

Linga Travel: Dissecting Phallic Symbolism in South and Southeast Asian Context

Axle Christien J. Tugano

Division of History

University of the Philippines Los Baños

ajtugano1@up.edu.ph

Two decades have passed since my companion and I were summoned to the principal's office due to the phallic figures that we drew on the classroom's blackboard. Back then, as a child, I thought that it was a normal and wholesome thing to do. We have also seen phallic drawings on walls, chairs, and the back of a dusty car window. Before that, our teacher slapped our hands and told us that they were going to summon our parents. It was allegedly a "*kabastusang hindi dapat ipinapakita sa isang paaralan* (a perverted thing not to do inside the school premises)." We grew up in a Filipino society where topics that are related to genitalia and sex are considered taboo, whereas the precolonial communities have enriched cultures related to them, such as in the form of riddles (Eugenio 2005) and folktale (Eugenio 2006). These are both valued as body parts with depth in terms of their relevance and social utility.

As of today, discourses around topics related to genitalia and reproductive organs are scarce. For instance, in 2006, GMA I-Witness, one of the foremost documentary shows in the Philippines, aired an episode entitled "*Lukayo: Hindi ito Bastos*" (Lukayo: This is not Rude!) reported by Howie Severino. It was about old women (Lukayo) of Kalayaan, Laguna, who subscribed to the belief in anything related to the phallus as part of rituals to gain and improve one's fertility and married life. It was, however, tagged by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) as sexually explicit, and it was later removed from being aired on National Television (Katigbak 2006). Additionally, in 2022, one episode of Family Feud Philippines featured a teenage girl who was asked by the host the question, *In Filipino, anong body part ang nagsisimula sa "T"?* (In Filipino, what body part starts in the letter "T"?) (Family Feud Philippines 2022). To which the contestant earnestly replied, "*titi*" (penis), while its mouth was censored while saying it on National Television, albeit the word is indeed a body part. It was paradoxical and, most importantly, hypocritical when the inclusion of sexual innuendo in the aforementioned documentary and reality show s was censored, while many audiences find the vulgarity and misplaced misogynistic jokes made by the former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte in his presidential speeches, wherein he boasted about the size and length of his phallus while making fun of his female political opponents (*cf.* Tugano and Santos 2022; Tugano 2023). Duterte's phallocentric politics, according to Rafael (2021), *is central to his authoritarian imagination, using the image of his penis to put both men and women in their putative places.*

While growing up, I gradually realized the relevance of the body as discourse. Similar to the concept of *somatic society*, which was mentioned by Turner (1992), it is pivotal that discourses on the body be included in Philippine society in relation to the study of the body as tools for political and cultural discourses. During the period of my travels overseas 2013-2023, one phallic symbol caught my attention. I desire d to go beyond the interpretation of an acquaintance when that person saw some of the phallic wall paintings in Bhutan when they posted on a Facebook wall and tagged them as "silly" and "sexually explicit." Moreover, this essay aims to prove that this is beyond vulgarity since various Asian societies and communities have exhibited in-depth interpretations related to phallic symbols and phallus in general. This essay highlights the preliminary information gathered

regarding phallic symbolism in some of the countries that I have been to: Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos (Lao PDR), Thailand, and Indonesia.

Phallic Festival

Phallic Festivals can be commonly seen in communities under the influence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Hinduism-Buddhism (see table 1). The two aforementioned religions both ~~held~~ hold the linga-lotus= linga+yoni of Padmapani or Buddha (Wake 1870) and linga (*i.e.*, *ekamukhalinga*, *mukhalinga*, or *lingaparvata* as manifestations [*murti*] of Shiva). On the other hand, Japan, being a society that embraces both Buddhism and Shintoism (indigenous beliefs) has also shown a value for linga. As per Chapin (1934), in 970 CE, an encounter between Buddhism and Shintoism occurred wherein both have the practice of worshipping *Sae no kami*, a haring with the head of a bull, who is commonly linked to linga.

Table 1
Some of the *phallic festivals* with Buddhist, Hindu, and Shinto influences

Selected Phallic Festival (or with valuing)	Location	Religion/ Worldview
Kanamara Matsuri Festival (Mendonca et al. 2020)	Kawasaki, Japan	Shintoism
Nagaoka Hodare Matsuri Festival (Turnbull 2015; Kim 2019)	Niigata, Japan	Shintoism
Ha Festival (Pommaret and Tobgay 2008)	Lhuntshe, Bhutan	Buddhism
Tshechu Festival (Ping 2021)	Punakha, Bhutan	Buddhism
Holi/Eloji Festival (Yellow Fields 2021)	West Rajasthan, India	Hinduism
Na Nhem Festival (Saigoneer 2016)	Lang Son, Vietnam	Tam Giao ¹
Tro Tram Festival (VNExpress 2017)	Phu Tho, Vietnam	Tam Giao
Bun Bang Fai (Rocket Festival)	Vientiane, Laos (Molloy n.d.)	Buddhism
	Yashoton, Thailand (Winn 2010)	Buddhism
Phi Ta Khon (Thailand Foundation n.d.)	Isan, Thailand	Buddhism

Kathmandu, Nepal

In 2013, I went to Nepal, the birthplace (Lumbini) of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha in 633 BCE. From Nepal, Buddhism spread all the way to India, which later spread to China, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia (Roxas-Lim 1973). There was a time when, in many communities throughout Asia, a syncretized belief in both Buddhism and Hinduism emerged. It includes their belief in and value of linga (Sheean 1951). In Hinduism, linga is a manifestation (*murti*) of Shiva as a creator (DiBiasio 2013), while in Buddhism, they believe that Padmapani or Buddha once got out of a lotus (flower); however, according to some, it was two (2) symbolisms for linga and yoni (vagina) (Wake 1870). The most sacred place in Kathmandu, Nepal, is the Pashupatinath Temple; erected near the sacred Bagmati River that is being offered to Shiva (Tugano 2022a). Both linga and yoni are featured in this area (see figure 1), which has been worshipped by Nepalese since time immemorial.



