

ORGANIZED BY ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



SOUNDS, BODIES AND POWER

Politics and
Poetics of
Religious Sounds

**27–28
FEBRUARY
2020**

**Block AS8
Seminar Room
04-04**

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Whether through mantras, Quran recitation contests, or Christian congregational singing, sounds, bodies and texts depend on each other for the continued vitality of the sacred and the way it is experienced in Asia. However, texts have been given utmost priority in the field of Religious Studies for a series of historical and cultural reasons that have been summarized as a “scriptist bias” and “ocularcentrism”. Ranking vision over other senses in Western cultures, at the expense of the auditory and other sensory realms, has produced a kind of “disciplinary deafness” in the study of religions. This conference aims to consider the importance of **“a sonic turn” to bring forth understudied connections between bodies, sounds and media in the private and public life of religions in Asia.** It welcomes tool-box approaches from multidisciplinary scholars who combine methods and perspectives from religious studies, history, ethnomusicology, anthropology, media studies, folklore and performance studies.

Bodies of texts, which represent our common acceptance of the term *corpus/corpora*, will give way to a specific attention on “bodies of songs” (Hess 2015), “bodies of sounds” (Dodds and Cook 2013), the “skinscapes” of religious experience (Plate 2012), the sensory and embodied dimensions of the sacred (Csordas 1994, Meyer 2011), and the “entextualization” of the body through sacred sounds (Flood 2005). The role of sounds and embodied practices will also emerge as encompassing these intimate and affective dimensions, and reflecting broader questions on mediatization, and on the relationship between sounds, religions and power. In fact, the use of sound shapes the ways in which space is produced and perceived. Hence religious soundscapes, especially in urban and multicultural spaces, have been discussed as enveloping and claiming territorial authority, establishing boundaries, or awakening inter-religious tensions. An emerging literature on congregational singing as establishing community and the sense of belonging, and recent scholarship on the relationship between religious soundscapes and place-making are helpful in articulating the theoretical liaison between sound, people, places and identities. However, these conceptual frameworks, frequently based on urban, predominantly Christian, and North Atlantic contexts, often neglect intimate discourses, real experience and lived understandings of sound – and what sacred sound *does* to the people who are creating, listening, producing, and interpreting it.

The focus on the sonic aspect of religion cannot be separated from movement and touch, as fundamental dimensions of the experience of the religious body. Sound, and the senses of the praying/playing/listening/dancing body, appear as an interconnected and fundamental point to start an innovative discussion on the politics and the aesthetics of religious experience. The ways in which performed and sounded religious experiences are produced, transmitted, reproduced, commodified and received is also inseparable from the technical and mediated ways in which these communicative acts take place. Therefore our discussion is necessarily embedded in the understanding of the relationship between religion and media. Sound and the sonic ritual body are articulated and understood in different religious mediatizations, as cultural expressions communicated by oral, textual, musical, danced, digital, and other vehicles. Whether conveyed by live performance, graphemes, televangelism, or social media, the sensorial field of religious chanting, preaching, mourning, ritual dancing, or singing, becomes a site for broader social negotiations, sectarian contestations and trans-territorial identity formations, ultimately unsettling and multiplying the discussion on religion, the senses and the media in Asia.

Our discussion is interested in the various intersections between religious sounds, bodies, mediascapes and the reflection of power relationships, in order to understand contemporary issues that comprise but are not limited to:

- Community-making and place-making processes;
- Sound in ritual performance and the heritage discourse;
- Multicultural soundscapes in the public sphere;
- Sacred music, migration and diasporas;
- Sonic contestations and the production of inequalities;
- Religious sounds in new and changing mediascapes.

CONTACT DETAILS

Conference Convenor

Dr Carola E. LOREA

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Secretariat

Ms Minghua TAY

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27 FEBRUARY 2020 • THURSDAY

09:00 – 09:30	REGISTRATION	
09:30 – 09:45	WELCOME REMARKS	
09:30	CAROLA E. LOREA, National University of Singapore	
09:45 – 11:15	PANEL 1 • SONGS, TONGUES, AND SOULS: SOUNDING THE SACRED	
Chairperson	STUART STRANGE, Yale-NUS College, Singapore	
09:45	THOMAS J. CSORDAS University of California – San Diego, USA	Sacred Sonorous Being-in-the-World
10:05	KENNETH DEAN National University of Singapore	Multiple Modes of Embodiment: Sounds and Affects in Chinese Communal Rituals
10:25	NATHAN PORATH Chiang Mai University, Thailand	The Ensoundments of the Materially Ethereal in Indigenous Riau (Sumatra)
10:45	Questions & Answers	
11:15 – 11:45	MORNING TEA	
11:45 – 13:15	PANEL 2 • GENDERED SOUNDS, RITUAL SPACES AND SONIC PIETY	
Chairperson	YING RUO SHOW, National University of Singapore	
11:45	SARAH WEISS Kunstuniversität Graz, Austria	Sonic Gendering of Ritual Spaces
12:05	ROSALIND I.J. HACKETT University of Tennessee, USA	Sounds Electronic: New Sonic Mediations of Gender and Spiritual Empowerment
12:25	EPSITA HALDER Jadavpur University, India	<i>The Lament Rose Up to the Sky: Community and Identity in Women's Lament Ritual in Muharram</i>
12:45	Questions & Answers	
13:15 – 14:15	LUNCH	
14:15 – 15:45	PANEL 3 • INDIC TRADITIONS OF SONIC THEOLOGY	
Chairperson	RAJEEV S PATKE, Yale-NUS College, Singapore	
14:15	GUY L. BECK Tulane University, USA	Multi-Religious Soundscapes and Public Identity Formation: Hindu Rāga Music in South Asian Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
14:35	CAROLA E. LOREA National University of Singapore	Sounding the Bay of Bengal: Sonic Shields and Ritual Touchability Resisting Casteism and Displacement
14:55	SUKANYA SARBADHIKARY Presidency College, India	Aural Auras of Inner Sounds: The Instrumental Creation of Devotional Bodies
15:15	Questions & Answers	
15:45 – 16:15	AFTERNOON TEA	

16:15 – 17:45	PANEL 4 • NEW MEDIA AND DIGITAL REALMS OF RITUAL PERFORMANCE	
<i>Chairperson</i>	FRANCIS LIM , Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	
16:15	ALVIN ENG HUI LIM National University of Singapore	Speaking in Tongues in Comparative Contexts and their Digital Soundscapes
16:35	MIGUEL ESCOBAR VARELA National University of Singapore	Multimedia Platforms for the Scholarship on Bodies and Sounds
16:55	CITRA ARYANDARI Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta	Performing vs Recording: The Sound of Modern Bali
17:15	Questions & Answers	
17:45	END OF DAY 1	
18:00 – 20:00	CONFERENCE DINNER (For Speakers, Chairpersons & Invited Guests)	

