The Focus | Sustainable Humanosphere Studies: Towards new models of socio-economic development

Guest Editor Mario Lopez presents multidisciplinary research from scholars who are engaged in sustainability studies in Southeast Asia. This issue’s contributions to the Focus section emphasize the important collaborations that are currently taking place between disciplines to address complex socio-economic transformations in the region.
The Focus
Sustainable Humanosphere Studies

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Guest Editor Mario Lopez presents multidisciplinary research from scholars who are engaged in sustainability studies in Southeast Asia. This issue’s contributions to the Focus section emphasize the important collaborations that are currently taking place between disciplines to address complex socio-economic transformations in the region.

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Floods are a perennial issue in Southeast Asia and how states have dealt with them vary from country to country. Loh Kah Song historically contextualizes how post-colonial Singapore has created flood control plans and the environmental and political issues that have arisen as a consequence of flooding in the city-state.

26–27

Kaoru Sugillata considers the relationship between industrialization and environmental sustainability by introducing the concept of sustainable humanosphere. He places Southeast Asia’s recent developments in the global history of human intervention on the sustainability of the earth.

28–29

Noboru Ishikawa introduces a multidisciplinary research project in Sarawak, Malaysia that examines the transformation of plantation society through collaborative work undertaken by both social and natural scientists.

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Termites are ubiquitously thought of as pests, however, Kok-Boon Neoh shows us how they form a fundamental part of the diverse ecosystems and societies in Southeast Asia and how their role as a socioeconomic driver needs to be re-appraised.

32–33

For the past 20 years, the Human Development Index (HDI) has been a yardstick for measuring human societies. Takahiro Sato and his research team offer a fundamental reappraisal by introducing a Humanosphere Potentiality Index (HPI), to re-consider development in a broader framework.

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Over the past 20 years, the peat lands of Southeast Asia have undergone vast transformations through unprecedented resources exploitation. Kosuke Mizuno introduces a collaborative large-scale project that aims to rehabilitate the degraded peat lands of Bengkalis, Riau in Indonesia.
IIAS’ twentieth anniversary is an occasion to take stock of what has been accomplished, and in particular, to gauge the institute’s capacity to evolve from a consortium-grounded national organization with an international reach to a locally embedded institution, member of the newly established area studies platform ‘LeidenGlobal’, acting as a global clearing house in the field of Asian studies.

Philippe Peycam

THE ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY should be stressed. More than ever, IIAS remains the network builder and research facilitator that its founders envisioned two decades ago. With a reinforced profile and a more focused programmatic orientation, the institute has gained in visibility and credibility. This has led IIAS to engage in the development of ambitious collaborative projects; not only does the institute serve as an incubator of new research but it is also a facilitator of research-led teaching and public service initiatives. This special issue of The Newsletter will amply demonstrate the diversity of IIAS’ accomplishments, and the institute’s transformation in the past two decades.

For this special occasion, the Editor, Sonja Zweegers asked me to reflect on ‘what makes the institute so unique’. It is a challenge I am willing to take on, but with the realization that I may not give full credit to all the interesting aspects of the institute or to the people who have made it what it is today.

Often I am asked by visitors how such a small team of people can manage to accomplish so much and be visible in so many parts of the world? Part of the answer is implied by this question. IIAS is first and foremost a team with a remarkable group spirit and a shared commitment toward the collective – success of the institute. Behind each of the activities performed – the IIAS fellowships, the website, office and finance management tasks, conferences and events, the cluster activities, ICAS, The Newsletter, the publications, etc. – there is one or sometimes two dedicated people. When one staff member gets really busy, colleagues are always ready to assist. The IIAS staff is not only committed, but also self-reliant. They have come to share a shared appreciation, I suppose pride, for the unique role and mission of the institute. There is also a Dutch-style combination of refreshing informality with an inclination to deliver concrete results, cutting through unnecessary hierarchies and formalities. It is rare to see such a synergy operate in a workplace among colleagues, all ‘comrades in arms’. This is one of the secrets behind the institute’s success.

Another characteristic of IIAS is its unique institutional set-up. There are few precedents in Asia, Europe or the US, of an institute that is so small and yet enables a ‘global’ governance model for a network of scholarly organizations. IIAS is well known for its unflinching dedication to the Humanities in higher education. The recent grant made to IIAS is intended to assist it in its efforts to operate as a global trans-regional ‘broker’ with an even more balanced interaction existing between scholars and institutions from Asia, Netherlands /Europe and North America, together with their emerging counterparts in Africa, Latin America and beyond. The project, in the form of five ‘forums’ and a total of 17 events, seeks to frame alternative realities of knowledge about Asia, while helping us to bring activities of research, teaching and dissemination closer together. This is an experimental undertaking that, I hope, should help IIAS and its partners to move the field of Asian studies forward in today’s very many more interdependent global knowledge village.

This special issue of The Newsletter celebrates 20 years of IIAS’ successes made possible by IIAS Fellows, strategic partners, IIAS staff, research programmes and networks, IIAS and ICAS publications, conferences and workshops, ICAS outreach projects and annual lectures, The Newsletter, and many more people, activities and initiatives. All ‘the Study’ articles in this issue have been contributed by former and current IIAS Fellows; the ‘Focus’ has been compiled by Dr Mario Lopez from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) at Kyoto University, one of IIAS’ longstanding partners; ‘News from Asia’ is provided by our colleagues at ISEAS in Singapore, who generously contribute to each issue of The Newsletter; ‘the Review’ features contributions made by a faithful review committee of our literature website New Asia Books (www.newbooks.asia, page 38), and ‘the Portrait’ for this issue highlights just one of the many unique benefits of the institute’s location.

Furthermore, befitting the celebratory mood we find ourselves in, IIAS is holding a Photo Contest to engage even further with The Newsletter readers and IIAS’ friends, colleagues and partners. At IIAS we endorse story-telling by way of pictures – The Newsletter uses an abundance of colourful images, which thus become one of its most recognisable features. Our contributors and readers come from all over the world and speak dozens of different languages, so what better way is there to represent a global language we can all understand? Go to page 7 to see how you too can take part and contribute to our growing image collection.

We would like to thank everyone who has participated in the making of this special issue, and hope that like us, you too are looking forward to the next 20 years of IIAS!

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS
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The International Institute for Asian Studies

Baby Krishna has come of age

At the official opening of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) on 13 October 1993, several authorities in the field of Asian Studies expressed their views on the history, nature and future perspective of various dimensions of Asian Studies. In addition to the keynote address by J.F. Staal, ‘Concepts of Science in Europe and Asia’, which appeared separately as an IIAS-publication in December 1993, the other speeches given on that day appeared in written form in a supplement to the second issue (spring 1994) of the IIAS Newsletter, under the title ‘Asian Studies in global perspective’. This latter publication, comprising 24 newspaper-size pages, could be regarded as the birth document of the International Institute for Asian Studies.

Jan E.M. Houben

IN ADDITION to a document attesting to its birth, we also have for the International Institute for Asian Studies – and this is more rare for institutions and people – a document that marks its initial conception: this is the Baby Krishna report compiled by the Advisory Committee on the ‘Small Arts’ departments (Kleine Letteren) chaired by J.F. Staal, which appeared in January 1991. The conclusion of the committee, set up in July 1989 by the Minister of Education and Science, contained the recommendation that the possibility be explored of establishing a European Institute of Asian Studies “which would organize post-doctoral courses and other meetings, workshops etc. dealing with Asian studies and where fellows who have obtained research support … could carry out their work and make use of an existing library and other support facilities for Asian studies.” The committee chaired by Staal was asked to place emphasis on the humanities (especially ‘Languages and Cultures’) and the social sciences dealing with Asia. As it was felt that the role of the social sciences needed further consideration, a follow-up survey was done by a committee appointed in May 1991 by the Netherlands Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW). Their report, ‘Krishna in the Delta’ appeared in October 1991. With a change of name the proposed European Institute of Asian Studies became the International Institute for Asian Studies, and the cooperating partners included, apart from KNAW and Leiden University mentioned in the Baby Krishna report, also Amsterdam University (UvA), and the Free University of Amsterdam (VU).

In the two decades of its existence, and under its three successive directors – Wim Stokhof (1993 to 2005), Max Sparenboom (2006 to 2009) and, since 2010, Philippe Peyram – the IIAS has by and large remained faithful to its original objectives. The aim of improving international co-operation, especially in a European context and between Europe and Asia, has been served, for instance, through fellowships programmes and through the organization of numerous international events, with participants from all over the world. In my personal experience I have been familiar with the IIAS from its very beginnings. I belonged to the first batch of fellows of the IIAS in 1993-1994, and even when I was already appointed as Professor of Sanskrit at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, the IIAS accepted me as a visiting fellow in 2009 during which period I could organize a workshop on Indian traditional medicine: ‘Ayurveda in Post-classical and Pre-colonial India’ (9 July 2009).

The institutional context of the IIAS has changed considerably since the early 1990s, just as the institutional context of Asian Studies and the ‘Small Arts’ departments in the Netherlands has changed. The earmarked funds for Asian studies, for instance, were abolished at the beginning of this century. At present, not only the small arts departments, but the Humanities at large have reached precarious conditions, as is clear from a recent report by a committee chaired by J. Cohen, Sustainable Humanities: Report from the Committee on the National Plan for the Future of the Humanities (Amsterdam, 2009). Although not focused on Asian studies this report contains much that is also relevant for IIAS, especially its engagement with humanities, next to other sciences. At present IIAS is no longer ‘taken care of’ by four institutions, but only by Leiden University.

It is impossible to fully review here these changes and their implications for IIAS. The main characteristic and functionality of the IIAS as a unique institute stimulating and cherishing institutional cooperation in the domain of Asian Studies has remained intact from the conception and actual birth of IIAS, till the present time. From this brief overview and from the fact that J.F. Staal was a specialist in Panon’s Sanskrit grammar and its structure of rules and metanoles, one central part of IIAS’ success formula is clear and it gave IIAS a remarkable ‘flying start’. From the outset it was placed on a meta-level vis-à-vis all other institutes dealing with or touching on Asia in, first of all, the Netherlands, but also Europe and the world. Although relatively small, IIAS contributed to the facilitation of other institutes more absorbed in specific projects and to the communication, cooperation and interaction between them. Even when IIAS started to engage in its own specific projects, the meta-level activities (manifested, for instance, in its internationally distributed The Newsletter) remained an intricate aspect to the functioning of IIAS. It is the level at which the grown up Krishna can derive much of its strength, also in the future, as J.F. Staal’s “man-of-steel”.

Prof. Dr. Jan E.M. Houben, Directeur d'études, Sources et Histoire de la Tradition Sanskrkte, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris (jemhouben@gmail.com)

The International Institute for Asian Studies – Celebrating 20 Years

Sandra Delhez (IIAS)

This year we celebrate the birth of our Institute, 20 years ago. Officially opened on 13 October 1993 by the then State Secretary for Education and Science, Dr. M.J. Cohen, the establishment of the International Institute for Asian Studies followed the recommendation by two consecutive committees installed by the Ministry of Education and Royal Netherlands Institute for Arts and Sciences (KNAW). While the first committee was asked to come up with proposals on how to assure and/or improve the quality of research in the so-called ‘Small Arts’ (such as ‘Oriental Studies’) and the social sciences where they have a function for the ‘Small Arts’, the instruction for the second committee was to advise on the quality of research in the field of Asian studies in the humanities and social sciences. In their reports both committees stressed the importance of the establishment of an institute for Asian Studies as one of the means to strengthen Asian studies in the Netherlands, and as an important step towards its internationalisation.

The Institute’s founding agreement was signed in the summer of 1993 by its four founding partners: the Royal Netherlands Institute for Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the Free University of Amsterdam (VU) and Leiden University (LU). Choosing Leiden as its seat, they assigned four goals and activities to the Institute.

1. To set up and execute a post-doctorate programme for Dutch and foreign researchers.
2. The organisation of international scientific gatherings.
3. To act as a national centre for Asian studies to improve international co-operation in the European context.
4. To develop other activities in the field of Asian studies, such as the publication of a newsletter.

From its inception, IIAS has committed itself to the fulfilment of these objectives, making the Institute what it is today: a research institute and exchange platform, hosted at Leiden University in the Netherlands, that encourages the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia, and actively promotes (inter)national co-operation. Today, IIAS acts as a national, European and global mediator, bringing together academic and non-academic partners including cultural, social and policy organisations. The Institute organizes a fellowship programme (see pages 8-9) and supports high-quality joint research projects on topics of common interest to Europe and Asia in close cooperation with national and international partners (see pages 11-18). The IIAS and ICAS publication series are part of our policy to strengthen Asian studies scholarship. Throughout the years IIAS has organised all types of gatherings such as international conferences and seminars, enabling researchers and fellows to discuss work-in-progress and share findings. IIAS furthermore organises and participates in thematic roundtables which act as think-tanks and provide opportunities for free discussion between a diversity of expert scholars and practitioners. In addition IIAS organizes various outreach activities in order to promote greater public understanding of contemporary Asia (see page 22).

As a clearinghouse of information and knowledge, IIAS offers a range of communication instruments enabling it to reach out to thousands of academics and professionals worldwide. IIAS has been running its ‘Newsletter’ right from the start, with the first issue of the ‘IIAS Newsletter’ (now simply “The Newsletter”) appearing in August 1993 (see page 6). The IIAS website is the institute’s core information repository and goes hand in hand with the monthly IIAS Update and other email notifications keeping subscribers informed.

Since 2010, IIAS has organized most of its research and other activities around the three thematic clusters of Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia. The purpose of this approach is not to exclude anything or anyone, but to cultivate synergy and coherence between people and projects.
IIAS in Leiden
Sandra Dehue (IIAS)

IIAS is situated in the historic centre of the Dutch city of Leiden, a university town that combines modern urban facilities with 17th-century charm. The city of Leiden is home to Leiden University, the oldest university in the Netherlands (founded in 1575). The Institute is situated at Rapenburg 59 in one of the mansions along the ‘Rapenburg’ canal. With a population of around 120,000, Leiden is a friendly and dynamic metropole situated right between Holland’s major cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. These cities can all be reached by frequent trains within 12 to 40 minutes, and Amsterdam Schiphol Airport within 20.

Asia in Leiden
Leiden abounds in expertise on and collections from Asia. Dutch relations with Asia go back more than 400 years, and Leiden University has from its beginning concentrated on the cultures and societies of ‘the Orient’, making it one of the oldest and renowned centres for Asian Studies in the western world. Moreover, this long-standing relationship with Asia is also reflected in the many and unique historical collections from Asia that are present in the university libraries (see p56), Leiden museums, and in other Leiden-based institutes such as the Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

At Leiden University a number of institutes in the Humanities and Social Sciences with specific expertise on Asian countries and Asia-related topics stand out. First and foremost, there is of course the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IIAS), which comprises the School of Asian Studies (IAS) and the School of Middle Eastern Studies (SMES). Area specialisations in the School of Asian Studies include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, South- & Southeast Asian, and Tibetan Studies. Expertise on regions belonging to the Middle East is present not only in SMES but also in the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO). This independent Institute located on the premises of Leiden University also houses several collections that are valuable resources for researchers of, for example, Islam in Asia. Also in the Faculty of Humanities is the Institute for History which, among other areas, has a focus on Asian societies in a global context. Expertise on the art and material culture of East Asia and of South and Southeast Asia is present in the Art History department (and IAS). Specific Asian expertise is also present in the Social Sciences, where Indonesia is one of the traditional foci of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology. This institute also has several researchers specialised in South Asia. The list of research topics of the Institute of Political Science includes Central Asia Politics and Chinese Politics. In the area of Law, the Van Vollenhoven Institute (VVI) collects, produces and disseminates knowledge on the processes and relationships between law, governance and development, particularly in Asia and Africa.

For the purpose of the short overview of relevant institutes in light of IAS’s mandate, I would like to mention two more outside the Humanities and Social Sciences, namely the Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML) and the Institute of Biology. The first because of its twenty-year research programme in the Philippines, and the second because of its research and programmes in the areas of biodiversity, plant science and natural products, which make use of the extensive plant collections from Asia present in Leiden. From its foundation in 1590, the Leiden Herbarium actively collected (medicinal) plants from Asia, as well as knowledge on the use of these plants. The Leiden herbarium of the National Herbarium Nederland (the NHN is part of the Leiden-based Netherlands Centre for Biodiversity Naturak) is well-known for its extensive collections from South-East Asia, especially from Indonesia. As the oldest Dutch herbarium, it also contains several historic collections, among which the 17th century 12-volume Hortus Malabaricus, which has been declared a testimony of cultural heritage by both the Netherland and India. Leiden is also home to the Siebold House with collections from Japan, and two national museums that hold collections and have expertise pertaining to Asia: the National Museum of Ethnology and National Museum of Antiquities (RMO).

LeidenGlobal, a new platform for global expertise
A number of the academic and cultural institutions mentioned above have recently brought together their respective and complementary scientific and cultural knowledge in a platform for global expertise called ‘LeidenGlobal’. Through LeidenGlobal these institutions wish to connect with local communities, media, government, NGOs and the business world. Besides IAS, the partners in LeidenGlobal are: Leiden University, The Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asia and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO), African Studies Centre (ASC), the National Museum of Ethnology and the National Museum of Antiquities, and the Roosevelt Study Centre which is a research centre on twentieth-century American history located in Middelburg.

LeidenGlobal was festively launched on 27 November 2013 at the National Museum of Ethnology by the Rector Magnificus of Leiden University and the mayor of the city of Leiden.
Evolution of The Newsletter

The IIAS Newsletter, later simply re-named The Newsletter, was created along with the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in 1993 and is an embodiment of the institute’s ideals. This is clear from the inaugural issue of The Newsletter, in which its first managing editor, Paul van der Velde, explained how IIAS “was expected to play a stimulating and integrating role in the field of Asian studies in Europe through organizing international workshops, conferences, a database and by publishing a newsletter.” IIAS was founded to give coherence to a fragmented Asian Studies world and The Newsletter was to be a partner in that endeavour. It took on that role from its very inception by assimilating the already existing South Asia Newsletter, which was in itself a collaborative effort by CASA (Amsterdam) and the Kern Institute (Leiden). The Newsletter was thus from its very initial conception meant to be much more than the dictionary definition of a periodical bulletin of institutional news and events.

Promoting and connecting others

In earlier issues of the IIAS Newsletter, contributions were sorted into three main sections – South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia – each with news about institutes, conference reports, calls for papers, lectures, awards and events. The issues also included a general section on Asian Studies. But in everything it reported on, it was used as a wide-reaching forum to provide exhaustive information about other institutions rather than exclusively listing its own institutional news. There was a conscious effort to build networks and to sketch the larger picture. Hence, it would frequently profile new, as well as established, institutions devoted to Asian Studies – both nationally and internationally.

The Internet & The Newsletter

The Internet profoundly affected publishing the world over, and The Newsletter was no exception. IAS established its website in 1996, which was proudly announced in issue #10. Prior to that, The Newsletter had taken it upon itself to educate its as yet uninstructed audience. In a series of articles in issues #4 to #9, a special correspondent (Annelies de Deugd) gave detailed information and instruction about how to use the internet. Once the internet became more generally accessible The Newsletter confidently reached out to its new online audience. Thanks to the internet, it has a much wider readership than would otherwise have been the case. Its present readership has reached 17,000, of which only 8000 are in hardcopy, as a growing number of readers are digital subscribers. The issues are also always available to everyone on our website.

The future

The Newsletter is exploring the possibility of putting together an International Council (similar to ICAS, see p21). This Council would not be an editorial board, but rather function as an advisory council of global members – giving global input in the ever expanding field of Asian Studies. It would reflect the global institutionalisation of IAS, and reinforce our global networks.

The future looks promising for The Newsletter, but what will be crucial to its ongoing success is the maintenance of the basic principles that it has always worked according to – that of being broad, free and accessible (in the widest sense of the term). Because IAS is broad in its embrace of the whole of Asia and is committed to building networks, The Newsletter also reaches wide in its scope. Its readers come from all over the world, and thus it is important that The Newsletter be accessible, which is only to be achieved through a variety of digital platforms.

Rituparna Roy

Rituparna Roy was a former IAS Fellow

(see Page 10; rituparna_sandhi@yahoo.co.in)
In the celebratory spirit of our 20th anniversary we invite our readers and friends of IIAS to contribute to our growing image collection by entering the IIAS Photo Contest, which will be launched on 1 January 2014 and run until 30 June.

This Photo Contest offers you the chance to have your photo published in The Newsletter. We would like to give you the opportunity to tell a visual story, to explore photography’s capacity for communication, to capture the unexpected, and to share with us the world you live in. The photos you send will automatically become eligible for publication in The Newsletter (always accredited to you), and thus provide us with an incredible new source of pictorial material. To further reward you for this we are granting a number of prizes, which will be announced on our website and in the next issue of The Newsletter.

Please send us your photographs by using the online form, which can be accessed through the website:

www.iias.nl/photocontest

The rules and regulations can also be found on the webpage above – please read them before entering the contest.

Submit up to 5 photographs per person, for any combination of the following 6 categories:

1. **Asian Cities**
   - The rapid growth of Asian cities has tremendous effects on urban culture and communities – show us what you have witnessed.

2. **Global Asia**
   - How can we best record the flow of people, goods, capital and ideas from, as well as within, the Asian region?

3. **Asian Heritages**
   - Show us Asia’s broad diversity of cultural heritage and how it is used to express identity.

4. **Asia’s Pop Culture**
   - Commercial culture, style and taste of the youth, ‘low culture’, mass media – how do you define pop culture in Asia?

5. **Everyday Life in Asia**
   - Take to the streets, record the daily routines, experiences and activities that unite each and every one of us.

6. **Asia by Mobile**
   - Be spontaneous – use your phone or tablet to capture the moment. Set your device to its highest resolution!
IIAS Fellowship Programme

Aiming to further the quality of research on Asia, IIAS is keen to enable talented researchers to develop new research plans. To this end IIAS has developed its (post-doctoral) fellowship programme. Along with the Research Fellows, who are attached to one of the IIAS research programmes, the Institute yearly hosts a large number of visiting researchers (Affiliated Fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, the Institute also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations.

Especially for new arrivals. It is easier to connect outside the office. Therefore, IIAS makes sure to bring fellows together during informal events such as the yearly IIAS fellows’ outing, or for example, during a guided walk along the Leiden City’s attractions (fellows and staff are pickled here gathered in front of the Institute, see photo). IIAS is also very pleased that fellows take the initiative to organize social events themselves: from cross-cultural professor dinners, to the screening of films from Asia, to extra research presentations.

Research fellows

As an institute aiming to further the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia, IIAS has over the years initiated and supported a series of innovative research programmes at an international level in cooperation with important partners in the field of Asian Studies abroad. The coordinating researchers of these programmes attached to IIAS (or of their ensuing networks) are known as Research Fellows.

Affiliated Fellows

The Institute supports the work of individual researchers (Affiliated Fellows) who join us for a period ranging from a few weeks to two years, to work on their own research project. As IIAS aims to stimulate Asian studies with a focus on the humanities and social sciences and their interaction with other sciences, most fellows, although not all, hold a PhD in some branch of learning from the humanities or social sciences. Among these are researchers who have worked on their own finances as well as those who receive financial support from IIAS directly, or from one of our partner institutes in the framework of a formal agreement. Examples of the latter are the joint fellowship programmes with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (ISAS), and the African Studies Centre in Leiden (ASC), or the fellowships supported by the Gonda Foundation meant for researchers working on Indology.

IIAS facilities

Regardless of background or funding, all affiliated fellows can count on the same facilities and services provided by IIAS. Fellows are offered office facilities, while the Institute mediates access to libraries, archives and other institutes in the Netherlands. In return, fellows are expected to be productive in writing, possibly give a lecture or organize a workshop, and attend activities organised by IIAS.

BAS not only provides talented researchers from different backgrounds a place to work, but also an opportunity to exchange ideas and exchange ideas, with the goal to broaden their horizon and inspire new ideas. One tool to facilitate interactions is the IIAS ‘lunch lecture’. During these informal sessions...

FELLOWS CURRENTLY AT IIAS

Natsuko Akagawa
Affiliated Fellow
1 Dec 2013 – 28 Feb 2014

Mohd Aminine
Research Fellow and Coordinator of the IIAS Energy Programme Asia
Domestic and geopolitical challenges to energy security for China and the European Union
1 Sep 2007 – 1 Apr 2017

Rebecca Bego
Winner 2012 Master’s Thesis Prize
Urban activism and cultural politics in Hong Kong
23 Sep 2013 – 23 Dec 2013

Gregory Bracken
Research Fellow and Coordinator of ‘The Postcolonial Global City’
Colonial-era Shanghai as an urban model for the 21st century
1 Sep 2013 – 1 Sep 2015

Bernardo Brown
Affiliated Fellow
The circulation of Sri Lankan catholic clergy to Europe, transnational religious networks, and global Christianity in South Asia

Mo CHEN
Affiliated Fellow (IAS Energy Programme Asia)
Cooperation between Chinese petroleum enterprise and Saudi Arabia and Sudan
7 Sep 2013 – 7 Oct 2013

Young Chul CHO
Visiting Professor, Korea Studies Chair (Korea Foundation)
(1) Nationalism and cultures of (dis)security in East Asia; (2) Indigenous IR theory production in Asia
1 Sep 2013 – 1 Jul 2014

Ana Dragolovic
Affiliated Fellow
Indict genealogy and forms of relatedness: rethinking diaporia and citizenship
26 Nov 2013 – 26 Jun 2014

Jonathan Dupplette
Affiliated Fellow
A study of Śivādvaita Vedānta theology with reference to Appayya Dik kur and Srividyanāndi, a subcommentary on Śivakērtha’s Brahmānāmassabhāṣyā
1 Sep 2013 – 13 Mar 2014

Elisabeth L. Engebreten
Affiliated Fellow
Prehistoric livelihoods, rising inequalities, and politics of survival in contemporary urban Chinese society
1 Sep 2013 – 28 Feb 2014

Elisa Ganser
Affiliated Fellow
Vedānta and srivijaya: a focus on the humanities and social sciences and their interaction with other sciences, most fellows, although not all, hold a PhD in some branch of learning from the humanities or social sciences. Among these are researchers who have worked on their own finances as well as those who receive financial support from IIAS directly, or from one of our partner institutes in the framework of a formal agreement.

“...IIAS offers a stimulating environment to balance work on my project with interactions amongst a vast network associated with the institute.”

Siobhan Campbell
(Affiliated Fellow) University of Sydney
Affiliated Fellow
1 Sep – 13 Feb ’14

David Kloos
Affiliated Fellow
Becoming better Muslims: religious authority and ethical improvement in Aceh, Indonesia
1 Jul 2013 – 31 Jan 2014

Retno Kusumaningtyas
Affiliated Fellow
Socio-economically driven internal migration in Indonesia
1 Apr 2013 – 31 Mar 2014

Viet Le
Affiliated Fellow
Representations of modernization and historical trauma in contemporary Southeast Asian visual cultures (with a focus on Cambodia). Win him and his diasporas

Saraju Rath
Affiliated Fellow
Indian Manuscripts in the Netherlands: from forgotten treasures to accessible archives
5 Jan 2004 – 1 Jan 2015

Albert Tseng
Affiliated Fellow
BAS-SEAS Fellow
Framing sociology in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore
20 May 2013 – 20 Nov 2013

Yi Wang
Affiliated Fellow
Cataloguing the Van Gulik Collection
1 June – 31 Dec 2013

Lui YUAN
Affiliated Fellow (IAS Energy Programme Asia)
Resource-based city development in The Netherlands
1 Nov 2013 – 30 Nov 2013
our affiliated fellows present aspects of their work in a manner accessible to other researchers who do not necessarily have specialised knowledge of the topic at hand, followed by time for questions, comments and discussion. Lunch is provided by the Institute. The meetings are open to fellows as well as others with an interest in the subject.

Another often heard reason for researchers to choose IIAS is the access to important resources available in Leiden and the Netherlands. Thanks to its long-time relationship with countries in Asia, the Netherlands is home to many important and sometimes unique historical manuscripts and other collections from Asia, many of which found their way into the ‘Special Collections’ of the Leiden University Library (The Portrait on page 56), or which are present at one of the other institutes in Leiden. Owing to the university’s long tradition of Asian Studies, specific expertise on a wide variety of Asia-related topics abounds at Leiden University and fellows take the opportunity, with or without the help from IIAS, to talk to the many experts. Other fellows actively use their affiliation with IIAS to become part of the Institute’s network, for example, by taking part or contributing to a conference organised by IIAS during or after their official fellowship period.

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

Asian Heritages
This cluster concentrates on the critical investigation of the politics of cultural heritage, and explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a Europe-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values.

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

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

For information on the research clusters and application form go to: www.iias.nl
For the past twenty years, more than a thousand fellows and affiliated scholars have enjoyed the facilities of IIAS in Leiden and have made good use of the many university institutes, museums and libraries in the vicinity. Many of these scholars did not limit their stay in Leiden to just one occasion, but they returned, attracted by the IIAS atmosphere that for many proved so conducive to their research. But even if they did not return to Leiden physically, we have remained in contact with many of our former fellows, of course via our website and The Newsletter, but also by meeting them at roundtables and conferences all over the world. Below is a small selection of alumni who reflect the varied backgrounds and research fields found among fellows at IIAS.

Alumni, let us know when you have new publications coming out, or when you have found yourself a new position, or are starting a brand new research project. In short, help us to strengthen the IIAS community, so we can even better help you find colleagues and others who share your academic interests.

**Edwin Jurriëns**
I am a lecturer in Indonesian Studies at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne. I was a research fellow at the IIAS in Leiden from January to April 2008, during my sabbatical leave from my previous employer, the University of New South Wales, Canberra. The IIAS offered me a place for undisturbed research and meeting old and new friends in the field of Asian Studies. It gave me the opportunity to finish my book from Monologue to Dialogue: Radio and Reform in Indonesia, published by KITLV Press in 2009. During my stay in Leiden, Jeroen de Kloet and myself also launched our co-edited volume Cosmopolitanities: On Distinct Belongings and Cross Cultural Encounters (Brill, 2009). Another highlight of my participation in Dutch artist Wendelien van Oldenborgh’s audio-visual project No False Echoes, which was exhibited at the Van Abbe Museum in 2008. My current research focuses on contemporary art, grassroots media and media ecology, especially video art and community video. My forthcoming book on contemporary art, grassroots media and media ecology, The Van Abbe Museum in 2008. My current research focuses on contemporary art, grassroots media and media ecology, especially video art and community video. My forthcoming publication will be the co-edited volume Disaster Relief in the Asia Pacific: Agency and Resilience (Routledge, 2013), in which I focus on the role of art and alternative media in informing and rebuilding disaster-prone communities.

**Dipika Mukherjee**
I received my PhD in English, with a major in Linguistics, from Texas A&M, and over the next two decades tried to carve out a dual career for myself as a linguist and creative writer. I have had a nomadic life and taught at academic institutions in the US, India, China, the Netherlands, Malaysia and Singapore. My first novel, Thunder Demons, was long listed for the 2009 Man Asian Literary Prize; and my short stories and poems have been published internationally. I currently teach at the Weingron College of Arts and Sciences and am an Affiliate of the Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies at Northwestern University. I was an IIAS Affiliated Fellow in 2003 and 2007 to 2013. During this time, I co-edited Longage Ships Among Malaysian Minorities as Effects Of National Language Planning: Speaking in Many Tongues (AUP, 2011), and published a book chapter in Multilingual Identities: New Global Perspectives (Peter Lang, 2013), on the new identity-formation of Surname-Indian/women in Dutch society. IIAS was a wonderfully open and intellectually stimulating institution to work in, and I am enriched by the continual collaboration with IIAS colleagues in different parts of the world. **Edwin Jurriëns**

**Rituparna Roy**
I lived most of my life in Kolkata, where I first studied English Literature at the Presidency College and Calcutta University, and later taught the subject at Jadavpur College. I specialized in Indian Writing in English and did my PhD in India with the help of two UGC Fellowships (JRF & FIP). I left my full-time, permanent job as a lecturer in Kolkata to join my husband in the Netherlands in 2007. Since coming here, a teaching job has eluded me – but thanks to IIAS, I could continue as a scholar. During my time at IIAS (Jan 2009 to April 2012), I worked on an independent post-doctoral project, and apart from several journal articles, authored two books – my revised doctoral thesis, South Asian Partition Fiction in English (Peter Lang: 2013) and a co-edited ICAS volume, Writing India Anew: Indian English Fiction 2000-2010 (AUP: 2013). I now write an occasional column on India for The Newsletter, and am honoured to be assisting the editor Sonja Zweegers with this special 20th anniversary issue. IIAS helped me evolve as a person – broadening my mental horizon and enabling me to see myself and my work as part of a much bigger world than I knew before, both in the field of Asian Studies and at large.

