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Asian Cultures in the Context of Globalization

I-Chun Wang and Li Guo

More than fifty years ago Marshall McLuhan coined the term “the global village”, associating globalized human experiences in an electronic age (4). Although transnational relations existed for many centuries, McLuhan predicted in the 1960s that new technologies not only facilitated the growth of international interconnectedness, cross-border exchanges as well as trans-cultural phenomenon but also helped foster cultural transactions. Referring to the dramatic and unprecedented break between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, Arjun Appadurai indicates that media and migration have been two major forces impelling the circulation of world cultures (3). In the phenomenon of globalization, people from every part of the world tend to embrace the concepts of democracy, feminism, human rights and technical assistance but the globalization did not go smooth in all aspects of life. Globalization that was originally characterized as a power to diminish the gap between the developed and developing words encounters various forms of anti-globalization. The backlashes of globalization of the shrinking world include urbanization, delocalization, commercial piracy, crimes, problems of energy, multinational capitalism, and possible circulation of contagious diseases. Globalization is not a new term. As Jameson says, globalization has become a philosophical issue because through cultural adaption, integration

and transformation, globalization has triggered the development of mass culture and restructured the production of cultures in most parts of the world in various ways (54-60).

The transformation of Asian cultures in the context of globalization have drawn much attention especially after China began opening her door to the world and South-eastern countries joined China, becoming world factories and opening tourist sites. For most Asians, globalization suggests Americanization and cultural colonization by western way of life. Global markets witness the success of consumer products, such as Coca-Cola, Hollywood films and fast food restaurants, but more and more products are standardized, for example, computers, cell phones, the autos and even agricultural products. The spread of English that may help develop international trades suggests the loss of mother tongues, the change of language habits and the renovation in education. Although some positive western values are accepted by Asians in the process of global trends, globalization is considered as a new imperialism reinforced by capitalism which not only gravitates economical and political inequalities but also intensifies competition among transnational corporations, increasing social problems (McLaren 135-8). Appadurai reminds that globalization marks new crisis for the sovereignty of nation-states and ethnic identity (4). Recent researches on Asian cultures tend to touch on national identity as related to the trend of globalization; Asia, as a part of the old civilization, encounters a new set of challenges embedded in media and technology. Viniti Vaish thus asks, "Are you for or against Globalization?" in her introduction to

globalization in Asia, when she examines English as a global language in East Asia (8). World history witnesses the circulation of commodities or objects of economic value that help construct social lives. In the modern era, capitalism even reshapes political units, and destabilizes the older paradigms of formation of identities. As globalization trend is still revolving, most cross-cultural researchers found that the original resistances to globalization in Asian countries help awaken people to their own local/national culture and therefore result in layers of intra-national diversity and hybridized world cultures.

Besides the adaptation of western cultures, more and more Asian cultural elements are found in the western world. Some western composers and directors tend to infuse Asian elements in their music compositions, dramatic and film productions. In recent twenty years, Internationalized Asian cultures include Korean wave or Hanryu phenomenon exemplified in dramas and popular songs, Japanese popular culture such as manga and animation, as well as the fashion of learning Mandarin in major western schools and universities. Globalization of cultures suggests multilayered empirical experiences and emerging aesthetic and cultural consciousness. In order to redefine Asian cultures in the context of globalization, the purpose of this special issue is to examine the most current phenomenon of globalization in Asia, investigate the relationship between locality and regional identity, and to

Look into cross-cultural issues. This special issue on Asian cultures tries to cover the myriad of conflicting and contingent meanings and experiences but also various forms of

collective practices and problems as found in the age of transnationalism. The papers of this issue include case studies, theoretical works, and articles that extend to education, feminism, cultural production, literary adaptation, urban environment and comparative cultures. The regions and countries that are covered include India, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Indonesia, China, Cambodia and Taiwan.

Urban space in the age of globalization is an important issue. Ian Morley's paper "Asian Culture and Urbanism" engages with urban cultures in Asia. As Morley points out, the physical pattern of cities reveals not only their history, but illustrates economic, political, cultural, and artistic matters within the space of the cities. By examining urban environments, the paper is a general survey of architecture and buildings that exemplify historical and cultural and economic significance in major Asian cities. When Morley focuses on urban environment as related to construction of buildings, Devjani Ray discusses crime in Early Twentieth-century Calcutta and how it is represented in Byomkesh Bakshi mysteries. Ray's paper starts with the presence of the colonial authority that planted British sovereignty in India, and traces the city's crime history can be traced to the relationship between the British lawmakers and the privileged classes of the Bengali society, revealing at the end of the paper that in Byomkesh Bakshi, many people struggled to sustain themselves in the shabby alleys of the metropolitan jungle.

