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ACADEMIC FREEDOM

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Editorial



Rahul Mukherji
CATS Speaker

The third issue of CATSarena is being published a time when the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies has worked itself into an arena where the institutes dedicated to South Asia, East Asia, Ethnology, and Transcultural Studies have gained from proximity and interactions. It is imperative that inter-area scholarship finds a place of pride in this setting. It is often challenging for area studies scholars to move from one area to another without compromising scholarly depth. CATS can provide that setting by encouraging dialogue among areas. Inter-Asia scholarship can be consolidated through the institution of CATSFORUM, a platform where scholars from all the institutes, irrespective of academic seniority, will hold dialogues with each other. CATS is committed to enriching the institution of the forum. It is hoped that such exchanges will promote inter-Asia, as well as interdisciplinary knowledge.

Can knowledge production be transcultural without becoming hegemonic? This conceptual task is both important as well as challenging. We are happy to report that CATS has established a lecture series, in which the first speaker, Professor Sudipta Kaviraj from Columbia University, will dedicate himself to this task.

CATS was concerned about the burning issue of democratic backsliding and the consequent challenges for academic freedom in Asia. There is a political backdrop to this intellectual challenge, which is discussed by Asian and Heidelberg scholars in this issue of CATSarena. The world's largest democracy, India, is nowadays being dubbed an "electoral autocracy" or a "competitive authoritarian regime." This does not augur well for democracy in the region and the world. The 2022 scores of the Press Freedom Index reported that India had reached its lowest ever rank of 150 out of 180 countries in the world. China (175), Bangladesh (162), and Pakistan (157) have an even lower rank, even though Japan (71), Nepal (76), Maldives (87), Thailand (115), and Sri Lanka (146) seemed better off. Clearly these are not rankings worthy of emulation. What is more interesting is that India's rank was 133 in 2016. The score declined by 17 places within the last five years.

Concerned about these trends, Professor William Sax and I initiated a round-table discussion on academic freedom in South Asia. We extended invitations to scholars from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Scholars such as Professor Rahman Sobhan (Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka), Professor Krishna Bhattachan (Tribhuvan University, Nepal), Dr. Fatima Ihsan (Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad), Professor Mridula Mukherjee (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), Professor Nandini Sundar (Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi), and Professor Kalinga Tudor Silva (Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka) participated in this lively exchange. We discussed the substantial challenges facing academic freedom in South Asia. Professor Sax has summarized that discussion in a report in this issue of CATSarena. It was generally agreed that such a discussion should take the form of a report rather than a declaration. We

are delighted to present the brief report in this issue of CATSarena.

Furthermore, this issue of CATSarena has widened the scope for discussion on academic freedom by engaging the region more generally. Thanks to Professor Barbara Mittler, we were able to invite a rare contribution from China by Dr. Sun Peidong. Professor Mridula Mukherjee engaged the status of academic freedom in India as viewed from the lens of a senior, recently retired professor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Professor Axel Michaels describes how Hindu nationalism is obstructing rational and scientific inquiry in India, at a time when the infrastructure and investment in that area needs to be enhanced. The contribution by Dr. Said Reza from Afghanistan describes the condition of academic freedom in Afghanistan after the Taliban gained political control over Kabul. Professor Kalinga Tudor Silva describes the condition of academic freedom in Sri Lanka at a time when Sinhalese ethnonationalism seeks to undermine the country's time-tested democratic credentials. Finally, Professor Anja Senz cautions us about the dangers of relying on global internet platforms such as Zoom, which are used extensively for online teaching, conferencing, and conversing. She tells the less well-known story of a company, with servers based in China, that can block dialogues related to human rights and democracy, and that treats workers in a manner that would not be acceptable in many parts of the world.

What I have described above is just the tip of the iceberg. CATSarena is a democratic platform that nudges all the constituent institutes and departments to contribute liberally towards showcasing the evolution of the four institutes in close physical and intellectual proximity. There is much to explore in the pages that present CATS's intellectual trust.

Contents



FOCUS: ACADEMIC FREEDOM

7
Axel Michaels
"Scientifically proven" – The Threat to India's Academic Freedom by Pseudoscience

10
K. Young
"Academic Depression": Between Fear and Freedom in Hong Kong

13
Anja Senz
Academic Freedom in the Digital Age – Let's Zoom in...

16
Kalinga Tudor Silva
Academic Freedom in Sri Lanka

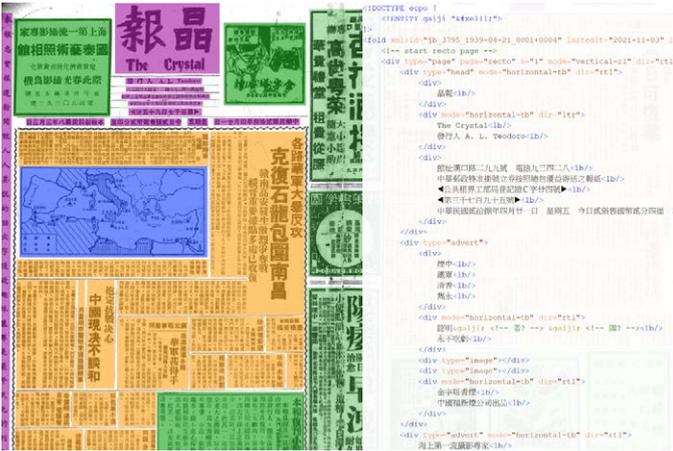
18
William Sax
Academic Freedom in South Asia

20
Mridula Mukherjee
Academic Freedom in India: Multiple Challenges

22
Lennart Riedel
Negotiating Political Loyalty and the Academic Quest for Truth. A Legal Perspective on Academic Freedom in the People's Republic of China after 1978

25
Said Reza Kazemi
In Control of the University. Taliban Takeover as a Challenge to Freedom of Higher Education in Afghanistan

28
Peidong Sun
Academic Non-Freedom and the Crisis of Chinese Writing



RESEARCH NEWS

- 30
Shefali More
First Heidelberg Indology Doctoral Symposium DISRUPTION

- 32
Matthias Arnold
Artificial Intelligence to Analyze Chinese Periodicals

- 33
Sara Landa
Pandemic Readings

- 34
Worldmaking Fellows 2021

- 35
Call for Applications for Master's in Transcultural Studies

- 36
Emily NK Tsui
Review: Vanitas 21 - The Present

- 37
CATS LIBRARY

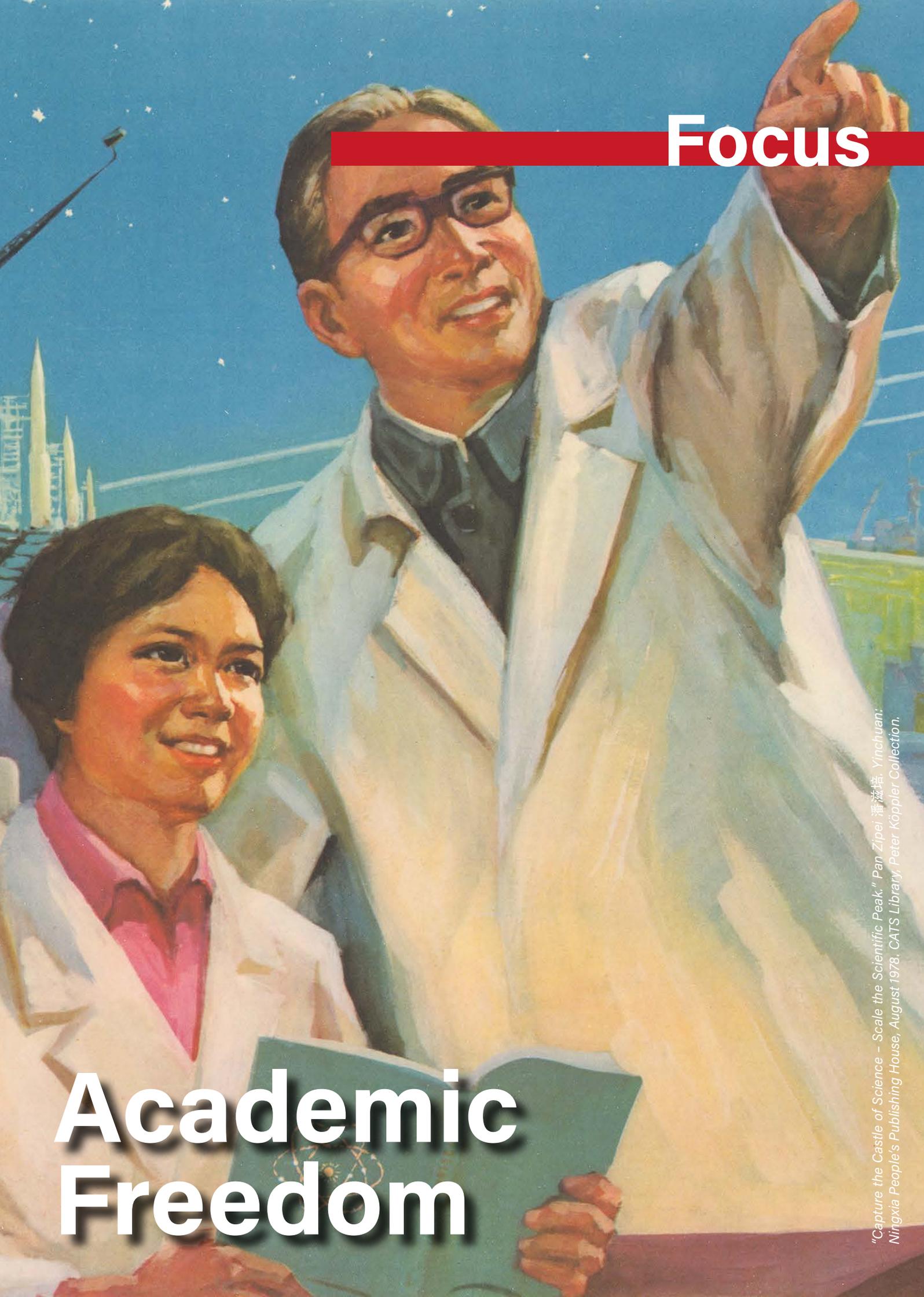
- 39
STUDENT'S FORUM

- 42
INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

- 46
CENTRE FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES

- 54
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

- 72
HEIDELBERG CENTRE FOR TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES



Focus

Academic Freedom

"Capture the Castle of Science - Scale the Scientific Peak." Pan Zipei 潘滋培. Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Publishing House, August 1978. CATS Library, Peter Köppler Collection.

“Scientifically proven”

The Threat to India’s Academic Freedom by Pseudoscience

by **Axel Michaels**

Senior Professor, Classical Indology

With nearly seven hundred government and over 250 private universities, as well as more than 40,000 colleges, India is the largest education market in the world after the U.S. and China. There are approximately 38 million students. Every year, emit 1.5 million mechanical or computer science engineers leave India’s universities, 1.3 million students are enrolled in medicine, 3.8 million in the natural sciences. No wonder India has produced many outstanding scientists, including twelve Nobel Prize winners.

India can rightly be proud of the largest education systems in the world, but a lot has faltered since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014. Almost every day there are reports of a wide-ranging Hindu nationalist movement trying to take educational and cultural life into its own hands, such as threatening academic freedom through censorship, political influence on curricula, preventing certain meetings and conferences, physical attacks on the teaching staff and students, suspension of teachers or forced exmatriculations of students and the denial of visas.

To be sure, the 19th century led to the establishment of a number of new disciplines such as history, religious studies, classical studies, anthropology, sociology, educational science (pedagogy), psychology, etc. These academic changes brought not only a professionalization of knowledge, but also a special humanities approach to cultural phenomena. Many of the disciplines mentioned have adopt-

ed methods that have been taken from or modelled on the natural and life sciences. “Scientifically proven” thus became the most reliable but also misused label for most forms of knowledge.

Here are some random examples from India (all last accessed in January 2022): 20 Amazing Scientific Reasons Behind Hindu Traditions, The Science behind a Happy Marriage, or Some Scientific Aspects of Yagya. Likewise, turmeric (turmeric), or the tulsi plant (Indian basil, *Ocimum tenuiflorum*) are repeatedly praised for their scientifically proven health effects. The most recent example for “Saffronizing Academics” is the introduction of cow science (Kamadhenu Gau Vigyan Prachar Prasar Exam) at Indian universities, mainly in the state of Kerala.

However, the process of scientificification in academia not only led to scientific knowledge that brought a lot of relief and progress for humankind, but also to a certain scientism – in the sense that scientific statements were classified as superior to other forms of knowledge, such as those that arise from experience or intuition. So what are the differences between modern science, scienticism or scientification and pseudoscience?

The modern science, which is by no means as homogeneous as often assumed, is based on empirically collected data, statistical calculations and scales, formal modeling, experiments, and the constant review of results by the scientific community, resulting in a constant revision of ideas, theories and results. Scienticism or scientification is the actual or supposed use of

scientific methods and terminology without a critical approach that could lead to their ideas, theories and results being discarded. It is also the positivist ideology that all questions can be answered with the scientific methods mentioned. Pseudoscience is a conscious dressing of non-scientific, often religious or esoteric ideas in a scientific language, without applying strict scientific methods and criteria of proofing the propositions.

It is the latter that affects Indian science as can be seen in some key events of the last years: books, including those written by Harvard professor Wendy Doniger or the renowned historian Ramachandra Guha, have been censored. Scholars were physically attacked for unpleasant passages in their books. Even moderate scholars such as Filippo Osella, professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the University for Sussex (UK), were recently (March 2022) deported back to UK immediately after arrival in India. The journalist and chairman of the think tank “Observer Research Foundation”, Sudheendra Kulkarni, was showered with black grease at the presentation of a book by the former Pakistani ambassador. The heads of scientific associations and organizations as well as universities are replaced by Hindu nationalist loyalists. The writer and English professor K.S. Bhagavan, who denounced the justification of the caste system and misogynistic verses in the Bhagavadgita, was under police protection for death threats. The writer and former university president M.M. Kalburgi or the left-wing activists Narendra Dabholkar and

Govind Pansare have already been murdered. In this way, the public climate is heated up to such an extent that interreligious tensions and conflicts arise.

Historians have been particularly badly affected. In the prestigious Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), all presidium positions were filled by government loyalists. From now on, it is said, Indian historiography should be based on religious epics such as the Mahabharata or the Ramayana and not on verifiable facts. The curricula in the schools are to be rewritten accordingly. The textbooks are intended to become religious catechisms rather than independent thinking. More than fifty historians protested sharply in an appeal to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education and pointed out that the results of renowned historians are no longer taken into account and that history is nationalized. It is also distorting to speak of a glory of the Hindu era and a darkness of the Muslim era. Economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen resigned as president of the revived Nalanda University in 2013 because of such developments.

In the universities and schools, abstruse ideas are indeed flourishing now – and they are supported by high-ranking politicians from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or Hindutva groups and their media. For example, in January 2018, Satyapal Singh, India's then Minister of Higher Education, who holds a postgraduate degree in chemistry from Delhi University, called for the theory of evolution to be removed from school curricula because no one "has ever seen a monkey turn into a human." Instead, he suggested using the Vaishnava *avatāra* theory to explain how humans evolved from animals. Similarly, in March 2018, the Union's Science Minister Harsh Vardhan, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claimed at the 105th Indian Science Congress that Stephen Hawking

once said that the Vedas had a theory superior to Einstein's theory of relativity. BJP leaders such as Prime Minister Modi or temporary Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj also claim that Sanskrit can cleanse the world of the wounds of modernity, including global warming. It is seriously said that the ancient Indians knew the airplane, even space travel, because it is so written in mythological texts.

Another example is 'Vedic Mathematics'. *Vedic Mathematics or Sixteen simple Mathematical Formulae from the Vedas (For Online Answers to all Mathematical Problems)* (sic!) is a book written by a former Sankaracharya by Govardhana Maṭha in Puri, the late Jagadguru Swāmī Śrī Bhāratī Kṛṣṇa Tīrthajī Mahārāja (1884-1960), published posthumously in 1965. Since then, Vedic mathematics has become a growing branch of mathematical knowledge production recommended as a textbook for higher education by the National Council of Educational Research (NCERT). Several books and DVDs were published, courses in Vedic mathematics such as "The Certified Vedic Maths Online Course for Teachers" flourished and a TV series ("Vedic Maths TV") was founded. However, the term "Vedic mathematics" is completely misleading and factually incorrect since the aphorisms in Sanskrit cannot be found in any of the Vedas. No wonder a group of renowned mathematicians and scholars led by S.G. Dani, a professor of mathematics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai, and Madhav Deshpande, a professor of Sanskrit and linguistics at the University of Michigan, expressed their deep concern that at a time when the contents of mathematics lessons must be carefully designed to keep up with the needs of other modern professions using mathematical techniques, the imposition of this

book in schools and universities is ridiculous and catastrophic.

Such invocation of the glorious past is arguably based on an inferiority complex due to colonial experience, which dismissed native knowledge as useless. Not least because of such lingering insults, the official guideline is now issued that the West is materially superior, but India is spiritually superior. And since spirit counts more than the material, India as a whole is above the West's supposed lead in technology and economy.

This religious, ideological and semi-scientific orientation of the Indian state education system and cultural system is so serious because the great potential of Indian youth has not yet been exhausted. Serious structural deficiencies continue to hinder the connection to internationally raised standards. Many students cannot study for economic and social reasons. Expenditure on education amounts to only 0.9 percent of the gross national product; in China, the figure is 0.4 percent. There is too little competition and there is too much consideration for caste and municipal prerogatives. Universities often do too little research, for which there are hardly any incentive systems and competition. There is a lack of quality assurance, evaluations have hardly any consequences. The humanities and social sciences are too navel-gazing by focusing entirely on India. You can hardly find foreign scholars at the huge historians or sociologist congresses of India. The fact that India has repeatedly produced international leaders in almost all disciplines is due to a few academic lighthouses and the sheer mass of graduates than to a clever education policy.

The muzzle now being imposed on Indian scientists, intellectuals and artists is poison for the much-needed improvement of education. It endangers the academic freedom, critical spirit and

Academic Freedom

pluralism on which every society and all science depends but which in recent years has been severely constrained, often making Indian and foreign scholars the object of censorship and disciplinary measures. India in particular, through its diversity of religions and traditions, including in the traditional indigenous sciences, has proven how much this majority of positions and opinions are beneficial.

Please note: Parts of the contribution have been taken from my Introduction to *Science and Scientification in South Asia and Europe*, ed. by Axel Michaels and Christoph Wulf (London and New York: Routledge, 2020). I also recommend *Science and Religion in India: Beyond Disenchantment* (London and New York 2022) by the social scientist Renny Thomas whose fieldwork were Indian laboratories.



Dr. Axel Michaels

is Senior Professor of Classical Indology at the South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg. Current fields of interest are social history and history of Hinduism, theory of rituals, as well as the cultural and legal history of Nepal.

“Academic Depression”: Between Fear and Freedom in Hong Kong

by **K. Young**
CATS Graduate

It is increasingly frequent to see the media announcing ‘the death of Hong Kong’. As pro-democrats arrested, student activists jailed, universities raided and anti-government news agencies disbanded, morbid statements from students like ‘It Feels Like We’re Just Waiting to Die’ headlining stories about Hong Kong in major news outlets come as no surprise. Research showed Hong Kong’s academic freedom in sharp decline. An online survey carried out by the Progressive Scholars Group in 2019, a network of more than 200 Hong Kong-based academic staff, illustrated that 67 percent of the respondents expressed academic freedom in Hong Kong has either ‘significantly decreased’ or ‘slightly decreased’ over the past years.¹

Since 2010s, students and academics have been at the forefront of the pro-democracy protests. In 2012 ‘anti-national education’ protests opposed the school subject ‘National and Moral Education’ as ideologised learning content. In 2014 the Occupy Central protest which later became Umbrella Movement demanded free elections. This 4-month sit-in street protest turned ‘civil disobedience’ from an academic concept into the city’s everyday vernacular. In 2015, *Hong Kong Nationalism* was published by the Hong Kong University (HKU) Students’ Union which discussed the city’s history of autonomy and advocated independence. From then on, ‘localist’ political parties were founded by student activists, some of whom were elected in the

Legislative Council by popular vote. The litany of protests climaxed in 2019 where months of demonstrations against the ‘Extradition Bill’ which would allow extraditions to Mainland China took place. Two major universities were sieged and the protest eventually quieted down in the beginning of 2020 due to Covid-19 and ended by the introduction of the ‘draconian’ National Security Law.

Since the legislation, the Hong Kong government has made tightening the control over the city’s education sector one of its foremost missions. Universities, secondary and primary schools in Hong Kong are required to include patriotic education and national security education as mandatory classes in their curricula, to eradicate the ‘anti-central government forces that have penetrated campuses’.² Hong Kong’s execution of the National Security Law is an obvious response to the intimate involvement of its education sector in the range of protests over the decade.

Before the National Security Law was even made public, five university heads signed a letter endorsing the legislation, saying while they support academic freedom, they also ‘understand’ the need for the law.³ This move shed the light on one of the most troubling aspects of the threat that the local academia is facing — the suppression of freedom comes not only from the authorities, but also fellow colleagues and students. Broadly worded and malleably defined, the National Security Law established the crimes of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign organisations. Unprece-

dentedly, cases could be trialed and their sentence served in China instead of in Hong Kong, despite the two different legal systems. Promotion of Hong Kong nationalism and open defiance against China, chants and billboards for which once were ubiquitous in campus, are now punishable up to life imprisonment. The arbitrariness of the law and severity of its punishment prompt self-censorship in all aspects of education. Any activities on campus from teaching and examinations to assignments and class discussion are subject to the law. Suspicious behaviors and speeches can be reported to the government tip line.

Fearing of legal consequences, most universities did not hold students’ union election in the past two years because of the lack of candidates. Numerous accounts of insecurity felt by lecturers and students speaking about sensitive topics, for fear of being reported, can be found across news as well as academic articles.⁴ CCTVs are seen in some lectures and students request more secure ways for submitting assignments. Forums on subjects related to the rule of law and democracy are held privately. Walls of posters supporting the pro-democracy protests that once filled the campus thoroughfares were demolished. In a highly symbolic move, three universities removed their Tiananmen Incident monuments from campus, despite them having stood for decades, citing legal advice and claiming they were never authorised. One of the monuments, the Statue of Shame in HKU, stood in the centre of the university adjacent to one of the biggest canteens. Regardless of one’s political stance, it had been a key backdrop of campus life for many. These statues epitomised the extent of freedom enjoyed by Hong Kong that differentiated the city from the rest of Mainland China, where the Tiananmen Incident



Walls of posters on Hong Kong University Campus, October 2019

is still a forbidden subject. Their removal attested to how the Security Law changed the local academic environment both materially and mentally. It brings the threats to academic freedom in Hong Kong to a new level, as the retribution of not abiding by the central government is no longer merely institutional. The criminalisation of incomppliance provided even more motivation for universities, academic staff and students alike to self-censor by enforcing a political leverage over academics and adapting a pro-Beijing stance.⁵

In response to the law, universities in Hong Kong intended to strive for political neutrality, but they have never been quite politically neutral. A university's autonomy hinges on various factors from political to commercial interest, legal to social

norms, management structures to sources of funding. In the case of Hong Kong, HKU, the city's first university founded in 1911, was an imperialist project. The colonial government hoped to use this institution to carry out 'the ideological function of making the process of domination and exploitation appear normal, inevitable or even scientific'.⁶ The small circle of elites educated there would become 'natural allies' to the British Empire and helped promote English to be the dominant language of modern science. To curb any anti-colonialism sentiments, HKU prohibited its members from taking part in political activities between 1911 and 1950. Afterwards, universities' student unions had been politically active. The Chinese Communist Party used the student unions to

promote the handover of Hong Kong to China that was scheduled to happen in 1997. Student leaders often visited the Mainland prior to the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, after which the student unions openly severed tie with Beijing. Since then and until the recent ban of any memorial activities related to the Tiananmen Incident, the same stance had been openly upheld by student leaders, contesting Beijing's rhetoric that the incident was an unlawful anti-revolutionary event.

