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IIAS

International Institute for Asian Studies

# theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

60  
Africa and the Chinese way

## The Focus

China is both a global power and a developing country – clearly still finding its way in the international system. Guest editor, Frans-Paul van der Putten, focuses on China's relations with the African continent and how they differ from those of other influential actors. The Focus articles identify specific elements of the Chinese way of dealing with political-economic diversity in the developing world; elements which allow China to clearly distinguish itself from the West. Pages 19-30.

多极化  
Multipolarity

崇主权  
Respect for  
sovereignty

无附加条件  
No-strings-attached

不干涉  
Non-interference

和而不同  
Harmony-  
with-diversity

软实力  
Soft Power

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**Sanne van der Lugt** shows how Chinese actors tend to promote a favourable investment climate in Africa, which may not always be the best possible approach for the host country in each particular instance. She poses that all countries have the right to choose their own path of development, and questions whether China can truly advise without interfering.

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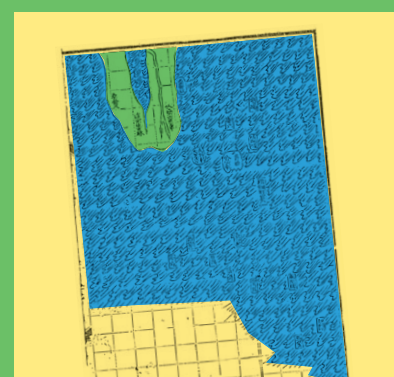
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Not only is China's African policy not based on ideology, but – as **Zhang Qingmin and Song Wei** point out in their article 'China's policy toward Africa: a Chinese perspective' – it also limits the effects of Western attempts to promote liberal values.



Page 28-29  
In **Chih-yu Shih's** article 'Harmonious racism: China's civilizational soft power in Africa', he points at limitations in the role of diversity in Sino-African relations. Although China's state-level foreign policy might respect African political and economic preferences, it lacks a firm foundation of respect for Africans at the individual level.



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**Stephen Ellis** notes in his contribution, 'China and Africa's development: the testing ground of a world power', that for China to protect its business interests in Africa, it may feel compelled to give increasing support to multilateral bodies and their use of interventionist policies.

# Widening boundaries

In April this year, IIAS received a visit from Prof. Webby Kalikiti, who teaches history at the University of Zambia, in Lusaka, Republic of Zambia. Prof. Kalikiti is an “Asianist”, or more specifically a “Southeast-asianist”, who did his research on the economic history of Vietnam during the colonial period. He represents a rare example of African historians who chose to focus on an Asian research topic and who, after completing his postgraduate education in Europe, returned to teach about Asia at his home university. Local economic realities and demand from his students compelled him, however, to instead teach about Europe and North-America and thus refrain from sharing his expertise and passion.

Philippe Peycam

THIS PERSONAL STORY illustrates a major imbalance that ultimately contributes to restrain the field of Asian studies into an almost exclusive *face-à-face* between Western and Asian scholars, at a time of a global shift toward a more multi-polar world.

This gets me back to Prof. Kalikiti's visit to Leiden. In keeping with its mission of serving the field of Asian studies in the global context of today, IIAS chose to take part in this historical process of an increased interaction between Asia and Africa, putting a distinctive emphasis on the promotion of the humanities and the social sciences as essential intellectual instruments of this interaction. The Asian Studies in Africa (ASA) initiative began in 2010 when IIAS, the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS), and the African Studies Centre in Leiden, convened an exploratory workshop on the issue of building capacities in the teaching of Asian studies in Africa and African studies

in Asia. What transpired from the discussion was the extent to which some major Asian countries, especially China, recently initiated a remarkable strategy of sustained intellectual and educational presence in Africa, a strategy unmatched by most African and Asian countries *vis-à-vis* the respective region. In spite of the presence of a few specialised institutions in South-Africa, Japan, India, and of course China, there is, however, little chance that a real Asia-Africa intellectual and educational space of exchange can emerge. In terms of knowledge production of the “other”, therefore, there is a risk that trans- and intra-continental unbalanced patterns perpetuate themselves. The workshop's participants recommended that solid academic infra-structures capable of delivering foundational knowledge of “the other” as an essential prerequisite for sustained socio-economic progress in African and Asian societies be supported. Another instructive conclusion of the workshop was the recognised role imparted to Europe and European institutions to operate as facilitators and contributors for a truly non-hegemonic trans-regional academic exchange model.

Based on these recommendations, and because participants insisted in the urgency to address the question of educational capacity in Africa, it was suggested that IIAS and SEPHIS (now formerly re-established in the Philippines), in partnership

with institutions from the two continents, should begin by assisting targeted African institutions to build capacities in Asian studies before a similar initiative on the teaching of Africa be followed in a number of Asian countries. The University of Zambia subsequently expressed its interest in hosting a follow-up strategic workshop on the subject, hence Prof. Kalikiti's visit to Leiden and to a number of Asian countries.

In this rather unusual initiative, IIAS works with partners from four continents, from Asia, Europe, and Africa to North America. The ASA initiative fits well with the institute's research cluster on the global projection of Asia; in this case, “Asian studies” in the global context. In doing so, IIAS contributes to widen the boundaries of the debate on “area studies”.

Philippe Peycam,  
Director of IIAS



Photo © Ania Blaziejewska

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# The multiple meanings of tradition



Since the 1950s, villagers from Kam (in Chinese, Dong 侗) minority communities in Guizhou Province and adjoining areas of Guangxi and Hunan in south-western China have not only sung Kam songs in many different centuries-old village rituals and festivals, but also in many staged performances. As evident through my recent ethnographic research into Kam singing, these staged Kam performances have gradually formed a new ‘tradition’ of Kam singing that is simultaneously promoting, challenging and transforming Kam village singing in a variety of unanticipated and complex ways.

Catherine Ingram

UNDERSTANDING these contemporary developments in Kam singing requires acknowledging and carefully investigating how the multiple meanings of tradition proposed by Phillips and Schochet<sup>1</sup> operate within the Kam context, as outlined in this article. However, a discussion of the meanings of tradition within the twenty-first century Kam context also illustrates that a greater attention to the nature of tradition is vitally important for effectively promoting cultural heritage and helping ensure its survival.

The most recent vigorous debates over the meanings and nature of ‘tradition’ occurred in the early 1980s, following the publication of *The Invention of Tradition*.<sup>2</sup> While the book became a classic in its field, its authors’ assertions that many apparently long-standing traditions were relatively recently invented were questioned on a variety of political and socio-historical grounds. In subsequent decades, declining interest in this debate – as well as perceived difficulties in re-engaging with earlier arguments – has meant that in many academic contexts the word tradition has almost disappeared from use.

However, developments in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century demand a re-evaluation of this situation. Recent large-scale socio-economic changes and migrations are having an unprecedented impact upon small communities and cultures worldwide. New developments are challenging – and often endangering – longstanding cultural practices, whilst sometimes also creating new roles and functions for local heritage. Community- and state-sponsored programs aiming to protect and promote ‘traditional cultural expression’ and ‘cultural heritage’ – both of which are necessarily based upon concepts of tradition – are increasing in number and scope, especially within Asia. Moreover, there has been considerable financial investment in national and international programs, which support heritage maintenance efforts. For example, extensive national heritage programs have been established in Japan, Korea and China,<sup>3</sup> whilst UNESCO’s international heritage programs are known worldwide.

Above: Kam villagers file through a village gate in Sheem (Liping county, south-eastern Guizhou), February 2011, in a new version of Kam people’s centuries-old *kwun* communal ritual activities. Photograph by Catherine Ingram.

As the following discussion of the Kam situation illustrates, actions undertaken through external programs and stakeholders can be directly or indirectly helpful in maintaining local traditions. However, they can also challenge pre-existing traditions by promoting misunderstandings of local traditions, producing new traditions, or introducing ideas that influence local concepts of tradition. In these ways, they can potentially lead to irrevocable changes in the transmission of traditions and to cultural loss. Consequently, improved understanding of the meanings and nature of tradition within the contemporary context is critical not only in understanding local cultures, but also in ensuring effective support in sustaining valuable – and often endangered – cultural heritage.

## Kam singing today

In many Kam villages, Kam songs are still sung in contemporary versions of different centuries-old village rituals and festivals. Singing takes place at engagements and weddings, after the building of a new house, or on the arrival of important visitors. Praising important guests with suitable songs is just as important as giving them food and drink. During the procession and other ritual activities carried out in many Kam villages at New Year, singing is used to ask for blessings from the female deity *Sa* for the oncoming year. Every day for over a week during the festive season, Kam opera performances or communal *yeh* singing take place. And in villages in one small Southern Kam region, in the evenings during New Year celebrations singing groups gather in the tall pagoda-shaped *dare low*, the impressive wooden tower built in many Kam villages, to carry out a sung exchange of the songs known in English as ‘big song’.

Since Kam singing traditions first became widely known outside Kam areas in the early 1950s, they have undergone many unprecedented changes. The most prominent of these are the use of Kam songs in staged performances held anywhere from Kam villages and small Chinese cities to Beijing and New York’s Carnegie Hall, and the ongoing creation of arrangements of local Kam songs specifically for performance within

the staged context. Many other significant changes to Kam singing since the 1990s have been caused by the absence of almost all young Kam people for work or education outside Kam villages, resulting in major shifts in the roles that different generations of villagers assume in village-based systems of musical transmission and performance and changes to the social context for music making.

Recently, the recognition of four Kam song genres as National-Level Intangible Cultural Heritage (2006), and the inscription of the Kam big song genre on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2009), have altered the context within which the singing and state-sponsored promotion of Kam songs take place. Over the last decade, with awards for arranged versions of Kam songs performed in ‘authentic’ (原生态 *yuanshengtai*) singing divisions of high-profile Chinese song competitions, representations of ‘authentic Kam traditions’, which Kam people themselves recognize as inauthentic, have been promoted to both Kam and non-Kam audiences. Finally, as indicated by the results of my research into Kam singing and the understandings I have gained through participation in many Kam song performances, in some cases Kam peoples’ fundamental concepts about their traditions are also undergoing change.

## Kam ideas of ‘tradition’

The way that ideas of tradition are expressed and discussed in Kam, a Tai-Kadai family language with no widely used written form, is an important starting point for understanding ‘tradition’ in Kam singing. In Kam, as in many other languages worldwide, there is no term directly equivalent to the word ‘tradition’ or 传统 (*chuantong*). Nevertheless, Kam people name, discuss and carry out certain Kam singing activities in ways that directly correspond with concepts of a ‘tradition/传统’; that is, sets of customs that are distinctive and significant, have been practiced over a period of time, and have a particular pattern of development. Accordingly, these activities can – and should – be understood as types of singing traditions.

## Kam singing in southwestern China

Different village singing traditions that involve the singing of different genres of Kam songs are referred to using various Kam names. For instance, a female singing group and a male singing group gathering in the *dare low* to take turns singing choral songs around a large fire is described as *nyao dare low song lao ga* (exchanging songs in the *dare low*). The singing of visitors from the groom's clan at a wedding is referred to as *dor ga go-dan* (singing songs to get quilts), while that of members of the bride's clan is *dor ga dee-dan* (singing songs to offer quilts). For performances of Kam opera, a genre now recognized as China's National-Level Intangible Heritage that is said to have been created by Wu Wencai 吴文彩 (1798–1845) by combining elements from various pre-existing Kam song genres and certain characteristics of various styles of regional Han opera, the Chinese expression 唱戏 *chang xi* (to sing opera) is borrowed directly into Kam.

These various traditions have recently undergone obvious unprecedented changes. For instance, choral songs are now sung mainly by married women and men rather than by unmarried youth, and married men no longer join married women in singing *ga go-dan* and *ga dee-dan*. In the 1950s young unmarried women began to perform Kam opera within previously all-male casts, but that has changed once again and today most opera performers are married women. Continued use of the earlier names for contemporary forms of these Kam singing traditions suggests that, despite the fact that different performers are now involved in singing these genres and the social context for the performances has therefore altered, recent adaptations do not obscure recognition of the current format as a continuation of long-standing traditions.

### New Kam 'traditions'

Staged performances of Kam songs, sung either in the form used within village activities or in various arrangements based upon village versions, have occurred since the 1950s. These performances have their own largely distinct musical repertoire, performance norms, modes of preparation and history of development. Although staged performances, like the forms of Kam singing described above, are contemporary variations of Kam singing that have their roots in village activities, they are unusual in being recognized by Kam people as an activity and tradition with its own unique name: *cha tai dor ga* (going onstage to sing songs).<sup>4</sup> It is thus clear that such performances are not seen as part of pre-existing village traditions, but are still seen as a Kam tradition. Such recognition of a new tradition within Kam musical culture may parallel the creation and introduction of Kam opera at least 150 years earlier, which is now identified as a Kam tradition by both Kam communities and the Chinese state.

Big song, the Kam song genre inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is another example of a new Kam tradition.<sup>5</sup> The songs classified as big songs include all the different genres of choral songs 'exchanged in the *dare low*', as well as various arrangements of those songs that are used in staged performances and almost never sung in the village *dare low* exchanges. This big song tradition has gradually emerged over the last sixty years, with origins dating back to the 1950s when Han Chinese researchers involved in Land Reform work in Kam villages first heard Kam people's unusual choral singing. The researchers erroneously labelled all the different genres of songs that groups of Kam people sing in the *dare low* during lunar New Year celebrations to be sub-genres of just one Kam singing genre. They used 大歌 *dage* (big song) – a Chinese translation of the Kam name *ga lao* (big/old/important songs) that was originally used to refer to just one of the many choral genres – to label all the choral songs that they heard.

Despite extensive subsequent promotion of big song, use of the Kam name *ga lao* to refer to this entire choral singing tradition has not been universally accepted within Kam communities. Kam views on this matter became particularly clear when many Kam villagers were involved in singing a Kam choral song in a 2005 performance of 'Ten thousand people singing Kam big song'. The song performed was from the choral genre known to Kam people as *ga sor*, not the choral genre that Kam people call *ga lao*. Songs from both *ga sor* and *ga lao* genres are promoted using the Chinese name *dage* (big song), and also using the Kam *ga lao* from which the Chinese name derives. However, numerous older singers maintained that the performance was not actually of *dage* (that is, big song) since only *ga sor* was performed. Many younger Kam villagers who were unaware of the historical development of their own Kam choral 'tradition' could not understand the reasons for their elders' claims, illustrating the changing perceptions of the nature of Kam choral singing traditions amongst Kam people themselves.

*Improved understanding of the meanings and nature of tradition within the contemporary context is critical not only in understanding local cultures, but also in ensuring effective support in sustaining valuable – and often endangered – cultural heritage.*

### Changes to fundamental concepts of tradition?

The acceptance of recent adaptations of Kam singing as a continuation of earlier traditions, the recognition of staged performances as a new tradition of 'going onstage to sing songs', and the different views concerning the tradition called *ga lao* are important areas for further analysis. Such analysis will help determine how fundamental concepts of tradition are currently understood by Kam people, and whether or not recent social and cultural shifts have influenced the underlying ways in which tradition is conceptualized.

The radical changes to *nyao dare low song lao ga* (exchanging songs in the *dare low*) are particularly remarkable, and seem to strongly indicate that fundamental concepts concerning such singing have undergone significant change. The contemporary involvement of married women – an indirect result of the women's involvement in staged performances – has been critical for the continuation of this tradition. However, it represents the relaxation of a very strong longstanding prohibition concerning their involvement in such village singing, and has consequently involved marked shifts in the social context for such performances.

It appears that the staged tradition is also influencing the concepts of the village tradition of 'exchanging songs in the *dare low*' in other, direct ways. For instance, preparations for a large-scale exchange of song in the *dare low* at New Year 2011 saw village song experts in my field site in rural Guizhou regularly going to listen to and advise many singing groups on vocal quality and other purely musical issues. Such activity is typical in preparing for staged performances. However, I had never known it to occur within the village tradition; previously, most singers preparing for village song exchanges were more concerned about learning a large enough quantity of songs (to avoid the embarrassment of having no more songs to perform during a song exchange) than about attending to musical details of their performance.

### Conclusion

This brief overview of major issues concerning tradition in relation to Kam singing highlights both the complexity of the Kam situation and the importance of detailed investigation of the meanings and nature of tradition in a range of contexts. The Kam case also demonstrates how governmental and international organizations, through making certain decisions about local culture, have the ability to substantially impact local communities. More thorough inquiry into the meanings and nature of tradition thus has clear value in assisting such

organizations to limit their inadvertent interference in the very cultural activities they are (presumably) seeking to encourage, and to better promote and support cultural practices.

In their decision-making processes regarding external support of local cultures, governmental and international organizations rely upon both academic research and concepts of tradition prevalent within the general community. By researchers and other community advocates pursuing and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the meanings of tradition, such individuals can influence those decision-making processes and play an important role in facilitating future access to the valuable knowledge transmitted by and associated with singing and other cultural activities. The use of research and advocacy to increase awareness and understanding of the nature of tradition today therefore has an important role in supporting the transmission of cultural heritage, and offers crucial benefits for future generations.

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### Notes

- 1 Phillips, Mark Salber & Gordon Schochet. 2004. "Preface." In *Questions of Tradition*, M. S. Phillips and G. Schochet (eds.), ix-xv. Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, page xi.
- 2 Hobsbawm, Eric & Terence Ranger (ed.). 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 3 As noted in Howard, Keith (ed.). 2012. *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions*. Farnham, UK & Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate.
- 4 Descriptions of these staged performances appear in Ingram, Catherine, with Wu Jialing 吴家玲, Wu Meifang 吴美芳, Wu Meixiang 吴梅香, Wu Pinxian 吴品仙, and Wu Xuegui 吴学桂. 2011. "Taking the Stage: Rural Kam Women and Contemporary Kam 'Cultural Development'." In *Women, Gender and Rural Development in China*, edited by T. Jacka and S. Sargeson, pp.71-93. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- 5 See <http://tinyurl.com/748yv52>, where the Chinese 大歌 *dage* is translated into English as 'grand song'.



Top left: A performance of big song during the tour of the 'Wind of Colourful Guizhou' large-scale staged performance to Melbourne, Australia, February 2012 (see also Catherine Ingram. 2012. "Kam 'Big Song' Down Under," *New Mandala* (<http://tinyurl.com/7v95lev>))



Top right: Villagers from the Kam regions of Sheeam and Bee exchange big song in the newly-built *dare low* in Bee, February 2011.

Below: Visiting photographers, researchers and government officials – as well as many local residents – prepare to enjoy a staged performance of big song given by hundreds of Sheeam villagers in February 2011. The largest *dare low* in the village appears behind the crowd.

All photographs by Catherine Ingram.

# On the causes of socialism's deconstruction

Contrary to the well-known curse “*may you live in a time of change*”, the dismantling of socialism at the end of the 1980s - beginning 1990s was in fact affirmably advertised to the former citizens of the socialist block as a positive change. The acquired freedoms of speech and expression are believed to be the key benefits of bringing socialist economies to a halt. In this article, based on recorded life stories,<sup>1</sup> I would like to discuss how contemporary citizens of two former Soviet Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), and *de jure* independent Mongolian People's Republic (MPR), perceive and understand the deconstruction of socialism.

Irina Morozova



“Poisk Novogo Myshleniya” [The Search for New Thinking] “Issyk-Kul Forum”. Painting by S. Torobekov, S. Kypchbekov, Yu. Shygaev. Image courtesy of Yu. Shygaev. Among the participants of the Forum were: Alexander King, president of the Club of Rome; American playwright Arthur Miller; American novelist James Baldwin; Russian-born English actor and writer Peter Ustinov; French writer and Nobel Laureate Claude Simon; Alvin Toffler, author of ‘Future Shock’; Cuban author Lisandro Otero; Spain’s Federico Mayor, the UNESCO General Director appointed soon after the Forum; Indian composer-musicologist Narayana Menon; Ethiopian painter Afewerk Tekle; and others.

## The hall of mirrors in historiographies

At the beginning of the 1990s, when the re-nationalisation of historical writing began in the newly independent states of Central Asia and Mongolia, and the temptation to predict future developments spurred a rush of publications re-conceptualising Central Asian modernity, the very recent socialist past was either blurred as a period of social chaos or contrasted as a birth of national awakening. Not only did the official historiographers of the newly independent states view the whole socialist period as a deviation from the *normal* development of their nations, so too did this vision prevail in the writings of many prominent Western scholars.

Our knowledge of communal life and identities in late socialist Central Asia has been greatly influenced by Cold War ideological biases about the causes of the USSR's disintegration. Political clichés and catch-all notions on ethnicity and culture have formed this lexicon with which scholars repeatedly approach the problems of late socialist transformations. It has been generally taken for granted that the Soviet secular society could not resolve ethnic conflicts and cultural tensions without systemic reform. Michael Gorbachev pronounced that idea at the meeting of the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU on 29 February 1988, which was devoted to the war in Nagorno-Karabakh: “interethnic conflict exists everywhere”, having great potential for socio-political instability, and referenced his conversation with the director of the Institute for Ethnography (USSR Academy of Science), academician Yuri Bromlei. The reference to the authorised opinion of this ethnographer helped Gorbachev to frame an all-encompassing explanation for socio-economic and political tensions in the late 1980s. The talk of “ethnic strife” in Central Asia was popularised in the Soviet and Western public domains, and special emphasis was put on ethnicity as a cause of negative long-term socio-economic consequences for Europe (when it would face migrants from the southern peripheries of the Soviet Union).

Even the publications in the regional Central Asian press in the 1980s reveal the communist party members' concern for a possible “threat” coming from nationalism and its possible alliance with Islam.<sup>2</sup> It was those available Soviet sources, upon which the Western academia had to rely to set up new trends in their studies. Research on perestroika became grounded in discussions on nationalism. Renowned scholars such as H. Carrere D'Encausse, A.A. Benningsen and S.E. Wimbush contributed to the idea that perestroika released the suppressed national feelings and identities, allowing them to rise to the surface and predominate in political and public life.

In their turn, the Western scholars' views, previously unknown and hidden, suddenly acquired special meanings of truth among Central Asian intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> These scholars promoted the vision of the “formerly oppressed ethnic and religious feelings of the Soviet Muslims”. In most works by them, Islam or Buddhism were seen as brutally oppressed religions, and Muslim intellectuals or Buddhist monks as potential rebels against the socialist state.

Later, when perestroika led to the USSR's disintegration and dismantling of socialism, democracy was intertwined with nationalism and explained as the right political system that would legitimately favour various nationalistic and religious expressions. Although the very recent Western historiography attempts to overcome those stereotypes, they become more grounded in the national historiographies of Central Asian Republics and Mongolia. This “*hall of mirrors*” is continuously reproduced as our reflections upon late socialism change under the influence of the current socio-political and cultural transformation.<sup>4</sup>

## Knowledge production in socialist Central Asia and elitist perestroika debate

Education and knowledge had been monopolised by religious and spiritual elites in Turkic-Iranian Central Asia and Buddhist Mongolia long before the establishment of the local Soviets in the 1920s. The rhetoric of national awakening served as an instrument for the struggle within those elites, in which the “holy alliance” between national intellectuals and Bolsheviks became victorious. The well-known delimitation of the Soviet Central Asia and the establishment of the MPR in 1924 became the outcomes of those processes. In the 1940s, the establishment of the Republican Academies of Science was accompanied by the launch of fundamental projects on writing the history of the Kazakh SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, etc. In the MPR, the presence of Soviet specialists contributed to the creation of new social hierarchies, within which the knowledge of the Russian language became a tool for a better career path. An academic career in the Soviet Central Asian Republics was considered to be an elitist one, and promised great social prestige.<sup>5</sup> Lucrative positions in the Academy of Science gave those people additional motivation to co-operate with the state and party authorities, rather than to oppose them in an open or hidden way.

The social significance of scriptural knowledge and education, as a sign of belonging to the upper strata of the community and possessing the most prestigious status of spiritual teacher, was also noteworthy in the MPR. Perhaps due to the extreme under-population of the country, the ties between Mongolian academia and nomenklatura were even closer than in the Soviet Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. The history books articulate that the progressive democratic change came to Mongolia via young sculptors, painters, writers and journalists, who

*Not only did the official historiographers of the newly independent states view the whole socialist period as a deviation from the normal development of their nations, so too did this vision prevail in the writings of many prominent Western scholars.*

## Elitist discourses and people's perceptions in contemporary Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia

formed their own social networks of urban intelligentsia in the 1980s, and held informal gatherings, which evolved into the first democratic units in 1989.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet official discourse on perestroika was elitist and shaped by representatives of conservative and liberal wings of nomenklatura, together with their supporters among intelligentsia. The latter had certain access (more limited for the Soviet Central Asian Republics and wider for the independent MPR) to the outside world via economic and diplomatic lines and exchange, international socialist institutions and communist parties' networks. Many in the West learned to perceive perestroika through their eyes.

Gorbachev approached the liberal intelligentsia in the Central Asian Republics in search for legitimisation of the perestroika course. One of the manifestations of this alliance was the Issyk-Kul Forum held in October 1986 at the Issyk-Kul lake in Kyrgyzstan, organised by the world-famous writer from Kyrgyz SSR, Chinghiz Aitmatov. The Kyrgyzstani intelligentsia spread the word that the writer, commonly remembered above all as the initiator of the development of the Kyrgyz language, had himself initiated the event and had personally invited respectable figures of world cultural and intellectual life in order to set up and test perestroika's "new thinking".

### People's perceptions of ethnicity as the cause for socialism's deconstruction

The narratives by non-intelligentsia and non-elitist social strata – peasants, workers and low-scale officials – are very different from the intelligentsia story, but their voices do not find adequate representation. Ethnicity is imagined and interpreted by the interviewed common people as a factor of accumulated social deprivation and frustration that finally led the socialist system to collapse. The highest degree of social deprivation is fixated for people who do not reflect on social system or inequalities at all, but who focus on ethnicity as the

*The narratives by non-intelligentsia and non-elitist social strata – peasants, workers and low-scale officials – are very different from the intelligentsia story, but their voices do not find adequate representation.*

key reason for their personal misfortunes. However, when confronted with the question "how and when did you learn about your ethnicity and ethnic tensions", many people say that they never thought of it during socialism and only started recognising it as a problem during perestroika, or even after 1991. Ethnic Russians in Central Asia project their present perception of Russia, as a hostile to Central Asian societies, onto the past. For the citizens of Mongolia, the unpleasant personal experiences in Russia format the perception of offence about the USSR's quick withdrawal from their country at the end of the 1980s.

The majority of the interviewed people talk of "ethnic tension" as a reason for socialism's deconstruction only if specifically asked; the manipulation and reproduction of ethnic conflicts in contemporary Central Asian states make people reluctant to talk of ethnicity as the reason for dismantling socialism. Among the preconditions for the USSR's disintegration people see not the "ethnic strife", but rather false policies or the lack of political will by the socialist leaders.

The individual and collective behavioural patterns of the respondents show that national identities promoted by contemporary states call for collectivist rhetoric and marginalise individual reflections on the past. At the focus-group in the Kazakhstani city Shymkent, after all the participants (of various ethnic background) stated that they viewed the disintegration of the USSR in a negative rather than positive light, the youngest respondent, a Kazakh man in his forties, noted: "as a Kazakh ... I think we should be independent ..." His reply made all the others reformulate their previous statements in a more affirmable nationalist way.

As long as the falsely reproduced memories and historical amnesia about the recent past are not given scholarly attention, and the concepts, with which we approach

the systemic changes of the late 1980s-beginning 1990s, are not scrutinised and methodology reflected upon, the Western scholars are likely to continue to follow-up the nationalist focus of Central Asian states' historiographies.

**Dr Irina Morozova currently leads the project on the history of perestroika in Central Asia (sponsored by Volkswagen Foundation), for which she took the position at the Seminar for Central Asian Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. She has been an IAS Fellow since 2003 (iyamoroz@xs4all.nl)**

### Notes

- 1 The author is grateful to VolkswagenStiftung for sponsoring the project *The History of Perestroika in Central Asia*.
- 2 Based on the content analysis of provincial Kazakhstani newspapers (*Kommunistik enbek*, *Ortalyk Kazakstan* and *Enbek tuy*, 1982) by Saltanat Orazbekova.
- 3 On the apologetic promotion of the liberal ideology of free market and democratic institutions by Central Asian scientists and intellectuals see: Amsler, S. 2009. *The Politics of Knowledge in Central Asia*. London and New York.
- 4 Saroyan, M. 1997. "Rethinking Islam in the Soviet Union". *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping community in the former Soviet Union*. E.W. Walker (ed.) Berkeley, pp. 15-17.
- 5 Some scholars describe how the descendants of the urban families of saints became recognised scientists, preserving due to that lineage some kind of intellectual if not spiritual authority. See: Abashin, S. 2007. *Natsionalizmy v tsentral'noi Azii. V poiskah identichnosti*. [Nationalism in Central Asia. In Search of Identity] St. Petersburg: Aleteiya, pp. 223-228; Muminov, A. 2011. *Rodoslovnoe drevo Mukhtara Auezova* [The Genealogical Tree of Mukhtar Auezov] Almaty: Zhibek Zholy.
- 6 Interview with Dr. Hulan Hashbat, Ulaanbaatar, May 2008.

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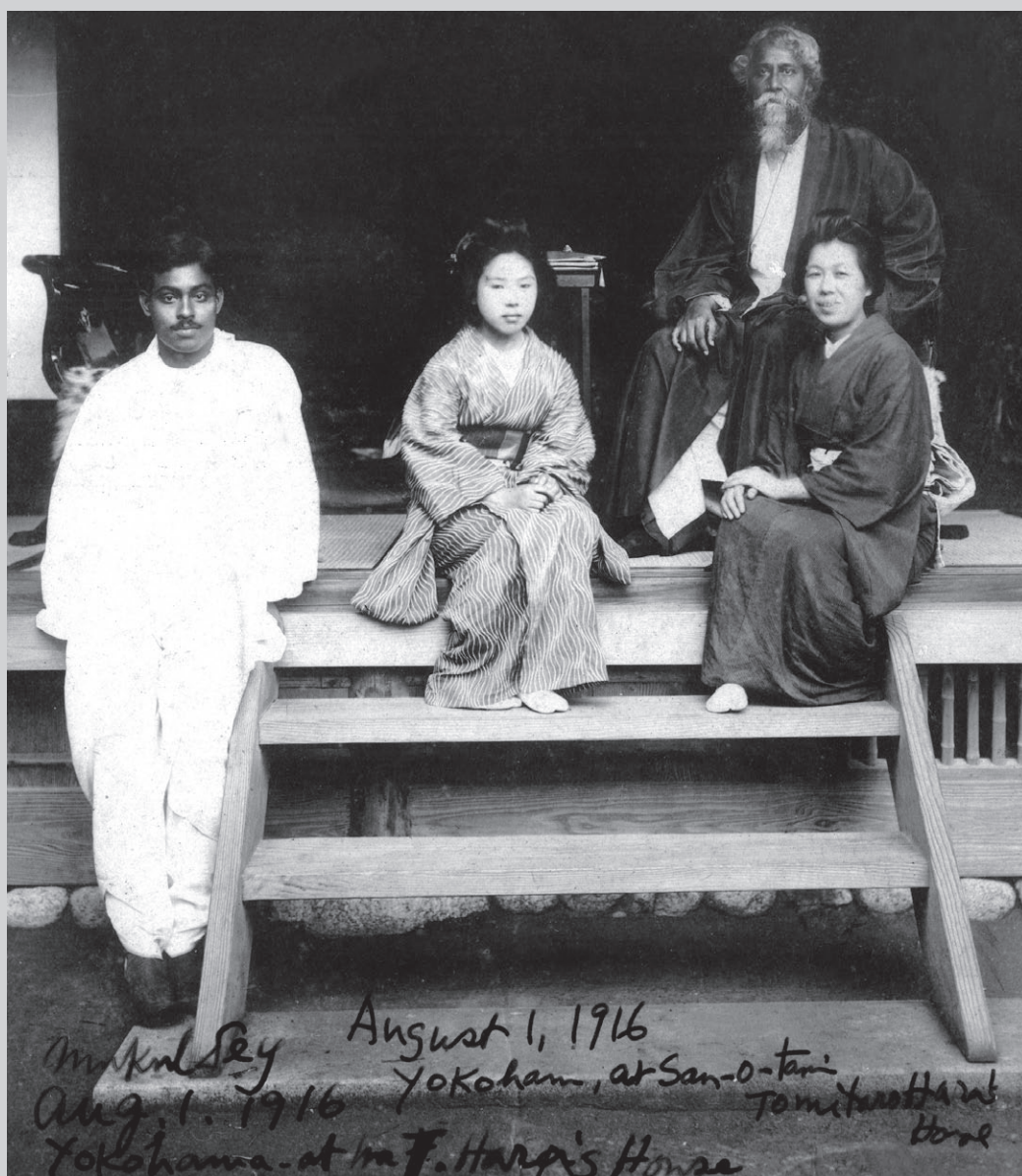
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# Mukul Dey: an autobiographically modern Indian artist<sup>1</sup>

One of the most persistent tropes in the study of South Asia has been the emphasis on collectivity and the formation of collective identities. In much of the older scholarship especially (but still persisting in a great deal of “common sense” contemporary understanding), the forces of religion, caste and the extended family are conceived of as somehow playing a much greater role in the framing of human subjectivity in the subcontinent than they do in other parts of the world. There has even been the suggestion, from one anthropologist, that South Asians could be best understood as “dividuals,” with a sense of personhood and agency derived largely from sources external to the self.<sup>2</sup>

Adrienne Fast



Mukul Dey (far left), Rabindranath Tagore (top right) and two Japanese ladies. Photo taken in Yokohama, 1916, two years before Dey's first trip to the Ajanta caves. Image courtesy of Mukul Dey Archives.

and his aspirations of middle-class respectability, the professional Bengali artist emerged as both a producer and a product of South Asian modernity; one which offered a profoundly new way to perform middle-class identity in the colonial context.

Performing the social role of the modern professional artist was by no means an easy or straightforward undertaking, as this was an environment of limited exhibition and sales opportunities as well as radically shifting patterns of patronage and art education. In such a difficult environment, it is useful to ask what kinds of opportunities (or risks) biographical writing might have offered artists who were struggling to carve out spaces of both economic opportunity and cultural capital for themselves. How did biographical writing provide a means by which to introduce a new kind of social entity – the modern, professional Bengali artist – to its public? And given the centrality of literature and the written word to Bengali cultural identity (then as now), were visual artists in Bengal particularly compelled to participate in the textual world in order to claim a role for themselves in public life?

There are a number of Bengali artists who began to write autobiographically during this period, including Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and Sudhir Khastgir (1907-1974). But Mukul Chandra Dey (1895-1989) offers a particularly useful case study when thinking about the autobiographical Bengali artist. First and most obviously, the narrative trajectory of Dey's own life intersects and engages with an incredibly rich cultural history of late colonial Bengal. He was a student at Rabindranath Tagore's experimental education project in Santiniketan at the very beginning of the twentieth century, when it was still in its earliest ashram-like period and before it became Visva-Bharati University. After Rabindranath Tagore became the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize (for literature in 1913), Dey accompanied him as his protégé and assistant on a highly feted tour of Japan and America. Dey had already demonstrated his artistic inclinations long before this trip, and had even tried his hand at etching plates for printing while still in India. But it was during this trip to the US that Dey gained significant training in printmaking, and he even became associated with the Chicago Society of Etchers. When he returned to India in 1917 Dey brought with him a rare and valuable asset: a functioning etching press. For the next few years Dey struggled to make a living as an artist in Bengal, before he eventually set sail for England in pursuit of further art education and training. He remained in England for seven years, studying first at the Slade School and later at the Royal College of Art. He exhibited and lectured extensively in London, and he became friendly with a veritable laundry-list of notable artistic figures of the day including Laurence Binyon, Muirhead Bone, Augustus John, and others. When he eventually returned to India in 1927, Dey was appointed the first Indian principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta; a post he held (sometimes tenuously) for about fifteen years. As an educator and arts administrator Dey influenced an entire generation of artists in Bengal, both through his curricular initiatives and by virtue of the fact that his own career trajectory provided students with an instructive model for them to follow (or rebel against). Although he produced large bodies of both painting and photographic work, Dey was primarily a print artist; he was one of the few artists of the period to truly specialize in printmaking media and he particularly pioneered the drypoint etching technique in India.

BUT ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS most commonly associated with the emergence of a self-conscious modernity, in India as in the West, is an intensified belief in (and glorification of) the autonomous individual, supposedly freed (or freer) from external social and religious pressures and self-governed by a rational and moral authority. Of course, it was particularly during the late colonial period that this model of the emancipated, independent individual gained cultural capital in India, and this was also precisely the same historical moment when systems of Orientalist ethnography were beginning to argue – and colonial systems of administration were working to encourage – the belief that collective identities were dominant in India; that India was a collection of castes and religions, rather than of individuals. As a consequence, the experience of being both modern and Indian in the late colonial period implicated a very specific, but not altogether globally uncommon, sense of anxiety. On the one hand it demanded an appreciation and a cultivation of the unique individual, while on the other hand it also presented a very real unease that one's own personhood was somehow incommensurate with individualism, and hence also with modernity itself.

The literary genres of biography and autobiography have long been associated with the growth of modern individualism in the West; in their emphasis on the production of unique individuals, biography and autobiography have routinely been read as markers of the emergence of a particularly modern (and usually exclusively Western) form of historical consciousness. Thankfully, in recent decades many historians of the non-West have done much to complicate this view by tracing

diverse histories of life-writing throughout the world and from a wide range of time periods. But nevertheless, during the late colonial period in South Asia the literary forms of biography and autobiography very actively participated in the kind of anxiety of Indian modernity that I have just described. On the one hand, there was a veritable explosion of writings in the first-person singular documenting individual lives in India from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Yet there was also a real concern about whether such texts that focused on a single individual were appropriate for South Asian subjects. As Gandhi famously noted in the introduction to his *My Experiments with Truth*, he was cautioned by a good friend against writing such an autobiography on the grounds that it was “a practice peculiar to the West. I know of nobody in the East having written one, except amongst those who have come under Western influence.”<sup>3</sup>

#### Producer and product of modernity

As an art historian, I am particularly interested in the entry of visual artists into this contested field of modern biographical production during the early decades of the twentieth century in Bengal (both present-day Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal). This was a historical and cultural context of extraordinary social transformation and upheaval, but it was also a period of great possibility when there emerged a number of radically new social roles and ways of being in the world. One such remarkably new social entity was the figure of the modern, urban, aspiring-to-be-middle-class, working Bengali artist. Distinguished by his (very rarely “her”) relationships with new forms of urban patronage, his aggressive self-promotion,

#### Autobiography as artistic practice

Perhaps even more important, for our purposes, than his own fascinating biography is the fact that Dey also wrote and published extensively, including three texts that can be called autobiographical. The first of these was his *My Pilgrimages*



GENERAL VIEW OF AJANTA CAVES, SHOWING CAVES 1 TO 17.



to *Ajanta and Bagh* (hereafter, *My Pilgrimages*), which was first published in 1925 and later reprinted in 1950. The second was a self-published book called *My Reminiscences*, which Dey produced in 1938. And finally, Dey's third autobiography is the Bengali-language *Amar Kotha (My Story)*, which was published posthumously in 1995. Covering as they do the full extent of Dey's long career, a brief look at each of these texts in turn offers a useful insight into the role that autobiography could play as a strategy of artistic practice for Bengali artists, from the early twentieth century to the end of it.

In *My Pilgrimages*, Dey recounts two journeys that he undertook to the famous Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta and Bagh, both in western India, with the stated purpose of studying and making copies of the frescos therein. Since their rediscovery in the early nineteenth century, the Ajanta murals in particular had done much to bolster India's claims to an indigenous painting tradition (colonial era art historical discourse had previously suggested that India had only fostered the plastic arts, but the discovery of sites like Ajanta proved that painting had simply not survived well in the South Asian environment). As they became better-known, through expensive collections of drawings and reproductions produced with the support of the colonial administration, the Ajanta murals quickly took on an iconic status as a "classical" Indian style, one that represented a lost golden age of Indian art and society before the British (or indeed even before the Mughal) invasions. For a growing number of artists in the late colonial period, Ajanta became the premier site that one had to study in order to gain a "properly Indian" sensibility in painting. It was the classical touchstone to which one could appeal when trying to negotiate through modern artistic expressions filtered from the West, and it was the destination of choice for those enacting a South Asian version of the educational rite of passage known in Europe as the "Grand Tour." Mukul Dey undertook both of his trips to Ajanta during the particularly difficult years between his post-Nobel-Prize tour with Tagore and his own departure for England, when he was particularly struggling to establish himself as a professional artist. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that during this period it would be Ajanta that Dey would turn to in order to try to stake out and establish his artistic credentials.