**Barbara Andaya**
As a student at Sydney University in the early 1960s, I could never have foreseen that one day I would be sitting in my office looking out at Honolulu’s beautiful Diamond Head, that my passport would be fat with visas from many different countries, and that my network of friends and colleagues would stretch across the globe. I could never have envisaged that I would have embarked on a career as a Southeast Asian historian, which has brought me so much intellectual stimulation and personal pleasure. At Cornell University I met my husband, Leonard Andaya, leading to a marriage that I never have foreseen that one day I would be sitting in my own place in academia. The Institute around the end of the 1990s made me both to help people find each other, and to keep everyone aware of what is going on at IIAS. For this to work it is necessary that the alumni out there keep us informed about any changes to (email) addresses and affiliations, and, if you have not already done so, by subscribing to The Newsletter, which as you all know, is distributed free of charge four times a year.

**Irina Morozova**
I earned my PhD in history from the Institute of Asian and African Countries, Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2002. My PhD thesis and later research resulted in two books, The Comintern and Revolution in Mongolia (White Horse Press: 2002) and Socialist Revolutions in Asia. Social History of Mongolia in the 20th century (Routledge: 2009). I became an IIAS Fellow in 2003 and since then have further developed my knowledge in the social sciences in the academic milieu of Leiden University and the University of Amsterdam. At IIAS, I gained skills of managing international research projects and organizing scientific forums at an advanced level. I was a co-director of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop and editor of ‘Towards social stability and democratic governance in Central Eurasia: Challenges to regional security’ (IOS Press: 2005). While continuing my lecturing duties at Moscow State University 2006-2010, I became an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the Institute of Middle East Studies, German Institute of Global and Area Studies in Hamburg in 2008. Since 2010, I have been leading the international research project ‘The history of perestroika in Central Asia (social transformation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, 1982-1991)’, sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation at the Leuphana-Lernhalle in Lüneburg for the Centre for Central Asian Studies, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt-University Berlin.

**Thomas de Brujin**
From 1998 to 2001, I was an IIAS Affiliated Fellow for a research project on contemporary South Asian literature. IIAS proved a very inspiring environment for this project, with the coming and going of researchers in all areas of Asian Studies. After the IIAS fellowship, my professional career took a different turn as I found work in an administrative position with IIAS colleagues in different parts of the world.

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Programmes, networks and initiatives

In its aim to promote broad, high quality knowledge on Asia, IIAS supports several thematic research programmes and networks developed and executed by international research teams usually consisting of a programme director, IIAS research fellows, and visiting fellows. To mark the twentieth anniversary of IIAS, this special issue of The Newsletter not only presents our current programmes and initiatives, but also recalls a number of completed programmes that received support from IIAS in the past.

Aging in East and West

It is projected that by 2050 there will be nearly two billion people aged 60 and over, and three-quarters of whom will be living in the developing world. An ageing in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steady increase in life-expectancy. In Western Europe, aging populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and healthcare, including pensions systems, unleashing substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing comparable challenges and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much shorter time-span.

This research programme, in short, sheds light on how both Asian and European nations are reviewing the social contract with their citizens.

Three researchers from Asia, and specialists on the theme of ageing, have visited IIAS during the last few years, and return visits to Leiden have been planned: Professor Marko Hirnse (Tokai University), an expert on policy shifts for the elderly in Japan and the Netherlands; Professor Ruma Chatterji (University of Delhi) who conducted an ethnographic study on elderly in Japan and the Netherlands; and Professor Roma Chatterji Hirose (Tokai University), an expert on policy shifts for the elderly in Japan and the Netherlands.

The ABIN organizes conferences in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. The fourth conference, organised together with the Southeast Asia Research Centre of the City University of Hong Kong, will take place from 8-10 December 2014 in Hong Kong, and is entitled: Activated Borders: Re-openings, Ruptures and Relationships. (See page 17 for the Call for Papers)

Coordinators: Ellen Raven (e.m.raven@iias.nl) and Gerda Theuns-de Boer (g.m.theuns@iias.nl) www.abia.net

Asian Borderlands Research Network

The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, central/east and Southeast Asia. The concerns of the Asian Borderlands Research Network are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns.

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Coordinator: Eric de Maaker (maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)
www.asianborderlands.net

Asian Studies in Africa

Since 2010, IIAS and other partners from Africa, Asia and the USA have been working on an initiative to promote the study of and teaching on Asian at African universities and, equally, to promote African Studies in Asia. The rationale behind this initiative is that the present intensification of interaction between the two continents -of capital investments, commerce, political alliances and cultural transfers of knowledge - urgently calls for systematic scholarly engagements with the past and present of Asian and African realities. The initiative constitutes a first attempt to sustain a humanities-informed South-South knowledge platform with connections between other academic centers in Europe and North America, but also Latin-America and Oceania.

In 2012, a roundtable in Chisamba, Zambia, led to the establishment of the pan-African Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASIA). A-ASIA’s development is biennial (biennial) conference will take place from 15–17 January 2015 in Accra, Ghana, under the title: Asian Studies in Africa: The Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interactions (see page 17 for the Call for Papers). This will be the first ever pan-African conference on Asian Studies, bringing together a diversified range of scholars and institutions from the continent and the rest of the world with a shared focus on Asia and Africa intellectual interactions.

Among the strategic partners of IIAS involved in the development of A-ASIA are the University of Zambia, the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Stellenbosch University, SEPHIS (the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development), African Studies Centre (ASC), Doshisha University, the Social Sciences Research Council, Beijing University and many others.

Website: www.ias.nl/asian-studies-africa. Call for Papers: see page 17.

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Website: www.ias.nl/asian-studies-africa. Call for Papers: see page 17.
Programmes, networks and initiatives continued

Indian Medical Heritage Research Network
The Indian Medical Heritage Research Network aims to stimulate social-cultural and social-historical research on Indian medical traditions such as Ayurveda, Unani-tibb, Siddha, Yoga and Sowa Rigpa. Of special interest is the integration of Indian medicine in Indian public health and its role as a second resort for middle class Indians and Europeans. The network offers a virtual space on Facebook for collating research findings and other information about Indian medical heritage covering universal perspectives, interests and backgrounds.
Coordinator: Maarten Bode (m.bode@uva.nl)
www.facebook.com/IndianMedicalHeritage

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)
Consisting of over 100 researchers from 14 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest global academic network on Asian cities of its kind. UKNA’s objective is to nurture contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities, and seeks to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies. To this aim, the programme hosts a variety of research projects through the exchange of researchers of the participating institutions, focusing on the three research themes (1) ideas of the city; (2) Cities by and for the people; and (3) Future of the cities. UKNA is funded by a grant awarded by the Marie Curie Actions ‘International Research Staff Exchange Scheme’ (IRESS) of the EU and runs from April 2012 until April 2016. IAS is the coordinating institute in the network and administrator of the programme.
Coordinators: Paul Rabie (p.p.rabie@iias.nl) and Gan San Tan (g.s.tan@iias.nl)
www.ukna.asia

Changing Labour Relations in Asia (CLARA)
The international research programme on Changing Labour Relations in Asia (CLARA) was launched in 2009 as the first European research centre devoted to the study of regulation and governance in Asia. Through its distinctive research approach and programmes, the Centre sets to achieve the following aims:
– It emphasizes the need to study Asian markets inductively and to develop non-Eurocentric theories of regulation and governance.

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

THE IIAS CENTRE for Regulation and Governance

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance was launched in 2009 as the first European research centre devoted to the study of regulation and governance in Asia. Through its distinctive research approach and programmes, the Centre sets to achieve the following aims:

– It engages in interdisciplinary and comparative research on the theories and practices of regulation and governance in Asia;
– Stimulates research collaboration between European and Asian scholars in this area of study;
– Acts as a forum of exchange among government regulators, politicians, entrepreneurs, civic organizations, and academics concerning issues of regulatory policies and public governance in Asia;
– Trains talented young scholars from Europe and Asia in comparative research on regulation and governance.

In seeking to become a focal point of innovative and concerted research, the Centre’s approach distinguishes it from conventional research centres. The uniqueness is reflected in the following:

– It undertakes inquiries on a well-defined subject area with a sharp focus of contemporary relevance: regulation and governance;
– It combines multidisciplinarity with area studies and emphasizes comparative analysis. It pursues inquiries from the top-down, state-centred, and practice-oriented perspective (regulation) and bottom-up, society-centred, and political perspective (governance);
– It emphasizes the need to study Asian markets inductively and to develop non-Eurocentric theories of regulation and governance.

Research programmes
A special feature of the Centre is that its research programmes are organised into interlocking projects closely linked to one another, instead of discrete studies undertaken in isolation by individual researchers. Such an interlocking research chain allows research findings to be exchanged and communicated between projects, keeps research fellows in constant dialogue with one another, facilitates the identification of empirical and theoretical gaps, and enables an effective accumulation and building of knowledge. Currently the research projects fall within the following interlocking areas:

State licensing, market closure, and rent seeking
Asian states intervene extensively in their economies. This creates widespread rent seeking, to the extent that a substantial proportion of economic resources are allocated and distributed in the form of rents through the creation and regulation of monopolies and oligopolies. This programme investigates the regulation of market closure, and the creation, allocation, and pursuit of rents.

Regulation of intra-governmental conflicts
In many large Asian countries, the authority below the top of the political system is dispersed. Far from being a unitary decision-making machinery, the state is characterized by bureaucratic factions, sectional interests, and local protectionism. The formulation and implementation of regulatory policies are predicated upon bureaucratic bargaining and negotiation along vertical hierarchies. This programme investigates the mechanisms of governing intra-state conflicts, and assesses the efficacy of regulatory policies under rival bureaucratic fields.

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance
Socio-Genetic Marginalisation in Asia

Regulatory governance under institutional void

This programme studies the role of certain actors in fulfilling regulatory functions in the absence of either public institutions or market mechanisms, i.e., under the situation of institutional void. These actors, either public offices performing market functions or market players undertaking regulatory responsibilities, transcend the conventional boundary between public-private and state-market. The programme set out to understand under what circumstances and under which forms of governance will institutional void be filled by what type of actors.

Partnerships and events

The Centre encourages joint research and cross-country cooperation in its research activities. So far it has collaborated with a number of institutions in its research undertakings.

These institutions include:
- Clingendael Institute (the Hague);
- Centre d’Études de l’Asie du Sud-Est/HESS (Paris);
- Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (Rotterdam);
- NUS Centre for Governance, Institutions and Organizations (Singapore);
- Tsinghua Center for Industrial Development and Environmental Governance (Beijing);
- Rotterdam School of Management (Rotterdam);
- University of Macau (China).

During the past few years, a number of international workshops and conferences have been organized by the Centre. Participants from different continents have taken part in the events. As stated above, the workshops were organized around interlocking themes that allow for the accumulation of knowledge and the deepening of research dialogues. These workshops include:

- International Workshop on ‘State Rescaling during State Rescaling’, Rotterdam, 3-4 December 2012.

In addition to research workshops, the Centre also runs regular seminar series. The first seminar series on ‘The State and Economic Development in Asia and Europe’ took place in 2011. Another seminar series on ‘Subnational and Transnational Actors in a Globalising World’ was organized in 2012. Both series were well attended by government officials, diplomats, business leaders, social activists, and researchers. They served as important forums of exchange between the public and private sectors with regard to issues of regulation and governance.

Edited book series

Finally, the Centre collaborates with NIAS Press (Copenhagen) in disseminating the research findings by editing the book series on ‘Governance in Asia’. The book series explores the problem of governance from an Asian perspective, and encourages studies that are sensitive to the autarkic structures and the concepts of Asian history and development, and which locate the issue of governance within specific meanings of rule and order, structures of political authority, and the institutional resources distinctive to the Asian context. The series publishes well-researched books that have the cumulative effect of developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities. Information about the series can be found in the website: www.niaspress.dk

The Centre is headed by Tak-Wing Ngo. NIAS Professor of Asian History at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Professor of Political Science at the University of Macau. Updates about the Centre can be found at: http://crg.iias.asia
Illegal but licit: transnational flows and permissive polities in Asia

TRANSNATIONAL FLOWS are regularly studied in the social sciences ‘from above’, focusing on the power of states to regulate, facilitate or hinder the movement of people across borders. The research project ‘Illegal but Licit’, while sharing with other studies an emphasis on the changing role of states in shaping transnational flows, ventured into the exploration of flows from the perspective of mobile people. The project championed ethnographic methods for getting at a better understanding of the aggregated ‘big picture’ of state authorities and transnational flows.

Conducted over the course of five years, from 2006 to 2011, the project included 11 case studies of transnational movement in various societies across the vast continent of Asia. Two of the case studies examined a long distance migration: female domestic workers from Kerala to the Gulf States, and male construction workers from rural China to Israel; while two other case studies focused on movement in borderlands: between Bangladesh and Northeast India, and between Afghanistan and Northwest Pakistan. The insights that the ‘Illegal but Licit’ project generated have benefited, in addition, from close collaboration with many other scholars working in Asia on transnational movement.

The project resulted in a number of journal articles, an edited volume and a doctoral dissertation. It also led to a policy dialogue, held in Kathmandu, between academics, civil-society activists and policy makers from different countries in Asia. In what follows, I shall explore and highlight some of the project’s main empirical findings and analytical perceptivities.

Thinking mobile, thinking multiple

Political order is commonly associated with the regulatory authority of states. This is not surprising in view of the fact that states have been seen to act in an exercise of enforcing full authority within national territories. According to the formal model, states enjoy a monopoly over the use of violence, the right to tax the population and the power to sanction offenders. Staying close to such a formal understanding, it is easy to conceptualise state authority in a binary fashion: either there is state law and order, or there is a lack of authority and thus anarchy.

Our empirical evidence shows that the sway of formal state authorities is often weak, and, crucially, that we should not understand this as a ‘lack’ of authority or as being detrimental to the establishment of order. Our findings point instead to the capacity for an aspirational authority that complement (or compete with) the regulatory authority of states. For example, time-honoured ways of doing things can be more powerful in shaping people’s practices than new regulations drafted in a government ministry. Religious, ethnic or commercial elites can exercise as much, or more, regulatory power than state officials. State authority is thus not restricted to a particular territory and may be better off than their ‘legal’ counterparts. They are better off than their ‘legal’ counterparts because they are tied to formal institutions, such as employer violations of signed contracts. For these migrants, paradoxically, legality turns into a liability. Indian domestic workers in Dubai, and Chinese construction workers in Tel Aviv, who deliberately opt to become ‘runaway’ workers or undocumented labourers, find themselves in a surprising position. They are better off than their ‘legal’ counterparts. In fact, they leave one behind to find binding contracts, excessive exploitation and extreme social isolation. Under these circumstances, absconding or fleeing a legal contract becomes a means of ‘countering subjugation’ rather than ‘subjugation itself’.

Permissive borders

Geographic proximity and trade links generate further transnational regimes of licitness. For example, in the border between India and Bangladesh, customary pathways and historic trade routes may persist in spite of more recently erected state borders. The habitual practices of inhabitants in borderlands lead them to perceive the crossing of state borders, on a daily basis and without formal permits, as unproblematic. State officials, on the other hand, may well consider such practices to be a dangerous subversion of state sovereignty, economic insubordination, or a potential security threat. But formal rules and stereotypical images may be negotiable, for example when state actors become deeply involved in facilitating unauthorised cross-border trade, or when they legalise ‘smuggling’.

Our studies advance that borders accommodate a vast range of informal flows, for example, in the Bangladesh-India borderland, the gendered nature of the local regime of permissiveness is pronounced. Here women traders and commuters easily navigate the high-security borderland amidst the construction of a new fence and increased patrolling, while men have to purchase a passage. State agents do not consider women traders, and the small quantities of goods that they carry, as a risk to either state. The presence of these women as permissible foreigners, illustrates how certain categories of mobile people may partially escape territorial and exclusionist discourses.

Finally, to people engaged in transnational flows in borderlands and beyond, authority does not radiate outwards from centres of power: strong at the centre and weakening towards the periphery. The findings of our contributors do not support that view. It shows that mobile people, authority is embedded in persons and objects and therefore is movable. Authority is not restricted to a particular territory and may materialise in unexpected places. For example, there is no necessary link between being territorially peripheral or geographically isolated and being free from state regulation (or, put differently, being excluded from the state). To people who are mobile, regulatory authority appears as a fluid property that can move about, expand and retract.

Barak Kalir is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, and co-director of the Institute for Migration and Ethnographic Studies. He was a post-doc researcher and the coordinator of the project “Illegal but licit: transnational flows and permissive polities in Asia”; Willem van Schendel was the director of the program, together with Prof Li Minhuiang from Xiamen University, China. Malini Sur was a PhD candidate, and Bindhubalesh Pattadath and Srafraz Khan were post-doc researchers, at the time of the project (B.Kalir@uva.nl).

Notes
Jatropha: from an iconic biofuel crop to a green-policy parasite

IN LESS THAN A DECADE, a very promising renewable energy source went from being a top policy priority to experiencing an "extraordinary collapse." How could that happen, and what can policy makers learn from this short history?

Prior to 2007, Jatropha curcas Linn. was promoted as a miracle plant capable of producing biofuel from marginal and degraded lands. Growing jatropha represented a response to both the alarmingly high price of oil and the emerging climate change, fossil fuel depletion and rural poverty. In 2008, a worldwide survey found 242 jatropha plantations on approximately 900,000 hectares and projected Indonesia as the largest producer in 2015 with 5.2 million hectares. However, many researchers who analyzed such agronomic claims about the crop or the social and environmental impacts produced mixed results. A publication in 2009 by the Global Bioenergy Partnership, in particular, warned against adopting overly optimistic narratives concerning new technologies as bases for policy making, public budget allocations and investment. An investigation of jatropha’s performance. In turn, process technology researchers used these extrapolations to create a narrative that made jatropha appear to be an attractive and environmentally friendly bioenergy crop for agro-ecological zones where oil palm production would not be possible or profitable. The jatropha ‘hype’ was financialized when the refinery manufacturer D1 Oils raised £13.5 million from their initial public offering on the London Stock Exchange in October 2004, reaching a market capitalization of £72 million in September 2005. The company claimed to have access to millions of hectares of land for potential jatropha cultivation in Africa and Asia. However, the remote locations of these marginal lands made the company’s claims difficult to verify.

Our analysis [...] warns against adopting overly optimistic narratives concerning new technologies as bases for policy making, public budget allocations and investment.

Jatropha in Indonesia

Jatropha development for modern biofuel production in Indonesia started in 1994. At this time, researchers at Bandung Institute of Technology in Bandung attempted to turn the wild plant - commonly used at least since 1907 for making torches and medicine - into a commodity for industrial extraction. Their initial success stimulated implementation by the plant science researchers extrapolating from various trial test results to predict yields. In turn, process technology researchers used these extrapolations to create a narrative that made jatropha appear to be an attractive and environmentally friendly bioenergy crop for agro-ecological zones where oil palm production would not be possible or profitable. The jatropha ‘hype’ was financialized when the refinery manufacturer D1 Oils raised £13.5 million from their initial public offering on the London Stock Exchange in October 2004, reaching a market capitalization of £72 million in September 2005. The company claimed to have access to millions of hectares of land for potential jatropha cultivation in Africa and Asia. However, the remote locations of these marginal lands made the company’s claims difficult to verify.

The extremely positive response of the market to these optimistic scenarios earned jatropha the nickname of ‘green gold’ in Indonesia, encouraged by government officials, the promotion of jatropha reached farmers across the vast archipelago. Subsequently, some farmers immediately began cultivating it, using seeds of wild jatropha from their gardens or those distributed during the Ministry of Agriculture’s 2005-2006 national jatropha program. Nevertheless, while the national government provided budget support for its cultivation, research and credit subsidies, there was no ‘project’ for creating a well-functioning marketing channel. When farmers could not sell the harvested jatropha fruit, cultivation eventually halted. Despite this disappointing experience, optimism about jatropha remained so strong that many farmers kept the crop ‘hibernating’ in their fields in the hope that someday the demand for jatropha would rise.

Hope, opportunity and rent-seeking

D1 Oils’ dramatic collapse in the stock market after mid 2007 did not reduce the interest in investing in jatropha projects in Indonesia. However, the definition of ‘projects’ here is crucial: it is a translation of the Indonesian concept of proyek, a delineated set of activities during a fixed and limited period of time for which there is a budget, usually provided by the government. Proyek is commonly associated with opportunities to benefit from mark-ups or with plain corruption. In the case of jatropha, the last opportunity for large state subsidies was in 2007, when an Indonesian national agribusiness coordination program. The coordinating minister of Economic Affairs established a company to manage the largest-ever domestic jatropha investment in Indonesia (around US$ 11 million). This company established jatropha nurseries in 15 districts in South Sulawesi and recruited 8000 ‘out-growers’ on 17,040 hectares. Nevertheless, although run with large capital input by a major company, the project began to run beyond the nursery stage. A patronage network of politicians, government officials and businessmen had recruited farmers by collecting copies of their land titles or identity cards to make the company’s access to land and labor appear secure. In return for acting as gatekeepers to land and labor, specific local elites’ obtained jobs or money. Most of the investment was spent on company personnel costs, buying properties and a package credit program for farmers, which failed because farmers were not interested in production and sales. The company was officially closed down in 2011 after being idle since 2009.

The network effectively absorbed the subsidized investment money without leaving a trace in the fields.

However, this closure was not the end of the story. In 2009, claims that the press-cake residue of jatropha oil extraction could be used as an organic fertilizer. Banker companies began to adopt the optimistic narrative. Jatropha would thus be food and fuel, while the remaining waste could be used as an organic fertilizer. Banker companies began to adopt the optimistic narrative, depicting business schemes in which they would act as a ‘managing company’ linking green investment to land and labor. A new pattern emerged, involving local project developers offering (foreign) investors their services to provide access to production areas in return for a lavish salary for a year or two. The projects were funded out of subsidies, which were passed on to green funds and retail investors, who tended to concentrate on future markets and not on actual production. Typically, within a year, the projects were shut down. The company’s project would be declared a failure – blaming local conditions and population – and the project developer would disappear, leaving shareholders with worthless shares and increasing farmers’ and local governments’ cynicism regarding agribusiness investors. In less than a decade, jatropha was transformed from a promising and commercially viable biofuel crop into a green-policy parasite, living on subsidies and green investments.

Policy arenas for future innovations

Policy-making for innovative biofuels in a country like Indonesia must improve in at least four arenas. First, research for new technologies would benefit from an ex-ante critical review of societal arguments, in order to curtail excessive optimism. Second, elite national policy makers should begin with ‘due diligence’ to deter subsidy harvesters. Third, international actors should simplify biofuels sustain-ability criteria to increase compliance. Fourth, the capacity of local government apparatus in ‘marginal land’ needs to be strengthened. The final point is to warn against the destructive effect of international ‘high risk - high profit’ (or loss) capital on local agricultural development. National regulations should prohibit such speculative investments.

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Programmes and initiatives – moving forward

Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context

A three-year IIAS pilot programme (2014-2016) supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The programme is incorporated in the overall research strategy of the IIAS, which focuses on three thematic clusters, namely Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia. The pilot initiative will include a range of scholarly activities in five topical areas, or ‘forums’, that cut across regions and disciplines. In the third year, a Roundtable will be organised, in collaboration with Columbia University, to evaluate the programme’s outcomes and discuss a continuation of the initiative.

The five forums are:

Forum 1: ‘History and Asian Intellectual Traditions: Modul Epistemology and Theory for AntiEuroasia’ (META)
The META Forum is based on the understanding that the humanist theories of knowledge often depend on culturally bound European concepts, which may be less universally applicable than generally assumed. The Forum’s objective is therefore to uncover the varied ways in which Western and non-Western understandings of humanist concepts diverge or converge and how they construe different epistemological modes. In the context of this Forum, two workshops will be organised that address theoretical, but closely related foci, namely the notions of ‘text’ and ‘source’. In these workshops, non-Western knowledge systems will be represented by scholars of Asian Studies who are specialised, for instance, in Chinese art and literature, classical Indian epistemology, Persian poetry, or Tibetan philosophy and historiography.

Forum 2: ‘Uses of Culture and Cultural Heritage in Asian Contexts’
This Forum addresses the modalities of cultural heritage production, its management and its reformulation in Asia. It explores the plurality of the notion of ‘heritage’ and its local variants, some of which depart significantly from European models because of powerful local religious, philosophical, conceptual, and political traditions. Three key questions take prominence: what kind of heritage is preserved, for whom, and through what process? The Forum will focus on vernacular knowledge as they are practiced in mainland Southeast Asia. It will include a Summer School in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the university of the same name, and a workshop in 2015.

Forum 3: ‘Asian Spatialities’
This Forum aims at overcoming the spatial limitations of nations and empires, past and present. It addresses the flows, interactions and community agencies across seas and landmasses of Central, South and Southeast Asia. This Forum is subdivided into three sub-themes, namely:

- ‘The Indian Ocean World – Belonging across the Bay of Bengal’
  A sub-project which will focus on contested notions of belonging across the Bay of Bengal. It includes two workshops, ‘Belonging across the Bay of Bengal: Migrations, Networks, Circulations’, and ‘The Bay of Bengal and Area Studies: Space, Scale and Location’. Both workshops will reflect critically on recent efforts to foreground ocean-centred historical geographies of the South and Southeast Asian littoral zones.

- ‘Central Euroasia – New Rulers, New Histories, New Identities’
  This sub-project concentrates on the massive landmass of Central and Inner Asia. It includes two workshops. The first is planned to immediately precede the international conference on ‘Changing Patterns of Power in Historical and Modern Central Asia’ (Ulaanbaatar, 7-9 August 2014, co-organised by IIAS – see opposite page) by addressing ‘National and Historical Contexts of Independent Knowledge Production’. The second workshop, ‘External Religious and Ideological Influences’, planned for the summer of 2015, will discuss the influence of transnational religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam) and ideologies (capitalism, democracy, socialism) on identity formation, national developments and international relations.

- ‘Across Southeast Asian Borders’
  The third sub-project of the Asian Spatialities Forum builds upon the dynamics initiated by the Asian Borderslands: Research Network established by IIAS in 2008. Two workshops in this sub-project will study Southeast Asia on the basis of networks, processes, transitions, polyvalence and fluxuality, in opposition to the concepts of the ‘nation-state’ or the ‘region’. The first workshop, ‘Communities in Between: Redefining Social Spaces in Southeast Asian Borderslands’, will investigate state-society relations through the perspective of the borderlands as they can be seen as products of a social and political negotiation of space. The second workshop, ‘Beyond the State’s Reach: Casino Spaces as Enclaves of Development or Lawlessness?’ seeks to better understand the ‘transitional zones’ that have emerged in the wake of the encounter between local communities, new migratory circulations and the global economy.

Forum 4: ‘The Idea of the City in Asian Contexts’
This Forum is based on the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), an IIAS-led and EU co-funded programme of scholars working on Asian cities. Cities constitute distinct domains worth examining in both local and global contexts. They often share more characteristics with one another than with their own hinterland, and, being at the forefront of economic growth, Asian cities are being re-imagined everyday by their residents, commuters, immigrants, civil-society groups, planners, politicians, business groups, and visitors. The project will involve three activities, corresponding to the thematic research areas of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA). Two small workshops will be held in 2014, on ‘subaltern urbanism’ and on the ‘public versus private city’. In 2015, a larger Roundtable called ‘The Idea of the City’ will explore the local/global city.

Forum 5: ‘Views of Asia from Africa’
Major changes are underway in the interaction between Asia and Africa, where a massive economic, political and demographic Chinese presence is rapidly transforming the terms of this international relationship. This Forum will be prepared together with the Association of Asian Studies in Africa (A-ASA) established in 2012 in Lusaka, Zambia. The A-ASA’s maiden conference is planned for February-March, 2015, in Accra, Ghana, and this event will offer the present project the opportunity to situate the Asia-Africa academic axis within the larger realm of the study of Asia, including the role of academic institutions in the North/West, by organising two thematic roundtables. The first meeting, ‘Dem-centring the Discourse on Asian Studies’ will discuss the movement of the study of Asia from a Western-centred model to an Africa/global initiative; the second event, ‘Creating a Sustainable Model of Asian Studies in Africa’, will discuss existing capacities and perceived gaps and needs to shape a sustainable Asian studies intellectual community on the African continent.

A Roundtable will be organised in the second half of the grant period to discuss the IIAS Mellon initiative in its entirety and consider suggestions for a new humanities-informed framework with which to ‘suppose’ Asian Studies’. Inspired by an event organised in November 2011 by IAS entitled ‘Shifting Patterns in Global Interactions and Identities’, which investigated new topographies of power in North/South and South-South geopolitics and what these mean for the academic study of Asia, the roundtable will bring together researchers engaged in the five Forums as well as external experts from Asia, Europe, North-America and beyond.

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THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN STUDIES recently received a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, New York, for a three-year pilot programme aimed at strengthening and redirecting Asian Studies as part of the foundation’s efforts to reframe area studies in Western universities. The programme is built on a practice of a close interaction between Asian, European and American partners. It aims to foster new humanities-focused research and educational opportunities in the field of Asian Studies on the basis of a trans-regional inter-disciplinary platform. In the process, the programme seeks to shape academic communities around new themes of research, emphasising the inclusion of young and aspiring scholars from the three world-regions, and beyond.

Both the research orientations and the architecture of the programme are meant to enable participants to think in terms of decolonising knowledge about Asia, exploring alternative narratives of Asian history, questioning conventional spatial configurations of Asia through the study of cities, exploring the complexity of the local-global nexus, or suggesting alternative approaches from those conventional spatial configurations of ‘Asia’ through the production, its management and its reformulation in a ‘Asia’.

The programme is incorporated in the overall research strategy of the IIAS, which focuses on three thematic clusters, namely Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia. The pilot initiative will include a range of scholarly activities in five topical areas, or ‘forums’, that cut across regions and disciplines. In the third year, a Roundtable will be organised, in collaboration with Columbia University, to evaluate the programme’s outcomes and discuss a continuation of the initiative.

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The Newsletter | No.66 | Winter 2013
UKNA Call for Research Contributions

Deadline for abstracts is 15 January 2014.

Deadline for draft papers of selected abstracts is 1 April 2014. Abstracts and questions should be addressed to Ms. Gien San Tan at g.s.tan@iias.nl

The networking of the conference will be English, French and Portuguese, but all power point presentations must be in English.

Co-sponsors
Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation (CKF), Taipei
Africa Studies Centre (ASC), Leiden
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden
Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC), New York
Doshisha University, Kyoto
Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Programme (SEAREP), Manila
South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS), Rio de Janeiro

Asian Studies in Africa: the Challenges and Prospects of a New Axis of Intellectual Interaction

A-ASIA INAUGURAL CONFERENCE, ACCRA, 15-17 JAN 2013
Call for papers deadline: 1 March 2014
Submission forms: www.iias.nl/aasia-cfp
Contact: Martina van den Haak (M.C.van.den.Haak@iias.nl)

ASIAN STUDIES IN AFRICA will be the first ever conference held in Africa to bring together a multidisciplinary ensemble of scholars and institutions from the continent and the rest of the world with a shared focus on Asia and Africa intellectual interactions.

The conference
The 2015 conference is organised by the Association for Asian Studies in Africa (A-Asia) in cooperation with the International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS). The conference, through panels and roundtables, will seek to assess the prospects for Asian Studies in Africa in a global context by addressing a number of theoretical and empirical questions that such an enterprise will raise: How should Asian studies be framed in Africa? Are African studies relevant for Asian? What is the current state of capacity (institutional, intellectual, personnel) and, so far, for the study of Africa and Asia? Can this be improved and how? How does (and must it?) Asian studies dovetail into the broader field of ‘African studies’, as it has been developed mainly in Western institutions? Are new narratives required for understanding the very visible contemporary presence of Asia in Africa and Africa in Asia?

The call for papers
We invite proposals for (institutional) panels, roundtables, papers and book presentations in the fields of Asian-African interactions studies. Proposals should be in English and be submitted online before 1 March 2014.

The submission forms can be found at: www.iias.nl/aasia-cfp
All (institutional) panel, roundtable, and paper proposals should clearly outline the methodological approach(es) taken and whether they contribute to the theoretical and/or empirical objectives of the conference. Those whose proposals have been accepted will be notified by 15 April 2014. The working languages of the conference will be English, French and Portuguese, but all power point presentations must be in English.

Call for papers
The conference aims at bringing together representatives of different disciplines researching various periods of historical and modern Central and Inner Asia, including scholars studying contemporary history of the region. The geographical scope of the conference is, understandably, large. We construe Central and Inner Asia as the huge expanse of land from the Ural in the west to beyond Mongolia and deep into modern China in the east. Papers referring to adjoining regions, which shared many of the vicissitudes of Central and Inner Asian history (the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan), will also be considered, if they bear relevance and if they enable new elite groups to emerge.

The conference stresses the transregional character of communication and exchange of the socio-political concepts and cultures between Central and Inner Asia and other world regions, because patterns of power are reflected in the process of social adaptation, how this process allows former elites to retain their privileged access to resources, materials and ideological assets, and how it enables new elite groups to emerge.

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Those interested in contributing should submit an English-language abstract of approximately 300 words describing their proposed output, plus a brief curriculum vita.
The Framing Asian Studies’ conference, and its framing

Albert Tzeng

HOW IS OUR KNOWLEDGE about Asia framed by the geopolitical contexts in which it is found - and how is it produced and disseminated? Which roles do the various knowledge institutions (e.g., foundations, associations, institutes, publishers and archives) play in promoting and directing Asian Studies? And what sorts of power relations can be identified, and critically reflected upon? IIAS, in partnership with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (IIAS-Singapore), organized the conference, Framing Asian Studies: Geopolitics, Institutions and Networks, to address these questions (18-20 November 2013).

