Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

The Newsletter

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‘Natasha’ The Singapore Biennale 2022
In this edition of The Focus

Environmental Governance amidst Climate Crisis

The start of 2022 has greatly furthered the need to restructure energy production and consumption to respond to geopolitical crisis. Through the war in Ukraine, Europe has been called to strategize against Russia by way of its natural resources. As a response to these geopolitical crises, Western governments have instigated a reduction in carbon emissions and greater integrated sustainability of supply chain. While this immediate response seems rational, it reinforces existing socio-ecological inequalities and asymmetries, causing immense stress to other natural resources. This plays into “Politics of Sacrifice,” which describes how increased needs for clean energy detrimentally affects an ecosystem and its inhabitants.

This Focus section highlights that although the climate crisis is a shared world-wide experience, it produces differing pathways across spatial and geographic politics, perpetually linking the macro-political and the economic with climate governance.

The Focus regroups articles thematically intertwined, expanding to China, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, even transcending and challenging national borders. Although these environments exist in various contexts, they are united by having to deal with resource management, path dependency, and shifting power structures.

These perspectives offer complex understandings on the intersection of place, policy, and the ever-growing natural resource scarcity that impact regions of the world to varying degrees.

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
It is our great pleasure to introduce our new IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator, Laura Etzer. She introduces herself on page 99. You can also read about the IIAS Fellowships and the Taiwan Studies Chair here, along with a report by Anne Sokolsky, who held the Chair from February to June, 2022. Page 50 is dedicated to the journal Non Nî: Men, Women and Gender in China, which is approaching its 25th anniversary. Founder and Managing Editor Harriet Zurndorfer writes about the journal’s history, changes to its chronological scope, and the shifts in disciplinary approaches to gender studies of China.

The 7th edition of Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN) took place in June at the Reconciliation & Coexistence in Contact Zone (RCCZ) Research Centre of Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea, Convener Ruth Gamble reports on page 51.

On page 47, Tamas Wells writes about his experiences while researching his book Narrating Democracy in Myanmar, which was published in the IAS Publications Series. Furthermore, we invite you to join the book launch (online or in person) of ‘River Cities in Asia’. Waterways in Urban Development and History’. The launch will include a panel discussion with the book’s authors led by its three editors (page 51). Concise information on the research programmes and the initiatives of IIAS can be found on page 52-53.
What is personhood? What is our relationship to the earth and the cosmos? This issue of The Newsletter opens with The Tone, a new section we launched in the summer of 2022. This edition of The Tone begins with four critical investigations on self and existence by Binna Choi, Nida Ghouse, June Yap, and Alia Younis, the four Co-Artistic Directors of the Singapore Biennale. Organized by the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), and commissioned by the National Arts Council, Singapore (NAC), the seventh edition of the Singapore Biennale engages participants and audiences in Singapore and around the world. While the program spans over a one-year period, its main event runs from October 16, 2022, through March 19, 2023, across a network of sites in Singapore.

The Study, The Focus, and The Region

The Study, our section dedicated to scholarly research articles, starts with a piece by John Smith, who reports on the current crisis in Sri Lanka. The country has gone bankrupt, social unrest has escalated, and it is unclear how the new establishment will rebuild the nation.

The Focus, which marks 75 years of independence for India and Pakistan, Sambata Rakshit writes about women revolutionary in the Indian subcontinent who have undertaken their independence in his article “Of Extremist Grandmothers.” Rakshit documents the story of his grandmother Bota Na Sen (1950-1989), and he connects her experiences to those of the well-known female revolutionary in the SEAS (1911-1986).

The Region also marks 400 years since the Battle of Macau, fought between Portugal and the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC). In “Revisiting the Battle of Macau in 1623: A Polyphonic Narrative,” Caspar Chan compares different narratives of this event by different individuals.

Looking to the future, Yuichi Mine envisions Africa and Asia as one large region in his article “Afrasia: An Emerging Macro-Region.” Mino created a map centered on what ancient Greek sailors called the Erythraean Sea, and he points that “it will be critically important to organize a heuristic dialogue between Africa and Asia in the 22nd century.” In “Ambassadors of K-Culture: Korean Americans, Korea, and K-Pop,” Jayson M. Chun and Eun Bye Suk introduce us to the “Pop-Pacific.” The authors coin this term to describe “a larger cultural sphere...[consisting] mostly of the US, Korea, and Japan...which combine to create a transnational Pacific culture.” K-pop, an aspect of the “Pop-Pacific,” is an influential part of Asian-American culture and has transcended the Pacific to become a world culture. It reflects the rise of Korea as a cultural production center, but it is essentially transnational.

The Slate

In this issue, we launch a new section called The Slate. In addition to facilitating research, exchange, and collaboration with scholars and practitioners throughout the world, another of IAS’s important pillars is education and learning. In this issue of The Slate, we invite educators and researchers to explore the debates, practices, challenges, and opportunities of 21st-century education. Contributions can take many forms, and authors are welcome to submit personal reflections, articles on practical and theoretical pedagogies, and critical essays on traditional education. For this first iteration of The Slate, Marisha Baij writes about pedagogies of弘揚 Institute in Singapore and the Southeast Asian University Asia Center (SNUAC), respectively. The SNUAC pages report on a seminar series about what archaeology and art history can tell us about Southeast Asia in the second millennium. SNUAC compiles narratives of heritage in Northeast Asia, addressing the problem of a black-and-white understanding of heritage being either tangible or intangible.

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What's in the name? What if there's no person behind the name so it's just the name? If the name evokes more than one person, who is going to answer when it's called? Why do we name the unnameable or the unnamed? Who still remain nameless and stay with us?

1. Natasha manifests when we undo the world as we know. By undoing them, we arrive at the “matrix” of life: home, family, and other relationships, whether of friendship, love, hate, or simply womb. Simultaneously, by undoing, we also land at home as earth—that is, the family and in relationship with other species, non-animate beings like stones, or invisible presences like ghosts or spirits.

A biennale is an exhibition of contemporary art—along with other programs—taking place biannually and mostly organized in large scale, grabbing many resources including attention. It’s a festivity, a ceremony, a statement, a momentum, or all of them. The Singapore Biennale 2022 is named Natasha. Given a name, Natasha pushes against our normative knowledge and ways of knowing—even including the biennale itself—to become minor, small, nothing, and to be something again. It’s the invitation for an encounter, as in a journey to face the meaning of life again.

Likewise, the life of the artist matters in relating to their works. It’s life before art or art in life. The encounter may enable us to practice different ways to relate to one another, ultimately towards what I would like to call “impersonal fellowship.” This idea is borrowed from theoretical physicist and theorist of mind David Bohm. He said, “The point is that we would establish, on another level, a kind of bond, which is called impersonal fellowship. You don’t have to know each other. In England, for example, the football crowds prefer not to have seats in their football stands, but just to stand bunched against each other. In those crowds very few people know each other, but they still feel something—that contact—which is missing in their ordinary personal relations. And in war many people feel that there’s a kind of comradeship which they miss in peacetime. It’s the same sort of thing—that close connection, that fellowship, that mutual participation. I think people find this lacking in our society, which glorifies the separate individual. The communists were trying to establish something else, but they completely failed in a very miserable way. Now a lot of them have adopted the same values as we have. But people are not entirely happy with that. They feel isolated. Even those who “succeed” feel isolated, feel there’s another side they are missing.”

2. Note to take: it may well be that, without names, a family, a community or any other relationship can maintain their relationship of love. There’s something immense behind the names, not in the names. The names are the incomplete agent and rather might perform an act of distancing, a way of objectification as in the colonial custom. So the name at best might be an index, an agent of the relationship in question. Anonymity can be an act of love.

3. “While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we used to live by suspending ordinary life, and causing the loss of many, we now witness a process of normalization, whether voluntary or forced. Many biennales have also celebrated this ‘return’ of post-pandemic, with a renewed hope for a world different from what we live(d) in. Visiting Natasha is not only to return, but to be conscious of the values most intensively experienced during the pandemic: intimacy, living the unknown, the capacity to adapt, realizing other possibilities of living and relating to the world.” — A collective voice from us, co-artistic directors of Singapore Biennale 2022

4. Shin Beomsun is one of the “artists” contributing to the Singapore Biennale 2022. Shin is Professor Emeritus of Korean Literature at Seoul National University. He never made or exhibited an artwork, but he has an expanding collection
of small stones that he found over last few years. Every day he sketches them, one after another, in order to read them carefully and closely. They show beings – numerous beings – whether they are shamanic, cheonsa (angels in Korean), princess and queen, or mythical bird-cum-lion like a griffin. Shin, however, named them somewhat differently: “shaymon” rather than shaman, “tenshya” rather than cheonsa, “gyryffyns” rather than griffin. A queen is named, or has the name, Shyashya. Queen Shyashya is composed of multiple and endlessly weaving lines of gyryffyn. There’s no foreground or background. One form of being leads to another to make a multitude of forms or beings. One could say, a joyful and vital form of non-existence is Queen Shyashya. The story of Queen Shyashya is a redemption of the lost old language or lost “paradise” as told by the griffin princess, Shin. Shin believes the tale is a fairy tale prior to myth. The tales are the stories that honor the creators or creating processes of the world. Email: binna@casco.art

Aarti received around 20 submissions in response to the assignment she posed: “What is this image, but one that caught her attention. When I saw these photographs, I was struck and perplexed, and in my own way, to the extent of my consciousness since. What did these pictures want, exactly? In that preliminary discussion, the images seemed to indicate that there was capacity for attributing language to what they were doing. And even Aarti’s subsequent Art Paper analysis indicates that what they represent is that which supersedes what can be seen. These photographs are rendered here as sketches that Aarti has made by hand, and their handmadeness is a significant aspect (Figs. 1-4). The reason she turned to drawing in this particular instance is that she is unsure about releasing these images to a public domain in photographic form. This might have something to do with what she calls their potential to feel seen across temporal terms. Sometimes we insist in public discussions that this “Natasha” is not a person, but we maintain that visiting Natasha is an invitation to encounter a presence nonetheless. What is this presence composed of? How is it felt? From where does it come to and what is it doing? While This Person Does Not Exist opens upon a terrain I am hesitant to enter, Aarti’s project reveals how to confront ‘the hidden and opaque forms of labor’ called ghostwork and to feel its presence across various platforms that claim to be computer-operated. It is widely understood that the commonplace notion of artificial intelligence rests on negating the material costs that have gone into machine learning. “The word ghost here,” she writes, “indicates that it is not just the physical absence of a person doing a particular job, but the pretense that such a person does not even exist; the alert laboring hand behind the magic of technology, the silence that requires spontaneity, creativity, and cultural interpretation is not.

Fig. 1-4: Laid-out Lightbox series of drawings by Aarti Sunder, 2022. “In one of our initial conversations with Aarti Sunder, she showed us a set of four photographs she had procured by posting a high-paying HIT, or human intelligence task, on a notorious online marketplace she’s been researching called Amazon Mechanical Turk — a crowdsourcing website that businesses use to hire geographically dispersed workers to perform discrete on-demand labor that computers are unable to do. The COVID-19 pandemic had made many people around the globe more aware of their condition. Aarti, who was staying at MIT at the time, was in dialogue with friends and colleagues to do. Natasha is a means of undoing knowledge or ways of knowing as we know, to say it again. Thus ask: What does this say about art, about art and how this “world” is created. We journey into other kinds of temporality and in different directions, a world of — the question of royalty, and how this “world” is created. We journey into other kinds of temporality and in different directions, a world of —

Notes


The Tone

Ghostwork

Nida Ghouse

Nida Ghouse is a writer and curator whose projects span media and disciplines, experimenting with ways of engaging artistic practices, in relation to activating materials and sites. E-mail: nighouse@bard.edu

Notes

1 http://www.thispersondoesnotexist.com

Angkrit Ajchariyasophon’s The Sanctuary is a 2½-acre plot of land in Chiang Rai, Thailand, which the artist began tending in 2002. The land came to belong to his family in the 1990s, and before then it had been used for growing pineapple and other seasonal crops. Subsequently, Angkrit would learn from a neighbor that there had been a lotus field and wetlands prior to cultivation, and that the grounds had been a place for the gathering of waterfowl. Determined to return it to a more natural state, Angkrit began experimenting with planting trees and other flora, with hopes also of attracting its original fauna.

But how to begin such an endeavour? Masanobu Fukuoka’s The One Straw Revolution would prove to be a suitable guide and inspiration, as Fukuoka saw nature as a network of complex dependencies. Within his seminal manifesto, Fukuoka extolled non-cultivation, and natural succession, Fukuoka’s strategy may be summarised as simply not getting in the way of nature.

While it is not Angkrit’s purpose to produce arable land, returning the land to nature would mean some measure of work, or at least the facilitation of growth. Amongst methods, Angkrit would employ Fukuoka’s practice of spontaneous seed broadcast—a carefree tossing of seeds roughly where soil conditions could provide them with the opportunity to take root. The process of transformation of land has thus taken the artist many years and much experimentation. It would seem his efforts have borne fruit—quite literally, too.

Walking through The Sanctuary—which incidentally is not too simple a task because, following Fukuoka, the land is covered with enthusiastic undergrowth rather than human-friendly paths—we spot a cluster of recently-bloomed pink flowers. Squatting down, Angkrit brushes aside these leaves to reveal white mycelium tendrils just underneath, and he invites me to feel this enriched soil. The humus is cool, friable, and clean to touch, and it emits a fresh and pleasing earthy scent.

Interest in fungal life seems to have bloomed in recent times, as warnings of climate crisis turn into reality. What may be more compelling is how this expanded knowledge of mycelial life might reorient our understanding of the world. For it is, indeed, entire worlds and systems that we are coming to fully understand. Even the assumption of ourselves as unified in form and consciousness is brought into question. Looking at our microbiomes, we are not singular organisms; we are ecologies.

As the fascinating exploration of fungi by Merlin Sheldrake reveals, “when we humanise the world, we may prevent ourselves from understanding the lives of other organisms on their own terms.”

June Yap is a curator based in Singapore and is currently the Director of Curatorial and Collections at the Singapore Art Museum. She wonders about trees ever so often. Email: june.yap@singaporeartmuseum.sg

Notas
Natasha as Code, or Future Friends Passing through the Digital Gate

By Ala Younis

In 1987, my uncle gifted us a computer. It was a product that was built by Yamaha in Japan, but as an Arabic-language technology that was conceived in 1983 in Kuwait. MSX Sakhr AX150 was a personal computer that operated in an Arabic interface and offered an array of software to engage with. We called it only Sakhr, an Arabic word that means rock but is also a common male name. At the time, we could not imagine an alternative to Sakhr’s limited color range and graphics possibilities. We spent hours on Sakhr trying every feature in its system and cartridges, until we eventually mastered booting its system, navigating it using tips from its manual, and learned how to mimic its operating sounds.

In 1986, Samia Halabq passed through a similar (digital) gate; her personal computer’s name was Amiga, a Spanish word that means female friend, the name of seeing an Apple II in her mathematician-sister’s house in 1983 – and successfully trying to use Logo, a software that taught one to draw a line as it travels – Samia shopped for her computer in New York. Samia read about the different computers on sale, visited computer shops, asked sales persons for details and information that were not necessarily known to them, and studied carefully the computers’ promotional videos. She finally bought an Amiga 1000 for 1000 USD, attracted to its system that offered much more color options than the other models. The artist began programming her art on this computer using Basic and C, studying these coding languages from manuals that sit until today in her library.

With Amiga, Samia delved deeper into a world of art-making. As an abstract painter, she questioned the medium versus the mind, before our eyes and in the screen becomes populated with a dense mesh of shapes and colors. It is short, but the journey was so full of details that the memory of its beginning might have faded already, requiring that we wear a guide and perform tours where works are stored as versions of series of codes, stored and indexed on 3½-inch floppy disks. The artist had carried them to exhibitions and performances on her bulky computer device, but for Natasha, we are showing them recorded or captured otherwise. When I visited Samia’s studio in New York, where she has lived since 1976, she demonstrated on her Amiga how she wrote and played the work. She feeds her desktop computer with floppy disks, one for the booting system, then another for some of her works that exist in versions, similar to how we save several word files for the same text, each with a little addition or omission. She types commands into the system, and this shows directories of folders and their content [Fig. 1]. She then types commands of the work (which is a program) that she wants to play, and it blows up into a full screen and presents one shape/sound after another [Fig. 2]. She cannot interrupt the work [program unless she cuts off the electrical supply. As we try to make a decision on how to show this work in Natasha, we also understand that the artwork is the code and not a particular manifestation that Samia has recorded in any stage of time. The work comes with information that is static and prima, and I ask myself: Can a digital art from 1987 show a sign of its age? Does it have to?

In this studio visit, I told Samia about the name of the Singapore Biennale edition that we were inviting her to participate in. Natasha, I said. Samia contained a smile. I explained how we are using a biennial format to rethink the interrupted givens of our professional and personal lives, and how we are trying to articulate our thoughts through close and intimate conversations with artists that inspire us with their intimate involvement and blurred boundaries between their life and work. Samia’s smile grew bigger, and she disappeared shortly to return with an orange book [Fig. 3]. Fascinating drawings that she made before and after her computer works, which codify the meanings of the lines and shapes we see in her digital works.

In these sketches, a purple line is a river, a red dot is a microbe, a pink arc is the shortest route to the river, and an orange arc is a house for meeting. These entangled worlds of Samia are abilities to capture with the mind, before our eyes and devices, a logic of commands that instructs (a computer to convey) a journey. Here, Natasha is a code, Amiga, or Sakhr – a digital gate passed through in 1987 – a set of energies, an intention of companionship, an institution of the mind that, sometimes, can be mediated through physical, technological, or cerebral abilities.

Ala Younis is an artist, co-founder of the publishing initiative Kayfa ta, co-Head of Berlinale’s Forum Expanded, and research scholar at al-Mawrid Arab Center for the Study of Art at NYU Abu Dhabi. E-mail: ala@younis@gmail.com

Notes
1 All quotations from Samia Halabq are from her unpublished text “My History with Digital Art”, drafted in July-August 2020.

Fig. 1: Samia Halabq showing her codes on Amiga, in a studio visit by Ala Younis, New York, 4 April 2022 (Photo by the author).

Fig. 2-3: Samia Halabq showing her work on Amiga (left) and her sketches (right) during a studio visit by Ala Younis, New York, 4 April 2022 (Photo by the author).

Niihau (1987) is a work named after an island in Hawaii, where Samia guest-taught before she returned to acquire her Amiga. A recording of the work, made in the same year, is two minutes and eight seconds. It shows a light violet 4:3 canvas with the word Niihau. In its upper left corner, Computer-generated sounds precede the visuals, which start as five interlacing oval shapes in different colors that start to override other shapes and each other. After few minutes, the screen becomes populated with a dense mesh of shapes and colors. It is short, but...
A Case of Eco-Public Art in Taiwan

The Meinung Yellow Butterfly Festival

Meiqin Wang

“Storm is coming in the afternoon, so we can only work till noon and this has been the case in the past several days,” artist Lin Yann-Lyn told me while we were looking at her husband Wang Yaw-Jun working on a massive installation artwork [Fig. 1]. Their daughter and son were helping their father with the installation. That morning, July 21, 2021, I was observing the creation of Wind of Summer in the famous tropical forest Yellow Butterfly Valley (YBV) of Meinung town. Located in southern Taiwan, this is a rural town inhabited by mostly Hakka people (an ethnic minority in Taiwan) who have created a distinctive agrarian culture [Fig. 2]. Summer here is the season of daily thunderstorms in the afternoon, so the artwork developed slowly.

Created in the shape of a gigantic squirrel from organic materials such as vines and tree branches [Fig. 3], the work represents a forest elf and embodies Wang’s appreciation of the dynamic, poetic, and mysterious natural world in the forest. He wrote: “The innocent life exists because of the abundant water, fertile soil, and healthy forest.” Both Wang and his wife are nature-loving people who live in a house situated amid farm fields bordering a foothill area in Meinung where squirrels frequent. He started in early July to construct the framework of the creature at his backyard. Then, this structure was transported to the forest where the family worked together for two more weeks until its completion.

An unpretentious artwork made of and for nature, Wind of Summer will stay in the forest until it disintegrates naturally, without leaving any art-induced garbage behind. This simple piece embodies a profound respect for nature – both its nourishing and destructive capabilities – and a desire to work with natural force while reducing the environmental footprints of art to a minimum. This is an ecologically conscious paradigm of thinking that has shaped much of Meinung’s community activism. As the main environmental artwork commissioned by the 23rd Meinung Yellow Butterfly Festival (MYBF) in 2021, Wind of Summer carries on the characteristics of artistic production promoted at MYBF: environment- and family-friendly, community-based, and simple and profound at once.

The annual MYBF was born for the purpose, and it served as a major platform facilitating people of different backgrounds to concentrate their energy, knowledge, and social resources for the anti-dam movement. With well-coordinated efforts, the movement lasted for eight years, forcing official budget for the dam to be eliminated multiple times. Eventually, it achieved a significant success in 2000 when the newly elected president Chen Shui-bian promised not to build the Dam. MYBF has since become the cultural legend of grassroots mobilization Meinung Hakka culture. It is the lasting legacy of the Hakka people’s (an ethnic minority in Taiwan) struggle against the tide of industrialization and rural decline. Importantly, it continues to serve as a major platform to promote environmental protection, ecological education, and sustainable development.

In the past decade, MYBF has gradually turned into an environmental art festival, and in 2015 it adopted the biennial format, rebranding itself as an environmental art biennial that aspires to “think globally, act locally.” “Think globally” concerns its focus on issues of agriculture, nature, and sustainability that are pertinent to rural communities across the world. “Act locally” reflects MYBF’s efforts to foreground local talents and cultivate local collaborative networks. It has striven to engage local people of different ages and various backgrounds in a wide range of reparative works that seek to re-establish a sustainable relationship between human society and the ecosystem that they are part of. It is now a multi-dimensional, multi-medium, and multi-month arts festival that combines ritual, performance art, theater, exhibition, workshops, public talks, field trips, guided tours, youth camps, volunteer training, an artist-in-residence program, sports, craft fairs, and farmers markets, among others.

One can say that MYBF has evolved into an encompassing project of socially engaged public art, the very subject of my recent edited book. Specifically, it is a case of eco-public art, given its commitment to ecological literacy and sustainable human-world interactions via public arts production and collaborative community experiences. As a long-term eco-public art project, MYBF is a product of the ongoing environmental activism in Taiwan that strives to advance the discourse of ecological protection and promote alternative (i.e., nonexploitative) imaginations about the relationship between human beings and the environment. It has in turn fostered a vibrant community culture.
centering on eco-friendly agricultural practices, alternative lifestyle experiments, and public arts productions in and around Meinung town. By bringing people close to nature, to farming, and to each other, MYBF has also contributed to new forms of art and cultural production, rural living, community experience, and social imagination.

Integrating ecological consciousness in collective learning and community collaboration has been the signature approach of MYBF. Back in 2019, for example, the above-mentioned Lin Yann-Lyn was one of the local artists commissioned for environmental artworks. A fiber artist skilled in weaving with plant-based materials, she led a one-week workshop that took adult and young participants (several of them were families) to explore the flora in YBV, learn about natural materials, and observe and experience nature through one’s bodily immersion in it. They collected durable vines from the forest and individually weaved animal forms based on personal preferences, such as boa, butterfly, dragonfly, fish, lizard, owl, etc. All of these were then integrated into a collective environmental art piece – “We Weave a Dream in the Tree” (Fig. 1) – as the final product of their efforts.