#### Personal narrative

One of the most interesting things about the narrative of *My Pilgrimages* is that it weaves fluidly through and across the genres of travelogue, personal autobiography and historical text. Suggestions for accommodation are offered alongside historical sketches of the life of the Buddha and the monastic community who first built and lived in the caves. Crucially, woven throughout all of this are stories of Dey's own personal experiences of traveling to and living at the caves while he undertook the months-long project of producing painted copies of the murals on paper. Dey recounts his "adventures pleasant and otherwise," including accounts of his travel across India by train, his encounters with wild animals, and the unfortunate death of his servant from cholera. In one chapter, for example, he begins by presenting a series of catalogue-like descriptions of the various caves with standardized information on their chronologies and decorations. He then suddenly breaks away from this inventory to tell a story about some mischievous monkeys who harassed him while he was trying to work. As the anecdote unfolds, Dey follows the monkeys some distance into the jungle where he discovers a set of enormous stone elephants. He then explains in the text that these sculptures were seen and discussed by the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, thus bringing his own personal anecdotal detour back full circle to the story of Ajanta, its connections

... in times of great social change, people were compelled to write their own stories not because they were exemplary, but because they in some way represented a remarkably new kind of life that even a few years previously would have been unthinkable.

to ancient routes of pilgrimage, and the history of Buddhism in India. This is simply one example of a pattern that recurs throughout *My Pilgrimages*; everywhere in this text Dey's own personal narrative is inexorably bound up with and within his telling of the story of Ajanta itself.

Scholars have noted that other Indian autobiographies written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often tended to veer away from the exploration of individual personality and psychology, in favor of connecting the individual life to larger political and historical trends and developments. In the Bengali context, Partha Chatterjee has noted that this manifested as a tendency to graft one's own story onto the story of India itself, suggesting that at this time the new, modern individual could in some ways only be understood "by inscribing it in the narrative of the nation."<sup>4</sup> In a similar manner, Mukul Dey was able to present his own personal narrative at this time only by presenting it alongside and in relation to a national symbol of great cultural significance like the Ajanta caves. What is significant, and what distinguishes Dey's autobiography from the others discussed by Chatterjee, is the choice of a nationalistic model drawn particularly from the field of culture or art, rather than politics, on which Dey elects to graft his own personal narrative. As a visual artist, Dey was compelled to participate in and to identify with the national symbols of culture and art, and these were the tools at hand that could be used by visual artists like Dey as vehicles through which to present their own artistic identities in the autobiographical format.

Moreover, insofar as *My Pilgrimages* displays the tendency to veer away from an exploration of its author's psychology or personality, it also has this in common with the large body of artists' life-writings that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in England. These artists' life-writings differed significantly from the usual Victorian models in that, rather than being prone to introspection and spiritual revelation, artists' autobiographies tended to be extensions of their art practice, designed to attract readers (and potential buyers) through a conversational and anecdotal attitude and approach. The biographical genre was, by this time in England, an established means by which artists presented and promoted themselves as respectable working artists. And indeed, it is important to note that Mukul Dey wrote and published *My Pilgrimages* during the seven years that he spent living and working in the UK. The lack of introspection that marks many other early Bengali autobiographies may be connected, in this case at least, less to nationalist notions of the self and more to a desire for artists to promote themselves as functional and productive, fully socialized members of society.

#### Extensively illustrated

The illustrations in *My Pilgrimages* also serve to distinguish this text from other early Bengali autobiographies. The images are remarkable both for their variety and their sheer volume. They include numerous photographs, line drawings, and reproductions of many of the painted copies of the frescos that Dey made during his time at the caves. There are nearly one hundred images altogether, making *My Pilgrimages* the most extensively illustrated early Bengali autobiography. According to correspondence that survives between Dey and his original London publisher, it seems that he wanted even more images to be included, but he had to be hurriedly ushered into the publisher's office at the last minute to make a reduced selection. Such a strong visual presence obviously speaks to Dey's training and background as a visual artist and his accompanying tendency to contemplate the world visually; it seems only likely that visual artists like Dey who elected to enter into the textual world would do so in a manner that emphasized the role of the visual in public life. But the images also relate and contribute to Dey's ability to fashion himself as a modern Indian artist in another very concrete, material sense. Before they became illustrations for this text, these images circulated first as independent commodities; many of the copies of the Ajanta and Bagh murals, which Dey produced during his time at the caves, and which were reproduced in the text, were sold to a Mr. Kallianjee Curumsey in Bombay, before Dey sailed to England in 1920. It was in fact the sale of those paintings that provided Dey with the financial wherewithal to undertake his journey to the UK, where he was in turn able to obtain the additional training, credentials and connections necessary to successfully market himself as a modern Indian artist, both in England and upon his return to Calcutta. These images therefore did not merely reflect an already formed artistic sensibility, they actively contributed to the making of Dey's artistic identity and his ability to live and earn a living as a professional artist at that time.

#### New possibilities

Dey's second autobiography was titled *My Reminiscences*, and it was composed in English and self-published in 1938 while Dey was serving as principal of the Government Art School in Calcutta. *My Reminiscences* recounts Dey's childhood and early

education, includes a lengthy description of his international travels and successes, and also provides some information about his work as an artist and principal after his return to India. Sudipta Kaviraj has argued that some early Bengali autobiographies were written to present readers with the possibility of a life; in times of great social change, people were compelled to write their own stories not because they were exemplary, but because they in some way represented a remarkably new kind of life that even a few years previously would have been unthinkable.<sup>5</sup> In much the same way, *My Reminiscences* presents a model of a possible life, lived as a modern, professional artist. It presents the constellation of skills and opportunities that make such a life possible, including travel, personal friendships, choice of specialization, paths of professionalization, and access to and best use of new forms of urban patronage and self-promotion.

*My Reminiscences* is also interesting because it was self-published. As an artist who specialized in etching and engraving specifically, Dey had privileged access to specialized printmaking equipment and the skills and training to be able to use that equipment well. Dey always maintained the printing press he had acquired in the US, and he also cultivated good working relationships with several local publishers. He made prolific use of these to produce large volumes of printed imagery and texts for his entire life. *My Reminiscences* is interesting for the ways that it participates in a much larger body of printed textual and visual material produced by Dey at this time, including personalized insignia, letterhead and logos that served to validate and reinforce Dey's authority, and his printed material as legitimate. The tools of printing and printmaking were, at this time and to those artists who could wield them, another valuable means by which to carve out a career and to promote oneself as a modern professional artist.

Finally, towards the end of his life Dey dictated the Bengali-language memoir *Amar Katha*. Although not published until after Dey's death, this text was recorded at a time when biographical accounts of several other artists who had been active in the early twentieth century were also beginning to appear in print. Panchanan Mondal's four-volume biography of Nandalal Bose, for example, appeared between 1982 and 1993, while the fictionalized biography of Ramkinkar Baij written by Samaresh Basu, *Dekhi Nai Phire*, appeared first as a series of articles in the journal *Desh* through the 1980s, before later being published in book form. Clearly at this time the late colonial period was becoming increasingly ripe for reinterpretation, and biographical texts were one of the means by which alternative interpretations and accounts could be negotiated and presented. Indeed, there was something of a biographical war being waged at this time – with the same events and the same people being presented in very different ways in different biographical accounts – as artists nearing the end of their careers sought to ensure that it would be their version of events that would acquire the status of history.

In conclusion, I hope I have demonstrated how the autobiographical writings of Mukul Dey provide powerful insight into the ways in which an Indian artist working in the metropolis of the colonial power was able to enter into the art world by building on a strong tradition of and fascination with artists' biographies in Britain, and how such an artist was able to then also reinsert himself into the Indian art world by presenting evidence of his international successes in a biographical format. At the end of the twentieth century, the tools of biography and autobiography became a final tool by which artists sought to secure their place in the art history of the period. The biographical text was an extremely useful strategy by which artists were able to both authorize and author themselves, not only through providing a means by which to introduce the artist to its public, but also by actively contributing to the formation of the "Modern Indian Artist."

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#### Notes

- 1 An earlier manifestation of this paper was presented at the International Congress of Bengal Studies in Delhi, March 2010. The author thanks those who were present and who offered comments and suggestions.
- 2 McKim Marriott. 1976. "Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism," in *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- 3 Mohandas K. Gandhi. 2009 (reprint). *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. New Delhi: Crossland Books, p.xi.
- 4 Partha Chatterjee. 1993. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.138.
- 5 Sudipta Kaviraj. 2004. "The Invention of Private Life: a Reading of Sibnath Sastri's Autobiography," *Telling Lives in India*, David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn (eds), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.93.

Left: General view of Ajanta caves, showing caves 1 to 17. Photo by Mukul Dey, included in *My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh* (1925).

Right: Mural depicting the temptation of Buddha, Ajanta Cave 1 (6th century). Copy done by Mukul Dey, included in *My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh* (1925).



# Translation studies go Asian in a quantitative way

How individuals and societies make sense of the Other has been a big question for many decades – in philosophy, cultural anthropology and other disciplines where qualitative methods are paramount. The next word comes from an unlikely breed: philologists with computers. Being empirical is the motto of this new brave world of *Geisteswissenschaften*. Digital humanities, as the direction is branded, flourishes on the unprecedented availability of multilingual computer-readable texts and computational power, as well as the yearning to ‘discover’ theories through the ‘mining’ of data.

Alexandre Sotov and Meng Ji



A RECENT PUBLICATION in empirical methods for comparative literary studies is the book by Oakes and Ji, *Quantitative Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*.<sup>1</sup> Among other case studies in a rich range of literature, the volume features two chapters that investigate how European translators dealt with two canonical Asian texts – Cao Xueqin’s *Hongloumeng*, a famous Chinese classic, and the *Rgveda*,<sup>2</sup> the oldest collection of Indian sacred hymns in Vedic Sanskrit (c. 1500 BC) – dwelling on some peculiar transformations that texts undergo when meeting a different language and a distant culture.

## Reinventing a Chinese classic

Meng Ji (Tokyo University, Japan) and Michael Oakes (University of Sunderland, UK) investigate the volatile styles of the early English translations of Cao Xueqin’s *Hongloumeng*, known in Europe as the Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*. The language of the novel, studied in China within its own special discipline called Redology (*Hongxue*), represents the pinnacle of historical literary Chinese. In China the novel is appreciated for its richness, subtlety, and the masterly use of figures of speech. The translation of the *Hongloumeng* into English in the 19th century marked a milestone in the Western study of Chinese literature and culture as a whole.

The comparison of different English versions of the *Hongloumeng* offers an opportunity to study the complex historical process and textual experience of the re-configuration of Cao’s artistic world in a distinctively different linguistic and cultural system. For that purpose Ji and Oakes used statistical techniques in order to compare three early representative English versions of the novel: Edward Bowra,<sup>3</sup> Herbert Giles<sup>4</sup> and Bencraft Joly.<sup>5</sup> They constructed a parallel corpus that helped to identify linguistic and stylistic differences between the three English translations.<sup>6</sup>

One of their observations was that, when compared to Bowra’s earlier translation, which contained a higher rate of function words, such as conjunctions and genitives, Joly’s later version enhanced the idiomaticity of the original through an idiosyncratic use of English terms and expressions (see Table 1).

Another important stylistic difference detected in these two English translations of the *Hongloumeng* was the structural variability of the idiomatic expressions used by Joly and Bowra. While the majority of idioms detected in Bowra’s early version of the Chinese novel was absolute or complete, with little structural variability, a large proportion of idiomatic expressions retrieved from Joly’s translation were instantiated within the textual context of the translation. This represents a further level of lexical adjustments and variations typical of Joly’s version of the novel, with a view to accommodating the literary tastes and expectations of the Victorian readership.

In the same volume, Ji studied two modern Chinese translations of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* in early seventeenth century Castilian. The two Chinese translations were created by Yang Jiang<sup>7</sup> and Liu Jingsheng.<sup>8</sup> A quantitative analysis revealed that compared to his predecessor, Liu greatly enhanced the use of Chinese idiomatic expressions in his more recent version, especially in terms of the use of Chinese figurative and archaic idiomatic expressions. It is worthy of note that Liu walked a similar path to Joly, the Victorian translator of the *Hongloumeng*. That is, in both cases, the later translations had greatly gained in idiomaticity, which may lead to the conclusion that such is a general pattern in the craft of literary translation, both old and new.

Last but not least, largely comparable findings uncovered in the two case studies demonstrated the significance and productivity of empirical methodologies in the study of literary translations at a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural level. One might hope that the use of statistical techniques can prepare a less speculative framework for the ongoing postcolonial debate about East-West encounters. Corpus driven tools and methods of exploring recurring patterns in structural variations of idiomatic expressions have much to offer such a project.

## Playing with poets

The source text and the translation are not easily comparable by means of corpus analysis; that is partly the reason why Ji and Oakes focused primarily on the comparison of the different translations of the *Hongloumeng*. In the same volume, Alexandre Sotov<sup>9</sup> (St. Petersburg, Russia) went a different way, dealing in his analysis with the one thing that seems to be common in both the *Rgveda* and its western translations: the usage of proper names.

First he simply counted all occurrences of several important proper names from the Vedic pantheon – gods Agni, Indra and Soma – in the Sanskrit text. Then he did the same thing in Karl Geldner’s German<sup>10</sup> and Tatyana Elizarenkova’s Russian<sup>11</sup> translations, aligning every verse of 1028 hymns in the Vedic collection with the translations. The results were surprising. The names were found in about 45% of the *Rgveda*’s c. 10.5 thousand verses, but the gap between their occurrences in the translations added up to about 800 verses in Geldner and almost 1000 in Elizarenkova, accounting for almost 10% of the entire *Rgveda*.

The differences between the translations went further when it came to analysing what is called explicitation. It is observed, for example, when a translator decided to add a name where it was arguably implied in the source text, as in verse 10.96.7 where the words Soma and Indra were spelt out by the translators, but not the poets. The analysis unveiled that the translators’ choice to explicitate was related to the number of words occurring just once (*hapaxes*) in a Vedic verse, as well as the location of the verse in the collection. Where there was just one *hapax* (or none), the translators were prone to ‘disagree’ over the use of explicitation – particularly in the verses outside the so-called family books of the *Rgveda*, where subject matter varies more. Of about 260 such verses, explicitation was used by one translator in 70% of cases. In contrast, in over 300 such verses inside the family books, traditionally attributed to particular clans of poets, explicitation was used in about the same number of verses by either one or both translators (a chi-squared test indicated high statistical significance for that difference).

What accounts for these and other differences in the use of theonyms is that the translators not infrequently adjusted the ambiguous Vedic original. But both scholars, Geldner in the first and Elizarenkova in the last decades of the 20th century, did that systematically. Strategy is the keyword to explain such behaviour, for it can be argued that translational decisions can in fact be ‘modelled’ with the help of game theory. A situation in which people act independently, yet quite unintentionally arrive at a common result, is well known in economics. Think of individual investors who hedge against each other perhaps without being aware of it. Perhaps the translators of Indian hymns are similar to economic actors, in the sense that their lexical decisions aggregate to a shared strategy, as if they were trying to balance each others’ translational choices.

Cartoon by Simon Goodway and Andrey Alexeyev.

In fact, where there were several Vedic *hapaxes* in a single verse, the translators ‘agreed’ or ‘disagreed’ over the use of explicitation at a near 50:50 ratio – apparently for the benefit of a future reader who can now compare their variants and make more sense of the enigmatic original. Such is the phenomenon, the research concludes, of complementarity between translations of one and the same text, which offsets a potential meaning-gap between the source text and its rendition and results in a situation of uncertainty. The mathematics behind such complementarity fits that of the Matching Pennies game. One could speculate that it could occur when hymns and verses did not offer the translators sufficient information to intuitively estimate a ‘fixed’ probability of their definitive meaning. Thus in a way the translators were, indeed, playing a guessing game with the ancient poets. Or, perhaps, vice versa: the poets themselves were playing riddles, Indian *brahmodyas*, with the western scholars. Well, sometimes the games played by *homo ludens* transcend both time, space, and culture.

Table 1: Some parts-of-speech (POS) frequencies in Bowra’s and Joly’s translations. The larger the chi-squared value, the more significant is the contribution of a particular linguistic feature towards the general stylistic differences between the two translation.

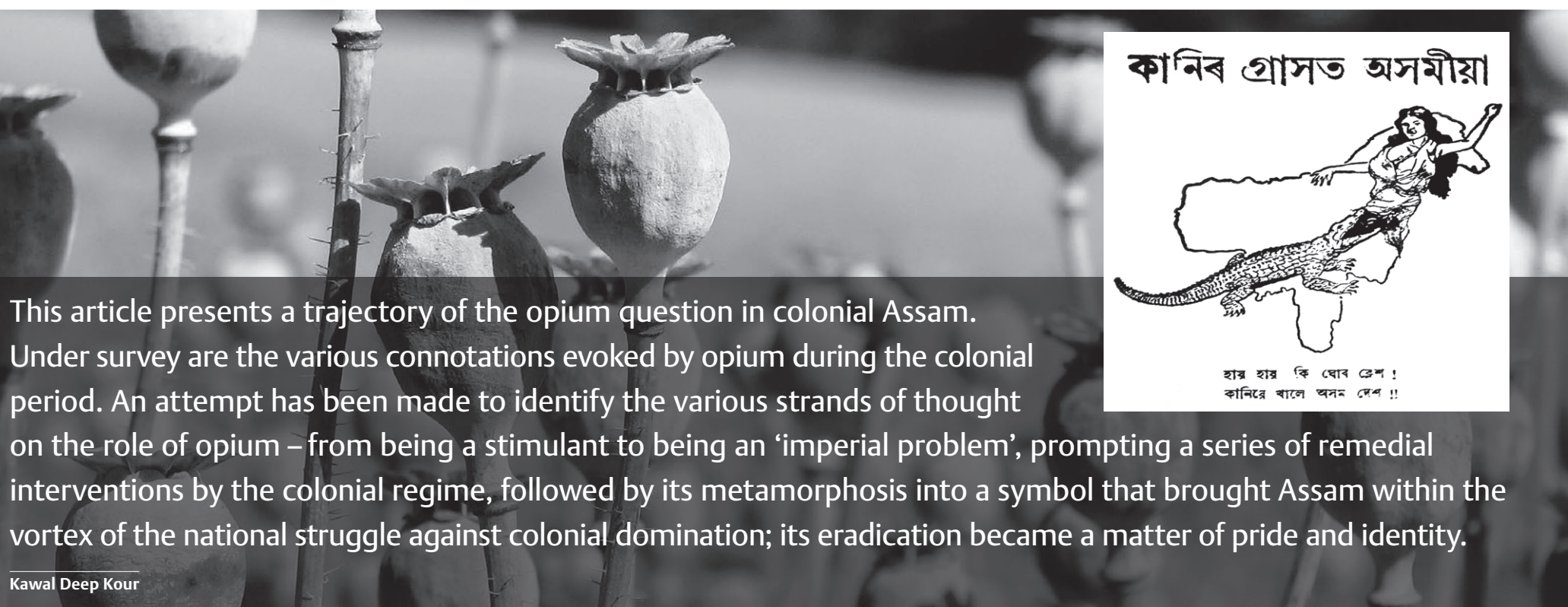
POS	Bowra		Joly	
	Frequency	Chi-squared	Frequency	Chi-squared
Conjunctions	553	4.638	650	3.351
Determiners	185	6.789	349	4.906
Genitive “s”	23	6.058	10	4.377
Prepositions	709	6.871	1156	4.965
Verbs	1284	7.012	1559	5.066

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## Notes

- 1 Michael Oakes and Meng Ji (eds.). 2012. *Quantitative Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins; <http://benjamins.com/#catalog/books/scl.51>.
- 2 Aufrecht, Theodor (ed.). 1877. *Die Hymnen des Rigveda*. Bonn: A. Marcus.
- 3 Bowra, Edward Charles (translation). 1868. *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Hong Kong: Noronha & Sons.
- 4 Giles, Herbert Allen (translation). 1895. *The Hong lou meng*, commonly called *The dream of the red chamber*. Shanghai.
- 5 Joly, Bencraft (translation). 1891. *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Auckland: Floating Press.
- 6 Ji, Meng. 2012. “Hypothesis testing in corpus-based literary translation studies”, in Oakes and Ji (eds.). 2012. *Quantitative Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*. John Benjamins.
- 7 Yang, Jiang (translation). 1978. *Don Quijote de La Mancha (Tang Ji He Te)*. Beijing: People’s Publisher.
- 8 Liu, Jingsheng (translation). 1995. *Don Quijote de La Mancha (Tang Ji He Te)*. Beijing: Li River Publisher.
- 9 Sotov, Alexandre. 2012. “The games translators play: Lexical choice in Vedic translation”, in Oakes and Ji (eds.). 2012. *Quantitative Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*. John Benjamins.
- 10 Geldner, Karl Friedrich (translation). 1951. ‘Der Rig-Veda’. *Harvard oriental series* 33-36. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- 11 Elizarenkova, Tatyana (translation). 1989. *Rigveda*. Moskva: Nauka.

# Opium, empire and Assam



This article presents a trajectory of the opium question in colonial Assam. Under survey are the various connotations evoked by opium during the colonial period. An attempt has been made to identify the various strands of thought on the role of opium – from being a stimulant to being an ‘imperial problem’, prompting a series of remedial interventions by the colonial regime, followed by its metamorphosis into a symbol that brought Assam within the vortex of the national struggle against colonial domination; its eradication became a matter of pride and identity.

Kawal Deep Kour

## First opium in Assam

It is only conjectures that surround the introduction of opium in Assam. References to the use of poppy in Assam date back to the time of the Ahom-Mughal conflict.<sup>1</sup> Credence to the theory that the Mughal incursions in Assam had facilitated the introduction of opium in Assam is contained in the *Buranjis*,<sup>2</sup> which contains references to gifts from the *Paadshah* (the Mughal Emperor of Delhi) that included *afing* (opium),<sup>3</sup> among other articles. According to the Assamese historian, S.K. Bhuyan, the cultivation of poppy and the habit of its consumption in Assam might have been imported by the bordering tribes from China where the production of this drug had been prevalent since earlier times.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary travel accounts further attest to the presence of thriving commerce between the Assamese merchants (*mudois*) with the neighbouring hill tribes, and with China and Tibet. The Assamese merchants went to Yunnan in China by means of the line of trade running through Sadiya in upper Assam. In fact, it was the lucrative trade with Tibet and China passing through Assam that was perhaps the reason why the Indian kings (Turko Afghan) and the Ti-Shans had attempted to capture the Brahmaputra valley.

Maniram Dewan, in his account of the Ahom rule, records that it was during the reign of the Ahom monarch Lakshmi Singha, that the poppy seeds were introduced from Bengal and cultivated at Beltola, in the neighbourhood of present Guwahati (Assam). In Assam, the local name for processed opium was *kane*. It involved a unique method of preparing opium by absorbing the fresh juice of the poppy with a strip of cotton; this was then either eaten (*kanikhowa*) or smoked (*kanipankhowa*).

## An imperial problem

By the early nineteenth century, colonial investigations into the landscape of the Brahmaputra valley resulted in a paradoxical identity for the fertile valley of Assam. It was hailed as a land of abundance, which was inhabited by lazy people. The excessive use of opium in Assam was identified as the reason for the ‘idle disposition’ of the people. The ‘opium plague’ soon became an ‘imperial problem’, with the European tea planters settled in Assam vociferously demanding colonial intervention to nip the evil in the bud.

The tea planters had high stakes in the newly developed tea gardens in Assam and they bemoaned the scarcity of local labour due to their indolence caused by their excessive use of opium. The cost of importing labour from initially China, and then from the central and eastern provinces of India, proved to be a costly affair. Thus, the colonial government embarked on a series of measures for dealing with the situation created by the opium menace.

Initially confined to the upper echelons of the society, opium was a status marker. It was the participation of the lower classes that made opium visible as a problem, resulting in a host of economic, social, administrative and legal ramifications for the province. In 1860, a governmental decree banned all private cultivation of poppy in Assam. While the colonial regime claimed to be guided by paternalist considerations, recent scholarship on the issue argues that it was guided more by economic than moral considerations.<sup>5</sup>

The official policy made a number of ‘opportunist’ shifts that moved from the prohibition of private cultivation, to the introduction of excise (*abkaree*), which would lead to revenue maximisation while progressively reducing the supply of opium; the shifts gradually reinforced the sense of an ‘Imperialism of Opium.’ This significantly restructured the opium issue in colonial Assam.

## Anti-opium campaigns

Meanwhile the anti-opium rhetoric was strengthened by the participation of the American Baptist missionaries in Assam, who actively campaigned for amelioration of the social evils, including the eradication of opium abuse. However, the docile sensibility of the newly emerging Assamese middle class towards the entire opium issue continued to vacillate between conciliation and compromise into the early twentieth century. The apathy of the intelligentsia, and their policy of ‘prayer and petition’ towards the anti-opium campaigns, continued until Assam was eventually drawn into the nationalist struggle by M.K. Gandhi’s prohibition of intoxicants.

So agitated was the anti-opium sentiment at the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921 that the temperance initiative witnessed huge participation by the youth. For them, the act of *Nikaniakaran* (purging of opium) signified an upheaval of a new Assam struggle against the ‘Imperialism of Opium.’ Opium was enmeshed in the contours of nationalist politics alongside increasing international drug surveillance initiated by US and taken up with vigour by the League of Nations, which certainly played a catalytic role.

The formation of the legislative council in Assam in the early twentieth century made opium a celebrated legislative issue. Its eradication became a matter of recouping national pride, which had been besmirched by Assam’s reputation as a ‘black spot of India’ due to its levels of opium consumption, which far exceeded standards set by the League of Nations. Assam’s consumption rate was 256 seers per ten thousand of population, as opposed to the standard of 6 seers per ten thousand of population set by the League. The insensitivity and the callousness of the Government was challenged on the floor of the legislature by vocal votaries of the anti-opium campaign. In unison, the Assamese councillors now claimed, ‘The Government of India is robbing the infant province of Assam of its milk and supplying poison in its place.’

The Assamese intelligentsia stirred up the momentum of the movement through their fiery writings, which were publicised by the print press, against the evils of opium. The virulent attacks on the Council certainly built up a new political awakening, which was the rejuvenation of the people to ensure regeneration of the province of Assam and ensure ‘Assam a rightful place in the comity of the emerging federal state.’

In 1939, as a final assault, the Congress-coalition Government in Assam decided to launch a Total Prohibition of Opium campaign, which entailed a three-pronged strategy of Propaganda, Vigilance and Relief. Perhaps the most rousing facet of the prohibition drive was the tremendous outpour of public enthusiasm, recollecting the days of the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921-22, when under M.K. Gandhi the ‘opium restriction campaign’ witnessed a deluge of active cooperation from the people of the province. The government appeared unlikely to have missed this opportunity of rebuilding Assam and restoring provincial pride.

Above inset:  
‘Assam in the  
clutches of opium’  
Alas! Alas! What  
misery has  
befallen Assam.  
Image courtesy:  
Tinidiniya Asamiya,  
1939. Department  
of Historical and  
Antiquarian Studies,  
Guwahati.



## Assam pride and identity

The classification of the Assamese peoples as physical and mental degenerates, and the label of ‘black spot’, had struck at the core of Assamese identity. This battle against the ‘evil’ opium was an important landmark in the history of the emergence of Assamese nationalism, which received stimulus with the up-and-coming Assamese intelligentsia in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Opium was linked to societal degradation initially, and later at the hands of the intelligentsia emerged, as historian Guha remarks, ‘the weak point of imperialists where the nationalists struck hard.’<sup>6</sup>

Literary outpourings of eminent nineteenth century Assamese litterateurs, such as Hemchandra Barua and Lakshminath Bezbaruah, against a malady that threatened to sap the vitality of the Assamese peoples, reached their culmination with the *Nikaniakaran Parva* (Festival of Temperance). The propaganda against opium was, in a sense, an act of purification and defence and, simultaneously, an assertion of Assamese pride and identity and the rebuilding of a *Sonar Axom* (Golden Land of Assam).

Post-independence, attempts at enforcing total prohibition were enmeshed with contemporary political and economic realities. Following the inclusion of prohibition as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy, the prohibition of intoxicating liquors and narcotic drugs was viewed as an integral part of the national development plan. Despite fervent pleas by representatives from Assam to prohibit the cultivation of opium in other provinces to prevent its smuggling into Assam, no constitutional obligation was resolved for uniformity in the implementation of the Prohibition in India. Finance seems to have been a decisive factor in policies on prohibition and continues to be so till this day.

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## Notes

- The powerful Ahom dynasty ruled Assam from 1228-1826. The Ahoms are considered to have been relatives of the great Tai peoples, and they settled in Assam after a long journey from their home in present day Thailand, across the Patkai hills and thence finally settling in Assam under an able general Sukapha, who became the first monarch of the Ahom dynasty.
- Assamese Chronicles are referred to as *Buranjis*. Written by official scribes of the Ahom rulers, they contain a descriptive and often authentic account of the reign of the Ahom kings.
- In Arabic, opium is referred to as *afing* or *afiyun*. The Sanskrit term for opium is *Ahiphena* or *Nagaphena*. See F. Moraes & D. Moraes. 2003. *Opium*. USA: Ronin Publishing.
- Bhuyan, S.K. “Asamat Kani” [Opium in Assam] in Birinchi. K. Barua (ed.). 1956. *Arunodoi Sambadpatrat Nagaonar Batori* [News on Nagaon in Arunodoi Magazine].
- The Opium monopoly was undoubtedly a lucrative source of revenue for the British East India Company. The prohibition of private cultivation of poppy was followed by the introduction of excise tax in Assam, which ensured a steady stream of revenue for the colonial coffers.
- Guha, Amalendu. 1991. *Medieval and early colonial Assam: society, polity, economy*. Calcutta: K.P.Bagchi & Co.

# The forgotten Penang hill station

Strategically placed between Asia and Europe, Penang Island was once dubbed the 'Pearl of the Orient'. Four years ago UNESCO granted the World Heritage Status to the historical heart of its capital, Georgetown – giving a boost to efforts to preserve the area's rich diversity. Beautiful colonial buildings such as the City Hall, High Court and the Eastern & Oriental Hotel have been restored, their white facades once again gleaming in the tropical heat. For the past thirty years, however, the bungalows and grounds of the famous Craig Hotel on Penang Hill (also known as the Crag Hotel), have all been allowed to go to ruin. What exactly has been happening up at this old British hill station?

Louis Zweers



1. The Craig Hotel in 2010; photo by author.

2. View from the first floor, overlooking one of the bungalows; photo by author.

3. Ground floor of the left wing, showing the 1929 inscription; photo by author.

4. The right wing of the Craig Hotel in 2010; photo by author.

5. View from the first floor, right wing, looking out onto Georgetown, the sea and mainland Malaysia; photo by author.



IT IS THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER 2010, and at first the driver of the jeep I am seated in will only agree to drive me up to the top of Penang Hill, where a well-known tourist lookout point can be found. But this is not what I came for. Somewhere below, among the thick jungle foliage, supposedly lies an old British hill station. After much coercing, and a substantial financial sum, I finally manage to convince the driver to take me along the narrow dirt road with dangerously sheer drops, until we eventually find the hidden cluster of buildings we were looking for. (We would later find that there was nowhere to turn the car, and we were forced to carefully reverse all the way along the winding and twisting path, back to where we had started.)

When arriving at the destination I am met by a rickety suspended rope bridge, and a forlorn overgrown property. Immediately visible are a number of dilapidated structures, windows and doors wide open, and a gate supported and kept upright by a few thin iron rods. This was the original entrance to the hill station. All around I see bungalows in ruin; here and there a forgotten rattan chair. Then I notice the building at the top of the hill, standing on an outcrop and accessible from only one side. It is the famous Craig Hotel, at the time a sister establishment of the Oriental Hotel in Georgetown. It still has its curved stone stairway leading up to the entrance; even the old balustrade has remained intact. Sheer drops are found on the other three sides of the building; a veranda stretches across its front. Inside I find the old ballroom with its endless bar; the room is dotted with remnants such as a metal coat-and-hat stand, original electrical outlets, doorknobs, rusty window and light fixtures. It could not be more dejected. It is rather spooky. "No one ever comes here", whispers the driver who is now standing behind me, looking around in amazement.

The once popular, and oldest (established in 1869), British hill station with its stately hotel and homely chalets has been completely engulfed by the jungle and the elements.

The once so elegant Craig Hotel, its outbuildings and detached bungalows with wide verandas, have gone to ruin. Behind the hotel you can still see the protruding slab of rock upon which guests could relax and enjoy the views, shaded from the sun by a large white parasol. From this elevation, at about 800 metres high, the views of Georgetown and its harbour, the tropical island of Penang, the sea and mainland Malaysia in the background, are still spectacular.

Penang was, only second to Singapore, the most important constituent of the British Straights Settlements. The island is approximately 25 kilometres long, 17 kilometres wide, and lies just off the west coast of the Malaysian peninsula. In 1901 the total population comprised 128,830 people – mainly Chinese, Malays and Tamil Indians. Just 2%, or to be precise, 2692 inhabitants were white colonials, originating from Europe and America. Georgetown was built on a hillside that slopes out to sea. It boasted numerable government structures and mansions built in British colonial style, as well as the legendary Oriental Hotel, the European Club, a race-course, botanical gardens and a golf course. Behind the town, the Penang Hills rise to an elevation of about 820 metres.

The original Craig Hotel was built towards the top of the hill in the 1870s. It was established and maintained by the joint Dutch tobacco ventures found in Deli, on the east coast of Sumatra. The managers of the hotel were the Armenian Sarkies brothers, who also had in their possession the famous Strand Hotel in Rangoon, the Raffles Hotel in Singapore and the Eastern & Oriental Hotel in Georgetown, among others. The high-lying hotel, where there was always a cool breeze, offered a sanctuary to the Dutch colonials from Deli; they often suffered from malaria, and would travel to Penang frequently for rest and recuperation. At that time, the trip by sailboat between Sumatra and Penang took about a week; later, a steamship covered the distance in a day.

The photographs taken by the British photographer W. Jones, who had a studio in Georgetown, show the nineteenth century hill station on Penang Hill. His extensive album "Penang, Singapore and Sumatra", compiled in 1888, gives a remarkable impression of the trip up the hill, and of the time spent by colonials at the mountain hotel and its hillside bungalows. One image shows a colonial being carried up the hill in a palanquin by Klingalese coolies from British India; at certain places the path was too steep even for horse and carriage. Another photograph depicts a colonial man, dressed in white flannel trousers, dark coat and tropical helmet, peering through a telescope perched on a tripod. In the background you can see a few chalets, and a sign announcing "Queen Victoria Bungalow". To the left, among the trees, you can spot a Bengali servant carrying a large tray with beverages.

Dutch author Carry van Bruggen who was living in Medan, travelled to Penang in 1905. In her story "Een badreisje in de tropen" (At the Seaside in the Tropics) she describes the trip across the Malacca Straits made by the young white lady Gerda, with her baby and *baboe*. She too was carried up the hill in a palanquin, but found it a harrowing experience and lamented about the fact that "five people, just for her, painstakingly laboured, like wretched servants, contorted slaves..."<sup>1</sup> When the new hill station Brastagi was established in East Sumatra, increasingly fewer visitors from Deli made the trip to Penang for health and recreational reasons, and by 1910 the Dutch colonials preferred to find respite in the cool hills of the Sumatran hinterland.

The Craig Hotel was completely renovated in 1929. The imprint of the year of the overhaul is still visible, and can be found on the ground-level wall of the left wing. A number

of new chalets were also built for the guests. The Craig Hotel maintained its popularity and flourished up until the start of the Second World War. After the War, the property fell into the hands of a group of Malaysian plantation owners, and later an international (boarding) school was temporarily established on the site.

The property has now stood empty for the past 3 decades. In 1992, the French actress Catherine Deneuve momentarily drifted across the terrace of the desolate Craig Hotel in the award-winning movie "Indochine", which was partly filmed at the hill station and in Georgetown. My driver told me that the hotel now has a new owner; there are plans to build a prestigious hotel complex on the popular elevated location. The question remains, though, whether the Craig Hotel will be restored to its original state, as was done with the Oriental Hotel, or if a more terminal future awaits it.<sup>2</sup>

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**Notes**

- 1 Carry van Bruggen. 1988. *Een badreisje in de tropen* [At the Seaside in the Tropics] Schoorl: Conserve. Original version was published by Becht in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 1909.
- 2 The original bids for development in 2010 were rejected as they did not meet the requirements set by the council. In April 2011 a subsequent bid was accepted and the Malaysian businessman, Sri Nisuh Sdn Bhd, was awarded the rights to develop the site. The new hotel will be managed by Aramresorts International, and be named Aramcrag Resort.



Photo taken by British photographer W. Jones in 1888. Here you see a guest of the Queen Victoria Bungalow enjoying the views through a telescope. Courtesy of VIDOC, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands – image 1165/31, neg. 1132/3a .



Photo at the Penang Hill station in 1888, taken by British photographer W. Jones. In the foreground you see a colonial guest shooting at a target. Courtesy of VIDOC, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands – image 1165/5, neg. 1132/2a .



Photo taken by British photographer W. Jones in 1888. Here you see the Clara Bungalow, and a guest being carried up Penang Hill by palanquin. Courtesy of VIDOC, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands – image 1165/1, neg. 1132/1a.

# Kazakhstan and Perestroika: was a chance at “heroism” lost?

On 17-18 December 1986, a students' uprising took place in Almaty, the capital of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KazSSR). The pretext for the riots (commonly referred to as the December events) was the appointment of the non-Kazakh and non-Kazakhstani “person from outside”, G. Kolbin, to the post of the First Secretary of the KazSSR Communist Party. The former First Secretary, D. Konayev, who had been leading the Republic since 1964, was removed from his post “due to the pension age”. The change of leadership in Kazakhstan happened as a result of the rotation of cadres' launched by M. Gorbachev to realise the newly proclaimed perestroika course.

Tolganay Umbetalieva<sup>1</sup>

THERE ARE VARIOUS CONTRADICTIONING VIEWS in academic milieu about the decisive factors that bring strong and complex politics, as the USSR, to a halt. Taking into account the complexity of the perestroika course that resulted in the USSR's collapse, this article focuses on the study of the political situation in the KazSSR in the second part of the 1980s. This research is based upon the data extrapolated from the recorded interviews with the participants and witnesses of the December events, results of the three focus-groups, content-analysis of the Kazakh and all-union periodicals of those years and memories of the members of the KazSSR Communist Party.<sup>2</sup>

Most publications on perestroika in Kazakhstan are heavily ideological; think of J. Kydyralina, who focuses on the national question, while A. Shakhanova investigates the religious situation in the Republic during perestroika.<sup>3</sup> Both authors base their research on the archival documents of the KGB in the KazSSR and the archives of the KazSSR Communist Party. Still the perestroika period has not been given much attention by Kazakhstani researchers, for which there have been some systemic political reasons.

## Perestroika in Kazakhstan: a shadow of nationalism

The political processes in the centre of the USSR were a mere echo in Kazakhstan, which always remained a Soviet periphery. Although the centrifugal administrative structures never granted much power to local authorities, the patterns of centre-periphery relationships varied at different periods of the Soviet history. From very early on (beginning of the 1920s), Moscow had little faith in the Kazakhstani political elite, who continued to be actively engaged with establishing the imagined Central Asian Republic, with its centre in Turkestan city, independent from the Soviet Russia. The project was labelled as pan-Turkism and its initiators and supporters were repressed.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Kazakh elite remained under suspicion of nationalism.