Figure 1. linga and yoni in Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu, Nepal

Mui Ne, Binh Thuan, Vietnam

India has a large influence in Champa. However, that said influence had started in the middle part of Vietnam (Nguyen 2005), which spread to the south, where evidence of the expansion of Hinduism-Buddhism and its encounters can be traced. An example of this is the Poshanu Cham Tower at the top of Ba Nai Hill, Mui Ne, Vietnam.



Figure 2. linga and yoni in Mui Ne, Vietnam. (2a) linga-shaped structure facing one of the three (3) important Champa temples in Mui Ne; (2b) shown how objects made of stone are being offered to linga and yoni.

It was built in the 9th century using the traditional Hon Lai design, a common design in South Vietnam during that period. The widespread worship of linga and yoni is evident in that area (figure 2). In the structure called Principal Tower A, a combination of blue and black-colored linga and yoni is commonly worshipped (figure 2b) together with carved stones to create a form of linga (figure 2a), while Tower B is a place of worship for Nandin, a cow-shaped *anito/u*, and Tower C is used to worship the God of Fire. During the period of 1994-2000, many artifacts were excavated that are believed to be worshipped and valued by the Champas, who followed the beliefs of Hinduism. During the month of October, the Kate Festival or *Mbang Kate*, is celebrated in three temples, namely: Po Nagar, Po Klong Garai, and Po Rome (Vietnam Online n.d.). Shamans commonly offer prayers and dances in these temples, together with flower bundles, food, and items in front of the linga-yoni. There is a possibility that this influence reached the Philippines, which was also possibly taught to the kingdom of Champa in Vietnam. According to Reid (1988), a recorded commercial encounter between the Philippines and Champa took place in ports during the 11th and 12th centuries, which was repeated during the period of 1450 to 1567, the time when commercial relations between China and the Philippines were greatly established.²

Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The beginning and dominance of the Funan kingdom from 100 CE to 600 CE, which was spearheaded by Kaundinya, can be traced through the legends of Khmer. It was believed that he [Kaundinya] brought Hinduism and Sanskrit to Kampuchea (Salazar et al. 2010). The kingdom was then led by Chenla, which was divided into two parts: (1) the land Chenla, which became powerful and strong; and (2) the water Chenla where the Sumatran and Javanese attacked, which led to the success of Jayavarman II, the founder of Angkor and Khmer (900 CE to 1,500 CE) (Salazar et al. 2010). The development of Angkor was evident during his reign until the reign of his son, Jayavarman III. However, as Chandler (2008) argued, there were only a few inscriptions dedicated to this event and to the two leaders, and some scholars believed that some parts of the story were exaggerated. Moreover, the construction of Angkor Wat can be traced to their reign in the 12th century. As per Lasco (2014), these “big infrastructures” were used for communal and religious purposes; as a monument to celebrate great people; and as the citadel or center of government.

The design of the temples inside Angkor was Hindu-Buddhism-inspired. Most Khmer kings considered themselves as *devaraja* or god-kings (Aeusrivongse 1976). For this reason, citizens of Angkor have been treated the same.

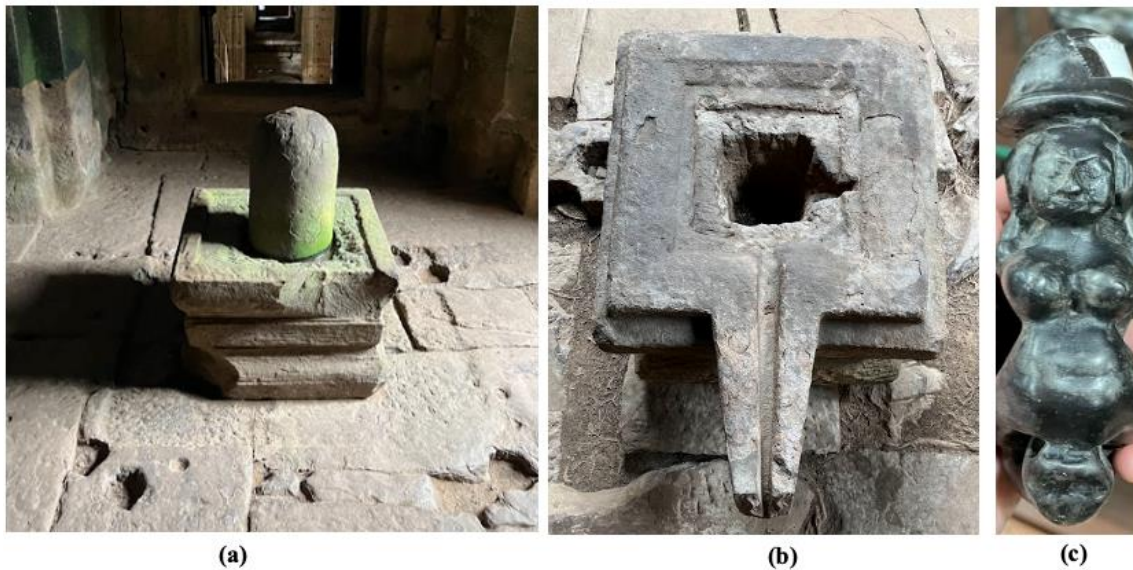


Figure 3. linga and yoni inside Angkor Wat. (3a) the showcase of linga as a symbol of Khmer kings; as a manifestation of Shiva; (3b) a yoni without a linga; and (3c) a carved figure of a naked woman around a linga that can be seen in a street as a souvenir in Angkor Wat.

The combination of linga and yoni can be seen inside of Angkor Wat (figure 3). As mentioned in the concept of *devaraja*, the Khmer kings have seen themselves as manifestations of Shiva (The Metropolitan Museum n.d.a.) (figure 3a). This is the reason ~~why~~ linga or lingam (*cf.* Albanese 2006; DiBiasio 2013) is also a symbol of kings, which also shows appreciation for the value of women (figure 3b).³ A figure of a naked woman around a linga is also seen as a symbol of linga (figure 3c).