The first day of the conference explored the contested discourse on Asia from the perspective of West and East, and various alternative geographical framings in studying the region. The second day started with reflections on the colonial framing of knowledge on Asia, and then focused on the actors involved and various institutions. The last day assembled papers that trace how a particular Asian region (e.g., India, China, Japan, Korea or the Southeast) has been understood in terms of its otherness carried out in the light of many other bilateral connections.

Conceiving the conference theme
As the recipient of the 2013/2014 IAS-IESAS Fellowship, I was given the opportunity to assist in organizing a conference. I proposed a theme derived from my dissertation, Framing Sociology in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore: Geopolitics, States and Practitioners (monograph forthcoming, Ashgate). The dissertation basically traces how sociology as a Western discipline was introduced, institutionalized and developed in the three Asian postcolonial societies listed in the title. It seeks to theorize about the observed patterns and to relate them to regional geopolitical factors (e.g., the Chinese Civil War, Cold War and decolonization) and the distinctive contexts of the three countries.

To theoretically accommodate this inquiry, I borrowed the ideas of world system (Wallerstein), network society (Castells), knowledge network (Castell), and cultural capital (Bourdieu) to propose a world system of knowledge network as an overarching conceptual frame for narrating the historical expansion of knowledge enterprise from the medieval European universities to a vast global network of knowledge production and dissemination. The conference, like my dissertation, would thus inquire about the social framing of Asian Studies at large, thereby situating the production and dissemination of knowledge about Asia within a ‘world system of knowledge network’. I paid special attention to the regional and geopolitical aspects, to a wide array of institutions that include both the state-centric and the transnational, and at the practitioner level, I focused more on the actors’ networks rather than on the individuals.

Patterns of submissions
The call for paper attracted 140 abstract submissions. Notably, the submissions were received from Asia, more specifically: India (26), Indonesia (9), and Japan (9). In Europe, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom dominated, each with 9 submissions. The geographical pattern reflects multiple factors that include the size of each country, the maturity of academic activities, research agendas and the span of the IAS-IESAS scholarly network. But it might not be a coincidence that the three Asian countries with the greatest presence were all at one time linked to the Dutch colonial Empire, and the two European countries with the most submissions happened to be the two major colonial powers that shaped the historical landscape of modern Asia.

Thematically the submissions covered a wide range of topics, but there were a few obvious gaps. First, there were no papers dealing with ‘knowledge about Russia or West Asia’. The few submissions by researchers from this area all focussed on how they studied China, Korea, India or Southeast Asia. Second, we received no proposals wanting to discuss any major Western research institutes that are influential in the field, while we did see some attention paid to their Asian counterparts. Finally, most papers dealt with geopolitical factors, with the role of some institutions discussed, but with very little attention diverted to networks of other institutions or individuals – probably because of the relative abstractness of the category and the technical difficulty in its empirical investigation.

Abstract review and selection
‘Quality’ was of course an essential aspect of consideration used to make the selection, but I identified at least five others, which I like to describe as part of an ‘editorial imagination’; they had more to do with the overall presentation of the conference and its anticipated proceedings.

First, we considered the potential for dialogue with other papers. We looked for papers with similar or comparable themes that could be grouped into sessions. Second, we preferred studies about a geopolitical unit of greater significance for an international audience. Papers about hotly discussed countries like India or China had an edge compared to a paper on, for instance, a particular ethnic group on a less known small Pacific island. Of course, the latter surely had a chance if its theoretical significance could be convincingly argued, but it had a higher threshold to cross.

Third, when in doubt, the author’s institutional affiliation and publication record was also considered. The selection committee’s confidence in the author (e.g., could s/he deliver what s/he had promised?) was based on the biographical information. This biographical information, moreover, would namely also shape the degree of confidence of prospective readers. Fourth, authors with different career patterns tend to develop variant writing styles; considering communicability and the desired consistency in presentation, we tended to favour abstracts without extreme styles. Finally, we also kept an eye on the geographical balance of presenters and topics, but eventually found we didn’t need to make any major adjustments as the shortlist was already geographically diverse.

Normative ends
The above discussion brought light to what had been preferred and excluded in an international venue like this conference, and certainly has the potential of triggering criticism at the normative level. I hold that these decisions are defendable given the purpose of this conference. An event at this scale has no obligation to take care of the diverse knowledge demands in the world, and any expansion to inclusiveness will only be possible with compromise in its analytical focus and prospect for dialogue. However, it is not my intention to ascribe a prestige to the type of scholarship we looked for.

On the contrary, the involvement in this process only deepened my conviction that there exist too many justifiable forms of knowledge that may not fit in an international venue like this conference. I can clearly see the value of many of the rejected papers to a local audience, and how they deserve a place in their own right. Their failure to be included reflects not their inferior quality, but the constraint of this conference. Hence I cannot agree with the tendency to prioritise anything ‘international’ over the ‘local’, as manifested in the ‘internationalisation’ or ‘globalisation’ discourses embraced in many Asian countries. Those myths only serve to marginalize these local demands, to narrow the scope of intellectual possibilities, and to force scholars to betray their local scholarly or public audiences.

This is where this short note meets the concern behind the conference theme. The reflection of the ‘framing’ of this international conference highlights the indispensability of the local platforms. Similarly, the discussion about how our intellectual enterprise is being framed by geopolitical and institutional factors is aimed to refresh the imagination of our profession, and to invite deliberation on how we as scholars should think and what we should do to bring our practices closer to our ideals. The conference and this note both started with questions that are empirical, but they both have a normative end.

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The IIAS Annual Lectures

Exchanging knowledge and forging links

Willem Vogelsang, IAS Institute Manager

The IIAS Annual Lectures is a series of public lectures that are organized each year by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). These lectures provide a platform for distinguished international experts to share their insights on various topics related to Asia and its history, culture, and society. The lectures are held in various locations, often within walking distance of the IIAS offices, and include lively discussions. In some cases, these discussions have become quite spirited, adding to the rich academic exchanges that take place during and after the lectures.

The annual lectures are intended to intrigue the audience by presenting known, or indeed unknown themes in innovative ways and from new perspectives. They are presented in order to push boundaries, both in the speakers and the audience. The speakers are invited because of their own expertise and field of work. In the past, IIAS has invited speakers from Asia and beyond, academics and non-academics. They include politicians (as for instance Chris Patthen, 2003), architects (Rem Koolhaas, 2005), artists (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, 1999), and others whose lectures contributed to a better understanding of Asia and the relationship between Asia and the rest of the world.

Space unfortunately does not permit a list of all the lectures since 1994, and some of the events were also far more than a lecture. One such event was particularly memorable - an evening programme in June 2010 that included a reading by the British historian William Dalrymple from his book, Nine Lives: In search of the sacred in modern India, accompanied by music and traditional dance (Paban Das Baul and Susheela Raman).

As can be imagined, the Annual Lectures ensure that at the end of the main presentation there are many questions and lively discussions. Sometimes these discussions became quite forceful as different points of view are highlighted, questioned, and examined in detail. But the willingness to exchange ideas and gain new insights into known and unknown situations remains an important factor in the role of the IIAS lectures.

The first Annual Lecture, in 1994, was entitled “De la vertu au detat des ars et de lae des ars etruriales asiatiques en particulier,” by Denis Lombard, former Director of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and of the Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient. Since then, some of the themes addressed include “Asia and the pre-modern world economy” (Professor Om Prakash, in 1995), “Europe and Asia: sustainable relations, sustainable growth” (Mr. L. J. Brinkhorst, Netherlands Minister for Economic Affairs, in 2005), “Our Quest in the Asia-Pacific: Origins, capability and threat” (Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, from St. Andrews, in 2003), and “Trauma, memory, amnesia” (Dong-Kieng Sen, Singapore, in 2008).

Sometimes the lecturer represents a university or institute with which IIAS is strengthening relations, and the speaker thus helps to forge closer links between IIAS, universities in the Netherlands, and the home organisation of the lecturer. For example, Professor Geir Helgesen gave a very well-attended Annual Lecture in September 2012. His topic was the relationship between North Korea and the West (“A user’s manual to North Korea: matters and issues that shape relations between them and us”). However, Professor Helgesen is also the director of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen, which over the years has become an important European partner of IIAS, and, together with IIAS, the driving force behind the European Alliance of Asian Studies.

In September 2013, the Annual Lecture was delivered by Professor Carol Gluck of Columbia University, New York. She talked about the global aspects of Japanese modern and pre-modern history (“Modernity in common: Japan and world history”), but she also represented the University that will be a close partner of IIAS in a new international IIAS programme (2014-2016) that is being sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation entitled “Rethinking Asian studies in a global context” (see page 16 of this issue).

And what is the future of the Annual IIAS Lectures? Various discussions are taking place to look at the nature of the lectures, how to relate them to the broader plans of IAS and how to present the lectures to the public. What is certain is that the range of lectures over the next few years will be as varied as the work of IIAS itself. We soon hope to announce the speaker for the 2014 Annual Lecture!

Jose Ramos Horta
As a founding member of FRETELIN – the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor – José Manuel Ramos-Horta spearheaded the East Timorese resistance during the years of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975 to 1999). After East Timor became independent, he served his country in several capacities: as its first foreign minister (2002-2006), then as Prime Minister (2006-2007), and finally as its second Prime Minister (2007-2012). He was a co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, and survived an assassination attempt in 2008. He is currently the UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau. In 2001, he visited IIAS to give that year’s Annual Lecture. He was then Minister of Foreign Affairs in the East Timorese Transitional Administration (UNTAET), under the auspices of the UN. His mind was greatly preoccupied with the subject, it was only natural that Horta would speak on ‘East Timor: from ashes to nationhood, and its place in the region.’ He spoke of both his country’s recent past under Indonesian occupation as well as his hopes for its future. He shared his thoughts about rebuilding a viable economy in East Timor, and how the international arena could contribute to the process of reconstruction.

Carol Gluck
This year’s Annual Lecture was provided by Professor Carol Gluck, George Sansom Professor of History and Professor of East Asian Language and Cultures at Columbia University. Professor Gluck writes on modern Japan, twentieth-century international history, World War II, history-wring and public memory in Asia and the West. Her most recent book is: Thinking with the Past: Modern Japan and History (University of California Press, 2013), and Post-Occasions: World War II in History and Memory is forthcoming from Columbia University Press. Professor Gluck’s lecture, “Modernity in common: Japan and world history,” was based on the dual assumption that just as one cannot tell the modern history of any society in isolation from the world, the history of the modern world can in fact be grasped from the vantage point of any place on the globe. In this instance, Japan, which has commonalities with other modern societies and, simultaneously, offers the opportunity to develop ideas about the ‘modern’ based on empirical evidence different from the European experiences that underlay earlier theories of modernity. She examined four questions frequently asked about modern Japanese history, in order to see how they appear when viewed in a global context – in the context of ‘modernity in common’

William Dalrymple
William Dalrymple is an acclaimed travel writer and historian of recent times. His travel books include In Xanadu: A Quest (1989), City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi (1993) and From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium (1997). White Mughal: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-century India (2000) marked Dalrymple’s shift from travel writing to revisionist history, and he continued in this vein in The Last Mughal: The Eclipse of a Dynasty. Delhi 1857. He came back to the travel book in 2009 – but gave it a totally different avatar, by mapping the spiritual traditions of India. Dalrymple’s IAS lecture in June 2010 on South Asia’s diverse sacred traditions, and how these manage to cling on in the new India, was based on that 2009 publication, Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India. It explores nine very personal stories – a Sufi, a possession dancer, a Buddhist monk, a Jain nun, a Tantric, a Baul minstrel, among others – each life representing a different religious path, while revealing the perhaps surprising persistence of faith and ritual in the face of India’s commercial boom. In Amsterdam, his lecture and book reading was accompanied by performances of two musical-spiritual traditions that he had written about in Nine Lives – Baul Sangit of Bengal, performed by Paban Das Baul and his partner; and Tamil thevaram hymns, sung by the celebrated Tamil born Tamil vocalist Susheela Raman. The lecture was also the official launch of the Dutch translation of his book by Uitgeverij Atlas.
International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)

IIAS Panels at ICAS 8

To celebrate the Institute's 20th anniversary, and proud to be associated with ICAS and to host its secretariat, IIAS sponsored and co-sponsored 16 panels and roundtables that reflect the vibrancy of IIAS' three thematic clusters: Asian Cities, Asian Heritages and Global Asia.

### Panels Organised in the Context of the Global Asia Cluster

#### Beyond the Ivory Tower: Re-defining the Relationship between Science and Society in Europe and Asia (Panels 29 and 56) Co-sponsored with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSessa) in Kyoto, Japan, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISeas) in Singapore.

Following an earlier BAS roundtable in 2011 on the theme of ‘Science and nature’, these two roundtables explored the question of the role of science and nature in contemporary discussions on global issues such as climate change and new technologies, food security and environmental conservation. They discussed the role of science and technology in shaping disease prevention and promotion, food systems, and energy access and use. This panel also addressed the question of how science and technology are used and perceived in different contexts.

#### Cooperation in Energy Policy and Sustainability: China and the European Union (Panel 74)

This panel focused on energy policy and sustainability, with a special emphasis on China and the European Union. It discussed the challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable energy policies and practices in both regions. The panel explored the role of scientific knowledge in shaping energy policies, the role of public participation, and the importance of international cooperation in addressing global energy challenges.

### Panels Organised in the Context of the Asian Heritages Cluster

#### Defining Asian Studies in Africa (Panel 150) and Moving Forward - The Future of Asian Studies in Africa (Panel 172)

These two related roundtables focused on the recently established pan-African ‘Association of Asian Studies in Africa (AASA)’. They discussed the role of Asian studies in Africa, and the future of Asian studies in Africa. The panel explored the challenges and opportunities in promoting Asian studies in Africa, and the importance of establishing a pan-African network to support and strengthen Asian studies across the continent.

#### Embodiment and Masculinities (Panel 177) and Leisure across Asia (Panels 190, 217 and 244)

These three panels focused on the embodied practices of masculinity and the way they are given expression by means of the physical male body in everyday spaces of work, leisure, consumption and popular culture across Asia. They explored the role of masculinity in shaping cultural practices and the way they are embodied in everyday spaces.

#### Architecture and Image in Asia (Panel 209) Co-sponsored with the Delft School of Design at Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands

This panel brought together leading scholars in the field to discuss the theme of architectural heritage in Asia within the context of various urban developments. The panel addressed the role of architectural heritage in shaping urban spaces, the challenges and opportunities in preserving and promoting architectural heritage, and the role of public participation in shaping urban development.

### Panels Organised in the Context of the Asian Cities Cluster

#### The Effects of UNESCO Politics on Local Notions of Heritage (Panels 26 and 53)

This double roundtable aimed to explore how UNESCO’s policies and conventions have impacted local notions of heritage and cultural landscapes around the world. The panel discussed the challenges and opportunities in developing inclusive and participatory heritage policies that reflect local needs and priorities.

#### Architecture and the City (Panel 236)

This panel focused on the role of architecture in shaping urban spaces and the way they are experienced by citizens. It explored the role of architecture in promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development, and the importance of public participation in shaping urban spaces.
THE REIGN OF ASIA has become a defining feature of the 21st century. The impact of Asia can be felt in two respects: materially and ideologically. From the outset, the growing economic affluence and political influence of Asia has been changing the historical landscape of our age. This is most obviously visible in the new political dispensation that has taken over the Asia Pacific nations, the development of a multi-polar international order, and the increasing pressure on global environment and resources. Equally far-reaching is the theoretical significance of Asia. The Asia Pacific region, and in particular many of its countries, has come to recognize that the region has something to offer the world in terms of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and identity, and social and political organization. This is important because, so far, the conceptually layered and analytical tools used in the social sciences and humanities have been developed almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their foundations are becoming increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia with its long indigenous traditions of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementation. And especially in Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, the point has come to recognize that the region has something to offer in the development of social knowledge. In this regard, ICAS plays an instrumental role.

Theoretical significance of Asia

In brief, ICAS manifests more than addressing its growing economic and political influence. It also requires us to reconsider the theoretical significance of Asia. The rapid transformation that has taken place in many Asian countries during the last few decades represents not only a radical social transformation, but also a living laboratory for social scientists of nearly all persuasions. The emergence of China and India, amongst many other countries, during the last few decades represents not only a radical social transformation, but also a living laboratory for social scientists of nearly all persuasions. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their foundations are becoming increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia with its long indigenous traditions of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementation. And especially in Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, the point has come to recognize that the region has something to offer in the development of social knowledge. In this regard, ICAS plays an instrumental role.

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) constitutes a major forum for such an epistemological adventure. This year, the eighth convention (iCAs 8) was held in Macao in June 2013. Unlike other conferences of scholars where the majority of participants come from the United States and Europe, ICAS is almost exclusively an Asian event, with most of the cross-continental representation and with the majority of participants coming from Asian countries. New ideas and research findings are exchanged not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. This is important because, so far, the conceptually layered and analytical tools used in the social sciences and humanities have been developed almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their foundations are becoming increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia with its long indigenous traditions of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementation. And especially in Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, the point has come to recognize that the region has something to offer in the development of social knowledge. In this regard, ICAS plays an instrumental role.

ICAS as an intellectual forum

ICAS 8 was held in Macao in June 2013. A total of more than 1200 participants from 56 countries and 600 higher institutes of learning took part in the event. The importance of the conference for Macao is many-fold. First, it has brought fresh knowledge and perspectives to Macao, through the exchange with researchers in such areas as urban development, migration, and cultural heritage. Second, it underlined the emergence of Macao as a unique blend of cultural diversity, modernity, and cosmopolitanism, which is a result of its position as a bridge between the Chinese and Portuguese traditions has left Macao with a unique blend of cultural diversity, modernity, and cosmopolitanism. It is a unique platform with the most diversified cross-continental representation and with the majority of participants coming from Asian countries. New ideas and research findings are exchanged not only among researchers who study Asia, but also among scholars who live in Asia. This is important because, so far, the conceptually layered and analytical tools used in the social sciences and humanities have been developed almost exclusively from the West. Although these theories and methods have been applied throughout the world with considerable success, their foundations are becoming increasingly apparent, especially in a place like Asia with its long indigenous traditions of organizing social relations, its own norms about power and order, and its legacies of implementation. And especially in Asian countries emerge to become prominent players in the world, the point has come to recognize that the region has something to offer in the development of social knowledge. In this regard, ICAS plays an instrumental role.

Building new knowledge

Such idealistic kindling will be no more provisioning than the emergence of an economically powerful Asia. After all, the global order is not only shaped by the rise and decline of material powers, but also by the way we perceive and theorize our political and economic existence. This will be a key challenge for the next generation of scholars in the new epoch. While scholars working in many areas have been searching for a new way forward, it is anything but straightforward. One of the major problems is the limitation set by our own analytical language. We need to be able to communicate and exchange our ideas. At the moment we use English as our common analytical language. The problem is that even the most basic terms such as ‘society’, ‘rights’, ‘citizen’, ‘leadership’, and ‘civil society’ have been debated, or even defined differently, in different parts of the world. This means that we need to develop a more inclusive, and at the same time, more meaningful analytical language.

ICAS 9 in Adelaide

ICAS 9 will be held in Adelaide (5-9 July 2015). It will be hosted by the University of South Australia in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Media Centre. The University of South Australia, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Media Centre, is hosting the conference in Adelaide. The University of South Australia, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Media Centre, is hosting the conference in Adelaide. The conference will feature a variety of keynote addresses, panel discussions, and workshops on a wide range of topics, including cultural diversity, political economy, and social and environmental sustainability.

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IIAS Outreach

IIAS’ outreach activities
Heleen van der Minne

In our contemporary society, science and arts occupy a relatively separated position. Whether it is just or not, IIAS finds it important to bring these worlds together. IIAS has been organizing outreach activities for a number of years now, whereby ‘outreach’ should be understood as crossing the borders of ‘pure’ scientific events; reaching out to a diversity of other cultural domains, such as film, literature, dance and other forms of art. In so doing, IIAS is also reaching out to a wider audience, not only to Asia scientists, but also to other various interests in Asia. Scientists and non-scientists meet, become acquainted with each other’s worlds, and broaden their Asian horizons and understanding. Reaching out to other cultural domains is part of IIAS’ policy to transcend disciplinary borders. IIAS has the firm conviction that science and arts, both creative processes, are overlapping domains, which can and do inspire and lead to fresh approaches in all disciplines.

Outreach collaborations

Over the years IIAS has been cooperating with outstanding art institutions and organizations such as the Eye Film Institute (the former Film Museum), the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the VVAK (Society of Friends of Asian Arts) and the Prince Claus Fund; together we have put together lectures, conferences, publications in the IIAS Newsletter, and other events.

In 2013 IIAS specifically focussed on visual arts, in cooperation with the leading museums in the Netherlands: the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, the Pinakothek in Delft, the Groninger Museum and the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. Our collaboration with the Museum Het Prinsenhof, the Delftsware museum, concerned the exhibition ‘Delft: Jingdezhen: The Blue Revolution, 400 Year Exchange’. IIAS supported the exhibition with a lecture held by Christine van der Pijl-Ketel, ‘Shipments and Sherds’. She described the varieties of Chinese porcelain for the Dutch market and transported by the 17th century VOC. IIAS editor Sandra Dehure wrote an article for the Newsletter about this renewed joint project between Delft and the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, in which contemporary Chinese and Dutch ceramists exchange their expertise on modern ceramics, inspired by the Chinese blue and white porcelain of 400 years ago (issue #64, page 5).

In April 2013 the world famous Rijksmuseum reopened its doors to the public after an extensive multi-year renovation. Its Asian art collection was accommodated in a brand new building, the Asia Pavilion. On this occasion the Newsletter published an article, in which the Asia curators Menno Fitski, Anna Słączka and William Southworth wrote about the collection’s wonderful artefacts hailing from various regions of Asia (issue #64, page 56).

Professor Titus M. Eliëns, Head of Collections at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague wrote the Newsletter article ‘DelftWare WonderWare’, about the museum’s magnificent blue and white Delftware collection, and the history of the Netherlands’ most iconic national product, which was initially intended as an imitation of Chinese export porcelain. (issue #63, page 48)

IIAS doesn’t focus on only ancient and antique arts; the institute finds it equally important to shed light on modern and avant-garde arts as well. Recently, IIAS organised a lecture, held by professor Jeroen de Kloet, about the limits of critique in Chinese art, within the framework of an exhibition of young Chinese artists, composed by the famous artist and activist Ai Weiwei, at the Groninger Museum.

In the exhibition ‘One meter of democracy’ (2010), artist He Yunchang invited his friends over to vote for, or against, cutting a one-meter long and 0.5 cm deep wound in his body. Twelve of his friends voted for, ten against, with three abstention. Following this democratic process the artist decided to proceed with his plan, and had a long cut made in his body. The documentation of this performance work is on display in the Groninger Museum, as part of ‘Fuck Off 2’, a show curated by Ai Weiwei, Feng Boyi and Mark Wilson. The images display the body with a thin bleeding line running from the shoulder to below the knee. The close up, in which the depth of the cut is visible, is particularly disturbing. One cannot help but wonder if this self mutilation is necessary in order to contemplate the violence of democracy? And what does this work signify in a country that lacks democracy? In pointing to the violence that democracy may allow for, or even produce, could it be read as a statement in support of the government? Clearly not for the artist, who writes, “it’s a luxury to talk about democracy and art in this country, because we lack a fair and reasonable environment.” (catalogue, p.65) The performance is disturbing and abject, and it is tempting to theorise it with the work of Kristeva or Bataille. But somehow, it fails to convince me. Not because of any belatedness, as other artists in and outside China have done similar work (much) earlier – I never quite understand the tyranny of the new and groundbreaking, be it in art or academia. It fails to convince me because its violence disturbs me without inspiring further reflection, doubt or questions.

The title of the show smacks of an equal lack of ambivalence: within the comfort zone of a provincial city in the Netherlands, an artistic protest against the Chinese authorities is unleashed. In the catalogue, it is particularly the text of Feng Boyi that frames the show in a binary opposition between allegedly political, liberalizing art and an authoritarian government. In his view, the works “uncover the cruelty of the Chinese social crisis: this cruelty is precisely that we live in an environment in which our basic rights are trampled and morality is lost.” (catalogue, p.21) Art is celebrated as an aesthetics resisting the vulgar, he claims, “Chinese official, mainstream, base pop culture dominates everything. In China we hear nothing more than vulgar noise…” (p.22). Not only do artists carry, in this narrative, the geopolitical burden of representing Chineseness, they are also warriors against the alleged sterilizing powers of popular culture. In effect, Feng, operating in the field of “high art”, is reiterating and reproducing a beguiling if not unfruitful opposition between high and low culture.

Back to the works! They resist such generalisations, and while space does not allow me to engage with many, let me pick out a few. The work of Chen Yufan and Chen Yujun takes urbanization, and with it the construction of bizarre buildings that pop up in first- and second-tier cities, as its source of inspiration. For example, the Fangyuan Mansion in Shenyang, a gigantic Chinese coin with the square hole in the middle. The artists rebuild these grotesque architectures, now with carton, and as such comment on unbridled processes of urbanization. Xia Xing takes photographs as the starting point, and devotes one year to one specific news story, comprising up to 60 oil paintings. We see the Bo Xilai scandal that made world news in 2012, now as a series of oil paintings, all of them copies of news pictures. As such, they instigate reflection upon the mediation of scandal. In turning a spectacle into an artwork, what does this tell us about art? What about the role of media and their intricate ways of constructing a scandalous reality? Finally, the pictures of Ren Hang depict young people, sometimes in rather complicated sexual poses, often injected with a large dose of homoeroticism, and above all, detached and alienated from their environments. As such, his works speak of a general sense of estrangement of the generation that was born in the 1980s – the first generation to witness only progress and very little political turmoil – in a world that seems filled with opportunities.

These are just some glimpses on contemporary art that happens to come from China (which does not make them primarily reflect upon life in China). When thinking through the possibility of critique for art, be it in China or elsewhere, it would be better to remember Foucault: “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” The second, less often quoted part of the sentence strikes me as urgent: we need to think critique within the parameters set by the system, and only from there can it search for its lines of flight, can it try to provoke a different distribution of the sensible. To think critique as inherently oppositional to and exterior of a political system ignores the multiple ways in which any system penetrates deeply into every aspect of our lives, just as it ignores its global entanglements. When thinking this way, Chinese contemporary art also speaks to our struggles, our anxieties and our doubts.

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Chinese art and the problem of critique
Jeroen de Kloet

In the work ‘one meter of democracy’ (2010), artist He Yunchang invited his friends over to vote for, or against, cutting a one-meter long and 0.5 cm deep wound in his body. Twelve of his friends voted for, ten against, with three abstention. Following this democratic process the artist decided to proceed with his plan, and had a long cut made in his body. The documentation of this performance work is on display in the Groninger Museum, as part of ‘Fuck Off 2’, a show curated by Ai Weiwei, Feng Boyi and Mark Wilson. The images display the body with a thin bleeding line running from the shoulder to below the knee. The close in, in which the depth of the cut is visible, is particularly disturbing. One cannot help but wonder if this self mutilation is necessary in order to contemplate the violence of democracy? And what does this work signify in a country that lacks democracy? In pointing to the violence that democracy may allow for, or even produce, could it be read as a statement in support of the government? Clearly not for the artist, who writes, "it’s a luxury to talk about democracy and art in this country, because we lack a fair and reasonable environment." (catalogue, p.65) The performance is disturbing and abject, and it is tempting to theorise it with the work of Kristeva or Bataille. But somehow, it fails to convince me. Not because of any belatedness, as other artists in and outside China have done similar work (much) earlier – I never quite understand the tyranny of the new and groundbreaking, be it in art or academia. It fails to convince me because its violence disturbs me without inspiring further reflection, doubt or questions.

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Collaborative research in Southeast Asia: towards a sustainable humanosphere

Over the past decade, Southeast Asia as a region has undergone economic integration, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) serving as the hub of region-making at an institutional level. This integration has been accompanied by a reorganization of the region’s economy, spurring stronger demands for energy, food and water as well as significant socio-political change. This rapidly changing milieu poses challenges for researchers to keep track of the region at the country level while keeping a larger perspective in focus. As integration proceeds, rising demands and competition for resources have led researchers to investigate trans-boundary issues such as security, environmental degradation/transformation and socio-political change. The complexity of issues have stimulated collaborative research agendas to develop not just micro- and macro-level analyses of changes taking place in the region, but also questions relating to policy formation and recommendations for various stakeholders.

Such issues have compelled the forging of multidisciplinary alliances to produce ‘engaged’ approaches attuned to the fast-changing dynamics of Southeast Asia. These approaches have been in terms of the dynamic interplay between the environment, technologies, institutions and societies; the examination of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural domains; and the need to incorporate the tropics as a fundamental analytical point of departure to understand the development of human societies in the region. This special Focus of The Newsletter looks at how collaborative research in Southeast Asia is addressing the complex challenges of creating new common research languages in tune with the exigencies of the times.

Mario Lopez
Integrating research approaches

For even forty years, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CESAS) has forged a dedicated integrated approach toward area studies in Southeast Asia and fostered multidisciplinary approaches. The Center has come to realize the need for rigorous and in-depth challenges. It goes without saying that not only the social and natural sciences developed in the early 20th century, but also in the current era, the critically necessary awareness of geographical thinking led to the specialization of disciplines, sub-disciplines and the hardening of boundaries. Yet Southeast Asia, a region known for its immense diversity, has always presented challenges to researcher questions that have inevitably compelled collaboration between and across disciplines. Whether the focus of analysis is social risk, environmental degradation, or political processes, we are trained within. However, broadening approaches from within the confines of academic disciplines and human sciences, broadening approaches towards interrelated issues should not be just an academic exercise to destabilize the disciplines we are familiar with. The methodologies we hope to see change is transformational power when taken from the disciplines that created them and employed in new contexts with practical application.

One example of this is a collaborative attempt to map the trans-regional spread of food-poisoning bacterial enteric pathogens (found in mollusks) that arise through cultural food practices in Southeast Asian nations by a team of microbiologists, food experts and industries based within the region. Collaborative toolboxes from various disciplines can come together to tackle complex trans-boundary issues to improve regional safety practices.

Researchers at CESAS have sought to foster multidisciplinary dialogues through a series of large-scale projects which push frontier technology related disciplines in addition to fostering specializations. In 2007, with special funding from the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT), a large-scale project entitled "In Search of Sustainable Humanosphere in Asia and Africa" (2007-2011) was initiated. The program adopted a holistic approach to a range of issues, with participating researchers called a "sustainable humanosphere." This term refers to both the temporal and spatial dimensions that incorporate the entirety of material and energy circulation of the geosphere and systems of governance toward its sustainability. The humanosphere is constituted by the geosphere, biosphere and human society. The geosphere constitutes the geographical foundation of the earth’s climate: the atmosphere, the oceans, and the biosphere. The geosphere involves every form of life on earth, incorporating their reproductive, transformative as well as ongoing evolutionary processes that have evolved and arisen through their interactions with both, leading to specific forms of co-existence. Our human societies as such, can be seen as technical systems where energy, materials and information, flow and circulate among these three domains.

In sum, the humanosphere is the ecological and social environment in which local people live and it forms an important theoretical background for multidisciplinary investigations across the disciplines into Southeast Asia, East Asia and African Countries. Through such investigations as those under the project of MEXT, we aim to think about the human-environmental development within a broader global context of the humanosphere.

Developing interdisciplinary studies through collaborative dialogue

For example, collaborations that took place between researchers from different disciplines on the program resulted in a number of outcomes and new research directions. In terms of deepening the understanding of the specificities of Southeast Asia’s abundant and fertile environment, it became clear that the region’s biomes play a pivotal role in any understanding of relations between human societies and environmental management. Historically, biomass societies in tropical Southeast Asia – those with traditionally widespread small-scale subsistence agriculture and agro-forestry systems – became the sites that exhibited resilience, developed sustainable practices and created a web of traditional ecological knowledge. Over the last 50 years, these have been reorganized by national states and their development priorities and policies, the imperatives of economic growth, and integration into the global capitalist production system. The 1990s Southeast Asian green revolution to increase rice yields was just a precursor to the rise of large-scale plantations and re-structuring of industrial production of rice among the region. However, little has been written about the complex, multifaceted and intricate relationships of effects of human societies on local environments, but rather our agency has unleashed unmanaged changes that we might not be able to turn. Yet we hope that there will be serious solutions to re-integrate areas that have fallen under the imperatives of economic development.

Mizuno Kosuke (this issue) and his research team make clear in their project in Biau, Indonesia, that scientific research can also have needs of a different kind of development that is not purely an environmentally oriented one. They are presently conducting an investigation within the framework of the natural sciences (measuring biomass, assessing levels of bio-diversity and the impacts of industry and agro-industry). The other facet of this research, within a social sciences framework, examines what people think and how people respond to its challenges, its aim is to access the interactions between various stakeholders such as individuals, companies, local government and the state. Combining the research results from this collaborative investigation allows us a better picture in which we can potentially reconstruct our humanosphere through incorporating messages from tropical forests.