The voices in support of this opinion were heard in our recorded interviews: “...Moscow had always treated Kazakhstan with suspicion and considered the probability of

escalation of ‘nationalism’ in the Republic to be very high.” And so, the republican national elite was deprived of decision-making abilities in the political sphere. Only later were ethnic Kazakhs promoted to the post of First Secretary of the KazSSR Communist Party: Zh. Shayahmetov in 1946-1954 and D. Konayev in 1964-1986. The history of distrust towards the Kazakh elite was most likely the key reason for Gorbachev's decision to appoint an ethnic Russian (and former First Secretary of the regional party committee in a small Russian town Ulyanovsk), G. Kolbin, to the post of First Secretary of the KazSSR Communist Party in 1986. The decision seems to have been supported by the information coming out of the Republic on the increased “threat of nationalism” in Kazakhstan.<sup>5</sup>

Even though there was an ethnic Kazakh candidate, N. Nazarbayev (at that time leading the Council of Ministers of the KazSSR), Gorbachev appointed Kolbin and later claimed it to have been Konayev's initiative. But, despite the fact that Kolbin now occupied the post of the First Secretary of the KazSSR Communist Party (which he held until 1989), he mustered little authority and Nazarbayev remained the unofficial leader of the Republic. Nazarbayev continued in his attempts

to convince Gorbachev of his loyalty and support for the perestroika course. In his turn, Kolbin was confronted by the Kazakh youth who protested his appointment; he had to suppress these protests, and in so doing, distanced himself from the Kazakh elite. Furthermore, he spent his whole tenure as First Secretary competing against former-First Secretary Konayev's enduring popularity.



According to Nazarbayev, his suppression of the students' revolt in Almaty in December 1986 should have been enough proof of his loyalty to Moscow. Nazarbayev was the first to condemn the rebellion in the media and call the protesters “extremists and hooligans”.<sup>6</sup> Later, after independence in 1991, and after his appointed as President of the new Republic, he would radically change his position, but at the time of perestroika he maintained his accusations of nationalism among the protesters, because that is what the Kremlin evidently wanted. By doing this, he launched a new campaign against various expressions of nationalism in the party apparatus and in the system of education in the Republic. The protesters were brought to court and prosecuted.<sup>7</sup>

More evidence of Nazarbayev's determination to prove his loyalty, was the principle change in his position. Never openly discussing the problems in the Republic during perestroika, he later suddenly became the transmitter of the “national interests of the Kazakh nation”. He claimed that he had always been concerned about the future of the Kazakh people and their language and had always been an active opponent of Kremlin's political domination.<sup>8</sup> Our content-analysis of the periodicals and other open sources for the period of 1982-1991 did not reveal a single fact to support this claim.

Despite the fact that after 1991 Nazarbayev re-claimed his image as representative of the Kazakh people, the role of the Kazakh youth in the December events still remains understudied. More than this, many facts that could potentially shed light on what happened during those days in the Kazakhstani capital, still remain unknown. The most common versions are: (1) It was democracy in its essence, whereby a movement of young people, who believed in the slogans of perestroika (*glasnost*, freedom of speech, democracy), expressed their disagreement with the decision to appoint Kolbin to the post of First Secretary; (2) It was a movement of nationalist character, showing the Kazakh people's dissatisfaction about their status and, especially, the disappointing position of the Kazakh language; (3) The rebellion was organised by the republican party elite, which fought for the leading positions in the Republic. During Konayev's reign, the republican elite had gained more advantageous positions vis-à-vis the Kremlin and enjoyed certain levels of independence, which they were not inclined to give up.

The campaign against the participants of the December events and their supporters continued during the whole period of perestroika. As a result,

the republican elite and wider sections of the population, followed the perestroika developments, but were never the vanguard of the reform. However, the diminishing leadership role of the CPSU in the state and society, as well as the weakening position of Gorbachev himself, influenced the events in the KazSSR. Thus, M. Shakhanov, the famous



writer and the Deputy of the Congress of People's Deputies managed to establish the Commission of Investigation of the December events in 1989 and rejected the accusation of nationalism among the young protesters. As a result, all participants were acquitted from all charges and released from prison, or hospital (as the case was for many). Those who had perished during or after the events, had their names cleared posthumously.

Despite everything, the ideas of separatism did not gain wide support in the Republic. There was no wide public debate on the issues discussed at the Congresses of People's Deputies in Moscow in 1989-1991. Lacking their own vision on the reform, the party elite continued to support Gorbachev's course and did not reveal quests for political independence. Consequently, the Republic was the last one to announce its independence from the USSR, in 1991, when *de facto* the USSR had itself already ceased to exist.

## Gorbachev's course in the memories of Kazakhstani people

The attitudes towards perestroika and its outcomes appear to be contradictory. On the one hand, many common people were rather passive towards the new course, acting as mere observers. On the other hand, not everyone supported Gorbachev's course and many people were sceptical about the Kremlin's policies. However, eventually the majority of the population became disillusioned by perestroika; despite Gorbachev's endless speeches on television, his proclaimed decisions remained unimplemented.

Nevertheless, the people's perceptions about the Soviet economic and social system remain unanimously positive; people still warmly recollect their lives under socialism, although they can also remember shortages and poor quality goods. The population of contemporary Kazakhstan is still unwilling to consider their lives in the USSR in a negative way, and therefore, in the peoples' perception, “perestroika” began in the 1990s, after the USSR's disintegration.

The KazSSR elite feared losing their status quo and finding themselves on the Soviet periphery, but opposing the Kremlin was an even more frightening option, to the extent that they were ready to sacrifice the interests of the Republic and its population. As a result, the current political elite, the great part of which built up their fortunes in Soviet times, lacks a “heroic past”, based on which it could start writing a new national history. This probably also explains why the Kazakhstani officialdom does not demonstrate much enthusiasm about any research on perestroika.



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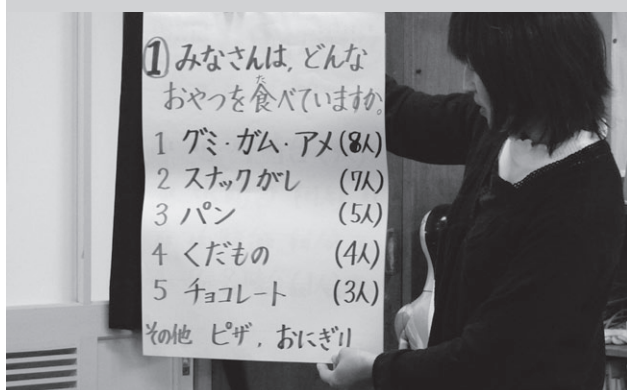
Above, left and right: Images of the 1986 protest, known as the December events. Photos courtesy of the Central State Archive of Almaty.

Below: A scene depicting the 1986 Jeltoqsan (December) events. Republic Square, Almaty, Kazakhstan. CC Attribution-ShareAlike.

# Tackling the overweight problem: healthy Japan was no exception

Researchers announced in May 2012 that 42% of Americans will be obese by 2030. This rekindled the national concerns for children's health in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of obesity among American children has tripled since 1980, partly because American society has promoted increased consumption of less healthy food.<sup>1</sup> The problem lies in excessive use of sugary drinks and high caloric foods for purchase in schools, advertising toward children, and lack of regulations. Japan, on the other hand, has always been known as one of the healthiest countries in the world in terms of its diet, which is low in fat and high in protein. And so it was a surprise to find that even Japan could not escape the threats of obesity, and was no exception to the global rule.

Kaori Takano



Left: "What kind of snacks do you eat?" At the top of the list we find candy and chips.

Right: "How much is too much?" Children measure appropriate amounts of potato chips during the snack lesson.



AT ONE POINT, Japanese people started to realize they were losing their traditional food culture due to the influence and prevalence of western food, and started to see that the country was facing a problem of overweight children and the associated health implications. According to a report released in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), only 6.7% of 6th grade boys were overweight in the late 1970s, but the number almost doubled to 11.7% by 2002.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, children's hyperactivity and misbehavior in school was becoming a social problem.<sup>3</sup> Gradually the entire Japanese society was becoming convinced that food education should be provided in schools to effectively improve children's diets.<sup>4</sup> The national government made this health issue a national priority and created a new law called *Shokuiku Kihon Ho* (The Basic Law of Food Education).

The term *Shokuiku*, or food education, was originally created more than a century ago, but emerged again through repeated warnings from food studies scholars in the late 1980s, and again in the early 21st century.<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was a strong advocate for food education and supported the creation of the law. According to the *Shokuiku White Paper*, the law aims to improve the diet of Japanese nationals of all ages and encourages parents, educators, and the community to collaborate in providing food education, especially for young children.<sup>6</sup> It raises awareness through various educational events, such as nationwide cooking seminars about food choice, nutritional issues, food safety, local food consumption, and preserving the traditional Japanese food culture.

When the food education law was enacted in 2005 the government invited the business community to educate children directly, instead of attempting to regulate food makers' marketing techniques toward children, so that children can build up abilities to make good food choices or *shokusenryoku*. This officially opened the door for the private sector into the public domain, including the field of compulsory public education. The commercial food makers started designing lessons for children at schools, examples of which are provided below.

## Snack lessons

A leading potato chip maker, Calbee Foods, developed a program to teach schoolchildren about responsible snacking. In 2008, their website explained that the snack lessons were free, and their target audience was 3rd-6th graders. Lessons lasted between 45-90 minutes, during which time the children would be asked to measure out the suitable amounts of potato chips as a snack, learn how to read ingredient labels on packages, and watch a video regarding appropriate snack times. In 2004, fewer than thirty schools participated in this snack lesson, but the number of participating schools rapidly grew to more than two hundred a year later, when *Shokuiku Kihon Ho* (the Basic Law of Food Education) was enacted.

Considering the fact that one of the major goals of the new law was to preserve traditional Japanese food culture, the McDonald's Japan campaign raised more than a few eyebrows.

I was curious about how teachers felt about this emerging trend created by this potato chip maker. Fortunately I had the opportunity to interview several public elementary school teachers, who were regularly carrying out the snack lessons by 2008, which was still before corporate food lessons had become the norm in public schools. There had been mixed feelings about the lessons; some believing it gave a wonderful insight into the snacking habits of children, and the chance to teach them about healthy food choices, whilst others worried that the lessons could be misused (by the companies providing the lessons) as promotional activities. Another concern was that children would simply start to see potato chips as healthy foods because the makers had been invited into the school; i.e., the school's endorsement of the lessons could be mistaken for an approval of potato chips as a healthy snack. Interestingly, the companies were able to quench all concerns of school leaders, and Calbee Foods is now the most successful company producing, what many believe, an unhealthy product, and yet providing food education lessons in public schools in Japan. The company's snack lesson continued to expand and reached more than five hundred schools nationwide by 2008.

## Fast food maker's food education

A (predictably) highly controversial, yet successful example of commercial food makers in school education is McDonald's Japan, a leading fast food maker. Unlike Calbee, which sends instructors into schools to provide free snack lessons, McDonald's Japan just provides free educational materials, produced in close collaboration with educational experts. The company created a free food education program on DVD, including sample lessons for educators, in 2005, immediately after the Basic Law of Food Education was enacted. Considering the fact that one of the major goals of the new law was to preserve traditional Japanese food culture, the McDonald's Japan campaign raised more than a few eyebrows. A reputable food expert, Makuuchi, criticized scholars and dietitians who had participated in the project, calling them "opportunists" for partnering with "junk food makers".<sup>7</sup>

As a parent and educator, I too felt troubled by this new phenomenon of the private sector involvement within schools. Therefore, in 2008, I contacted more than 50 public schools that were using the McDonald's food education program and spoke to some of the teachers who started giving the lessons in the early phases of the program. They had indeed had many disagreements with colleagues about their choice to work with McDonald's. I continued my dialogue with public school teachers until 2010, and surprisingly, these conflicts appeared to dissipate over time. The use of corporate curriculum was slowly becoming the norm for public school teachers. Teachers did, however, learn how to pick and mix what was on offer, thereby excluding promotional elements and taking full advantage of the potentially educational aspects of the lessons.

There are of course more commercial companies who participate. Kikkoman provides a soy sauce lesson; Meiji Corporation (known formerly as Meiji Dairies) provides a lesson about calcium; House Foods talks about the use of spices in food; a chewing gum maker provides a lesson that addresses the importance of chewing your foods properly; and a chocolate maker looks at the beneficial aspects of cacao. All these companies address the positive sides of their signature products, plugging the information into food education lessons, using their expertise and experience-based activities in very creative ways. The national government recognizes these sophisticated strategies. According to the *Shokuiku Hakusho* [Food Education White Paper] published by the Cabinet Office Government of Japan in 2007, the government is fully aware that some companies that provide lessons to schoolchildren do so in the form of corporate social responsibility, managing to keep their promotional activities out of the classrooms, yet others partake in the project as part of their marketing strategy.

## Implications

I must point out that this national movement of food education has made a significant positive impact on Japanese society. Over the past several years, more Japanese have become educated about food choices and many have become 'food police' to promote healthy diets. Due to the overall improved diets in the nation, the trend of overweight children was finally reversed at every grade level, after more than two decades,<sup>8</sup> and the Ministry of Education reported in December 2011 that the percentage of overweight children had continued to decline after 2009.<sup>9</sup>

Japanese society has a collectivist orientation, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of this national movement of food education. Although different countries have different political and cultural systems, and must take them into account when dealing with an issue such as food education, I strongly believe that food education is becoming a global movement – even in America where people are more individualistic and not entirely appreciative of government interference. Many advanced and developing countries are struggling to tackle children's health issues, so let's hope that the successes of the food education law in Japan can be transferred to other regions or nations.

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# Reading seventeenth century Dutch

## The Alumnus



Early in May this year, the IAS welcomed back an old friend from India. Professor Om Prakash, retired from the Delhi School of Economics, is a renowned specialist in the early modern economic history of the Indian subcontinent, and the relationship between India and the Netherlands.

Willem Vogelsang

PROFESSOR PRAKASH'S association with the IAS goes back to May 1995 when he was invited to deliver the second annual Institute lecture. The topic of the lecture was "Asia and the Pre-Modern World Economy", and it was later published by the IAS. He has also published in the Institute's quarterly, *The Newsletter*. In 1999, he was invited to serve on the International Review Committee to evaluate the IAS. He was invited by the IAS as a Senior Fellow in 2005-06 and again in 2007. He has been a Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2000, and in April 2005 he was awarded the Royal Decoration "Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion" by Her Majesty, the Queen of the Netherlands. Willem Vogelsang, IAS institute manager, spoke to professor Om Prakash about his research and his personal relationship with IAS and the Netherlands.

#### When did you first come to the Netherlands?

That was in September 1961. I was still rather young, for the first time outside of India. Yes, I was homesick, but fortunately I found some Dutch people who helped me, and in the end I stayed for two years in The Hague, going to the National Archives (at that time called the General State Archives) almost every day. But again, I had always lived with my family in Delhi, had gone to University there, and then to find myself all alone in a foreign country: the first few weeks were indeed difficult!

#### Why did you become interested in the Netherlands?

I studied economics at the Delhi School of Economics, but all that time I was also interested in history. In 1959 a new course was being offered, namely that of economic history, and of course I opted for that course, although I should add that I was the only student. During my studies I thus became interested in the Indian overseas trade in the seventeenth century, especially with the Netherlands. Did you know that by the end of that century, India had become the most important trading partner for the Dutch East India Company, more important even than Indonesia? The VOC exported Indian textiles to Europe, raw silk to Japan, and opium to Indonesia, from where some of it reached China. Especially Bengal was an important source of Indian products. The VOC trade with India remained larger than that of Britain until the early eighteenth century.

#### Who stimulated you to pursue this line of study?

When I studied in Delhi, one of my teachers was Tapan Raychaudhuri, who had already studied the archives in The Hague and who defended his second PhD thesis in Oxford in the mid 1950s ("The Dutch in Coromandel, 1605-1690"). Then there was Professor Ashin Das Gupta, who completed his PhD in Cambridge. He had also worked in the National Archives in The Hague, and in 1967 published his book, "Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740-1800". But I also received much support from a diplomat who worked at the Dutch embassy in Delhi. He taught me Dutch. The embassy also arranged a Dutch government fellowship to enable me to go to the Netherlands, at first for one year, but it was later extended to a second year. That is how I ended up in The Hague in September 1961. So you see, I received a lot of support and encouragement from various people.

#### Were people not surprised with you specialising in the Dutch trade with India?

Well, yes. At that time there were very few people in India interested in this subject. Many of my friends advised me to pursue a career in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). But I must say that I got a lot of support from my father, who had been a civil servant himself, although not in the IAS. I should add, that an academic career in India, in those days, was perhaps not as risky as it may be now; there were, and there still are, many universities and colleges and it is not too difficult to find a lectureship somewhere. Nevertheless, a career in the IAS was regarded as being far more prestigious. But, as I said, my father always supported my decision.

#### How did you feel when you first came to the Netherlands?

Rather lost, to tell you the truth, especially when I saw the documents I was supposed to study. I had learnt a bit of modern Dutch in India, with the help of my friend at the Dutch embassy, but reading handwritten seventeenth century Dutch was quite another matter. So, I think I was really lucky to meet the right people. An official from the Ministry that had given me the grant to come over to the Netherlands, arranged for a retired teacher to help me learn to read seventeenth century Dutch. At first it was rather funny, because he could not read the documents either, but he was native Dutch, and together we picked it up and in fact I soon noticed that I was reading the texts with much more ease. You may understand that at that moment I felt rather relieved.

#### How did your work go?

At first I focussed on the VOC trade in Gujarat, in western India, but later I concentrated on the archives that related to Bengal. The amount of material was really enormous, and that is why I received an extension of my fellowship for another six months. I then went to London for some three to four months to study the British sources, and after that I returned to the Netherlands for another six months. So, in total I worked for two years in The Hague.

#### So what happened when you returned to India?

In the winter of 1963/1964 I returned to India, by boat from Marseilles to Bombay. I had collected a wealth of information, and by 1967 I could submit my thesis, which was accepted in 1968. A few years later I could travel again, this time to Harvard. I had received a fellowship

from the Rockefeller Foundation, and I was lucky in being able to stay there for two years. I could revise my thesis manuscript and prepare it for publication. I returned to Delhi in 1972 and was appointed as associate professor at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

#### When did you go back to the Netherlands again?

That was in 1976, when I received a fellowship from the University of Delhi. My friends and colleagues were once more surprised that I opted to go to the Netherlands, rather than Britain or the United States, but I wanted to go back and study the archives again. I met some Dutch historians during this visit, who would remain close friends ever after: Jan Heesterman, Henk Wesseling, Dirk Kolff, Femme Gastra, Leonard Blussé, Ivo Schöffer, Hugo s'Jacob, Jaap Bruyn, Jur van Goor.

#### Did you ever consider leaving India permanently?

No, my wife and I always wanted to work and live in India. I have over the years received many invitations to work abroad, but I have always declined them. That did not mean that I did not like to go abroad for some months or longer. In 1982-1983 I received a fellowship from the Netherlands to spend time at IAS in Wassenaar (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences). During that year I finished a book manuscript for Princeton University Press. I went back to IAS in 1992-1993, to work with some of my Dutch friends, including Femme Gastra, Leonard Blussé, and Jur van Goor. Together we worked on a project that covered the trade of pre-modern Asia. And in 1998 I again returned to IAS for a few months as Guest of the Rector, who at that time was Henk Wesseling.

#### You are now at the International Institute for Asian Studies.

##### How did you initially get into contact with us?

Well, that must have been in the early 1990s when the IAS was still in its infancy. I met the then director of the IAS, Wim Stokhof, in Delhi, and he invited me to deliver the (second) IAS Annual lecture, in 1995, and I have been back as a guest of the IAS many times.

##### What has been your relationship with the IAS?

The IAS has always been extremely helpful, and my many visits to the IAS have always been very fruitful and stimulating. That is, for me at least, one of the great boons of the IAS. Being a fellow allows you to meet so many other scholars, from all over the world and from various disciplines, and talking with them is always exciting. In the past, when the IAS was still housed in the Nonnensteeg, there were the communal lunches every day, and those were always moments I looked forward to. Not just for the food, you will understand, but especially for the opportunity to meet other people. Nowadays, the IAS is housed on the beautiful Rapenburg; there are monthly lunch lectures and many other moments at which fellows and other scholars can meet. Yes, the IAS is a very exciting place.

##### What do you think about the IAS alumnus network?

An excellent idea. The network will provide scholars who have spent time at the IAS, at one time or another, the opportunity to get into contact with each other. They all share the wonderful experience of having stayed in Leiden or Amsterdam with the IAS.

##### And of course the main question: What do you think of *The Newsletter*?

Absolutely a great innovation. As a source of information about Asian studies I do not know of any other publication that equals it. One of the special attributes of *The Newsletter* is that it is sent free of charge to all subscribers. There is no hassle of subscribing, or transferring money, which you may forget. No, four times a year you find *The Newsletter* on your desk. It is full of information, with articles, book reviews, announcements of conferences, etc. It is really something any scholar in Asian studies cannot do without. And besides all that, for you it is a way to put the IAS on the map. Not only the IAS, but also the Netherlands.

##### How does it feel now, to walk around in the Netherlands, some 50 years after you first came here?

It is still wonderful to see people and to work with the archival material. It is also a bit sad, since many Dutch historians working with me have retired, just like me, of course. But I am still in touch with them and enjoy meeting them whenever I can.

##### What's next?

I will go on working, because that is what keeps you going. And I am very lucky, I can do what I really like doing. I am indeed very privileged that I could always do so. And I certainly hope to return to Leiden again. I have so many pleasant memories of this place, and the National Archives in nearby The Hague will always attract me.



# New for review

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London: Hurst and Company,  
236 pp. paperback  
ISBN: 9781849041362

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*Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan.*  
Durham and London: Duke University Press,  
232 pp. paperback  
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**Campany, R. F. 2012.**

*Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China.*  
University of Hawaii, 328 pp. hardcover  
ISBN: 9780824836023

**Dalton, D. 2012.**

*Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action.*  
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(reprint of 1993 edition)  
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**Dirlik, A. 2012.**

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307 pp. hardcover  
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Honolulu: University of Hawaii,  
304 pp. hardcover  
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**Dougill, J. 2012.**

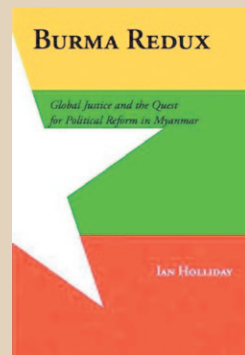
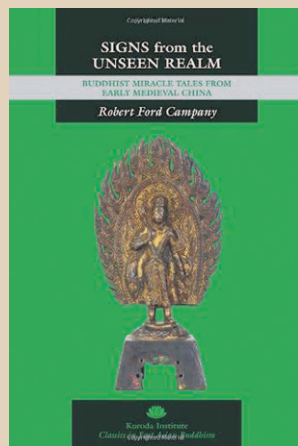
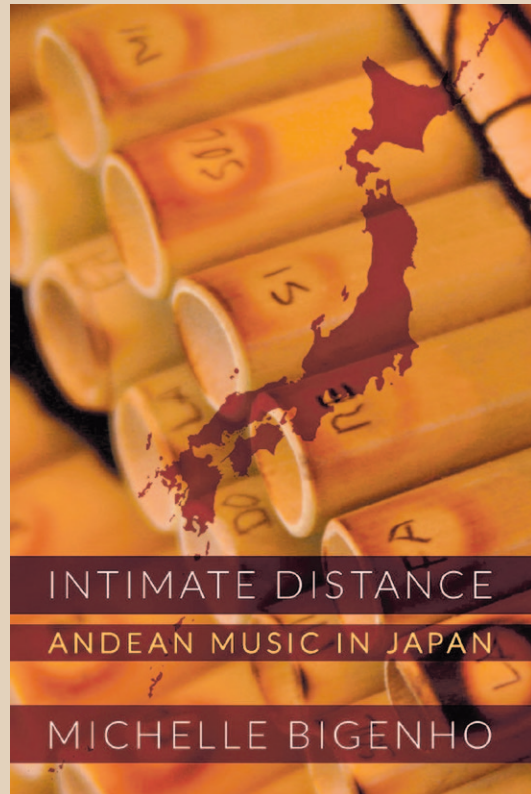
*In Search of Japan's Hidden Christians: A Story of Persecution and Miraculous Survival.*  
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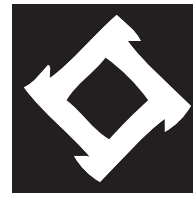
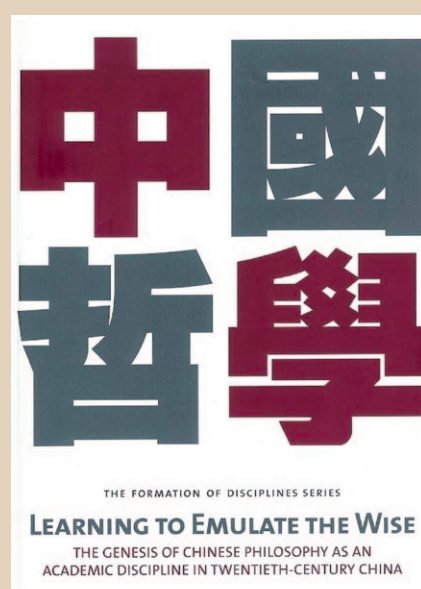
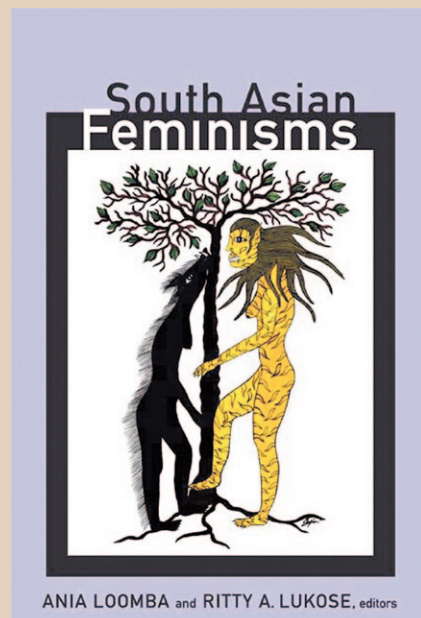
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Pull-out supplement

# theFocus

China's relations with countries in the developing world – beyond its immediate neighbours – constitute a relatively new and rapidly evolving phenomenon. As an area of research, China's approach to developing countries is still in an early phase. This does not mean that little has yet been published on this topic. Chinese relations with Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific islands have attracted quite a lot of media and scholarly attention – already during the Cold War, but especially thereafter.<sup>1</sup> This applies in particular to Africa.<sup>2</sup>

## Africa and the Chinese way

Despite the widespread attention, it remains difficult to identify the long-term elements that characterise the relationship between China and the developing world. An important reason for this is that China is still trying to find its way as a global power. Its identity and role in the international system remain far from settled. Moreover, the developing world is a highly diverse and extensive part of the international system and many developing countries are themselves changing fast. What makes the relationship even more complicated is that China itself is both a global power and a part of the developing world.

Frans-Paul van der Putten



# Dealing with political-economic diversity in the developing world



>> Continued from previous page

THE TOPIC OF THIS FOCUS SECTION is China's approach to the developing world in the case of Africa. What are the basic characteristics of this approach? Answering this requires identifying elements that are present in China's relations with all or most African countries, that have a long-term relevance, and that relate to China's status as a global power. But perhaps most crucially, it requires showing whether and how the Chinese approach is different from that of other influential actors. This is important because the widespread interest for China-Africa relations derives primarily from two issues. The first is the question of China's impact on development in Africa. While this issue may be approached in bilateral terms, there is a tendency to compare China's development impact with that of other non-African actors. The second is how China's involvement affects relations between African countries and the West – both Western states and the Western-dominated 'donor community'.<sup>3</sup> This issue relates to the notion of a power shift, with China (followed by other non-Western countries) joining or perhaps even superseding Europe and the United States as influential actors in Africa.

The Chinese government commonly states that it "respects African countries' independent choice of the road of development".<sup>4</sup> In other words, Beijing will not try to influence the political and economic systems in African countries. This is a reassurance to African governments that China will respect their countries' sovereignty, but also an implicit reference to the African policies of Western governments. The latter are aimed at promoting political and economic liberal values in African countries. Thus China attempts to distinguish itself from the West by emphasising its respect for the diversity in political and economic systems throughout Africa. This point is made explicitly in an editorial comment in the online version of the state-controlled newspaper *People's Daily*: "Following its traditional culture and foreign policy principles, China has never imposed its ideology on others [...]. By contrast, Western countries have been trying to impose their ideologies and values on African countries, which can be regarded as a form of ideological hegemony. [...] The influence of a rising China [...] has caused some African countries not to blindly follow the 'imperial edicts' from the West anymore."<sup>5</sup>

Western governments do not disagree that a major distinction between their African policies and those of China involves the promoting of values, but rather they argue that it is wrong of China to disregard liberal values, which they regard as universal. In June 2011, during her visit to Zambia, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was asked to comment on the fact that 'other players' – seemingly a reference to China, among others – engage in aid and trade with African countries without imposing conditions relating to good governance. Clinton replied: "We don't want to see a new colonialism in Africa. We want, when people come to Africa and make investments, we want them to do well, but we also want them to do good. We don't want them to undermine good governance. We don't want them to basically deal with just the top elites and, frankly, too often pay for their concessions or their opportunities to invest." Moreover, according to Clinton, China's 'top-down command economy' is not a suitable role model for Africa. Like the US, the European Union links conditions relating to democracy, human rights and rule of law to its provision of aid to African states.<sup>6</sup>

Both China and the West point at the promoting of values as an essential difference between them. While the West encourages African countries to adopt liberal values, China proclaims that it respects the diversity of systems in developing countries. The notion of diversity is closely related to some frequently discussed elements in Chinese foreign policy regarding the developing world, such as the principle of non-interference and the 'no strings attached' approach. However, these two elements differ in some regards from the concept of diversity. Interventions are not necessarily aimed at promoting liberal values abroad. Also, conditionality relating to Chinese aid and economic relations can involve issues that have no direct connection with the nature of political and economic systems in Africa. This is the case with regard to adhering to the one-China principle and supporting China in matters relating to the status of Xinjiang and Tibet, conditions that Beijing in fact does impose on its African partners.

To explore whether and how support – or at least tolerance – for a diversity of political and economic systems plays a role in China's relations with African countries, scholars from diverse backgrounds were invited to present their views on this topic in this issue of *The Newsletter*. While their contributions often emphasise different aspects and their assessments do not agree on everything, several noteworthy insights emerge from the essays on the following pages.

The contributors note that China's approach to Africa is indeed different from the West's. Most point at the West's self-imposed civilising mission and China's lack thereof as a key distinction between the two actors. Thus, unlike the West, China is not fundamentally inclined to change the political and economic systems in African countries. This attitude towards diversity is rooted in China's historical experience, which suggests that the country has been able to achieve significant security and economic goals because it chose the political-economic system that is most suited to its particular situation. China's current system is the product of indigenous processes, not of outside intervention. The Chinese understanding of what is good for developing countries thus differs from the Western view. Not only is China's African policy not based on ideology, but – as Zhang Qingmin and Song Wei point out – it also limits the effects of Western attempts to promote liberal values. According to Mamoudou Gazibo and Olivier Mbabia, this is one of the elements that make China attractive to many Africans.

However, this does not necessarily preclude the possibility that China might attempt to influence domestic political and economic conditions in African countries for non-ideological reasons. This may perhaps occur sooner in the economic than in the political sphere. In her contribution, Sanne van der Lugt mentions that Chinese actors in Africa tend to promote a favourable investment climate. While this benefits Chinese business interests, prioritising investment promotion over other policies may not be the best possible approach for the host country in each particular instance. Stephen Ellis notes that for China to protect its business interests in Africa, it may feel compelled to give increasing support to multilateral bodies and their use of interventionist policies. This relates primarily to economic organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But in crisis situations, when Chinese investments and citizens are endangered, the same might apply also to regional security organisations or the United Nations Security Council.

So while China's diversity policy seems to be very significant with regard to relations between African and Western countries, it is not entirely clear how firm this concept is integrated in China's longer-term approach to Africa. In fact, the contribution by William A. Callahan suggests that the relevance of diversity in China's foreign policy discourse is decreasing. According to Callahan, in the long-term China's ideal international system seems to be a Sino-centric world order in which unity rather than diversity is the main value. At some point in the future, policies aimed at harmonising and pacifying other peoples could thus come to play a major role in China's approach to Africa, instead of those aimed at maintaining diversity.

Finally, Chih-yu Shih also points at limitations in the role of diversity in Sino-African relations. His essay suggests that China's leaders are failing to address Chinese racism towards Africans in the cultural sphere. Consequently China's state-level foreign policy, which respects African political and economic preferences, lacks a firm foundation of respect for Africans at the individual level.

China's declared support for political and economic diversity in international relations should not be discarded as mere propaganda, but closer inspection is needed to understand how exactly the notion of diversity is relevant for China's relations with Africa and other parts of the developing world.

Four issues remain to be addressed through more structural research. First, what precisely does diversity mean in the context of China's history and foreign policy discourse? Second, what is China's actual behaviour with regard to political and economic diversity in developing countries? Third, in what sense is China's approach to diversity different from that of other actors? And fourth, how does this approach affect Africa and the international order? China's emerging leadership role in contemporary international relations is an exciting and rapidly developing field of study, and much remains to be discovered in this area.

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## Notes

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Below: Zheng He (1371–1433) was a Hui-Chinese mariner, explorer, diplomat and fleet admiral, who commanded voyages to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, East Africa, and the Horn of Africa. Photo courtesy flickr.com



# Choose your own development path: providing advice without interference?

China's presence and influence on the African continent is rapidly increasing and other foreign powers in Africa are following this trend with suspicion. The growing influence of Chinese actors in Africa offers possibilities as well as challenges similar to those of the other foreign powers. The intense popularity of Chinese projects in Africa is largely due to the alternatives offered to Africa by the official foreign policy of Beijing; alternatives to the approaches of the so-called 'West' and their influential international financial institutions, previously virtually the only sources of funding for Africa's economic development.

Sanne van der Lugt

THIS ALTERNATIVE APPROACH from China is also known as the "no-strings attached" approach. The "no-strings attached" approach should be understood as a promise from the Chinese government to not intervene in what are considered to be national issues. According to the Chinese government "each country has the right to choose, in its course of development, its own social system, development model and way of life in light of its national conditions".<sup>1</sup> Why does the Chinese government stress independent economic development and how is this demonstrated in Africa?

## The Chinese development model

The basis of Beijing's focus on independent economic development can be found in China's recent history. After the Second World War, and the subsequent civil war, China evolved as a communist country and became involved in the worldwide struggle for alliances on an ideological basis. When they realised that the United States was about to win the Cold War and become the sole global superpower, China and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to promote a multi-polar world order as opposed to hegemonism. Since that moment, the Chinese government has actively promoted diversity and an inclusive world system. In line with this argument, the Chinese government does not aim to impose an alternative development model, but instead encourages countries to choose their own. Furthermore, and importantly, the Chinese government will not accept any interventions regarding its own national issues and is therefore a staunch supporter of sovereignty in general.

Another important reason for the Chinese government to take a different approach towards international development cooperation, than the more traditional donors, is to distance itself from the latter. In so doing, it is also distancing itself from the practice of colonialism and stressing that China shares the experience of having been colonised; the Chinese have herewith won much credit in Africa. Furthermore, the Chinese government is also distancing itself from traditional donors, and emphasising its own position as a developing country, in order to temper the expectations from their partners in Africa, and to minimise critique from Chinese nationals who advocate for more economic development in their own country first. A fourth and last reason for China to promote sovereignty and to not impose a development model on other developing countries, is that it is the intention of the Chinese government to develop long-term economic and political relations with these countries. It is believed that this can best be achieved by showing mutual respect, rather than by imposing.

Ironically, the fact that the Chinese approach advocates independent development paths based on the specific national conditions, has created the assumption that the Chinese offer a new model for development as an alternative to the Washington Consensus. Besides offering a different approach to international development cooperation, it is the very success of China's own economic development, based on choosing its own development path, that aroused interest in 'the Chinese model' for development. However, Chinese government officials deny the existence of a Chinese development model and emphasise that China's development should be regarded as an example for other developing countries: that it is possible to choose your own development path and be successful.

## Balancing between Chinese and African economic interests

Chinese development cooperation in Africa is especially focused on the agricultural and infrastructural sector; the two sectors that comprised the motor of China's own economic development. When China needed to modernise its resource base and infrastructure, it used Japan's interest in their oil to build infrastructure for transport, and energy and export capacity. The Chinese government now uses this experience to construct similar resources-for-infrastructure deals with various African governments.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the recent development of Chinese Special Economic Zones in Africa



also derived from positive experiences within China itself. Chinese government representatives and investors in Africa are often asked to explain China's economic development and to provide advice about what might work in Africa. However, it must be noted that these (often) solicited recommendations from Chinese investors and government representatives are not only meant to contribute to economic development within Africa, but also to the further economic development of China. In other words: to a win-win situation.

The Chinese aim for a win-win situation is often misunderstood by Western scholars and government officials as a claim that Chinese development cooperation with Africa is well-balanced. However, the Chinese aim for a win-win should be understood as opposition to the rhetoric of the West, claiming to be in Africa just to assist with its development. Instead, Chinese government representatives state their intentions clearly by saying that they are in Africa to do business and that development cooperation should also serve China's own development goals.

Critics also seem to worry about the environmental and social impacts of Chinese projects in Africa. The Chinese, in turn, accuse these critics of getting involved in national issues of other countries. Entirely in accordance with the official Chinese position that countries should have the right to choose their own development path, Chinese government officials and investors argue that these issues are the responsibility of the African governments. During a study in the DRC I found, for example, that most Chinese construction companies did conduct detailed studies of the social and environmental impacts of the projects they had planned, which were then sent to the Congolese government for approval.

In contrast to Ramo's 2004 claim,<sup>3</sup> sustainability and equality are not regarded to be first considerations by Chinese investors or Chinese government representatives in Africa. On the contrary, both argue that the first priority for Africa is to create a good investment climate for foreign investors as well as for local investors. According to Chinese experience, it is important to attract foreign investors in order to gain knowledge. Foreign investment is attracted by favourable investment climates with competitive advantages, such as low labour costs and sympathetic tax laws, for example. Many Chinese investors in Africa complain about the poor investment climate due to the relative high wages, bad infrastructure and strict labour and environmental laws. Chinese investors and government representatives alike try to convince African governments that it is not yet the time for strengthening labour and environmental laws. They argue that Africa needs to temporarily compromise on these issues in order to attract the much needed financial and technological capital from abroad.

## Conclusion

The term "no-strings attached" means that the Chinese government does not wish to intervene in national issues of other countries. The Chinese government does not have a predetermined plan to impose a certain model on African countries, like the West and its liberal democracy model. However, China needs Africa to further realise the economic development of China. When African trade unions and/or (international) NGOs have demands that might obstruct the progress of a Chinese project in Africa, Chinese government



officials and investors could advise the respective African government strongly to follow the Chinese example and ignore these requests, arguing that China made the same sacrifices in order to achieve their impressive economic growth. The main motives behind this advice, however, seem to be selfish economic interests.

The Chinese do not differ, in this respect, that much from the West, whose efforts to develop Africa are not primarily altruistic either. However, an important difference between the Chinese approach and that of the West is that the Chinese are much more open about their economic intentions. For African government officials it is important to realise that the advice given by their Chinese partners is based on a combination of their experiences and economic interests, and that each is carrying the responsibility for their own citizens. The Chinese approach to African government leaders as equal negotiation partners with their own responsibilities, might lead in the most optimistic case to a greater awareness of these responsibilities among African leaders.

In order to strengthen their negotiation position, it is important for African leaders to study the motives of foreign investors. When weak regulations are the most important factors for attracting foreign investment, strengthening these regulations might result in fewer investments and the advice from their Chinese partners should be taken seriously. However, when other factors are more important for attracting foreign investment, strict laws and regulations might be enforced without jeopardising potential investment. The attractive power of African countries towards foreign investors differs per country and per foreign investor. Since the factors that attract foreign investors to African countries are not exactly the same as for China, the lessons learned in China, are not automatically applicable to Africa. This is acknowledged by Chinese government officials, as can be derived from the official Chinese sentiment that each country has the right to choose its own path. However, the request from Africa to share their experiences, combined with China's own economic interests, sometimes tempts these same officials to promote what has worked for China. This applies even more to Chinese investors in Africa whose main interests are economic. It is up to African leaders to take the advice of foreign actors into account, without letting them interfere in national issues, in order to guarantee the interests of their citizens.

