

ASIANetwork EXCHANGE

Vol. XIII, No. 1 Fall 2005

From the Editors—

Introducing the New Look of *ASIANetwork Exchange*

Tom Lutze and Irv Epstein, Co-Editors

As we begin our editorship of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, we think it important to introduce ourselves to members of ASIANetwork and to outline our goals and aspirations for the newsletter. We are respectively an Asian historian and a comparative educator who are deeply devoted to teaching about Asia in the undergraduate curriculum. For nine years here at Illinois Wesleyan University, our Asian Studies team has negotiated a number of challenges and taken advantage of many opportunities to help strengthen Asian Studies within a small, liberal arts environment. Our institutional involvement with ASIANetwork has been essential to the successes we have achieved. We thus seek to continue to learn from and share with our colleagues within the consortium, and view the editorship of the newsletter as a useful vehicle for broadly facilitating such exchanges among the membership.

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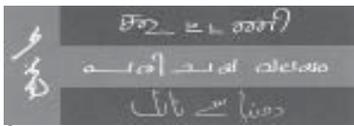
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One of our main goals as editors is to maintain the standards of professionalism, relevance, and literary clarity that were established by our predecessors. As a result of the initial leadership of Marianna McJimsey and her colleagues at Colorado College, and, for the past six years, the efforts of Marsha Smith and the editorial team at Augustana College, the *ASIANetwork Exchange* has developed and expanded both as a source of information about the consortium and as an important teaching tool as well. Over these years, the newsletter's growth has accompanied—and served—the remarkable growth of the ASIANetwork consortium itself, from an initial handful to over 160 members. The task of preserving the quality of the *Exchange*, while daunting, has been eased by the assistance Marsha and her staff has given us so as to make the transition seamless. We are deeply indebted to their efforts on our behalf.

The issues all of us confront as liberal arts teachers dedicated to the promotion of Asian Studies in the undergraduate curriculum have been made more significant in the twenty-first century as funding opportunities for new curricular initiatives remain limited, and as we struggle to articulate a vision that challenges dominant scholarly and research paradigms that reiterate the importance of enhancing disciplinary boundedness and specialization to the exclusion of interdisciplinarity, pedagogical, and curricular innovation. For most of us, the importance of sharing ideas is crucial because we work in environments where colleagues with similar interests are few and where administrative support for curricular innovation can be precarious, depending upon resource constraints. We need to continually talk with, support, and share information with one another, and as the consortium continues to expand numerically, the importance of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* can only increase in support of these needs. To this end, we want to share with you our hopes for maintaining and enhancing the *Exchange* as a dynamic newsletter that can best serve the interests of the ASIANetwork membership.

"We need to continually talk with, support, and share information with one another, and as the consortium continues to expand numerically, the importance of the ASIANetwork Exchange can only increase in support of these needs."

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ASIANetwork is a consortium of over one hundred sixty North American colleges that strives to strengthen the role of Asian Studies within the framework of liberal arts education to help prepare succeeding generations of undergraduates for a world in which Asian societies play prominent roles in an ever more interdependent world. The unique teaching mission of the undergraduate liberal arts institution poses special opportunities and challenges in the development of Asian Studies. ASIANetwork seeks to encourage the study of Asian countries and cultures on our campuses and to enable our students and faculty to experience these cultures first hand. In a time of fiscal constraints, ASIANetwork facilitates conversation among faculty and administrators concerning the development and strengthening of Asian studies programs, as well as ways to foster collaboration among institutions.



The *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE*, A Newsletter for Teaching About Asia, is published three times a year. As an important venue for communication among members, the newsletter includes information and articles in its sections Network News, Teaching about Asia, Media Resources, Research of Note, For Our Students, and

New and Noteworthy.

We welcome submissions of materials for any section of the newsletter. **Deadlines** for submission: **November 1** for the Winter issue, **February 1** for the Spring issue, and **July 1** for the Fall issue. The editors reserve the right to edit all materials submitted for publication.

Materials may be submitted electronically to <anexchange@iwu.edu>, or disks may be sent to Patra Noonan, *ASIANetwork EXCHANGE*, Illinois Wesleyan University, P. O. Box 2900, Bloomington, Illinois 61702-2900. For further information contact the editors at the above e-mail address or by telephone at (309) 556-3420.

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From the Executive Director

Teddy O. Amoloza

Headquarters Transition

As this newsletter goes to press, we are getting ready for the 135-mile drive across Illinois to Augustana College in Rock Island to pick up the numerous boxes of ASIANetwork materials that include current documents and archived materials. Such a trek seems to be part of the rites of transition for the ASIANetwork headquarters. In 1999, Van Symons, my predecessor, made a similar journey to Colorado College where ASIANetwork, under the able leadership of Marianna McJimsey, was headquartered since its founding in 1992. Since 1999, the consortium has grown by more than 50% and has run a number of programs; I therefore hope that the boxes of files will fit in the rental van. I have been working closely with Van Symons since last spring to ensure a smooth transition of the headquarters, and although my term as Executive Director started after the business meeting at last April's conference in Whittier, California, it does not quite feel yet that ASIANetwork is headquartered at Illinois Wesleyan University. I am sure that when those files get here, the reality will sink in. The transition is initially occurring in stages: Van got me involved in conversations about all ASIANetwork business that will carry over after the spring; in the summer, I kept a number of e-mail conversations going about our different initiatives and attended to a number of administrative matters including the publication of this newsletter; as soon as the files arrive, things will go into full swing as the fall semester begins. Thanks to Van's meticulous planning, Mary Doonan, our financial controller, will continue to manage ASIANetwork finances at Augustana until the end of our fiscal year on August 31. In September, bookkeeping will move to Illinois Wesleyan, completing the transition. Allow me then to introduce the new Headquarters of ASIANetwork and the team of people who will support the operation.

Illinois Wesleyan University is located in Bloomington in central Illinois. Bloomington and its twin city, Normal, have a combined population of more than

110,000 and are centers for insurance, manufacturing and higher education. The twin cities provide a wealth of experiences and opportunities in the community. The university is located on a 76-acre residential campus and is home to approximately 2,100 students. We have a 4-4-1 academic calendar (two 15-week semesters followed by a 3-week May Term) that allows for numerous opportunities for travel, research, and internships. Every year, more than 200 students go abroad either through one-semester or yearlong study abroad programs or May Term travel courses. IWU has 160 full-time faculty members teaching in the liberal arts and in four professional schools; it has a student-faculty ratio of 12:1. The faculty provides comprehensive liberal arts education in the best sense of that tradition and works with an administration that is highly supportive of international education. Because of this strong commitment, there was no hesitation in supporting me to bring ASIANetwork to this campus, and for that I am very grateful to the university administration. I am also thankful to my supportive cadre of colleagues who readily accepted my invitation to help me run the consortium.



The Illinois Wesleyan ASIANetwork Team

Ablly assisting me as I discharge my various administrative duties will be **Patra Noonan**, administrative assistant in the Division of Social Sciences. She has been at this university for 18 years, having worked at Purdue University for several years before then. She has assisted me in my numerous projects in my department (sociology), and gave me secretarial support throughout the seven years that I was director of the Freeman-funded Student Faculty Fellows program. Having established a solid working relationship with her, I did not think twice about asking her to be my administrative secretary when I accepted this position. Patra is a whiz at various computer software programs (e.g. word processing, spreadsheet, photo

editing, and desktop publishing) and an all-around trouble-shooter. She loves desktop publishing and has done the layout of two undergraduate journals in the past few years, *Res Publica* for our Political Science Department and *Constructing the Past* for our History Department. Given her publishing skills, the co-editors are fortunate that she has agreed to assist in the publishing of this newsletter.

The task of managing our finances falls on **Linda Tuttle**, CPA, assistant controller at Illinois Wesleyan. Linda joined the university in 2001 after spending six years as Chief Financial Officer at Marc Center, a local non-profit social service agency; prior to that she worked as a CPA at a public accounting firm. As assistant controller at IWU she supervises student accounts, is responsible for the operating funds of the university and helps prepare for the annual audit of the university. In September, she will inherit from Mary Doonan a well-organized financial management operation and will learn from her how to use the updated version of a computer software program designed to manage the finances of small nonprofit organizations like ASIANetwork. She will disburse our funds upon my instruction and will continue to provide monthly budget reports to the Executive Committee as well as prepare our accounting books for the annual financial review by an accounting firm. As I do not have any accounting training, I will rely heavily on Linda to help me maneuver the intricacies involved in managing the monetary transactions. (Oversight of our fund invested with Vanguard remains on the hands of the Board of Directors.)

The two co-editors of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* were very modest in introducing themselves, stating simply that they are "an Asian historian and a comparative educator" so I will say more about them. Both of them have been active members of the International Studies Program and I have had the privilege of working with them in various activities sponsored by the Asian Studies and the Development Studies teams. Their

contributions to deepening the international consciousness of the university have been invaluable. Needless to say, both are deeply committed to the study of Asia. Professor **Thomas Lutze**, our Asian historian, earned his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research interests and publications focus on 20th century China, in particular on the social and political history of the Communist revolution and on the origins of the Cold War in Asia. He was among the first Americans to travel to China after the thaw in US China relations in the early 1970s and for several years afterward lectured widely on China as a member of the East Coast Steering Committee of the US-China People's Friendship Association. He is currently completing a volume reevaluating the failure of U.S. China policy in the late 1940s. When he joined the university in 1996 he brought with him a contagious enthusiasm about Asia that energized the members of the Asian Studies team. His addition to our faculty was critical in having the Asian studies curriculum approved by the university. As coordinator of the Asian Studies team, he initiated Asian-focused programming that solidified campus interest on Asia. The Chinese New Year celebration started out as a small event at the International House attended by about 50 people and has grown to a festive event with broad participation by faculty and students from China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. This event is attended by over 300 guests who are treated to Chinese food and musical performances. The Asian Studies Colloquium features student and faculty presentations on their current research or most recent Asian experience. Every other year, he takes students to China on a May term travel course titled "Emperors and Revolutionaries: Chinese History through Travel" that is co-sponsored and hosted by the History Department of Peking University.

Professor **Irving Epstein**, whose Ph.D. is from the University of California Los Angeles, joined the department of Educational Studies in 1996. He has extensive international experience, having traveled, taught and lectured in over 20 countries; he spent two years in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China studying Mandarin and doing his dissertation research. Through his advocacy, IWU joined the Scholars-at-

Risk Network, an international network of colleges and universities aimed at promoting academic freedom and defending human rights of scholars worldwide. (The network arranges short-term academic positions for international scholars who confront danger in their home countries because of their writing and research. Last year, IWU hosted its first Scholar-at-Risk visiting professor, Emmanuel Tatah Mentan from Cameroon.) He brings to his task as co-editor numerous editorial experiences; he has been serving on the Editorial Advisory Committee of *Chinese Education* since 1990 and was guest editor of its summer 1986 issue. He has been a member of the editorial board of the *Comparative Educational Review* since 1998 and was an associate editor from 1989 to 1998. He is currently serving as editor-in-chief of the *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Children's Issues Worldwide* due to be published in 2007. Both Tom and Irv are strong advocates and supporters of ASIANetwork and are committed to making the newsletter a useful resource for our members.

The Status of the Consortium

The consortium is in very solid standing as this transition occurs. Thanks to the membership committee's hard work, we ended last academic year with a total of 167 institutional members: 124 full, 34 associate, and 9 affiliate organizations. With careful financial management by Van Symons and Mary Doonan, we are looking at over \$240,000 in operating funds as of the end of June. This money includes the budget for the different programs we are currently administering. Before the management of finances moves to Illinois Wesleyan University, we anticipate transferring about \$20,000 of that money to our funds at Vanguard, adding to a total that is approximately \$780,000; this will bring us closer to the goal of a million-dollar "contingency fund" that would yield enough interest to tide over the consortium during the lean years. Without doubt, our membership and finances are in great shape. We are also administering four solid programs, the

ASIANetwork Initiatives, that address our core purpose: to prepare the succeeding generations of undergraduates for an interdependent world in which Asian societies play prominent roles. Two of these programs, Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum and Student-Faculty Fellows, are already funded for the next two years, the Vietnam Academic Exchange is funded for next year, and we are hopeful that we will be able to run another Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Seminar next summer with funding from the Fulbright-Hays program. (See ASIANetwork Initiatives on pages 8-9). It will be a challenge to coordinate the operation of these different programs but I am confident that under the competent administration of their respective program directors, they will run smoothly. My task is to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

What Lies Ahead

This summer, I got a sense of what fulfilling the administrative responsibilities of the consortium entails. It involves numerous virtual and telephone conversations with different people, board members and all those involved in our various projects. And summer is supposedly when everything slows down! Toward the end of summer, we prepare the materials for the usual mass mailing that will go out in early September to the over 1,000 individuals at our member institutions. I will also have to prepare all the materials needed for the fall Board meeting in October and work with the Program Committee to organize the April 2006 conference. In November, I will travel with the Development Officers to New York City to meet with representatives of our current and potential benefactors to explore funding possibilities for the programs we have on the horizon. Somewhere in there, I have to learn the details of our finances and budget. Although these are routine operations, I will be undertaking them for the first time, and chances are I may falter along the way. When this happens, I hope you will be patient and let me know what else needs doing.

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While I look forward to mastering the routine tasks of running the head office and coordinating the administration of ongoing projects, I am also very excited about the initiatives that are already in different stages of conceptualization. This summer, the Board approved the conceptual framework for the book series project we are undertaking with the Association for Asian Studies. We plan to publish six to seven volumes under the AAS *Resources for Teaching about Asia* series. Rita Kipp, Dean of Sewanee: the University of the South and a founding board member of ASIANetwork is the editor-in-chief of the series. The first volume on Asian art will be the end product of the Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum grant and is targeted to be in press in Fall 2008. A grant proposal to fund the second volume on Asian missionary archives is being developed by Martha Smalley (Yale University) and Rita Kipp; we will present the proposal to the United Board during our trip to New York. We have a commitment from EastBridge press to publish these two volumes. The topics for the next four or five volumes will be discussed and hopefully will be finalized and approved at the Board meeting in October. Possible Asia topics include: the

performing arts, the diaspora, cartography/geography, the media, and religious texts. We are hoping to craft one proposal for funding the rest of the volumes. This book series will definitely take more than a few years to complete and is dependent on the generosity of interested foundations that will find this book series invaluable in the study of Asia.