The law makes observance and loyalty to the central government a civic duty. Patriotism, in this case towards the country as well as the ruling party, is not considered a political matter but an obligation. In this logic, the opposite of compliance is hence stirring the pot of politics and is now to be checked by the law. More importantly, the government has candidly expressed that the academic sector in Hong Kong is among one of the top priorities to be targeted by the new legislation. Jerome Cohen, a legal scholar and an expert in Chinese law, observed that a Mao-era political tactic of 'politics in command' (zhengzhi guashuai 政治掛帥) is now in place in Hong Kong, which places political imperatives above all else, including academic freedom, with the National Security Law being the vanguard of apparatus in managing Hong Kong.⁷ This tactical principle could facilitate a more formative understanding of the ambiguously worded law that seems to have terrorised the city's academia. Academic freedom, though protected by Hong Kong's Basic Law and repeatedly claimed to be adhered by the city's government, is not exempted when it comes to the Chinese government's understanding of national security.

The pessimism that has clouded the local academia extends to secondary and primary school stu-

dents, many of whom were sent to study abroad amid the wave of emigration. Some primary and secondary school teachers were deregistered for life for discussing the 2019 protest and thereby promoting Hong Kong independence in class. One of the affected primary schools was my 'alma mater', a Christian school which did not shy away from discussing politics with children. I remember learning about the 2003 march in class, a demonstration that opposed the Article 23 (another version of the Security Law), almost 2 decades ago when it was still safe to do so. As China tying Hong Kong closer, albeit increasingly by force, resistance and the feeling of disparity, fear and uncertainty also intensify. With the National Security Law in the forefront of China's tighter control over Hong Kong, and its academic sector being targeted, the only thing certain is that this 'academic depression' will not end soon.

¹ Lai, Yu-Fen, 'The Multiple Challenges to Hong Kong's Academic Freedom', Berlin : Max Planck Institute for the History of Science 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.17617/2.3325034>.

² Dennis Normile, 'New Security Law Rattles Hong Kong Universities', Science 369, no. 6500 (10 July 2020): 129–129, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.369.6500.129>.

³ Timothy McLaughlin, 'How Academic Freedom Ends', The Atlantic, 6 June 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/06/china-hong-kong-freedom/619088/>.

⁴ Vivian Wang, 'As Hong Kong Law Goes After "Black Sheep," Fear Clouds Universities', The New York Times, 7 November 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/world/asia/hong-kong-china-national-security-law-university.html>.

⁵ Carole J. Petersen and Jan Currie, 'Higher Education Restructuring and Academic Freedom in Hong Kong', Policy Futures in Education 6, no. 5 (October 2008): 589–600, <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2008.6.5.589>.

⁶ John P. Burns, 'The State and Higher Education in Hong Kong', The China Quarterly 244 (December 2020): 1031–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741020000958>.

⁷ Jerome Cohen, 'Johannes Chan Appointment Rejected by Hong Kong University Council: A Scandal', 1 October 2015, <http://www.jeromecohen.net/jerrys-blog/2015/9/30/hong-kong-university-council-rejects-to-appoint-johannes-chan-as-pro-vice-chancellor>.

K. Young

comes from Hong Kong, is a graduate of a CATS study program and now doing her doctorate at another German university. The situation in Hong Kong was critically discussed in various CATS seminars last year.

Academic Freedom in the Digital Age - Let's Zoom in...

by **Anja Senz**

Professor for Contemporary Chinese Politics, Society and Economy

During the pandemic, academic exchange shifted overwhelmingly into the digital space. However, European universities seldom relied on their own digital services—instead, they went to private platforms with strong links to North America and Asia. What does this mean for academic freedom in Europe?

In spring 2020, the pandemic outbreak forced most European universities to adapt digital formats at lightning speed. Video conferences quickly became the preferred choice in most settings. They allowed teaching to move online swiftly and stay conceptually close to traditional forms of face-to-face lectures and seminars. They offered professors a way to share their classes from within their home offices, enabled students to continue their studies, and allowed international students to participate from their home countries despite travel restrictions. Other academic exchanges also shifted into the virtual space, as workshops and conferences continued to be organized across continents without any health risks. Presumably, the spatial and temporal flexibility of online formats will stay significant for the academic community independent of the pandemic. Against the backdrop of existing digital alternatives, the scientific community will critically reconsider the need for meetings in physical presence due to time and financial resources, as well as ecological footprints associated with travel. Thus, video

conferences are increasingly taking centre stage in everyday university life as a medium for research and teaching. However, web conferences pose numerous challenges.

Data protection, IT security and the dependency on commercial platforms

Alongside open source services such as Big Blue Button, many universities primarily relied on commercial platforms such as MS Teams, Webex, or Zoom. However, there was rarely any reflection on the appropriate service for the corresponding usage scenarios. Users generally opted for the service they found easiest to access and use. The view of universities pertained to concerns about data protection and IT security. Moreover, universities fielded concerns about potential surveillance, unauthorized recordings, and cyberattacks jeopardizing free academic exchange. In 2020, the platform Zoom, for example, made negative headlines as obscene content disrupted online lectures and school lessons in the so-called “zoom bombing” cyber-attack. Since then, plaintiffs in the United States have successfully taken the video conferencing platform to court—not only due to this type of harassment but also because of major accusations of privacy violations. Zoom was accused of sharing the data of millions of users with Facebook, Google, and LinkedIn, among others. In August 2021, it became known that Zoom intended to settle the class-action lawsuit with a payment of \$85 million.

Discussions surrounding data privacy for cloud-based software

solutions like Zoom extended to server locations as well as encryption techniques. Zoom, for instance, readjusted its services several times after proof emerged that its encryption (ECB mode) was weak. Experts criticized its often advertised end-to-end encryption in particular. The criticism was due to the platform and not the user acting as the endpoint of the encryption, which effectively prevented eavesdropping by third parties, but not, for instance, by Zoom itself. Experts characterized this merely as a “transport encryption.” In February 2022, it was revealed that the microphone remained active on the devices of many users after leaving a video conference. Zoom has since declared that it fixed the problem without specifying the exact extent.

In addition to the technical challenges of providing media for secure online meetings to their members, academic institutions face high licensing costs and the risk of significant technical dependency on expensive commercial platforms.

The freedom, I mean

Academic freedom in Germany encompasses the right to develop research interests freely, formulate scientific questions of one's own choosing, independently design research methods, and freely design teaching in terms of content and method. Scientific opinions may be formed and expressed freely in the academic sphere, even if they contradict the prevailing view. Protected spaces are therefore indispensable to academia, so that even unconventional topics can be explored through argumentation, grievances can be criticized, and alternatives can be debated without fear of surveillance, intimidation, threats, or sanctions against those involved. For universities, the integrity and inviolability of the campus in which academic exchange can



Student in a Video Conference during the Covid 19 Pandemic

unfold is thus an exceptionally valuable asset, both in the real-physical (analogue) world as well as in the digital space.

In recent years, forms of external interference, politicization, and polarization have been observed in increasing numbers that pose a challenge to the academic community worldwide. The shift of research and teaching into the digital space raises additional questions, including, how can the stability and availability of services for all, plus comprehensive and adequate equipment, as well as acceptable costs and integrity of the scientific space, be reconciled? "Digital literacy" as a new buzzword addresses the idea of a user's critical understanding of the "technology in the background" in order to be able to make well-informed decisions regarding their own footprints in the digital world, and the minimizing of the diverse risks. Universities as organizations have obligations in the digital space, just as they do in the physical space and the daily operation of secure seminar rooms and lecture halls. This responsibility cannot simply shift to private platforms without endangering academic freedom.

A few instances since 2020 are particularly illuminating here. In June 2020, Zoom blocked the accounts of several human rights activists who were using the platform to commemorate the Tiananmen Square incidents in Beijing in June 1989 and to discuss the Chinese government's current increasing repression of dissent in Hong Kong. Zoom said it had blocked video conferences related to Tiananmen and associated accounts of US and Hong Kong citizens at the request of the Chinese government. In 2021, Zoom shut down several academic events at US and UK universities related to Palestinian activist Leila Khaled at the behest of critics of the event. Justifying its actions, Zoom referred to Khaled's membership in the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," which the US State Department classifies as a terrorist organization. According to Zoom, the event would have violated US terrorism laws. However, the question of whether a contentious person should have the right to speak at an online academic event is a matter for the inviting academic organization, not for a private company.

Political risks

Zoom as a platform with significant market shares sets a daring example with its proximity to the authoritarian regime in the People's Republic of China. The founder of Zoom, Eric Yuan, studied in the province of Shandong and emigrated to the US in 1997, where he first worked at Cisco Webex. In 2011, he founded Zoom with about forty employees who left Webex with him. Yuan then established two R&D companies in China, registering both as "foreign-owned" (外国法人独资) under the name Yuan Zheng (Eric Yuan) in Hefei and Hangzhou respectively, followed by a third company in Suzhou in 2014. The cities mentioned here are home to a comparatively large number of colleges that train many programmers. Unlike the major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen, labor costs are low and local governments provide tax breaks and other benefits to attract investment. In 2019, Zoom stated in its IPO prospectus, "our product development team is largely based in China, where personnel costs are less expensive than in many other jurisdictions." According to a recent business report for the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Zoom has 700 "code workers" working in R&D in China. Zoom's business model is based on being internationally competitive by minimizing costs in China and by benefitting from subsidies by the Chinese state. Therefore, significant parts of its infrastructure and human resources are located in China and are subject to local jurisdiction. This circumstance is problematic because, for instance, encryption keys are generated on this infrastructure even if no conference participant is located in China. Furthermore, within the framework of the new Chinese Cyber Security Laws and other relevant laws, the Chinese government

Academic Freedom

might exercise influence over the company and may gain access to confidential data.

Whose rights?

Universities have the domiciliary rights to their seminar rooms and lecture halls. However, in the digital space, as the above examples have shown, private companies can act as censors on behalf of third parties, such as states or activists, and deny people from participating in academic exchange. Furthermore, as the above examples illustrate, the European legal framework is undermined when companies refer to American or Chinese law. Surveillance capabilities elicit the danger of self-censorship and the avoidance of “sensitive topics,” for example, to protect students from possible sanctions. Students in a course on Chinese politics at Princeton University, for example, use codes instead of plain names in their papers to protect their identity. At Amherst College, professors use anonymous online chats to allow students to speak freely. Many Australian and Canadian universities have taken similar measures. While Zoom recently declared to respect academic freedoms in the US, this fails to reassure universities in Europe.

The (partial) shift of academic life from a physical place to the digital world and the resulting need to redesign spaces for learning, working, and discussion requires more than the simple use and applica-

tion of digital services. It requires critical engagement—with digital services, potential platforms, and appropriate formats—as well as the realization that academic freedom always goes hand in hand with defending the space in which critical thoughts can be expressed freely without worry.



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Academic Freedom in Sri Lanka

by **Kalinga Tudor Silva**

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Following the Dar es Salam Declaration of 1990, I understand academic freedom as the freedom of teachers, students, and university institutions to pursue knowledge without any undue interference or fear of repression from the state, non-state actors such as terrorist groups, or any other agencies.

All public universities in Sri Lanka are state-funded and operate under the purview of the University Act of 1978. Since 1938, Sri Lanka has had a state-funded free education system covering education from grade one to completion of a Bachelor's degree delivered by fifteen universities and some 20,000 schools providing education in Sinhala, Tamil, and English in selected courses and study programs. Education has opened avenues of upward mobility for all sections of society, including the rural and urban poor, men and women, and majority and minority communities. Universities have greatly contributed to the production of knowledge, literature, and creative work, but universities have also been important centers of social and political protest, as reflected in the campaigns for preserving free education. For instance, in early 2021 there was a widespread campaign within the public universities in Sri Lanka against the new Kotalawala Defense University (KDU) Act, identifying it as a move to militarize and privatize university education. Similarly, student protests supported by campaigns by medical trade unions, prevented the establishment of private medical colleges on several occasions during 1980s

and 1990s, despite Sri Lanka's officially declared switch to economic liberalization policies in 1977.

Academic freedom is guaranteed by the University Act. There are no institutional barriers to pursuit or production of knowledge in different fields, areas of teaching, and research and publication work. There is neither censorship nor surveillance of knowledge production except in the case of investigations into specific terror acts such as the Easter Sunday attack of April 21, 2019. The overall atmosphere for academic freedom, however, has been adversely affected by several developments over the years.

First, increased politicization of university administration with officers such as the chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the vice chancellors being increasingly appointed from among those loyal to ruling regimes. This has sometimes resulted in the encouragement of knowledge production and pursuit of knowledge favorable to ruling regimes, to the neglect of development of alternative frameworks of knowledge. However, this does not mean that views critical of ruling regimes have been suppressed within the education system. On the contrary, universities have always been safe havens for agitations against questionable state policies, as demonstrated by campaigns against the ban on agrochemical production and imports introduced by the prime minister of Sri Lanka in May 2021, which was revoked by the state in December 2021 largely as an outcome of diverse protests from farmers, professionals, and researchers.

Second, universities being a center of social protest, sometimes

knowledge production has been influenced by the political ideologies and populist propaganda of certain radical political groups resorting to violence against free thinkers. For instance, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) discouraged any research challenging their campaigns and interests. Research on caste, for instance, was reportedly discouraged in the University of Jaffna, which was controlled by Vellalar upper caste academics, as well as pro-LTTE groups at one time, who identified caste as a potentially divisive force within the Tamil community. The LTTE murdered independent thinkers like Rajini Thiranagama who refused to accept the LTTE dogma and the parochial nationalist point of view it advocated. Similarly, independent academic research was discouraged by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna during its heyday in the university system in the early 1970s and the 1987–1989 period. As a response many academics, particularly from humanities and social sciences, left the country to accept positions in academia in western centres of learning. Similarly, the pro-Sinhala Jathika Chintanaya (Nationalist Conscience) group criticized liberal academic research that questioned popular wisdom, orthodoxies of various kinds, and the nationalist interpretation of Sri Lankan history and culture.

Third, there are also some challenges for academic freedom from within sections of academia. For instance, some younger generation of scientists, including social scientists, have increasingly become ethnonationalist in outlook, as reflected in their writings, social media posts, and political leanings. This itself is not a problem in so far as they allow diversity of opinion and do not seek to impose their views on others. There is also some tendency towards ethnonationalist polarization of university education, particularly in some re-

Academic Freedom

gional universities. There are, however, some ongoing efforts by the UGC to counter this tendency, by encouraging universities to recruit staff and students on merit, and diversify the course structure and curricula to accommodate the macro needs of the country at large.

On the whole, while there are some challenges to academic freedom in Sri Lanka, it is very much part and parcel of university culture and life in Sri Lanka.

There are emerging challenges to the tolerance of diversity in southern as well as northern regions in Sri Lanka. Militant Buddhist groups—such as Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Movement; BBS)—in the south, a version of Shiv Sena among a small group of Hindus in the north, and some splinter Islamic fundamentalist groups—influenced by Islamic State (ISIS) propaganda, and anti-minority social and mass media campaigns— in eastern Sri Lanka are on the rise following the Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019 and the pandemic. These groups are reflective of new challenges to freedom of thought, even though these developments have not yet infiltrated the higher education system. The appointment of a new presidential commission on “One Country, One Law” in November 2021 under the leadership of Rev. Galabodaaththe Ghanasara—the chief organizer of BBS who has launched a strong campaign against minorities, Muslims in particular, since 2012—is another manifestation of the ruling regime’s hegemonic desire to outlaw diversity, disregarding the strong grain of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural heritage that has evolved in the island since the pre-colonial era. On the other hand, the state has also pushed the neoliberal globalization drive through tourism, foreign investment, and the establishment of a port city with Chinese support. The implications of these developments

on academic freedom and intellectual liberty are yet to be explored in a systematic manner.

An internal debate about academic freedom is needed to identify how to overcome these challenges and work towards evolving a viable system of academic freedom in keeping with local aspirations and needs.

Academic Freedom in South Asia

by **William Sax**

*Professor for Anthropology,
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Concerned by reliable reports of harassment of academics in India, the South Asia Institute (SAI), Heidelberg University, Germany hosted the webinar "Academic Freedom in South Asia" on 2 August, 2021 in which the following, internationally renowned scholars took part: Rehman Sobhan, freedom fighter and economist, Bangladesh; Mridula Mukherjee, historian and former director, Nehru Museum, Delhi; Nandini Sundar, anthropologist and prize-winning scholar of development and human rights, Delhi University; Krishna Bhattachan, sociologist and Indigenous rights activist, Kathmandu; Fatima Ihsan, educationist and Director, Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad; and Kalinga Tudor Silva, sociologist, medical historian, and former director, Centre for Minority Studies, Sri Lanka.

The webinar was introduced by William Sax, Professor and Head of Anthropology, SAI, after which the international guests were introduced by Rahul Mukherji, Professor and Head of Political Science and Executive Director, SAI. Each participant made a ten-minute presentation on the state of academic freedom in his or her country. This was followed by a short question and answer period and a discussion of the next steps to be taken.

Our working definition of academic freedom was "the freedom of teachers, students, and university institutions to pursue knowledge, teach, and conduct research without any undue interference or fear of repression from the state, or any other agencies, structures, or individuals." All participants supported equal access to university study for all persons, based on merit, and without discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, religious community, ethnicity, or disability, except insofar as these play a role in established equal opportunity policies. All participants unambiguously condemned any attempt by governments, universities, or non-governmental organizations and institutions to restrict this freedom by means of arrest, imprisonment, physical assault, restricting movement, intimidation, blocking of career advancement, withholding permission to attend conferences, and cutting retirement benefits. They also condemned vigilantism directed against academics and students, along with violence and the stifling of free expression by student groups. It was suggested that such violence occurs where students do not share roles in the university's governance, and when there is a nexus between certain student groups and governments, ensuring impunity when students engage in violence. Access to the universities, and their public role, were seen to be important for making higher ed-

ucation relevant for the citizenry at large. It was agreed by everyone that along with academic freedom come academic responsibilities of various kinds: to support the free and open exchange of views, to honestly report and never falsify research outcomes, and to encourage criticism from all quarters, especially students.

Beyond these points of settled agreement, participants identified further ways in which academic freedom can be threatened. When academic appointments and administrative placements within universities are politicized by making them on the basis of party loyalty, ideological purity, or communal identification, rather than on the basis of merit and established equal opportunity policies, academic freedom is threatened. When the media exacerbates negative images or reports news in a biased way, so that popular opinion turns against universities, academic freedom is threatened. When research is funded by for-profit businesses that attempt to influence its outcome, academic freedom is threatened. When those pursuing academic careers are pushed into the international "Precariat" so that their financial vulnerability makes it difficult for them to resist pressures of various kinds, academic freedom is threatened. When the word "university" is used for trade schools or other educational institutions for whom "academic freedom" is not of great importance and therefore

neglected, academic freedom is threatened. When private colleges are run as teaching shops or business enterprises, where faculty and students don't have much voice, academic freedom is threatened. Strengthening public tertiary education is therefore one important way to support academic freedom.

Some participants suggested that our working definition of academic freedom should be enhanced, modified, or even replaced. For example, it was suggested that we should ensure that the academic freedom of Indigenous Peoples be explicitly mentioned in our working definition, that academic freedom should not contribute to the colonization of Indigenous Peoples, and destruction of their collective ways of life, ancestral lands, territories, resources, and customary self-government systems, and that we should add the phrase "and with due respect to Mother Earth" and its custodians. It was also suggested that the oral traditions that are the basis of Indigenous knowledge be explicitly acknowledged. It was pointed out that most or all of those in the webinar could be described as "liberal progressives," and that a more inclusive discussion would include "right-wing" opinions as well. It was noted that the webinar was hosted by a Europe-based institution, which, by virtue of its organizing role, exercised considerable power over the outcome. It was suggested that it would be worth discussing whether the form taken by

South Asian universities, deriving as it does from the colonizing powers, restricts academic freedom in some way, and whether one should consider alternative forms of higher education, and whether other forms of internal colonization restrict academic freedom. It is important to understand the post-colonial context of higher education, where English is the main language, and the research agenda is set by western standards and interests. How to make education more relevant to the local context, and to build on local knowledge, is a longstanding concern that we might wish to take up in the future, at the country level as well as internationally.

Academic Freedom in India: Multiple Challenges

by **Mridula Mukherjee**

Professor of Modern Indian

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The freedom to think, speak, and write is a pre-requisite for academic functioning. Without it, academic activity becomes a farce, a mere ritual devoid of meaning. If, at its heart, academia is about questioning old ideas and throwing up new ones, if it is about debate and discussion, and creativity, about trying to make sense of a complex world, and even universe, then the mind has to be, in the words of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, "without fear."

Is that how teachers and students and researchers feel in India today? Free and without fear? I wish I could say yes. I could have said yes a few years ago, even if I had qualified my yes with an adjective such as mostly, with some exceptions, not totally, largely. But today, I am forced to say no, but with some qualifications. India is a huge country, with many diversities, with many provincial governments that have considerable autonomy, with a large number of educational institutions in the public and private sectors. So it is impossible to paint them in a single color. However, what most observers would agree on is that academic freedom has come under increasing threat in recent years. This is deeply connected to the larger issue of democratic backsliding, which has led to India being characterized by international observers as "a partially free democracy," "a flawed democracy," or even "an electoral autocracy." The impact of this is felt in the academic sphere as well.

There are multiple threats to academic freedom in India today, but the unifying thread in them is the ideology of religious sectarianism or communalism or what many prefer to call religious nationalism.

One can try to identify the main sources of these threats. A major one is the institutions of government, and institutions controlled by the government. The assumption of state power at the national level in 2014 by a government headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which espouses an exclusivist majoritarian world view and has close links with the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS), a large organization committed to the consolidation of Hindus around a majoritarian supremacist ideology called Hindutva, has intensified the threat from this source manifold. Parliament, bureaucracy, police, judiciary, regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission, university administrations, governing bodies of colleges, and research institutes are all used to promote this ideology and even target scholars who are critical of the establishment or represent a viewpoint different from the one in favor. Existing textbooks and syllabi are sought to be changed in a majoritarian and communal direction through the use of regulatory bodies and administrations of educational institutions. Intimidation takes various forms, from the suppression of books, with publishers being forced to refuse to publish and even pulp copies of books already published, to denial of appointments, promotion, leave, and retirement benefits, at times even suspension and dismissal, registration of court cases, and harassment by police.

Another major source of threats to academic freedom is vigilante groups affiliated with or inspired by the RSS or BJP. These groups receive covert and often open support from the police and other authorities in preventing speakers they do not approve of from participating in academic events on campuses, and in even physically attacking their targets among teachers and students.

Ironically, the media, which should be expected to be upholders of freedom of expression, have also been a major source of threat to academic freedom. Pro-establishment and compliant elements in the media, which regrettably are dominant in the corporate-owned and government-controlled media, both print and visual, are used to attack academic freedom by showing or publishing content which targets independent-minded academics and free-thinking students. There are of course honorable exceptions, but they are under severe pressure and have been declining in strength.

Let me illustrate the observations I have made above with some examples. At the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), India's premier university where I had the good fortune to teach for over four decades, professors have been subjected to disciplinary enquiries and denied retirement benefits, including pension, for taking part in a silent march on campus in response to a call by the duly elected teachers' association. Appointments have been made of undesirable and unqualified people as faculty, flouting all rules and norms, in defiance of recorded notes of dissent by senior faculty, including deans and chairpersons. Faculty members have had to go to court to prevent undesirable appointments. In one celebrated case, six chairpersons and one dean were removed from their positions without assigning any rea-

son in one stroke late in the evening. They appealed to the high court and were reinstated in their positions. However, the day their tenures ended, they were replaced by “friendly” faculty!

Leave to attend major international academic events and honors, and take up prestigious fellowships, including sabbatical leave, is denied on flimsy grounds. In short, every effort is made to harass and intimidate faculty members who show some spine to make them fall in line. They are not allowed to speak in university meetings. In the School of Social Sciences, which is the largest school in the university, with over 200 faculty, five highly qualified professors were superseded for appointment as dean of the school in 2017, and then an even larger number were superseded a few years later. Only pliable and pro-regime people are appointed in administrative positions. One negative consequence of this is an unhealthy polarization on campus, between pro and anti-establishment faculty.

