ASIAN VIDEO CULTURES

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EDITORS

> IN THE PENUMBRA OF THE GLOBAL

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INTRODUCTION

Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar

Asian Video Cultures: In the Penumbra of the Global focuses on *video* as a cultural form and practice across Asia. While invoking its titular terms—Asia, video, culture—as necessary organizing frames, the volume simultaneously seeks to trouble, recast, and pluralize them. Our aim is to move conversations about Asian media beyond static East-West imaginaries, residual Cold War mentalities, triumphalist declarations about resurgent Asias, and budding jingoisms. The essays collected here explore the region's pulsating relationship with the transnational, paying close attention to the role of video in shaping sub- and trans-Asian encounters. How, for instance, do global media processes transform our understanding of "Asia" as overlapping cultural, economic, and political potentiations? And how do the region's videomedia, too often consigned to the underbelly of the digital, not only drive new forms of cultural circulation and contact, but also animate new infrastructures, intimacies, and speculations? How are these proliferating Asias at once an engine of planetary growth and a glaring register for all the contradictions of the global? In what ways does this shifting continental imaginary instantiate the "Global South," taken as a dynamic formation with its agonistic histories and convulsive geographies?[1] To foreshadow the collection's thematic and analytical scaffoldings, we hope to situate Asian video cultures as crucial constituents of a "global

media" phenomenology whose *southern* vitalities are too often dismissed or overlooked in media epistemologies.

Across this collection, we focus on a range of mainstream and mundane video forms that are widely bracketed as aberrations both by the universalizing claims of global and digital culture, and by dominant discourses inside and outside the region. The chapters explore media formations that are salient in their own contexts and yet remain marginalized by commonsense understandings of technomodernity and development. Distinctive and variegated Asian experiences trouble and exceed the "universal" grids of intelligibility through which academics, journalists, and policymakers approach video—grids derived largely from Anglo-U.S. and continental European contexts and protocols. While informal infrastructures (photocopiers, optical discs, hard drives, SD cards, torrents) make up the primary means of media circulation in much of Asia (indeed, in much of the world, but particularly in southern societies), such ubiquitous practices are criminalized by aggressive legal discourses, regulatory measures, and technomoral ideologies (of which the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or TRIPS, is particularly significant).[2] The central contention of this volume is that these frames, rather than the allegedly aberrant video formations, constitute the crucial "problem" in the problematic of contemporary Asian media. This assertion suggests a first, primarily epistemological, reason for our designation of Asian video cultures as "penumbral": something (here, hegemonic approaches to global media culture) comes in the way of our understanding, occluding and partially eclipsing it.

But what exactly is a penumbra? The prosaic understanding of it has to do with the semi-dark belt during eclipses, a shifting zone in between the dark umbra and the bright part of the sun or moon. But there are more magical figurations: in ancient Hindu mythology, eclipses occur when the demons Rahu and Ketu attempt to devour the sun and the moon, respectively. Similarly, Filipino lore tells of the Bakunawa, a giant sea serpent who, entranced by the moon's beauty, ascended from the oceans to swallow it. In these accounts, the penumbra marks the resilience of light—its refusal to be erased from the sky, and its glorious reemergence into view. Asian cosmologies presume the celestial bodies' ability to burn through the demons' throats and emerge resplendent. Even as astronomy demystifies eclipses with its scientific explanations, the enchantment of astrological legends lingers. Our invocation of the penumbral underscores the indelible presence of local cosmologies and practices in the mediation of globalities—distinctively local aspects that can never be

fully subsumed within any universal imagination.[3] The penumbral also gestures toward the irrepressibility of local media practices in the face of dominant global norms.

In its thrust, the volume follows a genealogy of critical-historical interventions of which the Third Cinema movement remains exemplary. Emerging at the peak of a planetary trend toward political decolonization, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's manifesto of the late 1960s extended a strident call for cinema to fight the tyranny of aesthetic, epistemological, and institutional orthodoxies derived from colonial contexts and serving neocolonial interests. In spite of grim material odds, the stakes were nothing short of a radical "*decolonization of the mind*."[4] But for the most part, the Third Cinema movement remained wedded to a vanguardist conception of culture, staking out a radical position girded by pronouncedly masculinist—even militaristic—rhetoric. Its revolutionary agenda projected a domain of practices heretofore illegible, even unimaginable, to a colonial modernity, only to re-emplot it within a definitive postcolonial telos. Thus, the "popular" was to be a domain mainly of engineered cultural-political engagements, rather than an organic and vibrant realm consolidating extant political will and action. Skeptical about such grand blueprints for transformation, this volume takes the quotidian popular more seriously, although with a measure of criticality: what do people do when they "do" culture, how do they do it, and why? Tellingly, Solanas and Getino stressed new infrastructural affordances of the 1960s—including more affordable and mobile technologies, greater dissemination of skills, and alternative distribution networks and exhibition platforms—as conditions favorable to the expansion of cinema's social role beyond the diktat of media capital.[5] Similar infrastructural developments are, once again, upon us. Hence, it may not be so incongruous to speculate that the "third" of Third Cinema now lives on in the cultural formations that our contributors examine, albeit without the burden of a radical vanguardism, or even an overarching political program, and more within the messy context of contingent make-do and everyday living.

More close to our times, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies—inspired by British Marxist histories of working-class lifeworlds and Antonio Gramsci's interrogations of the hegemonic sublation of southern Italian peasant interests in nationalist politics—expanded its purview to include various minoritarian and subcultural social formations, providing an approach to grassroot cultures and local popular histories unencumbered by prescriptive political agendas. The local, micropolitical interests of Anglophone cultural studies, including the Australian and North American variants, made it generally oblivious

to the lived realities of Asian, African, and Latin American societies.[6] Yet it did not hesitate to posit implicitly universal theories of various popular-cultural phenomena—including reception, fandom, subjectivity, racial/gender/queer politics, embodiment, creativity, circulation, translation, technoagency, and cultural hegemony—that are of particular interest to this volume's contributors.

About the same time, the South Asian Subaltern Studies collective (and later, its Latin American counterpart) initiated the project of resuscitating "the small voices of history." Starting from Gramsci's observation—following Marx on "small-holding peasants"—that subaltern groups were incapable of representing themselves and thus awaited representation, the collective, initiated by Ranajit Guha, attended to the conditions of political agency on the part of marginalized groups with predominantly oral cultures—tribals, peasants, untouchables—in colonial and postcolonial contexts.[7] Later formulations moved away from this kind of demographic fixity in favor of a more relational understanding of subalternity. Dismissing characterizations of subaltern consciousness as "prepolitical" and agency as "spontaneous," this historiographic project increasingly focused on the possibility of distinctive subaltern epistemologies and tactics.[8] This analytical move is of great significance to us, as we seek to assess popular media practices on their own terms. However, while several of our contributors explore cultural practices that may be considered subaltern in a relational sense, their interest is less in holding on to its radical alterity—what Gayatri Spivak characterizes as "removed from all lines of social mobility"—than in exploring novel affordances enabled by contemporary intersections between the popular and the subaltern.[9]

Subaltern studies scholars investigated subalternity in relation to colonial administrations or within the framework of the postcolonial nation-state. More recently, scholars associated with the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies project have begun to analyze Asian realities in a transnational context and across the elite-subaltern divide.[10] Kuan-Hsing Chen, in particular, has called for a critical undoing of both Cold War mentalities whose embrace of a bipolar world elides large chunks of Asian experiences, and surreptitious processes of imperialization that subsume Asian ruling classes and state machineries. This collection builds on the strategic regionalism of inter-Asian approaches, for which Asian locales become each other's primary point of reference. But we are also interested in broader South-South exchanges and global fusings—an interest that courses through several chapters and is most evident in those on South Asian media in Nigeria (Casey) and Chinese diasporic mediations across Singapore and Germany (Heberer).

Stuck in their vexed histories, East and West now appear as ossified geographic imaginaries. In contrast, North and South signify unstable, overlapping, amoeboid formations that mutate according to the needs of global capital, while spawning enclaves of divergence, recalcitrance, even subversion. We argue that Asia, with its manifold cultures and economies, is best understood as emerging out of these ambivalent negotiations. Indeed, the opening up of Asia via transregional encounters, as well as its acute localization, addressed in many of the case studies collated here, qualifies the productivity of an Asian regionalism. We take such foldings and unfoldings—whereby media cultures stretch proximate points afar and bring remote corners together—to be fundamental to contemporary materializations of the global.