The other project that has taken off the ground is a joint program with the Hong Kong-America Center that focuses on religion, the state and international relations in contemporary Asia. The general goal is to organize collaborative research activities between American and Asian scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds. Several teams, each focusing on a different region in Asia and/or Asian religious tradition, will study the changing relations among religion, the state and society in the Asian regions. During the first summer, team leaders will meet for a planning meeting in Hong Kong. Other scholars and resource persons will be identified and collaborative work will be done throughout the academic year mostly over

the internet. Publishing a book based on the collaborative research is also part of the plan. This is a project that will take three years to complete but also depends on the receipt of funding. Hong Kong-America Center has approached the Luce Foundation, and, given our track record running grant-funded programs, our

involvement will help strengthen the chances of our receiving funding of the proposal.

As I review the details of running the head office, coordinating the

different on-going projects and anticipating those projects on the horizon, I cannot help but recall that same feeling of concern and trepidation that I felt when I accepted this position. It will be a daunting challenge fraught with many difficulties and seemingly insurmountable hurdles. But with the help of a truly hard-working Board of Directors, Development Officers and the various project directors, as well as the strong support of the membership, I do not see any reason why these things will not get done. I am here to do my very best to ensure that the vitality of our organization continues and I thank all of you for trusting me with this job.

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The ASIANetwork personnel at Illinois Wesleyan University. From left to right: Linda Tuttle, Irv Epstein, Teddy Amoloza, Tom Lutze and Patra Noonan.



Some members of the Board at the April board meeting in Whittier, CA.

From the Board Chair

P. Richard Bohr



I have just returned from participating in the month-long, eye-opening Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Program, cosponsored by ASIANetwork and the Hong Kong-America Center. The program was funded with a \$65,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fulbright-Hays Group Study Abroad Program and approximately \$6,000 from the Li Ka Shing Foundation in Hong Kong. This remarkable study tour included 16 professors of anthropology, business, economics, history, management, political science, religion, and sociology, each affiliated with a separate ASIANetwork member school.

Throughout South China's Pearl River Delta, the world's fastest-growing economic region, our delegation attended over forty lectures and visited factories, government offices, planning agencies, transportation and communication facilities, universities, and NGOs as well as religious and cultural institutions. Our purpose was to assess the impact of rapid economic development on new business enterprises, migrant labor, traditional and popular culture, government leadership, regional planning strategies, and the environment. Our bottom-line question was, To what extent is the Pearl River Delta a portent for the rest of China?

I will publish a full report on this faculty development program in a forthcoming issue of *ASIANetwork Exchange*, but at this point I want to convey two observations. First, this

project exemplifies what the ASIANetwork does best: infuse Asian Studies into the liberal arts curriculum by bringing its member institutions together for interdisciplinary collaboration in faculty, curricular, and pedagogical developments to prepare our graduates for the newly-dawned "Asian Century."

Second, this Fulbright-Hays project heralds a new level of service to ASIANetwork member institutions.

Now home, my fellow delegates and I will re-enact a similar ASIANetwork routine: collaborate with our deans, faculty colleagues, and students as well as off-campus groups to disseminate what we have learned by revising existing or creating new courses and offering lectures, conference papers, publications, and community outreach. In addition, several of us are already working with our study abroad officers to plan experiential learning activities at some of the Chinese universities we encountered on the trip. Our member institutions, too, will benefit as we circulate our findings via the ASIANetwork website, the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, the indispensable teachers' journal *Education About Asia*, and as we offer panels and presentations at next spring's ASIANetwork conference to be held at Hickory Ridge Conference Center in Lisle, Illinois on April 21-23, 2006.

This successful knowledge-sharing formula builds on earlier ASIANetwork programs supported by generous grants

from the Ford, Luce, and Freeman Foundations as well as occasional grants from The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, The Japan Foundation, and The Korea Society that have strengthened Asian Studies among our member institutions. One such program is the Freeman-funded Student-

"This project exemplifies what the ASIANetwork does best: infuse Asian Studies into the liberal arts curriculum by bringing its member institutions together for interdisciplinary collaboration in faculty, curricular, and pedagogical developments to prepare our graduates for the newly-dawned 'Asian Century.'"

Faculty Fellows Program, which, since 1998, has supported collaborative teacher-student field research in East and Southeast Asia and its dissemination throughout ASIANetwork institutions. By the time this newsletter goes to press, this Freeman-funded program will have sent close to 300 persons to Asia. The student-faculty fellows program, the just completed Pearl River Delta faculty development seminar, the U.S.-Vietnam faculty exchange program, and the Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum project are the ASIANetwork Initiatives mandated by the Board of Directors for implementation in 2004-05. We will continue to administer these programs next academic year. (Please see pages 8-9 for details.)

During the summer of 2005 ASIANetwork's headquarters moved from Augustana College, where Van Symons, Executive Director during the past six years, and his colleagues rendered exemplary day-to-day administration, finance and project management, and newsletter production. The new headquarters is Illinois Wesleyan University, where Professor Teddy Amoloza has already assembled a first-rate team. As is abundantly clear from her first Executive Director's column in this issue of the newsletter, Teddy is a time-honored veteran of ASIANetwork programs, having ably administered the Freeman-funded Student-Faculty Fellows Program since its inception. She is also an inspiring leader, a creative administrator, and is intimately acquainted with every nook and cranny of the ASIANetwork.

As Board Chair for 2005-06, I look forward to working with Teddy and her colleagues. I am also delighted that Professor Phyllis Larson, a Japan scholar at St. Olaf College, is the new ASIANetwork Vice-Chair and, therefore, Chair-designate. With broad experience as a department chair, Phyllis has also managed grants, served on numerous boards, and consulted widely on Asian Studies programs. Teddy and Phyllis will be ideal co-workers on the ASIANetwork Executive Committee.

Managing so many new projects will require even more wisdom, leadership, and energy from our traditional support base, beginning with our member institutions. ASIANetwork now has an unprecedented 167 member schools, a growth curve which testifies to its ever-increasing value to its constituents as well as the doggedness of the Board's membership committee. Our new projects will provide even more opportunities for constituent services and opportunities for member institutions to collaborate and learn from one another.

In addition, ASIANetwork must now rely more than ever on its hard-working, nine-member Board of Directors, which Professor Joan O'Mara, immediate past Board chair, characterizes as being

endowed with a "can do" spirit. Through its various committees, the Board oversees all aspects of finance, administration, operations, and outreach. Because of a

recent Finance Committee innovation, ASIANetwork funds are growing nicely. And thanks to Professor Diane Clayton's willingness to remain our website editor for an additional year beyond her board tenure, our outreach is more effective than ever. The Board's effectiveness in these matters is greatly enhanced by the wise counsel of a devoted Council of Advisors.

The Board proposes and implements all major projects associated with ASIANetwork. The initiatives mentioned above, for example, are funded by long-time foundation supporters, who have contributed over \$4.5 million to ASIANetwork since its creation in 1993. The receipt of public funding, as evidenced in the above-described Fulbright-Hays project, needs to continue if ASIANetwork is to retain its not-for-profit status.

Our new projects also depend on the new institutional partnerships that are needed to undergird them. One example is our association with the Hong-Kong America Center. We are collaborating with this outreach arm of five Hong Kong-based universities on a second proposal to the Fulbright-Hays program for a study tour next summer that focuses on South China's history and culture. ASIANetwork and the Hong Kong-America Center are also seeking support for an Asia-based seminar on Asian religions as well as a multi-summer project to study the Asian origins and the development of Asian-American communities in the U.S.

In addition to organizing a vibrant program for the annual conference in April, my goals as Board chair are to identify Board nominees with the gifts

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and talents to enable us to manage the next phase of our growth and to reach out to potential new institutional partners. To this end, I share the ASIANetwork founders' conviction that a liberal arts approach to Asian Studies is the best way to prepare students intellectually to understand Asia. But I am also convinced that, as the global economy continues to concentrate on Asia, there will be increasing urgency to prepare our students to become professional "Asia Hands." This will require our redoubled commitment to faculty development, interdisciplinary curricular depth, and pedagogical innovation as well as to locating expanded opportunities for study abroad, service learning, teaching, and internship experience in Asia. This can be accomplished only by developing a broad coalition of partners who will be able to help our students gain professional expertise and thereby insure America's competitiveness in the Asian Century. I hope some of you will submit panel proposals along these lines for next April's conference.

We hope that the newsletter will provide both informative and provocative articles. We welcome responses in the form of letters or commentaries which we may publish to facilitate and enhance dialogue among our members.



Phyllis Larson

ASIANetwork Initiatives

ASIANetwork seeks grant monies to sponsor programs and undertake projects that help strengthen the teaching of Asia at member institutions. Three programs are already funded for summer 2006 and through the next academic year, another program awaits funding.



"Hong punch bowl"
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gerry Lenfest
The Reeves Collection
Washington and Lee University
Lexington, VA

Asian Art in the Undergraduate Curriculum *funded by the Henry Luce Foundation*

This project seeks to focus on significant but generally less widely known aesthetically and pedagogically important works of Asian art and material culture that exist on our college campuses. We will utilize Asian art historians and professionals as consultants who will visit applicant campuses to identify works appropriate to this project. In 2005-2006, eight institutions namely, Beloit College, Connecticut College, DePauw University, Dickinson College, Earlham College, Eckerd College, Guilford College, and Wittenberg University will receive consultancy visits. Eight consultancies per year for the next two years are available. Undergraduate liberal arts schools that have large, medium or even minuscule collections of Asian art and/or material culture are invited to apply. **Deadline for application for the second round of consultancies is January 9, 2006.** For further information contact Dr. Stan Mickel, Project Director, Wittenberg University, 200 West Ward Street, Springfield, Ohio 45501, (smickel@wittenberg.edu, phone 937- 327-6354).

Student-Faculty Fellows Program *funded by the Freeman Foundation*

Now in its eighth year, this grant enables individual faculty members at liberal arts colleges to take up to five students to East and Southeast Asia to conduct undergraduate research activities. Faculty mentor and students apply as a team. During the past seven years, approximately 300 persons have participated in this program. Funding is available for up to sixty persons (mentors and students combined) to study in Asia during the summer of 2006. **Deadline for application is November 30, 2005** with notification in March 2006. For additional information contact Dr. Van J. Symons, Program Director, Augustana College, 639 38th Street, Rock Island, IL 61201-2296, (hisymons@augustana.edu, phone 309-794-7413).



*Randall L. Nadeau, Trinity University,
and his students at Lingnan University
in Hong Kong.*

Vietnam Academic Exchange Program *funded by the Henry Luce Foundation* *through the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam* *and the American Council of Learned Societies*



This program aims to promote faculty exchange between ASIANetwork and Vietnamese universities. Member institutions apply to host visiting faculty from Vietnam for semester-long stays on their campuses. Upon completion of the visit, host institutions will send representatives to Vietnam for month-long visits. In January 2006, four schools, Pomona College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Marlboro College and University of Puget Sound will be hosting Vietnamese scholars. Four grants are available for the next academic year. **Deadline for application is January 15, 2006** with notification in March. For further information contact Dr. Paul Nietupski, John Carroll University, 20700 North Park Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44118 (pnietupski@jcu.edu, phone 216-397-4704).

Pearl River Delta Second Faculty Development Seminar

pending funding by the U.S. Department of Education

Following the successful completion of the first Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Seminar in summer 2005 that focused on the economic and social transformations occurring in southeast coastal China, ASIANetwork, in conjunction with the Hong Kong-America Center, will again seek funding from the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program of the U.S. Department of Education to sponsor another faculty development seminar. For 3 ½ weeks in the summer of 2006, up to fifteen faculty participants will be immersed in the study of the rich historical and cultural legacy of southeast China. **Deadline for application is December 1, 2005** with notification in mid-spring 2006 contingent upon receiving notice from the Department of Education that funding will be provided. For further information contact Dr. P. Richard Bohr, College of St. Benedict/St. John's University, St. Joseph, MN 56374 (rbohr@csbsju.edu, phone 320-363-5918) or Dr. Chia Ning, Central College, 812 University Avenue, Pella IA 50219 (chian@central.edu, phone 641-628-5323).



Some of the participants of the Pearl River Delta Faculty Development Seminar at the orientation session in Whittier, CA last April.

For additional details on all these programs, visit our website at www.asianetwork.org.

Introducing the New Look... (continued from page 1)

What's New in the Newsletter

This issue of *ASIANetwork Exchange* embodies several new features to build on the existing strengths of the newsletter. Most obviously, readers will notice that we are adopting a new layout for text and incorporating more images and illustrations to accompany articles. We hope readers find the new format attractive.

We are launching other new features as well. At the heart of these changes is our effort to organize the material to enhance the newsletter's "user-friendliness." Emphasizing the role of the newsletter as both the voice of ASIANetwork and a tool "for teaching about Asia," we have grouped the articles to create a number of new sections that will appear regularly.

- **Network News** will include reports from officers, announcements about the annual meeting, information on ASIANetwork Initiatives, and other such organizational matters—all grouped together in one section.

Three other sections will be dedicated to teaching:

- **Teaching about Asia** will continue the newsletter's long-established and important work of soliciting and

publishing articles (including panel papers from the annual conference), sample syllabi, text reviews, and other materials that share information and experiences among members to enhance our classroom efforts.

- A new feature will be a section called **Media Resources**. With the growing availability and interest in film and electronic resources, we are publishing articles, movie reviews, information on digitized collections, and website assessments, all to assist in the selection and incorporation of media into our teaching.
- The newsletter will also continue to publish selected scholarly articles. While these pieces may not directly concern issues of pedagogy, they nevertheless address issues of broad interest to members and may be useful in teaching by providing short reading assignments for students or new material for retooling lectures. This section, **Research of Note**, includes such articles as the keynote addresses from the ASIANetwork annual conferences, panel papers, and timely analyses of current events relevant to Asia.

Two final sections will also be introduced.

- **For Our Students** will continue the reports on special student research, publication, language, and study abroad opportunities related to Asia.
- In future issues of *ASIANetwork Exchange*, **New and Noteworthy** will highlight institutional and individual accomplishments of ASIANetwork members, including, for example, honors awarded, grants received, books published, retirements, and appointments.

We hope these changes will enhance *ASIANetwork Exchange* as a reference source for our members. In producing our first issue of the newsletter we especially express our gratitude to the contributors who so cooperatively submitted their articles for publication. We want to stress how eager we are to continue to receive your submissions for any section of the newsletter; we rely on your sharing your experience, research, announcements, and ideas to make it a success. We also welcome your comments and suggestions as we try to build upon the newsletter's fine tradition of facilitating *Exchange* among our membership.

