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.
The Focus
Africa and the Chinese way

Guest editor Frans-Paul van der Putten suggests that 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.

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.

William A. Callahan suggests that the relevance of diversity in China’s foreign policy discourse is decreasing – 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.

The Chinese understanding of what is good for developing countries differs from the Western view. Mamoudou Gazibo and Olivier Mbabia, in their article ‘How China seduces Africa’, show how this is one of the elements that make China attractive to many Africans.

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.

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.

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 interventionalist policies.
In April this year, IIA 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,
Director of IIA

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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

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 for the upcoming 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 deer horn, 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 arrange-
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 dove low to take turns singing choral songs around a large fire is described as nyo-yen (singing songs in the dove low). The singing of visitors from the grooms’s clan at a wedding is referred to as do-yen go-dan (singing songs to get quilts), while the greeting song performed as do-yen gow-den (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 烏文彩 (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 貧腔 (ou qiang) (singing opera) is borrowed directly into Kam.

These various traditions have recently undergone obvious unexpected changes. For instance, choral songs are now sung mainly by married women and men rather than by unmarried youth, and married men no longer job joins married women in singing go-dan and go-doo-den. In the 1950s young unmarried women began to perform Kam opera within previously all-male casts but that has changed again and today most opera performers are married women. Continued use of the earlier names for contemporary forms of Kam singing traditions suggests, 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 repertoires, performance modes, norms 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: cho t'ai go-doo (going onstage to sing songs). It is thus clear that such performances are not part as 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 was also 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.4 The songs classified as big songs include all the different genres of choral songs ‘exchanged in the dove low’, as well as various arrangements of those songs that are used in staged performances and almost never sung in the village dove low exchanges. This big song tradition has gradually expanded 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 dove low during New Year celebrations to be sub-genres of just one Kam singing genre. They used 大歌 (big song) – a Chinese translation of the Kam name go-lo (big/song) – which 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 go-lo 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 the "Ten thousand people singing big song." The song performed was from the choral genre known to Kam people as gow loo, not the choral genre that Kam people call go-lo. Songs from both go loo and go-geo genres are promoted using the Chinese name dage (big song), and also using the Kam go loo from which the Chinese name derives. However, numerous older singers maintain that the performance was not actually dage (that is, big song) since only go loo 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.

**Notes**


5 See http://tinyurl.com/748yv52, where the Chinese 貧腔 is translated into English as ‘grand-song’.

**Top left:** A performance of Colourful Guizhou’ in Sheeam and Bee villages. **Top right:** Villagers from the Kam regions of Sheeam and Bee exchange big song in the newly-built dove low in Bee, February 2011.

**Bottom:** Visiting photographers, researchers and government officials – as well as many local residents – prepare to enjoy a staged performance of big song given by the Shoumei village group in February 2011. The largest dove low in the village appears to be about to be restored.

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, 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

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 rash 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 disintegration. 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.

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 discourses 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. 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.

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. 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
formed their own social networks of urban intelligentsia in the 1980s, and held informal gatherings, which evolved into the first democratic units in 1989.6

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 destruction

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 key reason for their personal misfortunes. However, when confronted with the question “how and when did you learn about your ethnicity and ethnic tension”, 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 reconstruction 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 affirmative 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 reflect 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 (tymoroz@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 Kommunismi endek, Ostaljik Kazakstan og Fribot (1982) by Sallanat Ozbilekova.
6 Interview with Dr. Halan Haidbat, Ulanbaatar, May 2008.
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.²

Adrienne Fast

Mukul Dey: an autobiographically modern Indian artist¹

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to Ajanta and Bagh (hereafter, My Pilgrimages), which was first published in 1925 and later reprinted in 1990. The second was a self-published book called My Experiments with Truth, 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 frescoes 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 even indeed before the Mughal) invasions. For Dey, his encounters with the art of this “lost” period and the geographical, cultural, and historical distance his travels to the West opened up, was a way 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 stand 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 these are stories of Dey’s own personal experiences of travelling to and living at the caves while he undertook the months-long project of producing painted copies of the frescoes that he encountered. “Adventures pleasant and otherwise,” including accounts of his travels 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 standard 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 Huen Tsang, thus bringing his own personal narrative 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 partook of the same bifurcated genre: My Pilgrimages, for instance, is both a travelogue and a personal narrative. Patrick 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.” 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 nationalist model of identity particularized both from the field of culture or art, rather than politics, on which Dey elects to graft his own personal narrative. As a visual artist and practitioner, Dey’s life was a strategy of artistic practice filtered from the same fundamental practice of visual reproduction; he was a self-published book called My Pilgrimages and My Experiments with Truth, which Dey produced during the seven years that he spent living and working in the UK. The lack of introduction that marks many other early Bengali autobiographies could be seen as a way to establish himself as a professional artist, designed to attract readers (and potential buyers) through a conversational and anecdotal atmosphere and approach. The biographical genre was, by this time in England, an established method by which artists presented and promoted themselves as respectable working artists. And indeed, it is the nature of My Pilgrimages and My Experiments with Truth that makes My Pilgrimages stand out in book form. Clearly at this time the late colonial period was becoming increasingly ripe for reinterpretation, and bibliographical texts such as these were one way to make an already published book seem more contemporary, or even a reduced selection. Such a strong visual presence obviously made My Pilgrimages easier to ‘sell’.”