28 FEBRUARY 2020 • FRIDAY

09:15 – 09:30	REGISTRATION	
09:30 – 11:00	PANEL 5 • ISLAMIC SOUNDS OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY	
Chairperson	YANG YANG, National University of Singapore	
09:30	DAVID HENLEY Leiden University, Netherlands	Amplified Waves: The Politics of Religious Sound in Indonesia, 2015-2020
09:50	KAZI FAHMIDA FARZANA University Utara Malaysia	Refuge to Religious Sounds: Religious Songs and Identity Politics of Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia
10:10	PEI-LING HUANG Harvard University, USA	Sounding Remembrance, Voicing Mourning: Material Aesthetics and Embodied Politics of a Changing Devotional Practice
10:30	Questions & Answers	
11:00 – 11:30	MORNING TEA	
11:30 – 13:00	PANEL 6 • BENGALI SACRED SONGS AND THE POLITICS OF MUSIC	
Chairperson	CAROLA E. LOREA, National University of Singapore	
11:30	ANNU JALAI National University of Singapore	Ma Mariar Gaan: Kirtan and Christianity in Rural Bengal
11:50	EBEN GRAVES Yale University, USA	Bodies with Songs: The Sounds and Politics of Interstitial Lyrics in Bengali Devotional Performance
12:10	BEN KRAKAUER Warren Wilson College, USA	Music as Epistemic Bulwark in West Bengal
12:30	Questions & Answers	
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH	
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 7 • DANCING BODIES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF BORDERING IDENTITIES	
Chairperson	NATALIE LANG, National University of Singapore	
14:00	ORLANDO WOODS Singapore Management University	The Power and the Politics of Embodying Dancehall: Reconciling Sonic Affect and the Religious Self in Singapore
14:20	YOSHIAKI TAKEMURA National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, and National University of Singapore	The Lived Body and the Contact Zone at the Teyyam Ritual in Kerala, South India: Sound, Embodiment, and Experience
14:40	TASAW HSIN-CHUN LU Academia Sinica, Taiwan	Sounding “Exotic Borderland”: Ritual Embodiment in a Yunnanese Tourist Festival in Northern Taiwan
15:00	Questions & Answers	
15:30 – 15:45	CLOSING REMARKS	
15:30	CAROLA E. LOREA, National University of Singapore	
15:45	END OF CONFERENCE	

Sacred Sonorous Being-in-the-World

Thomas J. CSORDAS

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The phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty described our embodied experience of language as a sonorous being-in-the-world. This is all the more compelling when utterance has religious meaning, and when that sound is in the form of song. In this paper I reflect on two forms of religious song in which sonorous being is further highlighted by the absence of semantic content in the vocalization. These are singing in tongues among Catholic Charismatic Christians, and peyote songs of the Native American Church. The reflection on the one hand recognizes the distinct cultural context and religious meanings of these two forms, and on the other recognizes their embodied existential common ground as engagements with sacred alterity.

Thomas J. Csordas received his PhD in Anthropology from Duke University and has held academic positions at Harvard medical School, Case Western Reserve University, and the University of California San Diego. At University of California – San Diego (UCSD), he is currently Distinguished Professor in the Department of Anthropology, the Dr James Y. Chan Presidential Chair in Global Health, Founding Director of the Global Health Program, and Director of the UCSD Global Health Institute. He has served as President of the Society for the Anthropology of Religion and Co-Editor of *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*, and is an elected member of the American Society for the Study of Religion. His research interests include medical and psychological anthropology, global mental health, anthropological theory, comparative religion, cultural phenomenology and embodiment, globalization and social change, and language and culture. He has conducted ethnographic research among Charismatic Catholics, Navajo Indians, adolescent psychiatric patients in New Mexico, and Catholic exorcists in the United States and Italy. Among his publications are *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (1994); *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (1994); *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: Ritual Life in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* (1997); *Body/Meaning/Healing* (2002); *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization* (2009); and co-edited with William Olsen, *Engaging Evil: A Moral Anthropology* (2019).

Multiple Modes of Embodiment: Sounds and Affects in Chinese Communal Rituals

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Daoist classical texts contain a theory of the creation of the cosmos through the intonation of primordial frequencies referred to as Sanskrit Sounds (fanyin). These sounds were elaborated into a variety of dharani scriptures, many written in pseudo-Sanskrit. In contemporary Daoist ritual in southeast China and Southeast Asia, remnants of these theories and echoes of these powerful sounds occur in the form of mantras recited during visualisations and ritual actions carried out by the Master of High Merit, the Daoist ritual master. The Daoist troupe includes musicians who offer songs and music to the gods as part of the offerings. Meanwhile, spirit mediums are led into trance states through repeated drumming and chanting of invocations. Outside the temple, a range of musical troupes from brass marching bands to traditional Southern Sound (Nanyin) ensembles to all-female drum and cymbal groups create a complex soundscape full of intersecting melodies and general cacophony. This paper explores the multiple modes of embodiment found within these communal ritual-events.

Kenneth Dean is Head of the Chinese Studies Department, National University of Singapore (NUS) and Research Cluster Leader for Religion and Globalisation, NUS. His recent publications include *Chinese Epigraphy of Singapore*, 2 vols. (with Dr Hue Guan Thye), Singapore: NUS Press 2017, *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plains*, 2 vols. (with Zheng Zhenman), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010, *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: Quanzhou prefecture* (3 vols), Xinghua Prefecture, Fuzhou: Fujian Peoples' Publishing House, 2004, 1995, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China*, Princeton: 1998; *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*, Princeton 1993; and *First and Last Emperors: The Absolute State and the Body of the Despot* (with Brian Massumi), Autonomedia, New York. 1992. He directed *Bored in Heaven: A Film about Ritual Sensation* (Dean 2010), an 80-minute documentary film on ritual celebrations around Chinese New Years in Putian, Fujian, China.

The Ensoundments of the Materially Ethereal in Indigenous Riau (Sumatra)

Nathan PORATH

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This paper will elaborate on the therapeutic sound-making of an Orang Asli group living in Mainland Riau who today are ethnically called Orang (Suku) Sakai, but formally referred to themselves as Orang Batin.

The paper will focus on sounds associated with ethereal matter (*semanget*) and its embodied manifestation that vitalizes human, animal and material physicality. In earlier writings this was called 'soul stuff'. The paper will then discuss the therapeutic sounds which are humanly generated to mobilize 'ethereal matter' to 'repair bodies'. The ethnographic material on the 'ethereal matter ensoundments', on sound-making and sound-representation will be explored in relation to Orang (Suku) Sakai animist (relational) ontology and (psycho) therapeutic shamanic healing. The material will also be explored in relation to 'mimesis' and Deleuze Guattari's concept of double 'turning away of face'.