The walk (and documentary) shed light on the current ecosystem of the Meinung Creek. The Butterfly Ceremony was followed by two other thematic activities in August: (1) an artist talk and public discussion on this year’s environmental artwork Wind of Summer, and (2) a concert featuring songs from a 12-minute video of the same title by Lauwei Wei, a local video artist and filmmaker who participated in an anti-dam campaign, see Jeffrey Hou, “Grassroots Practice of Environmental Writing and Film: ‘Unsung’” (University of California, Berkeley, 2000).

Return to the Butterfly Ceremony was followed by two other thematic activities in August: (1) an artist talk and public discussion on this year’s environmental artwork Wind of Summer, and (2) a concert featuring songs from a 12-minute video of the same title by Lauwei Wei, a local video artist and filmmaker who participated in an anti-dam campaign, see Jeffrey Hou, “Grassroots Practice of Environmental Writing and Film: ‘Unsung’” (University of California, Berkeley, 2000).

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6 Jeffrey Hou, “Grassroots Practice of Environmental Writing and Film: ‘Unsung’” (University of California, Berkeley, 2000).
7 Jeffrey Hou, 66.
14 Jeffrey Hou, 66.
I met Nishal, a 27-year-old man, in Colombo in early July 2022. He was buying essentials for his upcoming journey. On 12 July, Nishal’s ship departed from the Port of Colombo with a crew of 34. Nine Russians and 25 Sri Lankans were on board, all young and hopeful. The team was united in the task of transporting hundreds of containers across the globe, starting in the USA.

On the same day, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the now former President of Sri Lanka, left the country bound for Singapore. Sri Lanka went bankrupt after months of crisis, social unrest escalated, and the new establishment was left with the challenge of rebuilding a collapsing nation.

Realistic hopes
Hour by hour, week by week, the ground situation changes. The states of emergency passed in parliament, former President Rajapaksa’s sons extended in Singapore, activists were arrested, and a court seeks to hold those responsible for the crisis accountable. It all happens in within hours, while people kept queuing for fuel. At the end of July schools partially reopened, a sort of rehearsal of normality.

In October this year, Nishal will return to the island and will likely see a different Sri Lanka. He hopes that his parents and girlfriend have regular access to gas for cooking and fuel for transportation. He believes that there will be a solid plan for the economy of the country. He trusts that a reception committee of citizens will have left seeking a better future.

John Smith

Nishal’s girlfriend Radeeka helps her mother make breakfast. As gas has been out for weeks, preparing breakfast involves waking up earlier, gathering dana (left-over palm branches), cooking, and then scrubbing pots hard. Currently, Sri Lanka is experiencing the most serious economic, political, and social crisis in its history. In many parts of the country, the 26-year war has never directly affected the people this much. As a result of the lack of debt repayment, the rampant inflation, and the lack of many basic necessities (e.g., fuel, medicine, food), the island is in the midst of complete economic chaos. Several factors – mismanagement, corruption, lack of political vision, a sudden ban on agricultural pesticides, COVID-19, and the energy crisis in Europe – have contributed to the downfall and social isolation of millions of Sri Lankans.

The Rajapaksa family
The Rajapaksa dynasty has long held power in Sri Lanka. In the 1950s, D.A. Rajapaksa (1905-1967) was the patriarch, and later his sons stepped into politics. One of these sons, Mahinda (b. 1945), became President in 2005. During his tenure, his brothers and family members held different powerful positions. Among them Basil (b. 1951) and Gotabaya (b. 1949) kept key strategic ministerial roles till Gotabaya, in 2019, eventually became President himself. It’s not a matter of individual skills alone. Since the final phases of the Civil War (2009), the Rajapaksa families have constructed an extensive political, economic, and financial network. Over many years, they have established companies, firms, financial institutions, and connected these to government and foreign donors. China played a major role in funding gigantic projects, supposedly for people’s benefit, but often for enhancing the ruling family’s power and image. It is true that some projects were necessary for the country to develop, such as highways, ports, and power plants, but loans were a noose for the government.

Additionally, Chinese banks provided huge loans to Sri Lanka for the construction of useless works that merely contributed to rulers’ enormous economic wealth at the expense of the people.

One of Sri Lanka’s well-known and well-exploited fortunes is that it is in a highly strategic geopolitical position. For this reason alone, the offers of support from India and the USA, the requests for stability from Europe, and the economic interests of Russia and China continue. Yet again, everyone is ready to use Sri Lanka for political interest. Ukraine’s president, for example, declared that Russia must be considered responsible for the Sri Lanka crisis. China, India, the USA, Europe, the United Kingdom, and others, continue to strongly affirm their willingness to help Sri Lankans and the nation. The reality, however, is that such powers just make sure that their physical, financial, and political positions remain intact. Rather than a blessing, this bond appears to be a curse. China comes forward offering financial support and loans: one of the roots of the problem trying again to become the solution.

Street protests
On July 9, 2022, the situation spiraled out of control. Seen from above, the scene resembled a street scene during one of the great religious holidays. The heat was, as always, suffocating, the screams of the crowd deafening. The crowd pushed everyone towards a single center: the presidential palace. That same white building, always so immaculate and silent, was protected by yellow police barriers just a few hours ago. So protected, that the two rows of fences also prevented people from seeing inside. But the crowd managed to enter, to bathe in the pool, and to use the President’s toilets, as a form of revenge.

On July 11, the President, the highest expression of a broken political class, announced his resignation, after leaving the same building. Once again, Gotabaya Rajapaksa did not keep his promises: he left the country using the immunity changes given to his father and he did not present his resignation on the day he publicly declared it, because he was concerned about beingsurfaced in public. As usual, first personal and family gain and then, eventually, the public interest. The political future of the country fluctuated for days, reflected in countless projections, predictions, and snide comments. Ranil Wickremesinghe was named Acting President after Rajapaksa escaped. What the Acting President did was what governments in Sri Lanka have always done in times of hardship: he imposed curfews in different areas of the country and enacted the emergency law. People are used to these measures: during wartime, during the orchestrated communal riot in 2018, following the Easter attacks in 2019, and then during COVID-19 in 2020. Curfew and emergency laws were imposed so many times that, now, people no longer feel their weight. Soon, Wickremesinghe was elected by the Parliament as the eighth President of the country with a majority of 134 votes. Hopefully this is the beginning of a new era of stability, so needed and deserved by Sri Lanka’s people.

A matter of accountability
In the new government, just after the presidential election, many of the same mistakes were confirmed, raising another crucial question: can the parliament bring about change that are needed, or will continued the same immobility?Peculiarly, seeing the former President flee, the Supreme Court banned his powerful brothers from leaving the country. The end of the dynasty. Yet many old incidents and crimes remain unresolved. Many attempts to identify root causes and direct responsibilities have failed in the past.

This crisis showed how much the people of Sri Lanka changed since the end of the war in terms of public participation. It also showed how much the democracy matured. The #GotaGoHome or #GotaRatsa – later Aragala* – movement has written the history of Sri Lankans as a diverse nation in which Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Agnostics, and Atheists united for a common goal of justice and development for all. Overall, this movement has demonstrated enduring solidarity and civil faith, showing that there is an alternative to violence and war. And that the alternative is doable. In Colombo and several other cities, hundreds of thousands of people joined the peaceful sit-ins, regardless of weather, opponents, and political attempts of dodging their motivation.

Fact and History will prove whether the political system has changed as well. Whether the new leaders people will be seen through their actions and the implementation of their policies. Several issues remain unresolved, including delegation of power, constitutional reforms, economic plans, international positioning.

Until now, new leaders and politicians have not been able to find an appropriate space. It’s not about new names. It’s about a new pattern of living politics, a new approach to power, an open space for participation, and a strong commitment to accountability and inclusion. There is often a vicious circle here: politicians discourage people from participating, and people do not stand up to discourage them.

Notes
2. [https://www.nulitnews.com/2022/07/09/](https://www.nulitnews.com/2022/07/09/)
3. [https://gohomegota.online/](https://gohomegota.online/)
4. [https://www.adaderana.lk/news/83636/](https://www.adaderana.lk/news/83636/)
5. [https://www.icij.org/investigations/](https://www.icij.org/investigations/)
7. [https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/13/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/13/)
8. [https://www.adaderana.lk/news/83636/](https://www.adaderana.lk/news/83636/)
9. [https://www.icij.org/investigations/](https://www.icij.org/investigations/)

Fig. 1: An entire town blocked by queues for fuel (Photo courtesy of Dilip Kumar, 2022).

Sri Lanka: Seeking a better future

John Smith

Sri Lanka in crisis

10

Sri Lanka at the Crossroad of Its History

John Smith
Quezon City: Asia’s Lesser-Known Planned Capital City

Ian Morley

Quezon City was founded in 1939 as the future postcolonial capital of the Philippines. Inspired by the social values of the Commonwealth Government (established 1935), the settlement was meant to articulate modernity, equity, and the Filipino soul in architectural and environmental form. Yet, despite the intention to devise Quezon City as somewhere “better planned” and “more beautiful” than any existing urban settlement in the Philippine Islands, it is a place largely ignored within the historiography of Asian urbanism.

Notes
2. The Philippine Statistics Authority lists Quezon City’s population on May 1, 2020 as being 3,120,098 people.
Afrasia: An Emerging Macro-Region

One might assume that those engaged in African studies are typically African, European, or American. However, such an assumption does not reflect reality. Looking at East Asia, the Japan Association for African Studies has nearly 1000 members. The majority are Japanese who carry out ethnographic fieldwork in Africa at the level of local villages. African studies have also developed remarkably in China, India, and South Korea, each in its own way.

Asia and Africa as a single unit

I visited Africa for the first time in 1989 to take part in an NGO mission to observe Namibia’s independence elections. Flying with Malaysia Airlines, I approached the African continent with stopovers in Mauritius and Madagascar. On the way back, as the airplane from Kuala Lumpur to Tokyo did not fly as scheduled, the airlines offered the passengers sightseeing in Melaka, where merchants from Portugal, the Netherlands, West Asia, China, and the Ryukyus roamed around centuries ago.

Over the 30 years that have passed since then, I have enjoyed sojourns in Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Bangkok, Delhi, Dubai, and Istanbul in transit to African cities. As travelling via Europe is an expensive, time-consuming detour, one needs to go via an Asian city to travel from Japan to Africa. I naturally got into the habit of thinking of Asia and Africa in combination.

What if we were to envision Africa and Asia as one large region? Using NASA satellite imagery, I created an image that centres on what ancient Greek sailors called the Erythraean Sea (Fig. 1). In the first volume of A Study of History, Arnold Toynbee gave the term Afrasia to the steppe belt stretching from West Asia to North Africa, a part of the cradles of civilisations.1 Historians today call the western part of the Indian Ocean, where the cosmopolitan Swahili civilisation flourished, the Afrasian Sea.2 I define Afrasia more broadly, following the terminology of Ali Mazrui and Seifudein Adem, as a macro-region that embraces both the African and Asian continents plus their surrounding islands.3

Swahili civilisation flourished, the Afrasian Sea.1 I define Afrasia more broadly, following the terminology of Ali Mazrui and Seifudein Adem, as a macro-region that embraces both the African and Asian continents plus their surrounding islands.3 Let us take a macroscopic, futuristic view. People living in this broader Afrasia will make up the overwhelming majority of the world’s population by the end of the 21st century. This trend is confirmed by long-term projections of demographic change by world region (Fig. 2).4 The population of Asia is projected to plateau around 2050 and gradually decline in the second half of this century, while the population of Africa is expected to increase five-fold throughout the 21st century due to relatively high fertility rates and improvements in health conditions in the region. We can get an idea of the magnitude of the change by looking at the population distribution at the starting and ending points of the 100-year time span: in 2100, Asians and Africans will each account for around 40 percent of the world’s population, thereby representing more than 80 percent of the total in combination (Fig. 3). The combined area of Asian nations is roughly equal to the combined area of African nations. Therefore, given that the population sizes of the two regions will be on a par by the beginning of the 22nd century, the population densities of the two regions will also become almost equal. In terms of the social landscape, Africa’s future may look like India’s present.5

If demographers adopt different assumptions, the resulting figures may change significantly. However, recent research conducted by The Lancet has also reached similar conclusions about the distribution of the world’s population in 2100.6 The future shape of the planet will also be contoured by the dialogue that the peoples of Africa and Asia, the big twins, will organise.

History matters

The Japanese scholar of Middle Eastern studies Itagaki Yuzo once proposed the idea of ‘r-region’. The variable ‘r’ can be any countable number, and this means that individuals can freely conceive and choose different regions, or spheres/spaces in which...
human activities are embedded, based on their multiple identities. One may belong to various regions at diverse levels, from a village, a network of individuals, a nation, or a group of nations to the globe at the same time. While a region can be politically constructed, it may also be a religious community without specific geographical boundaries or a group of people who share certain secular values. In fact, a region may be a historical imagining that exists only in the memory of an individual.7

With different motivations, people have already discussed a number of other macro-regions combining two internally diverse regions: Eurasia, Eurafrica, Eurabia, Afrabia, and Chinafrique, etc. The Americas is another region already discussed a number of other macro-regions or on the individual's worldview? A continent that experiences a common history of being colonised by the West. Europe began to colonise Africa and Asia for uniting Africa and Asia? Does it have the experience of being colonised by the West. And yet the formerly colonised nations must share and internalise the norm against anti-Western mindset. The era of political hegemonic behaviours within the region. When it is presented on a world map, we can see the people of Afrasia do not cause much damage to the nature of the globe (Fig. 5). However, considering the expected impacts of climate change on the production of wheat, rice, and maize (the percentage change between the 1970-2000 baseline and 2080), tropical Afrasia will suffer a big loss (Fig. 6). It is morally unacceptable that the region that has been relatively friendly to the planet should be the one to bear the brunt of global environmental destruction.

Cultural triangulation
Afrasia is the largest variant of ‘macro-region’ imaginable on the globe. Let us zoom out and look at the world map. And then let us zoom in on the level of towns, villages, networks of individuals, and even an individual person. The framing of a macro-region may influence our approach when conducting fieldwork in specific locations.
Iinterrogate the nature of extremism itself as examining whether it is possible for a revolutionary to reclaim ordinariness in post-independence calm. I also challenge the mutual exclusivity of Gandhian civil disobedience and armed resistance by uncovering the composite identities of disobedience and armed resistance by post-independence calm. I also challenge movement transcended differences in their how a solidarity forged during the freedom in 1932 for the attempted assassination of while in confinement. Bina Das was convicted irretrievably taken away from their mission, part of their youth as political prisoners. Raktakarabi 1940s. Aside from reminiscing about political prison grounds. Both enacted male roles since Raktakarabi (“Riﬁng Chains”). During a reunion of Dasgupta and Das at Hijli, Bina relived how she and Bina Das used a crack in the wall above a putrid drain to catch sight of trains beyond the Hijli Jail compound.4 Incidentally, the British prison was a layered materials to complete her M.A. in Economics. Banalata successfully resisted patriarchal secret and storage and distribution of arms to revolutionaries, records an intimate account of this transformation: “She was a gentle, emotional girl, also an intellectual and ﬁrst in her class. An idealism shone on her face – She covered her face when I asked her to consider the shock to her parents. ‘Don’t tell them, please.’”1 Das had gone to Dasgupta to procure a revolver for an assassination attempt on Governor Stanley Jackson. The attempted assassination at the Calcutta University convocation, the trial of Bina Das, and her eloquent confession have been widely imbibed with idealism. Her role, even in incarceration, was “to teach a suppliant race the lesson of embracing death.”2 The prison years enabled a gradual evolution of Das’ political ideology from one of armed extremism to a composite revolutionary identity. Adopting Gandhian methods, she led inmates on a hunger strike in Midnapore Jail to protest various forms of physical violence and harassment by a particular jaller. A direct association with Gandhi began when he visited Alipore Jail and she was unafraid to debate him on his rigid adherence to non-violence. Nearly a decade later, they would walk together, breakfast, on a relief mission in riot-torn Noakhali. Her commitment to labor and mass movements can also be traced to prison kinship networks. These networks transcended class boundaries and included women convicts in the general wards. She views such women as subversive figures, whether in their retaliation against male violence or even through their theft of food during the British-engineered famine of 1943.3 Similarly, Banalata Sen recalls her incarceration as a period of ideological development and enrichment. At the time of her arrest, she was a member of the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and, previously, of the Marxist wing of Anushilan Samity, Anushilan and Jugantar were the two original revolutionary, nationalist organizations in Bengal. Prison gave Banalata a platform to meet seasoned revolutionaries, including Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, and Ujula Majumder, who had been involved with the Chittagong Massacre5 and direct attacks on British ofﬁcials. The female year in Presidency Jail became a forum of debate, which also led Banalata to evaluate her radical commitments against the moderate principles of the Indian National Congress. Kamala Dasgupta writes of a reading circle comprising herself, Banalata, Pratibha Bhardwaj, and Nimrana Roy, Banalata’s passion was for discussing Anti-Dühring by Engels. The debates, which carried on till the early hours and were particularly animated by Banalata Choudhury, and others, circa 1982 (Photo from the author’s family archives). Fig. 1: Reunion of Revolutionaries, including Nirmala Acharja, Banalata Sen, Pratibha Bhardwaj, Kamala Dasgupta, Bina Das, Induashree Ghosh, Sunil Chouboury, and others, circa 1982 (Photo from the author’s family archives). Of Extremist Grandmothers Recalling Banalata Sen and Bina Das, Revolutionaries in the Indian Struggle for Independence Sambalata Rakshith

Women revolutionaries in the Indian struggle for independence are often idealized in textbooks – and in the popular imagination – as Agnikanya, ﬁrebrand daughters of a subjugated nation. Modern scholarship on the subject has eschewed such idealistic commemorations and examined the conditions that gave rise to a homegrown women’s movement in the period following the non-cooperation movement of 1920. A movement is characterized not by isolated acts of violence, but by organized systems of resistance. Such systems, in an occupied country, are supported by clandestine networks of recruitment. At a time when women had limited mobility and higher education came with patriarchal surveillance, the formation of women-led fronts and the induction of women into existing subversive organizations marked a remarkable disruption of the political space. In this article, I attempt an alternative and more intimate recollection of the movement. I do so by documenting the story of my grandmother Banalata Sen (1915-1989), a relatively unassuming name among women revolutionaries, whose experiences I interweave with those of Bina Das (1911-1986), a revolutionary who is far more widely recognized.

In the summer of 1964, my grandmother Banalata Sen and my mother Subhata Rakshith paid an unannounced visit to Ujjala Majumder at her residence in Park Circus, Calcutta. Ujjala’s words upon opening the door were, “Cannot be true, Bana.”7 My mother’s recollection of the precise words – decades later – is linked to the transfiguring power of the moment. This was the ﬁrst meeting of the two revolutionaries after their time in Presidency Jail in the mid-1940s. Aside from reminiscing about political events led Das to eschew Gandhian principles in favor of focused underground activity.4 Unlike Bina Das, Banalata Sen’s patriotism did not crystallize from familial ideological inﬂuences. Her father, was a successful kabyar (“Kabyadic practitioner”) who supported a rural estate in Kartalpur, Bangladesh. Banalata had six sisters and two brothers; many of her siblings died young. There was no expectation to pursue studies beyond a semi-formal early education. Her oldest sister was married off young to an older groom with an earlier wife and child, and she endured a long widowhood. But Banalata successfully resisted patriarchal coercion and courage. She covered her face when I asked her to consider the shock to her parents. ‘Don’t tell them, please.’”1 Das had gone to Dasgupta to procure a revolver for an assassination attempt on Governor Stanley Jackson. The attempted assassination at the Calcutta University convocation, the trial of Bina Das, and her eloquent confession have been widely covered in historical and nationalist texts, fostering an ethos of female revolutionary courage and sacrifice. Unlike Bina Das, Banalata Sen’s patriotism did not crystallize from familial ideological influences. Her father, was a successful kabyar (“Kabyadic practitioner”) who supported a rural estate in Kartalpur, Bangladesh. Banalata had six sisters and two brothers; many of her siblings died young. There was no expectation to pursue studies beyond a semi-formal early education. Her oldest sister was married off young to an older groom with an earlier wife and child, and she endured a long widowhood. But Banalata successfully resisted patriarchal coercion and courage. She covered her face when I asked her to consider the shock to her parents. ‘Don’t tell them, please.’”1 Das had gone to Dasgupta to procure a revolver for an assassination attempt on Governor Stanley Jackson. The attempted assassination at the Calcutta University convocation, the trial of Bina Das, and her eloquent confession have been widely covered in historical and nationalist texts, fostering an ethos of female revolutionary courage and sacrifice.
nationalist work was woven into her academic life with a deliberate precision. Matriculating with distinction as a private candidate, Banalata moved to Calcutta to seek intermediate studies. To further education in Calcutta, she first took a basic training course and found employment as a primary teacher. Due to this period, she always asked herself: my mother nor my aunt can convincingly reconstruct the process by which a female student of about 20 years old, settled on her own in an unfamiliar city, secured board and employment, and pursued her education. Banalata was possibly assisted by Satyanarayan Sen, an elder cousin who was settled in Calcutta. Such linkages in an extended family, clustered in rural Bengal but spreading across rural towns to the capital, provided a resilient support network to women revolutionaries.

Banalata’s intermediate and undergraduate education was at Women’s College, Calcutta. She was among the first cohorts to graduate from this institution. Morning classes allowed her to continue teaching in the afternoon and work as a private tutor during the evenings. Subsequently, she pursued a Master of Arts in Economics at Calcutta University. Throughout her student years, Banalata resided in a women’s hostel in North Calcutta. Claiming the hostel as accommodation and private tuition as supplemental income was an exigency for a female migrant student. These domains were domains of education where even unaccompanied commuting was unpleasant. Manikuntala Sen, who founded the women’s hostel in North Calcutta, where she remained under house arrest until her escape to Germany in 1941. After the dissolution of Anushilan Samity, Banalata joined the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and worked in both labor and nationalist movements. Banalata was an essential recruiter and organizer of protest marches in North Calcutta during the August revolution of 1942. The high drama of the protest that led to her arrest has remained an enduring feature in our family history. That day, the ferocity of a police raid took the activists by surprise. Banalata, who led the rally, fell on her face during the ensuing stampede but survived police bullets and batons on her body while she iterated on the advice of party cadres, who put up posters at University Institute calling ‘vengeance for the martyrs of Calcutta in the past. She was arrested by police who maintained a reliable network of informants. Notable was University Senate, where her work centered on women’s labor in the tea industry. Despite compiling data from fieldwork, she was unable to finish the project on Bina Das who had completed his law degree in prison, set up a successful small dairy farm. While teaching economics at Sheila Devi College, Banalata earned a PhD on women’s labor in the tea industry. Despite intermittent amnesia, it is likely that Banalata had envisioned a teaching career as the original organ of Anushilan Samity. The nationalists who particularly inspired her were Madhuri Baskar Chatterjee, and Ashfaqullah Khan (1920-1927). Among those present were Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, and Pratibha Bhadra. The light and shadow of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed measure of solace as an educator. She taught young women revolutionaries in the early 1980s, coordinated and hosted by Banalata at her house, remains vivid in my memory [Fig. 1]. Among those present were Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, Sambarta Rakshit, Indira Singha Ghosh, and Pratibha Bhadra. The light and shadow of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed frame. While in a British prison or in that gathering, such a consciousness was a manifestation of freedom itself. The house (which remains my parental home) resounded with the recitation of the song of Bade Matarom by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. I recall my mother joining in. The female yard of Presidency Jail. I was at her feet, and she narrated a capture of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed frame. While in a British prison or in that gathering, such a consciousness was a manifestation of freedom itself.