The Angkor National Museum is located in Siem Reap, where the old history of Khmer can be seen. It is divided into seven sections⁴ and various linga and yoni can be found in Gallery B: Religion and Beliefs (figure 4). Each one of these has a distinct feature. One linga is called *ekamukhalinga* due to a carved face in it, while *mukhalinga* is the general term for all linga with a face on it. During the preAngkorian, Shiva was often represented as a linga; as a symbol of fecundity and the force of life. It can be noticed that there are three levels of linga (figure 4a-4f) due to its cubic base, which represents Brahma; the octagonal shaft in the middle is to represent Vishnu; and the rounded head is to represent Shiva (Angkor National Museum 2019).

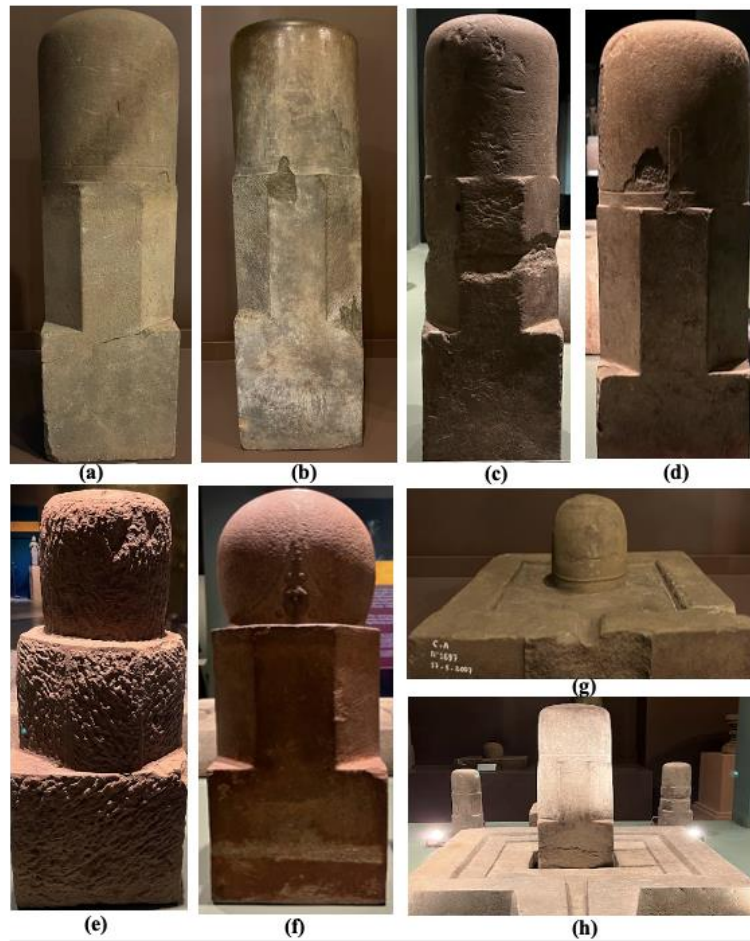


Figure 4. linga in Angkor National Museum. (4a) *snanadromi* - provenance is unknown, (4b) linga that was found in Prasat Bei, Siem Reap and estimated to be a part of Pre-Angkorian Bophoun design in 11th century, (4c) Shiva linga without provenance, (4d) Shiva linga without provenance, (4e) Shiva linga without provenance, (4f) *mukhalinga* that was made in sandstone; found in Wat Chhoeu Teal, Treang, Takeo; (4g) Shiva linga that was found in Phnom Bakheng Temple, Siem Reap, (4h) linga and yoni that was found in Takeo Temple and believed to be carved during the Angkorian Period.

I have seen similar figures in the National Museum of Cambodia in the capital city of Phnom Penh (figure 5). There is yoni with linga inside (figure 5a) and some without linga inside (figure 5b), which is said to represent a cow. The worship of cows in Hindu Buddhism is both symbolical and semantic, due to the representation of cows as a mother who provides milk to her offspring (Ferro-Luzzi 1980). It is important to see the symbol of Tara breastfeeding Shiva or, at times, a cow who is breastfeeding Shiva (figure 6). According to As-per Salazar (2010), when Shiva died after drinking poison from the ocean, Tara embraced him and breastfed Shiva, similar to an infant, for Shiva to live again and remove the effects of the poison.

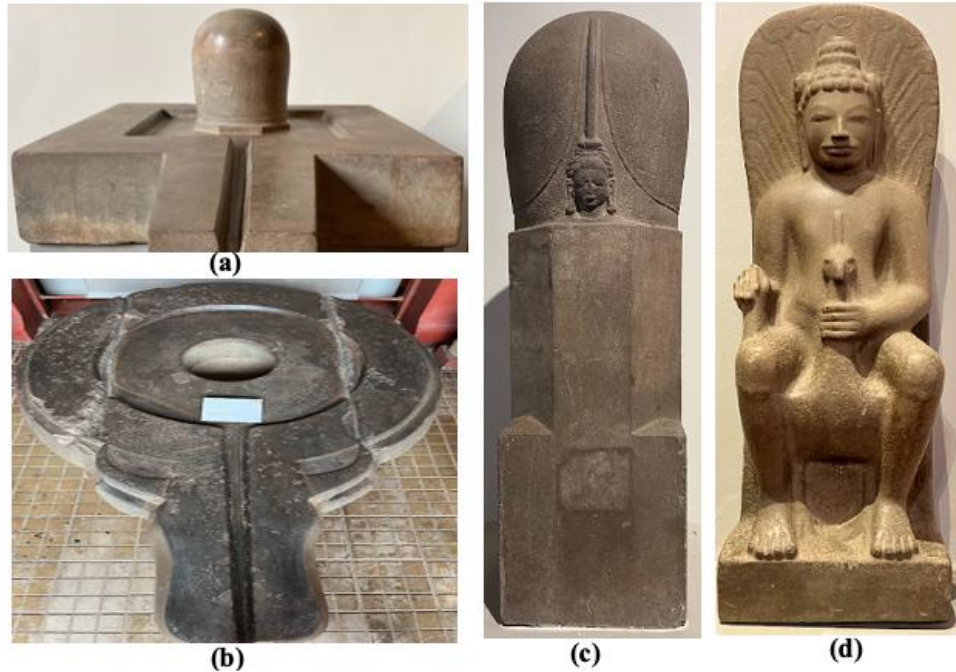


Figure 5. linga and yoni at the National Museum of Cambodia. (5a) *linga avec yoni* (linga with a yoni inside) found in Angkor Thom; (5b) *yoni* with a buffalo head under a Phnom Da style; a prominent design during the 6th century (Pre-Angkorian Period) that was found in Phnom Da, Angkor Borei, Takeo; (5c) the *mukhalinga* that was discovered in 7th–8th century in Wat Bodhi Metrei, Takeo; (5d) Skanda, which can be found in Toueuk Chha, Kampong Siem, Kampong Cham in the 7th century.



