

that may be applicable to other developing countries. It will also be a good guide for researchers of politics and governance seeking to examine political behaviour and campaign strategies in the 2024 Indonesian elections and beyond.

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DOI: 10.1355/sj39-2k

*Of Gods, Gifts and Ghosts: Spiritual Places in Urban Spaces.* By Terence Heng. Routledge: London, 2021. 236pp.

The oft-unspoken reality for any scholar working on religion is that the subject of our study is something that is often difficult, if not impossible, to accurately capture in words. No matter how lyrical the writer, or how lucid the prose, the accurate presentation of the numinous often evades scholars. Perhaps this is the point. Notwithstanding this, it is difficult to escape the feeling that something is lacking from discourses of religion. This is the void that Terence Heng's contribution fills. Emanating from his expertise in visual sociology, but speaking to cognate disciplines, the book is unique in that it is an image-led academic text.

Spanning nine chapters—of which seven are substantive, and using the same structure of an introduction that frames the chapter theoretically, followed by two dozen or so pages of photographs with detailed annotations—Heng develops the idea of “sacred flowscapes” to capture how the sacred moulds itself to the built environment through “paths of social action and material interaction, often etching rhythmic trails that linger on and in physical infrastructure” (p.187). The twinned tropes of flexibility and fluidity are appropriate heuristics to explore and understand the empirical focus of Heng's study; that is, Chinese religion (a catch-all term that includes Buddhism, Taoism and ancestor worship) in Singapore. Singapore is a unique

context in which to develop the idea of the sacred flowscape. As a spatially constrained island city-state, it is one in which the public sphere is closely managed by the state, and religion is granted a formally recognized, yet, for various reasons, often insufficient place in public life.

What Heng visually demonstrates through the sacred flowscape is how the gaps created by policy and prescription are filled by the (sometimes subversive) agency of spiritual, and often spiritually embodied, subjects. In this vein, where Heng's visual sociology really shines is in its capture of the mundane uniformity of Singapore's built environment, and how spiritual practice can mystify it, imbuing it with more-than-life. A recurrent theme is how the spiritual practices of Chinese religionists weave together a uniquely diasporic identity by collapsing pasts and futures through the places of the present.

The trans-temporality and trans-spatiality of Chinese religion is captured most vividly in Heng's depictions of Bukit Brown Cemetery (chapter 3) and the Hungry Ghost Festival (chapter 7), both of which reveal the limits of the technocratic state and its secular vision of Singaporean modernity. In many respects, Heng's images serve to parochialize the present. They reveal a sense of timelessness that reflects the transcendence of gods, gifts and ghosts, and the irrepressible power of hope, duty and responsibility that often evade the state's attempts to forge Singapore citizens. Captured in a variety of settings—from everyday signs placing limits on public behaviour, to the flying of Singapore flags outside public housing flats and the more spectacular performance of nation-building encapsulated in the annual National Day Parade—these everyday acts of resistance are at once public assertions of a spiritual right to the city, and in the same breath reveal novel attempts to strike a balance between the different, and sometimes divergent, components that constitute contemporary Singaporeanness. The visceral is offset by the situational, just as the performative is moderated by social compliance.

While Heng's book is a welcome intervention to an otherwise text-heavy field, it also raises the question of what next for how we might study, think about, and publish work on religion. On a

methodological level, it clearly highlights the power of the visual. While Heng's competency in this regard is high—he previously worked as a professional photographer—there are other mediums that might be put to productive use by scholars. This is particularly true regarding participatory methodologies and the deployment of certain exercises with research participants, such as mapping exercises and photographic diarizations of everyday life. Many journals now encourage visual abstracts, which provide novel openings through which the visual might play a more central role in our analyses. On a more theoretical level, Heng's visual sociology raises critical questions about what is not captured by photographs. In Singapore especially, questions concerning the economics of religion—its supply and demand, and the religious economies that emerge in response—are integral to any analysis that is difficult to capture visually. This is especially apparent when we consider the demographics of Chinese religion and how the ageing of society threatens the loss or dilution of rituals, traditions and practices in the intergenerational transfer of belief. The visual also tends to favour the spectacular, which poses problems when one moves the analytical gaze beyond the clearly bounded practice of “religion”. What of the spiritual practices of yoga, mindfulness, or even humanism? My point is that the most welcome scholarly innovations require critical balance if mainstream traction, meaning and value are to be realized.

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DOI: 10.1355/sj39-21

*The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte.*  
By Vicente Rafael. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. xii+173 pp.

Written during the height of the pandemic in the Philippines, Vicente Rafael's book offers a “prismatic” history of former president Rodrigo Duterte's regime through a sustained engagement with