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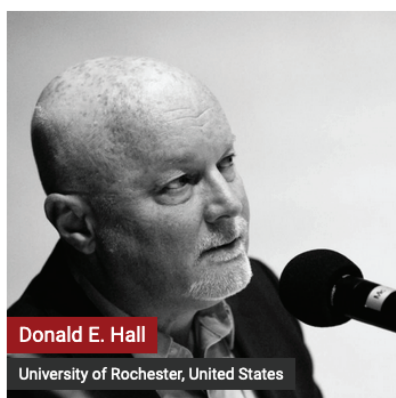
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## ***Mapping the Musical Resources in Ilocano Language Into the Grade 1 Curriculum for Ilocano Schools***

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The Asian Conference on Asian Studies 2022  
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### **Abstract**

Despite the available multimedia platforms, mother-tongue-based multilingual education teachers in Ilocos province suffer in implementing the subject because of the lack of published books, the abundance of books with culturally erroneous content, and the amusing number of subjects they teach. Although they are encouraged to design an integrated curriculum, it requires having valid resources and a model or framework for designing and helping them teach all these subjects. Interestingly, various studies present that music integration can build a bridge to all of these subjects. By mapping the sourced musical resources to the curriculum of Grade 1, this study sought to produce a model of a validated music-integrated handbook through Research and Development (R&D) design and Delphi method with 22 experts. These methods were used to (a) determine the curriculum standards in Grade 1, (b) find Ilocano songs that fit the standards, (c) analyze the criteria in selecting the standards-based musical resources, (d) test the criteria, and (e) validate the handbook with 3 experts. In the process, a map of musical resources embedded in grade 1 integrated curriculum was produced which can guide teachers in the setting to see how all of their subjects are interrelated and interconnected which can also be adapted by other languages, not only in the Philippines, but also to other countries, promote music integrated education, and help strengthen localization. Further work is needed to test both the developed criteria in music integration and the implication of the handbook on the students in the region.

Keywords: Grade 1, Ilocano Musical Resources, Ilocos Region, Music Handbook, Music Integration

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## Introduction (*Pakauna*)

Grade 1 in the Philippines started its reform in 2011 through the K to 12 Curriculum. This is also the stage where music was introduced to them as a regular subject taught in mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) (Jacinto, 2019). Researchers believed that students in multilingual settings benefit in terms of understanding and articulation through their mother tongue. However, in the course of implementing the language instruction, problems appeared which include lack of training, vocabulary resources, and more importantly, lack of books written in the Ilocano language (Lartec, et al., 2018). The lack of books brought teachers to rely on the internet resources often on published local songs written in foreign or other languages, while the few available published materials for Grades 1-3 in the setting needed further review. Based on an online petition, the content of these books was described as sick with poor quality in grammar and does not reflect truth to the culture in the setting (Northbound Philippines News Online, 2017). The lack of validly published works made this study come to life by designing a validated instructional material handbook.

In the construction of instructional material, it is important to know that it should be anchored to the K to 12 Basic Education Program as mandated by the Department of Education. These curriculum guides contain the topics per quarter, curriculum standards, and learning competencies (Department of Education, 2017). Curriculum, by definition, is the expected skills that are composed of learning objectives, topics, experiences, activities, and assessments (Ark, 2017). Similar to a component of an instructional material (Fiorillo, 2001). Individual teachers design their own instructional materials using the curriculum guide. However, how can teachers in the setting create a valuable curriculum when resources like music are few in number to no available valid published materials?

Moreover, musical resources are proven important not just in the context of music but also to other disciplines (Kocabaş, 2009; Arslan, 2015; Mesa & Sorensen, 2016; Yamamoto, 2019; Barney, Pleban, & Gishe, 2016). This process of using music for various subjects defines the word, music integration. In the examination of the K-12 curriculum at the University of Kansas, it was found that teachers were confident in the global thought of music integrating into the objectives of math, reading, science, and social studies (Colwell, 2008). Study shows that integration can be achieved when teachers join forces to create cohesive instructional material or curriculum (Miller, 2013). The quality of education is achieved when all curriculum is not isolated from each other. It is important to make the students and teachers see and understand that the subjects are connected across and beyond through music (Tuazon, 2015).

In the process of reviewing the related studies, there is insufficient understanding of how music integration is utilized in the region; there is a lack of studies pertaining to the standard or method of assessment in evaluating resources for the classroom, and there is a lack of resources in line with the designing criteria and using it to validate instructional material. Hence, there is no study that has been conducted on this topic. Now, if the available musical resources of Ilocos Sur are sourced out, can it produce a model of a validated music-integrated handbook for the Grade 1 curriculum and help improve MBT-MLE? If so, then the benefits of the integration of teachers, students, and music educators, can assist in achieving goals and realization of K to 12 in the Philippines starting from the primary basic education level.

## Evaluation of Musical Resources

With over one million views on YouTube and streamed on the radio across the region, the song *Bassit a Trak* (Domingo, 2008) along with other songs continue to speak loudly inappropriate to children and young adults. Based on its lyrics, particularly leading towards its ending, it says: “*Toy hotdog ko dimo metten kayat, naim-imas kenka di bassit a trak*” (2008). In English, the literal translation says, “*It seems that you do not like my hotdog anymore, that you prefer the little truck which is tastier for you.*” This is just one of the many songs played in the region that has explicit levels of censorship.

Media Smarts (2020) stated that whether to censor or not to censor, media depends on values and maturity in the family and the child’s temperament. The music reflects the identity of a culture of a place or a nation (Alfian, 2013); hence, failure to select culturally and contextually appropriate musical resources may lead to a failed curriculum, especially in the continuous growth of world music (Abril, 2006). It can be generalized that the most prominent musical resources used in grade school are nursery rhymes and folk songs which are also seen as vital to children, especially to social studies, as it reflects culture and familiarity with custom and tradition (May, 2020; Soleiman, 2020). The qualification of selecting the songs also includes any song adapted or translated into the local language. One must know that there is a lack of studies on what type of musical resources fit into the level. The selection of songs appropriate for the level and age recommends that it should be based on the lyrics, the duration of the song, vocal range, rhythm, and speed considerations, among others relating to music skills (Teacher Vision Staff, 2001).

## Music in Arts Integration

The Music plus Music Integration (M+MI) framework proved that music when taught in other disciplines features an authentic and interdisciplinary approach to music literacy skills (Scripp & Gilbert, 2016). Implementing music integration positively impacts learner engagement and promotes intrinsic motivation, especially for higher education nontraditional students (Hershner, 2018), and provides a higher level of interest and quality of work (Egger, 2019). Even if the musical resources are available in the setting, music integration requires preparation and mastery of the subject matter (Phuthego, 2008; West 2016).

Teachers in the country are guided in designing their curriculum map and instructional materials from the curriculum guide to establishing a nationwide standard-based curriculum (Department of Education, 2020). Carlos R. Abril presented an elaborated study on how to attain integrity in the selection of music for the curriculum. Interestingly, he mentioned 3 domains in the selection process. He stated that a musical resource should be grounded in (1) culture and speaks validity, (2) projects no bias, and (c) rooted towards practicality (Abril, 2006).

The power collaboration of experts to conduct brainstorming from and with their respective subjects, share common culture understanding, whose objectives and the criteria from them serve as the guide to produce a deep level of integration is believed to design a music-integrated model. This can be attained through the help of music educators and teachers from other disciplines, including teachers with no musical training (van Vreden, 2016). John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts highly promoted arts integration materials and produced a checklist in the integration process for teachers in a learner-centered approach (Silverstein & Layne, 2014). This collaboration process may then lead to the evaluation of



resources which involves internal and external criteria: external criteria are when the resources are paralleled with the curriculum; after which, the internal evaluation is executed concerning the investigation of the content of the materials in terms of age suitability, practice, and language, among others (Meng, 2018).

### **Music Integrated Instructional Material Handbook**

Based on the study in music integration perceptions, music integrated resources were deemed the most valuable assets in the development of the teaching profession (Penerosa, 2016; Atabek & Burak, 2019). Researchers developed steps in designing music integrated materials which include collaboration among teachers from different subject matters to identify a theme and writing meaningful activities suitable to multiple disciplines (Bautista, Tan, Ponnusamy, & Yau, 2016).

In terms of successfully constructed music integrated handbooks, there are insufficient studies on this, especially in the local setting. One group of researchers developed music instructional material in a Research and Development (R&D) method through identifying the learning requirements, designing them as learning tools, developing them based on testing and validation of experts, and up to the last stage which is dissemination (Widiastuti, Sembiring, Muklis, Sembiring, & Sembiring, 2019). Risa Maree Fiorillo (2001) constructed a primary-grade-teachers music integrated handbook for science, mathematics, and language arts, and identified in her handbook the components and goals for music. Fiorillo's format in the construction of the handbook was adapted in this study which consisted of goals, objectives, and procedures.

Despite the success in producing the handbooks from previous studies, the validation of these handbooks was not applied. Instructional materials are validated with a qualifier whether material is deemed very valid, valid, neutral, less valid, or invalid (Hariapsari, Tukiran, & Sudibyo, 2018). In the process of validating the music integrated handbook, it is believed that since the checklist criteria were created by experts or a collaborative professional decision-making body, (Silverstein & Layne, 2014) this would mean that it is highly probable that this research may provide a similar way to validate a music integrated handbook based on the results of the narrative answers. Tillman and Cassone (2012) underpinned those decision criteria are objective-based and goal-oriented assessment tools.

## Conceptual Framework

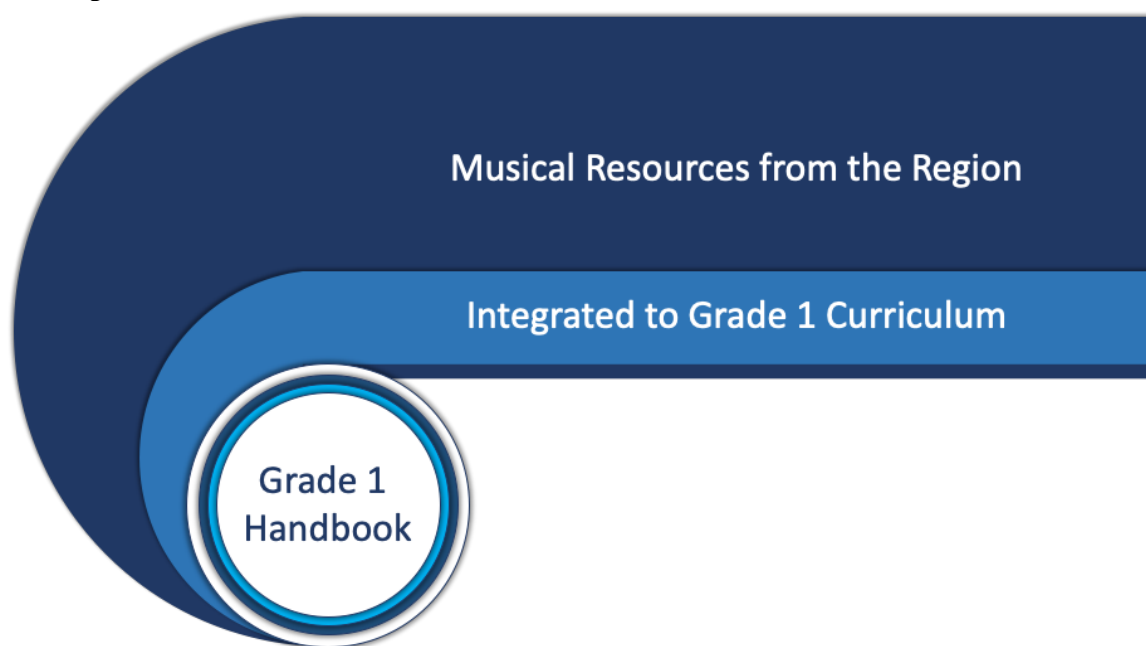


Figure 1. Framework on Grade 1 Musical Resources Integration Handbook Domains

Dr. Guerino Terracciano (2011) coined the term Developmentally Appropriate Musical Practice or DAMP which presents a framework that states: that when teachers are provided with quality musical resources, they draw confidence and success in promoting musical experiences that benefit children's development in several factors. The musical experiences applied in the routines and other collaborative disciplines provide students to develop learning connections (Neely, 2001). These learning connections are made true to the M+MI framework as a strategy for designing instructional materials and conducting lessons using music and its elements, providing differentiation and synthesis in artistic and academic disciplines in 21st-century education (Scripp & Gilbert, 2016). Another similar framework is the musical intelligence plus multiple intelligence (Mills, 2001). The process of connection or integration has to be guided responsibly and appropriately by professionals involved in this study, for there are musical resources, not limited to schools, that teach erroneous and sensitive content (Lartec, et al., 2018).

In selecting the musical resources, Common-Sense Media (2020) provided a guide for parents in applying filters to multimedia with high considerations of age and should be sensitive to the quality of content, themes, genre, comments, and reviews. Similarly, schools should also validate musical resources. Given the wide multimedia platforms in the region, it can be said that there is a possibly large number of musical resources available in the setting that needs to be filtered and validated. When the musical resources for Grade 1 are gathered and identified as a suitable material for music integration, designing and completing the handbook will now be possible (Figure 1).

## Research Design (*Wagas Ti Sukisok*)

Designing the Grade 1 music integrated handbook followed the pragmatic paradigm where it presented an approach to the construction of knowledge through field-related participants with mixed methods. Relying on data gathered from people, composers, and experts in the

field defined this research epistemology as authoritative knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, this study depended on the experiences and expertise of the professionals.

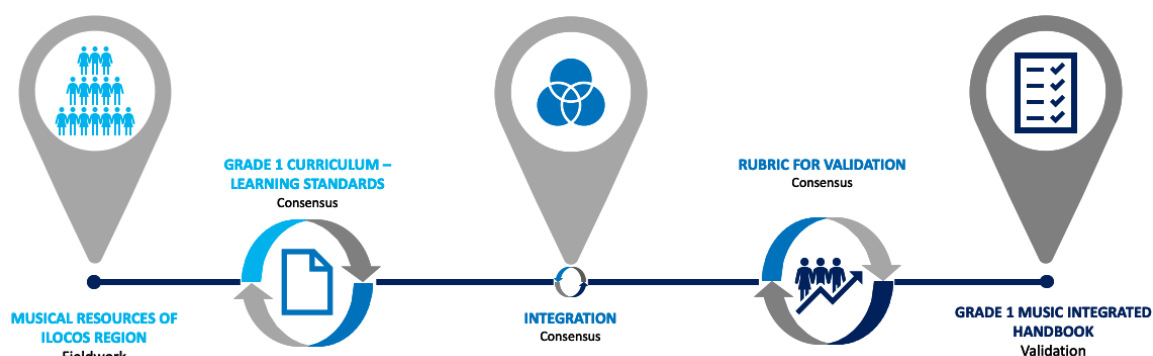


Figure 2. Research and Development Framework for Expert-Based Music Integration

The construction of this research revolved around two research designs: the research and development (R&D) and the Delphi method. The R&D is the main framework of this study to gather the musical resources, achieve product development, which is the criteria for music integrated instructional material and the handbook, and later be tested (criteria) and used for the validation (handbook) by experts (Kenton, 2020). Development, as a type of R&D, includes designing and developing prototypes and processes based on the findings of the research (Luenendonk, 2014; Okoli & D.Pawlowski, 2003). The Delphi method concerns the forecasting based on experts' consensus and reasoned arguments in the integration process of the gathered musical resources and the curriculum learning standards for Grade 1 (Twin, 2020; Hasson, Keeney, & McKenna, 2000; Siegle, 2020).

Validation of data in the Delphi method was analyzed quantitatively by (a) tabulating all results with the items against the columns on the number of YES and NO and their percentage equivalent placed one after the other, (b) getting the total number of responses per item for each YES and NO over the total number of items in percentage. The result should reach at least a 70% consensus rate. (Diamond, Grant, Feldma, & Pencharz, 2014)

$$\text{Result} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Responses (Yes/No)}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}} \times 100$$

Between rounds, the qualitative responses from a Delphi round were summarized and presented to the respondents in the next round. The same qualitative responses from the items with YES consensus rate were used to determine the criteria. This is obtained using thematic analysis by getting the categories from responses and organizing them by themes (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013; Becker, Kolbeck, Matt, & Hess, 2017)

The validation of data for the instructional material involved qualitative and quantitative data to establish the efficiency of the result (Conceicao, Strachota, & Schmidt, 2007). Researchers presented that the quantitative data were to be analyzed in the process of validating instructional material by the following steps: (a) input data of ratings per validator against 5 criteria with 5 levels of descriptors on the Likert scale (Table 1); and (b) calculate the average scores per criteria (Hariapsari, Tukiran, & Sudibyo, 2018).

Table 1. Rubric on Validity of the Handbook

SCORES	DESCRIPTORS
5	Exemplary
4	Satisfactory
3	Developing
2	Beginning
1	Early novice

These descriptors are adapted from Wade Vagias in validating instructional materials (2006).

$$\text{Average score per validator} = \frac{\text{Total Score Obtained}}{\text{Total no. of criteria}}$$

The result was interpreted based on the descriptors whether the instructional handbook identified as exemplary, satisfactory, developing, beginning or early novice. Table 2 presents an adaptation from K W Hariapsari, Tukiran, and E Sudiby (2018) and Erol Sözen and Ufuk Guven (2019) where they used the average score range in determining the validity of the teaching materials from experts.

Table 2. Score Interpretation of the Rate of Validity

Average Score Range	Criteria	Interpretation
4.50 – 5.00	Exemplary	Very Valid
3.50 – 4.49	Satisfactory	Valid
2.50 – 3.49	Developing	Neutral
1.50 - 2.49	Less valid	Less valid
1 - 1.49	Early Novice	Invalid

The instructional handbook of music integrated resources for Grade 1 is said to be satisfactory/valid or exemplary/very valid. The reliability was tested by calculating the percentage agreement,

$$R (\%) = 100 \left[ 1 - \frac{A - B}{A + B} \right]$$

where R (%) stands for the reliability in percentage, while A refers to the highest score and B is the lowest score received in the given criteria. Researchers presented that the handbook was reliable in criteria if it reached 70% and above (Hariapsari, Tukiran, & Sudiby, 2018).

## Results and Discussion (*Mennamenna*)

### The Songs in Ilocano

The gathering of musical resources in the Ilocano language made fieldwork virtually possible despite the pandemic. There were a total of 55 songs collected from various sources: YouTube, Facebook, published books, and local recommendations. There were a total of 34 songs with available recordings online, 4 songs recorded from the locals, and 16 songs recorded by the researcher.