Nathan Porath received his PhD from Leiden University for Anthropological research focusing on the Shamanic healing rituals of the Orang Sakai (formally called Orang Batin) of mainland Riau (Sumatra). He has also carried out research in various provinces of Thailand. His main research interests focus on indigenous peoples, anthropology of healing, altered states of consciousness and the body among others. His recent publication relating to the sound are "Seeing Sound: Consciousness and Therapeutic Acoustics in the Inter-Sensory Shamanic Epistemology of the Orang Sakai of Riau", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (2008). Other publications in this series on the sensoriality of shamanic healing are "Freud Among the Sakais, The Father-Archetype, the Talking Cure and the Transference in an Indigenous Sumatran Shamanic Healing Complex", *Anthropos* (2013), "Not to be Aware Anymore: Indigenous Sumatran Concepts of Consciousness", *Anthropology of Consciousness*. (2013) and "Physicalising the Spirit-Dimension by Song, Dance and 'Fakery' in Indigenous Mainland Riau, Indonesia" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2015). Recently he has published an edited book titled, *Hearing Southeast Asia: Sounds of Hierarchy and Power in Context*, NIAS Press (2019).

Sonic Gendering of Ritual Spaces

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Sounding 1: Deeply resonant, the rich, complex timbres of bells clang and boom across an urban neighborhood from above, competing with the bells from other nearby steeples in adjacent neighborhoods

Sounding 2: A scratchy, amplified throat clearing, a brief silence, and then the joyous upward-swelling arc of a clear-timbred, strong, male voice intoning the words 'Allāhu 'akbar' resonating in heterophonic concord with voices calling from other nearby minarets

The sound of bells from churches and the adhan from mosques serve similar functions. They call their communities to gather. They remind their members to pray wherever they are. Punctuating the day at regular intervals, they confirm the continuing nature of the community and its quotidian activities, articulating the ways in which the two are mutually constitutive. Even as they sound the clear boundaries of their communities, those same sonic phenomena course toward the outer edges of their sonic reach – spaces shared with similar soundings of other contiguous communities, albeit with increasingly blurred definition as the distance from each source grows. The sound of bells and adhan gender public spaces male, reminding those who choose to think about it of the (mostly) men who serve as leaders in the religion, as well as the men whose lives are described in scriptures – words that were predominantly recorded by men.

Although the gendering as male of public spaces described in the 'Soundings' above is largely unmarked, women actively, intentionally, gender spaces as female through their own sonic utterances in some ritual contexts. Drawing on comparative case studies from Asia and Europe, and across world religions, I argue that through performance, in particular at wedding and funeral rituals in some Christian and Islamic contexts, women sonically gender spaces as female. In claiming those spaces, women performers create opportunities for articulating commentary and opinion about their own lives and their community. Women's critique not normally heard/or allowed is softened through the context of performance, and restrictions on public performance by women are softened/or ameliorated by the ritual context.

Having completed her Habilitation in spring of 2019, **Sarah Weiss** is now Privatdozentin and Senior Research Scientist at the Institut für Ethnomusikologie, Kunstuniversität Graz. Her research interests include Southeast Asian cultures and performance, gender, ritual, postcoloniality, and hybridity. She has recently finished a term as Associate Professor in the Humanities and Inaugural Rector of Saga Residential College at Yale-NUS College (2013-2018), a liberal arts and sciences college in Singapore. Her new book, entitled *Ritual Soundings: Women Performers and World Religions*, was published by the University of Illinois Press (March 2019) in their New Perspectives on Gender and Music Series. For information about her other books and articles visit: <https://kug.academia.edu/SarahWeiss>.

Sounds Electronic: New Sonic Mediations of Gender and Spiritual Empowerment

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The world of electronic music has been dominated by and associated with male composers and artists from its origins in the 1930s up until relatively recently. Thanks to improved scholarship, media coverage, and activism by women's electronic music networks, the rapidly growing contributions of women now enjoy greater recognition. New collaborations between sound studies and gender studies attend to the relationship between embodied technology and the technologized body. For example, Lucie Vágnerová (2015) investigates how late twentieth-century female composers of "electro-bodily music" unsettled prevailing paradigms, such as the feminization of the voice in musical discourse, with their performative interventions and work with sound technologies. Relatedly, the concept of mediation has been revisited by scholars asking how the immediacy of live performance is influenced by sound technologies and how bodies and technologies mediate the experience of auditory perception (Birdsall and Enns 2008). What remains underresearched, however, is what creators and consumers believe about the capacity of new sound and music technologies (whether in the form of musique concrète, drone, feedback, sonic beds, drum machines, the theremin, the synthesizer, or the computer) to mediate the perceived other- or inner-worldly, and to do spiritual, in addition to cultural and political, work. Drawing on a selection of pioneering women composers and artists (Pauline Oliveros, Eliane Radigue, Abida Praveen, Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson,) and their successors (Björk, Tara Rodgers, Lyra Pramuk), I will explore the diverse, perhaps similar, ways that these women articulate the spiritual and its significance in their creative lifeworlds. These can range from Tibetan Buddhist philosophy or Meredith Monk's "impermanence" to what Radigue terms "the mysterious power of the infinitesimal". I will argue that the field of avant-garde electronic music leads us into new interstitial and intersectional territories that are surely grist for the mill of today's scholar of religion.

Rosalind I.J. Hackett is Chancellor's Professor, Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee. She has held fellowships at Harvard University and Emory University, and the universities of Notre Dame, Cape Town, and Groningen. She conducts research on traditional/indigenous religion, new religious movements, gender, art, human rights, and conflict in relation to religion in Africa, as well as on sound and religion more generally. Her recent (co-edited) books are *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa* (2015), *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (2015), and *Religious Pluralism, Heritage, and Social Development in Africa* (2017). She is Past President and Honorary Life Member of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), as well as Vice President of the International Council on Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH). She also serves on the Board of Directors and as Program Chair for the African Consortium on Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS).

The Lament Rose Up to the Sky: **Community and Identity in Women's Lament Ritual in Muharram**

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I propose to explore in my paper the sonic landscape of Muharram *majlises* (ritual mourning) as an interpretive tool to understand the formation of collective and individual agency within the Shia community. While the sonic reading of the elegies over the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the orchestrated drumming of the body as the entextualization of ritual lament – performed by the Shia men in the public procession of *ashura* — can be read as forms of contestation and negotiation of the Shias with the mainstream society as a double-minority community in the Indian context, my focus here will be on the interiority of the sound, performed by the community women in the closed cloisters of the *imambaras*.

The sonic aspect of the male mourning rituals, when performed inside the *imambaras*, attains an exclusive interior dimension, but microphones and phone cameras bring sounds to the social exterior. However, women's laments and chest-beating remain exclusively private sonic practices. I would like to understand if this realm of the sonic can be critically read in relation to its context of utterance and position and deliberation of the actors who utter them. Is the capacity of uttering ritual sound, pre-given and definite, a capacity to act upon the given circumstances of ritual? What is the role of innovation in the realm of authentic reiteration of the ethics and codes of religious sound, which has to be persuasive as well? Is the interiority of female sonic landscape of mourning susceptible to the bigger socio-religious context that the community negotiates with? Does the sonic offer an understanding of the regional, trans-local and multi-local connections that the community inherits and develops?

