 7–15 *Rukun Tetanggas*. The heads of each *Rukun Tetangga* gather every two to three months to gather opinions and suggestions on administrative issues that they then deliver to higher administrative levels. Finally, 10–15 *Rukun Wargas* are considered as one sub-district of an administrative area.

Community-level coordination is very well organised in Semarang. However, there is a big segregation between the government level of urban planning and local development. Large areas of the city – both urban and rural alike – are unregulated, and much of the local development and reform is conducted on the community level. However, this problem also makes community organisation even stronger. The government is now striving to make the bottom-up structure more closely connected to its own top-down way of doing things, which would bridge the current gap between uncontrolled development and policy regulation.

### The proposed plan

The design masterplan aims at building a detailed framework for the future of Semarang. In this scenario, the coastal and mountain areas are deemed unsuitable for settlement due to the risk of flooding, subsidence, and landslides. The chosen site is in suburban Semarang (where residents from dangerous coastal areas have already migrated). Measures will have to be taken to not only encompass the new influx of

residents, but also to keep the natural qualities of the area intact, especially the aquifers and watersheds. This is why detailed design areas were chosen to explore the possibilities of increasing green and blue areas (urban planning’s shorthand for non-urban land and water, respectively) in an urban context, as well as to preserve natural qualities in mountainous areas and create new areas for residents’ convenience.

The chosen intervention site is in the south of Semarang city, bordered by Mount Ungaran to the east. This area is within the administrative boundary of Banyumalika and covers the *Rukun Tetangga* areas of Spondol Wetan, Spondol Kulon, and Pedalangan. There is the mountain peak of Gunung Selekor east of the design intervention area. The natural qualities of this area are relatively well preserved, for little development has yet been made in this area. The Kaligarang river runs along on the border of the administrative

boundaries of Banyumanik and Sekaran. This river is part of the biggest water-supply route in this area, and thus must be more vigorously protected.

When it comes to the area’s history, there has never been a master plan to guide large-scale settlement and public facilities’ development. Much of the economic development came from the switch from manufacturing to business, with local people’s housing replaced by luxury hotels and shopping malls in the city centre. The long-term residents of the area are slowly being pushed out of the city and into the outskirts of Semarang. Due to this, old villages such as Basahan, Jayenggaten, Morojayan, Petroos, Mijen, Sekayu, and others on Pandanaran Road at the centre of Semarang city are disappearing.

If allowed to continue unabated, this would have increasingly detrimental effects on the conservation of the heritage of Semarang. If the pattern of migrants being pushed to the outskirts continues, it could trigger more and even faster disturbances to the historical heritage sites of Semarang. This problem would be compounded if there are no clear guidelines on how to deal with these places once the locals have been forced to leave.

Furthermore, real estate developers construct new infrastructure, such as roads, water pipes, electricity cables, phone masts, and health and education facilities in the new areas they develop. These facilities are usually accessible to people in adjacent communities, thus making these development areas preferable zones for migrant destinations. The small- and large-scale housing developments and equivalent facilities’ development carried out in the Pedurungan and Genuk districts<sup>4</sup> are examples. Such development has “triggered collateral development in the surrounding regions.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, large-scale developers play a crucial role in triggering regional transformation.<sup>6</sup> However, these areas are usually the least urbanised, as well as being the natural areas that people prefer to live in on the peripheries of the city. Therefore, without a clear strategy and master plan to guide the further expanding cityscape, it will be only a matter of time until the damage done to the environment and the city’s natural context are at a point of no return.

By creating a regional framework for the migrants it will be possible to guide settlement and public facility development more easily. People will be able to choose the areas they want to move into based on living quality or their environment preferences. With regard to ecology and geology we can see that the plan’s intervention site is located in the highlands and its development is centred around areas which are relatively less steep and, hence, have less danger from landslides. The landslide danger areas, and the tectonic movement of the mountainous areas, had to

be mapped in order to figure out the preferable areas for development of this project. The analysis of the hinterland’s volcanic activity was crucial because it relates to the new settlements that will be established in the up-hill areas.

Geothermal activities affect settlements because they create tectonic movements and hot-spring activities which are potentially harmful for people living near them. Also, up-hill activities affect the land subsidence of low-hill areas: as was highlighted above, the whole of the landscape is connected. There is also much to be considered regarding the ecology of the area. As we have seen, Mount Ungaran encompasses primary forests and biodiversity conservation areas which are home to many exotic species of animals. Most of the mountainous areas around Semarang have high ecological significance. This is why the mountain areas should be preserved as much as possible.

By creating migration guidelines for ecological preservation areas in the hinterlands, the plan will ensure the possibility of keeping the area’s natural qualities intact. The plan also consists of detailed guidelines (as well as a large-scale design) to try and address the needs of the new migrants in finding areas to live where they can feel safe from natural disasters, it also makes use of analysis to earmark places most suitable for new settlement, and also indicates which areas need to be protected for future generations because of their ecological and environmental importance. Finally, the plan also allows for (and actually encourages) participation from local groups to ensure there is a balance when trying to achieve this future vision so that everyone’s needs can be addressed. In terms of society, we have already seen how Semarang residents are keen to move to areas less prone to flooding and subsidence, but because of this migratory pattern the natural environment in Mount Ungaran is in danger of losing the very ecological values that make it so attractive, and this is something the plan seeks to address, with a long-term strategy to balance the needs of the new residents, without unduly damaging the qualities of the area they are moving to.

In order to achieve this, however, the plan’s design could be seen in some quarters as being controversial. Particularly the tight-knit *Rukun Tetangga-Rukun Warga* structure of communities and the top-down system of the government would be the biggest obstacles to making the radical changes in this proposal, so this is why the plan seeks to get their involvement and give them a meaningful say in what gets done. Furthermore, for a country with a rapidly growing population and economy, reserving land for nature preservation may even arouse opposition. However, this masterplan highlights nothing more nor less than the sort of utilitarian choices we will have to make in order to keep the environment intact for future generations. By creating a framework to incorporate the whole of the communities’ structures, it will be possible to keep them tight-knit, even if large-scale migration still needs to happen.

### Conclusion

Semarang is going through rapid urban and regional transformation. This has been seen in the past and continues to the present day. However, rapid urban sprawl and developments in commercial activity are still running parallel to spatial organisation. This will cause further trouble for migrants in the future when they are looking for new areas to settle in. With the assistance of this plan’s regional framework to guide urban development, and the settlement of future migrants, it will be possible to create safer living environments for those who wish to find new abodes.<sup>7</sup>

Sun Woo (Cassie) Kim,  
Urban Design Division, Haeahn  
Architecture, Seoul, South Korea.  
E-mail: [sw.kim3@haeahn.com](mailto:sw.kim3@haeahn.com)

### Notes

- 1 The Rockefeller Foundation (2016). *100 Resilient Cities*. Semarang City Government.
- 2 These have nothing to do with the public ponds known locally as “polders”.
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- 6 Ibid.
- 7 I would like to thank Fransje Hooimeijer and Nico Tillie for always trusting me through the process. Family and friends, you are all I need.



Fig. 3: Rukun Tetangga and Rukun Warga community illustration (Figure by Sun Woo Kim, 2019).



Fig. 1 (images left): African traders in Guangzhou (Photo by Qiyao Hu, 2018).

# Planning for African Migrants in Guangzhou

Qiyao Hu

Chinatowns can be found all over the world. Since China opened up again in 1978, the country's cities have begun to see foreign settlements take root, particularly in the last two decades as globalisation really began to take hold. These new settlements are a direct result of globalisation and its new transnational migrations. This paper examines one particular type of settlement: African ethnic enclaves in Guangzhou. It examines how they formed and what problems they face, particularly social-spatial segregation. It also proposes a strategy for dealing with these problems through spatial design and realistic planning for socially minded city governance.

## Globalisation and China

Since the beginning of the 20th century, and especially after World War II, global trade (i.e., import and export) has increased as a proportion of GDP.<sup>1</sup> With globalisation in economy and trade, other related factors have begun to globalise as well, such as population, technology, culture, and industry. In China, the reforms of 1978 ended the closed development that characterised the country since its establishment in 1949. China's development benefited from this change in policy. During the last 40 years, the country's economic output, industry, and foreign trade have all grown at an alarming rate.<sup>2</sup>

During this process, the manufacturing and transport conditions in some regions made the country once again competitive for industry, attracting investment from other countries. Those regions at the forefront of reform were mainly on China's long coastline, such as the world-class urban agglomeration of the Pearl River Delta (PRD). During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), Guangzhou and the colonies of Hong Kong and Macao were important foreign-trade ports, connecting feudal China to the outside world. Due to the PRD's prime

location, after the 1978 reforms, two special economic zones (SEZs) were established at Shenzhen and Zhuhai, further boosting the region's development in manufacturing. It has since become the main frontier in China's connection to the rest of the world. Accounting for about a quarter of China's trade. The PRD is also China's largest export base. The Pearl River Delta was and remains one of the most open areas in China and has been dubbed the factory of the world.

This economic take-off has brought about tremendous changes in China's social life and urban appearance. Urbanisation is also advancing at an alarming rate, which creates unprecedented challenges and opportunities for China's cities. In this, the cities' construction and industrial development require a large amount of labour resources and also attract a lot of business people.

The population within China has also begun to migrate. Rural labourers have poured into regions with rapid urbanisation, thriving industries, and developed commerce. At the same time, due to the arrival of labour and capital, the urbanisation in these places has also been actively promoted, which has

led to a rapid increase in size, density, and development in these cities. In addition to the large internal migration, many transnational migrants come to particular Chinese cities as a result of the country's opening up.

## Guangzhou and migration

Globalisation in its earlier form was mainly colonialism. Subsequently, it came to rely on large multinational corporations, dominated by economic powers like the United States and the countries of Europe. But the transformations wrought by globalisation since the beginning of the 21st century have made individuals more and more prominent in the process. With the rise and development of the Internet, globalisation relies more on individual participation.<sup>3</sup> There is an important component called low-end globalisation, which refers to the global flow of individuals or small-scale operations from underdeveloped regions. They go to places like China and Southeast Asia to buy affordable products and bring these fruits of globalisation back to the people in their home countries.<sup>4</sup>

When foreigners come to China, big cities with a higher degree of openness are the places they choose to come to. For example, there is a Korea Town in Beijing. Many merchants also come from the Middle East, and it is estimated that Guangzhou has the largest population of Africans in Asia.

The development of good Sino-African relations, especially in trade, has led to more African traders being familiar with China's markets, which attract them by their affordable products (e.g., textiles, shoes, small electronics).<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Guangzhou is not only a provincial capital, it is a regional capital as well, with an internationally integrated transport hub. China's largest import and export trade fair, the Canton Fair, is held here every year. These are all factors that make this one of the most attractive cities for foreigners in China. As a result, African traders have been coming to Guangzhou to find new opportunities.

African traders in Guangzhou are mainly divided into two types. The first are "long-stay"

for trade or business. Some of these even open shops or companies and have purchased houses in the city.<sup>6</sup> The other type are "short-stay" and mainly concentrate in Guangzhou around the time of the Canton Fair. These African traders, together with all the links in the chain from production to consumption, mean that products go from factories in Guangzhou to African consumers. Therefore, although their trade is not so large, the process is complicated because of the logistics and the fact that it is ad hoc, nor is there strong financial support – almost all of these traders come to Guangzhou to choose wholesalers and manufacturers by themselves.<sup>7</sup> This has led to the arrival and residence of a large number of African traders each year, and they often choose to live close together, meaning that African communities have gradually formed in the city.

## African enclaves in Guangzhou

According to local media reports, there may be as many as 200,000 Africans living in Guangzhou, legally or illegally. For several reasons, most of them choose to live together in communities like Sanyuanli and Xiaobei Road, which can as a result be called African ethnic enclaves. These enclaves have a number of common characteristics; they also face similar problems and challenges.

When African traders come to Guangzhou to look for accommodation, the major consideration is comprehensive transportation convenience. This convenience includes proximity to market areas, transportation hubs, logistics distribution centres, and other places closely related to business activities. Based on these requirements, such an area can only be found in the old town of Guangzhou. However, central urban areas also have very high land values due to their convenient conditions and good public facilities. Urban regeneration and real estate development results in Africans' concentration in some specific old and undeveloped residential areas that have cheap rent.<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 2 (images left and above): African enclave, Xiaobei Road (Photo by Qiyao Hu, 2018).

In addition, when African traders plan to live in a place for a long time, they will naturally need some support services. These include African restaurants, supermarkets, and food markets. Some shops in these communities sell beef and mutton aimed at Muslim African traders.<sup>9</sup> The addition of these exotic elements to city life has made these communities characteristically African. These characteristics, in turn, attract other newly arrived African traders.

Researching these communities has shown that they are composed of old residential buildings and villagers' housing. For the former, most of the original owners of the houses have left. The current residents are complex and varied, but the property management is quite inadequate. Meanwhile, villagers' housing communities are not included in urban land use because they are deemed "urban villages." Nowadays, urban villages in large Chinese cities are no longer the residences of the original villagers. With relatively low rent, urban villages have become an informal type of settlement that facilitates large numbers of migrant labourers. Due to maintenance difficulties and a general lack of management, these types of communities have numerous problems in common, like unregulated construction, high density, low living area per person, and lack of safety. The sanitary conditions and maintenance of public spaces are also very poor. Some of the original public spaces have been abandoned, occupied by other uses, or simply transformed into garbage dumps.

When asked about these problems during interviews, community clerks said that the community can only be responsible for some major public sanitation issues. Detailed work, like internal floor cleaning and the maintenance of community facilities, lack funds. Some community clerks have already tried to mobilise residents to raise public funds for these works, but due to the complex composition of the residents' profiles, the result failed to meet their fundraising expectations. Whether African traders or domestic migrants, residents think that even though the environment is not good, it will not affect temporary residence or work too much. Therefore, the poor environment is a phenomenon that characterises these

communities. What lies behind it is the difficulty of social governance, especially the problem of how to promote public participation and community governance.

In addition to the poor physical environment, these communities are also characterised by very few local residents living there. This is why they are called "ethnic enclaves." When African traders come to Guangzhou, local residents choose to actively isolate these outsiders due to stereotypes and misunderstanding. They either do not offer them rental housing or they take the initiative in moving out of the communities themselves.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, ethnic-based residential differentiation inevitably began to appear in Guangzhou. After Africans demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the management of the local government a number of times via protests, the confrontation between the migrant community and local society accumulated day by day. As a consequence, social segregation deepened further. These incidents are widely discussed on Chinese social media networks, where many comments are harshly critical of Africans. A lot of locals accuse them of crimes and call on the authorities to tighten up management of these areas.<sup>11</sup>

Such segregation will be a destabilising factor for the local society because both parties lack trust and understanding. They often feel unfairly treated or even threatened by the other. With an increase in difficulties, the local community's attention on these African enclaves increases. But there have been some small breakthroughs: African traders are increasingly invited to public activities like community football matches.<sup>12</sup> In the future, communities and local organisations need to play a greater role in promoting the integration of Africans and their enclaves into local social spaces.

### Proposals: participate, live, and stay better

Africans exist at the lower end of Guangzhou's social life, and this problem is exacerbated by neglect at the hands of the city. It is impossible to solve these issues unless we look at them in a new light. In view of the

characteristics, problems, and challenges of Guangzhou's African enclaves, and bearing in mind the current patterns of Chinese community governance, the government could start with some actions of spatial regeneration and governance for these communities. It could actively mobilise Africans and other residents to participate in such actions. Such a program could achieve the twin goals of improving migrants' environment and promoting cross-ethnic social integration.

Actions for improving the living environment of residents and promoting the integration of some minorities into the mainstream cannot be separated from a more comprehensive and in-depth participation of different stakeholders. Based on some successful attempts of public participation in the governance of Chinese communities, this author has designed a set of overall process frameworks that allow for more and better participation by African traders in community regeneration. The whole process is divided into four phases: Preparation, Plan-making, Implementation, and Management. The work at each phase is done by the public, professionals (such as architects and urban planners), and the government. The mode of cooperation and implementation will gradually change from a top-down, government-led model to a bottom-up model with public autonomy. In this process, the influence, input, and acquisition of these three parties will also change dynamically. The public has different ways of participating in community regeneration at different phases.

Through the design of this regeneration process, it is hoped that all stakeholders can be included in the process through different types of public participation and in different phases. The integration of African migrants into the Guangzhou's urban community can also be promoted through communication with the government, planners, and other residents throughout this process.

This research focused on the Xiaobei Road community, one of the most typical African enclaves in Guangzhou, as a sample for a spatial regeneration design and as a way of reflecting on the concept of better life. The design of the community regeneration is based on an analysis of the site. There are three main considerations in response to

three main problems: spatial disconnection between different areas; a lack of coherence in the organisation of functions; and the need to create a new identity for the place. The future of Xiaobei Road will be as a pedestrian- and environmentally-friendly, mixed and multicultural community. Therefore, the author reorganised and comprehensively redesigned transportation, public space, and public service facilities. Combined with the aimed improvements in participation outlined above, the design of the community regeneration will require residents to work on it according to their own needs and with the assistance of professionals and the wider community. For example, the renewal of housing and the beautification of the surrounding micro-public spaces are entirely dependent on residents' own ideas, supplemented by architects' suggestions and some financial incentives provided by the community. There are many other similar project proposals, including the transformation and utilisation of collective housing, the functional change of old factories, and the further excavation of public spaces such as school playgrounds. These designs revolve closely around solutions to the areas' specific problems.

### Conclusion

An urban development strategy that fully considers the living habits and cultural background of Africans can make the city more friendly to this group. The application of these actions can protect the living space of African traders in Guangzhou, attract more Africans to work and study there, and promote good inter-ethnic, transnational relationships that are mutually beneficial.

If Guangzhou can really pay attention to this group and take practical action, then this city will be a more desirable destination for transnational business people, and transnational ethnic enclaves will no longer be like scars on the face of the city. Former outsiders and their communities will be better integrated into the city in an active healing of the urban social space.