For a growing number of artists in the late colonial period, the discovery of sites like Ajanta proved that painting previously suggested that India had only fostered the plastic arts, but the discovery of sites like Ajanta proved that painting could play a strategy of artistic practice for Bengali artists, from the early twentieth century to the end of it.

New possibilities
Dey’s second autobiography was titled My Reminiscences, and it was composed in English and self-published in 1938 while Dey was professor of the Government Art College 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 auto- biographies were written to present readers with the possibility of a life; in times of great social and political turmoil, it was not only possible but necessary for writers 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 those most aware of the limits of such a life could find of great interest and unthinkble. In much the same way, My Reminiscences presents a model of a possible life, lived as a modern, professional artist in contact with the world of modernism, which would perhaps 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.

Dey’s Reminiscences is also interesting because it was self-published. As an artist who specialized in etching and engraving and who had gained access to some of the most up-to-date printing 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 UK, 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 used to participate in a desire for artists to promote themselves as functional buyers) through a conversational and anecdotal attitude and approach. The biographical genre was, by this time in England, an established method by which artists presented and promoted themselves as respectable working artists. And indeed, it is the nature of My Pilgrimages and My Experiments with Truth that makes My Pilgrimages stand out in book form. Clearly at this time the late colonial period was becoming increasingly ripe for reinterpretation, and bibliographical texts such as these were one way to make an already published book seem more contemporary, or even a reduced selection. Such a strong visual presence obviously made My Pilgrimages easier to ‘sell’.

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.
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.

A RECENT PUBLICATION in empirical methods for comparative literary studies is the book by Oakes and Ji, Playing with poets: Lexical diversity and stylistic differences in English translations of Cao Xueqin’s Hongloumeng. The two Chinese translations were created by Yang Jiang and Liu Jingheng. 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 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 area of literary translations at a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural level. One might hope that the use of statistical techniques can help to identify linguistic and stylistic differences between the translations. The larger the Chi-squared value, the more significant are the general stylistic differences between the two translations. Yet what the translators’ choice to explicitate is 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 Rigveda, where subject matter varies more. Of about 200 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 themes is that the translators did not uniformly adjust the ambiguous Vedic original. While both scholars, Geldner in the first and Elizarenkova in the last decades of the 20th century, did that systematically. Strategy is the key word 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.

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 esoteric original. Such is the phenomenon, the researcher concludes, of complementarity between translations of one and the same text, which offsets a potential meaning-gap between the source text and its renditions 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 definitive meaning. Thus in a way the translators were, indeed, playing a guessing game with the ancient poets. Or, perhaps vice versa: the choice themselves were playing riddles, 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 its contribution to a particular linguistic feature towards the general stylistic differences between the two translations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POS</th>
<th>Bowra Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-squared</th>
<th>Joly Frequency</th>
<th>Chi-squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
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<td>650</td>
<td>3.351</td>
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<td>Determiners</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6.789</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>4.906</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerund “s”</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.058</td>
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<td>6.871</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>7.012</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>5.066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
- Céz, Herbert Allen (translation). 1895. The hong lou meng, commonly called The dream of the red chamber. Shanghai.

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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.1 Credence to the theory that the Mughal incursions in Assam had facilitated the introduction of opium in Assam is spread by references to gifts from the Pooshdesh (the Mughal Emperor of Delhi) that included qofing (opium),2 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.4

Contemporary travel accounts further attest to the presence of thriving commerce between the Assamese merchants (modvis) with the neighbouring hill tribes, and with China and Tibet. The Assamese merchants went to Furzam 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 Aliphs) and the Ti-Bhans 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 Refoha, in the neighbourhood of present Guwahati (Assam). In Assam, the local name for processed opium was kawal. It involved a unique method of preparing opium by boiling the fresh poppy with a strip of cotton; this was then either eaten (kailannkhai) or smoked (kuniponkhao).

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.5

The official policy made a number of ‘opportunity’ 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 reordered 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, on the social 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 Nikonekoron (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 insensitivy and the callousness of the Government was challenged on the floor of the legislature by vocal startling 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 from the furthest reaches of Assam. The Assamese intelligentsia interfered in the landscape of the Brahmaputra valley resulted in a para-

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 ban on opium and the 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 Gaba remarks, ‘the weak point of imperialists where the nationalists struck hard.’

Literary outpourings of eminent nineteenth century Assamese litterateurs, such as Hemchandra Barua and Lakshmidt Bezbarah, against a malady that threatened to sap the vitality of the Assamese peoples, reached their culmination with the quell of Nokonikoros Purvo (Festival of Temperance). The propaganda against opium was, in a sense, an act of purification and dedication, and, simultaneously, an assertion of Assamese pride and identity and the rebuilding of a Sonar Assam (Golden Land of Assam).

Post-independence, attempts at enforcing total prohibition were emasculated 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

1 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.

2 Assamese Chronicles are referred to as Beurijis. Written by officials, these accounts of the Ahom rulers, they contain a descriptive and often authentic account of the reign of the Ahoms kings.

3 In Arabic, opium is referred to as a fi ng.


5 The quote is from the Second Report of the Committee of Enquiry on the cultivation of opium, 1922-23.

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
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” she describes the trip across the Malacca Straights 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...”. 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.

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Notes
1 Carry van Bruggen. 1909. 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 Haish Sin Bhd, was awarded the rights to develop the site. The new hotel will be managed by Aramresorts International, and be named Aramcrag Resort.
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.

Most publications on perestroika in Kazakhstan are heavily ideologically charged. Among those who seek to understand the peculiarities and political situation in the KazSSR in the second part of the 1980s. This research is based on the data extracted 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.