## The Curriculum Standards for Grade 1

As the first Delphi topic, the 22 qualified experts deliberated the 11 subjects to determine whether they are suitable for the Grade 1 level. Experts were asked if they adhere to the curriculum standards. Participants believed that the curriculum standards, as the foundation, prepare students to be ready for the next level; provide students with adequate skills that are valuable for the development and relation to other disciplines, real-life assessments, and beyond (Many & Horell, 2014). With all the subjects offered in Grade 1, all curriculum standards received an acceptable consensus rate of > 70% (Table 3). This Delphi topic concluded its first round.

Table 3. Consensus Rate of Curriculum Standards in Grade 1

	MT	FIL	ENG	MATH	SCI	AP	ESP	M&A	PE	H
YES	81.82	81.82	77.27	77.27	77.27	81.82	81.82	81.82	81.82	81.82
NO	18.18	18.18	22.73	22.73	22.73	18.18	18.18	18.18	18.18	18.18

*Subjects: Mother Tongue (MT), Filipino (Fil), English (Eng), Science (Sci), Araling Panlipunan (AP), Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP), Music and Arts (M&A), Physical Education (PE), and Health (H).*

Despite the level of acceptance of the curriculum standards, some experts contested that instead of covering the overwhelming number of subjects offered in the level, educators should improve on a curriculum in teaching how to be, how to learn and less on what to learn. Although, the number of subjects offered in Grade 1 varies in every country. The consideration of standardization or the expected skills for a high school graduate begins in Grade 1 which revolves around Mathematics, Reading, Writing, Science, Social Studies, and Visual Art or a total of 6 subjects (Morin, 2020) which is expounded to 11 subjects in the country. Moreover, the emphasis on mastery of basic skills, effective ways to learn, and character development directs more on the teaching and learning process in schools. All of these are observed and developed over time (Cherry, 2020; Kamamia, Ngugi, & Thinguri, 2014). These are the underlying elements that a lesson plan should have that a curriculum and its standards do not have (Dubin & Olshtain, 2015).

## Music Resources Integrated into the Grade 1 Curriculum

Experts mostly dwell on screening the songs according to the scope or relation to other subjects, the level of difficulty in terms of music skills, the cultural, moral, and ethical values, age-appropriate, and the level of interest or energy it projects. Although it is deemed vital that folk songs, because of their historical and cultural context, should be included in the level (Make Moments Matter, 2014), *Manang Biday*, despite being one of the popular Ilocano folk songs, was not seen as related to any of the subjects offered in the level because of its content, i.e., courtship which was suggested to be used to higher grade level instead. On the musical side, some songs have a low range from A3 to G4. Low notes will make students uncomfortable in singing. Grade 1 songs are recommended to range from D4 to B4 (Teacher Vision Staff, 2001), thus, key transposition should be applied. There were also songs that have vague, incomplete lyrics that may entail inappropriate context which should be avoided in selecting songs for the level (Brown, 2012). Songs like *Banbantay*, *Turturod*, an adaptation from *Red River Valley* by Marty Robbins, talks about how people who live in the highlands reflect not just cultural representation, but also make students become inspired and appreciate their local lifestyle – another way in selecting songs for the grade level (Buckby, 2018).



Collectively, from 55 songs, there were 39 songs that reached an acceptable consensus rate from the first round of the Delphi method. In the third round, the remaining 12 songs proceeded to Round 3 with the same question and summary of responses from the previous round. This time, it received NO consensus on any of the songs. All common folk songs in karaoke format and the rhymes received a NO acceptable consensus rate to NO consensus rate due to the love, courtship, or romance themes which are deemed inappropriate for the age of the target level. While 13 songs from Facebook and YouTube received a YES consensus rate. Moving forward, all 22 songs that can be integrated into the Grade 1 curriculum were included in the handbook.

### Designing and Completing the Handbook

From the 22 songs, 4 songs have been transcribed and adapted based on published works, 16 songs were transcribed based on the existing recordings, and the rest were transposed and revised based on the expert's opinion. The arrangement of the songs was based on the music competencies in the process of music integration. Take for example the song *Dagiti Kasapulan ti Pamilia* where it starts with D4 to B4 notes which may entail high and low notes, and it also highlights family needs which, according to a music-teacher expert, may be integrated into the subject *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao*. Both competencies are found under the Second Quarter (Department of Education, 2020). Table 4 presents how this song is mapped into music and to the subject.

Table 4. Sample Song Mapping into the Music and other subjects

<b>SONG: Dagiti Kasapulan ti Pamilia</b>
<b>EXPERT'S NARRATIVE</b>
<i>The song is short and could be easily memorized and can be used for the Araling Panlipunan subject (family). (E3)</i>
<b>MUSIC COMPETENCY</b>
<i>The learner...</i>
a. Identifies the pitch of a tone as high or low. MU1ME-IIa-1
<b>EDUKASYON SA PAGPAPAKATAO</b>
Ang mag-aaral ay
a. Nakapagpapakita ng pagmamahal at paggalang sa mga magulang EsP1P- IIa-b – 1
b. Nakapagpapakita ng pagmamahal sa pamilya at kapwa sa lahat ng pagkakataon lalo na sa oras ng pangangailangan EsP1P- IIc-d – 3

Following the competencies presented and the format from the previous studies (Fiorillo, 2001), the researcher, as the designer, created sample lessons based on the M+MI framework. For example, the competency in music (high and low pitch) was done starting with identifying photos of animals commonly found in the setting that produce the sound of high or low pitch and *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* competency reflects lessons on the importance of work of the parents to the family (Figure 3). It is deemed fundamental in learning music by listening and relating to experience (Scripp & Gilbert, 2016). The assessment completes the skills by asking students to perform the song to their parents as a means of showing love and appreciation to them.

**QUARTER 2. MELODY AND FORM**

**Content Standard:**  
The learner

- demonstrates basic understanding of pitch and simple melodic patterns
- demonstrates basic understanding of the concepts of musical lines, beginnings and endings in music, and repeats in music

**Performance Standard:**  
The learner


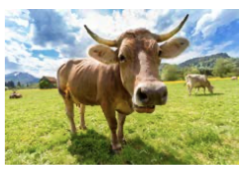
- responds accurately to high and low tones through body movements, singing, and playing other sources of sounds
- responds with precision to changes in musical lines with body movements.



**TOPIC 1: High or Low**

**A. Music Competency**  
Week 1. The learner identifies the pitch of a tone as high or low. MU1ME-lla-1

**Lesson:**

- Singing time! Let's sing the song, *Dagiti Kasapulan ti Pamilya*.
- Observe the following photos of animals.

Topic 1: High or Low

**BALAY-BALAY**

21

**B. Music Integration**  
**ARALING PANLIPUNAN**  
Ang mag-aaral ay

- Naipaliwanag ang konsepto ng pamilya batay sa bumubuo nito (ie. two- parent family, single- parent family, extended family) AP1PAM- lla-3
- Nailalarawan ang sariling pamilya batay sa: (a) komposisyon, (b) kaugalian at paniniwala, (c) pinagmulan, at (d) tungkulin at karapatan ng bawat kasapi AP1PAM- lla-3
- Nasasabi ang kahalagahan ng bawat kasapi ng pamilya.

**EDUKASYON SA PAGPAPAKATAO**  
Ang mag-aaral ay

- Nakapagpapakita ng pagmamahal at paggaling sa mga magulang EsP1P- lla-b - 1
- Nakapagpapakita ng pagmamahal sa pamilya at kapwa sa lahat ng pagkakataon lalo na sa oras ng pangangailangan EsP1P- lla-d - 3

**Lesson:**

- From the song, discuss the role of *tatang* and *nanang*.
- Discuss the concept of the type of family and ask students to identify the type of family the song has.
- Ask students to write in their notebook the roles of their parents. The names of their siblings and what they do or share for the family.
- Discuss the importance of every member of the family and share how to show appreciation and love to them at all times.

**MTB-MLE**  
The learner

- Identifies pronouns: a. personal and b. possessive MT1GA-lla-d-2.2
- Identify cause and/or effect of events in a story listened to MT1LC-lla-d-4.2
- Identify the problem and solution in the story read MT1LC-lla-g-4.3

- Ask students what will happen to the family if *nanang* and *tatang* stopped working.
- What are the things the *nanang* ken *tatang* can provide when they continue working? Correct, provide the basic needs and may also give what you want.
- Now, discuss the concept of pronoun in personal and possessive forms.
- Provide examples to show how these words are used in a sentence.
- Let's sing the song again and identify the pronouns used in the song. Present the lyrics once again to help them synthesize.
- Were you able to see the pronouns in the song? Good job!

**ASSESSMENT:**  
Perform the song again in front of your parents to show love and appreciation to them. Do not forget to end it with a "thank you," alright? Capture this moment in a video.

**BALAY-BALAY**

Figure 3. Screenshot from Balay-Balay

The use of ICT and technology in the lesson was also included following the practices of 21st-century skills (Scripp & Gilbert, 2016). The suggested use of online materials is adaptable to various modalities of learning, and it is highly encouraged that they should be guided by the parents to reinforce the learning experience (Myers, 2012).



Figure 4. Balay-Balay Mockup Cover Design

At the end of the handbook, the list of references was included, especially for listening purposes. All of these completed the content of the handbook entitled *Balay-Balay: A Handbook of Music Integrated Ilocano Songs for Grade 1* (Figure 4). Balay-Balay is a common Ilocano word for the children's game: play house. The cover and the title applied creative interpretation and revolved around the theme for and by the children. It can be noticed that one of the kids on the cover is using technology, i.e., an iPad to reflect a 21st-century student. The title reflected that the classroom has to be fun, family-oriented, socially relevant, and promotes lifelong learning.

### Criteria in Music Integration to Grade 1 Curriculum

Based on the experts' reasons for their answers from the previous Delphi topic, thematic analysis was applied to identify the 4 criteria from the music integration narratives of experts. Similar to the previous Delphi on music integration in the curriculum, experts underpinned the standards on music integration: the motivational context, curriculum integration, musicality, and the use of language (Figure 5).

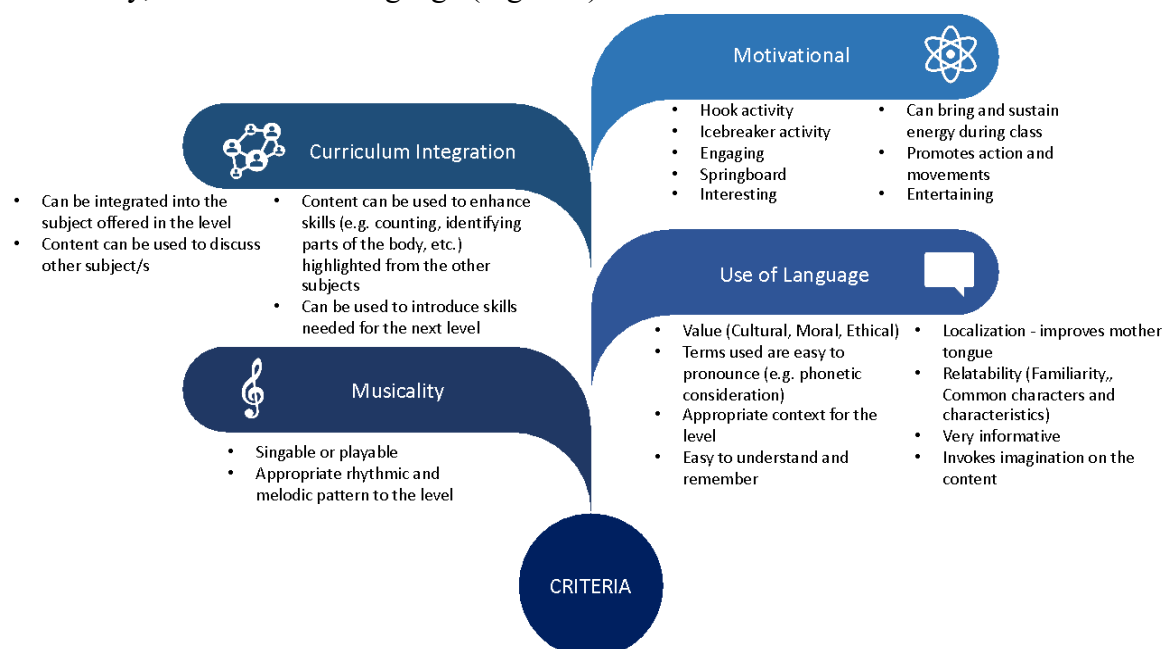


Figure 5. A Thematic Analysis Framework on the Criteria for Music Integration

Figure 5 presents the criteria that made the music possible to be integrated into curriculum standards. Each criterion was grouped into categories from the codes acquired from the narratives of Delphi rounds. Motivational, as a criterion, refers to songs that can be used as a subject for introduction or that could enhance or sustain interest in-class discussion. Curriculum integration refers to songs that cover the content of another related subject, provide enhancement of skills, or introduce skills needed for the next level. Use of language refers to songs that project appropriate values with terms that are easy to understand, locally contextual, relatable, or invoke comprehension. Musicality refers to songs that use appropriate elements of composition and the skills needed for the level.

As the last topic in the Delphi method, the criteria from this thematic analysis were used to answer the 2 questions. Interestingly, both Delphi questions received 100% from all 22 experts. There are procedures involved in evaluating materials for classroom use by using an assessment tool. This involved consultation from professional personnel, recommendations

from related school departments, and the selection criteria in finalizing whether the material is related and updated (Prince Edward Island, 2008). Similarly, these criteria, that underwent professional consultation and recommendation can be considered the selection criteria or indicators in evaluating musical resources for music integration. The selection process of instructional materials can be used in other grade levels provided that the selection is based on standards and relative to the learning goals of the level (National Research Council., 1999). These criteria were used then to validate the handbook.

### **Qualification of the Music Integrated Handbook for Grade 1**

There were 3 validators involved, composed of a Grade School Principal, a Music Educator, and a Grade School Subject Coordinator. They presented feedback on the handbook's underlying reasons for the professional selection process, the adjustments made from the recommended responses of materials that needed improvement, and the observation of a successful music integration process to the curriculum.

Experts' narrative illuminates how instructional materials continuously improve through evaluation processes involving professionals, practice, and innovation through data (Wiley, Strader, & Bodily, 2021). They added that the alignment or connection of instructional materials or the musical resources to the standards and competencies in the handbook made the lessons presented motivational. This is further supported by their scores where the handbook was deemed with a very valid exemplary result given the ratings in motivational factor (5), curriculum integration (5), musicality (4.67), and the use of language (4.63).

Experts recommended that the musical resources are not limited to specific topics or quarters and that they can also be used for various topics, whether in music or in other subjects, especially on MTB-MLE; the lessons need broadening; and the importance of orthography on Ilocano songs (Benosa, 2012). Interestingly, they pointed out that a song can be used in a certain musical skill and that it can also be used again on a higher level of musical skill. This method is relative to the progressive pedagogy continuity where music skills are developed at a level of difficulty using any particular music. Stephanie L. Standerfer (2019) supported the idea of progressive pedagogy continuity (Lo, 1993) where she introduced it as the Progressive Staff method.

The songs present that they can be applied across the whole level or on various quarters and can be explored to higher music skills. It is interesting to note that from the map of integration (Table 4), the subjects mentioned in the summary have expounded and can be generalized that the understanding and realization of the progressive staff method is not limited to music. Furthermore, the handbook, having musical resources with standards and competencies, was expressed as enough to present a mapped-out material of music integration to the curriculum and is enough to guide teachers on how to use the handbook. Moreover, all songs are written in the mother tongue which makes them naturally a great material for the language subject itself (Lartec, et al., 2018).

### **Discussion**

The findings from this study suggest that the musical resources in the Ilocano language may be integrated into the Grade 1 curriculum to produce a designed and validated handbook, albeit with the use of the criteria. Interestingly, all curriculum standards from the 11 subjects offered in Grade 1 were generally found acceptable by the experts. Research negates that the

curriculum standards of the country were seen with issues on the student-centered paradigm (Culala & De Leon, 2018) having too many subjects for the target grade level (Morin, 2020). It was found out that out of 55 musical resources from the online data gathering procedure, there are 22 songs suitable for the Grade 1 curriculum. The findings showed that selecting musical resources for music integration should involve four criteria: motivation, curriculum integration, musicality, and the use of language. It was also found that mapping the musical resources should be anchored on the curriculum standards and its competencies. Similarly, the indicators developed by John F. Kennedy Center agree on the result of the criteria on art integration where it stresses the engagement, constructivism, art-based demonstration of skills and the construction process which are aligned to the objectives of the art subject (i.e., music) and the other subjects (Silverstein & Layne, 2014). Findings showed that the use of local songs can be adapted and expounded on various quarters and levels which agrees with the concept of the progressive staff method and may prove that the progressive pedagogy continuity is still true to the music and other subjects today (Standerfer, 2019; Lo, 1993). Surprisingly, there is a significant result in the validity of the handbook in terms of the 4 criteria mentioned. Indeed, the criteria developed and validated from this study reflect significance in producing music-integrated materials. Research suggests that developing and validating criteria, should involve specific indicators or evidence of measurement of the subject being assessed and may involve collaborative practice (Ong, Diño, Calimag, & Hidalgo, 2019; & Bijlsma, M., Rendering, A., Chin-On, N., Debska, A., von Karsa, L., Knöpnadel, J., ... & Janssens, A. C. J., 2014).). Although it was presented as part of the limitation of this study on the implementation of the handbook, it should be asked about the effectiveness of the music integration as seen and applied in the classroom from the handbook despite its result. Further study is needed to test the implementation effectiveness rate of the created instructional music integrated handbook in the setting.

One must question the reliability of the criteria for music integration. It is largely possible that the formulation of the handbook was made successful because of the collaboration factor in determining the curriculum and the musical resources. It may cause different results when a teacher uses the criteria alone in developing and validating musical resources for music integration. Research suggests that successful integration can be done through joint deliberation among related professionals (Miller, Jan 2013; Drake & Burns, 2004; Fiorillo, 2001). Further work is needed to test the reliability and validity of the criteria to determine if a teacher can solely produce a significant music-integrated handbook.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings stated above, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The musical resources in the Ilocano language can be used for a certain grade level;
2. All curriculum standards in Grade 1 qualify in the setting;
3. A number of songs can be identified to be integrated into the Grade 1 curriculum by the joint collaboration of related professionals;
4. Assessing musical resources for Grade 1 and other levels in music integration involves indicators based on a motivational factor, curriculum integration, musicality, and the use of language;
5. The implementation of the criteria in assessing and designing music integrated handbook proved an effective assessment tool; and
6. A qualified music integrated handbook contains mapped-out musical resources with standards and competencies or goals and objectives of music and other related subjects of the same quarter.