Ishikawa Noboru (this issue) also highlights the potential that can exist in collaborative research. His project in Sarawak, Malaysia also shows the pressing need for a multidisciplinary approach toward an analysis of ecologically transforming landscapes such as those found in insular Southeast Asia. Monoculture cropping and the conversion of tropical forests to agricultural land can have irreversible effects when thresholds are crossed leading to reconfigurations that require observations across the disciplinary spectrum. Both the above projects show how synergies between disciplines can create a more holistic approach that brings out a richer picture of what is taking place in parts of Southeast Asia and how it is connected to a broader global economy.

Human interventions and the subsequent replacement of ecosystems are not just superficial, but very much affect life below ground. Biomass – living organisms, and matter – is crucial for the maintenance of the soil and the regulation of water flows. Good soil conditions are invaluable for insects, bacteria, and fungi which provide invaluable ecosystem services. Our relations to our environments are deeply connected to species with whom we share geographical space. Human societies have, for example, a thousand relations with termites (khopo) and ants (kombong) which form an important part of terrestrial animal biomass in Southeast Asia. Mizuno Kosuke (this issue) and his research team works on ant communities and their relationship to agricultural production in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the need to review the ingressed ‘comumonicunal’ view of termites as pests that degrade productivity and infect human habitats. What becomes clear is that policy toward our agro-landscapes needs to factor in changing perceptions of other species roles in a shared ecological space.

Readers might wonder if the humanities have been sidelined by the synergy that has arisen between the social and natural sciences. Any analytics of environments transformed by the pervasive influence of human societies would be lacking without historical scrutiny of the technological and administrate apparatuses that have arisen with the rise of modern nation states in the region. A theme that underpins all of the articles in this Focus is the crucial need to include historical and cultural analysis. Loh Kah Seng (this issue) offers us this necessary perspective in his discussion of flooding – a perennial issue across the region – and how the Singaporean state’s management of floods has roots in a broader colonial and (transnational) historical context.

Formulating new indices to meet the dynamics of regions

Putting aside the criticisms that exist over how accurate indices are at gauging the state of the world, there has still been no concerted attempt to quantify and place human activities within the context of global atmo/hydrological circulation and assess sustainability of the geosphere, biosphere and the human realm as an integrated whole. Parts of tropical Southeast Asia are home to some of earth’s most diverse and fragile ecosystems. The region possesses immense biomass resources sustained by an abundance of solar power. But can we gauge the sustainability of ecosystems which are found in equatorial Africa and the Amazonas – through current indices, which are heavily oriented toward measuring economic growth, sustainability and human development? Sato Takahiro and his team (this issue) who research in tropical agricultural ecology, present an alternative way to assess the interactions between environmental sustainability and the welfare of human societies. Through a comparison of the carrying capacity of temperate and tropical zones, they provide some clues as to which areas are most suited to support future human societies in, what is now, a world restructured by our human-centered needs. Incorporating multiple species, entire ecosytems and solar power into analyses can create meta-level discussions to inform policy makers and prepare future societies for the challenges ahead.

Nurturing a shared common future

To deliver on our promises to offer solutions that can flexibly deal with regional and global needs – be they geared toward the small needs of a farmer or large-scale development frameworks that can pursue these – a clear commitment needs to arise from a spirit of collaboration between the disciplines. This requires more than institutional mandates that foster regional ‘savior’ of research teams. It ultimately requires a restructuring of the intellectual processes that direct our agendas to prioritize concrete solutions. These can help establish the sustainable use of the environment and its energy sources, foster biomass societies, and push for future energy efficient modes of production in tune with current forms of social development. By attempting to collaborate across and through disciplines in a committed fashion, we widen the range of analytical resolution and incorporate more global players who can join in. This can only be achieved by stepping outside of established frameworks and reformulating our disciplines. To do so will allow us to foster new ideas and researchers who can be prepared for the challenges ahead.

Mario Lopez, Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CESAS), Kyoto University (mariolopez@cesas.kyoto-u.ac.jp)

Notes

1 This was the main subject of two consecutive collaborative research projects dealing with food-borne enteric pathogens spanning international research (supported by SAKAKI or Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research S no. 19109010, FY 2007-2011) and A (no. 2429038, FY 2012-2014) from SPMI (Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, and Technology, Japan).

2 The program mobilized specialists from within Kyoto University, CESAS, the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies (ASAS), the Center for Integrated Studies (CIAS), and the Center for African Area Studies (CAAS). Other institutions that have produced strong results from within the natural and social sciences. Any analysis of environments transformed by the synergies of economic development and its energy sources, foster biomass societies, and push for future energy efficient modes of production in tune with current forms of social development. By attempting to collaborate across and through disciplines in a committed fashion, we widen the range of analytical resolution and incorporate more global players who can join in. This can only be achieved by stepping outside of established frameworks and reformulating our disciplines. To do so will allow us to foster new ideas and researchers who can be prepared for the challenges ahead.

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Canals and concrete: floods and the Singapore state

Singapore is at a crossroads. Since the 1990s, the city-state has not only ambitiously tried to transform itself into a global city, but more recently, has declared its excellence in balancing economic, social and environmental priorities. In 2011, Singapore was ranked the 4th most livable city in Asia (51st overall) in the Global Livability index. Five years earlier, its government had adopted the ABC (‘Active, Beautiful and Clean’) Waters program, where rain gardens and rooftop gardens would not only store water for use, but also ‘beautify urban spaces, create new community focal points and enhance biodiversity.’1

Loh Kah Seng

ON THE OTHER HAND, the little island of 700 plus square kilometers in Southeast Asia is facing a backlash for its state-led planning. Supposedly forward-looking leaders had not foreseen the repercussions of a liberal immigration policy meant to propel Singapore into the first tier of the world’s cities. Racial consciousness has heightened as locals blame the newcomers for raising the cost of living (housing prices in particular) while, as the Nature Society (Singapore) warned in 2009, urban development is accelerating habitat loss.2

In the general elections of 2011, the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) saw its share of the popular vote dip to its lowest since 1963. Mass rallies against the immigration policy have become somewhat acceptable in a previously quiescent country.

The 1954 floods and the nadir of colonialism

Floods have affected Singapore in the last 60 years and are a microcosm of its local humanosphere, showing how the state manages economic, social and environmental imperatives. A historical perspective is useful, not least because the PAP has been in power since 1959. It highlights the government’s aims and methods in dealing with the floods, and their consequences, and throws light on the nature of state-society relations in the present day.

Floods are not merely about the weather, technology or administration but relate to historical contexts. Singapore is a flood-prone area, subject to tropical storms (particularly during the northeast monsoon between December and March), low lying and lacks adequate natural drainage. But more important than the natural conditions has been the vicious circle of development and flooding. As in other big cities in Southeast Asia, floods occurred when the volume of stormwater exceeded drainage capacity, which had been much reduced by intensive housing, infrastructural, commercial, and industrial development. After WWII, first the British colonial government and then the PAP government more robustly began to transform a rich but unplanned entrèpot into an organized city-state with standardized housing and industrial estates to accommodate a growing population. Despite the attention to planning for orderly urban growth, drainage capacity could not keep up with development.

Reinforcing the socio-economic changes was the political context. In December 1954, a series of floods caused by heavy rains inundated low-lying rural areas, killing five persons. The floods became politicized, as both the British and their critics wanted to be seen to be doing something about the floods and flood victims. The British response was technical: to plan a drainage system and straighten the flood-prone Bedok River. But this was also about orderly decolonization; it was an important departure from the pre-war laissez faire policy, indicating a change in the colonial subjects’ role as local people were preparing for self-government. Conversely, the PAP, then an anti-colonial party, and the Singapore Farmers’ Association, an affiliated leftwing group, sought to win support against colonialism. They challenged the British for failing to maintain drains in rural areas and for moving squatters to an inadequately drained resettlement area in Bedok.3

Planning flood control for development

British efforts, however, became an accepted precedent for the PAP once the party assumed the reins of power. The PAP adopted prevailing Western ideas of master planning and zoned development to propel the young nation’s industrial growth, focusing on physical planning and effective implementing by the bureaucracy. The goals of flood control were partly economic – to maximize landuse for development – but they were also social. In a Western-centric engineering approach to urban governance, the government sought to persuade people to leave their homes during a flood (rather than stay indoors to protect belongings), to move from flood-prone squatter areas to purportedly flood-free public housing estates, and to exhort people not to discard garbage into canals and rivers.

Concrete was a much loved material as the Drainage Department constructed drains and diversion canals, improved existing drains, erected tidal gates, and dug water retention ponds. In the mid-1960s, the department built two secondary concrete-lined canals to divert stormwater from the heavily developed, but poorly drained, Bukit Timah area. Concrete was not only held to be more effective for drainage than natural canals, but also visually reassuring as a symbol of organized modernity; in 1967, the Public Works Department praised a new outfall drain as having “transformed a muddy and ill-defined creek into a pleasant, easily maintained, well-defined canal.”4

Still, planned flood control for development did not mean the end of environmental hazards. Serious floods inundated the city in 1969 – the worst in 35 years – affecting 10,000 people in both public housing areas and less organized urban kampungs. A government spokesperson explained that it was difficult to devote much resources to deal with an event that happened only once in 35 years, but this unwittingly provided an insight into why the floods had occurred.5 The statement also revealed the government’s understanding of the floods as a climate- and thus policy – problem, rather than as processes embedded in the socio-economic policies it was pushing.

A decade later, in December 1978, huge floods again submerged much of Singapore, and seven people perished. This time, the crisis precipitated a mammoth state effort to build new, bigger canals and upgrading existing ones in public housing estates and the few remaining squatter settlements. A canal running through the important commercial district of Orchard Road was widened and deepened; care was taken not to disrupt the shopping activities. This concern contrasted with plenty of disruption elsewhere to people’s lives between the 1960s and 1980s, as squatters were resettled into public housing in order to make way for planned canal and road projects. In Bukit Timah, the Public Works Department happily announced in 1968 that it had the requisite big machinery to bulldoze unauthorized housing and meet its deadlines for drainage works.6

A generation later in 2010 and 2011, shoppers in Orchard Road found to their horror invasive storm waters in the streets, boutique shops and car parks. Again, the government instituted technical measures to raise the level of the area, install flood barriers and improve drainage. By this time, however, top-down responses were not so readily accepted. A state-commissioned panel of international experts urged the government to ‘educate and involve the general public proactively’ in its anti-flood measures.7 Singaporeans, especially in the social media, began to murmur about how the lauded dam at Marina Bay in 2008, built by the state to protect low-lying coastal areas, had in effect led to flooding inland.8 The panel of experts had to explicitly expunge this rumor; in truth, the floods had to do more with climate change (leading to more intense storms) and recent population and urban growth, as in previous decades. Yet, there was clearly something amiss in the government’s model of balancing drainage works and development.

Humansphere

The humanosphere concept in Singapore illustrates the state’s belief that modern science and engineering can transform both human nature and hazardous nature.9 The emphasis had been on technical expertise, physical measures and effective implementation, in short, canals and concrete. Singaporeans figured in this policy sphere only as passive citizens to be helped or ignorant people to be buried or evacuated. However, planning flood control ahead of national development has not always accounted for the increased risks of flooding in the future. This was able to show how the state had not predicted the adverse effects of the immigration policy on the costs of living, on locals’ unhappiness with policy, or in connection with climatic and environmental change.

The humanosphere concept is an alternative to the Western-centric modernization theory of the immediate postwar period. The idea of the humanosphere rejects the Western notion of linear, universally applicable economic growth based on technical expertise and technology. Instead it posits an appreciation of local knowledge, adaptation and contexts as resources, rather than viewing Southeast Asia as an underdeveloped region. It may be unnecessary to forge binaries between the local and universal, or Western and Southeast Asian. But, a historical study suggests that Singapore’s planners need to recognize the limits of engineer- ing solutions to environmental problems that have political dimensions. The difficulty of resolving the perennial haze issue in concert with the Indonesian government is testament to this. The other lesson is the need to move away from an authoritarian planning model and enable the citizenry to play a bigger role in dealing with the city-state’s environmental and socio-economic problems.

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Notes

5 Straits Times, 28 December 2009.
Sustainable humanosphere in global history

How do we place the recent experiences of Southeast Asia into a global context, when considering relationships between industrialization and environmental sustainability over the long run? In this brief essay, I frame this question within the context of a large-scale Global COE program ‘In search of Sustainable Humanosphere’, which was initiated by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University (2007-12). In this research program we use the term ‘humanosphere’ to refer to the environment in which humans live, and we consider the conditions under which a humanosphere has been sustainable. We define the humanosphere as an integrated whole made up of the geosphere, biosphere and human society (chart opposite). Our interests concern the effects of human interventions on the basic sustainability of the earth, and the extent to which industrialization has been responsible for changes.¹

Kaoru Sugihara

The evolution of humanosphere

The key assumption here is that the humanosphere is governed by a logic that underpins the three different spheres. The geosphere emerged first, followed by the appearance of the biosphere, and finally human society. This sequence is important in the sense that human society has been dependent on the existence of the preceding spheres. We took the assumption that the logics that drive each sphere are different and largely independent from each other.

Firstly, the earth, especially the tropics, receives heat in the form of energy from the sun, and circulates it to the rest of the earth through atmospheric and hydrologic circulation. This basic logic of the geosphere, which drives the distribution of heat energy, remains unaltered by human intervention.

The effects of climate change (the rise of temperature, sea levels, etc.) are perhaps the most obvious man-made disturbances, but their impact has been primarily felt on the biosphere and human society, rather than on the logic of the geosphere itself.

Secondly, the logic of biosphere, centered around the existence of life and its reproduction, has also been at work for a very long period of time, and is an essential ingredient for the sustainability of the humanosphere. Demonstrating the distribution of solar energy, a large amount of biomass is stored in tropical rainforests, which house a rich variety of species. This biodiversity has been increasingly threatened by globalization, but remains the basis of global food chains on which humans depend for their subsistence. It is well known that Southeast Asia is a particularly important testing ground for this aspect of global sustainability.

Finally, the logic of human society, especially the idea that members of society should respect their right to live and core about and for each other, has been behind the survival and expansion of human society, in spite of disruption from violence, war and other conflicts, as well as discrimination by race, gender and class. It is expressed in humans’ ability to hold and expand a large population under local resource constraints and the constant threat of infectious diseases.

Components of humanosphere

Historically the humanosphere has served three specific needs. Firstly, the survival of individuals is a fundamental function of the humanosphere. In hunter-gatherer societies the basic survival strategy was to secure food, water and energy (typically biomass), and for people to protect themselves from natural disasters, infectious diseases and other threats (from animals and other human communities).

The space that provided such a condition consisted of the humanosphere, and the idea of creating a segregated settlement and a site of production separated from the natural environment (typically arable land), which came later, did not eliminate the significance of individuals’ survival against natural and other human threats.

Secondly, humans formed institutions, typically around the household or the family to help the survival of others, which enabled them to give birth and rear children more easily. This was the basis for reproduction and expansion of human society, although the latter was not always intentional. Securing food and caring for the members of families (from children, to the old and the sick; from physical, to mental and social needs) required a systematic and social thinking about how to meet human needs within different stages of the life-cycle. Thus the sharing of social values among communities, such as respecting the presence and dignity of others and caring for them, became important requirements of a sustainable humanosphere.

Thirdly, a separate area of the humanosphere developed where humans secured ‘subsistence’: food, clothing and habitats. The agricultural revolution, based on the earlier successful domestication of crops and animals, is said to have marked a transition into an era of densely settled human communities. In a settled society both production and consumption became more sophisticated, and birth fertility and mortality probably increased as a result of more frequent pregnancies and the emergence of a disease pool within human settlements. Meanwhile, the division of labor within local society developed through the growth of exchange. Power became concentrated in the city, and became increasingly central to the state. The ‘economic’ and ‘political’ spheres became spatially larger and more visible. Subsistence, however, consists of only a part of the humanosphere; a sustainable humanosphere is a condition that meets all described components of the logics driving the three separate spheres.

The fossil-fuel-based world economy

Society is ‘humanosphere-driven’ when the path of economic and political development is consistent with the logic of nature, especially with the logic of the geosphere (energy and material circulation, movement of water and air, etc.) and the logic of the biosphere (the conservation of the eco-system with appropriate food chains and biodiversity).

Until 1800, population growth did not cause major problems for environmental sustainability, if we define it in terms of whether nature was basically governed by the forces of the geosphere (smooth energy and material flows are maintained in accordance with the circulation mechanisms of the earth) and the biosphere (eco-systems and food chains function by incorporating human interventions rather than vice versa). Humans depended on their labor to produce food (on arable land) and energy was derived from biomass (mainly forest-derived), as well as from other humans, animals, water and wind. Burning biomass was the basic technology for heating and lighting, as well as for clearing the land.

However, a massive increase of the use of fossil fuels (especially coal and oil) since the industrial revolution fundamentally altered the relative importance of the geosphere and biosphere, as the balance between geosphere-derived and biosphere-derived energy sources dramatically changed.

Capital-intensive industrialization, the use of steam engines and the development of railways and steamships, increased the ability of human society to exploit natural resources and transport them to the centers of industrial production and mass consumption. The emergence of the fossil-fuel-based world economy increasingly demolished geographical and environmental barriers to trade, and plantations and mines were opened up across the non-Western world. Thus the relative autonomy of the local environment, on which local societies had depended for resources, progressively diminished.

As world population and GDP grew, this trend persisted leading to deforestation, environmental deterioration and climate change.

Today, the commercial value of land- and forest-derived products in world trade is much less important than that of fossil fuels. Biomass remains an important source of fuel in developing countries (it is often a vital source for local community livelihoods), but it is in relative terms much less valued today than two centuries ago. In this respect, the world economy has become much less organic, more...
The great divergence

In this way, the course of human society diverged significantly from the previous pattern of the human-nature interface. The development path changed from humanosphere-driven to productivity-driven. In England and other parts of Western Europe, societies became increasingly concerned with the rise of labor productivity and the improvement of living standards during the early modern period, while in East Asia there emerged a powerful concern for sustaining and raising land productivity to provide for a vast population. But neither the use of coal in England nor extraordinary population growth in China had a decisive impact on global history before the diffusion of industrialization and its effects were felt worldwide. The impact of fossil fuels on the structure of the world economy was so great that the direct interactions between human society and biosphere have become rather peripheral to global resource and energy security issues, as we see them today. However, this divergence has not been a linear, inevitable course of human history. By the early modern period, in East Asia, land was scarcer relative to population, and labor-intensive technology and labor-aborting institutions developed. When Japan, China, and other parts of East and Southeast Asia industrialized a little later than Western Europe did (starting in Japan in the late 19th century and spreading across the region after WWII), the region created a labor-intensive industrialization path. By and large, the region depended on biomass for its energy needs much more than Western Europe did during its period of industrialization. It also had a tendency to choose energy-saving technology and relatively less energy-intensive industries.

The West also eventually directed its attention to energy intensity. Prior to the two Oil Crises of the 1970s, heavy and chemical industrialization (with military industries leading energy-intensive technological innovation), saw a large rise in the energy usage of the leading powers (the United States and the Soviet Union), while many countries under the labor-intensive path maintained steady levels. However, there was a remarkable convergence after the 1970s, through the reduction of intensity in the United States and Western Europe, as well as in China, and eventually the (former) Soviet Union. The traditional distinction between capital-intensive industrialization and labor-intensive industrialization became skewed to some extent, as the focus on energy-saving technology began to dictate the direction of global technological innovation. It is therefore possible to suggest that the global industrialization path began to shift from an energy-intensive one to an energy-saving one. Looking back, the two centuries of an energy-intensive industrialization path as a whole may be seen as a great divergence from a more balanced, environmentally sustainable path.

Of course, the story of energy intensity is only part of a larger narrative of the establishment of a global environmentally sustainable path. It must include a change in the relative importance between geosphere-derived and biosphere-derived (and clean) energy sources, a fuller respect for the logics of the geosphere and biosphere (e.g., the development of science and technology should be directed more clearly towards sustainability concerns), and the reorganization of human society in accordance with sustainability needs demanded by nature. When such a perspective is established, industrialization will be accepted as a truly positive agent of global history.

Southeast Asia

In 1950, most countries of Southeast Asia were exporters of primary products par excellence. By the end of the 20th century, the ASEAN 4 became exporters of labor-intensive manufactured goods and importers of capital-intensive manufactured goods. Following the lead of South Korea and Taiwan, a rapid shift to export-oriented industrialization took place in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s. The share of their GDP derived from manufacturing output and employment rose rapidly with time lags and variations. Throughout this process, deforestation and other environmental degradation induced by industrialization and globalization have been a serious concern for both local communities and environmentalists. More recently, deforestation has also attracted attention in the context of climate change.

So, to return to the opening question, did Southeast Asia figure badly in comparison to the historical experiences of other regions in these respects? In contrast to advanced Western countries, which used coal for household-use from early on, the ASEAN 4 used a lot of biomass energy for non-commercial use during the process of industrialization, in addition to exporting forest and plantation products. These resources were used, often without concern for environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, the use of commercial energy (coal, oil, natural gas and electricity) increased, but energy efficiency (measured in terms of commercial energy consumption divided by GDP) of the ASEAN 4 and Singapore has on the whole remained reasonable. A combination of these factors, however, was insufficient to meet the rapid growth of energy demands, and Southeast Asia’s imports of oil from outside the region have steadily risen. In other words, in energy and resource use terms, the region is becoming less and less self-sufficient.

In none of these respects does Southeast Asia’s performance look particularly extraordinary, once the rapid pace of transformation is taken into account. What is unique is that, after all that has happened, the region is still endowed with a remarkably rich biomass and unparalleled biodiversity. Parts of rural Southeast Asia remain humanosphere-driven rather than productivity-driven. Whether or not we can establish the notion that environmental sustainability must be the basis of economic development in the long run is a big challenge both for the region and for the world at large. The answer to this question will determine the future of Southeast Asia, and eventually the shape of human development in the region and the world.

Notes
The logging-plantation nexus in Borneo

Equatorial zones in Southeast Asia possess a high concentration of biomass due to a combination of abundant solar energy and heavy rainfall. Hydrothermal circulation makes tropical rain forests prime fertile grounds for the regeneration and commodification of natural and agricultural resources. From the age of commerce to the present, Borneo’s biomass has long been linked to the outside world through numerous commodity chains, i.e., networks of labor and production processes connecting distant peoples and landscapes.

For more than a century, global commodity chains surrounding Borneo have converged into a couple of distinctive yet symbiotic modes of resource appropriation: logging and plantation. From Sabah in the 1960s, then to Kalimantan and consequently to present-day Sarawak, there has been an evolving relationship between logging operations and the rise of the plantation industry. The development of the logging-plantation nexus marked a shift in commodification from the one based on the regeneration of biomass to the other that depends on expansive production of planted vegetation. With the clearance of forests, an irreversible transformation has led to fundamental changes in social formation. The object of appropriation has shifted from biomass on land to land itself.

Multi-species, multi-landscape, and multi-disciplinary research

Sarawak is a final resource frontier in Borneo. It thus provides us with a last opportunity to examine the dynamics of human/nature relations under large-scale ecological transformation. Since 2010, a five-year project has been under way to comprehensively document and understand the process of changes taking place in Bintulu District, northern Sarawak, Malaysia, where 57% of the land (12,166.2 km²) has been converted to plantation fields as of 2011. We have been investigating a tipping point for dete

The project is ambitious in that it involves the collaboration of some 20 researchers who specialize in anthropology, geography, Southeast Asian history, global history, area studies, political ecology, environmental economics, socio-linguistics, plant ecology, animal ecology, forest ecology, hydrology, ichthyology, geomorphology and life-cycle assessment. For these researchers to engage in their own fieldwork as well as collaborative sub-projects, a basin catchment composed of two riverine systems, the Kemena and the Tatang, are selected as a unit of analysis. Ecologically, the basin catchment is a mosaic landscape of oil palm and Acacia mangium plantations, logging concession areas, secondary forests, wadsets and peatland. The basin is also home to numerous social groups: the Malay, Melanau, Vave Segen, Chinese, Iban, Kayan, Kenyah, Punan Bah, Batak, Tatang, Luguat and Penan. Almost all the ethnic groups of Sarawak live side by side, from upstream rivers down to coastal areas.

Conducting fieldwork in this unitary yet inherently heterogeneous socio-ecological space enables us to examine a microcosm of Sarawak, which undergoes immense spatial reconfiguration and concomitant social change. Furthermore, a transdisciplinary and collaborative approach enables the research team to observe multi-species relations and interactions.

The strength of this project thus lies in a strategic combination of field sciences. On one side, the natural sciences deal with material flows such as water, gases and minerals through the physical and biological processes at work in and out of plantations. On the other, the social sciences look into the articulations and disarticulations between natural economy and plantation economy, the effects of road networks linking the interior land to cities as well as hills and plains and the reconfiguration of a local global relationship through commodity chains.

For instance, the ecological research team analyzes the ecosystems of natural and planted forests in the riverine catchment where heterogeneous landscapes are observable in sequence. Multiple research plots have been selected by animal ecologists in order to map the spatial structure of biodiversity. Hundreds of camera traps have been set to monitor the movements of animals in and out of plantations as well as timber concessions. While ecosystem ecologists focus on the flows of nitrogen and particulate organic matter in the forests and rivers, hydrologists look into the water cycle in the ocean and atmosphere, the forests and the rivers, in several tens of square kilometers at a meso-scale. These researchers are in charge of examining material cycles of nature, where the transfer of chemicals from biological to geological systems, are observable in mixed landscapes.

The socio-cultural research team focuses on transformations from a traditional natural economy (swidden cultivation, hunting and gathering of forest produce) to off-farm wage labor (at timber camps and urban areas), and to agricultural income/generation (oil palm smallholdings). We have conducted a series of household interviews on topics such as functionally and spatially extended kin networks, circular labor migration and the flows of remittances.

In addition to the emerging rural-urban continuum, the nature/non-nature boundary has become increasingly porous and manipulable. We highlight a number of larger questions concerning the political economy of resource utilization. Plantations are endorsed by international systems of certification and finances. Planted forests of oil palm and Acacia mangium as a potential energy source are considered to contribute to reduction of carbon emissions. The financial sector thus seeks to create instruments for the securitization of tropical biomass under the newly proposed REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and REDD Plus initiative. The result is a dynamic process of negotiation within an increasingly complex nature/non-nature threshold.

In the course of planning this research, we have thus created new methodological devices, scales and units of analysis that enable an integrative, cross-disciplinary understanding.
Nature/non-nature relations in Borneo

The expansion of planted forests, human relations to other animals have changed, albeit in a rather unexpected way. It has become easier for some inland Dayak people to encounter wild boars (Sus barbatus) coming into plantations for an abundant supply of oil palm seeds. The locals also frequently spot barking deer (Muntiacus spp.) in remaining logged-over forests where they feed on pioneer plant species. The preservation of salt licks (a natural mineral deposit where animals in nutrient-poor ecosystems can obtain essential mineral nutrients) in reduced impact logging concession areas is found to lead to the better conservation of animals in forests. To examine the relation between the diversity and number of living species in ecologically disturbed areas, and how the local natural economy (i.e., hunting and gathering) has subsequently transformed, a group of anthropologists and geographers examine an economic portfolio of long-houses. Alongside, animal ecologists set camera traps to capture mammals for the purpose of examining biodiversity. To cross-check such ecological data and evidence, social scientists collect the narratives of local people on the changing nature of their environs.

The number of river fish has declined. Only catfish such as ikan tapah (Wallago leerii) is strong enough to survive water coming out of logging concessions and plantations. Why? Because they are slimy!

The above is a comment that anthropologists on the research team have often heard from upriver longhouse dwellers. To examine the changing relations among geosphere, biosphere, and human communities, an understanding of the effects of plantation development not only on the ecosystem but also on people’s foodways is necessary. Ecologists, by taking numerous samples of water along the river on the other hand, clarify the effects of agro-industrial operations on the forest ecosystem. This they do in collaboration with ichthyologists (those who study fish), who conduct a biodiversity assessment of the freshwater community.

One of the most valued forests products in the area (with more than 400 years of trading history) are the nests (kurang buring) of edible swiftlets (Aerodramus fuciphagus). In fact, the nests constitute an important meeting ground for cultural anthropologists, historians (global history and Chinese history) and bird ecologists, to observe how commodity chains and food webs are being reconfigured with the advent of plantations. In the coastal peat lands at the mouth of the Kemena, we have constructed a swiftlet farm house for experimental purposes, collecting basic information on laying, hatching and nesting eggs. The farm house enables us to examine droppings for nitrogen isotope ratio, an important task, as it provides data concerning the swiftlets’ food webs inside and outside plantations. Anthropologists and historians are also collaborating to trace the commodity chains that link Bintulu to the region and further beyond. This leads us to the busy streets of Shuang Wan, Hong Kong and even Chinatown in New York City.

Oil palm has a very peculiar nature. As an industrial commodity, fresh fruit bunches need to be processed within 24 hours, so as to avoid oxidation which lowers the quality of the product. This oxidation, a micro-change at a molecular level, is in fact a driving force of grand social change in our research site, where the traditional riverine society has been transformed to a land-bound one with road networks for transportation of fruit bunches to processing mills. With the advent of roads, many residents have moved to the roadside, at some distance from their longhouses that are traditionally built along the river. Now a long stretch of temporary huts (langkau in the Iban language) can be found, and oil palm cultivation on smallholdings has become common. Specialists in the fields of environmental economics, human geography, cultural anthropology and life-cycle assessment, are paying particular attention to the dynamics of oil palm expansion into inland areas where economic activities and kinship relations are based on riverine social networks.

In search of better articulation of social and natural systems

What is the importance of the points of articulation between material cycles and the movements of capital, humans, technologies, and institutions? What are the consequences of changing connections, not only at local, but also at cross-continental and global scales? How do we locate linkages among non-adjacent and seemingly disconnected locations in nature and society? One of the very challenging endeavors of our research project is to empirically examine how natural systems and social systems articulate and how they have been transformed by the impacts of large-scale land use change.

Both the social and natural sciences have long engaged in the study of connections from within their own disciplinary boundaries: from the community, region and nation-state to empire, or from habitat patches to landscapes. We have scaled and rescaled the units of analysis in time and space to comprehend how constituent parts of systems and distant places are linked. However, such engagements have usually been pursued without connecting ourselves to other disciplinary endeavors. As such, the project aims to not just bring out or confirm these connections, but understand them in the context of the emerging bio-industrial landscapes. To find the formula for the co-existence of planted forests with a sound ecological and socio-economic base for local communities is the most effective and practical approach.

What we see in the transformation of Southeast Asia’s high biomass societies are features common among equatorial zones across the world. Research in insular tropical Southeast Asia will serve as an important test site where such a multi-disciplinary approach may offer valuable clues. Our primary concern is the reliance of local communities that comprise people, fauna, and flora and produce strategies for responding to the emergent geo-political conditions and their ecological impacts, thereby offering alternative paths toward survival and sustainability.

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Notes
1. The project ‘Planted Forests in Equatorial Southeast Asia: Human-nature Interactions in High Biomass Society’ is funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, under its Integrated Science and Innovative Science Scheme (New multidisciplinary field) of the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) No. 22221010.
Termites are ubiquitous across the world and have widespread beneficial impacts on ecological communities and ecosystem processes. Crop yields increase parallel to the richness of termite species in any given farmland and this is in no small part through the inestimable services termites offer to ecosystems and the role they play as socioeconomic drivers. Long reciprocal interactions have taken place between human society and termites. Yet how they have fundamentally shaped the integrity of our environments, socioeconomic base, and the livelihoods of millions in Southeast Asia today, tends to be ignored. This short essay introduces their role in the eco-systems of Southeast Asia to argue that they should be appraised in any future policies toward the region’s agro-landscape and their invaluable interactions in the humanosphere.

Termites are considered to be one of the most beneficial insect groups in natural ecosystems and they are what we can call, typical agro-ecosystem engineers. They are cellulose-based feeders; they feed on a wide array of food ranging from living plant tissue, wood and roots, plant litter and humus in their food. During the monsoon seasons, these mushrooms emerge as a fruited body in termite nests. In the region, these seasonal mushrooms are appraised as a delicacy and are expensive. During this period, Yum Hed Khone (Spicy termite mushroom salad) can cost up to THB 350 (US$12).

If we turn to the southwestern provinces of Vietnam, such as Ben Tre or Tien Gao, the local people roast termite mushrooms with betel leaves. The price of one kilo of termite mushroom in Tien Gao can cost up to 300,000 VND per kg ($15). However, these consumption activities vary within the region. Wild termite mushroom dishes or termite themselves are rarely served in Malaysia, although middle-aged men do have a predilection for queen termites, which are highly sought after. Local indigenous knowledge treats queen termites as an aphrodisiac; they are thought to have special properties similar to that of Viagra and can boost male sexual prowess. Queens are usually swallowed alive before sex to boost performance. Superstitious beliefs can hike the price of queen termites up to an astonishing $1500 based on their color and vitality (doctors reject these effects as nothing more than a placebo effect).