Qiyao Hu, independent scholar, China.  
E-mail: [huqiyao201709@163.com](mailto:huqiyao201709@163.com)



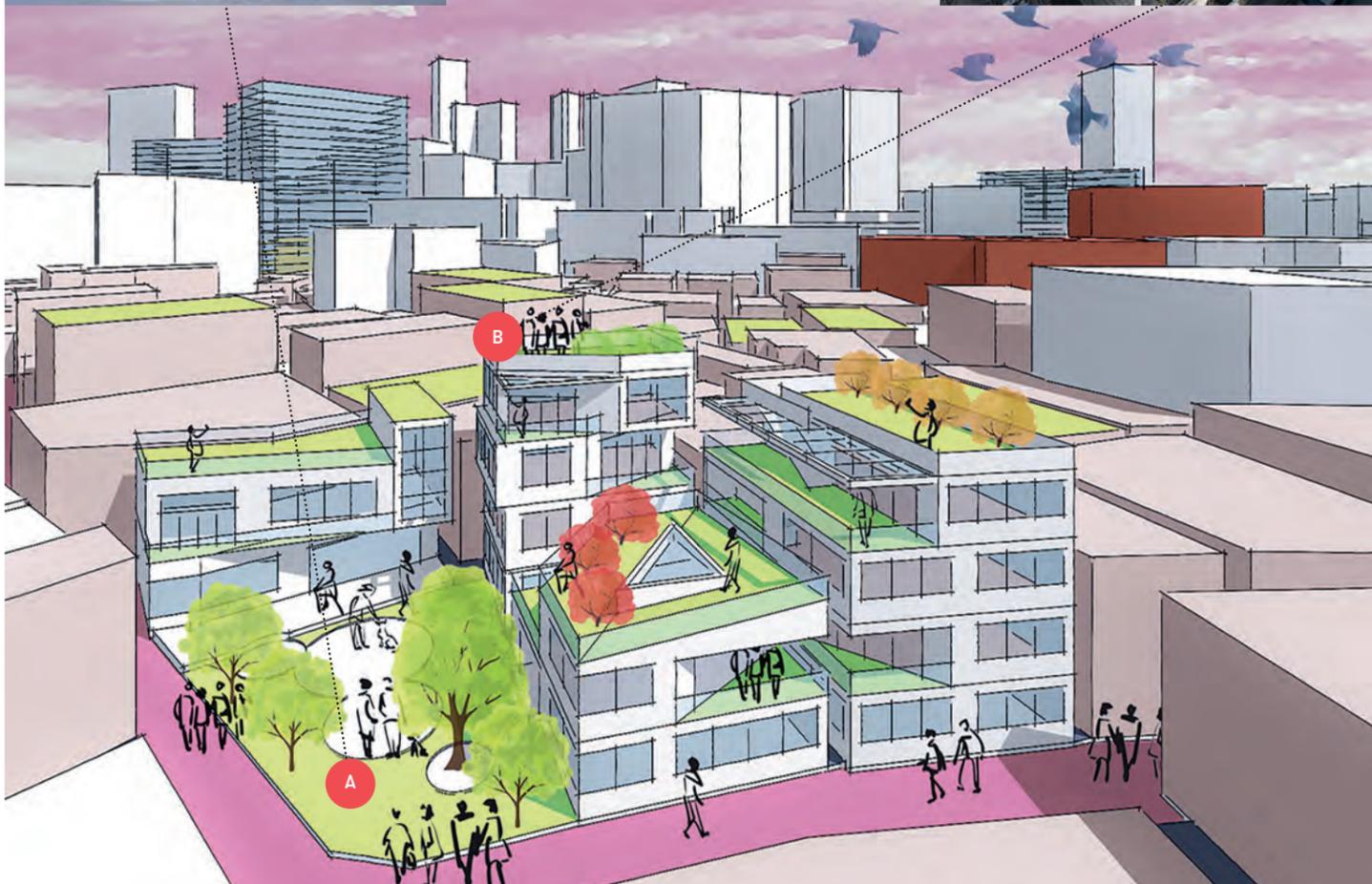
Fig. 3: Community regeneration project design. (Figure by Qiyao Hu, 2019).

#### A (left): Co-create Garden

Residents, community and planners use the corner space of the village to create some small leisure venues.

#### B (right): Self-renewal Housing

Residents renew homes with the assistance of architects and community funding subsidies.



### Notes

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Fig. 1: Dense streetscape in Sham Shui Po (Photo by Xiaojun Liu, 2018).

# The Impact of Hong Kong's Urban Renewal on Chinese Migrants

Xiaojun Liu

**Hong Kong is a magnet for Mainland Chinese migrants, particularly females, children, the elderly, and other non-skilled workers. Lacking economic and social resources, they tend to cluster in the city center, where building quality is poor but they can rely on social networks. Urban renewal is threatening these networks. This research examines the Sham Shui Po district to show the economic and social importance of these communities, as well as the need to save them from development-driven urban regeneration. It questions the current redevelopment model – which leads to gentrification – and identifies things that need to be saved if this vibrant and socially responsive area is to continue in its vital function of welcoming Mainland Chinese migrants to the city.**

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong's economic prosperity and inclusive environment has attracted millions of migrants since the 1960s. More than 40 percent of the current population was born in Mainland China, and around 40,000 people are still migrating annually. Because of the One Way permit,<sup>1</sup> most of these migrants are family members of Hong Kong residents: females, children, the elderly, and a small number of middle-aged men. Normally from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they lack social networks in Hong Kong and tend to settle in districts where the cost of living is more affordable and where they can find jobs (this is something we also see in You Wu's paper, "The Death and Life of Amsterdam's Chinatown"). Hong Kong's decaying central areas are popular, with mid-rise (five- to eight-storey) buildings constructed between the 1920s to the 1950s being cheap to rent. But they lack proper maintenance and the housing quality is poor, with out-of-date living facilities, sanitation, internet access, and the like.

Sham Shui Po is a typical migrant district, with almost 50 percent of its population born outside Hong Kong [Fig. 1]. This is the highest rate in Hong Kong and is predicted to go up to 65 percent by 2028. Areas like this do not only accommodate newcomers; they also help them integrate into Hong Kong. Since 1940, more than 50 percent of Sham Shui Po migrants achieved higher social status and moved out. The area they leave behind, however, remains poor and rundown. Sham Shui Po is considered one of the most problematic districts in Hong Kong by the authorities. It has the second lowest median income in the city and the most aged

community. Buildings are also in poor condition, with more than 1200 of them older than 40 years and lacking proper maintenance.

Since 2011, a number of urban regeneration projects have been proposed for Sham Shui Po. They are aimed at attracting a diverse class of people to activate its upgrading. Noticing the social value of the neighbourhood, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), the government operator of Hong Kong's urban renewal, also intends to rebuild or densify neighbourhoods to continue to accommodate low-income migrants. Public facilities, like sport and education, are also a mandatory requirement for re-developers. However, as these projects proceed, local migrant communities are torn apart. The population of Mainland Chinese migrants in Sham Shui Po was reduced by around 2000 people between 2011 and 2016, and this is expected to continue as more regeneration projects get underway.

Regeneration claims to improve citizens' environment, health, and safety, in part through the removal of illegally subdivided houses. However, migrants' satisfaction rates are also generally lower than the average population as a result of these regenerations' so-called improvements, as we will show.<sup>2</sup> The goal of integrating Mainland Chinese migrants into Sham Shui Po through regeneration have failed due to the dramatic demolition and gentrification resulting from the current property-led urban renewal, which is detrimental to both affordable living space and neighbourhood-based social networks. With migrant neighbourhoods shrinking, it becomes less economically feasible for these people to enter and settle in Hong Kong.

Due to the cost of transportation and limited social connections, migrants' social networks are more reliant on neighbourhoods. Such place-based networks are crucial for migrants' accommodation and daily lives. Reconstructed by the migrant community itself, the flexible public spaces of old Hong Kong allowed for temporary markets, multi-functional parks, and public spaces for migrants to expand their networks. However, these flexible, multi-functional spaces are being transformed into monotonous public space for the middle class, damaging the migrants' community identity.

## Hong Kong's urban renewal projects

Hong Kong set up the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in 2001. Its task is to steer urban renewal processes in more socially oriented ways, and it is supported by local academics who research the social impact of communities. The URA insists on more socially oriented clauses in contracts with developers in order to achieve their aims – namely, the 4Rs: Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Preservation, and Revitalization.

Redevelopment is at the core of these urban renewal projects. It means demolition of dilapidated buildings and reconstruction of new (always higher) ones. This is accompanied by the rehabilitation of less dilapidated buildings, the revitalization of streets and open spaces (with gentrified shops and improvements to pavements), and the preservation of heritage as an anchor to preserve local culture. However, in reality,

these interventions are less likely to be realised than straightforward building redevelopment because they contribute less to profit.

Due to Hong Kong's limited land resources, 100-metre-high residential buildings ("pencil towers") are widely used in urban renewal. They normally comprise the following three components: (1) Car-oriented streets: wide roads (>14 metres) with narrow pedestrian pavements (three to four metres). Sometimes, because of a building's setback, the pedestrian area will be wider (5 metres or more), but walking spaces is limited and in shadow; (2) Commercial podiums: the bottom of the building normally has significant commercial value, so accessible floors are essential to property developers. Normally, the bottom three to five levels will be completely commercial, with the top of the podium housing services for residents or other facilities for the community; (3) Residential towers: to make full use of height restrictions and to create spaces with daylight, residential towers are designed as simple columns, with four to six apartments on each floor, making the façade monotonous but efficient in its use of the built floor area.

## Migrants' integration

Migrant communities have a very different perspective on Sham Shui Po. They see this neighbourhood as an Arrival City with a community that helps their integration. Mainland Chinese migrants' problems are special because they have only limited skills and social resources.<sup>3</sup> In order to achieve economic and social integration, a number of specific things are required: (1) Capital accumulation: migrants' median income is lower than the Hong Kong average. This leads to discrimination by locals and feelings of isolation.<sup>4</sup> Income improvement is a significant part of migrants' integration and has a close relationship with elements such as occupation, work experience, networks, and capital accumulation, all of which require investment in education and real estate.<sup>5</sup> (2) Affordable housing: over half of migrants' monthly income is used on accommodation. Their financial situation, and Hong Kong's relatively high-priced public transportation, limits their choices. Ideally, they need to be close to work. Housing in central areas is expensive, and migrants are likely to live in small apartments with expensive square-metre rentals. The average housing area per migrant is 17 square metres (lower than Hong Kong's average of 32.7 square metres, and much lower than Shenzhen's 45.2 square metres). These apartments are so small that they hardly meet migrants' basic living requirements, which means less life satisfaction. (3) Social network expansion: migrants' social integration goes hand in hand with their social networks, which assist them in psychological ways and also contribute to their financial improvement.<sup>6</sup> Migrants are more likely to find financial support and career information through these social connections, which can be divided into four categories: occupation, family, neighbourhood, and public services. (4) Identity establishment: this can help build confidence. Events and community organisations play important roles here. For example, Chiuchow community's Yulan Festival is an annual ethnic event where the members of the community gather and new migrants are able to meet established ones. These events also help keep community identity alive. These events are open to everyone and act as a platform to showcase culture and build channels to the general public. And finally, (5) Spaces that support integration: physical space has an impact on people's social activities, which in turn contributes to their social networks. The spatial characteristics of migrant settlement have an impact on migrants' social mobility. Doug Saunders describes four elements helping migrants' integration: high density, commercial-friendly streetscape, traffic connection to the city center, and affordable accommodation.<sup>7</sup> Having these elements improves the economic and social status of migrants. (Saunders also discusses political elements, such as open citizenship, welfare, health, and education, some of which are specifically spatial, like schools.)

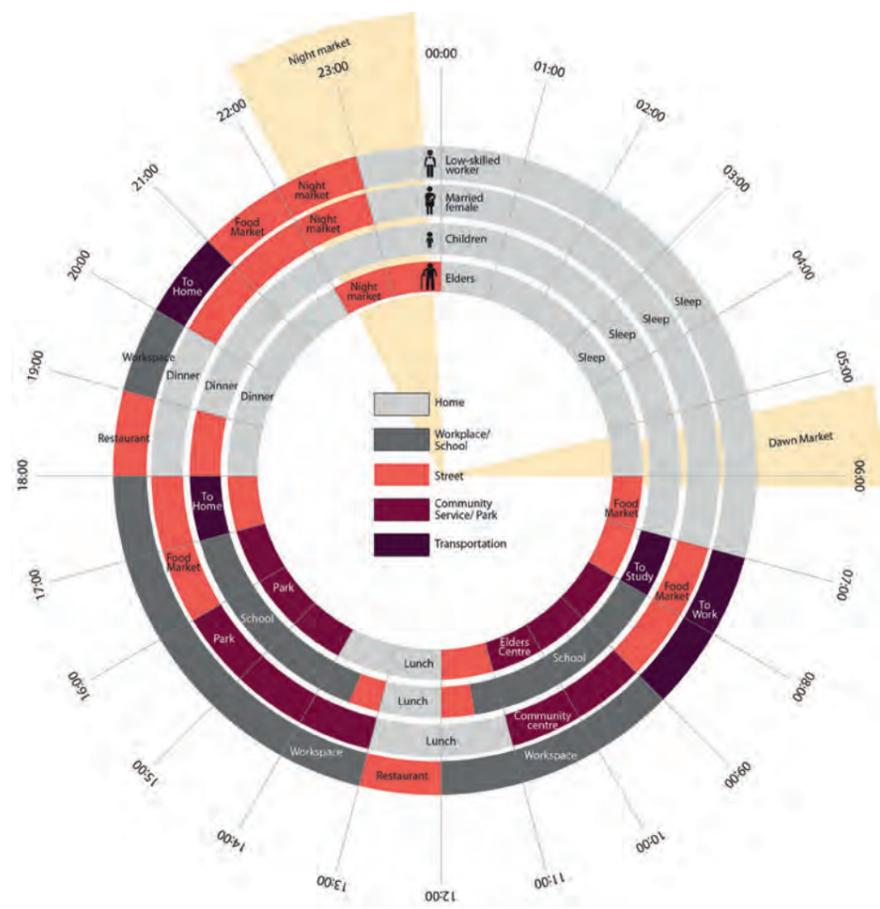


Fig.2: Weekend timetable of Mainland Chinese migrants in Sham Shui Po (Figure by Xiaojun Liu, 2018).

### Sham Shui Po's migrant community

In order to understand Sham Shui Po, this research examined the spatial characteristics of the area and its migrant communities' daily lives [Fig. 2]. Most people are on the street in the morning and again in the afternoon. These are the best times for meeting each other because they usually do not have much time for social life. Three elements in particular were examined: (1) Housing: Sham Shui Po's dense urban environment and high number of rentals result in shared space with little privacy. Apartments are subdivided and accommodate several families [Fig. 3]. Each family has a small room (c.15 square metres), but the toilet, bathroom, and kitchen are shared in common. A lot of activities are done in the apartment's public space, like the corridor, living room, and kitchen, which provides living space for more people and makes them more affordable. Interviews with residents show that they accept this situation. (2) Local streets: these have highly mixed commercial spaces, with shops facing covered pavements that provide shelter from the weather and which are comfortable to stay in. There are also temporary shops and stalls selling small commodities, like toothbrushes, sometimes located in the narrow lanes. Mobile containers are rented from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. Rent is low, and tenants can easily move in. After shops close, stalls open selling even cheaper items, like second-hand books and phones. They occupy these structures without paying any rent and are gone before dawn. The streets function 24 hours a day but to serve different groups. Migrants can buy affordable

things, but they can also start their own small businesses. This neighbourhood commerce not only serves locals but also the wholesale clothing and electronics industries located in the empty industrial buildings nearby, where they rent space for their activities and do not require highly skilled workers. (3) Public services: weekends are more flexible than weekdays and are used for more public activities. These can be found on the third and fourth floors of buildings and include civic organizations, community service centers, mini-schools, and even churches. They share staircases with the residential floors above. Hometown Organizations are important. These are organizations of migrants from the same place. Led and sponsored by older, successful migrants, they help the new migrants, unfamiliar with the city, to adapt. Supported by the Cultural Department and District Council, some industry associations also give subsidies and make good use of their influence. The hometown community in Sham Shui Po is from Guangdong Province and dates back 30 years. With work stations and branches in each neighbourhood, they provide voluntary life assistance to residents. Social workers also visit to give help and have daily contact with disadvantaged migrants. Generally, community service stations can be found in the center of the neighbourhoods and are non-profit, aiming to help residents with education and health care (including mental health). They are more active than other organizations because they know more information about the residents and are able to visit people's homes. They are also usually branches of a larger organization that provides knowledge and training. Because they can directly contact residents, the Welfare

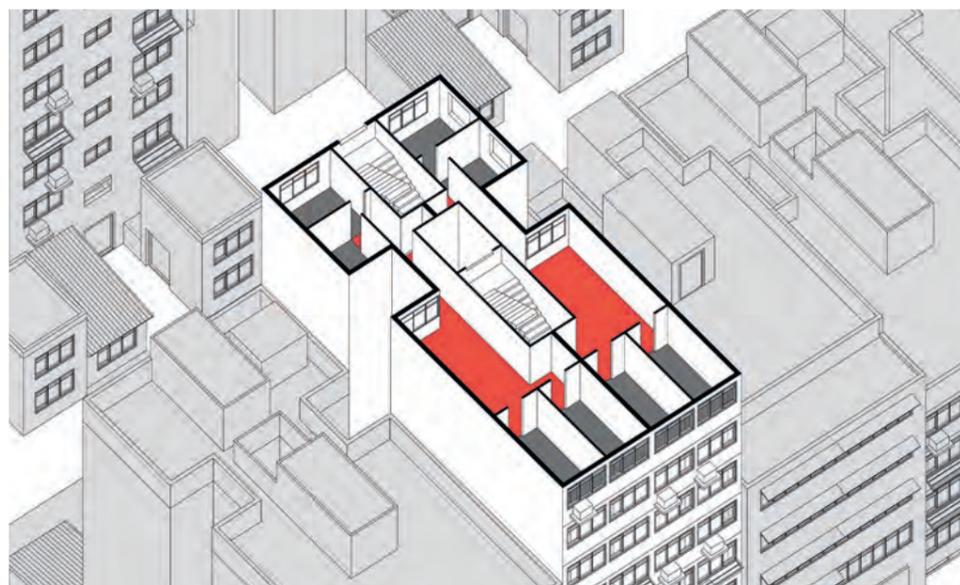


Fig. 3: Existing subdivision of housing in Sham Shui Po (Figure by Xiaojun Liu, 2018).

Department and real estate agencies benefit from their information and, in turn, give them advice and, sometimes, financial assistance. Research institutes, like Hong Kong University, also rely on these social networks to maintain contact with migrants for their research.

### Urban renewal in Sham Shui Po

The Urban Renewal Authority began a number of projects in Sham Shui Po in 2009. Located between Tung Chau Street, Tai Po Road, Boundary Street, and Yen Chow Street, the major interventions were in the southern part, at Hai Tan Street, where three blocks of old buildings were demolished, replaced by new high-rise residential towers and a commercial podium. This project also aimed at rebuilding – and providing space for – the forgotten local ferry heritage.

Other rehabilitation projects were dispersed throughout the neighbourhood. Led by property owners and financed by the government, most of these buildings were better quality and had less history. Property owners, satisfied with their own buildings, were willing to repair them instead of letting the government demolish and replace them. Most of the newly redeveloped residential buildings succeed in the residential market but fail in the commercial market. One example of this is the new development at Hai Tan Street, where three blocks of old buildings were demolished and replaced by high-rise residential towers and a commercial podium. Not all of the shops in the podium have opened, although the building has been in use for a number of years. In addition to failing to attract shop owners, controversy over property rights has also hindered their opening (as can be seen by banners outside the building).