The study revealed the qualified method and product in completing the music integrated handbook for Grade 1. Grade 1 teachers should find the instructional materials in the handbook as a guide and source in designing activities and assessments in a music-integrated classroom. Teachers may use the criteria in designing a music-integrated handbook for different grade levels and different sets of songs. Teachers from other provinces may adapt the method or criteria in producing music-integrated instructional material to support mother-tongue-based multilingual education subjects and their benefits. Music educators and composers must produce songs for music integration to cater to other subjects, standards, and competencies. Another study must be conducted to assess the implication of these songs or the handbook itself on the students in the region. Another study must be conducted to assess the existing musical resources used in the setting to determine the suitability of the materials at a particular level which may be assessed using the 4 criteria found in this study. A similar study must be conducted to test the effectiveness of the criteria in a larger group of instructional-material designers to determine if the same findings will be achieved. Another study must be conducted to test the effectiveness of the music integrated handbook when implemented in the classroom.

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Lastly, to all students, teachers, musicians, and readers, may this study and the handbook help and inspire you to use and grow the music of your childhood hometown. May this bring you back to your *Balay* (home).

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***Between Law and Justice:  
Self-Defense Principle in Late Qing China Penal Cases***

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**Abstract**

This article, through the analysis of selected judicial cases of the late Qing dynasty, explores the existence of the self-defense principle and the limits within it was considered valid or not. In the first part, through the study and the analysis of some articles contained in *The Great Qing Code*, it will be shown how the written law considered a murder specifically derived from the need to defend oneself or a relative from an external attack, how the magistrate must judge these particular cases and what were the judicial organs legally involved. In the second part, selected penal cases, included in a late Qing legal cases compendium, are presented. Through the examination of these historical documents, that concerning both men and women belonging to the same social class, it will be clear how the previously presented law, reported in the official code of the dynasty, was effectively applied and, in particular, what were the promulgated sentences. The final aim is to show the limits of the Qing code in self-defense matter. It should be borne in mind that *The Great Qing Code* thanks to the strong continuity with dynasties 'previous codes (especially of Tang and Ming dynasties) represent the final result of more than a thousand years of complex legal culture.

**Keywords:** Self-Defense Principle, Late Qing Dynasty, Qing Code, Magistrates, Judicial Cases, Imperial Legal System

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## Introduction

According to its universal definition Self-defense it's "a universally accepted principle that a person may protect themselves or others from harm under appropriate circumstances, even when that behavior would normally constitute a crime"<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, self-defense provide justification and excuse for any act done by the defendant. According to the general principles of international law, any state who acts for self-defense is considered absolved for any international crime<sup>2</sup>.

In imperial China becoming a murderer most times meant having to pay for the committed crime with one's life. The law did not always consider the motives that drove a person to commit an extreme act such as murder and the penalties were very severe. However, in some cases it seems that committing murder in defense of one's own life or that of a relative could guarantee certain mitigating circumstances, thus sparing the murderer the death penalty.

Based on the definition of self-defense, a distinction between subjective rights and mere principles must be done by establishing that "rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory"<sup>3</sup>, whereas legal principles are more difficult to define. Considering the linguistic meaning of the word "principle" it is defined as:

A fundamental truth; a comprehensive law or doctrine, from which others are derived, or on which others are founded; a general truth; an elementary proposition; a maxim; an axiom; a postulate; The collectivity of moral or ethical standards or judgments; A basic truth, law, or assumption; A settled rule of action; a governing law of conduct; The collectivity of moral or ethical standards or judgments.<sup>4</sup>

From this point of view a legal principle is defined as a prevailing standard or set of standards of behavior or judgment. Moreover, a legal principle would be understood also as basic norm from which other norms derive<sup>5</sup>.

According to these definitions, rights must be 'respected' while principles must be 'observed'. The fundamental difference between these two categories is that principles have only limited justiciability, whereas subjective rights can be asserted directly in court.

The right of self-defense has been introduced in China in 2020 when the Supreme People's Procuratorate Ministry of Public Security enact the "The guidelines on The Application of the System of Justifiable Defense in Accordance with the Law" (*Guanyu Yifa Shiyong Zhengdang Fangwei Zhidu de Zhidao Yijian*, 关于依法适用正当防卫制度的指导意见)<sup>6</sup>. Considering the late introduction within the modern Chinese legal system, one may presume that the right of self-defense was non-existent in both law and judicial system of imperial China. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.findlaw.com/criminal/criminal-law-basics/self-defense-overview.html>

<sup>2</sup> Naresh; 2017:17.

<sup>3</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights/>

<sup>4</sup> The People's Dictionary. Available at: <http://www.dictionary.co.uk/browse.aspx?word=principle>

<sup>5</sup> Daci, 2010:109.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.court.gov.cn/zixun-xiangqing-251611.html>

principle of self-defense seems to emerge from the sub-statutes of the articles of law and in selected cases, when recognized, succeeded in guaranteeing the murderer his life.

Furthermore, it must be said that the principle of self-defense has not been taken into account in books or articles describing *The Great Qing Code* or court cases belonging to other collections, except for Alabaster's book entitled 'Notes and Commentary on Chinese criminal law' which mention it in its section on 'excusable homicide'. Nevertheless, no reference is made in this work to the law articles or sub-statutes, but only to a few cases included in the famous *Xing An Hui Lan* (刑案匯覽) collection. So, the cases presented by the author, without supporting articles of law, at the first attempt could simply be considered as isolated cases.

### ***The Great Qing Code: article and sub-statutes***

The main legal code for the Qing dynasty was known as *The Great Qing Code* (*Da Qing Lü*, 大清律例). As can also be understood from the title of the work, the code was composed of two main parts: 436 normal statutes or article (*lǚ* 律) and over 1,000 sub-statutes (*li* 例) that form an intricate body of rules, analogies, exceptions, annotations and cases. While *lǚ*s were immutable and permanent norms; *li*, on the contrary, were selected and summarized from concrete cases that must be revised regularly. Conforming to the principle established by the Qianlong Emperor, *li* should be slightly revised every 5 years and greatly revised every 10 years<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, while the number of *lǚ* is fixed, the articles of *li* increase significantly<sup>8</sup>.

Each *lǚ* gave a fairly detailed description of the circumstances under which, a crime or offence was committed, which is why the judge's task was very simple, he simply had to establish the exact circumstances of the case from the data in his possession and then search within the code for the article that stated the corresponding punishment. Apart from the comments, which merely had an explanatory value, the main meaning was not expressed by the article itself but by the exception. The latter was particularly important for one reason, as the articles were copied from older codes and thus written and promulgated in completely different circumstances, the system of sub-statutes was necessary to cope with a changing society and, above all, tended to be completer and more precise than the articles to which they were attached. It was almost a regular principle in the Qing dynasty that in cases where an article and a sub-statute were both applicable to a given event, the ruling was not based on the article but on the sub-statute, even if this sometimes resulted in a partial or even total modification of the article itself. The *li* were particularly useful in situations not covered by the code. This is also clearly expressed in a section of the Qing dynastic histories known as the *Qingshigao Xingfazhi zhujie* 清史稿刑法志註解, "Legal treatise of the Qing Dynasty" which gives a detailed description of the situation:

If a sub-statute had been available, the article would no longer have been used. Articles in most cases came to be regarded as empty words, while sub-statutes became more and more numerous and fragmentary. Contradictions developed between the earlier and later ones. Sometimes, a sub-statute was used to increase the penalty in the article, or sometimes it was used precisely to annihilate the article. Sometimes an

<sup>7</sup> *Qingshigao Xingfazhi zhujie* 清史稿刑法志一 (Draft History of Qing, The Treatise of Punishments, part 1)

<sup>8</sup> Zhang, Dong, 2017:2.



exemption was formulated in such a way that it could be used on a single occasion. That is why where one exemption was not sufficient, others were added.<sup>9</sup>

Consequently, in dubious court cases where both the articles of law and the sub-statutes were applicable, the latter having greater legal force and being the only ones, unlike the articles, that present principles of self-defense, it may be inferred that indeed this principle certainly had legal force and if recognized this was actually applied despite not being formally present in the articles of law of the code.

## The Judicial System

Committing any kind of crime brought the offender into a series of procedures that could be short or long depending on the crime. After it was reported to the local *yamen*<sup>10</sup>衙門, an investigation was conducted, and the alleged perpetrator and witnesses were interrogated. The interrogation often involved the practice of torture and at the end of this, the magistrate would consult the code of law and determine a sentence; he would also refer the case to the higher courts, which would review the case and hold further trials. In criminal court cases, and thus involving murder, the process of examining the case was very long and the final judgement often deferred to the decision of the emperor himself.

The judicial system of imperial China, like the governmental system in general, was highly centralized. It was a system in which power was not subject to subdivision and in which the private practice of law was not permitted. Legal cases were examined and transmitted from the lowest to the highest level of the system; the latter operated on four macro-levels, displayed in descending order:

- (a) *Xian* 縣 (districts, roughly 1300) or *zhou* 州 (departments, 150).
- (b) *Fu* 府 (prefectures, 180)
- (c) *Sheng* 省 (provinces, 18)
- (d) Beijing Central Administration.

People, in case of crimes, had to turn to the district magistrate who was in charge of acting on both civil and criminal cases. The magistrate was much more than a judge, he not only conducted hearings and made decisions, but was also in charge of conducting investigations and enquiries to find the guilty parties as well. As a judge of a lower court, however, the magistrate was only authorized to pronounce sentences in minor cases, the penalties of which amounted to flogging or the obligation to wear a yoke. Consequently, in circumstances in which the punishment did not result in simple caning but in a sentence of hard labor, the magistrate had no choice but to pronounce a temporary sentence and pass on all information in his possession to his superiors pending approval. These cases were then reported to the prefecture offices and from there they were simply forwarded to the province where they were judged by legal experts. These experts were called *ancha shi* 按察使 (judicial commissioner) and each province had one in charge of managing legal affairs. These were not only among the most powerful officials in the provinces, but enjoyed a special autonomy granted by the *Xing bu* 刑部 (Board of Punishment). At this point, after the judicial commissioner had examined the case, the defendant and witnesses were taken to the

<sup>9</sup> *The Ch'ing Legal Treatise* cit. in Bodde, Morris 1967: 67.

<sup>10</sup> Administrative office and/or residence of a local bureaucrat. A *yamen* could also mean any government office or body headed by a mandarin, at any level of government.

provincial court for trial, their presence could also be requested in Beijing for further hearings. However, the judgments issued by the *ancha shi* required confirmation by the governor or the general governor of the province. However, court cases whose conviction amounted to a punishment that was no more serious than the imposition of hard labor were collected and forwarded by the governor general or simple governor to the Ministry of Punishment in Beijing. More serious cases that included murder were sent individually to the Ministry of Justice. The *Xing bu* pronounced the final judgement of all cases except those whose outcome was the death penalty. When the circumstances were so serious as to provide for the death penalty, the final judgement was referred to the decision of a set of even higher-level offices known as the *san fa si* 三法司 (three upper courts), and from there ultimately transmitted to the emperor for final approval.

Table 1. As proposed by Bodde and Morris, here is the exemplified procedure of a court case<sup>11</sup>:

Administrative level	Categories of cases (classified according to punishment)			
	Death Penalty	Exile or Penal Servitude (Homicide included)	Penal Servitude	Punishment of beating
District/ Department	Investigations	Investigations	Investigations	Trial and passing of sentence
Prefecture	Transmission	Transmission	Transmission	Cases are simply reported
Provincial Court	Trial	Trial	Trial	Cases are simply reported
Simple Governor/General Governor	Approval	Approval	Approval	
Ministry of Justice	Revision	Final judgment	Cases are simply reported	
Three upper courts	Final judgment			
Emperor	Judgement approval			

### [Laws Relating to] The Board of Punishments

Given that the court cases that will be considered concern murder cases arising from fights, reference will be made, in this section, to the article and sub-statutes that will be cited by the judges entrusted with the judgement of cases that will be subsequently presented. The analyzed articles of law are included into four chapters of *The Great Qing Code*: chapters IX&X: related to “Homicide” and chapters XI & XIII related to “Affrays and Blows”.

On the assumption that it was almost impossible for a murderer to receive the total redemption, in penal judiciary cases it must be underlined that avoiding the death penalty was the maximum that a culprit could achieve.

The first article under consideration is included in chapter IX and it is 290.1, entitled “Engaging in an Affray [and Killing] of Intentionally killing another” that states:

<sup>11</sup> Bodde, Morris 1967: 116.

290.1: Anyone who, during an affray, strikes and kill another, regardless of whether he has stuck with the hand, or the feet, or with another object or with a metal knife, will be punished with strangulation (with delay)<sup>12</sup>.

At the outset, it seems obvious that the law does not investigate the triggers of the fight and therefore does not examine culpability but only the overall result of the action. Anyone who reacted despite having done so in defense of his or her life will still be punished for taking a life.

But what if a person reacts in defense of a relative? And here a reference to the ninth sub-statutes of the article 290 should be made:

290.09: If a fight breaks out between two families and ends with the death of a person, the murderer shall pay with his life [Article 290]. But if at that time the victim was beating a person who was not a relative of the murderer, the penalty is 100 strokes of a heavy bamboo cane and exile to 3000 *li*<sup>13</sup> away. If the victim was beating a relative of the murderer there is a further reduction of the penalty by one degree: 100 strokes of a bamboo cane and 3 years of penal servitude. The murderer's family will have to pay 20 liang of silver for burial expenses<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, if in a family dispute one person acts in defense of another, the culprit is subjected to mitigating circumstances, in fact the death penalty is not imposed.

In case one defends a person who is not within the mourning degrees<sup>15</sup> and kills the attacker the penalty is reduced by one degree and in the case one acts in defense of a person who is a relative within the mourning degrees the penalty is further reduced by two degrees.

Chapter X includes article 292 entitled “Killing in a Play, Mistaken Killing, unintentional killing or injuring of another” that states:

1: Everyone who, because of play kill or injures another, or, because of being in an affray, by mistakes kills or injures a bystander will, in each case, be sentenced on the basis of killing [art 290] or injuring [art.302] in an affray. If death results, he will be strangled.

3. Anyone who unintentionally kills or injures another will be sentenced as if it were killing or injuring in an affray [art.290]. Redemption will be received according to the law, and the money will be given to the family (of the victim)

[...] In all these cases where initially there was no intention to harm or kill another, but it happened that death or injury was inflicted on another, sentence as is it were killing or wounding in an affray [art.290]. Redemption will be received, according to the law. [This amount] is given to the household of the one who is killed or injured. [This is money for burial or medical treatment]<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Da Qing Lü Li*, 大清律例: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/3635/qingcode00.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Traditional unit of length, equal to 150 *zhang* (市丈), and equivalent to 0.5 kilometre or 0.311 mile.

<sup>14</sup> *Da Qing Lü Li*, 大清律例: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/3635/qingcode00.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> In China, formal mourning at the death of a relative was a fundamental act of social participation, and the actions to be undertaken were prescribed by local custom. In all times and places, Chinese mourning behavior has included a formal recognition of the genealogical distance between the mourner and the deceased and has marked five or more categories of genealogical distance.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

Here it must be considered the term “unintentionally”, that means that which the ear or eye does not extend to, that which contemplation does not attain, for example when shooting wild animals, and unexpectedly killing somebody<sup>17</sup>. So, despite the absence of any criminal intent, the act was still considered a crime.

It seems that whatever happens the law always refers to article 290, even when the circumstances are different the result seems to be the same. In contrast to the cited article 290, however, a new clause appears in the art. 292: “redemption will be received according to the law”. Since an unintentional killing was unexpected, the exact means by the victim died was irrelevant. The magistrate should always evaluate whether it was a situation of that which contemplation does not attain. In the eyes of the judicial organs, the lack of a mental element to the crime seems to be of paramount importance. As a result, monetary redemption of the prescribed punishment was available<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, despite the result of the action a loophole was possible, but this had to be recognized by the courts.

The principle of self-defense appears in the chapter XI. Article 302.7 entitled “Affrays and Blows” is the first one regarding affrays and blows in which the law seems to focus not only on the result of the action but on the initial causes of the action and on the course of the action itself.

Indeed, it states:

7. If, because of an affray, there is mutual striking and injury, then investigate the seriousness of the injuries and affix penalty. The one who strikes subsequently and has reason to [strike] will [have his penalty] reduced two degrees. If death result or in the case where someone strikes an elder brother or sister, or father’s elder or younger brother the punishment will not be reduced [art.318]<sup>19</sup>

Reference is made here to article 318 entitled “Striking superior or elder relatives of the second degree” that also states that for unintentional killing or injuring, in each case the penalty will be reduced from the penalty previously prescribed by two degrees:

[...] As for unintentional killing or injuring, in each case the penalty will be reduced from the penalty for the killing or injuring (of elder brothers and sisters, or the father’s brothers and their wives, or the father’s sisters and maternal grandparents) two degrees. (This case does not fall within the rule of redemption)<sup>20</sup>.

Another article exempting the murderer from the death penalty is 323, entitled “When the father or paternal grandfather is struck [by another]”:

1. When the Father or Paternal Grandfather are Stuck [by another] in every case in which paternal grandparents or parents are stuck by another, and a child immediately [...] aids them and returns the blows (of the offender who act cruelly) [...] If death result, then decide according to the ordinary law. [320]<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Neighbors, 2018: 26.

<sup>18</sup> The fee to redeem the punishment was set at 12.42 taels of silver.

<sup>19</sup> Da Qing Lü Li, 大清律例: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/3635/qingcode00.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

The main article states that in this case, a son or a nephew who intervene in the fight and kill the offender will not be condemned to death.

As the Sub-statutes 323.01 also clarifies even a woman that acts in defense of her husband's in-laws or grandparents who intervenes in a life-threatening situation and kills the offender, will not be sentenced to death and a request for a reduced sentence will be made directly to the emperor and higher courts:

In cases of murder, if one's grandparents or parents of one's husband are beaten by another and are in serious danger of their lives and the wives of their children or grandchildren rescue them and beat the offender to death, in a memorial to the emperor one will state the facts, ask for a reduction and await a response from the imperial court, which will make the final decision. If one's husband's grandparents or parents have a quarrel with another and the wives of their children or grandchildren beat and kill the offender, or if one's husband's grandparents or parents start a fight with a person and the wives of their children or grandchildren arrive immediately after [the start of the quarrel], support them and beat and kill a person, although in accordance with the law, [the woman] is guilty of a crime, having helped or assisted [the husband's relatives] who were in a critical situation will receive a penalty reduction<sup>22</sup>.

