

role of *Sam Kok*'s translations in highlighting social and cultural changes among the Chinese Peranakan in the Netherlands East Indies at the beginning of the twentieth century. The author illuminates the multifaceted significance of *Sam Kok*. First, the translations show the cultural connections between Chinese literature in the mainland and overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Second, the fact that the translations are read even today indicates the intergenerational readership of these works within the Chinese Peranakan community. Further study is warranted to compare these translations of *Sam Kok* with translations in other Southeast Asian contexts (p. 270).

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References

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Community Movements in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective of Assemblages

RYOKO NISHII and SHIGE HARU TANABE, eds.
Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2022.

In *Community Movements in Southeast Asia*, Nishii Ryoko and Tanabe Shigeharu center the idea of community movements as forms of assemblages in which power arises in collectivity. The contributing authors understand power not as emanating from the state alone but coming into being in assemblages of people—a community. Their edited volume, hence, centers people's everyday experiences with power and participation in community movements, decentering and putting the role of the state into perspective. In effect, the book shows that power is fluid, multidirectional, and changing according to the assemblages that people are embedded in. Nishii summarizes community movement as being “the process by which people create alternative communities and worlds that can persist under inescapable hegemony” (p. 8). She further states that community movements distinguish themselves from social movements by being defined by heterogeneity, coincident formation, and joint action rather than homogeneity of members. As such, they are to be understood as assemblages without an assumed “pre-existing organic wholeness” (p. 9) to them. This theorization of community movements is drawn out by Nishii in dialogue with the individual chapters of the book, giving brief summaries of what readers can expect.

The first three contributing authors look at different community movements across Thailand

as religious, political, and ethnic assemblages in resistance to hegemonic power, growing suppression, and homogenization. Tanabe looks at Buddhist hermits living in Northern Thailand and how their community has served as an assemblage of resistance to hegemonic perceptions and conceptualizations of Buddhism in Thailand. He analyzes how this assemblage of resistance comes into crisis the moment some individuals in the community begin to associate themselves closer with the Thammayut sect. Takagi Ryo, in contrast, focuses on the role of radio—its use of social media and voice—as an essential actant to constitute and form communities. He follows the innovative and resourceful transitions that three community radio stations were forced to undergo in order to maintain and reassemble a sense of collectivity when the Thai government decided to censor public political discourse and dissent in media. In the third chapter, Nishii discusses how Hmong communities' memories of forest life help them to sustain a sense of collectivity and community—even as the forest has been taken away from them. She argues that entering the forest, Hmong could experience a sense of collectivity that was uncoupled from social and ethnic (minority) status as it was defined through being *sahai* (comrades) and sharing common experiences of forest life. This collective memory of forest life continues to sustain the Hmong's land restoration movement and is strengthened through visits to the ruins of their former village, now located in a national park.

The second part of the book turns toward community movements in Myanmar, focusing on religious and linguistic education in a state that is constituted and sustained by conflict with its people. Tosa Keiko focuses on the establishment and expansion of Buddhist religious education in Myanmar through Dhamma schools. While these schools have been associated with the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim extremist movements in Myanmar, Tosa argues that the schools are crucial to providing and promoting education based on a child-centered approach and improving Buddhist education, especially for children from families and orphans in need. Yet Tosa does not deny that the schools and their members reflect anxieties over the erosion of Buddhism and fears over Islamic expansion, with some of the schools having connections with individuals from the extremist anti-Muslim movement. Saito Ayako, on the other hand, turns toward Burmese Muslims and their approach to Islamic education in Myanmar (beyond madrasahs), showing that it does not only provide religious education but also instills a sense of national belonging and community among Burmese Muslims. Saito further demonstrates how Muslims engage in interfaith dialogues and provide community services for all Burmese to counter the discrimination and violence perpetrated against them. Lastly, Kubo Tadayuki analyzes the role of Kyebogyi in the de/politicization and homogenization of Kayah identity in Myanmar, arguing that Kyebogyi is a depoliticized ethnic language. Kubo demonstrates that the Kayah identity and language, as well as the ability to use its script, are anything but uniform and homogenous. As such, he claims that the Kayah are a national *ethnie* in the making rather than already being one.