One of Chen's sharpest criticisms is directed against the continuing grip of imperial dyads (West-East, colonizer-colonized) on late twentieth-century postcolonial studies, and thus the persistence of the West in articulations of self and nation. While we take his point, we also want to hold on to the postcolonial as a critical perspective on globalization—in particular, to complicate the idea of a global modernity unfolding along a linear, universal pathway. Short-circuiting hegemonic scripts, the varied registers of video practice produce unstable and overlapping media ontologies: confounding preset expectations, they glide between—and enfold—industrial and amateur, legal and illegal, ratified and renegade, giving rise to multiple mediated globalities. This ontological plurality arises from the intrinsically supple nature of creativity: creative practices routinely diverge from idealizations, challenging notions of unilateral transmission of technologies and skills, derivative cultures, and modular modernities. One might even argue that some of the most exhilarating instances of creativity appear when the fetish of creativity is abandoned in the throes of quotidian life.

This ontological mutability and plurality of the global brings us to a second, more experiential sense of the penumbral. In invoking the hazy band that appears as a sliding intermediary between light and dark—between clear visibility and complete opacity—during an eclipse, we seek to capture the plasticity of the global, to stress the ongoing improvisational creativity that goes into its production. Our phrase "the penumbra of the global" does not refer to the shadow cast by a solid and prefab globality; rather, it is meant to describe *the global itself* as a penumbral formation. This sense of a continually evolving global is markedly different from the gradual dialectical incorporation of various locals within a homogeneous and universal structure: penumbral globality would, of necessity, remain partial and contingent, as an emergence. Thus,

we summon the penumbral for two reasons: first, to move past common discourses of light and shadow, center and edge, that reflect a universalizing approach to the global and that necessarily frame Asia (and southern configurations in general) as secondary, supplemental; and second, to foreground the transitional, the processual—to underscore that the global is productively chaotic, always in the process of becoming.[11]

Going by mainstream discourses, Asia is at once the bright sun in neoliberal capital's blue horizons and the demon that gnaws away at capitalism's health. Starting from this conundrum, this introduction explores the structural schisms that enable such allegations of autosarcophagy and seeks to move beyond the institutional and epistemological apparatuses that, in marking Asian media forms and practices as trivial, transient, and illicit, inhibit our understanding. Going against the grain of such frames, this volume's collective enterprise is to write Asia's vibrant media practices into the mainstream of global media and cultural theories, thereby transforming the latter.

VIDEO IN/AS TECHNOMODERNITY

Seeking to open up the question of what counts as digital modernity, *Asian Video Cultures* begins with a set of intertwined assertions. First, video forms and practices are integral to Asian media cultures. Video's plasticity across lo-fi and high tech, on- and offline networks, social groupings, and diverse geographies is crucial to its ubiquity and irrepressibility. Next, the enthusiasm surrounding new media, too often focused on idealized digital experiences in northern metropolitan cultures, leads to narrow prescriptive frameworks. Finally, such normative imaginations of global technoculture occlude actually existing media assemblages in much of the world. It is this occlusion that inspires our use of *penumbral* across this collection: phenomenologically speaking, penumbral forms and practices comprise much of the mainstream and *seem* marginal only because something opaque comes in the way of their legibility.

Extending beyond familiar optical disc formats, streaming sites, and YouTube, Asian video forms and flows challenge basic assumptions about the digital present, as well as its explanatory frameworks rooted in concepts like speed, reliability, ubiquity, access, participation, innovation, and convergence. While the untimeliness of Asian media arises from the entanglement of the latest high tech with the most ad hoc informalities, engrained perspectives shrink such complexities into a narrative of backwardness. Take, for example, the media scholar Henry Jenkins's influential study *Convergence Culture* (2006),

which begins with a familiar account of new-media circulation. A Filipino-American high-school student "photoshopped" an image of *Sesame Street*'s Bert alongside Osama Bin Laden and posted it on his webpage as part of a spoof series called "Bert Is Evil." Because it offered a good likeness of Bin Laden, the image was downloaded by a publisher in Bangladesh and put on anti-American placards by protesters throughout the Middle East, before being rebroadcast to viewers on CNN. Representatives of *Sesame Street* saw the signage on television and threatened legal action, "outraged" that their character was appropriated in this manner—though it was not clear who exactly could be held accountable for the infringement.[12] For Jenkins, the anecdote captures the key elements of convergence, including new and unanticipated constellations of participation (teenage techies, grassroots social movements, corporate media), the entanglement of analog and digital forms (photo editing, the Internet, printed signs, TV), as well as the fast and far-flung transmission of such images (North America, Middle East, transnational TV and web coverage). Recessed in this foundational anecdote of new media studies are consequential genealogies that inform our project, but also become fodder for yet another routine account of straggled technological dissemination. Jenkins's retelling of the adventures of Osama and Bert consolidates commonsensical ideas of "global" and "digital" media: in short, digital media are produced and consumed by North American teenagers, television networks, and audiences, whereas Arab activists—themselves mere images for Western televisual consumption—seem limited to "old media" modalities. Thus, the protesters' use of the picture suggests not only a misreading of the "Bert Is Evil" parody, but also imitation and a lack of the capacity to remix and broadcast images of one's own.[13] Emblematic of widely held views on global media circulation, the Jenkins example throws into sharp relief key areas of critique and intervention, including transcultural (mis)appropriations, lagged and derivative cultures, and persistent discourses of "influence."

Whereas concepts like convergence signal the consolidation of digital-media conglomerates, and the rapid coming together of new and old media across connected platforms (mobile phones, tablets, laptop and desktop computers, living-room screens, large format displays, etc.), southern media cultures often "converge" rather differently. In her work on mobile phones in China, Cara Wallis describes migrant women's use of a single device for multiple purposes as a "necessary convergence" born of economic necessity. The mobile phone—often in low-tech and improvised versions (a homespun improvisability evoked in local terms such as *jugaad*, *shanzhai*, *gambiarra*,

etc.)—is central to a range of emergent media cultures: from SD cards and microdisplays, to offline Internet practices that we might call the *extranet* to capture the truck between formal and informal networks.

Several contributions to this volume (Chio, Shah, Mukherjee and Singh, Srinivas) describe how online videos are regularly downloaded and sold on optical discs, SD cards, and hard drives—at grocers, *paan* shops, and mobile-phone charging stations—taking on new lives outside the metered legibility of Snapchat posts and Youku views. This capacity to *jump* infrastructures, via a more intensified and opportunistic circulation, fosters unmeasured access and use across breakdown, blackout, and brand new, creating new capacities in the process. It is these improvised infrastructures, not new or remixed content, that provide the true measure of the creativity and impact of contemporary Asian videos *as social media*. Attention to these diverse circuits, informal practices, and bazaar atmospherics—more than content, authorship, and ownership—is a key disposition that unites the essays in this collection.

Pursuing such video practices in the penumbra of the global, this volume illuminates grey zones that are routinely marginalized as illegible, contraband, or out-of-sync. It challenges the standard historiographic arc of Euro-American-centered approaches to video, which typically moves from magnetic tape to digital formats to the Internet. Such scholarship, with its narrow focus on video art, official tape and disc distribution, and online platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, underscores new and improved technologies (a dominant vector of "new media" studies), diffusion models of Americanization or similar core-to-fringe transfers (with Japan as an earlier center), questions of clarity (high definition, more pixels, vibrant color) if not fidelity (qua indexical link to some reality), the consolidation of formal and legal media industries within a framework of global governance, and the new significance of high-tech user-consumers.[14] This high-bandwidth politics—in which *you* are the person of the year—is tethered to imaginations of Web 2.0 and specific protocols for technological living, and thus also of mediated lives marked as obsolescent. Video forms and practices outside the implied cultural "center"—say, from Mongolia, Palestine, or Vietnam—are elided by this more or less neat trajectory, as alternate formats, aesthetic regimes, and modes of circulation are relegated to a separate time zone of lagged development. Note the persistence of the video compact disc (VCD) over the previous two decades in Asia, as well as its current iterations in differentially compressed DVDs, Blu-ray discs, and myriad digital files. Instead of situating these variegated formats in relation to the substrate of material practices from which they spring, dominant

discourses of video dismiss them as cheap, vestigial, and peculiarly Asian containers of media content.