Among the most frequently discussed issues regarding globalization is the renovation of

education system. Two papers that explore the impact of education and multiculturalism include Simon Estok's "Re-defining South Korean Scholarship and Education within the Context of Globalization", Walter Lim's "Singaporean Multiculturalism in the Age of Globalization". Lim indicates that Singaporean multiculturalism historically aims at ensuring social and political stability. Within the past thirty years, the Singapore government has taken very seriously the management of race relations in the building of social harmony but the strategies get complicated by "local"/"foreigner" tensions that have developed in response to immigrants and foreign talent deciding to make Singapore their "home." Globalization involves migration and the process of homing, but for most of the times, migration results in diaspora. In her essay, "Singaporean Abroad": Narrating Transnational Lives, State Nationalism, and the Production of Diaspora," Cheryl Narumi Naruse argues that the Singapore government attempted to foster more positive relations with overseas Singaporeans. Diasporic phenomenon has been a significant trend in global studies, but Fu-Jen Chen finds, with the expansion of the global economy, and trans-national/-racial adoption practices, more and more paternal voices are represented in adoption discourses. As it is revealed in Chen's essay, a great majority of birth fathers suffer from emotional wounds and are inclined to seek contact and even develop subsequent relationships with his child. In the article

"Protestant Missionaries' Translation of Western Learning in China's National Salvation in 1894-1911," the author Mingyu Lu traces back to late 19th century and early twentieth

century when Protestant missionaries such as Young J. Allen and D.Z. Sheffield helped influence Chinese intellectuals, constructing new learning and new culture through translated works.

The transformation of music and visual arts attracts a lot of attention of the authors of this special issue. Vebhuti Duggal represents during the period of the techno-sonic, industrial and cultural economy, the economy of music emerged as the remix of music forms in the 1980s, 90s and the first decade of the 2000s. It is how this economy of music transforms itself as one aspect of dynamics of globalization in India. Koay Kheng and Mikel Ledee highlight the mixture of Asian tradition and western forms in Tony Prabowo's *Pasar Loak* (Flea Market) for soprano and percussions, and Chinary Ung's *Grand Alap* (A Window in the Sky). In their essay entitled "The Crossed Boundaries in Musical Culture between Asian and Western World," Kheng and Ledee examine how the Indonesian composer Tony Prabowo, and Chinary Ung, a Cambodian-born American composer, adopt modernist techniques from Western art music and traditional Asian music cultures in their compositions. Mei-wen Lee and Timothy Urban employ *Moonlight Sorrow* as an example of hybridization in music. According to the essay entitled "*Moonlight Sorrow* Reflection," *Moonlight Sorrow* was originally a single melody that can be possibly traced back to a folk melody of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan. As a common consequence of imperialist mission, the melody was used as a vehicle for Christian missionaries to communicate with native Taiwanese. The melody

then went through Japanese period globalization as a means of propaganda and reemerged again as a piece for orchestra. Wang's focus is the representation of spectacles through intermediality in Zhang Yi-mou's Impression series, *Wayang* in Bali and Minghua Yuan's transformation in the context of Taiwanese theatrical troupe in the trend of globalization and tourism. Wang finds that globalized city tends to become a site for performances and rites because cities are situated in the context of cultural formation. The use of spectacles that may have deterritorialized some essential parts of traditional local cultures tends to promote cultural experience through technology- assisted intermediality,

Indigenous culture in the era of globalization is the focus of Hsinya Huang and Sheng-mei Ma. Huang's article explores environmental damage as brought up by three indigenous authors across the Pacific: Margo Tamez (Lipan Apache), Liglav Awu (Austronesian/ Paiwan), and Rimui Aki (Austronesian/ Atayal). Her study, by looking into their narratives, discusses cultural anxiety about the geopolitical rise of China and the environmental crises. Sheng-mei Ma finds Asian indigenous filmmakers Byambasuren Davaa, Zacharias Kunuk, Khyentse Norbu prefer to tell their own stories. Despite different perspectives and modes of representation, the films discussed by Ma agree on the task of myth-making, self-forging out of nothing, and the desolate lands that local people emotionally attach to. Munib Rezaie's article emphasizes Dayyan Eng and *Omninational* Filmmaking. By tracing changing definitions and views towards film as entertainment in the

PRC and recent changes in regulation and policy in the Chinese film industry, Rezaie investigates Eng's films by juxtaposing PRC productions that both pass government censorship and receive nationwide distribution.