The academic freedom of students has also been under attack, even taking on a physical form. For example, on January 5, 2020, on the pretext of minor clashes between two groups of students, a large group of about fifty or so hoodlums was allowed the run of the campus. They attacked protesting teachers and students on campus with sticks, iron rods, and stones. All this while police waited at the gate and, instead of coming in to protect the residents, prevented sympathetic citizens and activists from entering the campus to support the victims. No action has been taken against anyone for this, though two years have passed.

JNU faculty have also been the target of another modus operandi of vigilant groups, which is to make complaints against academics who hold views different from the official one, and prevent their partic-

ipation in academic events. M. N. Panini, a retired JNU professor, was prevented from speaking in a university in Jharkhand when the BJP was in power. In 2017, in Jodhpur, a professor, Rajshree Ranawad was suspended for inviting Nivedita Menon, a professor from JNU, to an academic event. She herself had to move to another city for safety. In February 2016, students from Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student organization affiliated with the RSS, stormed a Gwalior event hosting Vivek Kumar, a Dalit professor from JNU, who had to be evacuated.

This method is also used against academics from other universities. Just a few months ago, in July 2021, a local ABVP unit complained to the police, and the police sent notice to the university about invitations to Gauhar Raza, former chief scientist at The National Institute for Scientific, Technological and Developmental Studies, and Apoorvanand, a professor in Delhi University, to participate in a webinar organized by Hari Singh Gour University in collaboration with an American university, on the grounds that it may lead to enmity between communities and a breakdown of law and order. The result was that the seminar was held by the foreign university, but the Indian university was forced to bow out. The government also issued an order, which it later withdrew on objections from a large number of scientists, that permission had to be taken to invite any foreign scholar to an online event.

Let me also give a personal example. In April 2016, a book I co-authored came under attack. A delegation led by Dinanath Batra, a well-known office-bearer of Vidya Bharati, an affiliate of the RSS, met the vice-chancellor of Delhi University, which had published the book in Hindi some three decades earlier, and demanded that the book be withdrawn from sale and circulation, which the vice-chancellor

promptly ordered. Cases were filed against the authors, legal notices sent, and the book remains out of circulation. There were attacks on the authors in TV shows, and even a mention in parliament. It is another matter that, since the book was very popular, there is now a pirated edition, brought out by enterprising souls, freely available!

It is inevitable that this kind of hounding will lead to self-censorship, thus curbing academic freedom. You are bound to get into the habit of thinking twice before expressing a sharply critical opinion, in writing and in speech. Even teaching is bound to be affected, especially in the social sciences. This, in the long run, will impact how students learn from example. We all learnt from our teachers who were fearless in expressing their opinions. Original ideas only come when your mind is without fear.

I cannot do better than to conclude with the words of the poet, Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore:

Where the mind is without fear and
the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the
depths of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its
arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by
thee into ever widening thought
and action
into that heaven of freedom, my father,
let my country awake.

Negotiating Political Loyalty and the Academic Quest for Truth

A Legal Perspective on Academic Freedom in the People's Republic of China after 1978

by **Lennart Riedel**
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In recent years, the situation of academic freedom in the PRC has come under scrutiny as reports of crackdowns on freedom of research, classroom surveillance, and incarceration of academics dominate mass media and debates among Sinologists. Yet, most papers about the topic concern case studies and result from interviews or surveys.¹ While those occasionally mention laws, they fail to provide a legal definition of the term academic freedom and overlook important legal developments relevant to all higher learning institutions in the PRC. This article aims to start filling the gap by delineating the individual rights and responsibilities of academics in the fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities,² using the frequently employed Maoist term “red and expert (*you hong you zhuan* 又红又专) to describe what Du terms the “role duality” of Chinese academics: the requirement to be both politically loyal and professionally competent.³ I begin my examination in 1982 with the introduction of the academic freedom concept into the constitution and end in 2016 with the State Council’s announcement of a new era of “red” sciences. Following Fish, I define the academic freedom right to concern teaching, research, and publishing.⁴

While the 1982 constitution does not explicitly mention “academic

freedom,” it is generally believed that the academic freedom right is enshrined in article 47.⁵ The latter stipulates the negative right to freely engage in scientific research and the positive right to conduct all scientific and educational endeavors “conducive to the interests of the people (有益与人民).”⁶ Combined with the negative right to publish, granted by article 35, we thus can conclude that academic freedom as defined in this article’s introduction is a constitutional right in the PRC. Yet, it is not an absolute one. Article 51 stipulates that the exercise of constitutional freedoms and rights is not to infringe upon the interests of the state, society, the collective, and the freedoms and rights of another individual. Additionally, articles 52 to 54 formulate certain general principles like “observing public order (遵守公共秩序)” that every citizen must abide by. While Zhan and Huang correctly note that similar constraints on freedom are common in other countries like Germany,⁷ they fail to notice the potential for political and ideological interference phrases like “conducive to the interests of the people” represent. According to the *Constitution of the Communist Party of China*, first adopted in 1982, the Party is the “true representative of the interests of the people of all ethnic groups in China (中国各族人民利益的忠实代表).”⁸ Thus, we shall reframe the positive right granted by article 47: the state supports scientific and educational endeavors conducive to the CCP defined inter-

ests of the people. Since the right to teach is only mentioned in conjunction with the above phrase, the constitution evidently allows CCP ideological interference with it. As for the negative freedoms to publish and research, apart from obviously CCP determined interests of the state that cannot be infringed terms like “observing public order” in article 53 are decisive. Banning research and publications able to disrupt said public order, i.e., by inciting protests or petitions to the government, is thus also an action in accordance with the constitution. Therefore, we find that the concept of “red and expert” is constitutional.

Though the constitution has often been called a “dead letter” since it is not implemented and constitutional conformity of laws and regulations is not supervised,⁹ newly added or amended articles frequently serve as what Ginsburg and Sampser in their classification of constitutions in authoritarian states call “billboard” and “blueprint”: they signal the intention of leaders within a regime to domestic and international audiences and guide the direction of future legislation.¹⁰ Accordingly, four years after the promulgation of the 1982 constitution the *Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on the Guiding Principles of Building a Socialist Spiritual Civilization* (中共中央关于社会主义精神文明建设指导方针的决议) proclaimed the CCP’s decision to implement “academic freedom (学术自由),” albeit legitimized by the notion that academic freedom helps academia to better “serve the people, serve socialism (为人民服务, 为社会主义服务).”¹¹ The concurrent legislative endeavors resulted in the 1995 *Education Law* and the 1998 *Higher Education Law*, of which the latter concerns universities and is thus of paramount importance for our investigation. Article 10 reaffirms that the state guarantees freedom of research and unspecified oth-

er “cultural activities (文化活动)”, while also demanding that those are conducted in accordance with the law.¹² Additionally, the state’s demand for academics’ “role duality” is enshrined in Article 3 and 5: the former emphasizes the importance of being “red” by proclaiming that the state supports a higher education sector that develops socialism “under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory (以马克思列宁主义、毛泽东思想、邓小平理论为指导)” and in accordance with constitutional principles. The requirement of being an expert is then formulated in Article 5 that delineates the role of academics as fostering *innovative* experts able to put ideas into practice, “developing a culture of science and technology (发展科学技术文化)” and thus “accelerating the realization of socialist modernization (促进社会主义现代化建设).” As for the right to publish, the 2000 *Notice on Further Strengthening the Management of Journals on Current Political Affairs, Comprehensive Cultural Live, Digest, and Academic Theory* (关于进一步加强时事政治类、综合文化生活类、信息文摘类和学术理论类期刊管理的通知) similarly stipulates the need for academic journals to “uphold the correct political orientation (坚持正确的政治方向) [...]” and not violate the Party’s propaganda discipline and the state’s publication guidelines like adherence to Marxism-Leninism etc.¹³ Therefore, we can conclude that political loyalty has always been a precondition for exercising the academic freedom right after 1978. Accordingly, Cong Cao’s hypothesis of a post-Mao era shift from the red-and-expert criterion to the “sole emphasis on expertise” must be rejected.¹⁴ When he finds that members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences were selected because of their professional and not political achievements, he forgets that said

academic excellence was proven through topics and arguments *within* the politically sanctioned discourse. It was never a question of “red or expert,”¹⁵ but rather one of which aspect of the directive to be red *and* expert was judged to be *more* (but not solely) important.

In practice, political loyalty used to mean that everything was allowed except fundamental systemic criticism like questioning the Party’s leadership and guiding principles like Marxism-Leninism etc. or talking freely about sensitive historical incidents like the Tiananmen Protests.¹⁶ Foreign ideas and theories, especially from Europe and the US, were part of the discourse, so much so that Tani Barlow noted in 1991 that the Chinese intellectual of power “speaks the languages of imported Truth.”¹⁷ However, in 2009 signs appeared that a shift of the political bottom line was imminent when the Director of the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization Li Changchun 李长春 proclaimed that adherence to ideological guidelines implies the rejection of “Western values 西方价值.”¹⁸ The 2013 leaked internal party directive *Document 9* (中共九号文件) then explicitly banned discourse on several of those, especially such discourse that claims their superiority over value systems implemented by the Party, e.g., the argument that the Western definition of Human Rights is better and should therefore be adopted in the PRC.¹⁹ In the legal sphere, the new party policy translated into the 2016 *Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Political Work at Institutions of Higher Learning under the New Situation* (关于加强和改进新形势下高校思想政治工作的意见).²⁰ The *Opinion* explicitly mentions the phrase “red and expert” and calls for ideology to penetrate the whole teaching process. In the area of research, it proclaims nothing less than the establishment of “Philosophical and Social



The topic of “red and expert” will be explored visually in the next exhibition at the CATS Library, cf. page 37.

Sciences with Chinese Characteristics (中国特色[...])哲学社会科学学科.” Likewise, it asks for all the Social Sciences and Humanities to “possess Chinese Characteristics (具有中国特色)” as well. This effectively constitutes the proclamation of a “red epistemology” as the only true methodology for said fields of studies, since possessing “Chinese characteristics” entails the methodological use of sinized Marxism and having, advancing, and disseminating a “correct (正确)” political orientation,²¹ which begs the question if we can still frame the role of academics in China as “red and expert. I argue that “red epistemology” constitutes a classic example of what Foucault calls “Regime of Truth:”²² Academics have to submit to the notion that only “red epistemology” can produce truth, and that such truth is in line with the truth propagated by the CCP. Since Humanities and Social Sciences are not only concerned with hard facts but involve analysis and interpretation, the commitment to a certain methodology *predetermines* the outcome, which then will be published as “red truth.”

Hence, I propose abolishing the term “red and expert” when talking about academics in the PRC after 2016 and instead using “red experts” to signify that both aspects are no longer separated.

This article has shown that the “role duality” of Chinese academics of being “red and expert” has dominated their profession ever since the concept of academic freedom was introduced into the constitution in 1982. It has always been a conditional freedom. But while being “red” used to mean refraining only from systemic criticism, it came to entail the commitment to a “red” mode of knowledge production in Xi Jinping’s China. Such crackdowns on academic freedom are found to be constitutional and not in violation of any laws. The question remains if China’s “red experts” can devise strategies to use “red epistemology” to continue to argue against government policies. Considering the legitimization of the ideological canon of works by Marx etc. this seems highly likely. While a definite answer will be left to future research, the following Marx quote might serve as a preview: under a system of censorship, the government “hears only its own voice, knows that it hears only its own voice, and is yet fixed on the delusion to hear the voice of the people and demands from the people to fall for the trick.”²³

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¹ E.g. Zhidong Hao and Zhengyang Guo, “Professors as Intellectuals in China: Political Roles and Academic Freedom in a Provincial University,” in *Academic Freedom Under Siege. Higher Education in East Asia, the U.S. And Australia*, ed. Zhidong Hao and Peter Zabielskis, Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects (Springer, 2021).

² For the purpose of this paper, I have excluded laws and regulations concerning the institutional autonomy of institutions of higher learning and mechanisms to enforce and control political loyalty. Those are nevertheless important to consider for everyone attempting a comprehensive assessment of the state of academic freedom in the PRC.

³ Cong Cao, “Red or Expert: Membership in the Chinese Academy of Sciences,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, no. 4 (1999): 42. Xiaoxin Du, “Academic Staff’s Dual Role in China: Academic Freedom in a Prestigious University,” in *Academic Freedom Under Siege. Higher Education in East Asia, the U.S. And Australia*, ed. Zhidong Hao and Peter Zabielskis, Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects (Springer, 2021), 106-07, 19.

⁴ Stanley Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom. From Professionalism to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5, 20-36.

⁵ Yichao Jin 金一超, “Lun xueshu ziyou de zhidu baozhang 论学术自由的制度保障 (On the Systemic Guarantee for Academic Freedom),” *Zhejiang Gongye Daxue Xuebao* 浙江工业大学学报 8, no. 3 (2009): 301; Zhongle Zhan 湛中乐 and Yuxiao Huang 黄宇骁, “Zai lun xueshuziyou: guifan yiju, xiaoqi quanli yu jiji yiwu 再论学术自由: 规范依据, 消极权利与积极义务 (Academic Freedom Revisited: Normative Foundation, Negative Right and Positive Duty),” *Fazhi yu shehui fazhan* 法制与社会发展 136 (2017): 90.

⁶ *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo xianfa* 中华人民共和国宪法 (*Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*), promulgated 1982, accessed 28.12.2021, http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content_5276318.htm.

⁷ Zhan and Huang, “Zai lun xueshuziyou: guifan yiju, xiaoqi quanli yu jiji yiwu 再论学术自由: 规范依据, 消极权利与积极义务 (Academic Freedom Revisited: Normative Foundation, Negative Right and Positive Duty),” 95-97.

⁸ *Zhongguo Gongchandang dangzhang* 中国共产党党章 (*Constitution of the Communist Party of China*), promulgated 1982, accessed 15.01.2022, [https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hans/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%85%B1%E4%BA%A7%E5%85%9A%E7%AB%A0%E7%A8%8B_\(1982%E5%B9%B4\)](https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hans/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%85%B1%E4%BA%A7%E5%85%9A%E7%AB%A0%E7%A8%8B_(1982%E5%B9%B4)).

⁹ Qianfan Zhang, “A Constitution without Constitutionalism? The Paths of Constitutional Development in China,” *ICON (International Journal of Constitutional Law)* 8, no. 4 (2010): 952; Dingjian Cai, “Constitutional Supervision and Interpretation in the People’s Republic of China,” *Journal of Chinese Law* 9, no. 2 (1995).

¹⁰ Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Simpser, “Introduction. Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes,” in *Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes*, ed. Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Simpser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6-8.

¹¹ Shenggen He 何生根 and Hui Zhou 周慧, “Lun xueshu ziyouquan de baozhang yu jiuji 论学术自由权的保障与救济 (On the Guarantee and Remedy of the Academic Freedom Right),” *Fazhi yu shehui fazhan* 法制与社会发展 62 (2005): 85.

¹² *Gaodengjiaoyu fa* 高等教育法 (*Higher Education Law*), promulgated 1998, accessed 15.01.2022, <http://www.people.com.cn/item/faguiku/jy/F44-1020.html>.

¹³ *Guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang shishi zhengzhi lei, zonghe wenhua shenghuo lei, xinxi wenzhai lei he xueshu lilun lei qikan guanli de tongzhi* 关于进一步加强时事政治类, 综合文化生活类, 信息文摘类和学术理论类期刊管理的通知 (*Notice on Further Strengthening the Management of Journals on Current Political Affairs, Comprehensive Cultural Live, Digest, and Academic Theory*), GAPP Issue [2000] No. 753, accessed 10.02.2022, http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2001/content_61335.htm.

¹⁴ Cao, “Red or Expert: Membership in the Chinese Academy of Sciences,” 54.

¹⁵ Cao, “Red or Expert: Membership in the Chinese Academy of Sciences,” 42.

¹⁶ Rui Yang, Lesley Vidovich, and Jan Currie, “‘Dancing in a Cage’: Changing Autonomy in Chinese Higher Education,” *Higher Education* 54 (2006): 58; Du, “Academic Staff’s Dual Role in China: Academic Freedom in a Prestigious University,” 111.

¹⁷ Tani Barlow, “Zhishifenzi [Chinese Intellectuals] and Power,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 16 (1991): 226.

¹⁸ Changchun Li 李长春, “Liu ge yu shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi miqie xiangguan de wenti 六个与社会主义核心价值观体系密切相关的问题 (Six Questions Closely Related to the Core Value System of Socialism),” *People’s Daily*, 2009, accessed 02.10.2021, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%85%AD%E4%B8%AA%E4%B8%BA%E4%BB%80%E4%B9%88/3593>.

¹⁹ *Guanyu dangqian yishi xingtai lingyu qingkuang de tongbao* 关于当前意识形态领域情况的通报 (*Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere*), CPC No. 9, accessed 03.01.2022, https://www.bannedbook.org/forum34/topic3971.html#google_vignette.

²⁰ *Guanyu jiaqiang he gaijin xin xingshi xia gaoxiao sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo de yijian* 关于加强和改进新形势下高校思想政治工作的意见 (*Opinion on Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Political Work at Institutions of Higher Learning under the New Situation*), CPC Central Committee Issue [2016] No. 31, accessed 15.01.2022, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-02/27/content_5182502.htm.

²¹ Xi Jinping 习近平, “Zai zhexue shehui kexue gongzuo zuotanhui shang de jianghua 在哲学社会科学工作座谈会上的讲话 (Speech at the Forum on the Work in Philosophy and Social Sciences),” *Xinhua Net*, 18.05.2016, accessed 23.09.2022, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-05/18/c_1118891128.htm.

²² Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart, Foucault, Michel, 1926-1984. Lectures at the Collège de France, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 93-113.

²³ Hanno Hardt, “Communication is Freedom: Karl Marx on Press Freedom and Censorship,” *Javnost - The Public* 7, no. 4 (2000): 90.

In Control of the University

Taleban Takeover as a Challenge to Freedom of Higher Education in Afghanistan

by **Said Reza Kazemi**
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In mid-August 2021, the Afghanistan government disintegrated and the Taleban recaptured power while the United States was completing the American and coalition withdrawal from the country. Since this consequential turn of events, what has happened to university lecturers, students, and generally higher education in the country?

The very freedom of higher education in Afghanistan is at stake, because the fallout of the Taleban takeover has been, firstly, a fear-induced exodus of faculty members and students, and disruption of higher education, and, secondly, the creation of a mechanism of controlling higher education. By freedom of higher education, I mean not only the freedom of lecturers to research, teach, and publish, and of students to learn, but also the autonomy of a higher education body to decide its membership, governance, and quality of scholarship (Daston 2019). This freedom is crucial to "our conception of the university." (Scott 2019: 5)

Exodus and Disruption

During and in the wake of the Taleban takeover, a large number of faculty members have either escaped from, or been looking for a way out of Afghanistan for fear of being persecuted on various grounds, including ethnic or religious background, gender, studies or publications, ties with the previous government, or outside academic or non-academic con-

nections. Academics from or in western, central, and northern Afghanistan have spoken to the author about a resulting dramatic reduction in faculty numbers. They spoke about some departments and faculties they knew in public and private higher education institutions in Herat in the west, Balkh in the north, and the capital Kabul, which had become almost empty of lecturers, because most lecturers had left or were leaving. One major university in particular, the American University of Afghanistan that opened as the first private university in Kabul in 2006, has completely collapsed; the Taleban have taken over its premises (Jacinto 1 September 2021). Similar to lecturers, many students have escaped, or are escaping from an Afghanistan that is again under Taleban rule. Those who remain find silence safer than confrontation with the new rulers.

In addition to creating a climate of fear, the Taleban takeover has had other disruptive repercussions. Foremost has been the closure of all thirty-nine public universities and higher education institutes, partly because the Taleban do not have the funds to keep the system running, supposing they would finance public higher education if they did have the money. The closure has halted the study and work of large numbers of students, faculty members, and non-teaching staff (figure 1). The takeover has caused a rupture in Afghanistan's relations with the international community, whose aid kept civil services, including public higher education, up and running.

As for over 120 private universities and higher education institutes, many have seen their student numbers plummet due to the collapse of Afghanistan's overall economy, at least in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif cities, where this author spoke to university administrators and lecturers. Many students were employees of the previous government or foreign non-governmental organizations, and hence lost their jobs and incomes after the 15 August regime change and inter-

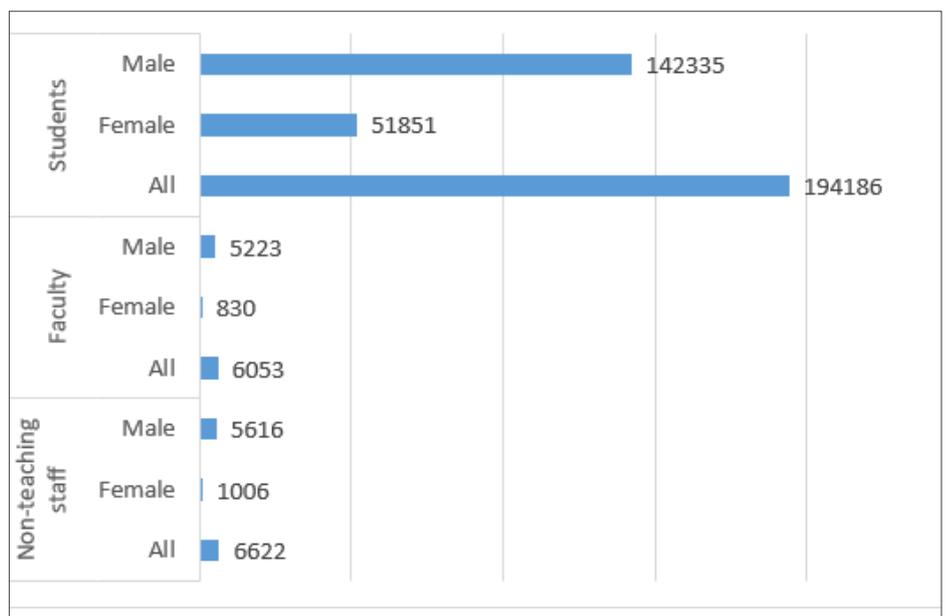


Figure 1: students, faculty members and non-teaching staff of public higher education institutions, March 2020 (Afghanistan Ministry of Higher Education 2020)

national withdrawal. At the same time, thousands of high school graduates who took and passed the pre-Taliban takeover national university entrance test known as *kankur* have had no opportunity to start going to university. This means that the annual cycle of the national university entrance test is most likely broken, also taking into account the fact that the Taliban have banned girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade in many provinces across the country.

A Mechanism of Control

The Taliban have also been putting in place a system to control whoever and whatever has remained from higher education in Afghanistan. First, they have appointed their members or sympathizers in key positions in the ministry of higher education, chiefly the minister and the three deputy ministers for academic affairs, student affairs, and finance and administration. In focus is the Taliban's acting minister of higher education, Mawlawi Abdul Baqi Haqqani, who has long been involved in politics and war in Afghanistan (Wikipedia 10 December 2021). He was governor of the south eastern Khost and Paktika provinces, deputy minister of information and culture, and an official in the consular department of the foreign affairs ministry during the first Taliban rule (1996–2001). In the post-2001 period, the United Nations sanctioned him for his role in organizing militancy throughout eastern Afghanistan, in particular in his home province of Nangarhar. Like several senior Taliban officials, he has studied in Darul Uloom Haqqania, a religious seminary in Pakistan's northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (ur-Rehman 25 November 2021).

Second, the Taliban have been establishing a parallel structure to extend their control over all public and private higher edu-



Taliban members visit to monitor a private university, 27 December 2021, Kabul city. Source: APUIHEA Facebook page.

cation institutions in Kabul and the provinces. Central to this has been the appointment by Haqqani of extraordinary representatives entrusted with wide-ranging authorities to oversee and monitor the higher education sector. In response, some faculty members have resigned or been dismissed. In the notorious example of Kabul University, Afghanistan's largest state-run university, Haqqani first introduced Muhammad Ashraf Ghairat, a young religious school graduate, as his extraordinary representative, and then on 21 September installed him in place of Muhammad Osman Babury, a renowned Afghan scholar who was heading the university. Social media posts also resurfaced reportedly showing Ghairat defending the Taliban's use of implosive electronic devices as a war tactic, and calling for the killing of journalists and the Islamization of the higher education system, including curricula and preventing women's participation. This caused an outrage among the faculty, with dozens of lecturers tendering their resignations, that even made the Taliban-run ministry to introduce a second replacement—Osama Aziz, from Nangarhar, an alumnus of the International Islamic University, Islamabad. To give a second example, in the state-run Albiruni

University in the northeastern province of Kapisa, Abdul Qahar Sarwari resigned as chancellor, saying that "the university is not a military battalion and a place of espionage in which to appoint people for spying and exercising pressure," referring to Haqqani's extraordinary representative at the university (*Hasht-e Sobh* 11 December 2021).