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## Notes

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Above left: Photo taken in DRC, August 2010, on premises of a large Chinese construction company involved in, among other projects, the construction of roads as an element of the Sicomines Agreement. Image courtesy of author.

Above right: Photo taken from the roof of a hospital in Kinshasa, built by a Chinese construction company. In the forefront you can see the barracks in which the Chinese labourers live, and the Chinese and Congolese flags. In the background you see the Stade des Martyrs and the Palais du Peuple, both a gift from China to the DRC. Image courtesy of the author.

# Harmony, unity and diversity in China's world<sup>1</sup>

As the international influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) grows, people both inside and outside China increasingly want to know Beijing's views on global issues. This Focus section of The Newsletter examines China's relations with Africa, and I would like to address this topic by putting it in the wider cultural and theoretical context of the competing discourses of unity and diversity in elite Chinese discussions of the PRC's role in the world.

William A. Callahan

## Harmonious world

As Prof. Shih's essay in this volume shows, many Chinese thinkers assert that China's role in Africa is different from the West's various regimes. Reading recent official, academic and popular texts, I have found that "difference" is the key theme in Chinese discussions about an emerging Sino-centric world order. But as we will see, "difference" does not necessarily entail diversity. Rather, most Chinese voices advocate a new *Pax Sinica* that asserts "unity" as its primary value. The goal, then, is not necessarily to build a post-hegemonic world order that celebrates diverse ideas, cultures and peoples; rather, it is to "harmonize" and "pacify" other peoples – including Africans – into the new "benevolent rule" of the Chinese world order.

Of course, discourse in China is far from monolithic. President Hu Jintao, for example, has a cosmopolitan view of China and the world. From the podium of the UN General Assembly in September 2005, Hu introduced "harmonious world" as a new way of thinking about global politics, explaining that his goal was to "build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity." In this new world order, different civilizations would coexist in the global community, making "humanity more harmonious and our world more colorful." Africa is an important part of Hu's harmonious world; in fact, he first mentioned the concept at the Asian-African summit meeting in Jakarta in April 2005.

China's domestic policy also embraces diversity; the country is officially a multinational nation-state that unites 55 minority nationalities with the majority Han in a harmonious society. Diversity certainly is an important value in Beijing's foreign policy of harmonious world and its domestic policy of harmonious society; but rather than advocating diverse opinions in civil society, diversity here is restricted to the essentialized spaces of "different civilizations" and "national minority cultures." The main goal of harmonious world, it turns out, is not to share culture globally, but to assert the PRC's right to have a different "social system", which is based on communist party rule rather than China's traditional civilization.

## Everyday-life differences

To get a better sense of Chinese understandings of diversity and unity, however, we need to go beyond official policy statements to see how people deal with difference in everyday life. We usually think of China as a source of outward migration, most recently to Africa. But as the PRC develops, it is increasingly becoming a site of inward immigration; Wudaokou in Beijing has a Koreatown, and over 300,000 Africans live in a neighborhood in Guangzhou that Chinese call "Chocolate City".

One of the results of this movement is a marked increase of marriages between Chinese and non-Chinese people. Alongside Shanghai's countless multinational corporations, there are more than 3000 mixed-race marriages every year. Since most Chinese take their identity as self-evident – as bloodline descendents of 5000 years of civilization – the recent influx of foreigners from the West, Asia and Africa is challenging what it means to be "Chinese."

On the one hand, such mixed-race marriages were celebrated at the Shanghai World Expo 2010; both the "Future Cities" theme pavilion and Siemens's corporate pavilion presented Chinese-foreign marriages and their mixed-race children as emblems of the future utopian world. But there is a limit to this cosmopolitanism, as Lou Jing's experience shows; mixed-race means Chinese/white, not Chinese/black.

Lou Jing is a young woman from Shanghai whose mother is Chinese and father African-American; she became famous in 2009 as a singing contestant on the "Go! Oriental Angel" television program, the Chinese version of "American Idol". Individual Chinese express a wide range of attitudes about race, and the TV program sparked a spirited debate in the Chinese blogosphere. Some netizens were cosmopolitan, and supported Lou and her mother, but many others saw Lou, and blacks in general, in outrageously racist terms; Lou was described as a "black chimpanzee", a "zebra", whose mixed Chinese and black parentage was an ugly "mistake". One netizen recognized "that fascination with foreigners is indeed a fad", but scolded Lou's mother, "you still can't pick blacks!"<sup>2</sup>

With racist attitudes like this, we should not be surprised that conflicts between Chinese managers and workers in Africa are growing as an issue. Such events should not be written off as isolated incidents that are alien from Beijing's official policy. If we follow poststructuralist international relations theory, as explained in David Campbell's *Writing Security*, official foreign policy actually grows out of people's encounters with 'Otherness' in everyday social life: ethnicity, race, class, gender, region, and sexuality. Official foreign policy's job then is to guard the identity borders inscribed by popular foreign encounters.<sup>3</sup> Lou's ordeal thus can tell us much about the overlap of domestic society and foreign policy in China. But her experience also is significant beyond the problem of racism; it can also tell us how harmony works for both harmonious society and harmonious world.

## Harmony-with-diversity or Great Harmony

"Harmony" is taken as a quintessentially Chinese ideal. While I was (shamelessly) promoting my book *China: The Pessimist Nation* (2010) last year, a young Chinese diplomat in the audience confidently stated that all Chinese "instinctively" know what harmony means. I wish I had asked him to explain this, because a closer examination reveals that what we now call "harmony" in both Chinese and English can have two quite different meanings: *he er butong* (和而不同) means harmony-with-diversity, while *datong* (大同) is Great Harmony.

Great Harmony describes an overarching unity: the "tong" in *datong* also means sameness. This sameness is seen as harmonious because it describes a united universal utopia. The main source of the ideal of Great Harmony is a famous passage from the Book of Rites (Liji 礼记): "When the Great Way prevails, the world will belong to all. They chose people of talent and ability whose words were sincere, and they cultivated harmony. Thus people did not only love their own parents, not only nurture their own children ... In this way

selfish schemes did not arise. Robbers, thieves, rebels, and traitors had no place, and thus outer doors were not closed. This is called the Great Harmony."<sup>4</sup> Great Harmony remains one of Chinese thought's key ideals, and still informs plans to create a perfect world.

While Great Harmony creates perfection through a unified order, "harmony-with-diversity" questions the utility of sameness. In the famous passage that gives us the phrase harmony-with-diversity, Confucius discusses the harmony/sameness (*he/tong* 和/同) distinction that is found throughout classical Chinese literature: "The exemplary person harmonizes with others, but does not necessarily agree with them (*he er butong*); the small person agrees with others, but is not harmonious with them." (*The Analects* 13/23) Here Confucius tells us that agreeing with people means that you are the same as them, in the sense of being uncritically the same: sameness-without-harmony. Harmony-with-diversity, on the other hand, allows us to encourage different opinions, norms and models in a civil society.

Rather than describing the same value that is instinctively known by all Chinese, Great Harmony and harmony-with-difference thus present very different models of social order and world order; one appeals to the benefits of overarching unity, while the other seeks to encourage opportunities for diversity. This is not simply a philosophy lesson; these two concepts of harmony continue to be invoked by China's political leaders and its public intellectuals as a way of describing Chinese visions of future world order.

According to the Xinhua News Agency, harmony-with-diversity was the Chinese idiom that Premier Wen Jiabao "most frequently used" on his visit to the U.S. in 2003.<sup>5</sup> Although Wen was still repeating the phrase during his visits to America and the Arab League in 2009, harmony-with-diversity has decreased in popularity since the mid-2000s. Hu Jintao's "harmonious world" appears to have replaced "harmony-with-diversity" as a way of describing Beijing's dealings with different nations, and the "China's Peaceful Development" White Paper (2011) even retranslates "harmony-with-diversity" as "unity without uniformity."<sup>6</sup> Each of these phrases is used to tell foreigners two things: China respects diversity among nations, and it demands that foreign critics likewise respect Chinese "difference".

## China's future is the world's future

Once again, the celebration of cultural diversity in international space is employed to preserve ideological unity for the domestic population. While interest in harmony-with-diversity has been waning in the PRC, declarations of Great Harmony as China's long-term goal have become very popular in recent years. This certainly is not a totally new trend; Kang Youwei's *Book of Great Harmony* (*Datongshu* 大同书), written at the beginning of the 20th century, revived this ancient concept as a way of solving the problems of modern society.<sup>7</sup>

Great Harmony, then, informs a Chinese-style futurology that looks to the past for ideals to shape a utopian future. In recent years, many public intellectuals have been publishing books and articles describing China's future as the world's future.<sup>8</sup> This public discussion of China's future is inspired by the transition to the 5th generation leadership in 2012-13; China's intellectuals are promoting new ideas in public space with the hope that they can influence Xi Jinping's and Li Keqiang's new signature policy narratives.

Curiously, the endgame for most of China's chief economic, social and political forecasters is the World of Great Harmony (世界大同 *shijie datong*, 天下大同 *tianxia datong*). World Bank Chief Economist Justin Yifu Lin has a calligraphic scroll of the Great Harmony passage on his wall in Washington D.C.; he recently explained that its ideals guide his plans for the global economy. In 2030 *China* Hu Angang, the PRC's top political-economist, concludes that China will create a Sino-centric world order to establish the World of Great Harmony, which is not only "China's dream", but is also the "world's dream" (see footnote 8, p.188).

*"Difference" is the key theme in Chinese discussions about an emerging Sino-centric world order, but it does not necessarily entail diversity since most Chinese voices advocate "unity" as their primary value.*

Right: Lou Jing (right) and her mother (centre) appearing in 2009 as a singing contestant on the "Go! Oriental Angel" Television show.



Left: Kang Youwei (1858–1927).



What does Great Harmony mean here? Descriptions are generally vague; but Pan Wei's detailed outline in *The China Model* can give us some clues. Pan argues that the patriarchal values of village life, which is presented as a conflict-free organic society, are the source of the PRC's economic success. He sees the PRC as village society writ large, where the party loves the people like a caring father, and the masses are loyal, grateful and respectful, like good children. There is no room in this national village for open debate in "civil society," which Pan condemns as a battleground of special interests that can only divide the organic whole. For him, diversity is "division," and thus a problem that needs to be solved by the state. Unity here is the guiding value because Pan sees social order as a process of integrating divisions into the organic whole, ultimately into the World of Great Harmony (see footnote 8, pp.18, 29 (3-85)).

#### Darwinist "racial harmony"

Here Pan follows Kang Youwei's *Book of Great Harmony*, which likewise sees division as the source of human suffering, and world unity as the solution to the problems of modern life. Kang thus proposes a plan to "abolish" territorial, class, racial, gender, family and species borders in order to create the One World of Great Harmony. In a sense, Kang is like David Campbell: they both stress the importance of social relations in global ordering.

Kang's goal of universal equality and global unity is laudable; but it has serious costs. Rather than harmony-with-diversity, his Great Harmony world promotes an unharmonious sameness: all women will become like men, for example. More importantly, Kang's Great Harmony advocates a social Darwinist "racial harmony" that we would find offensive today; the "whites" and "yellows" will unite in a new race that excludes "blacks" who, Kang tells us, cannot enter the world of Great Harmony "owing to their extreme ugliness and stupidity".

It would be easy to dismiss Kang's noxious arguments, which were common among global elites 100 years ago, yet Kang's racism is not a quaint exception to his otherwise progressive plans for the future; it is an integral part of his cosmopolitan quest that seeks unity over diversity. Kang's book is important because it has been very popular for over a century, inspiring each generation's reformers and revolutionaries. What is curious is that few, if any, Chinese intellectuals offer a critical view of this Chinese-style utopia's social Darwinist plan for race-annihilation.

#### Uniquely unique China

In many ways, the netizens' harsh comments about Lou Jing echo Kang's utopian plans. In a similar vein, Liu Mingfu's *The China Dream* sees international politics as a battle between the "yellow race" and the "white race." While Pan Wei's version of Great Harmony does not have explicit social Darwinist plans, it does exhibit another emerging trend in Chinese discourse: Chinese exceptionalism. Pan and Zhang Wei-wei see international politics as a battle of civilizations (which can easily be refigured as races): the China model vs. the "Western" model. China's model is unique, we are told, due to its unique history and culture. Since China is completely different from Europe and America, Pan and Zhang argue that it can only be judged by its own "Oriental civilization" values.

Here we move from "difference" to "exceptionalism" because Pan's China model is not only unique, it is uniquely unique – and "uniquely superior" to Western ideas of democracy and human rights. While Pan deconstructs the "Western universals" of liberal democracy, he simultaneously asserts an essential, singular and unified version of Chinese civilization. The China model thus is more than an economic plan that can be shared with other countries: it is the sign of China's unique "cultural renaissance." The upshot is much like harmonious world and Great Harmony discourse; Chinese exceptionalism builds up a discursive wall to protect Chinese politics from "critics" who are all labeled as "foreign."

*China's racial problems are probably not any more serious than those of other countries. The real problem in the PRC is a lack of critical interest in China's own history of racism and discrimination.*

Here, "Chinese liberal" is an oxymoron; Chinese people who advocate deeper political reform, according to Pan, really want "to demolish the Forbidden City in order to build the White House" in Beijing, so "foreign forces can control China's military, politics, economy and society."<sup>9</sup> One of the main goals of China model discourse, therefore, is to affirm and support Beijing's current system of governance that is dominated by the CCP.

Chinese exceptionalism now is primarily defensive; "uniqueness" is used to protect China from criticism, which is coded as "foreign" and thus illegitimate. But Chinese exceptionalism could easily switch to go on the offensive, where the goal is to change the world in China's image. Hu Angang's World of Great Harmony does not offer a world of equality; it advocates a "great reversal" of North/South relations so the South can dominate the world in a way that reproduces the logic of power as hierarchical dominance.

The battlegrounds of this global cultural war emerge in fascinating places. After writer-turned-dissident Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace Prize was announced in early October 2010, officials and public intellectuals in Beijing decided that China needed its own peace prize to properly reflect "Eastern values." (This ignores the fact that the Magsaysay Award already serves as "Asia's Nobel Prize"). Later that month, UN Undersecretary-General Sha Zukang gave General Chi Haotian the "World Harmony Award" for his contributions to world peace. To many Chi was an odd choice; this former Defense Minister was most famous for ordering the military assault on protesters in Beijing on the night of 3 June 1989, which killed 1000 citizens.

Then on 9 December 2010 – the day before Liu's Nobel Prize ceremony – a hastily created "Confucius Peace Prize" was given to Taiwanese politician Lien Chan for aiding the unification of Taiwan and the mainland. The 2011 Confucius Peace Prize went to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, primarily for his decision to go to war in Chechnya in 1999. As the award committee explained: "The iron hand and toughness revealed in this war impressed the Russians a lot, and he was regarded to be capable of bringing safety and stability to Russia."

While neither winner actually collected their Confucius Peace Prize, these Chinese-style peace prizes can give us a sense of official and popular values in the PRC. The three prizes all value unity over diversity: ideological unity for Chi, unity of the mainland and Taiwan for Lien, and national unity for Putin. Chi's and Putin's prizes also show how peace is the result of war, and harmony can be the product of violence.

#### Otherness – at home and abroad

As this essay's examples show, China carries cultural baggage to its encounters with otherness in Africa and the West. Its racial problems are probably not any more serious than those of other countries. The real problem in the PRC is a lack of critical interest in China's own history of racism and discrimination.

What does this mean for Africa and the world? China's popular discourse of unity and exceptionalism does not leave much room for "diversity," which is seen as a problem that needs to be solved by the state. Since China's harmonious world foreign policy narrative grew out of Beijing's domestic policy of harmonious society, exploring encounters with otherness at home can be instructive for understanding its encounters with otherness abroad.

Beijing's understanding of national minorities in China provides an interesting template for its current and future relations with Africa. Beijing's policy is basically to "civilize" the former "barbarians" by modernizing non-Han groups through assimilation. Economic rewards for cooperative people and groups are considerable. But those who resist assimilation, see the good life in non-economic terms and hope to preserve and develop non-Han ways of life, risk being criminalized as threats to the Chinese state.<sup>10</sup>

Chinese government and business have likewise shown considerable interest in the economic opportunities provided by Africa. There is less interest in building cultural and social relations on an equal basis; "exchange" usually involves Chinese instructing Africans about how to be modern in terms of economic development. There is a general lack of interest in Africans who show an interest in different values, including traditional non-economic values and liberal democratic values. China thus is sometimes criticized for exploiting Africa in a "neocolonial" way; its national minorities policies are likewise seen as a form of internal colonialism and internal Orientalism.<sup>11</sup>

Chinese elites often tell us how their world order will be "different," providing a harmonious and benevolent order that benefits all. As China grows in international influence it is gaining more attention – including critical inquiry – which is certainly right and proper for an emerging global power. But the harsh response to any criticism of China's impact on Africa – which we can also find in this issue of *The Newsletter* – suggests that Beijing wishes to be different in another way. It wants to be beyond critical inquiry.

Beijing's search for unity thus is epistemological as well as ontological: "one world" demands "one dream," as the 2008 Beijing Olympics slogan instructed us. Yet in this Sino-centric world order of the future, peace can become "pacifying," and harmony can become "harmonizing."

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#### Notes

- 1 This essay is taken from arguments made in W.A. Callahan and E. Barabantseva (eds.). 2012. *China Orders the World: Normative Soft Power and Foreign Policy*. Johns Hopkins University Press; and W.A. Callahan. 2012 (forthcoming). *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future*. Oxford University Press.
- 2 For a sample of internet comments see Fauna, *Shanghai 'Black Girl' Lou Jing Abused by Racist Netizens*, ChinaSMACK, 1 September 2009; <http://tinyurl.com/23cqs6g>
- 3 David Campbell. 1998. *Writing Security*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, revised edition.
- 4 W. T. de Bary (ed.). 1960. *Sources of Chinese Tradition, vol. 1*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.176
- 5 Xinhua News Agency, 11 December 2003, [www.xinhua.org](http://www.xinhua.org)
- 6 State Council, "China's Peaceful Development," Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.
- 7 Kang Youwei. 2005. *Datongshu [The Book of Great Harmony]*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- 8 Pan Wei (ed.). 2009. *Zhongguo moshi jiedu renmin gongheguo de 60 nian [The China model: Reading 60 years of the People's Republic]*. Beijing: Zhongyang bianzhi chubanshe; Liu Mingfu. 2010. *Zhongguo meng: Hou Meiguoshi shidai de daguo siwei zhanlue dingwei [The China dream: The great power thinking and strategic positioning of China in the post-American era]*. Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chubangongsi; Hu Angang, Yan Yilong and Wei Xing. 2011. *2030 Zhongguo: Mianxiang gongtong fuyu [2030 China: Towards Common Prosperity]*. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe; Zhang Wei-wei. 2011. *Zhongguo zhenhan: Yige "wenming xing guojia" de jueqi [China Shock: The rise of a "civilization-state"]*. Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe.
- 9 Pan, "Dangdai Zhonghua tizhi," 3, 83.
- 10 See David Tobin, "Competing Communities: Ethnic Unity and Ethnic Boundaries on China's North-West Frontier," *Inner Asia* 13:1 (2011): 7-25.
- 11 Louisa Schein. 2000. *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press



Left: General Chi Haotian, former Chinese Defense Minister, receives the WHF award from Sha Zukang, the U.N. under-secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, 2010. Photo: Chinanews.com



Left: Beijing 2008 Olympic Opening Ceremony celebrates 'One world, one dream'. Photo reproduced under a Creative Commons licence, courtesy of Familymwr, Flickr.

# How China seduces Africa

During the last decade, China has managed to considerably establish its influence in the world, including in Africa. Some analysts have focused on economic imperatives, particularly in the energy sector, to identify what conditions have facilitated this achievement.<sup>1</sup> Others have pointed to the absence of conditionality (democracy, human rights, good governance, etc.) in the Chinese approach towards Africa.<sup>2</sup> Finally, another group of authors claim that by increasing its presence in Africa, China has been trying to promote a 'Beijing consensus' (in opposition to the Washington consensus), relying on "the example of their own model, the strength of their economic position and their rigid defence of the Westphalian system of national sovereignty".<sup>3</sup>

Mamoudou Gazibo and Olivier Mbabia

## Co-opt rather than coerce

In this paper we attempt to understand the reasons why China has become so influential in Africa in the past fifteen years. Our analysis is inspired by the paradigm of "soft power". Soft power refers to when a country tries to obtain desired outcomes in world politics indirectly, "because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it." It is a form of power that is based on the capacity to influence the international agenda in a way that shapes others' preferences (agenda-setting) and that co-opts others rather than coerces them.<sup>4</sup>

However, we need to adapt this concept to the context of Sino-African relations. Initially, J. Nye used the concept of soft power in opposition to the idea that the influence of the United States is declining.<sup>5</sup> According to Nye, America was "bound to lead" because of the attractiveness of its culture, its political system and other economic and institutional comparative advantages. Although the paradigm of soft power was not conceptualized with reference to China, it is nonetheless helpful in understanding the Chinese approach towards Africa. China is attractive to Africa for different reasons: its powerful economic rise driven by non-western recipes, its insistence on development, its non-interference policies, and its smart and respectful way of interacting with African officials. China's attractiveness is also explained by the peculiarities of the African context, mainly the fact that many African regimes are, at best, pseudo-democratic and that after decades of western-oriented policies and pressure, Africans are desperately searching for new models of development.

In 2006, the Chinese leadership launched a new Africa policy with the publication of the *White Book*. According to this text, "China seeks to establish and to develop a new type of strategic partnership with Africa, characterised by equality and mutual confidence in political affairs; mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic realm; and the strengthening of exchanges in cultural affairs".<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, China's influence in Africa dates back far earlier; The People's Republic of China was involved in liberation wars in Africa and cooperation projects with Africa throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This involvement, however, did not always lead to success because of East-West rivalries and China-Soviet Union competition, which imposed many constraints for China on the African continent.<sup>7</sup>

What is different with China's influence in Africa today is its unprecedented scope. It is now felt either politically or economically in all 54 African countries including those (Burkina Faso, Gambia, Swaziland and Sao Tomé and Príncipe) that do not have diplomatic relations with Beijing. Naturally, this presence also creates problems.<sup>8</sup> In several countries, anti-China demonstrations have been held, particularly in Zambia where anti-Chinese rhetoric was key to the victory of former opposition leader Michael Sata in the 2011 Presidential elections.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the attractiveness of the Chinese development model, or at least a general receptivity towards China, is undeniable in Africa. Its most important sign is the institutionalization of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). But in recent years, Africa has shown its interest in China in several ways: the passing of the Olympic flame in a festive atmosphere in Africa; donations offered by Africans to the disaster stricken regions of Wenchuan; and the inflexible

adherence to the "One China Principle", which refers to the recognition of Taiwan as a Chinese province. In this paper, we analyze three crucial elements that explain why African countries have responded to the Chinese call: culture, history and diplomacy.

## The cultural factor

China's strategy with regards to culture is linked to public diplomacy, which is understood as "a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies".<sup>10</sup> Information, education and culture are all privileged in the Chinese strategy. Four out of the eight steps announced at the FOCAC conference in November 2009 in Egypt are directly linked to the education and the training of African professionals by the Chinese government. China plans to implement 100 joint scientific research pilot projects and accommodate 100 post-doctoral fellows in China; build 50 schools; train 1500 school headmasters and teachers and increase the number of Chinese stipends to 5500; send out 50 agrarian technical missions and train 2000 African agrarian technicians; and train 3000 nurses and doctors for Africa. The training of African elites in Chinese universities is even more important. In 2006, 3737 African students were accepted into Chinese universities; this constitutes a 40 percent increase from 2005.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the main factor for this change is the ongoing development of Sino-African relations, there are several other reasons that have influenced African students' interest in China, including a recognized improvement of the training received in China; the possibility of obtaining study stipends; the low cost of education and life in China; and finally, the ever-increasing international standing of the PRC.

African students in China now represent such a significant number that it is hard to miss them on the main Chinese campuses. African students who go to Beijing attend Chinese institutions, such as the *Beijing Language and Cultural University* (BLCU), the *Beijing Foreign Studies University* (BFSU) or even *Tsinghua*. These students overwhelmingly opt for scientific and technical programs. Shanghai hosts students registered in *Fudan University*, in *Shanghai International Studies University* (SISU) or in *Tongji University*. Other campuses also receive numerous Africans: Guangzhou, Chongqing, Wuhan, and Nankin. For most universities, however, proficiency in Mandarin is mandatory, as the Chinese know that a country's political and cultural influence is also transmitted through language.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to students, there is also the temporary presence of African professionals who come to China in the context of internships, or technical or military training. Groups of young African diplomats are selected every year to spend one month in China, during which time they are intensely immersed and exposed to the Chinese development model. There are also a number of African military personnel who follow training sessions and internships in telecommunications at the military bases of Xi'an and Nankin. Aviation officers returning to Africa from Xi'an confirm that China is now the country that offers the greatest number of stipends for African countries in certain domains.<sup>13</sup> This increase in human and cultural interactions has led Chinese authorities to promote the presence of Confucius Institutes in Africa, the first of which was opened in 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya. These institutes are instruments through which Chinese authorities seek to officially promote cultural interactions between Chinese and Africans.

At the beginning of 2010, there were twenty-one Confucius Institutes and four Confucius Chinese classes throughout Africa. The institutes are located in South Africa, Benin, Botswana, Cameroun, Egypt, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe.<sup>14</sup> With the universities of the African cities in which they are established, and in partnership with Chinese universities, these institutes promote Chinese language and culture and contribute to the PRC's cultural influence and its seductive power in Africa.

Convinced of the positive impact that cultural exchanges with Africa can have, China has encouraged more tourist and artistic encounters with Africa, such as the African Ballet in Beijing, martial arts demonstrations in Africa, and the commemoration of the Chinese New Year in the Confucius Institutes in Africa.

The increased presence of Africans in China has influenced the media sector as well. For instance, in September 2007, the *China Central Television* (CCTV) launched a French language channel targeted at francophone viewers. Before that, on 26 February 2006, *China Radio International* (CRI), based in Beijing, launched a station with a frequency in Nairobi, Kenya. This CRI radio station is the first to be operated in a foreign country and it broadcasts nineteen hours a day in English, Chinese and Swahili, thus spreading Chinese culture into Africa.

In the same vein, the increased presence of African nationals and the rise in official delegation visits represent a great opportunity for the Chinese to practice their hospitality. This non-material element is of capital importance in African culture.<sup>15</sup> This hospitality is seen in *The Analects of Confucius*: "It is a pleasure to receive friends from far away places." However, the presence of Africans in China is not always unproblematic: several cases of racism against African have been noticed (see Shih's and Callahan's contributions in this volume).

## Appealing to history to legitimize current relations

Chinese discourse unanimously situates the origins of the countries' contacts with Africa in a distant past. In fact, China can claim a long history of contacts with the African continent.<sup>16</sup> Modern China has a series of sources, preserved by the different dynasties, that allow curious minds to retrace the links that China has forged with foreign peoples throughout history. In the eyes of Chinese leaders these historic texts justify maintaining such links today. For this reason, whenever Chinese talk about their relations with Africa, they always refer to the historical context, as this reinforces its present relationship.

Beijing claims that it wants to promote an "African memory", but clearly uses history as a rallying tool by insisting on a "common past" (e.g., colonialism and racism) and "common values" (e.g., third-worldism and anti-hegemony). In his speech at the opening ceremony of the FOCAC Fourth Ministerial Conference at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2009, Chinese Premier Minister, Wen Jiabao, declared: "I would like to point out here that neither the Chinese presence in Africa, nor the support of the African countries to China are recent phenomena. Already in the 50s and 60s of the past century China and Africa have fought side by side in the battle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemony, and have advanced hand in hand on the rocky path of economic recovery."

*Soft power refers to when a country tries to obtain desired outcomes in world politics indirectly, "because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it."*





Left: Li Changchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Central Committee's Political Bureau dances with students from Nairobi University, in Nairobi, Kenya, April 20, 2011. (Photo: Xinhua/ Zhao Yingquan)

Right: Wang Gengnian, director-general of China Radio International (CRI) at the launching ceremony of CRI's first overseas FM radio station in Nairobi, Kenya, Feb. 27, 2006. [Xinhua Photo]



China's political elites are accustomed to emphasizing the historical foundations of the links with Africa and refer to themselves as members of the Third World community; China is "the biggest developing country in the world and very attached to peace and to development, [and] is pursuing a foreign policy of independence and peace." Similarly Africa is "the continent regrouping the greatest number of developing countries, [and] constitutes a weighty force in the realisation of peace and development throughout the world".<sup>17</sup>

However, China's self-identification as a Third World country is motivated by the pursuit of national interests. It has contributed to the accomplishment of fundamental national objectives that have remained the same over the different leadership periods: preserving security and national unity; and promoting China's place and role in the world.<sup>18</sup>

Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, China has often used its relationships with the Third World, particularly Africa, to better its own position vis-à-vis the United States or the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> For example, Mao's theory of the Three Worlds and his opposition to American hegemony after the Cold War was aimed at creating coalitions that would be capable of limiting the superpower's influence. This approach has become even clearer since the 1990s. Scholars thus point out that the Chinese promotion of history is significant. History is being instrumentalized to resolve a foreign policy dilemma that is generally encountered by emerging powers.<sup>20</sup> In effect, far more than being a simple description of the historical foundations of the past, the use of history also serves to convince African leaders that despite China's emergence to the ranks of a world power, its commitment to the interests of developing countries will remain unwavering. This is unclear, however, as the history of great power politics shows us.

#### Diplomacy as a rallying ground

Yet another element of China's influence in Africa is seen in the implementation of a kind of diplomacy that African countries, generally marginalized in the international arena, are very sensitive towards. China promises to contribute to the promotion of South-South cooperation with a view to improving the position of developing countries on the international political and economic chessboard. Both partners also fight for the democratization of international relations and equity in the international order through the reform of international economic and political decision-making bodies (e.g., the WTO and the UN). China is an attentive observer of the institutional mechanisms of the UN and seems inclined to push for an institutional reform of the organization that will favour the entry of certain African countries. All African countries have rallied around a proposal, supported by Beijing, that asks for two permanent seats with veto rights and two additional non-permanent seats for Africa. It is possible that China has the intention of soliciting the support of her African allies in order to permanently prevent the entry of its Japanese rival into the Security Council; such an entry would diminish China's regional predominance in Asia.

Moreover, Chinese diplomacy in Africa forms but a part of a general strategy, which features multipolarity and non-interference as key principles. In fact, in the face of an uncontested American hegemony that could have slowed down China's emergence, Chinese leadership has been promoting the idea of a multipolar world in which all principal powers are balanced and cooperate with each other.<sup>21</sup> In that spirit, Wenping He highlighted that in

its quest for great power status in the international system, China will need "Africa's political and moral support".<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Chinese leadership is looking for durable alliances and intensified South-South cooperation as it wishes to secure support within international organizations, such as the High Commission of Human Rights in Geneva or the World Trade Organization. This explains the importance of African countries that have many times prevented the passing of sanctions against China for its human rights records. Africa is thus a "power" that China must keep seducing in order to preserve Chinese interests in these institutions.

In addition to the diplomatic symbolism of choosing Africa as the destination for their official foreign visits at the beginning of each year, Beijing also seems to try to position itself as a moral defender of the African people. In general, Africans are very receptive to Chinese policies, which are aimed at building a strategic partnership that is based on equality and mutual benefits. However, excessive optimism must be treated with caution. It is important to take into account all of the interests pursued by China. Overall, though, China's aims to build a sincere friendship, ensure mutual advantages on an equal footing, cooperate in solidarity and work towards a shared development,<sup>23</sup> look very attractive to African countries, long trapped in a subservient relationship with the Western powers.

#### Conclusion

After the Sino-African summit in Beijing in November 2006, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, declared that "China is a source of inspiration for all of us". Like other African leaders, he is satisfied with the promises made by the Chinese leadership. China can indeed pride itself on a number of economic, political and diplomatic successes in Africa; successes, which seem to be a result of the Chinese initiatives that were intended to charm and seduce Africa.

The attractiveness of China surpasses material considerations, such as aid and financial support, and forms part of Chinese 'soft power' in Africa. Africans identify more readily with China, which is seen as a benevolent mentor. This is partly due to its nature as a developing country. It is also because China has not put into practice the neoliberal recipes of the international financial institutions. In addition, it does not impose conditions on African states and it seems more willing than other overseas actors to contribute to the industrialization of Africa.

It is not our aim to judge the effectiveness of this 'Chinese Model', although through China's actions, we have seen a relative increase in the political, cultural and economic status of the African continent. Indeed, the Chinese presence in Africa is real and it plays a role in the way in which African countries now evaluate their relations with their other partners.<sup>24</sup> China is clearing a path for other countries that are trying to find their own avenues and means for development and trying to position themselves on the international stage while maintaining their independence and protecting their way of life and their political choices in a world dominated by the West.<sup>25</sup>

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Left: Li Changchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Central Committee's Political Bureau dances with students from Nairobi University, in Nairobi, Kenya, April 20, 2011. (Photo: Xinhua/ Zhao Yingquan)

Right: Wang Gengnian, director-general of China Radio International (CRI) at the launching ceremony of CRI's first overseas FM radio station in Nairobi, Kenya, Feb. 27, 2006. [Xinhua Photo]



China's political elites are accustomed to emphasizing the historical foundations of the links with Africa and refer to themselves as members of the Third World community; China is "the biggest developing country in the world and very attached to peace and to development, [and] is pursuing a foreign policy of independence and peace." Similarly Africa is "the continent regrouping the greatest number of developing countries, [and] constitutes a weighty force in the realisation of peace and development throughout the world".<sup>17</sup>

However, China's self-identification as a Third World country is motivated by the pursuit of national interests. It has contributed to the accomplishment of fundamental national objectives that have remained the same over the different leadership periods: preserving security and national unity; and promoting China's place and role in the world.<sup>18</sup>

Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, China has often used its relationships with the Third World, particularly Africa, to better its own position vis-à-vis the United States or the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> For example, Mao's theory of the Three Worlds and his opposition to American hegemony after the Cold War was aimed at creating coalitions that would be capable of limiting the superpower's influence. This approach has become even clearer since the 1990s. Scholars thus point out that the Chinese promotion of history is significant. History is being instrumentalized to resolve a foreign policy dilemma that is generally encountered by emerging powers.<sup>20</sup> In effect, far more than being a simple description of the historical foundations of the past, the use of history also serves to convince African leaders that despite China's emergence to the ranks of a world power, its commitment to the interests of developing countries will remain unwavering. This is unclear, however, as the history of great power politics shows us.

#### Diplomacy as a rallying ground

Yet another element of China's influence in Africa is seen in the implementation of a kind of diplomacy that African countries, generally marginalized in the international arena, are very sensitive towards. China promises to contribute to the promotion of South-South cooperation with a view to improving the position of developing countries on the international political and economic chessboard. Both partners also fight for the democratization of international relations and equity in the international order through the reform of international economic and political decision-making bodies (e.g., the WTO and the UN). China is an attentive observer of the institutional mechanisms of the UN and seems inclined to push for an institutional reform of the organization that will favour the entry of certain African countries. All African countries have rallied around a proposal, supported by Beijing, that asks for two permanent seats with veto rights and two additional non-permanent seats for Africa. It is possible that China has the intention of soliciting the support of her African allies in order to permanently prevent the entry of its Japanese rival into the Security Council; such an entry would diminish China's regional predominance in Asia.

Moreover, Chinese diplomacy in Africa forms but a part of a general strategy, which features multipolarity and non-interference as key principles. In fact, in the face of an uncontested American hegemony that could have slowed down China's emergence, Chinese leadership has been promoting the idea of a multipolar world in which all principal powers are balanced and cooperate with each other.<sup>21</sup> In that spirit, Wenping He highlighted that in

its quest for great power status in the international system, China will need "Africa's political and moral support".<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Chinese leadership is looking for durable alliances and intensified South-South cooperation as it wishes to secure support within international organizations, such as the High Commission of Human Rights in Geneva or the World Trade Organization. This explains the importance of African countries that have many times prevented the passing of sanctions against China for its human rights records. Africa is thus a "power" that China must keep seducing in order to preserve Chinese interests in these institutions.

In addition to the diplomatic symbolism of choosing Africa as the destination for their official foreign visits at the beginning of each year, Beijing also seems to try to position itself as a moral defender of the African people. In general, Africans are very receptive to Chinese policies, which are aimed at building a strategic partnership that is based on equality and mutual benefits. However, excessive optimism must be treated with caution. It is important to take into account all of the interests pursued by China. Overall, though, China's aims to build a sincere friendship, ensure mutual advantages on an equal footing, cooperate in solidarity and work towards a shared development,<sup>23</sup> look very attractive to African countries, long trapped in a subservient relationship with the Western powers.

#### Conclusion

After the Sino-African summit in Beijing in November 2006, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, declared that "China is a source of inspiration for all of us". Like other African leaders, he is satisfied with the promises made by the Chinese leadership. China can indeed pride itself on a number of economic, political and diplomatic successes in Africa; successes, which seem to be a result of the Chinese initiatives that were intended to charm and seduce Africa.

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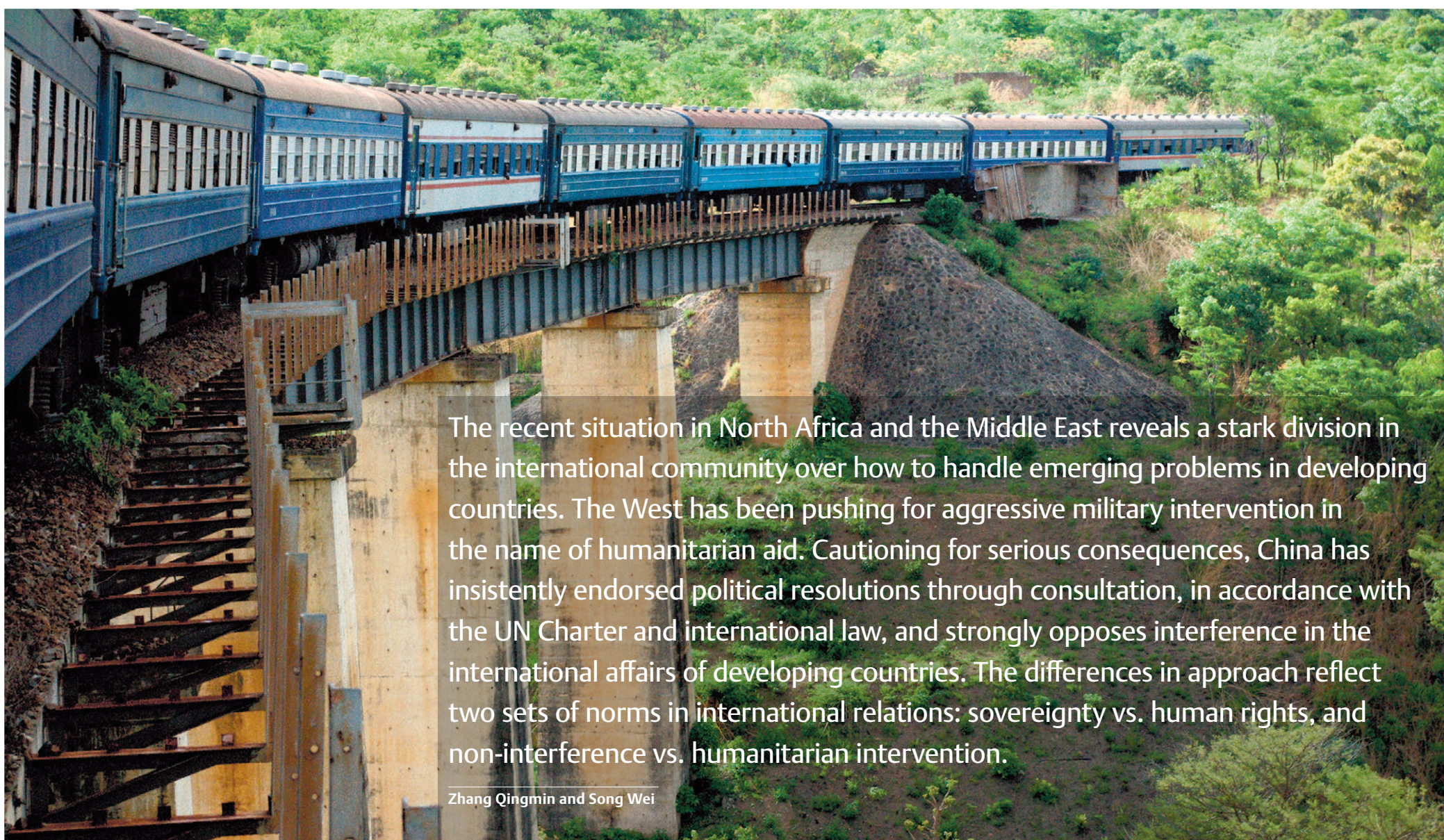
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# China's policy toward Africa: a Chinese perspective



The recent situation in North Africa and the Middle East reveals a stark division in the international community over how to handle emerging problems in developing countries. The West has been pushing for aggressive military intervention in the name of humanitarian aid. Cautioning for serious consequences, China has insistently endorsed political resolutions through consultation, in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, and strongly opposes interference in the international affairs of developing countries. The differences in approach reflect two sets of norms in international relations: sovereignty vs. human rights, and non-interference vs. humanitarian intervention.