The voices in support of this opinion were heard in our recorded interviews: “…Moscow had always treated Kazakhstan with suspicion and considered it as 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 Kazakh 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 process was suffused with anti-Turkism and its initiators and supporters were repressed. As a result, the Kazakh elite remained under suspicion of nationalism.”

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 were no longer the proponents 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. Shakhnov, 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 expressed the accusation of nationalism among the young protesters. As a result, all participants were acquitted from all charges and released from prison, or, at least, the case was for many. Those who had perished during or after the events, had their names cleared posthumously.

Despite everything, the ideas of separation did not gain widespread support in the Republic. There was no wide public debate on the issue and the Commission discussed at the Congress 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 public was not ready to announce the 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. People were sceptical about the Kremlin’s policies. However, eventually the majority of the population became disillusioned by perestroika; despite Gorbachev’s undeniable achievements, 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 its status and found themselves on the Soviet periphery, but opposing the Kremlin’s policies differed from 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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Notes
1 The author is grateful to VolkswagenStiftung for sponsoring the project ‘The History of Perestroika in Central Asia’.
3 Sarsenbaeva: 328.
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.1 The problem lies in excessive access to sugary drinks and high calorie 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

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 2002.2 At the same time, children’s hyperactivity and misbehavior in school was becoming a social problem.3 Gradually the entire Japanese society was becoming convinced that food education should be provided in schools to effectively improve children’s diets.4 The national government made this health issue a national priority and created a new law called Shokuiku Kenpo (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 2010s.5 In the late 1990s, Akinori Kozumi 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.6 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 showkenryoku. 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 30–90 minutes, during which time the children would be asked to measure 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 Kenpo (The Basic Law of Food Education) was enacted.

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 in this phenomenon of the private sector involvement within the schools. Therefore, in 2008, I contacted more than 50 public schools that were using the McDonald’s food education lessons (as promotional activities). Another concern was that food education is becoming a global movement – even in America where people are more individualistic and not entirely appreciative of government 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.

Japanese society has a collective 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 developing 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 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.

Dr. Kaori Takano is a visiting assistant professor of International Business at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, USA. She has conducted extensive research about food education in Japan. (kaoringcun@yahoo.com).

Notes
5. ‘Kodomo ga kawatari b shokuiku’ [Children changed: No.8 Food education]. Retrieved from the National Food Education Network; ‘Kodomo ga kawatari b shokuiku’ [Children changed: No.8 Food education]. Retrieved from the National Food Education Network.
Early in May this year, the IIAS 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 IIAS 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 1960s (“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 lecturership 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 Netherlands. 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 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 received a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, and I was lucky in being allowed 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 Kolf, Femke Gaasta, Leonard Blussé, Hvi Schiffer, Hugo J. Jacobs, Jaap Broyer, 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 NIAS in Wassenaar (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences). During that year I finished my first book, “Microeconomics of the Pre-Modern World Economy”, and it was later published by Cambridge University Press. I went back to NIAS in 1992-1993, to work with some of my Dutch friends, including Femke Gaasta, Leonard Blussé, and Jur van Goor. I also received 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.

What do you think about the IIAS alumni 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 in touch with each other. They all share the wonderful experience of having stayed in Leiden or Amsterdam with the IAS. The IIAS 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 IIAS. 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 friends. Nowadays, the IIAS 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 alumni 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 in touch 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, books reviews, announcements of conferences, etc. It is a treasure 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. 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


Asia Pacific Memo is an initiative of IIAS

Asia Pacific Memo presents short essays or video interviews on contemporary Asia twice a week. Each Memo addresses a single poignant issue rooted in current research.

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“A couple of promising manuscripts are under consideration so there will be some books forthcoming very soon

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Forthcoming

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Ayem Eli, Women in China’s Muslim Northwest: Gender, Social Hierarchy and Ethnicity

Kyungja Jung, Practising Feminism in South Korea

Emma Fulu, Intimate Partner Violence in the Maldives

Jongmi Kim, New Femininities and Consumption in South Korea

Larissa Sandy, Women and Sex Work in Cambodia

Kay Schaffer and Xianlin Song, Women’s Writing in Post-Socialist China

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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.\(^2\) This applies in particular to Africa.\(^2\)

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.
Dealing with political-economic diversity in the developing world

Both China and the West point at the promoting of values as an essential difference between them. While the West encourages African countries to liberalise 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 politico-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 Gably and Olivier Mbuya, 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 to some extent 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 international 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 long-term strategy for 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 paring 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.

Notes
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

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, China evolved as a communist country and became involved in the worldwide struggle for alliances on an ideological basis. When the cold war ended and the West started to win the Cold War and become the sole global superpower, China and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to promote a multipolar world order as opposed to hegemony. Since that moment, the Chinese government has actively promoted diversity and an inclusive world system. In line with this argument, China has governed the roots not 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 interests 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 therefore 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, as a world temper the expectations from their partners in Africa, and to minimise critique from Chinese nationals who advocate for more economic development in their respective country. Consequently, this understanding for China to promote sovereignty and not to 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 of the countries that choose to become Chinese development partners or Chinese government representatives in Africa. In 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 regulations 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 temporally compromise on these issues in order to attract the much needed financial and technological capital from abroad.

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 are most important for its 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 through the Chinese ‘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.” Why does the Chinese government stress independent economic development and how is this demonstrated in Africa?