From the examples listed above, we can therefore infer that those who in defense and have reason to strike back are in some way considered by the law. In any case, even if initially it seems that anyone who even accidentally kills will have to pay with his life, this is not always true, because of two reasons, the first can be found in the sub-statutes which excludes the death sentence in the case of killing in defense of a person or relative and the second comprehend that clause that states “according to the law redemption will be received” that somehow represents a way out.

### **Two Jiaqing era Penal Cases: The promulgated sentences & the applied articles**

All the penal cases presented took place in the Jiaqing era (1<sup>st</sup> of January 1796 - 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1820) and are included in a compendium entitled: *Qing Jiaqing Chao Xing Ke Ti Ben Shehui Shiliao Ji Kan* 清嘉慶朝刑科題本社會史料輯刊 (Jiaqing era Compendium of historical judiciary cases). The document report 1662 penal cases divided in 13 sections and four of them will be analyzed in this paper.

It should be emphasized that although the period of interest of the analyzed court cases is the Jiaqing period, *The Great Qing Code* remained in force until the collapse of the dynasty, so the researched phenomenon related to the principle of self-defense will certainly be present in court cases from later periods, up to 1911.

#### **Case A: Sichuan province, Anyue district, Mrs. Li Hu, in order to protect her mother-in-law, mortally wounds her husband's cousin**

The first case is related to the murder of Mr. Li Zhikui. It is reported that on 12<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month of 1802, Li Zhikui, without permission, felled a cypress tree on his brother Li Zhiguang's land. Then, a relative of the man, Mrs. Qiu intervened to stop him and was pushed

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

and beaten by him. Finding herself in difficulty, she called for help and Mrs. Li Hu, her daughter-in-law, intervened for fear that the woman would be injured due to her advanced age. At that point, Li Zhikui punched Mrs. Li Hu in the face to persuade her and continued to beat Mrs. Qiu. Then Mrs. Li Hu grabbed a wooden gavel and hit the man in the back; however, in the confusion of the moment she struck him in the nape causing injuries that killed him four days later. Mrs. Li Hu claims that she only intervened to rescue the woman and that it was not her intention to kill the victim.

The sentence issued by the judge in charge of the case, Minister Dong Gao, is very significant for our purpose: in the first line of the sentence, he already shows himself in favour of leniency by calling Mrs. Li Hu “a woman with a compassionate spirit”.

This minister and others, in agreement with the judicial commissioner and the imperial court of justice, met and examined the case of the Anyue district whereby Mrs. Li Hu, with a compassionate spirit, to rescue her mother-in-law injured Mr. Li Zhikui who at the end died.

On the basis of what has been previously reported and in consultation with the superintendence bodies, Ms. Li Hu in accordance with the law [for those who] in a fight beat and kill a man, disregarding accomplices, motive and the murder weapon, has to be condemned to death by strangulation with delay, [however,] having examined the sub-statutes of the law relating to murder cases, for relatives who are beaten and injured and in actual fact are involved in circumstances that are dangerous [to their own safety], the children or grandchildren of these who intervene in their rescue and beat and kill a person [for these reasons], according to imperial decree, and in accordance with the sub-statutes of law describing two [similar] circumstances, [are remanded] to trial and must await the decision of the imperial court<sup>23</sup>.

Although the sentence in its first part refers to the Article 290 by stating that “in accordance with the law [those who] in a fight beat and kill a man, has to be condemned to death by strangulation”; the minister goes on stating that in accordance with some sub-statutes, the sentence will be submitted to the higher courts for a review of the case and a confirmation of the sentence as provided in the sub-statute 323.1 concerning those who intervene in a fight and kill the one who is beating their relatives.

As also ascribed to the sub-statute itself, Minister Dong Gao also present an official document that was later be submitted to the high courts of justice, in which he proposed reducing the punishment to one hundred strokes of a heavy bamboo cane and exile to 3,000 *li* of distance; however, according to the law, married women can obtain redemption behind the payment of a sum.

A note at the end of the document states the final conclusion of Minister Dong Gao, pending further confirmation by the higher courts of justice. Although there is no official confirmation at the end of the document, the sentence is likely to stand and Ms. Li Hu therefore pardoned and obliged to pay a sum of money for redemption.

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<sup>23</sup> *Qing Jiaqing Chao Xingke Tiben Shihui Shiliao Jikan*, 清嘉庆朝刑科题本社会史料辑刊: 33.

## Case B: Guangdong Province, Qujiang District, Lady Zhu Jiang mortally wounds her husband Zhu Jianke

The third case concerns the murder of Zhu Jianke who was assassinated by his wife, Mrs. Zhu Jiang, who fatally wounded him in defense of his mother. According to the witnesses' testimonies we know that in the year 1809 Mrs. Zhu Jiang's husband, Mr. Zhu Jianke, is out of money and asks his wife to return to her mother's home to beg for a loan of twenty-seven garments to pawn, with the promise that he would redeem and return them right after the first rice harvest of the season. Despite the promise, the man spends all the money on wine and does not redeem the clothes from the pawnshop. Sometime later his mother-in-law demands the return of the clothes and when her daughter goes to her husband to make the request, he strikes her drunk in response. Mrs. Zhu Jiang then goes back to her mother's, explains what happened and fearing to return home and be beaten again, stays overnight. The mother, Mrs. Jiang Xie, calms her daughter down by saying that she will talk to her husband the next day. The next day then Mrs. Jiang Xie goes to her son-in-law to get back what was due to her but is blocked and beaten by the man. At this moment Mrs. Zhu Jiang arrives and tries to release her mother but is beaten herself. Desperate and thinking that her mother might somehow be mortally wounded she grabs an axe in an attempt to frighten her husband and stop him, but this does not happen and the man undaunted continues to fight and beat both women. At this point Mrs. Zhu Jiang throws one last gash and hits her husband in the wrist, severely injuring him and preventing him from continuing the fight. The injuries are so serious that the man dies soon afterwards.

Minister Han Feng, in charge of the case, in his final review states:

According to the law, if a wife beats her husband and causes his death, she must be beheaded with immediate effect. [...] Mrs Jiang Xie being the mother-in-law of Zhu Jiangke, is considered to be a relative of the fifth degree of mourning, the lady therefore in accordance with the law concerning elders or superiors outside the marriage who beat a young man or inferior and injure him, [is judged according to the common penalty, but since the degree of kinship is so slight] the said young man is considered a common person and the penalty is reduced by one degree, for injuring a person there are 80 strokes of heavy bamboo cane and two years of hard labor, reduced by one degree there are 70 strokes of heavy bamboo cane and one and a half years of hard labour, but a married woman according to the law receives redemption. [...]<sup>24</sup>

In this case the judge does not consider the self-defense of a relative at all, and in relation to Mrs. Zhu Jiang he applies article 315<sup>25</sup>, sentencing her to death by beheading with immediate effect.

Whereas in respect of Mrs. Jiang Xie he applies Article 290 by initially sentencing her to flogging with a heavy bamboo cane. Even though the circumstances are similar to those of the first case presented and despite the fact that Mrs. Zhu Jiang acts solely and exclusively to save her mother, that is elderly and in difficulty, the judge does not consider in anyway the extenuating circumstances or other articles of law and convicted the two women.

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<sup>24</sup> Ivi, 1065.

<sup>25</sup> Entitled: A Wife or Concubine Striking a Husband.



Therefore, despite the nature of the events the final judgement was unequivocally linked to the judgement of the minister in charge of the examination, who had the freedom to apply any article of the code, sometimes disregarding certain complex aspects of the events presented. In both court cases, some intervened in defense of a relative but not everyone received fair and balanced treatment.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there is no right of self-defense, but its principles can be found in various sub-statutes of the articles of the code. These principles had to be recognized by the court in order to be taken into account, and this could depend on a series of factors, such as the presence of witnesses or the willingness and competence of the minister in charge of the case. Thus, considering the cases in which corruption obstructs justice and those in which the examination of cases is entrusted to less experienced or precise magistrates, it is evident that even in similar trials (A-B), the principle of self-defense is not always recognized and the perpetrator, despite having acted for a right purpose, is still sentenced to death. Therefore, although there are traces of a law on self-defense that will only see its official recognition in the modern era, it is evident that in late imperial China, citizens acting in self-defense, due to the lack of clarity of the code, are suspended between law and justice.

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## ***Practical Exploration: Research Into the Strategies, Core Content, and Implementation of Transmedia Narrative Communication by the Palace Museum***

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### **Abstract**

This research focuses on the strategies and practices of the Palace Museum in relation to its use of transmedia narratives (2013-2021). Specifically, in 2014, the Palace Museum published a post on its WeChat account titled "Yongzheng: I feel cute about myself" (an emperor in the Qing dynasty). The post altered a portrait of the emperor in an amusing manner. This marked the first of many instances in which the Palace Museum tried to imbue historical characters with new personalities and storylines through transmedia channels to render them more attractive and acceptable to the public and young audiences in particular. Following this post, the Palace Museum has launched 12 main channels and more than 41 projects to create and enhance its transmedia media mothership. Its outcomes and achievements in this regard are readily apparent. The Palace Museum and its transmedia narrative practices have forged a powerful connection between the past and the present, individuals and grand history, traditional aesthetics and modern design, reality and fiction, and offline and online. This article will take the Palace Museum's case as an example to demonstrate how it created a sufficiently encompassing mothership. To do so, it will delineate the museum's transmedia ecosystem, analyze how it strategically customized different storylines according to various channels and presented those aspects in a manner that audiences could react to and interact with, and also detail its achievements. Finally, recommendations will be forward for the Palace Museum's future development.

**Keywords:** Palace Museum, Transmedia Narrative, Transmedia Storytelling, Communication Strategies, Marketing Communication, Digital Marketing, Forbidden City

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## Introduction

When the first movie in the original Star Wars trilogy was released in 1977 by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, China had not yet started its opening up and reform. Over the past 35 years, Star Wars and similar universes, such as those created around DC and Marvel, can be considered excellent examples of effective and engaging transmedia storytelling practices. However, at present, there is nothing similar produced by a PRC brand or organization. Until Palace Museum began to engage in transmedia storytelling in 2014, no entity had conducted strategic and sustained storytelling on such a large scale. In this context, due to the lack of examples, transmedia narrative theories have not been articulated, cited, or treated seriously in academia and business. Academics wish to research the Palace Museum's practices relating to content marketing, integrated marketing communication, and intellectual property development domains. However, adopting these analytical lenses run the risk of ignoring the primary practical reason: the success of a comprehensive transmedia narrative.

It is encouraging to note that with the increasing popularity of typical American universe storytelling strategies and the proliferation of mobile communication channels, there are an increasing number of remarkable practices carried out by organizations in mainland China. Transmedia storytelling skills have been elevated into an essential communication capacity for entities. As a result, more distinctive and exemplary universes referring to original Chinese culture are being created and are progressively employed for business or other purposes. The trend and phenomena of the Palace Museum's transmedia narrative strategies not only constitute a well-accepted pioneering model by the public but also are an example of a successful business collaboration or intellectual property authorized method that other entities can learn from.

## Literature Review and Conceptualization

By reviewing the limited literature available on the Forbidden Palace in the relevant domains, it can be seen that scholars have tended to focus on the Palace Museum's content or digital media marketing strategy, integrated marketing communication, consumer satisfaction with cultural and creative products, and estimations of its intellectual property. Song Qing (2018) traced back the Palace Museum's actions to understand why it was becoming increasingly popular. Elsewhere, Xie Xiaotong (2018) deployed critical word narrative theory to conduct their research, mainly focusing on content marketing analysis. Li Jiayi (2020) and his collaborators offered an explanation from the perspective of integrated marketing strategies. Specifically, they discussed the advantages of the relevant theories in understanding consumers and the use of vertical and horizontal integration to maximize exposure, develop excellent products, and create purchasing opportunities for the public.

It appears that the existing research has studied the whole process: To improve the tourist destination's attraction, the Palace Museum devised the initial ideas; To unlock the economic value of traditional Chinese cultural resources, it engaged in intellectual property development; To promote and advertise its cultural and creative products, it conducted transmedia communication campaigns and promoted content distribution. All of these behaviors worked effectively and efficiently. The Palace Museum has enjoyed success both financially and in terms of elevating its reputation. However, besides these wonderful theories and their application, such analysis is missing the most salient point.

Here I will analyze the Palace Museum's use of typical transmedia narrative theories. These are the most practical and helpful concepts that can be used to build a fundamental understanding of the museum and discern the radical reasons behind its success.

Much academic attention has been devoted to discussing how transmedia narratives can be employed in the promotion of tourist attractions (Ligia-Andreea Popa. 2017), especially in the contemporary digital era. Initially, the Palace Museum launched promotional campaigns to attract more individuals to engage with the historical and national representative landmarks and cultural heritage. Moreover, when the stories and characters were abstracted from the Forbidden City, they became unstoppable, which led to the co-creation of an entire world through collective intelligence (Lévy, P. 1997). In essence, these co-creations were a kind of spontaneous participation by the audience and consumers, driven by their interests. Additionally, the corporations in relevant domains invested their resources to broaden the reach of the trend for business purposes.

According to the keywords related to transmedia storytelling articulated by Henry Jenkins, the vital elements are unified, coordinated entertainment experiences (a core story and separate storylines), story extensions usually across different distribution channels, and collective intelligent contributions that refer to the audience (Jenkins, 2007). From this, a framework can be constructed to analyze transmedia storytelling practices. Meanwhile, Henry Jenkins' seven principles aid us in understanding the core concepts of transmedia storytelling. Chapters 3 and 4 of the book *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins, 2008) set out a valuable template from which the storytelling ecosystem and grassroots creative participation can be abstracted.

Drawing on the transmedia storytelling theory detailed above, the following research questions are put forward for further investigation.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the Palace Museum customize its storylines to frame a holistic transmedia narrative? How does it structure the storytelling mothership?
2. How does the Palace Museum utilize different channels to distribute appropriate content? What is the effect of new technological channels on transmedia storytelling?
3. What are the reactions from and interactions with the audience? How do they participate in this narrative process? What are their contributions and influences?

### **Discussions**

The most challenging aspect of crafting the core Palace Museum stories is that they lack a unifying, centralized storyline. The Forbidden City is another name for the Palace Museum. It was built in the Ming dynasty in 1406, housing 24 emperors, uncountable imperial concubines and eunuchs, and other working staff over its lifetime. Understandably, many influential historical events took place, some of which have historically been depicted in a dreary or unengaging manner. The story materials seem too rich and detailed to be conveyed in a proper manner. Additionally, the characters are too numerous and unmemorable to be mentioned.

The most remarkable actions and activities mainly took place once Mr. Shan Jixiao was in the position of the chief curator (between January 2012 and April 2019) of the Palace Museum.

In 2014, the Palace Museum published a post on its WeChat account (Forbidden City Taobao WeChat Official Account, the earliest public communication official account on the WeChat platform established in 2013, specializing in cultural and creative products promotion) named "Yongzheng: I Feel Cute about Myself." The post altered a portrait of the emperor in an amusing manner. This was one of the initial steps in which, across several storylines, the Museum Palace tried to imbue historical characters with new personalities, thus making them more attractive and acceptable to today's audience and consumers, especially younger generations. The post soon went viral, reaching 780,000 views in 5 days (The Beijing News, 2014).



Figures 1 & 2: Yongzheng: I Feel Cute about Myself (2014)

Emperor Yongzheng (1678-1735) was one of the key figures in the Qing Dynasty. He worked with his father and son to create a golden age in Chinese history. Moreover, he was famous as a winner of "Nine Princes Vying for the Throne" and was known to be a workaholic. His reputation and impression had nothing relevant to the word "cute." The new personal characteristics and interpretation of his role by the Palace Museum contrasted sharply with historical facts, laying the foundations for a viral sensation. This success was later replicated in the following years, such as with a creative H5 post on WeChat Moments, "Visiting you through the Forbidden City" (2016, Emperor Zhudi 1360-1424, Ming Dynasty). The innovative method constituted a creative solution to a tricky problem. If history itself was deemed to be too boring, the Palace Museum could create a fantastic fiction to replace the factual one with a narrative that is more attractive to modern audiences.





Figure 3: Creative H5 post: Visiting You Through the Forbidden City (2016)



Figure 4: Documentary Series: Master in Forbidden City

Another essential storyline is "Modern Experts and the Forbidden City." It started with a documentary called "Master in Forbidden City" (2016; the title can be directly translated from Chinese to English as "I am repairing cultural relics in the Forbidden City"). Compared to previous documentaries, this groundbreaking historical documentary was told through the eyes of the cultural relic restorers working in the Palace Museum. The viewer could learn knowledge from real experts, as opposed to merely following a monotonous voice-over commentary. As a result of the documentary, previously unknown experts became new power influencers on social media. The series featuring these professionals include *I Have Been in The Forbidden City for Six Hundred Years* (2020), and *I Am Repairing Clocks at The Mountain Resort* (2021), where the experts from the Palace Museum went to another

vital museum in Hebei to help them repair cultural relics. All these documentaries gained a highly positive reputation amongst the Chinese public.



Figures 5, 6, and 7: Mascot: Cats of the Forbidden City (Started the design in 2015)



Figure 8: Comic and Animation: Echo of the Forbidden City (2018-2019)

Later, the Palace Museum hosted a variety show called New Products of the Forbidden City (2018, 2019, 2020). The show introduced cultural and creative products from the joint perspectives of cultural relic experts and merchandise designers. Notably, it also introduced the design and narrative of the Forbidden City Cats to serve as its official T-mall store mascots. The cats had their own separate picture books and peripheral products. Additionally, the Palace Museum had comics called Echo of the Forbidden City (2018-2019) aimed at a different age group audience. This series of comics expanded another storyline about the migration of cultural relics from the Forbidden City during the Second World War.

Since the Palace Museum launched its Weibo official account in 2012, it has gone on to utilize a broad range of channels to create and disseminate its narrative, which can be considered a typical new digital media application case. The following table details the main narrative channels and touch points relating to the Palace Museum.