Even with urbanization, these species and their earthen mounds can be found relatively easily in residential areas, parks, and along roadsides. Residents in the neighborhood usually shelter inactive termite mounds within small red-painted shrines. Worshippers pray to the ‘Datok Kong’ for protection, good health, good luck, and on occasion to strike out. Consequently, intensive and multiple treatments are conducted to degrade plant-derived toxins and provide proteinous nutrients to the young termites.

Termites and human society in Southeast Asia

Fig. 1: Termites deposit their food materials as a honeycomb-like structure. The termites cultivate symbiotic fungus (Termitomyces sp.), but maintain them in a nodul stage (see arrow). The fungus is essential to degrade plant-derived toxins and provide proteinous nutrient to the young termites.

Fig. 2: The fruited body of the termite mushroom is well known as a local delicacy in Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Fig. 3: Indonesia consists of 22.5 million hectares of peat swamp forest that accounts for 5% of global peat lands. Large peat swamp areas are degraded annually due to improper management and wild fires. Under such conditions, earthworms are absent from highly acidic and disturbed areas, termites offer valuable ecosystem services.

Fig. 4: A queen termite can become as large as 7 cm in length and contain more than 50% unsaturated fats, proteins, minerals and vitamins that are essential to human health. Superstitious beliefs can hike the price of queen termites up to an astonishing $1500 based on their color and vitality (doctors reject these effects as nothing more than a placebo effect).

The ritual ant

Aside from their ecological services, nutritional value and perceived aphrodisiacal qualities, termites have ritual significance in some Southeast Asian societies. In some parts of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, the culture of worshiping termite mounds is practiced, especially by local Chinese communities. Mound-building termites, especially species such as Macrotermes spp. and Globitermes spp., are widespread across the Malay Archipelago. Their earthen mounds may reach as high as 1.5m in height and 2m in diameter. Once a termite colony dies or becomes inactive, the termite mound can erode over time. In Malaysia, some local people see these inactive termite mounds as structures created by spirits. They believe that a local guardian resides in them, known as ‘Keramat’ in Malay and ‘Datuk Kong’ (Fig. 4) in the Hokkien dialect. In fact, in Malaysia, Keramat-worshipping originated from Islamic mysticism and had been practiced in rural areas as far back as the pre-colonial period (1500-1870). This was soon adopted by Chinese immigrants who believed that local spirit guardians found in nature should be paid respect in order to ensure their overseas security and prosperity.8

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Notorious pest status in urban and agro-landscapes

Irrespective of their revered holy status, termites are regarded as a perennial unwelcome pest in both human settlements and farmlands. The annual damage caused by termites in 2005 was estimated to be US$50 billion worldwide, and in Southeast Asia alone, it was estimated to cost approximately US$400 million per year.10 Unlike in temperate countries, it is common in Southeast Asia to find several termite pest species co-existing and infesting the same buildings, and worse, other termite species can re-infect building structures after previous termite treatments have been successfully carried out. Consequently, intensive and multiple treatments are considered to be the only solution. This poses an uphill challenge to pest control personnel in Southeast Asia. Among oriental termites, the Asian subterranean termite, Coptotermes gestri (Wasmann), is the most economically important and invasive species in Southeast Asia. This species is well adapted to

Known as the ‘White Ant’, termites are believed to have existed on the earth long before any other social insects. Studies of fossils in petrified forests in Arizona have suggested that they existed in the Permian period as far back as 220 million years ago. In other words, they are one of the oldest creators on our planet and witnessed the rise and demise of the dinosaurs. Termites cover 70% of the world’s habitable surface and are found predominantly in tropical and sub-tropical regions or areas that are close to the equator.2 There are over 2,600 described species, comprising a total of 281 genera. Today, the evidence from phylogenetic and morphological studies strongly suggest that termites are eusocial cockroaches and are now classified within the cockroach family (f. Blattodea) that evolved from a single ‘social cockroach’ species, which then diversified into a number of termite families.

Natural ecosystem service providers

Termites are considered to be one of the most beneficial insect groups in natural ecosystems and they are what we can call, typical agro-ecosystem engineers. They are cellulose-based feeders; they feed on a wide array of food ranging from living plant tissue, wood and roots, plant litter and husms in varying degrees of decay. They are essential for the energy flow and recycling of nutrients in the natural environment and are also great modellers of soil porosity, its water holding capacity, as well as soil water infiltration rates. Termites also enhance soil quality and nutrients such as pH, water content, organic carbon and nitrogen, as well as modifying soil composition via relocating the soil particles during mound construction. These activities influence the composition and spatial arrangement of plant diversity, while their mounds provide a specific microhabitat that enhances the growth and survival of certain tree species. This role can’t be emphasized enough in the highly eco-diverse Southeast Asia tropical rain forests. Crucially, through their services to ecosystems, they play a role as socioeconomic drivers for human societies. In other words, there is increasing evidence that shows that crop yields increase parallel to the richness of termite species in any given farmland.11

Termites and the Southeast Asian food chain

Termites are also a part of our food chain and contain nutrients that are essential to the human diet. They range from queens, soldiers, winged termites and eddible termite mushrooms. In other regions, such as Africa and some parts of Latin America, they are an important protein source and Southeast Asia is no exception. Both Thailand and Myanmar are renowned for their wild termite mushrooms (Termitomyces fuliginosus), in Thai also known as Het Khone. Termites of the family Macrotermitinae (macrotermits) are generally detritivores, i.e., they feed mainly on dead wood, dead grass, dung, and the roots of dead or living plants. By doing so, they turn their food into a fungus comb and cultivate a symbiotic fungus (genus Termitomyces) inside their nests. This mushroom serves as a protein source for young termites and helps in degrading the toxic plant-derived compound (fijin) in their food. During the monsoon seasons, these mushrooms emerge as a fruited body in termite nests.3 In the region, these seasonal mushrooms are appraised as a delicacy and are expensive. During this period, Yum Hed Khone (Spicy termite mushroom salad) can cost up to THB 350 (US$12).

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those environments where human settlements prevail and it attacks mainly wooden structures like cabinets, parquet floors, windows, door frames and roofs. In peninsular Malaysia and Thailand, approximately 85-90% of termite infestations are observed on floors, windows, door frames and roofs. In peninsular Malaysia, those environments where human settlements prevail and they provide to Southeast Asia's agro-landscape. In fact, they pose unexpected risks if mishandled. Misconceptions have led to a ‘Keramat’ or ‘local guardian’, a ‘Keramat’ or ‘Datok Kong’. A local farmers always view termites as a pest despite the fact that the structure is home to a ‘local guardian’, a ‘Keramat’ or ‘Datok Kong’. Yet, promisingly we are starting to see a shift in attitudes towards termites in Southeast Asian context, which has a greater diversity of insect communities, complex agro-ecosystem processes and a specific socioeconomic background particular to the region. Only through social research inquiry combined with scientific approaches from biology and ecology on how to harness termites’ services, can we reengage with the important and vibrant world teeming under our feet. To do so can potentially improve farmers’ socioeconomic needs through promoting practical and practicable models of coexistence between termites and human society. And this will undoubtedly help us rehabilitate and reappraise the role of insects in future models of sustainable economic development in the region.

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Notes
1 As evidenced by the oldest described fossil termite, Metameteres bertrani (f. Hodotermitidae) found in Spain, which dates back to the Cretaceous period 130 million years ago.
2 However, the distribution of some termite species has extended to cooler zones and the global warming is seen to be one of the triggers behind this.
3 Eusocial means they have a high level of social organization.
5 Mainly between the months of September and January.
7 In contrast, we can also find inactive termite mound worshipping widely practiced in India, but only if a divine snake, the cobra, is found to be living in the mound.
Humanosphere Potentiality Index

Many of the so-called developed countries have narrowly set production and increased productivity as societal goals. Under this production-centric worldview, per capita GDP (or GNP) has long been a de facto indicator of the wealth of citizens even though numerous problems have been pointed out. Since the beginning of the 1990s, various organizations have become engaged in efforts to develop indices to take the place of GDP and to evaluate the state of the world from the standpoint of new concepts such as ‘sustainability’ or ‘human development’. However, no index has been developed that attempts to place human activities within the context of global atmospheric-hydrological circulation or the capacities of the world’s diverse life forms.

RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT TREND of developing indices and concerned with how to read the state of the world, we have developed a Humanosphere Potentiality Index (HPI), with the aim of addressing the present and future welfare of human societies within a broader context of environmental sustainability. This perspective is derived from the concept of the ‘humanosphere’, as explained in the introduction of this focus issue, and expresses our dissatisfaction with the limits of measuring the status of human societies through the Human Development Index (HDI).

Humanosphere: an analytical framework to assess humosphere potentiality

The humanosphere is chronologically made up of three spheres: the geosphere, biosphere and human society. These three spheres have historically interacted with each other and inform our current place in the world, and possess their own inherent logics. The geosphere in terms of ‘circulation’, the biosphere in terms of ‘diversity’ and human societies in terms of ‘autonomy and empathy’ (fig. 1). In working towards a sustainable humanosphere, we believe it is important for human societies to acknowledge two fundamental points: that human societies have developed through their interactions with both the geosphere and biosphere; and that there is a need to reconstruct our relationships with them by understanding how their logics influence the sustainable development of human societies.

Our strategic intention has been to offer an alternative to HDI. In 1990, the UNDP announced HDI with the intention to offer an alternative to GDP (GNP). The index was founded on a theory known as the capability approach – what individuals are capable of – advocated by the economist Amartya K. Sen. HDI is the outcome of a calculation that involves simply averaging three functions of human development: capabilities in health, education and income. We offer a different viewpoint to HDI. HPI is neither a simple attempt to reverse the view of the world as seen through HDI, nor is it merely an ‘additional perspective’. Rather, HPI attempts to evaluate the potentiality of the geosphere, biosphere and human societies to support our livelihood through a clearly defined logical framework. As a result, we are expanding the viewpoint of HDI.

If we consider HDI from the perspective of HPI we see that its focus is on an evaluation of the ‘autonomic’ achievement of ‘better’ livelihood. HDI is also founded on the idea that it is crucial for individuals to be able to gain access to fundamental services (health, education and income) and collectively create and pursue value in their own lives. The HPI extends the perspective of evaluation to include the potential for sustainable development. This approach was adopted to consider care practices of human societies and their fundamental ability to empathize. Ultimately, it makes an evaluation which acknowledges the core logics of circulation in the geosphere and diversity in the biosphere. As we will show, through considering HDI from this expanded perspective and based on the layered logics, unexpected correlations and differing viewpoints become apparent.

Calculating the Humanosphere Potentiality Index (HPI)

Through a research project that has run for over five years, a team of researchers working in Asia and Africa created the components of HPI (fig. 2). We created nine indices that are expressed as a three by three index to include potentiality indicators, availability indicators, and disturbance indicators in each sphere. Our potentiality indicator refers to the quantitative scale that each sphere possesses, while the availability indicator attempts to present the ‘proper’ relationships of the elements that compose each sphere. These two indicators are expressed using the value per unit of land area. The disturbance indicator presents human-induced negative effects that arise in the two spheres. We subtract this to adjust the potentiality of each sphere, keeping modern human society in mind. As such, the disturbance indicators are expressed using value per capita, and not value per unit of land area.

To represent the geosphere, we chose three indicators: solar energy, an atmospheric-hydrological circulation index (as a potentiality and availability indicator), and CO2 emissions to express the logic of circulation, which all have established accessible databases. Likewise, for the biosphere biomass, the biodiversity index and human appropriated net primary production (HANPP) were included to express relations. Biomass is represented by forest biomass per unit area because forests account for almost 90% of the total plant biomass in the world. The biodiversity index estimates the biodiversity of terrestrial ecosystems based on the numbers of species of vascular plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. HANPP as a disturbance indicator explains the per capita appropriation of the net primary production of human activities.

To create an index for human society, we adopted population, care relations and total unexpected deaths. These indicators reflect the idea that there are two fundamental logics that characterize human society, namely autonomy and empathy that form a basis to make possible care relations. We chose population as a potentiality indicator as all human societies show tolerance and consideration towards each other. As such, population sizes represent the potential magnitudes of care relations. We have calculated care relations through two elements: the first one is the sharing of abodes, which expresses potential care access in the household, and the female-to-male ratio, which expresses fundamental gender equality in household care relations. Total unexpected deaths are the sum of the number of deaths resulting from the actions of the geosphere (disasters), biosphere (infectious disease), and human society (intentional injuries).

In each sphere, the three figures that express potentiality, availability and disturbance are integrated into a composite index, creating a simple average of three indicators. The HPI is an integrated index averaging these three indices.

Humanosphere Potentiality Index (HPI) and the Human Development Index (HDI)

Figure 3 is a representation of the world from the perspective of HPI. Those countries that have a higher HPI value possess a higher potentiality of sustainable development than countries with lower scores. It shows that the indices for the tropical zones of South East Asia and Latin America are as high as those of South Asia, Central Africa and parts of the Middle East. In the countries with the highest HPI figures, the human society index is above average, in addition to the fact that the

### Fig. 1: The logic of the three spheres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geosphere</th>
<th>Biosphere</th>
<th>Human Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy &amp; empathy</td>
<td>Diversity of life</td>
<td>CARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Sphere</td>
<td>Diversity of human ecology society &amp; culture</td>
<td>Potentiality Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air &amp; water circulation</td>
<td>Material &amp; energy circulation through food chains</td>
<td>Circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material &amp; energy circulation through technology</td>
<td>Material &amp; energy circulation through technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fig. 2: Structure of the Humanosphere Potentiality Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geosphere</th>
<th>Biosphere</th>
<th>Human Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solar Energy</td>
<td>Biomass</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentiality Indicators</td>
<td>Availability Indicators</td>
<td>Disturbance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geosphere</td>
<td>Biosphere</td>
<td>Human Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air &amp; water circulation</td>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Care relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human appropriated net primary production</td>
<td>Unexpected deaths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takahiro Sato, et al
There is a synchronizing elevated tendency between HPI and HDI in tropical zones but, its disappearance in temperate zones is an interesting finding. Nonetheless, we see significant observed correlation in countries between HDI and CO2 emissions in both tropical and temperate zones. Fundamentally, this means that the countries that have achieved a high level on HDI have been contributing to the deterioration of the environment regardless of where the country is located.

In search of a sustainable humanosphere
The aim of our work has been to construct and propose the establishment of HPI through the critical incorporation of existing indices such as HDI and others. The most central characteristic of HPI is that it offers a positive evaluation of tropical zones, such as Southeast Asia, where some of the world’s richest ecosystems lie. By comparing HDI and HPI, it becomes clear that the evaluation reached for tropical zones stands out in stark contrast. This is derived from a difference of perspective in respective evaluations: HDI evaluates three dimensions that include health, education and income, with a focus on an ‘autonomous’ achievement of ‘better’ livelihood (i.e., human development) – while HPI focuses on values for livelihood that incorporate circulation and diversity, autonomy and empathy. With increased material prosperity, we tend to think that countries in the temperate zones, including Western nations and Japan, lead a life of abundance whereas the tropical countries located in South East Asia and Africa, exist in poverty. However, such an ingrown belief can be questioned by asking in what sense do we really have ‘satisfying’ lives? Will such lives ensure our livelihoods with sustainability? Our HPI casts this into question.

Our index provides only a snapshot of how things have progressed so far. We cannot predict any trend in the decrease of forested areas and we cannot propose or evaluate ideal technologies or specific structures in institutions in different regions to deal with changes. As such, HPI, has its limitations in that ultimately, it is a crude index. However, what it enables us to do is to provide an indication of the world’s current situation in a much more comprehensive manner by presenting an agenda that is neither included nor addressed by HDI.

The HPI underlines the crucial message that we must pay much more attention not only to development but also to our ‘potentiality’ from the perspective of the humanosphere, in order to promote a sustainable livelihood for all human societies. Ultimately, the world viewed through an index such as HPI could make us rethink human development from within a much broader and deeper context, that of the ‘sustainable humanosphere.’

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In Southeast Asia, wet peat lands are rich in biomass and water resources, but are extremely vulnerable to human induced environmental changes. They form a part of tropical forests where decomposed organic matter accumulates over many years, creating carbon-rich soil. Southeast Asia’s peat lands account for 11-14% of the total global peat carbon pool. Even though peat lands are not suitable for cultivation, they have been increasingly turned into an economic resource over the past 20 years. They have undergone unprecedented large-scale exploitation, leading to serious degradation, large scale fires, and carbon emissions across the region. Seeking to understand how peat lands are changing, a joint team of researchers from Kyoto (Japan) and Riau (Indonesia) have been undertaking a two-phase multidisciplinary initiative in Bengkalis (Riau) to shed light on forest use. Our research aims at a holistic undertaking a two-phase multidisciplinary efforts to revitalize our environmental interest and business needs and works as a bottom-up economy and conservation factors (i.e., the rehabilitation of peat land). We hope that companies will make use of the idea of a ‘people’s forest’ to enhance the protection zone among Hutan Tanaman Industri (Industrial Timber Estate) forests. Ultimate, we hope for a production growth path that does not compromise survival strategies (i.e., the household economy) and conservation factors (i.e., the rehabilitation of peat land). This path brings together multiple activities, interests and business needs and works as a bottom-up model of sustainable forest management that integrates multidisciplinary efforts to revitalize our environmental heritage for present and future generations. Kosuke Mizuno is a Professor at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University (mizuno@ccsas.kyoto-u.ac.jp)

Notes
4 The traditional practices of the Malay in Sumatra have a limited ecological footprint and are ecologically compatible with the peat lands and their functions. Yet since 1985, new imperatives aimed at economic growth have seen peat swamps subjected to repeated rapid land-use change. Degradation has resulted from transmigration (both spontaneous and official), large-scale logging (legal and illegal), oil palm plantations, and the short rotation of timber plantations to supply pulp and paper industries and forests. By 1988, over 93% of the peat swamp forests of Sumatra and Kalimantan were degraded, leaving only a few areas in a primary state.
5 Rehabilitation through collaboration
Over the past few years, we have studied these degraded peat lands in Riau in collaboration with local people whose livelihoods depend on the health, regeneration and sustainable management of peat lands, with the aim of developing ‘forests for people’. Through a group of experts whose fields include biology, economics, geography, soil analysis and ecology, we have holistically approached the peat lands. Any comprehension of the bio-diversity of peat lands must factor in the plant diversity as well as the role of birds and mammals, water flows, and human transformations of the environment. And yet, we have to also bear in mind the different degrees of complexity in peat lands, including large forests, timber plantations, oil palm estates and local communities. The wise use of peat land will relate to crucial issues such as water management and plant use. As such, plant diversity studies can help us understand how we can sustainably introduce plants that are crucial to land use.
6 Biomass studies – those that look at key issues of biomass society such as production, land use, natural forests, timber plantation, oil palm estate, and local community interactions are also needed to understand the specific biophysical production processes, peat land conditions, their productivity and material cycling. Biomass production flows are closely related to profit maximization, however, the stock of biomass production is closely related to conservation.
7 Multidisciplinary studies such as ours that depend on the active involvement of people who live in and around forests, and the local knowledge they possess to preserve it, can allow us to clearly pinpoint causes of degradation. How human societies and their subsequent needs shape them must be included in any form of people-oriented sustainable forest management and the revitalization of their place in our world.
8 Gradual land transformation in Riau
Until the early 1980s, the local Bengkalis society (Riau) maintained features of balanced peatland society. That is, the population was small and people made use of peat lands through traditional means, such as fishery activities, small-scale logging and trade in jungle rubber, without drastically altering their landscape. However, fast-paced production changes occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, radically transforming the landscape. A large-scale logging commenced in 1998 and led to oil palm cultivation. Subsequently, over a fifteen-year period, the exploration and opening of timber plantations as well as the oil palm estates led to an influx of people and the subsequent degradation of peat lands. People in the area are enthusiastic for oil palm cultivation, but such cultivation has not lived up to everyone’s economic expectations as productivity has been far below national or provincial standards and exposed to fire risks, in spite of the continued use of fertilizers and agricultural chemicals. Lands have become increasingly less fertile and there are frequent fires.
9 However, we find that people continue to hold multiple occupations and not rely solely on income from palm oil cultivation; they also earn from fishery, trade, public services, construction, grocery stores and cooperatives. Jungle rubber, for example, is a source of income, it is something that people inherit, and it has not noticeably changed the peat land landscape. Although its productivity is low compared to national standards, it provides a fairly good income as cultivation expenses are minimal. The past fifteen years have seen people’s survival strategies make the most of available opportunities presented by the cultivation of palm oil, employment at timber companies and a subsequent rise in large-scale illegal logging and smuggling.
10 Although people have inherited good use practices that intensively relied on peat land, large-scale timber plantations, logging, deforestation and oil palm cultivation, have changed their lives and made them vulnerable to fire. As a result, land has suffered severe degradation, and finally become barren or abandoned, much to the unfortunate expense of people’s livelihoods and the environment’s carrying capacity.

In Sumatra, two main groups of people make use of peat swamp forests. The first are the Malay people and their ‘culture of transit’. Tropical soils are quickly depleted by intensive cultivation, but the Malay people have preserved them by engaging in sporadic swidden agriculture, fishery, and trade – selectively falling noble aromatic trees, collecting useful products and strategically creating swidden parcels. Through these activities, they have left great wealth of forests intact. The other group includes immigrants such as the Javanese, who have moved in and used the peat land tidal forests on a large scale; they have felled the trees. Over the years, they have become permanent residents in the areas they have settled in.

Right top: Harvesting oil palm.
Right below: Collection of raw rubber by the rubberman.

Kosuke Mizuno is a professor at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University (mizuno@ccsas.kyoto-u.ac.jp)
Encouraging young talent

IIAS Masterclasses and Summer/Winter Schools

SINCE 1996 IIAS has been organising masterclasses and Summer Schools to enable talented graduate and PhD students or young postdocs from both Asia and Europe to have intensive intellectual interaction with leading figures in Asian Studies.

Since 2011 the format has changed somewhat. IIAS now organises an annual Summer (or Winter) School, consisting of a four-day masterclass, intended for excellent PhD students and led by renowned scholars in their field. The Summer/Winter Schools aim to contribute to the nurturing of a multidisciplinary community of young Asia experts, and address topics pertaining to one of IIAS' three clusters: Asian Cities, Global Asia and Asian Heritages.

The 2013 Macau Winter School: Urban Hybridity in the Post-Colonial Age Co-organised with the University of Macau, the Macau Winter School (16-20 December 2013) welcomed participants from Europe, America, Asia and Australia, and was run by three world-renowned scholars in the fields of Asian post-colonial hybridity: Prof. Akhil Gupta (UCLA), Prof. Engseng Ho (Duke University) and Prof. Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University).

2014 Summer School in Chiang Mai, Thailand The 2014 IIAS Summer School, ‘Reading Craft: Itineraries in Asian contexts’ Academic Directors: Prof. Pamela Smith (Columbia University), Prof. Françoise Vergès (Center for Asian Studies) and Prof. Akhil Gupta (UCLA), Professor Henk Schulte Nordholt, said that all submitted theses revealed a productive combination of disciplinary rigor and in depth regional knowledge, calling this a “happy marriage between disciplines and area studies”.

To help secure the future of Asian Studies, IIAS stimulates involvement starting from the graduate level by means of different measures and activities. Examples are the IIAS masterclasses and Summer/Winter Schools and the National Master’s Thesis Prize in Asian Studies.

IIAS National Master’s Thesis Prize in Asian Studies

EACH YEAR, IIAS awards a prize for the best master’s thesis in the broad field of Asian Studies in the humanities or social sciences, written at a Dutch university. The Prize consists of the honorary title ‘Best Master’s Thesis in Asian Studies’ and a three month IIAS fellowship to write a PhD project proposal or a research article.

In total 16 excellent theses competed for the 2013 award, covering a wide academic field ranging from architecture, to history, philosophy, anthropology, political science and other fields. During the award ceremony on 3 December 2013, chairman of the IIAS Board, Professor Henk Schulte Nordholt, said that all submitted theses revealed a productive combination of disciplinary rigor and in depth regional knowledge, calling this a “happy marriage between disciplines and area studies”.

This year’s prize went to Tabitha Speelman from Leiden University, for her thesis: ‘Fast and forward? High-speed rail reform in China and what it costs to whom.’

This thesis contrasts perspectives of the state with its top down blueprints and the lived experiences of travellers and ordinary people on the ground. In doing so, the author uncovers the weakness in an ideologically driven development model that is exclusively geared towards success. Intended to speed up national integration, the fast train also creates new inequalities by leaving behind marginalized areas and lower classes. As such the train – and the risks it involves – is a telling metaphor of China’s overheated development.

Henk Schulte Nordholt

For more information on the shortlisted theses and next year’s Thesis Prize, see: www.iias.nl/master-s-thesis-prize

MA courses of Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe

OVER THE LAST YEARS, IIAS has been intensively engaged with Leiden University and targeted Asian partners in the development of a programme to complete two interrelated Master’s in heritage studies, at Leiden University and an Asian partner university, consecutively. This has already resulted in the option to focus on critical heritage studies within the Leiden MA in Asian Studies.

Leiden

As of September 2013 it became possible for students to opt for the focus on Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe within the History, Arts and Culture of Asia specialisation of the Leiden University MA in Asian Studies. The curriculum includes courses in critical approaches to heritage studies and heritage policy making, as well as a number of electives that focus on heritage management, specific subjects/regions of Asia, and/or the study of Asian languages. Inspired and supported by the IIAS Asian Heritage research cluster, the curriculum allows students to explore the contested character of all representations of culture, the plurality of notions of heritage in Asian and European contexts, and the way distinct and conflicting values of indigenous, local communities and official state discourses are negotiated.

Asia

In the foreseeable future the successful completion of the programme at Leiden University will give access to a second one-year MA programme in heritage studies at an Asian partner university (including Radjsh Mada University, Indonesia, the National Taiwan University, or Yonsei University in South Korea). After completing both programmes, graduates will, in addition to the two separate degrees from both universities, also receive a certificate for the combined programme in Critical Heritage Studies.

Information and application

For more information see: http://ietnul.com/masters-in-leiden

When applying for admission, please add “Critical Heritage Studies” to the application form. On a case-by-case assessment, it is possible for students to enroll in the programme starting from the second semester of this academic year (2013-2014).

The Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe focus is supervised by Dr Adele Esposito from IIAS and the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (IIAS) (a.esposito@maul.leidenuniv.nl)
Rohingya or Bengali? Revisiting the politics of labelling

So Ann Oh

Ethnicity instead of race
How do we decide if someone is Rohingya, Karen or Kachin? Do we use ‘objective’ criteria and indicators, as colonial administrators did based on nineteenth century paradigms of race – size of nose and head, colour of skin, curliness of hair – and (or other less physical characteristics such as language, religion, political allegiance, belief)? Or do we use self-identification provided by those who subscribe to a particular group identity? The term ‘ethnicity’ is often used to refer to selected cultural, social and physical characteristics of groups of people. It is broader than ‘race’, which refers to subspecies and derives from paradigms of biology. But ‘race’, which has fallen out of popular use and has mostly been replaced by ‘ethnicity’, also at one time included the social and cultural characteristics of a population. For example, the British, who carried out extensive censuses in their colonies, based racial classification on both physical and cultural markers. However, the indigenous diversity in their colonies combined with a myriad of immigrant groups confounded their neat categories of race.

The difficulty stemmed from the underlying assumptions of nineteenth-century European paradigms, that fixed and mutually exclusive boundaries could be set up around each race, and that racial identity was the only significant factor in determining political allegiance. This ran counter to how group identification actually operated in the colonies, particularly Burma. Instead of mutually exclusive ethnic and geographical demarcations, politics in Burma were characterised by interpenetrating zones of power and influence, as argued by Edmund Leach. In addition, while studying the Kachins, Ronald Renard notes that there are almost no references to the Karen before the nineteenth century, and that the term was originally a Mon-Burmese one referring to various ‘forest peoples’ often at war with each other. However, the Karen now define themselves as an ethnic group, and are recognised as such by the Burmese state. It has also been argued that conflict generates ethnicity, in that community divisions, the struggle for control of natural resources, the interventions of foreign governments and de-contextualised media descriptions of war, combine to create socio-political issues. Yvind Sivjøl takes this a step further, arguing that conflict and acts of armed struggle actually contributed to the formation of Palestinian identity.

Labels have a life of their own
The act of ethnic categorisation inscribes labels in our social world, and is the process by which a certain view of the world comes to be socially established as ‘reality’. In a census, individuals find themselves firmly fixed as members of a particular dimension and substance. In time the new ordering of society created by the census acts to reshape that which the census sought merely to describe. This phenomenon was demonstrated by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson who conducted an experiment in a school in 1960s America. They labelled one class slow learners and the other fast learners. The teachers were also informed of the label given to each class. By the end of the year, the students’ test results showed that they had performed in accordance with the label applied to them, even though they had all been randomly allocated to their classes at the beginning of the year.

One IDP camp near Sittwe can only be accessed by sea with boats transporting vital aid supplies such as rice and cooking oil. (Rohingya State, Myanmar, September 2013. Photograph reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of Matthew Dick, EU/ECHO on flickr.)

Criteria are diverse
Edmund Leach contended that what set people apart had less to do with ‘race’ and culture than with their framework of political ideas and this was greatly influenced by the attitude they held and hence the hold that the state (and its political and cultural influences) had over them. This gives credence to the observation that ethnic identification may be subscribed to despite diversity in language, religion and political affiliation. The different ethnic groups in Myanmar are composed of subgroups of people with diverse religious, cultural, geographical and even language backgrounds, subscribing to a myriad of political allegiances. Given the great variation in intra-group characteristics, the maintenance of ethnic boundaries often depends on whether the physical and cultural markers attributed to an ethnic group are aligned with other ideological, social and economic divisions in society. For instance, religion and language can be especially strong factors in maintaining divisions that reinforce cultural definitions of ethnicity.

In the case of the Rohingya, their religion (Islam) and darker skin (derogatory terms such as ‘Kalas’, meaning Indian, are used by the media and some sectors of society to describe them) are employed as markers to emphasise their difference in a predominantly Buddhist country. Nonetheless, even these indicators of difference are subject to change. For example, after the end of Dutch rule in Malacca in the early nineteenth century, the Dutch (Protestant) Eurasian community had converted to Catholicism and been absorbed into the larger Portuguese Eurasian population within a few generations. The fact is that there are no universally agreed classifications of ethnicity. Physical and cultural markers that are used to differentiate one population from another can be ambiguous and are subject to change across time. Moreover, characteristics that are considered major signifiers of ethnicity in one society may be considered minor ones in others. Thus, ethnic classifications are best understood as fixed and simplified descriptors which help us to make sense of a world that is often messy, dynamic and indefinable.

In short, labelling has the power to change how we view and respond to the world. Charles Keys has noted that almost every theory of ethnic relations points to the importance of political and economic structures in the creation and maintenance of ethnic inequality and identity. Dominant groups may ‘create’ or negate ethnic labels and ideologies to justify political power or economic exploitation. Thus, the group with the authority to create and impose ethnic categories, and to decide who fits into these categories, actually contributes to the formation of Palestinian identity.
Ethnic insurgencies and peacemaking in Myanmar

Tin Maung Maung Than

MYANMAR is a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society. Officially, there are 135 sub-national (ethnic) groups under eight major ethnic communities. Population estimates (the last census was in 1983) indicate that the majority Bamar (formerly called Burman) ethnic group constitutes 60 per cent, while seven major ethnic groups and three (mainly of Chinese and Indian origin) groups making up the rest of the population.

British colonial rule, which separated ‘Burma proper’ from the frontier areas (populated by non-Bamar), had far-reaching implications for the subsequent creation of an independent Myanmar state. Myanmar nationalists, especially the Bamar majority who advocate a unitary state, accused the British of a “divide-and-rule” policy of preventing the indigenous nationalities from developing a sense of belonging and bonding that could culminate in an ‘imagined community’.

Consequently, nation-building in Myanmar became a contentious exercise with many ethnic ‘nations’ challenging the unitary concept of the ruling elites and resorting to armed struggle. Civil war ensued soon after independence and the government had to fight a multi-front war against a multitude of ideological and ethnic insurgencies, some of which are still continuing.

Ethnic groups challenge the state

The seeds of rebellion among ethnic groups were sown under colonial rule and World War II, with the latter availing them the opportunity for stocking weapons and mastering the art of armed conflict. Traditionally, the British recruited the ‘martial races’, identified as Chins, Kachins and Kayins (Karens), into military service, while very few Bamar were in uniform.

World War II brought ethnic tensions between Bamar and indigenous minorities into the open as some of them who were loyal to the British crown found themselves at odds with the Bamar nationalist allies of the Japanese invaders. Heavy-handed behaviour by inexperienced nationalist commanders added insult to injury and festered resentment among some indigenous minorities. Such experiences under Japanese occupation “revived and intensified” the minorities’ ‘ancient antagonisms’ against Bamar for their perceived hegemony. The anti-fascist resistance movement that followed (in March 1945) also had differential impacts on different ethnic communities, which affected ethnic perceptions of majority-minority relations.