TEACHING ABOUT ASIA

Incorporating Women Into the Chinese History Survey—

*Cooking The Five Grains and Heating the Wine:
Guiding The Undergraduate Gaze*

Stephen Udry
Carthage College

Presented at the 2005 ASDP/ASIANetwork Conference

To begin I would like to thank Chia Ning for all her work organizing this panel and giving us all this opportunity to think about different ways of approaching what is probably our most public task, teaching. In that spirit, I would like to talk about incorporating the teaching of women into our Chinese History survey courses. I take it as my task to offer some concrete ways in which this incorporation might be achieved.

As we look to bring materials on the situation, role, and status of women throughout Chinese history, into our courses via both lectures and readings of texts (including all types of texts), we are faced with a number of obstacles, three of which seem to stand out in particular. First, the basic general narrative that is usually covered in survey courses is already too expansive for one semester. This means that adding something necessitates cutting something. Although it is certainly not a zero-sum game in all cases, time, both in and out of class is limited. The second obstacle is the nature of the survey course itself. A degree of brevity and lack of depth is not only necessary, but rather justified in that the course is just that, a survey of Chinese history. Given the nature of survey courses, exploration of the variation in situation/role/status of women over time and space is very difficult in the allotted time. The third obstacle that must be faced when incorporating materials on women into our Chinese history survey courses is stereotypes. Perhaps stereotypes and generalizations would be the best way of describing this obstacle. While this is an obstacle with any course

we teach on a subject only vaguely familiar to our student body, I feel it is a particular problem when approaching the subject of women in Chinese history as it is a subject to which our students already seem to come with a certain amount of

baggage. It does not take much searching among mass media and popular culture to see the frustratingly familiar, stereotypical portrayal of Chinese (indeed Asian women in

general) women as submissive and obedient while lacking any sort of agency.¹ For instance if you just teach Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women* and the *Mother of Mencius* story, the stereotypes of a number of our students will be reaffirmed. They won't be either challenged or refined.

In addition to these three obstacles, also crucial in helping our students gain a deeper and better understanding of Chinese history are the five sets of polarities pointed out by Joseph Adler.² These polarities include *textual traditions* and *social practices, normative texts* and *descriptive texts*, practices of the literate *elite* and those of the majority *commoners*, women constructed as *ideal symbols* and women seen as *diverse individuals*, and women portrayed as

objects of a male-centered "gaze" and women as *subjects* expressing their own lives and worldviews (all emphasis is Adler's).²

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In particular I try to focus on agency; what types they exercised, where it could be practiced, its limits, etc. My other goal is to illustrate how the political, social and economic changes within Chinese society directly affected women. This goal fits in quite easily with the rest of the course.

Once the decision to incorporate women into your teaching of Chinese history survey courses has been made, there is no shortage of materials for you to turn to for both background information and research, as well as texts for students. In her recent state-of-the-field survey on women in China's "long twentieth century," Gail Hershatter notes approximately 500 works, mostly from the last two decades.³ That should put to rest any notion that there is not the background scholarship to support your

teaching efforts. There is, as well, a plethora of materials to help teach about women in China. However, I have found that my needs—and the financial concerns of students over book costs—can be met well enough by just two sources; Patricia Ebrey's *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, and Susan Mann and Yu-Yin Cheng's *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*.⁴ These give me plenty of breadth in choice for materials for my survey courses.⁵

In making suggestions for incorporating women into the general narrative of Chinese history survey courses, I am working off of two assumptions. First, although I recognize that the survey can be taught effectively with a topical approach (and women can be one topic), I am here assuming that the general outline of the course would be chronologically-based; second I am assuming that it is a semester long course. My purpose here is not to convince you that you should include such narratives in your courses, but rather to suggest ways and resources to undertake just such an incorporation. It should also be noted, by way of a final caveat, that the following suggestions are not the only way of incorporating the topic into your courses. What follows are just some examples and suggestions to help get started.

Typically I introduce the topic of women into my courses early on while addressing China's early schools of thought. I find that reading the story of the mother of Mencius can be used to begin to teach them to look for areas of agency that Chinese women may be able to carve out. The students seem to enjoy being introduced to a single, working mom from ancient China. I also include

the selections from Ban Zhao in the Ebrey sourcebook. I have also just added a text which places the *Book of Filial Piety* and the *Book of Filial Piety for Women* side by side.⁶ These texts all allow me to accomplish the dual task of introducing my students to Confucianism and women in Chinese society. I might note that it also allows me to bring up the differences between admonitory texts (normative texts under Adler's sets of polarities mentioned above) and descriptive texts which will be introduced later on in the course.

The next point I often use to incorporate women into my course's narrative is with the entry of Buddhism into China. This leads easily into a discussion of Empress Wu (r. 690-705) during the Tang. The story of Yang Guifei allows an opportunity for a discussion of numerous topics, including ideals of beauty, love and also concubinage.

With the Song we start to see an ever-widening range of both background research and available resources. Foot binding is a topic that must be addressed if women are going to be incorporated into your survey and there is a plethora of material to choose from (Dorothy Ko's

work⁷ is a good place to start). While the discussions that arise from the subject of footbinding are often very animated, I find that students also benefit tremendously from a set of readings contained in the Ebrey sourcebook under the provocative title "Women and the Problems They Create." These stories provide fascinating examples of what women could and could not do in Song society. They help the students come to a more layered understanding of Chinese society during the Song specifically, but also in general. Issues such as divorce and property rights, as

well as Song perceptions of the relative roles of women and men in their relations come to the fore in these readings.

Having dealt with the issue of footbinding in the Song, the Ming and the Qing offer the opportunity to confront the "cult of widow/female chastity." Once again the Ebrey sourcebook offers some readings which open the topic up. Also in the Ebrey sourcebook are some readings on the institution of concubinage, including an excerpt from the *Jin Ping Mei*. There is, however, an enormous amount of other material that could be brought in to the classroom depending on what you want to get across to the students. A piece that I have used successfully over the semesters is a translation of Yang Jisheng's "Final Instructions" by Beverly Bossler.⁸ As Bossler notes in the introduction to the translation, the colloquial style of writing is striking and allows the students to feel quite comfortable commenting about and discussing the piece. The piece itself, written while Yang was in prison awaiting sentencing (he had written a memorial charging a high official of corruption), provides a touching view of how a family works while displaying caring and emotion as Yang instructs his wife and sons on how to proceed should he be executed (which he was). In addition to these suggestions, selections from *Journey to the West*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Jin Ping Mei*, and *The Water Margin* abound and can be used depending on just what you want to focus on.

With the Qing Dynasty, as with the Song and the Ming, the problem is not finding material, but rather finding the material that best fits your course goals. I often use another text which focuses on the family, but is written by the matriarch, to follow up the "Final Instructions" of Yang Jisheng (discussed above). The text, "Letter to My Sons," was written by a woman named Gu Roupu (1592-ca. 1681) and is translated by Dorothy Ko. Gu is a fascinating woman and her story usually prompts at least one of my female students each semester to write a paper on the lives of female gentry. Gu was a gentry daughter from the Hangzhou region. Her husband died early so her father-in-law gave her a classical education so that she could train her sons.



11th Century Poet Li Qingzhao

She ended up not only training her sons, but other women as well. Her niece founded the female poetry club “the Banana Grove Five.” In 1632, Gu wrote a letter to her two sons indicating her decision to divide the household. The letter, as Dorothy Ko tells us, is “a rare example of a woman’s candid reflections on her multiple roles in the Confucian family.”⁹ Moving away from the topic of women within families, discussion of the Empress Dowager Cixi serves to help refer to and refresh material discussed previously in the course, as Empress Wu reenters the discussion.

The most interesting conversations occur when the class reads a play by a female Qing writer, Wu Zao. Sophie Volpp has translated Wu’s *Drinking Wine and Reading “Encountering Sorrow”*: *A Reflection in Disguise*, for the *Under Confucian Eyes* collection of translations.¹⁰ This text is useful first of all because it is a play, usually the only one we will read in class. Second, the play is a reflection on the limits of gender. Wu Zao’s character, a female poet, imagines herself a male (at least as a female cross-dressed as a male), so that her talents may be recognized. Because this text is read towards the end of the semester, the students, by this point, have enough background and raw material to deepen their discussion of gender as opposed to merely

“women” and what women did in China. This topic is unavoidable as the students must also confront the Qu Yuan poem “Encountering Sorrow” referred to in the title. In the poem Qu Yuan, uses the metaphor of an abandoned woman to expose the plight of an



Liu Shi, the Lady East-of-The-River, who dressed as a man in order to gain acceptance for her poetry. She was famous as both poet and visual artist. Photo by Sadie Jo Smokey

exiled courtier.¹¹ The play forces the students to work out perceptions of gender roles and to re-examine the stories, letters, and admonitory texts read throughout the semester.

In this brief paper I have attempted to provide some suggestions, by way of example, for incorporating more materials on and by women into a survey course on Chinese History. The paper was intended to begin a discussion by panel participants and attendees that would bring to light other resources and approaches to the benefit of all. One suggestion that came out of the discussion was to bring the concepts of gender and gender perceptions out earlier in the course. Some attendees felt that footbinding provided a good opportunity to address differences between conceptions of gender in the West and China. Others felt that the new research by Hostetler¹² and Emma Tang¹³ on

gendering the “Other” could also be used fruitfully in survey courses. These are good suggestions and certainly provide helpful examples of how we can bring current research into our classrooms, which is, after all, just what we should be striving to do.

Endnotes

¹ This paper does not directly address the subject of western, gendered perceptions of Asians, male or female, in general, though the theories and research on this subject are certainly related to the project as a whole.

² Joseph Adler, “Daughter/Wife/Mother or Sage/Immortal/Bodhisattva? Women in the Teaching of Chinese Religion.” Presented at the ASIANetwork Annual Meeting, Whittier, CA 2005.

³ Hershatter, Gail. “State of the Field: Women in China’s Long Twentieth Century.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63.4 (2004):991-1065.

⁴ Full citations: Ebrey, Patricia. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. New York: The Free Press, 1993. Mann, Susan, and Yu-Yin Cheng. *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

⁵ As a textbook I use Conrad Schirokauer’s *Brief History of Chinese Civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1991.

⁶ Ebrey, Patricia. “The Book of Filial Piety for Women Attributed to a Woman Nee Zheng (ca. 730).” *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*. Ed. Susan Mann and Yu-Yin Cheng. 47-69.

⁷ Ko, Dorothy. *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

⁸ Yang Jisheng. “Final Instructions.” Trans., with introduction, Beverly Bossler in Mann and Cheng, eds. *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*. 119-132

⁹ See Mann and Cheng, eds, *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*. 150.

¹⁰ Volpp, Sophia. “Drinking Wine and Reading “Encountering Sorrow”: A Reflection in Disguise by Wu Zao (1799-1862).” Mann, S. and Yu-Yin Cheng, Eds. 239-250.

¹¹ Volpp’s well-written introductory essay (p. 239-43) explains all of this to the reader, so that the students are able to see these issues as they read the translation.

¹² Hostetler, Laura. *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.

¹³ Tang, Emma. *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures 1683-1895*. Harvard University Press, 2004.

Teaching as a Service Learning Experience: Reflections on Redlands students' service at Peking University

Xinyan Jiang

University of Redlands

Presented at the 2005 ASDP/ASIANetwork Conference

In May 2004, I brought a group of 14 University of Redlands students to China for a four-week travel course. During these 4 weeks, besides academic activities and cultural tours, our students also taught English at Peking University, Shandong University, and Xi'an Taotong University. Incorporating teaching into a travel course is not a new idea from me. I am indebted for this to my colleague, Professor Bill Huntley, who has brought students to Japan to teach English for many years. There are many differences between the Japan and China travel courses—e.g., the former was hosted by individual Japanese families, while the latter was hosted by Chinese universities; and the former made teaching English the most important part of its program, while the latter incorporated it as component of its program equal to classroom studies and cultural tours. Nevertheless, a teaching element is what these two programs have shared in common.

In this presentation I will just focus my discussion on my students' teaching at Peking University, where I studied and taught before I left China. Our group stayed in Beijing for two weeks. During those two weeks, besides taking a short course taught by professors at Peking University and touring Beijing and nearby areas, students, as volunteers, taught English on the campus during the evenings (about three class sessions per week and various tutorial sessions). Each pair of students was in charge of a class section made of about 10-16 Chinese students, and there were a



Peking University West Gate

total of seven class sections. Before we left the U.S. for China, each pair of students had written a conversation on a topic that they would like to teach. I let students exchange their written conversations with each other. Thus, students had seven different dialogues written as lecture notes when they arrived in Beijing. Each pair of students was totally responsible to teach their class and freely taught whatever they thought best for their students, with seven

written lecture notes for their reference. Several students adjusted their teaching content based on students' needs. For example, two students helped their Chinese students to prepare interviews for American visa applications, since many of their Chinese students were going to apply for a visa to the U.S. soon.

“Many of our students have made friends with Chinese students and have kept in contact after they returned to the U.S. One of my students told me that he sent a John Kerry presidential campaign flyer to his new friends in China who were his students, since they were eager to know what was going on in the U.S. at that time.”

This teaching experience not only helped Redlands students to develop their abilities for leadership and organization and to understand the meaning of teaching, but also taught them a great deal about Chinese people and culture. It taught them something about China that they could never learn from a class or a tour. This experience provided students with an opportunity to connect with real Chinese students and

understand their lives and their ideas. Many of our students have made friends with Chinese students and have kept in contact after they returned to the U.S. One of my students told me that he sent a John Kerry presidential campaign flyer to his new friends in China who were his students, since they were eager to know what was going on in the U.S. at that time.

This teaching experience plus other experiences in China had a great impact on most of the students in the group. For example, several students enrolled in a Chinese language course after their return to the U.S. from China; several students applied for short-term teaching positions and planned to teach English in China during the summer. Moreover, one of my students, although he is no longer at Redlands now, has decided to go back to Peking University on an exchange program for a long period this coming fall and his application has been accepted. Another student said that his teaching experience in China was so enjoyable so that he decided to accept a job offer to teach English full-time in Korea a few months after our travel course. Teaching in Korea will make his return to China much more likely than if he stays in the U.S., of course.