Figure 6. A cow and Shiva in Kathmandu, Nepal. It is shown to the Nepalese society how cows are well respected and valued. They believe that in order for Shiva to live, a cow breastfed him.

On the other hand, one *mukhalinga* can be seen, which can be considered an *ekamukhalinga* due to a head figure attached to it (figure 5c). *Skanda* is also present (figure 5d), a sitting figure holding a peacock that emulates one's linga (The National Museum of Cambodia 2015). According to their belief, the peacock (which at times can be ridden or placed near a linga) symbolizes fertility and aggressiveness in a war (The Metropolitan Museum n.d.b.).

Champassak, Laos

Laos (particularly the middle part) was once a part of the Chenla kingdom from 600 CE to 900 CE, a vassal regime that snatched the throne from Funan (Salazar et al. 2010). However, according to Briggs (1951), the Khmer kingdom (after the reign of Chenla) embraced Sivanism, or Shivanism, a highly devoted worship of Shiva. An example of this was the Vat Phu, also known as *lingaparvata*, or ‘mountains of linga’ that was offered to Shiva. It is located in the southern part of Laos, particularly in Champassak. I was able to reach the area in Champassak where an enriched pre-Angkorian civilization took place. Vat Phu became one of the most important temples dedicated to the worship of Shiva (Shivaite Place) (figure 7), since Shiva’s linga can be found at the top of *Lingaparvata* where sources of water can be found (figure 7a). It was first called *Lingaparvata* by the Khmer; however, at the start of the 13th century, it became a temple for Buddhists to conduct their rituals of worship (Marzano and Pancaldi 2018).



Figure 7. linga and yoni in Vat Phu, Champassak, Laos. (7a) a yoni-shaped deck where the water that comes from *lingaparvata* flows down (Shiva’s mountain of linga); (7b) an abandoned yoni in the *upper terrace* of Vat Phu, (7c) linga-shaped posts with a 40 x 60 meter dimension facing each other in the Northern Pavilion and Southern Pavilion; and (7d) Shiva’s linga sanctuary at the bottom of a cave located at the top of the mountain.

I had the chance to conduct a short interview with Roberto Marzano⁵ (figure 8), one of the authors of *Vat Phu: The Mountain of Shiva*, in Pakse, Laos. According to him, one symbolism of linga and yoni (figure 7b) is an indication of the equality of women to men in Hindu-Buddhism religions (Marzano 2023). While linga structures, which are made of sandstone, are located in Vat Phu (figure 7c), murals depicting Shiva's companionship with his wife, Uma (Parvati), are also present (Marzano and Pancaldi 2018). It is common to see in yoni to receive water from the linga of Shiva. And that said linga of Shiva (figure 7d) offered items and worshipped them as part of their rituals (Vat Phou n.d.).

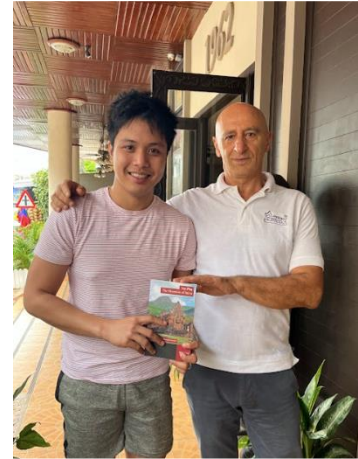


Figure 8. A photograph with Roberto Marzano, one of the authors of *Vat Phu: The Mountain of Shiva*. Marzano grew up in Bologna, Italy and is currently residing in Laos.

Bangkok, Thailand

Plad khik, or *palad khik* has been interpreted due to the photographs captured by Aaron Viernes of the Department of History, UP Diliman, which were then cited by Bolata (2022). This was seen in the National Museum of Thailand. As per Bolata (2022), *palad khik* is an example of amalgamation between Hinduism and animism, wherein linga became a charm. Wooden carvings of penises tied up to the waists of a child are evident. A common practice was for the male children to wear these carvings into their waist to discourage any form of spiritual possession (i.e., so that ghosts can be moved away from taking an interest in a child into taking him to the world of ghosts). As per Iamkhorpung and Kosuta (2022), there are two classifications of amulets in Thai society. The first one is called *phra khrueng*, or amulets with carvings of Buddha's image, prominent monks, or Rama (kings). The second one is called *khrueng rang*, which is commonly animistic. *Takrut* (talisman) and other phallic symbols can be placed under this classification.

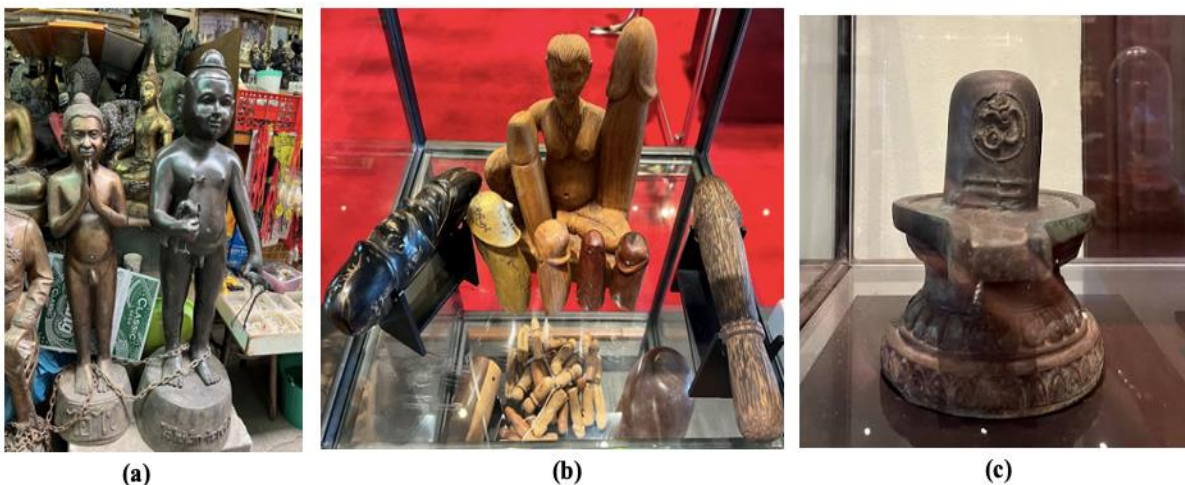


Figure 9. phallic symbol in Bangkok, Thailand. (9a) *kuman thong*, or child with penis, in Maharat Road; (9b) phallic objects as amulets inside the Museum Siam; and (9c) linga at yoni in the Museum Siam.