In terms of Sham Shui Po's street revitalization, less has been implemented. In 2013, the Jade Market was relocated to Tong Chow Street. The final outcome of this renewal has yet to be seen [Fig. 4]. But we can look at four elements in order to assess them: (1) Housing and commercial renewal: these projects were all renewed from nine-storey apartments into towers of more than 35 storeys. The old buildings were completely torn down, replaced by new buildings composed of housing towers with a commercial podium. Public facilities (e.g., swimming pools, library, and community service centers) are located inside these podiums. However, when comparing residential data, we can see that these buildings were not designed for the migrant community. Projects follow the self-financing principle of urban renewal, which means developers maximise income by any means, resulting in larger scale units sold at higher prices (and lower construction costs). Despite household numbers increasing by more than one third, residential units under 40 square metres have reduced by more than half. The project in Lai Chi Kok Road does not even have small-sized units. This means that almost 50 percent of migrants are excluded, even though the population increased by a third. If all of the old buildings (housing approximately 22,000 migrants and 33,000 locals) are renewed in this manner, then an estimated 5400 incoming migrants will have no homes. (2) Limiting low-skill job opportunities: in the commercial podiums of these new projects, the typology has also changed. Although the number of shops remains almost the same, the average size of units increased by around 40 percent, from 69 square metres to 113. This means that migrant tenants can no longer afford them. Most of these shops no longer face the street but face inwards towards the malls inside the podiums. The street can no longer function as a public space supporting migrants' informal social networking. Flexible commercial activities are also being replaced by street parking. Because of this new commercial typology, shops in the new projects tend to be spas, supermarkets, cafes, and clinics, which cater to the middle class. Migrants have almost no opportunity to find job opportunities here. (3) Gated public services: in the land requisition phase, developers were required to provide certain public services in their projects. These include sports and cultural

facilities that the neighbourhood residents need. However, in the projects researched, these facilities are located on upper floors and behind gates. Existing residents do not even know the facilities are accessible to them. (4) Spillover effect: apart from this building renewal, nearby Haitan Street is also experiencing rapid gentrification. Between 2018 and 2020, more than 18 cafés targeting middle-class customers opened. The street is also branded as a new Brooklyn. However, mainland migrants are obviously not the target customers. In their contracts, small restaurants, car repair shops, barbers, and more were excluded by the higher rents, and at least one Hometown Organization has moved out. So, we see that not only are migrants' consumer spaces being diminished, but so too are their networking spaces.

### Conclusion

The spatial and social impact of urban development on the migrant communities of Sham Shui Po are significant, and damaging. Rising rent is top of the list. Redevelopment does not only remove small-size apartments; it also raises house prices in adjacent areas. Public spaces, like parks or marketplaces, are being taken over by the new developments, with the result that the ground-floor streetscape is changing into higher-class commercial patterns. These spatial and social changes are impacting these neighbourhoods and having a detrimental effect on migrant quality of life and their all-important social networks.

Property-led urban renewal has unduly targeted migrants. Firstly, the demolition of commercial-friendly streetscapes and the exclusion of low-level shops reduces low-skill job opportunities in the places where migrants are most highly concentrated. Secondly, the demolition of small-size apartments raises migrants' spending on housing. Higher rent for shops also expels smaller tenants who provide the economic necessities for migrants.

Migrant communities have become unstable when facing these challenges. Ethnic cultural events are now also threatened due to dispersion of the migrants, who used to gather in the neighbourhood and share their experiences. There must be a better way to renew the city-centre communities of Hong Kong. If solutions are not found, then the city will lose something special: the traditional welcome it has always given Mainland Chinese migrants – something that has given the city strength and a rich cultural identity for more than half a century.<sup>8</sup>

Xiaojun Liu, landscape architect, West 8 urban design & landscape architecture b.v., Rotterdam. Email: lewislau010@gmail.com

#### Notes

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- 8 I would like to thank my mentors, Gregory Bracken and Franklin van der Hoeven, for guidance and support in this study.



Fig. 1: Streetscape of Zeedijk (Photo by You Wu, 2020).

# The Death and Life of Amsterdam's Chinatown

You Wu

**Stroll through Amsterdam's city centre and you will be immersed in the splendour of the Dutch Golden Age. You can also immerse yourself in the enigmatic atmosphere of De Wallen, or red-light area. Adjacent to this is a place where some other interesting sights will meet your eyes, sights which do not appear to belong to this place: canal houses ornamented with Chinese lanterns and pagoda features, bilingual street signs (Dutch and Chinese), Western-style columns painted green and red. There is even a Chinese temple, Hehua Temple, opened by Queen Beatrix on 15 September 2000. Despite the fact that there is no official Chinatown, Amsterdam clearly has a Chinese district nestled deep within its historic centre. Why is this? And how can it survive in the face of globalisation?**

## Chinatowns

Ethnic enclaves known as Chinatown can be found in many places around the world, as we already saw mentioned by Qiyao Hu in his paper, "Planning for African Migrants in Guangzhou." Originally regarded as ghettos by Western culture, in recent decades they have been transformed into fascinating and exotic urban environments and have become "must-see" tourist destinations. The success of ethnic enclaves that have transformed and been accepted by local societies appears to be a given (but often is not, as highlighted by Hu's paper). Under the expansion of cultural consumerism, the monetisation of ethnic cityscapes enabled Chinatowns to break their association with poverty, vice, and social backwardness.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Chinatowns all over the world appear to be very similar, yet we cannot associate them with any one location or period in Chinese history. Developers and store owners are marketing authenticity to the general public, but this has brought about misunderstandings and led to a stereotyping of Chinese culture instead. These contradictions invariably lead to controversy, since Chinatowns today can neither express Chinese culture in a "correct" way, nor gather Chinese people spatially. Yet Chinatowns are a record of how Chinese migrants adapted to local society.

The 19th century saw industrialisation and modernisation, and Chinese migrants began to appear in Western countries. China under the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) found itself forced to open to foreign commerce, particularly after the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860, respectively). Chinese citizens began to labour in menial jobs abroad, and many shipping lines preferred to engage Chinese stokers and trimmers because they could pay them less. Consequently, the number of Chinese sailors was on the rise in Western countries. Demand for labour fluctuated from day to day, so Chinese workers relied significantly on their compatriots to introduce them to work (exactly the sort of migrant social network we saw in Xiaojun Liu's paper on Hong Kong). As a result, seamen would spend certain days around the docklands looking for job prospects before sailing on to new destinations.<sup>2</sup> Some older sailors saw opportunity for profit and launched their own businesses, opening boarding houses around the docklands. These businesses also formed a platform between ports with trans-local interactions in addition to providing physical supplies of food and lodging. Shop owners used their social connections to spread the latest news and job opportunities for sailors, which formed a strong social bond among the Chinese. Since then, Chinatowns

have served as a social hub for Chinese employees. Meanwhile, Chinese quarters were sprouting up near several of Europe's city harbours. Some, such as those in Antwerp, Liverpool, and Amsterdam, are still located near the waterfront.

Chinatowns had an impact on their urban settings but also adapted to changing times. At the beginning of 20th century, Chinese quarters and Chinese immigrants were all but invisible, without any meaningful contact with local society. In the Netherlands, several unemployed Chinese seamen sold Chinese peanut cookies on the streets to make ends meet in the lean years of the 1930s. They opened eateries for both Chinese and Dutch customers after accumulating a certain amount of money. Their dishes were a cheaper alternative to the city's restaurants, and they were increasingly accepted by local Dutch, particularly those who had worked in Asian colonies. Following World War II, Chinese restaurants appeared serving a mix of Chinese and Indonesian cuisine. Chinese dishes had been contextualized and integrated to cater to the native Dutch public. Integration is a mutual process: new larger portions and tailored tastes helped a growing number of Dutch people become acquainted with the new urban lifestyle trend of eating out,<sup>3</sup> while Chinese groups were gradually

becoming known by their "host" society. Waves of mass migration from China to the Netherlands clustered around the catering industry due to the enormous business opportunities it offered. And Chinatowns were the first destination for newly arrived immigrants seeking to adjust to their new social environments and find a place to stay.

With the restriction of immigration in Western countries over the past 30 years, the primary wave of Chinese migrants has switched from manual labourers to students and employees, with higher levels of education. This has also had an impact on the make up of the Chinese community. Chinese labourers used to rely significantly on their compatriots to provide them with social resources and employment, whereas more recent migrants live in a more dispersed way. Although the social bonding that occurs within a Chinese community is still strong, Chinatowns are no longer considered spatially agglomerated ethnic enclaves purely for Chinese people. They have become less visibly Chinese, with many of their traditional features watered down and replaced by more general tourist fare.

Additionally, overseas students and highly educated personnel would be considered "floating immigrants" – that is, groups which come and go and are better able to keep up with the latest Chinese culture and trends. Unlike earlier manual laborers, these newcomers have a fresh and in-depth understanding of Chinese culture. From their perception, the current representation of this culture in Chinatowns is based on a trite and superficial stereotype. Rather than conveying any positive aspect of the culture to local people, it leads to misunderstanding. In other words, new immigrants' ideas about Chinatowns differs from that of previous generations, those who left China 30-50 years ago.

These more critical voices circling around Chinatowns are not only within Chinese migrant groups, but have also emerged externally. Tourists are easily drawn to the "otherness" of cultural tourism destinations.<sup>4</sup> Driven by larger profits, Chinese entrepreneurs are using visual manifestations of 'Chineseness' to attract them – e.g., displaying red lanterns, decorating their buildings' façade with pagoda-like ornaments, and constructing Chinese archways to emphasize the ethnic branding of their stores. This easy method of representing exoticness appears to be effective, so much so that this contextualized technique has been widely adopted in Chinatowns around the world, which has caused them to resemble one another. However, this cliché of exaggerating and overemphasizing 'Chineseness' only strengthens Western societies' misperceptions of Chinese culture. Even though all such elements originated in China, these ineffective pairings are unable to adequately depict current Chinese culture. In most situations, Chinese characters are incomprehensible to people in Western urban environments, and the haphazard decorations of Chinese merchants frequently undermines the streetscape's order. Chinatowns are in danger of becoming a "hollow box" due to their meaningless visual characteristics.

Moreover, this strategy is also applied and adopted by non-Chinese merchants, who see the opportunities this commodified landscape offers for their businesses. These same components are used by stores from different cultural backgrounds to "assimilate" themselves into Chinatown's aesthetic. A consequence of this is that more upgraded and non-Chinese businesses are moving into Chinatowns, displacing small, local shop-owners while maintaining the area's ethnic branding. For instance, Pan-Asian, fusion restaurants are embellished with traditional Chinese elements. As a result, this "invasion" is leading to a decline for Chinatowns and a loss of authenticity. Chinatowns seem no longer popular as a destination anymore, either for Chinese or tourists.

## Amsterdam's Chinatown

When it comes to Chinatowns in the Netherlands, the one in Amsterdam stands out as unique. While very far from being invisible, it is not recognized by the local authorities. (Compare this to the other two Dutch Chinatowns: The Hague's is clearly identifiable, having been acknowledged and well supported by the municipality, whereas Rotterdam's is all but invisible, having been assimilated into its surroundings.)

Amsterdam's Chinatown, known as Zeedijk (note the zee ["sea"] in its name), is located next to the city's red-light district. Originally, this was a reputable area, populated by wealthy merchants in the Golden Age. It became a popular recreational area for sailors in the 18th century, particularly Chinese sailors, as mentioned above.<sup>5</sup> The earliest Chinese stores date from the early 20th century, and this Chinese flavour in the district still exists today, despite the ravages of recent tourism. The district's Chinese characteristics identify the ethnic designation of the streets, even though there are some doubts as to why such an exotic ethnic enclave still exists in the heart of Amsterdam, especially with historical canal buildings being embellished with exaggerated Chinese ornamentation. This neighbourhood used to be highly recommended as an essential stop on the red-light district tour on most tourist websites. Despite the "attractiveness" of Chinatown and the distinctiveness of its Chinese characteristics, the number of Chinese stores has decreased in recent years. Today, there is just a small Chinese cluster in the vicinity of the Chinese-style Hehua Temple. Based on research conducted in 2020, there are only 36 Chinese stores remaining in Chinatown (the area between Zeedijk, Stormsteeg, Nieuwmarkt, Geldersekaade, and Binnen Bantammerstraat). Besides this, the business environment appears to be relatively homogeneous and tourist-oriented. Chinese restaurants and massage parlours occupy more than half of all business, often with Chinese restaurants operating side by side, serving similar dishes.

According to Jan Rath, "Local entrepreneurs are not completely free actors."<sup>6</sup> Although there have been negotiations between Chinese entrepreneurs and the local government on the better promotion of Chinese ethnic identity in the area since the 1990s, this Chinese quarter has never been officially acknowledged by the Municipality of Amsterdam.<sup>7</sup> In 2007, the municipality started a project to restructure the red-light district and its surroundings (including the Chinatown area). This was intended to restrict criminal activities, confine prostitution to a smaller area, and encourage the upgrade of the shopping and living environment.<sup>8</sup> With this project, the local government seemed to acknowledge and encourage the presence of Chinatown: "Regarding the emerging market in China but also because Chinatown gives meaning to the so characteristic diversity of Amsterdam, we support the plans that should lead to a healthy Chinatown."<sup>9</sup>

However, these actions led to a decrease in the number of Chinese stores. In the Netherlands, ethnic entrepreneurs tend to concentrate their economic activities in wholesale, retail, and restaurants, which have low barriers to entry in the market.<sup>10</sup> The same goes for Chinese entrepreneurs. Small family-owned businesses face fierce competition from their compatriots due to their general uniformity and a lack of specialization, which is the opposite of what the municipality

desires for local businesses. Besides, there seems to be no follow-up "encouragement mechanism" to increase the appearance of Chinese businesses on the street. Under state-led gentrification, Chinese entrepreneurs are very vulnerable. Therefore, the Chinese "flavour" around Zeedijk is in danger of disappearing.

## The future of Amsterdam's Chinatown

As an ethnic enclave, Amsterdam's Chinatown has a distinctiveness that makes it appealing, but it also leads to arguments about ethnic segregation and the question of inclusivity in cities. Various social issues enabled Chinatowns to have a lot of social significance as well as complexity. Overseas Chinese are often considered an inward-looking ethnic minority by Western societies. Although they are distributed around cities, they still maintain their own social circles with compatriots and have limited contact with other groups. This social segregation and the inward-looking aspects of the community sometimes intensify misunderstandings about Chinese people and their culture. Discrimination does occur from time to time. Despite their erroneous interpretations of Chinese culture, Chinatowns continue to be seen as open public spaces. Instead of being referred to as social segregation, this method of embracing difference and variety should be referred to as "voluntary" segregation. Chinatowns serve as a storage facility for their ethnic identities, which also provide platforms for social interaction (like the "Arrival City" highlighted in Gregory Bracken's "Asian Migrations" as well as in Xiaojun Liu's Hong Kong paper).

Rather than abandoning the existence of this ethnic enclave, the local authority and Chinese groups should help it transform and adapt to new contexts so it can be integrated into local society. This does not mean ignoring ethnic characteristics to simply assimilate. On the contrary, integration should protect ethnic groups from cultural dominance by a majority ethnic group (or host society) and should respect and treasure their ethnic "core."<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, instead of resembling one another all over the world, Chinatowns should be contextualized and varied based on their situations. Each Chinatown could be made diverse by its own special transnational cultural identity. In the process, Chinatowns could be transformed into collaborative public spaces rather than tourist-oriented destinations. People from both local society and those with Chinese backgrounds should be involved in the area. Therefore, a distinctive streetscape is not the aim we would like to achieve, which cannot convey any ethnicity and would even make some groups keep away due to not feeling of a sense of belonging.

In other words, Chinatowns should be considered a microcosm of Chinese culture, rather than expressing identity through repetitive stereotype. Chinatowns should contain multiple aspects like economic activities, ethnic culture and social connections. As an agglomerated area of economic activities, they could also be a collaborative public space to promote peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding among different groups. Visually, as an ethnic neighbourhood under the local context of its physical setting, it would mean less decoration with "Chinese" characteristics

on the streetscape. Chinatowns should not be alien to their surroundings. These material manifestations are a double-edged sword. They could be key elements in shaping the social meaning of an urban environment,<sup>12</sup> but an overemphasis on distinctness would enclose the territory within a strong sense of otherness. Compared to creating a completely mysterious and exotic neighbourhood, it is more valuable to reveal the combination of Chinese culture and domestic identity.

Meanwhile, Chinatowns should work as a platform for cultural exchange to propel the mutual understanding and build up a sense of belonging in the host society for Overseas Chinese. Integration between (and combinations of) local and Chinese characteristics have composed the unique transnational identity of Chinatowns. Therefore, their engagement would provide more transnational experience for tourists and the neighbourhood.

Besides Chinese entrepreneurs and tourists, Overseas Chinese and residents should also be involved in this neighbourhood through diverse activities to engage them and create more ethnic-related experiences. Diverse groups could also have many more opportunities for unintended encounters, which would only increase the sense of place. Within this process, the built environment would provide related physical settings for public activities.

Collaboration from a variety of actors is also required for an integrated transformation process. Taking Chinatown in Amsterdam as an example, the local authority, local developers, existing Chinese shop owners, and the business association behind them would be the primary actors driving this development.

It is understandable that the restructuring idea would have a favourable impact on the city centre of Amsterdam and the quality of its streetscape for local government and developers. They should, however, provide some assistance in maintaining the district's Chinese flavour and bringing back Chinese groups. To improve the creative and innovative concept of Chinatown, they could provide co-working spaces or incubators for Chinese artists and creative professionals; to introduce stores filtered by certain conditions, with diverse offers for targeted business, would be effective; to upgrade a business, they should also think about ways to assist existing shop owners with transformation and re-distribution suggestions. It is critical to provide communal activity space for Overseas Chinese populations in terms of social interaction. Meanwhile, the local government should issue design guidelines to maintain the streetscape's consistency.

Existing enterprises, although appearing vulnerable in comparison to the local government and developers, are the most important actors for intervention and can alter things on their own. They should actively engage in the transformation so as to determine whether their company has a chance of surviving. First and foremost, they should start to modify their store's business positioning and include locals as well as Chinese people as target clients. Simultaneously, they may incorporate an engaging Chinese cultural experience to enliven the concept. Rather than emphasising 'Chineseness' through tangible manifestations, they should establish a transnational streetscape by following recommendations from local authorities and experts. Furthermore, rather than fighting for greater recognition, Chinese business

organizations should adapt their position in this dialogue as well. They should serve as a link between local government and entrepreneurs. Using their connections and business networks, they would be able to identify possible funding opportunities and organize additional public activities to involve various groups. These techniques would not only make Chinatown more appealing, but they would also provide more business opportunities for future expansion. Eventually, residents and Chinese migrants could gradually return to this community and become involved in a variety of activities. Organically, various groups may get to know one another better through participation.

When transforming Chinatowns, it is important to consider the spatial, social, cultural, political, and economic implications. Techniques should be implemented in different ways and with a variety of actors. Because many of the issues that have arisen in Amsterdam's Chinatown are also prevalent in other Chinese communities, some of the suggestions made above could be applied to other Chinese businesses in Chinatowns, and they could even serve as a model for other ethnic enclaves that are considering (or are in need of) renovation.<sup>13</sup>

You Wu, urban designer at PosadMaxwan strategy x design, the Netherlands.  
Email: wuyou0429@outlook.com

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Fig. 5: Impression of ideal Chinatowns (Figure by You Wu, 2020).

# Casablanca-Hanoi: Caroline Grillot and Nelcy Delanoë on intertwined histories and the coincidences that shape research

Paramita Paul

**D**r. Caroline Grillot, a social anthropologist and independent scholar affiliated with the Lyon Institute of East Asian Studies, and Prof. Nelcy Delanoë, an ethnohistorian and formerly professor of American history at the Université Paris Nanterre, are the authors of the book *Casablanca-Hanoi: une porte dérobée sur des histoires postcoloniales* ("Casablanca-Hanoi, an historical side-door onto postcolonial stories"). Published in 2021 by Editions L'Harmattan, with a preface by François Guillemot, *Casablanca-Hanoi* is a story that spans decades and takes place across nations. It traces the history of Moroccan-Vietnamese families in mid 20th-century Vietnam – and their descendants in the 21st century – across the planet. Through these individuals' life trajectories, it is also an exploration of questions of postcolonialism, citizenship, globalization, and Asia-Africa relations. Equally, the book is the story of the process of conducting research itself: of how two researchers meet and connect, and of circumstances and coincidences that shape investigation and inquiry.