Standard analytical frames and habits cannot, *will not*, acknowledge local practices as legitimate, pushing the latter into an epistemological periphery with significant material ramifications. For global observers, media practices across the region embody cultures of copy and counterfeit, distortion and cut-rate dissemination: they are denounced as parasitic aberrations. Extending an orientalist trope, innovative video technologies are readily dismissed as tools of repression and censorship, instruments of an Asian authoritarianism deemed more sinister, more violent than its Euro-American counterparts framed by technorationalist rhetorics of governance. As a corollary, videos from Asia are more readily accepted when they can be tethered to a politics of resistance. To be labeled as "banned" in China, Iran, or Myanmar seemingly guarantees a certain level of success in Western portals and the global press, which find a certain comfort in reproducing visions of authoritarian, excessive, or unruly Asia(s), and thus ignore both site-specific concerns and a broader politics of exclusion by no means unique to the region. The media portals that Patricia Zimmermann explores in her essay here—all salutary instances of NGO-backed pro-democratic initiatives—remain open to charges of reiterating such a reductive political imaginary. The underlying friction—between, on the one hand, the value of these websites to grassroots activists fighting repression across Southeast Asia and, on the other, the pitfalls of embracing imported, top-down, and "modular" paradigms of democracy and civil society—indexes the fuzzy role of video in the region's popular mobilizations.

While numerous scholars of video since the 1990s have argued that there will never be a cogent field of video theory, a claim induced by the medium's perceived lack of a single, essential form or practice, this volume contends that it is precisely video's heterogeneous shapes, rituals, and ripples that demand theorization. Moving beyond disciplinary preoccupations with medium specificity, we take video to be an integral element in giving shape to, and circulating, a wide range of residual and emergent Asian formations. What we mean by video includes the usual analog and digital forms, platforms, and configurations, but also something more that is historically specific to Asia. Our sense of video includes technologies, idioms, and practices that point not just to the gleaming new Asia of neoliberal triumphalism, but also to the slums, shantytowns, and "survival sector" that shore it up. To emphasize cultures of informality and spaces outside planned development, recalcitrant enclaves that undercut modernist rationality and modes of civil society, is not to romanticize

a subaltern realm, but to attend to uneven historical experiences and demotic agencies. The point is to highlight crucial porocities and interpenetrations—what Lawrence Liang has called "avenues of participation," and Ramon Lobato and Julian Thomas pursue as irreducible interdependencies among informal and formal economies.[15]

The essays commissioned for this volume chart video's plastic, transmedial, and promiscuous assemblages, complicating notions of technoscientific capacity and modernity. They examine a vibrant field that runs from media platforms to industrial labor, HIV/AIDS communities to rural documentary collectives, microcinema to dance cover videos. The exigencies of a structurally distinct Global South shape the contours, textures, and flavors of Asian video formations, their distinctive "accents" pressing against standard understandings of the medium.[16] Which is to say, alongside the high-def and high-gloss worlds of commercial cinemas and new technophilias thrives a distinctly "southern" video assemblage—marked by its affinities with local popular cultures, social movements, pirate economies, and ecologies of desire and anxiety, and indexed in the contagious, compressed, and embodied videographies that drive a new sensuous politics. Thus, beyond dismissals of the medium as the mundane conduit of commerce or the low-tech option for amateurs, artists, and activists, this collection asks: what is video at this point? And how does it recalibrate technomodernity in the outposts of globalization?

BEYOND NORMATIVITIES

Taken as a whole, this volume also puts into question the idea of *culture*, especially its bourgeois-liberal conception as a pedagogical tool that helps produce discerning, well-tempered citizen-subjects of a modern polis. Beset with this onerous function, the concept comes with its share of contradictions. Notwithstanding its numerous local instantiations, culture as civilizing force serves as a universal template, the modern conduit to a rootless cosmopolitanism. And while crucially circumscribed by parameters of taste and propriety, culture is, nevertheless, expected to promote free and spontaneous expression. Modern forms of governmentality, with their balancing of local specificity with translocal commensurability, and their paradoxical intertwining of a desire for freedom and a need for control, have depended on the pedagogical role of culture. The complementarity of rights and responsibilities in civil society discourses finds its parallel in the obligatory pairing of censorship with creativity.

Michel Foucault's work on the crucial intercalations of control and freedom in liberal thought alerts us to culture's ambiguous role in the art of governance—especially the cultural production and normalization of hierarchies of power (insides and outsides, the normal and the pathological). Even as Foucault focuses on European contexts, he stresses the racial dimensions of modern biopolitics that lead to the obsessive production and monitoring of binaries of the self/other genus. But the genealogy of governmentality encounters additional problems when confronted with the history of colonialism and the challenges of postcolonial life.[17] Edward Said, drawing on Foucault's methodology, reveals the role played by human imagination and culture in the concerted production of "the Orient" as Europe's Other and in the consolidation of territorial, economic, and psychic occupations.[18] We submit that the discussion of governmentality stands to gain much from the incisive mid-twentieth-century interventions of Frantz Fanon. The racialization of both explicit and covert mechanisms of control, so astutely analyzed in Fanon's exploration of emancipation, adds a distinctly postcolonial twist to our understanding of modern biopolitics and its constitutive role in the itineraries of imperialism. Fanon's ruminations on the shackles on consciousness of an all-engulfing "whiteness," and his critique of postcolonial "national culture" for both its essentializing tendencies and its lingering sense of lack, constitute a powerful exegesis of control and freedom that have important lessons for the interrogation of all non-Euro-American formations, including Asian media cultures.[19]

If Asia is now widely acknowledged as an engine of capitalist growth, it is also the source of much apprehension in the West. The tenacious (re)production of racial stereotypes and the discounting of Asian consciousness and creativity continue to be common strategies for managing anxieties around the region's resurgence. Contemporary connectedness ensures that these anxieties come to inflect Asian attitudes: local elite classes, often in thrall with Euro-American worldviews and normativities, seem particularly susceptible to the continued dismissal of Asia as culturally backward and politically retrograde. But the same connectedness also ensures that Asia now infiltrates the West with its ideas and orientations, thereby imploding the East-West dyad. In response, a neurotic impulse to categorize, distinguish, and segregate shows up in the domain of global interactions, producing a racialized pecking order of the "our brilliant creativity, their crass imitation" strain. Many of the essays in this collection (Chio, Cho, Heberer, Neves, Srinivas, Steinberg, Wu) establish the démodé status of such binaries, situating Asian video practices as

essential to understanding the ambidextrous modulations of global-popular cultures. At the same time, we note a tendency among many Asianists to fall into a racialized revisioning of Asia as, essentially, East and South Asia, expunging West Asia as external to global civil society (a move countered by Dickinson's essay in this volume).

At issue here is a powerful drive toward universal normalization, crucially shaping contemporary desire and aspiration, will and agency. Dominant modes of doing things take on the force of universal absolutes, although shadowed by the proviso of the *exception*. Thus, warfare must follow international conventions of just and fair combat, unless it is the war on terror or drugs or piracy—some discernible enemy that is deemed unjust. Thankfully, every centralizing normativity must contend with countervailing, often rhizomatic tendencies: ebullient deviations that cannot be accommodated by the sanctioned exception. One entry point to this interminable square-off is the institution of law that seeks to negotiate tensions between control and emergence, to arbitrate disputes, and to codify stable criteria for their resolution. For the postcolonies (or, more broadly, the Global South, including postsocialist contexts), the problems posed by the sedimentation of Euro-American legal structures have now been compounded by the rising demand for global governance. Contemporary international law poses itself as a transhistorical, transcultural, universal entity, threatening to bulldoze all manners of incommensurabilities to establish convenient equivalences. To argue, as Euro-American legal scholars such as Lawrence Lessig do, that "law is law," and that all sovereign nation-states must strictly sync their legal frameworks to international statutes, is to willfully ignore the messy historicity of international copyright laws (described in one influential commentary as "information feudalism"), not to mention the particular exigencies of local media cultures.[20] It is only because of such tunnel vision that Lessig can separate out creative forms of piracy (such as collage and sampling) that generate value, as opposed to "piracy plain and simple" that merely pilfer others' creativity without adding any value.[21] Interestingly, he locates this latter form of "bad piracy" mainly in Asia and the "Asiatic" parts of Europe from the former Soviet Union. From such a liberal perspective, invested in the sanctity of bourgeois law, the myriad *cultural* activities of Asian media compute as uncivil recalcitrance—a persistent problem for institutions of global governance like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Yet, as scholars like Ramon Lobato and Madhavi Sunder have demonstrated, media

practices such as poaching and copying generate local value streams that remain opaque to narrowly legal frameworks.[22]