I will attempt to answer these questions by focusing on the sonic structures of women's *majlises* at the *imambaras* in Kolkata. I will also explore the interconnections between sound and gendered action in the socio-political context of the Shia community.

Epsita Halder teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She has been writing and publishing on the vernacular Muslim communities of Bengal with a special focus on popular piety and community identity. She is now working on a monograph based on her thesis where she worked on the making of Muslim modernity in late nineteenth-early twentieth century Bengal focusing on the interconnection between Islamic reform and Bengali Muslim cultural nationalism. She has been working on the Muharram traditions and the identity formation of the Shia community in the eastern part of India. She received fellowships from India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore and Sarai-CSDS, Delhi. She has been translating and conducting translations of the writings of contemporary Bengali Muslim prose authors of Bengal. She was the Charles Wallace India Trust Visiting Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies (2018).

Multi-Religious Soundscapes and Public Identity Formation: Hindu Rāga Music in South Asian Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

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Music has always played a significant role in the Hindu religion, where one finds a close bond between music and religious experience extending for millennia. The recitation of the syllable OM and the chanting of Sanskrit Mantras from the Vedas formed the core of ancient fire sacrifices to appease the Vedic gods. The Upanishads designated OM as Śabda-Brahman, the Sound-Absolute that became the object of meditation in Yoga. First described in the *Nāṭya-Śāstra* (ca. 3rd century BCE) as a sacred art, music or Sangīta was a vehicle of liberation (Moksha) founded upon the worship of Hindu deities like Brahmā, Vishnu, Śiva, and Goddess Sarasvatī. Medieval Tantra and music texts introduced the concept of Nāda-Brahman as the metaphysical source of music that was expressed in terms of Rāgas, melodic formulas, and Tālas, rhythmic patterns, forming the basis of Indian music today. Nearly all genres of Indian music, whether the classical or devotional, thus share a common theoretical and practical understanding, and are bound together in a mystical spirituality based on the element of sacred sound. While these aspects are well known in reference to Hindu experience, what is less documented is the embrace of Rāga music in non-Indic religions in South Asia like Judaism (Bene Israel), Christianity (Catholic), and Islam (Chishti Sufi). This paper will briefly describe the historical influence of Hindu Rāga music on these traditions followed by examples of musical compositions in Rāga format that extoll the principal deity of each: Adonai, Jesus, and Allah. As these songs are circulated in media recordings throughout India, issues regarding the formation of multi-religious soundscapes and public identity will also be discussed.

Guy L. Beck is an historian of religions, musicologist, and musician. Presently teaching Hinduism, Asian religions, and religion and music at Tulane University, he has been researching and performing Indian music for over thirty-five years. He was awarded a US Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellowship (2010) and an AIIS (American Institute of Indian Studies) Performing Arts Fellowship (2008) for advanced training in Indian music in India. In 2001, Beck was a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He has lectured and performed in Japan, Switzerland (Eranos Conference), Smithsonian Institution, Princeton University, on Indian TV. His book *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound* (1993) has been widely acclaimed as a unique contribution to Hindu religious thought and practice. The sequel, *Sonic Liturgy: Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition* (2012) followed the completion of his other major project, a book and 18 CD archive of northern Indian devotional music entitled *Vaishnava Temple Music in Vrindāban: The Rādhāvallabha Songbook* (2011). He is also the editor of the textbook and CD, *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* (2006), and has released three CDs of his own, *Sacred Rāga* (1999), *Sānjher Pradīp* (2004), and *Wisdom of the Khayal Song* (2016).

Sounding the Bay of Bengal: Sonic Shields and Ritual Touchability Resisting Casteism and Displacement

Carola E. LOREA

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The struggle against untouchability, the religious history of Bengal, and the study of post-colonial displacement in South Asia can hardly be considered without posing serious attention on a roughly two-hundred year old low-caste religious and social movement called Matua. The Matua community counts at present 50 million followers, according to its leaders. It is scattered across a large area and connected through a trans-local network of preachers, pilgrims, institutions, print, and religious commodities.

The fragmented pieces of the Matua sect have created a strong network of sacred places, people, stories and songs. Their transregional unity and the sense of belonging to a community is maintained by circulating flows of pilgrims, preachers, singers and their tales: a highly mobile network of people, commodities, small media, and knowledge, particularly related to Matua performance occasions and genres, especially *kīrtan* and *kabigān*.

Participatory singing, drumming, and dancing, represent a central dimension of Matua lives. My paper will focus on the sonic dimension of the Matua community, or on their soundscapes of religion and displacement across the Bay of Bengal, in order to discuss politics and poetics of religious sound. Using ethnographic material from my extensive field-work engagements with the Matua community in West Bengal, southern Bangladesh, and the Andaman Islands, I will argue that local understandings of sound are crucial to understand issues of subalternity and resistance, a specific gender culture, as well as affective, anthropo-poietic, and soteriological aspects of sacred sound.

Carola E. Lorea is Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation cluster of Asia Research Institute in National University of Singapore. She is interested in oral traditions and popular religions in South Asia, particularly eastern India, Bangladesh and the Andaman Islands. Her research lies at the intersection between oral literature and the anthropology of religion, with a particular focus on sound cultures, folklore and heritage in relation to esoteric religious movements and the ethnography of Tantric traditions. Her monograph *Folklore, Religion and the Songs of a Bengali Madman: A Journey between Performance and the Politics of Cultural Representation* (Brill, 2016) is the result of a four year travel-along ethnography with Baul performers in West Bengal. She received research fellowships from IIAS, Gonda Foundation (Leiden) and SAI (Heidelberg) to study travelling archives of songs in the borderlands of India and Bangladesh. She authored several articles on folklore and sacred songs, published the translated works of Bengali poets and novelists, such as *Jibanananda Das* and *Nabarun Bhattacharya*, and has been socially engaged as an interpreter for Bangladeshi refugees for several years. Her current book project is a study on soundscapes of religion and displacement focusing on a numerous, yet understudied community of low-caste religious practitioners called Matua, and their flows of preachers, performers, religious items and ideas across the Bay of Bengal.

Aural Auras of Inner Sounds: The Instrumental Creation of Devotional Bodies

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This paper, situated at the interface of anthropological fieldwork and philosophical scrutiny, tries to understand the relation of sounds, bodies, and texts, through the prism of 'internal sonic physiognomy'. Analyzing rare tantras, texts of classical Indian philosophy, and descriptions of lived experiences of religious sounds by sonic meditators, instrumentalists, and instrument craftsmen, I describe complex methods of constructing the body as an auditory instrument, its inner space of breath-paths and listening acumen embodying a distinctive religious sense of corporeal place.

The sacrality of sound and music have long been recognized as critical to Hinduism, especially to its devotional varieties. But musical instruments and their theological/philosophical import has not been appropriately stressed in studies of Indic religious traditions. However, Bengal-Vaishnavas and other devotional groups have strong esoteric traditions of sonic metaphysics, in which, alongside uttered syllables which have always been important dimensions of ritual worship, instrumental sounds are significant.