The most contentious issues among the ethnic groups were the alleged Bamar dominance over indigenous minorities, the interpretation of ‘autonomy’ and ‘rights and privileges’ guaranteed by the Panglong Agreement and the right to secede (after ten years) guaranteed by the 1947 Constitution. Thus, separatist tendencies toward an independent ‘ethic nation’ with its distinctive ‘identity’ led to armed rebellion by all major ethnic groups during the first decade of independence, as non-state armed groups (NSAG) proliferated throughout the Myanmar countryside.

Up to five deadlines, beginning with October 2009, passed and the impasse continued after the 2010 elections and the coming into force of the Constitution in January 2011. Meanwhile, five BGFs (KIO, NSPP, SSA-Mya, KNPP, CDF) who had rejected the BGF scheme together with the KNUs and five smaller NSAGs (representing the Lahu, Arakan, Pa-O, Palaung and a splinter Wa group) formed the 11-member coalition named the United Nationals Federal Council (UNFC) in February 2011 to collectively work for a federal solution to the problem of ethnic conflict. However, the government did not recognize it as a representative organization for its members.

Making peace

After the elections in November 2010, the military indicated that the ceasefire agreements had lapsed, but still did not move against the armed ethnic groups who refused to comply with the BGF scheme. After assuming power in March 2011, the elected Union Government announced, on 18 August 2011, an offer to all armed ethnic groups to enter into peace talks based on a two-step process. Though initially sceptical toward the government’s peace overture, altogether 13 NSAGs eventually entered into ceasefire talks at both provincial and Union levels.

To further institutionalize the peace process, the 11-member Union Peace-making Central Committee was established on 3 May 2012. This high-level body in turn delegated the implementation tasks to the 52-member Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPMWC). Confidence-building measures with the armed ethnic groups were stepped up under the government’s new peace initiative and several new ethnic groups (the non-CFG, Karen National Union (KNU) and Restoration Council for the Shan States (RCSS), entered into ceasefire negotiations with the central and provincial governments.

Despite tangible progress in ceasefire agreements and an enhanced level of trust and confidence between the central government and most of the armed ethnic groups, the latter are still highly suspicious of the MDS’ motives as the fighting continues in the Shan and Kachin states. Much of the dispute and discord has to do with lack of political dialogue, and military encroachment into ceasefire territory. The government’s sequencing of ‘ceasefire first’ has been unacceptable to the KIO/KaA, which had been fighting since June 2011. The President’s instruction to the MDS in December 2011 to take only defensive action towards KIA, and eleven preliminary meetings of both State (provincial) and Union levels, did not yield any ceasefire agreement. Instead, towards the end of December 2012, the fighting escalated with the KIA.

Concluding remarks

While the UPMWC has been relentlessly engaging with the new CFGs and other NSAGs to consolidate the ceasefires and move towards political dialogue, the continued violent resistance of the KIA/KaA is a vexing issue for the reformist government of President U Thein Sein. The government has also been accused of a dual-track policy of talking while fighting and some even questioned the President’s ability to control the military and enforce his instructions. In the international media front, the MDS has been vilified and subjected to condemnations by ethnic activists and human rights organizations, some of whom are lobbying for a unilateral ceasefire. The military’s top leaders need to handle these predicaments with finesse and patience and perhaps embrace a new security mindset to enable the MDS to be part of the solution in the peace process rather than a problem as portrayed by its detractors.

Tin Maung Maung Than is a Senior Research Fellow at SEAS.

Notes


Kachin Rangers, armed resistance against Japanese invaders. Photograph reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of flickr.
A redesign for New Asia Books

After almost 7 years of serving the worldwide Asian Studies community, we thought it was time to elevate the popular New Asia Books site to current web standards. With a redesign also comes a new address: www.newbooks.asia (but rest assured, the old address www.newasiabooks.org still works). We listened to our site users and as a result changed a few structural elements without touching too much of its textual design. A major improvement is that the site now responds to the visitor’s screen size. No matter on which device you are browsing, the content is always clearly readable. (fig.1)

We listened to our site users and as a result changed a few structural elements without touching too much of its textual design. A major improvement is that the site now responds to the visitor’s screen size. No matter on which device you are browsing, the content is always clearly readable. (fig.1)

Thomas Voorter

The initial purpose of New Asia Books remains: to help busy scholars keep track of the vast array of Asian Studies books that are published every month, and to free them from time-consuming and potentially unproductive searches for new material. A book search on a site such as Amazon will throw up a long list of responses relating to books published several years ago – books that an experienced academic will either already have read or have made an active decision not to read. New Asia Books presents you with only exactly what is necessary: a list of current publications in your field of expertise.

Content

Although an ongoing and never-ending endeavour, we aim to include only current and recent titles on the site, weeding out not yet published (NYP) titles, and older titles. The books are presented with factual information such as author(s), editor(s), publication date, ISBN, and – where available – a jacket image, detailed description, table of contents, and biographical information. Following the Book Industry Communication (BIC) classification schemes, each publication is tagged according to regional and disciplinary categories (mainly within the Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts).

The website receives new bibliographic data every month from Nielsen BookData, a major bibliographic data provider. However, we also encourage publishers to maintain their lists of publications on the site through their Partner Account (see below) and inform us of any new titles that have become available for review. Many publishers are already in direct contact with our reviews coordinator – those who are not, are encouraged to do so.

Search and find

You can benefit fully from the site by using the faceted search function, prominently at the top of the page. On the results search page, you can narrow down your results by checking the categories. (Fig. 2) The site also helps you to automatically find titles with similar content. On every book page there is an easy way to bookmark what you’ve found or to send the information to your favourite social media account or email address. For some site features – like bookmarking or submitting a review – you first need to login. We have simplified the login procedure by also allowing you to use your existing Facebook, Twitter, Google or LinkedIn account, without having to create an extra account for New Asia Books.

Write a review

New Asia Books is the place to go for the latest book reviews, many of which are also published in The Newsletter. New Asia Books reviews cover the very latest publications from a wide variety of publishers. You’ll find high quality, critical essays and not just short marketing blurbs.

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Site developer/administrator, Thomas Voorter; t.j.h.voorter@iias.nl
Reviews coordinator/The Newsletter editor, Sonja Zweegers; s.i.zweegers@iias.nl

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Content

The Newsletter is published by IAS (Leiden, the Netherlands) four times a year. It prints a number of reviews in each issue – reviews that are generated by the New Asia Books website. The Newsletter editor is also the reviews coordinator; the coordinator keeps track of all new titles available for review, hardcopies sent out, review submissions, and makes a selection of reviews for each issue. However, all submitted reviews are published online on the New Asia Books website.

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New titles and new reviews

Latest reviews on www.newbooks.asia

In addition to the reviews published in this issue of The Newsletter, you will find that the reviews listed below have also recently been added to the New Asia Books website.


Folk Tales of the Maldives | Reviewed by: Xavier Romano-Frias


Folktales of the Maldives | Reviewed by: Xavier Romano-Frias


Classical Malay Literature | Reviewed by: William Noseworthy

New titles available for review


Robert E. Buswell


IIAS Publishing

20 years of publishing at IIAS: from in-house distribution to publishing with a global reach

Paul van der Velde

THE FIRST PUBLICATION of the IIAS was the IIAS Newsletter (renamed The Newsletter in 2009; see page 6 of this issue for “The Evolution of The Newsletter”). While The Newsletter became our most visible publication in Asian Studies, we also, in the early years, published two Yearbooks in 1994 and 1995, which included numerous research articles by IIAS fellows, four Working Papers and the outcome of BAS conferences and seminars (1993-1996); and the BAS Lecture Series based on the texts of the IIAS Annual Lectures (1993-1998).

The above-mentioned publications could all be considered in-house publications since no external publisher was involved. That changed in 1996 when the “Studies from the International Institute for Asian Studies’” series was started in cooperation with the publisher Kegan Paul International (1996-1999), which gave the series a global distribution. For the publication of the Guide to Asian Studies in Europe (1998) we engaged Curzon Press; it was the first of the Curzon-BAS Studies Series (1998-2002), reflecting the scope of studies at the Institute. After the turn of the millennium IIAS started two series with ISEAS in Singapore (2002-2010) and subsidized multiple books with publishers worldwide.

In 2007, all IIAS’ efforts were concentrated in the two series: the BAS and ICAS Publications Series published by Amsterdam University Press (AUP). While the former series was to promote interdisciplinary studies on Asia and comparative research on Asia and Europe, the latter wanted to stimulate dialogue among scholars and civil society groups at the local, regional, and international levels. In all, nearly 50 monographs and references and seminars (1993-1996); and the BAS Lecture Series based on the texts of the IIAS Annual Lectures (1993-1998). were published in these two series.

In 2013, in order to bring its publications more in line with the IIAS research agenda, it was decided to discontinue both. The streamlining coincides with the restructuring of AUP’s publishing strategy. In view of the volume of books in the BAS/ICAS Series, AUP agreed to turn Asia into one of its five foci. It will publish approximately 50-75 books a year on Asia, thus becoming one of the main publishers in the field worldwide. Needless to say, this will reinforce the visibility of the BAS series and the titles published by AUP itself.

IIAS will start three new series with AUP: Global Asia, Asian Cities and Asian Heritages. Global Asia addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region itself, as well as Asia’s projection into the world through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth.

Asian Cities aims to explore the long-standing Asian urban ‘traditions’ by discussing the origins of urbanism and urban culture in different parts of Asia, and by linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times.

Asian Heritages explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European concept associated with architecture and monumental architecture to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested distinctions of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in framing and creating various forms of identity. In Asia, the notion is often associated with the construction of post-independence nation-state models, the definition of national ‘traditions’ and ‘authenticity’ and the idea of post-colonial historical national continuity.

While I will remain in charge of the series, Series Editors are in the process of being appointed and Editorial Boards are being put into place for each of the series. The Series Editor for the Asian Heritages Series has already been selected: Adèle Espósito (Institut Parisien de Recherche Architecture Urbainisation Société, IPRARS), former IIAS fellow and current lecturer at Leiden University and coordinator of the MA program ‘Critical Heritage Studies’ (IIAS/current University).

The Editorial Board for this series will include, among others, Prof. Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University).

On a personal note I would like to thank all the publishers, authors, editors, contributors and members of the editorial board who collectively enabled the publication of the fruits of our research, at IIAS and other institutes around the world in the past 20 years.

Paul van der Velde, IIAS Publications Officer

Amsterdam University Press – Asian Studies

Saskia Gieling, publisher at AUP

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS (AUP) supports and stimulates scholarship through its high quality peer reviewed academic publications. AUP is characterised by a critical, creative and international environment, an open atmosphere and a strong commitment to the academic community.

AUP has a well-established list in Asian Studies in the area of Social Sciences and Humanities, and is renowned for its publication of solid source-based scholarship in the history, religion, politics, migration and culture of the peoples and states of East and Southeast Asia. The Asian Studies programme is strengthened through our partnership with IIAS.

Together with specialists in the field, AUP has developed a list of series on niche topics, related to diverse aspects of modern Asia, which deserve more academic attention. Each series has an editorial board, consisting of internationally renowned scholars, who oversee the academic quality of the publications.

An example is the recently established series ‘New Mobilities in Asia’, on the profound transformations of migration from, to and within Asia. The series focuses on the longstanding transformations of Asian societies and their relationship to the world – with respect to the impact on national identities and the establishment of new migration policy regimes, modes of transnational politics, consumption practices, and ideas of modernity. The series will, for the first time, bring together studies by historians, anthropologists, geographers, and political scientists that systematically explore these changes. The members of the editorial board are Pal Nyiri, Free University, Amsterdam; Tim Winter, Deakin University, Australia; Ahwa Ong, University of California, Berkeley; Joy Hendry and Biao Xiang, Oxford University; Johan Lindquist, Stockholm University; Tim Oakes, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Other series within the programme are: Political Religion in Contemporary Asia; China’s Environment and Welfare; Consumption and Sustainability in Asia; Social Histories of Work in Asia (in cooperation with the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam); Emerging Asia; Borderlands; Popular Culture; Contested Nations. The three series Global Asia, Asian Cities, and Asian Heritages are published in cooperation with IIAS.

AUP has agreed to establish a series in cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and its publisher, China Social Sciences Press. The series, entitled ‘China on China: Humanities and Social Sciences’ consists of works by members of the Chinese Academy, selected by an international board of China scholars.

More series will be established in the coming year.

Please visit www.aup.nl for more details about our Asian Studies list. If interested in publishing in one of our Asian Studies series or in setting up a series, please contact Saskia Gieling (s.gieling@iap.nl)

Gottowik, V. 2014

Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia

Amsterdam: AUP

DRAWING ON RECENT ethnographic research in Southeast Asia, the authors demonstrate how religious concepts contribute to meeting the challenges of modernity.

Modernity is surrounded by an almost magic aura that casts a spell over people all over the world. In fourteen chapters, the authors demonstrate how religious concepts and magic practices contribute to meeting the challenges of modernity. Against this background, religion and modernity are no longer perceived to be in contradiction; rather, it is argued that a revision of the western notion of religion is required to understand the complexity of ‘multiple modernities’ in a globalized world.

Maass, M. 2014

Foreign Policies and Diplomacies in Asia

Amsterdam: AUP

THE OBSERVATION of a rising Asia and of rapidly growing economic powerhouses in the region has become a truism. Nonetheless, the impressive economic development stories in the region provide the backbone for the growing political strength and assertiveness of Asian countries. Asia’s economic prowess is rapidly being transferred onto the diplomatic stage. In light of these larger developments, the authors of this volume investigate the regional and international implications of a rising Asia and problematic critical developments.
A decade ago Sinophone studies emerged as a new academic field within the humanities, with several scholars from North America, Europe as well as Asia engaging in research on Sinitic-language cultural production through the lens of this novel and multidisciplinary mode of inquiry. For those who are interested in the study of Sinitic-language cultures from beyond the borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as well as in the production of non-Han artists from within the PRC who express themselves in a Sinitic language, this critical reader edited by Shu-mei Shi, together with Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards, represents a milestone in the systematization of the Sinophone.

Antonio Paolillo


Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader is a well-conceived and thought-provoking anthology made up of three interconnected sections. Penned by Shu-mei Shi, the introduction to the volume represents a useful overview of what is meant with the phrase ‘Sinophone studies’ and the issues that this young field of inquiry is mainly concerned with. In an academic realm where Chinese studies is often a synonym of China studies and where Sinistic-language societies and cultures outside the PRC are often considered peripheral at best, the Sinophone represents an important attempt in providing an alternative discourse. On-familiar, a powerful technological tool to analyze, reposition and give voice as well as visibility to cultural actors and products from beyond Hein China. As Shi clearly explains, “Sinophone studies takes as its object of study the Sinitic-language communities and cultures outside China as well as ethnic minority communities and cultures within China where Mandarin is adopted or imposed” (11).

Issues and controversies

Despite the novelty of the Sinophone as a field of study, scholarly concern with the theorization of Sinitic cultures and communities at the margins of China had already resulted in several already well-established paradigms and viewpoints on China and Chineness. The first section of the volume, “Issues and Controversies” contains a useful selection of edited essays by Tsai and six essays. Apart from reprints (in full or in part) four seminal works by four renowned scholars that focus on issues such as diaspora, identities, languages and ethnicity, it additionally presents one article by Shu-mei Shi based on her previous theoretical works on the Sinophone as well as one previously unpublished article by Hai Jin. While Shu-mei Shi’s chapter is “a broad, programmatic piece to pave out a space for Sinophone studies” (25), the following chapter is a modified and reprinted version of Roy Chiao’s theoretical article “On Chineness as a Theoretical Problem” first published in 1998. This essay, together with Leon Ang’s “ground-breaking ‘Can One Say No to Chineness?’” (1998) also present in the volume, urges the reader to think critically and theoretically about the very notion of Chineness. Kim Chew Ng, a Chinese Malaysian scholar and fiction writer based in Taiwan, contributed a brilliant essay that explores language(s) from a Sinophone Malaysian perspective (i.e., vis-à-vis China’s Putonghua, but also in relation to Melayu, the national language of Malaysia), an issue both complex and fascinating. The following chapter by David Der-wei Wang focuses on loyalist and loyalist discourse in Sinophone writing from Taiwan. Both Ng and Wang’s articles were originally published in Chinese and are part of the political and social upheaval in the Anglophone readership for the first time, thanks to Brian Bernards’ skillful translations. “Exiled in English”, Hai Jin’s highly personal and beautifully written piece on issues of geographic exile and linguistic exile sees the perfect choice to close the section. Strictly speaking, Hai Jin who produces all his works in English and is, therefore, an Anglophone Chinese American writer, has chosen not to belong to the Sinophone realm. The “voluntary banishment of Mandarin in his stories” (22), however, compels us to take into serious consideration one of the natural possibilities of evolution of the Sinophone. Hai Jin’s choice is a reminder that “diaspora has an expiration date, and the vanishing of the Sinophone in various communities is part of the historical process of localization.” (22)

Discrepant perspectives

“Discrepant Perspectives,” the second section of the volume collects essays originally published in the 1990s, thus well before the Sinophone was theorized as such. However, this critical reader shows up a wealth of ideas that complete had these chapters not been incorporated into the anthology. In fact, “they in many ways lay the groundwork for the emergence of Sinophone studies in the twenty-first century,” as rightfully stated by Brian Bernards in his introduction to this second part of the volume (125). The authors of the four essays reprinted here all propose sound theoretical bases for the exploration of the diverse identities and possibilities that ethnocultural people outside China have at their disposal. “Chineseness: The Dilemmas of Place and Practice” (1999) by renowned Singaporean scholar and fiction writer Der-wei Wang offers a new interpretation of renowned author Lao She who, over the years, has influenced not only some of the Sinophone’s more prominent fiction writers but also some of the finer minds of the Sinophone is impressive and much-needed English-language overview of Sinophone writing from Taiwan. While Schiaffi’s essay acquaints the reader with the Sinophone Tibetan literature and the ways in which ethnically Tibetan authors use the language of the colonizer as a tool to affirm their Tibetan identity, the chapter by Rojas explores the issues of language and nationalism in the production of Sinophone Tibetan literature, a chapter which gives us an insight into “the formation of a ‘South Seas’ postcolonial discourse” (125). The multicultural and multilingual postcolonial experience in Singapore is, at times, a chapter that offers an intriguing insight into “Mowing Looking for Her Cat”, a controversial play by Kun Paa Kun on the limitations of Singapore’s multicultural policies. The remaining chapters explore several aspects of Sinophone literary figures writing from geographic and cultural environments as diverse as New Zealand, Europe, and the U.S. from a double periphery. Carlos Prado-Fonts, for instance, offers a new interpretation of renowned author Lao She who was, at different times, a Sinophone writer in England and a Manchu writer in China. In the chapter rounding up the third section, one of the main concerns of the Sinophone, namely, the multiplicity of responses by Chinese communities to local place and practice. Therefore, by taking Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and San Francisco as cases in point, Wang attempts to give an answer to the question of “[h]ow have the different communities of the diaspora changed in response to the demands of their adopted countries?” (133) and challenges the idea that there is only one way of conceptualizing, understanding and practicing Chinese identity. Wei-ming Tsu, author of “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center” (1991), shares his concern with the formation of the Sinophone (he focuses his attention of the ambiguities of the term ‘Chinese’) as well as the role and position of Chinese communities outside China vis-à-vis the Chinese center. Famous for his theorization of a ‘cultural China’ which encompasses Greater China, Chinese communities across the globe and everyone who tries “to understand China intellectually and culturally” (148), Tsu wishes to draw our attention away from the purely political division of the Sinophone by taking the Chinese center, by reminding us that the meaning of being Chinese is ultimately “a human concern pregnant with ethical religious implications” (155). In his “On the Margins of the Chinese discourse” (2002), Wang attempts to “construct an alternative paradigm for the Chinese diaspora in the United States” (157), and calls for the inclusion of Chinese American viewpoints and voices in this new paradigm in order to “fully understand the structure of dual domination” (178) shaped by the equally-manipulative American assimilationist discourse on the one hand and the Chinese loyalist one on the other.

Sites and articulations

“Sites and Articulations”, the third and longest section of the volume, is probably the most interesting for the reader, since it cover(s) polyphonic voices that constitute the major chorus of the Sinophone” (183). With an introduction jointly penned by editors Bernards and Chien-hsin Tsai and eighteen short chapters focusing on literature, the section centers on the practical use of Sinophone studies as a mode of academic investigation. In his essay, Wei-ming Tu focuses on loyalism and loyalist discourse in Sinophone writing from Taiwan. Both Ng and Wang’s articles were originally published in Chinese and are part of the political and social upheaval in the Anglophone readership for the first time, thanks to Brian Bernards’ skillful translations. “Exiled in English”, Hai Jin’s highly personal and beautifully written piece on issues of geographic exile and linguistic exile sees the perfect choice to close the section. Strictly speaking, Hai Jin who produces all his works in English and is, therefore, an Anglophone Chinese American writer, has chosen not to belong to the Sinophone realm. The “voluntary banishment of Mandarin in his stories” (22), however, compels us to take into serious consideration one of the natural possibilities of evolution of the Sinophone. Hai Jin’s choice is a reminder that “diaspora has an expiration date, and the vanishing of the Sinophone in various communities is part of the historical process of localization.” (22)

Antonio Paolillo is a teaching fellow in Chinese Studies at the Department of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh (antonio.paolillo@gmail.com)
Melaka revisited

Based on a wide range of unexplored contemporary Portuguese sources, this ambitious study aims to reconsider and to expound the Portuguese expansion at the heart of political, social and economic structures in Asia. In doing so, it expects to open new paths in the study of contact between civilisations that began at the end of the 15th century. This is all the more promising as the fog of ideologies and of the nagging aftermath of colonialism has, according to Pinto, been dispelled (xxii).

Niels Mulder

The Portuguese and the Straits of Melaka


IN VIEW OF THE WORKS OF HISTORIANS of Southeast Asia, we are in dire need of integrating the scattered studies and source materials, as up to now, Portuguese historiography appears to be ignorant of Malay, Dutch and other regional sources (Chinese, Japanese, Achehnese, Gujarati, Thai, etc.), at the same time that most historians are equally ignorant of Portuguese sources. Consequently, the history of the area prior to the arrival of northern Europeans is lacunary at best and basically remains terra incognita.

As a researcher and lecturer of Oriental Studies at the Catholic University of Portugal, the author hopes that his effort at integrating important historiography as well as a wide range of published and unpublished Portuguese sources will result in a more cosmopolitan historical view of the area; the current translation of his work is expected to be a major step in that direction.

The author approaches his subject through the analysis of the geopolitics of Melaka since it fell into the orbit of the Portuguese Estado da India and the local structures, especially Johor and Aceh, with which it interacted. The period in focus spans the half century from the lifting of the siege by Aceh and the loss of Temate as the centre of the spice trade in 1575, in the aftermath of Dutch Batavia that spelled the capture of Portuguese influence in the Straits. The analysis concentrates upon the political and geopolitical aspect to the detriment of an economic approach, even as trade, monoply and profit were the driving force behind Portuguese and competing explorations, conquests and subsequent exploits.

Contents

The historical survey proper is divided into five substantive chapters that deal with (1) the economy of Melaka in its global context as part of the Estado da India, and its gradual decline, or exhaustion of the Portuguese imperial ambitions. (2) Then, in the same context, the political and military framework, their tensions, changes and erosion, are described. (3) Follows the relation of the regional context of the western part of the Archipelago, which is subsequently (4) deepened by the dynamics of the precarious equilibrium between the rival powers Aceh, Johor and Portuguese Melaka. (5) The last

Shaping Indonesia

This well-researched and cogently presented study shows how images of an idealized China came to occupy a central place in Indonesia’s post-independence political discourse. Indonesian leaders during the Sukarno era, Liu contends, admired Mao’s China and sought from it “conceptual and practical inspiration” for their nation-building efforts.

Loo Kam Hing
Megan Brankley Abbas calls into question the common scholarly understanding of the Indonesian state. Herriman draws on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in East Java and as a result in Social control from below

In The Entangled State: Sorcery, State Control, and Violence in Indonesia, Nicholas Herriman draws on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in East Java and as a result calls into question the common scholarly understanding of the Indonesian state.

In the late 1950s, Pramoedya was impressed too by the productive and clean and public services that worked. And entering China from Hong Kong, Indonesian visitors encountered a way of life they to make sacrifices for the new nation. They saw cities that were and often times contradictory ways that the Indonesian state.

Locally planned and popular violence

Herriman argues that village-level state officials are not only representatives of the Indonesian state but are also residents of their respective villages and are therefore deeply embedded within the social networks and norms of the community. As a result, they feel sympathetic to the accused villagers and sometimes act as representatives of the villagers.

Discretion of the state

For the most part, The Entangled State is a convincing and much-needed corrective to prevailing depictions of the Indonesian state in the face of sorcery killings. Specifically, in which contexts were the killers of alleged sorcerers arrested and brought to trial? Who within the Indonesian state initiated these proceedings, and to what extent were representatives of the state divided over the legality and ethics of such cases? Moreover, the purged authorities by which Indonesian state officials sought to prevent or, after the fact, to adjudicate the killings of alleged sorcerers perhaps points to an unexamined source of state power: discretion. Did the specter of potential prosecution for retributive violence against sorcerers exact any control over villagers? Over village officials?

Despite the above-mentioned critique, Nicholas Herriman's ethnographic study of sorcery in East Java provides a nuanced glimpse into a fascinating moment in recent Indonesian history and contributes an important voice to the ongoing debate about the Indonesian state's response to sorcery killings.
Aspects of manuscript culture in South India

Our knowledge of South Indian texts, including those aged more than a millennium, is based on manuscripts that are generally speaking seldom older than 3 or 4 centuries. These texts did however set forth a tradition that significantly influenced Asian scholarship and culture. In order to advance our expertise with reference to these manuscripts as text sources it is of great importance to research their historical origins, production, distribution and acquisition, both in the past and present.

Peter Richardus

Peter Richardus (prichardus@freeer.nl)


In Chapter 13, Kenneth Z. Zysk gives a brief survey of manuscript collections in India and abroad, and illustrates how cataloguing Sanskrit manuscripts can enhance the regional and general intellectual history of India.

On relatively small manuscripts collections

In Chapter 5, Masato Fujii discusses the research concerning the Jaiminiya Sāmaveda traditions and the role played by the manuscripts on the Sāmaveda (the third of the four Vedas) in the past and at present. The rare Jaiminiya version of the Sāmaveda is found only in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Extensive field work resulted in a historical and geographical survey of the Jaiminiya traditions whereby significant information on the brahmanical erudition and manuscript culture at the level of South Indian villages was revealed.

In Chapter 2 Saraju Rath discusses not only the origins of M.A.J. van Manen's Sanskrit palm manuscripts collection but also how and why they were acquired from c. 1928 onwards. Their arrival in Leiden was the result of a collaboration between Johan van Manen (the then General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal) and Prof. J. Ph. Vogel, the founder of the Indological Institute Kern (Leiden, 1925). The author sketches their life and work of van Manen and gives us an interesting survey of the European context with regard to the Johan van Manen Collection. The 588 South Indian palm leaf manuscripts dating from the 16th or 17th century include texts on Vedic ritual, philosophical texts, epics, and even information on medical topics. A complete list of titles is available through a Timeline Manuscript Culture in India representing the temporal contours and the main parameters of competing means of textual transmission. In Chapter 7. This project carries out research into the numerous aspects of Mahābhārata plays. It may be added here that the UNESCO awarded an example of this tradition, Kuttayattam, with the title “Masterpiece of the Oral and Tangible Heritage of Humanity.” The accumulated documentation with a reference to this Sanskrit theatre tradition includes c. 300 hours of footage and thousands of photographs. For the most recent status of this research group visit: www.indologie.uniwurzburg.de/bhasa/rahmen.

The publication

The Editor of Aspects of Manuscript Culture in South India has indeed achieved the following objectives: (a) researching the production, distribution and collection of palm leaf manuscripts in the past and present, (b) enhancing the quality and quantity of data on the rich history of manuscripts to be found in various present-day collections both within and outside India and (c) exploring the background of the Johan van Manen Collection.

Brill's Indological Library Volume 40 presents us with a state-of-the-art publication that includes an innovation: a selection of the b/w illustrations (including folios from manuscripts, field photographs, and maps) first inserted in their respective chapters return in the final section of the book, but now in full colour. The research under review here is the outcome of an international workshop organized at the International Institute for Asian Studies (Leiden) in 2007. It will be of interest to scholars and to students active in the fields of indology, manuscriptology, paleography, the cultural-cum-intellectual history of South Asia, oral traditions and memory culture. The fact that it is dedicated to the Dutch orientalist Johan van Manen (1887-1943) is therefore all the more appropriate.

Peter Richardus

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The Newsletter | No. 66 | Winter 2013
Tides of *tagunggu*. Of Sama Dilaut lifeworlds, gongs, and plastic bottles

The so-called gong-chime belt of Southeast Asia is home to a great cultural diversity. Different cultural groups, sometimes occupying borderland areas and stretching over several sides of today’s national borders, are connected with one another across this territory through their practice of different, yet recognizably related, styles of gong playing. Attempts to relate to one another musically, and how gong ensemble repertoire is a favored means to do so, can be observed on the occasion of the many cultural festivals held recurrently in the region. Here, cultural groups musically situate themselves in the larger region while at the same time emphasizing their usually localized musical uniqueness in order to firmly affirm their place within their wider cultural context.

**Birgit Abels**

HOWEVER, LOCAL IS NOT NECESSARILY a primary reference for identity construction. For the Sama Dilaut, for instance, inhabiting a heartland of the gong-chime belt, the Southeast Asian island world, the transformation of musical meaning is dependent on movement much more than on place: even more, through moving music, they make sense of their world. One of the Sama (or Sinar), speaking maritime peoples making up one of the most widespread cultural groups within Southeast Asia, they are also referred to as the ‘Bajaus Laut’, especially in Bone’s Sabah: ‘Sea Sama’. While other Sama communities characterized by specific shoreline settlements of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the so-called sea-nomadic Sama Dilaut feel at home in a territory that for them is defined by a set of sacred locations, kinship networks, and historical sites. The Sama Dilaut lifeworlds stretch from the Southern Philippines to Eastern Borneo, with several small groups extending farther East and West. Customarily, the Sama Dilaut have been living on house-boats, scrounging the Sulu and Celebes Seas for rich fishing grounds and continuously following their staple food’s natural movement.

Today, this holy contested region is affected by the politics of the nation states drawing their borders through the area across which the Sama Dilaut customarily move, Malaysia and the Philippines. In addition, the group’s relationship with the shore communities, on which they depend economically, has been difficult. They face open discrimination and economic exploitation from their sedentary neighboring communities. This is one more reason for many Sama Dilaut to treasure their maritime mobility literally as an emergency exit open to them at all times, should they need to escape from violence. Integrating and negotiating categories that, for their neighbors, are incommensurable, the Sama Dilaut make sense of the world not by means of maps, historiographies, and status quo, but by means of itineraries, relationship networks, chains of events—and the performing arts, which enable them to carve out temporary musical niches of stability and belonging.

**Cultural identity**

In the construction of their cultural identity, therefore, music and dance play an important role. In this, *tagunggu* holds a special position, being the gong music that creates a space for the contemporary lifeworld of the Sama Dilaut to be negotiated and acted out sonically. Music and dance are central to Sama Dilaut identity negotiation and maintenance of cultural memory: they have always moved with the Sama Dilaut and they continue to do so, encountering, challenging, generating, and (re-)constructing meaning along the way. For the Sama Dilaut, specific situations require the performance of specific repertoires, which are usually *tagunggu* music (listen to sound example 1). With their life-ways continuously changing, *tagunggu* has also become a concept: *tagunggu* may at times be performed by two musicians each playing a kulintangan (gong) part on the same keyboard synthesizer, as they would when performing on a gong set, and the traditional drum tambul. In fact the kulintangan may even be replaced by empty plastic bottles if no instrument is around, as it is often the case in the tiny communities living largely outside the wage labor system—for instance on boats or very small islands (listen to sound example 2). By broadening the concept of *tagunggu* to include a wider range of musical realizations of the repertoire, the Sama Dilaut are capable of keeping their transforming lifeworld and their traditional worldview integrated; in this way firmly situating themselves in the larger cultural context. Bridging individuals, groups, and the various spaces and places across which Sama Dilaut life unfolds, musical concepts such as specific melodic movements and rhythmic patterns may take on meanings that renew the old ones as well as the newly encountered ones.

Sama Dilaut cultural identity is floating, a metaphorical description that not only emphasizes its relationship to space, but also is in accordance with the role of the sea in the Sama Dilaut lifeworlds. Sama Dilaut identity is continually reconstructed in a mode of negotiation that finds its most relevant reference in a continuous movement, in a space that is intrinsically mobile. Music and dance are direct conduits for the expression of these reconstructions that localize the Self ‘in-between’ rather than ‘here’ or ‘there’—as primarily ever-moving and secondarily interstitial, that is. Here, musical meaning, which is at the same time always musical meaning-in-the-making, is in this sense not found primarily in musical roots, but in musical routes, to paraphrase Paul Gilroy. In the case of the Sama Dilaut, it is not so much the stops on the way that make the ‘route’, but the experience of moving through perpetually changing interstices.