The third and final part draws on examples from countries around the Mekong Delta—Laos,

Thailand, and Cambodia—looking at rural community movements that fight for economic survival and resist exploitation and dispossession by the state and a global economy. Koya Nobuko looks at the Inpaeng Network as spreading the idea of an “agriculture for living” (p. 213), or integrated farming and sustainable agriculture, in resistance to the profit-driven farming of the globalized market economy. While the network was established in resistance to the global economy, Koya argues that integrated farming does not function in complete rejection of the globalized market economy but that through integrated farming the Inpaeng Network is able to resist dependency on it. Nakata Tomoko similarly focuses on farming practices of rural communities and their challenges from national and global structures of domination. With economic restructuring driven by the state in Laos, Nakata argues, economic disparity has been brought to villages, increasingly defining social relations in terms of money. Taking the example of villagers’ irregular practices of land acquisition and bridge building, Nakata demonstrates that villagers’ creative reactions to economic deprivation speak to the dynamic character of community movements. Villagers make use of but also resist the effects that national and global power structures produce on their livelihoods. In the final chapter, Abe Toshihiro turns to collective action in Cambodian land rights movements showing that farmers use global pop culture, social media, and international organizations to fight against their dispossession by state policies and projects that on the surface promote development. All the while, farmers learn from failed attempts of resistance and improve their strategies as they face aggressive repression through state violence.

While the volume begins with a chapter that binds together the different chapters to consolidate Nishii and Tanabe’s theorization of community movements, it does not offer a concluding chapter, effectively escaping a rigid conceptualization and opening the possibility of further thinking about the essential absence of a “pre-existing organic wholeness” (p. 9) to community movements. Nevertheless, the book offers coherence, as all the contributors draw on the theorization of community movements outlined in the introduction. Through thick ethnographic descriptions and rich empirical materials from their fields, the contributing authors emphasize the everyday workings and forms of resistance to hegemonic powers through subjectivation, which allows for “creating or reproducing other kinds of hegemony” (p. 49) rather than acting solely in a mode of simple opposition, refusal, and rejection. Despite focusing on the daily lives of their participants, none of the contributors loses sight of the fact that community movements in Southeast Asia commonly face a repressive, violent state apparatus or other hegemon. By tracing the role of individuals participating in, transforming, or leaving a community movement, the contributors demonstrate the assemblage character of these movements. They draw out the dynamism and fluidity of individual actants gaining, holding, and losing power in their relations with one another. The book, hence, successfully illustrates the micropolitics and complex relations of power. Individual actors no longer appear entirely helpless against a dominating nation-state but as active participants in a collective reacting to sovereign power.

However, at times the strong focus on thick description and alignment with the editors' theorization of community movement lacks forthright engagement, discussion, and critique of it. It is not always entirely clear how far the chapters work with the concept in more depth, contributing to and expanding on its theorization. In general, the volume could have benefited from a broader discussion of the contributors' understanding of community movements to clarify their distinction from new social movements. As it is, the contributors' claim that community movements are defined by heterogeneity, in contrast to (new) social movements that are based on homogeneity, appears a bit vague. I understand that the contributors focus on the heterogeneous elements and the fluid constitution of community movements. However, this focus also leads to a lack of acknowledgment of the homogenizing dynamics in such movements. Although most contributors write that the community movements they studied are not driven by any pre-existing homogenous sense of community, many of them are based in an ethnic or religious sense of community, of sharing collectivity through common village structures or political (past) alliances that make them become part of the assemblage. From the empirical data offered by most contributors, some of the community movements are clearly based on the creation of homogeneity by glossing over differences (and therewith the heterogeneity of their members) as these are potentially disruptive. Kubo, for example, describes the ambiguous and ambivalent relationship of heterogeneity and homogeneity in community movements. When he writes that the script movement of the Kayah people shows that they are not a homogenous *ethnie* but that they dream of becoming one, unified through a common language and script, he does not show only their heterogeneity but also their desire for homogeneity—for a certain level of commonsensus. As such, it appears to me, community movements are not so much defined by heterogeneity as by the dynamics between members' heterogeneity and the homogenizing processes they are involved in. This dialectic and its ambivalence can be traced by the contributing authors' understanding of community movements and their collectivity as being un/made by individuals who find themselves in an assemblage.

Hence, while the strong focus on community movements as heterogeneous assemblages constitutes a moment of potential criticism, it also constitutes the book's strength as it revives the question of what constitutes a community and its movement. In shining a light on this question through rich empirical data, the edited volume becomes an intriguing read. It puts forward the important suggestion to understand community movements as constituted of assemblages of heterogeneous actors involved in power struggles, whereby their sense of collectivity is not simply oppositional to hegemonic power but also constitutes an opportunity for the actors' subjectivation. This bottom line offers a new avenue into studying community movements in relation to repressive and violent governments and other hegemons.

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