I explore rare discourses of cultivation of the sound-perfect, meditative, tantric/yogic body and its relations to three instruments of substantial import: the flute, *khol* (clay drum), and conch. Based on fieldwork conducted among artefact collectors, sounders, meditators, and general specialists of religious sound, across multiple villages in West Bengal, I especially discuss claims about how practitioners cultivate the yogic body and instruments as mirror-reflections: the conch, flute, and *khol* themselves become devotional body-places, and the entire vibrational interiority and skin of the devotee, *becomes*, the instrument. I argue that what a musician of a religious instrument plays externally and hears internally creates an aura of aural vibration which affects solitary meditative realization as well as deep senses of sacred sonic community.

Sukanya Sarbadhikary works at the interface of the anthropology of religion, religious studies, and philosophy. In her first work she did an intensive ethnography among different kinds of Bengal-Vaishnavas, focusing on diverse experiences of religious place and discourses of sensory apprehensions of divine affect. Her book, *The Place of Devotion: Siting and Experiencing Divinity in Bengal-Vaishnavism* (University of California Press) was published in 2015. She is also passionately interested in the sociology and philosophy of aesthetics and music, and their relations with sacred embodiment. She is currently working on a range of devotional instruments and traditions of sonic metaphysics in Bengal.

Speaking in Tongues in Comparative Contexts and their Digital Soundscapes

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Interpretation and translation are sometimes a feature of spirit mediumship. In the context of popular *tangki* practice in Singapore, spirit mediums are assisted by a *zhoutou* who receives direct instructions, words of advice, or divine messages from the medium possessed by a deity. Upon receiving those words, often in a Chinese dialect and sometimes incomprehensible or inaudible to everyone except the assistant, he is then charged with the task of interpreting them and conveying the message to the devotees. In the context of Charismatic Christianity in Singapore, the practice is somewhat paralleled, but the pastor is the source and producer of incomprehensible words. This performative act signals both the pastor addressing God as well as his supposed intimacy with God.

This paper examines and compares the two contexts in terms of performativity. For Terence Chong, Christianity's emergence in Singapore acted as a form of cultural disavowal and arose because new middle-class Christians were seeking new socio-cultural identities that were different from their parents and kin. Often converting from Taoism or other Chinese folk religions to Christianity, Chong describes this conversion as a "class transcendentalism," i.e. from a working-class background to more English-proficient middle-class and a "synchronized act of cultural distancing and sharing of cultural vocabularies" (Chong 2016, 100). This paper will explore this 'sharing of cultural vocabularies' by focusing on the specific bodily gesture of 'speaking in tongues' and comparing the practice of spirit dialogue found in localized Chinese popular religions with the megachurches' practice of speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* (Anderson 2004). In both cases, the tongue acts as a performative gesture of the spirit—the Holy Spirit in the Christian context and the Chinese deity in *tangki* practice. Often accompanied by music, the act of *speaking in tongues* involves a deeply encoded practice of listening and affect. This definition is complicated by the prevalence of digital media, when the performative speech performs for the camera and is later uploaded to the internet.

Alvin Eng Hui Lim is a performance, religion and theatre researcher. He is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. His research focusses on the intersections of theatre and religion, popular religious practices, spirit mediums and rituals, with emphasis on digital media. He holds a PhD in Theatre Studies jointly awarded by the National University of Singapore and King's College London. He is also Deputy Director and Technology and Online Editor (Mandarin) of the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A, <http://a-s-i-a-web.org/>), and Editor of Theatre Makers Asia (<http://tma-web.org/>) archive. He has recently completed a monograph, *Digital Spirits in Religion and Media: Possession and Performance*, published by Routledge in 2018. He has also published on Singapore theatre, translation, digital archiving, and religious performance in Singapore. He is a member of the "After Performance" working group, which explores experimental modes of writing and co-authorship.

Multimedia Platforms for the Scholarship on Bodies and Sounds

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Most researchers of performance travel with equipment for audiovisual documentation. Many performers actively use digital recording media to record and distribute performances of their work. Yet, academic outlets rarely enable the submission of multimedia documents that combine rigorous ethnographic description and analysis with audiovisual records. This is an institutional rather than a technological problem. Platforms to support audiovisual interactive content are readily available. The problem is devising consensus for reviewing and preserving such documents. In this talk I introduce a series of principles that can lead towards this goal. I use software I have developed for the documentation of Javanese shadow puppet theatre (wayang kulit) by way of example.

Miguel Escobar Varela is a theatre scholar, web developer and translator. He is currently Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Academic Advisor on digital scholarship to the NUS Libraries. His main interests are the digital humanities and the performing arts of Southeast Asia (primarily Indonesia). In his research, he aims to combine ethnographic and computational methods to study theatre performances. He also coordinates Digital Humanities events in Singapore (digitalhumanities.sg). Publications, datasets, and source code for his digital projects are available at <http://miguelescobar.com>.

Performing vs Recording: The Sound of Modern Bali

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This presentation will discuss my personal experience when conducting research in a community of the ancient Balinese named Tenganan Pegringsingan. I was very impressed with their ability to maintain the tradition alive since the 11th century. The village was surrounded by beautiful sounds during the ritual, but I was not allowed to record them, the reason being, it is not appropriate to record sacred rites. Even so, we can always enjoy the live sound during the ritual ceremony, and it is recorded unconsciously. The memory of the sound is still played when the ritual is held.

As an ethnomusicologist trained in Indonesia, my knowledge is influenced by Jaap Kunst's works on music in Java. We are taught to discuss the form, function, organology, notation, and playing styles of the music. However, the prohibition to record makes this disciplined approach very difficult to apply in the music tradition Gamelan Selonding of the Tenganan Pegringsingan. I can only hear sounds and see from a distance. Gamelan Selonding is always located in Bale Banjar, which is forbidden for me to approach. How do we deal with this delicate situation as ethnomusicologists?

On the other hand, modern Balinese music has been recorded since 1928 by the record company Odeon and Beka, but Balinese people prefer live performances in the village. In 1945 with the emergence of RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) Balinese people began to get used to sound recordings. Many music competitions are held in Bali, and with the development of visual technology, it has an impact on the uniformity of musical creativity.

How did Balinese people respond to modernity through sound recordings and how did they maintain traditional life-styles? How can a community maintain its culture by rejecting recording, if recordings are present as an extended life of the culture itself? Why does the recording, built upon a power relation, produce a different experience, if compared to the immediate cultural performance?

In Tenganan Pegringsingan, an indigenous community that lives with myths perceive the recording as an attempt to uproot the function and value of the Gamelan Selonding's sacredness as part of the ecosystem of community life. In other places and for different performance events, sound recording may be regarded as a preservation effort that can be legitimately adopted, but because Balinese performances and rituals that are still very much alive, this perspective is disregarded.