**The musical meaning of *tagunggu***

This importance given to movement across interstices as the primary space in which cultural change takes place makes the Sama Dilaut performing arts a particularly suitable case study to sound out the usefulness of spatial theory in the analysis of musical transformations moving across interstices. The musical meaning of *tagunggu* is constantly being reconfigured, which is why *tagunggu*, perhaps more than any other Sama Dilaut cultural practice, makes audibly barely noticed, but nonetheless vital statements about who the Sama Dilaut, at a given moment and place, feel they are. In linking the performative dynamics of cultural identity construction with traditional Sama Dilaut musical concepts of sound and movement (which are rooted in the sensory experience of traveling and making music) at sea, the sense-scape that they create by moving and dancing interweaves as an interface of self and spatial reality; a distinctly Sama Dilaut alternative reality. This, I argue, is based on a partly physical sensibility that is fundamental to an experiential truth which, for the Sama Dilaut, goes way beyond a contestation of public space. Not only is this reflected in music and dance; rather, music and dance serve as a means to perform Sama Dilaut cultural identity beyond geographical frames of reference.

At the same time, Sama Dilaut music continues to be very much alive. Melody-playing on gong instruments, and indeed tonal space in general, continues to be conceptualized and described in spatial terms: “Don’t think about which gong you should be hitting, think about how your hands should be moving”, a Sama Dilaut woman whom I call Samantha told me. Then again, starting with the introduction of the keyboard synthesizer in the second half of the 20th century, the diatonic tonal system has become common in those genres of vocal music that are accompanied with it. But Sama Dilaut tend to appreciate pitch in terms of pitch spectrums rather than distinct pitches, which makes perfect sense when you conceive of melodic movement as based on the spatial horizontal movement afforded by gong instruments; the diatonic tonal system is easily accommodated within such traditional ways of structuring pitch.

What is more important than the intervallic implications of using a keyboard synthesizer though, in the case of Sama Dilaut music-making, is actual playing practice: usually, two musicians will be standing behind the keyboard, each playing with one finger of each hand, imitating the hand movement typical for *tagunggu* playing. Playing the synthesizer, in this way, becomes a performative evocation of both a traditional musical practice and Sama Dilaut alternative spatiality. This detail firmly contextualizes contemporary musicking, both musically and spatially, as distinctly Sama Dilaut—no matter whether you’re playing on a carefully crafted kulintangan, a keyboard synthesizer, or that old plastic bottle. *Tagunggu* may be a musical genre, but perhaps more importantly, for the Sama Dilaut, it is a way of conmeming with, and making sense of, the world.

**Birgit Abels** was an IAS Affiliated Fellow, sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, from October 2007 to February 2010 (IAS.nl/profiles/birgit-abels). At the Third ICAS Book Prize (2009), Birgit was awarded the ‘Best PhD Humanities’ prize, for her dissertation ‘Sounds of Articulating Identity: Tradition and Transition in the Music of Pulau’; consequently she was a member of the Reading Committee for the 2011 and 2013 ICAS Book Prizes. Birgit Abels is a cultural musicologist, and current Director of the Department of Musicology, at the University of Göttingen in Germany, where she is also the editor-in-chief of the journal ‘The World of Music’.

1 The two sound samples can be accessed from the online version of this article.
The Maharaja of Baroda (Western India), Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1875-1939), was an active art collector, and lender to colonial exhibitions. His collecting practices represented high artists, artisans and institutional projects, which in turn articulated ideas of a highly original, alternative modernism. This modern art project subsequently also shaped ideas of nation-building. As a research fellow at IAS, I set about to expand our understanding of princely India’s stellar contribution to discourses of modernization and nationalism through art collecting.

**Alternative modernity: re-imagining Asia and Africa**

Priya Mahaloy-Jaradi

The Maharaja of Baroda (Western India), Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1875-1939), was an active art collector, and lender to colonial exhibitions. His collecting practices represented high artists, artisans and institutional projects, which in turn articulated ideas of a highly original, alternative modernism. This modern art project subsequently also shaped ideas of nation-building. As a research fellow at IAS, I set about to expand our understanding of princely India’s stellar contribution to discourses of modernization and nationalism through art collecting.

Re-imagining the collections

Today, as the relevance of these acquisitions is questioned, and ethnographic museums are seen as mere colonial projects, full victim to budget-cuts in the European Union, twelve curators across the continent have come together in a moment of “introspection”, informs Laura Van Broekhoven, curator at the Museum Volkenkunde and co-curator of the travelling exhibition, FM. FM re-imagines its collections in new configurations. Each exhibition has emerged from its conventional category and taxonomy to be viewed afresh, thereby allowing multiple, alternative readings. FM also searches the original context of production or the social changes in their physical form. The accompanying catalogue offers expanded discussions on select exhibits such as the Wahgi shields of the people of Papua New Guinea. New shields produced in the modern age by 1970s redploy logos and text from Western advertisements. The usage of the words ‘Cradle Cup’ signifies the sponsorship of rugby matches by the Maharaja’s Wahgi clan that engage in warfare become analogous to the competitive rugby teams.

In stark contrast to this appropriation of western culture, FM addresses the long-standing tension created by the ‘borrowing’ of indigenous design by European practitioners. This archiving of objects as ‘designer’ sticker offers ample scope to reflect on the emulation of stools produced for the past 300 years by the Asante people in Ghana. As Gaganendranath Tagore’s usage of cubist principles was derivative and compromising. If FM is to be read in conjunction with these contemporary writings on art history, it is clear that the western construct of modernity has not only denied the non-west its innovative moments, but has even rectified its own indigenous experiences on the strength of superior African and Asian artworks. To redress this hitherto inverse relationship between modernity and the non-west, FM includes plural voices, locations, moments and materials. Its video loops record interactions of community members on what modernity means to them. Likewise, contemporary practitioners are invited to comment on the discourse of modernity through their artworks.

Breaking from convention

While I had made my way to the Museum Volkenkunde to see FM, my friend came to see FM, my friend complained about the one-way path, my friend thought FM should have had a neat one-way circumambulatory layout. My friend thought FM should have occupied a specially designated space. The visitor; however, I saw a meaningful revisit to search for original contexts.

Barbara Ramusack’s work helped me realise how the story of princely India in these discourses was underplayed; her emphasis on augmentation of archival research gave me the added confidence to carry the Baroda story further with a data laboriously collected from provincial archives. Alongside this academic work, I tasked myself to explore Leiden on foot, to see its many museums and experience the European summer in this “quaint university town”, a picture impressed upon me by Wikipedia and Lonely Planet. The first batch of materials in my hand, even before Ramusack’s book, was a folder handed over by the exhibition accommodation office – manuals and the Leiden city guide were part of it. I spotted and short-listed Fetish Modernity (FM) an exhibition showing at the Museum Volkenkunde as a must-do. From here began my journey to position ‘alternative modernity’ along the twisted axes of colonial India/Asia (through my post-doctoral work) and contemporary Europe (through the exhibition).

An evolving provenance

This article summarises my two trajectories: on the one hand I profile my protagonist, a Maharaja of colonial India, representing the idea of a peripheral modernity by becoming an active lender to colonial exhibitions across Europe; on the other, the article reviews FM to assess a post-colonial situation in which European museums are engaging with a re-imagination of their colonial-ethnographic collections to appreciate the fact that Europe was never the sole centre for modernism. Modern conditions existed in Asia and Africa too; moreover, these peripheral geographies absorbed and countered Eurocentric modernism in their own creative ways.

So in effect, both the Maharaja of Baroda and the curators of FM map locations of modernity outside Europe and bring forth alternative modernity through their artworks. My friend thought FM should have occupied a specially designated floor in the museum to allow time for a complete re-orientation on the part of the visitor; however, I saw a meaningful contrast in its juxtaposition with Liefkes’ exhibition that pushes its viewers to make alternative assessments of given objects and cultures. My friend thought FM should have occupied a specially designated floor in the museum to allow time for a complete re-orientation on the part of the visitor; however, I saw a meaningful contrast in its juxtaposition with Liefkes’ exhibition. Perhaps I was over reading ethnography into this accommodation to European practitioners, as the Maharaja had permitted his collection to grow, issues of decolonization, Asian-African modernities, and cultures. My friend thought FM should have occupied a specially designated floor in the museum to allow time for a complete re-orientation on the part of the visitor; however, I saw a meaningful contrast in its juxtaposition with Liefkes’ exhibition. Perhaps I was over reading ethnography into this accommodation to European practitioners, as the Maharaja had permitted his collection to grow, issues of decolonization, Asian-African modernities, and cultures.

Notes

Dealing with colonial paradigms

At present, the countries of Southeast Asia face substantial gaps of knowledge regarding their earliest history. Located between the powerhouses of China and India and demarcated by colonial-era borders, the region has obtained its conceptual validity due mostly to 20th-century geopolitical developments, although Southeast Asians can rightfully defend the analytical legitimacy of their field by emphasizing shared cultural practices, agricultural systems, historical developments and contemporary transnational phenomena. Of the upper class, shaped by Sanskrit-speaking elites, towards a fuller appreciation of interaction between these two culturally diverse regions is reconstructed from historical linguistics, lexical borrowing and the distribution of biological, cultural and technological items designated by the ‘travelling’ loanwords under comparison. Doing so inevitably involves a departure from the focus of the upper class, shaped by Sanskrit-speaking elites, towards a fuller appreciation of the roles played by sailors, merchants and craftsmen in the introduction of Indian concepts into Southeast Asia.

The author’s research aims to cast a new light on the oft-neglected vernacular dimension of pre-modern contact between India and Southeast Asia. The nature of interaction between these two culturally diverse regions is reconstructed from historical linguistics, lexical borrowing and the distribution of biological, cultural and technological items designated by the ‘travelling’ loanwords under comparison. Present in some medieval inscriptions, never obtained the literary prestige accorded to Sanskrit) tend to denote items regarded as trade, technology and other aspects of everyday life, marking a clear contrast to the more abstract concepts, scholarly terms and luxury loans for which people preferred to draw upon Sanskrit.

While his new-found role for agency and active Southeast Asian participation in the eastward exchange of commodities, we may also begin to revise cultural transmissions in the opposite direction. The spatio-temporal reach of these loanwords is now best documented by colonial-era borders, the region has obtained its conceptual validity due mostly to 20th-century geopolitical developments, although Southeast Asians can rightfully defend the analytical legitimacy of their field by emphasizing shared cultural practices, agricultural systems, historical developments and contemporary transnational phenomena.

Regional developments and contemporary transnational phenomena. Of the upper class, shaped by Sanskrit-speaking elites, towards a fuller appreciation of interaction between these two culturally diverse regions is reconstructed from historical linguistics, lexical borrowing and the distribution of biological, cultural and technological items designated by the ‘travelling’ loanwords under comparison. Doing so inevitably involves a departure from the focus of the upper class, shaped by Sanskrit-speaking elites, towards a fuller appreciation of the roles played by sailors, merchants and craftsmen in the introduction of Indian concepts into Southeast Asia.

The linguistic record strongly suggests that speakers of Malay played a key role in these interregional transactions. It has long been known that this language was instrumental in the dispersal of Indian and Middle Eastern loanwords among much of Southeast Asia. While many of Southeast Asia’s early kingdoms were Malay-speaking, the main reason for the transnational success of this language was its susceptibility to external influence. Up to this day, Malay both gives and takes vocabulary from languages in contact and is used as a lingua franca between people of various ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Examples of widespread Malay loanwords include damar ‘treasure’, jemur ‘whip’ and sago ‘sago’. More research on the literary traditions of the Indian Ocean may help us to determine at which point in time these words started to travel outside the Malay World.

Re-appreciating Southeast Asia’s antiquity

The study of pre-colonial history and archaeology is gradually gaining ground in Southeast Asia. While ancient heritage has been used since independence to bolster nation-building and tourism, new developments in demilitarisation, stability, economic growth, political integration and travelling opportunities have provided Southeast Asians with an increased awareness of their shared regional history. This is something to which the field of historical linguistics has the potential to provide important clues to cultural contact, especially when textual evidence is absent or chiefly preoccupied with the exploits of the elite. A study of vocabulary, after all, is one of the most efficient ways to learn what common people – all too often neglected in mainstream history – cultivated, ate, bought, sold and did in a pre-literary society.

Tom Hoogervorst is a post-doctoral researcher at the Netherland Institute for Advanced Study (KNAW) in Leiden. He was formerly affiliated with the IAS on a Gonda Foundation scholarship, where he conducted a significant part of his ongoing research on cultural contact between South and Southeast Asia. His academic interests include Southeast Asian linguistics and archaeology in their broadest sense.

Tom Hoogervorst
At present, no expense is spared for the regeneration of the Uzbek capital; national and international resources are being used to create the skyline of modern Tashkent. Importantly, Timurid (14th century) and Shaybanid (16th century) architectural styles have been used to construct a modern Uzbek identity. Although Samarkand was the main Timurid capital and Bukhara the Shaybanid stronghold, Tashkent has become the emblem of everything that is new and modern in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Like an architectural palimpsest, the Timurid and Shaybanid past is used to define the present political and religious agenda of independent Uzbekistan.

The independent boom
During the second half of the 19th century, the New City of Tashkent was founded to the east of the Anhor canal. The urban plan of this rapidly expanding city was determined by the Tsarist Russian administration, which was ruling Turkestan at the time. The New Tashkent had a fan-shaped layout with wide avenues organised around a nucleus, known today as the Amir Timur Square (fig.1). The square has become the ideological centre of the city. Ever since this major addition to the urban layout of Tashkent, the metropolis has remained divided into the Old City and the New City. The two parts differ in their architecture, urban plan and amenities and have never functioned as a whole.

With the independence of Uzbekistan, proclaimed on 3 September 1991, the skyline of Tashkent changed dramatically. The most characteristic feature of the present architectural boom is that the majority of the buildings draw inspiration from the glorious Timurid and Shaybanid past. Two major sites, recently built, are the Palace of International Forums (2009) situated in the New City, and the Khazrat Imam Complex (2007) in the Old City. Their symbolism is evident. On the one hand, the Palace facing the horse statue of Timur underlines his status as the great national hero. On the other hand, the Barak Khan Madrasa, recently built around the mausoleum of Sujunidz Khan in the period 1530-1550. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and the seat of the mufti were housed in the Barak Khan Madrasa from 1950 to 2007.

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The Khazrat Imam Complex
In January 2007 the International Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) declared Tashkent one of the four capitals of Islamic culture. The Khazrat Imam Complex - the oldest and holiest site in Tashkent - was chosen to commemorate the occasion. The new building activity transformed the image of the Old City and created a large-scale pilgrimage site in what used to be a remote area, off the beaten track, amidst narrow streets of mud-brick housing. The most important construction within the complex was the new Khazrat Imam Mosque built by the Uzbek president Islam Karimov (fig.2).

With the Khazrat Imam Complex, Karimov created a centre for the Old City, which no other urban planner before him had managed to achieve. By drastically modernising the Old City, especially its most religious and sacred Kern, a new tolerance towards Islam was availed, which had probably been unthinkable during the early years of Uzbek independence. Furthermore, the building project was characterised by direct citations of Timurid and Shaybanid iconography and urban planning.

The Khazrat Imam Complex evolved around the mausoleum of Kaffel Shashi (d. 976/77), one of the first imams of the Shafi'i school of Sunnism. During the sixteenth century, when Tashkent gained cultural and commercial importance under the Shaybanid dynasty, a new mausoleum for Kaffel Shashi was built in 1541-42, known at present as the Khazrat Imam (fig.3). The mausoleum of Sujunidz Khan (d. 1525), the first Shaybanid ruler of Tashkent, was erected in the cemetery that evolved to the south of the Kaffel Shashi burial site. The Barak Khan Madrasa was built around the mausoleum of Sujunidz Khan in the period 1530-1550. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and the seat of the mufti were housed in the Barak Khan Madrasa from 1950 to 2007.

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The mosque was conceived as the flagstone of Timurid craftsmanship and architectural ingenuity. The addition of the three domes to the Barak Khan Madrasa makes a very clear architectural reference to the Bibi Khanum Mosque. Furthermore, the two domes above the vestibule also refer iconographically to the Shaybanid Mir Arab Madrasa (1535-1536) in Bukhara. The two side domes, characteristic of the Mir Arab Madrasa, are repeated on the main façade of the Barak Khan Madrasa and on the main façade of the new Khazrat Imam Mosque. By utilising architectural elements of previous key monuments of the Timurid and Shaybanid dynasties, the modern Uzbek artistic elite aspires to the status of powerful leaders, creating artefacts on the same grand-scale as their predecessors.

As architectural emblems of the former capitals of Bukhara and Samarkand, these monuments are reused in an attempt to legitimise the political and religious power in Tashkent, the capital of modern Uzbekistan. This process can be defined as architectural palimpsest. The outcome is a mix of Timurid, Shaybanid and modern Uzbek iconography, meant to unify national traditions. The popular Khazrat Imam Mosque is visited both by local people and by governmental officials on state visits. The Khazrat Imam Complex was the key architectural achievement of modern Uzbek architecture in 2007.
Its success and popularity with the local population proved to be a determinant in the presidential elections in December of that same year. With the Khazarat Imam Complex the long-anticipated centre of the Old City was finally created.

The Palace of International Forums “Uzbekistan”
The present Amir Timur Square has been regarded as the ideological centre of Tashkent ever since 1882. The site was chosen at the crossing point of the Moscow and Kaufman avenues, which followed the trading routes of the Silk Road. The Moscow avenue followed the caravan route to Kashgar and further to China, and the Kaufman avenue was laid out along the road to Kokand, situated in the Fergana valley. The square was regarded as the centre of Russian rule in the nineteenth century. In 1913 the monument of the Turkestan governor Kaufman was marked with a plaque reading: “General Kaufman and the Army that Conquered Central Asia”. Then, following the October Socialist Revolution in 1917, the Kaufman monument was dismantled (1919). In 1930 a bust of Lenin was erected on the square for a short time, which was subsequently replaced by a statue of Stalin at the end of the 1940s. After considerable Soviet reconstruction during the 1950s, a monument of Karl Marx was instituted in 1968. The Karl Marx monument was dismantled in 1993 as it did not represent the ideology of the new Uzbek state. In 1993, celebrating the anniversary of the Uzbek independence, the bronze horse statue of Amir Timur was revealed and the square adopted its present name. Amir Timur was proclaimed the symbol of Uzbek national identity. Once the pro-Timurid direction of cultural production and activities in modern Uzbekistan became manifest, the Amir Timur Square was adorned with the Timurid Museum (1996) and the Palace of International Forums in 2009.

The Palace of International Forums “Uzbekistan” was completed in an exceptionally short timeframe of only six months. Its doors opened on 2 September 2009 to coincide with the celebrations of the Uzbek Independence Day on 1 September, and with Tashkent’s 2,200th anniversary. The client of the project was the ‘Republic of Uzbekistan’. The country’s most important representative building is designed for congresses, conferences and cultural events. Commissions in March 2009, the German architectural bureau Ippolito Fleitz Group3 created a contemporary interior while incorporating elements from traditional Uzbek architecture. Their interior design won the ‘Best Architects 11 Award’.4

The exterior of the building is colossal and robust. The glazed façade is decorated with white columns of Thassios marble with traditional Uzbek capitals. The massive, semi-circular corners remind one of the gigantic guldasta (corner towers) of the Timurid Yasawi Shrine (14th century). An elaborate cornice executed in white marble finishes off the exterior wall. A Shaybanid architectural quotation comes in the form of the solar detail (below) taken from the tympanum of the Shir-Dar Madrasa in Samarkand, and is used here on two rectangular niches on the façade facing the Amir Timur Square.

The surface area of the palace measures 40,000 square metres, spread across four levels. Millions of Swarovski crystals were used for the chandeliers, precious metals were incorporated into the design, and 850 eight-pointed marble stars were inlayed in 18 natural stone formats. The most characteristic design feature of the foyer is the massive twenty-three metres long chandelier executed in 1.1 million Swarovski crystals. Another eight spherical chandeliers decorate the gallery (fig.5).

Protruding into the gallery, the exterior of the auditorium with 1,850 seats forms an organic counterpart to the strict geometrical design of the façade and the sixteen-meter high window axes. The seats are upholstered in turquoise blue. This is a metaphor for the lapis lazuli, a colour that has become indigenous to Timurid architecture and has been widely used for glazed tiles and ribbed domes in Samarkand. The carpets are hand-woven, referring to the century-old carpet industry of Uzbekistan. The palace is a masterpiece of white marble. The magnitude of the project, the choice of the most expensive materials and the global character of the project logistics only testify that no expense was spared throughout the construction.

Conclusion
This sketch is a modest attempt to shed more light on the building activities in Tashkent during the last decade. It stresses the importance of the Timurid and Shaybanid heritage for the formation of the architectural landscape of Tashkent. The new constructions range from complex religious compounds to public buildings. The style is eclectic. While the majority of the earlier renovations were carried out by local artisans and architects, there is a tendency in the last couple of years to open the state commissions to foreign companies. As a result, new architectural gems have been created by using the latest technology. Obviously, the state assets are used for creating the new image of independent Uzbekistan as a reliable business partner on a global scale.

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Notes
1 ISESCO was established by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in May 1979. ISESCO is one of the largest international Islamic organizations specialising in the fields of education, science & culture. Its headquarters are in Rabat, Morocco.
2 Uzbekistan’s highest religious leader.
3 The information in this article is based on the Ippolito Fleitz Group’s press release on the Palace of International Forums.
4 Architectural award for the best and most interesting project of German/austrian/swiss architects. For more information, please refer to the award website at: http://bestarchitects.de/award/info.html.
A major disciplinary interest of anthropology is how to understand, conceptualize and theorize cultural continuity, change and radical transformation. This effort has been achieved under various rubrics such as 'post colonialism', 'modernity' or the rise of the 'global capitalist system'. In this essay, I explore social continuities and change through a discussion of the ways in which labor is gendered in the rapidly growing corporate-led mass-tourism industry of Bali. I position gender as one of the structuring principles of the Balinese labor market and tie it to inventive uses of land as capital in this new economy. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in two fishing villages on Jimbaran Bay in 2003/4 and 2010, I argue that local models of gender, embedded in social relations and organization, impact men and women's participation in this 'new world of work'.

Annette Fagertun

PARTICIPATION in the rapidly growing economy can open new paths for social mobility in this Hindu-Balinese caste based society. Access to the new labor market, and a position within it, can open new paths for social mobility in this Hindu-Balinese caste based society. The competition of 'modern' goods and lifestyles, we also witness an increased assertion of the work as 'helping out others'. This flexibility accommodates all their (other) work-duties in the household, and this 'global tourist resort', but it is also a substantial increase in income for some Balinese villagers.

Above: Village ceremony - the Bali-Thomas cultural life is elaborate and intensive.

Tourism as an agent of change

Today the travel and tourism industry is amongst the world's largest industries, and the Asia-Pacific region is the world's fastest growing tourist destination. Tourism as an 'economic engine' has become an alternative source for growth, contributing substantially to developing economies in the global south. It is also a labor intensive industry, which in Bali has been encouraged and justified for its potential to increase employment opportunities and thus develop the island economy. Bali's rapid economic growth since the mid-1980s is mainly the result of mass-tourism. In Bali, a small island with a population of about 3.9 million, tourism accounts for about half the economy and employs more than half of the workforce. Labor migrants account for about ten percent of the population, and about two and a half million tourists from all over the world visit the island every year. The tourism and service sector is a composite industry involving transport, accommodation, catering, entertainment, natural resources as well as other facilities and services like shopping malls, golf courses, parks, etc.

Tourism began in Bali with the Dutch colonization of the island in 1908, but it was during the New Order period of President Suharto (1986-1998) that it really developed. Bali was viewed by Dutch orientalists as a 'living museum' of the Hindu-Javanese civilization that had been swept away from Java by the coming of Islam, a view which informed the colonial policy of the preservation of this cultural heritage (Baliwire). The island of Bali has been conceived ever since as 'the Island of the Gods' and the 'Paradise Island'. However, where culture is 'heritage' to be preserved, it is also a major capital to exploit for profit. While the Balinese people try to make a livelihood by turning cultural practices into commodities for tourists, these practices might in the end become indigenized as 'tradition' and 'authentic culture' and form the basis for asserting a new cultural identity and new cultural practices.

When local communities develop as a result of tourism, one will see traditions, culture and the past continuously reinvented in order to uphold the image created through the visitor's gaze; simultaneously, material culture, people and places undergo commodification for the purpose of the global market.

The 'new world of work'

Of course, 'culture' is not the only thing being commodified, or the only 'object' exploited for profit, in the new economy. A general shift from subsistence economy to wage labor on the island, as in rural Southeast Asia in general, has led to the commodification of labor - labor in the abstract, as something that people 'own' and can choose to sell for a wage. With the tourist-boom in Bali, and the consequent expansion of the formal and informal service sectors of the economy, a range of new types of labor emerged and labor migrants from all over Indonesia started to arrive in large numbers. The level of employment in these sectors is indeed high, yet in Bali it is also highly structured according to gender, caste and class. While we do see that social mobility is increased through the emergence of new ways to earn a living, therefore managing many Balinese with the base for participation as consumers of 'modern' goods and lifestyles, we also witness an increased social stratification among local communities. The competition for work in the tourism industry is fierce, and the majority of local villagers tend to compete with unskilled migrants for unskilled, manual and low-paying jobs, in informal sectors such as construction, laundry, gardening or maintenance at hotels, in restaurants in the spa and tour guide sector, while the well-paying positions in the formal/service sector are filled by skilled migrants and expatriates.

Gender and land

Within this process land has become capital that can be exploited for profit. In Bali, agricultural land is rapidly converted into tourist facilities; people sell their land to investment companies, hotel chains, and foreigners who seek business opportunities or who are looking for a holiday home. The massive conversion of land into 'concrete forests' is a way to accommodate the rapidly expanding tourism industry in this 'global tourist resort', but it is also a substantial increase in income for some Balinese villagers.

Such land conversions may have many deep and implications for local people’s lives. For one, the ownership and rights to land are being contested. One of the foremost issues that has already created serious situations of land deprivation for local villagers and spurred deep conflicts between family members and villagers. Originally it was only land that was being sold off to the tourism industry; but these days all types, including agricultural and grazing land, and even forests, are being sold or leased. Selling land has become a good business – for men. Land is traditionally owned by men and men inherit land through their fathers, in accordance with the Balinese patrilineal kinship system. However, married women can access land through their husbands/brothers/fathers and on Jimbaran Bay, a new form of land use has turned into a good business for some village women.

Unskilled labor migrants from all over Indonesia arrive in Bali in large numbers. Most of these migrants cannot afford to buy or rent a house; they need to find a place to live. This has become a new niche for many village women. They build boarding-houses (kost) on their compound land and rent out rooms to migrants, profiting from their housing needs. These women are thus self-employed in the informal sector of the new economy; they have found a ‘micro-niche’ based on their access to attractive and cheap land, which provides them with a steady monthly income and a secure future. This reality gives them opportunities to participate as consumers in the new economy and climb the social ladder.

The gender of labor

While women tend to engage in labor within the domestic sphere - as landladies, maids, running small shops close to the house - men tend to monopolize jobs that involve greater spatial and temporal mobility, such as fishermen, taxi drivers, guides and gardeners. In Bali this is closely connected to local configurations of gender, imbued with sexual double-standards, which make women particularly vulnerable to sexual insinuation and gossip through their association with the tourism industry. Local women, especially those who are married, are therefore reluctant to take on employment in the tourist sector and are doubly - as women and unskilled - restricted from participation in the formal sector of the new economy. Women’s work often takes on a ‘flexible form’, which accommodates all their (other) work-duties in the household, and is culturally construed as ‘helping out others’. This flexibility is conditioned by the principle of gender, which informs the division of labor between the sexes – where women’s roles have primarily been inside the household, and men’s outside the household.

Even as more women are engaging in waged labor nowadays, the aspect of ‘helping out others’ still continues. This might be conceived as representing continuity in gender models in a situation of rapid transformation in people’s everyday labor situation. A common way for local women to justify their income and having remunerative employment, is their wish to ‘help’ their husbands with the family’s expenses. Taxi drivers or guides, who in the low season might struggle to make ends meet. Men agree that their wives’ employment is a help to them; it is not necessary, but it is welcome.

Men’s and women’s jobs are not always different – we find, for example, that both men and women can take positions or work in laundries – however, as Strathern put it, “…what is portrayed as the ends to which the labour is put.” Arguably, it is not only the form of work itself, but the gendered moralities of work, through which work is organized and described meaning, that form women’s flexible work situation. Moreover, and perhaps as a consequence, women are invested with what I have elsewhere termed ‘encompassed agency’: women’s wage work is considered of lesser value than that of men, and is limited to ‘helping’ by the imperative status of the work of men as ‘providers’.

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Notes

Sufism and the secular state: the South Asian experience

Over the last two decades, since the appearance of a special issue of *The Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai) on secularism (1994), Indian intellectuals have intensely debated the question as to whether one can speak of a South Asian or Indian variant of secularism. Proponents of such a view (e.g., Rajeev Barghava) take it for granted both that the concept of secularism historically emerged in a European context, and that the experience of European states with secularism has frequently been fraught with contradictions, since a sharp demarcation between state and religion(s) could not be maintained in practice. The South Asian variant of secularism abandons the need for strict demarcation.

Peter Custers

IT IS VARIOUSLY ARGUED that the secular state should occupy a position of neutrality between the faiths practiced by the Indian population, or should hold a position of principal distance. The Indian Constitution, as adopted after Partition, clearly indicates that the founding fathers of the post-colonial state took cognizance of the fact that a ‘hands-off’ policy in itself does not suffice, since there is a need to balance freedom of religion with other democratic rights guaranteed under India’s constitution. If the state is to play an emancipatory role in relation to society, it can’t afford to acquiesce in religious views that are oppressive. Hence it is the obligation of the secular state to intervene in civil society where religious operate, and play a reformist role. While one wonders whether any modern state – Indian or otherwise – has been effective in preventing the (re)emergence of ‘trivialist’ or ‘fundamentalist’ currents, it is clear that no secular state can survive without an activist defence of religious tolerance.

Tolerance and divisions

Now the concrete task I have set myself is to highlight the contemporary significance of South Asian Sufi shrines (fraternities) and shrines for the maintenance of peace and harmony between the subcontinent’s diverse religious communities. Firstly, as to definitions: in its broadest sense the Sufi tradition refers to a whole range of mystics, of groups and people searching to reach an individual, direct spiritual union with Islam’s God, Allah. Via their fraternities, these mystics devised a discipline aimed at reaching a spiritual state. It is important to note though that the definition of Sufism put forward by some strands of Islamic reformist secularism can and should be integrated into a Gramscian perspective. Anon. Gramsci differentiated between two spheres of society’s superstructure: the state and civil society. The latter comprises all institutions and organisations that are non-economic in kind, and do not reside directly under the state’s apparatus of coercion and legal dominance. From the points of differentiation between Sufi fraternities mentioned above, it is evident that the activities of these fraternities have a crucial bearing on the maintenance of religious tolerance or otherwise, since they have always been situated within civil society.

Take the case of a typical dargah, as described in the socio-linguistic literature on South Asian shrines. It would comprise, besides the burial places of the saint and some of his disciples, the living quarters of the shrine’s spiritual head and his family and Sufi visitors; and perhaps Qawwals; and houses of performance of qawwals during weekly sessions or the uri, the annual celebrations. Moreover, the number of shrines where pilgrims gather for the numbers of Muslim and Hindu participants in some cases run into millions. And while it obviously cannot be taken for granted that the motives for people’s participation in these festivals are exclusively spiritual or religious in nature – intercession frequently is sought for purely earthly reasons many if not most dargahs continue to be points of attraction for people belonging to different faiths. Hence, and there is a critical feature of India’s civil society in Gramsci’s sense.

The above statement on shrines and Gramscian thought, however, does not fully suffice for emancipatory conceptualisation. Towards this purpose, two further steps need to be taken. First, Gramsci and others argue that civil society should be understood as a distinct social sphere: he also insisted that civil society is an arena of contention, of conflict between dominant and subordinate classes. Hence we need to specify what meaning shrines have for society’s most deprived sections, such as Muslim and Hindu landless labourers, internal migrant workers, poor women and childless, outcastes, harijans, etc. Moreover, the conceptual task involved is challenging, since Gramsci’s political theory to my knowledge largely bypassed theoretical questions of secularism and tolerance.

Emancipatory conceptualisation

This then is a nutshell summary of the double task to be accomplished. On the one hand, more empirical data needs to be gathered so as to assess, how and to what extent Sufi shrines contribute to the maintenance of tolerance, and towards social struggles in the interests of society’s poor. On the other hand, we need to investigate how or to what extent the debate by Indian intellectuals on the question of secularism has resulted in a Gramscian conceptualisation of secularism. Fact is that South Asian Sufi fraternities have not suffered the same fate as that suffered by shrines in countries of the Middle East, such as Egypt under Nasser and Turkey under Ataturk. This seems to confirm the thesis put forward by Indian intellectuals, that India’s secularism since 1947 has been distinct from the secularism practiced elsewhere. Hence my assessment that the vibrant experience of South Asian shrines and tombs bears much significance for the international debate on the nature of an emancipatory state expressing secularism. To achieve an emancipatory conceptualisation we need an approach that is both grounded in Gramscian theory, and which can comprehend different class perspectives. Hence we need to investigate the dynamic relation between state and civil society towards defending secularism; a topic that, as stated, did not figure much in Gramsci’s published Prison Notebooks. In short, the ultimate task of this project is to put forward a Gramscian conceptualisation on Sufism and the secular state.

