

# Epilogue

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This volume does not aspire to be a decisive declaration on queerness or its relationship with Asia. By bringing together a representative range of topics, regions, countries, debates, and issues, as well as contributors from various parts of Asia and from variant professional backgrounds, the volume presents a collection of pertinent themes and approaches being undertaken in service of a queer Asia.

The themes and topics included in this volume find commonality across subsections and significantly across the volume. The contributions have been divided into three parts, ‘Negotiations’, ‘Traces and Ambiguities’, and ‘Coalitions and Fractures’, that pull out more obvious commonalities across each section. The first part, ‘Negotiations’, brings together contributions from Ahmad Ibrahim, Ben Murtagh, He Xiaopei, Gabriel Semerene, and an interview with Alana Eissa, exploring divergent ways in which self and identity is negotiated, constrained, and demanded in modern Bangladesh, Indonesia, China and the UK, Lebanon and Palestine, and Malaysia and the diaspora. The second part, compiled of chapters by David Lunn, Loo Zihan, and Kate Korroch, and an interview with Floyd Scott Tiogangco, inspects how queerness and queer identities are traced, performed, and represented in the satirical work of Indo-Irish author Aubrey Menen, in postcolonial Singapore, in South Korean advertising, and the Philippines. The third part, ‘Traces and Ambiguities’,

is formed of contributions by Geoffrey Yeung and an interview with Small Luk, Po-Han Lee, Nadje Al-Ali and Ghiwa Sayegh, and an interview with Alqumit Alhamad, examining coalitional politics and organising, on both micropolitical and macropolitical levels, including in Sinophone contexts, parts of West Asia, in the diaspora, and in relation to ‘Queer Asia’ projects more broadly. This last part considers how coalitions and fractures have featured in queer organising and theorising.

There are other interesting potential ways of reading the volume – for example, reading with a particular topic in mind, such as trans\* identities or in relation to new media. When read as a whole, while there are obvious themes across these main sections, there are also significant commonalities invoked between the different chapters and sections. By means of some examples: the theme of state governmentality is picked up in Ibrahim, Loo, and He’s contributions, as to what queer lives are lived and how; while the theme of organising, either in the face of or against authority, is discussed by Al-Ali and Sayegh, Semerene, Yeung, and Lunn’s chapters, with decolonial outcomes also discussed by Lee and Al-Ali and Sayegh. Negotiating multiplicity – with identity here remaining open and inclusive – for political outcomes is clearly discussed in Lee, Al-Ali and Sayegh, Yeung, and Semerene’s chapters, while the actual construction and contestation of ‘queer’ and other identities (for personal reasons or otherwise), including subverting mainstream narratives, is taken up by Korroch, Murtagh, Ibrahim, Loo, He, and Semerene’s chapters. Murtagh, He, Korroch, Loo, and Lunn’s contributions deal with the representation of queer desires in various mediums. Many chapters consider what forms of queer are permissible, whether decolonial, postcolonial subjects (Lunn, Lee, Loo, Ibrahim, Semerene), beyond existing – often medicalised and pathologised – frameworks of knowledge (Yeung, Murtagh, He), or as objects of beauty and desire

(Korroch, He). The interviews (Eissa, Tiogangco, Alhamad, and Luk), in addition, supplement the more traditional academic submissions and complement many of the ideas raised in the other chapters, whether military involvement, state authoritarianism, asylum claims and diaspora communities, or sexual or gender alterity.

Significantly, the volume foregrounds the need to remain conscious of positionality inherent in the trajectory of queer theory. This trajectory is not unidirectional, but is also strongly inflected by the westward physical movement of queer people with Asian backgrounds. In such a complex milieu of transnational flows, the 'Queer' Asia platform embodies a questioning of the supposed establishment of an academic discipline of 'Queer Asian Studies' as the replication of hierarchical forms of knowledge and knowledge production. In embracing the political lessons inherent in queer theory, we proffer a collective and network as a potential source that works towards enriching struggles, collaborative strategies, and political solidarity. The narrative of 'Queer' Asia is one that is strongly underwritten by the need to create and nurture spaces of collaboration and support where few exist. It is within this impetus that we locate the necessity of responding to erasure or marginalisation of queer Asian intersections by performing the needed emotional and physical labour in centring the productive dialogues that can emerge from South-South collaborations. Thus, the chapters included in this volume should also not be thought of as individual studies on particular specificities, but as the products of ideas that have already circulated via presentations, exchanges, discussions, networks, and dialogue within the framework of 'Queer' Asia, particularly the conferences, that are always and already shaped as inter-Asia. Lunn's chapter on satirical writing circulated alongside discussions on exclusions being negotiated via the literary form of the queer graphic-zine in India and the marginalised queer portrayals

emerging from women's writing in South Korea (within the highly patriarchal field of literary production). Similarly, the chapters on the politics of language in Lebanon and Palestine and on state regulation of Hijra identity in Bangladesh (Semerene and Ibrahim, respectively) were in dialogue with each other at 'Queer' Asia 2017, alongside a study of exclusivity and homonationalism in diasporic social formations and queer performativity. Such a dialogue posited the irreducible complexity of political actors, yet suggesting to each political formation strategic knowledge from another sphere that enriches the varied forms within which struggles are and can be carried forward. Moreover, with the inclusion of the contributions by He, Loo, Yeung and Luk, Eissa, Tiogangco, and Alhamad, this book attempts to suture the divide between the different fields within which the conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation of queer forms of Asia are taking place. It is hoped that Loo's chapter describing struggles with a queer archive in Singapore lays the foundation for attempts to stem the tide of archival erasure across Asian communities (and further) that disproportionately impacts queer communities. In similar fashion, Murtagh's chapter on HIV/AIDS representation in web series in Indonesia may describe potential tools for film-makers as ways to bypass regressive censorship practices that have brutalised queer film-making, such as that of director Jayan Cherian's film *Ka Bodyscapes* (screened at the film festival in 2018).

This book also foregrounds the need to decolonise the production of queer knowledges. Here, historically rooted accounts of the emergence of intersectional feminist and queer spaces in regions within West Asia by Al-Ali and Sayegh offer important frameworks for queer communities engaged with replicating Western models of activism and organisation. Their contribution offers both a cautionary and hopeful note for queer organising. This topic is theorised by Lee's chapter on 'Queer Asia' coalitional politics, whereby 'Queer Asia' as the body without organs

offers multiplicity and heterogeneity for both queer organising and reconfiguring queer and decolonial studies. Their different chapters emphasise how projects of inclusivity are necessary in overturning the all too easily erased labour of queer or/and women of colour in the creation of essential intersectional LGBTQ+ spaces and the threat that depoliticised gay communities present. In calling for a decolonial praxis towards queer approaches, this book urges the abandonment of reading for disciplinary expertise in favour of reading across regions and disciplines for political solidarity and strategy. This appeal emerges from the conference framework that encourages audiences to engage with panels that are interregional and programming that encourages dialogue. It encourages audiences to reject cherry-picking within area silos formed of colonial processes. Furthermore, it emphasises the need to adopt a multi-format strategy in the approach to queer knowledges in Asia.

‘Queer’ Asia – platform, network, book, lived reality – is multiple, expansive, rich, and undefinable. Thus, this volume does not draw any decisive conclusions as to what queerness is or its relationship to Asia. As editors and organisers of three annual conferences and two film festivals, we are responding to vast and complex networks that have opened up through the platform’s activities. We therefore recognise that this is not the closing of a book, but rather the opening for a call to proliferate Queer Asia: what it is, its study, its components, its embodiment, and its visions.