Our conversation was originally featured as an episode of *The Channel* podcast. In the following excerpt, Caroline and Nelcy take us back to beginning of their research project, discuss the material remains of a Moroccan-Vietnamese cooperative, and elaborate on mapping and representation.

**Caroline and Nelcy, in 2006 your lives connect when Caroline meets Dung, a woman of Moroccan-Vietnamese descent. Dung is a central figure in your book: she doesn't just act as the catalyst of a series of events, but her persona also represents the complexity of intertwined histories that form the core of your work. Caroline, I am interested in your first meeting with Dung. Can you describe how that meeting took place? What were your first impressions of her?**

Yes of course. I met her in April 2006. At that time, I was conducting research on Vietnamese marriage migrants in China, and I was staying in Hekou, a small Chinese border town, just next to Vietnam. One afternoon I was sitting at a Vietnamese street stall drinking lemon juice when I noticed a Vietnamese woman whose face was quite unusual. She was also looking at me and she asked me where I was from, the usual questions, and when I replied that I was French, she smiled and she said that she was French too. A conversation followed in Chinese, in broken Chinese, and she ended up writing her French name in my notebook. Only it looked like an Arabic name rather than a very classic French one. She then told me that her father had abandoned her when she was young, and that she wished to find him, and that was the starting point of an unexpected new research topic.

**Who is Dung and what questions did she inspire you to pursue?**

Dung and I quickly became friends, because I started to see her on a daily basis, and we became friends very naturally, because of our "French" connection, even though at that time I didn't really know what that meant, but it certainly meant something for her, and she gave me access to her personal life. She described herself as the wife of a Chinese worker, and she was one of those women I was



Fig. 1: Morocco Gate, Hanoi, built between 1956-1964 by a Moroccan-Vietnamese settlement, and inspired by the 1732 Bab Al Mansour Gate in Meknes, Morocco (Photo courtesy of Nelcy Delanoë).

actually looking for in that place, one of those marriage migrants whose life choices I wanted to understand. In fact, she was a poor worker, she was surviving in this place in very poor conditions, without any plans for the future. She was in her thirties, she had a son back in Vietnam, her mother was in Vietnam, and she was alone in this part of China. She slowly told me about her life's trajectory, and I found out that it was full of drama, which [took] her to where she was in the Spring of 2006. It was really out of curiosity for her life that I started to look further into her past, including a search for her father.

**How did you decide to contact Nelcy?**

At first, Dung's identity did not make any sense to me, but I was curious to understand how she could have an Arabic name and who could be her father. I knew she was telling the truth because she looked quite different, so there was something of mixed blood in her. So I simply went to an internet cafe and I googled a few key words, and miraculously the algorithm of Google provided me with the name of Nelcy Delanoë, a French historian who wrote a book that connected Vietnam and North Africa. Since I had no other leads and no access to the book, and I had nothing to lose, I just decided to write to Nelcy and ask for her advice.

**Nelcy, you explained that your specialization is in native American history. Why were you drawn to Dung's story in particular?**

I wasn't exactly drawn to Dung's story in the beginning. I was amazed, and I didn't know exactly what was amazing. I had spent four years documenting and then writing my *Poussières d'Empires* [Presses Universitaires de France, 2002]. When published in France and in Morocco in 2002, the book had created quite a surprise and lots of interest. Why? Because the story of Moroccan soldiers and many others from other origins in the French Indo-Chinese army during the so-called Indo-China War, who had transgressed, deserted, and rallied to the Viet Minh, was unheard of, and I had found it out. Even more intriguing, these men, had eventually been stuck in Vietnam, until 1972, in a prison camp turned into a cooperative, for almost 20 years. Why [had they been] stuck there? The causes are various: the war, the Cold War, the history of Morocco, the history of Vietnam, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the unification of

Vietnam, the American war, the postcolonial world. Eventually I knew I was going to know more about my work.

**After the French retreat from Vietnam in 1954, Moroccan soldiers in the French army who had rallied to the Viet Minh, such as Dung's biological father Houmanne Ben Mohamed, remained in Vietnamese cooperatives, together with their Vietnamese wives. As an art historian with an interest in Visual Culture, I am fascinated by the material remains of these cooperatives, and particularly a monument made by a cattle-raising Moroccan-Vietnamese settlement. I am talking about a gate, inspired by the 1732 Bab Al Mansour Gate in Meknes in Morocco. This gate features on the cover of your book and in your title, and is concrete, tangible evidence of the existence of a Moroccan-Vietnamese community between past and present, between countries, and between lives "here" and "there." Nelcy, can you describe the monument to us and elaborate on when, how and why it was made?**

It was made between 1956-1964 with sand, earth, cement, white paint, and that's it. They had a picture though, to help them. Their commissioner brought them a French dictionary, a Larousse, and there was a picture of the Meknes door. So that helped them with decoration and proportion. He supported their decision to do that because he liked them, he was really a warm guy, but he was very worried about repetitive unruly demonstrations, because by then they still had no inkling of when they would go back. And his superiors were getting very nervous about his incapacity at ruling them. So he gave them his support with material, with this picture, and with encouragement, and they built it. At the same time, they were working on the premises. They had to clear the jungle that had invaded the property that had belonged to a French farmer, who had cows, and they found the cows that were wandering around. They planted vegetables and raised chickens. They became popular because they were producing butter and milk that was sold in Hanoi to the European Red Cross. And the Vietnamese wives who they had married were unusual, because why would you marry a Moroccan guy who in Vietnamese would be called a "black European"? It was not very popular. They were outcasts for one reason or another. With the Moroccans, they had children and founded families.

Now the life they had while doing all this hard work was unusual for these men from the

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countryside, because they were paid for it, and not a bad pay. The families could see doctors if and when necessary, the children went to school, everybody spoke Vietnamese. So gradually everybody, and particularly the men, they were proud of themselves, because of the dignity that they were given, and which they had never experienced before, was such that they were grateful forever. Even when I interviewed them, and despite the fact that they were angry at their "hosts," they still respected the dignity they gave them. As they wanted to go home, but couldn't for reasons incomprehensible to them, and pending that, they insisted they would finish that door, a Moroccan door with three arches. The arch in the middle is taller and larger. The two arches on the side are not as tall and they are sculpted with flowers, leaves, a small crown. [The gate] has strong pillars. In fact, it was very strong because when I found it in 2000, it was still there. It had not been destroyed, and was just looking great, with cobwebs and moss and rain stains, but it just needed polishing and it was just there, gorgeous. According to me, it symbolizes national pride and their declaration of sovereignty as Arabs, as Moroccans, as Muslims, with a king and a country they were going to go back to. For me, 50 years later, it has become a stone archive.

**In addition to the gate, to which we will return once more at the end of our conversation, your book includes two other figures. This is a map of Morocco and a partial map of Vietnam. you have captioned the maps "Map of 'their' Morocco" and "Map of 'their' North Vietnam." Caroline, can you explain the captions? What does "their" mean?**

"Their Morocco" shows the cities or regions where most of them originated from, including the capital and the places that symbolize their country, their kingdom. Not all of them were literate, so they probably didn't know much about their own country, also because they left quite young and they were from rural areas in Morocco, but at least they knew a few places, a few important cities. We didn't want to use a regular map of Morocco or Vietnam because that didn't make sense: you can find that everywhere. We wanted something that shows what Morocco represented to them and what Vietnam represents to them, because also they didn't know the whole country of Vietnam, only the places where they had fought during the war, where they had stayed after the war, the different camps where they had settled, and that was their Vietnam.

This transcript has been heavily edited and abridged. The original interview includes a wealth of further details and discussion. To hear to the full conversation, listen and subscribe to *The Channel* podcast: <https://shows.acast.com/the-channel>

Paramita Paul is Chief Editor of *The Newsletter*.

# Subversive Archaism from Greece to Thailand: A Conversation with Michael Herzfeld

Benjamin Linder

Michael Herzfeld is the Ernest E. Monrad Research Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard University. He also holds academic appointments at Leiden University, Shanghai International Studies University, the University of Rome-Tor Vergata, and the University of Melbourne. Herzfeld has authored numerous books and articles on a wide array of ethnographic, geographical, and theoretical topics. His latest book, *Subversive Archaism*, explores the politics of culture and national heritage through a comparative analysis of two sites: (1) Zoniana in Crete, Greece, and (2) Pom Mahakan in Bangkok, Thailand.

Our conversation was originally featured as an episode of *The Channel* podcast. In the following excerpt, Herzfeld describes subversive archaism and some related concepts to explore their utility for contemporary cultural theory.

The new book is *Subversive Archaism: Troubling Traditionalists and the Politics of National Heritage* (Duke University Press, 2022). You introduce a whole bunch of fertile concepts in the book, but I think it's probably best to start with the titular phrase. What is subversive archaism? How do you define that?

These are communities that, essentially, are saying, "We represent national culture much better than the bureaucrats." Both Greece and Thailand have cultural bureaucracies. They have other kinds of bureaucracies as well, and actually I've made practice of studying bureaucrats as well as other kinds of people. Despite whatever impression may be given, I also have some sympathy for the plight of bureaucrats, especially those who are caught in the lower orders of their systems. But to get back to subversive archaism: these people, for a variety of reasons, have come to conceive of themselves as representing national culture without the apparatus of state. So for them, there is a separation between the state (for which they either have contempt or which they experience as hostile) and the nation (to which they are fiercely loyal). This makes them a real problem for what I now call the "bureaucratic ethno-national state." I prefer that rather cumbersome phrase to "nation-state" because what I think people forget is that the bureaucratization of ethnicity as nationhood is a relatively recent phenomenon, especially its recent enshrinement in the idea of a state structure. The subversive archaists are people who, whether consciously or otherwise, are reacting to that framework. They can manage very well, thank you, without the state. What they have made clear is that they have learned from the state something about the terms in which the nation conceives itself – the language, if you will, of tradition, heritage, and history. They know how to talk about that language and to use it themselves, but they don't accept the authority of the state as defining what those things are. So that's essentially what subversive archaists are. They are looking at archaic models.

One of the things I talk about extensively in the book is something that, until recently anyway, critical heritage studies specialists hadn't really focused on very much, which is the idea of social structure as a kind of heritage. So they are actually opposing to the top-down, bureaucratic structure of the state a different, a more self-organizational form, if you will. In the case of the Cretan village Zoniana, that form is the patrilineal clan. It's one of the very few places left in Greece



Fig. 1: Through a plastic sheet darkly: Practicing tradition while defying the state (Photo courtesy of Michael Herzfeld).

where you'll find such patrilineal clans, and very powerful ones at that. In the case of Pom Mahakan, perhaps a little more indirectly through invocation – I'm never quite sure how aware they are of the historical antecedents in this sense – they are appealing to a pre-state form of social organization also, which in Thai is known as *moeang* and which has a very long and deep and wide history, not just in Thailand itself but in the whole Tai language area.

In the introduction to the book, you write, "Local groups with distinctive cultural styles reveal the liability that the nation-state accepts in deploying the concept of heritage as its conceptual banner. Rebellious citizens can point to historical antecedents in their local cultural heritage that not only are older than the state itself but also represent alternatives to its disciplined modernity." What is the relationship in general terms between these subversive archaists and the bureaucratic ethno-national state, as you termed it?

In a way, the situation is exactly the opposite of what we would normally expect. We've been hoodwinked – let's face it, all of us around the globe – into thinking that the nation-state is the ultimate destination for human social organization. What [subversive archaists] understand very well is that that isn't necessarily the case, and that they can manage quite well without the state in certain respects. This makes their traditionalism even more of a problem for the state because they can fight back at the state, saying, "Why are you bullying us like this? Why are you mistreating us? Why do you regard us as the lowest of the low?"

There's also another built-in paradox here because the state, as Weber presents it, is essentially supposed to be a modern project. And yet it needs that traditionalism, but it needs to be able to control it. These people are saying, "We understand tradition, and we are not constrained by the sort of modernist project that leads you to be such featureless, unsympathetic, and generally unimaginative managers of the nation." It all comes back again to that relationship between the state and the nation. I remember the late Ben Anderson saying at a conference we were both speaking at that the nation and the state were in a rather uneasy relationship. He said that that hyphen [in "nation-state"] represents a rather shaky marriage, but he didn't think that it would collapse and divorce. In a way, I don't think that subversive archaists necessarily want it to collapse and divorce either, but they want a space in which they can be more autonomous than the state is inclined to let them be.

One of the first conversations we ever had here in Leiden was about this term "crypto-colonialism." What is this term, and how does it relate to subversive archaism?

Countries that have been humiliated but not actually militarily invaded are claiming that they never actually were under the colonial yoke. To cut to the chase, for me, crypto-colonialism is a condition in which a country claims to be independent but has had to make sometimes humiliating sacrifices in order to maintain that independence. That relationship can only be maintained if a local establishment is willing, essentially, to provide the sort of governmentality, if you will, that assures the colonial powers that it's not advantageous



Fig. 3: Pom Mahakan: A symbolic funeral for a community about to be destroyed (Photo courtesy of Michael Herzfeld).

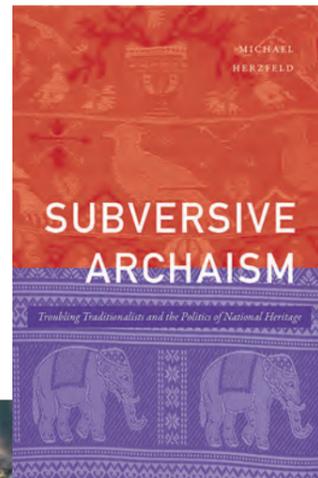


Fig. 2: Cover of *Subversive Archaism* (Duke University Press, 2022).

for them to invade. The diagnostic feature of "crypto-colonialism" is the battle cry, "We were never under colonialism!" I do want to emphasize that I don't develop these terms in order to use them in some kind of dictatorial and absolute way. To me, the question is not, for example, "Is China a crypto-colony or not? Is Greece? Is Thailand?" Those essentialist questions don't get us very far. The question I would like to ask is, "What do we gain by thinking of a country as a crypto-colony?" I think that what we gain is a better appreciation of the extent to which culture can actually be used as a tool. It's not soft power at all. It's a form of structural violence that can sometimes damage a country in very humiliating ways. Here is the other feature that is important. The real post-colonies, the ones that are unambiguously postcolonial – Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, the Congo – have no problem identifying a point of rupture with the colonial past. Now think about Greece and Thailand.

In the book, you're really clear to say that subversive archaism is not exactly left-wing or right-wing in the way that we traditionally think of those terms, and it's also not exactly populism. How would you characterize the politics of subversive archaism and these kinds of appeals to the past?

I don't think that it fits any of those labels. I've also tried to distinguish it from James Holston's "insurgent citizenship" and from "social banditry" in Eric Hobsbawm's language. I think it is a new category. Again, I don't want to be absolutist about this: all of these things shade off into each other in various ways. You can probably find quite fascist versions of subversive archaism, but what strikes me about these two communities is that they are actually inclusive in ways in which the state often is not. So in Zoniana, I didn't see any hostility to migrants. I think they see the right attitude to migrants as being their value of hospitality, on which they place a great deal of emphasis. More impressively, perhaps: in Pom Mahakan, after the tsunami in 2004, the community president made a speech in which she exhorted the residents to raise money with an auction of old clothes. Remember, this is a community of really poor people now being asked to raise money. But [the president] said, "We are in a community of suffering. That's what we have in common. So we shouldn't be looking at whether these people are Thai or foreign. We shouldn't be looking at whether they're Buddhist or Muslim or Christian. We share with them the experience of suffering." That's one reason why I would certainly distinguish subversive archaism, as I've encountered it, from right-wing populism.

Again, to be very clear, these are categories for use, not for imposition. I think it's useful to talk about subversive archaism because what it points out is a paradox: that, sometimes, people can play the state at its own game and especially use the state's own language of culture to push back at the state. That's really what this is about in both cases.

This transcript has been heavily edited and abridged. The original interview includes a wealth of further details and discussion. To hear to the full conversation, listen and subscribe to *The Channel* podcast: <https://shows.acast.com/the-channel>

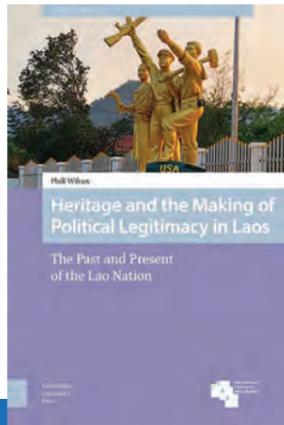
Benjamin Linder is Assistant Editor of *The Newsletter*.

# Meet the author

For IIAS Publications, we invite authors who have recently published in the IIAS Publications Series to talk about their writing experiences. What inspired them to conduct research? What did they encounter in the field? What are the stories behind their book? For more information on IIAS books, please visit [www.iias.asia/books](http://www.iias.asia/books)

## Laos: The Long View

Phill Wilcox



The Lao People's Democratic Republic celebrated its 46th birthday on 2 December 2021. The political system in Laos is now comfortably middle-aged. I first went to Laos in 2002, as a much younger person and at a time when the Lao political system was a youngish 27 years old. Much has changed, and stayed the same, in the last two decades.

Taking a long view of Laos encourages me to think about Laos as I first encountered it. Of course, I was aware of its former royalist administration and the events that led to the founding of the country as a one-party socialist state in 1975. My mother had been assigned to Laos in the early 1970s as a British Council worker, leaving shortly before the revolution. When I first encountered Laos myself in 2002, I wondered how the Lao people understood and perceived their political system. What is it like to live under such a system in the contemporary world? I was also struck by the question of why the one-party system had endured in Laos, when similar regimes had fallen all over the world with the dissolution of the USSR. When we talk of political transition, we talk of transition to what exactly, and is this always an inevitable, linear process ending with some sort of capitalist democracy? These questions are the backbone of the research that has taken me to Laos again and again.

After that first visit, I returned to the UK, graduated, and settled into a job in refugee law. I never advised anyone from Laos, but I encountered many from similar political systems. Over the following decade, the political climate towards legal advice and refugees hardened, and I began to consider other possibilities. As my interest in Laos had never gone away, I had started to travel to Laos most years from about 2007 onwards. I decided to convert this interest in Laos into actual research, registering for a Master's degree and, later, a PhD with a very supportive and encouraging supervisor. My entry point into research was one of finding a location and research theme and then applying for formal academic study, rather than the other way around. Along the PhD journey, I was also very fortunate to have the opportunity to study Lao at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at the University of Wisconsin in the summer of 2014. By this point, I realised that a considerable number of people believed in me and my research trajectory, and I returned to Laos for my PhD fieldwork in 2015.