Ethnic intermarriage is one of the most significant phenomena in the age of globalization. Kaori Mori Want approaches globalized culture from the perspective of suggests intermarriage is an indicator of racial/ ethnic tolerance as well as coexistence, and therefore an indicator of the maturity of multiculturalism. Want's discussion focuses on the increase of foreigners and intermarriages in Japan results in hyphenated names that reflect multicultural heritage. As for Robert Brown, adaptation of literary patterns or themes is an aspect manifesting cultural exchange. By examining Carlos Bulosan, Brown discusses appropriation of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in's *The Cry and the Dedication*.

Globalization of Chinese culture is one of the most issues in recent years. Ming-dong Gu discusses sinologism that eventually brought China into the global system. In his essay, Gu not only analyzes theoretical formation of sinologism, its rationale and logic but also attempts to identify its Orientalist, Eurocentric, and ethnocentric ideas, views, beliefs, and practices so as to bring to light the development of sinologism in the western world.

Colonization, globalization, and the remapping of diaspora, as intersecting theoretical planes, lead author Juyoung Jin to consider Chinese and Korea diaspora literature as possible mediums for creating transnational territories in the text. Jin, in her comparative study of

Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *China Men* and Kim Young-Ha's novel *Black Flower*, proposes that both authors portray Asian indentured workers in the Pacific Rim who prevail over traumatic cultural loss and displacement by claiming a new cultural tradition in their exiled land and by making it their home and territory. Jin executes an in-depth analysis of these narratives, beginning with a theoretical discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. She proposes that both novels, by applying postmodern narrative techniques, shatter the silence of the diasporic, ex-centric subjects, endorse their values and heritages, and facilitate their return from a marginal social status to the center. The globalization process, as Jin demonstrates, exposes the obsolescence of the notions of nationalism, "national boundary," and any place-bound sense of belonging. Rather, by rewriting actual history, diaspora literature can create a "transnational, non-place bound sense of belonging" for the indentured workers, which shares clear affinities with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of "deterritorialization."

The re-appraisal of globalization in the context of colonial histories necessarily engages discussion of gender. Li Guo and Anup Grewal in this issue both discuss 1930s progressive Chinese women's exploration of new gender and societal roles. Li Guo, by considering the conflictual image of the New Woman in Republican China's theatre, explores how women's images represented the shifting gendered viewpoints of the early reformists, the May Fourth male pioneers and, later, those of the female revolutionary writers and

performers. While the pre-revolutionist authors and actors of *Xinju* (New Plays) envisioned a progressive feminine subjectivity by reconfiguring Western female characters through translation, theatrical adaptation, and even male impersonation of Western women, such often male-centered gender constructions inexorably positioned the feminine as the colonized within the theatricality of Modern China's multiculturalism. Simultaneously, theatrical depictions of the New Woman by female writers such as Bai Wei, Yuan Changying, and Su Xuelin, portray republican women's valiant endeavors to carve out a wider space of individual and social performance by redrawing the discursive boundaries of gender, race, and class in the broad context of global feminist activism of the early twentieth century.

In analyzing progressive women's images of this same period, Anup Grewal focuses particularly on the Chinese proletarian modern girl within a transnational socialist imaginary. Positioning her study of the 1930s Chinese leftist cultural production in relation to a transnational socialist imaginary, Grewal aims to "theorize a historical moment of 'global' engagement based on simultaneity and affinity through political solidarity." This theoretical stance leads her to interrogate the images and representations of the modern proletariat woman, the specificity of this literary figure in its historical context, and its potential embodiment of a future-oriented socialist feminist in China's leftist literatures. Grewal's essay traces the possible structures underlying the transnational imagination of China's proletariat femininity by studying images of socialist women in the former Soviet Union in

the late 1920s and 1930s, the representation of proletariat women in Soviet aesthetic practices, and their cross-cultural currency beyond their partisan boundaries. Whereas the images of proletariat women inexorably create a blended one representation, Grewal points out that the production, circulation and dissemination of these images, and the meanings they generate, reach out toward different formations of imagined community in a globalized setting.