On the contrary, according to Harris (2000), *palad khik* was also used by monks as amulets, which were often merged with magic. Moreover, *palad khik* is a representation of a lingam or linga under Shiva that aims to promote fertility. While most of the *khrueng rang* are human-like figures, not all of them are representing spiritual forms of sacred beings in Buddhism (i.e., *kuman thong*, a fetus who symbolizes a powerful spirit) (Iamkhorpong and Kosuta 2022).

I saw some phallic symbols in the streets and museums in Bangkok (figure 9), particularly on Maharat Road, where amulets can be bought instantly. An example of this is the *kuman thong*, a statue of a male child with a small penis (figure 9a). As I went to Museum Siam in Phra Borom Maha Ratchawang, a wooden-carved phallus can be seen (figure 9b), where a wooden-carved naked woman is seen to embrace these phallic figures. Additionally, a yoni-linga combined figure, which symbolizes fertility and equality, is present. According to the narrative of the museum, most of the Thai people are Buddhists; however, this faith is amalgamated with animism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism. An example of this is the top deck of Museum Siam, where statues of Buddha (Buddhism) and the gods and goddesses from Brahmanism and Hinduism (Museum Siam n.d.) were displayed.

Jakarta and Bali, Indonesia

There are two pieces of evidence that I personally witnessed during my visit to Indonesia, which can be found in Java and Bali. In Java, particularly in its capital, Jakarta, the National Monument of Indonesia is located, also known as *Monas* (figure 10). This monument stands inside Merdeka Square and is considered the symbol of independence (*kemerdekaan*) (Macdonald 1995). Between 1950 and 1960, it was constructed under the orders of the Indonesian president, Achmed Soekarno, and the construction finished during the administration of the dictator General Soeharto (Ford 1993); it was named “Soekarno’s Last Erection” by Clarke (2009) and Dovey (2010).⁶ According to Dovey’s (2010) book entitled *Becoming Places*, *Monas* is a phallic symbol, especially both the terrace and the obelisk of the said structure where linga and yoni resemblance can be seen, which are both highly adored in Hinduism.

Soekarno intentionally amalgamated the elements of Hindu, Balinese, and Javanese orientations in order for the monument to avoid any form of controversy, such as Javacentrism and Islamiccentrism (Dovey 2010). In addition, Soekarno has Hindu blood; his mother, Ida Njoman Rai, was a Hindu-Balinese from Buleleng Regency (Tugano 2022b). The linga of *Monas* symbolizes the fertility of men; a form of masculinity, while its yoni on the horizontal bowl symbolizes female fertility. According to Benedict Anderson (1972 as cited by Dovey 2010), the fertility of *Monas* and/or its leader expresses the continuous growth and development of Indonesian society. Additionally, Dovey (2010) mentioned that *Monas* is a symbol of a mortar and pestle that emerged from a bowl, which was later found to be a woman. It can be noticed that it is contrary to the Filipino concept of *lusung* (mortar) for women and *halo* (pestle) for men, an indication of an egalitarian relationship between sexes among Filipinos.⁷ Other theories mentioned that *Monas* is similar to *Amorphophallus titanium*, an



Figure 10. *Monas* is a symbol of linga and yoni. A structure ordered to be built by Soekarno is allegedly similar to linga and yoni.

endemic flower species of *rafflesia* in Indonesia that is shaped like a phallus, similar to its Philippine counterpart, the *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius* or pongapong.⁸



Figure 11. Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu as represented in linga in Bali, Indonesia. Inside Goa Gajah, the white-clothed linga represents Shiva, the red one symbolizes Brahma, and the black one represents Vishnu.

In Ubud, Bali, one of the notable tourist spots is the Goa Gajah, or Elephant Cave, also known as the “demonic cave mouth.” It is considered a sanctuary of worship for Ganesha (*cf.* Acri 2021). Inside the cave, three linga-shaped stones can be seen, which represent Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu (figure 11). Shiva is represented through the white cloth-covered linga (*putih*), while Brahma is represented through the *barak* or *biing* (red cloth), and Vishnu is represented through the *ireng* (black cloth) (Suardana 2023). In Hindu customs, they are called the *trimurti*, or triad, of Hindu gods with distinct powers and characteristics; in short, they are co-equal and co-independent gods that are also considered one (DiBiasio 2013). Brahma is the creator; Vishnu is the steward; and Shiva is the destroyer. However, in other variations, Shiva is

considered the creator; the same reason why linga is often linked to him as a symbol (DiBiasio 2013). The representation of the three gods—the three linga—are distinct in some temples, such as Goa Gajah.