In general, I believe that Redlands students' teaching experience at Peking University is also a good learning experience for them. Such experience has taught them to be more responsible, more capable, and more open-minded human beings. As far as cultural understanding is concerned, teaching English in China may be one of the most efficient ways to understand China.

MEDIA RESOURCES

Columbia University Launches New Website for Undergraduate Teaching About East Asia: www.exeas.org

Heidi Johnson

Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University

The Expanding East Asian Studies (ExEAS) program at Columbia University was established in 2002 with funding from the Freeman Foundation Undergraduate Asian Studies Initiative. Under the direction of historian and member of the ASIANetwork Council of Advisors Carol Gluck, the program creates innovative courses and teaching materials that incorporate the study of East Asia in broad thematic, transnational, and interdisciplinary contexts.

Program activities are carried out by the ExEAS Teaching Collaborative, a diverse group of scholars composed of ExEAS Postdoctoral Fellows, faculty participants from two- and four-year undergraduate institutions in the Northeast, and members of the Columbia and Barnard faculty. Since Fall 2002, three cohorts of Teaching Collaborative participants have met on the Columbia campus for a series of weekend workshops that include discussions of curricular and pedagogical needs in East Asian studies, demonstrations of effective teaching techniques, and working sessions to develop new teaching units and other materials.

In Fall 2004, the ExEAS program launched its website, www.exeas.org, to share materials for teaching about East Asia with educators everywhere. The website features a wide range of teaching materials and syllabi designed for use by instructors at all levels and in all subjects. Materials are designed for use by both Asia specialists and non-specialists as well as instructors teaching outside of their discipline or geographic area of expertise. De-nin Deanna Lee, Assistant Professor of Art History and Asian Studies at Bowdoin College and an ExEAS Teaching Collaborative participant, comments, "The ExEAS Collaborative has created teaching materials that are useful for non-Asianists and Asianists alike. The curriculum at Bowdoin increasingly embraces interdisciplinary approaches and adopts a more global stance, and in this context,

these materials — filmographies, literature focusing on issues of gender and sexuality, classroom suggestions for addressing Asian-American identity, texts for discussing East Asian experiences of modernity and so forth — will become ever more valuable."

Content on the ExEAS website is divided into three sections: teaching materials and resources, syllabi, and links. All materials are listed alphabetically as well as by category. Categories include Asian diasporas, contemporary society, East Asian economies, world history, world literature, and more.

Highlights of the teaching materials and resources section include teaching units written by ExEAS Teaching Collaborative participants on topics such as gender in pre-modern East Asian literature, nationalism in East Asia, Buddhism in Asian philosophy, and the political economy of postwar Japan. The units are designed to be incorporated into courses in all subjects in the humanities and social sciences, including general education and survey courses. Each unit includes all of the materials that instructors need to introduce the units into existing courses, including background information for instructors, lists of student readings annotated for easy selection and understanding, discussion questions or other classroom activities, and lists of further readings.

For example, the unit "Your Honor I am Innocent: Law and Society in Late Imperial China" features student readings and activities focused on the translation of a nineteenth-century homicide case. Written by historian Ming-te Pan of SUNY Oswego, the unit not only introduces Confucian principles, family structure, and social hierarchy in Chinese society, but also explores broader issues such as gender relations and capital punishment. Like all ExEAS units, it is designed to fit into a number of different courses, from East Asian history to women's studies and philosophy. "Units like 'Your Honor I am

Innocent' provide materials that can be easily integrated into large lecture courses and intimate seminars alike," says Ian Miller, Assistant Professor of History at Arizona State University and a former ExEAS Postdoctoral Fellow. "I plan to use the student activities from this unit to augment the lectures in my upcoming 'Introduction to Modern Asian History' course."

"The Short Story in East Asia and Beyond," "East Asia's Dynamic Economies," and "Exploring Culture in the Great Cities of Asia" are among the syllabi featured on the website. Syllabi include those courses developed by ExEAS Postdoctoral Fellows and piloted at Columbia as well as syllabi contributed by Teaching Collaborative participants and other faculty throughout the country.

"The courses developed through the ExEAS collaborative are a perfect fit for liberal arts colleges such as Connecticut. I can easily imagine colleagues in sociology or government departments, for example, making use of the syllabi we've developed when assigning materials for their introductory and comparative classes which otherwise might have overlooked Asia," says Alexis Dudden, Associate Professor of History at Connecticut College and a 2004-2005 ExEAS Teaching Collaborative participant.

The links section of the website offers a carefully selected listing of web-based resources for images, primary sources, teaching materials, writing guides, and much more. Lists of recommended films, novels, primary materials, and activities for classroom use will be added to the teaching materials and resources section of the site in Fall 2005.

The site will continue to evolve as new materials are made available. The success of www.exeas.org will be measured by experiences of site visitors. If you use any of the materials featured on the ExEAS website, please send comments and suggestions for improvement to exeasmail@columbia.edu.

Images of Women in Chinese Films—Through the Confucian Lens

Sherry J. Mou

DePauw University

Presented at the 2005 ASDP/ASIANetwork Conference

Introduction

One memorable scene in recent Chinese films comes toward the end of Feng Xiaogang's *A World without Thieves* (2004), when the police detective tracks down a very pregnant Wang Li at a local restaurant, gobbling platefuls of shredded Peking duck, pancakes, green onions, and sauce. Alluding to her missing lover Wang Bo, the detective greets her sardonically: "No point in waiting. He's gone" Wang Li stops him short with "Let me finish eating first" and continues devouring the food.



For sure, in the few seconds when she sees the detective and hears what he announces, Wang Li comprehends her new situation—that her lover and father of her baby is dead, and she is about to be apprehended. But her spontaneous reaction that everything else should be second to her eating—to ensure the welfare of her unborn baby—depicts a typical Confucian mother, whose whole-hearted devotion for her child surpasses all other concerns at critical moments. While contemporary Chinese films display an array of images of women, Confucian womanhood is often at the foundation of most, if not all, of women's roles. Most of these roles tend to be familial ones—grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives—and the plot usually evolves around how these women fulfill or deviate from their expected roles. Even in their non-familial roles, women are often defined or understood in relation to traditional

Chinese family structure.¹ Since family is at the foundation of Confucianism,² placing women at the center of the family is to acknowledge that women have a fundamental position in Confucian society. When we consider that the Chinese word for nation-state is composed etymologically of two characters 國家 (*guo-jia*, literally "country-family"), we see how fundamental women's position is in relation to the nation. Namely, a country is built on the basis of families—a very Confucian concept. Therefore, in addition to the discussions of film presentation (directing, camera angles, editing, etc.), it is also important to point out to our students how women's screen images reflect aspects of the dominant social ideology—Confucianism.

Presentation and Representation

Over the last fifteen years, Chinese movies have broken ground not only in the Western film industry and American movie theaters³ but also in American academia. Books and articles on Chinese films continue churning out, and discussions of women are almost a must in them. Applying psychoanalysis, feminist theories, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, scholars discuss how women are cast on screen as spectacles, as male desires and fantasies, as victims of feudal practices, and as the epitome of modern China's colonial experiences. From an "autonomous ecstasy"⁴ to "a narrative site for the projection of national

trauma and collective memory,"⁵ these inquiries are often fruitful, and they bridge a Chinese subject and other current disciplines. The positions over the past three decades of three film and cultural critics can be very instrumental in our study of how the film images of women—through the familial and non-familial roles—explicate Confucian ideas. Let us briefly examine each before we look at the Confucian images of Chinese women on screen.

In the mid-1970s, British film critic Laura Mulvey applied Freud's theory of scopophilia⁶ to her interpretation of traditional (Hollywood) narrative films and coined the notion of "male gaze," namely a "male" position that viewers—regardless of their genders—adopted in watching the sensual and arousing "traditional exhibitionist" images women play and display on screen. Mulvey has since revised this controversial position; however, her methodology still has value. For example, one interesting and fruitful application is Cui Shuqin's reading of Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* (1990), about Ju Dou, the young aunt whose liaison with her husband's nephew produces an illegitimate child⁷ Cui points out the subversion of a Mulveyian reading in a scene where Ju Dou turns her bruised body to face both the eyes of the camera and the nephew, who is peeping through a hole at her undressing for a bath. Ju Dou's semi-naked back is seen through the hole; then, all of a sudden, as if she has made up her mind about something, Ju Dou peels off her Chinese brassiere and turns sharply toward the hole (and the camera) and exposes her front. The difference between this scene and the traditional narrative film is that the audience never gets to see Ju Dou's naked body. Ju Dou's exposure of her bruised yet attractive body thus becomes both an

invitation and a taunt to the nephew—an invitation to enter an erotic relation and a challenge to deliver her from the physical abuses inflicted upon her by the uncle. Thus, instead of taking the “male position” to “enjoy” an erotic image on screen, the audience is presented with a moral decision. In essence, Ju Dou has altered the passive position of the screen woman as an object to be looked at, into an active agent who allows a man to look at and act upon thereafter, rendering him (and the audience) in effect into a passive voyeur.

In the 1980s, Mulvey’s focus on film presentation was countered by David Bordwell’s proposition of a more active viewer participation. Bordwell explains that our prior knowledge and experience form clusters of knowledge which then direct our hypotheses about the world around us; when we watch a movie, our comprehension and enjoyment of it depend upon our pre-existent knowledge.⁸ Clearly, Mulvey’s concern lies more with the film (how subjects are presented on screen), and Bordwell’s more with the audience (their understanding of what the subjects on screen represent).

In the early 1990s, cultural critic Rey Chow remapped the dynamics between a film and its viewers to a transnational level. Relating how her Hong Kongese mother approved of Bernardo Bertolucci’s presentation of China in *The Last Emperor* (“It is remarkable that a foreign devil should be able to make a film like this about China. I’d say, he did a good job!”⁹), Rey Chow pointed out how gender and power are both subjected to cultural interpretation. The ethnic female audience is examining the authenticity of a “foreign” production—among other feelings and concerns, there is also national pride and historical truthfulness in the consideration, not at least Chinese people’s fascination with history and their own imperial past.

Rey Chow’s example incorporates both Mulvey’s and Bordwell’s ideas and brings the relationship between film presentation and the audience to a new level. Imagine this scenario: our students—non-Chinese with little to no prior knowledge and experience with China—are the audience watching

Chinese films and trying to make sense of the images of Chinese women on screen. To what extent is the “gaze” still gendered, and to what extent does the audience’s “prior knowledge and experience” (of China and of their own cultures) interfere with their enjoyment and comprehension of a Chinese film? The answers are necessarily complicated, but more relevant to our discussion is the following question: what “prior knowledge” about Chinese culture should we prepare for our students so they can watch and decode images of women on screen? It will be fruitful to look at how women represent Confucian spirits and the formation of the nation-state from its foundation—namely the family.

The Spokeswoman of Confucianism

Watching a Chinese film can be a very sophisticated process of decoding and constructing meanings, since many cultural codes are embedded in the cinematic presentation of Chinese society, sometimes without the director’s awareness. Two Confucian characteristics are particularly akin to this discussion: this-worldly philosophical orientation and the focus on families. The two are in fact related, for an interest in families necessitates a focus on practical and mundane issues that sustain family life. If we examine the familial roles women play on screen, it is not difficult to see that women are often the ones who try at all costs to maintain stability at home and to ensure the continuation of the ancestral line of a clan—sometime their fathers’ but more often their husbands’. We can thus infer at least two features. First, men hold on to theories and ideals both in actions and in convictions, while women are more ready to deviate in action from what they truly believe at heart. Second, women are often more independent, tough, and practical than men.

Clips from three films illustrate how women in recent Chinese films are faithful followers of Confucianism in their practical and conformist approaches to life: *The Soong Sisters* (1996), *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996), and *A World without Thieves* (2004). My choices are deliberate in that each film

depicts women from a different social spectrum and literary genre. *The Soong Sisters*, a biographical drama, is based on the lives of the three Soong sisters, who respectively married to H.H. Kong (a rich financier and China’s finance minister in early twentieth century), Dr. Sun Yat-sen (China’s national father), and Chiang Kai-shek (Generalissimo and President of the Republic of China). As such, the film delineates women from modern China’s ruling class whose personal choices affect national affairs in recognizable ways. Against the looming shadow of a historical event (Hong Kong’s return to China in 1997) *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* portrays two Chinese immigrants—a man (Li Xiaojun) and a woman (Li Qiao) who are strangers to each other—coming to Hong Kong in the mid-1980s in search for new lives and ending up together in New York years later. Through their many unexpected life-altering incidents and experiences, the film shows how ordinary people struggle to achieve their life goals and how their aspirations and determinations are cruelly engulfed by waves of social changes that pay no attention to individuals. Finally, *A World without Thieves* is a story of Chinese Bonnie and Clyde wrapped in an Oriental Express. Wang Li (the Chinese Bonnie) and Leaf (a female thief in a gang)—the two leading women in the movie—are both lovers of criminals; yet the movie shows that even women living outside of family structure and on the edge of the laws behave according to Confucian codes in spirit, if not always in action. In all three movies, we see women move on to new situations much faster than men, who are often held back by their old ideals and principles.

Men Are from Venus and Women Are from Mars”: Examples

Although John Gray’s famous title *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* implies that men are more practical and women are more romantic, Chinese women in recent Chinese films are much more practical and daring than men. In these film presentations, men tend to be more idealistic, holding on to principles and ideals, oblivious of changing circumstances. On the other hand, women constantly re-evaluate the

changing conditions, adjust their expectations, and adapt to reality much faster.

In Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters*, Charlie Soong insists that his daughters be educated to become China's new women and take on great responsibilities and more important roles in the new China he and his fellow revolutionary (among them Dr. Sun Yat-sen) were striving to build. The irony is that when his daughters become China's new women with minds of their own, he cannot tolerate their independence. His insistence that Qingling, his second daughter, renounce her romantic interest with Sun Yat-sen is the best example. Although he is proud that his daughters are well educated, independent, and capable of assisting his co-revolutionary, he cannot accept the fact that Qingling is in love with Sun and wants to marry him. Charlie dismisses her love as mere "hero worship." The open-minded father who advocated his daughters' Western education turns out to be the same Confucian father who demands their absolute obedience when it comes to marriage. On the other hand, his wife Ni Guizhen, who is hesitant to let her young daughters go abroad for school at the beginning, turns out to be much more adept in accepting the changes that result from their Western education. Charlie's opposition to Qingling's marriage is grounded mainly on several moral issues. Sun is a national hero and a revolutionary partner. Having his daughter marry Sun would be a breach of both personal and public moral codes: a hero is to be "worshipped not to be loved," and being a personal friend puts Sun a generation above his daughter and, therefore, forms a generational taboo. There is also a separation of labor along gender lines, where men stay with nation-building while women constantly focus on building and perfecting the family.¹⁰

According to Charlie, the personal offense makes him



Charlie Soong throws his arms and says to Qingling: "We've become laughing stocks." *The Soong Sisters* (1996)

and his wife a laughingstock among their friends, and the public offense endangers Sun's credibility as a national leader. In comparison, Ni Guizhen's approach is realistic and down to earth: she first tries to reason with Qingling, asking her to consider the great difference in their ages; then, after seeing how determined Qingling is, she relents. The mother and daughter reconcile in silence in one of the film's most touching scenes, when the runaway Qingling turns back to face her mother, and Ni looks at Qingling with all the blessing a mother can muster and convey through her expressive eyes.

Because women are concerned more with "here and now," they also tend to make decisions that address the current situation. A scene from *A World without Thieves* shows how Wang Li and Wang Bo (the Chinese Bonnie and Clyde) hold



Uncle Li advises Leaf: "Greatness is ruthless." *A World without Thieves* (2004)

very different views about their salvation. For Wang Bo, the Clyde, their fate is sealed: with all the crimes they have committed thus far, salvation is not possible, not in this life, not in a next life, nor in any other lives beyond that. Therefore, there is no point of return and no necessity even to reflect upon return. On the other hand, Wang Li, the Bonnie, acts exactly according to the common Buddhist belief that "the moment you put down your knife is the moment you step on the path to Buddhahood" (*fangxia tudao, lidi chengfo* 放下屠刀,立地成佛). For her, *karma* is accumulative from now on. It is almost as if religion has no effect on Wang Bo but is created for exactly the mindset of Wang Li.

No less practical is Leaf, the female gangster who betrays her boss Uncle Li, the ringleader, at the pivotal moment and

turns him in to the police. The scene comes toward the end of the hide-and-seek played among the authorities, the gangsters, and Wang Bo and Wang Li. Knowing that his confrontation with public security is imminent and trying to outsmart the police, Uncle Li has himself handcuffed by Leaf, his amour-in-crime, who disguises herself as a female police officer. They are hoping to escape from the train in the imminent confusion when the train enters the next station and the local police force will make an arrest with the public security people already on the train. The two exchange their thoughts as they wait for the train to stop. When Leaf comments on the lack of loyalty shown by Number Two and others when

they betray Uncle Li, he dismisses loyalty as something that exists only in fiction and advises her that "to survive in the

underworld," she should "remember just three words: Greatness is ruthless"¹¹ The advice obviously strikes a chord with Leaf about her own future, for in the next scene she does exactly what he suggested—ruthlessly turns him in to the police after apologizing for taking his advice. What Uncle Li theorizes, Leaf carries out in action.

To drive this male-theory/female-practice dichotomy further, let us compare the two women with Li Xiaojun, the leading man, in *Comrade, Almost a Love Story*. Xiaojun is devoted to his Chinese fiancée Xiao-ting and works hard to save money in order to bring her to Hong Kong. However, various circumstances—most having to do with survival—lead Xiaojun to have an affair with Li Qiao, who is determined to succeed at any cost in this new environment full of possibilities. To achieve her goal of success, Li Qiao refuses to be involved emotionally and thus treats her affair with Xiaojun simply as physical needs of two lonely people. However, this is not something Xiaojun can handle. Shortly after he brings Xiao-

ting to Hong Kong, marries her, and starts a new life, he realizes that his love for Li Qiao is too great to be ignored. He confesses the affair to Xiao-ting and begs for her forgiveness. In a rage, Xiao-ting asks why he would bother to get her out of China when he was having an affair with Li Qiao. Xiaojun answers sheepishly that getting her out “was his ideal.” Ultimately, it is Xiao-ting who insists on a divorce and who first steps into a new life of her own. What comes down is the man’s holding on to personal goals almost blindly, incapable of reassessing changed circumstances.

Since women in Confucian society are charged with personal responsibility for the welfare of the family, they are faced with practical and realistic matters day in and day out, the so-called “seven items as soon as one opens the door (to a house)” (*kaimen qijianshi* 開門七件事): firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, and tea, the basic necessities, according to Chinese. As a result, women appear to be more utilitarian and focus primarily on the here and now. In comparison, men can often afford to ignore the more practical and mundane aspects of life and to indulge in the abstract and the ideal, at least in movies. Again, some scenes from the three movies will help to illustrate this point.

In an early scene from *The Soong Sisters*, Charlie Soong tries to educate his three daughters at a very young age and takes them out in a maze on a snowy day, teaching them the “penguin dance.” When Ni Guizhen and her servants find them in the snow and complains that the cold weather will make them sick, Charlie retorts; “The cold won’t make them sick; only poverty makes people sick.” Charlie’s metaphorical language contrasts sharply with Ni Guizhen’s practical concern.

Continuing the scene from *A World without Thieves* with Wang Li gobbling down Peking duck, we get another contrasting example of the dichotomy of a theoretical man versus a practical woman. Regardless of Wang Li’s request not to tell her any details about her lover until after she finishes eating, the detective goes ahead and unfolds in flashback a detailed account of Wang Bo’s final hours. After he is done, he

comments on how his pregnant wife eats just like Wang Li does, because she, too, “worried about the baby’s nutrition.” Then, just before he leaves, he says curtly to Wang Li “When he grows up, don’t hide the truth from him. Tell him exactly who his father was. There is nothing to be ashamed of.” Whether it is the mention of the baby or the detective’s leaving, Wang Li stops eating and sits still for a few seconds. Then she resumes eating, mechanically doing the Peking duck routine—placing pieces of duck slices into a pancake, dipping green onion pieces into the sauce, wrapping the pancake into a roll, and then biting and stuffing the



Xiaojun looks at the pictures from his aunt’s treasure trunk. *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996)

roll into her mouth. Soon, her eyes well and tears start trickling down her cheeks; nonetheless, she does not stop chewing, however mechanical it has become. The poignant scene marks how determined Wang Li is to focus on the present and near future instead of withdrawing into the past. Her lover is dead, but her baby is on its way. She is forcing herself to focus on the baby through nourishing herself. The scene is reminiscent of a Confucian paradigm glorified throughout Chinese history: a widowed mother doing her very best to bring up her offspring to continue the family lines.

This does not mean that women do not have romantic sentiments or that they forget about their ideals. They make room for their romantic past and ideals, but they do not let the past hinder what has to be done in the present. Li Xiaojun’s Hong Kong aunt in *Comrade, Almost a Love Story* illustrates this point the best. In her youth back in the 1950s, she had dinner with William Holden at the Peninsula, the island’s famed luxury hotel, frequented by movie stars and other dignitaries. She stole a dinner knife, fork, and napkin while William was not paying attention. These memorabilia are placed in a trunk with other valuable things in her life. She takes them out and

looks at them often and is quite content with that. For her, William is a milestone and a sweet memory that she can never forget, but she does not let this memorable incident paralyze her; she lives a busy life regardless of her fond memory. She knows the improbability of ever having anything to do with Holden and will not let herself believe otherwise.

Similarly, Li Qiao separates romance and reality in words and action. Early in the film, she has her first tryst with Xiaojun in his tiny basement lodging—unexpectedly, after they celebrate Chinese New Year’s Eve together. The following day, Xiaojun goes to see her at McDonald’s, where she works. Li

Qiao acts as if nothing has passed between the two good friends, offering him “half a dozen” promotional Teddy bears, so he can “send them home to [his] folks.” Xiaojun cannot handle the new relationship between them the same way and feels that he should be responsible for her more than he would were she a mere friend. When Li Qiao learns what is in his mind, she tells the awkward and guilt-driven Xiaojun that what happened was simply “two lonely people keep[ing] each other warm” on a New Year’s Eve that “was rainy cold,” nothing more.

In all these episodes, women curb their ideals and romantic inclinations to focus more on the matters in hand and the situations at present. They try to change what they can; when they cannot, they conform with and adapt to the situation. Their spirits are very much in line with the pragmatic and this-worldly inclination of Confucianism. The practical and tenacious images of women in recent Chinese films speak volumes for the essence of Confucian womanhood: practicality, daringness, perseverance, and selflessness.

Conclusion

In recent Chinese films, women are much more practical and independent



Li Qiao explains to Xiaojun what happened between them: "Last night. . . it was rainy cold. . ." *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996)

than men in their familial or non-familial roles. Furthermore, through their relations with the family, Chinese women often turn themselves into the focus and subvert the importance of their male relatives, for they are often the active ones advancing (and ending) the films, unlike Mulvey's dynamics of traditional Western narrative film, where the man's role is "the active one of advancing the story" (20). Indeed, Confucianism's emphasis on family allocates a specific place to women in society; whereas society outside the family becomes the battleground for men and their careers, family is turned into a stage by women upon which they exercise their ability, talent, and power and perform their own drama.

Growing up with images on television and movie screens, our students are savvy viewers. Furthermore, their comprehension of the connotations and expressions of film images are sharpened even more with the remarkable use of DVDs. Commentaries, such as those in the Criterion Collection, allow viewers to listen to film critics, directors, or producer alongside the images. Trailers on DVDs de-mystify technical intricacies by showing how fantastical elements were produced and how actors and actresses prepared for their roles. In addition to the more crystallization and accessibility of film production, film studies also incorporate and make salient use of many schools of thoughts and contemporary theories. In effect, film has become another language through which we can communicate to students complicated ideas through images. All these are universal aspects about films, especially mainstream Western films.

However, in watching an ethnic film, the process of decoding becomes more complicated because viewers bring with them less (or different) prior knowledge and experience about the subject, as noted by Bordwell and Chow. And here is where we, as Chinese teachers, can contribute much to the discipline to

ensure that our students are equipped with reasonable "prior knowledge" about Chinese culture—not to bond them to the tradition but to use as a yardstick to evaluate how the film images capture, support, reproduce, deviate from, or recreate that culture. In short, films can be a very effective medium in teaching culture—not least in defusing misunderstandings and stereotypes.

Endnotes

¹For example, one common non-familial role is prostitution, whose importance is often evaluated against relation to a family—whether a woman threatens a family's normalcy or tries to become a part of it. Rarely does a career woman become the protagonist without her familial roles. Wei Minzhi, the thirteen-year-old substitute teacher in Zhang Yimou's *Not One Less* (1999), is a rare exception.

²Even students with some Asian background are often surprised to learn that the smallest units in a Confucian society are families, not individuals, although on reflection they see the reasoning.

³Following the box office record setting of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* in 2000, Zhang Yimou's *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) opened in mainstream American theatre shortly after their debuts in China and Hong Kong, where the films were produced.

⁴See Yuejin Wang's "Red Sorghum Mixing Memory and Desire," in *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, ed. Chris Berry (London: BFI, 1993): 93.

⁵Shuqin Cui, *Women Through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i

P, 2003): xi.

⁶In his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Sigmund Freud discussed scopophilia—pleasure derived by observation. With "observation" at its root, scopophilia is then aligned with voyeurism. Mulvey took this Freudian notion one step forward to align the audience with the male/active/looking position and the women on screen the female/passive/looked-at position. See "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989): 16-17.

⁷See Shuqin Cui, "Gendered Perspective: The Construction and Representation of Subjectivity and Sexuality in *Ju Dou*," in Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu's *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nativism, Gender* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1997): 310-313.

⁸David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985): 33.

⁹Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1991): 24.

¹⁰Although Sun marries Qingling in the end, he is seen only passively in the scene when Charlie confronts the couple in their wedding, unlike his active, commanding role in earlier scenes.

¹¹The original Chinese has five characters 無毒不丈夫 (*wu du bu zhangfu*, literally "without poison not a great man"), which means "without applying extreme measures, one can not accomplish a great career."

RESEARCH OF NOTE

Reading Xu Bing's "Book from the Sky:" A Case Study in the Making of Meaning

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I am not concerned here to speculate on authorial intent—what Xu Bing's "Book from the Sky (*tianshu*)" might mean to him as the artist.¹ And there are better informed scholars available to evaluate the many different, often insightful sociological and political interpretations of this installation. I am not an art historian who might be able to make profitable associations between *tianshu* and other examples of "conceptual art"—a genre of art that promises a message we might not immediately understand, but that invites an open-ended range of speculation about meaning.

I do however want to dispute any suggestion that Xu Bing can be explained as playing largely to a foreign audience without significant recourse to his own Chinese cultural tradition. Are such Chinese artists ideologically imprisoned as they depend on Western values and discourse for their art? To put it simply, is this contemporary art rooted in Chinese culture, or is it yet another excellent example of what some would interpret as cultural self-colonization?²

All that I have to offer here is what the "new art" of *tianshu* means to me as a student of Chinese philosophy when I attempt to locate it within the formative cosmological assumptions of Chinese culture—a phenomenological

description of my own response to Xu Bing's art if you will. I want to argue that for me at least, Xu Bing's *tianshu* certainly evokes some associations that are decidedly Western—James Joyce's



Some of the opened "pages" of Xu Bing's "Book from the Sky."

enigmatic *Finnegans Wake*, for example, comes immediately to mind.

But Xu Bing's work also stimulates a much richer reflection that is located squarely within a familiar Chinese cultural discourse and a demonstrably Chinese understanding of the way in which language works in the production of meaning. I want to suggest that in contrast with this Chinese understanding, there are persistent cosmological assumptions about language and meaning that have predominated within our own philosophical narrative that would at least retard a similar response if not provoke a fundamentally different interpretation of *tianshu*.

Indeed, there is a profoundly serious philosophical question prompted by Xu Bing's *tianshu*—Where does meaning come from? An attempt to answer this question will provide us with the occasion to distinguish Chinese cosmology from our own persistent ontological assumptions about language and creativity. But before embarking on this philosophical excursus that *tianshu* invites, I want to first reflect on a more fanciful response that the culturally-informed observer might have at a less deliberate and more immediate level.