Zhang Qingmin and Song Wei

## Political and strategic based relations

The foundation of China's policy toward developing countries in general, and Africa in particular, was first expounded by Zhou Enlai, the first Premier and Foreign Minister of China, at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. He said that most developing countries "have been subjected to colonial plunder and oppression, and have thus been forced to remain in a stagnant state of poverty and backwardness ... Suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim, it is easier for China and other developing countries to understand each other".<sup>1</sup> The People's Republic of China (PRC) has always considered its relations with developing countries as a cornerstone of its overall foreign relations and Zhou's idea still functions well in China's management of its relations with developing countries. But the basis for such relationship has undergone changes since the founding of the PRC in 1949.

During the early days of the Cold War the basis of China's relations with African countries was mainly political and strategic. China supported African countries' national liberation movements through military aid and political support, and African countries, in turn, were sympathetic to China on international issues. It was with the staunch support from Africa that the PRC replaced the ROC at the UN in 1971, leading Mao to humor that "it is our African friends who have brought us back to the United Nations." As a member of the UN Security Council, China has stood firmly on the side of developing countries. For instance, China voted 16 successive times for Salim Salim, the Tanzanian Foreign Minister, to be elected as UN Secretary-General in 1982.

The major strands of bilateral relations during the early days of the Cold War included mutual diplomatic recognition, frequent exchanges of high level visits, and China's aid to Africa. These were especially important when China was isolated and the newly independent African countries badly needed diplomatic recognition of their independence, and when their respective international spaces were limited.

The 1860-km Tanzania and Zambia Railroad (TAZARA, Tan-Zam, or Uhuru railway), constructed between 1970-1975, with a RMB 988 million interest free loan from the Chinese government, is a monument of China's foreign aid to Africa and a symbol of Sino-African relations during the Cold War.

## Economical based bilateral relations

Opening up and reform in 1979 was a watershed in Chinese foreign policy as well as Chinese history. China needed to adjust to its shift in economic focus, and thus began to create a favorable international environment for its domestic economic construction, which became the main goal of its

foreign policy. By then all African countries had gained their national independence and they were facing the same task of having to develop their economy.

To adapt to the new international and domestic environment, China put forward four principles on developing cooperative relations with African countries, in 1985. They were, "equality and mutual benefit, stress on practical results, diversity in form, and attainment of common progress."<sup>2</sup> China reaffirmed its firm support for Africa, but it gradually shifted the base of its African policy away from supporting their national liberation and opposing hegemony, to developing mutually beneficial economic and technological cooperation. China's cooperation with Africa expanded from foreign aid to include other forms of financial aid, including preferential loans and joint ventures, thus demonstrating and validating bilateral relations.

## Diversified basis of bilateral relations

Upon the ending of the Cold War, China came once under great pressure from the West; but most developing countries, African in particular, showed sympathy with, expressed understanding of, and voiced support for Chinese domestic and foreign policy. Chinese and African cooperation in the political field ranges from mutual support on human rights issues to intimate cooperation on concrete issues. For instance, Africa supported China's successful bidding to host the 29th Olympic Games in 2008 and the World Expo in 2010, and it has always supported China in blocking Taiwan's return to the UN. China, in turn, advocates for the UN to pay more attention to development and confronts the problem of under-representation of developing countries in the UN.

Another foundation of Sino-African relations, since the Cold War, lies in the significant and complementary nature of their economies. China needs raw materials and new markets for its products. Africa, along with Latin America, which is rich in resources and large in population, has what China needs for its rapid economic development. From a strategic point of view, Africa can help diversify China's dependence on Western powers, which are always politically critical of China. From Africa's perspective, China offers an alternative source of power and influence, and new markets for trade, particularly for the sale of raw materials and foodstuffs to promote growth at home and reduce reliance on western powers, and a source of investment without the strings attached, which is the case with most Western investments. Moreover, China and Africa have common interests in solving global economic problems, involving such issues as South-South cooperation in the age of globalization, and they both demand that developed countries honor their promises on market access, aid and debt relief.

## China does to African countries what it expects others to do to China

China respects African countries' right to independently choose their own social systems and paths of development, and has never tried to impose the Chinese way onto African countries, because the Chinese political system was chosen by the Chinese people themselves, and the Chinese road of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" was earned through their own hard experiences.

China advocates that African issues should be solved by the Africans themselves through political consultation, without the interference of external forces. China respects the sovereignty of African countries, because China's sovereignty has been threatened by other major powers in the past; China knows how Africa feels. China cherishes its hard-won sovereignty and understands that other developing countries value their sovereignty too. China embraces the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereignty countries and so does not interfere in the international affairs of African countries. China strongly disagrees with other countries exceeding their authority and meddling in the affairs of sovereign states, including China and African countries, in whatever pretext.

China does provide humanitarian assistance to other countries, but is opposed to using this means arbitrarily and with double standards. Take the Darfur issue for example; China sought to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people through humanitarian aid, but opposed sanctions against Sudan, which China considered would only bring more trouble. China insisted that the international community could influence the situation without interfering directly – China persuaded the Sudanese government to cooperate with the UN by offering suggestions rather than threatening forced sanctions. When the Sudanese government, the African Union, and the UN reached a tri-party agreement on the deployment of a "Joint Mission" in Darfur, China sent a 315-strong engineer brigade to assist the peace-keeping mission at the request of the UN. The Engineer Corps personnel was charged with bridge construction, water source exploration and road maintenance.

Another example of China's humanitarian assistance involved the recent situation in Libya, another African country. When the Qadhafi regime suppressed its people with brutal means, China voted for UNSC Resolution 1970 in February 2011, which demanded an end to the violence while imposing an arms embargo on the country and a travel ban and assets freeze on the family of Muammar Al-Qadhafi and certain Government officials. But China abstained from the UNSC

Above:  
TAZARA railway.  
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Courtesy of  
Richard Stupart.

Resolution 1973 a month later, which authorized “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians. Despite achieving their goal of a regime change, the military intervention has only increased the suffering of the Libyan people and created a bigger humanitarian disaster.

#### Developing mutual beneficial economic relations

Economic relations are another important strand that binds China and Africa today. Remarkable evidence is the volume of the bilateral trade, which witnessed a robust boost in the new century. For instance, China-Africa trade was \$10 million in 1950, \$100 million in 1960, \$1 billion in 1980, over \$10 billion in 2000, and a massive \$150 billion in 2011; making China the largest trading partner of Africa. In addition, as of 2011, more than two thousand Chinese companies have now invested \$13 billion on the continent. China considers the bilateral trade relations win-win and mutually beneficial.

The structure of Sino-African trade has led to criticism of China's policy in Africa as “new colonialism”. China's trades with African countries are mainly with the resource rich countries, and oil accounts for most of Africa's export to China, while most of China's exports to Africa are industrialized products. Some in the West, based on this fact, accuse China of having an “insatiable appetite for energy and raw materials”, and see China's investments in Africa as “extracting resources rather than helping to create employment”, just like the imperial powers of the nineteenth century; sometimes they simply allege that “China is trying to colonize Africa”.<sup>3</sup> Such accusations are theoretically illogical and have political ill-intentions.

First, the Sino-African trade structure resembles that of many other international trades today, which is not intentionally created by any party but historically formed. It is a structural problem resulting from the requirement of a division of labor in a globalized world, resembling that between developed countries, which mainly export services, and China, which mainly exports industrial products. But nobody calls the trades of developed countries “new colonialism”. In the same vein, China also buys a lot of raw materials from Australia, but nobody considers China's trade policy with Australia as neo-colonialist. Tellingly, criticism of China's trade relations with Africa mainly comes from those who used to exercise colonial rule in that continent. They are making incorrect historical analogies by invoking their own nostalgia.

Second, no colonialist treats its colonized as equals; yet, China emphasizes equality and mutual benefit in Sino-African relations. China has received more than two dozen state-official visits from Africa, and Chinese leaders have reciprocated to dozens of African countries in the 21st century. China has made it a diplomatic tradition that the first foreign visit each year, by its Foreign Minister, is in Africa. Furthermore, colonialists always fear the awakening of their colonized; yet, China has instead offered the African Union a \$200 million new headquarter complex to support African countries' efforts to grow stronger through unity. This gigantic complex, 113 meters high, in the center of Addis Ababa, is witness to China's friendship and commitment to Africa.

China does not fear, and in fact strongly supports, developing countries playing a more important role in international affairs. When China envisions a multi-polar world, it considers Africa as

a crucial element. When China advocates the democratization of the international system, it holds that all countries, big or small, strong or weak, ought to enjoy the equal right to participate in and make decisions on international affairs.

Thirdly, African people do not agree with the sentiment that China's policy in Africa is a form of new colonialism. While criticizing the Western world for having precipitated the weakening of the continent's economic systems and for having tried to “re-colonize” Africa, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that “China, with its extraordinary resurgence and its commitment to a win-win partnership, is one of the reasons behind the African renaissance”, and that the economic emergence of Asia, especially China, is “an opportunity for Africa to build and rebuild partnerships”.<sup>4</sup>

#### Providing aid without strings attached

As most African countries are small, weak, and under-developed, China has continuously offered African countries economic assistance with no political conditions attached. To meet the challenges in the new century, China, motivated by some African countries, proposed the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which has become a new platform to strengthen Sino-Africa consultation and cooperation. At the first Ministerial Conference of the Forum, held in October 2000, China committed to reduce or cancel RMB10 billion loans owed by less-developed countries in Africa, and loans owed by 31 African countries totaling RMB10.9 billion were written off in the following years. After Chinese President Hu made eight commitments at the Beijing Summit of the FOCAC in November 2006, Chinese Premier Wen further pledged another eight measures of aid to Africa at the 2009 FOCAC meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The Chinese assistance towards Africa includes grants, interest-free loans, concessional low-interest loans, cancellation of loans, professional training (agricultural and medical experts), construction projects (convention centers, railways, roads, hospitals, etc.), zero-tariff export agreements, clean energy projects and facilities, teacher training, medical equipment and anti-malaria materials, cultural exchange programs, and much more.<sup>5</sup>

China's aid to Africa is at times criticized for supposedly supporting pariah regimes, whereby China is accused of disregarding human rights abuses, fiscal transparency, and clean governance. But China feels that the current norms of international relations limit China to having to deal with sovereign states through their government – and China complies with the current international norms and the spirit of the UN Charter.

As to the so called human rights abuses, China has let developing countries, African countries in particular, fend themselves against attacks from the West. China will not join the West in criticizing African countries on this issue and in putting pressure on them. China itself has made world-recognized progress in its human rights situation at home, and has done so whilst disregarding external pressures. China does hope that the human rights situation in Africa will improve along with its standards of living, which is one of the reasons for China's continuous aid to Africa; nevertheless, China maintains that external pressures are simply counter-productive.

Lack of transparency is another stick the West often uses to criticize developing countries, including China. But transparency can only be realized when a government is confident that it will not be threatened. Clean government is a common desire for all peoples, but all governments and international organizations, Western ones included, have problems of corruption. The only real difference is that corruption in developed countries mostly happens through “lawfully” hidden means, while corruption in developing countries is still in the early stages, and taking place in broad daylight. China, which is not spared from the sufferance of this disease, does not want to be a self-appointed judge who can preach governance to others, whether it concerns a developing or developed country.

#### Challenges and implications

Though China's relations with Africa are strong, it does not mean that no problems exist in their bilateral relations. In addition to Western suspicion and criticism, China has its own problems. The Chinese party-state system, which appeared as a strong monolithic unitary actor in world politics, is no longer so monolithic.

Professionalization, cooperation pluralization, and decentralization, have complicated Chinese foreign policy-making. For instance, the FOCAC follow-up commission is composed of 22 ministerial level agencies. Different voices can be heard from China. Bureaucratic coordination or mal-coordination hinders the Chinese government's efficiency in handling its relations with Africa.

As the Chinese government encourages Chinese enterprises “to go out” and invest in Africa, many business sectors are taking their own initiatives without the knowledge and control of the government. Like any business, they are all profit-driven, whether state-owned or private. Each investor has his/her own strategies, which together do not necessarily result in a Chinese national or state strategy. They are the sources of, and should be blamed for, many of the China-related problems in Africa, such as poor labor practices and environmental problems. But as it stands, the Chinese government is held responsible for whatever happens by Chinese in Africa.

In addition to these newly emerged problems, some traditional issues remain, such as the matter of Taiwan, an unalienable part of China, which is still recognized by a small group of African countries as the legitimate Chinese government, rather than the PRC. Trade frictions, such as quality concerns of many Chinese products, and anti-dumping cases, are also ripples in the smooth development of good bilateral relations.

Lastly, the accusation that China engages with Africa as if it were a colonial power, has nudged China out of its position of a developing country, at least in the conventional sense. Some African countries have very high expectations of China, and expect China to shoulder some extreme responsibilities, such as to check the aggressive policies of the West. But China, which still considers itself a developing country, would rather keep a low profile and refuses to be a leader; nevertheless, it unswervingly supports developing countries on international issues.

The substantial and rich Sino-African relations and the existing challenges, are two sides of the same coin. The balancing act between the two sides will not only decide the future of Sino-African relations, but will also affect whether the norms of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit between sovereign states, which China and other developing countries advocate, will prevail in international relations in the future.

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- 4 [www.thechinatimes.com/online/2012/01/2036.html](http://www.thechinatimes.com/online/2012/01/2036.html)
- 5 The full extent of the agreements and commitments made can be found on the FOCAC website, [www.focac.org/eng/](http://www.focac.org/eng/)

Right: African Union conference center and office complex (AUCC) in Addis Ababa. ©CC-Attribute-Share Alike. Courtesy of Maria Dyveke Styve.



# Harmonious racism



International observers evaluate the expanding Chinese presence in Africa according to their own countries' involvement in Africa in the past, as observed by a Chinese analyst who contends that "The charge of neocolonialism is in large part the West's anxiety over China's rising presence and influence in Africa rather than just a humanitarian concern."<sup>1</sup> Thus, China is being criticized for practicing a new form of colonialism,<sup>2</sup> presumably to replace the old European colonialism.

Chih-Yu Shih

THE CHARGE OF NEW COLONIALISM has two aspects, which are not completely compatible with each other. Hilary Clinton articulates one of them best when she criticizes that the Chinese invest in the African elite, which undermines good governance in Africa. In comparison, she alleges that the US invests in the people of Africa, which is for the long run. Yet, a second view of new colonialism actually suspects that there is a long-term planning behind China's Africa Policy.<sup>3</sup> Colonialism in the past systematically exploited Africa; this fact has given rise to the convenient analysis that China is exploiting Africa in a similar, well-planned manner.

The notion of new colonialism implies, likely correctly, that the new colonialism mimics the old one.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the so-called new colonialism is a sort of Anglicization of Chinese foreign policy. Grounded on the Anglicization angle, new Chinese colonialism should aim at China's economic gain (i.e., capitalism) and political influence, as well as strategic security (i.e., realism). Even critical reflections are Anglicized.<sup>5</sup> Few, however, have detected the irony that the spirit of colonialism may have been lost in the mimicry. What critics of China fail to address are views and values arising out of a non-Christian historical trajectory. If China's new colonialism, so to speak, is the result of the Anglicization of China's Africa policy, another Sinicization aspect is worth exploring. One promising scholar specifically opines that Anglicization is an intrinsic component of Sinicization.<sup>6</sup> If Anglicization is about making the world suitable for Anglo-Saxon capitalism and realism, and vice versa, Sinicization is the process that makes the world suitable for Chinese, through mutual learning and adaptation. Civilizational politics thus leads to recombination of cultural norm, practical preference, and institutional arrangement on all sides. Accordingly, there cannot be any easy assessment on expansion of China's presence in Africa, which is neither unilateral, nor teleological.

In this spirit, I argue in the present work that China's African policy is one of "harmonious racism." Officially, the call for peaceful co-existence of different political systems symbolizes China's normative foreign policy and constitutes China's soft power in the developing world in general, and in Africa in particular. Socially as well as culturally, however, the Chinese display a racist attitude toward the darker-skinned Africans,<sup>7</sup> despite the fact that racism leads neither to policy discrimination practically, nor does racism constrain China from treating African nations as ideological, strategic, and global governance allies. On the one hand, China's African policy is characterized by classic realism, in that China does what most other major powers do in Africa. They seek economic opportunities in terms of resources, market, and labor.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand,

Above:  
Newly arrived  
engineers from  
China serving  
with the United  
Nations-African  
Union Mission in  
Darfur (UNAMID)  
stand to attention  
after arriving in  
Nyala, South Darfur.  
Courtesy of UN  
Photo on Flickr.

China manifests a contrast in its pursuit of a harmonious world with due respect to cultural differences. As a result of China's preoccupation with harmony and aid, its concessions to African nations are made at the state level, even if racism influences practices from time to time at the individual and corporate levels. The rise of China as an advocate of harmony has caught the world's attention. Meanwhile, with the seeming Sinicization in Africa, the question on the kind of soft power needed by China to achieve its goal, without causing anxiety among its watchers, remains. The concern is more pronounced especially in the case of realists who do not believe a word about harmony.

#### Sinicization and realism

Foreign and Chinese observers regard 2006 as the benchmark of China's return to Africa, as China dubbed 2006 as the "Year of Africa."<sup>9</sup> The fast-growing Chinese investment, trade, immigration, and aid witnessed in Africa testify to the expansion of Chinese influence in the continent. At the same time, African presence in China is continuously increasing for various purposes. By and large, the Chinese believe that China and Africa are in a win-win economic situation. In addition, China gains significant new sources of energy supply, for example, but continues to provide aid to needy African nations. Their positions in multilateral organizations are usually mutually attuned. Their distance from each other rules out territorial disputes that still poison contemporary international relations in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Chinese enthusiasm with their opportunities in Africa is met with suspicion, if not antagonism, in some parts of the world.<sup>11</sup> The debate over the nature of the seeming Sinicization of Africa centers on the concerns over the China threat. In the United States, the critics conceive the threat both in terms of substitution for American supremacy and impediment to the spread of liberal democracy in Africa. For local African writers, the threat is perceived in the alleged exploitative consequences of Chinese investment environmentally, as well as economically. That said, governments of African nations predominantly perceive China in a positive light, despite localized incidents, which sometimes generate a negative attitude among Africans. China supports and enjoys the support of African nations on most global governance issues. Accordingly, the multiple and varied results of Sinicization disallow any easy assessment. Hence, there is the call for sophisticated analyses.<sup>12</sup>

Sinicization is, in part, Anglicization to the extent that the institution setting the growing Chinese presence in Africa represents and embraces market capitalism, which reproduces globalization and the liberalistic values undergirding it. The China threat, felt due to China's growing influence in Africa,

reinforces rather than undermines certain American values and, therefore, rests upon China's assimilation of globalization through its own manner of Anglicization, namely, marketization and privatization. Chinese corporations in Africa are driven by profitability, which parallels mercantilism in 19th century Europe and blinds them from any socialist spirit of sharing gains squarely with local labor. The environmental consequences of Chinese ventures similarly follow the practices of their Western predecessors, despite consistent reminders by the Chinese authorities to behave otherwise. Most noteworthy to Western observers is China's quest for energy. They believe that energy security concerns explain China's acquiescence on the suppression of human rights in Africa's failing states. In response to the accusation that China supports African dictators for the sake of acquiring energy, the Chinese official rebuttal points to Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, who in fact used to be "staunch allies of the West" and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, who was never China's ally but "a guest of many Western leaders."<sup>13</sup> In any case, Sinicization in Africa insinuates China's Anglicized national interests, except that it is China, instead of the United States, that appears ready to take the lead in the coming decades.

#### Harmony

Another side of Sinicization that justifies the charge of a China threat to a certain degree is China's consistent rejection of global intervention on human rights violations. However, China's insistence on the principle of sovereign autonomy, which questions the legitimacy of intervention, has a much deeper cultural root than the critics are willing to take note.<sup>14</sup> Long-held cultural values in China, embedded in Confucianism, Taoism, and even modern Maoism, share the wisdom of ruling by modeling, which is about preaching and learning. Intervention would be a sign of moral decay of the intervening party as it would signal the loss of its civilizational attraction. Much stronger early Chinese dynasties did not value intervention of any sort, either. Therefore, China's relative power weakness in recent decades cannot fully explain China's restraint for intervention.

Nonetheless, China intervenes in a peculiar way. Specifically, it intervenes privately through persuasion, instead of punitive sanctions. Thus, Chinese intervention is heavily subject to the personal faculty of its diplomats. Chinese diplomats mediate behind the scene for resolutions acceptable to both the global intervening forces and the local government. The purpose is by no means global governance. It is about avoiding choosing sides, hence harmony.<sup>15</sup> Harmonious intervention ensures that the local government understands its own precarious situation under both external and internal pressures. Harmonious

## China's civilizational soft power in Africa

intervention reassures African nations of China's continued support to the former's autonomy, and prepares a platform that could meet the requests made by global forces, at least half-way. In this manner, the local government could give in without giving recognition to the norms proclaimed by the global forces, and in the process reduce their legitimacy to execute intervention. China has painstakingly applied harmonious intervention in North Korea, Myanmar, and former Sudan.<sup>16</sup> In former Sudan, for example, by stressing the increasing possibility of external intervention, Beijing could press Darfur to accept a relatively neutral alternative. After all, friendly China would be part of the peacekeeping to ensure its fair operation. Harsh provisions in the UN authorization on its Sudan mission were accordingly tabled at China's insistence.

For another recent example, honoring its non-intervention stance, China was the last to recognize the change in Libyan regime, despite the high cost of its slow response. Beijing refrained from voting on UN air strikes on Gaddafi's troops because, according to an official source, the wording of the resolution indicating the possibility of abuse did not warrant China's support, but the Arabic League's wish for UN intervention had China's respect.<sup>17</sup> China's non-intervention philosophy carried it to the point of yielding the rights to exploiting Libyan oil to France, the concerns for which are suspected by critics to dominate China's African policy.

In effect, Sinicization that brings enhanced relationships between China and African nations, in particular, demonstrates a style of realism unheard of in Western international relations textbook.<sup>18</sup> China is ready to pay for the preservation of autonomy of an African nation plagued by whatever institutional failure. In the case of pre-divided Sudan in 2008, for example, China adamantly opposed the proposed unilateral intervention without the prior consent of the local authorities.<sup>19</sup> China did the opposition at the risk of provoking an anti-Beijing Olympic campaign that labeled the Olympics "the genocide games."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, China has characteristically financed large projects in Africa that were not aimed at profitability since the 1960s. The most noteworthy of which was probably rails in Tanzania in the past, and more recently, the Conference Center for the African Union in Addis Ababa.

Cajoling harmony comprises a conventional wisdom in China's African policy long before the critics' suspicion that contemporary China's calculated interest in Africa favors dictators for the sake of convenience. In fact, Chinese Foreign Ministers tour Africa every year as no other counterparts outside the African continent have ever done. The Chinese style of realism carries the belief that outsiders cannot solve domestic conflicts, not to mention trying to solve the conflicts abiding by a pretentious universal standard of human rights. As long as a legal government is installed in the country, the Chinese principle of harmony is to cope with it within the scope of China's capacity. To do even slightly otherwise, the Chinese government relies heavily on the regional organizations to take the lead. Involvement of regional organizations was apparent in the case of Myanmar and the Association for Southeast Asian Nations, in the case of former Sudan and the African Union, and in the case of Libya and the Arab League.

### Soft Power

The Chinese have their particular style of realism, making the Chinese approach to soft power dramatically incompatible with the American viewpoint. American realism draws others to voluntarily practice American values and adapt to American institutions regardless of their apparent indifference to the American government. Ironically, Chinese analysts largely abide by this discourse of soft power, though. As regards to Africa, the American definition of soft power is echoed by Chinese writers.<sup>21</sup> In practice, nevertheless, Chinese soft power contrarily lies in the intellectual capacity to appreciate diversity in harmony. This concept has earned the appreciation of the late Lucien Pye, who noted Chinese tolerance for cognitive dissonance, as well as the mystery of Chinese civilizations pretending to be nation states.<sup>22</sup> In other words, whereas the American version of soft power compels even its rivals to practice American values, the aim of Chinese soft power is to make its rivals believe that China does not contest any value, hence the rival never sees China as an adversary. If China's advocacy for non-intervention fails on any of the numerous global governance issues, developing countries all over the world could anticipate unrestrained application of liberalistic universalism coming their way shortly. As a result, the support for Chinese positions resonates accordingly with the quest for the national autonomy of most developing nations.

The rise of China attests to its peculiar style of harmonious diplomacy whenever China detects a hint of confrontation. Harmonious diplomacy emerges at times in the style of ambiguous disciplining such as small neighbor policy. Occasionally, smaller developing countries in the Asian region challenge China. In response, China resorts to an ambiguous disciplining action of hit-and-run that shows China's resolute strength but,

with concession in the immediate aftermath, does not appear to be happening. The South China Sea is where China practices indefinite and yet harmonious disciplining. Similarly, harmonious diplomacy may lead to a style of ambiguous balancing as regards global power policy. When global power appears to circulate in China, China raises a set of core national interests to sacrifice them in the short run in order to indicate its readiness to compromise. US arms sales to Taiwan is such a quintessential issue whereby China's opposition has been on and off. The purpose of ambiguous balancing is opposite to that of harmonious disciplining, namely, to compromise without the semblance of compromising. Both are in line with the aforementioned style of harmonious intervention whereby China intervenes on behalf of the global forces for the sake of restraining them from really intervening; China does this by persuading the target nation into symbolic compromise in the immediate run.<sup>23</sup>

The other form of harmonious diplomacy is harmonious racism, which is relevant in Africa. For the Chinese, learning from the Chinese institution, practicing Chinese medicine, and receiving Chinese investment pose no pressure on Africa's extant value system or lifestyle. Note the statement that "We just tell them the good practices that we believe. Whether they will adopt them or not and how will they adopt them, it's up to them to decide. We have never asked African countries to follow China's model."<sup>24</sup> There is no such transformation of values to think about in an encounter with Western capitalism. However, the lack of motivation to move from civilizational learning to cultural assimilation sometimes hinders social mingling and reproduces racism in daily life. Liking China and disliking the Chinese way of life together could strangely compose a style of soft power that contrasts a different combination of liking the American way of life but disliking the United States. If China cares more about its public image in the global arena than making the world right, preaching specific civilizational devices without any cultural transformational implication should be the favored style.

### Racism

Lofty policy concessions and aid, as well as normative support for autonomy, are not sufficient to soothe the Chinese racism toward Black people. In fact, almost 70% of respondents rank Africans lowest in social status in a survey.<sup>25</sup> One major impression among African students in China is racism. Not surprisingly, the increasing number of African workers in Canton leads to complaints by local residents, driven by racism.<sup>26</sup> In another occasion, one Chinese immigrant to Africa is quoted as saying that the reason she came to Africa is that in Europe, Yellow and Black people are equally low.<sup>27</sup> Larger corporations send only less competitive personnel to African posts as the more competitive ones avoid African assignments.<sup>28</sup>

However, racism of this sort never translates to the public policy arena.<sup>29</sup> Chinese racism toward the Africans is a classic case of "old-fashioned racism", from the foreign policy point of view. In its old-fashioned sense, racism is an atavistic attitude functioning only to sustain the pretentiously higher self-image, presumably of a previous privileged class or group, but has no behavioral implication in daily interaction. To that extent, Chinese high officials have little difficulty in liking, befriending, or cooperating with their African counterparts. At a lower level, however, diplomats dispatched to Africa do not enjoy their social contacts as much. Going lower into the hierarchy, managers of Chinese national corporations in Africa may run their workplace with fear. In an extreme case in Zambia, two Chinese personnel took a shot at an approaching group of protesting workers and wounded 12 victims. Zambia's then opposition party ran an anti-China campaign and, after coming to power, detained the responsible managers.<sup>30</sup>

### Civilizational soft power

Racism is politically incorrect anywhere in the world, but in China's Africa policy, it ironically generates a lofty self-conception for the Chinese leaders to feel like a benefactor, who presumably cares and respects African cultures, as opposed to North American and Western European leaders who promote liberalization. Whereas China's fast growing investment in Africa carries the same realist logic of national interests as it does elsewhere in the world, the conscious provision of aid and privileges to African states likely characterizes China's African policy into a much longer and steady future. On account of the distance between China and Africa, China has no immediate stake in Africa. Such absence of immediate stake is the reason why Africa used to be China's moral theater of anti-imperialism, anti-hegemonism, Three Worlds Theory, and so on. For almost half a century, Africa has been fueling China's foreign policy morale in coping with the West in general, and the United States in particular.<sup>31</sup> In the age of global governance where universal values and multi-culturalism compete, the Chinese civilization that treasures variety and modeling can generate new possibilities in Africa. Both harmony and racism are external to the realist logic of national interest,

but effective in combination with the calculated national interest. How these ways of thinking combine/recombine, impede, or bypass each other will have to be the choice of actual people at all levels.

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# China and Africa's development: the testing ground of a world power

China's irruption into Africa has come as a great, and largely unwelcome, shock to people working in the development sector. Moreover, it comes at a time when development budgets in most donor countries are under pressure from domestic constituencies. What offends so many development experts in Europe and North America is China's refusal to play by the rules they have made over the years.

Stephen Ellis

## Commercially based cooperation

The main aid donors aim to develop a common strategic approach to client-countries via the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but China has declined to join this Committee and is therefore not bound by its views. The Chinese government also offends central tenets of the policies hammered out within the Development Assistance Committee; it openly offers bribes to already corrupt heads of state in Africa; it pays no heed to debt reduction schemes painstakingly negotiated over months or years; it cheerfully admits that its main interest is business rather than the reduction of poverty; and it professes no aspirations for democracy and human rights.

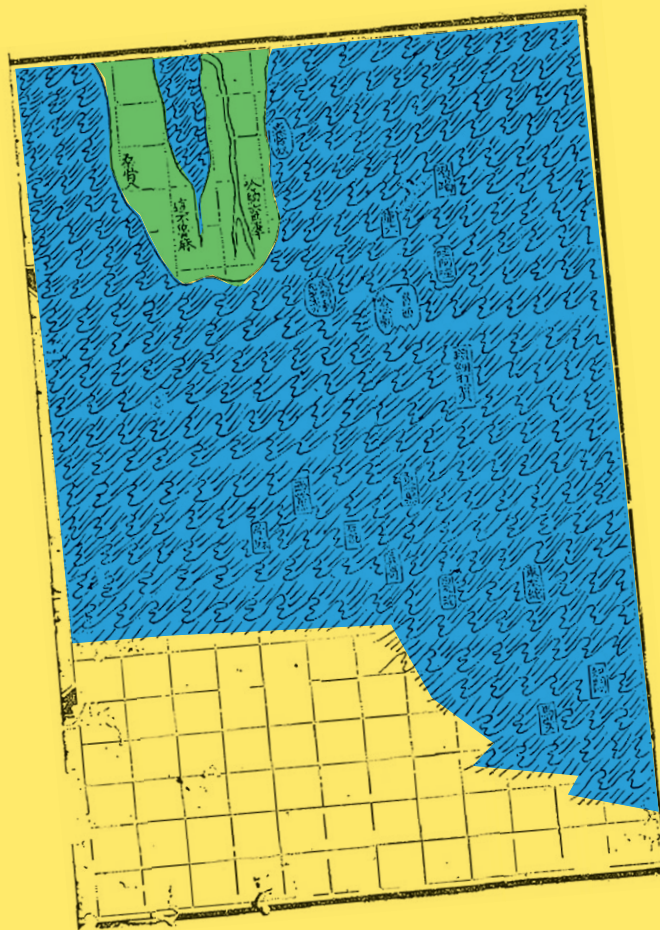
While offending against so many of the dogmas of development that have evolved among OECD countries, China has itself made a strong pitch for the moral high ground. China is itself a developing country, as its government reminds anyone who cares to listen. It is itself a historic victim of Western imperialism. When, in the fifteenth century, the Chinese admiral Zheng He visited east Africa at the head of an imperial fleet, he did not attempt to colonise the region, but simply returned home. His voyage marked the end of official Chinese interest in Africa, until after the Communist revolution of 1949, when the Beijing government took quite a close interest in Africa during its age of decolonisation. Eclipsed by internal wrangles during the Cultural Revolution, China's Africa policy was then dormant until quite recent times. Nowadays, Beijing's professed aim is no longer the export of revolution, but commercially based cooperation among moral equals. To many Africans, tired of receiving lectures from Western politicians whose own moral credentials are not always beyond question, this comes as a breath of fresh air.

## The newcomers are here to stay

At the same time, many Africans are now beginning to see a downside to Chinese interest in their countries. Somewhere between a quarter of a million and a million Chinese nationals now live in Africa, most of them entrepreneurs from the private sector rather than employees of parastatal companies. Many are involved in retail trade. It has become quite common, in all parts of Africa, to find a Chinese "mom and pop" store selling general goods, and the family serving behind the counter more likely to be learning whatever African language is spoken by their customers than the old colonial languages English, French and Portuguese. In Senegal and Malawi there have been public signs of resentment by local market-sellers annoyed by competition from these foreign interlopers. More often, there is anger that in many construction projects – the roads and sports stadia that Chinese companies are building with such speed – even the drivers and manual labourers are often Chinese.

Prestige infrastructure projects, whose aim is usually to provide the means to export raw materials more efficiently than is possible at present, are doing little to create jobs in societies that suffer from chronic unemployment. In Zambia, a couple of incidents in Chinese-owned mines that have led to the deaths of workers have given Chinese managers a bad reputation, in a country known for its strong trade unions. The fact that people are discovering the negatives as well as the positives of the Chinese presence is really just a sign that these newcomers are in Africa to stay.

The great and growing volume of Chinese trade with Africa is often commented upon, as Africa provides China with the oil, copper, hardwood and other commodities that it needs, while in return it exports cheap manufactured goods. There are few examples of Chinese commerce leading to the creation of processing industries, with Sudan being a rare exception, where Chinese assistance has helped the country to develop an oil refining industry and even a processing sector making cheap and simple plastic products.



## Partitioning Africa

Less often publicly debated is the likely impact of China's interest in Africa in the fields of international politics and diplomacy. Everyone knows that Africa was colonised by a handful of European powers, and these countries have subsequently had a tendency to regard the continent as their own backyard. Less often appreciated is the fact that Africa has had, and continues to have, a unique relationship with the elusive entity known as the international community.

The notorious partition of Africa that resulted from a conference held in Berlin in 1884-1885 was the work of a collective known as the Concert of Powers. The European states of that time were conscious of forming an international family of nations that as yet included only a few members from outside the European continent. Britain, France and the other colonial powers secured recognition of their spheres of influence in Africa by negotiation within this international club. When Germany was deemed unworthy of colonies after its defeat in 1918, some of its former possessions were assigned as mandate territories to the new League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations. When African colonial territories gained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the UN, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other multilateral bodies came to play a key role in their development.

This brings us back to the OECD, another multilateral body, and its Development Assistance Committee. If China does not want to join this particular club and does not want to observe its protocols and principles, then what might it do? There appears in this respect to have been an interesting and rapid evolution in official Chinese attitudes towards Africa. It is not by accident that China's diplomatic offensive in Africa began with countries that were at odds with the multilateral organisations that wield such influence throughout the continent. In particular, the Chinese government established a privileged relationship with Angola, Sudan and Zimbabwe, all countries with valuable economic assets, to be sure, but more to the point, countries whose governments were on poor terms with the World Bank and other agencies, as well as with the donor community as a whole, on account of an array of political and economic offences ranging from corruption and debt, to human rights abuses. By proposing itself as a commercial and diplomatic partner from outside the strictures of the OECD consensus, China was able both to gain access to some attractive commercial opportunities on advantageous terms – notably crude oil from Angola and Sudan – but was also making a point about the nature of its place in the world.

## Sovereignty

Since that time, the Chinese government has shown an impressive degree of pragmatism. For all its posturing, it has not actually invested much in Zimbabwe, recognising in President Robert Mugabe a partner who, at age 88, is unlikely to endure. From its initial suspicion of the multilateral architecture that has been erected around Africa for decades, the Chinese government has discreetly begun to acquire a share in the ownership of this edifice. China now contributes more troops to UN peacekeeping missions than any other permanent member of the Security Council. In October 2010, China was participating in six UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. While it retains its rhetoric of respect for African sovereignties, it is quietly reconciling itself to the very institutions that regularly intrude on those same privileges. It is pressing for a larger stake in the World Bank and the IMF. The most interesting test-case for Chinese policy in Africa has been Sudan, where in 2006 the Beijing government succumbed to intense international pressure by lobbying Khartoum to accept a hybrid African Union/UN peacekeeping force.<sup>1</sup>

China's shift away from a fundamentalist attachment to the principle of sovereignty is for good reason. One of the most striking features of the longer history of sub-Saharan Africa is its relative lack of states, in the modern sense of the term. As the historian John Lonsdale noted many years ago, "the most distinctively African contribution to human history could be said to have been precisely the civilised art of living fairly peaceably together *not* in states."<sup>2</sup> Africa's colonisation in the late nineteenth century, whatever else it may have been, marked the continent's inscription into an emerging international order of states in an inferior role. Its reincorporation into a world of nation-states after 1945 was intended as an emancipatory gesture, and the strategies of development that have dominated international attitudes towards Africa ever since can be understood as attempts to give substance to the sub-continent's legal status as an assembly of sovereign states. This effort cannot be said to have been notably successful, as the number of 'failed' states in Africa testifies.

Enter China. Its government has an ideology of non-interference, but its rulers are also technocrats who are obliged to recognise that an absence of states with efficient bureaucracies, able to enunciate rules that are more or less respected throughout their national territories, poses problems for modern business. The Chinese government was deeply shocked by the collapse in 2011 of its Libyan ally, Colonel Gaddafi, and the consequent necessity to rescue 30,000 Chinese citizens threatened by the fighting there. More recently, the taking of Chinese hostages in hostilities in Sudan has received considerable public attention in China. The government's support for the government of Sudan, including its provision of the arms used to perpetrate many massacres, is clouding its relations with the new republic of South Sudan, where most of the country's oil is located. The current resumption of fighting between the two Sudans is now testing the success of Beijing's approach over recent years.

## No moral baggage

The logic of great power status leads the rulers of a rising state to try and shape the political context of the countries that matter to it. China is learning that intervention in Africa is sometimes necessary for the most hard-headed reasons. If the existing international architecture turns out to be accessible to a newcomer, and can be used in the Chinese interest, then Beijing's pragmatists will consider it potentially useful. Beijing is increasingly seeking to project the image of a great power able to assume the responsibilities that accompany its status.

China's assumption of a place at the top table is reshaping the contours of the world system. Nowhere is this likely to be more visible than in Africa, which has such a marked tendency to suck external actors in to its domestic affairs. However, it is clear that China is not simply evolving into a great power that treats Africa the same way as others do. Above all, China does not carry the moral baggage that underpins so much Western intervention in Africa, still rooted in the nineteenth century concept of a civilising mission. In regard to Africa this is likely to remain a mark of difference between China and its traditional partners.

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# New ICAS and IIAS publications

## Space and the Production of Cultural Difference among the Akha Prior to Globalization: Channeling the Flow of Life

Deborah E. Tooker

SPACE AND THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AMONG THE AKHA PRIOR TO GLOBALIZATION

Channeling the Flow of Life  
Deborah E. Tooker

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

– This exemplary work is not only a moving evocation of a unique culture, it is also a sophisticated re-examination of the multiple meanings of ‘center’ and ‘periphery’ in Southeast Asian studies, and in anthropological theory.”