I spent over a year in and around Luang Prabang, the former royal capital, the largest city in Northern Laos, and the cultural centre of the country. This time coincided with the 40th birthday of the current political system, and 25 years of Luang Prabang as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I learned a considerable amount about my topic and wrote in my thesis, and latterly in my book, about how selective representations of the past feed into narratives of the national story of contemporary Laos. Overwhelmingly, I met many people for whom the revolution was an event that happened several generations before them. While many know that their political system is different from that of, say, Thailand, it has delivered

### Heritage and the Making of Political Legitimacy in Laos: The Past and Present of the Lao Nation

Phill Wilcox, 2021  
ISBN 978 94 6372 7020 | 190 pages  
IIAS Asian Heritages Publication Series  
[www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463727020/heritage-and-the-making-of-political-legitimacy-in-laos](http://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463727020/heritage-and-the-making-of-political-legitimacy-in-laos)

stability in a very poor country. Many people expressed a need for better infrastructure and development in Laos, but nobody told me that political reform was a prerequisite to achieving that. I also learned to take what the Lao state says about itself seriously. Outsiders may well conclude that it is neither socialist nor a democracy, but in official terms, socialism remains part of everyday discourse and a destination the country will arrive at one day. This explains why the term "post-socialism" is unhelpful in Laos. Similarly, the Lao political establishment claims to be the legitimate representatives of the Lao population, even though the country is a one-party state.

I wanted to understand more about what it is to be a citizen of the contemporary state of Laos, and how different people are included, or alienated, from the political establishment in its different forms. To put this in a slightly different way, I wondered how, where, and why different people encountered the state and vice versa. As it happened, many of my

friends and associates in Laos are Hmong, one of the country's largest ethnic minorities. The Hmong make up around 10% of the overall Lao population and face discrimination at all levels of Lao society, largely on the basis of widespread Hmong opposition to the establishment of socialism in 1975. The effects of this have very real consequences in contemporary Laos. I witnessed this myself shortly after commencing my PhD fieldwork when a young Hmong friend and I were stopped by the police and fined for a minor infraction while travelling on his motorbike near his village. Later, I asked my friend why he felt that we had been stopped when other vehicles were allowed to pass without any problem. He responded that he knew that he had been stopped because he is Hmong.

But while patterns of discrimination repeat themselves, I also became aware that such young people were forging new futures in a changing Laos. Many still learn English, but an increasing number also study Mandarin and regard China as a place of opportunity, where one can study at university and later gain a well-paid job with one of the growing number of Chinese companies in Laos. One young person even went as far as to explain this to me in overtly colonial terms: he was learning Mandarin for the same reason older generations of his family had learned French. Initially, I viewed the growing amount I heard about China as something interesting, but unrelated to my research. Such a position did not last and now seems embarrassingly naive. I began to understand that if China was key to how my Lao friends and associates understand and locate themselves in contemporary Laos, then it should be important to me, too.

I took this change of direction head-on and began to think about China not as a peripheral interest, but something much more significant. I devote a chapter of my monograph to it and am now researching perceptions of China in Laos specifically. Back in 2002, I travelled from Vientiane across the Chinese border, a bone-shaking journey that took several days on multiple buses. Coincidentally, this was a border about which I would later spend much time thinking. I also repeated this journey in the other direction in late 2017, having travelled to visit a group of Lao students at university in a minor city north of Shanghai. Fifteen years after my original encounter with the Laos-

Chinese border, transport possibilities had much improved and will become quicker still with the opening of the Laos-China high-speed railway line in December 2021. Once the border reopens, this new infrastructural project will cut the travel time down from days to mere hours. Here, I can see the concern about improved access to Laos from China as a tangible reality. I am also struck by how my Lao friends regard China as a contradictory force, representing both opportunity and anxiety simultaneously.

Much has changed in Laos in the 20 years since I first encountered it, and one advantage of having thought about Laos for nearly two decades is the ability to do what Jonsson aptly termed slow anthropology.<sup>1</sup> I very much appreciate the long view, the context, the getting to know Laos in different ways over many years, even before I formally started to be there as a researcher. Equally, there is no "before" and "now" as fixed points in time: Laos was in a state of change in 2002, much as it is now. Some of these changes, most notably the rising visibility of China in Laos, have happened rapidly in the last decade. Other changes are longer and slower in the making. For me, the most interesting thing is that the authoritarian system endures. It shows no sign of disappearing anytime soon, and it shows remarkable ability to change shape. From leading economic changes in Laos in the mid-1980s to reinventing itself as the legitimate guardian of Lao culture and society in the early 1990s, the system has managed to embed itself and remain relevant to the lives of much of the population. If anything, it may be in the process of changing shape again, as Chinese influence embeds itself in the literal and metaphorical landscapes of Laos.

I am delighted to have published my monograph on Laos, which represents the culmination of this part of my long interest in the country. At the same time, I also believe that I have many more questions than answers. My interest in the Lao political establishment and, more importantly, how it is understood and interacted with, remains. It is also the foundation for all the work I have done (and continue to do) since. My book concludes with a suggestion that the rising influence of China in Laos may prove the ultimate test of Lao authorities.

Dr Phill Wilcox, Faculty of Sociology,  
Bielefeld University.  
E-mail: [phill.wilcox@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:phill.wilcox@uni-bielefeld.de)

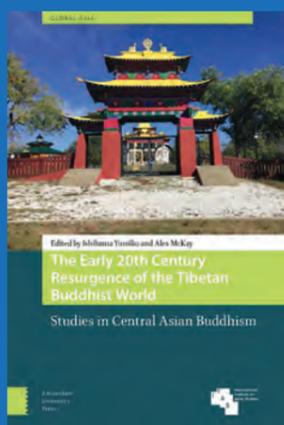
#### IIAS Book Talk

Phill Wilcox will give an online IIAS Book Talk on 7 April 2022, at 14:30 (CET). For more information, please visit [www.iias.asia/events/heritage-and-making-political-legitimacy-laos](http://www.iias.asia/events/heritage-and-making-political-legitimacy-laos)

#### Notes

- 1 Jonsson, Hjørleifur. 2014. *Slow Anthropology: Negotiating Difference with the Lu Mien*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications.

## Latest Publication



### The Early 20th Century Resurgence of the Tibetan Buddhist World: Studies in Central Asian Buddhism

Ishihama Yumiko and Alex McKay (eds.), 2022  
ISBN 978 94 6372 8645 | 264 pages  
IIAS Global Asia Publication Series  
[www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463728645/the-early-20th-century-resurgence-of-the-tibetan-buddhist-world](http://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463728645/the-early-20th-century-resurgence-of-the-tibetan-buddhist-world)

The *Early 20th Century Resurgence of the Tibetan Buddhist World* is a cohesive collection of studies by Japanese, Russian and Central Asian scholars deploying previously unexplored Russian, Mongolian, and Tibetan sources concerning events and processes in the Central Asian Buddhist world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Set in the final days of the Qing Empire when Russian and British empires were expanding into Central Asia, this work examines the interplay of religious,

economic and political power among peoples who acknowledged the religious authority of Tibet's Dalai Lama. It focuses on diplomatic initiatives involving the 13th Dalai Lama (and other Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs) during and after his exile in Mongolia and China, as well as his relations with Mongols, and with Buryat, Kalmyk, and other Russian Buddhists. It demonstrates how these factors shaped historical processes in the region, not least the reformulations of both group identity and political consciousness.

Professor Ishihama Yumiko is a tenured faculty member of the School of Education, Waseda University, Japan, and the author of a number of English and Japanese language articles in the field of Tibetan and Central Asian history.

Alex McKay is a retired lecturer and research fellow at the SOAS (University of London), UCL, and the IIAS (Leiden). He is the author of four monographs and 45 articles on Indo-Tibetan history, and editor/co-editor of five collected works.

## Cultural Precarities: Reading Independent Art Collectives and Cultural Networks in Asia

Venka Purushothaman



Above: film still from *The Smoke Rides on the Wind*, a film made for the ISGS by Erin Wilkerson. Looking from the west coast of Singapore, to the refineries on Jurong Pulau.

‘Cultural Precarities 2021’ was an In Situ Graduate School (ISGS) exploring art collectives and cultural networks in Asia. Originally conceived as a weeklong on-site study in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2020, it had to pivot to an online programme spread over ten months. This piece reflects on the issues and the pivot in these pandemic times.

*Cultural Precarities: Reading Independent Art Collectives and Cultural Networks in Asia* was an In Situ Graduate School (ISGS) held online in 2021. Organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS, Leiden), LASALLE College of the Arts (Singapore), and KUNCI: Forum & Collective (Yogyakarta), this ISGS aimed to study the increasingly vibrant cultural networks and artist collectives in Asia, which are becoming vital nodal points for cultural, social, creative, and political intersections in contemporary societies.

This particular ISGS invited artists, scholars, researchers, and PhD candidates interested in collective practices and emerging trends in Asia to deliberate on the various intersections of artistic practice and networks and foster dialogue on the emergence of independent cultural networks in Asia. It convened a team from Asia to consider emerging practices of collectives. The convenors were Dr Venka Purushothaman, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore (art writer and educator); Dr Dev Nath Pathak, South Asian University, India (cultural sociologist); Chen Yun, West Harvests, China (curator and researcher); and KUNCI, a Yogyakarta-based collective and its member Syafiatudina (writer and curator).

The convenors, in turn, curated a team of international speakers comprising artists, researchers, and collective members representing a poly-dimension of disciplines and sectorial practices to inject new approaches to study and unpack core questions around art collectives and networks. They include Chun-Fung Lee, a Hong Kong-based artist and co-founder of Woofers Ten; Jagath Weerasinghe, Sri Lanka-based artist-archaeologist and member of Theertha Artists Collective; Sadya Mizan, an independent curator/researcher and founder of URONTO Artists Community in Bangladesh; and Urich Lau, a Singapore-based media artist and member of The Artist Village (Singapore).

Seventeen participants from around the world were shortlisted through an open call. They represented a broad range of artistic (film, theatre, music, writing, media) and academic disciplines, cultures and nationalities, and scholarly and creative interests. Importantly, participants’ interests traversed national boundaries, and many were located outside of their homes while others interweaved interdisciplinary interests within their own countries. This became an essential feature of this ISGS, as the participants brought concerns around migration, diaspora, trafficking, artistic expressions, networked geographies, and more to the topic.

### Collectivism in Asia

Cultural networks and artist collectives symbiotically meet and inform each other. Networks in Asia, in particular, are a composite of artist collectives, local/national institutional/inter-governmental agencies and foreign agency-led initiatives. Networks such as the Mekong Cultural Hub (Taipei); Asia-Pacific Network for Culture, Education and Research (Singapore); KUNCI Study Forum and Collective (Yogyakarta); Tokyo Performing Arts Meeting (Tokyo), to name a few, develop an inclusive approach between artists and their immediate communities. Moreover, artist collectives such as Taring Padi (Indonesia), URONTO (Dhaka), Vertical Submarine (Singapore) and Jiandyin (Thailand), among others, function as cultural intermediaries. They engage with communities and governments to consider cultural imperatives in economic and social development and foster artist mobility across other networks and collectives.

Growth in collectives and networks in Asia has been rapid. Imbuing an improvisational antic in addressing localised concerns, they have become critical spaces for mobilising contemporary and emerging ideas. In this regard, a set of questions informed the ISGS. These questions, outlined in the IIAS call for participation, invited a critical appreciation of the ‘flow’ between and within collectives and networks, their short-lived, ‘precarious’ character, and above all, their situatedness within communities and what this meant to their immediate lived experiences.

### In Situ

The ISGS was programmed around three pillars in Yogyakarta, Indonesia – a centre of Indonesian arts and culture.

The first pillar was an incisive study of KUNCI: Forum and Collective, based in Yogyakarta. Founded in 1999, KUNCI seeks to transverse boundaries in institutionalised systems and practices and re-articulate them through forums, studies, publications and projects. More than an organisation, it is built around organic social practices such as friendship and fellowship, allowing it to eschew hierarchical decision making to celebrate ground-up agenda-setting exercises. At KUNCI, one would find precarity in its lived form as a method of organisation: it empowers members to opt in and out of its system and propose issues to be deliberated, piloted and simply stood down. The ISGS programme called for participants to experience collectivism, improvised around informal social, conversational and walking practices.

The second pillar, a roundtable, enquired if independent art collectives offer an alternative framework for social, economic, and political engagement and could be considered substitutes or parallel systems to formalised institutional systems such as museums, universities, or corporate-funded programmes, or as complementary partners. The roundtable, comprising Chun-Fung Lee, Jagath Weerasinghe, Sadya Mizan, and Urich

Lau, provided insights about how cultural networks and artist collectives continue to negotiate cultural and historical preservation in tandem with contemporary aspirations. Rapid digitalisation, in particular, has enabled highly localised engagement, which is global in perspective yet rooted in real daily concerns such as sustainability of livelihood, complex inter-agency negotiations, and providing a voice to disenfranchised peoples and ideas. Furthermore, the emergence of a young demographic (averaging ages between 25-35 years in many parts of Asia) into the arts and cultural space has resulted in an inclusionary, and increasingly inseparable, agenda, spanning across art, aesthetics, environmental concerns, and social and political issues. This points to a larger question of whether emerging networks contribute to cultural labour’s precarity or reflect an aspiration to unmoor from neoliberal and often authoritarian social contexts. The ISGS participants worked in groups to think through some of these concerns through their own artistic and research practices. This informs the third pillar of this ISGS – participatory engagement.

Participants were organised into three groups mentored by one convenor to study a set of questions that emerged from the first two pillars. Each group was organised to include multiple disciplines and nationalities, encouraging a multi-disciplinary approach to constructing their responses. Participants were requested to be self-directed and develop a range of outcomes to their self-selected questions. In a manner, the groups loosely mirrored an imaginary first meeting to form a collective – developing their purpose, formulating core questions, identifying engagement, and creating points of view.

### Ex Situ

The ISGS, which was to be held in Yogyakarta in March 2020, was postponed to March 2021 due to the emergence of COVID-19 and its impact on travel. By late 2020, it became clear that COVID-19 was unrelenting, and the ISGS had to pivot to online delivery in 2021 as the hope of meeting in an embodied learning environment as a collective of independent artists, researchers, scholars, and cultural workers was fast evaporating. Several discussions between the organisers and convenors led to formulating the in situ experience into ex situ.

The primary intent of the three pillars remained and was transmitted through an online platform (ZOOM) over four half-day sessions (two in March, one in September, and a closing meeting in December) spread over ten months. Participants held their self-organised project meetings in between these sessions with gentle prompts from mentors to come together and deliberate: The home became the in situ site of curating ideas across borders.

If collectivism is defined by a loose gathering ideated by core interests, the participants’ groups became a collective

expression borne out of a crisis (pandemic). All of the sessions were spontaneously prefaced with a communal sharing of existential ‘presence’ – in the absence of in situ – such as emerging social rituals (masking, vaccination, lockdowns), changes in time and travel patterns (quarantines and availability of flights), and duty of care (self/well-being, empathy and care for others, and dealing with loss and separation).

Group sharing revealed several matters. First, the ability to manage oneself. One’s immediate families and communities and research as distinct socio-cultural ambits blurred and began to inform each other as the emotional weight of the global pandemic weighed in. Participants and convenors alike began to deeply reflect (something which may not have been possible in a one-week in situ session) on metaphysical questions related to collectivism and its effectiveness as the Anthropocene loomed larger than anticipated in many Asian countries. The global concern was no longer a domestic concern but a personal concern. The March sessions were about framing and contextualising the enquiry. The September session was a place of metaphors as online fatigue and personal challenges invaded the research space. The December session flourished opportunities and new beginnings for understanding the precarious nature of networks and collectives.

### New Beginnings

Ex situ, the ISGS found itself in a different place from where it started. The three groups’ final presentations in December 2021 discussed the collectivism essaying into the personal, the existential, and the world to be. The participants presented a new way of envisioning collectivism through a rich palimpsest of storytelling, podcast conversations, interviews, moving images, and performances. A selection of the presented work is available at [www.iias.asia/masterclasses/cultural-precarieties](http://www.iias.asia/masterclasses/cultural-precarieties).

Three outcomes were visible. First, collectivism embodies care. The well-being of individuals and their ideas and beliefs matter, and this is integral to understanding why collectives emerge. They care for people. Secondly, collectivism embodies togetherness. The pandemic disembodied the human ability to be social creatures, to be together. In some ways, the disembodiment may have led to the increased lack of tolerance and indifference towards people and their right of expression, as seen through the heightened nationalisms around the world. Thirdly, the ex situ provided numerous new opportunities to participants to improvise outreach amongst and beyond themselves within a short span of time. Participants have planned to continue relating to each other and build new initiatives and projects.

The ISGS successfully concluded in December. Its pivot during the pandemic, while complex and challenging, has led to new opportunities for convenors and participants to redefine artist collectives and networks in Asia. Importantly, the ISGS infused a new way of thinking about collectivism in a post-pandemic world alongside myriad urgent concerns emerging in Asia: rapid urbanisation and digitalisation, shifting geo-political and domestic priorities, climate shifts and changing demographics. Amidst this, the aspirations of artists, cultural workers, and researchers continue to hold vigil to new paradigms for socio-cultural engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Venka Purushothaman is deputy president and provost at LASALLE College of the Arts (Singapore). He is the founder of the Asia Pacific Network of Culture, Education and Research (ANCER) based out of Singapore. Email: [venka.p@lasalle.edu.sg](mailto:venka.p@lasalle.edu.sg)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I thank all participants for braving the journey. This ISGS would not be possible without the support of Dr Philippe Peycam (IIAS), Dr Dev Nath Pathak, Ms Chen Yun, KUNCI and Ms Syafiatudina, Dr Mitha Budhyarto (LASALLE) and Mrs Martina van den Haak (IIAS). This essay is written with inputs from my co-convenors.

## Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals (GRIP-ARM)

The International Institute for Asian Studies facilitates several research-based activities around the Chinese BRI/China's global influence. A new addition in this area is 'Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals (GRIP-ARM) – A trans-regional comparison of growth strategies in rare earth mining'.

The GRIP-ARM programme is Led by Dr Jewellord Nem Singh from the Institute of Social Studies at Erasmus University (Netherlands) and Associate Research Fellow at IIAS. This ERC-funded five-year project seeks to address three intricately connected questions:

(1) How do state capacity, business power and organizational structure of domestic markets shape the design of industrial policies in resource-rich countries?

(2) What explains the success of some countries in generating linkages between resource extraction and manufacturing, and what accounts for their failure?

(3) How effective are the responses of importing countries and their manufacturing industries in securing a stable supply while reducing the socio-environmental costs of extraction?

The new global political economy is increasingly defined by 'critical raw materials' – of which rare earths elements (or 'rare earths') are the most significant. The GRIP-ARM study examines the globalized supply and demand for rare earths – from mining, processing, manufacturing, use and recycling – to have a closer scrutiny of mining both as a strategy for industrialization and as an integral part of contemporary efforts towards a sustainable supply of raw materials. GRIP-ARM interrogates the dynamics in rare earth mining that might lend this particular resource a tool for economic development.

This is one of the first systematic, comparative study on rare earths mining and economic development, which brings political science perspectives in conversation with natural resource geography and international political economy. Using a trans-regional comparison of China, Brazil and Kazakhstan, the GRIP-ARM project will span across five years, starting from 2021.

### Relevance

Two important trends underline the urgency of this research. Firstly, low and middle-income countries joining the race for industrialization are increasing demands for high-tech goods ranging from computers, mobile phones, and flat screens, as well as for low-carbon consumer products, such as energy-efficient cars, solar panels, wind turbines, and even lights – all of which constitute further pressures to accelerate the pace and breadth of natural resource exploitation. Secondly, growing demands for rare earths are currently suffering from a supply constraint given that China – the dominant market player in rare earths mining – has begun to impose export restrictions and reorient its mining policy to support domestic industrialization. The impending resource crunch

creates incentives for mineral states to gain strategic and economic advantage.