Citra Aryandari received a PhD in Performance Arts and Visual Arts Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, in 2012. She is the founder and director of Citra Research Center (CRC); a lecturer at the Department of Ethnomusicology, Institut Seni Indonesia, Yogyakarta; guest lecturer at Musicology Department, Universteit van Amsterdam. Her research interests include musicology, performance studies, cultural studies, urban culture and society, mythology, and visual anthropology. She is the author of a number of articles, documentary films and books. Her works can be accessed at the personal website: www.citraaryandari.com.

Amplified Waves: The Politics of Religious Sound in Indonesia, 2015-2020

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In 2016, an ethnic Chinese woman in Medan complained to a neighbour about the volume of the amplified call to prayer being broadcast from a local mosque. Rioting ensued in which Buddhist temples were burned, and Chinese homes and property destroyed. A local court of justice later sentenced the woman to 18 months in prison for 'insulting Islam', and in 2018, at appeal, the national Supreme Court upheld the verdict. Yet some of Indonesia's most authoritative and influential religious leaders publicly regretted it, arguing that no blasphemy had been committed. Picking up where my earlier article 'Sound Wars' left off in 2015, my paper follows the continuing controversy over amplified religious sound – a supremely sensitive issue at the dangerous intersection of identity politics, doctrinal disagreement, and debate over the nature of civil, legal, and human rights in Indonesia.

David Henley is Professor of Contemporary Indonesia Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. He is interested in diverse aspects of the politics, history, and geography of Indonesia, and of the wider Southeast Asian region. His books include *Asia-Africa Development Divergence: A Question of Intent* (2015) and (edited, with Henk Schulte Nordholt) *Environment, Trade and Society in Southeast Asia* (2015). On the topic of religious sound, he recently published a chapter entitled 'Sound wars: piety, civility, and the battle for Indonesian ears' in the anthology *Hearing Southeast Asia*, edited by Nathan Porath (2019).

Refuge to Religious Sounds: Religious Songs and Identity Politics of Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia

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The Rohingya ethnic minority from the Rakhine state of Myanmar has been forced to become a stateless community currently living in some countries in South and Southeast Asia, Middle East and beyond. They are regarded as the most persecuted community who encounters government sponsored structural inequality and systematic violence in Myanmar for decades due to their religious and ethnic identities. The Myanmar authority tried to put the community in silence by suppressing and oppressing thousands of Rohingya men, women and children; by dislocating them from their original place of birth and pushing them into new locations called 'model villages' that are basically detention centers; and by forcing most of them to flee to other countries to become refugees. All these experiences created terrible painful memories for the community which remain alive in their diaspora life in the form of verbal arts - poems or songs (tarana). The helpless persecuted communities often take refuge to those taranas for mental/psychological peace and construction of political identity and future. This research uses narratives and some selective taranas produced by the refugees in Malaysia that represent the sounds of their memories, identity and politics.

Data for this socio-ethnographic research come from long term fieldwork experiences in four states in Malaysia. The data are composed of poems/songs/taranas on devotion to religion, political identity and community harmony. This research argues that activities such as the Holy Quran recitation contests, the call for prayer (azaan), preaching, and mourning are not only the indications of their profound feelings for the religion they practice but also a non-conventional resistance towards the authority that destroyed their way of life. Consequently, it can be argued that the persecuted and displaced community seek and find their refuge in religious sounds and bites for psychological peace as well as for inspiration for community and political identity.

Kazi Fahmida Farzana is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Affairs and Research Fellow at the Asian Institute of International Affairs and Diplomacy in University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. Her teaching and research interests include nationalism and ethnic conflicts, diplomacy, forced migration and statelessness with an emphasis on South and Southeast Asia. She has more than a decade long experience of working with the Rohingya community and has interviewed Rohingya refugees living in the camps in Bangladesh and elsewhere in Malaysia and Thailand and other stakeholders including policymakers. She is currently a British Academy Award Holder (duration Sept 2018 to Dec. 2020) due to her international research collaboration (as a member) with University College London (ULC), in London on a project titled: *"Rohingya Journeys of Violence and Resilience in Bangladesh and its Neighbours: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives"*. As a peace and conflict specialist, Dr Farzana has published not only several articles in prominent journals in her field, but also book chapters with leading publishers around the world. She also has an authored book titled, *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees: Contested Identity and Belonging*, New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan (2017).

Peter Sammonds aims to understand the geophysical mechanics of the Earth's crust and cryosphere, the relation to natural and anthropogenic hazards and their societal impact. He employs a combination of experimental, field and modelling (particularly statistical) methodologies and work closely with social and medical scientists on conflicts and disasters. He lectures on earthquake risks and organises the IRDR MSc independent projects. He advises the UK

research councils on the increasing resilience to natural hazards. He has contributed to inter-disciplinary reports on disaster and recovery, taken up widely by government for policy advice.

Bayes Ahmed is working as Lecturer at the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR) at University College London (UCL). His background includes research into the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR), conflict and migration, community vulnerability and resilience, and climate justice. He obtained a PhD in DRR from UCL, a joint MSc degree in Geospatial Technologies from Spain, Germany, and Portugal; and a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning degree from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). He works in the intersection between conflict and disaster with a vision to help improving the living standards of forced migrants and stateless population.

Sounding Remembrance, Voicing Mourning: Material Aesthetics and Embodied Politics of a Changing Devotional Practice

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This paper focuses on the material aesthetics and politics of a sounded devotional practice in Sindh, Pakistan, through changes in the devotees' voicing technique and interpretation of its affect, against the backdrop of a dominant narrative of "Sindhi Sufism" propagated by Sindhi nationalists. Shah Jo Rāg is the poetic repertoire performed by male *rāgī faqīrs* at the shrine of eighteenth-century Sufi poet-mystic Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. In this devotional practice, concepts of self-cultivation manifest through the performance of Rāg, that intertwines bodily techniques and poetic texts to express the pain of separation from the divine. Over the last 150 years, a new high-pitched voicing technique has emerged and gained currency within the *faqīr* community, coproduced by a material and symbolic fusion of the *faqīrs'* bodies and their instruments and the availability of stronger instrument strings. Contrasted with the lower chest voice (*gerām*), the high head voice is nowadays most often called *sunhī* (thin) or *kalī* (bud), and less frequently, *mādī awāz* (female voice). Although *faqīrs* agree that both voices are vital, aesthetic preference for a particular harbors subtle debates on the power of recitation for semantic or affective ends. Recently, some *faqīrs* have started to interpret the intense high sounding as the wailing of women at the Battle of Karbala, which encodes their practice as a way to express Shi'a piety. This new interpretation of "female voice" functions politically for a large number of *faqīrs* whose Shi'a sectarian identity had consolidated over the last century: they harness the emotional rendition of this "voice of mourning" alongside other aspects of performance to distinguish themselves from the prevalent labeling of "Sufi" in contemporary Sindh.