Notes

Quiescence and disquietude: 1947-1989

The memory of a particular Sunday in the early 1980s has stayed with me. I spent the day at the secondary school in Jalpaiguri, a suburban town in North Bengal, where I spent my student years. Banalata was then the primary breadwinner of the family. She was also the caregiver of my mother. Around 1951, the family moved to Jalpaiguri, a small town in North Bengal, where they set up a single-family home with a small dairy farm. While teaching economics at Sheila Devi College, Banalata earned a PhD on women’s labor in the tea industry. Despite intermittent amnesia, it is likely that Banalata had envisioned a teaching career as the original organ of Anushilan Samity. The nationalists who particularly inspired her were Madhuri Baskar Chatterjee, and Ashfaqullah Khan (1920-1927). Among those present were Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, and Pratibha Bhadra. The light and shadow of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed measure of solace as an educator. She taught young women revolutionaries in the early 1980s, coordinated and hosted by Banalata at her house, remains vivid in my memory [Fig. 1]. Among those present were Bina Das, Kamala Dasgupta, Sambarta Rakshit, Indira Singha Ghosh, and Pratibha Bhadra. The light and shadow of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed frame. While in a British prison or in that gathering, such a consciousness was a manifestation of freedom itself. The house (which remains my parental home) resounded with the recitation of the song of Bade Matarom by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. I recall my mother joining in. The female yard of Presidency Jail. I was at her feet, and she narrated a capture of a spirit that did not belong in a fixed frame. While in a British prison or in that gathering, such a consciousness was a manifestation of freedom itself.
The Pop Pacific and K-pop
K-pop as a transnational phenomenon

BTS’s performance of their hit song “DNA” at the American Music Awards in 2017 in front of screaming fans marked the triumphant arrival of Korea as a producer of cool culture to mainstream American audiences. This event marked the first time a K-pop boy band performed at a major American music awards show, and it was also BTS’s mainstream US television debut [Fig. 1]. While Psy’s earlier viral hit “Gangnam Style” (2012) achieved global popularity, it was more of a novelty hit renowned mainly for its unusual depictions of Korean culture. BTS’s performance, on the other hand, marked K-pop’s breakthrough in the United States, the world’s largest music market. Yet, BTS’s performance in the United States was not the first milestone for K-pop, as K-pop had already achieved popular recognition in the 2000s in Asia and especially in Japan, the world’s second-largest music market. This is surprising since in the 1990s, Korea was not known as an exporter of popular culture. One of the reasons for the popularity of K-pop in Asia was that it expresses a larger hybrid transcultural “K-culture” labeled as “Made-in-Korea.” As much as K-pop is not much is culturally Korean about it. BTS’s performance represented this K-culture because, while performing intricate Western choreography and wearing stylish Western fashions, the group also sang in Korean peppered with some English phrases. Importantly, BTS performed a culture that Korean Americans helped create. Korean Americans in the 2000s served as cultural brokers helping to create early K-pop and K-culture. This flow of culture, as seen in BTS’s performance, has then come back to the United States to influence Asian-American youth. The rise of K-pop reflects the rise of Korea as a cultural production center in what we call the “Pop Pacific.”

Ambassadors of K-Culture
Korean Americans, Korea, and K-pop

Jayson M. Chun and Eun Bin Suk

The Pop Pacific and K-pop culture: K-pop as a transcultural phenomenon

K-pop is associated with the rise of Korean culture worldwide. Yet, K-pop music use mostly English-language signs and pseudo-American settings. In most videos, there is this symbolic reference to Korea and a startling lack of signs in Hangul. TWICE, a multinational girl group of performers from Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, invoked the image of American students in their video for “Cherish Up” (2016), performing in a gymnasium at an American-style high school pop rally with English signs in the background. With the sound off, this video invokes the image of Asian-American cheerleaders performing in a high school or college, like a mishmash hybrid of Korean and American settings (Fig. 2). To understand the rise of K-pop and Korean and American settings, consider that K-pop is part of a larger “K-culture.” We define this culture as encompassing K-pop, K-cinema, K-drama, K-fashion, and K-food. As this essay will show, K-pop invokes this hybrid culture because Korean Americans were early pioneers of this music.

The “K” in K-culture stands for Korea, but it also represents a larger cultural sphere for what we call the “Pop Pacific.” This sphere consists mostly of the US, Japan, and Korea (with significant influences from places such as Europe and Southeast Asia), which combine to create a transcultural Pacific culture. Korea is one of the major cultural centers of production in the “Pop Pacific” through the export of K-pop overseas. Rather than being a barrier, the Pacific, as ancient Polynesians used it, functions as a route that connects people and culture. This sphere began in the early 20th century, around the time when immigration and the Internet accelerated this transnational flow. The “Pop Pacific” reveals the links between Korea and the United States and how much of K-pop was part of a larger global web of popular music. “K-culture” also contains much Western-influenced culture, such as coffee shops, fashion, and cosmetics alongside native Korean culture. According to Joo Yong-ha, a professor of folklore studies at the Academy of Korean Studies, non-Koreans identify chimaek (chicken and beer) and K-pop when they think about Korea. Yet most Koreans do not consider it Korean food. Joo recommends focusing on the concept of “K-food” rather than arguing over whether or not this dish is a Korean dish. It is difficult to describe the difference between Korean culture and K-culture because Korean culture has been influenced at various times by China, Japanese colonialism, and US military bases. Perhaps food could illustrate this relationship between Korean culture and K-culture. To many Koreans, kimchi is the national dish, yet most Koreans do not consider it Korean food. Joo recommends focusing on the concept of “K-food” rather than arguing over whether or not this dish is a Korean dish.

Korean Americans and the making of K-pop
Korean Americans played a key role in early K-pop. In Korea, “American” has a cultural cachet, so Korean Americans performing K-pop contributed to making it become “cool” in Korea, and then this music was re-exported to the rest of the world as “K-pop.” Seen as inauthentic Hawaiians at home but authentic Americans overseas, Korean Americans helped to turn the “K” in K-pop into a pan-Pacific culture appealing to international audiences in places like Japan and the US. One of the hallmarks of K-pop is its frequent citations of African-American culture. Scholars trace the beginnings of K-pop to 1992 with Sea Taji-wo aideul (“Hand in Hand,” 1992), a trio who invoked American culture through their use of African-American hip-hop fashions, street beats, dancing, and samples from American artists. Their music appealed to Korean youth, much to the dismay of their parents. By using American imagery, Sea Taji and Boys reflected the strong influence of American culture – especially after the end of military rule in the late 1980s – and marked the rise of Korean popular music favored by teenage fans during the 1990s. Also, Korean Americans mainly from Los Angeles contributed to the popularization of the early K-pop scene by adding an American cultural appeal. Some historical background will shed light on the Korean-American influence on K-pop.

One historical background will shed light on the Korean-American influence on K-pop. Since the 1960s, Koreatowns became the focal points of Korean settlement. There were 11,000 Korean immigrants in 1960, but due to the change in immigration policy, that number increased to 290,000 in 1980, a 2500 percent increase. Koreatown became contact zones for the children of these immigrants to experience many different cultures, especially African-American culture. A contact zone like the Los Angeles metro area played a key role in the creation of what we call the “DNA of K-pop” because many K-pop artists hailed from that area. To many Koreans, LA was both a place of fantasy and threat, reflecting Hollywood-produced popular culture. H.O.T. was a K-pop group in the early 1990s in Los Angeles and consisted of its members, Tony Ahn, hailed from L.A. Because of his fluency in English, Korean youth were fascinated with Ahn and his hip image. In addition, Lano Park, Tiffany Young (from the group Girls Generation), and Tiger JK are some other examples of K-pop pioneers from LA. Furthermore, as Young Dae Kim points out, many K-pop performers were not Korean Americans; rather, many would be better described as gajeo, a Korean term that “…broadly encompasses people who are either born or raised overseas, with or without a foreign nationality of which they chose to live.”

As seen in Kang’s example, the Korean press in the early 1990s was alarmist at American influences on teenagers. If Kang represented unwanted emotional sentimentality, then Yang Joan-il, a gajeo returned from America in 1990, represented a darker threat with his androgynous fashions, wild dancing, and inability to properly use the Korean language. Although the norm in K-pop now, and for world music of his time, his gender-bending appearance shocked Koreans. Yang was seen as such a threat that the SBS radio program that he co-hosted was suspended for some months because of his excessive use of English. Facing such negative publicity, he faded from the public eye (although he made a guest appearance in 2019 on a nostalgia TV program). As seen in Kang and Yang, the Korean press viewed American culture as a threat to Korean culture but also feared them as spreaders of negative American influences.

The Korean-American RBX boy band Solid (1993-1997) played a key role by providing American-sounding K-pop from model, church-going gajeo, thus rendering the music safe for Korean youth consumption. This trio, composed of Korean Americans from Orange County, California, sang the smash 1995 hit “I’ll Be Your Juliette” (아이며, 왜 너야?) and then “I...
K-pop and Asian America

K-pop is an influential part of Asian-American culture. K-pop has become a means for panethnic Asian-American youth to feel an Asian-American fusion. Is K-pop an Asian-American media? What do we mean by Asian-American culture? What do we mean by Asian-American media representations?

K-pop as the “sweet spot” with just enough rebellion

While Asian immigrant youths may be turned off by the hypersexuality of K-pop in the US media, K-pop music allows for a bit of rebellion that can satisfy those youths, but with enough resonance to allow for one’s values learned at home. K-pop stars address racism and homophobia, conveying a humble, well-managed image. K-pop idols follow a strict code of conduct, and are encouraged via transgression to be called out by fans, forcing a quick apology. When TOP from Big Bang was caught using marijuana, he apologized publicly, bowing down in front of a slew of reporters. Not only do K-pop stars convey a good attitude; they also follow for a little bit of rebellion that provides a sweet spot for the teenage audience. For example, BLACKPINK’s “Kill This Love” (2019) is about embracing the breakup of a toxic relationship. This conveys female agency and independence in a way that shows a rebellious attitude by strong female idols. K-pop also challenges the mainstream view of desexualized Asian men. In the US media, Asian men are usually stripped of their masculinity and portrayed as either androgynous, clumsy, a depiction of Asian masculinity alienating to Asian-American youth. For example, in Kim Jong-uk’s song “She Bangs” off-kay on American Idol in 2004, brought up arguments of negative stereotypes of Asian men. In 2009, Ken Jeong’s performance in The Hangover (2019) was accused of manipulating the stereotype of Asian-American youth, with Asian Americans being portrayed as loud, obnoxious, and Mr. Chow.”12 Unlike the stereotypical depiction of Asian males in the US media, K-pop male idols carry a much more androgynous, soft masculinity, like “kkonminam,” (“flowery handsome man”) well-groomed, preoccupied with androgynous looks such as a thinner frame, soft body, and facial proportions. One could say that women are fed up with toxic masculinity and are fed to safe with these beautiful idols that are also seen as role models for women from Western male singers. Moreover, in the 2010s, there was a phenomenon of “beast idols,” male idols who were edgy but still safe according to US standards. These were K-pop idols such as Rain, who showed his ability to play the role of feminine. Such idols can be the object of desire for many fans and provide alternative to common portrayals of Asian males in US media. The fact that American forces to confront long-hair stereotypes they have regarding Asian men.

Conclusion

There is so much meaning lying behind BTS’ 2017 televised appearance. When BTS stepped on that stage, it represented that this “Love” be united in their love of a common transpacfic culture. K-pop is just one aspect of the Pop Pacific. Whether it be anime from Japan, K-pop from Korea, or Chinese movies (Hollywood producers often make movies with the large Chinese market in mind), youth worldwide are consuming the “Pop Pacific” culture. The K-pop explosion is a transnational one, but it is really transnational. We look forward to more investigations of how popular cultural forms may be transcultural but are really transnational.
Social Control or Trust?
A Journey through Tokyo’s Railway Manner Posters

During my long stay in Japan, the ‘manner posters’ displayed along the corridors and platforms of railway stations in Tokyo were a common sight. Through graphical content and accompanying text in these posters instruct passengers on social etiquette and public decency in railway spaces. Many railway companies in Tokyo (i.e., Tokyo Metro, Seibu Group, Keio) have a long-established tradition of displaying manner posters. These address different audiences and situations, and they construct normative standards of behaviour in public spaces. These manner posters have a strong visual component – specifically, the posters’ images are more expressive than their textual contents. In this article, I examine several recent eye-catching manner posters displayed by Tokyo Metro and argue that, rather than annoying or controlling, these posters play a more progressive role. By collectively constructing a shared value system among daily commuters of busy railway lines in Tokyo, these posters underpin mutual trust among passengers.
September 1979. The tradition continues today, and each year the subway company adopts a particular theme for its manner posters (e.g., “Do it somewhere else” in 2008, “Good manners, Good Tokyo” in 2018). Every month a new poster is displayed on its platform walls, at automatic ticket gates, and along station corridors. The manner posters cover a range of topics. For instance, loud talking, eating, talking on the phone, holding parties, littering, eating on the seat, smoking, drinking and sleeping, blocking the entry/exit, rushing to board trains, and applying cosmetics/make-up are some of the discouraged activities inside trains. Helping others, offering seats to the elderly, lining up for boarding, properly storing luggage on racks, and properly handling large luggage are some of the encouraged activities.

Interestingly, some manner posters target subtle human behaviours like “how to handle your wet umbrellas in public space.” Other posters, negatively depicting a couple’s intimate inside a train, indicate what is considered ‘private’ and ‘public’ in Japan. The majority of these visual contents are highly expressive, cynical, and humorous. The visual content of these manner posters overwhelms the textual. The instructions for good manners have been visualized. The textual contents, in many of the cases, have been given a relatively lower emphasis or priority. The “images, not the text [in the manner posters], are the core of the communication. In one glance they tell the story.”

Scholars who analyze visual artifacts agree that, compared to verbal cues, images are more memorable, which makes the viewers process those faster than the textual contents. Previous research finds that the use of pictorials in warnings increases comprehension and enhances the memory of a warning.

Notably, the railway manner posters in Japan are similar to other pictorial warnings (i.e., signal words such as Danger, Warning, or Caution) commonplace in many countries, but they also differ in key respects. While commonplace signal words (along with pictorial signals) function to communicate safety-related information, the manner posters do not only convey safety warnings but also display a range of public etiquette and cover a wider range of situations, inside trains and railway stations. Scholars also argue that the use of manner posters in Japan is substantially different from other parallels, such as the use of cartoon characters by the Paris Transport Authority (BART). The anthropomorphic pink rabbit of the Paris BART – portrayed with his left hand pinched between the sliding doors of a train – invites the passengers to pay attention to the automated device which closes the train entrance. However, the Japanese manner posters differ substantially in terms of their communicative aim. “They [manner posters] are not concerned with the passenger’s own safety, they do not want to warn him of the danger of dealing inattentively with a technological environment. They focus instead on person-to-person relationships, on the sensitivity of the other travellers, who might be hurt by our inconsiderate and self-centred behaviour.”

Social control or social trust?

As a regular passenger of commuter trains in Tokyo, I became interested in what determines the efficiency, peacefulness, and user-friendliness of Japan’s rail transportation? Is it merely a product of modern technology and advanced transport ergonomics, or is there something more to it? In my opinion, while technology and the

Notes
4. Ibid, 342.
7. Ibid, 64.
This year marks the quadricentenary of the Battle of Macau, fought between Portugal and the Dutch VOC over the Portuguese settlement of Macau. Traces of this significant piece of history can still be seen in the names of different places in the city. However, what indeed happened on that destinate day of June 24, 1622 has remained folkloric and anecdotal, nor is there a comparative study using sources from different perspectives. Besides, the Dutch failure to capture Macau did not only allow the Portuguese to realise their precarious holding of Macau in the Far East, altering their subsequent governance of the city, but also directly influenced the diplomacy as much as the power struggle among the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the Chinese, and others in the following years. In order to understand more about this critical battle over the small port-city of Macau, we need to start from the beginning.

The Battle on Land

Despite all these differences, the sources are consistent in stating that 800 soldiers from the invading army landed at Cacilhas on the morning of June 24. On the defending side, both Rodrgues and Ljungstedt identified that there were 60 Portuguese and 90 Macanese. The Dutch side captured the trench and battery successfully, but according to Ripon, they succeeded at the cost of great losses. For one, their commander Cornelis Reijersen was wounded as soon as he arrived at the front and was transported back onboard immediately afterward. Rosário, in his account, speculated that the Dutch landing was more formidable since the invaders from occupying the trench and battery, the defenders retreated to the city.

What happened next seems to be one of the determining moments of the battle. Nevertheless, such an incident was only recorded by one of the three narrators. While the other two sources do not offer any details, this event is mentioned in Ripon’s diary through his first-person experience. After the landing, and seeing that the Portuguese had retired into the city, Captain Hans Ruffin (d. 1622) was convinced that they would win the battle. Therefore, acknowledging that his soldiers had already spent hours of shooting and were exhausted, he still ordered them to follow the Portuguese at once, instead of allowing them to rest or to equip themselves with ammunition. Ripon, meanwhile, foreseeing that a tragedy would happen, asked his sergeant to acquire some gunpowder and arms. Concurrently, he also asked Ruffin to organise their supply of armaments, which he did briskly. From the descriptions of Rodrigues and Ljungstedt, 200 Dutch soldiers stayed at their landing spot to unload artillery. During this time, the defending soldiers had already regained order and prepared to continue defending. The balls in the city also rang to signal the invasion. Many citizens ran to assist the defence although without clear organisation or commands.

The Dutch force was in all likelihood the second to arrive at the space. The first one were the defectors from the invading army landed at Cacilhas ("Dapaoata") and the Hill of Guia ("Dongwanyang shan"). This area was also within the firing range from the Forte de Monte [Fig.2]. Rodrigues, Rosário, and Ljungstedt reported that the defectors had arrived in this space, cannoneals were shot, which impeded the advance of the Dutch. In addition, in Rosário’s account, Captain Major Carvalho understood that Ripon’s possible position on the Hill of Guia

Revisiting the Battle of Macau in 1622

A Polyphonic Narrative

Caspar Ko Yin Chan

Revisiting a 400-year old narrative

Four accounts on the Battle of Macau

Prelude

The Portuguese first settled in Macau in 1557. It became the first diocese ever founded in the East, a lover of the Jesuit missionary work. The city also acted as an important trading post where the Portuguese conducted commerce with the Chinese, the Japanese, the Malays, and other Southeast Asian communities. In addition, at least not related to the Macau campaign of the 60s of the Iberian Union (1580-1640), when the Portuguese throne was assumed by the Spanish crown, was the hub that linked the lucrative Lisbon-Goa-Macao and Mexico-Manilla-Macau routes together. Concurrently, the little port continued as the redistribution centre where gold, silver, silk, cotton, timbers, porcelain, spices, and precious stones were exchanged. Thus, situated as a node between the sea and the land, the South and the East, different colonies, powers saw Macau as a strategic spot for expanding their influence and market in Asia. Therefore, in the conflict of the 16th and 17th centuries, capturing Macau was a significant matter to the Dutch, to the Spaniards, and to the British. The city also acted as an important commercial and cultural spot. In the 17th century, capturing Macau was to send a fleet and occupy Macau first, the final attempt to capture Macau [Fig.1].

Even though the battle had been a failure, the Dutch continued their attempts to capture Macau from as early as the 17th century. Indeed, during the Dutch East India Company’s first attempt on the land, the South and the East, different colonies, powers saw Macau as a strategic spot for expanding their influence and market in Asia. Therefore, in the conflict of the 16th and 17th centuries, capturing Macau was a significant matter to the Dutch, to the Spaniards, and to the British. The city also acted as an important commercial and cultural spot. In the 17th century, capturing Macau was to send a fleet and occupy Macau first, the final attempt to capture Macau [Fig.1].

In any case, all the accounts describe that the Dutch fleet anchored on June 22. The Dutch immediately surveyed the geography of the spot, deciding where they would land their attack. Rodrigues reports that Reijersen himself carried out the survey, and the Portuguese from the city attacked the survey team on June 23. Rosário describes a yet more dramatic scene: already on the 22nd, the Dutch attempted to land but retreated under the defending fire from the city. On the 23rd, two big battle ships with 25-30 canons approached Macau, raiding the city for four hours. He writes that “our men have accurately destroyed their ship so that it could not sail anymore, and we have yielded a huge casualty on them.” This episode, however, does not appear in other materials, including Ripon’s diary. This passionate description, as well as his vivid illustration of the battle, which we will soon monograph, is due to his affinity with the Portuguese. To the contrary, Ripon reflects that they merely prevented everything to disembark after anchoring. He also wrote that they could not find a good landing spot other than the place where the Portuguese and the Spanish had built a trench and a battery. In the other three sources, the spot is recorded as Cacilhas/Cacilhas (潮州街/Tangshouan), on the Eastern edge of Macau.

In the following paragraphs, I present four archival materials about the Battle of Macau. Some details from one may be contradicted by another but by comparing them, we can come closer to what indeed occurred during the battle. The first account is from the Jesuit Jerônimo Rodrigues (1567-1628), who wrote in Spanish Relacão de la Victòria que alcançou la cidade de Macau, em la China centro la Holandeses ("Report about the Victory Achieved in the City of Macau in China against the Dutch"). This report was only retrieved and published in 1938 by the British historian Charles R. Boxer.7 The second perspective comes from the diocese’s governor (goverrador do bispo), António de Rosário (in office: 1613-1623; 1623-1630), who wrote Relação do viva da os Olandezes a Macau ("Report of the Coming of the Dutch to Macau"). In this account, he also gave his evaluation of the defence led by the captain-major (capitão-mor), Lopo Sarmento de Carvalho (in office: 1617-1618; 1621-1623).8 The third comes from a Swiss mercenary, Elie Ripon (in service for VOC: 1618-1626), who fought on behalf of the Dutch VOC. His diary was first published in 1971 in French by Yves Giraud. The following analysis references the Dutch edition, published in 2016 by Leonel Blussé and Joap de Moor.9 Last but not least, I consider a brief study conducted by the Swedish historian Anders Ljungstedt, of the same battle, different individuals have given their own narratives. Depending on their own affiliations and personal backgrounds, these narrators offer us a polyphonic portrayal of the battle, where facts are blurred with fantasies. This brief article, therefore, attempts to revisit this drama once again from different perspectives 400 years after the battle.
was a strategic vantage point for the Dutch, as it is the highest point on the Macau Peninsula. For this reason, he [Carvalho] commanded men to occupy the hill.”7 As a matter of fact, the accounts of Rodrigues, Rosário, and Ljungstedt all show that the resolution of the Portuguese, the valour and determination, slaughtering those in Rufijn’s entourage. Despite this loss, Ripon kept on fighting with calmness and intelligence like the post of a governor – instead of a commander. But he did not have the power to lead in the conflict. As a first-person experience on the battlefield. As a first-person experience on the battlefield.