GRIP-ARM's agenda is especially salient as several rare earth projects are being developed in Latin America, Africa and Asia to create an alternative supply chain outside China. By building an interdisciplinary scholarship on rare earths-based growth strategies, GRIP-ARM contributes to scholarship on innovations in non-traditional manufacturing sectors as key to long-run economic development (Nem Singh & Chen 2018; Ovadia & Wolf 2018; Peres 2013).

Furthermore, GRIP-ARM aims to influence debates on international development by targeting knowledge exchange activities towards key decision-makers involved in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) No. 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and No. 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). The project likewise builds on the expertise of an International Advisory Board consisting of international policy practitioners and senior experts in the fields of political economy and development studies.

Another crucial element of the project is that it will create valuable knowledge for the Global Rare Earths Industry Association, which provides inputs on global efforts to create a secured, greener supply of critical raw materials. The study will add to knowledge on how developing countries can seek to build industrial capacity to extract in less environmentally destructive ways. In these ways, the research contributes to the urgent call of designing growth strategies compatible with ecological sustainability.

### Objectives and outputs

The study has three primary objectives: (1) To empirically document how mineral states design industrial policies that have the potential to link extraction and manufacturing sectors of the economy. It will also explore why similar policies yield varying outcomes; (2) To identify the political factors that successfully built linkages between sectors of the economy, spur technological innovation, and maximize benefits from extractive industries; (3) To analyse new initiatives of rare earth importers in the EU and Japan. The project will provide insights on how importing countries and their manufacturing firms have promoted ways to address long-term supply vulnerability and sustainability of resource use.

The project will produce a number of academic outputs including a monograph on 'Transforming Rare Earths for Industrial Development', articles authored by the project leader, articles co-authored with the PhD researchers (on Brazil and Kazakhstan) and articles co-authored with the post-doc (on China's Rare Earths policy, industrial policy and building innovation and linkages through china's mining sector).

For more information, please contact the project leader, **Dr Jojo Nem Singh**  
Email: [nemsingh@iss.nl](mailto:nemsingh@iss.nl)  
[www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm](http://www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm)

## Paul van der Velde and IIAS

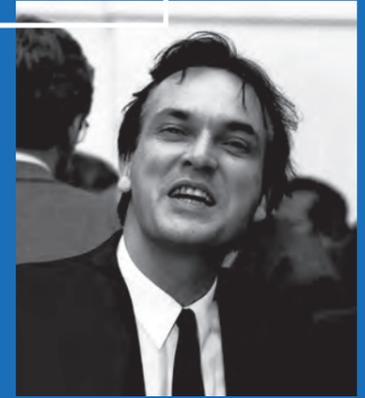
Philippe Peycam

For many of us, it is difficult to imagine IIAS without Paul van der Velde. Still, from November 2021, due to his retirement, he is no longer officially an institute staff member. Luckily, Paul will continue to be associated with IIAS as an affiliated researcher, and we will continue to see him and enjoy his perennial upbeat spirit.

I would like to take this opportunity to pause for a minute and reflect on Paul's achievements and contributions to IIAS. His name has been closely connected with the institute's development from its very inception. Many initiatives for which IIAS is known were either pioneered by Paul or have his unique imprint on them. Off the top of my head, I can think of *The Newsletter*, IIAS's book series, and of course, the International Convention for Asia Scholars (ICAS). Whether factually his 'baby' or not, ICAS conferences as they have developed since the first event in Leiden in 1998 to the recent online one in Kyoto would not have taken place if they hadn't been formulated in Paul's creative mind. In every ICAS event, a sheer number of innovations – from the book talks to the multi-lingual book prizes – bear Paul's signature.

The story of Paul van der Velde at IIAS is one of a relentless churning of ideas, some brilliant, some, perhaps, less so. His involvement guaranteed that every year, every event would be different from the previous one. Along with this whirlpool of ideas are the hundreds of individuals who benefited from his assistance, notably in publishing their book or article or in another capacity. Paul's love for published works and his curiosity for new written materials are boundless.

Having worked with him for more than a decade, I have learned to value his contagious enthusiasm and willingness to always try something new. Some images are now burned in my memory, such as the epic Indian Ocean Studies roundtable



Paul van der Velde, 1997, Opening of the International Institute for Asian Studies

in the crumbling foyer of the Africa House building in Zanzibar in 2018 and the much larger Africa-Asia conference in Dar es Salaam one week later. In the same year, there was also an exciting short visit to Moscow where we caught a glimpse of the remains of the cold-war era as we tried to garner support among our Russian colleagues so they would overcome their initial suspicions before participating in ICAS 11 in Leiden. No less exciting were our jaunts together in the vibrant madness of Rio de Janeiro to work with our Latin American colleagues in outlining plans for a new Latin America-Asia collaborative platform.

Outside of IIAS, in 2016, he was awarded Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau, amongst others, for his involvement as editor-in-chief of *Zeeuws Tijdschrift*, a magazine dedicated to the history of his dear region of Zeeland; we affectionately call him "Sir Paul."

IIAS has greatly benefitted from Paul's unique style of engagement, and equally, IIAS, for Paul, has been a space where he could realise his dreams and wishes in the way he imagined them. I don't think he would have been able to work as happily elsewhere, which is a testimony to the Institute's capacity to let its members flourish to full potential. On behalf of all my colleagues, I want to thank Paul for all that he has done and for his positive influence on the culture of IIAS. I am glad to know that he will continue to inspire us in his new role.

## The challenges of energy transition: Comparing China's Belt and Road Initiative and the European Union

On 9 March 2022, 14 researchers from China and Europe will convene to discuss their individual research projects in the context of the joint research programme between IIAS-EPA and CASS-IWEP, titled, 'Geopolitical Economy of the Belt and Road Initiative and its Reflections'. The aim is to

publish the papers presented at this fourth research-oriented meeting in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal and later as a book (2023).

[www.iias.asia/events/challenges-energy-transition-BRI-EU](http://www.iias.asia/events/challenges-energy-transition-BRI-EU)

## IIAS Webinar Series

We organise webinars on a variety of Asia-related topics, held by IIAS fellows and other speakers. All webinars are announced on our website at [www.iias.asia/events](http://www.iias.asia/events).

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

subsequently contact you with further information on how to participate. Our previous webinars can be viewed on our YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/asianstudies](http://www.youtube.com/asianstudies).

The following speakers have been confirmed for the coming period, and we will be adding new lectures to the list as time goes on.



9 March 2022

Webinar

*Two container ports in the Indian Ocean (1989-Present). A window into India's model of development*

Speaker:  
Richard T. Griffiths



11 March 2022

Webinar

*An enquiry into the causes of the vanishing Anjana River in West Bengal, India*

Speaker:  
Sankha Subhra Nath



7 April 2022

Webinar  
IIAS Book Talk Series

*Heritage and the Making of Political Legitimacy in Laos*

Speaker:  
Phill Wilcox (author)

# 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](http://www.iias.asia/fellows)



### Hannah Klepeis

IIAS Research Clusters: Asian Cities, Global Asia  
1 October – 31 July 2022

[www.iias.asia/profile/hannah-rosa-klepeis](http://www.iias.asia/profile/hannah-rosa-klepeis)

My time at the IIAS allows me to think more deeply about parts of my research that I had to sideline during the writing of my dissertation, such as the social, spatial and economic consequences of urbanisation in China's western regions, local governance, and the role of trans-local connectivities with the Tibetan diaspora in shaping people's social worlds and informing discourses and processes of identity-making.

The research fellowship has so far been inspiring, allowing for a form of productivity that is hard to measure quantitatively but which has allowed me to think in new directions more freely and openly. It is an invaluable experience for a young academic. It's great to forge connections with scholars from different fields and career stages. I hope to be able to engage with scholars at Dutch universities and the various research initiatives and networks in the region during the remaining months of my stay.

The past two years have brought fresh challenges for us as anthropologists, especially with regard to conducting ethnographic fieldwork in China. I am currently outlining a new research project that explores China's social transformations from a global perspective by examining Chinese migration to Europe and related practices of financialisation and citizenship on Europe's margins.

The perspectives and insights of the community at IIAS have been very helpful in framing my present and future research and in stimulating and furthering my curiosity in innumerable topics across Asia. The Institute has also brought friendship and comradeship. I will never forget Christmas. With several IIAS fellows stranded in the same house, we pulled together and created a wonderful potluck dinner; on New Year's Eve, we danced the Viennese Waltz after having grilled Bengali paneer, Assamese meats, and Yunnanese shaokao!

### (Re)imagining social transformations in and beyond China

The purpose of my research fellowship at IIAS is to turn my doctoral thesis into a book manuscript. In spite of the restrictions in place since my arrival (most of my time in Leiden has been spent in lockdown or quarantine!), I have managed to spend a lot of time in a very different world, returning to my field site in my thoughts.

My doctoral research is based on long-term fieldwork conducted in Gyelthang, a multiethnic borderland region in southwest China that was officially renamed Shangri-La 20 years ago to further ethnic tourism. Focusing upon its Tibetan Buddhist monastery Ganden Sumtseling, I explore the implications of state-led development and religious policy on the relations that exist between laypeople and monastics and how they inform notions of Tibetan identity and moral personhood.



### Trude Renwick

IIAS Research Clusters: Asian Cities, Global Asia  
12 March – 12 May 2022

Home Institute: The University of Hong Kong  
[www.iias.asia/profile/trude-renwick](http://www.iias.asia/profile/trude-renwick)

vending that deemed migrant street vendors as "greedy" and "bad," the rebranding of Bangkok's luxury malls as "villages" protected by local Brahmin shrines, and the renovation of shophouses into art spaces and bars themed around local Buddhist relics reveal how spirituality fuels debates surrounding the development of the commercial landscape. I am grateful to have the resources and stimulating academic environment in Leiden to further develop this work.

In addition to developing the above book proposal and manuscript, at IIAS, I will perform preliminary archival research for my next project, *Peripheries Mobilized*. This research examines the impact of the Chinese-sponsored Pan Asia Railway on conceptions of periphery and frontier in Thai and Lao cities along its central route. Beginning with the case of Khon Kaen, I will look at how, as key nodes along this new railway network, previously "peripheral" urban outposts of these nation-states have become the central foci for the Thai and Lao governments, as well as the private sector. State-led investments

in the creative industries in urban agricultural centers like Khon Kaen have paved the way for an influx of "creatives," who are reversing the traditional movement of labor out of this city as they reshape its image. I am therefore especially interested in exploring early images, writings, and drawings of creatives and officials in this region beginning in the mid-19th century.

The large community of scholars at IIAS doing work on urban studies in Asia and the BRI drew me to Leiden. As a result, I have confidence that my time spent here will foster collaborations with scholars engaged in the Asian Cities and Global Asia clusters and push my research in new and unexpected directions.

I am especially excited at the opportunity to spend time exploring Leiden with my partner Felice and our dog Roo Paw, who will be joining me for the duration of my stay. We look forward to ambling about nearby cities, visiting my grandmother's hometown just outside of Dusseldorf, and, as an avid sailor, I hope to find myself on a sailboat at some point during our stay in the Netherlands.

### Examining spaces of commerce, infrastructure and spiritual practice in Thailand and the world

I am thrilled to begin my research period in Leiden this March. My work examines the intersection of commercial, infrastructural, and spiritual space in Thailand. While in The Netherlands, I look forward to investigating these topics through archival research,

spending time in the IIAS office and university libraries, and engaging with other scholars based in the region.

My book manuscript, *Eat Pray Shop*, unpacks who has the right to engage in commerce and shape the commercial landscape. This ethnography examines the uneasy symbiosis of commercial and spiritual space in Bangkok and contributes to a growing body of scholarship on globalization, inequality, and urban beautification in Asia. Cases like the 2016 restrictions on street

## IIAS Fellowship Possibilities and Requirements



### Apply for an IIAS fellowship

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for an IIAS fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.



### Combine your IIAS fellowship with two extra months of research in Paris

When applying for an IIAS Fellowship, you have the option of simultaneously submitting an application for an additional two months of research at the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (FMSH), in Paris, France, immediately after your stay in Leiden.



### Apply for a Gonda fellowship

For promising young Indologists at the post-doctorate level it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS.



Information and application forms: [www.iias.asia/fellowships](http://www.iias.asia/fellowships)

# 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](http://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-regional 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).

### (Hybrid) Conference

'Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West', Leiden/online, 25-26 April 2022.

[www.iias.asia/events/care-self-iii](http://www.iias.asia/events/care-self-iii)

[www.ukna.asia](http://www.ukna.asia)

Coordinator: **Paul Rabé**

[p.e.rabe@iias.nl](mailto:p.e.rabe@iias.nl)

Clusters: **Asian Cities; Asian Heritages**



## Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

SEANNET is a community of scholars and practitioners with an interest in cities in Southeast Asia through the prism of the neighborhood. Supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, NY (2017-2021), case studies are carried out in six selected cities in Southeast Asia (Mandalay, Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Surabaya). In the second phase (2022-2027, also supported by the Henry Luce Foundation), SEANNET will be led by Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), and the number of case studies and activities will be

expanded. SEANNET seeks to engage the humanistic social sciences in a dialogue with urban stake-holders 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.

[www.ukna.asia/seannet](http://www.ukna.asia/seannet)

Coordinators: **Paul Rabé** [p.e.rabe@iias.nl](mailto:p.e.rabe@iias.nl) and **Rita Padawangi** Singapore University of Social Sciences [ritapadawangi@suss.edu.sg](mailto:ritapadawangi@suss.edu.sg)  
Cluster: **Asian Cities**



## Dual 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](http://www.iias.asia/programmes/critical-heritage-studies)

Coordinator: **Elena Paskaleva**  
[e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Cluster: **Asian Heritages**





## Humanities Across Borders

**H**umanities Across Borders' (HAB) is an educational cooperation programme, co-funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York, that aims to create shared, humanities-grounded, interdisciplinary curricula and context-sensitive learning methodologies at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

Twenty universities in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas contribute time and resources to this unique and innovative venture. The HAB partners are now in the process of signing a joint agreement that will bring them together in a vibrant international consortium, committed to building new humanist capacities at the

inter-institutional level, including thematic projects, syllabi, and joint classrooms with other continents.

This new phase (2021-2026) builds on the groundwork laid during the first phase of the programme, under the title 'Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World' (2016-2021).

Follow the stories on the  
[Humanities Across Borders Blog](https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog)  
[humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog](https://humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog)

[www.iias.asia/hab](https://www.iias.asia/hab)

Clusters: [Global Asia](#); [Asian Heritages](#)

## Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)

**T**his network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. The concerns are varied, including migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, ethnic mobilisation, 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.

7th ABRN conference 'Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences', Seoul, South Korea, 23-25 June 2022.

[www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network](https://www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network)

Coordinator: [Erik de Maaker](mailto:erik.de.maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)  
[maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:erik.de.maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

## Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge

**A**'frica-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge' is an inclusive transnational platform that convenes scholars, artists, intellectuals, and educators from Africa, Asia, Europe, and beyond to study, discuss, and share knowledge on the intricate connections and entanglements between the African and Asian world regions. Our aim is to contribute to the long-term establishment of an autonomous, intellectual and academic community of individuals and institutions between two of the world's most vibrant continents. We aspire to facilitate the development of research and educational infrastructures in African

and Asian universities, capable of delivering foundational knowledge in the two regions about one another's cultures and societies. This exchange, we believe, is a prerequisite for a sustainable and balanced socio-economic progress of the two continents. It is also an opportunity to move beyond the Western-originated fields of Asian and African area studies—something that would benefit Asian, African and Western scholars alike.

[www.iias.asia/networks/africa-asia](https://www.iias.asia/networks/africa-asia)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)



## International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)



**T**he International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the largest global forum for academics and civil society exchange on Asia. It 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



by IIAS in cooperation with local universities, cities and institutions and are attended by scholars and other experts, institutions and publishers from around 60 countries. The biennial 'ICAS Book Prize' (IBP) awards 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. Twelve conventions have been held since 1997 (Leiden, Berlin, Singapore, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Daejeon, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden. ICAS 12 was organised together with Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and took place entirely online).

[www.icas.asia](https://www.icas.asia)



## The Forum on Health, Environment and Development

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](https://www.iias.asia/programmes/forhead)

Coordinator: [Jennifer Holdaway](mailto:j.a.holdaway.2@iias.nl)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

## Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

**T**he current 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 Balkans, and Russia.

[www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia](https://www.iias.asia/programmes/energy-programme-asia)

Coordinator: [M. Amineh](mailto:m.p.amineh@uva.nl)

[m.p.amineh@uva.nl](mailto:m.p.amineh@uva.nl)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

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

**T**his interdisciplinary research is aimed at the study of the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government, with special attention given to the impact of the 'New Silk Road' on countries, regions and peoples outside of China.

[www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad](https://www.iias.asia/programmes/newsilkroad)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

## Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals (GRIP-ARM)

**T**he ERC-funded research programme (2021-2026) *Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals: A Transregional Comparison of Growth Strategies in Rare Earth Mining* (GRIP-ARM) examines the globalised supply and demand for rare earths, from mining to processing, manufacturing, use and recycling. Using a trans-regional comparison of China, Brazil and Kazakhstan, the proposed research is one of the first systematic, comparative studies on rare earths mining and economic development, bringing political science perspectives in conversation with natural resource geography and international political economy. GRIP-ARM is hosted by Erasmus University (Netherlands) and supported by IIAS.

[www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm](https://www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm)

Coordinator: [Jojo Nem Singh](mailto:jojo.nem.singh@iss.nl)

[nemsingh@iss.nl](mailto:nemsingh@iss.nl)

Cluster: [Global Asia](#)

## Join the new Leiden Anthropology of Asia Network!

Erik de Maaker

Asia Research Cluster, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology  
[www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/social-behavioural-sciences/cultural-anthropology-and-development-sociology/research/asia-cluster](http://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/social-behavioural-sciences/cultural-anthropology-and-development-sociology/research/asia-cluster)

Leiden Anthropology Blog: 'Anthropologies of and with Asia, at Leiden University'  
[www.leidenanthropologyblog.nl/articles/anthropologies-of-and-with-asia-at-leiden-university](http://www.leidenanthropologyblog.nl/articles/anthropologies-of-and-with-asia-at-leiden-university)

Leiden University has many anthropologists working on Asia, spread across different faculties and institutes. Besides the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology,<sup>1</sup> this includes the Leiden Institute for Area Studies,<sup>2</sup> the Van Vollenhoven Institute,<sup>3</sup> and the International Institute for Asian Studies.<sup>4</sup> Until fairly recently, the Leiden University Profile Area 'Asian Modernities and Traditions' (2011-2018) played a significant role in creating bridges between scholars located across Leiden University; AMT facilitated high-profile lectures and workshops and fostered and enabled new research initiatives.<sup>5</sup> Its demise has created a lacuna not filled by the new Institutional Profiles that have been instated since.

To address the real and dire need for new institution-wide Asia oriented initiatives, the CADS Research Cluster Asia<sup>6</sup> has created the 'Leiden Anthropology of Asia Network' (the RC Asia is one of the five Research

Clusters of the CADS Institute). In a very well attended online network meeting across five break-out groups, held in December 2021, we discussed how we might create synergy to our research and strengthen collaborations with academic colleagues spread out across the rapidly growing number of academic institutions in Asia. While many participants are anthropologists by discipline, the event also included colleagues from closely related fields such as history and political science. Participants at the meeting indicated that they wanted more peer-level academic interaction. Also, they expressed the need for a new institution-wide initiative that can increase the impact of the important contributions Leiden University can make to the Anthropology of Asia. Such institutional support can significantly strengthen the global impact of research done, in line with the ambition of Leiden University to deliver academic education and produce knowledge with a truly global reach.