Laikwan Pang has noted the broad acceptance among Asian upper and middle classes of the rhetoric that adherence to international laws is an index of a people's modernity and civility.[23] The contemporary focus on the creative industries in mainstream media and academic knowledge production—a focus on the legal and legible that values only certain types of productive labor—is emblematic of this normalizing trend. It also fortifies the sense of culture as a pedagogic force within civil society. However, this class-ideological purchase of a universalized model of Law (and Culture) runs up against local economic and political expediencies. Shujen Wang has demonstrated that the revenue needs of local administrators in China come in the way of the effective operationalization of anti-piracy laws.[24] The Indian Copyright Act of 2012, which seeks to update the statutes for the digital era and to be consonant with the global Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) regime, leaves enough ambiguity in its language to accommodate deviations considered essential to nurturing local potentialities.[25]

LEGITIMACY

Whatever the law is, it frequently seems remote from what is felt to be socially legitimate in light of cultural and economic exigencies. Since global copyright statutes derive mainly from Euro-American interests and frameworks, they do not reflect the ground realities of media cultures in the rest of the world. Even the mainstream *Economist* magazine has reported on staggering discrepancies in the international pricing of media. The DVD of a mainstream Hollywood blockbuster such as *The Dark Knight*, which sells for just under $20 in the United States, has a price tag in Russia that, when adjusted for real income differentials, amounts to nearly $75; the corresponding value in India is a stunning $663.[26] Even for Russian or Indian middle classes, legal DVD prices of Hollywood products prove to be exorbitant and unfair; thus, there is little incentive to eradicate piracy of imported media, the only politically compelling pressure coming from established domestic industries.

An entire range of piratical activities emerges in the wide gap between legality and legitimacy. Sometimes, these practices negotiate established institutions and norms, pressing for change: Kay Dickinson's essay in this volume addresses the legitimation of copy culture via poetic practices across West

Asia; Tzu-hui Celina Hung addresses documentaries that seek greater social acceptance for already legal "immigrant brides" within a Taiwanese multiculturalist paradigm. At other points, the piratical consists of more desperate acts of communication spilling into the realm of terrorism: instantiations of these include videos made by Palestinian jihadis before they go on a suicide mission, exhorting younger generations to join their legitimate struggle, or the more macabre recordings of ISIS beheadings aimed primarily at inducing horror, forcing specific concessions, and inciting armed retaliation.

Common to these disparate practices is a struggle over sovereignty. In his musings on Roman law against pirates, Daniel Heller-Roazen speaks of the *littorum*, that shifting line where land meets sea: an area of confusion and dispute, given the defining role played by the fluctuating waterline, on the one hand, and the land-centric articulation of civil law, on the other. As that threshold moves with the seasons and the tides, it produces a zone of indeterminacy in which all instituted rights—over land and property—find themselves, literally and figuratively, at sea.[27] The moving shoreline marks a realm of blurred experiences and puts to question not only the jurisdiction of established laws, but also our very notions of the licit and the illicit (for instance, of kinship structures, sexualities, and ethics). With this unraveling of a stable and shared sense of the legal and the licit arises a crisis of competing sovereignties. The issue of legitimacy keeps returning as an open question, not quite tractable by the institution of laws. The problem is not exclusive to the shifting shoreline: whenever a new set of potentialities arise due to novel technologies, economic opportunities, political realignments, or social transformations, the tension between legality and legitimacy surfaces.

So far we have been talking primarily in terms of law, specifically copyright law and related forms of intellectual property. But the figure of the moving shoreline is evocative of a wide variety of experiential domains inducing fickle affiliations, moving moralities, and nebulous agencies. At once the center and outpost of the global contemporary, Asia is marked by frictions, incongruencies, and uncertainties that normative dispensations seek to manage. Video, broadly construed, offers ways of negotiating—apprehending, reframing, living out, intervening in—this shifting terrain. One useful approach might be to ask how these negotiations engage various normativities and the institutions that bolster them. What, for instance, is the relationship of emerging video cultures to the state and its policies? Jenny Chio writes about rural Chinese documentary collectives which benefit from state-sponsored training facilities, equipment pools, and distribution networks, but whose recordings of community

festivals move well beyond official tourism circuits to serve local needs for self-representation. In contrast, Patricia Zimmermann provides an account of NGO-backed online media collectives that evince a decidedly critical relationship to the state, but whose objective of expanding egalitarian access and participation in Southeast Asia has the future political firmament in sight. For S. V. Srinivas, reposts of audiovisual material on YouTube and other social-media sites, with minimal or no modification, help mobilize popular support for the carving out of a new province: video here takes on a direct role in gerrymandering the political cartography of India. Joshua Neves's exploration of Chinese workers laboring under inhuman conditions in factories serving transnational companies suggests that the state, now reduced to an appendage of global capital, has rethought and relinquished much of its responsibility toward its citizens.

Since the state makes its presence felt in the media world largely in terms of censorship, subverting or bypassing such regulatory norms becomes a primary preoccupation for many of the media practitioners discussed here. At issue are contending parameters of taste, prescriptive notions of culture, and moral policing, often at the intersections of the popular and the subaltern. Conerly Casey takes a close look at popular tactics of negotiating the ban on Bollywood cinema and music in the wake of the shari'a laws in Nigeria. Likewise, Rahul Mukherjee and Abhigyan Singh analyze the circulation of Mewati music videos on microSD cards, viewable on mobile phones in private and away from the disapproving gaze of religious clerics; complicating conceptions of subalternity as a space outside of the mainstream, their case study demonstrates the extent to which aspects of the popular now infiltrate *and* enable subaltern lives and endeavors. In her contribution, Bishnupriya Ghosh argues that HIV activists and social workers in Manipur—caught between a callous state and a militant underground that turns punitive in reaction to the disease's social stigma—must be particularly discreet about the production and circulation of HIV/AIDS media. These varied media publics experience the censorious state, and nascent political formations with statist aspirations, as rather arbitrary arbiters of what is acceptable and what is tainted as illicit. This is why William Mazzarella has described media censorship as oscillating between the dual roles of police and patron while seeking to manage "the open edge of mass publicity" via a series of "performative dispensations."[28] Like Mazzarella's work, the case studies examined by Casey, Ghosh, and Mukherjee and Singh chart the uncertain relationship between meaning and affect, media techne and social efficacy. But these instances also entail media production and reception practices that are grounded in local communities, thus conjuring up

the relatively more utopian, if still volatile, realm of the popular. At stake in these case studies are the ingenuity, viability, and limits of popular sovereignty as it mediates, via video practices, the always dubious legitimacy of normative structures.

The necessarily contentious nature of the terrain suggests a conceptualization of "Asia" that must depart fundamentally from an "area studies" paradigm predicated on an additive model of the global. The Asia (as well as the global) that materializes from the pages of this volume seems to be exemplary of penumbral formations—always emergent, without any predetermined shape or stable destination. Refusing to simply accept a neoliberal narrative of Asia, we claim that Asia also names an arduous and continuing search for legitimacy, equity, and social justice. Asia's diversity and dynamism is not a matter of epistemological incoherence, but the mark of what mediatized life looks and feels like in a globalizing-yet-localized world. Without imposing nomenclatural consistency or insisting on ontological unity, we signal and work with the incompossibilities that are constitutive of Asia (and the global) at this point.

MEDIATION

Not surprisingly, cultural theorists who work primarily with Asian contexts have come up with some of the most stimulating formulations of world-making practices and globalities. Particularly germane to our collective project is Rey Chow's consciously provocative elucidation of entanglements as a mediatic mode for our dissonant-yet-overlapping contemporaneity. As she suggests, entanglements might well provide the figure for the "topological looping together" of things characterized by "disparity rather than equivalence," the "linkages and enmeshments that keep things apart, the voidings and uncoverings that hold things together."[29] Her formulation points to a process of mediation far more involved than the simple one-to-one correspondence between reality and its classical *re*-presentation: a process that is constitutive of material reality rather than simply reflecting it in an empire of signs. And the medium of video seems rather apposite for such entangled mediations.