Rodrigues and Ljungstedt reported that the Dutch attempted to re-organise themselves when those who had retreated rejoined those who were stationed at Caicilhas. However, without being able to withstand the Portuguese counter-assault, the Dutch turned to the sea, trying to swim to their ships. Many fell on the beach, while 90 were drowned in the sea. Rodrigues reported that only a few survived the retreat back onshore. Ripon also described that his fellow soldiers were “slaughtered like chickens” (als kippen werden gedood). Simultaneously, he saw a tall priest, standing on the shore, who encouraged the Portuguese to stay his army. He then sneaked to the back of the priest and killed him with a stroke that went through his body, before jumping into the water and swimming to his float. He was rescued onto a boat, but he could only see a few soldiers onboard.

Ripon detailed that of the 800 men sent to the battlefield, only 250 returned, plus 90 were drowned in the sea. Rosário reported that 163 Dutch killed and 162 wounded were in the battle. Interestingly, there were ten Portuguese and Spanish, together with “a great number of [soldiers] and slaves serving in this battle.” In the end, it seems that no consensus could ever be reached regarding the casualties on both sides.

Epilogue

Rodrigues recorded that on the next day (June 25), a ship bearing a white flag was sent, trying to rescue survivors on the Dutch side. The city, however, responded by saying that it was not the time to be judging. Ripon, without recording this event, wrote that after they had treated the wounded in good order, they decided to continue their expedition and reached the Pescadores Archipelago on June 27. In addition, both Rodrigues and Ljungstedt reported that the admiral of sea from the Canton province, seeing the courage of the slaves and servants who fought for the Portuguese, awarded them with a considerable amount of rice. Some of the slavedo not even freed by their masters after the battle. It is also after this instance that the post of a governor – instead of a commander – was considered for the Pescadores Archipelago. And a systematic construction of forts and walls was planned (Fig.3).

From there, Rodrigues conferred the victory to the help of Saint John the Baptist. He asserted that “[t]here would have been more [dead] if the soldiers and servants had not been occupied by deceiving and behaeding the dead, honouring Saint John the Baptist, on whose day the heroics (the Dutch) tried to profane the many temples, monasteries and sacred altars in this city.” Similarly, besides reporting that the Portuguese had killed 300 of the best Dutch soldiers and almost all of their captains, and had seized numerous swords and muskets, Rosário also expressed that if the servants and slaves had not been busy with stripping the clothes off of those who were slain on one hand, they could have escaped. On the defending side, according to Rodrigues, four Portuguese, two Castilians, and “some” (alguns) slaves died in the conflict, while 20 were injured. Rodrigues, on the other hand, did not specify any casualties at all throughout his report, other than a Macanese being killed at the beginning of the battle. Ljungstedt’s number accounts with Rodrigues, but stated that “a few” slaves were killed. Although Ripon did not specify how many African servants and slaves were killed, following his overall narrative, there must be far more people who were killed by the Dutch than the numbers he mentioned. According to Chronicle of Macao (廣東誌事志事在馬곳 [Kanton Naniwaru], there were 163 Dutch killed and 162 wounded on the Dutch side. However, there were ten Portuguese and Spanish, together with “a great number of (soldiers) and slaves serving in this battle.” In the end, it seems that no consensus could ever be reached regarding the casualties on both sides.
Cultural Hijacking: Clash of Storyworlds

India is home to hundreds of indigenous people. The Karbi community is one of the significant indigenous populations of Assam, Northeast India. Karbi are culturally and historically distinct from the majority Hindu population of India. The Karbi worldmaking process is ritually mediated through indigenous knowledge conventions. When dealing with storyworlds, I am using the term ‘storyworld’ from a folkloristics approach to understand storytelling as means of sense making and continuously engaging in the creation of a storyworld that a culture per se inhabits. It is problematic to subscribe to a single narrative/myth or history. This can homogenize complex fields. Marginal storyworlds comprise of narratives that are local, vernacular, and non-mainstream that are neglected in the re-imaginings of a one world homogenous storyworld. Some myths from some storyworlds are more powerful than the others, and hierarchies are formed when they collide. The hijacking and appropriation of marginal storyworlds by colonial storyworlds is a present-day reality with different hegemonies run by the same agenda.

Myths, storyworlds, and world-building

I will be employing the term ‘mythopolitics’ as a conceptual framework to understand the interactions between different competing storyworlds. I am part of the Mythopol project that seeks to interpret and deconstruct the role of hegemonic Hindu storyworlds in the contemporary politics. I see mythopolitics as an interdisciplinary concept that applies insights from politics, religion, and folklore to acknowledge the multidimensional aspects of competing storyworlds. In reality, neither is free of the other as neither would exist without the other. Mythopolitics is a developing concept that focuses on the present day trends of world-building processes to probe into the possible futures by trying to realize the facets of negotiations, re-imaginings and reinterpretations of the competing hegemonic storyworlds underpinning identity and belonging.

Karbi people speak a Tibeto-Burman dialect and there are numerous expressive verbal repertoires in the Karbi convention. The Karbi way of life stems from the belief in and propagation of multiple spirits. They are animist in the traditional Indigenous Karbi religious sense. Karbi indigenous religion is a cornerstone that shapes the belief system and gives meaning to the world that they inhabit. It entails the co-creation – a collectively held, embedded, and reciprocal knowledge system. As a product of oral tradition, folklores and narratives serve as the only source for Karbi history and understanding one’s own culture. The Karbi are one of the many indigenous populations at the periphery persistently battling for rights and equity over status, identity, and representation. There is an increasing rate of acculturation, assimilation, and asymmetrical power relations aimed at the homogenization of the Karbi culture into the folds of the mainstream Hindu right-wing nationalist agenda. To understand the processes of internal consolidation by majoritarian forces against the Karbi is the focus of this article. I look at it from the perspective of "cultural hijacking." I use this term to actually look at how majoritarian cultures exert their ideologies by changing the lens of minoritarian traditions through alteration of worldview, knowledge system, and one’s cultural understanding of identity and belonging. Through uniformity and homogenization tactics the cultural blueprints of a community are replaced with new ideas of the Hijackers. The study on the new religious movement Lokhimon will be central in framing my arguments, a group vital for understanding the transformation, conversion, and identity politics. In the discussions that follow, I will attempt to show how Hindu myths created by Hindu nationalists have captured and tailored the imaginations of the Karbi people through media, language, and politics.

Myths are hierarchical in nature, and narratives become competitive in situations of asymmetrical power relations. The notion of coexistence is seen from the vantage of the victors, and more than often, the ‘us versus them’ narrative continues to ebb imaginations perpetually fed in a binary opposing system.

In the world-building processes, narratives dictate and shape the world(s). A storyworld is and also the outcome of the world-building which entails a culture’s particular ways of exhibiting itself embedded with notions of identity, language, cultural practices and knowledge systems. Myths are essential, as they legitimize and form the foundations of identities, communities, and even nations. For marginal communities, it is taxing to subscribe to a single narrative/myth, or to a history of uniformity, assimilation, hegemony, othering, and silencing. As some myths are more compelling than others, being carriers of storyworlds, it is consequential when it collides.

Throughout history, many worlds have constantly engaged in power struggles and waged war based on differences in thoughts, words, and actions. An alternative to a one world-world issue could be the acceptance of heterogeneity and multiplicity. The world we see and experience is an outcome of our perception, but what about the others’ perceptions? The difference is perceived as something of the unknown, and the inability to comprehend the unknown as others do results in a tendency toward rejection and assimilation. Variation and inconsistency — that is, narratives other than what is conserved, uniform, and sanctioned — are disputed in a society that feeds on homogenized ideals. The conception of Karbi identity and history is a classic case of hegemony, domination, marginalization, misappropriation, and misinterpretation. For long, Karbi people have been referred to as ‘Mikir’ (a derogatory misnomer), firstly by the British administration and later by post-colonial India until very recent times. The Karbi history is absent in the discourse of the Indian education system, there's hardly any acknowledging mentions in the grand narrative.

Cultural hijacking as a phenomenon

The term ‘cultural hijacking’ is an established concept in the study of cultural forms and spatial practices of branding. The nation-branding post-independence politics has painted India and its peripheries with ideas of citizenship through religion, media and language. In Karbi Anglong, modes of education are mainly transmitted either through English, Hindi or Assamese. Karbi religious practices and cultural values are either diluted or transformed into becoming a more Hindu based variants in the present situation. I see cultural hijacking as a phenomenon that incapacitates the host (culture bearers) by dissolving the cultural values, displacement of one’s own understanding, and detachments to land, language, and cultural ownership at the behest of the hijackers. It is from this standpoint, I use this concept to analyze and explicate the hegemonic Hindu mythic storyworld and its effects on the marginal storyworlds from the context of Karbi culture. No doubt the eventual outcome of cultural hijacking is a complete assimilation process over time, albeit from the stance of internal colonization. Ashworth and Kaviraj elucidated how the notion of branding and hijacking are related.

The problem stemming from majoritarian versus minoritarian claims in India prelates the British era, but British colonization played an instrumental role in instituting new hierarchical formations within South Asian communities. The ‘Hindu storyworld and Karbi storyworld’ are simultaneously in an arena of contestation and conflict. Culture or cultural traits go on to have a life of their own in everyday repetition and re-enactments through lived performances. Constant interruption in this flow of everyday embodied practices will definitely change the course and may even replace it. There are origin or creation myths behind every Karbi traditional ritual practices that inform the Karbi people about their world. QUALITAS plays the most vital role in the Karbi world-building process. Repetition and constant engagement with the ritual performances endows possibilities for continuity in shared and lived reality. Point of rupture ensued in the 1900s through the colonial religious classification schemes which enabled the dominant Hindu culture to intervene and impose majoritarian values.

Hindu Mahasabha (an organ of Hindu nationalist organization) and associated working as Hindu census supervisors post 1920s rallied in the tribal populated areas of Assam to propagate Hindu beliefs.
This incident harnesses the hijacking of a Karbi storyworld by majoritarian Hinduism. One Karbi storyworld is seen as something ‘less than’. Hindu lifestyle. Karbi traditional practices based on the teachings of Vaishnavism denounce Karbi traditional practices and Lokhimon toward one’s traditional cultural values and of ‘social distancing’ and deep resentment follow new protocols. This creates a sense programs are installed, the hijacking of implementations such as the CAA cultural hijacking through administrative means.

The new religious movement is a present-day reality in the form of homogenization and majoritarian politics, with different actors tied up with agenda, one of the aftermath of religious classification schemes gave birth to based on the new religions of Vaishnavism among the Karbis in the 1950s and since its inception the group continues to grow in number present day. Hindu Vaishnavism encompasses diverse spectacles from the center. It is one of the many cogs in the wheel that are steered by the interest group and outdated. The inclusion of their vision of India as a homogenized Hindu Rashtra. To explicate this argument, I would like to give an encounter I had with an Uber driver during my fieldwork in Assam, India. While I was traveling, the Uber driver, who was on discussing the hijacking of the storyworld, said, “It’s all about the packaging. The labels are different, but the content is still the same.”

I call this the distant小编 away from the indigenous group to the ‘Gori’ community (an Assamese group that converted to Islam during the 1600s Mughal era) and who himself faced bouts of racism and alienation. His interpretation was way alien to the present Lokhimon case indicating the shift in association of identity and belief are proportional to power dynamics in the majoritarian politics. One of the many consequences of cultural hijacking as a rupture in cultural storyworld reflects a liminal realm of belief. They are also a matter of reals. The differences are not simply matters...
From 1946 to 1948, an estimated 14 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs headed in both directions, many forcibly driven out by violent extremist groups on both sides. Unspeakable violence engulfed this large human displacement. An estimated one to two million people were killed, and hundreds of thousands of women were victimized by sexual violence. The 1947 Partition was part of an established practice by the British empire of “drawing lines on maps of other countries” in order to more effectively “divide and rule” or to attempt to solve ethnic and religious tensions that the British had previously fostered, as evidenced in the earlier partitions of Afghanistan (1893), Bengal (1905), and the Ottoman Empire after World War I (1918-1922). Newbery notes that from 1970-1994, “everywhere in British Africa, partition changed the cultural landscape.” The legacies of these partitions are long-lasting, and even today, they certainly continue to impact world politics and possibilities for peace.

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan – given the magnitude of displacement and death – certainly deserves greater attention in our education systems and public consciousness globally. The 1947 Partition is rarely included in discussions of world history, and where it is, such as briefly in textbooks in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom, there is a focus on “us and them” and singular narratives. They tend to be silent about the violent outcomes of Partition, as educational scholar Meenakshi Chhabra discusses in her extensive research and textbook analyses about the historical event.

One-fifth of the world’s population lives in South Asia (accounting for nearly two billion people), a region comprising the nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The South Asian diaspora across the globe also numbers an estimated 21 million. For those with South Asian heritage, and also for those without this heritage, teaching about the 1947 Partition as an important event in world history offers a corrective to the silence and invisibilization of this history to date.

My own family’s trajectory was greatly impacted by Partition through the loss of family members, their sudden displacement as refugees, and the lasting intergenerational traumas that all of it caused. As an educational scholar, I offer three areas through which we can engage the pedagogies of Partition in our classrooms, communities, and beyond to learn from this painful history: (1) humanizing Partition through children’s literature and curriculum; (2) public pedagogies and counternarratives of Partition; and (3) efforts towards peacebuilding and solidarity. Education – both inside and outside of the classroom – offers important analytical frameworks as we grapple with understanding contested historical events like the 1947 Partition; it also provides a way to develop a “people’s history” of Partition, one that can foster a more expansive collective historical memory, one which transcends the political agendas and projects of nation-states.

Humanizing Partition through children’s literature and curriculum

Whether in schools, libraries, or even the books read at home, the increasing number of Partition-related stories in recent years offer multiple perspectives on this event through the hopes, realities, and experiences of the characters in the texts.

The following texts at the primary and secondary levels can introduce readers to stories about the Partition:

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India to Pakistan during Partition than, later to the UK. The 2022 six-part fictional series Ms. Marvel explores the superhero Kamala Khan’s origin story, which centers around her experience of the 1947 Partition. Several episodes include archive and fictional footage, examining the effects of fleeing violence, offering a window into this historical period through popular culture. Archives, museums, films, and shows visualize the complex and layered experiences of Partition. Exposure to multiple narratives can be an opening to discuss these events, but caution is required to not fall into the singular narratives of “enemy/victim” and “us versus them” that have been perpetuated by political leaders in different nation-states.

Efforts towards peace-building and solidarity

Attention to agency and solidarity, as well as counternarratives to dominant histories, can help to unpack simplistic tropes around Partition that have fueled enduring hate and division across nations. It is essential to highlight stories of solidarity as well as to critically analyze how political leaders have leveraged singular narratives for their own agendas over these past 75-plus years. Shedding light on lesser-known stories of Partition can also further highlight the processes and complicated realities of this period.

One such effort is a joint, publicly available text produced by the History Project entitled Partitioned Histories: The Other Side of Your Story. The project, collectively developed by Indian and Pakistani educators and scholars, presents 16 chapters in a nearly 300-page book. Each chapter has the Indian and Pakistani narratives of historical events side-by-side, as culled from history textbooks in both countries. The authors of the book note in the introduction when referring to the book’s last chapter, “The Partition of India, with which we conclude, is arguably the most important of these events and it is still the reason for the rift between people on either side of the border, a rift that we hope to interrogate, transform, and heal by doing history differently.” The placement of conflicting narratives side-by-side offers a chance for the reader to zoom out and question why such narratives have been produced, by whom, and in the service of what agendas.

The organization Project Dastan is a “peace-building initiative which examines the human impact of global migration that gives a lens of the forced migration in recorded history of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan.”

The organization uses virtual reality (VR), with footage compiled from volunteers, to allow survivors of Partition to visit their childhood homes through VR headsets, as opposed to navigating the turbulent political terrain of securing visas or traveling long distances across hostile borders. With teams from across the South Asian region, the organization also produces videos like “Child of Empire,” a virtual reality “docu-drama experience” of the 1947 Partition.

The organization also recently produced three short animated videos entitled Lost Migrations to shed light on “hidden stories” of Partition, such as the experiences of women, South Asians in Burma, and those who became stateless after 1947.

Brazilian educational scholar Paulo Freire has stated, “Looking at the past must be a means of understanding more clearly what and who we are so that we can more wisely build the future.” The role of critical inquiry and education as the pursuit of greater understanding and who we are so that we can more wisely build the future. The role of critical inquiry and education as the pursuit of greater understanding and who we are so that we can more wisely build the future.

Additional Resources

“The Great Divide” in The New Yorker: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/29/the-great-divide-books-dilemmas


“Historians have missed the opportunity of forgetting East Pakistan.” In The Daily Star (Bangladesh): https://thedailystar.net/opinion/partition-memories-part-two-1971


Notes

1 These tests offer further information and historical insights into the Indian Partition. Available at: https://www.1947partitionarchive.org/lessons/india-partition

2 https://www.1947partitionarchive.org

3 https://www.idnow.today/education/latkat/current-afghan-hikayesi.html


8 https://www.partitionmuseum.org


15 A dditional Resources


The introductory class of the Colleges of the Fenway (COF) Minor in Migration Studies usually opens with a good half hour of silence. Students follow the turning of the pages of The Arrival by Shaun Tan, a wordless graphic novel on the experience of migration [Fig 1]. The story unfolds on the screen with the help of an old-fashioned overhead projector lamp. Students’ reactions span from embarrassment at the quiet activity to complete and devoted absorption in the bewitching pages of the book. The 95 minutes that follow are possibly the most engaging of the entire semester. The book produces emotions, raises questions, and demands participation out of every student; often, even the most reserved one has a hand up to share a thought or an image. This article stresses the pedagogical benefits of graphic novels to teach migrations in the discipline of history and across the social sciences.

The social sciences often address topics related to migration (e.g., assimilation, ethnicity, race, citizenship, multicultural societies, belonging, identity) through structured processes; that is, they postulate hypotheses based on specific theories, and then they undertake empirical analyses. However, this scientific approach sometimes runs the risk of taking meaning away from the reality of migration. In The Arrival, people are sketched with photographic precision, on a seemingly sepiatone paper. As the turning of the pages resembles the intimate act of looking at a family album, the shared reading of the book plants into the students a genuine interest for the personal stories of diasporic people. Hence, the use of graphic novels can help find a balance between systematic research and personal narratives while raising awareness about the underlying unpredictability of human behaviors. Additionally, research on migration cannot be complete without a “two shores” approach, which combines sources on and from the receiving societies with material from the sending localities, while also analyzing change at the intersection.

A book of choice in my “East Asian Migration and Diaspora” is Thi Bui’s The Best We Could Do [Fig. 2]. It is a memoir that portrays Vietnamese migrations to the US from the viewpoint of Vietnamese refugees. Through personal narratives of translocal lives, the book is a powerful tool to challenge dominant discourses on the Vietnam war, and it urges students to step outside of the popular US-centric understanding of that complex historical period. With crude and ubiquitous images of childbirth in New York, Saigon, and refugee camps in Malaysia, the book depicts Vietnamese people’s struggle before, during, and after the war. By engaging with this graphic novel, which illustrates a multi-faceted and culturally heterogeneous Vietnam, students approach the history of colonization and delve into the concept of diversity and migrants’ agency. Therefore, intimate images, with which students identify, facilitates a two-shore, transnational, historical analysis of the war, with special attention to its consequences for refugees’ conditions.

In Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud demonstrates that simple and sometimes silent pictures offer readers an opportunity to identify with circumstantial features that can also be universal.1 Therefore, I adopt The Arrival for the core class of the Minor, “Intro to Migration Studies,” for two main reasons. First, the book sketches stories of struggle and adaptation, stressing the agency of migrants as a key element to understand migration issues. Second, the author, an Australian citizen, son of immigrants from Malaysia, successfully conveys a de-nationalized representation of the migration experience. Even if the first drawings in The Arrival evoke popularized images of Ellis Island, the book stresses the transnationality of migratory movements, which is one of the teaching objectives of the Minor. Dean Chan, an expert on Cultural Visualization, recognizes that the significance of graphic novels in creating alternative pedagogies might still not be obvious to many. And yet, he argues that The Arrival has surely obtained a steady position in college classrooms. Among the plethora of texts adopted to teach and underscore the transnationality of migration and diasporic studies, especially of Asian cultures, Shaun Tan’s graphic novel is among the most successful.1 Typically, I also select traditional scholarly texts such as Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines, edited by anthropologist Carolinnette B. Brettell and political scientist James F. Hollifield. The latter aims at familiarizing students with interdisciplinary approaches to global migrations, another learning goal of the Minor. And yet, the course would not obtain the same level of engagement without Tan’s visual introduction.

On this topic, Barbara Postema argues that the drawings of a comic book can become open invitations to long-lasting empathy and not only tools to momentarily identify with the characters.” In The Arrival, every person possesses his or her own idiom, and yet, within the course of the book, the protagonist, and the readers with him, while sharing disorientation, make communication possible. Therefore, the book predisposes students to approach individual stories of transnational movement with empathy, while also pursuing scientific analysis of complex themes such as assimilation, displacement, acculturation, integration, or multiculturalism. As an example, the ending of The Arrival presents an optimistic view of emplacement, one in which multiculturalism and intergenerational collaborations are achieved. Some scholars, however, have questioned this romanticized portrayal of modern societies and criticized it as a simplistic acceptance of US-born assimilation theories.2 Consequently, The Arrival can help raise questions about nationalist narratives such as that of the “society of immigrants,” commonly considered in the US to be one of the essential features of American nationhood. Hence, the graphic novel becomes a vessel to motivate students to critically analyze historical, political, sociological, and anthropological studies of migration as they relate to assimilation and other research issues.

Making sense of migrations with three graphic novels

These are only few examples that speak of the visual and conceptual power of graphic novels for teaching migration history as well as theoretical ideas developed in the humanities and social sciences. Due to space limitations, I can only pick a few among many interesting examples to highlight here.3 In what follows, I will discuss three graphic novels that can be pedagogical successes for the teaching of Asian migrations. The first...
is Almost American Girl by Robin Ha [Fig. 3]. This book is a great rendition of migrant life between Asia–Korea in this particular case—and the society of arrival.1 The complexity of migrants, the sociological questions about assimilation or adaptation, cultural differences, and the formation of ethnic identities are all illustrated in the memoir and, consequently, humanized. By pairing the images and the narratives of memoirs with scholarly articles, the educational power of graphic novels is compellingly revealed. That is, the drawings of a graphic novel prompts multi-disciplinary research questions about political actions towards migrations, about the role of domestic and international institutions, about levels of incorporation, or about the role of legal systems vis-à-vis migration.

The second is Displacement by Kiku Hughes [Fig. 4]. The author, a Japanese American, examines her own sense of belonging. She does so by piecing together the life story of her grandmother Ernestina Tebow at the internment camps with her parents in 1943. Kiku, the protagonist, is shocked as she finds herself going back and forth between a 21st- and a 20th-century California. The images and feelings summoned by the author become tangible recollections of her grandmother’s (and Kiku’s own) geographical and emotional displacements. In the final pages of the book, book 10 in the 2010s, Kiku opens up to her mom, who also claims to be a time-traveler. They finally realize that their seemingly supernatural gifts are in fact memories, powerful ones. Such powerful memories formed the basis of their identities, their daily relations with local communities, and their interactions with society at large. Through this book, students become acquainted with historical methods, as they are exposed to primary sources and the craft of storytelling. In the comic medium, past, present, and future can sit on a single page, visibly showing the changes of global political interests and transnational networks over time, as well as shedding light on repercussions for individuals.