Table 1: The Palace Museum Transmedia Narrative Channels, Projects, and Contents

S/N (I)	Channels	S/N (II)	Projects	Contents
1	Official Website	1	<a href="https://www.dpm.org.cn/(2001)">https://www.dpm.org.cn/(2001)</a> , and the Forbidden City Wallpaper Section from <a href="http://www.dpm.org.cn">www.dpm.org.cn</a>	The online main entry of the Palace Museum includes maps, 3D exhibitions, digital collections, special exhibitions, news and posts, an online ticket office, tourist guidelines, a VR application, and photos. The famous wallpaper section offers beautiful pictures of views, buildings, collections, drawings, etc., free of charge.
		2	Palace Museum Youth Website <a href="http://young.dpm.org.cn/">http://young.dpm.org.cn/</a> (2015)	An official platform website for children and young people, including news, tour guidance, multiple-media content, and web games. Visitors can play web games, including The Ridge Beast of Taihe Hall, Palace Gate Pass, Emperor of Ming Dynasty, and Prince's Schedule.
2	Apps for Apple and Android App Store	3	Yin Zhen's beauty painting (2013)	An online exhibition of a famous painting
		4	The auspiciousness of the Forbidden City (2014)	Auspicious patterns and stories
		5	A Day of an Emperor (2014)	Designed for children of 9-11 ages, featuring interesting and interactive stories, and knowledge about emperors
		6	Han Xizhi's banquet painting (2015)	An online exhibition of a famous painting with experts' interpretations in both audio and video
		7	Daily Forbidden City (2015)	Carefully selects one piece from the 1.86-million-piece collection every day and sends it to the app
		8	Ceramics of Palace Museum (2015)	An online exhibition collection of ceramics
		9	Imperial costume in Qing Dynasty (2015)	Dynamic and static emperor costume displays
		10	The Forbidden City Exhibition (2015)	Online exhibition viewing and offline exhibition information queries
		11	Forbidden City Community (2017)	11 forms of content, such as news, collections, and cultural innovation, integrated with more than 10 types of cultural resources and service forms of the Forbidden City
3	WeChat Official Account, WeChat Video Account & WeChat Applet	12	Digital Forbidden City (2020, WeChat applet)	The main mobile entry of the Palace Museum includes maps, 3D exhibitions, digital collections, special exhibitions, news and posts, an online ticket office, tourist guidelines, and photos
		13	Micro Palace Museum (2014)	Palace Museum's official information publishing platform links its WeChat Official Video Account, panoramic view, exhibitions, creative products, WeChat store, and other web or H5 mobile games together. Compared to the Forbidden City Taobao WeChat Official Account, it focuses more on general information and services.
		14	WeChat Official Video Account (2020)	Video clips and helpful services relating to the Palace Museum include live streaming and links for purchasing tickets and accessing maps, tourist information, and relics in the digital Palace Museum. Videos include general introductions, specialist tour guides, relic/building/historical character introductions, special videos for traditional festivals, clips from documentaries, other Palace Museum interactive platform recommendations, etc.

		15	Forbidden City Taobao WeChat Official Account (2013)	First established as a WeChat official account for the Palace Museum's self-operated shop Taobao for relevant contents. It now contains links to the self-operated WeChat shop and offline consumer experience stores. Popular posts (more than 100,000 views) such as, Yongzheng: I feel cute about myself (2014) How did she cut off her long hair step by step (2015) H5: Visiting You Through the Forbidden City (2016) How did I kill chatting (2017) H5: "I received a WeChat from your mother" (2017) "Play around the Forbidden City" applet (2018) The Forbidden City has launched a new lipstick (2018) Long wait! The Forbidden City original cosmetics! (2018) Forbidden City, the first snow has come (2020), etc.
		16	Gifts from Forbidden City WeChat Store (2019, WeChat applet-based)	A mobile e-commerce store on the WeChat platform. Offers complete e-commercial functions, much like other e-commercial stores
		17	Forbidden City: Pocketable Palace Craftsmen (2019, a WeChat applet-based game)	Palace Museum and Tencent created a WeChat applet-based mobile game. It belongs to a project called Tencent Dream Catcher.
4	Tok-Tok Official Account	18	Show You the Forbidden City (2020)	Videos and live streaming of the Forbidden City relating to the ancient buildings, experts, exhibitions, relics, traditional cultures, and views. It has more than 1,060,000 followers.
5	Little Red Book Official Accounts	19	The Culture and Creativity Hall of Palace Museum (2018)	These four official accounts are used for information pushing (articles, videos, pictures), live streaming, product display, customer experience building, and product recommendations. The online store and private accounts are operated by staff from the Palace Museum and are used for promoting the relevant content. The Culture and Creativity Hall of the Palace Museum account provides integrated information among these official accounts. The others' primary function is as an online store
		20	New Products to the Forbidden City (2021, Cultural and Creative Shop)	
		21	Gifts from The Forbidden City (2022, Cultural and Creative Shop)	
		22	The Culture of the Forbidden City (2021, Cultural and Creative Shop)	
6	Weibo Official Account	23	The Palace Museum (2012)	A public one-site information service platform with more than 10,030,000 followers. It provides posts, articles, videos, live streaming, articles, photos, and super topics
		24	The Official Flagship Store of Palace Museum ( 2015 )	Initially designed to be the Palace Museum's product recommendation platform, it also shares cultural information publishing function (posts, articles, videos, live streaming, photos)
7	Television Variety Show on Provincial Satellite TV & Online Streaming Media Platforms	25	New Products to the Forbidden City (2018, 2019, 2020)	Guests and designers joined hands with experts on cultural relics of the Forbidden City to develop new artistic and creative products
8	Documentaries on CCTV Channels, Provincial	26	Master in Forbidden City (AKA: I am repairing cultural relics in the Forbidden City) (2016)	Documentary series featuring modern experts and the Forbidden City

	Satellite TV, and Online Streaming Media Platforms	27	I have been in the Forbidden City for six hundred years (2020)	
		28	I am repairing clocks at the Mountain Resort (2021)	
		29	When the Louvre meets the Forbidden City (2010)	Other Documentaries Subjects
		30	The Palace Museum 100 (2012)	
		31	The Emperor's Secret Gardens (2012)	
		32	New events in the Forbidden City (2017)	
		33	National Treasure Archives: Exploring the Forbidden City ( 2017 )	
		34	The Forbidden City (2021), etc.	
9	Animation and Comic Websites	35	Echo of the Forbidden City (2018-2019)	A comic receiving 1.6 billion views on Palace Museum's official website and Tencent comics, which has since been developed into an animation documentary
10	Official Online Stores of Palace Museum on E-commerce Platforms	36	Cultural and Creative Products' Flagship Store of Palace Museum (2016, T-mall)	For selling all kinds of exclusive creative and authorized products. Palace Museum launches different e-commercial shops for various purposes, such as a publication store for books and creative printing products. Others focus on cosmetics, daily necessities, or creative goods.
		37	Stationery Flagship Store of Palace Museum (2019, T-mall)	
		38	Palace Museum Taobao & Gifts from Palace Museum (2008, Taobao)	
		39	Publication Flagship Store of Palace Museum (2016, Taobao)	
		Other e-commercial platforms like JingDong, Pinduoduo, etc.		
11	A Special Physical Museum Store in the Forbidden City	40	Cultural and Creative Experience Hall of the Palace Museum (2015)	To sell all categories of cultural and creative products on-site; also linked with online stores
12	A Physical Digital Site for Exhibiting Collections and Stories in the Forbidden City	41	Digital Museum of Palace Museum (2015)	Includes digital models, digital Stereo 3D maps, digital brushes, digital ink, etc., to enhance the visitors' digital experiences.

We can summarize the main structure of the Palace Museum's core stories as follows: 1) The reinterpreted historical roles attract modern audiences; 2) The professional expert heroes are taken from behind the scenes and placed center stage; 3) Original cartoon mascots are designed to represent the modern cultural and creative consumption direction, and 4) Other original comic and animation roles and stories are devised to cultivate a young audience.

Precisely speaking, to clarify the third point, cultural and creative product development and consumption direction's new ideas had better be discovered from historical lifestyles, traditional culture, ritual occasions, or pieces of interesting famous ancient relics. Much like the Palace Cat, the mascots' original idea came from the use of working cats to avoid mice infestation in the Forbidden City. These cats were found in many formal documents from the Palace in the Ming Dynasty, as well as in paintings by Palace painters produced during that time. Even today, the staff of the Palace Museum still keep cats for the same purpose. The Palace Museum names them, feeds them, “Traps Neuters, and Returns” them, and ensures they are in good working condition. For visitors, audiences, and consumers, the appearance of such a cute creature in the tightly managed museum is inappropriate and provides a point of excitement. This is only an example to explain cultural and creative product development thoughts. Of course, the products created by the museum are not only limited to cartoon mascots. They contain many categories: dolls, stationery, cosmetics, accessories, clothing, and publications, to name but a few. Such a broad range of products is offered to create more purchasing opportunities and hot-selling products. They tactically follow the design philosophy: absorb interesting cultural snippets from the Palace Museum, identify a connection with potential consumers, and cater to them in cultural and creative ways. These innovations and creations come from the people, things, and objects relating to the Palace.

Separately, one product cannot convey a complex historical story; it is only a tiny clip of the Palace lifestyle. However, when they are combined into a comprehensive narrative, or when a consumer seeks out the background stories hidden from sight, they will be attracted to journey through the Palace universe.

For the fourth point, other original comic and animation aspects. I consider this to be a trial for engaging with younger audiences. This 12-chapter short-length cartoon received 1.6 billion visits (from its time of publication to 27 September 2019) (Game Industry Website, 2019). Since then, no new comic or animation project has been launched. Instead, many web games, mobile apps, and hand-drawn introduction articles for entertainment and education are continually developed on the Palace Museum's official youth website. Compared to other content that is effectively produced and operated by Palace Museum, serialized cartoons need more creative effort invested in them. It should also be noted that more time may be required to mature in this area, which is why the Palace Museum stopped investing.

Strategically, these four pillar storylines technologically attend to the various demands of fun sharing, specialists' interpretation, influencer-driven, consumption orientation, selective media preference, and content perception habits, which be applied on all-round occasions to serve audiences from all age groups. Unlike integrated marketing skills, its most notable aspects were based on the excellent set of core transmedia storytelling content, which then allowed for the integration of transmedia distribution capacity. The mothership of these stories was developed in a consistent, comprehensive, and integrated manner. Meanwhile, the stories and branches are variable, adaptive, and unique. Together, they carefully guide the public's overall impression of the Palace Museum.

An abundance of narrative content is shared across the various channels, referring to various information-consuming scenes technologically distributed to the audience. Customized content for audience segmentation is utilized to provide customers with an immersive experience. At the same time, the media habits of different generations can be effectively attended to. For example, seniors can watch TV and enjoy the physical exhibition and shopping experience; those individuals who grew up in the 80s & 90s can access the website, official WeChat account, and posts, or even scroll through Tik-Tok, Weibo, and Little Red Book; children can enjoy web games and apps, which are both educational and entertaining. Due to the diverse range of channels available, individuals can choose their favorite channels, through which they can experience different stories and create unique and personal experiences. The cumulative effect is that users can build their own Forbidden Palace world based on their own interpretation.

From the audience's perspective, engagement with the Forbidden City did not solely come from the strategies implemented by the Palace Museum; undoubtedly, the Palace Museum benefited greatly from the cultural trend of Qing dynasty dramas set in the Forbidden City. Since 2011, there had been a flurry of palace dramas, such as *Palace: The Lock Heart Jade* (2011), *Scarlet Heart* (2011), *Empresses in the Palace* (2011), *Palace 2: The Lock Bead Curtain* (2012), *Palace 3: The Lost Daughter* (2014), *Story of Yanxi Palace* (2018), *Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace* (2018), all of which had enjoyed immense success on satellite TV and online streaming channels. By reviewing the timeline shown in the above table, it can be concluded that the triumphant narrative of the Palace Museum coincided with the increased interest in Qing dynasty palace culture. The upsurge trend of Qing Palace Drama in 2011 laid a solid foundation of cultural acceptance for the Palace Museum to then leverage and build upon. The dramas produced and broadcasted in the following years helped to maintain the public's interest and educate them on Chinese history.

What about the audience and consumers' interactions and reactions?

To begin with, consumption of the Palace Museum's well-designed cultural and creative products stimulated interest in its collections. Merchandise could be bought for themselves, family members, and friends, who can then collectively share and showcase their cultural tastes offline or on online social media. Specifically, their consumption demonstrated their support and promoted communication of the narrative content.

Moreover, feedback and participation were essential: many channels created a space for comments and feedback, such as the e-commerce website's product feedback board and the comment sections below the streaming media website documentaries and variety shows. Other key tools for discussion and interaction are the one-site information platform Weibo and WeChat official accounts. The forwards, likes, and comments showed the users' interests, concerns, and engagement, thereby expanding the connection between the audiences and consumers and providing opportunities to motivate each other through their positive or negative words.

Ultimately, consumers evolved into prosumers (a concept coined by Alvin Toffler in 1980 to describe an individual's consumption and production behaviors). Returning to the point that the Palace Museum is a famous travel destination in China, there are numerous ways for tourists to engage with the museum online and offline, producing unique, rich media content that can be shared on various social media platforms. For example, when cosplaying as emperors, queens, princesses, and princes, many costume photos and videos are produced

and shared for fun. Meanwhile, regardless of which influencers or ordinary people made such content, they all helped to sustain and share the narrative. It is easy for an individual to create their own story and imagine themselves as part of the fictional history that can be merged into the Palace's magnificent narrative.

## **Recommendations**

According to my observations, there are two main weak points in storyline creation and audience engagement that the Palace Museum should work to improve.

Firstly, the mothership of the main stories seems more like a corner from a shared story world. The Palace Museum has given the same historical characters different interpretations and personalities, such as the cute Yongzheng, and created cartoon roles to improve original stories. However, there are very few roles formed initially and exclusively, such as Superman and Batman in the DC universe or DreamWorks' Kung Fu Panda, not to mention the integrated Marvel Cinematic Universe, which features many branches of hero stories. The Palace Museum will take some time to make up the distance with the world-class transmedia narrative pioneers. Only creating more original exclusive characters and core stories can guarantee long-term profits and success going forward.

Secondly, the Palace Museum needs a more powerful and effective audience forum or means of association to engage with the public and increase their participation. The Palace Museum does not have an official platform to bring together and centralize the audience's voice and feedback, which can then be integrated for greater benefits and encourage bottom-up creativity. A bottom-top self-motivated engagement mechanism can be effectively combined with today's professionals, celebrities, media, and new media technological engagement system to elevate the audience's benefits to a higher level. Meanwhile, the positive interactions between fans can constitute a great source of energy and create a satisfying sense of belonging in the community.

## **Conclusions**

The best strategies are adapted from consideration of and reaction to practice. In the past decade, the Palace Museum creatively rode the wave of mobile platforms and expansive multiple-media development. In doing so, it offered new approaches to establishing self-owned intellectual property and developing business value based on historical heritage. At the same time, it merged the latest communication technology and applications with a seminal piece of Chinese culture and promoted the digitalization of the Forbidden City. Most importantly, its transmedia storytelling practice sets an exemplary, successful model that similar entities in China mainland can benefit from studying.

Furthermore, its transmedia narrative practices have developed a powerful connection between the present and the past, individuals and grand history, traditional aesthetics and modern design, reality and fiction, and offline and online. In doing so, it continually engages the audiences to participate in groundbreaking and significant storytelling. The Palace Museum thrives on the connotations of historical heritage, guiding it to go beyond the purpose of education and grow into an indispensable element in people's daily cultural life and entertainment.



We can expect more in terms of its development of core stories, exclusive character creations, and methods used to engage audiences and promote involvement.

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## ***Health Impact Perceived by University Students at Three Sites in Asia: Two Years Into the Pandemic***

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### **Abstract**

Two years since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, education in universities is still being disrupted. Prolonged exposure to the pandemic situation may result in health-related problems for university students. In January 2022, we conducted an online survey in three universities in Bangladesh, Thailand, and Vietnam for a rapid assessment of students' perceived impacts on their health conditions. In total, 159 students from the three sites responded. Data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. A third of the respondents reported that their health condition was impacted, while female students perceived more impact on health than males ( $p < 0.001$ ). Over half of the respondents reported experiencing some stress, while students living in the dormitory had a higher tendency to perceive stress ( $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, students in higher grades tended to have higher perceived stress ( $p < 0.01$ ) and higher perceived worry ( $p < 0.001$ ). There were also significant differences in the level of perceived health impact, stress, and worry for the future among the students from the three sites, probably due to the characteristics of respondents in each site. These findings imply the need to address not only the quality of education but also to improve health support services for students on the campus.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam, Online Class, Pandemic, Impact, Satisfaction

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## Introduction

Countries in Asia were taking the earlier impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, in general, experienced fewer fatalities compared to Europe and the USA (Miyawaki & Tsugawa, 2022). Nevertheless, the extent of the impact on Asian countries varies from country to country. Bangladesh, Thailand, and Vietnam are among the earliest and most affected by COVID-19 countries in Asia. Bangladesh was early affected by the pandemic, while Thailand and Vietnam were relatively successful in containing the pandemic throughout most of 2020 but have been experiencing an uncontrolled resurgent outbreak since April 2021.

The higher education sector of Asian countries has also undergone changes during the transition process to online learning. It must face the same challenges during the pandemic such as online class, digital transformation, social distancing, and lockdown. However, still little is known about the impacts of COVID-19 exposure on health and wellbeing, as well as the academic and daily life of students, and what are the needs to be supported. According to a study conducted in several countries in the Asia Pacific region, university students who are facing online learning challenges and future job opportunities are among the most at-risk group for psychological issues (Jiang et al., 2021). A survey in Thailand has reported that overexposure to COVID-19-related information is associated with the occurrence of psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, and insomnia (Mongkhon et al., 2021). It was reported that job hunting has become very challenging and stressful during the pandemic (Rachaniphorn, 2021).

Thailand's education was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020, creating a transformation process to online education. A study conducted in 2021 on high school students across nine provinces has shown how online learning affects student satisfaction due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kornpitack & Sawmong, 2022). So far, efforts have been put into reforming the learning management impacted by COVID-19 in higher education in Thailand (Joungtrakul et al., 2021; Nuankaew et al., 2021). However, the shreds of evidence about COVID-19 impacts on the university students' health and well-being in Thailand are still limited (Masuyama et al., 2021).

Bangladesh's education sector has introduced lockdown and other measures, including the closure of universities across countries in response to the pandemic. A study about the impacts on the education of dental and medical students has shown challenges such as installing e-learning transformation and introducing new approaches to teach skill practice for health science students (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Another study had shown that the students experienced a high impact on their studies and were concerned with their mental health due to the pandemic (Rahman et al., 2021).