However opaque the *tianshu* text might appear, there are familiar formal continuities with contemporary Chinese written culture that give it a logic and coherence—the individual, self-contained graphs themselves as a distinctive style of writing, a finite, yet sufficient vocabulary of some 4000 characters (about the same number as recognized by an educated Chinese person), the proportional redundancy of the characters, the physical structure and organization of a stitched book with title page, table of contents, front matter, columns, and folio and verso pagination, the inclusion of interlinear commentary in smaller characters, the familiar carved calligraphic brush strokes of 12th century woodblock printing, and so on. And even more suggestive of legibility, in the construction of the *tianshu* "characters," many of the 214 standard "radicals" or "signifiers" are used that tell us that the meaning of this particular character has some reference to "earth" or "silk thread," to "cutting" or "handling." The promise of textual prophecy—of the text speaking its message—lies in the degree to which it evokes a familiar sense of language, and arouses an anticipation of meaning in the observer. At this level, the promise and the disappointment must be more meaningful to someone who is literate in the Chinese language than someone who is not.

The not unfamiliar title of the new art, *tianshu*, reiterates this promise that the text is meaningful. The art historian, Wu Hung has argued that colloquially, *tianshu* in this context would mean “nonsense writing”—“abstruse or illegible writing that makes no sense to its reader.”³ A necessary clarification of Wu Hung’s claim would be that *tianshu* is not to be understood as nonsense in the sense of mere unintelligible scribble. Indeed, within this inherited Chinese cultural legacy, an encounter with an inaccessible, esoteric “text” of one kind or another—a “nonsense writing” that resists our reading and understanding—is not an altogether unfamiliar experience.

We might be prompted to think of *tianshu* as “historical” by the fact that there is enough continuity with our current sense of the written language that we can identify it as such. At the same time it evokes an antique primordiality in that its untelligibility suggests that the novelty attending an always continuing present has outrun its linguistic reference. What once was a determinate, rational language has become residual, and we are left with an obsolete vocabulary that would speak if it could of a lost world before the birthing of our present linguistic epoch—of a profoundly literate civilization that we no longer have the cultural competence to know.

If we were to think speculatively and more historically, one possible association one might have with the *tianshu* is these characters are some long lost language of the mysterious Xia dynasty or some earlier proto-Chinese culture that, having vanished from sight in the morning mists of history, are still at least formally continuous with an always emergent Chinese literate culture. After all, subsequent to the Xia is the Shang dynasty from which we have only in the last century inherited the language of the oracle bones—the *jiaguwen*—written on the physical medium of bovid scapula and turtle plastron that are less familiar than the

tianshu books. These oracle bones contain a rich although largely incomprehensible vocabulary of some 3000 characters that are unintelligible to most people. Indeed only trained paleographers are able to read them, while even this expert group with a century of painstaking detective work behind them has only been able to decipher about 1000 of the 3000 characters.

When we are confronted by this “nonsense” *tianshu* text, a playful and fanciful response is thus to seek for the security of a specific, culturally revealing context—to make the text familiar and friendly by locating it historically as some archaic or esoteric form of transmission. Of course, this attempt to seek context is going to be one source of difference that indeed “adds up to something” when entertained from within a Chinese cultural sensibility.

But when we “read” Xu Bing’s *tianshu* as an invitation to search for meaning, it shuts down our usual expectations and redirects the inquiry to another level. The unyielding recalcitrance of the “language” takes us beyond any of these rather desperate contextualizing speculations, and forces upon us the profoundly philosophical question: Where does meaning come from—how is meaning made? And how does language convey this meaning? How do we construct our *imaginaire*? I want to suggest that the answer to these important questions will require us to distinguish Chinese cosmological commitments from our own persistent assumptions about the source of creativity.

I begin by taking my own “commentary” as a clear object lesson in what Xu Bing’s provocative artistic expression can hope to accomplish within its own Chinese worldview—that is, the further production of meaning. Indeed, I will argue that one distinctive feature of

“But when we ‘read’ Xu Bing’s tianshu as an invitation to search for meaning, it shuts down our usual expectations and redirects the inquiry to another level. The unyielding recalcitrance of the ‘language’ takes us beyond any of these rather desperate contextualizing speculations, and forces upon us the profoundly philosophical question: Where does meaning come from—how is meaning made? And how does language convey this meaning? How do we construct our imaginaire?”

Chinese process cosmology is the continuing “emergence” of order—a hermeneutical assumption about how meaning is made that will not allow for any severe distinction between “text” and the productiveness of interpretation. “Emergence” is a *creatio in situ* assumption about creative advance, and is captured early in the Chinese tradition in the expression *tiyong*—“the mutuality of reforming and functioning.” The earliest extant occurrence of this *tiyong* expression is by the commentator (and philosopher) Wang Bi (226-249) in his interpretation of Chapter 38 of the *Daodejing*, but it becomes ubiquitous in subsequent Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophical reflection. Simply put, in Chinese cosmology, *all* creativity is construed as a situated and radically embedded, collaborative co-creativity. Creating oneself and creating one’s world is a coterminous and mutually entailing process.

Perhaps the clearest canonical statement of this notion of emergent co-creativity is *Zongyong* 25 in its explanation of *cheng*—a familiar term usually translated as “sincerity” or “integrity,” but herein used with a less familiar cosmological application about the production of meaning. Immediately relevant to our reflection on the “language” of *tianshu*, the etymology of the character *cheng* itself suggests “consummating or completing (*cheng*)” through “discourse (*yan*).” This cosmological application of *cheng* has prompted us along with other commentators to consider “creativity” as an appropriate alternative to “sincerity”



Tianshu's illegible script.

or “integrity” in rendering it in this important passage:⁴

Creativity (*cheng*) is self-consummating (*zicheng*), and its way (*dao*) is self-advancing (*zidao*). “Creativity” references anything (*wu*) taken from its beginning to its end, and without this creativity, there are no things or events. It is thus that, for exemplary persons (*junzi*), it is creativity that is prized. But creativity is not simply the self-consummating of one’s own person; it is what consummates other things. Consummating oneself is becoming authoritative in one’s conduct (*ren*); consummating other things is exercising wisdom in realizing one’s world (*zh*).⁵ It is

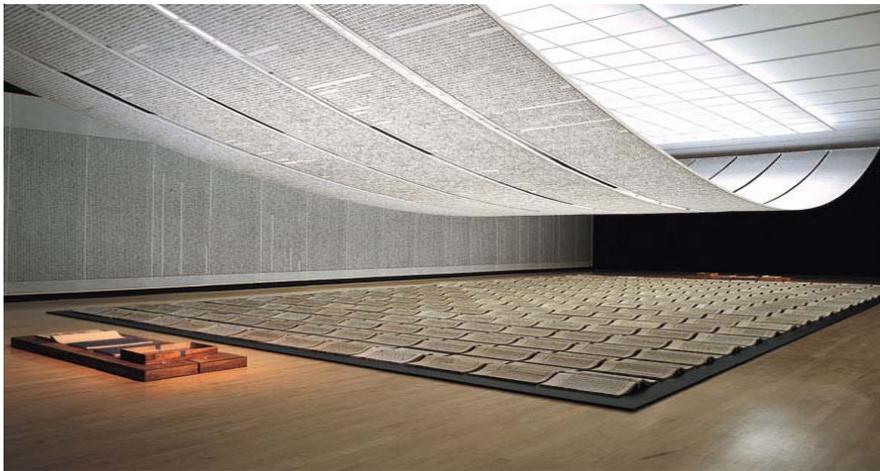
text quite literally breaks into song in celebration of the human capacity to create meaning and to realize its world, describing the consummatory human being as fully a co-creator with the heavens and the earth in the emergent order of the cosmos). In the Chinese cosmology expressed here, the lived world is the bottomless unfolding of an emergent, contingent world according to the rhythm of its own internal creative processes without any fixed pattern or guiding hand. Indeed, the absence of any creator “God” in this cosmology lifts the bar rather significantly on the degree of creativity expected from the human collaborator.

Having said this, the “emergent” sense of creativity is not entirely unfamiliar in our recent philosophical narrative. But as the Italian philosopher

“discovered” the productiveness of interpretation or—which is the same—the nonepiphenomenality, instrumentality, or secondariness of the commentary.⁸

Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” is only a fairly recent philosophical cliché. In fact, I want to argue that the Chinese cosmology in which the factic life-experience is processual, “never stopping night or day”⁹ places it historically in rather stark contrast to the “logocentrism” of the pre-Darwinian Anglo-European philosophical narrative that has inspired the internal critique to which Vattimo alludes. To use Heidegger’s language, our narrative begins from “theo-ontological” rather than cosmological questions—the search for some permanent and certain reality, a *logos*, that grounds and causally explains appearances with only a secondary interest in a prescription for how changing things can hang together most productively. In this search for a unifying “reality,” one specific aspect of the human religious, philosophical, physical, and volitional experience—God, rationality, matter, or will—has often been lifted out of the always fluid process and then privileged as causal and originative.

Until the philosophic revolution beginning slowly with Darwin and gaining real cultural ascendancy only over the past generation or so, we have been importantly a “logocentric” tradition. Logocentrism with respect to language is the assumption that a literal language of presence can be recovered in an “archaeology” of a text—the search for primitive origins or beginnings. On the analogy of the *Logos* as expressed in the scriptures, a search is undertaken for the objective authorial intent as a source of meaning that stands quite independent of the reader or the text’s changing context, where interpretation is merely derivative and instrumental. The Platonic and Aristotelian quest for essential definitions—what-it-is-to-be-things-of-this-kind—as the true objects of knowledge, and the primary understanding of etymology as the search for the original—indeed, the “true (*etumos*)”—meaning of a word is closely linked to the traditional importance of



The *Tianshu* conceptual art piece in its entirety.

achieved excellence (*de*) in one’s natural tendencies (*xing*) and is the way of integrating what is more internal and what is more external.⁶ Thus, when and wherever one applies such excellence, the result is fitting.

Taking the *Zhongyong* as a linear and coherent text, I would observe its early sections begin rather tentatively with expressed concern over the continuing failure of human beings to forge their way in the world. Indeed, an exasperated Confucius laments that “This proper way, alas, is not being traveled at all!”⁷ But once under way, the pace of the *Zhongyong* then accelerates with increasing speed toward a “halleluiahs chorus” crescendo in the last several sections in which the

Gianni Vattimo observes, the Anglo-European world has come relatively late to its current hermeneutical awareness of how the commentary as well as the text is a significant source of meaning:

By the productiveness of interpretation, I mean that interpretation is not only an attempt to grasp the original meaning of the text (for example the authorial intention) and to reproduce it as literally as possible but also to add something essential to the text (to understand it better than its author, the adage resonating in eighteenth century hermeneutics). . . . [T]he European culture of late modernity

creatio ex nihilo in our assumptions about the ultimate source of meaning. The putative search for the “literal” meaning behind the metaphorical or interpretive is itself a search for origins, for the reality behind appearances, a quest for certainty. Indeed, “in the beginning was the Word, the *logos*.”

Let me try to bring the contrast between this familiar *creatio ex nihilo* sense of creativity and the Chinese commitment to *creatio in situ* into clearer focus. In the course of time, the high expectations of the human experience that we find in the *Zhongyong* have produced an a-theistic religiousness that elevates the *cultivated* human experience into cosmic proportions. Human beings, without reference to limiting assumptions about religious transcendentalism and supernaturalism, have become a source of profound meaning in their own world—the only world. Cosmic creativity is fully a collaboration between human beings and their own enviroing context. Indeed, it is the cosmic import of human co-creativity that moves the *Zhongyong* to its religious crescendo:

Only those in the world of utmost creativity (*zhicheng*) are able to separate out and braid together the many threads on the great loom of the world. Only they set the great root of the world and realize the transforming and nourishing processes of heaven and earth.

How could there be anything on which they depend?

So earnest, they are authoritative (*ren*);
So profound, they are a bottomless abyss (*yuan*);
So pervasive, they are *tian* (*tian*).

Only those whose own capacities of discernment and sagely wisdom extend to the powers of *tian* could possibly understand them.¹⁰

Borrowing an expression from the *Yijing*, Tang Junyi has described this processual flow of experience without initial beginning or end as “the notion of ceaseless procreation.”¹¹ Experience is persistent, historicist, and naturalistic in

the sense of having no appeal to any metaphysical or supernatural source. Meaning is emergent in the transactions among the unique things that constitute the world.

The phenomenological world in classical China is an endless flow, evidencing its formal character only as “trans-form-ation.” In fact, the *Great Commentary* says explicitly that “spirituality is without squareness and change is without body.”¹² “Things” are in fact a processive and hence always provisional flux of “events,” where the shifting dispositioning of these events is interactive and mutually shaping.¹³

When we locate *tianshu* within these underlying cosmological assumptions, we have to realize that in this early and persistent Chinese cosmology, language and people are the outside and inside of the same thing where meaning is made through productive associations. Hans-Georg Gadamer observes:

The “use” of words is not a “using” at all. Rather language is a medium, an element: language is the element in which we live, as fishes live in water. . . . In the exchange of words, the thing meant becomes more and more present. A language is truly a “natural language” when it binds us together in this way.¹⁴

The Chinese processual cosmology would perhaps take this understanding of language one step further and claim that, more than a medium, language is constitutive of who we are as irreducibly relational people. Indeed the medium and the message are one and the same. If we pursue the question: “what does relationality mean?” we must allow that these various modalities of discourse are certainly key—a relationship is “relating to” or “giving an account of oneself.” We create each other through linguistic intercourse.

It is within these cosmological assumptions about language and human co-creativity expressed in texts such as the *Zhongyong* that we have to locate Xu Bing’s *tianshu*. At an intellectual level, *tianshu* certainly presents us with the question that we have rehearsed above: Where does meaning come from?

And in so doing, *tianshu* has enabled us to make an important distinction between the *creatio ex nihilo* sensibility of some single, independent, originative, and determinative authority that has had such broad play within the Western philosophical narrative, and the *creatio in situ* (*tiyong*) sense of emergent, participatory meaning so familiar and persistent within Chinese cosmology.

When considered from the *creatio in situ* perspective, *tianshu* initially in resisting understanding interrupts the ecology of meaning-making and self-articulation. While frustrating our search for immediate linguistic meaning, *tianshu* presents us with the incipient, the inchoate, the yet indeterminate—a still dark yet promising hint of meaning that forces a confrontation with our own unique imaginative powers of commentary and interpretation.

The *Daodejing* 56 tells us:

Those who really understand it do not talk about it,
And those who talk about it do not really understand it.