If globalization in the above authors' work is represented as a process of re-territorializing cultural identities in transnational settings, it perhaps also, as author Tie Xiao proposes in his study of Chinese *lianhuanhua* (interlinked pictures) by leftwing woodcut artists in the 1930s, re-localizes the artist's presence and identity, and responds to his aesthetic and political problems. Xiao's essay, rather than searching for the origin of China's popular visual art genre *lianhuanhua*, recontextualizes this popular art form by elucidating possible cross-cultural influences from the Japanese creative print (*sosaku-hanga*) movement, as well as from the "woodcut novels" by the Belgian graphic artist Frans Masereel. The former, Xiao suggests, might have provided Chinese leftist artists a vision of woodcut as a legitimate medium of self-expression distanced from the "reproductive" form of commercial art; the latter provided a model of pictorial narrative that linked the expressive possibilities of creative woodcut with individual political stance. Masereel was a European master of mass-oriented public art; indigenous leftist artists identified his woodcuts as intelligible and humanist artworks that expressed the true spirit of democracy. Xiao discusses

Chinese artist Wen Tao, who appropriated Masereel's works in his woodcut *lianhuanhua* by reformulating the Belgian artist's visual narratives and strategies to articulate a nascent aesthetic of collective unification and political awakening.

Similar subjects of globalization and appropriation are also prominent in the cinematic industry. Ling Zhang, in her essay on the 1930s leftist Chinese film *Crossroads* (十字街头), offers a vigorous analysis of the influence and impact of Hollywood cinema on early Chinese films. Chinese directors' appropriation and transformation of Hollywood filmic narratives on urban alienation and individual solitude in 1920s America, as prominently represented in Paul Fejos' *Lonesome* (1928), create a ravishing representation of the urban experiences of 1930s Shanghai, depicting the paradox of modernity as situated between systematic containment and explosive new energy, between uncontrolled chaos and newly emerging order and organization. Conscious borrowing from American films and from films of the former Soviet Union is manifested in Chinese filmmakers' theoretical ruminations and in their execution of specific techniques. These strategies of transcultural appropriation as manifested in the technically unrefined film *Crossroads* become all the more complicated in the context of Chinese cinema's transition from silent film to sound film, a movement in itself an emblem of the film industry's globalization process. In this case, appropriation is a form of locally resituating globality via the filmmaker's creative modification through political vision and interpretation.

Resonating with Zhang's discussion of Hollywood's influence in China and Grewal's analysis of the complicated image of the New Woman, Xiang Song offers an essay on the prestigious 1930s Chinese director Su Yun and his reworking of Hollywood muses in his films. By portraying a Chinese on-screen image of the Hollywood child woman, represented by stars such as Mary Pickford, whose child-like purity and energy imbued her character roles with a unique moral tone, Sun Yun transforms the child woman image into a vehicle for the criticism of China's increasing urban and rural divide, thereby delivering a social criticism of China's urban bourgeois of the time. Whereas the child woman image profoundly differs from that of the New Woman or the modern girl, it certainly raises new questions about the culturally hybrid nature of gendered identities in a global setting, and the film director's meaningful efforts to find ways of living with globalization tactically.

In comparison with the above authors whose works focus on the impact of globalization in Asia in the early twentieth century, Ping Zhu's essay on the issues of globalization and virtuality in Zhang Yimou's blockbuster film *Hero* evaluates the challenges and impact of globalization on Asian cinema in a contemporary context. Zhu argues that the director's application of virtual narrative and visual techniques aims to propose a new notion of world order, a virtual idea of *Tianxia* (all under heaven) rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy, at a delicate historical moment for China and for the world. Zhu proposes that the view of a tumultuous post-9/11 world and a relatively peaceful and rapidly developing China

gave Zhang Yimou enough confidence to promote the Chinese notion of *tianxia*, or “a new world philosophy for the new world institution” (Zhao, *The World Institution* 3). Nonetheless, Zhang’s virtual characters, filmic images, story line, and the virtual notion of “Tianxia” did not succeed in portraying the ideal of the virtual global, but rather was received as another film delivering the idea of the *Hero* as a national myth of China. The film director’s inability to transcend national boundaries to produce a *Tianxia* narrative perhaps reflects the symptomatic danger of homogenization in the course of globalization, and the ever-increasing disjunctions and differences generated in this process.

Cross-cultural education, as a crucial practice in globalization, is another topic that deserves critical attention. Mamiko Suzuki in this issue provides a thought-provoking study of Shimoda Utako (1854-1936), the founder of Japan’s Jissen Women’s Academy, former headmistress of the girls’ academy of the Peeress’ School, whose ground-breaking work with women’s education played an important role in the development of a modern pan-Asian female identity. Whereas Shimoda’s educational work with progressive Chinese women contributed to the development of a discourse of a pan-Asian feminism, her endeavors to expand women’s education in Japan and China through the popularization of domestic science and hygiene management also profoundly enhanced the educational opportunities for women in both countries. Suzuki suggests that Shimoda’s pioneering work and courageous intervention in the development of domestic science joined her students to a global domestic

scientific movement and endorsed a shared legacy of women's education for both countries.