### Network ambitions

Leiden Anthropology has a very long history of contributing to cultural knowledge production about Asia. Anthropology, as a discipline, proceeds from the premise that adopting a comparative perspective can create insights into how categories and concepts are embedded in specific societal contexts. But what academic knowledge constitutes and how it is taught continues to change over time, and it requires further revision to reflexively engage with the inequalities that mar today's world. Engaging with issues such as these, the Leiden Anthropology of Asia Network, specifically, aims to make an active contribution to decolonising academia.

The network wants to create a lively community of scholars that, through (among others) brown bag talks, reading groups, and perhaps story-sharing seminars, is conducive to redefining connections to

Asia in what will hopefully be soon a post-pandemic world. We also intend to share grant opportunities, inform each other about new research projects, and share opportunities for international exchange and cooperation. Our initial event was a great starting point for reinvigorating connections. It brought out the wealth of disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise on Asia in Leiden.

Would you like to join our network? Please contact the CADS Research Cluster Asia!

Dr Erik de Maaker is Associate Professor at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University and coordinator of the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN-IIAS).

### Notes

- <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/education/study-programmes/bachelor/cultural-anthropology-and-development-sociology>
- <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/humanities/institute-for-area-studies>
- <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/law/institute-for-the-interdisciplinary-study-of-the-law/van-vollenhoven-institute>
- <https://www.iias.asia>
- <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/asian-modernities-and-traditions>
- <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/social-behavioural-sciences/cultural-anthropology-and-development-sociology/research/asia-cluster>

### The Focus



### The Review



# Would you like to reach 50,000 readers worldwide?

## Call for Submissions to *The Newsletter*



The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a Humanities and Social Sciences research institute and knowledge exchange platform based in Leiden, the Netherlands. It takes a thematic and multisectoral approach to the study of Asia and initiates programmes that engage Asian and other international partners. *The Newsletter* is a free periodical published by IIAS, and the premier Asian Studies forum for scholars and experts alike to publish research essays and reviews. *The Newsletter* bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse and provides an exceptional opportunity to share work with our 50,000 readers worldwide. Pertinent and provoking, *The Newsletter* encourages discussion and interaction.

We are currently inviting submissions for issue #93, to be published in October 2022. We welcome four types of contributions:

### The Study

These are research essays of 1400-1700 words (for one-page articles) or 2500-3600 words (for two-page articles) on any topic in Asian Studies. Please include 2-3 images with your submissions.

### The Study

### The Focus

Each issue of *The Newsletter* includes a special section called "The Focus" that compiles multiple articles on a particular theme. The Focus is put together by an external guest editor. If you would like to propose a theme for a Focus section, please contact the editorial team.

### The Review

For the print edition, we typically select book reviews from our reviews website. To write a review for the website, please browse available titles at [www.iias.asia/the-review](http://www.iias.asia/the-review).

### New section - The Tone

Be the first! The Tone will feature works of creativity and curation. While this includes traditional museums and exhibitions, we increasingly encourage contributors to think in broader terms about artistic output: film and literary festivals, street art, digital media, musical recordings, crafts, and more. Articles in this section can be written by the curators/artists themselves or by a third party. To pitch an article for The Tone, please reach out to the editorial team.

### The Tone

Find more information about submission procedures and style guidelines here: [www.iias.asia/contribute](http://www.iias.asia/contribute).

For examples of previously published issues, please use the link below: [www.iias.asia/the-newsletter](http://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter).

Research essays for The Study in issue #93 should be submitted by 1 July 2022. All article submissions, Focus and Tone proposals, and any other enquiries can be sent directly to the editorial team at [thenewsletter@iias.nl](mailto:thenewsletter@iias.nl).

Paramita Paul,  
Chief Editor of The Newsletter, IIAS

To submit an article visit us at: [www.iias.asia/contribute](http://www.iias.asia/contribute)

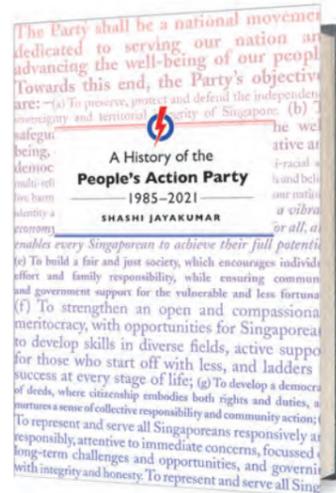
# New Books from NUS Press



**Stone Masters**  
*Power Encounters in Mainland Southeast Asia*  
HOLLY HIGH, EDITOR  
344 pp, US\$32,  
Paper 978-981-325-170-0  
46 b/w images, 3 tables

“A rare book: an organically integrated collection, with a strong theme. While it is unapologetically ethnological, *Stone Masters* engages cosmopolitan anthropological theories with great effect. It has a depth which anthropologists of other areas, working on analogous themes, can feed on.”

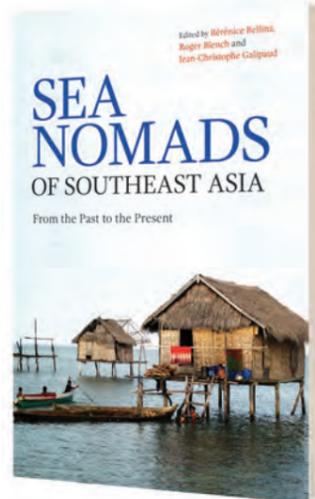
- Luiz Costa, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro



**A History of the People's Action Party, 1985-2021**  
SHASHI JAYAKUMAR  
800 pp, US\$38,  
Cloth 978-981-325-128-1

“A must-read for all interested in the politics of Singapore.”

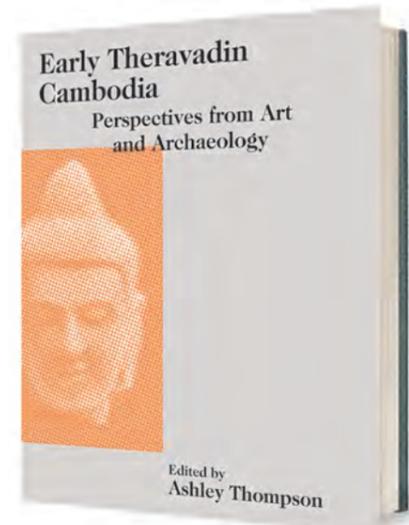
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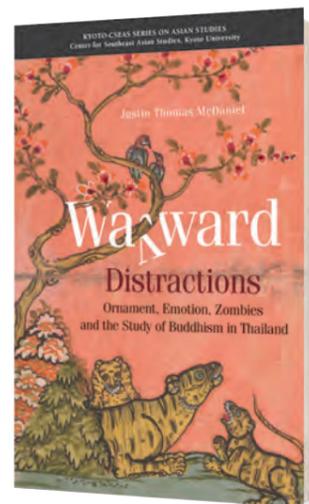
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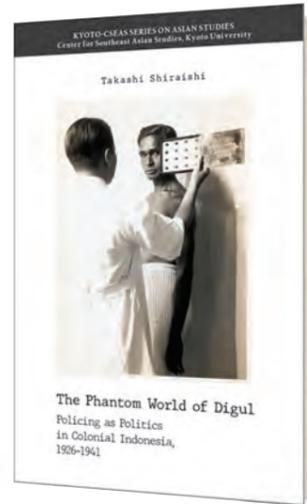
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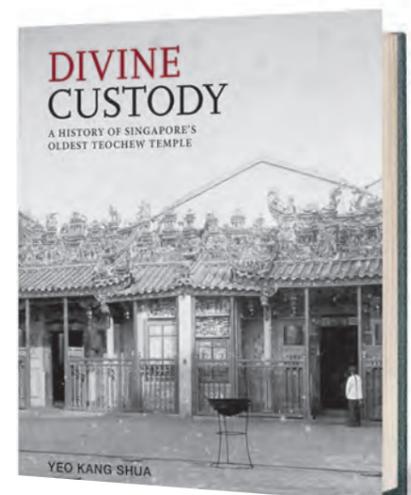
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Published with the support of the National Heritage Board, Singapore.

“The author is to be commended for giving us such a wide range of aesthetic pleasure.”

- Wang Gungwu, National University of Singapore



# Reflecting on Religion in a Plural Society

Artistic Perspectives from Indonesia

Claudia Seise

Online Exhibition by 14 Indonesian Artists  
<http://democracyandreligion.com>

Artists have the potential to shape the representation of religion, belief, and religious practice in the public sphere. In this sense, conceptual art represents a creative medium to approach the question of religion in public space and interreligious engagement in an alternative and interactive way. For this collection, 14 established Indonesian artists contributed work on the following central question: What space do beliefs and religious practices occupy in a plural society? The virtual exhibition “Religion in a Plural Society: Indonesian Perspectives” is part of the project “Democracy and Interreligious Initiatives,” funded by the Berlin University Alliance. Due to Covid-19 mobility restraints, the project members searched for alternative ways to carry out the project. The idea of a virtual exhibition was born out of the author’s previous engagement with and research on contemporary art in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> When choosing the artists, we tried to reflect

on the fundamental importance of diversity in the Indonesian archipelago. Four of the 14 artists are women. In Indonesia there are more male than female artists, and comparatively fewer women study art. The majority of the 14 artists have a Muslim background and four artists either have an evangelical Christian or Hindu background or follow a Javanese belief system. The artists come from Java, Sumatra, Bali, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi and belong to different age groups. We also aimed at reflecting diversity in the choice of artistic media. In addition to paintings, the exhibition also includes graphic art, glass painting, and sculptures. Except for one participant, all artists studied art at an Indonesian institution of higher education; e.g. the Institute of Fine Arts (*Institut Seni Indonesia*) in Yogyakarta.

With this virtual exhibition, we hope to make a creative contribution to academic communication that focuses on active observing. Adding an artistic perspective

to research on inter-religious initiatives in Indonesia expands the expertise on inter-religious commitment and increases understanding of democracy in connection with religion. The crossing of linguistic boundaries through visual art offers the possibility of new communication channels. In this spirit, this virtual exhibition can also be perceived as a research instrument. In addition, we hope that this exhibition makes a small contribution to inter-religious dialogue and understanding.

## Indonesia and her Pancasila

Indonesia is an insular state in Southeast Asia, bounded by the Indian Ocean to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Home to a wide variety of ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic groups, Indonesia has existed as a nation-state since August 17, 1945. It combines the above-mentioned diversity

in the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, (“unity in diversity”), as well as within the *Pancasila* (Indonesia’s official state ideology, literally the “five principles”). The first pillar of the Pancasila is “The belief in the One and Only God” (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). The other four pillars are: “Just and civilized humanity” (*Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*), “National unity of Indonesia” (*Persatuan Indonesia*), “Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in unanimity resulting from the consulting of the delegates” (*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan*) and “Social justice for all people of Indonesia” (*Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh masyarakat Indonesia*). Around 87% of Indonesians identify as Muslims, 7% as evangelical Christians (Kristen), 2,9% as Catholic Christians, 1,7% as Hindu, 0,72% as Buddhist, 0,05% follow Confucianism, and 0,13% follow other belief systems (*kepercayaan*).<sup>2</sup> Most artists of this virtual exhibition expressed the opinion that the *Pancasila* and especially its first pillar serves to foster and guard religious harmony in society. In fact, the pillar of the belief in the One and Only God opens the possibility to include most religions that express the belief in and include the worship of one higher being. This moves the belief and not the religious affiliation of an individual or a group to the foreground.

Several artists in the exhibition refer to this Indonesian national ideology (*Pancasila*), which is understood as an important basis for national harmony and tolerance of religions. In describing her work *Tree of Life* [Fig. 1] Budiasih (b. 1983) conceptualizes the *Pancasila* as a vessel that becomes a tool to connect religions and beliefs in Indonesia in order to achieve ideal coexistence. The graphic artist Syahrizal Pahlevi (b. 1965) also refers to the *Pancasila* in his work *6+1 ID Card* [Fig. 5], albeit from a more critical perspective. The first pillar of the *Pancasila*, the belief in the One God, de facto states

Fig. 1: *Tree of Life*, Budiasih, crayon and colored pencil on watercolor paper, 57 cm x 79 cm, 2015

Fig. 2: *Healing*, Franziska Fennert, mixed media sewn on canvas, worn clothes, filling with rice straw, gold leaves, copper leaves, acrylic paint, ink, 94 cm x 60 cm x 18 cm, 2021

Fig. 3: *Ritual of Liberation*, Suparman, varnish, oil paint on hardboard, 120 cm x 155 cm

Fig. 4: *Hablumminallah wa Hablumminannas*, Ariyadi, oil paint on canvas, 130 cm x 100 cm, 2021

Fig. 5: *6+1=ID Card*, Syahrizal Pahlevi, monoprint, woodcut on thick paper glued to the wood surface, 39 cm x 54 cm @ 7 plates, 2021

Fig. 6: *Dialogue*, Sindu Siwikkan, galvanized wire and cement, 22,86 cm x 20,32 cm x 81,28 cm, 2021



that all Indonesians must register their religious affiliation on their ID card. Pahlevi is convinced that the publishing of an individual's religious affiliation can also lead to discrimination. Meanwhile, Robert Nasrullah (b. 1977) connects his work *Ta'aruf: Getting to Know with the Pancasila*, which he perceives as a sort of umbrella under which all religions and belief systems in Indonesia enjoy the state's protection.

Religion, faith, and spirituality are profound elements of Indonesian life. Prayer, connecting to the invisible world, spiritual practice, and deeply rooted faith are important parts of many Indonesians' lives. At the same time, belonging to a religion or belief system is traditionally seen as a prerequisite for learning the virtues of tolerance and respect for those of different faiths to become part of a harmonious society. It is assumed that the geographic location of the archipelago has contributed to openness and tolerance towards new and different ideas. Sindu Siwikkan (b. 1994) states that the geographical location contributes to the fact that Indonesians are generally very curious and open towards other people. He sees tolerance towards religious practice, which his piece *Dialogue* evokes, as its result [Fig. 6].

### Religion in the public sphere

Religion, belief, and spirituality in many different facets are an integrative and indispensable part of Indonesian society. Faith is not expressed in a homogeneous way. In her work *Twilight at the Harbour*, Rina Kurniyati (b. 1970s) wants to express the diversity of cultures, religions, and profane life in Indonesia. She explains, "Every element of society shows and lives its uniqueness, because the real essence of mutual respect is the existence of differences and the beauty of the different colours." In his concept to his work *Ta'aruf (Getting to Know)*, Robert Nasrullah describes this phenomenon with

the analogy of the white canvas, which is painted with different colours and thus results in a meaningful work of art. Fika Ariestya Sultan (b. 1983) compares the religious and spiritual diversity in Indonesia with a *flower meadow*, which is also the title of his work.

With his artwork in lacquer technique, Suparman (b. 1975) reflects on the diversity of the different cultural and spiritual currents in Indonesia by displaying a cultural festival [Fig. 3]. Figures wearing traditional masks and costumes dance together in the capital city of Jakarta. In the background, one can see an important symbol of the Indonesian nation, the National Monument (Monas). It symbolizes the struggle for independence and stands as a symbol for unity. The national monument represents a key element in the public space and collective consciousness of the Indonesian population. It is charged with personal and religious interpretations. For example, it can be read as symbolizing the vertical as well as horizontal dimensions in relation to the Divine.<sup>3</sup> This theme is also found in some of the artworks. Ariyadi alias Cadio Tarompo (b. 1971) points to the vertical and horizontal connection between the Creator and creation, especially humans. In his work [Fig. 4], he illustrates the Islamic perspective and points out fundamental values of Islamic teaching: (1) there is no compulsion in religion (Quran 2: 256), and (2) there is a need for mutual tolerance of followers of different beliefs (Quran 109: 6). He also sees the Indonesian state ideology *Pancasila* as a necessity in order to preserve and protect religious diversity in Indonesia.

Coexistence and the horizontal connection of humans with the rest of creation also play an important role in the work of I Wayan Legianta (b. 1984). He explains that in Balinese Hinduism, God is present in every living being through the Divine Soul called *Atman*. *Atman* can be understood as a small spark of God that gives life to every living being, including humans. Therefore, according to the artist,

it is important to respect and appreciate every living being and the diversity in creation, which leads to glorifying God Himself. His work of art *Positionless Mixing (from horizontal to vertical)* reflects these thoughts in different shades of colours and layers, which harmoniously create a whole. According to him, the merging of colours and forms is supposed to hide the particular religious identity and to allow each person to be seen as a "being of faith" irrespective of religious affiliation. Franziska Fennert (b. 1983) also reflects the horizontal connection with creation and the vertical connection with the Creator in her work *Healing* [Fig. 2]. With her piece, the artist points out the responsibility of humans towards the environment and all other creatures. According to her, every element of the cosmos testifies to the existence of God.

### Personal faith and spirituality

Religion, belief, and spirituality also play an important role in the life of the individual, which then and influences society through an individual's actions, behaviour, interactions, words, etc. In this way, the individual on a micro level shapes the public sphere. In his artwork *Self-Reflection*, the artist AT Sitompul (b. 1977) reflects the importance of acquiring money in a religiously permitted framework so that it is also beneficial and blessed. In his work *Vertical Knot*, Rudi Maryanto (b. 1981) also reflects on his own religious affiliation and places the symbol of the Islamic direction of prayer, the Kaaba, at the centre of his work. In her artwork *Not...*, the artist Laila Tifah (b. 1971) describes the influence of every individual in society. In her work, the word "not" receives a positive connotation when combined with negative qualities. For example, to not feel self-righteous, to not prevent other people from worshiping, to not be intolerant. This helps preserving

harmony in Indonesian society. The artist Muhammad Andik (b. 1984) introduces another important aspect into the discussion about religion and belief in a plural society – namely, religious education. In his artwork *The Murshid (The Spiritual Teacher)*, the artist reflects on the importance of a spiritual teacher for a person's spiritual development from an Islamic perspective.

The exhibition illustrates that the desire and pursuit of harmony in Indonesia is a special quality that is cultivated, regardless of religion or creed. In their concepts, some artists have pointed out that ideas and ideologies "imported" from outside sometimes try to attack the pursuit of harmony and the deep-rooted tolerance towards those who think differently and those of different faiths. This reality reminds us of the importance to preserve, cultivate, and teach the historically grown and established tolerance and openness – and to pass it on to the younger generation.

Claudia Seise holds a PhD in Southeast Asian Studies and is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher in the junior research group "Perspectives on Religious Diversity in Islamic Theology" at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Email: [claudia.seise@hu-berlin.de](mailto:claudia.seise@hu-berlin.de)

#### Notes

- 1 *One Year on the Scene: Contemporary Art in Indonesia*. Regiospectra. Berlin 2010. <http://www.regiospectra.de/buecher/asien/suedostasien/indonesien/one-year-on-the-scene-detail>
- 2 Data taken from 2010 population census: <https://pkub.kemendagri.go.id/files/pkub/file/Data/zuqit368036766.pdf> (accessed: 03.01.2022)
- 3 See the curatorial statement to this exhibition for a detailed explanation: <http://democracyandreligion.com/de/uber/en/foreword>

# Buddhism's Ecological Footprint

Alíz Horváth

Reviewed title

**The Buddha's Footprint:  
An Environmental History  
of Asia**

Johan Elverskog, 2020.