For Vietnam, very few studies have been conducted with regard to the impacts of the pandemic on higher education. A study conducted in 12 universities has shown various challenges and acceptance of online learning in Vietnam amidst the pandemic (Hong & Quoc, 2021; Le et al., 2021). Another study reported that during the pandemic, nearly one-quarter of students were in a negative mood and depression, along with increasing patterns in sleeping time, body weight, and sedentary lifestyle (T. K. Tran et al., 2021).

For investigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic at two years after the outbreak on students' perceived health and campus life well-being, we decided to conduct a preliminary

survey at three top national universities in three countries. Burapha University, established in 1955, has a long history of development and is a large public university in Thailand, hosting about 47,000 students. It has three campuses and 24 faculties including Medicine, Nursing, Public health, Allied health sciences, Education, Management, IT, Sport, Agriculture, etc. The respondents in our study were majorly students of Nursing. Rajshahi University, aka “the Cambridge of the East”, is the second-largest public university in Bangladesh, and one of the top research universities in Bangladesh. It hosts about 38,000 students in twelve faculties including Law, Veterinary, Agriculture, Engineering, Arts, Social science, Fishery, etc. The respondents in our study were majorly students of Science and Engineering. Hanoi National University of Education, established in 1951, is a public university, the largest teachers’ training university in Vietnam. It hosts more than 30,000 students in 25 faculties including Arts, History, Languages, Biology, Chemistry, etc. The respondents in our study were majorly students of Arts.

This paper aims to investigate the impacts of the pandemic on health and wellbeing, and the factors that may associate with as well as the academic and daily life of students. In addition, it investigates the need for support for their students to reduce any impact.

## **Method**

A cross-sectional survey was designed using an online questionnaire using Google forms. The questionnaire included four-level Likert-like questions for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative analysis. The questionnaire was adapted from the questionnaire used in a previous study (H.N. Tran, 2022). Participants were recruited in January 2022 by an announcement to several classes of undergraduate students. The objective of the survey was described on the front page of the questionnaire by clicking on the link provided. It was voluntarily to participate in this study. Participation information was fully anonymous, as no data to identify the person were recorded. We analyzed the data obtained quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS Statistics version 27.0 for Windows (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). Qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis.

## **Results**

### ***Characteristics of respondents***

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondents from each university by gender, enrollment status, year of enrollment, foreign student status, living status, and living place status. There are 78.9% of the respondents are female, and the proportion of female students from Burapha University and Hanoi Education University is higher than male.

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics

Variable	Value	Burapha U (N=68)		Rajshahi U (N=26)		Hanoi Edu U (N=65)		Total (N=159)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	57	83.8%	7	38.9%	52	85.2%	116	78.9%
	Male	11	16.2%	11	61.1%	9	14.8%	31	21.1%
Enrollment status	Undergraduate	57	83.8%	20	76.9%	29	44.6%	106	66.7%
	Master	8	11.8%	6	23.1%	0	0%	14	8.8%
	Doctoral	3	4.4%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1.9%
	Undergrad (OJ)	0	0%	0	0%	36	55.4%	36	22.6%
Year of enrollment	1st year	4	5.9%	6	23.1%	27	41.5%	37	23.3%
	2nd year	12	17.6%	13	50.0%	18	27.7%	43	27.0%
	3rd year	23	33.8%	4	15.4%	18	27.7%	45	28.3%
	4th year	29	42.6%	3	11.5%	2	3.1%	34	21.4%
Foreign student	Foreign student	16	23.5%	3	11.5%	1	1.5%	20	12.6%
	Local student	52	76.5%	23	88.5%	64	98.5%	139	87.4%
Living status	Alone	40	58.8%	10	38.5%	1	1.5%	51	32.1%
	With family	5	7.4%	3	11.5%	56	86.2%	64	40.3%
	With roommate	23	33.8%	13	50.0%	8	12.3%	44	27.7%
Living place	Dormitory	27	39.7%	10	38.5%	2	3.1%	39	24.5%
	Rental	41	60.3%	16	61.5%	8	12.3%	65	40.9%
	Home	0	0%	0	0%	55	84.6%	55	34.6%

Regarding the enrollment status of the respondents, two-thirds of the total number of respondents are undergraduate students. High numbers of undergraduate students came from both Burapha and Rajshahi Universities. At Hanoi Education University, over half of the respondents are with “on-the-job” undergraduate status, who attend university for a degree on a distance learning or non-regular schedule basis. There are some respondents who are graduate students from Burapha and Rajshahi universities. The types of respondents also infer about their daily academic activities. Undergraduate students are the students who enrolled in a four-year bachelor’s course, spending most of the time attending the lecture or practice sessions under the supervision of faculty staff. Graduate students are more likely to be involved in research activities.

Looking at the year of enrollment of respondents, there are more respondents in the 4<sup>th</sup> year and 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Burapha University, while more respondents are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 1<sup>st</sup> year at Rajshahi University. At Hanoi Education University, more students are in the 1<sup>st</sup> year. Since this survey was taken place about two years since the pandemic had been announced, taking together the first and the second-year students, over a half of the respondents were experiencing their academic life fully under the COVID-19 pandemic, which also means that they have not experienced any academic life prior to the pandemic. Referring to the international student status, 12.6% of the respondents were international students, with Burapha University having the highest number of international students among the respondents, who mainly were come from China, Laos, and Cambodia.

Regarding the living status, more than half of the respondents from Burapha live alone, and a third live with roommates. Half of the respondents from Rajshahi live with roommates and over a third live alone. On the contrary, 86.2% of the respondents from Hanoi Education University live with family, probably because many of them are enrolled as on-the-job

students. Regarding the living place, more than half of the respondents from Burapha live in a rental home, while the left lives in a dormitory, as no one lives in their own home. This pattern is similar for respondents from Rajshahi. Of respondents from Hanoi, 84.6% live in their own homes.

### *Perceived impacts on health and campus life well-being*

The perceived impacts of pandemics on certain aspects of students' life are described in Table 2. The four-level Likert ranked from not at all, not so much, some, and a lot. We checked the reliability of this seven-item scale and found that the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.808, the corrected item-total correlation ( $\geq 0.3$ ) for all items, which indicated a good internal consistency.

Table 2. Perceived impacts on seven-item campus life

	Perceived Impact	Not at all		Not so much		Yes, some		Yes, a lot	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Class	26	16.4	27	17	57	35.8	49	30.8
2	Research	50	31.4	46	28.9	45	28.3	18	11.3
3	Foods	42	26.4	73	45.9	31	19.5	13	8.2
4	Life	18	11.3	60	37.7	52	32.7	29	18.2
5	Health	54	34	62	39	31	19.5	12	7.5
6	Stress	21	13.2	55	34.6	51	32.1	32	20.1
7	Worry	10	6.3	41	25.8	57	35.8	51	32.1

For categories of taking class, doing research, food, grocery supply, or health, the 'not at all' level of impact was chosen by the highest number of respondents. However, for taking class, a third of respondents replied with 'a lot impacted'. This phenomenon is interesting since the impacts tend to strongly polarize between no impact at all to a lot of impacts. The respondents reported no impact on research, as most of the respondents chose 'not at all' or 'not so much', which could be explained by the fact that undergraduate students are not yet required to do research work. Table 2 shows that the highest number of respondents chose "some impact" on taking the class and worrying about the future, "no impact" for doing research, and "not so much impact" for food supply, daily life, health, and stress.

Table 3. Perceived impacts on health, stress and worry breakdown by university

Variable	Value	Burapha U (N=68)		Rajshahi U (N=26)		Hanoi Edu U (N=65)		Total (N=159)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Perceived impact on health	Not at all	19	27.9%	19	73.1%	16	24.6%	54	34.0%
	Not so much	20	29.4%	4	15.4%	38	58.5%	62	39.0%
	Yes, some	20	29.4%	3	11.5%	8	12.3%	31	19.5%
	Yes, a lot	9	13.2%	0	0.0%	3	4.6%	12	7.5%
Perceived stress	Not at all	6	8.8%	6	23.1%	9	13.8%	21	13.2%
	Not so much	15	22.1%	4	15.4%	36	55.4%	55	34.6%
	Yes, some	23	33.8%	12	46.2%	16	24.6%	51	32.1%
	Yes, a lot	24	35.3%	4	15.4%	4	6.2%	32	20.1%
Perceived worries	Not at all	4	5.9%	1	3.8%	5	7.7%	10	6.3%
	Not so much	13	19.1%	1	3.8%	27	41.5%	41	25.8%
	Yes, some	20	29.4%	12	46.2%	25	38.5%	57	35.8%
	Yes, a lot	31	45.6%	12	46.2%	8	12.3%	51	32.1%

Table 3 shows the perceived impact on health, perceived stress, and worries of the respondents. In total, over a third of students perceived health impact. Students from Burapha perceived more impact on health, while students from Rajshahi and Hanoi tended to perceive very little impact. Regarding the perceived stress of the respondents, in total, over half of the respondents perceived some degree of stress. More students from Burapha (35.3%) perceived a lot of stress than students from Rajshahi (15.4%) and Hanoi Education University (6.2%), respectively. Regarding the perceived worries for the future of the respondents, in total, 67.9% of respondents perceived some degree of worry. More students from Burapha (45.6%) and Rajshahi (46.2%) perceived a lot of worry than from Hanoi Education University (12.3%), respectively.

Table 4. Spearman correlation between independent and dependent variables

		Health	Stress	Worry for future
University	Rs	-.130	-.357**	-.314**
	P	0.102	0.000	0.000
Undergraduate	Rs	-.106	-.053	-.083
	P	0.240	0.553	0.360
Female	Rs	-.267**	-.117	.036
	P	0.001	0.158	0.663
Year of enrollment	Rs	.066	.292**	.309**
	P	0.407	0.000	0.000
Dormitory	Rs	.058	-.164*	-.089
	P	0.467	0.039	0.262
Impact on taking classes	Rs	.345**	.372**	.312**
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000
Online class satisfaction	Rs	-.235**	-.405**	-.350**
	P	0.003	0.000	0.000
Online class preference	Rs	-.159	-.272*	-.203
	P	0.162	0.015	0.073
Impact on research	Rs	.399**	.309**	.114
	P	0.000	0.000	0.154
Impact on meal & shopping	Rs	.400**	.407**	.204**
	P	0.000	0.000	0.010
Impact on daily life	Rs	.464**	.456**	.394**
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000
Income change	Rs	.190*	.105	-.010
	P	0.016	0.188	0.897
Life plan change	Rs	.252**	.461**	.461**
	P	0.001	0.000	0.000
Foreign student	Rs	.068	-.088	-.059
	P	0.392	0.269	0.459
Access Information	Rs	.035	.081	.033
	P	0.665	0.310	0.677
Impact on health	Rs	1.000	.431**	.261**
	P		0.000	0.001
Stress	Rs	.431**	1.000	.620**
	P	0.000		0.000
Worry for future	Rs	.261**	.620**	1.000
	P	0.001	0.000	

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ;  $N = 159$



To investigate factors that may associate with health-related variables, we performed the Spearman correlation test (Table 4). We found several significant associations among variables. Undergraduate students tended to perceive more stress and worry ( $p < 0.01$ ). Female students might perceive more impact on health than males ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students in the higher years of enrollment might perceive more stress and worry for the future ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students living in dormitory might perceive more stress and worry ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students who perceived more impact on taking class might also perceive more stress and worry ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students who perceived higher satisfaction from online classes might perceive less stress, worry, and health impact ( $p < 0.01$ ). The higher preference for the online class, the less stress perceived ( $p < 0.05$ ). Students who perceived a higher impact on doing research might perceive a higher impact on health and stress ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students who perceived a higher impact on food supply might perceive higher stress, health impact, and worry ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students who perceived a higher impact on daily life might perceive higher stress, health impact, and worry ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students with increased income tended to have a higher impact on health ( $p < 0.05$ ). Students who had changed their life plans tend to have higher stress, worry, and impact on health ( $p < 0.05$ ). The health-related variables including perceived health impact, stress, and worry for the future were strongly correlated each with other ( $p < 0.01$ ). For the variables such as living status, foreign student status, and COVID-19 information access, we found no significant associations with regard to the health impact, stress, and worry for the future.

### ***Qualitative findings on the impacts of the pandemic***

The respondents were asked to explain how their health had been affected by the pandemic. In general, the responses could be grouped into physical health impacts and mental health impacts. Regarding physical health, voices were typically *“I gained weight because of immobility and eating too much”*; *“I suffered headaches and insomnia”*, *“My eyes became bad because of too much looking at the screen”*, and *“I spend most of the time laying on my bed”*, *“Having to wear a mask made breathing difficult and irritated my face”*, *“I can't to exercise at outdoor or gym”*. Regarding mental health issues, respondents mentioned changes in mood, depression, stress, and worry: *“I feel depressed”*, *“I am afraid to become infected, then I may infect my family”*, *“I feel stress all the time, I may have mental health issues”*, *“I became irritated because of too frequent COVID-19 testing”*, *“I have increased stress while studying”*, *“My mental health was affected, I feel lonely”*. Nevertheless, some respondents seemed not to be impacted. *“I am not affected much because the university prepares vaccine for the student”* (a foreign student from China).

Regarding changes in life and worries about the future, responses could be grouped into academic, employment, health, and future life concerns. Regarding academic concerns, some respondents reported that *“By studying online, I don't pay enough attention to study and received bad grades and”*, *“I worry about I will not be able to graduate in time”*. Especially for respondents from Burapha, who are mostly nursing students, their concerns were *“I worry about too little practical skills obtained”*, *“Worry about the experience in the procedure that has to do for the patient”*, and *“About collecting sample data used in my master's research during the pandemic situation”*. Many respondents worried about employment perspective: *“I need job hunting in future because I have responsibility for family in the future”*, *“I worry about how much I learned from studying. Is it enough for my future work?”*, *“No place to work after graduation”*, *“If it continues under this situation, actually, I worry about how hard to find a job and keep wondering if the online class could let us - freshly graduated students apply our knowledge to work effectively”* (a foreign student from Cambodia). Some respondents concern about health: *“I worry about getting infected because it can't help*

*contacting people who are infected”, “I worry about health consequences and my family may become infected”. Overall, there is a notion of the uncertainty of the respondents’ concerns: “No normal life. I worry if this pandemic will prolong till further future, and I won’t be able to visit home without going through many documents” (a foreign student from Cambodia), “I’m worried about my life, I’m not sure for future”, “When will I be able to travel abroad? When will be a normal life without a mask”, “When COVID-19 will out of this world”, “I come from a poor family, my father is gone, my mother is old, I have a lot of responsibility, I am so worried about my future life”, “My marriage could be delayed”, etc.*

The respondents also specified the need for support that they may expect. Many mentioned the need of providing financial support, support in cash allowance, to reduce tuition fees, tuition refund or exemption since the education was mostly online, or to consider increasing scholarship amount according to increased cost of living. *“At this moment, it only appears that money supports are needed in my head. You think, before the pandemic, our electricity fee is stable since we didn’t stay at our room or home at all. But now it’s not the same. Me, as a student, my monthly scholarship salary didn’t change at all, but I have to use all of my own facilities. And I guess university electricity’s consumption, at least decreases, right?”*. Some respondents raised the need for 3<sup>rd</sup> vaccine shot, free masks and alcohol, free tests, equipment, and supplies for the dormitory such as microwave, refrigerator, and instant foods. Besides financial support, the majority of the respondents mentioned their needs for online education infrastructure such as improving internet conditions, providing more online services, lending iPad to students, deliver books and learning materials to students’ homes. The need for providing mental health support was mentioned as well.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the authors investigated the impacts of the pandemic on students’ health as well as other aspects of students’ campus life at three target universities in Asia. It had been conducted two years into the pandemic when the students already had experienced four epidemic waves from 2020 through early 2022, while the new wave was still at its peak. During this two-year period, the students at the target universities studied almost fully online except for about a few months when the campus was open temporarily for classes.

About half of the respondents were in their first and second year and have never experienced before-pandemic university student life. From the quantitative data analysis, the results showed about over a third of the respondents perceived health impact, while respondents from Burapha tended to perceive more health impact, while respondents from Rajshahi and Hanoi tended to perceive very little impact. In total, over half of the respondents perceived stress, as students from Burapha tended to perceive a higher degree of stress, while respondents from Hanoi perceived the least stress. With regards to worries, respondents from Rajshahi tended to worry a lot about future life courses, while respondents from Burapha tended to have academic concerns for practice training. These differences in impacts could be explained by the characteristics of the respondents in each university.

From the correlation test, we found that undergraduate students, students in the higher years of enrollment, and students living in dormitory tended to perceive more stress and worry. Female students might perceive more impact on health than males. Students who perceived more impact on taking class might also perceive more stress and worry. The higher preference for the online class, the less stress is perceived. Students who perceived a higher

impact on food supply and on daily life, and who had changed life plans might perceive higher stress, health impact, and worry.

The respondents were well-informed about the COVID-19 situation but still have various needs. Our study's findings imply the need to provide support to students not only to improve the academic quality of classes, but also to allow more practice classes, and ensure conditions for doing research as required by the study subject. There are also the voices of students for financial support, health support and mental health support, infrastructure, and campus life condition support, along with career support. From these preliminary findings, there may be a need for further investigation on the impacts of the prolonged pandemic and online learning, the factors that may predict the impact of the pandemic on students, and the effects of support in alleviating the impacts of the pandemic.

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***Significance of a King in the South-East Section of the Silk Road  
in the Period Between Ancient and Medieval Times***

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**Abstract**

Along the Silk Road, there were different nations that differed not only ethnically, politically, culturally, but also religiously. Southeast Asia was a very important, both commercial and cultural artery. The route network was connected between countries in the eastern world along the coast of the Asian continental mainland and many associated archipelagos, thus connecting this southeastern part to the west on a wider scale. At first glance, however, quite different worlds were connected culturally – by the religious sphere, by the position of the king, which eliminated differences after both the geographical and ethnic origins of the cultures. The Sacred king combined both material power and spiritual power, and was a guarantee of certainty for that particular society. This position of ruler appears in both Eastern and Western societies, across history. First, I will focus on defining the characteristic features of a sacred king. I characterize these features based on written and material sources in the various areas where this type of king has appeared, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Subsequently, I analyze and apply these features in the Khmer Empire and the Kingdom of Funan.

Keywords: South-East Asian Studies, Silk Road, Sacred King, Khmer Empire, Kingdom of Funan

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## Introduction

The term Silk Road refers to the network of trails and trading posts, oases and cities that connected East Asia with the Mediterranean. The routes led to various points across the Eurasian continent, with one particularly important route, leading to Southeast Asia. The south-eastern part of the Silk Road was an important point of contact between two great civilizations, China and India, and a major channel for East-West trade.