For author *** ***, the process of globalization also serves as a context for writerly practices of scrutinizing the uncanny presence of the foreigner in another culture and overturning that sense of absolute alienation into a form of freedom. In an essay on the life and work of Kazuo Ishiguro, who is British in all but name, the author explores how Ishiguro utilizes the novel for the purpose of emotional manipulation. Ishiguro, with his first-person narratives of people stranded in alien worlds, constructs the novel as, in Edward Said's term, a "placeless place" with its catalogue of disaffected, dislocated, and oddly deformed objects. For Ishiguro, writing makes possible the merging of fragmented elements into a unified vision of the world. As the author points out, Ishiguro's pride in his outsideness in Japanese culture paradoxically empowers him with a force of self-chosen solitude, an ultimate and irreducible sense of singleness, a capacity of transforming the text as "an evental site" of resistance in the Alain Badiou sense of the term. This writerly stance is then further complicated by Ishiguro's strategic veiling and unveiling of authorial purposes in writing, an ostensible uncertainty beneath which is the desire to address the "morality" of fiction in its ability to probe into human experience and to represent that morality without imposing the author's judgment.

Similar thematic concerns about displacement, identity crisis, and the dire circumstances facing the postcolonial world are eloquently articulated in author *** ***'s

comparative study of V.S. Naipaul's "One out of Many" and Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*. In the essay, the author explores two third world protagonists' struggles against alienation and estrangement, which are caused by post World War I trauma in Naipaul's story, and display the indirect social impact of the first world after World War II in Ishiguro's novel. In Naipaul's story the protagonist's feeling of exasperating alienation in his own culture intensifies his feeling of fear for the cultural others. In comparison, Ishiguro's hero Ono overcomes his sense of displacement, caused by imperialist influences, by adapting to the changed circumstances with a fresh vision for the future. The essay, in all, brings forth the tendentious issue of postcolonial subjectivity located at historical junctures, and the urgent necessity of reconsidering ethical agency in the context of globalization.

The tension between political and cultural globalization vs. local or national resistance is well investigated in author ***'s essay on the first Chinese literary journal *Gujin* which emerged to prominence in occupied Shanghai after 1942. The editors utilized the journal to carve out a cultural space between resistance and collaboration, in which various perspectives on morality and nationalism were articulated through historical accounts. The journal's nostalgic tendency in using historical accounts, sometimes in overtly simplified form, reflect the editors' intention of redressing social morals in an indirect way, of setting up a pantheon of heroic images, and of reconfiguring essentialist nationalist discourses. Ultimately, the journal's curtailed life due to its political contentiousness exposes a profound

conflict between the editors' desire to reshape a Chinese identity against hegemonic cultural discourses, and the limited social tolerances for such endeavors to rewrite official narratives of China's history. The journal's short-lived trajectory illustrates a group of indigenous intellectuals' endeavors to re-localize a collective Chinese national identity in resistance against colonial rule.

Whereas cross-cultural encounter, in the above essay, is displayed manifested in the form of political conflict and resistance, it is negotiated, by contrast, as also a conceptual encounter between East and West in author Hui Zou's paper "A Qing Emperor's Comparative View of Labyrinth." By discussing the relationship between the Suzhou Lion Grove and the Qing Emperor Qianlong's Lion Grove and Western garden in the Yuanming Yuan, the essay offers a study of the conceptual encounter between the Western labyrinth and the Chinese labyrinth during the eighteenth century. Zou argues that, despite limited evidence, literary records and representations suggest that Emperor Qianlong's view of geometrical labyrinth and rockery labyrinth might have been configured by the cultural exchange between the Qing imperial court and the European Jesuits. The emperor's view of labyrinth demonstrates a poetics of change in the theatrical transformation of space and time, which built a common ground for the eighteenth-century cultural encounter and serves as a potent example of cultural globalization.

When global migration and the world economy are the main concern in cultural studies, micro-history that parallel the major trends of globalization helps synthesize theories and address large-scale historical processes. Modern cities manifest facts of contemporary life of people; in an era of globalization, people in most places share similar concerns and anxieties. In the trend of globalization, the foreign cultures are not so “foreign” because of media and common languages promoted in every institution. This special issue looks into the interconnections and interplay among cities and countries that sharpen various problems that we share. Although the global phenomenon is still an on-going process to be crystallized, through the representations of heterogeneities and homogeneousness found in Asian cultures, the papers collected in this issue is a departure point for better understanding Asian cultures and the world.

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