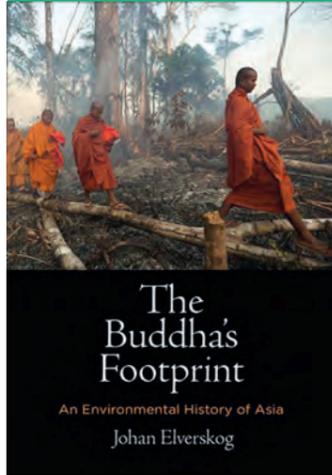
University of Pennsylvania Press.

ISBN 9780812251838

Johan Elverskog's *The Buddha's Footprint: An Environmental History of Asia* provides a timely and important corrective to the dominant, ahistorical narrative of Buddhism's inherent ecological orientation. The author helpfully articulates his thesis in a tweet-style summary: "Elverskog overturns eco-Buddhism narrative by showing how Buddhists across Asia transformed the environment by commodification, agro-expansion, and urbanization" (p. 119).

While defending this position, Elverskog simultaneously addresses larger theoretical and methodological problems that have contributed to the primacy of the pervasive and romanticized view of eco-Buddhism. There exists a disciplinary chasm, he argues, between history and religious studies: "historians of Asia know little about Buddhism, and scholars of Buddhism care little about history" (p. 1). The 19th-century sociologist Max Weber serves as a focal point for discussing this chasm. Historians, Elverskog claims, do not take seriously enough Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that religious ideas drive human action. Simultaneously, scholars of religion take too seriously Weber's characterization of Buddhism as inherently world-denying. Participating, then, in what is now a decades-long critique of Weber, Elverskog highlights the centrality of the accumulation of wealth – indeed, excess wealth – to Buddhist thought and practice and demonstrates that the accumulation and consumption of excess wealth had far-ranging environmental consequences. More broadly, Elverskog warns that ignoring the fact that Buddhist actors and ideas influenced the historical trajectory of Asia in profound ways leaves us with an incomplete, perhaps even sparse, understanding of both the rise and development of Buddhism and the history of an entire continent.

After laying out this argument in the introduction, Elverskog divides the book into two parts, each of which contains five chapters. Part One, "What the Buddha Taught," focuses on Buddhist thought as "the intellectual engine that drove Buddhists out across Asia, where their fortunes became intertwined with the exploitation and trans-



formation of the natural world" (p. 7-8). In this section, Elverskog constructs his depiction of Buddhism, or, more precisely, the Dharma, as a prosperity theology that not only depended upon but explicitly encouraged the laity's accumulation of excess wealth. This began with Siddhartha Gautama himself, who was supportive of individuals abandoning traditional nomadic pastoralism in favor of participation in newly emergent market economies. The Buddha praised nature in terms of the commodities that could be extracted from it, and thus the wealth that could be gained from dominating it. Markets drove Buddhists across Asia, and for the laity, the goal of this participation was "to produce wealth to support the Buddhist monastics and thereby generate merit" (p. 55). Elverskog thus centers the religious work of the laity – whom he later terms "entrepreneurial individuals" (p. 74) – in his discussion of Buddhism's environmental impacts. This in and of itself is an important contribution, as part of Buddhist studies' Weberian inheritance has been a focus on the practices of monastics. Such an approach fails to provide a complete picture of the history of Buddhism and its relationship to nature, a point Elverskog hammers home with a powerful comparison: "Imagine trying to grasp Christianity and Christian history in its entirety through the mandates of Benedictine monks. No one makes this mistake with Christianity, and

yet this categorical confusion shapes how many people understand Buddhism" (p. 35).

Building on Part One's ideological foundation, Part Two, "What Buddhists Did," details the "specific large-scale processes that Buddhists enacted" that fundamentally altered the surrounding natural world, oftentimes negatively (p. 8). As mentioned earlier, these processes involved exploitation of natural resources as commodities in the newly emergent market economy, agricultural expansion, and urbanization. The most illuminating and compelling of the chapters in this section is the ninth, where Elverskog examines the idealized Buddhist vision of social flourishing as occurring not in untouched nature, but in a highly controlled and cultivated metropolitan environment. While this vision might have first appeared in texts – Elverskog examines relevant passages from the *Cakkavati-sihanada Sutta* and descriptions of Sukhavati – it was also actualized in the urban landscape of Buddhist Asia. This deliberate program of city-building wreaked havoc on supplies of natural resources, and Elverskog is at his best when he describes the massive amount of resources necessary to build and sustain these large urban areas. Chapter Ten, "The Buddhist Landscape," continues in a similar vein, demonstrating how the construction of Buddhist monasteries, temples, and monuments across Asia necessitated Buddhists' destructive environmental practices. Elverskog provides examples from across premodern Asia, highlighting the ubiquity of such building projects undertaken by both state and non-governmental actors. "[A] Buddhist culture," Elverskog argues, "was created through the alteration and exploitation of the natural world" (p. 110).

Finally, Elverskog both begins and concludes *The Buddha's Footprint* with reference to once being jokingly called a "Grinch" after speaking about Buddhism's

environmentally destructive history. For the modern reader, such a response is perhaps understandable. We live in a time of unprecedented climate and environmental anxiety, and Elverskog has pulled the rug out from under our feet. Buddhism, suddenly, no longer offers a nicely wrapped solution to our problems or fears. But while Elverskog is confident – and certainly correct – in his analysis of early Buddhism as focused on the accumulation of wealth and its subsequent environmental repercussions, he is also cognizant of many modern Buddhists' changing attitudes towards nature and the necessity of its protection. This is, though, a radical and recent change, one that involves creative reinterpretation of Buddhist thought in response to specifically modern concerns about the role of the environment in contributing to human flourishing. It seems that we would do a disservice to those innovative problem-solvers not to recognize their work as such. Elverskog's insistence that we not paper over Buddhism's environmentally damaging past consequently helps us to better understand and appreciate the work of Buddhist environmentalists in the present.

*The Buddha's Footprint*, I am sure, will rightly find a home on many a college syllabus, including in my own courses concerning religion and the environment. Through clear prose and a consistent argument, Elverskog demonstrates that sophisticated thought need not be overly encumbered by specialist jargon. He thus delivers a book that is accessible to undergraduates while also providing valuable insight for specialists. *The Buddha's Footprint* is thus required reading for anyone interested in the history of Buddhist environmental thought and practice or the history of early Buddhism and its expansion across Asia.

Gregory M. Clines,  
Trinity University, USA



Tian Tan Buddha, also known as the Big Buddha located at Ngong Ping, Lantau Island, Hong Kong. Photo reproduced courtesy of Wikimedia.

# Art and Politics in Later Buddhist Mongolia

Simon Wickhamsmith

Reviewed title

**A Monastery on the Move:  
Art and Politics in Later Buddhist  
Mongolia**

Uranchimeg Tsultemin, 2021.

University of Hawai'i Press.

ISBN 9780824878306



On my first visit to Mongolia, in summer 2006, the first place I was told to visit in Ulaanbaatar was the Zanabazar Museum. This museum, dedicated to the first Bogd Haan Zanabazar, is much more than a repository of this 17th-century artist and religious leader's work; it functions as Mongolia's *de facto* national museum, showcasing the best of the nation's artistic and cultural heritage. But the identification of this important museum with this towering figure of the early Qing reflects his importance in Mongolia's story. That said, the life and work of Zanabazar – notably his central role in the development of Mongolia's fine arts and in Ulaanbaatar's development as Mongolia's religious, social, and creative center – has until now received scant attention from scholars. With the full disclosure that Uranchimeg Tsultemin is as much my friend as my colleague, I welcome the publication of *A Monastery on the Move*, a book which I see as an important addition to the library of anyone interested in the religious and political history of Mongolia, and especially in the development of its arts.

# Print Media and Legal Knowledge in Qing China

Chenxi Luo

Law as a modern discipline is highly sophisticated and specialized, and practicing law requires much-needed years of training. It might come as a surprise that, in early modern China, various members of society, like petty officials, lower-class litigants, and less literate commoners, were capable of citing the code during their judicial processes. Historians of Qing China have discovered a vigorously litigious society from reading local- and imperial-level archives since the 1990s. Through those legal archives, they recognized that many ordinary people employed legal knowledge for their own interests. This acknowledgment raises an important question: to what extent did commoners have access to legal information in the Qing dynasty? Ting Zhang's 2020 book, *Circulating the Code: Print Media and Legal Knowledge in Qing China*, deals with this issue and offers a positive perspective that ordinary subjects were able to acquire legal information through multiple channels. Rather than the state monopoly of legal knowledge, she affirms that private and commercial sectors in the Qing period were actively involved in producing and circulating legal knowledge. This is a must-read book for students whose interests lie in legal history and book history in early modern China.

The book begins with a fraud case in which a Qing-era male commoner used a legal loophole, killing adulterous couples on the spot without legal responsibility, as a cover-up of the murder of his wife and his lover's husband. This opening case is only the tip of the iceberg of a wide circulation of legal knowledge throughout the Qing society. Following the chapter sequence, legal knowledge goes from the top bureaucracy at the imperial court, down to the field administration, and finally reaches illiterate people in villages and non-Han Chinese on the frontiers. Chapter 1 is a chronology of how the printing of the Code worked at the imperial level. Besides the printing condition at court, the author enumerates several main legal editions issued by the regime, an overview that might be useful to future legal scholars interested in searching the Qing editions of the Code. The imperially authorized publishing, however, did not dominate the code circulation. It was the commercial printing that facilitated the downward movement of legal knowledge into middle-

and lower-echelons of the society. Chapter 2 goes on to reveal how commercial publishing operated throughout the Qing dynasty. The author foregrounds the compilation, revision, and publication processes of several commercial legal collections and highlights the cooperation among private legal advisors, book merchants, and provincial judicial officials. Commercial editions – the result of those collaborations – were main sources of acquiring legal knowledge for the Qing officials and commoners.

Chapter 3 focuses on reading methods and legal education for judicial officials. The scholar-officials agreed that learning law was important for local governance and that reading the code was essential to their duties. In Chapters 4 and 5, the author shifts her attention to the lower rungs of society by examining another two vehicles of expanding legal information: popular handbooks and community lectures. The popular handbooks with easy-to-read formats and timely information encouraged ordinary people to use legal sleights of hand in a courtroom. The community lectures sponsored by the state, on the other hand, orally imparted legal knowledge to illiterate people. Legal knowledge was no longer off-limits to commoners but became an integral part of village life. In the end, the book returns to the opening fraud case and locates the man's aforementioned ruse in a social context: it was because of the various media conveying legal information that an ordinary man like him knew and was able to take advantage of the statute. Overall, the book spotlights the free flow of legal knowledge as one key feature of China's legal modernity.

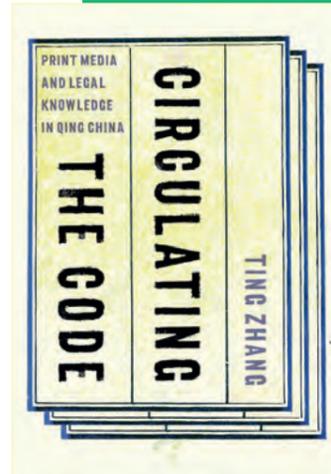
The book lies at the intersection of legal history and book history. To China's legal history, it contributes to the state of the field in two ways. First, the book speaks to the question of what constitutes a valid legal source in Qing China. Throughout the book, the author identifies different types of legal texts such as statutes, sub-statutes, administrative rules, case precedents, private commentaries, and the like. In Chapters 2 and 3, the analysis of textual components in commercial legal collections shows that unofficial legal texts, such as private commentaries and case precedents, were added along with the authorized code. Such inclusive compilation lent some credibility to unofficial legal texts during judicial practice (p. 61-4, 104-8). Second, previous scholarship pointed out that Qing China had a lively legal culture

While Uranchimeg's scholarship is first rate, the book's copious illustrations add a particular immediacy and depth to her narrative. The organic relationship between Zanabazar and Ulaanbaatar – the nomadic monastery of the title was, after all, the seat of the Bogd Haan lineage – is traced through a dynamic narrative, the warp and weft at the intersection of biography, art history, historiography, and religious studies. Central to this weaving, and made explicit in the illustrations, is Uranchimeg's wish to show "that the two parallel – Chinggisid and Buddhist – conceptualizations of political power [...] can be traced in the art and architecture of Ikh Hüree [Ulaanbaatar] throughout its history" (p. 10). Thus, from the earliest known representation of Zanabazar, a *thangka* which explicitly shows him surrounded by the primary teachers (human and spiritual) of his lineage, we see his link to the Tibetan Geluk (*dge lugs pa*) lineage and tradition. But Zanabazar was also a Mongolian from the lineage of Chinggis Haan, and so this image, both in terms of religious iconography and secular portraiture, starkly reveals these

"conceptualizations of political power" and their dependence upon the powerful "reformed" school of Tibetan Buddhism which had gained ascendancy in Mongolia.

In her biography of Ikh Khüree – a term meaning "great monastic estate" – Uranchimeg shows how the city became, over time, a focus of this potent admixture of religious and secular power, an inter-section of Manchu Qing polity, Geluk religious power, and a Chinggisid Khalkh national identity. Ikh Khüree's development as a trading post, as an administrative center, and as a focal point for religious practice, philosophy, and power further consolidated its importance, and Uranchimeg shows convincingly how the conceptual and physical mapping of the city responded to a series of architectural and political developments. The parallels between Ikh Khüree and Lhasa are drawn with care, and even a cursory reading of this book alongside both Aldrich<sup>1</sup> and Barnett<sup>2</sup> will show how strong an influence such monastic sociopolitics can be upon their secular environment.

In the end, though, Zanabazar was primarily an artist of great depth and



with a high litigation rate and the presence of litigation masters. The author substantiates this point from a new angle: the accessibility of legal texts was another element showing the robust legal culture in the Qing. Due to the commercial publishing boom, ordinary people could freely purchase legal texts from book markets and thus empower themselves during their litigation procedures. By tracing the production and circulation of legal information, the book breathes some fresh air into the issues of judicial practice and legal culture in Qing China.

With an interdisciplinary approach, the author introduces the methods from book history to legal history. Particularly, the author pays attention to the visuality of different textual editions, including the quality of woodblocks and printing, page decorations, physical sizes, character shapes, ink, etc. Those details give us some clues of how the printing press operated. For instance, the author's meticulous examination of an identical crack shown in the two editions of the Qing Code printed in 1825 and 1860 (p. 34-5) convincingly indicates that the imperial publishing reused the same woodblock almost 40 years later. The evidence suggests the decline of the imperial publishing activities after the mid-Qing period. Not only the printing quality but also the textual organization is crucial in Zhang's analysis. Beyond a simply textual examination, the author brings the structure of legal texts to the forefront, that is, the two-register and three-register formats used in Qing-era legal texts. Take the three-register format as an example. Each page was arranged into three horizontal parts, i.e., a cross-index in the upper, explanations of the Code in the middle, and the Code at the bottom. Those well-structured

formats were easily understandable to mediocre readers and convenient to legal practitioners (p.102-8). Indeed, the issues of how legal texts were printed and organized impacted the popularization of legal knowledge in Qing China.

The book, in passing, identifies some features that make the Qing publications distinct from their Ming precedents. At the imperial court level, regardless of several publication bans, the Qing rulers were relatively lenient in the control of the code publication compared to the Ming. The loosening of the publication policy encouraged editors and publishers to publish the code without official authorization. Another policy change occurred in the civil service examination: legal tests known as *pan* were eliminated from the examinations in the Qianlong reign. According to the author, the abolition of legal tests actually set a higher bar for students learning legal knowledge. Only by passing civil service examinations could they be able to receive legal education (p. 89). Speaking of the intellectual climate under the Qing, the author emphasizes the impact of substantive learning (*shixue*) and statecraft thoughts (*jingshi*) on legal learning. In the eyes of the Qing literati, learning how to adjudicate disputes matched their aspiration of benefitting the world, one goal of the intellectual movement (p. 70-3, 94). Those conditions together make the Qing dynasty stand out in its own right.

A successful book does not exhaust a topic but sparks further intellectual curiosities. Ting Zhang's book is one with such potential. Closing the book, readers might be interested in where ordinary women could obtain legal knowledge. Given that women actively participated in lawsuits in the Qing dynasty, yet with a low literacy rate and with no chances of participating in community lectures, what channels would be available for them to know the code? Readers might also wonder how commoners received the Code in reality. Did they understand the difference between statutes and sub-statutes? Last but not least, if we consider practice as one prerequisite of gaining legal knowledge, then how did judicial practice or litigation activity figure into one's acquisition process? Ting Zhang's welcome book will certainly broach more discussions that redefine Chinese legal and book histories in the future.

Chenxi Luo, Washington University, USA

subtlety, and it is as a book on Mongolian religious art that *A Monastery on the Move* really shines. Beyond the illustrations, Uranchimeg's is sensitive and astute in her analyses of Zanabazar's development; the influence of his recognition as the reincarnation of the historian Jonang Tāranātha (Kun dga' snying po), who had died in 1634, five years before Zanabazar's birth; and the importance of his legacy, which is made explicit for locals and tourists alike in the Zanabazar Museum. Such analyses offer a possible reading through the statuary and *thangkas* discussed in the text. The substantive presence of the spiritual realms in *vajrayāna* Buddhism emphasizes Zanabazar's achievement as an artist. As Uranchimeg describes, though, it is the critical place of image and symbol in the Mongol worldview and in the interplay of the religious and secular realms that emphasizes his greater achievement as the unifier of both realms in his role as Bogd Khan.

Above all, Uranchimeg's treatment of the history of the early Qing in Mongolia complements, and is enriched by, her stimulating investigation of the many

pieces of art she addresses. Although it is a fine piece of research, it is also a well-written and intellectually stimulating read. Parallel to the narrative, and in addition to the illustrations, both in black and white and in color, there are extensive and informative notes, a full and tantalizing bibliography, and a well-prepared index. That *A Monastery on the Move* is an important book is, to my mind, not in question. But the richness of its intellectual and visual force keeps drawing me back, and I look forward to returning to the text and to exploring the new vistas it reveals in the study of pre-modern Mongolia.

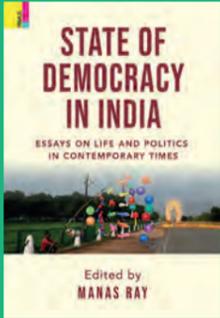
Simon Wickhamsmith,  
Rutgers University, USA

## Notes

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- 2 Barnett, Robert. 2006. *Lhasa: Streets with Memories*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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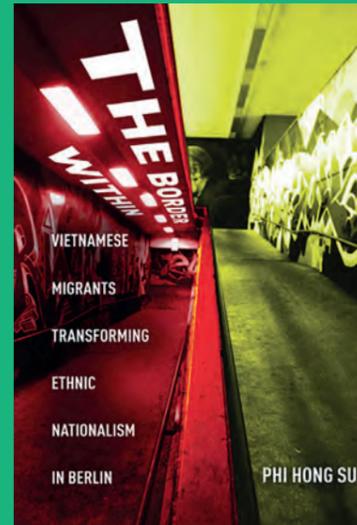
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