During my visit to the Bali Museum, some appreciation for the linga and phallus was evident in the form of *cili* (figure 12). *Cili* is a Balinese-inspired art piece that can usually be crafted in the form of sculptures, paintings, and handicrafts. It is commonly designed with a smiling face, can be dressed with *subeng* (earrings), *badong* (a tiger-like creature that is commonly adored in Balinese mythology), is thin-shaped, and is usually carved with a linga and phallus. *Cili* is often carved as a human figure. In Hindu-Balinese cosmology, *sekala*, or the visible world, is represented through *cili*, while *niskala*, or the invisible world, is often represented through linga; a representation of Siwa (Shiva) (Brinkgreve 1997).⁹ *Cili* is also considered a manifestation of the goddess of rice (Vickers 2020), Dewi Sri (in other versions, Nyi Pohaci), who is also a symbol of fertility and agriculture and, at times, represented through a *naga* or snake-like figure (Monaghan 2000).¹⁰



Figure 12. cili and lingga/phallus inside the Bali Museum, Indonesia. (12a) *patung phallus* that is made of wood; a symbol of fertility; (12b) a cili holding a phallus; (12c) *patung men brayut*, used as a decoration and symbol of fertility; (12d) there is no provenance and description, however, it can be noticed that this figure is masturbating its phallus; (12e) *lingga kembar*, or the twin lingga that is also used for fertility; and (12f) *patung raksasa duduk*, a sitting statue with a broken phallus.

Phallic appreciation can be seen through some of the *cili* in the said museum (figures 12b and 12d). The *patung phallus statue* that is made out of *kayu* (wood) (figure 12a) is considered a *lambang kesuburan* or a symbol of fertility, similar to the *patung men brayut* (figure 12c), which is considered a *sebagai hiasan dan symbol kesuburan*. Other figures also featured *lingga kembar*, or the twin lingga that is made out of *batu padas* (stone) (figure 12e), also known as *sebagai media pemujaan dan lambing kesuburan*, or symbols of fertility. Moreover, an anito made out of clay that has a missing phallus (figure 2f) has been called *patung raksasa duduk*, or the sitting giant.

Looking Forward

My journey throughout South and Southeast Asia became relevant in order to understand the historical and cultural underpinnings of lingga that happen to be theologically pivotal to the amalgamated beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism. In discerning the emergence of preliminary

information related to it outside of the Filipino community, it has been proven and cleared that its connections can be traced back to Hinduism and Buddhism. An indirect example of this is the influence of Nepal as a center point of Buddhism, since it was never the intent of the pre-colonial Nepalese to trade and spread their religion (Tugano 2021). Instead, Hinduism-Buddhism arrived in the Philippines by means of documented travels to Indonesia and Malaysia (Indo-Malay). For this very reason, phallic-inclined worship is closely linked to the communities and countries mentioned in this essay, which were greatly influenced by the two religions. While, for some of the readers, the discourse on phallic symbols, particularly in travel writing, is unorthodox, it can ~~open~~ peel off new ideas that will contribute to the understanding of the convergence of culture and history in Asia; contrary to the belief of some Filipinos as “sexually inappropriate.” I hope that I can soon reach India, Japan, and Bhutan to continue this form of knowledge-sharing.

About the Author

Axle Christien J. Tugano (ajtugano1@up.edu.ph) is taking up his MA Philippine Studies at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman. He is a Faculty Member of the Division of History, Department of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Laguna.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Juniesy M. Estanislao (Graduate Student, Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman) for his critique, edits, and suggestions for the development of this paper. To Robero Marzano (Pakse, Laos) and Ketut Suardana (Bali, Indonesia), who generously shared their expertise on this topic. It was my honor that Marzano and Suardana became a part of this essay. Of all people, I would like to give thanks to my wife, Joanna Frances Isabelle R. Sajor-Tugano who willingly joined in my travels in Southeast Asia to gather information and capture photographs that are vital to this essay.

Endnotes

¹ A syncretized belief in Vietnam (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) (Wuthnow 2020).

² Cf. Canilao 2010. Similar to the encounters of Champa-Philippines with Su-Huynh, which became a trading network in Southeast Asia, Champa is congruent to Masbate (Su-Huynh-Kalanay Interaction Sphere), where the usual trade revolves around pottery, and this connection lasted from 400 BCE to 1,5000 CE (see Solheim 1964).

³ There are some temples in Southeast Asia that have linga but no yoni base. However, despite its absence, it still flourished the land. See the *svayambhuva linga* (Aeusrivongse 1976).

⁴ Gallery A, Khmer Civilization (The Origin of Khmer Empire); Gallery B, Religion and Beliefs (The Reflection of Khmer's Beliefs); Gallery C, The Great Khmer Kings (The Great Inventors); Gallery D, Angkor Wat (The Heaven on Earth); Gallery E, Angkor Thom (The Pantheons of Spirit); Gallery F, Story from Stones (The Evidence of the Past); and Gallery G, Ancient Costume (The Fascination of Apsara) (Angkor National Museum 2019).

⁵ Marzano was born in 1958 in Bologna, Italy, and has spent 20 years as an archeologist in Italy and China. He conducted research on the caves dating back to the Ming Dynasty, a combined project of the Natural History Museum of Verona, Italy, and Normal Guizhou University in China. He was involved in *La Mission Archéologique Française au Sud-Laos*, an important project where they researched Vat Phu, the temple that is considered the *Lingaparvata* of Shiva. He traveled and conducted research in countries where the influences of Hinduism and Buddhism are evident, such as India, Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam (Marzano and Pacaldi 2018; Marzano 2023).

⁶ During the Dutch occupation of Indonesia, Merdeka Square was once called *Koningsplein* due to its significance to the colonial government as its center. As of now, the Merdeka Square is the center of activism, cultural performances, and amusement for the Javanese (Tugano 2022a).

⁷ An identification of the Bagobo as an ethnolinguistic group (Cruz-Lucero 2007; Gloria 1973, 1987).

⁸ A flower species was found in Agoos, La Union, that is called amorphophallus (*Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*) or pongapong, a form of rafflesia, which is considered the biggest flower in the world and is commonly found around the forests of Southeast Asia (Pedrasa 2011).

⁹ A similar Austronesian concept of the threefold universe is *kaitaasan* (above all; where the sun god and the bird representing it are present), *kailaliman* (beneath all; where naga, snakes, pythons, and their other representations are present), and the Earth (where the living creatures are present) (Lasco 2014). The *niskala* here is similar to *kaitaasan* and *kailaliman*; both the bird and the snake are representations of *linga*.

¹⁰ Rice is also the metonymy of Dewi Sri or Nyi Pohaci. Pre-colonial kingdoms in Indonesia were documented to value their deity; similar to *Mataram* and *Majapahit*, this goddess became a symbol of prosperity. According to the Balinese tradition, Dewi Sri possesses some form of power on the surface of the earth and as a celestial. This is the reason why Dewi Sri is often connected to the naga (snake) (Monaghan 2000).