Lastly, I teach a class called “Immigrant Kitchens: A Global Perspective on Ethnicity, Identity, and Foodways” in which students question theories about ethnicity and identity formation by tracing the history of different ethnic culinary traditions.2 They are prompted to investigate innovative culinary menus, vintage cookbooks, family recipes, and the development of transnational culinary practices. Therefore, the third book I will mention here is Measuring Up, the debut novel of Lily LaMotte, illustrated by Ann Xu [Fig. 5]. It underlines the effectiveness of discussing migration issues through the lens of foodways. In Measuring Up, we taste the powerful resilience of first- and second-generation girls as they use food to connect hometowns and places of arrival. Food is also a source of adaptation and accomplishment in the book. Cici, the main character, has recently moved to the United States from Taiwan when she decides to participate in a cooking contest. Her hope is to win the first prize of $1000 to buy a ticket to America for A-Má, her grandmother. A-Má represents her roots. She symbolizes Cici’s primal sense of belonging, and she embodies the tastes of Cici’s origins until she faces her new “home.” Cici wins first place because she finds her own tweak to a traditional family recipe. The graphic novel conveys the perceptions and hopes of migrants that words alone might keep hidden. Students become acquainted with topics such as culinary nostalgia,3 cultural intimacy,4 uprootedness, and resilience through the protagonist’s pragmatic and creative adaptations to the ingredients of the new land. Cici will declare at the end: “My dish is who I am … both Taiwanese and the new land.”

Well-researched, articulated, and effectively illustrated graphic novels, combined with academic publications, can fulfill several important educational purposes in the classroom. They can serve as icebreakers, attention triggers, introductions to theory-specific and discipline-based approaches, and more. To conclude, graphic novels are a phenomenon of interaction between written and spoken knowledge, oral histories, and official narrations, they contribute to transdisciplinary approaches and provide useful insights to tackle theoretical conceptualizations as experienced by the migrants themselves.

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Notes
8. I would like to add a few more successful titles of graphic novels I have used in teaching courses on East Asian History and Migration: Grew Luen Yang’s American Born Chinese, Rogers and Saints; Shipu Matzi, Showa: A History of Japan: Nakazawa Kaji, Barefoot Owl; A Cartoon Short of Hiroshima; Tatsunoko Novala, Kamikaze Girls; Michael G. Vann and Lu Clarke, The Great Handicap Hunt, Empire, Disease, and Colonial Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam; Kaum Suk Gendry-Kelly, Kim Chawi, Li Fumao and P. Olle A Chinese Life; Liu Na and Andrea Vera Martinez and Little Duck, A Childhood in China, among others.
9. In this case the US. As a side note, I am aware that most of the books I discuss here are linked to the US, and this limits somewhat the reach of this essay. As teach in the US, I deem important to reach the broader material that might result familiar; nevertheless, I always stress the significance of transnational and diasporic approaches to migration studies. In this paper, there was no space to discuss graphic novels in other languages or set in other regions of the world, but I hope others will undertake this important and existing examination.
Mapping Connections through Archaeology and Art History in Second-Millennium Southeast Asia

What do archaeology and art history tell us about Southeast Asia in the second millennium? This broad question was tackled by a webinar series convened by Hélène Njoto (École française d’Extême-Orient) and Noel Hidalgo Tan (Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, Bangkok) and hosted by Temasek History Research Centre at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

Noel Hidalgo Tan

Southeast Asia in the Second Millennium CE through Archaeology and Art History

With the stage set, we launched into webinars with archaeology lectures centered on the major kingdoms and empires extant in Southeast Asia during the second millennium CE. We began with Angkor, arguably the most famous of the Southeast Asian empires, with a discussion by Dr. Heng Phiphal on infrastructures and how recent archaeological research can tell us about the agricultural ability, road management, education, and healthcare in Angkor. Elsewhere in the region, we looked at the rise of competing polities in the region, such as the Dai Viet in present-day northern Vietnam (Do Truong Giang) and Bagan in Myanmar (Ye Myat Lwin). Representing the middle of the second millennium, we learned from the case studies of Mrauk U (Ye Myat Lwin), Ayutthaya (Dr. Prachaphorn Phoonmon), and Malacca (Dr. Hisham Rodziadi Khow). Such presentations explored how these kingdoms, emerging in the 15th century, carved out spaces for themselves from existing hagemonies. At the same time, their cosmopolitanism and interactions reached beyond their immediate neighbours – in the case of Ayutthaya, as far as France. In the last part of the series, we looked at the rise and prominence of the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore (Shintadri Adhitutayama) in Eastern Indonesia, kingdoms that both played an integral role in the global spice trade, and ultimately in European colonialism in Southeast Asia.

In the parallel theme of art history in Southeast Asia, we took a less chronological approach and focused on specific materials, such as ceramics (Dr. Heidi Tan), sculpture (Dr. Natalie S.Y. Ong), textiles (Dr. Sandra Sardjono), and bronzes (Dr. Mathilde Machling and Eko Bastiawan). For a region where textual sources are hard to come by, the study of these materials fills an important gap in our knowledge and understanding of this early period. For example, almost all of our understanding of Southeast Asian textiles and dress come from representations found in sculpture, reliefs, and murals, since textiles very rarely survive to the present. Closer attention to sculptural architectural or artistic objects, illuminate the persistence of the religion in Southeast Asia not only indicate the flow and circulation of ideas and beliefs in the region, but also how some artistic traditions were truly local expressions that persisted from antiquity to the present.

Prior to the arrival of Islam in the middle of the second millennium CE, many of the kingdoms and their resultant material expressions were religiously Indic (e.g., Buddhist and Shavite), Dr. Chotima Chaturawong, who below writes about a Burmese-style monastery in northern Thailand, speaks about the larger Hindu-Buddhist styles found in Southeast Asian architecture. Most importantly, Chotima notes that temples in Southeast Asia were not copies of those found in India; rather, more often than not, they were variations that developed localised expressions within the region – an architectural case for being ‘same, but different.’

One major challenge of convening an overarching webinar series like this was working against the constraints of time and the availability of speakers, leading to some gaps in coverage; for example, we were unable to talk about some other notable kingdoms during this period, such as Lan Xang in Laos or Majapahit in Java. Moreover, subjects from the Philippines and Indonesia were underrepresented. However, these regions were still discussed towards the chronological and thematic end of this webinar series, where we pivoted to the coming of Islam into Southeast Asia and how this change is reflected in archaeology and art history. For example, Dr. Farouk Yahya discussed illustrated manuscripts written in Malay and showed 19th-century examples of manuscripts being used for magic and divination aside from scriptural and practical use. Elsewhere in the Malay world, Dr. Imran Bin Tajudeen looked at the diversity of mosque architecture, unexpected larger variation than previously thought. Rounding up the impact of Islam in Southeast Asia was Noorashikin Binte Zulkifli’s exploration of artefacts in the collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Southeast Asia in the second millennium CE was marked by the rise of large states – polities that were able to exert control over large areas of the region and that, at the same time, competed with other neighbouring polities for dominance and influence. These interactions were not always hostile, and the spread and diversity of material expressions derived from these states, be they architectural or artistic objects, illuminate the wider history of contact and localisation. The webinars attracted a wide audience, from students in Singapore and abroad, as well as interested members of the public; it was common to have an audience size of at least 100 for these webinars. In a period where many planned activities were halted, this Temasek History Research Centre webinar series provided an introductory framework for the study and discussion of Southeast Asia through the lens of archaeology and art history.

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Noel Hidalgo Tan

The webinars, held over 2021 and 2022, was organised along the two main themes, archaeology and art history. By way of introduction, Dr. Njoto and I set the stage in an introductory lecture by pondering the question: “How well do you know your neighbours?” This provided a reminder to the predominantly Southeast Asian audience that, despite the existence of national borders, the region is connected in many ways, including its cultures, languages, and foods. Presentations on the nature of archaeology, art history, and historiography also invited the participants to think more deeply about the way the past is reconstructed in Southeast Asia.

One of the overarching themes was connections in their varied forms among the polities in the region. Noel Hidalgo Tan highlights these connections – material, architectural, infrastructural, political – in his overview of the webinar series in the first article of this section.

The rest of the contributions are from three speakers of the series. Imran bin Tajudeen and Chotima Chaturawong provide fascinating descriptions of religious architecture in Southeast Asia – mosque and temple, respectively. They highlight translocal transmission and creativity, and their articles provide insights into continuity and change in architectural forms. Hélène Njoto (École française d’Extême-Orient) and Noel Hidalgo Tan (Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, Bangkok) and hosted by Temasek History Research Centre at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

Co-convener of the Temasek History Research Centre, Noel Hidalgo Tan highlights these connections – material, architectural, infrastructural, political – in his overview of the webinar series in the first article of this section.

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The built heritage of mosques developed in maritime Southeast Asia is invariably excluded from surveys of Islamic art and architecture, a fate that is shared with Southern Arabia, Southern India, and Southern China. This exclusion needs to be understood in relation to the historiographical and geographical contexts of the study of mosques and Islamic art and architecture, which focused on the archaeological and art historical study of brick and masonry structures left behind by a number of inter-related dynasties and political entities. For instance, attention to the 12th to 18th centuries is typically given toPersianate West and South Asia, Turic and Persianate Central Asia, and the Arab-speaking lands of West Asia and the Mediterranean.1 In the Indian subcontinent, the focus is on the work of Richard Eaton called the Indo-Parthian axis, which excludes the maritime Muslim regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The miniature regions of the Indian Ocean and beyond—where maritime Southeast Asia is to be found—thus lay beyond the scope of Islamic architecture surveys. The vernacular architecture category used to define Southeast Asian mosques may have further displaced it, given the primacy of the disciplines of archaeology and art history in the study of Islamic architecture.

Vernacular architecture is typically defined as structures in wood as opposed to classical or canonical stone or brick architecture. This framing is problematic: Southeast Asian mosques and associated structures use a variety of materials beyond wood. Conversely, it is also necessary to expand the horizon of surveys of art and archaeology in Southeast Asian architecture and the study of Buddhist structures. Mosques typically do not even appear in such surveys or are consigned to a very small section.2

Variety of forms

Roof forms and the spatial and structural corollary features point to the connection of the Southeast Asian mosque to earlier building types. Roof forms thus usually serve as synecdoche when discussing typology.

The first type is the tajug or pyramid-hip roof type. This is the dominant form and can be found in examples from the 15th to 18th centuries in Champa, South Borneo (Banjarman), Palembang (Masjid Agung), Melaka (Tengker, Kampung Keling, and Kampung Hulu), and Banten (Masjid Agung, Kasunyatan and others). The examples from Banten display the type’s miniature upper tiers. In Java and Sumatra alone, great diversity may be seen in the form, including the number of roof tiers, the configuration of walls and platforms, and the configuration of columns and beams. Minangkabau (West Sumatra) mosques possess two variant forms depending on the Javanese or ‘tajug frasamiti’). In both the mosque of Jepara (north coast Java, expunged) and Limo Kaum (West Sumatra), the upper levels of the massive five-tiered roofs are used as true floors, unlike other mosques where multi-tiered roofs are superimposed primarily for ventilation, esthetic, or symbolic purposes. Despite tremendous variations in this roof form, one feature found in common throughout the region is the use of a finial (mustaka or memolu) to decorate the summit of mosques (Fig. 1). A second type using the gable or hip roof form is found in Kelantan, Teluk Manuk, Kota Bharu (Fig. 2), and also in Champa. It is also found in 9th-century temple reliefs such as at Prambanan in Central Java. A third type is the hipped roof, found, for example, in 15th-century Diriran and Buton and early 20th-century Singapore (Kajurah and H Muhammad Salas mosques). It is also found among other sites along the Straits of Melaka and the Malaya Peninsula, such as at Kuala Tenggaringan (Surau Tiki Kerinci) (Fig. 3). Finally, the simplest gable roof types, with two or three roof levels, are seen in small prayer halls or surau, such as at Surau Air (Patani, southern Thailand) and in examples at Tengker and Banda Hilir (Melaka, Peninsula Malaysia).

Translation and reworking

The names of some of the features on these various mosque types point to derivation from building types used as Hindu or Buddhist shrines, as introduced in 9th-century temple reliefs such as at Prambanan in Central Java. Conversely, indigenous names and the forms of small Muslim prayer halls, today adopting the Arabic term musalla but originally called surau and langgar, point to origins in indigenous cult buildings and men’s houses. A key illustration of translation and reworking is seen in Java, where the Trowulan tombstones bearing Arabic Islamic inscriptions used the Saka calendar rather than the Arabic-Islamic one, and in the Tranqganu Stone, which proclaims Muslim and local laws inscribed in the Jawi script (Arabic modified for Malay), but using the term Dewata Mula Raya, for God, rather than Allah as would be expected.4 These examples defy the idea of simple rejection of pre-Islamic cultures or of an unconscious ‘influence’ of pre-Islamic cultures. Instead, we observe the conscious and literate translation and accommodation of culture across conversion. The transculturation process from pre-Islamic Malay and Java-East Asian rites can thus be seen in these and other grave stones. They serve as indicators of parallel processes of adapting older building forms—some of which had previously served as cult buildings for indigenous, Hindu, and Buddhist creeds—for new Islamic uses.

Notes

7 Imran bin T. (2013). Java’s architectural enigma. In V. Rajakumar et al. (Eds), Anatomy of a Modern Asia (pp. 121-138), Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
Indigenization of Southeast Asian Buddhist Architecture: Case Study of a Burmese Monastery at Wat Upagupta, Chiang Mai

Chotima Chaturawong

The level of localization greatly increased and developed during the indigenization period starting around the 13th century in mainland Southeast Asia. This was when Buddhism began to decline in India and Sri Lanka became an important center of Theravada Buddhism along with Buddhist art and architecture. Theravada Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia was further developed, and new styles blending local beliefs and craftsmanship were created, for instance, in Thailand and Myanmar. A Burmese Buddhist monastery at Wat Upagupta, Chiang Mai provides an example of such indigenization of Southeast Asian Buddhist architecture between the 19th and the 20th centuries. During this period, the Burmese monastery (kyauk in Burmese) was a multipurpose edifice built on pilers. It combined public and private areas – namely, a Buddha shrine, an assembly hall for dhamma preaching and ceremony practice, dwelling places of monks and lay people, and storage. The funds for building the monastery at Wat Upagupta were donated by U Pan Nyo who came from Moulmein around 1870-1873 and later became a well-known Burmese teak merchant in Chiang Mai and northern Thailand. At that time, Chiang Mai was a vassal state of Siam (central Thailand) and was about to be annexed by the Siamese government. Chiang Mai was formerly the capital of the Lanna Kingdom, which is referred to administratively as the Lanna province in present-day Thailand. The Lanna Kingdom was founded in the 13th century and was under Burmese rule for over 200 years prior to becoming a vassal state of Siam. U Pan Nyo was a wealthy teak merchant who donated money to build and renovate Buddhist architecture as well as other public works, such as streets and bridges. Architecture built and reconstructed by U Pan Nyo had various designs, such as Shan, Pa-o, Mon, Burmese, Tai Yuan (indigenous northern Thai), and colonial styles. The important buildings constructed by U Pan Nyo between 1890 and 1910 in Chiang Mai included his house and Wat Upagupta. The monastery compound of Wat Upagupta consisted of a monastery as the principal architecture, a stupa, a Buddha shrine (wihan), and a house for dhamma preaching and ceremony practice. The monastery at Wat Upagupta and U Pan Nyo’s house shared similarities in architectural floor plan, materials, decorations, and style, and both were built by the same group of carpenters and workers. The architectural design of his house was perhaps associated with his birth planet, Jupiter, for a person born on Thursday. This is the third level, marked in yellow, comprising semi-autonomous territories granted by the Sultan to the

Malacca Sultanate as a Thalassocratic Confederation (1400-1511): Power Structure of the Pacified States

Nuska Budsaidi Khaw

The Sultanate of Malacca is one of the many historical thalassocratic states which thrived from the inter-regional trade in maritime Southeast Asia. Though often viewed as a unified kingdom, it was in fact a loose confederation of various coastal and riverine polities, with its economic and political center situated at the port of Malacca. The main port was strategically positioned as the narrowest chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even the Strait of Malacca, enabling the rulers to exert full control over the sea traffic and even

Information regarding the territorial expansion and administration of Malacca can be found in the Portuguese and Malay accounts: the Suma Oriental (written in 1512), Book of Duarte Barbosa (written in 1516) and the Salutator Salatin (compiled in the mid-16th century). All these materials provide important narratives as well as first-hand accounts of how the Sultanate of Malacca evolved and expanded from its founding by Parameswara until its demise under Sultan Mahmoud Shah. These materials also give, and capture information about how Malacca administered and exploited its subjugated territories. During the peak of Malacca’s power in the early 16th century, the sultanate covered most of the Malay Peninsula, Riau-Lingga islands, and south-eastern Sumatra. However, careful study of these historical accounts shows that the power structure of the sultanate was far from centralized or symmetrical. In Malacca’s capital, the rulers were supported by merchants and doctors who competed for influence. Malacca’s political framework was derived from its form of economy, which focused on controlling and capitalizing on the movement of people and goods by establishing and maintaining a network of subordinate groups with different degrees of loyalties. From these historical accounts, it is suggested that within the large area under the political influence of Malacca, there were five levels of political control (Fig. 1).

The first level – marked in red in Figure 1 – covers the area of Malacca’s center of population, possibly at the narrow strip of land between the Kesang river to the Melaka river. The second level, marked in purple, was ruled indirectly by the royal court through the local chieftains appointed directly by the Sultan. They were known as Pengulu or Manduik, who probably administered the area according to Malaccan laws. The territories of Lingga, Rang, Juga, Selangor, and Perak. These areas were also known to be rich in tin. The Sultan-appointed officials had to exercise tight control over these territories to maintain Malacca’s monopoly over the tin trade. The Sultan-appointed officials had to exercise tight control over these territories to maintain Malacca’s monopoly over the tin trade.
bungalow-style architecture spread across politics colonized by the British, such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Burma. The ground floor was likely U Pan Nyu’s office, where he conducted his teak business. The first floor was situated on the upper floor, which has verandahs wrapped around the north-, west- and south-facing sides. The building actually had three other staircases: two principal ones used separately by men and women, located to the front or west, and a minor one to the southeast that connected to a one-story kitchen on the ground level. While U Pan Nyu’s house and his monastery at Wat Upagata had corresponding elements, the monastery was more important and grander than the house. The principal roof of the monastery has two tiers, and its front porch is surrounded by a brick pavilion (‘spire’) (Fig. 1). It faces north, which is the same direction that monasteries face. Although the monastery of Wat Upagata no longer exists, the ground floor is assumed to have functioned as a storage facility.1 There are three possibilities for the way in which space was organized on the upper floor: the first is parallel to the spatial organization of monasteries in Moulmein, Lower Burma; the second and third share similarities with Pa-o and Shan monasteries in Lower Burma and northern Thailand. These three types of spatial organization have a porch entrance to the north with two outer staircases separating laymen and laywomen. The upper floor was surrounded by a covered verandah on three sides facing the west, the north, and the east. However, the three types differed in terms of the location of the Buddha hall, where Buddha images were enshrined and where monks and novices had their living quarters.2

The first type of spatial organization probably placed the Buddha hall to the east and the main hall to the west. The residence of monks and novices was situated to the south (Fig. 4). This spatial organization is typical of monasteries in Moulmein. The second type of spatial organization was likely similar to that of U Pan Nyu’s house with the main hall at the center and the Buddha shrine as a detached structure to the rear. The main hall was flanked by two bedrooms to its right and left. The former to the east was the abbot’s sleeping area, while the latter to the west was reserved for monastics (Fig. 5). These two rooms probably included a raised platform in the front, a place reserved for monks to receive guests and for novices to study. Another raised platform was erected in front of the Buddha shrine and reserved for monks and laymen. The floor plan was similar to that of Nat-kyun Kyaung, a Pa-o monastery, which is the same direction that monasteries in Lower Burma and northern Thailand are positioned along the trade route, but with less political strength than Malacca. The fifth floor, marked in orange, consisted of independent kingdoms with nominal allegiances to Malacca. Malacca had no effective political control over them, possibly owing to the distance and their political leverage, especially in terms of their military strength and ties with other regional powers. They probably had strategic partnerships in trade with Malacca, especially in the export of certain commodities such as rice and gold. They included Kedah, Pattani, and Kelantan, which are all located at the northern and southern ends of the Straits of Malacca. Finally, there were maritime politics, which were part of the Malacca political confederation, and often become its rivals, such as Aru and Pasai.

Like the Manchus, Malacca’s consolidation of power had less to do with direct political dominance over territories or settled populations than with its indirect control over the movement and distribution of goods and commodities in favor of its main part. As a result, the formation of Malacca’s political control over its territories varied widely and was extremely asymmetric in nature. The different areas within the empire were administered with varying levels of political control, from direct rule by the Sultan down to a nominal recognition of suzerainty by local rulers. Due to economic necessity and demographic factors, such a system evolved organically to form a confederation that was structured by a fluid and adaptable network of relations between the dominant political center and its subordinate territories. This was due to the fact that different areas would offer Malacca distinct strategic and economic advantages. Thus, in order to effectively capitalize on all of them in the interest of the empire, it must employ particular forms of political arrangements for specific subordinate groups, depending on their immediate economic strength, geostrategic location, and political leverage. Such was the true nature of Malacca maritime statecraft, a complex and dynamic organization of political and economic bonds established between local chieftains, merchant-aristocrats, and the imperial administration.

References


4. However, Kalya and Srisuda stated that it was used as a dharmasala in 1947. Kalya and Srisuda, op. cit., p. 161.

5. Also see these three architectural floor plans in Chotima Chaturawong, “U Pan Nyu: Siam and Burma Relations during the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries” (in Thai), in Proceedings of the Seminar on the 200th Anniversary of Thai-Myanmar Diplomatic Relations (Bangkok: Thai Khru Institute, Mahanak Worawihan, Thammasat University, 2018): 157-156.


Malacca hereditary nobles to be named in his name. The areas included Muar, Batu Pahat, Bentaus, Manjunj, Rupat, Singapura, Setia, Siantan, and Bentan. These were coastal and riverine settlements located at the strategic chokepoints of the Strait of Malacca. Being administered semi-autonomously by the high officials loyal to the Sultan enabled the territories to serve as important outposts to control the sea traffic, for the defensive and economic interests of Malacca. The fourth level, marked in green, was comprised of autonomous kingdoms ruled by local rulers who were subordinate to Malacca. They included Rakan, Siak, Kampar, Indragiri, Pahang, Kelantan, and Lingga, which were mostly potential rival ports pacified by Malacca. They were free to conduct local affairs, except in passing a death sentence, which required the Sultan’s approval. They also needed to send regular tributes and army personnel when requested. The pacification of these ports was meant to keep them under control, so that they would not rise up and threaten the commercial and military interests of Malacca. These ports often consisted of resource-rich coastal polities strategically positioned along the trade routes, but with less political strength than Malacca.