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Notes


Above: The mawlaism of Bul Ali Qalandar in Panipat.

Below left: The annual celebrations of Bul Bul and the living quarters of his living quarters.

Above: The mawlaism of Bul Ali Qalandar in Panipat.

Below left: The annual celebrations of Bul Bul and the living quarters of his living quarters.
Forgotten cosmopolitanism: revisiting the urban side of Bali

Through the course of the 20th century, the world’s encounter with the island of Bali and its architectural landscape is profoundly guided by the well-established image of an exotic ‘Balinese’ cultural otherness. Scholars such as Adrian Vickers and Henk Schulte Nordholt have argued that this powerful image is a product of a complex entanglement between colonial knowledge production, an orientalist conception of cultural otherness, the rise of the travel industry, and unfolding local identity politics. And as popular writings on Bali tend to focus on the iconic religious sites, the traditional villages, and the ritual life of the island’s indigenous communities, rural settings are the most referred context when talking about the island’s architectural tradition. The historical and shifting urban environments – the capitals of Bali’s competing pre-colonial royal courts as well as the colonial and subsequently contemporary urban settlements – remain largely unknown. At the same time, these urban realms are the most dramatically changing environments, compensating the calcifying conservation of the ‘villages’ as the island embraces its economic dependence on tourism cultural industry.

Amanda Achmadi

The market district is a reminder of an important role that trade and multireligious relations played in the everyday life of southern Hindu Balinese society in the first quarter of the 20th century. A Chinese Village (Kampung Cinjau, an Arab Village (Kampung Arab), a Hindu Balinese benjar (communal unit) and two traditional markets compose the district. Established during the reign of the Badung kingdom in late 19th century and subsequently further consolidated during colonial time, the ethnic and spatial composition of the area is captured in one of the oldest single-storey buildings produced by H.M. Weede during the 1908 colonial expedition into the region.

The Chinese Village is lined with stores selling households items and agricultural products, Chinese medicine stores and pharmacies, as well as white goods and furniture outlets. The Arab village is famous for its textile market that supplies the colourful fabrics of the iconic ceremonial apparels worn by Hindu Balinese communities in their ritual processes. The two traditional markets, Kumbasari and Badung, are the main sources of fresh produce, artwork as well as ceremonial elements central to the local Hindu community’s ritual life.

The Chinese Village today is a dense neighbourhood lined with two to three-storey shophouses. The majority of its residents are Chinese-Balinese traders who own and have run the business and properties for several generations. Some of these structures still resonate the Chinese shophouse architecture of the early 19th century colonial settlements throughout Java with its narrow but steep pitched roof. But the majority of the shophouses in Denpasar today reflect a widespread adoption of the art deco architectural expression, a popular architectural movement in colonial settlements throughout the Dutch East Indies during the 1920s and 1930s (fig. 1). The Arab Village is an equally dense urban village. Despite its name, the area is home to a mix of Middle Eastern, Pakistani and Indian traders, their businesses and families. A mosque is situated at the southern end of the neighbourhood, orientated towards Mecca. Similar to the Chinese shophouses, adoption of art deco architectural elements can also be observed here. The two and three storey shophouses in the Arab Village are accessible from the front and back. This way, the neighbourhood also has an active back laneway, which it shares with the adjacent Banjar Titi, the long-standing Hindu Balinese neighbourhood of the old Denpasar.

Thoroughly enclosed by the Arab and Chinese Villages, Banjar Titi is not visible from the main street of the district. A cluster of low-rise multi-pavilion courtyard compounds, Banjar Titi is primarily built around the village temple Pura Dalem Padang Estra. Most of the dwelling compounds have been renovated and densified throughout the years in order to accommodate the banjar’s growing community. What used to be a series of semi-open pavilion units, the compounds may now house a series of freestanding enclosed buildings, each containing a number of rooms. An adoption and adaptation of colonial bungalow style architecture can be found in a number of compounds.

Architectural hybridisation and cosmopolitan neighbours

With its mixed-use function, social cultural diversity, and considerably high population density, the market district is a lively urban precinct where private and public realms intermingle effortlessly. More importantly, the ethnic neighbours are not physically or socially detached from the others. Their co-existence is translated through a dense network of streets that connect and permeate through and within the three neighbourhoods. The inhabitants of the three quarters also share public amenities in the area such as health centres, schools and Badung markets, where food markets are held each night. Interactions between different ethnic communities have also taken place through marriage and participation in each neighbour’s communal gatherings and social events. Through the years these interactions have triggered a range of appropriations of the physical structure of dwellings in each ethnic quarter, in order to accommodate the growing communities. Most typical examples of these appropriations are the construction of a family Hindu Balinese temple (pura) on the roof of a shophouse structure and the adoption of an enclosed living pavilion within the courtyard dwelling compounds.

Such interactions, and their physical traces in the form of architectural hybridisation, indicate an urban everyday life of a multi-ethnic community. This phenomenon is not unique to Denpasar. Mixed use and ethnically diverse districts can also be found in urban settlements in the northern region of Bali, such as Klungkung, Karangasem and Bangli. These former capitals of the royal courts of 19th century Bali have an even longer span of historical encounters with colonialism and trading relations with Chinese and Middle Eastern traders. A hybrid urban form, featuring elements of Chinese shophouses, Art Deco architectural expressions, and Hindu Balinese tectonics, can be observed along the main market streets of these northern urban settlements of Bali.

Road against the intricate architectural traces of its cosmopolitan history, the urban side of Bali is a source of nostalgic about embracing its multietnic realities. Instead, privately developed gated housing estates, often ethnically and socially exclusive, are the main feature in the city’s urban fringe development. Meanwhile, the city’s authorities continue to be preoccupied by a mission to safeguard its perceived Balinese identity and cultural heritage. The recent government-led ‘architectural restoration’ of the market precinct of Denpasar exemplifies an unresolved tension between the city’s actual existing urbanity and its conceived Balinese cultural identity. Before the market street could be promoted as part of the city’s cultural heritage, a series of architectural restorations were undertaken. Restorations included the covering of Art Deco facades of the Chinese shophouses with materials such as red brick and sand carvings, which is considered to be ‘traditional Balinese’ architecture. The multi-ethnic collectivism that has long evolved in this part of Denpasar, and its desire in urban building typology, are now concealed by a ‘Balinese looking’ architectural finishing. The ‘hidden’ urban Denpasar exists as an invisible subject on an island where an imagined otherness has been seen as the only reality, at the cost of its own urban history, present and future.

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At the French colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence, a newly declassified file provides biographical information on Henri ROBERT,1 born in Vietnam in the late 1930s of a Vietnamese woman and a French man. Included among the medical exam records, annual teacher evaluations, and smiling school pictures of young Henri is a document telling the story of how he came to be a ward of the French colonial state. This document, dated 1945 and signed by Madame Aumont, states that Henri’s mother was “completely uninterested in her children”2 and hence handed them over to colonial authorities. Yet files tucked away in the Vietnamese National Archives in Hanoi reveal that Madame Aumont forcibly removed Henri from his mother and willfully lied about Henri’s history.

Christina Firpo

HENRI ROBERT WAS JUST ONE OF THOUSANDS of children who were removed— at times by force—from their Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Chinese mothers between 1890-1975, from the colonial period through the end of the Vietnam War, and Henri’s file was just one of many from the Fédération des œuvres de la France française d’Indochine (FOEFI), a French organization dedicated to mixed-race (métis) children from Indochina who had been abandoned by their French fathers. When the FOEFI closed its doors in the early 1960s, FOEFI authorities placed the files in the French colonial archives to enable former warders to trace their families when they reached adulthood.

Preserving colonial power by ‘protecting’ métis children

Madame Aumont, a French woman who worked as a librarian in Tonkin during World War II, also worked for the Jules Brévédent Foundation protection society for abandoned métis children that would later be renamed the FOEFI. The Brévédent Foundation had grown out of the multiple Societies for the Protection of Abandoned Métis Children founded in the late 1890s—a period during which French civilians and colonial authorities were growing concerned about the rising number of métis children born to French cohabitants and Vietnamese women, who later abandoned them. These French colonies feared that Indochina would develop the same problem that plagued the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies: a sizable population of impoverished mixed-race men and women who engaged in prostitution and rebelled against the colonial government. Drawing on detailed reports from the French consulate in Batavia, the colonial government in Indochina formulated a métis protection system modeled on the one used in the Dutch Netherlands Indies.

For some unmarried mothers of métis children, the protection society system was a blessing in a society where contraception and abortion were illegal, protection societies provided relaxation within the system with a means of escaping the duties of motherhood. Other mothers turned to the protection societies not to permanently relinquish custody of their children but to ensure their survival in times of hardship. During the 20th century impoverished mothers, or those incapacitated by disease, temporarily placed their children in foster-care type situations. They did so with the understanding that, when their situation improved, they would be able to retrieve their children—though, as it turned out, the protection societies rarely, if ever, returned them. Other mothers refused to relinquish custody of their métis children. In those cases, French authorities forcibly removed the children and placed them in special orphanages. While it is impossible to quantify how many métis children were removed through Indochina’s protection society orphanages, in the course of my research, I have collected data on more than 4,000 métis wards. The history of métis child removals in Indochina bears striking similarities to the removal of more famous cases of indigenous children removed in other colonial contexts, namely Australia, the United States, and Canada.

In Indochina, the métis protection program was tied up with colonial demographic plans. The mass campaign of World War II had revived French fears of depopulation and fueled the growing French Primitavist movement in the colony, as well as the metropole. Authorities in Indochina looked to fatherless métis children to help bolster the colony’s dwindling white population. Claiming ownership over fatherless métis children on the grounds that they were sons and daughters of Frenchmen, authorities removed them from their mothers and even sent some to the metropole to repopulate areas that had been decimated by the war. Initially, colonial authorities were only interested in children who could pass for white, but by the time World War II broke out, protection society workers like Madame Aumont were also removing the fatherless children of African men who had served in the colonial army. This was the beginning of a gradual shift in the colonial understanding of what it meant to be French. With the increase of colonial troops from Africa and India representing France in Indochina, some protection society workers began to see African and Indian troops, and their métis children, as French. The expanding definition of what it meant to be French had less to do with enlightened ideas than a desperation to preserve the empire.

The FOEFI had created a French West-African father, Henri Robert was one such case.

The truth about Henri’s removal

The documents produced by women who worked for the métis protection societies reveal that the ways that protection societies obtained custody of their children were not always as ethical as the societies led the colonial public to believe. In 1942, Madame Aumont was alerted to the existence of the Robert children; Henri was the youngest. Aumont forcibly removed Henri’s elder sister and brother and placed them in orphanages in Tonkin. It is not clear whether Aumont permitted young Henri to say goodbye to his mother because he was still nursing—a typical exemption— or whether she was simply unaware of his existence at that time. In 1943, Aumont decided to take Henri after all. She requested aid from the colonial police because his mother refused to relinquish custody. Madame Aumont’s inclusion in her report of Henri’s mother’s resistance, directly contradicts Aumont’s later claim, quoted at the beginning of this article, that Henri’s mother was completely uninterested in him, or her other children. But Madame Aumont had colonial law on her side. She carefully manipulated an 1893 metropolitan French decree that stipulated absent or abusive parents of their parental rights, declared Henri’s mother “incapable of raising” the two-year-old, and ordered authorities to forcibly take him from her.

Madame Aumont placed Henri in the École Saint Joseph, an orphanage and boarding school for fatherless mixed-race children, many of whom had undergone similar experiences of being removed from their mothers. There, wards were raised in a French-only linguistic and cultural environment. The plan was that once the wards reached adulthood, they would integrate into the colony’s French population. Not long after Henri arrived at the École Saint Joseph, his mother tracked him down. In a move that leaves little question about Henri’s mother’s interest in her children, she confronted the priest in charge and demanded that he return her child. When the priest refused, she took Henri to other orphanages around Indochina. Upon learning of Henri’s so-called abduction, Madame Aumont departed the colonial police to conduct an extensive search of the Tonkin countryside. Mother and son managed to evade authorities for a few weeks until a Vietnamese official turned them in to the police. Wise to the almost listless will of Henri’s mother, the protection society moved Henri to another orphanage and sent his brother and sister to separate institutions. At the orphanages, often times— from Henri ROBERT to Robert CHARLES HENRI, to finally to Charles HENRI—to prevent his mother from tracking him down again. Indeed, during this time, his teenage brother attempted to find him but was thwarted by the series of aliases.

Journey to France

Henri remained in the protection society institutions. As an adolescent, he attended the École des enfants de troupes étrangeres, a military school in Dalat designed to train young métis men to become officers in the colonial military. After the military defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Agreements that declared Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to be independent nations, France was forced to withdraw its colonial administration and military. The FOEFI, the latest manifestation of the protection society programs, proceeded to send almost all of its wards to France. As archival documents indicate, many mothers objected to the evacuation program and attempted to retrieve their children before they left. For their part, many wards refused to go. In 1955, as the École des enfants de troupes étrangeres was preparing cadets for their journey to the metropole, young Henri NICHOLAS obstinately refused to leave Vietnam. He incited a small riot among other cadets who wanted to stay in Vietnam with their families. Teachers reported that Henri made anti-French statements and told lies about the protection societies. While it is not clear what kinds of ‘lies’ he told, it is possible that he alluded to the circumstances of his separation from his mother. As the French military and protection societies were pulling the last of the French presence from Indochina, authorities at the military school struck Henri’s name from the list and left him in South Vietnam.

Saigon after decolonization in the mid-1950s was a rough town, plagued with corruption and violence. Among the city’s problems were the gangs of fatherless Euroasians, now adults and social outcasts, who roamed the town causing disturbances. In an attempt to curb the problem this population presented, the South Vietnamese government permitted the FOEFI to continue searching the countryside for fatherless métis children. As in the colonial period, some such children were forcibly removed and shipped to France, where they were raised in orphanages. Within this context, Henri Robert was eventually sent to France. The archival trail for Henri Robert ends in 1963, when he finally aged out of the protection society system.

The FOEFI continued to search the South Vietnamese countryside for the children of French men or French colonial soldiers, through till 1975. By sending them to France, they provided the action of this, in aid many young men and women who would have otherwise been social outcasts. But that had not always been the case. When piecing together wards’ lives from documents scattered among seven archives and libraries in Vietnam, Cambodia, and France, it becomes clear that the stories of how fatherless métis children came to be separated from their mothers are not as cut-clear, or as rooted in altruisin, as has historically been presented; many of them had been forcibly removed from their Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao mothers.

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Notes
1 In an effort to respect privacy laws, I use the pseudonym Henri ROBERT.
3 Letter, Madame Aumont to M. Resident Mayor of Hai Phong, 26 October 1942. Vietnam National Archives, 1, files of the Governor General of Indochina 495.
In 1892 Alexander Rea unearthed a small piece of bone in an inscribed stone reliquary at Bhattiprolu (in southern India). The translation of the ancient inscriptions identified the bone as the corporeal remains of the historical Buddha. In 1916 the Government of India proposed to present the Bhattiprolu relic to the Maha Bodhi Society, a prominent neo-Buddhist association. However, during the actual act of relic presentation in 1921, the reliquary itself was retained by the Madras Museum as an object of artistic and antiquarian value. The old bone was put in a new casket and presented to the Society for ritual enshrinement in the new Buddhist temple of Cuttaka, the Dharmarajika Vihara.

Sraman Mukherjee

THIS WAS NEITHER THE FIRST NOR THE LAST instance where ancient Buddhist corporeal relics discovered in the course of archaeological excavations in colonial South Asia travelled to practising Buddhisms in the world. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, archaeologists identified and excavated a number of Buddhist funerary mounds (stupas), which led to the unearthing of Buddhist corporeal remains in reliquaries. The inscriptions on the reliquaries were decoded by scholars, identifying the relics as corporeal remains of either the historical Buddha or of prominent ancient Buddhist monks. The British Indian state distributed these relics to various Buddhist countries, communities and associations across South and mainland Southeast Asia. In every instance, the old reliquaries housing the corporeal remains at the moments of their discovery were retained in museums, as objects of art, history, and antiquity. The bare bones were classified as purely sacred objects, having no historic value, and were given away for ritual enshrines in new relic caskets.

This study explores why and how this classification of bones as essentially sacred, and the ancient reliquaries housing them as objects of art and history, was produced. It does not ascribe the British colonial state to its political and cultural apparatuses – institutions of archaeology and museums – with the sole agency of producing meanings around ancient corporeal remains. Circulation of Buddhist relics predated both European colonialism and the rise of modern nation states in South and Southeast Asia. The study, however, seeks to bring out the centrality of modern regimes of scholarship and religious practice in producing a new visibility and multiple identities of Buddhist relics. Both colonial and postcolonial national states produced new networks and protocols of exchange and circulation that lent to the production of different and competing values and meanings around Buddhist relics.

Buddhist relics at the crossroads of history, politics, and religion

In 1898 Buddhist relics unearthed at Piprati Khot (in eastern India) were presented by the British Indian state to the King of Siam (Thailand) as the only reigning Buddhist sovereign, which he, in turn, distributed between the Buddhists of Siam, Burma (Myanmar), Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Japan. In 1910 Buddhist relics discovered at Shah-ki-Dheli near Peshawar (in Pakistan) were presented by the state to the Buddhists of Burma to be enshrined in a new relic temple at Mandalay (Burma). Such presentations of relics represented an act of frontier and foreign diplomacy of the colonial government. The presentation of relics to King Ram V of Siam reflected British anxieties to increase their political influence over Siam, which had emerged as an important geopolitical buffer between the British and French colonial interests in mainland Southeast Asia. The presentation of relics to King Ram V of Siam was intended as a symbolic gesture to consolidate the newly found British political hold over Burma after its political and economic subjugation in the late nineteenth century.

In the early twentieth century, as competition for colonial control among the European powers and an emerging Japan intensified over South and Southeast Asia, the presentation of these relics to practising Buddhist territories and countries provided the colonial state in India an opportunity to fashion itself in the image of pre-modern imperial benefactors of the Buddhism. The context of the Wars and particular turns in nationalist politics in colonial India, Ceylon, and Burma, which moved beyond associational politics of urban middleclasses to anti-colonial mass movements, provided the backdrop in which relics excavated from Bhattiprolu and Taxila (in Pakistan) were presented to the Maha Bodhi Society in 1932 and 1933. The new regimes of relic circulation meditated by the colonial state were designed as responses to contain politically contingent situations and secure the loyalty of colonial subjects at moments of crisis of the Empire.

The separation of corporeal remains from the caskets that these presentations ensued stood in sharp contrast to the early colonial archaeological encounters with Buddhist relics. Till the mid nineteenth century Buddhist corporeal relics along with their relic caskets, like those unearthed from Sanchi, Sonari, and Taxila (in central India) during the 1850s, travelled out of South Asia to major museum collections in London. There was no established code that could prevent Buddhist relics – both the bones and reliquaries – from being treated as unsuitable objects of specialized scholarly analysis, scientific preservation and public display. The religious sanctity of the bones and historicist sanctity of the reliquaries did not remain fixed and permanently coded over time. The new visibility and classification produced around Buddhist corporeal relics were forged by the colonial state’s politics of relic diplomacy and a concurrent refashioning of Theravada Buddhism at the intersection of worlds of scholarship and devotion.

Nineteenth century Orientalist textual and text aided archaeological scholarship on Buddhism led to the discursive emergence of an ancient ‘pure’ Buddhism as a humanist creed. Transnational Buddhist reform and revivalist associations drew on this image of ‘authentic’ Buddhism in fashioning a new reformed practising Buddhist subject. At the turn of the twentieth century the Maha Bodhi Society emerged as the most prominent transnational Theravada Buddhist voice whose emphasis shifted from a quest for scriptural purity of recovered, translated, and critically-edited canonical Buddhist texts to the physical site and space of Buddhist pilgrimage in Ceylon, India and Burma. The Society’s demands for recovery of ancient Buddhist sites in India brought the world of practising Buddhists into direct contact with the historicist vision of archaeological conservation of ancient monuments. The potential sacrality of Buddhist relics to a large extent thus prevented their complete archaeological museological applications. Antiquity preservation laws enacted in British colonies across India, Ceylon, and Burma in the early twentieth century determined the authority and status of the colonial state over movable and structural antiquities. However, keeping in mind the colonial state’s commitment to religious non-interference, the laws shielded away the fortifying protected status to antiquities in active ritual use or even potentially sacred like archaeologically unearthed Buddhist corporeal relics. As objects overlaid with historical, artistic, and religious connotations, bones and reliquaries now travelled to different destinations, to temples and museums.

Old bones, new caskets: dual lives of Buddhist relics

To end this study it might be worthwhile to explore how ancient Buddhist relics and reliquaries emerged as sites of competing claims and custodies inhabiting multiple spaces of history, heritage, and religion. In a different context of the repatriation of the Sanchi relics from the Victoria and Albert Museum during the 1950s, Torkel Brekke (2007) has argued that the idea of making copies of the reliquaries by the museum authorities reveal that they did not believe in the sacrality of these objects – not primarily because the objects belonged to an alien religion, but because of their modern secular worldview. Keeping in mind Brekke’s point about different epistemologies of knowledge and belief, I argue that the commitment to the making of duplicate reliquaries can also be explained by the material particularity of the objects in question – the relics and their relation to their reliquaries.

At the most fundamental level, corporeal ‘relic’ usually denotes the body or fragment of the body of a deceased person revered as holy. Unlike other material objects a corporeal relic requires a physical frame that explicitly signals its status as sacred object. The symbolic potentials of such relics are constituted in the way they are socially and ritually framed. In sharp contrast to icons and images, the relic’s absence of representational features and its recognition as a moment of unrepresented implication is constrained by the denotive work done by its frame, its reliquary. A relic without its reliquary/ casket loses its identity of a hallowed object.

In the context of colonial South Asia, the heightened importance of the reliquaries relates to the ways in which Buddhist corporeal relics came to the identified and authenticated. In pre and early modern politics across South and Southeast Asia the test of authenticity of Buddhist relics lay in their magical ritual powers woven around narratives of their durability, indestructibility, and mobility. In sharp contrast to these attributes, the primary identification of Buddhist corporeal relics, especially those unearthed during archaeological excavations across colonial South Asia, lay in their inscriptions on the relics. This was a world of specialist scholarly expertise, a new domain of archaeological and epigraphic research that was introduced in South Asia under the auspice of the colonial state.

For all concerned parties the separation of the bones from reliquaries threatened to tarnish Buddhist corporeal relics into meaningless scraps. To prevent this, the colonial state, despite its official commitment to remain unconnected to objects of religious worship, took upon itself the task of designing new relic caskets. The new caskets, now inscribed with a brief statement of the discovery of the relics and a translation of the original inscription, sought to attune to the enshrined bones’ identity as authentically Buddhist. This divorcing of the reliquaries from the corporeal remains led the production of a new order of Buddhist relics centred only on the symbolic sanctity of the bones. Against this history of the demands of religion to gain custody over relics and reliquaries from the preserves of museums and archaeology. In the context of South and mainland Southeast Asia, it would be the demands of postcolonial nationalist repatriations that would drag bones and ancient reliquaries from museums in Europe to the sanctums of new Buddhist temples.

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It’s not all about caste

It might sound like a paradox to shift the focus away from caste in order to speak of Dalit (former untouchable) and low-caste women political activists in Lucknow, the capital of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). For decades now, this state has been the epicentre of low-caste politics. The paradox gains strength when adding that the above women are activists within the Bahujan Samaj Party (the majority of the people’s party, or BSP), for which Dalit caste-based identity has played a pivotal role. However, as I entered the world of politics through women in the BSP, when my fieldwork began in the mid-2000s, other sociological features such as gender, class, and politics—and their interplay with caste—signalled their importance in capturing women’s identities and activities.

Manuela Ciotti

DALIT AND LOW-CASTE WOMEN ACTIVISTS were ‘different’ compared to the same caste women I had encountered and researched until then. What is more, the women activists were also ‘explanable’ through what I have termed the ‘Dalit woman trope’, an expression with which I refer to an existing body of knowledge that has emerged from the study of these women and which has returned them as victims of many of the difficulties and exploitation within their caste communities and Indian society at large. Indeed, many women are victims of these phenomena, and so, by demonstrating to what extremes as a whole still experience atrocities, discrimination and marginality.

Women activists neither fit the Dalit woman trope, nor would they represent themselves in that manner; so how to write about them? My forthcoming book Political agency and gender in India offers alternative conceptual tools to look at Dalit and low-caste women, whose broader constituency of individuals has been overwhelmingly identified, researched and written about through the prism of caste. This book is a counternarrative account of Dalit and low-caste women, who do not fit existing representations, accompanied by a new conceptual framework that their very presence invokes.

Overall, the book is an invitation to think of these women in the plural. One of the most notable signs for the need of this plurality is encapsulating women’s agency and identities under one (and important) label: ‘Dalit’. Some of the BSP women resisted the label as a tool of identification; to acknowledge this resistance, I speak here of Dalit and low-caste women. To complicate the picture further, a double positionality runs throughout the book: women who could be called the ‘proletariat of politics’ for the subordinate position they held within the party – yet, they could simultaneously be referred to as ‘else’ (in very relative terms), as far as Dalit women masses are concerned.

One of the tasks of the book consists of reconstituting BSP Dalit women as non-victim subjects, and the vantage point chosen to carry out this intervention is that of agency. In doing so, the book aligns itself with the re-orientation of women’s studies in India that has occurred over the past decades and which was aimed to correct the passive woman paradigm and deployed as ‘assets’ in the field. The book shows, needs to be interwoven with factors such as ‘difference’ was displayed as ‘assertiveness’ in the field, resistance equally limiting. The ways in which Dalit women’s political activism has been the epicentre of low-caste politics, the book holds the analytical overlap of agency with long-standing traditions of activism amongst women in India. In this process, underlying deeper structures of gendered political agency (cutting across time, class and caste were formed among BSP women, whose political activism was in this respect, a case study of incomplete and injurious political persona.

This is why the interventions the book wishes to accomplish imply more than an alignment with women’s studies’ efforts of recuperating agency. But there is more to it. Research on Dalit and low-caste women has led to the production of novel theoretical insights. But why is there a need to state an almost obvious point? Almost three decades ago, Appadurai poignantly argued “Although there have been a number of fine and detailed ethnographic portraits of Untouchable communities, their status in anthropological theory mirrors their lowly role in South Asian social life". After reviewing studies informed by a theoretical framework that asked whether these communities replicated the “hierarchical system they lived in, Appadurai concluded “the ethnography of Untouchables places them at the service of external theories [...] Untouchables are fodder for scholarly battles that could equally well have been fought without dragging them in.” Since the publication of Appadurai’s article a number of lines of inquiry have emerged from the study of these communities. A great deal of scholarship has, however, focused on what research insights might have to say on Dalit communities and their predicaments (which is indeed a crucial task) – often without venturing further to ask what those insights might contribute to debates beyond Dalit identity and the Dalit studies rubric – a ‘sub-field’ of South Asian Studies – and how, for example, the categories and arguments generated through research have reshaped South Asian Studies, rather than the other way around. By contrast, Political agency and gender in India re-imagines Dalit and low-caste women as actors of political participation generating theoretical insights on agency, and not only Dalit agency – on gender and not only on Dalit gender. And the list could be extended.

If situated research has brought to light lived difference, heterogeneity and plurality of a group of Dalit and low-caste women, this has led to think of these women in the plural, beyond the Dalit woman trope, and it has inaugurated new representational lives for them as objects of knowledge. In turn, this work will hopefully inaugurate new ways in which these women are viewed in the public sphere.

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In pursuing the three analytical lines outlined above, the book’s premise lies in considering Dalit and low-caste women’s political agency not as a poor imitation of women in ‘advanced’ western democracies, or of those hegemonic subjects of gender and politics in India (that is upper caste and class women). Dalit women are analysed in their own right, as non-western political subjects, and not as

Notes

1 Ciotti M. Forthcoming. Political agency and gender in India  London, New York: Routledge
4 ibid, p.751

The elephant is the symbol of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Photograph reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of opponaphoto.fr.

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The treasure chambers of the Leiden University Library

There can be no university without a library. Twelve years after William of Orange established Leiden University in 1575, he founded Leiden University Library, which, from the beginning, was meant to serve as a research facility. Access was restricted to a few privileged men (and their dogs!), and the books had to be consulted on the spot as they were chained to the shelves. Times have changed. Books are electronically protected, academia is no longer a man’s world – and dogs are asked to stay outside. The collection has grown from a few hundred books to over 4 million printed copies, plus approximately 1 million electronic books. Electronic resources, such as the 500+ databases in the University Library, allow us to share knowledge with, and to connect to, the most remote parts of the world. However, some things have not changed: the library still guards true treasures, thousands of jewels that reflect ideas and thoughts of times long past.

Doris Jedamski

3. A great number of items derive from the legacies of two celebrated scholars, the great Arabist and colonial official Christian Snouck Hurgronje, and the bible translator and linguist H. N. Van der Tuuk. Both collected not just thousands of manuscripts; Snouck Hurgronje also accumulated an extraordinary collection of photographs. His legacy was bequeathed to the University Library in 1936. Van der Tuuk left, in addition to the manuscripts, an exquisite collection of Balinese drawings to the library after his death in 1894 (fig. 2).

In the field of South Asian and Tibetan Studies, it is the legendary Kern collection (named after Hendrik Kern, the first Sansekrit Professor at Leiden) that has elevated the Leiden collections to worldwide fame. In 2010, it became part of the University Library. Kern, together with Jean Philippe Vogel and Johan van Manen, accumulated a vast collection of Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts, mostly from South India. The Van Manen collection, however, is first and foremost renowned for its more than 1000 Lepcha and Tibetan (block) manuscripts, which he collected in India between 1908 and 1943 with a focus on non-canonized historical and religious works. The Lepcha manuscripts collection is the largest of its kind in the world.

Three other jewels in the Leiden University Library are the extensive collection of Congshu, or ‘Chinese collectanea’; the collection of unofficial poetry journals from the PR of China; and the personal library of Robert Hans van Gulik, renowned Dutch sinologist, diplomat, and author of the Judge Dee Mysteries.

Many distinguished scholars have enriched Leiden academic life and the library, among them J. L.A. Brandes, C.F. Pijper, N.J. Krom, A.A. Bake, J. PH. Vogel, J.C. Casparis, J.G. Gonda, and R.R. Marin. Many archives have yet to be explored. In the past, facsimiles and catalogues facilitated access to items or collections, but in-house digitization facilities of the highest standards have made research and high-quality publication much easier. On-going digitization projects are soon to provide open access to the Snouck Hurgronje collection and the Tibetan block prints from the Van Manen collection.

In the spotlight

While a few items are seemingly left to oblivion, others attract attention from the scholarly world. A late 19th century watercolour by an anonymous Javanese painter, from the Snouck Hurgronje collection, featured in one of the major Dutch newspapers recently. It shows the Javanese Prince Dipangkara, the leader of the Java War against the Dutch (1825-30), in a western-style room with a little demon at his feet (fig. 3).

La Galigo, a Buginese manuscript from Makassar (South Sulawesi), made the international spotlight when, in 2010, it was included in the UNESCO’s Memory of the World register (MOW). The Leiden manuscript is the longest coherent fragment of this epical poem extant in the world. It consists of twelve parts that together constitute the first part of the creation myth of the Buginese.

With its striking presence on the internet, the Charter of King Räjendra Chola I (11th century) has reached a different kind of fame. Its 21 copper plates are held together by a bronze ring bearing the seal of the king (fig. 4) – altogether weighing more than 30 kg. On the web, praised as the most relevant of its kind, the Charter is simply referred to as ‘the Leiden plates’.

Thousands of other items are still waiting for their turn to be rediscovered, to be researched and written about, to be looked at or listened to. The Kern collection alone contains more than 70,000 photographs and almost the same amount of slides; about 37,000 images have been catalogued. In the age of data management it is worth emphasizing that old research data do not lose their significance. Aryan Usharbudh published his PhD in 1968, but his recordings of Hindu ritual folk songs in Suriname are still of enormous linguistic and cultural relevance, and not just to the present-day Hindu community of Suriname.

Still growing

Soon the Leiden University Library collections will expand impressively once again. Regrettably, due to funding cuts, both the libraries of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT, Amsterdam) and the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV, Leiden) are closing down. As a result of intense negotiations, both collections could luckily be saved. The Heritage Collection of the KIT collection will soon be part of the Leiden University Library Special Collection. The KITLV collection, too, will find its new home in the UB in Witte Singel 27. Sad as it is in some respect, the fusion of these magnificent collections is also a chance to put South and Southeast Asian Studies in Leiden and beyond even more prominently on the map.

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The Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries: www.library.leiden.edu/special-collections

Annually, the Sculler Institute offers various research grants (1-3 months) for research of (parts of) the Special Collections. www.library.leiden.edu/special-collections/sculler-institute