Many of the video interventions explored in these pages feature an ecologic of the body as their central problematic. Bodily matters have been firmly at the center of video art from its early days: the affordability, ease of use, and plastic modalities of video helped to make it the medium of choice for artists and activists, especially those concerned with a micropolitics of corporeality.[30] If the advent of the digital has expanded the purview of video cultures, many of the

medium's advantages have multiplied with chroma keying and nonlinear editing suites, networked publics and platforms for rapid duplication and sharing, cheaper equipment and simplified do-it-yourself operations. Laura Marks's delineation of video haptics—ascribed to its emergence "in the permeable space between source and viewer," and thus to its manipulability—can now be extended well beyond the textures and tonalities of the image itself, to the plasticity of the social body.[31] Particularly suited to the cultural necessities, economic exigencies, and political energies of the Global South, video thrives in that zone of limited resources and inspired improvisations, fissured communities and explosive mobilizations, elastic topographies and asynchronous temporalities. Southern experientialities—their density, pulsation, and piquancy—find representation and materialization in video's corporeal mediations: hence our speculation that some of Third Cinema's techno-aesthetic features, affective resonances, and political sensibilities *live on* in southern/piratical video cultures.

The corpus of video—the performative body at its center and the reality assembled by video cultures—is the analytical focus for all of our contributors. For Hung and Neves, it is the laboring body of the worker, of the immigrant bride in her unfamiliar settings and the young industrial worker in the Chinese special economic zones; for Casey as for Shah, it is the sexualized body susceptible to exhibitionistic and voyeuristic excess, deviancy, and surveillance; for Michelle Cho and Feng-Mei Heberer, it is the gesturing body as translator within cross-cultural registers of orientalist fantasies and containments. Other contributors explore video cultures that mount physically palpable worldings: Chio explores videos from the hinterlands of China that, in representing ethnic festivals, become a crucial part of those very events; Chia-chi Wu examines small-screen technologies, often mobile and handheld, in their forging of translocal Chineseness; Marc Steinberg considers the material interface, metamorphosis, and convergence within a Japanese media sphere comprising video games, books, comics, animation films, and toys. And both Srinivas and Dickinson investigate video cultures that are evocative in their projections of what is yet to be, but are no less real for this virtuality.[32]

Among the corporeal tensions addressed in this volume's case studies, a crucial one is that between the idealized and the experiential bodies encountering everyday challenges. Take, for instance, the chapters by Heberer and Ghosh. The Singapore-born German video artist Ming Wong uses the repertoire of already "improper" images of Germanness, drawn from the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, to interrogate his own lived experiences as both a

model minority and a not-quite-German subject (Heberer). In Haoban Pawan Kumar's video, a Manipuri bodybuilder seeks to overcome the precariousness of his HIV-ravaged body by winning the "Mr. India" bodybuilding title, putting to question what it means to be Manipuri or Indian (Ghosh). While Kumar's and Wong's works evince "indie" or even avant-garde sensibilities, Tsung-lung Tsai's "immigrant brides" trilogy takes a much more mainstream, made-for-television approach; but as Hung shows in her essay, the trilogy is no less incisive in its exploration of the niggling "foreignness" of these women within Taiwanese society, hailing as they do from elsewheres such as Cambodia, Vietnam, and mainland China. Underlying these localized case studies is a common concern about the normative national body type and subjectivity; at a translocal level, this recurrent anxiety indexes structural presumptions about the idealized universal subject of modern history.

In its gestural capacities, the body also emerges as an expressive register for the dizzying folds of transnational culture and the contradictions of global capital. As Cho demonstrates in her analysis of fan videos responding to the K-pop artist Psy's "Gangnam Style," the music video that simultaneously celebrates and parodies the lifestyles of the super-wealthy and privileged in a Seoul neighborhood in terms of exaggerated, repetitive, and often comical dance movements, its planetary reception—recorded in equally over-the-top gestures of reaction ranging from hilarity to dumbfoundedness—reveals a wide array of affective positions from enchantment to aversion, tender fan choreography to corporate-sponsored dance contests. Here, the body is the medium for ambivalent negotiations of Asia's alleged inscrutability, as well as working out more cosmopolitical relationships to it. For Casey, the widespread physical symptom of Nigerian teenage girls in the throes of spirit possession—"dancing like they do in Bollywood musicals"—marks a rather spirited response to the censors' attempts to immunize infantilized national subjects from cultural corruption and deracination. In his essay on Chinese workers at the mercy of transnational capital, Neves focuses on ludic video dispersions that highlight the risks besetting laboring bodies. The young female worker who inserted the image of her smiling face onto the screen of a brand-new iPhone, and Cao Fei's video lampooning the modalities of haute couture fashion runways to critique labor practices in Chinese garment factories, employ aestheticized yet precarious corporealities to comment on shifting notions of labor and leisure and the constitution of risk-bearing subjects within a neoliberal world order.

Across these multifarious explorations of the video-body emerges a common, larger concern with how media figures in the biopolitical management

of the living and its milieu—especially in the wake of the digital. What media ecologies are forged in the triangulation between life processes, technological forms, and power structures? Media theorists such as Alex Galloway and Wendy Chun address a version of this question, in terms of contemporary iterations of the citizen-subject in the digital public sphere.[33] Now they experience a large part of their social and political lives via the mediation of codes, protocols, and communication systems that double as mechanisms of surveillance: they mutate into something like a "data subject" (see Shah's contribution in this volume).[34] Expanding and deepening the shifts that Gilles Deleuze characterized as the harbinger of "control societies," the so-called digital revolution refabricates subjecthood—imploding, distributing, prostheticizing it—even as it restructures governmentality.[35] Recent biotechnological innovations, inaugurating a parallel realm of code-based bioinformatics, allow not only unprecedented interventions in public health (now increasingly privatized), but also the intensification of monitoring in terms of compressed "fingerprints" ranging from the capture of indexical impressions of human digits to the mapping of DNA profiles. Signs of the quotidian convergence of the two realms, the biological and the cybernetic, are all around us: from the institution of universal identity cards (e.g., India's Aadhar card or Russia's universal electronic card) to the appearance of advertisements on social network sites reflecting one's online browsing history. In Ghosh's essay, national security and biosecurity converge to an unnerving degree; Dickinson's contribution on Syrian activism and Zimmermann's work on Southeast Asian media coalitions explore the possibilities and limits of digital interventions.

The idealized political agency associated with a Habermasian bourgeois public sphere is further attenuated by such radical transformations of the social subject. With transnational capital emerging as the main locus of a global *socius*, and the nation-state appearing more like its own spectral trace, the understanding of citizenship has shifted, and political and cultural agencies now materialize largely as consumption-like activities: note the preponderance of consumer boycotts, dial-in opinion polls, and social-network posts (so-called clicktivism). Even as nonrepresentative democratic participation seems to expand, democratic ideals and institutions appear to come "undone."[36] With contemporary life increasingly materialized, comprehended, and lived at the intersections of the biological and the cybernetic, how does the political get recalibrated, especially from Asianist perspectives?

Such questions about lived experiences, distributed agencies, and emergent politics converge in the concept of mediation: the ways in which media

forms, networks, and processes come to organize, shape, and energize "life itself"—now rethought to include the animate and the inanimate, the living and the nonliving, the monadic and the all-enveloping. A provocation that has emerged from the work of neovitalist media scholars such as Eugene Thacker, Sarah Kember, and Joanna Zylinska, and drawing on the increasing convergence of the informatic and the bioinformatic realms, the idea of mediation lends a centrality to media technologies and practices of mediatization in the production of social life.[37] In mediation, the older vitalist sense of "medium" comes together with the idea of "media" as technologies of representation and communication: now they interface, so that social space, media infrastructures, and practices of living become mutually constitutive.