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The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 was a pivot point for traditions and customs around the world in terms of their recognition, status, value, preservation, and promotion. However, this convention, which followed the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972, has arguably led to an almost black-and-white understanding of heritage being either tangible or intangible.

China and Its Changing Narratives of Nationhood and Heritage

Susan Whitfield

Fig. 1: A performance from the 2016 ‘Xinjiang National Unity and Progress Art Gala’

Since 1949, when the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded, narratives of nationhood and heritage have been constructed by the Chinese Communist Party to create a cohesion among communities of China’s central plains and the surrounding colonized regions in order to present itself to the outside world as a nation-state. More recently, along with archaeological excavations, tourism, the PRC’s active role in UNESCO, and promotion of the Silk Road, there has been an increase of Han-centric narratives to frame heritage. Such narratives are stifling and, in some cases, destroying diversity.

In 1983, when the PRC ratified the World Heritage Convention, the many destructions of the Cultural Revolution were in recent memory. The PRC readily mastered the vocabulary and practices of UNESCO and succeeded in having five sites inscribed in 1987. These encompassed the whole chronology of “Chinese” culture, ranging from Peking Man to the tomb of the First Emperor, from the Great Wall to palaces of the last two imperial dynasties, the Ming and Qing. The geographical focus was on the central plains, with the exception of the Buddhist rock-cut temple site of Dunhuang, which was situated on the northwestern edges of China for much of history. Dunhuang’s place on the Silk Road was mentioned in the recommendation documents. Its diversity — including its Islamic history and independence from regimes in central China - was also presented.

The potential to include cultural sites in colonized regions — those of the “ethnic minorities” — on the UNESCO list, and to some extent to assert ownership of them, was first realized with the inscription of the Mogao Caves in 1978. But the inscription and its management has not gone without criticism: it has been argued that such action on the palace has enabled the destruction of much of the surrounding culture, inappropriate new buildings, and forced removal of the population. There has also been concern about its conservation, especially following a fire. The inscription also presented an opportunity for local and ethnic groups in Xinjiang. “The growth of the Silk Road narrative to frame heritage in UNESCO in the 1980s and the more recent political-economic Belt and Road Initiative by the PRC has only affected the way in which heritage is approached to heritage in Chinese Central Asia. The division into steppe, sea, and land routes across Asia — made in a report presented to UNESCO by Japan in 1957 — persisted in the UNESCO narrative. As the PRC and its narratives have come to dominate international discussion and promote heritage in Chinese Central Asia, the claim to certain territories is strengthened by the PRC’s active role in UNESCO. However, the increasing commodification and appropriation of the PRC of “minority” arts, especially music and dances, has been subject to much criticism. Such narratives are stifling and, in some cases, destroying diversity.

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The current heritage of Japan has been changed by a number of factors, one of the most important being the transfer of focus from the emperor to the people. After World War II, Japan underwent several radical transformations or interruptions caused by the occupying power (i.e., the United States), one of which was the reassessment of its sense of belonging and identity via the use of archaeological heritage.

The invention of new heritage took place, and we can see an interruption to previous heritage narratives. These narratives had been linked to the legacy of the Meiji period and the emperor — partly related to the embodiment of the state — and to the Kofun period (AD 250–710), which reflected the embodiment of the state and to the Kofun ‘salary man’ and his stone-age forebear.”2

Of the past as their ancestors: there is a who are encouraged to view the people archaeology comprehensible to the public These images render the discoveries of furusato: the status as a national song performed during the closing ceremony of the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano.

This is well illustrated by the song “Furusato” (“old home” or “hometown”) with its accompaniment of a drum, and along with singer to the next, and these photographs put the years. A few points are communicated through this display. The first is that this oral through the sound of the marketplace back reference to “tteukum” training that to check how loud they can shout. This is a to the intangible process. The second is intentional blank frames have been performance would have been like. The more interactive parts of the museum are the audio booths containing recordings of Pansori recitals and also the volume-check room where visitors can shout into the microphone to check how loud they can shout. This is a reference to “tteukum” training that Pansori singers would have received. In order to check the volume through the sound of the marketplace back in the 18th century.

The museum are the preserved 12 books of Shin Jieo Hye. Five of these books became registered and designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008 by UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. As visitors head towards the exit, there is a wall with photographs of Pansori singers throughout the years. A few points are communicated through this space. The oral tradition has been passed down from one singer to the next, and these photographs put a face to the intangible. We should consider that intentional blank frames have been put up to stress that Pansori is a living oral art form.

The Gochang Pansori Museum can be used to understand how the tangible has an important role in validating, preserving, and promoting intangible heritage, and vice versa. In many respects, seeing the books of Shin Jieo Hye, exploring the countless artifacts related to Pansori, and stepping on the grounds that were used to train Pansori singers in the past is a tangible evidence of the intangible tradition.

Notes
3. The song was translated into English by Greg Kim and this was published in the album called ‘Japan’s Best Loved Songs of the Season’ in 1998.

The Tangible Validation, Preservation, and Promotion of South Korea’s Oral Tradition Pansori in the Gochang Pansori Museum

Minjoo Zoh

Pansori combines two Korean words: Pan, meaning “a place where people gather”; and sori, literally meaning “sound.” Essentially, Pansori is a passed-down oral tradition of epic stories and songs that are accompanied by the accompaniment of a drum, and along with the audience, who would provide the reaction. Thus, a triple act was formed, making every recital and performance unique and complete. The origin of Pansori is difficult to pinpoint by exact date and location, but the closest understanding is that it began around the end of the 17th century through the 19th century — as the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) — around southwest Korea.

There was no “script” for Pansori recitals; they were very much impromptu performances. Stories were passed down by word of mouth until, eventually, they were recorded into literary compositions by a man named Shin Jieo Hye (1812–1898), who was a theorist and part of the oral tradition. Shin Jieo Hye’s house in Gochang (in the North Jeolla Province) was used to teach and train Pansori singers. These very grounds, where Shin is known to have recorded and taught Pansori, is now a part of the Gochang Pansori Museum today. The annex where Pansori singers studied and trained became renamed in the open to the public as part of the museum.

The Gochang Pansori Museum opened in 2001 to preserve and promote Pansori. The museum claims that its aim is to “collect, preserve, research, study, display, and analyse tangible and intangible cultural items related to Pansori in order to educate the general public and to provide people with opportunities to appreciate Pansori.” At the core of the museum — in the main exhibition hall of the museum — are the 12 books of Shin Jieo Hye that can be seen as the first steps taken towards the tangible-isolation of the intangible tradition, and also Shin Jieo Hye’s house that was an important physical location for Pansori training and singers. The museum, moreover, houses over 1000 artifacts related to Shin Jieo Hye’s house and his descendants. The museum also houses a huge board with a map, and numerous buttons are attached to specific locations within the map. Visitors are encouraged to press the button which holds recordings of Pansori recitals from different parts of Korea. Through this, visitors are able to hear the different dialects and styles of Pansori, depending on the region in which it was practiced. This display merges the tangible (buttons) and the intangible (audio). A large section of the museum is dedicated to the History of Pansori, and visitors are able to learn about the Pansori singers during the Joseon dynasty as well as how the oral tradition was preserved leading up to, during, and following the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945) in Korea. This was when the Japanese tried to “Japanize” Korea, meaning that there were intentional efforts to erase everything that was intrinsically Korean. The history room at the Gochang Pansori Museum portrays, through tangible recitals and artifacts, how the Korean oral tradition was preserved and passed down amid times of threat to Korean culture. Small 3D artworks have also been used to depict scenes from Pansori recitals back in the Joseon dynasty for visitors to imagine what a Pansori performance would have been like. The more interactive parts of the museum are the audio booths containing recordings of Pansori recitals and also the volume-check room where visitors can shout into the microphone to check how loud they can shout. This is a reference to “tteukum” training that Pansori singers would have received. In order to check the volume through the sound of the marketplace back in the 18th century.

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Notes
The Return of Naadam: A Celebration of Intangible Heritage in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Emilie Jean Green

After being cancelled in 2021 because of the rising cases of COVID-19, this year Ulaanbaatar and the other provinces of Mongolia saw the grand return of Naadam, one of Mongolia’s oldest and most celebrated cultural events. Over the last two years, the absence of Naadam has been sorely felt, and this summer there was a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation in the build-up to the celebrations. The pandemic changed much of the world in a very short amount of time; in many aspects of our lives, we had to learn to adapt and overcome these changes, and intangible heritage was no exception to this.

Intangible heritage relies upon “actors” and “agents” to practice, maintain, and transmit this cultural knowledge, in many cases depending upon people and groups gathering together to share and celebrate cultural traditions. The festival consists of distinct features of Mongolia’s nomadic culture and traditions. Unlike many events which could be adapted onto an online platform, Naadam did not translate appropriately to such forums. Naadam, like many other intangible cultural heritage events, requires the congregation of people, and the act of togetherness is as important as the events themselves.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010, Naadam is a three-day event, the origins of which date back to the Mongol period. Naadam is a celebration of not only Mongolian culture and heritage, but of nature and the relationship the Mongolian people have with their environment. The event consists of three main traditional sporting events: horse riding, archery, and wrestling. Included within the celebrations and events of Naadam are traditional singing, dancing, artistry, and food. In preparation for the games and events of Naadam, the participants prepare and finely hone their skills over many years. Traditions, skills, and knowledge are transferred from generation to generation, and in more recent years schools have emerged in which young Mongolians can train for participation in the events of the festival. Steeped in cultural and historical significance, the events of Naadam are evocative for observers, as seen in the brightly coloured traditional garments, the ceremonies, and the sense of monumentality that comes with the occasion. In all these things, Naadam itself is deeply symbolic, promoting feelings of solidarity and togetherness – feelings that have only become more appreciated over the last two years.

A true amalgamation of many intangible cultural traditions, practices, crafts, and sporting events, Naadam can be seen as encapsulating the spirit of entanglement that connects people and landscapes across vast distances from the farthest provinces from all corners of Mongolia. Intangible heritage events and festivals have many different facets and elements which emphasise their importance, from the reinforcement of social bonds within and between groups to the perpetuation of skills, knowledge, practices, living traditions, and shared cultural memory. Not only is Naadam a celebration of the cultural history of Mongolia, but it is also a celebration of its people, their lifeways, and the deep tether that connects them to their environment. Increasing numbers of Mongolian people are now living within cities such as the bustling Ulaanbaatar. Through the celebration of Naadam and the facets which constitute this great event, the Mongolian people gather and take a step away from their everyday lives to celebrate, maintain, and preserve this connection to the past.

With the growth of cultural tourism within Mongolia, many have returned to the country this year to enjoy and observe the events of Naadam. Through this, Mongolian culture is celebrated and stands proudly on the global stage. As Mongolia continues to grow and change, Naadam is an opportunity to celebrate heritage, and as the world becomes increasingly globalised, the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage has only become more apparent. Whilst COVID-19 remains in many ways a large part of our lives, it is encouraging to see a return to a greater degree of normality, wherein events such as Naadam can be celebrated, maintained, and safeguarded by current and future generations in their full capacity once more. The return of festivals and large-scale events such as Naadam has been an important part of the celebration of culture and heritage. Since the days of the early nomadic states who traversed the steppes, valleys, and mountains of Mongolia, Naadam has been the thread that connects the modern Mongolian people to their ancient past.

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Fig. 1 (left): Boy participating in horse race at Naadam in Mongolia. Public domain Wikipedia.

Fig. 2 (right): Horse riding event (Photo with permission of Joshua Wright).
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Environmental Governance
Amidst the Climate Crisis and Energy Transition in the 21st Century

The first quarter of the 21st century is a remarkable period of significant political change for the world. Firstly, our world experienced a unique pandemic brought forth by the novel COVID-19 virus, which yielded to a rethinking on health and well-being as a central responsibility of the national state. The pandemic likewise raised serious debates regarding the merits of unfettered economic globalization, leaving questions about the sustainability of integrated supply chains. Since 2020 disruptions in global production networks have remained a formidable challenge for securing access to basic goods. This, in turn, reframed political debates, including the significance of reshoring manufacturing processes by way of establishing regional production networks to effectively respond to local demands for personal protective gear, food supplies, and COVID-19 vaccines.

Climate crisis as a critical juncture

The International Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, known as COP26, has set the pace and direction of the global South, especially through bilateral arrangements via state-owned banks and the Belt and Road Initiative. These changes within the macro-political and economic realms are not insulated from the crisis of climate governance. Faced with uncertainty and crisis, Western governments promote the unprecedented drive to reduce carbon emissions during the Anthropocene. While global emissions still require slowing down, the global governance architecture overseeing climate policies falls short in securing a pathway towards energy transition – that is, away from fossil fuels-intensive growth – for many countries. In this context, environmental governance is a focal point to understand how moments of crisis can yield transformative political action. Through such critical junctures, we may witness the alteration of the course of human history as we respond to the challenges of climate change.

Sacrifice zones and the quest for new models of resource governance

The global race for natural resources reinforces the long forms of socioeconomic inequalities, top-down modes of governance, and ecological debt by the industrialized world towards the developing world. Traditionally, we think about “environmental governance” through the lens of problem-solving approaches, in which the narratives coalesce around how to achieve resource efficiency and how to secure access to critical raw materials for the energy transition. Those in developing countries bear enormous natural capital, especially communities living in close proximity to sites of extraction, are often considered...
Note: The Newsletter is the official publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), based in Winnipeg, Canada. It is a bimonthly magazine that provides news and analysis on sustainability issues, with a focus on climate change, biodiversity, and natural resource management. The text provided is an excerpt from the newsletter, discussing topics such as environmental governance, resource extraction, and the role of natural resource sovereignty in meeting global climate targets. The newsletter is authored by experts in the field, and it provides a platform for discussing the latest developments and challenges in sustainability. The newsletter is available online at https://www.iisd.org/newsletter
China’s participation in COP26 in Glasgow did not disappoint. China’s positions at COP26, as one of the most powerful players in the UN-led multinational climate talks, revealed both goals and reservations. While COP26 highlighted the gap between what developing countries can demand and what industrialized countries could deliver, China’s participation appears to be even more critical in deciding the success of such efforts. China has made significant and ambitious carbon emission reduction targets in front of the international community. Nevertheless, these commitments are circumscribed by the need to balance politics at home and China’s wider foreign policy efforts. This essay examines China’s new commitments at COP26, emphasizing not just the significance of these climate policy efforts at the international level, but also the wider challenges at the domestic scale to promote decarbonization.

China at COP26: ambitions and reservations

China has entered a new era of dual carbon targets since President Xi Jinping announced the country’s new climate targets in 2020. China has already implemented several initiatives at home in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow, demonstrating its commitment to tangible climate action. During the month of October in 2021, China issued multiple reports and policy papers stating their climate-related agendas, which included working guidance and action plans for carbon peaking, and China’s 2021 clearly response to climate change. On top of that, on the 28th, the Chinese government presented their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term low-carbon development strategy to the UNFCCC secretariat. These five new policy documents announce China’s decarbonization plans to the rest of the world, as well as the country’s position on climate debates at both international and domestic levels.

The joint Glasgow announcement between China and the United States on enhancing climate action in the 2020s was undoubtedly significant in boosting global climate objectives. Both countries pledged to further prioritize climate action in the 2020s, highlighting their shared conviction in reducing carbon and methane emissions while also reaffirming their commitment to the Paris Agreement. Being the primary movers of international climate negotiations, these two countries have put aside their differences on many other issues to reaffirm their commitments and actions in addressing climate change. In so doing, the world has a fighting chance of retaining the goal of keeping 1.5°C warming limit within reach.

At COP26, China’s new commitments have also promised to gradually reduce coal usage. First, China’s president, Xi Jinping, announced to the world China’s 30/60 dual carbon targets in 2020, which stated China’s intention to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Then, just days before the COP26, he announced at the UN General Assembly that China will stop building coal power plants abroad, in response to criticism that China was outsourcing carbon intensive power plants through its Belt and Road Initiative’s overseas infrastructure projects. Notwithstanding such apparent progress, other considerations led China to resist over-committing to climate mitigation measures. For example, China was instrumental in changing the language used in the Glasgow agreement on coal power from “phase-out” to “phase-down.” Even though high-level authorities set the ambitious goals and stated that “coal usage will be gradually reduced over the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2020–30),” China did not sign the Global Coal to Clean Power Transition Statement produced at COP26. The statement is a key agreement for phasing out coal power and was signed by 46 countries. As the world’s largest coal power generator, China’s refusal to accept the language of “phasing out,” and instead opting for “phasing down” coal demonstrates the tensions in climate mitigation measures and broader developmental objectives. Thus, climate policies reflect the careful balancing act between ambitious worldwide aims and a gradualist approach towards energy transition at home.

China also joined the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use, a statement aimed at halting forest loss and degradation. China also expressed its support for ending deforestation and enforcing laws against illegal importation of deforestation-risk commodities in a joint statement with the United States.

In general, the international community expected China to demonstrate greater climate ambitions and leadership at COP26. China did so in certain areas while expressing reservations in others. This suggested that the country has reached a critical juncture in the period of “30/60 dual carbon targets,” where both possibilities and problems exist. “1+N”: new governance scheme at home

Since the release of the dual carbon targets in 2020, China has failed to provide a clear roadmap that can link domestic economic development with its climate targets. The public was then presented with a new governance plan, which was released in the run-up to the COP26. The “1+N” policy framework represents China’s new climate strategy while also providing a clear path for different sectors.
to follow in order to meet China’s dual carbon targets. China’s emission-peaking efforts will be spearheaded by a newly constituted working group on climate change led by Vice Premier Han Zhen and constituted working group on climate efforts will be spearheaded by a newly to follow in order to meet China’s dual carbon targets; and the “N” comprised of several policies being enforced, such as the coal peaking action plan before 2030, policy measures and actions on key areas and industries, and any forthcoming plans to facilitate the efforts. The overarching policy framework aims to lead efforts in several areas, such as the energy system, circular economy system, commerce, transportation system, and so on, in order to gradually transition to carbon neutrality. Specific plans and targets have been drafted for each policy area. Furthermore, the framework emphasizes the implementing subjects, which include ministries, commissions, local governments, industries, industrial parks, corporations, and individuals.

The “1+N” outlines a path for China to effectively achieve its climate goals while also creating synergies at all levels and across sectors. It addresses both short- and long-term climate goals, requiring contributions from a wide range of players across all key emitting industries and related spheres. For instance, according to the Plan, the energy system will limit coal consumption and transform the power system to be based on new energy.1 The meantime, the emission-intensive steel industry is targeted to reach carbon peak earlier than 2030 under the new guidance. Apart from the five above-mentioned policies that solely focused on climate governance, the Chinese government introduced several key policy documents in the year leading up to the COP26. The 14th Five-Year Plan for national economic and social development, the long-term goals for 2035, and the 2021 report on the work of the government all discussed the blueprint for China’s future climate targets and laid the foundation for the “1+N” framework. This new policy framework is aimed at setting the direction for China’s green transition and providing more systematic political guidance on China’s environmental governance from top-level leaders. Just like Wang Yi pointed out, “to meet the targets, we have detailed a transformation to our entire system, not only in the energy sector, but across society and the economy.”

COP27 forecast obstacles and possibilities

Despite the commitment to actual climate targets and initiatives, China continues to face domestic concerns, as evidenced by the delicate balance displayed at COP26. In China, coal power plants are still a key source of energy. Concerns have been voiced over whether the plan to restructure the coal industry can keep up with the country’s accelerating economy, as shown by the power deficit in Northern China in late 2021. Short-term volatility can make long-term planning and goal achievement difficult. China’s officials have made up their minds to keep the country on a low carbon path. However, keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach will require their government to guide the process while carefully maintaining the delicate balance between economic development and decarbonization.

Furthermore, bilateral climate negotiations between the US and China have been put on hold due to the continuing conflict over Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, visiting Taiwan. The cooperation between the two largest emitters in the world is thus once again precarious, which might make negotiations at the upcoming COP27 even more challenging. However, even though the geopolitical conflict temporarily hails climate cooperation between China and the US, if the two nations can commit to other multilateral and regional agreements, it may still be possible to continue making progress against climate change. This may be a crucial factor in the success of the COP27. Nonetheless, China’s low-carbon transition appears to be a difficult assignment from every angle. The global response to climate change has been hampered by obstacles such as the public health crisis, the blockage of multilateralism, and an increase in economic and trade frictions. China’s climate pledges boosted global climate efforts, and the “1+N” policy framework demonstrated seriousness about delivering such climate pledges ahead of COP26,2 but strong political will still needs to consider domestic realities and challenges in order to make concrete progress and a successful international contribution.

Notes
5 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
Kazakhstan’s commitment under the Paris Agreement and, in 2013, announced its intention to transition to a green economy by 2050. However, the feasibility of these national strategies is questionable. This includes the areas of energy, manufacturing, agriculture and forestry, transport, housing, utilities, and waste management. During the COP26 summit held in Glasgow, Kazakh Prime Minister Asghar Mamin likewise noted that Kazakhstan was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement (6 December 2016). Kazakhstan plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2030 by adjusting the relevant energy share and adopting a green economy. Yet, despite the ambition to achieve carbon neutrality, the country faces multiple challenges. For one, Kazakhstan relies on natural resource revenues for its national income, with 27.6% of its GDP coming from the mining and energy industries. Thus, decarbonization requires a coordinated response to align its environmental regime with its broader economic development model.
effects of commodity specialization. In turn, rising gas prices that are passed onto the citizens in an oil-based economy have politically led to social discontent and, as the 2022 incident demonstrated, a rapid spiral into social unrest.

Kazakhstan’s path to decarbonization – an opportunity or pitfall?

While COP26 is often framed in Western media as the most important climate conference to achieve national climate targets for oil-exporting states, the COP26 reflects the changing geopolitical dynamics associated with the clean energy transition. At a general level, COP26 failed to resolve the so-called ecological debt of the industrialized world. Much of the thematic space has been developed and developing countries, with rich countries continuously putting pressures on poor countries to accelerate their energy transition. By contrast, many emerging economies claim that rich countries should increase their focus and support for climate adaptation to help the developing world. Take coal as an example. India and China have joined forces, often to soften the language on coal in the final agreement, changing the term from “phasing out” to “phasing down” coal production. In so doing, these countries have framed their positions as champions of the interests of developing countries. Kazakhstan, as one of the first signatories of the Paris Agreement, recognizes the need for a transition to a low-carbon model that incorporates the environmental and climate impacts of economic development. Its strategy emphasizes the shift from a hydrocarbon-dependent economy towards green electrification. If successful, Kazakhstan could serve as a model for other oil-exporting economies which face the unique challenge of simultaneously accelerating clean energy and reducing oil dependency. As the Kazakh government argues, “the fight for climate change and sustainable development appears ... to be unavoidable, and thus all our economic development plans should be aligned with the global agenda.”

