

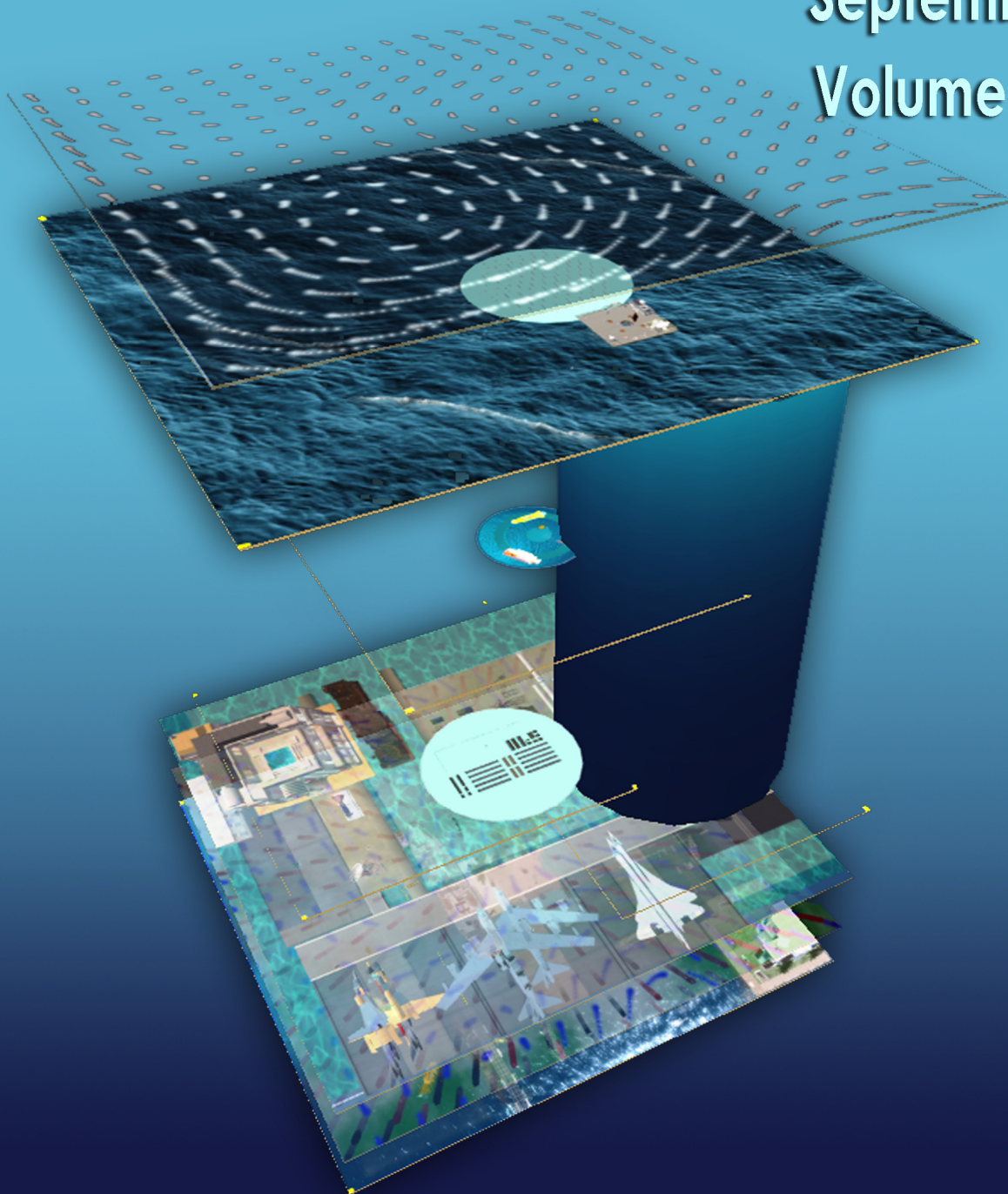
# Journal of • Virtual Worlds Research

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## Asian Perspectives

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Sky layers of the Abyss

# **Volume 5, Number 2**

## **Asian Perspectives**

### **September 2012**

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## **Virtual Worlds Asian Perspectives: a Landscape with Peaks and Valleys**

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The twenty-first century has introduced new politico-economic conceptions such as the BRICs thesis, increasing South-South trade and socio-cultural influence, economic uncertainty in the Old World, and the purported rise of the Asia-Pacific. Together, these developments – and others like them – have prompted pundits and academics to examine anew assumptions of how cultures evolve, how societies self-regulate, and how people participate in the course of learning.

It is thus timely that the Journal of Virtual Worlds Research – now in its fifth volume – has seen fit to devote a special issue on the theme of ‘Asian Perspectives’. In the Call for this issue, my co-editors and I affirmed our interest in topics such as socio-cultural framings of virtual worlds, game-based worlds and the communities that emerge within them, as well as special technologies that have emerged in the region. Commentators such as Engeström (1999) have given us lenses through which to investigate such interactions and growth.

When highlighting patterns of usage of virtual worlds, the mass media tends to draw generalizations from anecdotal extremes of the neglect of families and acts of gang-related or self-inflicted violence; other generalizations are drawn about the outsourcing of the acquisition of in-game resources. We argue that understandings of virtual worlds from Asian perspectives must be broader than these naïve generalizations.

When we set out to craft this special issue, our motivation was to seek a nuanced landscape of virtual worlds from Asian perspectives – a landscape which encompasses both peaks and valleys, as opposed to one which emphasizes some at the expense of others.

The result of this endeavor is an issue which my co-authors and I – as well as the authors and academics who have worked tirelessly in their submissions – are happy and proud to share with the

wider research community, and with all interested in virtual environments and fictive worlds. In these pages you will find perspectives from East Asia and Southeast Asia; the contrasts and comparisons are at once diverse and revealing – from Herold’s perspectives on games and gamers from China, to the work of Li and his team with similar community from Singapore, encompassing several other cultures, sub-cultures and scales of resolution at points in-between, with Li Xiong study that examines the demographic distribution of Chinese MMO players, through a fascinating study by Nishimura, Lim, & Koyamada of The Abyss Observatory – a museum created in Second Life and currently supported by JAMSTEC (Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology); as well as Martin & Vallance research of SL used as a medium for remotely located students to communicate in the collaboration and the study of Wigert, de Vreede, Boughzala & Bououd on The Role of the Facilitator when collaboration is conducted in a virtual environment.

It has been our privilege to conceptualize craft and develop this special issue of the Journal of Virtual Worlds Research, themed on Asian Perspectives. We trust you will derive as much pleasure from the papers and think-pieces within; may we continue to live in interesting times.