Additionally, the extraordinary representatives have the power to monitor private higher education institutions. So far, the monitoring has focused on the implementation of the scheme on gender separation in higher education. Proposed by the Association of Private Universities and Institutes of Higher Education in Afghanistan (APUIHEA), approved by the Taliban-run ministry of education, and entered into force on 1 September 2021, the scheme secured the ministry's permission for private higher education institutions to reopen after the dust of the 15 August regime change had settled. "The association knew that it must propose gender separation, without which it would be impossible to get a Taliban go-ahead for private higher education institutions to resume their work," a private university chancellor in Mazar-e Sharif told the author. The extraordinary

representatives and the APUI-HEA have formed provincial-level commissions, whose delegations often pay surprise visits to private higher education institutions to ensure that male and female students are separated at least by a partition in the classroom.

Lastly, there are indications that changing higher education policy will not remain limited to gender separation. Haqqani has stated on several occasions that the ministry will create what he calls an Islamic and acceptable curriculum by removing any subjects that are against Islamic law. He or any other officials have not given any details yet. At the same time, given Afghanistan's economic disintegration, it is not clear if the ministry can, assuming that it would, maintain all the diverse departments and faculties in natural, social, and human sciences that operated within the pre-Taliban takeover higher education system. Given the attrition of, and fear amongst faculty members and students, stated Taliban positions, and lack of funding, Afghanistan's higher education system is very likely going to be overhauled, meaning a loss of the diversity of curricula, departments, and faculties, particularly in the humanities and social sciences.

It is thus the very freedom of higher education that the new Taliban rulers have challenged. It is a challenge to what lecturers can safely teach, research, and publish, what students can be exposed to in terms of the diversity of knowledge and socialization, and what autonomy a higher education body such as a department, faculty, or university can have. However, it is premature to say whether the challenge has—or indeed will—suppress academic freedom in Afghanistan. If that happens too, the very idea of the university will be lost.

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Academic Non-Freedom and the Crisis of Chinese Writing

by **Peidong Sun**

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This short essay will focus on how academic non-freedom breeds a crisis in Chinese writing that has become increasingly pronounced since Xi Jinping took office in late 2012. I reflect on three topics: the problem of publication, the crisis of authorship, and the dilemma of language corruption.

Firstly, the publication market of Chinese writing has shrunk in recent years.

In mainland China, for example, only one single book related to contemporary Chinese history was published in 2017 by more than 500 publishing houses. It was a translation of Gail Hershatter's *The Gender of Memory* which The People's Press had approved in 2015, with the privilege of skipping the lengthy process of outsider review, supervised by the Central Institute of Party History and Literature.¹

The now typical approach to publishing explains the radical reduction in the number of books. Customarily, no clear rejection or affirmation of a book project on politically sensitive topics, as defined by the General Administration of Press and Publication, is given. This situation has induced many editors to avoid potentially sensitive issues, which are only vaguely and arbitrarily defined. All books must go through a long and utterly unpredictable review process.

In addition, the propaganda department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has taken a firm grip by controlling book numbers ever more fiercely. The book number is

a book's identity, and without it, the book is illegal. At the beginning of 2019, the propaganda department issued an internal document to publishers, announcing that the total number of book numbers would be reduced. The variety of books would be constricted. Unsurprisingly, this worsened the situation. There are three main categories of publishing houses in China: state-owned, joint ventures between private and state-owned companies controlled by the latter, and private, operating independently. Only the first two are eligible to apply directly for a book number now. Naturally, they prefer to publish books that will sell well, without political sensibilities.

While throughout the twentieth century, Hong Kong and Taiwan have been places where books censored on the mainland could be published, today, local publishers have become more reluctant as well. The 2014 Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan, the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, and protests and oscillations following these have shifted editors' attention to critical local issues.

Secondly, authorship in Chinese writing has encountered new challenges.

People have been largely indifferent towards Chinese writing in the overseas Chinese world. This explains why many immigrants delay or refuse to write in Chinese on their experiences, even if these experiences deserve to be shared.

Ha Jin 哈金 (1956-), a Chinese American writer, pursued his Ph.D. in the U.S. during the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democratic movement and later emigrated to the United States. He has chosen English as

his writing language and enjoys his "exile to English" because he does not have to worry about censorship that way. In a 2009 article in the *New York Times*, he claims "to preserve the integrity of my work, I had no choice but to write in English."² After 2015, my own academic writings, too, have been conveyed in English and French exclusively because I was repeatedly censored by Chinese academic journals and CCP authorities at Fudan University, where I worked from 2013 to 2020. I am working on two monographies, one is entitled *Underground Reading: How the Cultrual Revolution Shapped the Xi Jinping Generation*; the other is called *The Mentality of the Chinese Communist Party: An Untold Story*, in English. My memoir-in-the-making, *Crossing the Three Walls*, is written in English, too. The hope for more extensive freedom of self-expression and the possibility to engage less in self-censorship have empowered me to write in English. It is not easy to do so, however.

Thirdly, the crisis of Chinese writing is also caused by the dilemma of language corruption.

While this has varied over time, it has already affected three different generations of Chinese.

One of my interviewees, a middle-schooler from Shandong Province, wrote the following in his diary in the late 1960s: "After studying Chairman Mao's 'Against Liberalism,' my mind was enlightened, and I was ashamed to remember that I had regressed a lot since the beginning of the school year." He then continued, "I am determined to study Chairman Mao's writings in the future, to transform my worldview completely, to throw away my baggage, catch up with the situation, and become a qualified graduate who is satisfied with Chairman Mao."

These words would be familiar to the Xi Jinping Generation, and they

may even feel a kind of affection—if with a bitter taste. However, this diary is full of rather hackneyed revolutionary clichés. In addition, when one considers that an eleven-year-old child wrote these words, and that tens of millions of children and hundreds of millions of adults wrote, thought, and spoke in this style, one cannot help but feel alarmed.

The current Chinese language is arsenic of communist revolutionary ideology. In a 2012 article on the consequences of “language corruption,” economist Zhang Weiyong 张维迎 (1959-) reveals that this is bound to exist in a society that lacks a marketplace of ideas. Suppose a system or individual needs to defend something indefensible or pretend to do something that it does not want to do. In that case, it needs to separate the “name” and the “reality” of language itself, to “give a good name to an evil act,” or to modify the original language by giving it a new moral meaning and value.³

Thus, singing red songs and reciting Mao’s quotations has become a model of emotional expression that molded Xi’s generation during the Cultural Revolution. The writer Ah Cheng 阿城 (1949-) was having a party with his friends in the United States when—after three rounds of drinking—poet Bei Dao 北岛 (1949-) started to sing “The East is Red” and then recited the lines: “The sky was a dark and a dreary sky, the earth was a dark and a dreary earth,”⁴ from the revolutionary epic “The East is Red.” Ah Cheng thought Bei Dao was joking but later found out that he was not.⁵ Bei Dao expressed his innermost emotions, and to do so, he had to sing this well-familiar song in praise of Mao.

Wu Di 吴迪 (1951-), the chief editor of *Remembrance* 记忆, a journal on the history of the Cultural Revolution, too, is very good at singing revolutionary songs such as “Preface to the Reprint of Chairman Mao’s Quotations (毛主席语录再版前言)”

In one of my interviews, he said: “I do not like red songs, but this is the one I can sing best. Once I sing it, what resounds in my head is the excruciating melody of that time.”

As a People’s Republic of China historian, I have read many first and second-hand materials on the post-1949 era; such ideologemes and their doctrinal value have much influenced me. Many hackneyed pairs of words and arguments—always re-occurring in the same predictable order—populate my heart and mind whenever I describe my everyday and professional life. For instance, the word “thrift” 勤俭 for me, is a word encouraging ordinary Chinese people to consume less but to work harder to build the communist cause. I would never have thought that “thrift” and “shop” could be joined together and have real meaning before I saw a thrift shop in Ithaca last month.

Evidence that ideologemes are essential in the make-up of contemporary Chinese can be drawn from my review experiences with graduate students’ conference papers for an international conference organized by the Communication University of China 中国传媒大学 in September 2021. Twenty articles were submitted by Ph.D. candidates born in the early 1990s, pursuing their higher degrees in some of China’s most eminent universities. To illustrate the aim of an oral history project, one explains, “The project was organized and supported by the local government. It was initiated and designed within the national framework to ‘document their extraordinary journey, publicize their contribution to society, and promote their glorious tradition of patriotism and love for their homeland.’”

Revolutionary clichés are embodied in the bones and blood of many Chinese after continuous and intensive indoctrination for more than seven decades. Those familiar with CCP propaganda discourse

take for granted that the verb promote is naturally followed by “the glorious tradition of patriotism,” “the Party’s fine traditions,” “the spirit of the socialist rule of law,” and so forth. Socialist terms, such as “thought work” immediately comes to one’s mind whenever one sees “propaganda.” How Chinese would naturally react to certain clichés demonstrates that their minds have been re-structured without acknowledging the abnormality. It is not surprising to see socialist terminology in official CCP documents or in public speeches by its cadres. However, it must raise concerns when these clichés appear in academic writing.

Each character in Chinese has its temperature; it is more like a human face, which tells us about life’s sweet, sour, and bitter moments. I cannot imagine what our Chinese writing will be like in the future—if the heavy censorship by the CCP continues where it can.

¹ I introduced the book to the People’s Press.

² Ha Jin. Exile to English, *The New York Times*, May 31, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/31/opinion/31hajin.html>.

³ Zhang Weiyong. The Hazards of Language Corruption. *Miscellaneous Articles Monthly* (Digest). 2012;(7): 18-19.

⁴ Produced for the 15th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, it tells the history of CCP from 1921 to 1949.

⁵ Cha Jian-ying. *Interviews on the 1980s*. Shanghai: SUP Book Store, 2006. 24.



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First Heidelberg Indology Doctoral Symposium DISRUPTION

by **Shefali More**
*Graduate Student,
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Heidelberg Indology Doctoral Symposium (HeilDS), a two-day international conference on Indology, was organized by Shefali More and Kush Depala, together with the entire team of the doctoral students of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia department (SAI), Heidelberg University, on 13-14 November 2021. The COVID-19 Pandemic and the turbulences caused by it inspired us to examine the theme of 'disruption' in the broader sense. Hence, the theme of this first HeilDS was "Disruption" in South Asia. What constitutes Disruption in the South Asian context? What is its opposite? How is it presented? How has a community, text, or idea caused or reacted to a disruption? What is a disruption in a community or text, or ritual? What agencies cause Disruption? How is Disruption perceived in communities or rituals? How is Disruption exploited? How do communities or texts mitigate against Disruption? What power does the fear of disruption yield over people, communities, etc.? How else can we analyze and understand Disruption?

Keeping with this cross-disciplinary tradition of the South Asia Institute, the symposium provided a platform to doctoral students in the field of Indology and South Asian Studies to exchange and develop their research and ideas in an open, critical, and constructive environment.

The conference was attended by 25-30 people, with 12 scholars

participating in person in Heidelberg. The others attended virtually. Twelve doctoral students from 11 universities (in Asia, the USA and Europe) presented their research exploring Disruption in various contexts ranging from literary traditions to the pandemic. Over two days, four panels, each with three paper presentations, were held.

The first day started with a panel on "Disruption and COVID-19". Arkamitra Ghatak's (Heidelberg University) presentation "Disruption and Divine Intervention: Messianic Narratives and Online Communities of Faith in Times of Pandemic," focused on how the community of disciples of Sri Sri Sobha Ma, the guru of the Nimbārka Vaiṣṇava tradition, responded to the Covid 19 Pandemic, by shifting to the digital platform and by reiterating the messianic agency of the guru as the divine savior in times of calamity. Diksha Narang's (South Asian University) paper "This Disease Won't Affect Those that Work in the Sun': Labour Culture Amidst the Pandemic" attempted to understand the moral identity of precarious laborers during the Pandemic through their social and political responses to the coronavirus pandemic. Soumili Mondal's (Amity University) paper "Disruption in Folklore: A Study Through the Context of "Vratākathās," focused on the impact of COVID pandemic on the performance of small and large scale vratas followed by women in Bengal. This response to this panel was given Dr. Mukesh Kumar (Anthropology, SAI, Heidelberg University).

The second panel of the day was "A Perspective on History." Humaira Afreen (Presidency University) investigated the lingering ramifications of the periodization in South Asian history and its strong roots in colonial and nationalist historiographical traditions in modern indigenous scholarships even today. Nabajyoti Ghosh (Ashoka University) demonstrated a disruption in the way the Mishmis were represented in the 19th century by the stakeholders of the colonial state and how it was simultaneously reflected in the administrative policies which came to rule their lives in the second half of the 19th century. The third presenter in this panel, Ann Scarabel (Heidelberg University), illustrated a case study of the 19th-20th century debate on one important religious practices of Hindu India, the mūrti pūjā. The study delineated Svāmī Dayānanda's positions and Svāmī Karapātrī response. It was our pleasure to have Prof. Dr. Kama MacLean (History department, SAI, Heidelberg University) as the respondents of this panel.

The first day ended with a plenary session where participants shared their experiences of Disruption in their personal and work life due to COVID-19. We also discussed different strategies to cope with this Disruption in academia.

The second day started with the panel on "Disruption in Literature", with Dominik Haas (University of Vienna) paper, "How to Make a Religious Text Resistant to Disruption: The Case of the Gāyatrī Mantra." Simon Winant (Ghent University) with his paper "Literary Debts and Discontinuity in Devaprabhasūri's Pāṇḍavacarita: (De)constructing (Dis)continuities" complicated the binary of disruption/continuity within literary traditions through a close reading of one particular Jain Mahābhārata adaptation in Sanskrit, the Pāṇḍavacarita (1213 CE) by Devaprabhasūri. Chandrabhan

Yadav (Jawaharlal Nehru University), through his paper, "Resolving 'Disruption': Ukkaṅṭhita-bhikkhu and Women as the 'Objects' of Deviation in the Buddhist Narratives" analyzed Disruption on a psychological and social level in the narratives around the state of Ukkaṅṭha-Citta described in the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā. Prof. Dr. Ute Hüsken (Classical Indology, SAI, Heidelberg University) responded to this panel.

The last panel was "Disruption in Grammatical Traditions," beginning with Anita Maria Borghero's (University of Naples' L'Orientale' / University of Cagliari) paper "Broken Lines in the Process of Normalizing Languages: Two Cases of Discontinuity between Pāṇini and the Vedas ." Valentina Ferrero (University of Cagliari) in her paper "Is the Sārasiddhāntakaumudī Still Navya Vyākaraṇa? The Analysis of Its Disruptions" explored further avenues in the study of Sārasiddhāntakaumudī, which seems to be disruptive not only in comparison with the tradition of the prācīna vyākaraṇa but also within the navya vyākaraṇa tradition. Radha Blinderman (Harvard University) in her paper, "Vaiṣṇava and Śākta Grammars Facing Disruption" presented how Vaiṣṇava and Śākta grammars provide many missing links in a number of grammatical debates. Dr. Anand Mishra (Classical Indology, SAI, Heidelberg University) was the respondent of this session.

The second day and the conference ended with the keynote address of Dr. Vera Lazzaretti (Centre for Research in Anthropology [DRIA], Lisbon) on the topic "The Shadow of Ayodhya in Banaras: Reflections Around Disruption and its Reverberations ." Dr. Lazzaretti, who has been working on religiosity in Banaras for almost a decade, shared her thoughts and observations on Disruption in controversial religious spaces deriving from her experiences from her recent on-

going project on Kashi Vishvanath Temple Corridor.

Each respondent shared their valuable comments on all papers of their panel, which certainly helped the presenters progress their research. Fascinating and fruitful question-and-answer sessions followed these comments. In short, HeilDS was an enriching experience for all participants.

Artificial Intelligence to Analyze Chinese Periodicals

by **Matthias Arnold**
Heidelberg Research Architecture

The Heidelberg Research Architecture project “Early Chinese Periodicals Online” (ECPO) <https://uni-heidelberg.de/ecpo> has, in recent years, been transformed from a data silo into an open access Digital Humanities platform. In the first decade of its existence, the focus was on the systematization of digitized early Chinese press products, resulting in a searchable database for image scans and bi-lingual metadata: over 300000 scans, 85000 records and 50000 agent names from the Republican magazines and newspapers were identified. In a collaborative project with Academia Sinica, Taiwan, funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, we implemented the ECPO platform. This has since been further developed with support from various institutions, e.g. the Institute of Chinese Studies, the Research Council *Cultural Dynamics in Globalized Worlds*, the Konfuzius-Institut Heidelberg, Erlangen University, the CATS Library, and the HCTS.

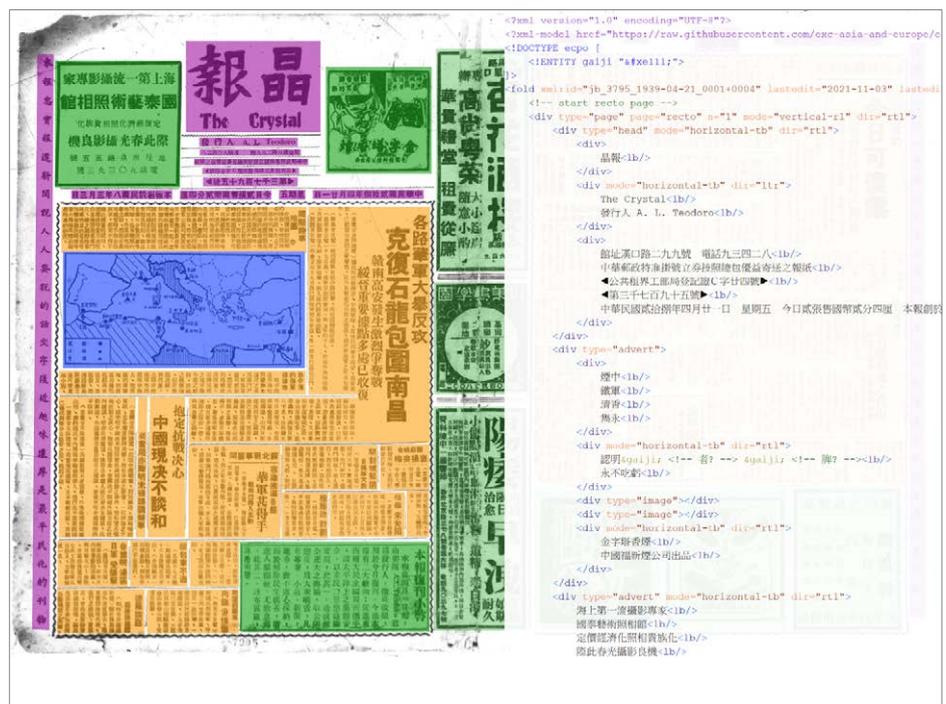
Since the material base consists of mostly image scans, the project has been running experiments on one Republican newspaper to explore approaches towards full text generation. As of today, computer-aided processing of image scans of historical periodicals is still a challenging process. Only due to the dynamic developments in machine learning it is now possible to transform material that was considered unprocessable just a few years ago. However, many challenges remain. An extremely complex layout and the resulting difficulties in reliable auto-

matic page segmentation have so far prevented full text generation for these newspapers even within China. This is also one of the reasons why approaches to process “western” Latin-script newspapers cannot simply be adopted.

The application of artificial intelligence requires a ground truth. This error-free, manually corrected text with structural information is used both for evaluation and training of software models for text and layout recognition. In fall of 2021, the project successfully implemented OCR on a sample from the newspaper 晶報 *Jing bao*, with a character error rate below 3%. On that basis, we are now expanding and generalizing our approach. With additional funding from the Research Council, the project is currently producing a new data set. Our aim is to offer a solution to automatically produce full text

from Republican newspapers using neural networks and machine learning.

Our current work not only contributes to a further development of the ECPO project. With the disclosure of our network models and data sets, our analysis can be reproduced, evaluated and our experiences can be adopted by others. Even though processing non-Latin-script is still a challenge in many cases, we hope that our work may serve as good practice example for such initiatives.



Jing bao 晶報 1939-04-21, p. 1 and 4, with ground truth overlay. Left: geometry and labeled bounding boxes; right: text (in XML format). Visualization: M. Arnold.

Pandemic Readings

by **Sara Landa**
Team World Making

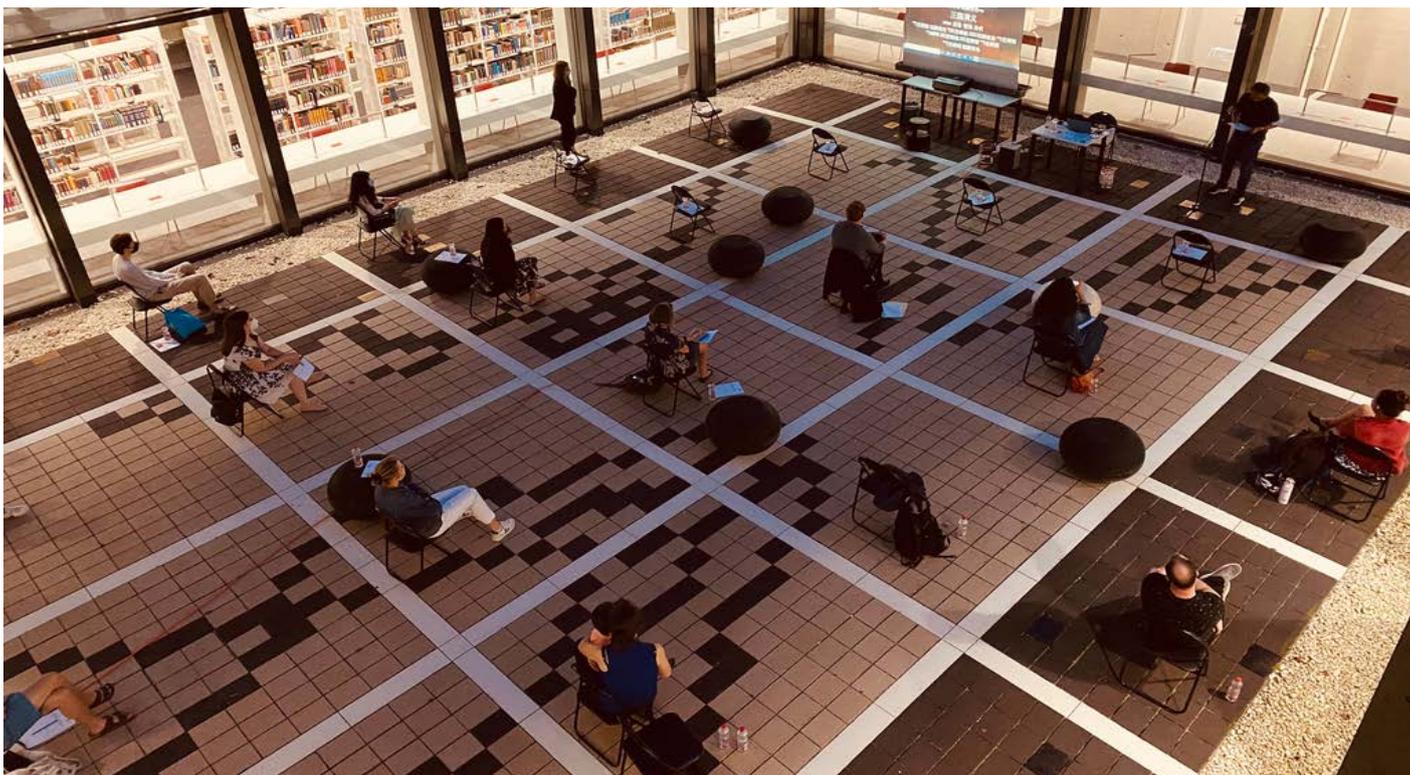
Is a crisis just a time of threat and destruction or can it entail possibilities and bring forth new potentials? During the summer semester, the BMBF-funded CATS project "Epochal Lifeworlds: Man, Nature and Technology in Narratives of Crisis and Change", part of the Joint Research Center "Worldmaking from a Global Perspective: A Dialogue with China" asked for the aesthetic potential of historical and fictive epidemic and pandemic scenarios across epochs and cultures.