The 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) selected 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: 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 situation 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 have expressed 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 are the responsibility of the African governments. During a study in the DRC, 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, sustainability and equality are not regarded as being considered by Chinese investors or Chinese government representatives in Africa. On the contrary, both agree 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 laws 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 argument for this advice, however, seems 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 and the West is that the Chinese are much more open about their economic interests. 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 development advice, not 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 jeopardizing 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


Harmonious world

As Prof. Shi’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, while others call “harmony” and “pacty” 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 Han majority 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; Wudakou in Beijing has a Koraetown, and over 300,000 African lives 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 2007, the Chinese have taken their identity as self-evident – as bloodline descendents of 5000 years of civilization – rather the 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’ 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 2006 in a singing contest on the “Global 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 spilt 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 outragously racist terms; Lou was described as a “black chimpanzee,” a “rubber”, whose mixed Chinese and black parentage was an ugly “mistake.” One netizen recognized “that fascination with foreigners is indeed a fact,” but scolded Lou’s mother, “you still can’t pick blacks!”

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. 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 Peasoplitst 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 bating (和而不同) means harmony-with-diversity, while doting (和) is Great Harmony.

Great Harmony describes an overarching unity: the “tong” in doting also means sammens. 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 周礼). “When the Great Way prevails, the world will be filled with all. They are 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 schemers did not arise. Robbers, thieves, rebels, and traitors had no place, and thus outer doors were not closed.” This is called the Great Harmony. 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 哉的) distinction that is found throughout classical Chinese literature. “The exemplary person harmonizes with others, but does not necessarily agree with them (he er buting).” The small person agrees with others, but it 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 ultimately the same: sammens-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-diversity thus present very different models of social order and world order; one appeals to the benefits of coexisting unity and the other to the benefits of diversity. This is not simply a philosophy lesson; these two concepts of harmony continue to be invoked by China’s political leaders, 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. 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.” 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 大同書), written at the beginning of the 20th century, revived the ancient concept as a way of solving the problems of modern society. 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. 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). Shiyi doting (shiyi tong). World Bank Chief Economist Justin Yifu Lin has a calligraphic scroll of the Great Harmony on his wall in Washington D.C.; he recently explained that its ideals guide his plans for the global economy. In 2001 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 footnotes & p. 183).
What does Great Harmony mean here? Descriptions are generally vague; but Pan Wei’s detailed outline in Datongshu [The Book of Great Harmony] 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 a village society very 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 Darwinist social Darwinism (compare the stress the importance of social relations in global ordering). Kang’s goal of universal equality and global unity is laudable; but it has some costs. Rather than harmony-with-diversity, his Great Harmony world promotes an unambiguous 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 “yellow” 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 nuxious 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-analhilation.

Uniquely unique China

In many ways, the netizens’ harsh comments about Lou Jing echo Kang’s utopian plans. In a similar vein, Liu Mingyu’s The China Dream sees international politics as a battle between the “yellow race” and the “white.” 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 argues that the PRC’s search for unity does not mean that global diversity is “racial harmony” (compare the stress the importance of social relations in global ordering). The real problem in the PRC is a lack of critical interest in China’s own history of racism and discrimination.

Chinese exceptionalism is not just a synonym for “foreign” 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.” 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-turn-writer 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 is why the Magayagai Award, named for his wife, was awarded to world peace. To many, it 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 1,000 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 as 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 others. Beijing’s policy is basically to “civilize” the former “barbarians” by modernizing non-Han groups and relations so the South can dominate the world in a way that reproduces the logic of power as hierarchical dominance. Beijing’s search for unity thus is epistemological as well as political.

To many Chi was an odd choice; this former under-secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, 2010. Photo: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

Notes


3 For a sample of internet comments see Fauna, Shanghai ‘Black Girl’ Lou Jing Abused by Racist Netizens, ChinaSMACK, 1 September 2009. (http://chinasmack.com/2009/09/)


9 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.


11 China’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

12 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

13 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

14 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

15 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

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37 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

38 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

39 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

40 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.

41 Beijing’s Peaceful Development; Beijing: Xinhua, 6 September, 2011.
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. Others have pointed to the absence of conditionality (democracy, human rights, good governance, etc.) in the Chinese approach towards Africa. 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.”

Mamoudou Gazoib and Olivier Mbabia
its quest for great power status in the international system, China will need “Africa’s political and moral support.” Thus, the Chinese leadership is looking for durable alliances and intensified South-South cooperation as it wishes to position itself, 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 the diplomatic symbolism of choosing Africa as the destination for their official foreign visits at the beginning of each of Beijing’s terms seems 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 new global order through equity 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 aims to build a sincere friendship, ensure mutual advantages on a equal footing, cooperate in solidarity and work towards a shared development, look very attractive to African countries, long trapped in a subversive relationship with the Western powers.

Conclusion
After the Sino-African summit in Beijing in November 2006, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, declared “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; success 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. Instead, our interest is to see China’s presence in Africa is real it and plays a role in the way in which African countries now evaluate their relations with their other partners. 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.