Bibliography

- Acri, Andrea. 2021. "Horror, Transgression, and Power: The Demonic Numinous in the Tantra-Influenced Literatures and Visual Arts of Java and Bali." *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 107(1): 137-206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27164172>.
- Aeusrivongse, Nidhi. 1976. "The Devaraja Cult and Khmer Kingship at Angkor." In *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History: The Origins of Southeast Asian Statecraft*, edited by Kenneth Hall and John Whitmore, 107-148. Michigan: University of Michigan Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
- Albanese, Marilia. 2006. *The Treasures of Angkor*. White Star Publishers.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1972. "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture." In *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Claire Holt, 1-69. Cornell University Press.
- Angkor National Museum. 2019. *Travel Kit Map: Discover City of the Legend*. Souvenir.
- Bolata, Emmanuel Jayson. 2022. Sa Pagitan ng Loob at Labas, Hubad. Unpublished manuscript. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363310749>.
- Briggs, Lawrence. 1951. "The Ancient Khmer Empire." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 41(1): 1-295. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1005620>.
- Brinkgreve, Francine. 1997. "Offerings to Durga and Pretiwi in Bali." *Folklore Studies* 56(2): 227-251. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178726>.
- Canilao, Michael Armand. 2010. "Ang Ginto ng Tagalog at ang Tradisyonal na Teknolohiya sa Pagmimina Nito." In *Ang Saysay ng Inskripsyon sa Binatbat na Tanso ng Laguna*, edited by Zeus Salazar and Ma. Carmen Peñalosa, 309-324. Quezon City: Bagong Kasaysayan Inc., and Pila Historical Society Foundation, Inc.
- Chandler, David. 2008. *A History of Cambodia*. Fourth Edition. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Chapin, Helen. 1934. "The Gion Shrine and the Gion Festival." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 54(3): 282-289. <https://doi.org/10.2307/594168>.
- Clarke, Wibble. 2009. "Monas, Jakarta." *Flickr*, 23 October. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wibbleclarke/6052683742>.
- Cruz-Lucero, Rosario. 2007. *Ang Bayan sa Labas ng Maynila, The Nation Beyond Manila*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- DiBiasio, Jame. 2013. *The Story of Angkor*. Silkworm Books.
- Dovey, Kim. 2010. *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power*. Routledge.
- Eugenio, Damiana (comp. and ed.). 2005. *Philippine Folk Literature Series; Vol. V: The Riddles*. Rev. ed. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- _____. 2006. *Philippine Folk Literature Series; Vol. IV: The Folk Tales*. Rev. ed. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- Family Feud Philippines. 2022. "Family Feud Philippines: In Filipino, among body part ang nagsisimula sa T." *Youtube*, 19 October. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YANjgBT5nco>.

-
- Ferro-Luzzi, Gabriella. 1980. "The Female Lingam: Interchangeable Symbols and Paradoxical Associations of Hindu Gods and Goddesses." *Current Anthropology* 21(1): 45-68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2741742>.
- Ford, Larry. 1993. "A Model of Indonesian City Structure." *Geographical Review* 83(4): 374-396. <https://doi.org/10.2307/215821>.
- Gloria, Heidi. 1973. "The Legend of Lapu-Lapu: An Interpretation." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 1(3): 200-208. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29791079>.
- _____. 1987. *The Bagobos: Their Ethnohistory and Acculturation*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers.
- Harris, Ian. 2000. "Magician as Environmentalist: Fertility Elements in South and Southeast Asian Buddhism." *The Eastern Buddhist* 32(2): 128-156. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44362260>.
- Iamkhorpong, Premjai and Matthew Kosuta. 2022. "The Relationship between Buddhist and Animist Amulets in Contemporary Thailand: Phra Khrueng and Khrueng Rang." *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 43(1): 53-59. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/kjss/article/view/256957>.
- Katigbak, Evelyn. 2006. "MTRCB suspends I-Witness for showing phallic symbols: Native Ritual Puts Docu Program in Trouble." *Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility*, 29 July. <https://cmfr-phil.org/media-ethics-responsibility/journalism-review/native-ritual-puts-docu-program-in-trouble/>.
- Kim. 2019. "Nagaoka Hodare Festival: A festival for fertility, from crops to children." *Japan Travel*, 12 February. <https://en.japantravel.com/niigata/nagaoka-hodare-festival/56981>.
- Lasco, Lorenz. 2014. "Mga Kadahilanan Kung Bakit Wala Tayong Malalaking Gusali o Templo Noong Dating Panahon." *Saliksik E-Journal* 3(1): 119-172. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=5480>.
- Macdonald, Gerald 1995. "Indonesia's Medan Merdeka: National Identity and the Built Environment." *Antipode* 27(3): 270-293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1995.tb00278.x>.
- Marzano, Roberto. 2023. Personal communication. Pakse, Laos.
- Marzano, Roberto and Pierangelo Pancaldi. 2018. *Vat Phu: The Mountain of Shiva; Convergence Between Science and Religion*. Wisdom.
- Mendonca, Shawn, Jessica Pan, and Steven Brandes. 2020. "Festival of the 'Steel Phallus' and the 'Bourani' Carnival of Tynavos: Phallic Festivals of Contemporary Japan and Greece." *The Journal of Urology: Official Journal of the American Urological Association* 203(4): 289-290. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JU.0000000000000850.016>.
- Molloy, Kenton. n.d. "Bun Bang Fai Could Only Happen in Laos or Thailand!" *Go Nomad*. <https://www.gonomad.com/2788-bun-bang-fai-the-rocket-festival>.
- Monaghan, Patricia. 2000. *The New Book of Goddesses & Heroines*. Llewellyn Publications.
- Museum Siam. n.d. Decoding Thainess. Souvenir.
- Nguyen, Trian. 2005. "Laksmindralokesvara, Main Deity of the Dong Duog Monastery: A Masterpiece of Cham Art and a New Interpretation." *Artibus Asiae* 65(1): 5-38. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25261818>.
- Pedrasa, Ira. 2011. "Penis-shaped plant seen in La Union." *ABS-CBN News*, 26 May. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/lifestyle/classified-odd/05/25/11/penis-shaped-plant-seen-la-union>.
- Ping, Chow. 2021. "Atsara: The Bhutanese clowns who are not just clowns." *Daily Bhutan: Your Gateway to the Kingdom*, 25 August. <https://www.dailybhutan.com/article/atsara-the-bhutanese-clowns-who-are-not-just-clowns>.
- Pommaret, Francoise and Tashi Tobgay. 2008. "Bhutan's Pervasive Phallus: Is Drukpa Kunley Really Responsible?" *Golden Jubilee Conference of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*, 59-76. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00718069/>.
- Rafael, Vicente. 2021. *The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte*. Duke University Press.