Pei-ling Huang holds a Masters in musicology from National Taiwan University, and is currently a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at Harvard University. Her dissertation focuses on the tradition of Shah Jo Rāg, performed by *rāgī faqīrs* at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in Sindh, Pakistan. She is interested in issues of selfhood, knowledge, voice, and gender that arise in the changing contexts of Rāg performance.

Ma Mariar Gaan: Kirtan and Christianity in Rural Bengal

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Kirtan singing is an important component of rural Bengal. These all night devotional songs are usually narrative stories on the miraculous lives of local deities and they are usually sung in their honour. This paper focuses on those kirtans that were sung in honour of the Christ, Mary or Saint Anthony. I shall describe the historical context of these narrative stories and bring in my own more recent research on commemorations of Satya-pir and Bonbibibi in the same region. Today, what are the shared experiences around these practices and along what axes are people drawing lines of inclusion/division?

Annu Jalais is an anthropologist working on the human-animal interface, on migration and Bengali identity and on Climate Change focusing particularly on Bangladesh and India. She is the author of *Forest of Tigers: People, Politics and Environment in the Sundarbans* (Routledge, 2010) and the co-author of *The Bengal Diaspora: Rethinking Muslim Migration* (Routledge, 2015) and is Assistant Professor at the South Asian Studies of the National University of Singapore.

Bodies with Songs: The Sounds and Politics of Interstitial Lyrics in Bengali Devotional Performance

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Recent research on devotional song in South Asia has rightly noted the ways that performance can, and does, present variations to the written archive of song collections. Linda Hess's work presents the frame of the "oral-performative" as a sphere of live interaction between singing and listening bodies, a space where dynamic transformation calls into question the ontology of the written text itself (2015). The act of textual transformation in the oral-performative sphere, however, assumes the presence of the written text where lyrics are represented. In this paper, I study an alternative example of devotional song in Bengal where there exists a large repertoire of lyrics that are only sounded and actualized in performance. In the genre of *padābalī kīrtan*, singers insert vernacular segments of text in between lines of an original song in performance. These interstitial lines expand on the images and affective import of each song text, and further advance the theological, didactic, and aesthetic aims of the repertoire. One term used to describe each song is "word-picture" (*śabda-citra*), a designation that emphasizes a relationship between song performance and processes of devotional meditation, as songs are seen as templates that might guide the act of visualization. The general absence of these interstitial lyrics in the written and published archive of *padābalī kīrtan* raises questions about the politics that define the relationship between written texts and the oral-performative sphere. Some critics in the present further direct a negative social valuation at the inclusion of these lyrics in performance, which underscores a recurring discourse that locates the oral-performative as "lower" than the written-material sphere (Kaviraj 2003). A final point of analysis in this paper studies the more recent omission of interstitial lyrics that occurs in the course of media production, as musicians encounter shortened time durations in the pursuit of the promotional opportunities offered by engaging with commercial media.

Eben Graves holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology from the University of Texas at Austin and has recently held fellowships at Yale University and Columbia University. His writings on devotional song in South Asia have appeared in the journals *Ethnomusicology* and the *Journal of Hindu Studies*, amongst other publications. His current book project focuses on connections between musical performance, devotional practice, and social time in contemporary West Bengal, and is titled *The Politics of Musical Time: Expanding Songs and Shrinking Markets in Bengali Devotional Performance*. He currently directs an interdisciplinary fellowship program and several research initiatives at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Apart from scholarship, he has studied the Bengali *khol* for many years, and finds time to study, teach, and perform Bengali music whenever possible.

Music as Epistemic Bulwark in West Bengal

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Colonial powers have often sought to establish their moral authority and political legitimacy by replacing local religious traditions with their own state sanctioned worldviews and value systems. Many administrations have sought to destroy or reform Indigenous musical practices in order to eliminate local religion. Both colonizers and colonized have recognized music and dance as epistemological bulwarks through which ways of understanding and experiencing the world are sustained and strengthened. Chikowero (2015) characterizes attacks on musical tradition as epistemicide, and celebrates the innovations of subaltern populations in resisting such efforts. Contemporary West Bengal is under the crosshairs of right-wing Hindu nationalism, which, in a campaign waged through political campaigning, mass media, and public policy, seeks to stamp out traditions of tolerance and interreligious harmony in Bengali Hinduism, and to inflame Bengali Hindu sentiment against Muslims. In this paper, I explore whether music in West Bengal can act as it has in resistance movements elsewhere, as a bulwark against imposed ideologies and worldviews. West Bengal has many musical and religious traditions that draw from both Muslim and Hindu traditions, incorporating participation from both groups, and which often critique the very idea of boundaries separating Hindus and Muslims. I consider how the practice of music and dance, across geographical and socio-economic divides in West Bengal, can serve as an affective defense, an epistemological inoculation against anti-Muslim bigotry.

Ben Krakauer writes about the aesthetics and politics of revivals in both South Asian and North American music. He is currently completing his first manuscript, *Caging an Unknown Bird: Folk Revival and Persecution in Contemporary Bengal*. This book focuses on elite representations of Baul-Fakir musicians and spiritual practitioners, from their exoticization by liberal audiences to their demonization by religious extremists. The book builds on his articles in *Ethnomusicology*, *Asian Music*, and *Bhabnagar*. In addition, his 2018 article in *American Music* highlights the processes and implications of genre-boundary maintenance in the 1970s bluegrass world, when conservative audiences rejected irreverent, experimental bands in favor of others that implicitly celebrated white working-class Southern identity. In 2019, he released *Heart Lake*, an album of original banjo compositions. Also in 2019, he joined the music faculty at Warren Wilson College, where he teaches courses in ethnomusicology, music theory, banjo, and bluegrass.

The Power and the Politics of Embodying Dancehall: Reconciling Sonic Affect and the Religious Self in Singapore

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This paper explores how the embodiment of dancehall culture in Singapore can lead to emancipation from, and tensions within, the religious self. Dancehall is a cultural movement that emerged in Jamaica in the late-1970s, and has since taken root around the world. It encapsulates a distinct style of music, dance, dress and attitude that has become known for hyper-sexualised representations of the gendered body. Whilst the embodiment of dancehall culture tends to be concentrated in Jamaican (and other Afro-Caribbean) diasporic communities around the world, it also has a small and surprising presence in Singapore. Singapore is an Asian city-state in which the self is indexed to the ethno-religious community to which an individual belongs. What makes the embodiment of dancehall culture in Singapore surprising is that it finds particular appeal amongst Malay-Muslim youths. For this cohort, the sonic affectiveness of dancehall provides a performative channel through which they can engage with their bodies in ways that subvert the conservative prescriptions of the ethno-religious community to which they belong. In particular, it enables them to realise the gendered and sexual freedoms of the embodied self. These freedoms must, however, be negotiated within the broader context of community surveillance, thus causing the religious and embodied selves to become compartmentalised representations of splintered belongings.