Authors have sought different aesthetic answers to process and mediate experiences of death, fear, social and political destabilization; they have used fictive (and real) pandemic scenarios to rethink concepts of society, state or world; and they have addressed the relationship between the creative forces of art and the destructive forces of illness.

The workshop series tackled the interplay of challenge, transformation and rethinking in digital reading and discussion sessions and a final in-person workshop. The focus of the first workshop was the interaction of factual and fictional writing, which has led to numerous controversies, as in the case of Defoe's "A Journal of the Plague Year", Heine's writings on the cholera in Paris and, most recently, Fang Fang's "Wuhan Diary". The second workshop considered literature's potential for allowing (and questioning) temporary escapes from fear and death, from Boccaccio's "Decameron" to Pushkin's "A Feast in Times of the Plague" and García Márquez' "Love in Times of the Cholera". The workshop also crossed medial borders with a discussion on César Cui's opera adaptation of Pushkin's drama in a 2020 pandemic 'zoom opera' interpretation by the Ópera na Pandemia. The last digital workshop asked for the trans-

formative potential of crises in the utopian and dystopian settings of Shelley's "The Last Man", Camus' "The Plague" and Chen Qiufan's "The Waste Tide." During the final "Pandemic Reading Night" participants not only presented additional texts from world literature dealing with the current pandemic, but also shared their own writings – from fictive post-Corona diaries reflecting man's relationship with the environment over a Hong Kong quarantine diary to attempts to reconnect with China's cultural memory under the light of current experiences.

As the pandemic continues, so do the creative engagements and reading activities: In December 2021, the Heidelberg Confucius Institute and members of the Worldmaking team at CATS took the discussion even further in an event series on dystopias and pandemics in the sinophone world, again showing that each crisis bears potential for change and rethinking.



Pandemic Reading Night in the CATS courtyard. Photo: Dr. Tao Zhang

Worldmaking Fellows 2021



Johannes Kaminski
01/10/2021 – 31/11/2021

Johannes D. Kaminski's research interests are German literature, Chinese classic novels and contemporary global science fiction. He received his PhD in German Studies at the University of Oxford in 2011 with a thesis on Goethe. He was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Cambridge (2012-2015) and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Academia Sinica (2015-2017) in Taipei, Taiwan. From 2018 to 2020 he held a Marie Curie Fellowship at the University of Vienna. He is currently based at the Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences. Recent articles include 'The Neo-Frontier in Contemporary Preparedness Novels' (*Journal of American Studies* 55.1, 2020) and 'Leaving Gaia Behind: The Ethics of Space Migration in Cixin Liu's and Neil Stephenson's Science Fiction' (*World Literature Studies* 13.2, 2021).



Jiajun Dale Wen
01/10/2021 – 31/12/2021

Dr. Jiajun Dale Wen has been working on sustainable development issues for more than a decade, with topics including sustainable agriculture, climate change, energy security etc. She is currently a visiting fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China, as well as a special guest researcher in the Environment and Development Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. She was a co-author for the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) – which some call the IPCC of agriculture. Over the last decade she has followed the international climate negotiations closely and has substantial insights on the Chinese government's reasoning and policy making as well as to what is happening on the ground in China – both in terms of climate action as well as the effects of the current development trajectory. She holds a PhD from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).



Phillip Grimberg
01/06/2021 – 31/07/2021

Phillip is a cultural historian specializing in the material cultures of late Imperial and contemporary China. He studied Chinese studies and International law at Universities in Germany (Cologne, Bonn) and China (Beijing, Hangzhou). After receiving his PhD in 2014 he held a number of research and teaching positions at different institutions (Bonn, Frankfurt, Erlangen, Naples, Trento) and is currently fellow at the Joint Center for Advanced Studies "Worldmaking from a Global Perspective: A Dialogue with China".

Call for Applications for Master's in Transcultural Studies



Thomas Wozniak
01/06/2021 – 31/08/2021

Thomas Wozniak was born in Quedlinburg and grew up as an active Catholic under the communist regime of the GDR. When the Wall came down he did his civil service instead of joining the army and worked with disabled people in Tabgha/Israel. After returning overland by bike tracing the crusaders he studied history. For the analysis of three late medieval taxation lists, which came to light during renovation work in his father's house, an old half-timbered building, he earned his M.S. After he completed his dissertation "Quedlinburg in the 14th and 16th Century" at the University of Cologne in 2009 he worked at the University Marburg until 2015 and finished his habilitation (second book) about "Natural events in Early Middle Ages" in 2017 in Tübingen. This was followed by professorships (Professurvertretung) in Tuebingen and Munich and a guest lectureship at Weber State University in Ogden/USA.

Heidelberg University welcomes applications for its two-year Master's Programme in Transcultural Studies, in which students from around the globe can explore the dynamics of cultural exchanges, working across disciplinary and national boundaries. The emphasis lies on Asia, predominantly East and South Asia, and Europe.

The MA in Transcultural Studies is a research-oriented, interdisciplinary programme in the humanities and social sciences with a transregional focus. It offers a wide range of courses within an international research environment, and is taught in English. Students are trained in transcultural theories and methods as well as in the study of cross-cultural exchanges in the past and the present, specifically between Asia and Europe. They specialize in one of three study foci: "Society, Economy, and Governance"; "Visual, Media and Material Culture"; or "Knowledge, Belief, and Religion." Students will learn to critically evaluate research tools and methodologies from different disciplines in order to build a set of methods and theories framed according to their specific research question and material.

Students are encouraged to spend their third semester abroad on study exchange or conducting a research-oriented internship. They can benefit from partnerships with Kyoto University, Tokyo University, Seoul National University, Jiao Tong University Shanghai, and Yale University, which also include funding opportunities. A study exchange with other Asian and European countries is also possible.

The MA in Transcultural Studies additionally provides an option to earn a Joint Degree Master's Cer-



tificate with its partner Kyoto University (Graduate School of Letters) in Transcultural Studies. Students can apply for the Joint Degree version (Heidelberg/Kyoto) only after admission to and enrollment in the regular Master's in Transcultural Studies Programme at the end of the regular MA in Transcultural Studies Programme's first semester.

Applicants must hold a BA or equivalent (minimum three years of study) in a discipline of the humanities or social sciences with an above-average grade. Furthermore, proficiency in English and two more languages is required.

The application deadline for international students for the winter semester 2023/24 is June 15, 2023.

For more information about the programme, the application requirements, and process, please visit <http://www.transcultural.uni-hd.de/> or contact us via email to mats-office@hcts.uni-heidelberg.de.

Review

Vanitas 21 - The Present

by **Emily NK Tsui**
Team World Making

Going into the Portland Forum, I wasn't sure what to expect from an evening of Monteverdi's choral works and Jazz improvisations by the trio Dell/Lillinger/Westergaard. The concert titled: "Vanitas 21: The Present" was presented by the Junge Kantorei as part of a series of events foregrounding the Baroque maestro—who lived through the Italian Plague epidemic of 1629-31 himself - organised by the CATS Worldmaking Kolleg in collaboration with the Heidelberg Thematic Research Network "Umwelten—Umdenken—Umbrüche."

Earlier in the Vanitas 21 series, Silke Leopold gave a lecture contextualising the new popularity of *vanitas* in 17th Century Europe, following the devastation of the plague and the Thirty Years' War. Leopold explained how *vanitas*, as Monteverdi saw it, "did not mean one should sink into gloom, but, on the contrary, should compel one to celebrate earthly existence, in all its vitality." With this premise, we were



Vanitas 21 - The Present at the Portland Forum in Leimen (September 25th, 2021)

invited to contemplate the concert.

From the very first notes, I became aware of how far away I had been from music in the last few months. Granted, I listen to Spotify all the time, always curating a background track for the quotidian. Yet, it became abundantly clear, sitting in that hall with other souls, that bearing witness to the creation of music had become a distant memory. As it turns out, listening and hearing, listening and succumbing, were altogether different things.

Each choral piece by Monteverdi was punctuated by a live improvisation by the free jazz ensemble. It was tempting to dismiss the jazz segments as experiments in cacophony, but submitting to counter-intuitive rhythm and key was a surprising experience. I was reminded of Herbie Hancock, who thought Miles Davis had instructed him not to "play the butter notes." Play around convention, fight one's instinct for tonal satisfaction, and

revel in the tension that one creates by going against the grain. And just when you feel you can intimate the order in the disorder, let us return to Monteverdi and his meditations of harmony and order, polyphony and grace. Meandering through the avant-garde made returning to familiar ground all the more rewarding, the mind rests and the body actuates again.

Throughout the concert, a video installation by Mierzowsky and Diel was projected onto screens placed orthogonally at the centre of the hall. The images seemed to be vanitas paintings in HDTV- we saw flowers bloom and fall, cells replicate, and nature decay. At some point, the soloists circumambulated the screens and serenaded pre-recorded images of themselves. Watching their past selves look back at them, it felt like I was intruding on a private and mysterious moment - and still I wonder what secrets were whispered between them.]

As I write this months after the concert, I can still hear *Zefiro torna* resonate as it did that night in the Portland Forum. The libretto from Ottavio Rinuccini, here translated by Richard Stokes, writes "Zephyr returns, and with sweet accents enchants the air and ruffles the waves, and murmuring among the green leaves, makes the flowers dance to his sweet sound." Although we may all "wander through lonely and deserted woods," how grateful I am that Zephyr still returns to sing.



Soloists interacting with Video Installation by Mierzowsky and Diel

CATS Library's Collections of Chinese Propaganda Posters

by **Hanno Lecher**
CATS Library, Head

From 25 April 2022, CATS Library is showing the exhibition "Red and Expert: Negotiating Academic Freedom in China". The exhibition contrasts boundaries and free spaces set by the Chinese government in the seventies and today, amongst others by displaying some of the political posters that are part of the Chinese collection of the CATS Library.¹

The nucleus of this poster collection was formed in 2013 when Peter Köppler decided to donate to the Centre of East Asian Studies the more than 2,100 posters he had acquired in the late seventies and sent in batches from China to his family's home in Speyer, where they since had remained untouched in a barn. When the parcels, wrapped in coarse, grey brown paper and covered with Chinese stamps from the seventies, were brought to the

Institute of Chinese Studies in August 2013, the unwrapping was a thrilling process and felt as if a time capsule was opened, revealing hidden treasures from a distant past.

Peter Köppler is a well-known personality in Heidelberg. Originally, he had learned mechanical engineering and worked for some time in the South African mining industry. Later, he went to Sri Lanka, China, Japan and India studying East and South East Asian philosophy, as well as Sinology, Hebrew and Philosophy at Heidelberg University. In the late nineties Köppler decided that he was too old for going after a doctoral degree and rather continued his studies independently, often having to live off gathering deposit bottles.²

Köppler had assembled the poster collection during his stay in China between 1977 and 1979. He was fascinated by these "*cheap paper posters that are hanging in every Chinese apartment*" mainly be-

cause they often depicted scenes in factories.³ Obviously, his previous education and career were still strongly on his mind. Although it is possible to detect his personal inclination while browsing through his posters, the motifs are not at all limited to representations of mechanical devices but cover a wide variety of topics.

The poster collection can be accessed via heidICON at:

» https://heidicon.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/pool/chinese_propaganda_posters

¹ The topic of the exhibition is further explored in the article by Lennart Riedel, "Negotiating Political Loyalty and the Academic Quest for Truth – A Legal Perspective on Academic Freedom in the People's Republic of China after 1978", see p. 22-24 in this issue.

² A brief biography of Peter Köppler is found in Ruprecht, edition of 30 January 2007; see <https://doi.org/10.25354/Arena03.2022.2-1>.

³ E-Mail Köppler to Lothar Ledderose, August 2013.

Poster "For the Future of our Nation", Shen Shaolun 沈绍伦 mit Wang Weixu 王伟戌, Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, April 1979, CATS Library, Peter Köppler Collection.



Special Services

Semester Reserve and Inhouse Reserve

Semester Reserve (Semesterapparat)

Lecturers may set up a semester reserve for their courses containing the most important books for a course. For the period of one semester (summer term: 1st April to 30th September; winter term: 1st October to 31st March) these books are kept in a separate shelf on floor -1. CATS reserves are sorted by numbers 700-749; a list of current reserves is available under

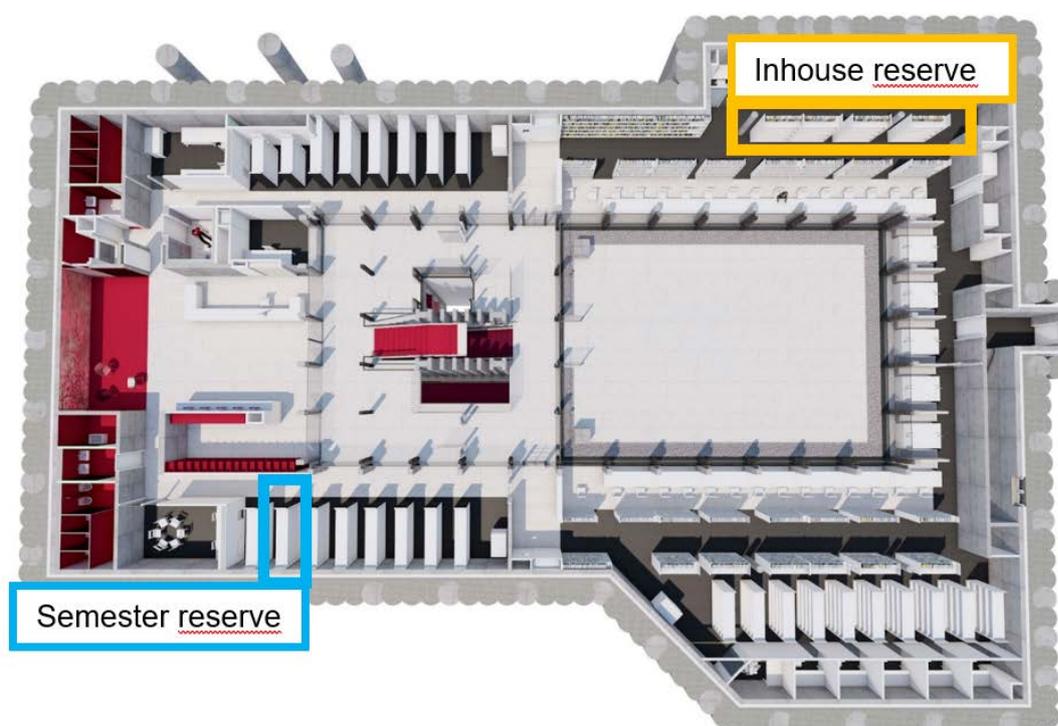
» <https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/allg/benutzung/bereiche/Semesterapparate.html>.

Inhouse reserve (Inhouse Apparat)

Students working with e.g. heavy books or big formats may want to leave them in the library in an in-house reserve. Like semester reserves, they are kept on separate shelves on floor -1, and are sorted by numbers 750-798. The lending period is from 1st April to 30th September or from 1st October to 31st March. Application forms are available under

» <https://www.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/bibliothek/service/inhouse.html>.

To guarantee access to everybody during the term, they are not for lending; excepting overnight or weekends, when the library is closed.



Photography as Knowledge (Re-)Production in Twentieth-Century East Asia

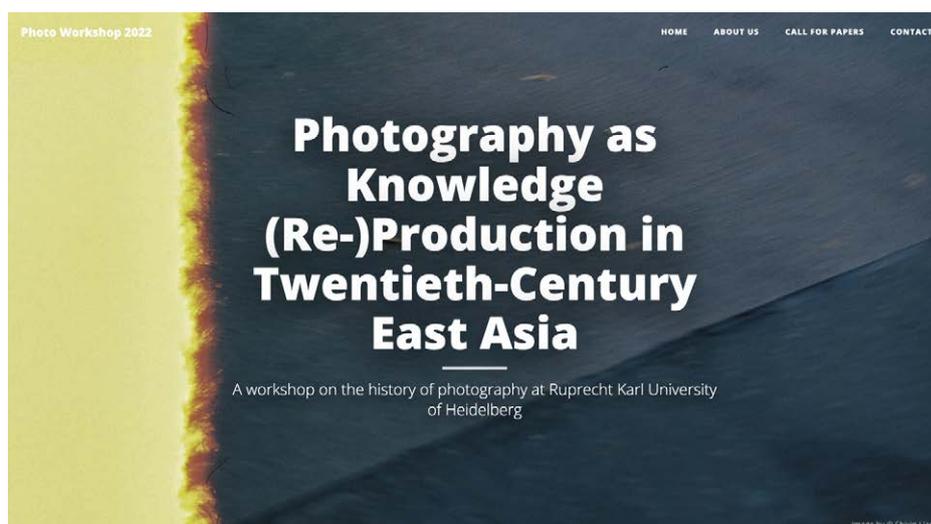
A hybrid Workshop on the History of
Photography (17th to 19th February, 2022)

by **Li Yanling, Liang Shixin, Giulia
Pra Floriani, Wang Fengyu**
Graduates East Asian Art History

The Graduate Academy has awarded doctoral candidates at the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies Li Yanling, Liang Shixin, Giulia Pra Floriani, and Wang Fengyu a grant to support their workshop on the histories of photography in twentieth-century East Asia. The four doctoral candidates approach materials from China and Japan. Despite their different disciplinary and personal backgrounds, they are all concerned with questions regarding the place of "Asian Photography" within the palimpsest of "World Photography." The questions they ask in the workshop grew out of their regular discussions on their doctoral projects, which they have been carrying out for more than one year.

The workshop, which will be held in a hybrid format between February 17th and February 19th, aims to explore various interrelations of photography with the history of technology and print-making, the shaping of various academic disciplines, and more broadly, the dissemination of political information and public education. The participants aim to intervene in historical narratives that have long been biased towards photography's 'core history' situated in Europe and the U.S.A and towards limited sources, often housed in colonial archives.

The event is planned in a hybrid format, with an in-person meeting



in Heidelberg (COVID rules apply) and an online option via Zoom. The list of confirmed guest speakers includes Maki Fukuoka (University of Leeds), Oliver Moore (University of Groningen), Thy Phu (University of Toronto), Franz Prichard (Princeton University), and Ayelet Zohar (Tel Aviv University).

The workshop program comprises panels on the entanglements of photography and Memory/embodied knowledge, Discursive spaces/situated knowledge, Ecology/built environment, Eye-witnessing/social reality, Photographic art reproduction, Expeditions/ideological 'knowledge,' and Materials/materiality. Furthermore, director Emiland Guillerme will broadcast his recent documentary movie on the Silvermine Collection assembled by Thomas Sauvin, which has been realized in collaboration with Liang Shixin, Barbara Mittler and the students of the seminar *Intimate*

Histories. The final program will be available from February 1st on the workshop webpage:

» <https://photoworkshop2022.com>

Populism and Narendra Modi's Communicative Crisis Response during the COVID-19 Crisis

Mathias O'Mahony

Student of Politics in South Asia

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is known as a master of the populist idiom.¹ His monthly radio program "*Mann Ki Baat*" (Speaking from the Heart) was a valuable tool to interact with large segments of the Indian population during the COVID-19 pandemic. But how did the crisis impact the communication of the Indian Prime Minister? Which features of populism were used with which goal?

To answer these questions, I analyzed 16 episodes of *Mann Ki Baat* during the pandemic by using Osuna and Javier's theoretical framework on populism.² This divides populism into the following five dimensions: Displaying society as antagonistic, dividing between good morals of the people and bad morals of the establishment, manufacturing an ideal society, calling for direct rule of the people and a charismatic leader.³

The populist dimension of the construction of an idealized society

is Modi's most favoured dimension within the selected material. The Indian cultural heritage of yoga, ayurveda and Indian spices is presented as having extraordinary beneficial effects on immunity. The Indian prime minister declares the country has become one homogenous team united by the fight against COVID—stating "*The entire country is marching ahead together in the same direction, towards a single common objective*".⁴

COVID lends itself readily to the populist dimension of antagonism and is soon portrayed as the main enemy. To counter this enemy, war rhetoric is heavily employed. Hospital staff are referred to as "COVID warriors" and "soldiers" who are standing on the "frontline" and are fighting a "victorious battle." Instead of being directed against a political opponent, antagonism is aimed at the clash between "Us, Indians" and the threatening "COVID-19." Throughout the 16 episodes Modi uses the words "us," "we," "friends" and "brothers and sisters," creating the impression that he is the charis-

matic leader of a united community with which his listeners can identify.

While being heavily criticized for his crisis response in times of the first and second wave of COVID-19⁵ the Indian Prime Minister tried to reframe the public discourse through his communication. Through using the populist communication features of antagonism, construction of a society and leadership he aimed to unite the people against the common enemy of COVID, presented Indian society to be superior to the virus and displayed himself as the caring leader listening to all Indians and is capable of solving their COVID-related issues.

¹ Jaffrelot, Christophe (2021): *Modi's India. Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*: Princeton University Press.

² Osuna, Olivas; Javier, José (2020): From chasing populists to deconstructing populism: A new multidimensional approach to understanding and comparing populism. In: *European Journal of Political Research*.

³ Osuna and Javier 2020; 836

⁴ 2nd selected episode of *Mann ki Baat* (26.04.2020)

⁵ See, Mukherji, Rahul (2020): Covid vs. Democracy: India's Illiberal Remedy. In: *Journal of Democracy* 31 (4), S. 91–105.

A State of Crisis

by **Sonam Dechen Gurung**
Student of Politics in South Asia

I spent the previous semester of my MADESH programme back home in Kathmandu, Nepal. Coincidentally, it was also the time when the Delta variant was unleashing its terrible might in the South Asian region. Like in India, things were bad and getting progressively worse as the virus gripped even more people across Nepal: scarcity of hospital beds, paucity of oxygen supplies, soaring death tolls, crushing lockdowns, and a general sense of hopelessness compounded the woes.

Not many years ago, Nepal experienced something comparably devastating when the 2015 earthquake ravaged central and eastern parts of the country. Earthquakes are anticipated seismological events in the context of Nepal's geographic location. Similarly, the possibility of another (and perhaps a deadlier) wave of COVID-19 was anticipated not just in Nepal, but also globally. Despite the anticipation, the Nepali government was

ill-equipped and inadequate in catering to the needs of its citizens during the worst days of the Delta variant. The government's response (or lack thereof) was reminiscent of its position in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake.

In stark contrast to the government, civil society organizations were quick to spring into action and to provide help in the form of free meals, delivery of oxygen cylinders, monetary relief etc. The alacrity with which such organizations sprung into action can also be traced back to the post-earthquake period. Two such organizations, namely *Prisoner's Assistance Nepal* and *Nyeshang Manang Women's Society*, were functioning from my neighborhood alone. While different on many fronts, the former is a well-established and esteemed NGO, and the latter is a relatively recent community-driven charity organization. Both strove to provide free meals and other relief materials at a time when many people were left without gainful employment to afford daily needs.

At the height of the monsoon season, parts of Nepal experienced heavy rainfall bringing about its own set of afflictions: Massive landslides and floods, loss of human lives and property, and the destruction in Sindhupalchowk that which ultimately led to the shutdown of Melamchi Water Supply Project that had only recently begun to provide drinking water to the denizens of Kathmandu Valley more than two decades after its inception. Nepal with its vulnerabilities will continue to experience such crises. Trust and certainty from the Nepali government at times of emergencies are what the Nepali citizenry hopes for and deserves. The government has much to learn from the country's civil society organizations.

The Institute of Anthropology comprises two professorships, two associated professorships are located in the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies and the South Asia Institute. The regional focus in research is on the insular and the continental South East Asia as well as South Asia.



