

# **Sovereignty in Asia: Anthropological perspectives**

Instructor: Courtney Work 教授吳考甯 Wu Kǎoning

Email: [cwork@nccu.edu.tw](mailto:cwork@nccu.edu.tw); [courtney.k.work@gmail.com](mailto:courtney.k.work@gmail.com)

## **Course Description:**

This class will examine the institution of sovereign rule from the bottom up, taking stock of the emergence of ancient states and attending to three distinct, but shifting registers in which sovereignty emerges in modern formations. One addresses the nation-state as a territorially and ideologically bounded entity, another engages with indigenous understandings of social relationships with the earth, which folds into the third register of Indigenous People's sovereign claims to territory. To unpack these interconnected strands, we begin by examining ancient sovereigns from East and Southeast Asia using anthropological and archeological data to complicate the story of civilization. We will attend to god kings and emperors, as well as the modern forms of territorial control that emerged from those ancient states. With this, we will turn the assumption of teleological progress into a question. Is the institution of the sovereign nation part of an evolutionary process of human social life? To address this question, we turn to the cults of soil and water common to indigenous communities across the region. There are elements of these practices that are directly connected to ancient forms of sovereignty. Part of our work will be to identify this connective tissue, as well as what possibilities are severed in the shift to sovereignty. From this perspective, we can follow the trail of sovereignty as it emerges out of the resources it consumes and, in this context, will consider the contested spaces where contemporary Indigenous Peoples make sovereign claims. The purpose of this examination is to consider alternative ways to frame contemporary questions about territory, resources, and the organization of place and society. We will ask more questions than we answer in this class, and participants should come prepared to think together about the creative process of social organization.

## **Course Objectives:**

- In the context of changing planetary systems and unchanging political and economic activities, students will understand some of the historical processes that inform our current challenges
- Students will understand the history and development of modern sovereign nations
- Students will be able to make connections between sovereign nations and the geo-bio processes that sustain them
- Sovereign claims by Indigenous Peoples will be understood in the context of their deep history.

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Early Adventures in Sovereign Land Claims: The God King and Son of Heaven**

- 1- Early Kings- Foundations, Violence, and "Superstition"
  - a. Graeber, D., & Sahlins, M. (2017). On Kings. Hau Books. [Introduction, Ch. 1]

- a. Sima Qian. (2007). *The First Emperor*. Oxford University Press. [Introductions, Ch. 1 and 5]
  - b. Mus, P. (1933). [1975] *India Seen from the East: Indian and indigenous cults in Champa*. Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.
- 2- China – Emperors, and Nomads
- a. Lewis, M. E. (2007). *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. [pp. 1-29;178-205; Geography of Empire; Religion].
  - b. MacKay, Joseph. 2020. *Imperial Chinese Relations with Nomadic Groups*. In, *Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations: Before and After Borders*. Edited by Jamie Levin. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 197-216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28053-6>.
- 3- Southeast Asia- Devaraja to Chakravartan
- a. Heine-Geldern, R. (1942). *Conceptions of the State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2(1), 15–30.
  - b. Day, Tony. 2002. *Fluid Iron: State Formation in Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. [Ch. 1 & 3]
- 2- Sovereignty, Women, and Religion
- a. McAllister, C., & Napolitano, V. (2021). *Political Theology/Theopolitics: The Thresholds and Vulnerabilities of Sovereignty*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 50, 109–124. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-101819-110334>
  - b. Yongqian, Su, and Kathryn Henderson. 2017. “An Exploration of the Queen Mother of the West from the Perspective of Comparative Mythology.” *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 3 (1): 72–90. <https://doi.org/10.1163/23521341-12340044>.
  - c. Thompson, A. (2016). *Engendering the Buddhist State: Territory, Sovereignty and Sexual Difference in the Inventions of Angkor*. London: Routledge. [Introduction Presis 2, pp. 2-18; Chapter 2, 71-110]