While such a formulation across multiple levels, scales, and the living-nonliving divide presents the hazard of metaphysical romanticization, untethered from and unmindful of real divisions (remember various connective, immersive, plasmatic imaginaries—most notably the nineteenth century's ether), the specific contexts of the individual case studies collected here ground them in tangible materialities and power struggles. What do these situated instances of videopoiesis teach us? Beginning with the counterindustrial minimalism of well-known East Asian filmmakers, and the small screens that have now infiltrated every aspect of trans-Chinese life, Wu offers a meditation on *wei* or "micro" at various levels: mini-screen gadgets, microblogs and micromessages, short duration, modest mode, simple trope, small tone, basic affect, mundane lives, micropolitics—in short, the mediation of life in a minor key and the shaping of a populist governmentality. Srinivas tracks a "cultural turn" in the demand for a Telangana state separate from Andhra Pradesh, away from the earlier focus on regional underdevelopment and economic inequities. He shows how charges of an Andhra hegemony stifling local language and culture were made affectively compelling largely through YouTube uploads of literary works, film clips, and songs: media "crap" that, posted with little or no embellishment, was nevertheless drawn from the cultural fabric of regional life to highlight its distinctiveness. In her essay on Arab video cultures, Dickinson explores the political potentiations of two distinct replication-based media tactics that push well beyond monetization and copyright infringement: video artists' recycled footage of the Syrian uprisings seeking to highlight aspects of living-in-common, and the performative appropriation, in political demonstrations, of the widely recognizable blue-skinned Na'vi people from the Hollywood blockbuster *Avatar* (2009), now adorned with "Palestinian flags and kufiya loincloths." While not explicitly

articulated by Mukherjee and Singh, a far-ranging implication of their piece on Mewati video production arises from the Latin word *amator*, lover. The original impetus behind amateur media is not market exchange but the love of media. While Mewati media production has developed into an informally organized business, it sprang from a desire for self-expression: even as the videos enter localized circuits of exchange, they dabble in the art of engaged, intimate, sensuous living. Video's deep penetration of the life of the community—an intense form of circulation that cannot be blocked by censuring authorities—indexes the ingenuity and expertise involved in quotidian mediation.

In its imaginative flairs, affective orientations, and concrete entanglements, mediation enables a fluid, relational approach to the global. Rather than being pegged as an immutable universal structure, the global is imagined and worked out in myriad local ways, with media playing a vital role in such realizations. In the context of this collection, we might say that videopoiesis paves the way for cosmopoiesis. The global, from such a perspective, is best understood as an ongoing speculative project involving multiple scales, locations, temporalities: nonlinear, unpredictable, and evolving, it takes on the attributes of an emergence. Such contingent formulations of the global—or, rather, of an array of global orders—call attention not only to established modes of worldmaking, but also local, informal, and unauthorized forms of participation.

PARTICIPATION AND PENUMBRAL CAPACITIES

Participation has become such a buzzword with the rise of digital interactivity and social media that it is worth reminding ourselves that the concept did not emerge with Web 2.0. Political philosophers have evinced two distinct dispositions toward participation: excitement and anticipation about its untapped potentialities, and apprehension about its uncharted volatility, especially when participation takes the shape of popular expression and mobilization. Is the popular the tabula rasa that must be directed and molded by a cultural-political vanguard, or is it a space of dynamism where the politics of inhabiting the social (the digital, the global) is always already at play? The people, the masses, the multitude: these interchangeable terms register the ambivalences of and about popular participation. One question cuts across their varied nuances: *who is the subject of history?* Whether it is the Marxist proletarian subject of Revolution or the vote-bearing citizen-subject of Western democracies, both forms of agency have their moorings in the Enlightenment with its stress on humanist values, technoscientific rationality, and agnostic legality;

both presuppose a teleological realization of history.[38] This is why the unplanned and dispersed nature of political emergences remain problematic for both traditions: from Eric Hobsbawm's characterization of the consciousness of "primitive rebels" as "prepolitical" to the more recent criticisms of the Arab Spring and the Occupy and Umbrella Movements for their uncoordinated spontaneity, participatory irruptions get deprecated as immature and inconsequential for their intrinsic virtuality.[39]

In the Global South, the incommensurability between pedagogical ideals of participation and popular mobilizations is compounded by its strained spatio-temporalities. The turbulent historicity of the postcolonial subject (not to mention her postsocialist counterpart) complicate meaningful participation: questions of historical difference and cultural authenticity, derivative imaginations, and failed modernity shadow her every step. A wide range of tactics has been proposed for overcoming such challenges: from Édouard Glissant's "poetics of relation," drawing on postcolonial errantry and "the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures," to the subaltern studies project of recovering discounted epistemologies and agencies.[40] The subaltern, an errant figure in the dual and relational senses of deviant and itinerant, infiltrates the realm of the popular and usurps its affordances to figure out a participatory role in an increasingly variegated mainstream.

It is impossible to overlook the renewed salience that culture has come to enjoy in late modernity as a conduit to participation. If mass media and culture once stood as emblematic bad objects for acolytes of the Frankfurt School, contemporary modes of expression—mass cultural or subcultural—take on undeniable momentum as vital zones of possibility, powerful speaking positions, and tactical resources. With globalization and networked cultures, these possibilities multiply along unforeseen vectors: even the most ideologically compromised sectors of culture come to augment the crucial status of "the imagination as a social practice," not only keeping alive the possibility of small interruptions and subversions, but, more important, restructuring the social in profound ways.[41] Embracing current polemics about active users, porous creativities, and new solidarities, this collection takes seriously even the seemingly mundane itineraries of contemporary participatory cultures, suggesting more than a shift from consumer to "produser." But we also note that everyday instances of participation featuring producing consumers, which frequently move away from models of cultural agency projected by twentieth-century radical aesthetic movements, are signposts of a decidedly neoliberal economy of interactivity. Nevertheless, this participatory economy remains distinct from

a reifying culture industry with its top-down fabulations. The newly dominant cognitive-affective economy proliferates even as it fixes cultural differences (as brands, experiences, lifestyles, geographical indicators). It is crucially reliant on forms of labor previously taken to be nonproductive and now dispersed well beyond industrial sites—shoring up a "social factory" animated by "free labor." This labor not only blurs the line between pleasurable engagement and crass exploitation, but has also transformed what it means to play a part—a shift from ideological dupes to cruel optimists.[42] Our problem here is simple: the knowledge economy, with its dual pleasure-exhaustion logic, has come to define what it means to participate in economic, political, and cultural life. In this context, participation, too, becomes a technology in the narrow instrumentalist sense.

How do we keep track of the more heterogeneous, contingent, "southern" forms of participation in the face of this relentless instrumentality, which appears to enfold contingency itself? Paolo Virno's conception of the "multitude" is useful for us here, as it draws on just such instabilities and differences to postulate a global-participatory realm beyond "the people," signaling *a unity that is not one*. The concept zeroes in on a key shift in labor processes— from productive waged labor to the economy of the "general intellect." No longer satisfied with the extraction of a fixed number of labor hours from workers, post-Fordist relations of production now subsume and are sustained by a broad range of human occupations: our leisure and boredom, affects and desires, clicks and memes. This revamped conjunctural totality, in which "the gloomy dialectic between acquiescence and 'transgression'" is no longer sufficient, demands and offers new conduits for political engagement.[43] Beyond the resistance-acquiescence model, Virno offers a surprising definition or call for participation: *exit*. To exit is to defect; or as he puts it, "*Exit* consists of unrestrained invention which alters the rules of the game."[44] To deny hegemonic structures their controlling inevitability is to pursue and proliferate other options, thus putting pressure on—and seeking to shift—the very terms of legality and legitimacy. Virno's rejoinder is consonant with our claim that what is blocked from view, foreclosed, and made penumbral is also marked by exuberant potentialities. It suggests that what appears as shadowy or illegible from one perspective might be better understood, from another angle, as a tactical exit-as-participation (Glissant's *errantry* is particularly redolent here). Asian video cultures are not simply eclipsed by the teleologies of globalization discourse or digital media studies: they also point to deliberate departures that recalibrate the conditions in which contestation and creation take place. In this sense, they are *otherworldly*.

There is, of course, nothing inherently progressive about participation. New modes of production and distribution (sweatshop assembly recast as "free labor," transnational commodity chains, online distribution services), technohabits, trails, and tracking (from data mining to drone cameras) not only inspire new kinds and intensities of engagement, but also enforce specific forms of it. Greater access, as it is becoming increasingly evident, comes with more invasive forms of surveillance and regulation. Or as Deleuze coyly describes the shift from disciplinary society to societies of control: "A snake's coils are even more intricate than a mole's burrow."[45] While Deleuze's often cited "postscript," speculating about newly dominant and distributed forms of control and new weapons of response, casts a tall shadow over new media studies, what concerns us is its rather narrow vision of technomodernity.[46] Beginning as a manifesto-like treatise on digitization and modulation, even the ethereal diffusion of new economies of control, it also takes on a prescriptive dimension that, contrary to its rhetoric, channels "users" in particular molds. This includes shoring up long-standing tensions between "active" and "passive" agents, accentuated by oppositions between what is presumed to be dominant and aspects that lag. Such binaries have the effect of dividing populations into those with capacity and those without.