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Notes
13. Interview with Air Force Officers from Cameroun and Gabon who participated in this training, on board an Ethiopian plane flying the Addis Ababa–Libreville-Douala route, 18 July 2008.
21. B. Vermander. 2007. ‘Chine brune ou Chine verte?’, Les défisennes de l’Ost-Rti, Paris: Sciences Po, p. 120.
25. J. C. Ramo The Beijing Consensus, op. cit.
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.”20

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.14

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.15 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.16 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 meet the concerns of the developing countries. All African countries have rallied around a proposal, supported by Beijing, that asks for two permanent seats with veto rights for African countries and it seems more willing than other overseas 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 Third World. Instead, we will focus on China’s presence in Africa and its role in the way in which the African countries evaluate their relations with their other partners.17 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.21

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13. Interview with Air Force Officers from Cameroun and Gabon who participated in this training, on board an Ethiopian plane flying the Addis Ababa–Libreville-Douala route, 18 July 2008.
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.

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 on 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 1973 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

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.”1 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 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 Uharu 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.”2 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.

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Resolution 1973 3 months later, which authorized “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians. Despite achieving their goal of 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 billion in 1990, $100 billion in 1990, $1 trillion in 1990, over $1 trillion 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”. 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, which has instead offered the African Union a $200 million new headquarters 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 envisages 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”.6

Providing aid without strings attached
As most African countries are small, weak, and underdeveloped, 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 consulta- tion 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 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 assistance towards Africa includes grants, interest-free loans, concessional low-interest loans, cancel- lation 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.7

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 dealing with sovereign states 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-record 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, never-\ntheless, China maintains that external pressures are simply counter-productive.

China reaffirmed its firm support for Africa, but it gradual- ly shifted the base of its African policy away from supporting their national liberation and opposing hegemony, to de-\nveloping mutually beneficial economic and technological cooperation.

Lack of transparency is another stick the West often uses to criticize developing countries, including China. But trans-parency 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, whereas implementation 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 blamed by an unscrupulous 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 decentral- ization, 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 of the Chinese party-state system 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 Chinese government. Like any business, they are all profit driven, whether state-owned or private. Each investor has its 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 China in Africa.

In addition to these newly emerged problems, some traditional issues remain, such as the matter of Taiwan, an unalienated part of China, which is still recognized by a small group of African countries as the legitimate Chinese government, but it is not spared from the sufferance of this disease, still in the early stages, and taking place in broad daylight.

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 unsurprisingly 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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Notes

2 Tian (ed.). China’s Foreign Policy after Reform and Opening up to the Outords World, pp.131-132, in Han & Mouhong (eds.), p. 362.


4 www.thecitietimes.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/en/
colonialism is a sort of Anglicization of Chinese foreign policy. Specifically opines that Anglicization is an intrinsic component of China’s Africa policy, another trajectory. If China’s new colonialism, so to speak, is the views and values arising out of a non-Christian historical terms of resources, market, and labor.8 On the other hand, China’s African policy is characterized by classic realism, in that China does what most other major allies. On the one hand, China’s African policy is characterized by classic realism, in that China does what most other major allies. On the one hand, China’s African policy is characterized by classic realism, in that China does what most other major allies.

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 substitu-

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 new colonialism mimics the old one. 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. 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 is the fact that Chinese foreign policy 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.9 Chinese enthusiasm with their opportunities in Africa is met with suspicion, if not antagonism, in some parts of the world.11 The debate over the nature of the seeming Sinicization of Africa 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.9

Sinicization and realism Foreign and Chinese observers regard 2006 as the benchmark-mark of China’s return to Africa, as China dubbed 2006 as the “Year of Africa.” The fast-growing Chinese investment, trade, immigration, and aid witnessed in Africa testify to the expan-

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.13 despite the fact that racism leads neither to policy discrimina-

divided. Hence, there is the call for sophisticated analyses.12

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 underlying 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. This argument is not 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 suppres-

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.13 despite the fact that racism leads neither to policy discrimina-

divided. Hence, there is the call for sophisticated analyses.12

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 underlying 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. This argument is not 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 suppres-

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.”10 Thus, China is being criticized for practicing a new form of colonialism, presumably to replace the old European colonialism.
intervention reassures African nations of China’s continued support to the former’s autonomy, and prepares a platform that could avert the risk of war. However, in China’s case, the local government could give in without giving recognition to the norms proclaimed by the global forces, and thereby the process would be the same. In ways, China has painstakingly applied harmonious intervention in North Korea, Myanmar, and former Sudan. China, in former Sudan, for instance, took a different approach. In the case of former Sudan 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 the Sudan mission were accordingly tailored 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 and other intervention forces because, according to an official source, the wording of the resolution indicating the possibility of abuse did not warrant China’s support, but the Arab League’s wish for UN intervention had China’s respect. China’s non-intervention philosophy carried it to the point of yielding the rights to Iraq, for which they are suspected by critics to dominate China’s African policy.

In effect, Sincnication that brings enhanced relationships between China and African nations, in particular, demonstrates a style of realism unheard of in Western international relations textbook. China is ready to pay for the preservation of autonomy of an African nation without an outsider’s intervention 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 African nations. China did not oppose the resolution at the price on an anti-Balay Olympic campaign that labeled the Olympics “the genocide games.” Furthermore, China has characterized 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 dictated by the 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 pretentiously 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 quite 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

China’s soft power 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 not congruent with Chinese writers.” In practice, nevertheless, Chinese soft power contrarily lies in the intellectual capacity to appreciate diversity in harmony. This concept has earned the appreciation and the support to Western Chinese scholars who noted Chinese tolerance for cognitive dissonance, as well as the mystery of Chinese civilizations pretending to be nation states.” In other words, whereas the concept 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 adversaries elsewhere in the world, the conscious provision of aid and privileges to African states likely characteristics China’s African policy into a much longer and steadily future. On average, the impact of Chinese investment in Africa and China, Africa 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-racism, and anti-Western Values, and so on. For almost half a century, Africa has been feeling China’s foreign policy morale in coping with the West in general, and the United States in particular. “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 race 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, or even coalesce with each other will have to be the choice of actual people at all levels.