Yet, the challenges remain formidable. As the COP26 negotiations clearly illustrate, compensation for climate policies and demand for the EU and other industrialized countries to contribute more will not disappear from political debates. After all, developed countries are not the main emitters of greenhouse gases judging by the fact that they are the recipients of an economic system built around the intensive and extensive exploitation of coal and natural gas. The demand for climate action might also have an unintended consequence: calling into question the exploitation of coal and natural resources. This viewpoint can drive developing countries to embrace the necessary shift towards an economy in line with global aspirations to achieve green transition with regulated extraction of mineral and energy wealth. After the riots in early 2022, Kazakhstan’s new president has declared that the country’s new development plans should be aligned with the global agenda.1

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The Tian Shan are home to the upper reaches of the Syr Darya River, one of two glacier-fed rivers that flow into the Aral Sea – the other being the Amu Darya. As temperatures rise globally, the glacial melt of the mountain glaciers is home to the upper reaches of the Syr Darya River, one of two glacier-fed rivers that flow into the Aral Sea – the other being the Amu Darya. As temperatures rise globally, the glacial melt of the mountain glaciers are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts owing to their economic dependence on natural resources. Indeed, natural resource politics have long defined the economies of Central Asia dating back to the Soviet Union, when Moscow directed the Central Asian countries to produce a range of raw materials to fuel the state socialist economic system. The Central Asian states were large producers of coal, oil, and gas, along with numerous mineral and metal commodities; for example, Kazakhstan was the largest producer of copper in the Soviet Union. Soviet centralized planning required a highly integrated and interdependent system of production in which many of the Central Asian states essentially bartered raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods from the other republics.

While much has been written about the energy-water nexus in Central Asia as well as about Central Asia’s abundant oil and gas resources, there is less academic literature concerning climate change impacts in Central Asia despite earlier warnings that climate change would affect Central Asia’s water resources and economic livelihoods. Following a summer of record temperatures worldwide and collapsing glaciers – not just in Central Asia, but also in Italy – it is imperative to address how the global climate crisis and the ensuing global energy transition will affect local livelihoods and Central Asia’s political economy. On the one hand, melting glaciers and changing rainfall patterns will wreak havoc on Central Asia’s agricultural sector, which depends heavily on the rivers fed by the glaciers as well as rainfall; on the other hand, as countries worldwide shift away from fossil fuels, there may be less demand for Central Asia’s oil and gas resources and hence less revenue for government coffers in the oil- and gas-rich states (e.g., Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan). While the war in Ukraine has seen an immediate uptick in demand for fossil fuels, over the long term, it is expected that many importing countries will seek to lessen their dependence on fossil fuels and shift to renewables. Ultimately, the climate crisis may amplify the negative impacts of fossil fuel development, as the oil- and gas-rich countries may lose export markets. Yet, the global demand for clean energy technologies may also provide opportunities for the Central Asian states as suppliers of critical minerals and rare earth elements.

On July 8, 2022, a glacier collapsed in the Tian Shan Mountains of Central Asia, causing an avalanche. The Tian Shan are a favorite place for foreign tourists to climb, and if it were not for the camera of a British tourist that witnessed the ensuing avalanche, the loss of the glacier might have gone unnoticed. Instead, we got a firsthand account of what climate change means for Central Asia’s ecology and economy.1

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background paper for the UNDP Human Development Report on Climate Change found that 46 glaciers in Central Asia were already shrinking and that from the 1950s to the 1990s the Pamir-Alai glaciers had lost 19 percent of their ice. Recent studies have found that approximately 80 percent of the Tian Shan glaciers in Xinjiang are melting. Earlier snowmelt coupled with shorter winters is likely to create natural hazards for those living near glaciers and associated infra-structure such as dams and reservoirs.

Overall, less water in Central Asia’s rivers will have socioeconomic and political consequences given the importance of agricultural livelihoods, even in the countries that are rich in oil and gas resources. For the region of Central Asia where livelihoods depend on the agricultural sector, changes in the river runoff will thus affect complex irrigated agricultural systems. For example, in Fergana Valley, overlaps over water resources occurred between communities along the border area between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2011. Changing precipitation has decreased the amount of water as well as wheat that can be produced, resulting in food shortages in 2017 in Turkmenistan.

Climate Change and Fossil Fuels

Addressing climate change requires an international commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For decades, the Central Asian states have been a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. They have been exporters of fossil fuels, the then Ministry of Environment and Water Resources engaged the International Institute for Environment and Development in 2011 to help map out a path for building a green economy. This followed the launch of the Green Bridge Initiative, which included regional collaboration to share lessons regarding green technologies and strategies for de- carbonization. At the 2011 UN Conference of the Parties meeting in Cancun, Kazakhstan undertook its commitment to reaching carbon neutrality by 2060.

Yet, dependence on natural resources continues to be crucial to the Central Asian economies. To reduce its greenhouse gas footprint, the country’s commitment to decarbonization is made more difficult by its reliance on coal-based power plants and the use of coal for heating in winter. Moreover, as noted by Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan, in 2019, the government published a list of BRI projects with China, some of which half were in oil and gas projects.

As with other BRI investments elsewhere in Asia, revenue generated from these projects will likely need to service the debt from the initial investments. Every year since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, despite being the world’s largest emitter of CO2, China was taking significant steps to diversify its coal-based energy sector. By relying on coal-fired power plants and expanding its use of clean energy technologies, China is making a commitment to decarbonization at home and is not being reliant on fossil fuels abroad with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. Yet, by investing in fossil fuels abroad, China’s commitment to its own decarbonization is undermined. In 2019, China signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Bank, which called for increased cooperation in the Green Industrial Revolution. In part due to such criticisms, China’s government has set the targets of carbon neutrality by 2060 and carbon neutrality by 2030 for the country. The country has also pledged to become carbon neutral by 2060.

To date, the absence of disclosing foreign investment and public participation in decision making has led to protests in other sectors as well, which have had implications for local communities and environmental and health impacts. For example, in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, the countries are also at the forefront of climate change and are among the top five greenhouse gas emitters in the world.

Conclusion

The loss of resources and impacts of climate change mean that Central Asia will face their own reckoning regarding how to manage the impacts of global warming while ensuring that governance coheres rationally to provide for both environmental and social benefits. While vital for fostering a global energy transition, to realize the transition to fossil fuels will have to go beyond the broader role of environmental and social impacts to benefit the local population and diversify its economy.

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People in Southeast Asia earn a livelihood in a variety of ways. Certain nomadic groups live on or near the water, relocating from place to place to follow migrating fish. The largest of these groups live by Tonle Sap Lake, an enormous body of fresh water in Cambodia. In Cambodia, as elsewhere, water usage is governed partly by national policies. As we shall see, however, governance of water is necessarily the governance of people whose lives are connected with such water. In this context, Tonle Sap has historically been the target of political intervention mainly regarding who gets what from the resources available from the lake. This article examines how water resources can serve as an effective tool for political influence. By examining the case of policy change by the Cambodian government in relation to Tonle Sap Lake, I argue for the importance of providing local people with the resources and capacities to take care of their surroundings once governed by the state.

In a highly restrictive political environment like Cambodia, political spaces for debate among various political parties and key matters of local policy are often discussed. By the 1980s, the power of the CPP in these councils was absolute and unchallenged, despite occasional "reforms" of the election system. Therefore, if the ruling party already enjoyed such a solid power base, why did it intervene in Tonle Sap's fisheries arrangements? Is it simply because the government was interested in conserving the fishery resources available from the lake? Or does the lake potentially serve as leverage for political purposes?

The Tonle Sap ecosystem

Before we dig into the governance issue, let us clarify the ecological context. Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, is a vast expanse of water that stretches in all directions almost as far as the eye can see. An estimated 1.7 million people make their home on the lake, spread out across over 1,500 villages.2 What makes Tonle Sap unique is the fluidity of its boundaries. In the rainy season, the lake swells to several times its dry-season size. Lake dwellers relocate as the tides slowly shift, dividing their time between farming and fishing as the seasons change. Such a lifestyle is astonishing to the eyes of a city-dweller, where one's "residence" is a fixed location on dry land, but a place where one's "living" status is anywhere from the lake. Lake dwellers have good reason to remain close to these shifting shores. The climate is pleasant all year round, and fish are (or at least used to be) available in abundance, removing the threat of famine. Communities around the lake also encompass schools, health centers, and other infrastructure, all built on stilts. Anyone with a boat can find life's necessities on Tonle Sap Lake, and the lake dwellers have long enjoyed the freedom to live and work there. What makes Tonle Sap unique is the fact that the size and location of these supposedly distinct areas change as the lake floods.

Tonle Sap expands dramatically during the rainy season, as Figure 2 shows, and this annual transformation calls for a complex system of resource management. Over the last few decades, Tonle Sap has been affected by population growth, urbanization, deforestation, and hydropower demand, not to mention the impacts of climate change causing scarcity of water in the region. On March 12, 2012, the Cambodian government announced a drastic policy shift, and the century-old fishing lot system was abolished. This had profound effects on the economically and environmentally valuable ecosystem of Tonle Sap Lake. While the government had already started to reduce the total area of fishing lots around the turn of the millennium, the total abolition of the system had been politically inconceivable. Initially welcomed by the small-scale fishers subsisting on the Tonle Sap fishery resources, the change also led to a rapid decline in fishing stocks. This came on top of other problems caused or worsened by the El Nino phenomenon; fish in Tonle Sap were becoming smaller in size, and biodiversity was suffering.3

The changing fishing system

Tonle Sap's fishing lot system dates back to the 19th century, when the government wanted to commercialize fisheries on the lake. The system has changed over time, but the basic function remained the same: the local government leased fishing rights to particular locations, forcing the people who had been using the lake for centuries to buy these leases. In 1987, the fishing lot system in Cambodia was abolished, opening up the fishing grounds to all, and with it the lake became a vast expanse of water in which one could live and make a living.

In 2000, when it reduced the total area of fishing lots by 56 percent, then further in 2012, the system was abolished entirely. At that time, Cambodia was still in a civil war that greatly affected the Tonle Sap area. The fishing lot system plunged into chaos. Further conflicts over fishing along the shore may have continued. Nonetheless, local communities and their leaders took over the lot system in the 1990s, which subsequently led to a rapid decline in fishing stocks.

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Why did the government relinquish its control over fishing lots?

There are several arguments as to why the Cambodian government decided to open up fishing lots. Firstly, the administrative incentive of the state was a factor. There are no oil and gas reserves under Tonle Sap Lake. For the government, the first step in securing control over the area was to dismantle the system that provided rights to private entities over parts of the lake and to establish itself as the main beneficiary of future revenues from the exploitation of these subterranean resources. However, the profitability of the still-hypothetical oil and gas exploitation remains to be determined, as there are no concrete plans to develop these reserves. Though plausible, it is difficult to identify a clear link between the abolition of the fishing lot system and plans for future resource development.

Secondly, the main beneficiaries of the abolition – the small-addressees, contributes to about eight percent of the GDP. According to prime minister Hun Sen's statement on March 8, 2016, many of the areas were involved in industrial-scale operations, and this small cluster generated about 400 million USD worth of total revenue. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery lacked the political resources to halt this activity before the discontentment spread throughout Cambodia. In the post-2000 period, an increasing number of industrial-scale fishermen frequently sparked minor conflicts across the country. The government’s push for a full-scale investigation into the problem in 2011 was seen as an expression of Hun Sen’s failure at the failure of the Fisheries Administration to deal with the situation.

Many fishing lots have been designated as exclusive fishing grounds established with help from the government. Under the Fisheries Administration, it is possible for the state to control or to bend the definition of “illegal fishing” according to their needs. Illegal fishing means to bend the definition of “illegal fishing.” On the lake is an easy way for the state to gratify at least a fourth of its citizens. It is hardly a coincidence that Hun Sen’s populist tactics remain as boundaries blur and patrols fall short, all means to bend the definition of “illegal fishing.” According to their needs.

Illegal fishing activities.

It is obvious that communities can accomplish on their own, especially with respect to controlling overfishing. Sithirith suggests that officials are concerned about the rising cases of exclusion and, later, by the delegation of fishing grounds for poachers. Community fisheries are established to react to the problem of overfishing in protected areas. The Ministry of Environment presides over the Fishing Administration benefits from its connection with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries lacks jurisdiction over fisheries in the fishing lots. The Ministry of Environment and the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, lack jurisdiction over the fishing lots. The Ministry of Environment and the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, lack jurisdiction over the fishing lots. The Ministry of Environment and the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, lack jurisdiction over the fishing lots. The Ministry of Environment and the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, lack jurisdiction over the fishing lots.

As mentioned earlier, the Fisheries Administration benefited from the situation with fishing lot owners. For example, fishing lot owners may offer accommodations to politicians and officials when they visit local areas. There is always a risk that such connections lead to the perception of corruption. Thus, it makes sense that the government would be eager to snuff out the escalating conflicts between fishing lot owners and small-scale fishermen who help with the disentanglement spread throughout Cambodia. In the post-2000 period, an increasing number of industrial-scale fishermen frequently sparked minor conflicts across the country. The government’s push for a full-scale investigation into the problem in 2011 was seen as an expression of Hun Sen’s failure at the failure of the Fisheries Administration to deal with the situation.

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The temperature of the world is rising and the climate is changing. Having now documented the nature of these changes and analysed their causes, at the end of March 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) offered us a way to stop overheating the planet. It would not be easy, but in 25 years’ time, the planet could reach a situation of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions if its businesses, governments, and citizens so wished. The task of rolling back the damage caused in the interval would then have to start. Central to this vision of the future was a massive increase in the role of wind and solar energy in global energy production. At present, these two sources contribute 11% (1.36 percent) towards primary global energy production. Under the scenario offered by the IPCC, by 2050 this would increase to 260 EJs (35.6 percent). This implies a 37-fold increase in renewable generating capacity.1 The report said nothing about the geographical location of these new sources of energy, nor about the distribution of the costs. It was also silent on the question of the materials required to realise this transformation. For example, if there is to be a 37-fold increase in wind and solar energy production, with current technology, it will require 37 times more materials than the entire stock produced to date for the solar panels, the generators, the storage batteries, etc. Undoubtedly, there will be an increase in the efficiency of wind and solar sources of energy, as well as some improvement in the recycling of materials, but the simple fact is that many of the minerals required are already in short supply, and this shortage is only likely to increase and to be exacerbated by strategic controls on raw materials.2

A recent Dutch report, focusing on six critical metals, suggested that by 2040 the annual demand for several scarce metals needed in wind and solar energy would be several times higher than today, and the calculations excluded the requirements for electrical vehicles.3 Most of these metals exist as major or minor constituents of minerals, such as silicates, carbonates, oxides, and phosphates. These are available on dry land, but dry land only covers less than 30% of the planet, and its resources have been exploited for decades. Attention is, therefore, turning to the oceans.

Deep-sea mining is defined as any activity removing minerals from a depth of more than 200m. Minerals exist in three different forms: (1) cobalt-rich ferro-manganese crusts on sea mounts, (2) hydrothermal vents bearing various sulphides, and (3) potato-sized nodules polymetallic nodules containing nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese that have been spewed over the ocean floor for millennia. For the areas that lie outside a country’s exclusive economic zone (200 nautical miles/370 kms from the shore), the challenge of deep-sea mining is overseen by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), a body convened in 1994 by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). There are several problems with this arrangement. The first is that not all countries are members—–the USA, for example, has only observer status. The second is that outside the area identified as the responsibility of a national government, it is difficult to establish any effective governance or means of enforcement. Third, in order to obtain consensus, many of its rules and practices are non-binding. While preparing its own rules, the ISA has accepted the so-called “two-year rule”4 informing the ISA that its sponsored company (DeepGreen) intended to start mining, effectively giving the ISA two years to finalise its regulation for the sector.5 The problem is that mining will disturb a unique ecosystem. At huge ocean depths there is no light, the biometric pressure is extremely high, and there are huge variations in temperature. Yet the hydrothermal vents provide the chemical-rich fluids that support an entire food chain. It was once thought that the deep-ocean surface was one relatively homogenous whole, but nothing is further from the truth. Each of these intense sites is unique and, through the spread of planktonic larvae, provides nutrients to a broader community. Destroying even one could mean the loss forever of a life form which we know almost nothing about.6 The spread of waste and sediment could produce a ‘nuclear winter’7 over an underwater habitat stretching hundreds of kilometres. The noise from mining activities will exacerbate the navigation and communication abilities of creatures over a range of several kilometers.8

The ISA’s new code will doubtless contain provision for environmental reporting and clearance before mining can commence. The problem is that it is difficult to be certain about environmental protection if one knows almost nothing about the environment that is being exploited. Then there is the question of who will be in charge of monitoring and protecting. Do we really believe that Nauru has the capacity or resources to do this, or even, as the royalties flow in, the incentive?9 Early in 2021, the World Wildlife Fund started a million dollar project to monitor the ecosystem on deep-sea mining. In September 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) voted in its favour.10 Individual businesses and banks have joined the call. We should not be looking at 24 months as an opportunity to stop it. There is no greening of the ungreenable. Richard T. Griffiths

Notes
1 There is a full eLibrary of free on-line resources on climate change in https://sourcewatchclimatechange.com/
2 EJ is equivalent to one quintillion (1018) joules
3 UNCLOS: Climate Change 2022. Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group II Contribution to the IPCC, Sixth Assessment Report (Ar6), Chapter 4, 2022.
4 P van Est er a l., Metal Demand for Renewable Electricity Generation in the Netherlands, 2016. Output of Pyrooxynitride and Dysprosium would need to be 2.3-4 times higher than today, Turbidity is 5-10 times, Neodymium 7-8 times and Indium 9-10.
5 R. Pichari, “Deep Sea Mining: Business Payday or Crime Against Nature?” Revolutionized, 10.2.2022, citing a market report by 3M/MarketUpdates (single user cost $1,200)
10 IUCN Resolution 112, approved at the Moresby IUCN Conservation Congress on September 10, 2021.
Democracy: A Distant Vision in Myanmar?

Myanmar’s 2021 coup d’état saw the country’s military leaders forcibly remove the democratically elected government led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Yet, after more than a year however, the military regime have been unable to gain control over the country’s governance in the way they had hoped. Through the popular Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), the reach and control of the regime is heavily curtailed. Yet despite widespread resistance and their deep unpopularity, Myanmar’s military leaders are proving difficult to dislodge. In the short term, it is challenging to envisage a comprehensive solution for either the military leaders or the widespread opposition movement. This sadly leaves Myanmar politics in a brutal impasse. The coup has been an incredibly distressing turn for many.

I began research for my book Narrating Democracy in Myanmar in 2015, and at that time many of my Myanmar activist and NGO friends had a guarded optimism about the rate of change in the country. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and many political prisoners had been released in previous years and were reengaged in public life. The press had new freedoms, and there was a flowering of new journals covering everything from fashion and sport to national politics. For activists, there were also new breakthrough shifts in government decision making – such as President Thein Sein’s suspension of the Myitsone dam project – which gave hope for advocacy efforts. The military-aligned and much maligned USDP party still controlled parliament, but there was optimism that the military leaders would be held to account. This focused on the development of new institutions and the promotion of liberal values of rights and minority protections. At the time, many Myanmar activists and democratic leaders that I spoke to narrated a very different story of Myanmar’s democratization, focusing instead on the problem of self-interested and dictatorial leadership and the need for a benevolent leader who could unite the country. This was democratization primarily through the fostering of goodwill and selflessness. The development of formal institutions was also important, but it was not considered by these activists and party leaders to be at the center of the process of democratization. Meanwhile, other groups of Myanmar activists and intellectuals stridently critiqued this common focus on benevolent leadership and sought a cultural reform toward equality in society. The word ‘democracy’ did not always mean the same thing. The widespread perception that democratization was imminent gave hope to the 2015 elections brought the differences in these contrasting narratives to the fore, sparking deep controversies over issues such as the rights of Muslim minorities, the political role of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the freedom of the press. After the 2015 elections – and during the period of NLD governance – these policy contests continued, revealing deeper contrasts in visions of democracy.

A unifying vision, from a distance

In 2016, I was living in Yangon and working for an NGO. I enjoyed going to local galleries and looking at the work of Burmese artists. Once a year, there was a stunning watercolour of a downtown Yangon streetscapes. In the image, rain was falling, and the buildings seemed to close in on the street. I noticed, though, that the painting had a different impact depending on how far away you were standing. When viewed from a distance, the painting looked like a coherent street scene, but when viewed from close-up, it was a complex mess of colours. In 2006, democracy seemed a far-off vision in Myanmar. Power was continuing to centralize under Senior Gen Than Shwe. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – along with hundreds of activists and NLD party members – remained in house arrest or prison, and civil wars continued around the periphery of the country. Opposition to the brutal governance of the military leaders was widespread against civil society organization leaders, ethnic political party members, urban activists, and members of the NLD. Donor agencies from Europe, North America, and Australia also sought ways to support these groups in their efforts to promote democratic change. At a time when democracy seemed far off to most Myanmar people, it was relatively easy for a diverse group of activists, political party leaders, and foreign aid agency representatives to see a coherent meaning for ‘democracy’ as an end to military rule in governance. Seemingly disparate actors could align around opposition to the military. When we fast forward to 2022, activists and democratic leaders are facing an entrenched and stubborn military leadership holding on to power. ‘Democracy’ is now a distant vision for many to be far off. Yet opposition to military rule – and the perceived distance from democracy – has, to some degree, brought alignment and a new unity among diverse political groups. The protests of 2021 and the Civil Disobedience Movement have had broad public support. Some communities in the Burmese-majority areas of the country are experiencing brutality of military rule in a way that many ethnic minority areas have long suffered, therefore bringing new shared experiences of oppression. While fractures remain in the opposition, there is a newly galvanized resistance to the military, often crossover ethnic and religious boundaries. From here, there are a range of scenarios for Myanmar, ranging from the optimistic (e.g., a breakdown to the extent that there was a new democratic election) to the pessimistic (e.g., a gradual centralization around military rule, or brutal and prolonged war). What will unfold in the coming years remains unclear.

From a personal perspective, the release of my book just after the Myanmar coup has been an incredibly distressing turn for those who participated in the research. People have devoted so much of their lives to service of their country through work in political parties and NGOs or in advocating for justice across Southeast Asia. From a personal perspective, I hope the book conveys my admiration for their bravery and commitment.

Tomas Wells is Coordinator of the Myanmar Research Network at the Urbanism Lab, UNSW. He writes on politics and development in Southeast Asia. Before entering academia, he worked for seven years as an advisor in the development sector in Myanmar.

For IIAS Publications, we invite authors and editors 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 books? For more information on IIAS books, please visit www.iias-asia.com/books

Emerging Civic Urbanisms in Asia: Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore and Taipei beyond Developmental Urbanization

In Sik Cho, Blaž Križnik, and Im Sik Cho (eds.), 2022 ISBN 9789463728546 | 316 pages
www.nuap.nl/en-
basil/9789463728546/emerging-civic-
urbanisms-in-asia

In parts of Asia, citizens are getting increasingly involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and cities, representing a significant departure from earlier state-led or market-driven urban development. These emerging civic urbanisms are a result of an evolving relationship between the state and civil society. The two contributory in this volume provide critical insights into how they are shaping state-civil society relationship affects the recent surge civic urbanism in Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, and Taipei, and present case of grassroots activism and resistance, collaboration and placemaking.

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The Chair of Taiwan Studies was jointly established by the Department of Cross-Straits Education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China, the Leiden University Faculty of Humanities and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) to facilitate the Taiwan Studies programme at Leiden University.

Information: www.iias.asia/professorial-fellowship-chair-taiwan-studies-leiden-university

Embarked on my PhD journey in Leiden in late 2014, and it brought me to the crosscutting world of museum storytelling. After completing my PhD, I started my fellowship with IIAS in Spring 2022, with the aim of revising my thesis into a monograph. The alloy next to the building of IIAS is the same one in front of my previous office in the Huizhong building of Leiden University; hence, doing the fellowship here really felt like a homecoming.