The purpose of this contribution is to analyse the importance of the king in the south-eastern part of the Silk Road in the period between the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. I will first characterize this type of ruler and then indicate in what different cultures we can encounter this type of ruler throughout history. Next, I will draw on primary sources in the form of written records, inscriptions, and selected archaeological sites to identify some of these defined characteristics to identify this sacred king in the setting of Southeast Asia, specifically contemporary Cambodia.

## Characteristics of the sacral king

The history of the sacral king dates to ancient Mesopotamia, a little later this type of ruler appeared in Egypt, on the examples of these two countries, two types of ancient oriental ruler can be defined: the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian. In Egypt, the god had a human form and was incarnated in the king himself – the pharaoh. His main task was to provide crops for the whole country. In Mesopotamia, on the other hand, the king was the son of God, entrusted with the administration of the state. If he displeased the God, another human representative took over his function. The monarch played an important role in the rituals that guaranteed fertility, which is why the role of king and high priest is often combined into one person. The king was still both ruler and priest, but the ruler's duties dominated.

The sacral king should generally maintain justice in the country, and guarantee that the strong should not oppress the weak. He is often depicted fighting the forces of evil. It is his victory that is an affirmation of the good relationship the monarch has with the gods, which he is obliged to uphold to protect society from evil, disaster, and disease. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh wrestles with and defeats the Bull of Heaven; he is further depicted in the epic as the shepherd of Uruk - that is, the shepherd of the people. He was the bearer of magical ruler luck, which he transfers to his people, and there is a measure of sanctity around him. Sometimes it is something completely taboo, and even the ruler could act as a source of supernatural divine energy. According to primary sources I created a characteristics of the sacred king:

1. A) Incarnate God himself in human form; B) Son of a deity C) Descendant of a major genus
2. Religious functions to guarantee a good relationship with the gods
3. Guarantees fertility
4. He is raised/rescued by animals
5. The ruler is entrusted by the heavens to rule
6. It abounds in magical dynastic happiness
7. Maintaining justice
8. Guarantees order
9. Provides protection
10. Fighting the forces of evil



The sacral ruler was the mediator between heaven and earth. He was the guarantor of justice and responsible for the welfare and good relations with the gods. If an individual or an entire community displeased the God, punishment followed. In ancient civilizations, this punishment usually took the form of crop failures, devastating floods, disease, or the danger of enemies. Order and justice changed as societies evolved, and ancient Greece established the first laws, attributed to the 7th century BC Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus. He is credited with forming the first constitution and society of equals in Sparta. Later, this characteristic feature appeared in ancient Rome. Another example of a sacred king can be found in Alexander the Great and his father Philip of Macedon. Alexander was even supposed to be a descendant of the god Heraclius. After the conquest of Egypt, Alexander's power expanded even further and a powerful cult formed around his figure, precisely by the Egyptians, who considered him to be an incarnation of the god Amon. Another eastern nation where the sacredness of the ruler appears are the Scythians and the Wu-suns.

Certain features of the sacral ruler appeared in the Chinese dynasty as early as the first millennium BC. Hou Ji was conceived by the infertile empress Jiang Yaun and the god of heaven. This child was subsequently raised by animals in the forest, where it was also looked after by woodcutters. His mother took him in after some time and he was raised in the royal court where he worked with horses. He was very close to nature, planting beans and grain, and is credited with being the one who encouraged the spread of crop cultivation - hence ensuring fertility.<sup>1</sup>

Another trait of a sacral ruler was maintaining a good relationship with the gods and observing oracular signs. For example, among the Huns, who were closest in character to the Rouran Khaganate, Jordanes, claims that Attila interpreted omens as a sacral king when he saw storks flying away and carrying their young, which presumably meant the imminent downfall of the city. In addition to the western - ancient areas - the mighty empires of Greece and Rome, we can also find a sacral ruler in the east - in modern Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Central Asia and China. In the following section, I would like to discuss the above points of characteristics of a sacral ruler, which I will identify based on primary material sources in a Southeast Asian setting.

### **Influence on south-eastern states**

First, however, I would like to note the influences that affected the south-eastern part of the Silk Roads in the period between the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. A great influence was exercised on the South-Eastern states by their powerful neighbours: China and India. These influences can be seen over the centuries in various ways, commercial, political, cultural, or religious. Significant changes have occurred with the spread and influence of world religions. As far as religion in the region is concerned, the 3rd century was a significant milestone, when Buddhist pilgrims travelled along the southwestern routes to and from the South Asian centres of Buddhist learning, and their numbers gradually increased. Buddhism had a profound influence on the various empires that existed in Asia, such as the Nan-chao Empire, and the Dali Kingdom.

Another important aspect of influence was the trade itself. Throughout Asia, it was linked by a network of sea and land. throughout Asia was linked by a network of sea and land. South-

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<sup>1</sup> Beckwith, Ch. (2011). *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present*. Princeton University Press. (p. 3).

eastern routes were also influenced in this sphere by India and China. However, the possibility of using internal trading channels made Southeast Asia an exceptional area for trade.

## Funan

The influence of India can also be seen in the field of politics, where the appointment of the king itself had an Indian influence in the ancient period, in the establishment of the kingdom of Funan. The kingdom of Funan whose size extended into the states of present-day Southeast Asia was religiously influenced by Hinduism, although the lower social classes worshipped animism and only later adopted Buddhism. An important source for research on the Funan Kingdom and the early Khmer Empire is documented in the History of the Sui. These document that before the 6th century in the Funan Kingdom, a temple dedicated to the spirit of P'o-to-li, to whom human sacrifices were made, was built on top of Ling-chia-po-p'o mountain. Here appears one point of the above characteristic features of the sacred king. The king had to regularly go every year to the temple, which was built on a hill, presumably to be thus nearer to heaven and to the God.<sup>2</sup> By this act the king was most likely to be just mediator between God and men. He went to the temple where he was to offer a human sacrifice. This would fulfil point 2. Religious functions to guarantee a good relationship with the gods. The kingdom of Funan ceased to exist in the 7th century.

## Khmer Empire

In the 9th century, the largest and by then most powerful empire in Southeast Asia was the Khmer Empire. There are several legends associated with the history of this empire, but one is particularly interesting. It is a legend preserved in a 10th century inscription. According to this legend, the kings were supposed to be the descendants of the hermit Kambu Svāyambhuva and the celestial nymph Merā.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the first point in the list of characteristics that can be used to identify a sacred king in the Khmer Empire is point 1b, namely that they are the descendants of the goddess celestial nymph.

Another distinctive feature emerges with the arrival of King Jayavarman II. This king is traditionally associated with the creation and unification of this powerful empire. A special ceremony took place on an elevated hill to symbolize a closer connection with the God, and the site was dedicated to Indra.<sup>4</sup> Through this initiation ceremony, the ruler was handed over his reign. The ruler was entrusted by the heavens to rule through this ceremony, thus fulfilling the characteristic of point 5. The king further became a divine king through the ceremony, i.e. point 1a. His other followers were also incarnated into God himself.

The term used for a sacred king in the Khmer Empire setting is "deravaja". Even the king's initiation ceremony may have established a divine right, as some scholars refer to it. After performing the initiation ceremony, the king was also in charge of all cult matters, thus fulfilling point 2. The historic city of Angkor, founded in the 9th century, was the capital of the Khmer Empire. The city became one of the largest and most cosmopolitan urban areas in the world and a centre of global diplomacy and trade. An important source of historical

<sup>2</sup> Coedes, G. (1968). *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press. (pp. 65-66).

<sup>3</sup> Coedes, G. (1968). *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press. (p. 66).

<sup>4</sup> Diskul, M. C. Subhadradis. (1981). Ancient Kingship in Mainland Southeast Asia. *Kingship In Asia and Early America*: 30. International Congress of Human Sciences In Asia and North Africa. A. L. Basham, Colegio de Mexico. (p. 148).

information about the reign of the king is an inscription from the 11th century Sdok Kok Thom temple.

In ancient Cambodia, the king had not only a privileged position within the cult, but also a social one, in the sense that, according to ancient Chinese sources, they were also treated as archivists, i.e. the writing itself was related to the economic power of the government.<sup>5</sup> This is a similar factor to what we find in other ancient cultures. The history of the sacred king dates back to ancient Mesopotamia, a little later this type of ruler appeared in Egypt, on the examples of these two countries, two types of ancient oriental ruler can be defined: the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian. In Egypt, the god had a human form and was incarnated in the king himself - the pharaoh. His main task was to provide crops for the whole country. In Mesopotamia, on the other hand, the king was the son of God, entrusted with the administration of the state. If he displeased the God, another human representative took over his function. In the rituals that guaranteed fertility (attributes of the plow, the axe...) the ruler played an important role, which is why the role of king and high priest is often combined in one person. The priest (ensi, lugal) served as a mediator between the people and the God. The king was still both ruler and priest, but the ruler's duties dominated. The temple, which played a major role in ritual ceremonies, also collected wealth. All wealth was written down, and by a select social class who oversaw temple affairs, so economic power was important for the temple as well as for keeping the king's role firm. King Jayavarman II became the first universal ruler of Cambodia.<sup>6</sup>

Another important element of my topic is the term linga. It is a facial motif carved in stone. There may have been shrines behind the walls of these statues. It is the materialized fact of worshipping the king as a god.<sup>7</sup> This topic has been the subject of many scholars, whether it is about the origin of worship, whether it is an element of Hinduism or Buddhism, and then what other gods this cult of the king is associated with. For my research, this is important in terms of elevating Cambodian kings to the superhuman equivalent of gods.

## Conclusion

Based on the primary sources I created individual characteristics points of the sacred king that appeared in the ancient Cambodian cultures. The environment of kingdom of Funan and Khmer empire I analyzed and applied these points. Sacred king appeared in both area in the privileged religious positions, his authority was most privileged in his empire.

Analysis of sacred king's

1. The first line is the characteristics at the beginning of the contribution
2. The second line is the Funan Kingdom - the characters that are represented
3. The third line is the characters for the Khmer empire

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	✓								
✓	✓	✓		✓					

<sup>5</sup> Yoffee, Norman, and Bradley L. Crowell, eds. (2006). *Excavating Asian History: Interdisciplinary Studies in Archaeology and History*. University of Arizona Press. (p.315).

<sup>6</sup> Yoffee, Norman, and Bradley L. Crowell, eds. (2006). *Excavating Asian History: Interdisciplinary Studies in Archaeology and History*. University of Arizona Press. (p.315).

<sup>7</sup> Coedes, G. (1968). *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*. University of Hawaii Press. (p. 64).

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***Indigenizing Order and Agency: A Southeast Asian Perspective on the  
‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ and the Rising China***

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**Abstract**

The idea of the ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ (FOIP) widely promoted by a number of major powers represents the evolving, yet competing, order of global politics. In light of these developments, this paper surveys the indigenous thinking of Southeast Asian International Relations (IR) in the context of the FOIP strategies. The main task is to make preliminary inquiries into three broad sets of the ‘local’ Southeast Asian scholarships undertaken by scholars academically domiciled within the region. First, what kinds of regional order have been conceivably established, replaced, or re-instituted amidst contesting power transformations shaped by major powers? Second, against this backdrop, how has the social identity of agency of ASEAN been formed, shared, and endured? Third, how has Southeast Asia actualized its agency to be able to cultivate their strategic positions, despite weaker/smaller actors, in this context? This paper argues that these broad understandings of Southeast Asian IR are enriching a ‘Global IR’ research program by incorporating the study of regions, regionalism, and agency into the pluralism of IR.

Keywords: Order, Agency, Indo-Pacific, Global IR

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## Introduction

Over the past decade, various external powers, namely the United States, the European Union, Australia and Japan, have coined their own strategies in association with the idea of the ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ (FOIP). It is to ensure that the vast maritime space, stretching from the northern Indian Ocean to the Malacca Strait to the South China Sea, are ‘free’ and ‘open’ for all stakeholders to have shared growth and prosperity. Having said that, anxious competitions and fragile hostilities have emerged, forming a central area of maritime geopolitics and geo-economics rivalries (Singh, 2020). While China continues to extend its militarization over the disputed areas of the South China Sea along with the immense projects of the region-wide Belt and Road initiative, Western allies have called for a new strategic alignment for maritime security to counter the rise of China.

From a geopolitical standpoint, Southeast Asia and ASEAN, located in the integral hotspot of the Indo-Pacific competitive architecture, shall need to embrace a strategic adaptation to ensure that the region remains inclusive to all major powers and that the region would enjoy the benefit of its geographical centrality. The idea of a ‘Free’ and ‘Open’ Indo Pacific’ was then included in the regional joint statement in 2019. At the 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, the regional grouping released its official ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), adding another definition of the term into the global discourse. While emphasizing its strategic roles, ASEAN maintains that the region of Indo-Pacific is a region of dialogue, cooperation, development and prosperity for all. AOIP was then to promote inclusiveness among ‘galvanizing forces towards constructive cooperation with and through ASEAN based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual benefits’ (Royal Thai Embassy at Washington D.C., 2020).

How can we make sense of these current strategic endeavors of ASEAN? On the one hand, AOIP was disappointing to many who argue that it could not offer anything beyond an irresponsive and ineffective ASEAN way (Boisseau du Rocher, 2019; J. I. Chong, 2019; Parameswaran, 2019). On the other, it is, in some ways, applauded by many who conceived it as an important institutional breakthrough after years of diplomatic maneuvering among ASEAN members (Anwar, 2020; Hussain, 2019; Pongsudhirak, 2019). The main purpose of this paper is to do a preliminary survey into the ‘indigenous’ Southeast Asian International Relations (IR), done by scholars academically domiciled within the region, in the context of the evolving FOIP strategies. The scope of the paper qualitatively focuses on a selected scholarship produced by a member of a network of strategic studies institutions of ASEAN-ISIS as well as those associated with research and academics institutions such as the Institution of Southeast Asian Studies, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, and the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies in Malaysia. While a transnational network of experts and academics can promote ideas and shape foreign policy and international relations, this paper is based on the notion that they are able to offer a set of knowledge, reflecting the way in which an indigenous scholarship is formed (Katsumata, 2003; Kraft, 2000; Simon, 2002).

Against the backdrop of the emerging trend of pluralism in IR (Acharya & Buzan, 2009; A. Chong, 2007; A. Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009; Compaoré, Martel, & Grant, 2021; Yong-Soo, 2019), this paper examines how the broad understandings of Southeast Asian IR enables ‘Global IR’ research program in three ways. First, what kinds of regional order and institution have been conceivably established, replaced, or re-instituted amidst contesting power transformations shaped by major powers? Second, against this backdrop, how has the social



identity of agency of ASEAN been formed, shared, and endured? Third, how has Southeast Asia actualized its agency to be able to cultivate their strategic positions, despite weaker/smaller actors, in this context? This allows us to comprehend how Southeast Asian contributions to Global IR unfolds.

### **On the Regional Order**

Local contributions to the global order have been widely discussed (Acharya, 2007, 2014a, 2018a; Acharya & Buzan, 2009). When new great powers have risen, we commonly start to think about how international political order should look. What kinds of ordered institutions shall be established, replaced, and/or re-instituted amidst such transformations? What kinds of shared purposes and values have states sought to regulate their relations? These are among the questions that have dominated agendas and debates among scholars of international studies as well as Southeast Asian specialists based in the region. Seeing Southeast Asia as a source of knowledge production, scholars in some ways keep the tradition of having a realist perspective handy and more relevant to the analysis of how international orders look as well as how it shapes the region (A. Chong, 2007; A. Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009).

Over the recent Indo-Pacific discursive struggles, there is an agreement among recent Southeast Asian analysts that the region has undergone two intrinsic, yet challenging, structural transformations: how to retain, if not reconnect, the US strategic involvement; and how to incorporate China's expanding economic, military and political power more favorably to suit the region's needs. According to Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Survey in 2021, China and the US are still viewed as the most influential political and strategic powers in Southeast Asia (Seah, Ha, Martinus, & Thao, 2021). While 49.1 % of the respondents favor of China, the US shares 30.4% of the respondents as the runner-up global influencer. However, while Beijing has a regional trust deficit, most respondents (or 88.6%) see China as the most influential political and strategic power. Meanwhile, China's presence, despite the abundance of economic benefits it may bring, has concerned locals. To illustrate the point, 46.35 % of the respondents perceive that "China is a revisionist power and intends to turn Southeast Asia into its sphere of influence." In a separate question, 31.5% think that "China is gradually taking over the US' role as a regional leader" (Seah et al., 2021, p. 35).

However, a clear and present anxiety in Southeast Asia is not all about China's rise, but locals are also anxious about the accumulating strategic rivalry between the US and China (Perlez, 2018; Pu & Wang, 2018). On the one hand, assertive Chinese militarization in the disputed South China Sea is about to challenge the rules-based multilateral order in the Indo-Pacific region (Seah et al., 2021, pp. 15-17). On the other, the Quad, which was recently revitalized in 2017, actualizes the sensitivity of the escalating geo-maritime competition in Southeast Asia, questioning the relevance of a regional institution like ASEAN as well as the regional inferiority due to power inequality (Beng, 2018; A. Chong & Hamilton-Hart, 2009).

The major power competition not only affects individual state autonomy but also holds the potential to polarize the sub-region (Anwar, 2020; Pongsudhirak, 2012, 2018, 2019 ; Singh, 2020; Sothirak, 2018, 2021; Tan & Korovin, 2015). For example, while it was agreed that ASEAN should and could provide an institutional platform for handling territorial and diplomatic sensitivity in reference to the South China Sea, it was also evident that the challenges structurally lie in the division between the mainland and the maritime states of Southeast Asia. Four maritime states, including Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, are territorial claimants in the dispute. As a consequence, they perceive China as a

growing threat to their sovereignty. In contrast, non-claimant states such as mainland Laos and Cambodia, currently under Chinese political and economic influence, are constrained from utilizing diplomatic tools such as hedging. For instance, these divisions between claimant and non-claimant states spilled over into an ASEAN ministerial meeting in July 2012, which prevented the grouping from issuing a joint communique for the first time since its establishment.

Nevertheless, against the backdrop of the ‘Thucydides’ Trap’ (Allison, 2017), it is Southeast Asia that integrally becomes a part of the very nature of international order which, in tandem, is contingent upon the dynamics of the ‘local’ agency’s trust toward major powers, the availability of the weak powers’ profit-optimization agenda, and the particular arrangement of regional institutional mechanisms. These three phenomena offered by scholars in the region well navigate a ‘reflexive’ and ‘fluid’ order in Southeast Asia.