## Sovereignty and Europe

- 6- European model of sovereignty and modernity
- a. Bodin, Jean. 2009. *On Sovereignty: Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Oxford: The Alden Press. [Book 1]
  - b. Croxton, Derek. 1999. “The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty.” *The International History Review* 21 (3): 569–91.
  - c. Lopez, Julia Costa, Benjamin De Carvalho, Andrew A. Latham, Ayse Zarakol, Jens Bartelson, and Minda Holm. 2018. “Forum: In the Beginning There Was No Word (For It): Terms, Concepts, and Early Sovereignty.” *International Studies Review* 20 (3): 489–519. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ISR/VIY053>.
- 7- Sovereign Exception and the Nomos of the Earth
- a. Schmitt, C. (1950). *The Nomos of the Earth: in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Telos Press Publishing. [Part 1: pp. 42-86]
  - b. Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press. [pp 1-67- Introduction and Part 1]
  - c. Lee, Seung Ook, Najeeb Jan, and Joel Wainwright. 2014. “Agamben, Postcoloniality, and Sovereignty in South Korea.” *Antipode* 46 (3): 650–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12070>.

## Sovereignty and Colonization

### 9- Mainland Southeast Asia – Sovereign Thailand

- a. Thongchai, Winichakul. 1994. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. [Intro, Ch. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7]

### 10- East and South Asia

- a. Chen, Edward I-te. 1970. "Japanese Colonialism in Korea and Formosa: A Comparison of the Systems of Political Control." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 30: 126–58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2718768.pdf>.
- b. Kohno, M. (2001). On the Meiji Restoration: Japan's search for sovereignty? *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 1, 265–283.
- c. Hansen, Thomas Blom. 2021. "Sovereignty in a Minor Key." *Public Culture* 33 (1): 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8742160>.

## Trade-Sovereignty-Energy: Before (or without) the Kings

### 11- General Concepts: Founders, Zomia, and the land between the kings

- a. O'Connor, R. A. (2003). Founder's Cults in Regional and Historical Perspective. In N. Tannenbaum & C. A. Kammerer (Eds.), *Founders' Cults in Southeast Asia: Ancestors, Polity, and Identity* (pp. 269–311). Yale University Southeast Asia Studies.
- b. Scott, J. C. (2009). *The Art of not being Governed: an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press. [Preface and Introduction]
- c. Baumann, B. (2020). Reconceptualizing the Cosmic Polity: The Tai mueang as a social ontology. In B. Baumann & D. Bultmann (Eds.), *Social Ontology, Sociocultures, and Inequality in the Global South*. Routledge.

## Sovereignty Reconsidered

### 12- Sovereignty and Contemporary Indigenous Movements

- a. Marisol de La Cadena & Orin Starn. 2007. *Indigenous Experience Today* (Wenner-Gren International Symposium Series). New York: Berg Publishers. [Introduction and Chapter 7]
- b. Bauder, Harald, and Rebecca Mueller. 2021. "Westphalian Vs. Indigenous Sovereignty: Challenging Colonial Territorial Governance." *Geopolitics* 00 (00): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1920577>.
- c. Mignolo, Walter D. 2021. *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. [Chapter 14]

### 13- Sovereignty and Territory

- a. Menshawy, Mustafa. 2019. "Constructing State, Territory, and Sovereignty in the Syrian Conflict." *Politics* 39 (3): 332–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718770>
- b. Ginoza, Ayano. 2012. "Space of ' Militourism ': Intimacies of U.S. and Japanese Empires and Indigenous Sovereignty in Okinawa." *International Journal of Okinawan Studies* 3 (1): 7–23. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/34106> .
- c. Longkumer, Arkotong. 2020. "Indigenous Futures: The Practice of Sovereignty in Nagaland and Other Places." In *Indigenous Religion(s): Local Grounds, Global Networks*, edited by Siv Ellen Kraft, Bjørn Ola Tafjord, Arkotong Longkumer,

Gregory D. Alles, and Greg Johnson. London: Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003021513>.

14- Which Sovereign; Which exception?