Institute of Anthropol



ogy

T(h)ailands in Thailand and Beyond

by **Benjamin Baumann**
Postdoctoral Associate

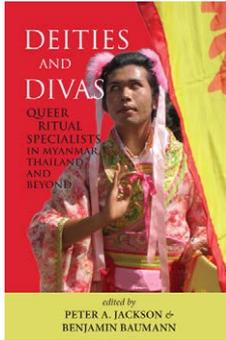
From September 23–24, 2021, the Institute of Anthropology hosted a symposium to discuss the current state of T(h)ai studies in Germany. Thai studies as such does not feature among Germany's academic disciplines, where Thaiistik, currently only taught at Universität Hamburg, traditionally focuses on philology and history. T(h)ai studies are, however, not limited to Thailand or individual disciplines, but should be considered as an interdisciplinary field of regional expertise. The need for a German-wide exchange of scholars actively involved in T(h)ai studies is obvious. Many German universities teach T(h)ai languages or offer seminars related to Thailand or Laos. However, language training is often not linked to content-related teaching, and content-related seminars are offered without com-

plementary language training. Students are thus rarely able to develop a holistic understanding of the societies they study. At present, while both content and language teaching on Thailand and Laos are threatened by massive budgetary cuts and a growing emphasis of transregionality, it seems no longer possible for an individual institute to offer a holistic training that concentrates on the speakers of a single regional language family. The formation and explicit articulation of disciplinary-based expertise at each location and a closer network between individual institutions therefore seems indispensable to guarantee the survival of high-quality T(h)ai studies in Germany. So far, however, the implementation of a German-wide network has failed due to a lack of leadership and financial support. We were thus very happy that the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Munich agreed to financially sup-

port a symposium in Heidelberg. The idea of holding the symposium in Heidelberg arose from the fact that recent personnel developments have turned Heidelberg's Institute of Anthropology into a national hub of anthropological research on Laos and Thailand. The most important result of the symposium was the recognition that no institute is any longer able to cover the interdisciplinary field of T(h)ai studies in its entirety. This inevitably means that students, no matter where in Germany they study, have to accept certain content and/or language cutbacks. Based on our growing expertise in the field of online teaching, and building on the experience with cross-university seminars gained in Heidelberg, we agreed to introduce a substantive online seminar every semester, which will be open to all students from institutes belonging to the newly funded T(h)ai Studies Network Germany.



Welcome address by Guido Sprenger



Peter A. Jackson,
Benjamin Baumann
**Deities and Divas. Queer Ritual
Specialists in Myanmar, Thailand
and Beyond**
Nias Press
January 2022, 311 pp.

Across the Buddhist societies of mainland Southeast Asia, local queer cultures are at the center of a recent proliferation of professional spirit mediumship. Drawing on detailed ethnographies and extensive comparative research, *Deities and Divas* captures this variety and ferment. The first book to trace commonalities between queer and religious cultures in Southeast Asia and the West, it reveals how modern gay, trans, and spirit medium communities all emerge from a shared formative matrix of capitalism and new media. With insights and analysis that transcend the modern opposition of religion vs. secularity, it provides fascinating new perspectives in transnational cultural, religious, and queer studies.

The Centre for East Asian Studies comprises four professorships of Chinese Studies, two of Japanese Studies and two of East Asian Art History. Two Associated professorships are located in the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies. Additionally, regular guest professorships have been established in all three departments and a guest lecture programme focusing on the history, culture and society of Taiwan.



Centre for East Asian



Studies

The Tokyo Imperial University Settlement House

Challenging Social Inequality in Interwar Japan

by **Hans Martin Krämer**
Professor for Japanese Studies

In 1923, a group of left-wing students and progressive professors from Tokyo Imperial University banded together to form the university's Settlement House in a workers' district in downtown Tokyo. This house contained rooms for students to live among the proletariat, and its activities included a labor school for factory workers providing night classes taught by professors and students, which produced several prominent labor leaders and future Diet members. The settlement program further included courses for adults and children, child care, a consumer cooperative, and a free medical clinic administered by university doctors. It also offered legal counseling, supervised by two of Japan's most influential law professors. Due to the prominence of its

founders and the range of its activities, the settlement was the most impactful example of a broader effort among progressives during this period to empower workers to seize leadership of the labor movement, and overcome what was perceived to be a fundamentally unequal socio-economic system.

Since April 2020, a research project based at Centre for East Asian Studies within CATS, has been investigating the Tokyo University Settlement and its historical significance. The funding is provided by the DFG and will last for three years. Led by Prof. Hans Martin Krämer of Japanese Studies (responsible for the subtopic of the rise of the modern social sciences in the 1920s), the research team currently includes Bruce

Grover (intellectual history), Violetta Janzen (international connections), and Alice Witt (prosopography of students).

By situating the Tokyo Imperial University Settlement House in the larger histories of the labor movement, welfare policy and social science and higher education in Japan during the first half of the twentieth century, we hope to shed light on the interconnection of these areas, on the international connections at work in these contexts, and on the relationship between theory and practice in progressive social movements. Ultimately, this project will serve as an important building block within a larger and more ambitious monographic history of equality and inequality in modern Japan.



The settlement house in a workers' district in Tokyo in 1928.

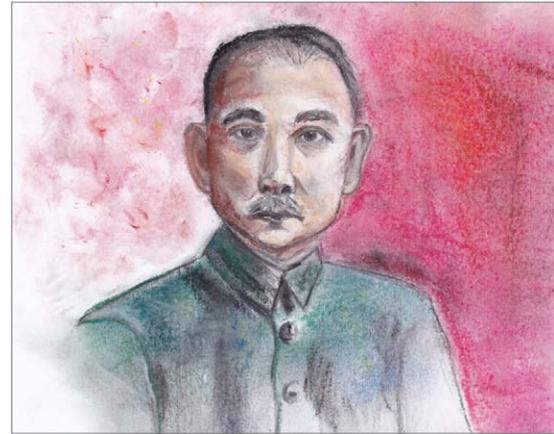
Teaching China

by **Odila Schröder**
Team China-School-Academy

Imagine several dozen teens spending ten days discussing complex questions about China's history, society, and impact on modern politics and technology, singing karaoke, practicing morning calisthenics, preparing a daily news show, discussing sustainability with Chinese students online, watching documentaries, asking endless questions, all while making new friends and meeting new mentors. This became a reality in the summer and autumn of 2021, when the Bildungsnetzwerk China partnered with Bildung & Begabung. We, Jonas Schmid and Odila Schröder, members of the BMBF-funded project China-School-Academy, were so lucky to teach one of the four intensive workshops for the "Schülerakademie China." Guiding students in their creative exploration of the history of 20th century China—writing diary entries and constructing new narratives—was exhilarating. It is difficult to imagine an initiative having more impact on not only the individual lives of the participating teens, but on Germany's future engagement with China and its neighbors.

A second initiative, the "Digital Autumn School: Teaching Chinese and China," grew out of our concern for the lack of research into teaching Chinese as a foreign language at German schools, the lack of a trans-regional community of future teachers, and a lack of opportunities to present high-quality teaching material focusing on China. While the Fachverband Chinesisch e.V. provides a platform of exchange for the growing community of Chinese language teachers in Germany, students studying for an MEd in Chinese, and future teach-

ers of subjects such as History, the Social Sciences, or Geography with an interest in China are often left to their own devices. The Autumn School was graciously funded by the Fachverband Chinesisch e.V., Bildungsnetzwerk China and the Heidelberg School of Education and took place between 27 September and 1 October 2021. Its main aim was to provide a platform for experienced teachers and researchers with an interest in teaching methodology to share their insight and an opportunity for early-career researchers and students to present their work. Discussions focused on innovative methods, ranging from theatrical approaches to language learning, the impact of social media on youth language, to the use of films and PC games in class. Other discussions explored the politics of teaching China and Chinese at German schools, and the necessary steps to further include Chinese case studies in the curriculum as well as to provide an opportunity to counter stereotypes and discuss issues of decolonization and sustainability. Both initiatives will continue in 2022.



Sun Yat-sen, drawn by Nele Meyer during the "Einsteigerakademie China", taught by Odila Schröder and Luise Punge, autumn 2021



Bird, drawn by Nele Meyer during the "Einsteigerakademie China", taught by Odila Schröder and Luise Punge, autumn 2021

Anja Senz, Jaok Kwon-Hein (eds.)
East Asia Today Working Papers
 Heidelberg University,
 Institute of Chinese Studies
 ISSN 2627-9649

“East Asia Today”—in German “Ostasien Aktuell”—is the title of a regular series of lectures and discussions organized by Prof. Dr. Anja Senz and her research group on political, economic, and social developments in the Chinese-speaking world as well as in Japan and Korea. The “East Asia Today Working Papers” make selected contributions from this lecture series available for everyone interested, with the intention to provide an opportunity for further exchange. In the year 2021, several papers have been published covering a wide range of topics from populist movements and clientelistic political structures in South Korea to mass-elite representation gaps in old and new democracies, the situation of women at the North Korean borderland, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in China and Europe. The Working Papers are available online in PDF format, and can be downloaded free of charge under

» <https://ostasien-aktuell.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/en/oawp-en/>

Anja Senz, Zhu Yi
Echowall
 Heidelberg University,
 Institute of Chinese Studies

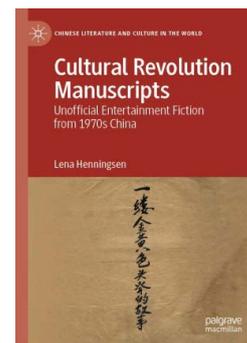
Echowall is a collaborative research platform based at Heidelberg University born out of an increasing need in Europe for sound and indepth knowledge about contemporary China. It recognizes that fact-based research should be informed by a wide range of experts in both Europe and China, and that it should be accessible to a broad audience.

Several interesting studies have recently been published:

- 150 Years of Studying Abroad in China: Three Cases of Study-Abroad Fever (Liu)
- Old Regime, New Tech—The Technology behind China’s COVID-19 Apps (Liu Manyi)
- China and the Taliban: Friend and Foe for Thirty Years (Li Damao)
- E-Mobility and the Chinese Booming E-car Market (Zhu Yi)

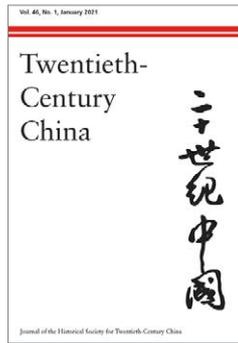
One article about the alleged dependency of the German economy on China was awarded with the “Excellence in Business Reporting” prize: “The ‘China dependency’ of Volkswagen Germany: Accelerating is Easy, Decelerating is Hard,” (published in Chinese in September 2020).

» <https://www.echo-wall.eu/>



Lena Henningsen
Cultural Revolution Manuscripts. Unofficial Entertainment Fiction from 1970s China
 Palgrave Macmillan
 2022, 283 pp.

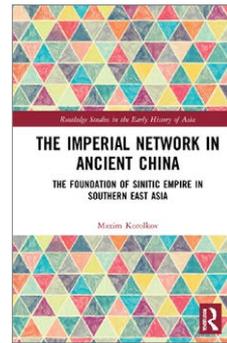
This book investigates handwritten entertainment fiction that circulated clandestinely during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Lena Henningsen’s analyses of exemplary stories and their variation across different manuscript copies brings to light the creativity of these readers-turned-copyists. Through copying, readers modified the stories and became secondary authors who reflected on the realities of the Cultural Revolution. Through inquiring into actual reading practices as mapped in autobiographical accounts and into intertextual references, the book also positions manuscript fiction within the larger reading cosmos of the long 1970s. Henningsen analyzes the production, circulation and consumption of these texts, considering continuities across the alleged divide of the end of the Mao era and the beginning of the reform period. The book further reveals how these texts achieved fruitful afterlives as re-published bestsellers or as adaptations into comic books or movies, continuing to shape the minds of their audience and the imaginations of the past.



Matthias Schumann
“For the Sake of Morality and Civilization”: The Buddhist Animal Protection Movement in Republican China
 Palgrave Macmillan
 January 2021, 19 pp.

This article by Matthias Schumann details the emergence of the first Chinese animal protection movement in the 1930s. Buddhist activists from the Pure Land school in Shanghai founded the China Society for the Protection of Animals, which campaigned against the mistreatment and killing of animals. Chinese activists argued that animal cruelty produced bad karma, weakened human morality, and caused interpersonal violence. In a period when concern over public morality loomed large, animal protection appeared to be a powerful means to build a “civilized” nation. Ingeniously playing on both local traditions and international discourses, the Chinese animal protection movement gained broad news coverage and support from the government.

Matthias Schumann is a post-doctoral fellow in the CATS-project “Epochal Life Worlds: Man, Nature and Technology in Narratives of Crisis and Change,” where he pursues a project on changing human-animal relations in early twentieth century Shanghai.

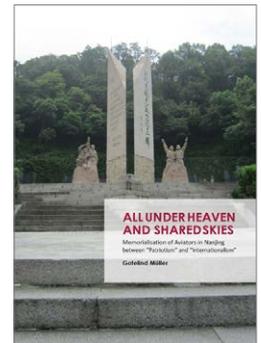


Maxim Korolkov
The Imperial Network in Ancient China: The Foundation of Sinitic Empire in Southern East Asia
 Routledge
 November 2021, 316 pp.

This book examines the emergence of imperial state in East Asia during the period ca. 400 BCE–200 CE as a network-based process, showing how the geography of early interregional contacts south of the Yangzi River informed the directions of Sinitic state expansion.

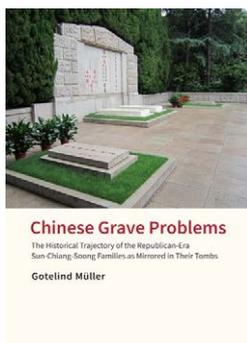
Drawing from an extensive collection of sources including transmitted textual records, archaeological evidence, excavated legal manuscripts, and archival documents from Liye, this book demonstrates the breadth of human and material resources available to the empire builders of an early imperial network throughout southern East Asia, from institutions and infrastructures, to the relationships that facilitated circulation. This network is shown to have been essential to the consolidation of Sinitic imperial rule in the sub-tropical zone south of the Yangzi against formidable environmental, epidemiological, and logistical odds.

The book contributes to debates about imperial state formation, the applicability of world-system models and the comparative study of empires.



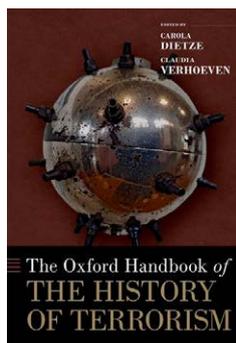
Gotelind Müller
All under Heaven and Shared Skies. Memorialisation of Aviators in Nanjing between “Patriotism” and “Internationalism”
 CrossAsia Repository
 2021, 63 pp.
 DOI: 10.11588/xarep.00004548

In present-day China, there is a very peculiar memorial cemetery in Nanjing. It claims to integrate tombs of Soviet and U.S.-American pilots, who died in the fight for China during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), with tombs of their Chinese counterparts. Today, the site is declared to stand for “patriotism” and “internationalism.” The memorialization of military aviators, however, means to dwell on China’s particular weakness during the war. A closer look into the historical trajectory of this aviators’ cemetery, however, complicates the picture for this site, originally set up years before the war. It reveals the evolution, problems, and implications of this site in a city strongly associated today with Chinese war-time victimization, eliciting comparison with the Wuhan “Tomb of the martyrs of the Soviet Air Force’s volunteer group,” set up by the subsequent People’s Republic exclusively for the early war-time Soviet aviators fallen in China.



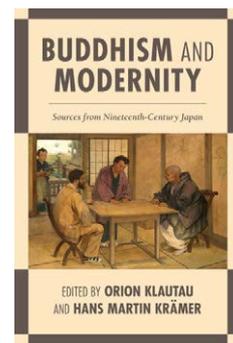
Gotelind Müller
**Chinese Grave Problems:
 The Historical Trajectory of the
 Republican-Era Sun-Chiang-
 Soong Families as Mirrored in
 their Tombs**
 CrossAsia Repository
 2021, 51 pp.
 DOI: 10.11588/xarep.00004474

This booklet takes a look at the cases of the interconnected Sun-Chiang-Soong families, which were crucial players in Chinese twentieth-century history, attempting to take a somewhat different perspective on them than the familiar political one by focusing on the tombs and the family context of the individual political “V.I.P.s.” The named families were entangled with China, North America, and the Soviet Union as well as Japan to various degrees, reflecting the multifaceted trajectory of modern Chinese history in a transnational context in their own way. A look into the tombs also opens up windows on the roles of religion as well as gender (and partly ethnicity) at the intersection of the public and the private. Finally, it involves questions of heritagization, and contests about post-mortem appropriation of individuals.



Gotelind Müller
**“China and the ‘Anarchist Wave
 of Assassinations’ around the
 Turn of the Twentieth Century”**
 In: The Oxford Handbook of the
 History of Terrorism, Oxford Uni-
 versity Press 2022, pp. 311-328

This handbook chapter discusses the reception of what David Rapoport has called the “anarchist wave of assassinations” as the first wave of global terrorism in East Asia at the turn of the twentieth century. It shows how the terms “terrorism” and “anarchism” were translated into East Asian languages; how the practice of assassinations relates to indigenous traditions of political violence; and in which sense one can speak of “modernity” in the Chinese assassination attempts undertaken. What interested the radicals receiving European models most was the perceived “new” strategy of systematic assassination campaigns as lived out by the Russian Narodnaya Volya, and its potential for “new” groups of people to join political violence, namely women. This strategy was attractive to many kinds of ideological commitments, but especially to the Chinese nationalists. Thus, this chapter calls into question the definition of the “first wave” in Rapoport’s “four wave concept” as “anarchist.”



Orion Klautau, Hans Martin
 Krämer (eds.)
**Buddhism and Modernity:
 Sources from
 Nineteenth-Century Japan**
 Hawai'i University Press
 March 2021, 300 pp.

Japan was the first Asian nation to face the full impact of modernity. Like the rest of Japanese society, Buddhist institutions, individuals, and thought were drawn into the dynamics of confronting the modern age. Japanese Buddhism had to face multiple challenges, but it also contributed to modern Japanese society in numerous ways. This volume makes accessible the voices of Japanese Buddhists during the early phase of modernity.

The volume offers original translations of key texts—many available for the first time in English—by central actors in Japan’s transition to the modern era. The present book fills the chronological gap between the premodern era and the twentieth century by focusing on the crucial transition period of the nineteenth century. Issues central to the interaction of Japanese Buddhism with modernity inform the five major parts of the work: sectarian reform, the nation, science and philosophy, social reform, and Japan and Asia.



Painting by Lao Zhu in the CATS Library's Reading Space, Photo: Susann Henker, 2021

The South Asia Institute comprises seven professorships in Development Economics, Anthropology, Geography, History of South Asia, Cultural and Religious History of South Asia (Classical Indology), Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures (Modern Indology) and Political Science of South Asia. Furthermore, the Indian Government finances the Heinrich Zimmer Chair for Indian Philosophy and Intellectual History; Pakistan funds the Allama Iqbal Professorial Fellowship and Sri Lanka enables the Chair of Sri Lankan Studies. Three associated professorships are located at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies.



South Asia



Institute



Aesthetics, Marginality and the Question of Ecological and Cultural Justice

by **Brahma Prakash**

Assistant Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University

I work in the field of South Asian folk performance and cultural practices with a special focus on the northern Indian state of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. My current research projects are in continuation of my previous work in which I explore artistic and cultural practices in relation to the questions of marginality, aesthetics and ecological and cultural justice. My book *Cultural Labour: Conceptualizing the 'Folk Performance' in India* (Oxford University Press, 2019) has shown this connection that how dominant aesthetic regime and hegemonic cultural discourses tend to marginalise the very strengths of folk performances of the subaltern communities in India. The book brings the discourses of culture and labour in a dialogue for a better understanding of both in a service-oriented caste society in India. My work is informed by detailed ethnography, personal memory and archival and historical materials.

During my stay at the South Asia Institute, I am planning two present some chapters from my forthcoming monograph tentatively titled as "Epical Subjects and the Questions of Cultural Justice in India" and a paper from my proposed project on Festival and Ecology. "The Epical Subjects" aims to study the role of imagination in relation to its emancipatory capacities in the struggle of the subaltern communities in India. I use popular epics of Dina Bhadri of Musahar com-

munity, the epic of Phoolan Devi and other narratives that project a reality in specific ways to make moral and truth claims in this consideration. I use epic as an analytic tool to explore this connection of denials and thinking about justice in Indian society in particular and postcolonial societies in general. Epic narrative in a sense creates a premise on which this research embarks its study of the promises of the new subjectivity that is not yet formed. It is therefore pertinent to understand what role these epic narratives play in the formation and transformation of potential subjectivity. Using the interdisciplinary approaches of performance studies, cultural anthropology and narrative studies and navigating through the connections of epic, imagination and potential subjectivity, this work sets five interrelated objectives: The first objective is to examine the epic mode of narrative and its imaginative capacities in relation to the question of marginality and as a site of potential. It will examine the power and potentials of the epic to mobilize the communities and construct a "reality" that can be considered more than the real, to use the phrase by David Shulman. The second objective is to show what distinguishes epics of the subaltern communities from the classical mainstream epics beyond the question of agency and the moral values they propose. If epic is a question of being human, what is the nature of "human" in the epics of the subaltern communities? It has been observed that in the classical epics, the heroic struggle is fought to maintain

the privileges or reclaim the lost privileges. While privileged epics show that the heroes come from noble family backgrounds and pure blood. In the case of epics of the subaltern communities, the heroes' usually come from the marginalised background. Their extraordinary acts, resistance, death and sacrifice make them the subject of the epic. I will discuss the epic narrative of Phoolan Devi, also known as the Bandit Queen, who emerged as heroin with her extraordinary acts and struggles. While heroes in Ramayana and Mahabharata fight to maintain their privileges, in subaltern epics, the struggle appears to be more about access, dignity and equality and therefore the conflict can be said to be more about social and cultural justice. The third aim is to examine the various ways the epic narratives of the subaltern communities perform justice which is often denied by the democratic institutions. In the absence of social, political and economic justice, cultural justice plays an important role as a survival strategy as well as in the emancipatory discourse for the communities. The performance of the epic narrative distributes justice in symbolic, gesture and narrative terms. The stories in most of the cases are troubled. The question of justice becomes an important marker and the basis of the moral discourse.

In my ongoing project, "Festivals for the Future: Centring Ecology in Heritage Making Discourse in South Asia," I propose to study harvest festival and its problematic and hegemonic mythical appropriation in northern India. My research

seeks to examine the hegemonic role of Hindu myths in changing the body and materiality of harvest festivals in north India. I plan to study Chhath Puja of Bihar, one of the most popular post-harvest festivals of this region to explore this connection. At the outset of the current upsurge of cultural nationalism in India which tries to mythicize all the cultural spheres in the light of dominant discourses of Hinduism, it will examine the formation of the myths around this festival and how are they changing the rituals and practices that were embodied in the local ecology. I also argue how ritual and religious studies in South Asia have created a dominant discourse that assumes that there is necessarily a myth behind every ritual and festival. While one does not deny the powerful role of myths in South Asian festivals, not all festivals can be considered to have myths. They can simply exist as ritual and cultural practices. In most cases, the harvest festival in India does not seem to have a strong myth. One can take the example of Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Lohri in Punjab, Makar-sankranti in north India, Noakhai in eastern India. In the background of deepening the environmental crisis, this proposed project intends to centre the ecological dimension in the discourse and process of cultural heritage making along with its social and cultural dimensions. For this study, I have been studying Chhath Puja of Bihar.

Chhath Puja is celebrated in the Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and cities with a significant migrant population from these three states. The celebration includes extensive cleaning of water-bodies and surroundings, ritual fasting by devotees, singing and praying, culminating in a feast prepared from freshly harvested fruits, vegetables and grains. This festival can be compared with Erntedank, a European thanksgiving harvest festival. In the recent years,

Chhath has emerged as a cultural identity marker and a heritage festival for the local communities – similar to its harvest festival counterparts in other Indian states: Onam of Kerala, Pongal of Tamil Nadu, and Baisakhi of Punjab. With its vastly changing status, Chhath becomes an ideal model to study harvest festivals in shifting socio-economic and ecological contexts. Being eco-friendly, it has recently caught the attention of environmental and climate activists for an ecological sensitive approach. Often referred to as a prakriti parv (nature festival), here, nature in the form of sun, river and harvest are thanked and worshipped by local communities. Analyzing its ritual actions, songs, performances and material culture, this study aims to unveil its embedded ecological relationships.