Despite Chinese President Xi’s pledge to deepen relations with his ASEAN neighbors, China also has a ‘trust deficit’ with Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (Pitakdumrongkit, 2019, p. 55). The sheer number of infrastructure projects (i.e., hydropower dams and a highspeed railway) place Laos as a strategic neighbor that suits China’s interests. However, their relationship seems contentious with a variety of issues. For example, Laos owes an estimated USD5.9 billion in debts, half of which is from China (Macan-Markar, 2021). In addition to a trade deficit, BRI projects in Myanmar are causing environmental deterioration and human rights violations. Amidst rising public awareness since 2011, Myanmar’s Thein Sein government decided to suspend the Myitsone dam, a joint project of China Power Investment and the Myanmar company Asia. At the same time, Nay Phy Daw took an opportunity to resume its decade-long non-alignment by improving its relationship with Washington. Chinese military provocation in the oil rig crisis in the South China Sea, or the East Sea for the Vietnamese, spurred a rising anti-China sentiment (Hiep, 2018). In January 2013, the Philippines decided to bring China before an arbitral tribunal under Article 287 and Annex VII of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The relationship between China and the Philippines deteriorated as Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China visited all ASEAN member states, except the Philippines, in 2013.

However, rising tensions between major powers have not only resulted in tensions and divisions among Southeast Asian states but have also paved the way for adaptive opportunism. For example, Indonesia has exemplified its ability to engage in ‘dynamic equilibrium’ diplomatic strategy through regional cooperation to cope with the rise of China and reduce American domination (Natalegawa, 2018; Sukma, 2012). As a decades-long ally, veteran journalist Kavi Chongkittavorn (2018) suggests that the American version of the Indo-Pacific Strategy coined by Donald Trump was an opportunity for smaller states in Southeast Asia, like Thailand, to resume their status as a leading regional player while preventing the hegemonic influence of China (Chheang, 2018; Pongsudhirak, 2018).

Divergence in how ASEAN members have responded to China’s rise and the US’s ambivalence, it is widely agreed that ASEAN member states are also determined to preserve their institutional centrality in the development of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ architectures and conceptualizes the resistant contour of smaller states against the ‘balance of power’ connotation of the Indo-Pacific strategy (Chongkittavorn, 2017). In practice, some positive outcomes between China and ASEAN with regard to the South China Sea conflict came about in response to the Philippines’ legal challenges in 2013 as well as Thailand’s effective coordination of the role (2012-2015) (Pitakdumrongkit, 2015). Meanwhile, China was

implementing a “strategy of flexible assertiveness in Asia, South China Sea included. Beginning in mid-2017, China took a more forward-leaning approach toward the COC as the Duterte administration was to make light of the 2016 arbitration ruling (Boon, 2018, pp. 118-120). As a result, the Framework of the COC and the Single Draft Negotiating Text (SDNT) were adopted in August 2017 and June 2018, respectively. It can be argued that the regional hegemonic order enforced by China has been contemplated within a social contract that needs secondary states’ consent for its existence (Noor & Rosli, 2018).

The regional order is not fixed but rather transitional and being contemplated by complex challenges (A. Chong, 2018). The contestation between or among major powers can be negotiated and remains open to possibly shared understanding. That would provide more space for local secondary power states, Southeast Asian and the regional institution included. Adding to the Indo-Pacific discourse, AOIP is firstly responsive to the multiplicity of the regional order where multiple states, large or small/powerful or weak, can influence the global outcome through shared diverse interests and concerns. As Indonesian expert Dewi Fortunam Anwar (2020, p. 112) suggests: “the growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years has been driven in part by the rise of India as an economic powerhouse with growing influence in regional affairs, which is seen to parallel the earlier and continuing rise of China and India’s growing interest in engaging with countries to the east.” From climate change to economic crisis to pandemics, it seems that the global availability of goods (e.g., peace, global financial and economic stability, spread of human security protection) could not only have been provided by great powers but the multiplicity of actors at the regional level. Alan Chong’s (A. Chong, 2018) seminal research captures very well the recurring order of the so-called ‘transitional polycentrism’ in which Asian security has become perplexed and multidimensional, based on ‘direct great power rivalries in the conflicting South China Sea island dispute and the emergence of non-traditional security threats challenging state-centric security order’ (Caballero-Anthony, 2018; Singh, 2020).

### **On the Regional Agency**

Pluralism in IR also urges the collective belief about how regional institutions are defined and negotiated in taming power disparity vis-à-vis rising competition of great powers. The analysis of ASEAN in the past decade generally points to the relevance of ASEAN in the post-Cold War global (dis)order. ASEAN took a series of innovative changes to foster regional architectures of institutions, along with the multiplex context of regional orders where ASEAN has played a central role in providing a forum for high-level discussions with major powers (Acharya, 2014b, 2018b).

Based on a social network theory, Mely Caballero-Anthony (Caballero-Anthony, 2014) conceptualizes the characters of ASEAN’s centrality as bridging different networks in the East Asian region. It is then characterized by three networking elements: between-ness (how ASEAN lies between a cluster of networks); closeness (how ASEAN performs agenda-setting, information sharing, connecting intra/inter-regional resources); and degree (the frequency of ASEAN’s meeting for multilateral dialogue). The centric position—located in the overlapping circles of regional groupings and extra-major powers—would allow ASEAN to be leading and influential in the ASEAN-led regional processes.

While the common conceptualization of ASEAN’s centrality is associated with institutional practicality of convening and in terms of ASEAN as a regional leader (Sukma, 2009; Tan, 2016), the lengthy discussion on ‘ASEAN’s Centrality’ very much provides a fundamental

understanding of the regional ‘self-construction,’ especially in the time of evolving Indo-Pacific narratives. In line with the emergence of the ‘ideation/critical’ turn of IR, the conceptualization of ‘Centrality’ does not only stipulate a relevance of institutional processes and mechanisms made and facilitated by ASEAN amidst major powers’ contestation but also the very nature of how ASEAN sees itself; and how it makes itself relevant to the world at large. A significant interest in the social and ideational components of regional grouping and politics features the fundamental knowledge of Southeast Asian IR.

As mentioned previously, ASEAN officially participated in the ‘Indo-Pacific’ conversation in 2019. The announcement, given as the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, visualizes the way in which ASEAN should define and materialize its roles as well as get engaged with the ongoing debates of ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific.’ AOIP gives specific attention to the value of cooperation and dialogue in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, experiencing ‘geopolitical and geostrategic shifts’ (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2019). It prioritizes maritime cooperation, connectivity and infrastructure with ASEAN playing a central and strategic role. That said, the document intends to actualize ASEAN as “an honest broker within the strategic environment of competing interests.” It also intends to enhance “ASEAN’s Community building process and to strengthen and give new momentum for existing ASEAN-led mechanisms” (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2019). ASEAN’s centrality is therefore deemed essential, according to the long-standing norms of a process-driven approach to coordination and collaboration, in safeguarding an inclusive Indo-Pacific regional architecture for all (Pongsudhirak, 2018).

What motivates ASEAN to adhere to such norms? Why has it consistently endorsed its roles as central to such tectonic strategic shifts? Following norms may comprise elements founded upon both rationalist and constructivist insights (Abbott, Keohane, Moravcsik, Slaughter, & Snidal, 2000; Abbott & Snidal, 2000; Keohane, 1988). They enable a process of socialization and understanding that are more about how and why institutions work. That said, strategic calculation of states to participate in institutions as well as an institutional output to reduce transaction costs are intertwined with a sense of community and the logic of appropriateness. The ‘contracts’ and ‘covenants’ are then combined. Whether states are in pursuit of values or interests, they search for the law to achieve their ends. Hence, agencies utilize both normative and interest-based strategies to create a legal and institutional arrangement. Rules and institutions then operate by changing material incentives and modifying understanding, behavior standards, and identity.

It is common among Southeast Asian pundits to take a constructivist exploration when it comes to understanding how ASEAN works. The issuance of AOIP manifests the normative purpose that a regional framework needs to be founded upon the ASEAN Way—inclusive and open regionalism. According to a constructivist perspective, an international agreement performs a covenant through which “persuasion, imitation and internationalization” (Abbott & Snidal, 2000, p. 425) will be continuously operated to alter the agency’s intersubjective understanding, shared norms and interest. By no means is it intended to legitimize and revitalize the normative entity of its principles of non-interference and consensus-based decision-making (Natalegawa, 2017, 2018). As a result, AOIP has been the reemphasis of ASEAN as a norm-setting and confidence-building agency (Tan, 2016, 2020).

For a group of weaker states, AOIP could enhance external legitimacy while fortifying the endogenous construction of a regional identity. The norms set out in the AOIP are a way to promote ‘regional resilience’ (Anwar, 2001), where regional autonomy can be upheld and

accepted. That said, the diplomatic communication done through the extensive ASEAN institutional mechanism provides a revitalized non-threatening posture to the rest of Asia-Pacific. As Tan (2018) pointed out, benign signaling of ASEAN has been taken by relinquishing “the use of force as the primary tool for resolving disputes among themselves, tolerate political pluralism in international relations as an article of good conduct, and maximize channels for dialogue between governments. It can also consider that it gains a high input legitimacy due to the adherence of consensus and consultation decision-making process” (Natalegawa, 2018).

For a strategic choice among weaker/smaller member states, AOIP does, in its original belief, aim to introduce new mechanisms to deal with the changing regional order while strengthening existing institutional functions to intertwine with diverse larger powers (Fitriani, 2018). This paper emphasizes ASEAN’s rationale of power constraints. As smaller and weaker countries, deepening alignment with any single major power is not a good idea as they would eventually become drawn into becoming a pawn of the titan. The underpinning of AOIP was to avoid entanglement in the US-China strategic rivalry.

As a newly created ASEAN-centered institutional process, it can be said that AOIP strategically becomes another effort for weaker power states to “borrow strength from external players to augment their capacity to tackle their shared challenges, with using their collective identity as ASEAN members to ease intra-ASEAN problems” (Kuik, 2016, p. 504). Meanwhile, it is a strategic foresight to re-emphasize the engagement with other alternative powers in the region. As Hoang Thi Ha (2019, p. 4) claims, the idea of AOIP was partly founded upon the need for ASEAN economic leverage with an Asian potential, like India. In tandem, ASEAN neutral diplomatic discourse via AOIP provides such an opportunity for ASEAN member states to become potential trade and investment partners under the China’s BRI schemes (Pitakdumrongkit, 2019, p. 54). More broadly, it also reflects ASEAN’s persistent commitment to strategies, arguably such as limited alignment and non-alignment, to resist pressure on the regional members amidst the strategic rivalry between Beijing and Washington (Suryadinata, 2018; Tan, 2020).

It is autonomy that the region has cherished and would very much like to preserve. Dewi Fortuna Anwar (Anwar, 2020, p. 127) suggested: “the only way for Indonesia and ASEAN to achieve the desired regional order of strategic autonomy and ASEAN agency is to play an active role in shaping it.” Stating it differently, AOIP is another sort of a regional collective rationale to preserve ASEAN’s position while avoiding being marginalized in regional and global politics (Tan, 2016, p. 734). The avoidance of marginalization in regional and global affairs drives ASEAN to introduce and cherish its process-oriented approach of institutionalization to the wider global audience. That said, governments choose a different level of legalization because they aim to solve particular problems of commitment or collective action differently (Kahler, 2000). In terms of ASEAN, since the sovereignty cost of ASEAN member states is very high, they benefit the most from the establishment of the institutional solution while maintaining a state interest of sovereignty.

### **On the Agency of Weak States**

Great power politics persists in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. However, it does not solely shape today’s world affairs. As mentioned earlier, the very nature of global politics becomes multifaceted and fluid, actualizing diverse agency to be able to cultivate their positions and strategies. In line with the ‘Global IR’ trend, it seems predominant among the ‘local’ Southeast Asian scholarships that distinguish the potential ability of Southeast Asian states to

enhance their agential role in the ramification of great powers' rivalries. That said, based on a realist perspective, the conventional belief is that the structural determinism under great powers provides only two strategic options for small and middle powers—balancing and bandwagoning. Juggling between the two, considered to be hedging, appears increasingly as witnessed in response to the economic and military power of rising China amidst the complex U.S.-led post-Cold War order (Acharya, 2007; Acharya & Tan, 2006). Two conceptualizations of hedging, understood by 'local' pundits, are worth discussing.

The first and most common understanding of hedging focuses on a mixed strategic choice of a secondary power state, laid by Cheng-Chwee Kuik (2016). Hedging is a strategic choice of a smaller power state that is 'contradictory and mutually counteracting.' It conveys an insurance-seeking behavior that concurrently combines both 'return-maximizing and risk-contingency options' (Kuik, 2016, p. 502). Kuik distinguishes six strategic choices along the continuum of conventional strategic options. With a specific focus on the rising China, ASEAN adopts the combination of economic pragmatism, binding engagement, and limited bandwagoning to maximize gains. Diversification of economic, political and military relations with other major powers was also adopted to offset the over-dependency on China. In this regard, despite its power limitations, ASEAN enables its inclusive regionalism through its extensive institutional processes designed to absorb uncertain power impulses. The tradition of not-taking sides while being equidistant vis-à-vis major powers is well noted among the local scholars (Chongkittavorn, 2018; Pongsudhirak, 2012; Saravanamuttu & Han, 2016; Sukma, 2012). Regardless, agential roles of weak states can be enhanced due to the availability and willingness of the different major powers that attempt to compensate for a lack of regional enforcement mechanism against the rising China with bilateral ties with individual ASEAN member states (Koga, 2016; Singh, 2020) or Mekong subregional cooperation, for example (T. M. Thu & Tinh, 2019).

Secondly, while the baseline of hedging denotes the concurrent mixed behaviors of economic, military, and diplomatic balancing and bandwagoning, ambiguity appears strategically selected and provides a rational option for a smaller power state to make a trade-off between the preservation of autonomy and alignment. Ambiguity can be strategically chosen and understood as hedging. Also, for strategic reasons, the issuance of AOIP would be timely and relevant as it might deal pretty much with existing complicated diversity across member states. The inherent strategic questions are: how the organization deals with a diverse presumption about China's rise; relevancy of the US historical legacy; possible benefits from alternative intra-regional powers like Japan, India and Australia, all of which lay down a diverse demand and expectation of both ideology and pragmatism to each individual state (Tan, 2016, p. 733). If the aim is to lessen the rigidity of the multi-faceted global and regional order, the systemic uncertainty can be manipulated by open-regionalism and fluidity of major power entanglements. AOIP and its persistent ambivalence among ASEAN member states might be the case (Ha, 2021; H. L. Thu, 2020).

The body of Southeast Asian literature also underlines multiple drives of agency's role conception under structural determinism (Acharya & Tan, 2006; Holsti, 1970). With a specific reference to Indonesia, the current global and regional critical environments do not de-actualize the role of the agency. As a middle-power, it becomes a sort of duty and special responsivity of Indonesia to take a leading role in shaping regional dialogue. The announcement of AOIP in 2019, therefore, reflected Indonesia's long-time omni-directional diplomatic practices that have been carried out in the pursuit of a middle-power status in the world at large (Anwar, 2020). The Indonesian brainchild of AOIP thus demonstrates its

foreign policy restraints to actively engage with great powers both within and outside the region. While placing ASEAN Centrality as a cornerstone of regional affairs, the availability of inclusive Indo-Pacific discourses and practices provides a regional context that is autonomous from contentious behaviors of the US, China and other regional stakeholders. Meanwhile, to escape the gridlock among major powers for geo-strategic influences over the country, an agency may utilize its past distinguished diplomatic practices with ASEAN to offset power constraints and marginalization of small-size power countries. Kavi Chongkittavorn (2018) notes that the nature of Thailand's balanced foreign policy, together with the long-standing emphasis on the ASEAN Centrality, would be a credible asset to "confidently engage foreign powers in both geopolitical and geo-economic terms to make sure that they coexist with each other without conflicts" (p.110).

One of the key driving variables that actualize an agency of weak power states is when their foreign policy is associated with the elite's domestic political legitimacy projects. Recent scholarly attentions goes to 'indigenous' domestic responses of Southeast Asia against the rising China. Kuik (2020) maintains that variations in response to China's BRI projects in Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand have derived from the agency's elite legitimation to "justify and consolidate their authority before their targeted constituencies" (p. 6). A similar account also occurs in the case of China's involvement in Indonesia's infrastructure projects in which assertive public scrutiny has complicated the economic relations between Jakarta and Beijing (Anwar, 2019; Damuri, Atje, Alexandra, Soedjito, & Intan, 2014; Damuri, Perkasa, Atje, & Hirawan, 2019; Suryadinata, 2017). Despite weak states' agency, foreign policy can be autonomously taken through a variety of means, corresponding to contingent domestic conditions (Baviera & Arugay, 2021; Chheang, 2021; Sothirak, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Given the multiplicity of international order, emerging discussions about International Relations (IR) have been developed into more 'local' and 'regional' areas of focus. This paper suggests the evolution of IR theory with a specific reference to the relationship between Southeast Asia and the evolving international orders associated with the idea of 'Indo-Pacific' and the rise of China does not completely distinguish itself from a Western School of IR, including well-known research programs such as realism, institutionalism, and constructivism. The very nature of Southeast Asian IR scholarship has largely drawn insights from realism in various aspects. The western presupposition of anarchic international order and the structural nature of power disparity between great and weak states remain intact and are continuously reproduced. Meanwhile, the prospective Southeast Asian IR manifests pluralist discussions engaged with the importance of agency in world politics.

This paper concludes that Southeast Asia scholarship on order and agency has contributed to Global IR research programs in three main aspects, despite the absence of indigenous theorizing First, the 'local' IR scholarship views that Southeast Asia is situated within the fluid international order, allowing multiple forms of agency to autonomously evolve and become a part of the very nature of the international and regional order. The dynamics of the weak states' 'local' trust toward major powers, the structural availability of weak powers' profit-optimization, and the applicability of regional institutional mechanisms vis-à-vis great power rivalries, one way or another, are reconstituting the indigeneity of global and regional order. Second, with a specific reference to ASEAN, the importance of regions is well articulated and associated with the broad conception of the agency's self-construction that is founded upon an unseparated material and ideational motivation. ASEAN and its member states utilize both normative- and interest-based strategies to craft a regional institutional

engagement with great powers. Distinct contributions of both rationalist and constructivist approaches in IR have much to say about Southeast Asian original creation of informal and non-legal binding institutional arrangements, as regional norm and identity, as seen from the announcement of ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in 2019. Third, the local Southeast Asian scholarship is keen to provide insights about variations on how to broaden the understanding of weak states' agency. A number of agency's sources streamline the accumulation of the 'local' knowledge where the structural determinism of great powers politics cannot be taken for granted.



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