What does this saying say? The *Zhuangzi* can serve as commentary here. In the *Zhuangzi*’s description of what it calls “tipping goblet” words (*zhiyan*), we find the contrast between the putatively “full” language of reference and authority and the “empty” language that always requires refilling. Language is constituted primarily by premise-dependent disputational words (*yuyan*) and the weighty, conversation-stopping words of orthodoxy and authority (*chongyan*). *Zhiyan* are words whose function invokes the image of a goblet that empties out automatically when filled to the brim, and then again rights itself to offer the opportunity be filled once again. According to the *Zhuangzi*:

Words that have premises occupy some 90% of our speech, and weighty, repeatable sayings occupy 70% of that. “Tipping goblet” words are new every time, and achieve a productive coherence on the revolving wheel of nature.

The 90% of words that have premises appeal to something beyond themselves for justification. It is like the father who will not act as the

matchmaker for his own son because the praises of someone other than the father are more persuasive than his own. The onus thus falls on someone other than oneself. People accept only what accords with their own premises, and reject what does not—they give affirmation to what accords with their premises and take exception when it is otherwise.

Canonical sayings that occupy 70% of such speech are conversation-stoppers, so they must come from our seniors. But where such persons are merely ahead of us in years but do not have the comprehensive know-how and discrimination we expect from elders, they are not ahead at all. Indeed, a person who does not have access to our precursors has no cultural legacy, and without it, is simply called old and useless.

The “tipping goblet” words that are new every time and achieve a productive coherence on the revolving wheel of nature can be relied upon to meet the ceaseless changes in life and to realize one’s full complement of years. There is parity in not speaking. . . . Thus there is the saying: “Do not say anything.” If in speaking you do not say anything, then in a lifetime of speaking you have yet to say anything, and in a lifetime of not saying anything you have never failed to speak up.

From one perspective something is permissible, and yet from another it is not; from one perspective something is so, and yet from another it is not so. What makes something so? Declaring it so makes it so. What makes it not so? Declaring it not so makes it not so. What makes it permissible? Declaring it permissible makes something permissible. What makes it not permissible? Declaring it not permissible makes it not permissible. Everything as a matter of course has that which

is so about it, and that which is permissible about it. There is nothing that is not so and that is not permissible. If it were not for “tipping goblet” words that are new every time and that achieve a productive coherence on the revolving wheel of nature, who could endure for long?¹⁵

Zhiyan is language understood as responsive to context and thus always appropriate: a living, emergent vocabulary that is constantly being reinvested and reauthorized as the cultural conversation continues. The *Zhuangzi* is declaring the speciousness of any “literal” metanarrative that would promise to give us access to some foundational truth—what is identified here specifically as referential language that has premises (*yuyan*) and that is freighted with the authority of repeatable, canonical sayings (*zhongyan*). Indeed, this chapter of the *Zhuangzi* is often construed as a commentary on statements made about language in the “Inner Chapters:”

Saying is not just exhaling breath; it is supposed to be saying something. The problem is that, since what is said is not fixed, in the final analysis are we saying something or have we in fact said nothing at all? People surmise that language is different from the twittering of fledgling birds, but in fact is there really any way of making this distinction?¹⁶

Language as the ceaseless flow of reality is what the *Zhuangzi* means when it insists on having a further word with the person who has forgotten words:

The reason for fishtraps is to catch fish, but having caught the fish, you forget the fishtrap. The reason for rabbit snares is to snare rabbits, but having caught the rabbit, you forget the snare. The reason for words is to capture meaning, but having grasped the meaning, you forget the words. Where can I find a person who has forgotten the words so that I can have a word with him.¹⁷

Without fixed reference, all we have is language as a currency for productively renegotiating situations as they arise—what Richard Rorty calls our possibility to generate infinite “redescriptions” (or perhaps better, “represcriptions”) so that the conversation might continue. Silence is not an option—it is an inverse obstinacy to literal language. What we need is to speak up and say nothing—that is, to say no “thing” as an object of fixed reference. That in a lifetime of such speaking, one can claim to have said nothing, is consistent with *Daodejing* 78 that states “appropriate language seems contradictory.” Indeed, the *Zhuangzi*’s *zhiyan* all language becomes art—it becomes poetry in which the text emerges in its full autonomy. In Gadamer’s words, “here language just stands for itself, it brings itself to stand before us.”¹⁸ What Gadamer means, I think, is that poetry is presentation, and cannot be treated instrumentally and reductively as representation.



An example of the “nonsense” *tianshu* text.

For the *Zhuangzi* it is the flexibility of this kind of language that enables us to survive. Xu Bing’s “characters” are such “tipping goblet” words that in standing invitingly empty before us, declare the impermanence and ultimate emptiness of any invested authority while at the same assuring us of the inexhaustible flow of adaptable, always provisional meaning.

If we allow that the process of meaning-making is made possible by the productive indeterminacy of image and language, with only the dawn or twilight of meaning available in viewing *tianshu*, we are overwhelmed by the weight of that indeterminacy. We might not be able to read the graphs themselves, but in our struggle to do so we do presuppose access to the unmarked conjunctions and

transitions that animate the Chinese language, and these fluid transitions and conjunctions give us the “and” of additional significance.

Language thus conceived as context and relation-dependent and at the same time, open and indeterminate, has the potential to liberate and animate our own aesthetic responsibility as co-creators—to release our unmediated, authentic experience of temporality, our *gongfu*. The encounter with *tianshu* presents us with an opportunity for recovering the personal aesthetic experience by bringing into question “literalism” and the culture of the Book. The “meaningless” text forces us, in the absence of the normal contextualizing relations of “community,” “reference,” “dogma,” and “science” that is usually freighted in a shared language, to acknowledge in a continuing present our own vital lived historicity, our factic life. It forces what Vattimo calls a “weakening of thinking”—a thinking without the oppressive, aggregating historical narrative presumed in the everyday use of language.

On the one hand, this abrupt awareness can be frustrating if not frightening. We are, in real degree, confronted with a feeling of cultural dyslexia if not amnesia. To the extent that the text is identifiable as “language” and yet stands empty, it is a disintegrating encounter with linguistic “ruins” that threatens our faith and feeling of security in the persistence of a shared commonsense. It is an experience that undermines our sense of communal solidarity and our assumed competence, underscoring the ultimate precariousness of the human experience.

On the other hand, this stimulating encounter has the potential to renew our confidence in our own creative and penetrating subjectivity. In the receding objectivity and orthodoxy, we are renewed as unique, historical, contingent, and provisional beings who struggle with imagination to quite literally make sense of the nonsense. Reassuring objective definition and true description gives way to the authentic experience of temporality—existential language as the source of our song and our poetry. Indeed, it is this “authentic temporality,” our historicity, that is the mystery and inspiration of art. As a response to the life-threatening, suffocating weight of

objectivity, life itself is nothing more or less than making a difference.

But at the same time, we must not overstate the indeterminacy. We must remember that this confrontation with our “lived historicity” is not pure, raw, and vacant, as Sartre would have us believe. It is a specious present still located within a most particular historical continuity that will not be denied. Indeed, it is this historical continuity that, in the absence of conventional meaning, is at once our most primordial identity and our remaining resource for real spontaneity—a liberated virtuosity that certainly exhorts us to think outside the box, but inevitably, from inside *this* box.

What is at stake in the liberation of our historicity is the renewed possibility of the aesthetic and religious quality of experience itself. The weakening of erstwhile commanding values and definitive doctrines that perpetuate an hierarchical center allows for the renewal of our creative possibilities through a proliferation of our own existential narratives. The world becomes ever more beautiful and spiritual through the ongoing embellishment of the tradition as we add the meanings of our own significant, inspired lives.

Endnotes

¹ I do, however, think it would be naïve to think that we can separate in any final way the artist and the connoisseur, where in the aesthetic project that artist is anticipating appreciation, and the connoisseur is searching for the creative act. See John Dewey, “Having an Experience” in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, edited by John J. McDermott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973).

² I am thinking here of the work of Homi Bhabha in his *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

³ Wu Hung, “A ‘Ghost Rebellion’: Notes on Xu Bing’s ‘Nonsense Writing’ and Other Works,” *Public Culture* 6, no. 2 (winter 1994):411.

⁴ See Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001):30-5 for our justification for translating *cheng* as “creativity” along with the commentarial

evidence that supports such a rendering.

⁵ This passage is reminiscent of *Analects* 6.23:

The Master said, “The wise (*zhi*) enjoy water; those authoritative in their conduct (*ren*) enjoy mountains. The wise are active; authoritative persons are still. The wise find enjoyment; authoritative persons are long-enduring.”

Wisdom entails appropriateness to context (see *Analects* 6.22). Thus, in realizing oneself, one necessarily brings realization to one’s situation.

⁶ Importantly, the internal/external *neiwai* distinction is a correlative notion like *yinyang*, and hence mean “more or less.” Character and conduct cannot be treated as exclusive demarcations.

⁷ *Zhongyong* 5.

⁸ Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002):62-3.

⁹ *Analects* 9.17.

¹⁰ Ames and Hall (2001):113.

¹¹ Tang Junyi, *Complete Works* Vol 11 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1988), pp. 20-22.

¹² *Great Commentary* A4.

¹³ In fact, at least as early as the Ming dynasty, the Chinese expression for “thing,” *dongxi*, is literally “east-west,” underscoring the relational and contextual understanding that attends Chinese phenomenological perceptions.

¹⁴ David Ramsay Steele, *Genius in Their Own Words* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002):196.

¹⁵ *Zhuangzi* Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supp. 20. (Peking: Harvard-Yenching, 1947):75/27/1-9..

¹⁶ *Zhuangzi* 4/2/23-4.

¹⁷ *Zhuangzi* 75/26/48-9.

¹⁸ Steele (2002):217.

FOR OUR STUDENTS

Research Report: Economic and Cultural Supports for Trafficking and Prostitution in Thailand and Cambodia

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Introduction

In the summer of 2004, three Eckerd College students, Ronald Porter, Carla Stehman, and Kathryn Peacock, along with an Eckerd alumna, Becky Day, accompanied me to Thailand and Cambodia for a two-month field study of the sale and trafficking of women and children into the sex trades. Our study was generously funded by a student-faculty research mentoring grant through the Freeman Foundation which my colleague from Asian Studies, Andrew Chittick, had acquired for the college. We were hoping to uncover the underlying reasons why this problem does not disappear despite what seem to be honest efforts on the part of the national and international communities to make it do so. Our goal was to visit various NGOs and government offices in-country that were attempting to address the problem, and, most importantly, to gain an understanding of those factors in Thai and Cambodian society which mitigate against their efforts. Each student had a particular focus, including gender relationships, international and domestic law, and social service provision to trafficking victims, and my focus was to pull all of our findings together into a solid understanding of the social and cultural underpinnings of the commercial sex trades in these countries.

It is first of all important to understand what is meant by trafficking. According to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000), trafficking involves

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of

persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or



Our research group with the hill tribe girls rescued from prostitution in Cambodia.

benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (p.3).

It is well known that there is a flourishing, lucrative sex industry in Southeast Asia. It is also well known that prostitution provides fertile ground for trafficking in persons. Since the time of the Viet Nam War, when thousands of United States military men took their rest and relaxation in Bangkok, Thailand gained the reputation of being the world sex capital. The industry took hold later in Cambodia, when the United Nations

mission arrived in 1993 in order to ensure free and safe elections, bringing approximately 20,000 men with money to spend on their own pleasures. Through recent crackdowns by the Thai government on sex with children, there has been a diminishing of sex tourism with children as the intended partners in Thailand, and a significant increase in sex tourism by pedophiles into Cambodia.

Prostitution may be a career choice for women throughout the world. It is unquestionable that in Thailand and Cambodia, a female prostitute can earn far more money than she would earn as an agricultural worker, street vendor, or any of the many other low paying jobs available to rural women. The literature is in conflict as to whether all prostitutes are victims, or only those who are coerced to sell their bodies. Our interest in undertaking this field study, was to examine those issues specific to the women and children of Thailand and Cambodia who do not make this choice for themselves.

Entry into Prostitution

There are fundamentally three ways that women and children enter prostitution, two of which involve trickery and coercion. The first way is voluntary entry; simply making the choice to work in the sex trades. The second way is called debt bonding. In debt bonding, the parents or guardians of a girl are approached by a recruiter, often a person well known in the village, perhaps even a friend. The recruiter typically approaches a poor family and offers money to the family that then sends its daughter to work in the sex trades as collateral against the loan. The amount of the loan can vary from up to \$15,000 in Thailand to a mere \$100 in Cambodia. From the perspective of the parents, they are not selling their daughter; they are simply using her as collateral in order to purchase for

themselves and, ostensibly for her, a better life. What they do not know is that the girl may be sold over and over again to brothel owners and pimps, and that her debt will continue to grow as the traffickers impose fines to make up their own “expenses” in moving her, in getting her false papers if necessary, and as they charge her rent, food costs, medical costs, and the condoms which she may hope that her customers will use. They also are ignorant of the risk of AIDS that their daughters will encounter.

The third entry into prostitution is involuntary. Often involuntary prostitution begins the same way as debt bondage. Recruiters make promises to poor families of good jobs for their daughters in the cities. Sometimes they approach the young women directly. They do not talk of prostitution, but rather of jobs as hotel employees, waitresses, domestic workers, models or factory workers. They promise to pay for the girl’s transportation and to take care of her, and the families and young women are told that she will be able to send money home. However, once the traffickers leave the village with the girl, her debt begins to accrue, and once again we see a form of debt bondage.

The debt of a woman or child trafficked for prostitution never actually goes away. Kevin Bales (1999) offers a clear analysis

of the money to be made by the traffickers and brothel owners on each woman in their “employ” and reveals how little of their income ever goes to the girls themselves. Their debt

increases, they earn progressively less money as their beauty wanes under the continuing stress of serving roughly fifteen clients per night, and they become trapped in a miserable life of desperation.

The recruiters are aware of risk factors which may make it easier to recruit a young woman into debt bondage. Derks (1997) cites the following factors: having an older child, relative or friend who has already been

recruited, family dysfunction including separation, divorce, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling or high family conflict. Of course, families in dire poverty are more vulnerable than those with subsistence income or better.

Recruiters tend to have territories in which they work. In Thailand, hill tribe areas have been major recruiting grounds, and this may stem at least in part from a racist sense that hill tribe people are not truly Thai. Border communities with Burma and Laos have also been fertile ground for the recruitment of young girls. We learned that in Sangkhlaburi alone (a town of 15,000 people on the Burmese border) there are at least twelve operating brothels. The poor, rural northeast region of Thailand is also a productive recruiting environment.