Charles Lindholm, University Professor of Anthropology, Boston University

BASED ON THE AUTHOR’S EXTENSIVE FIELDWORK among the Akha people prior to full nation-state integration, this illuminating study critically re-examines assumptions about space, power, and the politics of identity, so often based on modern, western contexts. Tooker explores the active role that spatial practices (and their indigenous link to a ‘life force’) have played in maintaining cultural autonomy in an historically migratory, multiethnic context. *Space and the Production of Cultural Difference Among the Akha Prior to Globalization: Channeling the Flow of Life* expands current debates about power relations in the region from a mostly political and economic framework into the domains of ritual, cosmology, and indigenous meaning and social systems. Relying on decades of fieldwork, this brilliant book focuses primarily on the myriad ways in which the Akha conceptual construction of space provided these tribal people with a sense of their own cosmic power and centrality, despite their actual political weakness and marginality.

Deborah E. Tooker is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York and is a Faculty Associate in Research with Cornell University’s Southeast Asia Program.

## The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity

Kah Seng Loh, Edgar Liao, Cheng Tju Lim and Guo-Quan Seng

The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya

Tangled Strands of Modernity

KAH SENG LOH, EDGAR LIAO, CHENG TJU LIM AND GUO-QUAN SENG



AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

POST-WAR MALAYA. Liberal, communal, Fabianist, and left-wing socialist groups rise. Alliances are brokered and broken. Slogans are shouted but their meanings are contested. British decolonisation allows the political flux, then proscribes it. The university nurtures future statesmen before changing to train experts in development. *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity* explores the role of a group of university student activists in the contest for a modern nation-state.

Kah Seng Loh is a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies of Kyoto University. Edgar Liao is a tutor at the Department of History of the National University of Singapore. Cheng Tju Lim is an educator in Singapore. Guo-Quan Seng is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Chicago.

– This is an immensely compelling, informative and skilfully written account on the role of a formidable student movement in colonial Malaya and Singapore during the Cold War era and its active engagement in liberal-democratic principles, the socialist ideology and the making of a new nation.

Professor Cheah Boon Kheng (retired), Universiti Sains Malaysia

– This study captures a brief Malayan moment in the history of Singapore and throws light on why the moment did not last. It is a strong example of alternative history in which losers’ stories are not only told but also help to correct official accounts. Remarkably, it also shows how historians juggle with memories of pain and regret as they try not to make new myths.

Professor Wang Gungwu, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore

## Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Negotiating Public Spaces

Eka Srimulyani

Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia

Negotiating Public Spaces

EKA SRIMULYANI



AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

– (...) Here Eka Srimulyani gives us an insider’s view of the little-known contribution of women to Islamic education.

Susan Blackburn, Monash University

– (...) provides us with a rich history and ethnography of pesantren women. The work is certain to become a classic in the study of Indonesian Islam.

Robert Hefner, Boston University

– (...) the first [book] to provide a view of the life world of women in the East Javanese pesantren (...) helps us understand why Muslim feminism has found much broader grassroots support in Indonesia than in most other countries.

Martin van Bruinessen, Utrecht University

UNTIL CURRENTLY there have been no specific publications, particularly in English, on women in traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, known as *pesantren*, which played a significant role in shaping the gender issues in the Indonesian Muslim community. This informative and insightful book contributes to two booming fields in Indonesian studies: the study of Islam and the study of Muslim women. It also adds a new perspective to the English-language literature on Muslim women outside the Middle-Eastern of Sub-Indian continent communities context, which used to dominate the scholarly discussion or publication in this field.

Eka Srimulyani lectures in Sociology at the State Institute for Islamic Studies in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

## Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou

Gregory Bracken

Aspects of Urbanization in China

Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou

EDITED BY GREGORY BRACKEN



AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

– Among burgeoning studies on urban globalization, *Aspects of Urbanization in China* stands out as genuinely interdisciplinary. These lavishly detailed local accounts of three major Chinese cities by experts in architectural and cultural studies produce a refreshingly intimate knowledge of global metropolitan typologies.

Robin Visser, Associate Professor of Asian Studies at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill

CHINA’S RISE is one of the transformative events of our time. *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou* examines some of the aspects of China’s massive wave of urbanization – the largest the world has ever seen. The various papers in the book, written by academics from different disciplines, represent ongoing research and exploration and give a useful snapshot in a rapidly developing discourse. Their point of departure is the city – Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou – where the downside of China’s miraculous economic growth is most painfully apparent. And it is a concern for the citizens of these cities that unifies the papers in a book whose authors seek to understand what life is like for the people who call them home.

Gregory Bracken is a research fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden.

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## Geopolitical contention and institutional inadequacy in the global energy game



If one wants to understand the current condition of energy policies in the world, there used to be only two options. First, the sea of literature on energy policies in individual nations provides abundant information about how each country or regional political entity deals with energy use. Second, several organizations, such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), regularly publish overview studies of global trends in energy consumption and regulation. These two types of sources offer valuable insights with regard to both national and global trends; but what is lacking is an understanding of how political entities interact with each other in the geopolitical sense when it comes to energy policies.

Yifei Li

Reviewed publication:

**Mehdi Parvizi Amineh & Yang Guang (eds.). 2010**  
*The Globalization of Energy: China and the European Union*  
 (International Comparative Social Studies Vol. 21)  
 Leiden: Brill, 364 pages, ISBN: 9789004181120

WITH THE PUBLICATION of *The Globalization of Energy*, a third option now becomes available that allows for an appreciation of international geopolitical realities that always shadow the making of energy policies. In introducing the international relational perspective to the study of energy policies, it is easy to overemphasize conflicts of interests or international cooperation as an obvious binary. The authors in this collection transcend this binary, discussing the complexity and specificity in the historical relations between China and the European Union, and how changing geopolitical relations shape energy policies. The chapters not only attend to the domestic and international conditions in China and the European Union, but also discuss other important players in the game, such as the United States, India, Iran, and Russia. The volume takes full advantage of an edited book, bringing together research from different perspectives. Some chapters discuss the issues from the vantage point of energy suppliers, i.e., that of Russia and Iran. Some stand in the shoes of energy demanders. Other chapters examine the dynamics between different demanders. The accounts encompass a broad range of perspectives, but also stay focused on its central theme of Sino-EU energy relations, thereby gaining both breadth and depth.

The book consists of two parts, with the first devoted to discussing the “locking in” strategy of trying to secure more sources of conventional energy supply (i.e., oil and gas), and the second to exploring issues with the “seeking out” strategy of developing alternative sources of energy. The two parts are two sides of the same coin, as the world faces energy shortages and increasing energy insecurity.

The first part of the book offers a well-rounded overview of the geopolitical reality of the relation between China and the EU, and how energy issues play an increasingly important role in the relation. A key contribution of the chapters in this part is the identification of the potential for cooperation between China and the EU. The cooperation should not only be premised on the shared demand for oil and gas, but be rooted in a common domestic institutional arrangement that China and the EU share. Specifically, in both political entities, a centralized governing body is responsible for setting up goals of energy savings, and each local governing body devises their own strategies of achieving the goals.

In the European Union, the EU Commission sets legally binding targets. The targets include greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, energy efficiency goals, energy source diversification goals, among others. However, the Commission does not detail the specific action plans through which the goals should be achieved. Member states have the leeway to determine strategies that would work best in the national context. A similar institutional arrangement is in place in China where the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is responsible for goal-setting in the form of Five-Year Plans. Provincial level governments in China are required to meet the goals as mandated by the NDRC, by way of locally defined strategies. Similar domestic governing structures in China and the European Union reflect similar problems faced by the two political entities. Both are troubled by rising energy demands, and corresponding environmental externalities of energy consumption.

Evidently, both China and the EU have turned to foreign policy leverages to enhance energy security and to satisfy domestic demands. More often than not, foreign policies are directed to stress the competitive aspect in the relation between China and EU as energy demanders. For example, regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are usually devised to enhance relations between demanders and suppliers. The chapters in the first part of *The Globalization of Energy*, however, offer insights as to how cooperative relations between demanders are not only necessary, but also possible. Especially with regard to China and the European Union, the two regions’ similarity in domestic energy policy structure warrants a closer tie, so as to learn from each other.

The second part of the book reviews efforts to tap the potential of renewable energy in China, the European Union and beyond. The chapters cast doubt on the feasibility of renewable energy. By examining the history and current status of energy efficiency and sustainable development policies in China, Japan, and the Netherlands, the four chapters reach a consensus that the development of renewable energy is not only hampered by high costs of such, but also by a variety of institutional barriers. In China, the renewable energy sector relies heavily on state subsidies and has little incentive to develop

# Individual choice but not individualism: new mortuary rites in Japan

Every society faces the problem of death and the concrete issues of body disposal, funerary rites and commemorative practices. Satsuki Kawano's volume focuses on one example for dealing with death that has emerged in contemporary Japan. Her book examines the renewed custom of scattering the ashes of the dead after cremation.

Eyal Ben-Ari

Reviewed publication:

**Kawano, Satsuki. 2010**

*Nature's Embrace: Japan's Aging Urbanites and New Death Rites*  
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press  
221 pages, ISBN 9780824833725 (hardback)

TO CARRY OUT HER INVESTIGATION she focused on the Soso No Jiyu O Susumeru Kai (Grave-Free Promotion Society), based in Tokyo, which she studied between 2004 and 2006. The organization was explicitly established in the early 1990s to promote individual choice in the way a person's body will be disposed and their identity memorialized after their death. The Society both advances the acceptance of this practice in Japan and aids its 11,000 members in organizing their own ash-scattering rituals. Kawano's excellent book not only provides a rich ethnographic account of this organization, but also the social and cultural background to its activities and growth. For any student of Japan, and more widely the industrial democracies, Kawano's volume offers a model text that interweaves macro-sociological analysis, a micro investigation of a particular organization and an evocation of the voices of the actors she portrays. The volume will appeal, then, not only to Japan specialists, but to any scholar interested in death and death rites and their relation to social change in current-day societies.

Kawano's main argument is that demographic changes in contemporary Japan have led to a scarcity of ceremonial caregivers whose role is to assure the correct transmission of the dead into ancestors. The demographic changes she refers to include a move towards nuclear families and a diminishing number of children per family, increased mobility of children (rural depopulation and urbanization), the emergence of Japan as an aging society, and the commercialization of caring alternatives for the dead. This situation has led many elderly to worry about who will care for them after death and to search for alternatives that will grant them some control over their posthumous futures. While for childless persons any alternative chosen is unproblematic, there is much room for contestation, as Kawano shows, among those individuals with children and remaining spouses. In effect then, the new mortuary rite of ash-scattering is an example of negotiations over, what she calls, the generational contract: that set of (informal) agreements that set out the mutual expectations of parents

and children. This contract is enacted through the practices centered on key cultural scripts or models of a "good" or "proper death" (one that includes the circumstances of demise, body disposal and commemoration).

Framed between an introduction and a conclusion are five chapters. The introduction provides an analytical review of the practices centered on death and death rites as they are related to changing social circumstances. Especially useful is her utilization of the rich Japanese-language scholarship to build up her analysis, thus making it accessible to readers of English. Moreover, in this respect, the long historical sections that describe and analyze processes of change and continuity can be read (or assigned for reading) on their own. Kawano contends that the activities of the organization for the promotion of ash-scattering are an indicator of increased individuality, but not of individualism, in Japan. By this point she means that the new practice increases individual choice and control over personal matters, but does not disconnect between the older and younger generations.

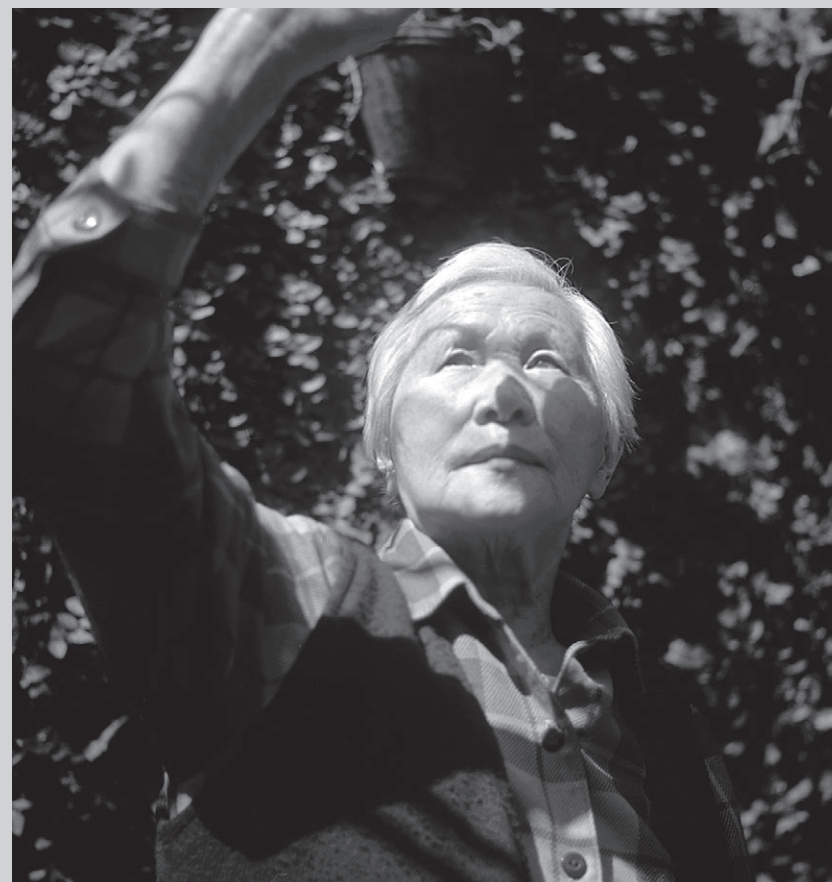
The chapter on actors looks at the generational contract on a macro-sociological level, as it centres on the dependence of elderly Japanese individuals on younger persons for both care (for the living) and rituals for the dead. She very convincingly shows how elderly people are asserting their individual (again not individualistic) choice in terms of family or institutional care, and in terms of the practices related to their death. The next chapter, titled "Historical Perspectives", makes the point that ash-scattering has a long history in Japan (reaching back more than a thousand years), and how it has been renewed over the past few decades. I found the chapter especially rewarding since it charts the diversity of practices that existed historically, as well as the standardization of the Meiji period. The third chapter focuses on the Grave Free Promotion Society and provides a very rich set of ethnographic descriptions of organization, meetings, the effect of gender and seniority or yearly and monthly cycles. For scholars interested in Japanese organizations this section is interesting because it describes a different kind of way of organizing, where, for example, age and seniority or social status do not hold in the same manner as in the more studied commercial enterprises.

The next chapter is about the scattering ceremonies themselves. It takes readers through the various preparations for the rite (including the grinding of the bones so that the remains can be scattered in the wind or dispersed in mountain forests). It also includes a description of three actual ceremonies that took place and that Kawano documented (she provides some black and white photographs to enhance her analysis). These concrete depictions are important because they further underline the diversity found within a common practice. The fifth chapter is again an excellent analysis of family relations as they are played out in and around the scattering of ashes. She focuses not only on the changing patterns of intergenerational relations, but also on the ways in which various aspects of the practice of ash scattering are contested. Indeed, in this chapter and throughout the volume, Kawano is careful to clarify that the practice is sometimes criticized for being selfish. The volume's conclusion reiterates her main thesis about the new practice as one example of greater choice for the elderly, but not a disconnect from younger generations.

I found the volume to be very well written, theoretically sophisticated and well placed in comparative frames. While this is a book about Japan and a Japanese expression of the new alternatives emerging in aging societies around the world, it will appeal to a wider readership.

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Left: Nuclear power plant in Belgium. Photo: Reproduced under a Creative Commons licence, courtesy of Koert Michiels.

a commercialized market. The country also suffers from the lack of technological innovation, to the point that renewable energy is limited to a handful of technological applications, such as solar PV. Consequently, China's renewable energy sector is only successful in certain rural areas where costs are relatively low. Similarly, Japan's nuclear sector is also facing challenges. In light of the unstable foreign relations between China and Japan, it remains unclear how energy cooperation between the two countries will fare. Without benefiting from China's buying power, Japan's capacity of nuclear power generation is far from fully tapped. The Fukushima earthquake and its aftermath, which occurred after the publication of this volume, clearly added to the dismay of Japan's nuclear energy sector. In the Netherlands, the development of renewable energy is also thwarted by institutional inadequacies. Interest groups in conventional energy sectors wield significant power to contain the growth of the renewable energy sector. As the emphasis on renewables is placed on technology research, instead of on social barriers, much of the Dutch renewable energy development remains in laboratories.

These chapters invite a serious look at the contemporary fade of low-carbon development throughout the globe. The current trajectory of energy-use points to a future situation in which carbon intensity will likely increase. In other words, in the absence of reliable and stable supplies of renewable energy, shortages in oil and gas compel nations to switch back to coal, which emits more greenhouse gas per unit of consumption.

However, as the chapters suggest, the development of renewable energy faces more institutional barriers than technological ones. It follows that low-carbon development should be treated more as a process of social and political change than a process of industrial and technological change.

The two parts of the volume weave together a story of energy policies that is at once global and domestic, socio-political and technological. The breadth of the chapters is indeed laudable. However, with its limited space, the volume inevitably leaves out relevant topics that are equally important. For example, the development of energy efficiency measures in the transportation and building sectors have witnessed tremendous gains in recent years. The extent to which gains in energy efficiency might bring fundamental change to the global energy outlook deserves more attention. In addition, the chapters focus on governmental actors in the analysis, which is a legitimate realist orientation. However, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is widely documented in the realm of energy and environmental policies. NGOs are often times seen as the bridge between national or regional governments. Interested scholars should pay no less attention to the reality of multi-track diplomacy that involves citizen groups and many other non-state actors.

Overall, this edited volume is a testimony of the globalized era, in which energy policies must be contextualized in a broader picture of global interplay. However, the title of the

book, *The Globalization of Energy*, deviates from the conventional understanding of globalization as the flow of goods and services per se. Instead, the book brings together studies of the socio-political dynamism that either promotes or prohibits the global flow of energy. It is therefore more about policies, geopolitical contention and domestic conditions in the globalized era – consequences of and reactions to globalization. Globalization is taken as a given, and therefore is not the subject of the volume. Thus, interested readers should not be distracted by this slightly deceptive title.

This book would be a suited starting point for scholars doing research on the effect of energy shortages on international relations, or conversely, the effect of international contention on energy policies. The collection exhibits the breadth that is necessary for a systematic understanding of the issue. This volume is also ideal for specialists in Chinese or European domestic energy policies who wish to explore the international implications of such. Thought-provoking as it is, the chapters invite readers to further explore the issues and stakes that comprise the contemporary scene of international energy diplomacy, not only between China and the European Union, but on a truly global scale.

Yifei Li is a doctoral student in the sociology program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interests include environmental sociology, urban sociology and community development (yifeili@ssc.wisc.edu).

# Rejection and embrace

As scholarship, recently more than ever, has sought to draw in cross-disciplinary approaches, *Vietnam and the West: New Approaches* stands above recent scholarly contributions as a text that not only seeks to re-interpret the traditional boundaries of discipline, but also provide a more nuanced understanding of history.

William Noseworthy



Reviewed publication:

**Wilcox, Wynn (ed.) 2011**

*Vietnam and the West: New Approaches*

Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Publications

224 pages, ISBN 9780877277521 (paperback)

INDEED AS SCHOLARS of Gender and Language, Environment and Geography, Medicine and Religion, History and Politics have convened in this volume, the works produced form a synthesis of discourse that neatly problematizes previous conceptions of the neat dichotomies of Vietnamese/non-Vietnamese and Western/non-western; as Wilcox writes, “these essays participate in a reexamination of the long and important interaction between Vietnam, Europe, and North America” (13). It is this (re)examination, which draws on a most impressive array of source material ranging from Vietnamese language texts written in the demotic adaptation of classical Chinese script (*chữ Nôm*), French language documents from the era of *missionnaires* to the period of decolonization, the oral histories of the Agent Orange survivors, and recent discourse over the privatization of water (*nước*), which has driven much of the discourse of recent scholarship on Vietnam, and more broadly Southeast Asia. With the current revolution in the field of Asian studies in mind, this volume not only represents a careful, but also a well sampled chronology.

Our examination of *Vietnam and the West* begins in the field of religious studies. Many of the essays in this volume could be argued to be contributions to the field of religious studies as well as that of history, particularly if scholars adapt the broad conceptions of religion as articulated by Ninian Smart. In his works *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion* (1968) and *Dimensions of the Sacred and an Anatomy of World Beliefs* (1998), Smart argued that religion had three para-historical characteristics and four historical characteristics. Doctrine, Mythos, and Ethics were considered para-historical. Ritual, experiential, institutional, and dimensional were considered historical elements.<sup>1</sup> If one adapts Smart’s framework for the study of religion the essays within the first part of this volume, *Precolonial Encounters* (to 1862), therefore offer great contributions to the field of Religious Studies as they explore all seven of Smart’s characteristics. The two essays, by currently independent (Cornell PhD) Brian Ostrowski and Wilcox, additionally offer particularly strong contributions as they take on the dominant historical narrative of the development of Vietnamese Catholicism with both zeal and well-thought out provocation. As Wilcox argues, the standard vision is for Vietnamese historians to see Vietnamese Catholics as they resisted the French, while most English language scholarship has seen Vietnamese Catholics as they supported the French. Therefore, scholars tend to want a more coherent picture, as “surely nineteenth century Vietnamese Christians could not have been rejecting French imperialism and embracing it

Picture taken by reviewer, 13 July 2011, Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai Street Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam. Image shows an informal memorial to a Vietnamese Catholic who passed away at or nearby that location in 1950’s; it was written in chalk on the pavement, in French and Latin. Just days later it had been washed away by the rain.

at the same time.” (72) However, as Wilcox writes “The flaw in lumping personalities as diverse as Trường Vĩnh Ký, Phan Thanh Giản, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, and Đặng Đức Tuấn together under a mantle of nineteenth-century Vietnamese Christianity is apparent.” (72) While Wilcox chooses to complicate the notions of the simplified historical understanding of Vietnamese society often conceived of by scholars as, in the words of Diane Fox, “the categories that bind our thinking,” (175) Ostrowski’s essay aims to push the boundaries of intellectual contact to a rather earlier period than popular conception (the nineteenth century – or the rise of French high colonialism – for those unfamiliar). As Ostrowski writes, “Contrary to today’s commonly accepted understanding of the origins of Western influence in Vietnamese literature, the large but often ignored corpus of seventeenth-century Christian Nôm writings show that both Western literary content and stylistic concepts found widespread expression in Vietnamese literature long before French colonialism.” (19) As such, Ostrowski’s essay on the *Maiorica* Texts, which demonstrate localizations such as “the last rice” (*com cuối*, 34), rather than “supper,” reflects much of the nature of this volume, where scholars have sought to ring out the silences of those voices that blur the traditionally understood lines of Vietnamese history.

One of the greatest accomplishments of *Vietnam and the West* is not only in the individual essays that broaden the horizons of scholarly understanding, but also in the form that these essays have taken in adaptations of cross-disciplinary approaches and subject materials to attract scholars from the tradition separated intellectual zones of the humanities and the sciences. In particular the contributions from Michele Thompson, Fox, and Christopher Kukuk will be of particular interest to those in the fields of Medicine, History, Environmental Studies, Politics, and Policy. In Thompson’s essay on the physician Jean Marie Despiou, who parted with his compatriots Chagneau and Vannier over the topic of religion in emperor Gia Long’s court, we see not only the blurring of lines of loyalty between the French and the Vietnamese, but also the full development of a political life of a man, who perhaps ought to be remembered more for his independent research in his search for a smallpox *vaccina*. Thompson’s essay, which focuses on the portrayal of a more nuanced understanding of the early colonial encounter contrasts strongly with the work of Diane Fox although both exhibit fascinating moments in the developments of the field of Medicine.

Perhaps *fascinating* is not the most appropriate term that could be used to describe the work of Diane Fox in *Agent Orange*. Perhaps one would be more accurate to use terms such as *tragic*, or on the other hand *inspirational*. However, Fox’s method, the choice to draw on a single narrative thread of “one piece of the mosaic,” (178) is one that, with the

experience of families on both sides of the war in Vietnam (or “the American War” in Vietnamese history), can bridge the gap of humanity to encourage (*đồng viên*) the search for a better future. It is within this context that Fox concludes, “Careful attention to the stories told by people who suffered the long term consequences of war has much to offer scholarship: a way towards rethinking binary constructions of reality, input for reexamining some of the master narratives of our times, and an example of how past divisions might be reworked in order to address present, shared challenges.” (194)

Indeed, it is the work of this volume, presented on a grand scale – from Micheline Lessarged’s essay on the influence of Vietnamese women on the development of anti-colonialism to Marc Jason Gilbert’s essay on the early developments of Vietnamese revolutionary Marxist-Leninism in the search for anti-colonial allies among Indian and African communities, through Edmund F. Wehrle’s case study of the relationships between trade unions in the United States and South Vietnam in the 1950s, and Sophie Quinn Judges selection, presumably taken from her current project *The Elusive Third Way* – that not only gives an entire reconsideration of the war period down to topics that may be addressed at the level of secondary education, but also entirely reshapes the period under most popular consideration in scholarship on Vietnam, with one particular exception, the present. Thus, it is in the present discourse on the public and the private that the volume concludes, with the selection of the lens of water, where Kukuk argues, in the words of Nguyễn Đình Ninh et al., for the creation of a local authority to mitigate global concerns, a “Ministry of Water.” (207) In Kukuk’s discourse readers see the original central problem of the volume (the presumed dichotomy of “Vietnam” and “West”) recast, into a new problematic: *local and global*. Though scholarship has already been engaged with this new problematic for a decade or more, it is the collected recasting of this volume that truly represents, in the words of the prolific historian of Vietnam Marc Bradley, “A splendid achievement.”

**William Noseworthy is a PhD Candidate in the History Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying under Professor Thongchai Winichakul. His current research focuses on transnational histories of intellectual movements with a regional emphasis on Southeast Asia as a nexus of interchange (noseworthy@wisc.edu). The reviewer would like to thank Jim Brokaw and Mollie Sandock for the review copy.**

## Notes

- 1 Smart, Ninian. 1968. *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*. New York: Humanities Press; Smart, Ninian. 1998. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

# Analysing China's changing society

Over the last thirty years China has opened up to the world and the global market. From a largely rural society under socialist rule the country has seen intensified urbanization throughout the past three decades during its transition to a – what the Chinese authorities call – socialist market economy (Wang, 2004; Friedmann, 2005).<sup>1</sup> The effects of China's economic reformation are undeniably recognizable throughout the world. Nevertheless, great attention in the academic world has gone to the effects on China itself too.

C.M. de Boer

Reviewed publications:

**Wan, Guanghua (ed.) 2008**

*Inequality and Growth in Modern China*

Oxford: Oxford University Press

211 pages, ISBN 9780199535194 (hardcover)

**Li Zhang (ed.) 2010**

*In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*

Ithaca: Cornell University Press

248 pages, ISBN 9780801475627 (paperback)

ESPECIALLY IN THE REALMS of urban geography, economics, sociology and anthropology, this has caused a tremendous increase in material on the rise of China. The works under review here, each belong to one of these realms and both provide a complementary view to the many and various effects of China's reformation. What makes this particular set of works all the more interesting though, is that the publications each approach China's economic transition and its effects on inequality and social stratification from a different methodological angle. The work of Zhang is strictly qualitative, whereas the work of Wan, which is the outcome of a two-year UNU-WIDER project, is solely based on quantitative analysis. This analytical contradiction renders the two highly suitable for a comparative review.

## A closer look at the contents

Firstly, it must be said that both of the publications cover slightly different themes. Where Zhang focuses on the development of housing, the housing market, government policy and the spatialization of class, predominantly within urban centres, the Wan publication exposes the changes in nationwide inequality and poverty since the 1978 economic reformation, specifically stipulating the urban-rural divide.

In her ethnography, Zhang aims to illustrate what implications the economic transition in China has had on housing in general, but in particular on the division of space, governmental housing policy and the social and cultural class reformation. She does so by providing a multitude of real-life examples from

interviews she has conducted in her hometown of Kunming – in the western (rural) province of Yunnan – through which the impact of three decades of rapid economic growth on housing becomes clear.

What Zhang manages to do particularly well is to provide the reader with a well-supported and informative account of the effects that the transition from a socialist to a capitalist economic system has had on the middle classes and their attitudes and preferences towards housing. According to Zhang, the Chinese middle class is feverishly trying to establish a culture based on their newfound wealth and thus glorify materialism, mainly regarding their residences. Housing developers are keen to fill in the demand and are among those whose wealth has skyrocketed over the last few decades. As the stories of both developers and the more 'well-to-do' citizens are taken into this account, Zhang sheds light on the effects on a multitude of Chinese citizens.

Not unexpectedly, however, this development frenzy and materialistic focus has had profound negative effects within Chinese urban centres as well. A large chunk of *In Search of Paradise* is dedicated to the fear, uncertainty and injustice it produces, which includes transcriptions of personal experiences with rising inequality, social polarisation and stratification, labour exploitation, spatialization of class, bribery and unfair preferential treatment of real-estate developers.

The incorporation of multiple angles in her work definitely is one of the strengths of Zhang's publication. It deepens the understanding regarding the various sides of the transition story. However, it also gives the work a naturally high pace, as she seems to 'hop topics' to cover various sides of the story.

The UNU-WIDER (World Institute for Development Economic Research of the United Nations University) publication contains the combined works of several studies conducted for two 2005 conferences on *Inequality and Poverty in China* held in Beijing and Helsinki. The group of

authors attempts to compose causal theories on inequality in contemporary China by deconstructing growth into a variety of supporting factors. The main focus lies on China's interregional differences and explains why the (urban) coastal areas in the East continue to outperform the (rural) inland areas in the West in terms of economic growth.

A multitude of factors – ranging from innovation and financial capabilities, to earlier governmental development and poverty reduction strategies – is meticulously analysed by Wan's contributors. While there is an abundance of factors that are analyzed throughout the various chapters of the work, and extensive attention is given to legitimize their use, the results are often compiled into a very brief section of a chapter, which seems to seriously undermine the strengths of the models. Furthermore, the link with reality consists of an equally brief policy recommendations section, which again leaves a rather poor first impression.

But beware, let there not be a misunderstanding. In the meticulous deconstruction of inequality and poverty into numerous causal factors, *Inequality and Growth in Modern China* provides a more than thorough and useful analysis of the increase in regional inequality over the past few decades. As such, it proves essential to the academic with a specific interest in China's reformation, urbanization and the great variety of problems regarding poverty and inequality that the country subsequently has had to face.

## The methodological clash

A quick glance at the affiliations of the author(s) before reading already hints at the differences in methodological approach in both publications. The anthropologist Zhang naturally opts for a qualitative approach, including numerous semi-structured interviews with renters, homeowners, housing developers and community leaders over an extensive period of time. The group of contributors to the UNU-WIDER publication consists mainly of economists, managers and development strategists, resulting in a clear quantitative approach, using statistical data to find answers. The reader can thus expect both publications to have their fair share of limitations, as either method has its inherent shortcomings.

On the one hand, Zhang's ethnography provides the reader with a number of deeply insightful recordings of personal and real-life experiences from various people involved, however, her statements are often based on a small number of respondents, leaving her with a merely moderate ground to generalize upon, which she does only in combination with newspaper publications or other accounts of a widespread conception.

On the other hand, the UNU-WIDER survey data analysis supplies a very legitimate basis for a generalization of results – in particular considering the effort that has been made to explain and legitimize each chapter's theoretical model and the selection of data – but simultaneously fails to adequately exemplify the human and social aspects of the poverty/ inequality story.

Naturally it is a matter of academic field or methodological conviction that is decisive for the degree of reliability one wants to ascribe to a certain method of analysis. Both methods have their respective strengths and weaknesses. However, analysis based on qualitative data generally results in more pleasantly readable publications.

## Concluding remarks

The comparison between two works that use a completely different methodology on a roughly similar topic was not done to eventually 'pick a winner'. Both the Zhang and Wan publications have their respective strengths and weaknesses and both are definitely useful accounts for understanding the inequality problems China faces today. Indeed, the works can even be complementary to one another.

The peak of China's growth might still be far away. Therefore, those interested in the country will need to maintain a broad field of vision to its developments, which includes educating oneself through works from a variety of fields with varying methodological approaches. As such, *In Search of Paradise and Inequality and Growth in Modern China* would both be a good way to start.

C.M. de Boer MSc recently graduated as an Urban Geographer from Utrecht University. His academic interests include gentrification, the urban transition of China and the development of world cities (c.m.de.boer@gmail.com).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Friedmann, J. 2005. *China's Urban Transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Wang, Y.P. 2004. *Urban Poverty, Housing and Social Change in China*. London: Routledge.

Main image:  
Chinese housing  
development. Image  
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# Strategic restraint?

This volume from Cohen and Dasgupta challenges prevailing traditional views on why India has failed to sufficiently develop her military power and concurrent strategy. Rather than focusing, as others have done, on issues such as culture, the makeup of Indian society, the presence or not of political will or India's immediate strategic environment, the authors instead present a compelling case for what they refer to as India's "deeply engrained tradition of strategic restraint".

Chris Ogden



Reviewed publication:

**Cohen, S.P. and Sunil Dasgupta. 2010**

*Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*  
Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution  
350 pages, ISBN: 978 0 8157 0402 7 (hardback)

AS A CONDITION that has dominated contemporary Indian politics for the last 60 plus years, this tradition is symptomatic of an enduring belief in political not military solutions, as well as a brand of government that privileges civilian influence over all others. It also highlights a key contradiction within India – a search for a suitably armed and modern military (including nuclear weapons), but an absence of clear strategic aims underpinning how such a process should be undertaken. It is this lack of political direction and certainty that results in a situation whereby India has been effectively Arming without Aiming.

Reflecting the authors' longstanding experience, the book presents in a highly lucid and engaging manner the myriad of challenges facing India across her three armed forces, as well as her nuclear capabilities and police force. Such challenges

relate to many of the dilemmas within the Indian system – from drawn out procurement practices, weak central planning and the incidence of corruption, to how to integrate a solid strategic vision in a state that lacks a commander-in-chief and often only nascent military doctrines. Through verdant detail, these problems (and many others) are presented in a comprehensive and compelling fashion. How, for example, can India have a fully realizable nuclear triad that can quickly respond to threats if its three armed forces are not coherently linked to each other? In turn, can a civilian controlled military really effectively gauge (and with sufficient speed) imminent threats from Pakistan or China? Such questions are compounded given consideration of India's internal security threats and the high incidence of insurgency since independence.

In their elucidation of such issues, the authors pinpoint the problems confronted by a large developing state grappling with how to adequately represent itself on the world stage. Central to this analysis, is the authors' focus upon how deep-seated the belief in strategic restraint has become. Dating from an "ideological preference" of her leaders whereby

violence was associated with colonialism and imperialism, it has endured as the state's preferred modus operandi, making it hard to shift and adapt. Of especial pertinence here, is India's aspiration to great power role – and the question of whether or not a great power can act with restraint when it is expected to be a responsible provider of security commensurate with its position in the international system? It is here, that the book's real strength lies, as it underlines the distance India needs to travel to ensure this status and, crucially, how she needs to do this in a manner recognizable to the rest of the world. Such importance is underpinned by the authors' efforts to always make their analysis relevant to policymakers – in particular in the United States – with the text acting as a magisterial example of bringing the empirical and analytical into the practical domain. Acting as a primer for the problems, but also possibilities in India's strategic future, it is vital reading for understanding the connotations and consequences that this future may bring.

Chris Ogden is a lecturer in Asian Security at the University of St Andrews, Scotland ([cco2@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:cco2@st-andrews.ac.uk)).

Both images from the illustrated manuscript *Hamzanama* commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in about 1562 – the *Hamzanama* narrates the legendary exploits of Amir Hamza, the uncle of the prophet of Islam.



# Memorial landscapes



This book offers valuable information and thoughtful comment. But they are presented in a form of writing that shrouds them in undue obscurity. Brought up to value straightforward language in such works, if not 'plain' English, I strive to do my best with what has happened since the 'linguistic turn'.

Nicholas Tarling

Reviewed publication:

**Christina Schwenkel. 2009**

*The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation*  
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press  
264 pages, ISBN: 9780253220769 (paperback)

WORDS HAVE BEEN 'APPROPRIATED' – like that very word – and given meanings that are new – 'mapping' and 'terrain' are among them – or even meanings that are almost opposed to the original – 'agency', for example, or 'mediation'. Perhaps, as an historian, I have to expect the deployment of such tropes when tackling a work in another discipline. Disciplines have their own languages, their own practices: historians prefer footnotes, some social sciences are happy to make glancing references to authors and titles. But surely codes can become too hermetic and put at risk interdisciplinary exchange among scholars, let alone the involvement of a wider readership?

The research for this book derives from a mixture of reading and interviews. The latter were carried out in part by happenstance, and that has given them an authenticity that formal questionnaires might not have enjoyed. Indeed the author refers to '[t]he spontaneity of these interactions' and 'the subtle way [she] guided the direction of these discussions without assuming the lead'. [p. 16] They were carried out over several years, and that has also been of an advantage. Changes of approach and attitude were apparent even over a relatively short period.

The book exemplifies a current academic concern with memory. How are events recalled by participants? Through what means and in what ways are they brought to mind in others? What is the role of state, family, institution, commerce, individual? The focus is on what the Americans call the Vietnam war, but the conclusions may have implications beyond those even of that cataclysm.

Both as an historian, and as a student of Southeast Asia, I was keen to read the book, but found it a difficult task, though not in the end an unrewarding one. The author never uses one word when six will do, is reluctant not to precede a noun with an adjective, and deploys sentences often so long that their meaning is easy to escape. 'This work', we are told in the introduction, "traces the transnational mobility of memory embodied in images, objects, people and knowledge; its multidirectional, and highly uneven, movement across national borders, primarily between and within Vietnam and the United States, but also transgressing other nation-states that were drawn

into the social imaginary of the war through mass-mediated representations.' [p. 8] Could that have not been expressed more simply, I wondered? – also wondering what meaning to find for 'transgressing'.

Chapter One makes the sound, though not novel, point that the same actions have different meanings because they are seen in different perspectives. Veterans go back to Vietnam with different purposes, and return with views changed or reaffirmed. Vietnamese seem less haunted by the past. Some are able to see both foreign soldiers and their opponents as victims of imperialism. 'To what extent can trauma be co-experienced?' the author rather mysteriously asks. [p. 46]

The second chapter deals with photojournalism. Again the content is attractive, the treatment ponderous. It focuses on a particular exhibition, 'Requiem – the Vietnam Collection', that was prepared and shown in Kentucky and then flown in fourteen crates to Vietnam and shown in Hanoi, and later in Ho Chi Minh City. But it raises other issues, some of them, of course, not peculiar to Vietnam: 'images of distant suffering intended to elicit compassion and spread knowledge about violence may lead to indifference, inaction, or absence of pity' (Boltanski 1999). [p. 56] Nor, of course, were the positive images that wartime Vietnam produced without precedent; cheerful working women and courageous families were propaganda fodder I can remember from the 'home front' of my youth in Second World War era Britain.

Chapter Three deals with 'trauma tourism'. Travel to sites of mass death is, as the author says, not new, but it has increased. Most tourists, as she points out, have no experience of the Vietnamese battle sites, any more than of the Holocaust. Their motives for being there must be varied and, I believe, sometimes questionable. Tuol Sleng was more 'real', the author was told: you can see the bloodstains on the floor. [p. 85] In Vietnam, she tells us, commodification has 'prompted certain rearticulations of the past in the public sphere as the terrain of memory making becomes increasingly transnational and infused with capitalist values'. [p. 81] Incidentally, ARVN veterans, hitherto spurned, have gained employment and career prospects in the process.