Chhath is growing without a core narrative, theological interpretation, and mediation of a priest. The festival defies the dominant approach in which one seeks to find the meaning of festivals in the narrative, scriptures, and devotional hymns. But as the popularity of the festival is increasing, a new set of myths are being created by the social elites. Attempts have been made to contain the festival within the “traditions” of Vedic literature, also often associating it with the stories of the epic Ramayana and Mahabharata. Similarly, Buddhists have also claimed that ‘Chhathi Maiya is a pre-dawn deity and can be equated with the Goddess Marichi of Later Buddhism’ While the myths piece does not seem to make any obvious connection, there is a possibility that the hegemonic myths will soon accommodate the festival praxis and ecology in its domains as it has already happened with the other south Asian festivals such as in the case of Ramma of Uttarakhand, Dasara of Mysore, and Theyyam of Kerala.

Against the notion of cultural heritage based on the dominant pasts

and hegemonic claims of identities, perpetuated by mytho-politics, it contemplates a model of cultural heritage based on the shared sense of future with ecological concerns at the center—heritage as a value that will save us in the future. Thus, heritage is not imagined as a given inheritance from the past but as a work-in-progress for the future—by reconfiguring past values and thus by co-creating communities. Studying this harvest festival as a cultural ecosystem, locally contextualised, can point us to possible ecological forms of artistic and cultural production— an alternative to the global festival culture resulting in damage to the environment, promotion of culture of consumption and dislocation of local meanings and practices.



Brahma Prakash

is Assistant Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is a scholar of South Asian folk culture and performance traditions.

SAI's Research Exchange with the Bangladesh Chair and Joining of Prof. Dr Harun-or-Rashid

by **ASM Mostafizur Rahman**
*Research Associate,
Department of Political Science,
South Asia Institute*

The Bangladesh government has recently revived the Bangladesh chair at the South Asia Institute (SAI), Heidelberg University after two decades of closure. Political scientist Professor Harun-or-Rashid, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh has joined the SAI, as Bangabandhu Professorial Fellow for a period of six months from September 2021.

The Bangabandhu Professorial Fellowship under the Bangladesh chair is the outcome of the signing of a memorandum of understanding in December 2019 between the Heidelberg University and the Bangladesh Embassy, Germany. The government of Bangladesh funds the fellowship enabling Bangladeshi scholars to conduct academic research for a period of six months at the SAI. The aim is to promote exchange between the SAI and academic institutions in Bangladesh, expanding and strengthening visions of the countries concerned along with a focus on research and development in South Asia. The chair is open to active researchers and scholars in Bangladesh belonging to the disciplines such as geography, history, modern-languages South Asia studies, cultural and religious history of South Asia, political science, development economy and anthropology. The SAI brings teaching and research together with a highlight on South Asia and neighboring regions.

Professor Rashid studied political science at the University of Dhaka and the University of London, from where he obtained his

doctoral degree in 1983. Since 1995, he has been Professor of Political Science at the University of Dhaka. He served the university as pro vice chancellor during 2009–2012. He was vice chancellor of the National University Bangladesh for two consecutive terms during 2013–2021. Professor Rashid has authored 17 books and numerous articles published in Bangladesh and abroad. Politics of partition India, post-partition Pakistan and present Bangladesh are the focus of his academic concentration.

At the SAI, Professor Rashid engaged himself in research, teaching and other academic pursuits. On November 22, 2021, he delivered a public lecture on "Was India's 1947 Partition Inevitable?" Furthermore, he has been conducting a lecture course on "State formation in South Asia – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh" in this semester (WiSe 2021/22). In addition to research and collaboration, he dedicates himself writing a book on understudying the political development of Bangladesh over the last fifty years.

Professor Hans Harder, Professor Rahul Mukherji and Dr. Martin Gieselmann warmly welcomed Professor Harun-Or-Rashid to the chair. Over a reception at SAI on October 10, 2021, Professor Rashid expressed unfathomable appreciation of the academic and intellectual excellence of SAI and Heidelberg University.



Harun-or-Rashid

is guest lecturer for the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman professorial fellowship for the Winter Semester 2021/2022. Dr. Rashid is professor of political science and former vice-chancellor at National University of Bangladesh. His work includes Bangladesh politics, governance and constitutional development.

Adapting to the Pandemic

Collaboration between Indian and German Sanskrit Scholars and Students

by **Ute Hüsken**

Professor for Cultural and Religious History of South Asia

The pandemic-related constraints forced and continue to force the Cultural and Religious History of South Asia Department to fundamentally change the activities of the project "Exploring Cultures of Learning in India and Germany". This program is funded from 2020 to 2023 as part of the DAAD program "A New Passage to India". Prof. Hüsken and Dr. Mishra planned and conduct this program in collaboration with Prof. Vinita Chandra (IIT/BHU, Varanasi) and Prof. Gopabandhu Mishra (BHU), and with Prof. Jörg Gengnagel and his team at Würzburg University.

Overall, the program is designed to bring together students and scholars from India and Germany, to learn and do research together, both in Varanasi and in Heidelberg. Not surprisingly, the entire program had to be redesigned, due to the pandemic situation and corresponding travel restrictions on both sides.

The annual course "Cultures of Learning in Varanasi" could not take place in 2021, and had to be shifted from February/March to September/October in 2022. In 2022, the course will focus on Navarātri/Dūrgapūjā/Rāmīlā, as celebrated in Varanasi: the incoming and local students will explore together diverse facets of this important festival, and attend cor-

responding teaching modules by Heidelberg and Varanasi teaching staff. As always, the entire program will be accompanied by a course in Spoken Sanskrit, conducted by Prof. Gopabandhu Mishra and his team in Varanasi.

Physical graduate and PhD student exchange has been interrupted, too. However, through virtual stipends, the Heidelberg department was able to host a number of "online research fellows" to conduct short-term projects in Varanasi.

In this context, a team of two online research fellows, Ms. Anuja Jose and Ms. Akanksha Yadav, conducted intensive fieldwork in Varanasi from September to December 2021, competently supervised by Prof. Dr. Vinita Chandra (IIT-BHU).

FROM GUAN BAI(?) TO KAUDI MATA



- The structure of the temple
- Guan bai Pond and its significance to the community
- Idol- Goddess Brahmacharini- Goddess Lakshmi
- Tantric Guru- Lal Baba
- Peepal tree
- Offering of cowrie shells
- Mantra
- Lakshmi Purana?



Regular meetings with the project members in Heidelberg during the period of fieldwork ensured a lively academic exchange and ensured periodic review and revision of the research activities. Ms. Anuja Jose focused on textually a relatively insignificant temple of Kaudi Mata in Varanasi, who has gained increased attention from pilgrims from South India in recent years. The study contributes towards the study of "little traditions" of folk goddesses. Ms. Akanksha Yadav focused on the festival of "Chatth" and the coordinates and dynamics of its possible "Sanskritisation".

Another batch of students, supervised by Prof. Gopabandhu Mishra (BHU), worked on diverse aspects of Sanskrit literary traditions and their contemporary performances. Thus, Ms. Anuranjika Chaturvedi explored the topic "Narrating Bhāgavata-Purāṇa in seven days (Bhāgavata-Saptāha)", and Mr. Deepak Mishra engaged with the topic "Learning Sanskrit Grammar in traditional schools of Varanasi".

In addition to these activities, the department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia conducts regular online reading sessions with students and scholars from India, in close cooperation with Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and Somnath Sanskrit University, Gujarat. Dr. Anand Mishra (Heidelberg University) coordinates these online meetings together with Prof. Dr. Gopabandhu Mishra (BHU, Varanasi) and Dr. Dipesh Vinod Katira (Shri Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval). These reading sessions, entitled "Śāstrādhyayana: Reading Sanskrit Texts with Students and Scholars in Varanasi/India/South Asia", currently engage with Sanskrit grammar (Pāṇini) on the one hand, and with Mīmāṃsā and Śābdabodha on the other. The main aim of these reading sessions is to familiarize the participants with the respective different cultures of

reading Sanskrit texts. The linguistic, cultural, methodological and didactic differences here are the main challenges and at the same time the desirable condition to confront these differences and expand the participants' respective horizons.

While the originally planned exchange had to be amended in many aspects, the current activities within and beyond the collaborative project "Exploring Cultures of Learning in India and Germany" do in fact provide a chance to study and reflect on the challenges and possibilities of inter-continental joint academic activities during the time of the pandemic. While in-person exchange and the physical experience of the respective learning and studying environment is sorely missed, the online format at the same time facilitates the participation and input by many especially younger students and budding academics on both sides.

Regime Defense against Ethnonationalism

by **Jamison C. Heinkel**
PhD Candidate, Political Science

My doctoral research is on explaining how regimes decide to respond to ethnonationalist challengers. Ethnonationalists face a variety of regime responses that are dynamic, varying over time and by type, across a spectrum from nonviolent to violent. I contend that weak states engender internal wars because these states are divided into ethnic factions. Within these factions, one group tends to dominate the state as the ruling regime, whose interest is to remain in power. I suggest a novel theory of regime defense, where the regime, defined here as the primary decision-maker(s) of the state, makes policies towards minority groups, which are based on the minority group's signaling to the regime, and the perception of whether the group poses a threat to the regime's political survival. Building from international relations omnibalancing theory premise, I argue that internal threat perceptions are more important than perceived external threats perceptions to regimes. Threat perception of internal political challengers consists of perceived intentions and perceived capabilities. These perceptions in turn shape regime responses to ethnonationalists over time. Ethnonationalists, by their very existence, pose an ideological threat to the hegemonic state's balance of power, challenging the regime's rule and all its accompanying privileges provided by holding power. However, the intention of ethnonationalism by itself is not enough to explain variation in state response. My research finds evidence that regime political ex-

clusion of ethnonationalist groups is often later followed by repression due to a persistent threat posed by the ousted ethnonationalist group which has further mobilized against the regime. If political exclusion does not remove or lower the perceived heightened ethnonationalist threat, regime repression of ethnonationalists, in the form of military operations, likely follows. My research focuses on explaining the varying temporal regime responses on several in-depth case studies of regime-ethnonationalist conflicts in South Asia. These case studies draw on primary sources including archival data, official documents, doctrines, correspondence, testimonies, biographies, memoirs, and conferences. This provides a closer examination of the empirical record, unpacking the causal process of regime decision-making, and demonstrates that perceived internal threats to political survival are paramount in explaining regime responses to ethnonationalists. While structural conditions set the stage for threat perceptions, primarily domestic conditions drive regime response variation to ethnonationalists. Understanding the influences and perceptions of regimes as well as their constraints help to inform how decisions are made, and thus the threat perceptions in decision-making highlighted could be indications of potential and increased likelihood of political violence.



Jamison C. Heinkel
is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University.

Governance and Politics in South Asia Lecture Series

by **Tanvi Deshpande**

*Post-Doctoral Research Associate,
Kings College, London*

The Governance and Politics in South Asia lecture series is organized by the Department of Political Science. The series covered diverse topics including comparative politics, domestic and regional politics, welfare and climate governance, and the state of institutions in the South Asian region. These talks not only helped in facilitating academic discussions, but also fostered learning on methodological frameworks and their applications. Despite the pandemic, the department successfully conducted the seminar, both in person and virtually, details of which are also posted on the website. Talks were delivered by both established and up-coming scholars from across the globe such as Professor Ruth Harris, University of Oxford (Oxford); Professor Harun-or-Rashid, Heidelberg University (Heidelberg); Ambassador Shyam Saran (India); Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar Quaid-i-

Azam University (Islamabad, Pakistan); Professor Virginius Xaxa, Institute for Human Development (New Delhi, India); Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani, Heidelberg University (Heidelberg); Dr. Omar Sadr, University of Kabul (Afghanistan); Ambassador Rakesh Sood (India); Dr. Jonah Blank, Rand Corporation.

Professor Ruth Harris in her talk on "Western women, Indian Gurus" discussed her paper that looks at the relationship between Vivekananda and his female acolytes, and the feminization of religion.

Professor Harun-or-Rashid spoke about India's partition, and the influence of the British Raj, the Congress, and the Muslim League in his talk titled "Was India's 1947 partition inevitable?"

The lecture series also organized a panel discussion on the political crisis in Afghanistan. Eminent scholars from the South Asian region including Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani, Dr. Omar Sadr, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, and Dr. Jonah Blank expressed their views on the crisis.

The discussion was moderated by Commodore Uday Bhaskar and Professor Rahul Mukherji.

Ambassador Saran in his talk "The Challenge of Proximity: Managing India's Sub-Continental Periphery," discussed India's role in the South Asian context with respect to security concerns, economic growth, and climate and ecological issues.

In the talk titled "Hamza Alavi's Overdeveloped Legacy," Dr Aasim Akhtar built on Alavi's framework explaining state formulation in postcolonial countries to highlight the potentialities of subordinate classes in an era of identity politics.

Professor Xaxa in his talk on "Tribal Policy in Independent India" discussed the status of one of the most marginalized sections of Indian society, and explained the variation in development across regions by examining existing policies.

Students and colleagues of the South Asia Institute actively engaged in scholarly debates. Additionally, the online format fostered participation from around the globe.

It is Time to Take Seriously the Discursive Elements of Strategic Culture

by **Matias Castren**

PhD Candidate, Political Science

Strategic culture is a concept that has been developed in the field of international relations (IR) to take a break from the obsession with the deterministic state system. Strategic culture pays attention to what neo-classical realists refer to as "unit-level variables." The attempt is to investigate the role of culture in states' responses to challenges posed by the world beyond their borders.

Conceptualizations of strategic culture come in various forms, and these forms are also visible in the literature of Indian strategic culture. There are the mystical denialists, who claim that India has no strategic culture. Responses to events are crafted ad hoc out from the thin

air, without any historical or cultural background. Then there are the determinists, who claim that the long civilizational history creates a shared consciousness that governs decision making. These accounts resemble the eighteenth-century German romantics who adopted the Hegelian notion of spirit and argued that every nation has its unique *volksgeist*. People were seen as agents of this destiny. The third group are the pluralists, who pay attention to various worldviews that are observable in a given culture, and analyze the effect of those worldviews in the making of foreign policy. The pluralist approach contains a liberal philosophic notion of the marketplace of ideas, where the conscious actors choose the ideas that appeal to them the most. The marketplace of ideas leads to a cat-

egorization of the strategic schools of thought, rather than to an analysis of strategic culture.

What is left without attention, is the question of how ideas come about. Ideas do not appear or act in a vacuum but are discursive by nature, and are always constructed and reconstructed from specific historical positions. The discursive element of social behavior is not new to IR. However, it has not been taken seriously, especially in the considerations of structural features of politics. The field tends to be stuck on the perfunctory notion of the state system as the structure. However, by taking the discursiveness of the social world seriously the political ontology of the state system ought to be problematized. Besides, the role of the global economic structure is often disregarded in analysis.

If we want to take the role of ideas seriously in the formation of state behavior, we need to rethink the discursive structures of global politics and consider their role in the construction of actors' agency.

Digital Humanities for South Asianists

by **Ute Hüsken**

Professor for Cultural and Religious History of South Asia

The "Digital Humanities for South Asianists" programme of the Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia (Classical Indology) continued its lecture series on the study of South Asian and Southeast Asian manuscripts in the context of the fast-evolving discipline of the Digital Humanities. These talks, ranging from the "Manuscript Heritage of Orissa"

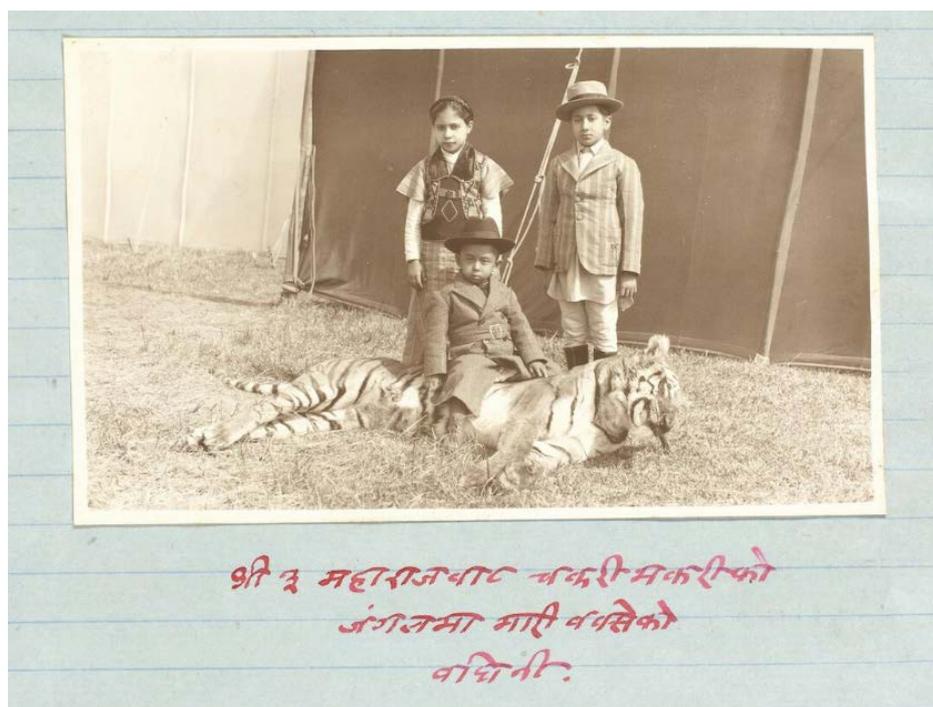
(Dr. Mamata Mishra, Chennai) to "Advanced Technologies for Imaging and Preservation of Ancient Palm-leaf Manuscripts" (Prof. P. R. Mukund, Rochester Institute of Technology) occasioned discussions on the central theme of the Joint Research Group with Otani University, Kyoto, namely to carefully assess the desirability, as also possible concerns, connected to the integration of digital technologies to the study of manuscripts. Expanding the activities of the programme, a two-semester course

on "Digital Humanities for South Asianists", starting from the winter term 2021/22 and continuing in the summer term 2022, has been designed to train the participants in the effective use of digital resources and to develop the necessary skills to find solutions for subject-specific research requirements. This course contributes towards the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Digital Humanities at Heidelberg University.

Preservation and Digitalization of the Walter-Rindfleisch Collection

by **Simon Cubelic**
Research Associate

During the 1980s and 1990s, Walter Rindfleisch, a Bavarian businessman with family ties to the Nepalese Rana elites, gathered an extensive and diverse collection of historical and literary sources from Nepal. Initially handed over to the Institute for Indology and Tibetology at the University of Munich by the collector's son, in 2018 the material was passed on to the research unit "Documents on the History of Religion and Law of Pre-modern Nepal," part of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The collection consists of palm-leaf rolls with clay seals from the late Malla period (1500–1800 CE); Nepalese deeds and royal documents from the Shah period (1800–1950 CE); several volumes of bound books recording events in the palace, state trips and visits, governmental correspondences, and historiographical accounts; handwritten manuscripts of Sanskrit texts on rituals, medicine, elephant taming and moral education as well as law texts in Nepali; British-Indian court and tax records; and miscellaneous material such as historical photographs, maps, newspaper cuttings, brochures, speech notes and printed law texts. This varied material provides a unique perspective on the manifold transformations Nepal underwent throughout the early modern and modern period (c. 1600–1950). It also witnesses the constitutive role of transnational entanglements and multilingualism for the country's cultural histo-



A tigress shot down by Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher in the Tarai, 1939.

ry. In 2021 the research unit began efforts to preserve the collection and make it publicly available. The collection, which was handed over in simple cartons or wrapped in cloth, is being repacked in an acid-free storage system suitable for long-term preservation. Specimens of the collection were sent to Heidelberg University Library to create test digital images. The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at Hamburg University was consulted for the conservation of the palm-leaf rolls. Once the digitalization and the conservation measures are completed, the collection is planned to be returned to Nepal in close cooperation with Nepalese and German experts in legal, heritage and archival studies.



Simon Cubelic
is a Research Associate at the research unit "Documents on the History of Religion and Law of Premodern Nepal" (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities) and Academic Librarian at the South Asia department of CATS Library.

4EU+ Workshop on Area Studies

by **Jai Shankar Prasad**

PhD Candidate, Political Science

The Department of Political Science at the South Asia Institute has been awarded a 4EU+ project titled Framework for Area Studies. This project brings together academics, students, and research scholars of four European universities: University of Heidelberg, University of Warsaw, Charles University in Prague, and University of Milan. The project aims to explore how these four European universities can come together to enrich each other, and collaborate over the creation of an online, multi-university, introductory course in area studies for undergraduate students.

In this relation, Professor Rahul Mukherji, Dr. Seyyed Hossein

Zarhani, and Mr. Jai Prasad attended a workshop organized by the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, joined by participants from Warsaw, Prague, and Milan on November 9 and 10, 2021. The objective of this workshop was two-fold: first, to collectively dwell upon the idea of area studies; and second, to work out a possible structure and delivery mechanism of the online programme "Introduction to Area Studies" in the spring semester, 2022.

The Workshop afforded an opportunity for the participants to delve into critical questions surrounding the concept and justification of area studies in contemporary times, with numerous global challenges faced by states and societies that demand specialized local knowledge—from cyberspace-driven populism to collaboration over climate change and pandemic responses to endemic conflict zones. The trajectory of area studies since early twentieth century, transformation during the Cold War, and the divide between humanistic and so-

cial scientific area studies provide the background for understanding the current crisis in area studies. To this effect, Professor Mukherji buttressed the importance of contextualizing area knowledge against the legacies of colonialism, racism, the Cold War, and Eurocentricity. He stressed on the fact that, on the one hand, progressive neglect of methodologically rigorous and intensive area knowledge has contributed to foreign policy blind spots for the world's great powers in an increasingly multi-polar world, and on the other hand, seriously impeded scientific progress in social science disciplines such as comparative politics and international relations. The Workshop also presented a unique opportunity to get a glimpse into the making of "expert knowledge" about the Orient and its communication to the general public in a Eurocentric setting, through a tour of the Náprstek Museum of Ethnology in Prague. Overall, the workshop presented an excellent forum for exchange of ideas around the future of area studies in Europe.

Sacred Spaces, Holy Tongues

Panel at the 49th Annual South Asia Conference

by **Jonas Buchholz**

Team Temple Networks in Early Modern South India

A panel titled "Sacred Spaces, Holy Tongues: South Indian Temple Legends Revisited" was organized by Jonas Buchholz (Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia) as part of the 49th Annual South Asia Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which took place online in October 2021. The panel is connected to the ongoing DFG project "Temple Networks in Early Modern South

India," (Principle Investigators: Ute Hüsken and Jonas Buchholz) and explored different approaches to temple legends (Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmya* or *sthalapurāna*), a prolific genre of Indian texts that deal with the localized myths of particular holy places, with a special focus on South India. The papers by the four panelists (Ute Hüsken, Malini Ambach, Jonas Buchholz, and Ofer Peres) investigated temple legends from the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu composed in both Sanskrit and Tamil against their religious and literary

background, as well as in their social and ritual context. The panel was chaired by Dominic Goodall (EFEO Pondicherry). With participants and the audience spread across three continents, the panel led to a fruitful discussion and increased the international visibility of the research on Sanskrit and Tamil temple legends that is taking place at the South Asia Institute.

White Women, Interracial Intimacy, and the Global Pursuits of Indian Anticolonialism

by **Joanna Simonow**
*Assistant Professor,
South Asian History*

I joined the History department of the South Asia Institute as Assistant Professor in October 2021. A brief introduction to my current research below serves the purpose of introducing myself as well as to invite you to a conversation on the history of Indian anticolonialism.

Most of the numerous sexual and sometimes even marital relationships between Indian activists and white women in the interwar period have gone unnoticed to this day. The outcome has been a distorted historical perspective on the burgeoning of Indian anticolonialism in Europe and North America, as the inter-ethnic sexual connections that shaped anticolonial activism and community-building have been elided. Their omission is partly rooted in their contentiousness. The nature of these particular set of sexual relationships can be described as transgressive for several reasons. One was that the couples lived in conflict with gendered norms that governed sexual conduct and personal relationships. For some contemporaries, sex, love, and marriage between Indian activists and non-Indian women were detrimental to Indian anticolonial activism; others held them as the most powerful means to subvert colonialism. My study of couples' life trajectories and experiences demonstrate that their impact on the unravelling of empire was even more

complex. They can assist us in challenging some of the long-held truths that undergirded the historiography of anticolonialism in the interwar years.