Such epistemic divisions of the world into zones of capacity and incapacity are at the heart of our critique of new media's participatory modes. We argue that the relative neglect of historically grounded conceptions and instances of participation vacates southern capacities and acts to trivialize participation itself. That the entrepreneurial-cum-consumer logics of Web 2.0 distinguish value-generating cultures of innovation from "primitive" cultures of imitation and corruption only acts to intensify long-standing exclusionary articulations of publics. Take the so-called informal sector, which remains a key arena for appreciating the overlooked potentialities of eclipsed modes of participation, and which includes many of the media formations that interest us here. If we acknowledge creativity beyond its abstract and universalized contours, and beyond the heroic figure of the startup entrepreneur, a world of situated capacities comes into view. We move from a focus on content and commodity to a consideration of the inventive tactics via which distinct, often underprivileged actors inhabit the present and make claims on the future.

Such tactical ingenuities lead us to the informal and unpredictable field of circulation—and hence video—which includes various unregulated, illegible, and unmeasured practices and flows. Circulation—as a set of cumulative

synergies, connective flare-ups, and opportunistic repurposings that are at once destabilizing and procreative—constantly modulates and remakes infrastructure itself. In this context, what once seemed concrete and stable is transformed into something fluid and ephemeral, so that improvisation and destabilization become central to its very operation. This processual understanding of creativity and its infrastructural substrate recasts the entire question of participation in a new light. Beyond the two poles of transcendental normativity and narrow instrumentality, the capacity for participation opens up to the manifold possibilities arising from the intersections of the cultural, the economic, and the political.

In thinking about creative capacities, we want to emphasize the links between informal infrastructures and what Partha Chatterjee has termed "political society." Chatterjee argues that the domain of political activity for many—indeed, "for most of the world"—lies outside the realm of civil society. The problems associated with an already striated public domain are compounded by the unfeasibility of rights-based claims: vast segments of the citizenry (not to mention fringe, undocumented groups) are unable to pursue their aspirations by civil means. In response, contingent publics resort to moral and other nonlegal languages, and sometimes to violence, calling out the contradictions in official discourse, tactically (re)routing "the Law" and short-circuiting state dispensations to their advantage. In short, uncivil and illegal means become an essential part of everyday social life. To focus analytical attention on this agonistic domain, Chatterjee proposes "political society" as a conceptualization of "the rest of society that lies outside the domain of modern civil society."[47] Our aim is to bring this notion of political society squarely into conversations about contemporary media worlds and popular cultures, and more specifically to steer research on media industries into the messy terrain of informal creative economies of the Global South.[48]

The shifting gap between civil and political societies drives our usage of the concept of the penumbra over more familiar terms like Ramon Lobato's shadow economies. In part, this is because the shadow's semantic field fixes certain media forms and practices as illegitimate, rather than casting light on the production and contestation of legitimacy itself. Indeed, Lobato and Julian Thomas's *The Informal Media Economy* usefully demonstrates how the informal is very often integral to, and interdependent with, official modalities. But if narratives of interdependency underscore transactions between seemingly polarized realms and remain crucial to understanding the value of grey-market practices, they offer incorporation as their typical endpoint.

Incorporation suggests a linearity, a process of becoming legitimate: it suppresses activities that do not lend themselves to marketization, state projects, or the increasing sway of the innovation industries. Thus, industry techies celebrate China's *shanzhai* culture precisely because they can easily incorporate and benefit from it. Here, street-level ingenuity effectively functions as outsourced research and development, promising all the profit with little risk: its other significations fade away.

Even if one were to accept the eventual capitalization of all media-related activities, and the adoption of efficiency and optimal rates of return as the most decisive metrics, "global media" remains a curiously divided phenomenon, with the international distribution of creative endeavors mimicking the international division of labor. And yet, no particular array of infrastructural assemblages is immune to the eddying forces of global circulation. As Steinberg's contribution to this volume demonstrates, considerations of regional-cultural-geopolitical circulation nuance our understanding of the global distribution of production-distribution capacities and infrastructures.[49] His essay is exemplary of this collection's challenge to key methodological proclivities of a hegemonic media industries paradigm, such as the subordination of the cultural to the political-economic, the dismissal of the local-popular in favor of global mass culture, and a narrow focus on media at the expense of crucial interpenetrations. But our volume pushes further, seeking to advance the study of penumbral industries—or, better still, industriousness. These shifts in focus rest on the belief that the social value of media cultures exceeds economic concerns in important ways. On the evidence of the case studies assembled here, practices such as covering, copying, reposting, archiving, multiplying, cohabitating, and becoming possessed exceed "representation" in the techno-aesthetic sense. These activities constitute, properly speaking, *more-than-representational* modes of mediation, which (re)circulate social and political capacities that are themselves generative.[50] In a fundamental sense, these ongoing mediations potentiate and achieve fresh alignments of the social, of our lived worlds.

A BRIEF ROADMAP

Infrastructures, *intimacies*, and *speculations*, the three sections organizing the book, highlight the work of video and actually existing forms of technomodernity in the global Asias. There is, expectedly, some overlap between the sections; nevertheless, the essays grouped together in each section share the

primary preoccupation signaled in its title. Thus, "Infrastructures" interrogates videomedia's technological, institutional, and geospatial conditions of possibility, tracking its passages between formal and informal organizations, high-tech and low-tech networks, content and platform, online and offline formats. "Intimacies" examines videomedia's fabrication of desiring publics and affective communities in terms of insides and outsides, familiar and unfamiliar, permissible and impermissible, while registering the dissolution of precisely such polarities. Finally, "Speculations" explores videomedia's embodied assemblies and emerging cultural and political geographies, not only acknowledging the untimely, the unseemly, the unhomely, but also gesturing toward the nascent, the virtual, even the unexpected.

Methodologically, *Asian Video Cultures* embraces materialist and ethnographic approaches, training a keen eye on ground-level sensuous engagements with media technologies and dispersed forms of affective politics that have no recognizably cogent endpoints. Such methodologies help illuminate everyday practices that are elided by the surprisingly common conflation of the global with a persistent imagination of the First World. At the same time, the collection refuses to jettison established modes of textual and ideological analysis. Those of us who study Asia (or the Global South) cannot afford to ignore textual idioms and ideological sleights of hand, as these are the grounds on which Asian creativities and worldviews get dismissed so often as trailing anomalies or recalcitrant idiosyncrasies. Attention to these multiple registers, and to the truck between them, map a media field that is strikingly—and profoundly—heterogeneous: it helps foreground various informal, diffuse, and possibly illicit media forms, circuits, and practices.

The volume's three organizing concepts—Asia, video, culture—exceed and escape all manners of standardizing tendencies, and implode normativities that now are bundled conveniently under the sign of neoliberalism. Indeed, one of the central interventions of this volume is the epistemological restitution of media phenomenologies that, for their allegedly divergent, ad hoc, and derivative nature, have long been relegated to the scandalous peripheries of global media. The real scandal, speaking more broadly, is the relentless orchestration of a hegemonic and universal global order (be it trade relations, media networks, or the idea of civil society), when actual experience is ineluctably multiple. What happens, this volume asks, when we consider the global in light of Asia—not just the glistening Asia showcased in triumphant narratives of capitalist expansion, but also the "southern" congeries of Asia embodied in the

teeming slums of Manila and Mumbai, the remote hinterlands of Tajikistan and Yunnan, or the vital informal economies of Seoul and Taipei?