'Monumentalizing War' is the main title of Chapter Four. The author discusses what she calls 'monument initiatives',

persuasively suggesting that the Vietnamese have been following a practice introduced by the French. How are memorial landscapes to be 'traditionalized' or 'Vietnamized'? 'I think that if our traditions are kept alive by tourism', one respondent said, 'then we are on some unstable ground.' [p. 140] It is a risk shared in other countries. 'Cultural producers, who seek to rediscover "Vietnamese" tradition and cultural identity unpolluted by foreign influence, play right back into the hands of global capitalist forces', the author comments. [p. 140]

Chapter Five discusses what she calls 'museal' institutions and the 'recreation' of exhibits. In Vietnam museums are another product of French colonialism. That, the author thinks, helps to explain 'the alienation of the populace from such spaces'. [p. 149] The young in particular are not interested. But that again is surely not peculiar to Vietnam. There were adjustments in content and description when relations with the US improved in the 1990s, demonstrating 'how museal institutions and the historical truths they produce are entangled in webs of global interdependence and uneven relations of power that affect and shape the representation of knowledge and memory'. [p. 164]

The sixth and final chapter is devoted to the memory and representation of American POWs. Close the past to face the future, was the Vietnamese gesture to the Americans. But, the author argues, the reverse occurred in US policy towards the Vietnamese. The past was recalled, 'perhaps not uncoincidentally as the U.S. strengthened its efforts toward dismantling "market socialism" and expanding economic liberalization'. [p. 177]

What the Vietnamese have done in the field this book covers is, the author concludes, not unlike 'market socialism'. 'The merging of capitalist and noncapitalist economic logics and knowledge practices demonstrate[s] not a definitive "defeat" of socialism – a claim denied by many in Vietnam – but its recombination as a strategy to delimit and control the reach and penetration of U.S. capitalism and its empire of memory into Vietnam's growing economy and its still-scarred landscape of history.' [p. 206]

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Above:  
Vietnamese child soldier escorting American POW. Image reproduced under a creative commons licence courtesy of 'blind hen' on flickr.

# Announcements

## Visualising China

A CONFERENCE LAST YEAR on the history of the Chinese treaty ports saw the launch of a resource easing access to one of their valuable inadvertent legacies, the immense archive of visual records of modern China now lodged in archives, libraries and in private hands overseas. Bristol University's 'Historical Photographs of China' project, previously introduced in a supplement to *The Newsletter* 46 (2008) has continued to grow, and in 2010-11 collaborated with a technical team to develop 'Visualising China', a new portal for accessing and annotating the collection. In addition, this free, open-access portal allows cross-searching across two additional collections of digitised photographs: the Robert Hart Collection, at Queen's University Belfast, and photographs taken by Joseph Needham, held at the Needham Research Institute.

Well over 8,000 images are now accessible, ranging from the 1860s to the late 1940s, covering major Chinese cities, as well as rural locations, and maritime China. The images can be downloaded for research, teaching and learning, and the interface allows users to propose identifications or corrections directly into the record. The materials are still being added to; most recently the Bristol team digitised 2,000 photographs held in albums at the British National Archives, which were rich in materials relating to Hong Kong, Weihaiwei and Shandong, and the 1900-01 north China operations of the allied armies fighting in the Boxer war. The project's new blog aims to introduce the holdings to users, and to offer suggestions about their potential use.

Most of the photographers are Europeans, but there is a significant collection of photographs taken by Chinese diplomat and politician Fu Bingchang (1895-1965), and many of the images were bought from Chinese studios by foreign visitors and residents. A large proportion of the materials come from private collections, principally from descendants of foreign residents of the treaty ports including traders, diplomats, missionaries, and journalists, as well as foreign employees of the Chinese state in the Post Office, Maritime Customs or Salt Gabelle.

Why do we do this? The material is in most cases absolutely unique. The project rescues it for preservation, scholarship, learning, and general public use and enjoyment internationally.

We have barely exposed the tip of the iceberg. Even within the British Isles we are aware of other significant collections of private family material, and more remains as yet undigitised in libraries and archives. Across Europe there must be much more yet. The Bristol team is working closely with Christian Henriot at the Institut d'Asie Orientale, and would welcome discussion with others about building on progress already made.

**Visualising China:**  
<http://visualisingchina.net>  
**Visualising China blog:**  
<http://visualisingchina.net/blog>  
**Historical Photographs of China:**  
<http://hpc.vcea.net>  
**IAO Virtual Cities project:**  
[www.virtualshanghai.net/Presentation/Virtual\\_Cities](http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Presentation/Virtual_Cities)

**Robert Bickers**, director of the **Visualising China Project**, and professor of **History at the University of Bristol**.



1. Studio portrait of a group of four boys in a 'boat'. Probably Shanghai, c.1930s. Unidentified photographer. Carstairs collection © 2011 Jamie Carstairs.

2. Studio portrait of a Chinese woman, 1930s. Unidentified photographer. Carstairs collection © 2011 Jamie Carstairs.

3. Bioscoping in Shanghai, 1923-1927. Thomas Frank Crellin (1883-1949) was a photographer and cinematographer. He was based in Shanghai from c.1923-1927, working for Eastman Kodak. In this photograph, Tommy Crellin is playing the part of Charlie Chaplin, while being filmed in a studio with opera actors. A similar photograph to this, was published in 'The Kodak Magazine' (Vol IV, No 2, July 1923). Unidentified photographer (probably directed by Thomas Crellin) Crellin collection. © 2011 David Crellin.

4. Viewing something like a kaleidoscope, at a peep show stall, maybe in Shanghai, c.1905. Unidentified photographer. Hulme collection © 2012 Charles Poolton.



## Yale Himalaya Initiative

THE YALE HIMALAYA INITIATIVE (YHI) brings together faculty, students and professionals across Yale University, whose work focuses on the Himalayan regions of Nepal, India, Bhutan, Pakistan and China, as well as the Tibetan cultural areas that traverse the borders of all those states.

YHI is the first comprehensive, interdisciplinary University-led initiative in North America to engage with the Himalaya as a trans-regional whole, while at once recognizing its ecological, social and political diversity. Focusing broadly on the themes of environment, livelihoods, and culture, we support the development of teaching and scholarship on topics related to the Himalayan region by drawing upon the combined intellectual resources of members across the Yale community. We encourage the widest possible interdisciplinary participation, in collaboration with scholars, practitioners, and communities in the Himalayan region itself.

The Initiative's scope spans the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional disciplines. It draws upon the expertise of Yale faculty members in the Arts and Sciences (Anthropology, History, History of Art, Religious Studies),

[himalaya.yale.edu](http://himalaya.yale.edu)

Yale's professional schools (Forestry and Environmental Science, Law, Management, Public Health, Medical), and other University centers including the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, and the Global Health Initiative of the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. The Initiative builds upon existing research projects and strong disciplinary networks to promote broader collaborative efforts at Yale, while also developing lasting partnerships with research institutions, government agencies and NGOs throughout the region.

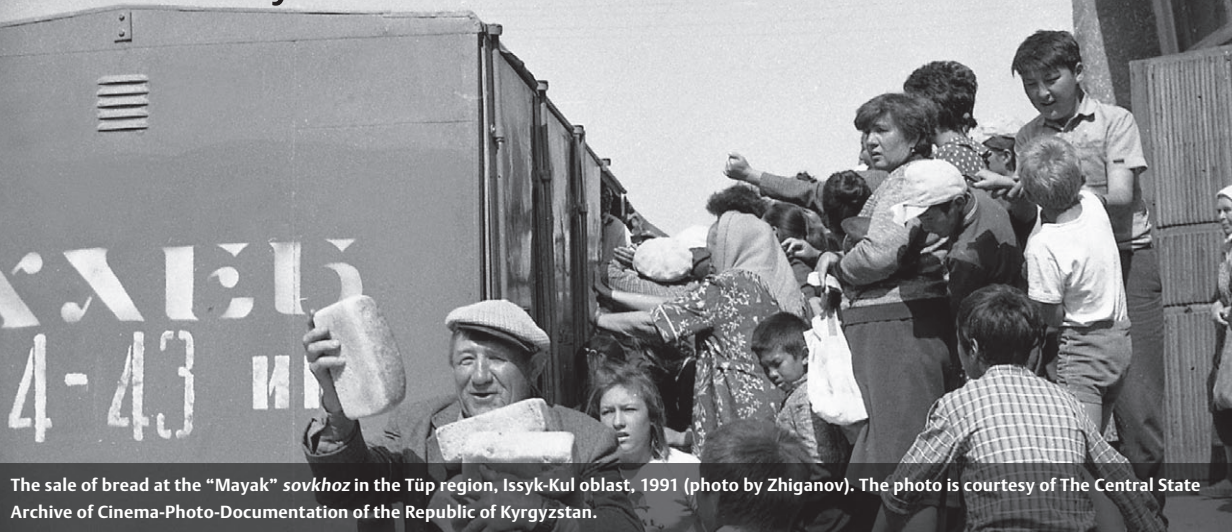
YHI was launched in 2011 and began operating fully in the 2011-2012 academic year. During that time, the Initiative has hosted an interdisciplinary seminar series, with ten events spread over the course of the year. Speakers have included anthropologists, foresters, economists, doctors, conservationists, geographers and policy makers, who addressed a range of issues in Bhutan, China, India and Nepal. The Initiative looks forward to expanding the scope of its lecture series – both geographically and thematically – in future years.

A larger workshop focused on the theme of 'Himalayan Connections' is being planned for 2013. Additional activities have included consultations and partnerships in the Himalayan region. A workshop was held in Dehradun, India in August 2011, and a second workshop will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal in August 2012. These events are oriented towards developing shared research priorities, which to date include:

- Migration and land use change
- Urban growth in the Himalaya: environmental, social and political issues
- Community forestry: trans-regional lessons in theory and practice
- Sacred geography and pilgrimage in a cross-border context
- Linguistic diversity and educational transformation
- Literary and artistic production and dissemination
- Ethnicity, inequality and conflict
- Religious and cultural history of pre-modern and early modern traditions.

For more information, please contact Dr Mark Turin at [himalaya@yale.edu](mailto:himalaya@yale.edu)

## The History of Perestroika in Central Asia



The sale of bread at the "Mayak" sovkhos in the Tüp region, Issyk-Kul oblast, 1991 (photo by Zhiganov). The photo is courtesy of The Central State Archive of Cinema-Photo-Documentation of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

SINCE OCTOBER 2010, an international research team has been carrying out the project "The History of Perestroika in Central Asia (social transformation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, 1982-1991)", sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation. The project aims to add to the recent studies of social change in periods of structural crisis. In all post-socialist/post-Soviet countries, a shift from a socialist state economy and communist party rule to the market-orientated model has been a painful process, which has led to economic decline, social marginalisation and polarisation among population groups. The different development trajectories of post-socialist Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia can be explained by a comparative analysis of the socio-political dynamics and reform during perestroika, the status of different elites vis-à-vis Moscow and particularities in cultural and religious institutions and identities. The ideological trends, which resurfaced with perestroika, have been determined by the course of social transformation, and are still reflected in people's attitudes towards the reform.

This project studies the adaptive strategies of social groups in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia during perestroika, in a broader socio-cultural context, and seeks to explain how the newly introduced ideological trends and cultural ideas impacted on communities and personalities. Social groups are distinguished according to their influence upon socio-political and cultural transformation, and power is understood to be concentrated not solely in state institutions, but dispersed among various social groups at different levels. The titular nation concept was reframed and imposed upon the population by the ruling elites, while other identities, linked to ethnicity, religion and new ideological trends, often emerged in ambivalent forms and uncontrolled by the government. The comparative element is the core of research and aims to distinguish the similarities, differences and specifics of patterns of social consolidation in the three societies.

The research is based on field interviews, open and published sources, media sources kept in national archives, memories, literature and literary criticism, and statistics. Although some materials extrapolated from the Soviet newspapers and public-political journals are published, most data remain untouched. The present time offers us a unique opportunity to record narrative stories about perestroika in Central Asia. Oral history interviews are held with people from different social, political and ethnic groups at republican, regional and local levels. Since the perestroika ideology was experienced variously by different layers of the population and people's perceptions of perestroika have been continuously in flux, the categories used by respondents to describe social reality are contextualised and scrutinised. All the case and comparative studies will be situated in the broader framework of the project and brought together in the edited collective volume.

The project team consists of project leader Dr Irina Morozova at the Seminar for Central Asian Studies, Humboldt University in Berlin; Dr Tolganay Umbetalieva and Ms. Saltanat Orazbekova at the Central Asian Foundation for Developing Democracy, Almaty; Dr Gulnara Aitpaeva and Ms. Ainura Turgangazieva at Aigine Cultural-Research Centre, Bishkek; and Prof. Jigjidiin Boldbaatar and Mr. Enkhbaatar Munkhsaruul at the Ulaanbaatar University and the National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. The senior researchers supervise doctoral students, who write their PhD theses in the framework of the project.

Articles related to this project can be found on the following pages of this issue of *The Newsletter*. Dr Irina Morozova (page 6) and Dr Tolganay Umbetalieva (page 14).

More information on the project can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/c7tgjqp>

## 5th SSEASR Conference, Manila, 16-19 May 2013 Call for papers and registration

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE our forthcoming 5th SSEASR Conference on Healing, Belief Systems, Cultures and Religions of South and Southeast Asia. The conference is co-sponsored as a Regional Conference by the parent body, International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), Member of CIPSH, an affiliate organization of UNESCO.

The conference will cover various aspects of healing beliefs and practices in the cultures and religions of South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Philippines is a cultural playground of inter-ethnicity and an amalgam of hundreds of native belief systems that are spread over 7,113 islands. It is a place that displays ethnic harmony and showcases the cultural values of unity, humility, compassion, and peaceful co-existence. In an age of intolerance, religious tension, and cultural conflict, the 5th SSEASR Conference is dedicated to providing an academic platform for discussing the relationship between culture and religious healing through various scholars from all over the world.

The Conference is being organized by the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila from 16-19 May 2013, and will be held in collaboration with local Universities. We will also be organizing some pre/post conference tours too.

Sessions and paper proposals dealing with the study of this phenomenon through various academic disciplines are invited. Complete information, including a list of sub-themes and registration form, can be found at [www.sseasr.org](http://www.sseasr.org).

Email: [SSEASRphilippines@yahoo.com](mailto:SSEASRphilippines@yahoo.com)

Show of interest: 24 November 2012

Early registration deadline: 15 January 2013

Abstract deadline: 24 February 2013



# IIAS News

## Orientalism revisited: cultural knowledge production on Asia across orders and borders

Report of the roundtable held in Leiden on 30-31 March 2012. Hosted by Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) and IIAS.

IN MARCH 2012, scholars from Asia, Europe, the United States and Africa met in Leiden for the two-day interactive Roundtable 'Orientalism Revisited'. One of Orientalism's 'crime scenes', the former house of the Dutch Islam-expert and colonial advisor Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), seemed a good location to discuss the political legacies and problems of Orientalism today and in the past.

KITLV, a relatively old institute with roots in the colonial past, and IIAS, a relatively young institute with roots in the postcolonial past, organised this roundtable to re-investigate Orientalism in the broadest possible sense: all practices that generate cultural knowledge production on Asia, developing at multiple sites and institutions across the continents, from the 19th until the 21st century. The aim was to open new perspectives on the study of Asia.



The inevitable starting point of our discussion was the impact of Edward Said's classic interpretation of Orientalism – as a state and western-centered hegemonic power structure – on institutional developments in the various countries that the participants represented, and from there to assess the nature of Orientalism today. The next step was to identify problems and gaps, and to seek for new research lines and academic curricular tools and strategies, that would help to go beyond the analytical frameworks of imperial projects, national states and formal academic institutions.

It turned out that, from the other, formerly 'oriental linguistic' and colonial historical departments and institutions that were represented – from Said's home base Columbia to Paris, Cambridge, Singapore and Manila – quite a number had changed their (institutional) names immediately after the publication of Orientalism in 1978. Critical awareness of the hierarchies in cultural knowledge production on Asia has developed widely, into something almost obvious, but in fields like Slavic Studies or Russian Oriental studies, Orientalism has only recently entered the debate.

Among the various trends in the present-day study of Asia we observed the recent shift towards comparative, inter-Asian and transnational lines of research next to a tremendous activity in shaping cross continental inter-institutional collaboration. One conclusion, however, was that despite this apparent move towards inter-activity, hierarchies continue to exist until today: hierarchies in funding, in determining the research agenda, in research practices and in access to knowledge, hierarchies between journals and between publishers. There may be shifts – also in the discontents about the hierarchies and in international efforts to make a difference – but the hierarchies, between institutions in Europe and the United States on the one hand and those in Asia on the other, or between institutions within Asia, whether sponsored by foreign money or local governments, seem inevitable.

As one participant pointed out, the sensible question would be how to use the hierarchies for our purpose, to develop new research and/or infrastructural intellectual methods that could stimulate (perspectives on) less univocally hierarchical and more interactive processes of knowledge production on Asia. But, as other participants argued, the classic question what 'is' Asia, and who decides what is valuable, still stands in the way and deserves further reflection. Since the 19th century, perspectives have changed from that of the semi-free, innocent, multi-lingual universal Orientalist, who could not escape that the Orient was 'to be known to administer it', to the constellations academics are working in now, in which the trend to economise on the non-profitable seems to determine the agenda.

Another matter of discussion in this regard was the study of Asia at academic institutions in Asia, and the question whether students in Asia were (to be/being) triggered to study political-cultural matters beyond the borders of their own state. How to gauge, moreover, the apparent expressions of colonial nostalgia visible in many countries in Asia, going from historical re-enactments, via the (re-)production of colonial brands, cafes and bicycles, to the safeguarding of colonial heritages? How are these trends meaningful for Asian studies? Can we relate these to changing attitudes towards colonial pasts and thus also to endeavours to investigate alternatives to official national histories in Asia?

Such questions brought us, in the final session, to discuss new plans – for research, for the development of new curricula, and for new institutional collaboration. The shared aim, for which one of the participants formulated the suitable framing 'A new global economy of cultural knowledge production on Asia', was to cross boundaries: boundaries within cultural knowledge production on Asia, as practice and as object for study, and boundaries between continents, institutions,



Left: reproduction of "Femme De Constantinople" by Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) (public domain).

Top right: Anonymous Venetian orientalist painting, The Reception of the Ambassadors in Damascus, 1511 (public domain).

disciplines and approaches. One important condition, as was one of the conclusions, was to broaden access to information worldwide. We therefore discussed how we could use, in a structural way, the institutional networks represented at the roundtable (and others), to connect to archives and other information providers worldwide, in order to stimulate open access to publications, to primary sources, and to new curricular tools. Would it make sense to send out a manifesto to propagate such ideal conditions?

The question how to broaden access to information, and thus how information is organised, also valorised the research plans-in-development that passed in review, on Asian modernities, on knowledge production across borders and orders, and on citizenship, methodologically starting out in Asia, but also addressing connections to Europe and the United States. We will continue to work on these plans over the coming months.

Marieke Bloembergen, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) Leiden (bloembergen@kitlv.nl).

## 27 August - 1 September 2012

### A four-day masterclass, followed by a two-day international conference

# Worldwide Asia: Asian flows, global impacts

## Summer Programme 2012

THE SECOND IIAS SUMMER PROGRAMME IN ASIAN STUDIES will partner with the Leiden Global Interactions Profile Area (LGI) to critically explore Asian migrations as a globalising force. Registration for the masterclass is closed, but it is still possible to participate in the conference.

#### International Conference

The programme will close with a two-day conference (31 August – 1 September) on Asian migrations, featuring international scholars.

More information: [www.summerprogramme.asia](http://www.summerprogramme.asia)

## Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE of *The Newsletter* we reported briefly about the new IAS-led programme "Urban Knowledge Network Asia", consisting of a network of over one hundred researchers from 13 partner institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States. Last year IAS was able to attract a €1.25 million grant from Brussels – under the Marie Curie Actions 'International Research Staff Exchange Scheme' (IRSES) – to enable the large scale staff exchanges within the network. The UKNA programme officially started on 1 April 2012, so it's time for an update. Sandra Dehue interviewed Paul Rabé, who joined IAS as the new programme coordinator, in March of this year.

### The key objective of UKNA is 'the nurturing of contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities'. How will this be accomplished?

The exchange mechanism of UKNA is aimed at bringing together scholars to do research on urbanisation in Asia in the three interrelated domains of environment, heritage and housing and neighbourhoods. At the same time the project has a second overarching objective, and that is to produce new forms of urban knowledge.

UKNA is innovative in a few ways. First of all UKNA is intended to function as a bridge between theory and practice. What we know about cities is often either very theoretical, or very practice oriented. The theoretical debate takes place mostly within universities, but meetings between academics and policy makers are still too rare. An important ambition of UKNA, therefore, is to help bridge this traditional divide.

The network is composed mainly of scholars, but they are supposed to produce knowledge that is relevant for practice. UKNA is specifically designed to produce research that can be applied by all stakeholders: by local decision makers in the cities themselves, by central government policy makers, as well as by academics and civil society groups.

UKNA functions as a very open and bottom-up network, where the experienced researcher as well as the beginner, and people from different backgrounds, can contribute. The network includes, among others, environmentalists, social scientists, scholars from the humanities, architects and also planners. They will each research a topic of their own choice and within their own expertise, but in addition we ask them to add to the common endeavour by contributing their thoughts about the various forms of urban innovation they encounter within their own field of research. Examples of innovation can be related to new participatory methods or other new forms of urban governance, new types of planning or financing instruments, or new ways of looking at the notion of urban heritage, to name but a few examples.

### Is the network limited to the present partners?

UKNA is an open network and it is already expanding to include more universities from the "Greater China" area, i.e., Hong Kong, Macau and perhaps in the future also Taiwan. Other institutions from different areas of Asia-Pacific, Europe and the US are also eligible to join and participate in its activities as affiliate partners, even though they will not be eligible for the original EU funding under the IRSES staff exchange scheme. But the researchers from these affiliate partners can certainly join in the staff exchanges, on a self-funding basis.

The activities of UKNA, however, are not limited to staff exchanges. We will also be organising various external events that will be linked to UKNA. These additional events will be open to UKNA members and scholars, and they will be based on the same principles of multidisciplinary, policy-oriented and bottom-up knowledge that guide the UKNA staff exchanges itself. These activities will focus on the entire Asia-Pacific region and will include roundtable discussions, training courses, and a broad range of other activities. The first such external event will be a tailor-made training programme in August for policy makers in Thailand focused on urban flooding. This multidisciplinary training course will explore how the risk of flooding can be reduced by improving inter-institutional collaboration. The course will bring together senior managers from public and private institutions to discuss the issue of governance of urban flood control measures. The group will present its findings at an international seminar which will also be open to all UKNA members.

Another external event that will be linked to UKNA is a roundtable in October on the politics of urban heritage management in the city of Taipei, Taiwan. The roundtable will look at issues of "contestation" around built and intangible heritage, in one case study area of Taipei. The insights of the roundtable will be shared with policy makers, universities, NGOs and other stakeholders. Again, all UKNA members and scholars are welcome to join the roundtable discussions.

### How will you manage the huge amounts of information that the 100-plus researchers will produce?

We are going to bundle the information and knowledge on urban innovation, and of course make this material available, in due course, for use by both academics and practitioners. We will also post information about all the individual research plans on the UKNA website, which should function as a platform enabling researchers to contact each other, and to exchange information and ideas.

For more information and updates, see [www.ukna.asia](http://www.ukna.asia)

## Bali in global Asia Between modernization and heritage formation

Conference on the occasion of the  
50th anniversary of Universitas Udayana

Conference date: 16-18 July 2012  
Venue: Campus Universitas Udayana,  
Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

### Keynote speakers

The well known public intellectual Goenawan Mohamad, and Governor of Bali, I Made Mangku Pastika.

### Panels

Information on the panels can be downloaded from the Events page on the IAS website.

### Fees

Conference fee: 40 Euro for non-Indonesian, and RP 200,000 for Indonesian participants.

Further information about registration fees, the venue, and logistics will be posted on the Events page on the IAS website. Participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

The conference is sponsored by Universitas Udayana, KITLV/Leiden, IAS/Leiden and University of Göttingen.

## Asian Borderlands Conference Connections, Corridors and Communities

3rd Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research  
Network, 11-13 October 2012

The conference will be hosted by the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore and the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

### Connections, Corridors, and Communities

Extensive land and maritime networks have crisscrossed Asia for centuries, providing the basis for encounters between diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, religious, and political groups. Today, developments such as new infrastructural projects, an increase in media access, and renewed interest in shaping cross-border cultural identities serve to both underscore these long-standing linkages and create new forms of connections across Asia. During the 3rd Asian Borderlands Research Conference in Singapore, presentations will address continuities and ruptures along routes and borders in Asia, broadly related to the theme Connections, Corridors, and Communities.

Convenors: Prof. Prasenjit Duara, Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore; Prof. Tansen Sen, Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Dr. Tina Harris, University of Amsterdam; Prof. Willem van Schendel, University of Amsterdam; Dr. Erik de Maaker, Leiden University

More information: [www.asianborderlands.net](http://www.asianborderlands.net)

## History, identity and collective memory: In search of modern China

Workshop 29-30 June 2012. Leiden, the Netherlands

Convenor: Prof. Jui-sung Yang, IAS Professor, holder of the Taiwanese Chair of Chinese Studies/National Chengchi University, History Department.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore key features of Chinese nationalism, especially focusing on how history, identity and collective memory issues are interpreted, constructed and appropriated in the nation building process of modern China.

## Harnessing counter-culture to construct identity: Mapping Dalit cultural heritage in contemporary India

Workshop 7-8 December 2012. Leiden, the Netherlands

Convenor: Prof. Ronki Ram, holder of the India Studies Chair/Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Leiden Institute for Area Studies & IAS.

[www.ias.nl/events](http://www.ias.nl/events)

Workshops

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## Rituels, territoires et pouvoirs dans les marges sino-indiennes

Edited by Grégoire Schlemmer



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# News from Asia

## Ancient epic goes digital

Cholponai Usubaliev-Gryshchuk

SNOWCAPPED MOUNTAINS looming magnificently above the clouds, a herd of sheep grazing lazily on the slopes, shepherd dogs eyeing the herd and warming up their bones, while the crowd encircles a man comfortably seated on traditionally embroidered cushions, chanting the lines of a heroic epic, *Manas*. This is believed to be a typical scene amongst *manaschys* (those who recite, or chant, the epics). One of the few living epics of the 21st century, the heroic epic *Manas*, is a trilogy consisting of three main parts – *Manas*, *Semetei* (his son) and *Seitek* (his grandson). The epic is a cornerstone and a pivot of the entire epic heritage of the Kyrgyz people, and is considered to be the longest epic in the world, consisting of 500553 lines (S.Musaev 1984).<sup>1</sup>

Kyrgyzstan is one of the former Soviet countries lying in the heart of the *Tien Shan* mountain range and the mountains of *Ala-Too* in Central Asia. This small country is mostly inhabited by once-nomadic Kyrgyz people who take great pride in their mountains and their main mythical hero – a valorous warrior, *Manas*, who is believed to have united the scattered Kyrgyz tribes under one nation, freed the conquered land and withstood a violent onslaught of the enemy. The story of *Manas* has been told for decades now by people known as *manaschy*, who are believed to recite the story for hours, days and even months, thus passing on the epical knowledge by word of mouth. It was only during the Soviet era that two of the most prominent *manaschys* of our time were recorded and their recitation was put on paper (*Manas*, Sayakbai Karalaevdin varianty n.d.).<sup>2</sup> The tradition of epic chanting is still alive and actively evolving in Kyrgyz society today; however, the majority of contemporary *manaschys* base their recitation on these recorded and written versions of the epic, which are now considered to be traditional or classical.

In the years since independence, the importance and value of epical knowledge became paramount in the midst of an ardent quest for a new ideology and an ongoing political struggle. In the hands of those in power, the epic became one of the main political tools, as many people still find refuge and support in it, and the spirit of *Manas* is often invoked for guidance and protection (Heide 2008). However, very little



was done for the preservation and development of the current state of the epic and *manaschys*. Given a multitude of technological advancements that exist today, neither a full audio nor video version of contemporary epic recitation had ever been created. The Aigine Cultural Research Center (hereafter Aigine), a non-profit non-governmental organization founded in May 2004, with the aim to preserve, develop and integrate traditional wisdom in contemporary life and incorporate its positive potential in decision-making at all levels of political and social life, with the financial support of The Christensen Fund (USA), initiated a project in 2011 to create the first video version of the *Manas* epic recited by recognized contemporary *manaschys*.

The main goal of this project was to capture and preserve the current state of the epic and its recitation by present-day *manaschys*. It was also aimed at raising spiritual awareness, enriching traditional knowledge and educating the new generation of *manaschys*. The project was successfully implemented, and as a result Aigine issued 3 two-layered DVD discs with as much as 25 hours of live recitation consisting of 50 main episodes, from the birth of the hero to his demise, which make up the core of the *Manas* epic. It took organizers and the filming crew 7 months to complete the shooting, recording and editing all episodes, while 12 active *manaschys* from different regions of the country were involved. Each *manaschy* was able to recite several episodes of his choosing, with the duration of at least

Above: Name of Manaschy: Kamil Mamadaliev.

Below: Name of Manaschy: Zamirbek Bayaliev.

30 minutes. All video sessions were recorded in the lap of nature, on the shore of the crystal-clear Lake Issyk-Kol, amidst pine trees of the Ala-Archa mountain gorge outside Bishkek, and in the homeland of the hero, the Talas valley. People still hold a firm belief that recitation amidst nature reflects the essence, power and free spirit of the epic, and also helps *manaschys* receive inspiration and spiritual elevation.

Upon the completion of the project, Aigine made a public presentation of the discs to a full-house of 800 people, followed by a bewitching concert and live performance by epic chanters. In order to fulfill its aim, the center has started distribution of the discs, free of charge, in all educational institutions throughout the country. Aigine believes that in the long-term perspective this video version may become even more important for scientific research when entirely new versions of the epic appear.

**Cholponai Usubaliev-Gryshchuk is a researcher at the Aigine Cultural Research Center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (cholponai.ug@gmail.com).**

### Notes

1 *Manas* epic is twenty times longer than the Homer's *Illiad* (15693) and *Odyssey* (12110) epics put together and two and a half times longer than the Indian *Mahabharata* epic.

2 *Sagymbai Orozbekov* (1867-1930) and *Sayakbai Karalaev* (1894-1971)



## The Southeast Asian Story: The 2012 World History Association Symposium at Siem Reap, Cambodia

Jayati Bhattacharya

THE NAME OF SIEM REAP IN CAMBODIA is almost synonymous with Angkor and everything related to it – the marvellous temples, its deeply embedded culture, the nodal point for historical interactions – and is also the focus of many projects and considerable amount of research undertaken related to Khmer studies, archaeology, architecture, cultural interactions, tourism and socio-economic issues. It was not surprising then that the World History Association (WHA) decided to hold its 2012 Symposium in the surroundings of Angkor Wat, the heart and soul of Cambodia.

Titled “Southeast Asia and World History” and hosted by the Pannasastra University of Cambodia, Siem Reap Campus, the three-day 2012 World History Association Symposium was held from 2-4 January 2012. Attended by numerous scholars from across the globe, this symposium provided the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the nature, culture and historical diversity of not only Cambodia, but of the entire Southeast Asian region. The conference presented a rich variety of themes including warfare, migration and networks, anti-colonial movements, missionary activities, culture, religion, music, trade and commerce, as well as both autonomous and connected histories.

Three parallel panel sessions were held on the first day and two sessions each on the second and the third days. A two-hour plenary session on pedagogy was also held on the second day, chaired by Leonard Andaya from the University of Hawaii and the National University of Singapore. The very first session of the Symposium began with a panel on

Southeast Asian warfare, covering the period from the 16th to the 19th century; the second panel on migration and mobility networks dealt with trans-regional and trans-ethnic mobilities from the 19th and 20th centuries to the present context; and the third panel focussed on situating the Philippines in the narrative of global history through trade, military and missionary activities, etc.

Another session, on “World Historiography, Autonomous History and Southeast Asia”, was chaired by Marc Jason Gilbert from Hawaii Pacific University, also the President-Elect for WHA. It dealt with conceptualising and theorising Southeast Asian history in the larger context of world history, and also emphasised the importance of autonomous histories of the region. There were also presentations on the Chinese diaspora by John Miksic from the National University of Singapore, and labour migration by Amarajit Kaur from the University of New England, complementing the earlier panel on migration. The theme of “Religion as Agent in Southeast Asia” was also explored.

The popular theme of maritime connections in Southeast Asia was discussed; Kenneth R. Hall and Barbara Watson Andaya spoke on the indigenous networks in Southeast Asia in different time periods, with Andaya focussing on how the trade diasporas and their commercial ties were reduced with the impact of Western colonial interests. Other panels on alternate visions in Southeast Asia and cross-cultural encounters examined the contributions of world history approaches towards the study of culture and conflict in the modern world.

One of the most remarkable panels looked at the flourishing development of music in Southeast Asia. Together, the papers dealt with processes of localisation, indigenisation and syncretism, different parameters of musical exchanges and evolution interwoven with the historical periods.

The plenary session on teaching about Southeast Asia had presenters arguing for the need to explore works of female authors and tales of transnational encounters in the construction of gender, as well as greater attention for the inclusion of thematic, comparative and episodic approaches to studies on the Southeast Asian region in different stages of the social studies programme. There were also suggestions of looking at pedagogy through heritage tourism, and experimental learning of culture and history through cuisine in Southeast Asia.

Other sessions examined anti-colonial and liberation movements in Southeast Asia with a focus on Vietnam and Cambodia. There was a panel on mass violence, genocide and crime, and post-conflict effects on historical memory, rehabilitation, socio-political configuration and other aspects that shaped the structure and functioning of the socio-political economy of different affected nation-states.

Given the interesting line-up of presentations, the only regret proved to be that many of them were run concurrently, presenting participants with the difficult choice of which to attend. However, the inclusion of so many illuminating topics within a three-day conference left the organisers with little scheduling alternatives. Nevertheless, the Symposium was by all measures a successful one, for it not only presented opportunities for interactions and networking among scholars from different parts of the globe, but also provided a learning experience in the assembly of diverse specialisations. It proved a useful platform for greater understanding of Southeast Asia through the eyes of the scholars from the region and beyond.

**Jayati Bhattacharya is a former Visiting Research Fellow at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre of ISEAS in Singapore (jayati@iseas.edu.sg).**

Siem Reap. Photo reproduced under a Creative Commons license courtesy of Bruno/flickr.



## Asian encounters – networks of cultural interactions: an international conference

Upinder Singh

THE CENTURIES-OLD INTERACTIONS between the different regions of Asia took various forms including the migration of people, trade in raw materials and manufactured goods, and the exchange of religious, literary, and aesthetic ideas and forms. Given the historical importance of these interactions, it is surprising that they have not received the scholarly attention they deserve. The international conference held late last year (31 October to 4 November 2011) assumes importance against this background. The conference was a collaborative effort between four major Indian institutions – the IIC-Asia Project, the Department of History of the University of Delhi, the Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The convenors were Upinder Singh and Parul Pandya Dhar of the Department of History, University of Delhi. The broad focus was on the processes and manifestations of Asian cultural interactions in pre-modern times, informed by a conviction that understanding these interactions requires the coming together of scholars belonging to many disciplines, especially history, art history, aesthetics, archaeology, epigraphy, museology, religious studies, and literature.

The idea of the conference was that of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, and her address at the inaugural session highlighted the multi-faceted nature of Asian interactions and the urgent need to explore them through a multi-disciplinary approach. This session also saw the release of the book *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, edited by Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani and Geoff Wade (Singapore, ISEAS, 2011).

The first day's panels were held in the University of Delhi. The panel on war, diplomacy and cultural interactions looked at the perspectives on India-Southeast Asia relations (Hermann Kulke), war as an aspect of Chinese state policy (Tansen Sen, Geoff Wade), Southeast Asian religious endowments in India (Upinder Singh), and the Central Asian background

of the Sultans of Delhi (Sunil Kumar). The panel on dialogues in religion and art touched on Avalokitesvara in Sri Lankan maritime trade (Osmund Bopearachchi), interpretations of the Dong Duong sculptures of Champa, present-day Vietnam (Parul Pandya Dhar), and Buddhist votive tablets in India and Thailand (Suchandra Ghosh). The papers on archaeology and trade touched on Niharranjan Ray's discovery of India-Burma relations (Gautam Sengupta), developments in Sri Lankan archaeology (Senarath Dissanayake), and early modern Indian carpets as media for cross-cultural interaction (Yumiko Kamada).

The panels on the second and third days included two sessions on epigraphy. One focused on Indian epigraphic connections with West and Inner Asia (Daryoosh Akbarzadeh, Maheshwari Prasad, G.S. Khwaja, and B. R. Mani), and the other on epigraphic connections between India and Southeast Asia (K.V. Ramesh, R. Nagaswamy, Gouriswar Bhattacharya, Sachchidanand Sahai, Vong Sothea, A.P. Jamkhedkar, and T.S. Ravishankar).

There was also a series of panels on Asian aesthetic theories and art forms. These included papers on literature, music and dance (Suchitra Chongstitvatana, Arsenio Nicolas). The panel on art forms included papers on the temples of Champa (Ngo Van Doanh), the Javanization of the goddess Durga (Hariani Santiko), and geography and iconography (Enamul Haque). There were also fruitful discussions on various aspects of Indian aesthetic theory (K.D. Tripathi, M.N.P. Tiwari, S.K. Pathak, Raghunath Sharma). Irene J. Winter offered an insightful comparative analysis of Western aesthetic theory and West Asian aesthetic experience.

The discussion of representations of Asian art in Asian Museums included presentations on the Asian Civilizations Museum (Gauri Krishnan) and the Peranakan museum in Singapore (Kenson Kwok). Janet Tee Siew Mooi focused on the museum as a custodian of national culture in Malaysia, while Carol Cains talked about the museum as a medium of cultural discovery in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

A special session on 4 November consisted of a dialogue between two eminent scholars, Irene J. Winter and Shereen Ratnagar, chaired by S. C. Malik. The speakers spoke with insight and sensitivity about many key issues related to archaeology and history, especially about what happens when traditional disciplinary boundaries are breached in cross-cultural analysis. During the conference, the ASI mounted three exhibitions on three themes: The ASI's role in the conservation of monuments in Cambodia and Laos; Bamiyan to Bagan (on the ASI's conservation initiatives in Asia); and recent epigraphical discoveries. The valedictory session saw rapporteurs present the salient features of the various panel papers and discussions.

The conference marked an important scholarly intervention, both in terms of the variety of themes and perspectives. It outlined the many facets of Asian interactions in pre-modern times, identifying key issues that require urgent scholarly attention. It will hopefully pave the way for more concerted research on these issues as well promote international research collaboration and more sustained inter-disciplinary dialogue.

Upinder Singh is a professor at the Department of History, University of Delhi ([upinders@gmail.com](mailto:upinders@gmail.com)).

## Archaeological excavation of two Spanish-era stone houses in the Philippines

Kathleen Tantuico

WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF DOCUMENTING 19th century construction technologies during the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines, a three-season archaeological excavation of two Spanish-era stone houses was conducted by the University of the Philippines-Diliman Archaeological Studies Program (UP-ASP) from 2009 to 2011. Located in Barangay, Pinagbayanan, a small coastal town in the Municipality of San Juan off the southeastern tip of the Batangas Province in Southern Luzon, these stone structures are remnants of Hispanic influences garnered from over three centuries of Spanish colonization.

The town of Pinagbayanan, which translates to "where the former centre of the town once stood", was the original town proper of San Juan in the 1840s, when it was first recognized as an independent Municipality in Batangas. However, as documented in Spanish records, due to repeated and immense flooding in the area starting in 1883, the town proper was transferred to nearby Calit-Calit in 1890. Only ruins remain in the original town.

In accordance to original spatial arrangements of Spanish colonies, the original town of Pinagbayanan once had a church and a municipal hall as its two main administrative structures. Presently, the ruins of the old church are recognized as a National Historical Site by the former National Historical Institute (now the National Historical Commission of the Philippines).

Among the remnants of this old town are two Spanish-era structures located southeast of the church. These structures are believed to have been used for residential purposes. Labeled as structures A and B, these ruins were the subjects of rigorous archaeological excavations for three field seasons. Vital to these excavations were the uncovering of the structures' foundations and the identification of main entrances to the structures.

