This volume explores Eurasian notions of heritage, identity and modernity as they evolved from European-rooted concepts through the first half of the 20th Century. Recognising how complex entanglements might enrich our understanding of how people, ideas, artefacts and practices flowed through the space between the Atlantic and the Pacific, and across all of Asia, the papers in this book address museum exhibitions, art and artists, architecture, as well as secular and religious landscapes, and illuminate how the circulation of ideas and people across empires and through the upheaval of two World Wars produced a fascinating diversity of cultural forms and actors in the spheres of culture, education, arts and religion. The diverse chapters in this book were based upon presentations at a joint IIAS-ISEAS conference, Asia-Europe Encounters: Intellectual and Cultural Exchanges 1900–1950, at the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore in 2012. The aim of the conference was to “explore the intellectual and cultural flows between Asia and Europe that occurred during the momentous political and social changes of the first half of the twentieth century.”

“Eurasia” in this context, is defined in its broadest sense, a place of interaction beyond the confines of colonial empires, and which de-centres Euro- and Russo-centric narratives in favour of lateral, rather than hierarchical dynamics and connections. As such, the papers in this volume represent ideas which reach beyond the borders of the nation-states one would traditionally associate with “Eurasia”—an area of geopolitical interest encompassing the land lying between Europe and Asia; namely, those made up of Western and Central Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In this case, the papers in this volume embrace the full extent of the transnational exchange of ideas between Europe and Asia, stretching from Western Europe to as far east as Japan.

The book is divided into three sections, the first addressing the development of cultural institutions and structures as integral to the process of decoloni-
sation. These contributions present museums, along with their collections, as sites devoted to articulating ideas about the state and its governance, as well as the negotiation of ideas about citizenship. Deepti Mulgund’s chapter discusses the development of Balasheb’s art collections and museum in Aundh, India, as being “concerned with addressing not just colonial power but also with creating a particular kind of citizen for the nation to come ...”5 Analysing museum development in China and Japan through the first half of the 20th Century, Wang, like Mulgund, recognises museums in Asia as having their roots in European display, adapted to suit the local social and cultural context.

Diverging from museums, Sonal Khullar’s chapter delves into the intersections and paradoxes of nationalism, modernism and feminism through examining the lives and work of two female artists practicing in Asia and Europe—Pan Yuliang and Sher-Gil. In linking the lives and careers of these two artists to travel—to mobility—Khullar connects to the volume’s wider theme of cross-cultural flow, while simultaneously pointing to the need for an increase in feminist cosmopolitan models. The final chapter in this section sheds light on cultural connections between Japan and Germany through the mutual impact of Bauhaus-based teaching methods in the inter-War period. Sharing an affinity for simplicity and function, Capkova illuminates the development of a hybrid, progressive model for design education through the complex networks of artists and teachers connecting Europe and Asia.

Each of these chapters highlight the role of museums, art, and artists as important aspects of the imagining of emerging nations as they were negotiated within the colonies. Importantly, they offer examples outside of the Euro-American context in which most well-known case studies have emerged. Some of the chapters are very specific, such as the detailed history and analysis of the museum at Aundh, while others are much more general. In each case, papers in this section address the arts as a critical tool in negotiating the colonial encounter, and emphasise the significant transnational exchanges between Europe and Asia in the first half of the 20th Century.

The second section, “Missions and Education”, opens with a chapter by Indrani Chatterjee, which aims to re-interpret encounters between European missionaries and local populations in Eastern India. Discussing the centrality of women’s labour, marriage and bridewealth, Chatterjee reflects on the role of missionaries in reinforcing the racialised structures and systems of privilege within the Empire. In contrast to the tensions highlighted in Chatterjee’s paper, the second and final paper in this section points to the cooperative nature of

5 Mulgund, in Stolte and Kikuchi: 27.