Thus, collectively, our contributors examine not only the large media conglomerates, but also grassroots video interventions often directed against statist power, and the myriad colloquial media circuits and localized practices that constitute the domain of popular culture. At least two far-reaching ramifications of this approach are worth reiterating here. First, as a whole, the volume effectively offers a critical exploration of the global-popular, where the hyphen indexes not simply an additive model but a more intricate set of folds, intersections, and entanglements. Second, in acknowledging and recording digital modernity's tainted or overlooked southern manifestations, the volume shifts focus away from online, clean, high-res idealizations and offers a more expansive and accurate sense of global digital cultures. As a result, the "world picture" provided by a digital media studies firmly entrenched in Euro-American preoccupations begins to unravel, suggesting more accommodating and incisive conceptions of global media and digital humanities. Both these "gains" result from our collective attempt to overcome forms of epistemological blockage by positing a penumbral—multiple, dynamic, irrepressible, and illuminating—sense of Asia and the global. Otherwise, our discipline (in its various avatars) would remain mired in what, following Ackbar Abbas, is designable as "reverse hallucination": if a hallucination is seeing something that is not there, then its reverse, as Abbas argues, is not to see what *is*.[51]

NOTES >

1   We invoke the "Global South" not as a stable geographic entity, but as a mutating formation with its historically produced conflicts, injustices, and inequities. This formulation clearly echoes Gramsci's writings on southern Italy. On the pitfalls and potentialities of transporting the idea of "the South" from a nationalist setting to the global scale, see Cesare Casarino, "The Southern Answer: Pasolini, Universalism, Decolonization," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 4 (2010): 673–96.

2   On informal infrastructures of media circulation in the Global South, see, for instance, Erwin Alampay, ed., *Living the Information Society in Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009); Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Lawrence Liang, "Porous Legalities and Avenues of Participation," *Sarai: Bare Acts* (Delhi: Sarai, 2005); Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Ravi Sundaram, *Pirate Modernity: Delhi's Media Urbanism* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

3   In his well-known reading of the global history of capital, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that these insistent local traces come to constitute capital's "history 2s." Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), esp. 47–96.

4   Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," in *New Latin American Cinema Vol. I*, ed. Michael T. Martin, translation from *Cineaste* revised by Julianne Burton and Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, [1969] 1997), 37, emphasis in original.

5   For a more detailed development of this point, see Bhaskar Sarkar, "Theory of 'Third World Cinema,'" in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (New York: Routledge, 2013), 470–77.

6   Significant exceptions include Ziauddin Sardar, *Consumption of Kuala Lumpur* (London: Reaktion, 2000); Ackbar Abbas and John Nguyet Erni, eds., *Internationalizing Cultural Studies: An Anthology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004); Meaghan Morris and Mette Hjort, eds., *Creativity and Academic Activism: Instituting Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

7   Representative essays appear in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ileana Rodríguez, ed., *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

8   See Ranajit Guha's critique of Eric Hobsbawm in his magisterial *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, foreword by James Scott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), especially 5–7.

9   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular," *Postcolonial Studies* 8, no. 4 (2005): 475. Also see Swati Chattopadhyay and Bhaskar Sarkar, "Introduction: The Subaltern and the Popular," *Postcolonial Studies* 8, no. 4 (2005): 357–63.

10 Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Introduction: The Decolonial Question," *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1–46; Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

11 We employ "chaos" here in the positive sense that Ien Ang theorizes as capitalism's deep uncertainty. See Ien Ang, "In the Realm of Uncertainty: The Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity," in *Living Room Wars: Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. 175–76.

12 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1–2.

13 Jenkins had to pay more serious attention to populist mobilizations in Iran and the Arab world between 2009 and 2012. But even then, the "digital" remained very much the prerogative of select savvy netizens well versed in the use of proxy servers: "Iranian protesters were particularly well prepared to use digital networks to spread their perspectives, given the country's high level of digital literacy when compared to many of its neighbors in the region." And Jenkins's

lopsided understanding of the "global" is evident in seemingly innocuous assertions such as this: "Global citizens helped the Iranian protesters route around potential censorship and technical roadblocks, translated their thoughts into English, distinguished reliable information from rumors, passed what they had learned on to others, and rallied to force news outlets to pay more attention." Henry Jenkins, "Twitter Revolutions?," Spreadable Media, n.d., http://spreadablemedia.org /essays/jenkins/#.ViFqcBCrSqA.

14   A key problem here is the relative disappearance of video as a coherent field of study since the 1990s. While certain lineages related to video art, Internet videos, and guerilla TV-cum-DV activism persist, what is erased is the crass popularity of videomedia, including its manifold forms and site-specific uses. On the one hand, studies like Roy Armes's *On Video* (London: Routledge, 1988), Sean Cubitt's *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Lucas Hilderbrand's *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009) are largely predigital in their formulations and limited by U.S. and U.K. perspectives. On the other hand, more recent works like Yvonne Spielmann's *Video: The Reflexive Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), Akira Lippit's *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), Michael Newman's *Video Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), and the various readers published by Geert Lovink's Institute of Network Cultures, among others, are primarily invested in avant-garde politics and high-bandwidth practices. The unspoken implication of many such works is that everything beyond the well-worn video genealogies of art-activism-Internet, especially the aberrant practices of the Global South, are inconsequential to contemporary media cultures.

15   Liang, "Porous Legalities and Avenues of Participation"; Ramon Lobato and Julian Thomas, *The Informal Media Economy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

16   We borrow the concept of "accented" media from Hamid Naficy's *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), although in an expanded sense to cover a far broader range of media production than his original focus. We are invested in studying not only the interstitial and artisanal modes that emerge in conditions of exile and diaspora, but also the improvisational, do-it-yourself, and often piratical modes that characterize media production by rooted populations, as well as the cross-cultural circulation of media forms.

17   See the recent work of Partha Chatterjee, especially *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) and *Lineages of Political Society: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

18   See, particularly, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

19   Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, [1952] 2008).

20 Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Culture of Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 64; Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite, *Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?* (New York: New Press, 2007).

21 Lessig, *Free Culture*, 63.

22 Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema*; Madhavi Sunder, *From Goods to a Good Life: Mapping Global Justice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

23 Laikwan Pang, *Creativity and Its Discontents: China's Creative Industries and Intellectual Property Rights Offenses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 14.

24 Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

25 On the Act's ambiguous tone, see Bhaskar Sarkar, "Media Piracy and the Terrorist Boogeyman: Speculative Potentiations," *positions* 24, no. 2 (2016): esp. 353–60.

26 "Spotting the Pirates," *Economist*, August 20, 2011, http://www.economist.com/node/21526299. This pricing discrepancy is noted as a key structural factor behind global piracy in a Social Science Research Council report: Joe Karaganis, ed., *Media Piracy in Emerging Economies* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011), http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/media-piracy-in-emerging-economies/.

27 Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York: Zone, 2009), 61–68.

28 William Mazzarella, *Censorium: Cinema and the Open Edge of Mass Publicity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

29 Rey Chow, *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 1–2, 12.

30 Illuminating this context, for instance, are the three volumes in the *Resolutions* series, including Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg, eds., *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Ming-Yuen S. Ma and Erika Suderburg, eds., *Resolutions 3: Global Networks of Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

31 Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 9–10.

32 Indeed, the dream of Telengana as an autonomous province became a reality as Srinivas was writing his piece.

33 Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Works after Decentralization* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

34 See also Rita Raley, "Dataveillance and Counterveillance," in *"Raw Data" Is an Oxymoron*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 121–46.

35 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations: 1972–79*, by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 177–82.

36 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

37 Eugene Thacker, *Biomedia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

38 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

39 Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Norton, 1965).

40 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 144.

41 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 31.

42 Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), chap. 3, esp. 74–78. See also Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

43 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti et al. (New York: Semiotext[e], 2004), 70.

44 Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 70.

45 Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," 182.

46 Even the main thrust of Deleuze's arguments on technomodernity, directed against a post-Enlightenment understanding of the human, betrays its utterly Euro-American roots. Long-standing Asian traditions of thinking human-nonhuman relations—embodied, for instance, in the idea of the hermitage in the classical Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa's fifth-century play *Abhigyana Shakuntalam*, an idea revived in the early twentieth century by the poet Rabindranath Tagore—have a lot to offer for conceptions of technomodernity, not to mention contemporary "radical" posthumanist thought.

47 Partha Chatterjee, *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 169.

48 We follow Ravi Sundaram's useful extension of Chatterjee in the introduction to *Pirate Modernity*, 20–22.

49 Scholars like Michael Curtin, among others, have demonstrated the need for globally inflected studies of media industries. See, for instance, Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Largest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

50 We borrow the phrase from Hayden Lorimer's nuanced critique of Nigel Thrift's widely celebrated "non-representational theory." See Hayden Lorimer, "Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being 'More-than-Representational,'" *Progress in Human Geography* 29, no. 1 (2005): 83–94.

51 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 6–7.