- a. Povinelli, E. A. 2016. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Duke University Press. [pp. 30-56; 92-118; *Can Rocks Die? Life and Death inside the Carbon Imaginary; The Normativity of Creeks*]
- b. Boelens, R., Escobar, A., Bakker, K., Hommes, L., Swyngedouw, E., Hogenboom, B., Huijbens, E. H., Jackson, S., Vos, J., Harris, L. M., Joy, K. J., Castro, F. de, Duarte-Abadía, B., Souza, D. T. de, Lotz-Sisitka, H., Hernández-Mora, N., Martínez-Alier, J., Roca-Servat, D., Perreault, T., ... Wantzen, K. M. 2023. Riverhood: political ecologies of socionature commoning and translocal struggles for water justice. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 50(3), 1125–1156.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2022.2120810>
- c. Matthews, Daniel. 2021. “Reframing Sovereignty for the Anthropocene.” *Transnational Legal Theory* 12 (1): 44–77.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20414005.2021.1929022>.

**Further Reading:**

- Aldrich, R., & McCreery, C. (2020). " Monarchies, decolonisation and post-colonial Asia". In *Monarchies and decolonisation in Asia*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. Retrieved Sep 6, 2021, from <https://www.manchesterhive.com/view/9781526142702/9781526142702.000>
- Aung-Thwin, Michael A. *Pagan: the origins of modern Burma*. University of Hawaii Press, 2019.
- Beeson, Mark. 2003. “Sovereignty under Siege: Globalisation and the State in Southeast Asia.” *Third World Quarterly* 24 (2): 357–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659032000074637>.
- Burman, A. (2020). Black hole indigeneity: the explosion and implosion of radical difference as resistance and power in Andean Bolivia. *Journal of Political Power*, 13(2), 179–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2020.1764802>.
- Cardozo, Mario Luis. 2014. “Governing Indigenous Territories: Enacting Sovereignty in the Ecuadorian Amazon.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41 (September): 642–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2014.924682>.
- Cecil, E.A., 2020. A Natural Wonder: From Liŋga Mountain to Prosperous Lord at Vat Phu. *Primary Sources and Asian Pasts*, 8, p.341.
- Delang, Claudio O. 2003. *Living at the Edge of Thai Society: The Karen in the Highlands of Northern Thailand*. Edited by Claudio O.Delang. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Durrenberger, E. P. (1996). *The Power of Culture and the Culture of States*. In E. P.Durrenberger (Ed.), *State Power and Culture in Thailand*. Yale University Southeast Asia Studies
- Jean Comaroff, and John L.Comaroff. 2016. *The Truth about Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.
- Elkholy, R. (2016). *Being and Becoming: Embodiment and experience among the Orang Rimba of Sumatra*. Berghahan Books.
- Gibson, T. (2011). *Egalitarian Islands in a Predatory Sea*. In *Anarchic Solidarity: Autonomy, Equality, and Fellowship in Southeast Asia* (pp. 270–293). Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Monograph 60.

- Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2006. "Sovereignty Revisited." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123317>.
- Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hirsch, Cecilie. 2017. "Between Resistance and Negotiation: Indigenous Organisations and the Bolivian State in the Case of TIPNIS." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 0 (0): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1394846>.
- Holt, John Clifford. 2009. *Spirits of the Place: Buddhism and Lao Religious Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-4160-4389-8.50161-8>.
- Johnson, Andrew. 2011. "Re-Centring the City: Spirits, Local Wisdom, and Urban Design at the Three Kings Monument of Chiang Mai." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42 (3): 511–31.
- Kang, D. C. (2020). International order in historical east asia: Tribute and hierarchy beyond sinocentrism and eurocentrism. *International Organization*, 74(1), 65-93. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818319000274>
- Kapusta, Jan. 2016. "Maya Intimacy with the Mountains: Pilgrimage, Sacrifice and Existential Economy." *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 10 (1): 25–41.
- Levin, Jamie. 2020. *Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations: Before and after Borders*. Edited by Jamie Levin. *Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations: Before and After Borders*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28053-6>.
- Li, X., Zhang, S., Lu, M., Qiu, M., Wen, S., & Ma, M. (2020). Dietary shift and social hierarchy from the Proto-Shang to Zhou Dynasty in the Central Plains of China. *Environmental Research Letters*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ab6783>
- Milner, A. C. (1981). Islam and Malay Kingship. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, 46–70.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (Ed.). (2007). *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003117353>
- Munn, Mark H. *The Mother of the Gods, Athens, and the tyranny of Asia: a study of sovereignty in ancient religion*. Univ of California Press, 2006.
- Munn, N. D. (1996). Excluded spaces: The figure in the Australian aboriginal landscape. *Critical Inquiry*, 22(3), 446–465. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448801>
- O’Lemmon, Matthew. 2014. "Spirit Cults and Buddhist Practice in Kep Province, Cambodia." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 45 (01): 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463413000623>.
- Park, Clara Mi Young, Ben White, and Julia. 2015. "We Are Not All the Same: Taking Gender Seriously in Food Sovereignty Discourse." *Third World Quarterly* 36 (3): 584–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1002988>.
- Petit, P. (2020). *History, Memory, and Territorial Cults in the Highlands of Laos: The past inside the present*. Routledge.
- Philpott, Daniel. 1995. "Sovereignty: An Introduction and Brief History" *Journal of International Affairs* 48 (2): 353–68.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2021. *Between Gaia and Ground: Four Axioms of Existence and the Ancestral Catastrophe of Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Quijada, Justine Buck. 2020. "Resource Sovereignty Beyond Socialism and Capitalism." *Anthropology News*. 2020. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.14506/AN.1519>.

- Rippa, Alessandro. "Re-Writing Mythology in Xinjiang: The Case of the Queen Mother of the West, King Mu and the Kunlun." *The China Journal* 71 (2014): 43-64.
- Roseman, Marina. 1998. "Singers of the Landscape Song, History, and Property Rights in the Malaysian Rain Forest." *American Anthropologist* 100 (1): 106–21.
- Rothschild, Norman Harry. "Wu Zhao and the Queen Mother of the West." *Journal of Daoist Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 29-56.
- Saranillio, Dean Itsuji. 2013. "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference." *Settler Colonial Studies* 3 (3–4): 280–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810697>.
- Sidaway, J. D. 2003. "Sovereign Excesses? Portraying Postcolonial Sovereigntyscapes." *Political Geography* 22 (2): 157–78. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(02\)00082-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(02)00082-3).
- Song, Seung Won. 2020. "A Heavenly Nymph Married to an Arab Sayyid: Stranger-Kingship and Diarchic Divisions of Authority as Reflected in Foundation Myths and Rituals in North Maluku, Indonesia\*." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48 (140): 116–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1675279>.
- Stark, M. T. (2019). *Universal Rule and Precarious Empire: Power and Fragility in the Angkorian State*. In N. Yoffee (Ed.), *The Evolution of Fragility: Setting the Terms* (pp. 161–182). McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
- Sturm, C. (2017). *Reflections on the Anthropology of Sovereignty and Settler Colonialism: Lessons from Native North America*. *Cultural Anthropology*, 32(3), 340–348. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.3.03>
- Tannenbaum, N. B., & Kammerer, C. A. (2003). *Founders' Cults in Southeast Asia: Ancestors, polity, and identity*. Yale University Press.
- Tambiah, S. J. (1976). *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*. Cambridge University Press.
- Usher, Mark. 2020. "Territory Incognita." *Progress in Human Geography* 44 (6): 1019–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519879492>.
- Esterik, P. Van. (1996). *Nurturance and Reciprocity in Thai Studies*. In *State Power and Culture in Thailand*. Yale University Southeast Asia Studies. pp. 22-46
- Wessing, R. (2017). *The lord of the land relationship in southeast Asia. Spirits and Ships: Cultural Transfers in Early Monsoon Asia*, 515–556
- Wiessner, P. (2002). *The vines of complexity: Egalitarian structures and the institutionalization of inequality among the Enga*. *Current Anthropology*, 43(2), 233–269. <https://doi.org/10.1086/338301>