Orlando Woods is Assistant Professor of Humanities at the School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University. His work spans social and cultural geography; his thematic research interests involve exploring the religious, urban and digital transformations occurring throughout Asia. Orlando holds BA and PhD degrees in Geography from University College London and the National University of Singapore respectively.

The Lived Body and the Contact Zone at the Teyyam Ritual in Kerala, South India: Sound, Embodiment, and Experience

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Ritual is accomplished through the process of the practice. The same is true of music. The essential element of music is that it is performance, event, and practice. Therefore, music or ritual, as the meaningful action, should not be read as the text but should be experienced physically. However, the scholarships of those filed have not paid much attention to this lived experience until recently, and it is significant to discuss the experiences of the body, which are practicing and performing music, listening and feeling the music, in various ways.

In Kerala, South India, there is a cultural practice of embodiment, called *Teyyam*. It was originally only practiced in local Hindu society once a year. Through a complex ritual process accompanying with folk drum ensembles, the practitioners, who belong to scheduled castes, impersonate the divine, or *Teyyam*, and thereby can bless and interact with devotees, including upper castes. Until the early 1980s, *Teyyam* had been in danger of dying out. However, under the influence of scholarly attention both domestically and internationally, its appropriation by Communists, as well as the increasing inflow of Gulf money, backdrop of economic growth and development of technology and new media, this ritual has not only been activated but also conducted often in multiple places, and in spaces deviating from the original contexts of the last two decades.

This paper will focus on the contact zone among the *Teyyam* practitioners, musicians, and the devotees or audiences at the ritual space and will investigate their interactions and experiences. It will also argue how musical influence affects not only ritual practice and resonate, but also the practitioner's creativity and enjoyment in the contemporary era.

Yoshiaki Takemura is a Visiting Research Fellow in the South Asian Studies Programme at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore (NUS) and also Visiting Researcher at the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan. He holds a PhD in 2012 from Osaka University, with a dissertation entitled "Living as a God: Ethnographic Study on the *Teyyam* Practitioners, Kerala, South India". His primary interest has been focused on the interaction between the transformations of bodily movement and the dynamics of the social, economic and political spheres. His publications include *Living as a God, and its Life-World: Ethnography of 'Untouchables' Performance in Kerala, India* (Fukyosha, 2015 [Japanese]), 'Conflict between cultural perpetuation and environmental protection: a case study of ritual performance in North Malabar, South India' in *Dance Matter II: Markers, Memories, Identities* (edited by Pallabi Chakravorty and Nilanjana Gupta, Routledge, 2018). Currently, he is working on the project on body politics of migration: the globalization of Indian dance and agencies in Singapore at the NUS.

Sounding “Exotic Borderland”: Ritual Embodiment in a Yunnanese Tourist Festival in Northern Taiwan

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This paper examines a creative process that a Yunnan community in northern Taiwan tactically uses music and dance to embody a cross-border culture to boost local tourism. This group comprises people of different ethnicities, cultures, religions, and linguistic traditions from the Thai-Myanmar borderlands, who have later come into contact at the political, economic, social and cultural margins. Due to the contingency of historical events, they have later settled in Jhong-li, Taoyuan city, in Taiwan, since the 1950s. The study explores a process of transformation where, in recent years, the group has drawn on a sense of marginality in their shared past by selecting particular music and dance genres, as well as peculiar ritualistic/religious components from the Thai-Myanmar borderlands in turning the marginality into an advantageous position. By adopting artistically and technologically to creative ways in this transformation, today they have successfully developed a contemporary commercial spectacular zone named “Enchanted Golden Triangle” (*meili ginsanjiao*). This zone has also been coined “exotic borderland” (*yiyu*) and become a sought-after destination for visitors to experience.

This case study draws upon the key notion in the borderland studies literature, viewing borderlands as sites enabling those dwellers to negotiate tensions. The negotiation can be often seen as exemplified in the presentations of music and dance between their quotidian routines and festival peculiarities, and by those amongst different Yunnanese ethnic cultures crossing the frontiers of Golden Triangle. However, the negotiations do not go uncontested. The demand of local economic growth based on cultural tourism has leveled the important cultural differences and contradictions within subgroups. It is a sense of cross-cultural soundscapes—embodied in festivity, exoticism, ritualism, and other forms of cultural representation of “exotic borderland”—which allows them to claim a homogeneous sociocultural identity.

Tasaw Hsin-chun Lu is Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnology in Taiwan’s Academia Sinica. She received her PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles in ethnomusicology. Her scholarly interests focus on issues of migration, cultural tourism and identity formation, with a principal geo-cultural specialty on Burma/Myanmar and its diasporas. She has published articles in journals such as *Journal of Burma Studies*, *Asian Music*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, and *Asian Theatre Journal*, as well as many book chapters. Her book titled *Unfaded Splendor: Representation and Modernity of the Burmese Classical Music Tradition* (in Chinese) was published by National Taiwan University Press in 2012. The same year, she was awarded Rulan Chao Pian Prize for her article “Mapping Public Soundscapes and Performing Nostalgia among Burmese Chinese in Central Rangoon” (*Asian Music* 2011). Then she was the sole recipient from the arts disciplines to receive the Ta-You Wu Memorial Award and later the Junior Research Investigators Award, two coveted prizes nationally in Taiwan. In recent years, her extensive ethnographic study has reached intercultural arts projects between Taiwan and Myanmar, as well as music and dance performances of the Burmese migrant workers in Macau. She also collaborated with many renowned musicians, composers, museum curators, and filmmakers in various arts productions in promoting knowledge of Burmese music in general education.

ABOUT THE CHAIRPERSONS

Francis LIM is Associate Professor in the Sociology programme at the Nanyang Technological University. He is also Deputy Directory of the University Scholars Programme. His current research interest focuses on religion in various Asian cultures and societies. His forthcoming book examines how Christians seek to transform mainland China through the workplace, social media, and community development work. He is the author of *Imagining the Good Life: Negotiating Culture and Development in Nepal Himalaya* (Brill 2008), co-editor of *Christianity and the State in Asia: Complicity and Conflict* (Routledge 2009), editor of *Mediating Piety: Technology and Religion in Contemporary Asia* (Brill 2009), and *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives* (Routledge 2013).

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Natalie LANG is Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asian Urbanisms and the Religion and Globalisation clusters at the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore (NUS). She is also affiliated to the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt, and to the Centre d'études et de recherches sur l'Inde, l'Asie du Sud et sa diaspora Université du Québec à Montréal (CERIAS-UQAM). Her research interests include religion, migration, diaspora, recognition, and urbanity. Her doctoral thesis in anthropology, entitled *Source of Pride: Hindu religion in La Réunion*, was awarded the Frobenius Research Award. After her doctoral studies at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies, University of Göttingen, Natalie Lang was a junior fellow at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies at the University of Erfurt. She holds an MA in Migration and Diaspora Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and a BA in South Asian Studies from the University of Heidelberg. Natalie Lang is member of the editorial board at the peer-reviewed journal *Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasienforschung* (Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on South Asia).

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