Structure A, excavated in field seasons 2009 and 2010, is located roughly 100 meters south of the ruins of the old church. The foundation of this structure was reached at roughly 2 meters below the surface and was composed of adobe blocks. The location of the house in reference to the church indicates that the occupants of this house may have belonged to the upper class. A keystone that indicated the presence of an arched walkway was also uncovered in the structure's southwestern portion. Directly west of this keystone, a bed of floor tiles, locally known as *baldosa*,



Left: The conglomerate pavement found on structure B's northeastern portion may have been an entrance to the structure. Photo by Kathleen Tantuico.

Centre: The church ruins of the old town of Pinagbayanan are scheduled to be mapped and excavated in April 2012. Photo by Kathleen Tantuico.

Right: The keystone feature uncovered amidst floor tiles (locally known as *baldosa*) indicates that the structure may have had an arched walkway. Photo by Kathryn Manalo.



were uncovered *in situ*. The excavation team identified three enclosed spaces that were initially interpreted to be storage rooms. A possible entrance to the structure was identified at the structure's western portion, facing the main road of the town. This was initially interpreted to be a passageway for carriages based on uncovered postholes that could have been posts for doors that were spaced wide enough for Spanish-era carriages to pass through. Inside the structure, in the southwest section, was a Spanish-era well. Locally known as *kolo-ong*, this well was used for domestic purposes.

Structure B, located 40 meters south of structure A, was excavated in field season 2011. With four visible pillars, this structure revealed construction materials and structural patterns different from that of structure A. Crucial findings in this excavation included two probable entrances located at the structure's northwestern and northeastern portions. With adobe blocks aligned to resemble a pathway, the northwestern entrance led to an elevated mortar bed interpreted to be a doorstep. A similar pathway was also uncovered in the structure's northwestern portion, although cement and lime mortar fillings indicated that this entrance had been renovated and sealed.

Composed of both adobe and conglomerate blocks that measured approximately 60 by 20 centimeters and bonded by lime mortar and cement, structure B's foundation was

unearthed at 1.5 meters below the surface. The presence of cement as a bonding agent for the structure's foundation indicated that structure B was constructed in the late 1800s.

A large concentration of artifacts was obtained from numerous pits located at the structure's southeastern portion, indicating that the site had been looted. Among the artifacts collected were metal fragments such as square nails, modern nails and screws as well as porcelain sherds, glass shards, and plastics, which reveal the structure's construction materials, and also occupancy and abandonment from the 19th until the 21st century.

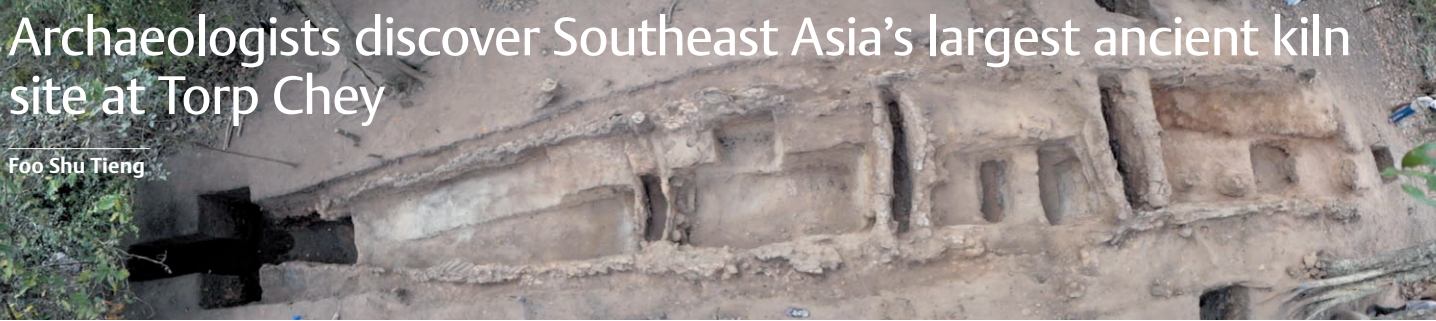
In line with the project's objective to instill awareness of cultural heritage in the community of Pinagbayanan, both sites, along with obtained artifacts, were opened for public viewing to conclude each excavation. Scheduled to take place from April to May 2012, the UP-ASP has further plans to excavate and map the ruins of the old church to enrich the existing archaeological data of Pinagbayanan. The Batangas excavations are spearheaded by Dr. Grace Baretto-Tesoro, the current Deputy Director of the Archaeological Studies Program at the University of the Philippines-Diliman.

Kathleen Tantuico is a graduate student at the University of the Philippines-Diliman Archaeological Studies Program ([k8tantuico@yahoo.com](mailto:k8tantuico@yahoo.com)).

## News from Asia (continued)

## Archaeologists discover Southeast Asia's largest ancient kiln site at Torp Chey

Foo Shu Tieng



CAMBODIAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS recently uncovered Southeast Asia's largest kiln site to date at Torp Chey. Located on one of the major ancient Angkorian highways between Beng Mealea and Bakan, to the east of Angkor, the site is situated close to a Jayavarman VII rest house also named Torp Chey. An excavation of one mound between December 2011 and January 2012 revealed a kiln measuring a remarkable 21 meters in length and 2.8 meters in width. Many pieces of large brown-glazed jars, roof tiles, animal-shaped figurines, and sandstone chips were recovered. The Cambodian team, led by Dr. Ea Darith of APSARA, the Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap, hopes to make a formal presentation on the findings from the site, to experts at the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor in June 2012.

Leaders of the Khmer empire, which once dominated much of the region known today as mainland Southeast Asia, appropriated and localized Hindu and Buddhist iconography, firstly to consolidate their power base, and secondly to legitimize their rule. Majestic examples of monumental architecture, such as those found in Angkor (including the world heritage site of Angkor Wat), speaks to the role and significance of the elite. The discovery of the Torp Chey kiln site will enlighten researchers on the extent of trade networks within the Khmer empire and provide new insight into the economic organization of the ancient Khmer. For archaeologists and anthropologists, pottery embodies the cultural and technological knowledge of the potters and the users. As pottery is one of the most common types of artifacts found in most archaeological excavations, owing to the durability of the material, the study of pottery can provide insight into rituals and practices, class hierarchy, and the stylistic preferences of a culture during a specific period of time. The Torp Chey kiln site excavation will hopefully allow researchers to pinpoint the source of some of the brown-glazed Khmer pottery that has been found elsewhere in the region, this subject being a newly burgeoning field of study.

The Torp Chey kiln complex was discovered during the course of a ground survey in 2007 along the Angkorian road between Beng Mealea and Bakan (also known as Preah Khan of Kompong Svay). M. Hendrickson, who published a report in 2008 on the finds of the survey, noted that the site is significant because it firmly establishes the fact that Khmer brown-glazed pottery (the predominant type from the 12th to 13th centuries) could have been manufactured to the east of Angkor and that the production of the brown-glazed pottery was not exclusively limited to kilns in northeast Thailand, as was previously thought. Hendrickson also suggested that careful dating of the site might give researchers a clue to patterns in pottery style changes, shedding light on the question of whether the brown-glazed ceramics were first made in the kilns in northeast Thailand or in Cambodia.

The new excavation at Torp Chey by the Cambodian team, jointly funded by APSARA Authority and the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, has unveiled a large kiln structure constructed against a natural slope. The kiln has four separate firing chambers heated by a single fire box. The firing chambers are separated by three additional firing trenches. Other features of the kiln include one gate (door) in the southern wall of a firing chamber, and an air vent toward the back of the kiln with three smoke holes. The three firing trenches located between the firing chambers may suggest side-stoke ports where additional fuel (wood) and oxygen could be added in order to manage the temperature and atmosphere inside the kiln.

When one compares the Torp Chey kiln to other known Khmer kiln sites, the difference in magnitude is quite clear. According to Pariwat Thammapreechakorn, other excavations in Cambodia, such as those at Tani, Anlong Thom, and Sarsey (belonging to what is known as the Phnom Kulen group of kilns) have revealed oval cross-draft kilns with single firing chambers built atop sloping mounds, usually measuring 1.8 to 3.6 meters in width and 6 to 8 meters in length. The Buriram kilns, which are located in northeast Thailand and also attributed to the Khmer Empire, are structurally similar to those found in Phnom Kulen, and are fairly long cross-draft kilns at 12 meters. The excavated Torp Chey No. 2 kiln mound, with a length of 21 meters, seems to suggest manufacture at an industrial scale larger and more extensive than anyone might have previously thought. Given that this kiln mound is merely a middle-sized mound among a group of twelve found within the same area, the potential to find one of an even larger size seems good.

According to Dr. Ea Darith, Mr. Robert McCarthy, who is a stone specialist working with the Japan-APSARA for Safeguarding Angkor (JASA) project, has linked the sandstone chips that formed the foundation layer on top of the natural soil of the No. 2 kiln mound to those from the Torp Chey rest house, the Jayavarman VII structure located approximately 60 meters north of the excavation dated to the late 12th to early 13th centuries. While the brown-glazed pottery found in association with the site also indicates a similar date, further radiocarbon dating may narrow down the site use period to a more precise span of time.

Some researchers who have visited the Torp Chey excavation site have remarked on how it resembles some ancient kilns found in China. Dawn Rooney, who has written several books on Khmer ceramics, has also commented on the similarity between the Chinese Yue ware and some Khmer forms in the past. According to Dr. John Miksic, a specialist in the field of Southeast Asian ceramics, the Khmers were second only to the Chinese in mastering the technique of producing stoneware (a less porous type of pottery), and in the ability to produce glaze (a coating of silica that can be used to smoothen and to decorate the surface of pottery). While researchers are looking

**Top left: Top view of the site at Torp Chey No. 2 kiln mound, which was excavated between December 2011 and January 2012. The kiln measured 21 meters long and 2.8 meters wide and is Southeast Asia's largest kiln site to date. Photo courtesy Dr. Ea Darith of APSARA Authority.**

**Top right: An animal shaped figurine unearthed during the excavation of Torp Chey Kiln No. 2. Photo by Foo Shu Tieng.**

**Bottom left: An artist impression of what the Torp Chey No. 2 kiln might have looked like when it was in use. The diagram highlights the single firebox (to the bottom left) as well as the four firing chambers, three additional firing trenches, an entrance to the southern wall of the third firing chamber, and finally, to the extreme right, an air vent at the top of the kiln with three smoke holes. Image courtesy Dr. Ea Darith of APSARA Authority.**

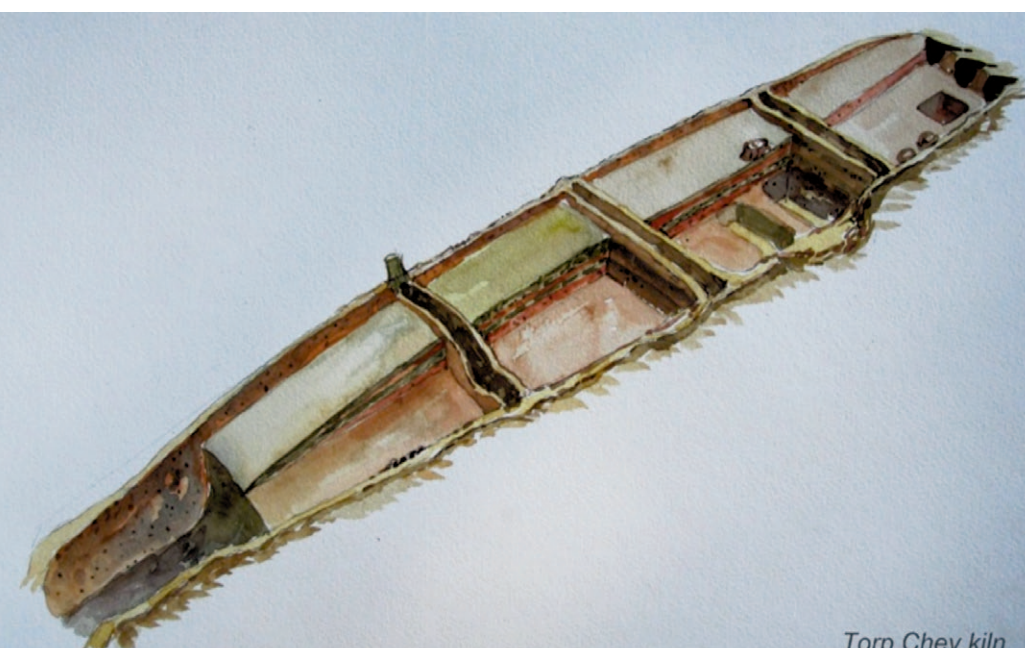
**Bottom right: Location of the Torp Chey archaeological site in relation to capital of the Khmer empire, Angkor. Map drawn by Kim Samnang, courtesy Dr. Ea Darith of APSARA Authority.**

into possible direct technological transfers between the Khmer and the Chinese potters – which have thus far been relegated to the realm of popular myths – the archaeological evidence and academic consensus so far is that Khmer potters were inspired by Chinese imports, but that they developed the techniques of kiln construction and glazing independently. As mentioned earlier, while the brown-glazed pottery associated with the Torp Chey site suggests a later date of 12th to 13th centuries and does not address earlier associations between the Chinese and Khmer (which relates to pottery with a green glaze produced as early as the 10th century), the Torp Chey site excavation does suggest that the Khmer were using fairly labor-intensive and sophisticated methods in order to maintain and control kiln firing temperatures, and were producing pottery in large quantities, which has implications for economic organization and coordination.

Dr. Ea Darith of APSARA Authority has proposed that further work be conducted at the site, including conservation, management, public outreach, as well as research. Looting is probably the biggest threat to the site; M. Hendrickson, who published the survey report in 2008, reported that the crown of kiln No. 1 was already looted and that a local villager had indicated that large complete jars had been found there. According to Chhay Visoth, who has discussed the conservation of the Thnal Mrech kiln site (located on Phnom Kulen), before the 1990s the Thnal Mrech site was protected by the law and local popular beliefs; more specifically, by the soul of a local spirit (*neak ta*). As the villagers believed that any person who destroyed or disturbed the site would cause himself and his relatives to fall gravely ill, they would not even dare to take a small piece of pottery home and this allowed the kiln sites to be fairly well-preserved. However, after the restoration of peace in Cambodia in the 1990s, treasure hunters hired impoverished local villagers (who did not know that they were destroying their heritage) to dig up such artifacts. The best pottery often entered the antiquities black market after being sold to middlemen and art dealers.

It is hoped that by educating the local residents about the significance of the Torp Chey site, by hiring locals to maintain and guard the site, and by erecting information panels in English and Khmer to explain the motives for and results of the kiln excavation, further looting can be prevented. Dr. Ea Darith hopes that it will be possible to construct a small visitor center including an exhibition of some artifacts found at the site, and to conserve and open a kiln structure for the public to visit. Dr. Ea Darith's Cambodian team also hopes to continue research along the ancient road from Beng Mealea to Bakan in order to learn more about the significance of the road in the past, in relation to other structures that have been found, particularly between the kilns, the temples, and other water structures.

**Foo Shu Tieng is a research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Archaeology Unit of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (stfoo@iseas.edu.sg).**



Torp Chey kiln



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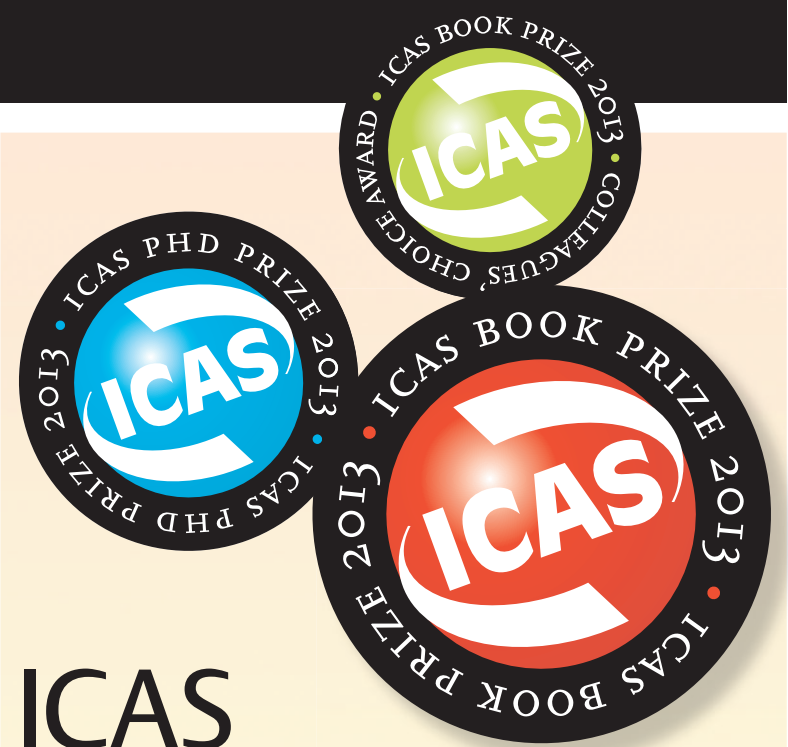
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# IIAS Research projects

IIAS research is carried out within a number of thematic clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents – all built around the notion of social agency. The aim of this approach is to cultivate synergies and coherence between people and projects and to generate more interaction with Asian societies. IIAS also welcomes research for the open cluster, so as not to exclude potentially significant and interesting topics.

## Asian Cities

WITH A SPECIAL EYE on contemporary developments, the Asian Cities cluster aims to explore the longstanding Asian urban “tradition”, by exploring the origins of urbanism and urban culture in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times. Through an international knowledge-network of experts, cities and research institutes it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, IIAS wishes to initiate a productive dialogue where each participant can contribute his or her own expertise, with the potential to evolve into a broad multi-disciplinary corpus contributing to the actual development of Asian cities today.

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### The Postcolonial Global City

This research examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made the successful segue from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary approach bringing together architects and urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies. A key factor in the research is architectural typology. Architecture is examined to see how it can create identity and ethos and how in the postcolonial era these building typologies have been superseded by the office building, the skyscraper and the shopping centre, all of which are rapidly altering the older urban fabric of the city.

**Coordinator:**  
**Greg Bracken**  
(gregory@cortlever.com)



Shanghai skyline. Photo © G. Bracken.

## Asian Heritages

THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested distinctions of “tangible” and “intangible” heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in framing and creating various forms of identity. The cluster will address the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for determining who benefits or suffers from their implementation. It aims to engage with a broad range of concepts including the issues of “authenticity,” “national heritage,” and “shared heritage”, and, more generally, issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage. It will also critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Translating (Japanese) Contemporary Art

Takako Kondo focuses on (re)presentation of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in art critical and theoretical discourses from the late 1980s in the realms of English and Japanese languages, including artists’ own critical writings. Her research is a subject of (cultural) translation rather than art historical study and she intends to explore the possibility of multiple and subversive reading of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in order to establish various models for transculturality in contemporary art.

**Coordinator:**  
**Takako Kondo**  
(t.kondo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

#### ABIA South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index

The Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology is an annotated bibliographic database for publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. The project was re-launched by IIAS in 1997. Partners are the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India, and the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at [www.abia.net](http://www.abia.net). Extracts from the database are also available as bibliographies, published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

**Coordinators:**  
**Ellen Raven**  
(e.m.raven@iias.nl)  
**and Gerda Theuns-de Boer**  
(g.a.m.theuns@iias.nl)

## Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region as well as Asia’s projection into the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends will be addressed. The cluster wishes to contribute to a better academic understanding of the phenomenon by challenging the Euro-centricity of much of its current literature, acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformations. It also wishes to explore new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interaction in the form of South-South and East-West dialogue models. By multi-polarizing the field of Asian studies, an enriched comparative understanding of globalization processes and the role of Asia in both time and space will be possible.

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Asian Borderlands Research Network

The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. A conference is organised every two years in one of these border regions, in co-operation with a local partner. The concerns of the Asian Borderlands Research Network are varied, ranging from migratory movements, trans-formations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns.

[www.asianborderlands.net](http://www.asianborderlands.net)



Thai/Myanmar border. Photo reproduced under a Creative commons license courtesy epidemik/flickr.

#### Energy Programme Asia – EPA

Established in September 2007, this programme addresses the domestic and geopolitical aspects of energy security for China and the European Union. The geopolitical aspects involve analysing the effects of competition for access to oil and gas resources and the security of energy supply among the main global consumer countries of the EU and China. The domestic aspects involve analysing domestic energy demand and supply, energy efficiency policies, and the deployment of renewable energy resources. Part of EPA was a joint-research programme with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in collaboration with three other Chinese research centres of CASS, which ran from 2007 until December 2011. The outcomes have been published in two book volumes. Preparations are being made for a second joint programme, with the same Chinese partners and five Dutch universities and institutions.

**Coordinator:**  
**Mehdi Parvizi Amineh**  
(m.p.amineh@uva.nl)

#### Gender, Migration and Family in East and Southeast Asia

Developed from an earlier research project on ‘Cross-border Marriages’, this project is a comparative study on intra-regional flows of migration in East and Southeast Asia with a focus on gender and family. It aims at studying the linkage between immigration regimes, transnational families and migrants’ experiences. To investigate these issues, this project will bring together scholars who have already been working on related topics. A three-year research project is developed with an empirical focus on Taiwan and South Korea as the receiving countries, and Vietnam and the PRC as the sending countries.

**Coordinator:**  
**Melody Lu**  
(m.lu@iias.nl)

#### IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance in Asia, is engaged in innovative and comparative research on theories and practices – focusing on emerging markets of Asia. Its multi-disciplinary research undertakings combine approaches from political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology in the comparative analysis of regulatory issues in Asia and in developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities. Currently the Centre facilitates projects on State Licensing, Market Closure, and Rent Seeking; Regulation of Intra-governmental Conflict; Social Costs, Externalities and Innovation; Regulatory Governance under Institutional Void; and Governance in Areas of Contested Territoriality and Sovereignty.

**Coordinator:**  
**Tak-Wing Ngo**  
(t.w.ngo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

#### Jatropha Research and Knowledge Network (JARAK)

IIAS has become partner in a new network called JARAK, the Jatropha Research and Knowledge network on claims and facts concerning socially sustainable jatropha production in Indonesia. Jatropha is crop that seems very promising: it can be used as a clean non-fossil diesel fuel and it can provide new income sources in marginal areas that will grow the crop.

**Coordinator: Dr. Jacqueline Vel**  
(j.a.c.vel@law.leidenuniv.nl)

#### Plants, People and Work

This research programme consists of various projects that study the social history of cash crops in Asia (18th to 20th centuries). Over the past 500 years Europeans have turned into avid consumers of colonial products. Production systems in the Americas, Africa and Asia adapted to serve the new markets that opened up in the wake of the ‘European encounter’. The effects of these transformations for the long-term development of these societies are fiercely contested. This research programme contributes to the discussion on the histories of globalisation by comparing three important systems of agrarian production over the last 200 years. The individual projects focus on tobacco, sugar, and indigo in India and Indonesia. Institutes involved: University of Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam) and IIAS.

**Coordinators:**  
**Willem van Schendel**  
(h.w.vanschendel@uva.nl)  
**and Marcel van der Linden**  
(mvl@iisg.nl)

## Open Cluster

### PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

#### Senshi Soshō

This project, funded and coordinated by the Philippus Corts Foundation, aims to translate a maximum of 6 official Japanese publications of the series known as ‘Senshi Soshō’ into the English language. From 1966 until 1980, the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo published a series of 102 numbered volumes on the war in Asia and in the Pacific. Around 1985 a few additional unnumbered volumes were published. This project focuses specifically on the 6 volumes of these two series which are relevant to the study of the Japanese attack on and the subsequent occupation of the former Dutch East-Indies in the period of 1941 until 1945.

**Coordinator:**  
**Jan Bongenaar**  
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#### Ageing in Asia and Europe

During the 21st century it is projected that there will be more than one billion people aged 60 and over, with this figure climbing to nearly two billion by 2050, three-quarters of whom will live in the developing world. Ageing in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steady increase in life-expectancy. In Western Europe, ageing populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and health-care, including pensions systems, unleashing substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing comparable challenges and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much shorter time-span. Research network involved: Réseau de Recherche Internationale sur l’Age, la Citoyenneté et l’Intégration Socio-économique (REIACTIS) Sponsored by: IIAS.

**Coordinator:**  
**Carla Risseeuw**  
(c.risseeuw@iias.nl)

# IIAS Fellows

IIAS hosts a large number of affiliated fellows (independent postdoctoral scholars), IIAS research fellows (PhD/postdoctoral scholars working on an IIAS research project), and fellows nominated and supported by partner institutions. Fellows are selected by an academic committee on the basis of merit, quality, and available resources. For extensive information on IIAS fellowships and current fellows please refer to the IIAS website.



**Guo Zilin**  
Conflict, communication and co-existence: relations between Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucids

IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD, two great kingdoms, the Ptolemaic Egypt (323B.C. - 30B.C.) and Seleucids (323B.C. - 164B.C.), were built by Greek-Macedonians in North Africa and West Asia respectively, where they had conquered Alexander the Great at the end of the fourth century B.C. They were engaged in the continuous conflict for a long time seeking for hegemony around the Mediterranean and Syria, which has been studied by many scholars in recent years. However, it seems that the relation between them is not limited to conflict, but also involved peaceful contact and friendly exchange in some fields at some times. Not all researchers have paid full attention to this point and these relations' influences. Therefore, I plan to conduct a comprehensive study on it through making references to some works and analyzing the materials available.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the generals had been fighting each other off and on for the control of the huge empire between 323B.C. and 280 B.C. Through struggles and warfare, Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucids were the two main participants. Then, six Syrian Wars took place between them, dating 274B.C. to 168 B.C. To some extent, the conflict was the main melody of the relations between two kingdoms.

It should be noted, however, that they had not been fighting every year. On the contrary, there were some relatively peaceful stages between wars,

and peaceful communications between them even during the wars, such as marriages, trades, exchange of religions and ideas, communication of sciences and technologies, migration and integration of different peoples, etc. Therefore, I think that the communication and co-existence were at least the harmonious voices of the relations between them, even though not the main tones, if we can regard the relation as a fair-sounding music allegorically.

Finally, I will find out the changes of the politics, economic system, culture and society in these two areas and beyond in the late Hellenistic Period. Based on these, it is possible to recognize the influences of the relations between them on themselves and other neighborhood countries. I believe that the relations laid foundation for the formation of a cultural circle of West Asia and North Africa, and foretold the coming of regional integration, and even showed some characteristics of the modern society and politics in this territory.

I highly appreciate being awarded a five-month postdoctoral fellowship at the IIAS in Leiden. I now have access to the rich library collections and documentary materials of NINO and Leiden University, and have ample opportunities to discuss my research findings with some scholars in the Netherlands, especially Prof. Olaf Kaper and other experts at NINO of Leiden University.



**Elizabeth Chandra**  
Writers, publishers and libraries

DURING MY FELLOWSHIP at the IIAS, I examined Chinese literary and journalistic publications about Indonesia in the late colonial period. In the 1930s and 1940s a number of major international events took place – namely the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the commencement of the second Sino-Japanese War, followed by the Pacific War – which affected overseas Chinese, including those residing in the Netherlands Indies. Ever since Japan annexed parts of Manchuria in 1931, the Chinese press in the Indies had become vocal critics of Japan and its military expansion;

this antagonism intensified when the second Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937. Not surprisingly, once the Indies came under Japan's rule, most Chinese publishers were shut down. Up until the dawn of the Pacific War, literary and journalistic publications by the Chinese had dominated the Malay publishing market, but after the war only a handful of Chinese publishers survived (17 out of about 55 press agencies) and their total output was comparatively minuscule. Chinese writers and journalists did not fare any better – many were detained, tortured, even killed, while a small

number of writers were permitted to continue working insofar as they operated through official channels, and usually in exchange of doing propaganda work for the occupying authorities.

This episode of history, however, has been scarcely studied, even as first-hand documentations of these events are available in the form of journalistic and literary writings. My plan in Leiden was to bring together and examine such primary sources from the 1930s and 1940s, to see how Indies Chinese writers perceived the series of political events that came to be seminal to the Chinese conception of self. What types of writings did they produce? What can these writings, including the fictional works, tell us? So far I have discovered two types of writings: highly stylized fiction (fantasy novels set in China throughout the 1930s) and prison memoirs from roughly the first half of the 1940s. These materials will keep me busy for a whole year.

Speaking of research materials, I must say the KITLV library is very special. It is rather lacking in equipment (no regular/microform scanner, only one copier), but the accommodating librarians more than make up for what it lacks. I am glad that the Sino-Malay literary collections are beginning to be made available online in PDF form. While with the IIAS, I also discovered that research did not have to be a strictly private endeavor; I learned a lot from talking to and meeting people with similar interests – getting to know Indonesian circles in Holland was a highlight, and other IIAS fellows have become really good (hopefully lasting) friends.



**Ronki Ram**  
The resurfacing of Dalit cultural heritage in contemporary India

I AM THE FIRST incumbent of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) long-term Chair for the Study of Contemporary India established in 2010 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed between ICCR and Leiden University. The Chair is jointly hosted by Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). While the Chair will function under the aegis of the university's Faculty of Humanities, incumbents will simultaneously hold affiliations as 'ICCR Professor of Contemporary India Studies' at LIAS and 'Professorial Fellow' at IIAS. The Chair will focus on politics, political economy and international relations of contemporary India.

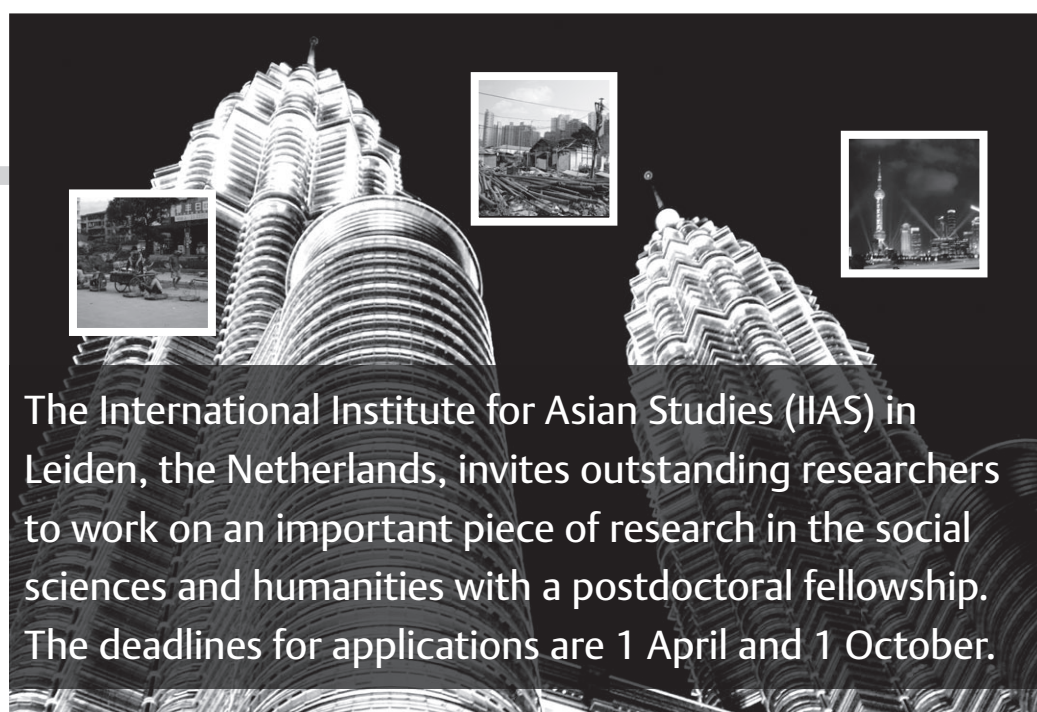
After joining the Chair in September 2011 at IIAS, I started researching the emerging patterns of Dalit Cultural Heritage in contemporary India in addition to teaching a course on Indian Nationalism at LIAS. Dalit Cultural Heritage falls within the broader thematic cluster of Asian Heritages, one of the three major research areas currently pursued at IIAS; it primarily focuses on the epistemology and political economy of heritage and the way it impacts the cultural capital of diverse communities and social groups in Asia.

Of late, Dalit cultural heritage has been emerging as a critical site in contemporary India blending tradition

and modernity seamlessly into each other. It aims at resurrecting a lost cultural heritage world of an extremely marginalized community in India, popularly addressed as Dalits. Dalits in contemporary India are fiercely engaged in developing their own "tangible" and "intangible" cultural heritage clusters at the grass-roots and national levels. Consequently, this has led to a sort of perennial conflict between the hitherto dominant communities and the surging Dalits. It appears as if Dalit cultural heritage is slowly giving way to what may be called a zone of cultural conflict.

In order to critically engage with the emerging trajectories of Dalit cultural heritage, IIAS in collaboration with LIAS is organizing a two-day international workshop on 7-8 Dec 2012. IIAS, I must admit, provides homely ambience to scholars from almost all the continents of the world to work in a refreshing and mutually encouraging academic environment. It helps scholars to delve deeply into their chosen intellectual pursuits, while at the same time facilitates them in finding some common links at the intersections of their sharp-edged research boundaries. My current research theme is the outcome of such common research links I easily discovered during scholarly conversations with the research fraternity of the IIAS.

## IIAS Fellowships



The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to work on an important piece of research in the social sciences and humanities with a postdoctoral fellowship. The deadlines for applications are 1 April and 1 October.

WE ARE PARTICULARLY interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute's three thematic clusters: 'Asian Cities', 'Asian Heritages', and 'Global Asia'. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

**Asian Cities** The Asian Cities cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows of ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism, *métissage* and connectivity, framing the existence of vibrant "civil societies" and political urban microcultures. It also deals with such issues as urban development in the light of the diversity of urban societies.

**Asian Heritages** The Heritage and Social Agency in Asia cluster explores the notion of heritage as it evolved from a Europe-originated concept associated with architecture to incorporate a broader diversity of cultures and values.

**Global Asia** The Global Asia cluster addresses Asia's role in the various globalization processes. It examines examples of and issues related to multiple, transnational intra-Asian interactions as well as Asia's projection in the world. Historical experiences as well as more contemporary trends will be addressed.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualized, multidisciplinary knowledge, with the capacity of translating this into social and policy relevant initiatives, will be privileged.

For information on the research clusters and application form please see: [www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl)



# The most beautiful flowers often bloom in hidden places

If you walk through the gates of 'Het Dolhuys' museum in Haarlem one of these days, you will most certainly be captured and enthralled by the new exhibition, "Hidden beauty from Japan". The exhibition displays 1000 works by 46 outsider artists from Japan. Ranging from Marie Suzuki's obsessive fascination with genitals to the unceasing accuracy of Takanori Herai, this until recently unknown Outsider Art from Japan has never before been shown in the Netherlands.

Matthias Naranjo Aguilera

HANS LOOIJEN, DIRECTOR of the museum Het Dolhuys, was introduced to the exhibition 'Art Brut Japonais' in 2010; an exhibition of Japanese Outsider Art in Paris. He became fascinated by the works and their beauty and decided to examine the stories behind their makers. This fascination led him to Japan, where he made an inspiring journey through various welfare organisations and was able to meet several of the artists. It was during this trip that the idea was born to develop an exhibition that would focus more on the lives of the artists, in relation to their work. The concept grew and, in collaboration with the Aiseikai Organization and the No-Ma Borderless Art Museum in Japan, the exhibition "Hidden Beauty from Japan" was established.

25 of the artists whose work is shown are exhibiting in Europe for the first time. More importantly, most of the artists have a psychiatric disorder or a mental disability. Thus Looijen says about the exhibition: "This exhibition revolves around the art of people who have generally not been trained as artists. To differ from the norm is not readily acceptable in the Japanese culture. There is a great social pressure to conform and a psychological problem involves total disqualification in the country that most people like to associate with beauty and elegance."

"Hidden Beauty from Japan" is a taboo-breaking exhibition. In Japan, more than in most countries, people are terrified of madness, and the mad. People with mental illnesses are often literally kept behind locked doors. This severe tradition, in combination with the characteristic Japanese culture, is often identifiable in the works on display.

The thoughts, feelings and obsessions of the artists include different themes. Some express their deepest desires, vivid fantasies or let their most cherished or suppressed memories run free. Others are clearly fascinated by interpreting and organising the world around them through a personal system. But all the artists have one thing in common, they communicate with the outside world through their art.

Take Marie Suzuki, for example; breasts and genitals, scissors and human figures, who are neither adult nor childlike, dominate her paintings. An extreme violence is vigorously recorded by black and coloured markers on large sheets of sketching paper. In 2007 she suddenly started to express the images that were haunting her, but which she had always suppressed. Suzuki's illness manifested itself in high school, and she eventually graduated through a correspondence course. Today she lives in a local welfare facility. The subjects in her drawings are unmistakable memories from her childhood. Suzuki explains her expressive drawings as, "The ugliness of the idea that human life comes from the womb, a dislike of female and male genitalia, and conversely an obsession with all these things." It is clear that a horror and fascination for the origin of life intertwine in Suzuki's drawings. Yet, drawing seems to help her relax and has become an indispensable part of her life.

Suzuki was one of the eight Japanese artists present at the official opening of the exhibition in the museum Het Dolhuys. It was a unique event at which the extraordinary cooperation between the various welfare organisations in Japan, and museum Het Dolhuys, was celebrated.

The term Outsider Art is at times hard to fathom. Among the genre, which was first launched under the synonym 'Art Brut' by Jean Dubuffet in 1948, are both artists that dismiss the conventional 'high-low' art world, as well as artists with mental illnesses. In general, those labelled as outsider artists were considered to have little or no contact with the mainstream art world or society in general, and thus uninfluenced in their expressions by the civilized world outside. These views were later slightly adjusted to the fact that it is unrealistic to assume that anyone can live completely isolated from the outside world. Nevertheless, this is actually occasionally the case for some of the artists in this exhibition, mainly because of the taboos that reign in Japan. There are a number of works of art for which the artist's family name cannot be mentioned, nor a photo of the artist be publically shown. Fortunately, these artists' participation in this exhibition has had a positive impact; families are starting to see the makers in a new light. Through the art comes appreciation and recognition for their qualities. The aesthetic beauty of the works speaks for itself.



The exhibition "Hidden Beauty from Japan" is proving to be a great success in Haarlem and is enjoying tremendous amounts of attention from the media, and art- and museum lovers. Several European museums have also shown their interest, and there is a good chance that the exhibition will travel to various museums on the continent. In this way we can hopefully further chip away at the taboos surrounding psychiatry, and continue to blur the boundary between 'normal' and 'abnormal'. Ever since its inception, museum Het Dolhuys has asked its visitors to reflect on this boundary, and it will continue to question the prevailing labels and prejudices through its permanent and forthcoming exhibitions.

"Hidden Beauty of Japan" is on show until 2 September 2012.



## Het Dolhuys

Het Dolhuys Museum is the museum of psychiatry in the Netherlands, located in the beautiful old town of Haarlem. Het Dolhuys [The Madhouse] is located in the former 'leper, plague and madhouse', established in 1320. The leper, plague and madhouse was situated outside the city walls of Haarlem as a shelter for "lunatics" and people suffering from infectious diseases. For the following 700 years, the building continued to function in healthcare; most recently as a crisis centre and day care centre for demented elderly.

In 2005 the building became a museum, whose main aim is to chart and disclose the cultural heritage of psychiatry in Europe. Areas of focus include: psychiatry and photography, psychiatry and architecture, and psychiatry and art. With varying exhibitions and events, the museum zooms in on current social issues in psychiatry. In the museum one can observe the boundaries between crazy and sane, normal and abnormal, in an interactive and thus impressive manner. In Het Dolhuys it is mainly the patients who tell you what 'madness' means, and so the personal stories act as your guide through the museum.

In its relatively short life, museum Het Dolhuys has become a household name in Haarlem, and is widely recognised as an educational institution of high quality. The museum wants to leave visitors with a positive, lasting impression, which contributes to the de-stigmatisation of people with a psychiatric disorder. It hopes to accomplish this by creating a personal encounter with the (ab)normal.

Visit the website at [www.hetdolhuys.nl](http://www.hetdolhuys.nl)



Top: Shinichi Sawada. 2010. *Untitled*. 445x190x190mm. Ceramic Sculpture, Clay.

Middle: Shota Katsube. 2011. *Untitled collection*. Various sizes (±3 cm tall each). Twist ties.

Below: Koichi Fujino. 2001-06. *Octopus*. 540x380mm. India Ink, Drawing Paper. This yellow version of the drawing has been adapted by designer Kees Peerneman for commercial purposes – the original is black on white.