

scholarly significance should stand the test of time, and become a treasured reference for future scholars continuing to work on Sino–Indonesian relations.

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Hearing Southeast Asia: Sounds of hierarchy and power in context

Edited by NATHAN PORATH

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The present volume tunes our ethnographic ear towards the many sounds characterising Southeast Asian cultures; and considers how sounds and their production are framed within forms of hierarchies and power, discussing different aspects of the acoustic experience. The volume situates itself within the recent growing interest in sound studies and the anthropology of the senses, and contributes to the anthropological studies on hierarchy in Southeast Asia, thus representing a valuable resource for all scholars interested in such fields.

The contributors to the volume *Hearing Southeast Asia* give close attention to the questions ‘how does Southeast Asia sound’ and ‘how are sounds implicated in power’ (p. xxiv). The text is composed of 12 chapters, 11 of which embrace a specific ethnographic case. Although there is an attempt to maintain a certain geocultural balance, no ethnographic examples from Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos or Singapore are present. While an arrangement of the chapters by themes might have contributed to a more fluid and clear connection between the single contributions, the geographical organisation doesn’t prevent common themes and their sub-variations from emerging throughout the reading.

The themes are summarised in chapter 1, which works as a sort of expanded introduction to the volume: the chapter assigns a section to each theme, discussing it with the support of an insightful theoretical frame. Focusing on the forms of ‘ensoundment of hierarchy and power in Southeast Asia’, the chapter first and foremost outlines the notion of hierarchical strata, framing it within the Southeast Asian context and underlining the paramount role that sound has in expressing them — a discourse which encompasses all the contributions of this volume.

The discourse about the experience of sound represents one of the main themes: the volume embraces the notion of ‘ensoundment’ (i.e., of a body immersed in sounds) and of the multi-sensorial nature of perception: ‘People do not experientially perceive the environment through one sense alone but through all the senses functioning in unison’ (chapter 1, p. 10). This theme and its sub-variants constitute the backbone especially of chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 11: all these chapters discuss the use of sounds as a way to connect with local animist ontologies, manifesting the invisible and numinous present in the environment. The sacred hierarchies established and manifested through religious ensoundments represents another important theme of

the volume, which also emerges clearly in those chapters discussing the symbolism and functional role of sound practices (chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10).

The ensoundment of human/spirit relationships discussed in chapter 6 brings the discourse towards the 'political role of acoustic ecologies' (p. 203) as a form of protest against the indiscriminate environmental exploitation and the silencing of the natural sounds imbued with animist meanings. Just like sound, different types of silence can be 'heard, seen and felt' (chapter 1, p. 19), and utilised to create hierarchical structures of power. Discussed in chapter 1, silence does not decisively emerge as a theme in the contributions of this volume.

Although departing from the notion of schizophonia (chapter 1, p. 46) and high- and low-fidelity soundscapes (contested in chapter 11), the volume acknowledges the impact of the sounds of the Anthropocene on local acoustic ecologies. Not only the violent sounds of environmental exploitation discussed in chapter 6, but also sound technologies, media and modern-day consumerism have had a huge impact on the Southeast Asian way of life and sounded practices. The ensoundment of hierarchies become evident in the public spaces of the modern bustling cities: different religious sounds compete with each other in an attempt to prevail, thus sanctioning their hierarchical primacy (chapter 7); shopping mall sounds hierarchically affect the relationship between shoppers and workers (chapter 1, p. 43; chapter 12); traffic and the sounds the vehicles produce are a direct consequence of modern economic policies which encourage people to consume, changing the sounds of the city and manifesting economic hierarchies (chapter 1, pp. 39–40); as a consequence, speech has adapted to an environment 'filled with sounds' (chapter 12, p. 375).

This brings the discourse towards another theme: the definition of hierarchies and their perpetuation through language (chapter 1, p. 22). With a sociolinguistic approach, chapter 1 discusses how a few Southeast Asian languages ensound hierarchies through different speech registers and the use of pronominal referents, expressing asymmetrical relationships. This theme is especially underlined in chapter 12, which explores the social and aesthetic practices of the Thai language. The ritual use of pronouns and word-sounds is presented in chapters 4 and 5, while chapter 10 discusses the superiority and ritual efficacy of Buddhist word sounds.

Throughout the volume, certain chapters underline how musical sounds are entangled with hierarchy and power. Chapter 3 clearly underlines that music does not exist 'in its own autonomous space', and that hierarchy and power are hidden 'behind the mask of mere "entertainment"' — concepts also underlined in chapters 8 and 9. Underlining the connection between performance and identity, chapters 1 and 3 provide interesting ethnographic examples of egalitarian Southeast Asian societies whose performances reflect hierarchies of the surrounding hegemonic societies and cultures. A discourse on the hierarchical order among musical genres (Western-like, and regional folk traditions) in the new consumerist lifestyle of the urban middle class can be found in chapter 1, while chapter 9 underlines state control over music production; songs and music emerging from the people's relationship with the ensouled environment usually hold a 'supernatural power' (chapter 3) and are used as a powerful identity tool (chapter 6).

Given the focus on sensory perception and ensounded cultural practices, it is surprising not to find a more consistent number of listening examples for each chapter:

only chapters 2 and 5 — and only the former in an extensive way — allow the reader to listen to these ‘acoustic experiences’ from a supporting website, a practice that has become normal. Despite this and other minor drawbacks, the volume makes a crucial contribution to sound studies and the anthropology of the senses in Southeast Asia. The reader will enjoy the deep and insightful ethnographic examples presented in each chapter, as well as the analysis of the relationship between sounds, hierarchies and power from the point of view of experience, language and music.

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The Southeast Asia connection: Trade and politics in the Eurasian world economy 500 BC–AD 500

By SING C. CHEW

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In this book, Sing C. Chew has selected his emphasis on Southeast Asia as a way to recalibrate the perceived imbalance in global history studies, wherein this region is sandwiched between two of the world’s major civilisations, that of China and India, and often regarded as a peripheral zone. Chew shares his long-term investigation of Southeast Asia’s role in the context of world history, specifically from 500 BC through to AD 500, a key period during the region’s intensive engagement in global maritime trade networks. This book places Southeast Asian civilisations on an equal footing with other known civilisations to be examined in terms of their collective historical characteristics and global significance.

As Southeast Asia has no internal written records of its own during the time period of this study, the major sources for this book involve documentary evidence from neighbouring areas and archaeological reports from Southeast Asia and beyond, applied toward reconstructing the emergence of the region’s social and economic complexity and maritime connections. Additional lines of evidence are mentioned when relevant in particular cases and aspects.

The Introduction reviews studies of macro-historical structures and world-systems theory, and it proposes how a global historical narrative can refine and clarify the position of Southeast Asia in these terms. Following the Introduction, this book is divided into four numbered chapters, with themes of Southeast Asia’s early context, connection with global trade networks, world economic systems, and political transformations.

Chapter 1 (Early Southeast Asia) summarises a rich amount of archaeological data and related historical literature, and it further investigates the region’s economic and political trajectory. In this chapter, the discussion focuses on rice cultivation and metals fabrication, as they are the two major factors that stimulated cultural-social