In Cambodia, there is extensive poverty, and the economy is largely rural and agrarian. Traffickers tend to visit poor villages near the borders with Thailand and Viet Nam. Once a trafficker has a Cambodian girl in his care, he may well choose to traffic her right out of her native country into Thailand, where a prostitute can make more money for him.

Interestingly, we learned that Cambodian girls are typically not taken from Cambodia into the Mekong area

of Viet Nam, but that many Vietnamese girls are trafficked into and through Cambodia. Experts viewing the NBC Dateline video aired in 2003 (“Children for Sale”) noted that the children rescued from the Phnom Penh brothel were virtually all Vietnamese.

Both the Thai and Cambodian governments have spoken out about the need to halt trafficking, yet neither government has had overwhelming success in doing so. Both find themselves on the U.S. government’s *Trafficking in Persons Report (2004)* Tier 2 list of countries making efforts to stop trafficking in persons but still falling short of their goals. One method used has been media campaigns. When we

were in Phnom Penh, for example, we saw a poster informing travelers that if they have sex with a child in Cambodia they will go to jail in their own country. In both countries there have been efforts to provide warning information in the rural areas so that families will be aware of what the traffickers are really up to. We learned of efforts by public health workers in western Thailand to go into the villages, ostensibly to show popular movies. Once the villagers are in attendance, half the movie is shown, then stopped while the workers convey their message of the dangers of sex trafficking, HIV, tuberculosis and other grim topics, and then the final half of the movie is aired. We were told that this was the most efficacious way they had found to get the message out to the poor.

The interest of our research group was to learn more about social and cultural supports for prostitution and trafficking that make the problem so resistant to eradication. Through our interviews and extensive reading, we found our answers in religion, male-female relationships, globalization and tourism, and social and economic factors in both countries.

Religion

Both Thailand and Cambodia are largely Theravada Buddhist countries. Inherent in the Theravada Buddhism is the notion of merit making. The Theravada Buddhist strives to make merit for him or herself in this life in order either to reach the ultimate Buddhist state of nirvana, never to reincarnate into another life, or in order to come back into a better life the next time. Along with this notion of merit for the self, comes the belief that a young person must make merit for his or her family as well. The Thai or Cambodian child grows up understanding that his or her relationships with their parents are of paramount importance, and that they accrue a sort of debt to their parents for raising them. A means of paying back the debt is through the making of merit for the family. In both cultures this often translates to helping the family improve their social status.

An easy way for a Thai or Cambodian male to make merit both for himself and his family is to join the monastic order. Giving a son to the

songha brings merit to the family automatically. Merit making options for girls are not so easy to come by, and job opportunities which will allow a girl to send money home and increase her family's status are seen as valuable. This creates a dilemma for the young woman. On the one hand, both Thai and Cambodian cultures look down on prostitutes. On the other hand, even a girl trafficked for prostitution recognizes that she may make merit if she is able to provide money and hence village recognition for her family if she views her situation through a religious lens. Through our interviews in Thailand and Cambodia this theme of merit-making reappeared repeatedly as one of the reasons that efforts to stop trafficking and prostitution have been of only limited success.

Gender Roles and Relationships

A second reason is tied up in women's roles and relationships in both countries. While women are very much valued as mothers, they are considered as inferior to

men throughout Thailand and Cambodia. In fact, we were often told that if a woman had made sufficient merit in her former life, she would have returned in this life as a male!

Superstitious notions about the value of sex with a virgin are also significant contributors to the problem of trafficking in young women. According to Douglas (2003) many Southeast Asian men believe that having sex with a virgin will cure HIV and increase virility. From the trafficker's perspective, this demand calls for an ever-increasing supply of virgin girls, and, at least in Cambodia, helps to explain a trend toward the trafficking of younger and younger females. We were also told in-country of a flourishing market in hymen restoration so that girls will be seen as virgins more than once.

Once a young woman has been trafficked into the sex trades, she is typically abused by pimps, customers, brothel owners, and sometimes by corrupt policemen. Despite the dream idea that having money to send home might make merit for her and her family, her self-esteem is destroyed by the abuse. Once this occurs, many girls wind up choosing to remain in the sex trades, no matter how

they arrived there, because they find comfort in the social networks established with other prostitutes, and because they do not see themselves worthy of better lives. Rescue and rehabilitation agencies that we visited in both Thailand and Cambodia said that the majority of

women and children with whom they work wind up returning to the brothels.

Globalization and Tourism

Despite the fact that roughly 95% of the consumers of prostitutes are Thai and Cambodian men, globalization and tourism have had significant effects on the trafficking and sale of young women in Thailand and Cambodia. With globalization has come an increasing porosity of borders between countries, free trade, tourism, and exposure among the rural poor to the lives of the affluent via television and to the lives of wealthy tourists. Loose borders mean easier trafficking of women from country to country, and both Thailand and Cambodia have become both source and destination countries for women being trafficked throughout Asia and the rest of the world. The increase in tourist dollars into the

countries is important to governments, and mitigates their efforts to stop trafficking and prostitution.

As Thai and Cambodian people become increasingly exposed to "the haves" of the world, their own desires for parity increase. This makes the sale of a child or young woman more justifiable in the impoverished rural areas of Thailand and Cambodia. It also increases corruption among police and government officials who are paid paltry salaries. For example, we learned that a police officer in Cambodia earns approximately \$25 per month from his job, while a Thai police officer earns \$175. The attraction of turning a blind eye on illegal prostitution for payoff is fundamentally a way of increasing the policeman's economy. We were told by the Foundation for Women in Bangkok, that they have had to work hard to identify small cadres of honest policemen to collaborate with them in their work to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked prostitutes.

Poverty

Most of the literature on trafficking and prostitution focuses on poverty as the primary motivator, both for the traffickers and for the families who sell their children. Undoubtedly this is a key factor in both Thailand and Cambodia. Despite the illegality of trafficking and prostitution in both countries, the tourist money coming into the country economy, the money coming via collateral loans from traffickers to poor families, and the money crossing the hands of the young prostitutes are all motivators for the problem to persist. Inadequate salaries for governmental and law officials lead to corruption and inadequate implementation of the laws and conventions designed to stop trafficking.

The Tsunami of December, 2004

The Tsunami which hit southern Thailand on December 26, 2004 has had a chilling effect on the Thai economy. Massive amounts of damage occurred in the highly tourist-oriented beach communities. This disaster has shifted the priorities of the Thai government toward rebuilding efforts, both in terms of infrastructure and in the rebuilding of the lucrative tourist industry. The focus has moved away from addressing human

"Despite the illegality of trafficking and prostitution in both countries, the tourist money coming into the country economy, the money coming via collateral loans from traffickers to poor families, and the money crossing the hands of the young prostitutes are all motivators for the problem to persist."

men throughout Thailand and Cambodia. In fact, we were often told that if a woman had made sufficient merit in her former life, she would have returned in this life as a male!

It is expected in both Thai and Cambodian cultures that men will frequent prostitutes. It is seen as preferable for a man to have sex with a prostitute than to take a minor wife or establish an emotional relationship outside of marriage. Kevin Bales (2002) explains that on a "night out with the boys" a man would find great ego satisfaction in buying a round of prostitutes for his friends. Perhaps in Thailand this relates to the country's long history of polygamy. In Cambodia, the practice of arranged marriage is seen as a contributor, creating potential family dysfunction and males looking for sex outside of the marriage (Douglas, 2003).

“At the same time, it has been recorded in the popular press that there was an increase in the trafficking of children from the refugee camps established after the tsunami. Obviously this totally unexpected disaster has been a significant impediment to efforts to slow the trafficking of women and children into the sex industry in Thailand.”

rights issues and other concerns of the poor to getting the country back on its feet. Efforts to reduce the incidence of trafficking in women and children for prostitution are currently not a primary focus of government effort. At the same time, it has been recorded in the popular press that there was an increase in the trafficking of children from the refugee camps established after the tsunami. Obviously this totally unexpected disaster has been a significant impediment to efforts to slow the trafficking of women and children into the sex industry in Thailand. Fortunately, Cambodia was relatively untouched by the crisis of the tsunami.

Final Words

For Ronald, Carla, Kathryn, Becky and me, this trip provided not only a focus for our research, but a future direction of study for each of us. We presented all of our findings in a remarkably well-attended forum at Eckerd College. My faculty colleagues were amazed by the depth of knowledge the students had acquired, and by the strongly global focus which they were able to take. The political science student made two conference presentations subsequent to our trip, and published a paper in *The Eckerd Scholar*. The student focused on human services is looking closely at comparisons between service provision to needy women in Southeast Asia and those of her home in Washington D.C. The student primarily interested in gender relationships has continued her study of male-female relationships in the United States and is the incoming president of the campus Women's Resource Center.

My own interest is in looking more closely at the interrelationships between cultural factors and the rehabilitation services provided for victims of trafficking and prostitution in Thailand and Cambodia.

Having taught counseling for many years, I was struck by the imposition of Western models of counseling on Southeast Asian women regardless of their Eastern cultural orientation. As one example, all of the NGO's involved in rescue and rehabilitation provided group counseling for the women, although both Thai and Cambodian women told me that they would never share their problems in a group setting in order not to lose face. I am hoping to study more closely the models which counseling personnel are being trained in to evaluate the goodness of fit to the cultures of Thailand and Cambodia. Hopefully, such study may lead to recommendations that could make a difference in the lives of trafficking victims in these countries.

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www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/34021.htm

NGO's Visited:

Thailand

Acting for Women in Distressing Circumstances
 Center for the Protection of Children's Rights
 Chiang Mai Anti-Trafficking Coordination Unit
 ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of children for Sexual Purposes)
 Foundation for Women
 Kwai River Christian Hospital
 New Life Center
 Payap University
 Rong Rang Tham Church
 Save the Children UK

Cambodia

Ad Hoc (Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association)
 Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights
 Cambodian League for the Protection and Defense of Human Rights
 Cambodian Women's Crisis Center
 Cambodian Women's Development Agency
 Khmer Angkor Development Association
 Sankheum Center for Children

2005 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



Roger Ames gestures during his keynote address on Saturday. Photo by Marsha Smith.



The head table at the Friday evening banquet: Betty Buck, ASDP; Anne Ofstedal, UBCHEA; Glenn Shive, HKAC; David Adams, CIES; Roberta Martin, Columbia University; Paul Kjølberg and Diane Clayton, ASIANetwork; Helena Kolenda, Luce Foundation. Photo by Marsha Smith.



Bruce Cumings giving his keynote address at the opening plenary session. Photo by Marsha Smith.



An attentive audience at one of the panel sessions. Photo by Chia Ning.



Students from Whitman College performing a tea ceremony that they learned while in Japan on the Student-Faculty Fellows Program. Photo by Marsha Smith.



Cathy Benton, Development Officer, receives a thank you hug from Van Symons. Photo by Chia Ning.



Joan O'Mara, outgoing Board chair, confers with Van Symons. Photo by Chia Ning.



The outgoing Executive Director and the incoming Executive Director. Photo by Chia Ning.



Van Symons, Betty Buck and Ronnie Littlejohn at the Saturday morning plenary session. Photo by Chia Ning.



Richard Bohr, current Board Chair, shares a light moment with David Vikner and Jim Winship. Photo by Chia Ning.

At the conference, Joan O'Mara led the membership in extending its gratitude to colleagues at Augustana College who have done tremendous service to ASIANetwork. Van Symons was presented a plaque of appreciation for his ten years of service to ASIANetwork, four years on the Board and six years as Executive Director. Former Board members expressed their thanks to Van through letters compiled into a scrapbook by Diane Clayton. Jim Leavell made the presentations.



Jim Leavell presenting Van Symons with the scrapbook. Photo by Chia Ning.



Paul Watt, Development Officer, thanking Marsha Smith for her years of service to the newsletter. Photo by Chia Ning.



Mary Doonan receiving a thank you gift from Joan O'Mara. Photo by Chia Ning.



Ruth Symons with Joan O'Mara during the gift presentations. Photo by Chia Ning.

Once again, thank you very much Van, Ruth, Mary and Marsha!



Members: 2004-2005

Full Members:

Allegheny College
Alverno College
Augustana College
Austin College
Baldwin-Wallace College
Bard College
Bates College
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Beloit College
Berea College
Bowdoin College
Bucknell University
Calvin College
Carleton College
Carthage College
Central College
Chatham College
Coe College
Colby College
Colgate University
College of St. Benedict/Saint John's University
College of William & Mary
College of Wooster, The
Colorado College
Connecticut College
Cornell College
Daemen College
Davidson College
Denison University
DePauw University
Dickinson College
Drake University
Drew University
Drury University
Earlham College
Eckerd College
Edgewood College
Elmira College
Elms College
Elon University
Fairfield University
Franklin & Marshall College
Furman University
Gettysburg College
Gordon College
Goucher College
Grinnell College
Guilford College
Gustavus Adolphus College
Hamilton College
Hamline University
Hanover College
Hartwick College
Hastings College
Hiram College
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Huron University College
Illinois Wesleyan University
Kalamazoo College
Kenyon College
Knox College
Lafayette College
Lake Forest College
Lawrence University
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Loras College

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Lynchburg College
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St. Olaf College
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Swarthmore College
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Transylvania University
Trinity University
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University of North Carolina
University of Puget Sound
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Associate Members:

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American University
Bridgewater State College
Butler University
Case Western Reserve University
Central Washington University: Asia/Pacific Studies Program
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College of Charleston
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John Carroll University
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University of San Diego
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Valparaiso University
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Wheaton College

Affiliate Organizations:

American Council of Learned Societies CEEVN
Associated Colleges of the Midwest
Association of Teachers of Japanese
Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES)
Henry Luce Foundation
Institute for International Education of Students (IES)
Japan ICU Foundation, Inc.
Pacific Affairs, University of British Columbia
United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA)

Affiliate Individuals:

Bao Bean, Cathy
Check, Timothy, University of British Columbia
Cleland, Jerry W., DePaul University
Embree, Ainslie T.
Guyot, Dorothy
Holmes, Elizabeth L., St. Anselm College
Lyman, Richard, Brandeis University
Ramanathan, Vaidehi, University of California, Davis
Seater, Barbara, Raritan Valley Community College

Mark your calendars!

14th Annual ASIAnetwork Conference

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