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Notes

Note on notes: All web addresses accessed on 5 May 2012


4. Anabela A. Lemos and Daniel Ribiero, “Taking Ownership or Just Changing Owners?” in Manji and Marks, pp. 64, 69.


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.

Sovereignty

Since that time, the Chinese government has shown an impressive degree of support. For all its promises, 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 promise 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 contributes more than 20 per cent of 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 reconceiving itself to the very institutions that regularly intrude on those same privileges. It is pressing for a larger state 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 international pressure by lobbying Khartoum to accept a hybrid African Union/UN peacekeeping force.

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 cohesive states. As the historian John Lonsdale noted many years ago, “the most distinctive African contribution to human history could be said to have been precisely that; the capacity to sustain, for at least 10 years, an infanticidal polity, a stateless polity, a state to which no one gave a name.”

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 manage the rules that more often than not are not always beyond question, this comes as a breath of fresh air.

Partitioning Africa

Partitioning Africa, a centrally publicised debit 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, 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 is 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 multi-lateral 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. The key point is that 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 inaccessible to a newcomer, and can be used in the Chinese interest, then Beijing’s pragmatists will consider it potentially useful.

China does not appear to have the same way as others do. Above all, China does not carry the moral baggage that underpins so much Western intervention in Africa. 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 outside from the structures of the OECD, consensus, China was able both to gain access to some attractive commercial opportunities on advantageous terms – notably in the oil fields from Angola and Sudan – but was also making a point about the nature of its place in the world.

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 for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but China has declined to join this committee and is therefore not bound by its norms. The Chinese government also offers 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 relational one and its experience in the field of business is far from impressive as far as 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 the Communist revolution in 1949, when the Beijing government took quite a close interest in Africa during its age of decolonisation. Eclipseed 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, tied of receiving lectures from Western leaders on how to run their national territories, poses problems for modern business. The Chinese government was deeply shocked by the collapse in 2011 of its Libyan ally, Colonel Gadaffi , and the consequent inaction of states that as yet included only a few members from outside the African continent. However, it is clear that 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 inaccessible 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 redrawing the contours of the world stage. Whether one is the more visible than in Africa, which has such a marked tendency to seek external actors in its to its domestic affairs. However, it is clear that 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 inaccessible 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.

Stephen Ellis

The Focus: Africa and the Chinese way

Stephen Ellis is the Desmond Tutu professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the VU University Amsterdam and a senior researcher at the Africa Studies Centre in Leiden. In 2003-2004 he was a member of the Africa programme of the International Crisis Group. His research interests are in contemporary history, especially in West Africa and South Africa. His most recent book is "Season of Rain: Africa in the World" (Hurst & Co., 2011).

Notes


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

Eka Srimulyani

— (…)we are challenged to consider what the contribution of women to Islamic education.

Susan Blackburn, Mphon 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 Hofner, Boston University

— (…)the first book to provide a view of the life world of women in the East Juavene peasantry. (…)helps us understand why Muslim feminism has found much broader grassroots support in Indonesia than in most other countries.

Martin van Bruinessen, Vrije 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 and 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

— 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.

New ICAS and IIAS publications

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

— 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 “terror” 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 the 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.

— This is an immensely compelling, informative and skillfully 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

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 student activists 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 context 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.
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.

Reviewed publication:
Mehdi Parvizi Amineh & Yang Guang (eds.). 2010
The Globalization of Energy: China and the European Union
International Comparative Social Studies Vol. 21

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 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...
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.

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.

Kawano, Satsuki. 2010
Individual choice but not individualism: new mortuary rites in Japan
Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press

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)

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 has its 11,000 members in organizing their own ash-scattering rituals. Kawano’s excellent book not only provides a rich ethnographic basis for the 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 evacuation 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 a smaller 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 practices. Kawano’s volume deviates from the conven-

The two parts of the volume weave together a story of energy and environmental change in Japan. By this point she means that the new practice of disposing and their identity memorialized after their death. The next chapter, titled “Historical Perspectives”, moves 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 that has taken place in 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 the more studied commercial enterprises.

The next chapter is about the scattering ceremonies themselves. It takes readers through the various preparations for the rites (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 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 a new alternative to traditional practices around the world, it will appeal to a wider readership.

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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 Nowsorthy


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 reexamination, 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 missionaries to the period of decolonization, the oral histories of the Agent Orange survivors, and recent discourse over the privatization of water (về 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 on 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. “If one adapts Smart’s framework for the study of religion the essays within the first part of the volume, Proclamation and Encounter (to 1622), 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 at the same time.” (72) However, as Wilcox writes “The Raw in lumping personalities as diverse as Trương Vĩnh Ký, Phan Thánh Gián, Nguyễn Trung Trực, and Đặng Đức Túin 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 Smith, “the categories that bind our examining.” (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 Maiorca Texts, which demonstrate localizations such as “the last rice” (com cuối), 34, rather than “super,” 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 Kukk 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 Despiau, who parted with his compatriots Chagneau and Vanier 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 vaccine. 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 (đóng góp) 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 scholar- ship: a way towards rethinking binary constructions of reality, input for reimagining 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 Lessard’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-Leninist 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 Kukk 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 Kukk’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.”