-
- Reid, Anthony. 1988. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume One; The Lands below the Winds*. Yale University Press.
- Roxas-Lim, Aurora. 1973. "Buddhism in Early Southeast Asia: A Contribution to the Study of Culture Change." *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 11(1): 75-97. <https://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/index.php/archive/121-vol-11-no-1-april-1973>.
- Saigoneer. 2016. "Vietnamese Festival Criticized for Penis Plagiarism." *Saigoneer*, 6 March. <https://saigoneer.com/saigon-culture/6470-japanese-festival-has-vietnamese-festival-by-the-balls-after-plagiarism-arises>.
- Salazar, Zeus. 2010. "Tundun-Pailah-Binwangan: Ang Sistemang Ilog ilawud-ilaya ng Katagalugan, Bilang Halimbawa ng Isang Proseso ng Pagkabuo ng mga Sinaunang Pamayanan ng Kapilipinuhan." In *Ang Saysay ng Inskripsyon sa Binatbat na Tanso ng Laguna*, edited by Zeus Salazar and Ma. Carmen Peñalosa, 341-467. Quezon City: Bagong Kasaysayan Inc., and Pila Historical Society Foundation, Inc.
- Salazar, Zeus, Atoy Navarro, Sharon Maminta, and Lars Raymund Ubaldo. 2010. *Asya: Kasaysayan at Kabihasanan*. Quezon City: Abiva Publishing House, Inc.
- Sheean, Vincent. 1951. "The Buddhism that was India." *Foreign Affairs* 29(2): 287-299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030834>.
- Solheim, Wilhelm. 1964. "Further Relationships of the Sa-Huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition." *Asian Perspectives* 3(1): 157-165. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42928875>.
- Suardana, Ketut. 2023. Personal communication. Ubud, Bali, Indonesia.
- Thailand Foundation. n.d. "Phi Ta Khon: The Happy Ghost Parade." *Thailand Foundation*. https://www.thailandfoundation.or.th/culture_heritage/phi-ta-khon/.
- The Metropolitan Museum. n.d.a. "Linga (Phallic Emblem of Shiva) with Architectural Base." *The Metropolitan Museum*. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38298>.
- _____. n.d.b. "Skanda, God of War." *The Metropolitan Museum*. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/77673>.
- The National Museum of Cambodia. 2015. Souvenir Information. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- Turnbull, Stephen. 2015. *Japan's Sexual Gods: Shrines, Roles and Rituals of Procreation and Protection*. Brill.
- Tugano, Axle Christien. 2021. "Isang Pag-uugat sa Ugnayan ng Nepal at Pilipinas." *Tala Kasaysayan: An Online Journal of History* 4(2): 40-63. <http://talakasaysayan.org/index.php/talakasaysayan/article/view/58>.
- _____. 2022a. "Sa Repositoryo ng mga Kulturang Materyal: Personal na Tala ng Paglalakbay Ukol sa mga Museo sa Ibayong Dagat ng Asya-Pasipiko at Europa." *Entrada Journal* 8(1): 93-143. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=18568>.
- _____. 2022b. "Ang Identidad ng Relihiyon, Ang Relihiyon ng Identidad: Isang Anekdotal na Tala Bilang Manlalakbay sa Timog-Silangang Asya." *Katipunan Journal* 9(1): 97-142. <https://ajol.ateneo.edu/katipunan/articles/556/7189>.
- _____. 2023. "Ang Popularidad ng Phallic Jokes: Isang Kritikal na Pagsusuri sa mga Phallokra-tikong Pahayag ni Rodrigo Duterte sa Midya." *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society* 20(2) (forthcoming). <https://doi.org/10.52518/2022-13tgn0>.
- Tugano, Axle Christien and Mark Joseph Santos. 2022. "Ang Phallokrasiya ni Duterte sa Midya bilang Mang Kanor ng Politikang Pilipino." *Talastasan: A Philippine Journal of Communication and Media Studies* 1(2): 30-49. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=19344>.
- Turner, Bryan. 1992. *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology*. Routledge.
- Vat Phou. n.d. Vat Phou: The Sanctuary, The Spring, The Ancient City. Souvenir.
- Vickers, Adrian. 2020. "Word and Image in Miguel Covarrubias's Island of Bali." *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Esteticas* 42(116): 53-76. <https://doi.org/10.22201/iie.18703062e.2019.mono1.2704>.

-
- Vietnam Online. n.d. "Kate Festival." *Vietnam Online*. <https://www.vietnamonline.com/destination/ninh-thuan/culture/kate-festival.html>.
- VNExpress. 2017. "This spring festival in Vietnam is all about sex." *VNExpress International*, 8 February. <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/travel-life/this-spring-festival-in-vietnam-is-all-about-sex-3538268.html>.
- Wake, Staniland. 1870. "The Influence of the Phallic Idea in the Religions of Antiquity." *The Journal of Anthropology* 1(2): 97-105. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3024803>.
- Winn, Patrick. 2010. "Thailand: The power of a penis-shaped rocket." *MINN Post*, 14 June. <https://www.minnpost.com/global-post/2010/06/thailand-power-penis-shaped-rocket/>.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2020. *What Happens When We Practice Religion? Textures of Devotion in Everyday Life*. Princeton University Press.
- Yellow Fields. 2021. "God of Sex Temple In Jodhpur, Rajasthan." *Youtube*, 25 December. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlhUXINAGSw>.