As the initial result of converting my thesis into formal publications, I have contributed a chapter to an edited volume, Exhibiting East Asian Art in a Global Context, which is set to be published in Spring 2023 by the University of Chicago Press. This article explores the shifting meanings of Ming and Qing porcelain—from decorative art serving Dutch self-fashioning to fine art with its own aesthetic and art-historical values—in the Rijksmuseum’s changing display schemes between the late 1980s and the 1950s. This time period captures how the Rijksmuseum’s collection history and the particular display aesthetics of the museum’s directors/curators can impact the meaning generated by the objects on display. In addition, I also contributed a research article to the Journal of Curatorial Studies, which is going to press this October. This article tackles the importance of considering subjective interpretations of museum displays, both as a narrative device that underscores the perspectival filtration of a museum presentation and an analytical tool that can explicate the potential ideologies behind an exhibition. During my fellowship, I have also completed an object-based article, a column, and two exhibition reviews, which are going to be published later this year.

Facing one of Leiden’s beautiful canals, I appreciate the camaraderie and warm support from IIAS staff and fellows and cherish every moment we got to spend together. And now, I look forward to charting a new course on my academic voyage.
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

Meet the new IIAS Fellowship Programme Coordinator: Laura Erber

Coordinating a fellowship programme that fully assumes its critical responsibility in a world in need for multidimensional knowledge is an inspiring challenge.

IIAS has a unique position within the landscape of Asian studies, situated as it is on the intersection of local and global knowledge, encouraging innovative approaches to research and bridging the gap between academia and society. The IIAS Fellowship Programme affords a great opportunity for the development and completion of ambitious intellectual projects and can also invite area studies scholars to rethink forms of academic collaboration and knowledge exchange. My previous experience as an academic administrator and professor in different countries and institutions has showed me how complex the challenges faced by researchers in a fast-changing academic system really are. Over the last 10 years, I have worked in both South American and in European universities. I spent 9 years as a professor of Art Theory and Culture at the Río de Janeiro Federal University UNIRJ, and was a visiting professor at the Copenhagen University and at the Catholic University of Portugal. My areas of expertise cover visual and cultural studies, as well as art history and literature. My extensive teaching experience in Brazil covering a wide range of disciplines in a cross and transdisciplinary approach, has provided me with the opportunity to develop inclusive pedagogical skills challenged by the increasing diversity on all levels. Given the challenges faced by South American, African and many Asian students in accessing academic bibliography, I became involved in the debate on publishing policies for the university public. In 2015, I founded Zazie Editions, a non-profit venture that publishes digital books in Brazilian Portuguese, accessible on an open-access platform. I have also been actively participating in the public debate surrounding the democratization of access to contemporary, high-quality theoretical-critical bibliographies. Aside from my academic career, I am a writer and translator with books published in many different languages. Having been a scholar in different parts of the World, over the past 20 years, I believe it is important to approach a period of research not only as a transitional stage towards a future goal, but also as a meaningful experience in and of itself. It is my goal to intensify the synergy between the different programmes and various important activities promoted by IIAS, with a dynamic perspective, embracing different areas of knowledge. I also see the Fellowship Coordinator as the person who should sustain and potentially enhance the global reach of the programme, fostering collaborative, innovative and transdisciplinary research, facilitating the integration of Asian studies within larger intra- and inter-regional global dialogue frameworks, in line with the Institute’s mission. I am grateful for being given the opportunity to coordinate and improve the programme. I will do my best to ensure it will continue to be a very welcoming environment, which encourages intellectual and academic exchanges among a diverse community of fellows.

Above: Laura Erber

Coordinating a fellowship programme that fully assumes its critical responsibility in a world in need for multidimensional knowledge is an inspiring challenge.
The Journal Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China celebrates its 25th Anniversary

Harriet Zurndorfer

The 1990s also saw the first attempts to go beyond the title of the journal to its current name, Nan Nü, Men: Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China; hence the initial title of the journal, Nan Nü project. Since then, the Board has expanded in number, and now also includes centers in the USA, UK, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, formed a fabulous team. They worked extremely well together with authors and peer-reviewers as well as myself—and that close connection between myself and the Board members, I believe, has been a key factor in the long-term reach and visibility of the Nan Nü project. Therefore, since the alluring title of Nan Nü makes clear that their socioeconomic marginalization is a result of how the last twenty years have seen exacerbated class and gender differences as well as rural-urban inequality there. In its twenty-five-year history, Nan Nü has tried to make more transparent to its readers the substance and consequences of China’s changing gender relations against the complexity of the country’s values and current changing mores. That complexity may be viewed in the journal’s multi-disciplinary, broad-sweeping chronology and multi-faceted foci, which affirm the present one.

Moreover, as the alluring power of the Chinese revolutionary ideal faded and the country transformed from a socialist collective to a neoliberal consumer economy, research on men, women, and gender also took on new challenges. Articles and reviews appearing in Nan Nü represent these shifting trends in research and writing about gender matters. Many of these studies incorporate new disciplinary approaches to well-known facets of China’s historical and literary record, such as the application of recent archaeological findings to burial practices or the interpretation of religious texts. While such topics as family relations, sexual orientations, and sexual practices have been the focus of studies published in the journal both in the past and present, the significance of the more recent analyses seems to accentuate the consequences of rapid economic reform. A recent article on “leftover men” in today’s PRC makes clear that their socioeconomic marginalization is a result of how the last twenty years have seen exacerbated class and gender differences as well as rural-urban inequality there. In its twenty-five-year history, Nan Nü has tried to make more transparent to its readers the substance and consequences of China’s changing gender relations against the complexity of the country’s values and current changing mores. That complexity may be viewed in the journal’s multi-disciplinary, broad-sweeping chronology and multi-faceted foci, which affirm the present one.

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Book launch ‘River Cities in Asia. Waterways in Urban Development and History’

Date
27 October 2022, 12:00-13:30 (CEST)
Venue
International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands
(hybrid event)

The Book Launch
This book launch will feature a panel discussion with the book contributors, led by the three Editors. It will be a hybrid event: you can join in person at IIAS or online. A lunchbox will be served for (registered) in-person attendees.

The Book
River Cities in Asia uncovers the intimate relationship between rivers and cities in Asia from a multi-disciplinary perspective in the humanities and the social sciences. As rivers have shaped human settlement patterns, economies, cultures, and rituals, they also have harmed the flow and health of rivers. In Asia, the scale of urbanization increases the urgency of addressing the impacts of rivers and their ecologies, including human life.

The Editors/Speakers
Rita Padawangi is Associate Professor (Sociology) at Singapore University of Social Sciences. She is Coordinator of the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET). Paul Rabé is the Coordinator of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), based at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, and Editor of the Asian Cities Series. He is also Lead Expert in Urban Land Governance at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (HI) at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Adrian Perkasa is a PhD candidate at Leiden University, and a lecturer in the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga in Indonesia.

Registration (required)
Please register via the IIAS website and include if you will join online or in person at IIAS. A lunchbox will be served for in-person attendees.

www.iias.nl/events/river-cities-asia

Announcements

Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences

7th ABRN Conference
23-29 June 2022
Seoul, South Korea

Tenth Conference of Iranian Studies ECIS 10

The European Conference of Iranian Studies (ECIS) is one of Europe’s largest conferences in Iranian Studies. It is held every four years and organized by the Societas Iranologica Europaea (SIE). The tenth edition of the conference ECIS 10 will be hosted by Leiden University and convened by Gabriele van den Berg, Albert de Jong and Elena Paskaleva of the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies.

Information:
www.universiteitleiden.nl/ecis10

Meet Laura Erber, the new Coordinator of the IIAS Fellowship Programme
Read more on page 49 of this issue.

IIAS signs agreement to continue Chair of Taiwan Studies at Leiden University and IIAS another three years
More information: page 48 of this issue.
IIAS Research, Networks, and Initiatives

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

IIAS Research Clusters

Asian Cities
This cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with their issues of flows and fluxes, ideas and goods, and cosmopolitanism and connectivity at their core. Framing the existence of vibrant ‘global cities’ 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).

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 stakeholders and 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 team comprises international urban knowledges and local scholars, students from local universities, and civil society representatives, all working together with the neighbourhood residents.

Leiden Centre for Indian Ocean Studies

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

Dual Degree in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

The Dual Degree forms part of a broader ambition to decentralise the production of knowledge about Asia by establishing a platform for continuing dialogues between universities located in Asia and beyond. The present institutions involved in the Dual Degree – IIAS, Leiden University, National Taiwan University and Yonsei University – have established a fruitful collaboration in research and teaching and talks are underway with several universities in Indonesia and North Africa. The Dual Degree programme offers selected students the opportunity to follow a full year of study at one of the partner institutes with full credits and two MA degrees.
Humanities 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, syllabai, 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
humanitiesacrossborders.org/blog
www.iias.asia/hab
Clusters: Global Asia; Asian Heritages

Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)

This network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central East and Southeast Asia. The concerns are varied, 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.

Reach the report of the 7th ABRN conference ‘Borderland Futures: Technologies, Zones, Co-existences’ on page 51 of this issue.
www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network
Coordinator: Erik de Mosser
Email: moosjer@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
Cluster: Global Asia

Africa-Asia, A New Axis of Knowledge

Africa-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 African and Asian area studies—something that would benefit Asian, African and Western scholars alike.

www.iias.asia/networks/africa-asia
Cluster: Global Asia

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

The 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 IIAAS 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’ (BIP) 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, Kazan, Ljubljana, Daegu, Honolulu, Macao, Adelaide, Chiang Mai and Leiden). ICAS 2023 is organised together with Kyoto Seika University, Japan, and took place entirely online.

www.iias.asia

Research

The Forum on Health, Environment and Development (FOHED) is an interdisciplinary network that brings together natural, medical and social scientists to explore the implications of environmental and social change for public health in China and beyond.
www.iias.asia/programmes/forhead
Coordinator: Jennifer Holdaway
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Cluster: Global Asia

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The 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
Coordinator: M. Amin
Email: m.amin@iias.nl
Cluster: Global Asia

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

This 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/new silkroad
Cluster: Global Asia

Green Industrial Policy in the Age of Rare Metals (GRIP-ARM)

The 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 IIAAS.

www.iias.asia/programmes/green-industrial-policy-age-rare-metals-grip-arm
Coordinator: Jojo Nem Singh
Email: j.nemSingh@iias.nl
Cluster: Global Asia
Early on in the book, Lyons presents the astonishing fact that despite Japan’s low crime rate and incarceration rate, it boasts more prison chaplains than the United States, where more than 20% of the working-age population are either incarcerated or on probation. Chapter 1 describes this phenomenon as a strategy for Buddhist institutions to align the foreign institution of the prison system with local moral values. At the same time, Buddhist priests gave new moral legitimacy, and secured the state’s superiority over religious clergy. In other words, the symbiotic relationship between Buddhists and prisons had the effect of aligning the foreign institution of the prison with local moral values. At the same time, modernized Buddhist doctrine came to fit the needs of modern secular governance. The results are that rather than breaking individuals free from their familial hierarchies and generational divides, the state makes sense when we consider interventions of the state. In practice, this proselytization of the dharma was completely place in the state’s favor by arguing that the state’s expansive, top-down, technocratic modernisation through the agency of macro-level actors (such as experts, developers, and policy makers), but also through the micro-level negotiations and intimate choices that Chinese rural citizens make.

Moving away from the introduction, Chapter 1 provides a detailed overview of the social demographics and local landscapes of the field-site, Harmony Cove. This chapter also frames one of the main objectives of the book, stating that in the age of spatial mobility and labour migration, bounded territory alone does not define Chinese village life. Chapter 2 looks at the changing frameworks of intimacy, love, and marriage. Birth Planning Policy remains a central concern throughout the book. In Japan, it is a shared story that villagers face in terms of childbirth. The chapter portrays how intensive parenting is taken on by multiple agents, processes, and institutions under the conditions of labour migration. Through insightful ethnographic analysis, the reader learns about how class inequalities and the state’s educational system are both modifying and strengthening local multi-generational practices of parenting and child rearing in the rural context.

In the final two chapters of Chinese Village Life Today, Santos moves away from the more in-depth analysis of how the intimate choices of village families shape the configurations of village life to move into the more mundane everyday level of decision-making. Chapter 5 takes the book in a different direction from the first four chapters, stepping away from family practices to the technical arrangements and procedures in place for bodily hygiene. Santos describes how the shift towards flush toilets and private bathrooms in the household goes hand in hand with new notions of personal privacy and hygiene. Bodily hygiene and public sanitation also exist as fields of technical intervention, which are subjected to civilising forces of hygienic modernisation to promote the construction of a new state-led “socialist material civilization.” Following the theme of technical intervention, Chapter 6 shifts the focus from hygiene to popular religion. Through ethnographic study of the monetarization of symbolic mirrors inscribed with words representing key moral values and ideals, Santos describes how popular religion as technologies of ethical imagination that are subject to larger civilising forces of ethical modernisation and standardisation. Buying inscriptions becomes another example of the intimate choices that villagers make to construct a locally shared moral compass and framework of personal responsibility.

As a reader, I was often describing that the final chapters would make Santos’ arguments about continuity and transition come to life through the same ethnographic richness that the first chapters hold. Throughout the book, Santos reminds the reader that, although Chinese rural communities no longer depend on ancestral land as a major source of livelihood, the sense of identity and attachment that people associate with their native lineage villages has remained. In other words, the reader that this sense of belonging is sustained through ritual celebrations. Yet Santos does not explicitly tell us what these celebrations are. One would assume rituals and ceremonies practiced throughout populist celebrations ofalla, but this is far from the case. In the absence of specific information, I wondered whether inscriptions and those “of rich moral substance and the local richly rich piece of scholarly work offering a timely perspective to understand Chinese village life through technocratic subjectivities and new high-tech medicalised visions of childbirth. If we want to better understand the workings of the Chinese state’s expansive, top-down, technocratic processes of governance, it is these voices that Santos documents — those of ordinary Chinese citizens in rural communities — that we need to be listening to.

I have recently completed Santos’ book, Chinese Village Life Today: Building Families in an Age of Transition, and I have not only been impressed by the originality and detail of his research, but also by his ability to produce Japanese social values. Adam Lyons’ Karma and Punishment: Prison Chaplaincy in Japan is not only a major contribution towards filling a gap within the broader debates regarding crime and punishment, but it also makes a compelling and fascinating argument about the role of religion in the establishment of the modern prison and his continuing influence on public perceptions of justice. This is a fascinating and highly readable book, and it is one that should be on the reading list of anyone interested in the sociology of the prison and its role in the modern world. Lyons presents the astonishing fact that despite Japan’s low crime rate and incarceration rate, it boasts more prison chaplains than the United States, where more than 20% of the working-age population are either incarcerated or on probation. Chapter 1 describes this phenomenon as a strategy for Buddhist institutions to align the foreign institution of the prison system with local moral values. At the same time, Buddhist priests gave new moral legitimacy, and secured the state’s superiority over religious clergy. In other words, the symbiotic relationship between Buddhists and prisons had the effect of aligning the foreign institution of the prison with local moral values. At the same time, modernized Buddhist doctrine came to fit the needs of modern secular governance based on a new principle of “civilization and enlightenment” (bunmei kaika). This unlikely pairing of religion and the state makes sense when we consider the context of chaplaincy’s origins in the upheavals of the Meiji era. In the first chapters of Karma and Punishment, Lyons describes how Shin Buddhism, whose existence was under threat by a wave of anti-Buddhist movements in the late 19th century, found a place in the state’s favor by arguing that the proselytization of the dharma was compatible in line with the goals of the Emperor and the state. In practice, this proselytization was not about winning converts; rather, 

Reviewed title
Karma and Punishment: Prison Chaplaincy in Japan


Harvard University Press ISBN 9780674260153

Jason Darnely
Southeast Asia was among the first regions that had to battle the COVID-19 virus originating from Wuhan, China. Given the heterogeneity in the socio-economic conditions in the region, how did and will the Southeast Asian countries fare after the pandemic? This is the overarching question posed by this erudite volume that brings together an impressive array of social scientists from multiple disciplines emanating from academic institutions, think tanks, and civil society organizations. The volume is stupendous in the breadth and depth of issues being addressed, ranging from urbanization, the environment, people’s movement, collective action, and local community. It will stand as an authoritative volume that many — and anyone — with an interest in Southeast Asia will enthusiastically consult in the future.

The contributors uniformly treat COVID-19 as a critical juncture upon which they reflect how the issues examined may be affected as a result of the pandemic. The volume is divided into three sections. Section One, “The Pandemic and Social Change,” is divided into three parts. Section Two, “The Pandemic and the State,” also contains three parts. Section Three, “The Pandemic and the People,” contains four parts. Each section is further subdivided into chapters.

The first section then turns its attention to sectoral impacts of the pandemic on real estate, business process outsourcing, and garment industries. The common thread is that the pandemic has laid bare that the precariousness of these industries — dependence on mobility of international investors, and more generally the exploitative relationship between global capitalists and manufacturing industries in the region — have exacerbated their detrimental effects on the local communities. The central claim of the centrality of doctrinal admonition toward more modern Shin Buddhism in the new Japanese occupational practice.

Lyons notes the ways this redemptive moral karma that could be purified through an adherence to the pre-war chaplaincy. First is the claim of the centrality of doctrinal admonition toward more modern Shin Buddhism in the new Japanese occupational practice.

Lyons argues that doctrinal admonition, as it came to define the role of the Shin Buddhist chaplaincy in the new Japanese nation-state, located moral threat in bad karma that one could purify through an interior process of reflection and reform. Lyons notes the ways this redemptive moral narrative resembles Christian models of sin and salvation, even while Shin Buddhists had been actively involved in the persecution and forced conversion of Christians. Yet while Christian chaplaincy developed a tradition of attending to the suffering of the prisoner, Buddhist chaplaincy is focused more on the promotion of state ideology. As the State sought to strengthen and formalize its own political ideology, so too did Shin Buddhists, whose practice of moral admonition evolved into a central component of doctrine and occupational practice.

In a fascinating analysis of Shin Buddhist writings on chaplaincy, Lyons elaborates the claim of the centrality of doctrinal admonition toward more modern Shin Buddhism as a result of the state’s newly enshrined political power of Shin Buddhism as a result of their status in the penal system. In the Sugamo Prison incident, for example, several Buddhist chaplains resigned in protest of a move to reduce the number of Shin Buddhist chaplains and introduce Christian chaplains. Ultimately, this had effects that rippled all the way to the Diet, where a bill was quickly passed that would legally secure Shin Buddhist control over chaplaincy. This control was not limited to the prison facility, but also extended to a network of volunteer “probation groups” and so on.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this book is that way Lyons shifts to more ethnographic methods and perspectives in the second half. Guided by existential anthropologist Michael Jackson’s notion of the politics of storytelling in Lyons visits prisons, speaks to chaplains and addresses the controversial topic of the death penalty. Through his extraordinary access to several important and experienced chaplains and his exceptionally far-reaching involvement in the contemporary religious scene of Japan, Lyons and his research collaborators present a true-to-life account of the role of chaplaincy, as well. While I cannot do justice to the nuance and sophistication of Lyons’ perceptive accounts of chaplains’ lives, two points stand out as important departures from the pre-war chaplaincy. First is the way chaplaincy was refashioned as a role that functioned to fulfill prisoners’ newly enshrined constitutional rights to religious freedom.

While Shin Buddhist chaplains would continue to assert a strong dominance, Lyons also describes Shinto and Tenrikyo chaplains as well. The volume is divided into three parts. Section Two, “The Pandemic and the State,” also contains three parts. Section Three, “The Pandemic and the People,” contains four parts. Each section is further subdivided into chapters.

The seven chapters in the Section Two take a critical view of the impacts of the pandemic on labor mobility, including the plight of the migrant workforce in Singapore and Malaysia, repatriated Filipino workers, and those in working in healthcare sectors overseas. The common thread across these cases is the precariousness of these workers to the state. They were the underbelly of the crisis, and they were easily forgotten.

In Section Three, the eight chapters examine various grassroots initiatives that support communities to contain the virus through the lens of collective action and grassroots organizing. These chapters give a by-daily look to the people of Southeast Asia to illustrate how they can shape a better outcome when they work together — from neighborhood food-sharing and getting royong in Indonesia to “happiness-sharing pantries” in Thailand.

Overall, this is an extremely impressive collection of essays that takes seriously the diversity of the region and offers the reader reflections on what the pandemic means for the cities, environment, economies, institutions, and people of Southeast Asia. It would be — and should be — widely read by not only area specialists, but also urban planners, geographers, and other social scientists interested in how societies evolve after a profound critical juncture.

It was about “doctrinal admonition” that could lead prisoners to reform their ways and becoming good citizens. The word for “doctrinal admonition” (kyōka) would literally become the basis for the first “chaplains” (kyōkak-shi). Lyons argues that doctrinal admonition, as it came to define the role of the Shin Buddhist chaplaincy in the new Japanese nation-state, located moral threat in bad karma that one could purify through an interior process of reflection and reform. Lyons notes the ways this redemptive moral narrative resembles Christian models of sin and salvation, even while Shin Buddhists had been actively involved in the persecution and forced conversion of Christians. Yet while Christian chaplaincy developed a tradition of attending to the suffering of the prisoner, Buddhist chaplaincy is focused more on the promotion of state ideology. As the State sought to strengthen and formalize its own psychological notions of spiritual therapy for suffering prisoners. The idea was that chaplains often felt caught between their moral obligation to the prisoners and their personal aversion to the criminal justice system. Chaplains would be removed from their duties and unable to care for prisoners, yet they were also unable to challenge the criminal justice system, and they struggled with complicity in ways that were not apparent in earlier iterations of Japanese chaplaincy. This ambivalence towards the role of the chaplain was most pronounced in the face of the state’s new legal framework that defined the role of the chaplain as a facilitator of death.

This combination of historical and ethnographic perspectives is what makes this book unique, exciting, and valuable for broadening our understandings of the relationship between religion and the state in Southeast Asia today. It is remarkable that despite the breath-taking wealth of sources Lyons uncovers in his research, he is still able to articulate such clear and compelling claims, about both the development of chaplaincy and its current state. It is both an impressive and a must-read for anyone who is interested in these topics, but I hope it is also read by criminal justice planners and social workers, and also by social scientists interested in the evolution of chaplaincy in Southeast Asia.
Available for Review

**Essays and Studies in the Art of Kucha (Leipzig Kucha Studies 1)**
Dev Publishers & Distributors
ISBN 9789387965462
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/essays-and-studies-art

**Bangkok Street Art and Graffiti: Hope Full, Hope Less, Hope Well**
Rupert Mann, 2022.
River Books
ISBN 9786164510616
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/bangkok-street-art-and-graffiti

**Islamic Law in Circulation: Shari’i Texts across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean**
Mahmood Kooria, 2022.
Cambridge University Press
ISBN 9781009098038
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/islamic-law-circulation

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Holly High (ed.), 2022.
NUS Press
ISBN 9789813251700
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/stone-masters

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Jeff Koons-McClain, Russell Mead, and Jing Jing Chang (eds.), 2022.
Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789888528530
https://www.iias.asia/the-review/chinese-cinema

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