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Notes
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). 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:


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 belonging 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 frangy 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 analysed throughout the various chapters of this 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 book 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 picks a winner from the various chapters of the story 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 generalise 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. Each of them add to our understanding of China’s future. Inequality and Growth in Modern China would both be a good way to start.

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Notes
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 vivid detail, these problems (and many others) are presented in a comprehensive and compelling fashion. How, for example, can India have a fully realistic 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.

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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: Christiana Schwenkel. 2009
The American War in Contemporary Vietnam:
Transnational Remembrance and Representation
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press

Words have been 'appropriated' – like that very word – and given meanings that are now – 'mapping' and 'terrain' 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 even that of a catalyser.

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 unwravering 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 veterans, hitherto spurned, have gained employment and infused with capitalist values. [p. 81] Incidentally, ARVN terrain of memory making becomes increasingly transnational – but its recombination as a strategy to delimit and control mass death is, as the author says, not new, but it has increased. 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, Nighthawks, 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 memoria
tional 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, unlike not ‘market socialism’. ‘The merging of capitalist and non-capitalist economic logics and knowledge practices demonstrate[s] not a definitive “death” of socialism – a claim denied by many in Vietnam – but its reincarnation 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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Ask for your personal sample copy.
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 descendents 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 Institute 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

Robert Bickers, director of the Visualising China Project, and professor of History at the University of Bristol.
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 these 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), 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 a broad network of research, 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.

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 surfaced 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 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 Orakzakova at the Central Asian Foundation for Developing Democracy, Almaty; Dr Gulnara Altpaeva and Ms. Almira Turgangazieva at Aigine Cultural-Research Centre, Bishkek; and Prof. Jigjidyn 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.

The research is based on field interviews, open and published sources, media sources kept in national archives, memories, literature, and literature 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 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.

Email: SSEASRphilippines@yahoo.com
Show of interest: 24 November 2012
Early registration deadline: 15 January 2013
Abstract deadline: 24 February 2013
Orientalism revisited: cultural knowledge production on Asia across orders and borders

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 of 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, 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.

Mariëlle 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 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 discourses 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.
Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE of The Newsletter we briefly reported 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 and logistics will be posted on the Events page on the IAS website.

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.

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.

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

Fees
Conference fee: €40 for non-Indonesian, and €20,000 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 Morris, University of Amsterdam; Prof. Willem van Schendel, University of Amsterdam; Dr. Erik de Maaker, Leiden University

More information: www.asianborderlands.net

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

Workshop 29-30 June 2012, Leiden, the Netherlands

Convener: 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 articulated, 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

Convener: Prof. Ronki Ram, holder of the India Studies Chair/Indian Institute for Cultural Relations (IIKR), Leiden Institute for Asia Studies & IAS.

www.iias.nl/events
Ancient epic goes digital
Cholponai Usbablyeva-Gryschuk

SNOWCAPPED MOUNTAINS looming magnificently above the clouds, a herd of sheep grazing lazily on the slopes, shepherd dogs eying the herd and warming up their bones, the heart of the Alxa-Ascha 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 Usbablyeva-Gryschuk is a researcher at the Aigine Cultural Research Center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (cholponai@gmail.com).

Above: Name of Manaschy: Kamal Mamadaliev.
Below: Name of Manaschy: Zambek Bayalinov.

Notes
1 Mansas epic is twenty times longer than the Homer’s Iliad (15693) and Odyssey (12134) put together and a half times longer than the Indian Mahabharata epic.
2 Sagymbai Orozbakov (1867-1930) and Sayakbai Karalaev (1894-1971).
30 minutes. All video sessions were recorded in the lap of nature, on the shore of the crystal-clear Lake suyk-Kol, amidst pine trees of the Alxa-Ascha 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.

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

The 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 Pannapath 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 multitude of thematic, comparative and episodic approaches to studies of thematic, comparative and episodic approaches to studies of culture and history through cuisine in Southeast Asia. Together, the papers dealt with processes of localization, 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 the 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.

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

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 quality 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 success, 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 (jayat@iseas.edu.sg).
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 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 India Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and the Archaeological Survey of India. 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 these interactions and the 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, Reflecting on Cross-Cultural Exchange, edited by Pierre-Yves Maunier, 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 historical background. The IIC-Asia Project, in its inaugural year, was described by its former director, Dr. Shereen Ahmed (Singapore, ISEAS, 2011). The first day also saw the release of the book Asia, Trade and Identity, published by the IIC-Asia Project and the ISEAS (Singapore, 2011). The second day's panels were held in the department of History, University of Delhi. This session also saw the release of the book The Languages of Contact – Literature, Diplomacy and Culture in South and Southeast Asia, 1500-1800, edited by Shereen Ahmed and A. Mani (Singapore, ISEAS, 2011).

The discussion of representations of Asian art in an Asian Museum 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, Irène J. Welter and Sherene 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 panels 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).

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-Dilliman Archaeological Studies Program (UP-ASP) from 2009 to 2011. Located in Barangay, Pinagbayan, 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 Pinagbayan, 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 Pinagbayan once had a church and a municipal hall as its two major 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 was 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 revealed 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 southeastern portion. Direct west of this keystone, a bed of floor tiles, locally known as baldosa, 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 south-west 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 walls, 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 southeastern 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 northeastern 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 Pinagbayan, 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 Pinagbayan. The Batangas excavations are spearheaded by Dr. Grace Barretto-Teso, the current Deputy Director of the Archaeological Studies Program at the University of the Philippines-Dilliman.