Research on the history of Indian anticolonialism has long tended to reproduce dichotomies that artificially separated the personal from the political, and the private from the public. The history of anticolonial communities in Paris, Berlin, and London (among other places) is thus usually presented as a history of bonds between men and their public activities. Their sexual and marital relationships are rarely considered the source and site of political activism, whereas wives and lovers are rendered invisible.

Identifying the processes and activities that obscured these women and these partnerships is the first step in the course of reconsidering the history of Indian anticolonialism. I further study how political activism originated in the quotidian and intimate spaces of activist couples as they negotiated their roles and often found themselves in profound disagreement. The daily experience of living and working together in environments that were often openly hostile to them meant a personal encounter with the hierarchies that upheld imperialism, and had a lasting impact on their shared and individual political activism.



Joanna Simonow
*is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at SAI. Prior to her current research project, she worked on the transnational history of food and famine in South Asia. Her two latest journal publications are in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* and *Zeithistorische Forschungen*.*

Research Stay at SAI

by **Pralay Kanungo**
DAAD Guest Professor

Heidelberg University was a dream destination ever since I started my academic journey as a university student. The South Asia Institute—SAI's Orissa Research Project, which made pioneering research on religious, social and cultural identity of my home province, introduced me to the outstanding scholarship of professors such as Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund. Their research and publications became source of inspiration for my doctoral research on Hinduism/religion and identity. Subsequently, I continued to take interest in the works of other scholars of SAI like Axel Michaels, William Sax, Hans Harder, Christiane Brosius, Ute Hüsken and Guido Sprenger. This was purely a long-distance scholarly engagement until Professor Rahul Mukherji, my former colleague at Jawaharlal Nehru University, joined the political science department at SAI. Due to his initiative, the dream that I nurtured decades ago, became a reality with my joining as DAAD Guest Professor at SAI in 2020.

I became an integral part of the political science department. Professor Mukherji led an excellent team of reputed young academics (Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani and Dr. Himanshu Jha), serious doctoral students (Jai Prasad, Dr. Tanvi Deshpande, Mostafizur Rahman), a competent student assistant (Ronja Gottschling) and a very efficient secretary (Sabine Morawa-Görlitz). Professor Mukherji's scholarly reputation, research contributions and outstanding publications were known to me before. However, new to me was his vision for the discipline, dynamic leadership and

commitment to make political science department a global intellectual hub. Dedicated teaching, rigorous cutting-edge research, regular weekly colloquium, lectures, conferences, resident scholars program had brought laurels to the department from scholars across the world. I contributed to the research agenda of the department and presented two research papers: "The Surge of Hindu Nationalism in the US," and "The Governance Model of an Indian State, Odisha."

As DAAD prioritizes teaching, I introduced courses on "Religion and Politics in South Asia," "Contemporary Indian Politics, Nation, Religion," and "Secularism in India," which attracted students from different disciplinary backgrounds. It was a pleasure to engage with students who were deeply interested in South Asian/Indian society, religion, culture and politics. Some students also took interest on Hindu nationalism, my area of specialization, and consulted me often exploring research possibility on related themes.

I would always cherish my association with SAI; it was a memorable and intellectually stimulating time with students and colleagues. I thank Professor Mukherji and Dr. Martin Gieselmann for making my stay comfortable.



Pralay Kanungo

Professor Kanungo was a DAAD Guest Professor at the department of Political Science, SAI.



Keerthana Ravi

In October 2021, Ms. Keerthana Ravi from Coimbatore joined the Classical Indology Department in the South Asia Institute as an MA student, having completed her undergraduate degree in Chemistry and Sanskrit at the Delhi University.

Keerthana Ravi is not only a talented Sanskritist but also a versatile musician, starting her education in Carnatic Music at a very early age. She has been trained in Carnatic music for 15 years, with an impressive record of Carnatic music concerts in and around Kerala and Tamil Nadu. At Asia's biggest cultural fest, Kerala State Kalolsavam in 2015, she was the top scorer and received the event's prestigious "Kalathilakam" award. In July 2018, she took the organizers' invitation to attend and perform at the 17th World Sanskrit Conference, held at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. On this occasion, she performed Campuprabhāṣaṇam on Nīlakaṇṭhavijayacampu and Jayadeva-Aṣṭapadi at the All-Con-

ference banquet. In Germany, she performed at the Samskriti Europe Margazhi Usavam 2021-22 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LouvgLEd-T8>, starting at 6:06) and on January 26, 2022, she was invited to perform at the Consulate General of India (Frankfurt) as part of the Republic Day celebrations.



Dr. Brahma Prakash

The South Asia Institute is happy to welcome Dr. Brahma Prakash as Baden-Wuerttemberg-Fellow 2021/22. Dr. Brahma Prakash is Assistant Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is a scholar of South Asian folk culture and performance traditions. His research intersects ritual, performance, and festival studies in relation to the questions of marginality, aesthetics, and cultural and ecological justice. He is the author of *Cultural Labour: Conceptualizing the 'Folk Performance' in India* (Oxford University Press, 2019). As a Baden-Württemberg Fellow at the South Asia Institute, Dr. Prakash will be developing his research project on Chhath festival, tentatively titled "Festivals for the Future: Centering Ecology in Heritage Making Discourse in South Asia." He will be also presenting chapters from his working monograph, *Epical Subjects and the Questions of Cultural Justice in India*.



Dr. Ofer Peres

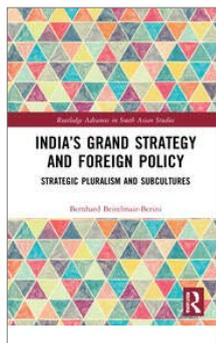
The Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia is happy to host Dr. Ofer Peres as Minerva Fellow from September 2021 to August 2022. Dr. Ofer Peres is a scholar of South Asian religions and literature. His main fields of interest are Vedic myth and ritual, purāṇic Hinduism, south Indian bhakti traditions, and early modern Tamil Śaivism. In his research, he examines the functions of textual adaptations and translations, and their role in cultural and religious transitions. As a Minerva Fellow at the South Asia Institute, Dr. Peres will be working on his research project, "Contesting Realities: Narrative Adaptation as Ideological Discourse in Medieval India." In addition, he will be pursuing another project, entitled "The Rise of the Dark Planet: The Early-Modern Origins of the Cult of Saturn in South Asia."



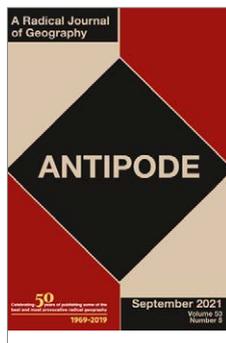
Dr. Valeria Gazizova

Dr. Valeria Gazizova, a scholar of Mongol and Tibetan religions, specializes in the history and anthropology of Buddhism, and forms of popular worship among the Mongols of Russia in late modern and contemporary times. She has conducted extensive ethnographic research on religious transformations, new vernacular spiritualities, and ritual healers in postsocialist Kalmykia, southwest Russia. She has MPhil in Tibetan studies and PhD in history of religions from the University of Oslo, the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages. Prior to her appointment at Heidelberg University, she was a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Cambridge, the Department of Social Anthropology (Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit).

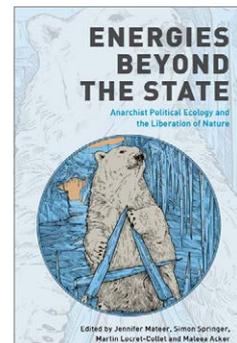
As a DAAD PRIME fellow at the South Asia Institute (Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia), Dr. Gazizova will be working on the project "Secret Lamas of the Soviet era and their Female Lineage Holders: Gender Dynamics in Kalmyk Buddhism since Late Socialism to the Present," exploring the relationship between secrecy and female religious agency in the conditions of state suppression, and to what extent the continuity of a religious tradition can be maintained through transformations involving changed gender roles.



Dr. Bernhard Beitelmaier-Berini
India's Grand Strategy and Foreign Policy. Strategic Pluralism and Subcultures
 Routledge, 2021, 212 pg.



Pablo Holwitt
"Constructing Classes and Imagining Buildings: Urban Renewal and Transactions between Concepts and Materialities in Mumbai",
 Wiley-Blackwell, March 2021, 22 pg.



Philipp Zehmisch
"The Conservation of Anarchy: Ethnographic Reflections on Forest Policies and Resource Use"
 Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, January 2022, 16 pg.

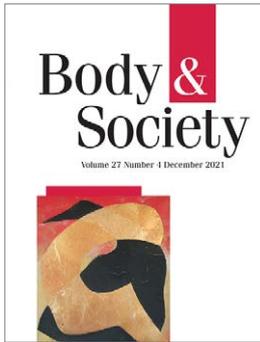
Dr. Bernhard Beitelmaier-Berini's book "India's Grand Strategy and Foreign Policy. Strategic Pluralism and Subcultures," was published by Routledge as part of the Routledge Advances in South Asian Studies series. The book explores the competing grand strategic worldviews shaping India's foreign and security policies by analyzing the interaction between normative modern International Relations theories and vernacular concepts of statecraft and strategy. To assess the diverse, competing ideas that characterize India's debates on grand strategy and foreign policy, the author presents the subculture-cleavage model of grand strategic thought. The book demonstrates that the strategic paradigms, or strategic subcultures, are marked by contending ideas of Indian statehood and civilization, held by policymakers and the informed public, and are a result of ideology-driven perceptions of the country's strategic environment.

Dr. Pablo Holwitt (associate member of the SAI, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institute for Ethnology) recently published an article on urban transformation in Mumbai in the journal Antipode. The article presents a fresh way of understanding urban renewal by drawing on ethnographic research about a particular urban renewal scheme commonly referred to as 'chawl redevelopment' that has been implemented in the city since the early 1990s. It develops a notion of class differences as being rooted in the material setup of the city, and of building design as being informed by imaginaries of class and community. Drawing on theoretical insights from actor-network-theory and new materialism, the author argues that urban lifeworlds are constituted through the dynamic interaction of various acting entities that transcend the dichotomy of the material and the social.

Conservation policies increasingly challenge anarchic groups living in remote, biodiverse regions. In the Global South, the demand to protect the environment is often weighed against the rights of hunting and gathering, herding or peasant communities.

My ethnographic case study from the Andaman Islands investigates the potential of conservation efforts in marginal forest spaces to both impede and enable anarchy. The Ranchis, Adivasi laborers from Central India, migrated to the islands as "hill coolies" to clear the tropical forests for the timber industry and settlement infrastructures. Many former laborers encroached previously logged plots of forestland, reconstructing an anarchic lifeworld based on the principles of autarky and autonomy. A policy shift from resource exploitation to conservation paradoxically consolidated the liminal status quo: without land rights, the Ranchis' remote locations remained outside the purview of state officials, effectively leaving them alone and self-determined.

This chapter is part of the Trilogy "Anarchist Political Ecology."



Pablo Holwitt
**Governing Corporeal Movement
 in India during the COVID-19
 Pandemic**
 SAGE, December 2021, 27 pg.

Dr. Pablo Holwitt (associate member of the SAI, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institute for Ethnology) recently published an article on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on urban mobility in India in the journal *Body & Society*. Based on ethnographic field research carried out during his appointment as Resident Representative at the SAIs Branch Office in Delhi from 2019 to 2021, Holwitt chronicles the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020 and subsequent attempts by the Indian government to contain the spread of the disease. He argues that the various measures aimed at reducing the risk of infection in public spaces of Indian cities are rooted in governmental logics that understand the mobile body as a clearly readable, transparent, and knowable entity, but run into problems due to its fluidity and open-endedness.



Ute Hüsken, Vasudha Narayanan,
 and Astrid Zotter (eds.)
**Nine Nights of Power:
 Durgā, Dolls and Darbars**
 SUNY series in Hindu Studies,
 Oct. 2021, 308 pg.

The volume “Nine Nights of Power: Durgā, Dolls, and Darbars,” edited by Ute Hüsken, Vasudha Narayanan, and Astrid Zotter, was just published as part of the SUNY series in Hindu Studies. Its ten richly illustrated contributions deal with different aspects of the autumnal festival Navaratri (also called Durgapuja/Dassehra/Dassain), arguably the most important Hindu festival. The rituals of this nine-night-and-ten-day-long festival take place in royal, domestic and public spaces. Exploring this festival as celebrated in diverse regions of South Asia and in the South Asian diaspora, this book addresses the following common questions: What does this festival do? What does it achieve, and how? The authors discuss issues of agency, authority, ritual efficacy, creativity, change, appropriation, and adaptation.

The Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies comprises five professorships for Global Art History (with a focus on South Asia and the Middle East), Buddhist Studies (with a focus on South- and East Asia, including Tibet), Visual and Media Anthropology (with a focus on South Asia), Cultural Economic History (with a focus on Japan) and Intellectual History (with a focus on China). Two Associated professorships are located in the Centre for East Asian Studies and in the History Department.



Heidelberg Transcultu



Centre for ral Studies

New FITCH Research Tandem Explores Cultural Landscapes and Social Innovation

by **Dr. Fabienne Wallenwein**
Research Fellow

In July 2021, a new research tandem started its cooperation as part of Heidelberg University's Flagship Initiative "Transforming Cultural Heritage." The interdisciplinary partnership, which involves researchers from the Institute of Classical Archaeology, HCTS and the Centre for Social Investment (CSI), aims to fathom the potential of cultural landscapes as resources for social innovation. Focusing on (re)activation mechanisms, the team strives to reposition cultural heritage at the center of local community life, and integrate it into future perspectives through participatory approaches to landscape management.

The project proceeds from an understanding of cultural landscapes as polyvalent spaces. With natural and cultural resources being limited, clashes between the interests of different stakeholders over landscape-related tangible and intangible heritage occur, generating new forms of cooperation as well as conflict. Moreover, external factors such as globalization and climate change but internal dynamics also trigger changes that deeply affect cultural landscapes and their communities. How can policy makers, researchers, local residents, activists and visitors jointly deal with the complexities surrounding cultural heritage and synthesize them into sustainable pathways for future development? The research tandem strives to avoid two extreme tendencies that have come under criticism in the international her-



FI TCH Research Tandem: Combining the concepts of cultural landscapes and social innovation.

itage discourse: the static 'museumification' of landscapes on one hand, and their overexploitation on the other—the latter often due to unregulated commercial activities. In contrast, the flagship project in Heidelberg pivots on the (re)vitalization of local/indigenous knowledge and the development of innovative collaborative strategies for community empowerment.

In its methodological approach, the team builds on theoretical concepts from landscape theory, critical heritage studies, and social innovation. Theoretical insights and implementation measures will be tested in a series of case studies to contrast the revitalization of 'inactive' archaeological landscapes in the Mediterranean region with the valorization of 'active' terraced agricultural landscapes in southwestern China. A central aspect of the case studies as well as the entire project is to trace social innovation emerging from the adaptation and use of cultural heritage for common interests. Related functional and transformative processes of landscapes



The project team (clockwise from top left): Prof. Dr. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, Dr. Fabienne Wallenwein, Lena Altpeter, Dr. Georg Mildemberger, Julia Rittershofer, Dr. Gudrun-Christine Schimpf. Not pictured: Lara Scaiola.

include: utilization of local/indigenous knowledge for conservation of cultural heterogeneity and biodiversity, development of innovative product ideas to foster socio-environmental sustainability and economic feasibility, changes in regulations and legal provisions (e.g. recognition of customary law and non-standard legal entities), and the promotion of social inclusion (e.g. greater openness to civic engagement).

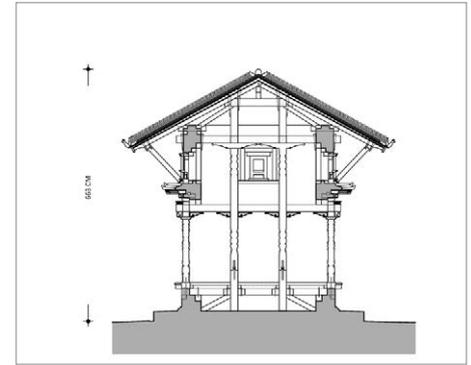
Making Place and Forging Solidarities

Heritage as Placemaking Launches in Heidelberg, Delhi, London, and Kathmandu

by **Christiane Brosius,**
Monica Mottin
Team Heritage as Placemaking

October 2021 marked the official start of the four-year project “Heritage as Placemaking: The Politics of Solidarity and Erasure in South Asia” (HaP). This international research project is funded via a grant of more than €1.4 million from the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Sweden. HaP is a collaboration between the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS), South Asian University (SAU) in Delhi, SOAS University of London, and Social Science Baha (SSB) in Kathmandu, led by Prof. Dr. Christiane Brosius and by Prof. Sasanka Perera, Dr. Stefanie Lotter, and Dr. Sabin Ninglekhu, respectively. The project explores how solidaric formations impact processes of social placemaking that intersect with the construction, upkeep, and erasure of living and lived heritage in South Asia, with an emphasis on northern India and Nepal.

The Heidelberg-based team of Heritage as Placemaking is composed of project leader Dr. Christiane Brosius, HCTS Professor of Visual and Media Anthropology, and social anthropologist Dr. Monica Mottin, the latter having joined the HCTS in December 2021 for three years. Within the project, Brosius’s research investigates heritage campaigns and social activism centering around the phalca (communal arcaded rest-house) of Nepal, building off of her previous work on post-earthquake urban regeneration, and vernacular heritage in the HCTS’s Nepal Heritage Documentation Project (NHDP). She will collaborate with Dr. Monalisa Maharjan (SSB), who works on heritage activism in the context of ritual water architecture in Kathmandu. Meanwhile, through studying Newar and Maithili heritage performances in the Kathmandu Valley and Janakpur, Monica Mottin’s project aims to understand how heritage performances con-



Phalcas in Cyasal, historic city of Patan, November 2019. Photo taken by Christiane Brosius.

struct “places” and cultural landscapes, which in turn facilitate, or limit, collective imaginations of a plural Nepal.

Both projects at the HCTS seek to break down the boundaries of performance and place, challenging the binary of tangible-intangible heritage often touted in heritage studies. As Dr. Mottin notes, “our aim is to show this divide as fictitious...these performances would not exist as such if they were not tied to the place, just like the phalca’s meaning is sustained by the rituals and the everyday use that it engenders.”

Heritage as Placemaking’s research team is composed of ten international scholars working across academic fields. The project’s interdisciplinary scope is unified by the lens of placemaking applied along four theoretical strands—decolonization, bureaucracy, commoning, and erasure—explored through collaborative research projects at eight sites: Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Janakpur, Bodh Gaya, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lumbini, and Mukundapur.

» <https://www.ias.asia/the-newsletter/article/heritage-placemaking-politics-solidarity-and-erasure-south-asia>



Phalcas in Cyasal, historic city of Patan, November 2019. Photo taken by Christiane Brosius.

Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation

by **Franziska Koch**
and **Moritz Schwörer**
Team Worlding Public Cultures

The Trans-Atlantic research project Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation (WPC), whose BMBF/DLR funded Heidelberg branch is affiliated with the Chair of Global Art History (HCTS) and led by Monica Juneja and Franziska Koch, continued with its numerous activities through its second year. Among these were two international academies which were organized as hybrid events in collaboration with the three other project teams, located in Canada, the Netherlands and the UK. The first academy took the shape of the Assembly "Letting Go of Having to Speak All the Time" (October 7–9, 2021). It was hosted by the WPC team in Amsterdam and organized as a forum on activism and art. The second academy in London titled

"Consent Not to be a Single Being: Worlding Through the Caribbean" (December 2–8, 2021) took place in conjunction with Tate Britain's ground-breaking survey exhibition "Life Between Islands" of Caribbean-British art spanning the last 70 years. Building on relational theory, the academy sought to make Caribbean thought productive for a methodology to "world" arts and public culture.

Recordings of both academies are featured on the newly launched WPC website www.worldingcultures.org, which will also offer an academic blog and a database on exhibitions, events and university courses that provide different transcultural or transnational approaches to worlding the arts and art history.

In order to prepare the final academy of WPC in Dresden, scheduled for July 2022, the Heidelberg WPC team visited the Staatliche

Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD) in October 2021. Meetings with several curators and educational staff, while visiting SKD's rich collections and archives, focused on discussions of the practical challenges of making the objects speak to a more inclusive public. The SKD's institutional visions encompass a transcultural approach to curation together with making transparent the collection's conflicted histories. These objectives have acquired an urgency in view of expanding, more diverse publics on the one hand, and on the other, the threat posed by growing right wing movements that have become increasingly culturalized. The open and constructive conversations laid the groundwork for the academy, to be organized by the Heidelberg WPC team, titled "Transcultural Pedagogies in Art History and Museum Practices." It has been conceived as a three-day event that will integrate excursions through the collections, talks by international speakers, a virtual panel for emerging scholars, curators and activists and a public panel discussion sharing academic insights and pedagogical concerns with local audiences.



In the porcelain collection of the SKD in October 2021: The Heidelberg WPC Team in conversation with the collection's director Dr. Julia Weber and Noura Dirani (Advisor for Transcultural Methodology / Creative Direction) of SKD.



Emily Hyatt

In October 2021, Emily Hyatt joined the HCTS as coordinator of the international research project “Heritage as Placemaking: The Politics of Solidarity and Erasure in South Asia” (HaP). This initiative investigates the role of social placemaking in the construction, maintenance, and erasure of cultural heritage at eight research sites in Northern India and Nepal. A key aspect of the project is its cross-institutional collaboration and international research team, which is led by Christiane Brosius (HCTS), Sabin Ninglekhu (Social Science Baha, Nepal), Stefanie Lotter (SOAS, University of London), and Sasanka Perera (South Asian University). The project will run for four years, and is funded by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Sweden.

Emily is thrilled to return to the HCTS after finishing her MA in Transcultural Studies (focus Visual, Media, and Material Culture) last March, and working as a HiWi for the initiative “Kulturen Teilen | Sharing Cultures.” Her MA thesis traced the entangled material history of early modern Venetian glass, and was supervised by Monica Juneja and Rebecca Müller. Previously, Emily studied art history and studio art in New York City, with an emphasis on the history and practice of printmaking. She has also worked as an arts and museum educator.



Jule Nowoitnick

Jule Nowoitnick (re-)joined the HCTS in October 2021 as coordinator of the Research Initiative “Kulturen Teilen | Sharing Cultures.” In this interdisciplinary network, over thirty scholars at Heidelberg University and several partner institutions explore dimensions of sharing and participation in relation to cultural heritage. The initiative is headed by Christiane Brosius (HCTS), Thomas Schmitt (HCCH) and Christiane Wiesenfeldt (Musicology) and is funded by Heidelberg University’s Flagship Initiative “Transforming Culture Heritage.”

Jule Nowoitnick studied German Literature and Mongolian Studies in Berlin, before she joined the Graduate Programme for Transcultural Studies at the Cluster of Excellence, “Asia and Europe in a Global Context,” in 2009. Her dissertation “Tschingis Khaan in der deutschsprachigen Literatur. Eine Geschichte des (Nicht-)Wissens,” dealt with the perception of Genghis Khan in German literary and cultural history, focusing on the transfer and transformation of knowledge between historical sources, historiography, and modern literature. In 2014, she took over the position of manager of the GPTS. After a brief stint as an Early Career Manager at the Cluster of Excellence “Integrative Computational Design and Construction for Architecture,” at the University of Stuttgart, she is happy to be back at the HCTS.



Monica Mottin

I am a Social Anthropologist and Research Fellow at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University, currently working on the project “Heritage as Placemaking: The Politics of Solidarity and Erasure in South Asia,” (2021–2025 funded by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond) and studying how heritage performances make “places” in the Kathmandu Valley and in the Janakpur area. Previously, I worked at London Metropolitan University and Ruskin College, Oxford (UK). I have a degree in Philosophy/Modern Languages (English and French Languages and Literatures) from the University of Padua (Italy). I completed both an MA in Anthropology of Development (2001) and a PhD in Social Anthropology (2010) at SOAS, focusing on how the arts, and theatre in particular, can create spaces for social transformation in social and political movements as well as through international development projects.

My research focuses on the anthropology of theatre and performance, art and activism, cultural labor, social and labor movements, community mobilization through cultural performances, gender and sustainable development. I am also interested in religion, traditional and alternative healing, critical theory, and research methods (in particular ethnography, participatory and arts-based research).



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Public Art at CATS
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