Kathleen Tantuico is a graduate student at the University of the Philippines-Dilliman Archaeological Studies Program (kltantuico@yahoo.com).
CAMBODIAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS recently uncovered Southeast Asia’s largest kiln site to date at Torp Chey. Located on one of the major ancient Khmer 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.

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 revealed 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 Pairaw Thammasaneepreechakul, other excavations in Cambodia, such as those at Tani, Anirling 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 3.8 to 3.6 meters in width and 6 to 8 meters in length. The Bunrung 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 even a 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.

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. 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 Yuan 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 glazed (a coating of silica that can be used to smoothen and decorate the surface of pottery). While researchers are looking 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.

For matters related to editorial contributions to this section as well as requests to be included in events listings, please write to Lu Caixia, regional editor for the Newsletter at iias_iseas@iseas.edu.sg.

The Newsletter | No.60 | Summer 2012
Macao: The East-West Crossroads
24-27 June 2013

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the premier international gathering in the field of Asian Studies. It attracts participants from over 60 countries to engage in global dialogues on Asia that transcend boundaries between academic disciplines and geographic areas.

The more than four century long interaction between Western and Chinese traditions in Macao, the first and last European colony in China, has left the city with a unique blend of cultural diversity, modernity, and cosmopolitanism.

Join us at this world heritage site for ICAS 8, which is hosted by the University of Macau. Venue: The Venetian Hotel

Call for Panels and Papers:
Deadline 15 July 2012

For more information:
www.icassecretariat.org

ICAS Book Prize 2013

Established in 2004, the ICAS Book Prize competition aims to create an international focus for publications on Asia and to increase the visibility for Asia Studies worldwide.

All scientific books pertaining to Asia, published between October 2010 and October 2012, are eligible.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS
15 October 2012

In all, five prizes are awarded:

Best Study in Social Sciences
Best Study in Humanities
Best Dissertation in Social Sciences
Best Dissertation in Humanities
Colleagues’ Choice Award

The awards will be presented during ICAS 8 in Macao, 24-27 June 2013

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.icassecretariat.org
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 in terms of its 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 authors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, IAS 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.

Chinese Urban Studies

Projects and Networks

The Chinese Urban Studies project is 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 architecture and its role in urban development.

Translating (Japanese) Contemporary Art

Takako Kondo focuses on (re)presentation of art in contemporary Japan in art critical and theoretical discourses from the late 1980s in the realm of English and Japanese languages, including artists’ own critical writing. Her research is a subject of (cultural) translation rather than art historical study and she intends to explore the possibility of multiple and subversive readings 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 IAS in 1997. Partners are the India Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, India, and the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The database is freely available at www.abia.net. Extracts from the database are published annually and have been published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

Coordinator:
Ellen Raven
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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 of increasing globalisation, a challenge to 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-homogeneous intellectual interaction in the form of South-South and East-West dialogue models. By multi-polarising 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.

Coordinator:
Mohd. Najib Aminah
(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 has an exploratory 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’ experience. 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 well as the receiving countries, and Vietnam and the PRC as the sending countries.

Coordinator:
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IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance focuses on the role of institutional analysis 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 Extra-governamental Conflict; Social Costs, Externalities and Innovation; Regulation Governance in Urban Areas, and Governance in Areas of Contested Territoriality and Sovereignty.

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Jatropa Research and Knowledge Network (JARAK)

JARAK has become partner in a new international project on Jatropha Research and Knowledge network on claims and facts concerning socially responsible biofuel production in Indonesia. Jatropha is a 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.

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THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European-originated concept to a specific regional architectural and memorial 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 the different 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 having to do with 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.

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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.

IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD, two great kingdoms, the Ptolemaic Egypt (323 B.C. - 30 B.C.) and Seleucids (321 B.C. - 164 B.C.), were built by Greek-Macedonians in North Africa and West Asia respectively, while 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 Asia Minor 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 the 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. By the 320s B.C., the Ptolemaic kingdom of Alexander’s younger brother, Ptolemy I (280 B.C. - 246 B.C.) had conquered the Seleucid kingdom of Seleucus I (280 B.C. - 246 B.C.) through struggles and warfare. Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucids were the two main participants. Then, six Syrian Wars took place between them, dating 247 B.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 relations as a fair-sounding music allegorically.

Finally, I will find out the changes of the policies, 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 neighboring countries. I believe that the relations laid foundation for the formation of a cultural circle of West Asia and North Africa, and forestalled 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 two-year 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. Olf Kaper and other experts at NINO of Leiden University.

IIAS Fellows

Ronki Ram
The resurfacing of Dalit cultural heritage in contemporary India

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, migration 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 European-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
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 Aguilara

HANS LOODJEN, 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 the 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 Loodjen says about the exhibition: “This exhibition revolves around the art of people who have generally not been trained as artists. To suffer 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 who dismiss the term and artists who accept it as their guide through the museum.

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 strong 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 do so by checking prejudices and taboos through its permanent and forthcoming exhibitions.

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

Het Dolhuys
The Dolhuys 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 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 expose 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 house-hold name in Haarlem, and is widely recognised as an educational institution of the highest quality. The Dolhuys is open 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

Below: Backs of Figures. 2001-06. Otahuhu, 54x36x100mm. India ink, Drawing Paper. This yellow version of the drawing has been adapted by designer Keis. Permanent for commercial purposes – the original is black on white.


Visit the website at www.hetdolhuys.nl