

Monika Gänßbauers (Organisatorin) Vortrag über den Essayisten Liu Zaifu interpretierte (mit H.R. Schlette) den Marginalismus als Humanismus. Die Weigerung, sich vom Zentrum fortschreiben zu lassen, ermögliche einen Blick von außen. Dies zeige sich am selbstkritischen und reflektierten Schreiben Liu Zaifus paradigmatisch.

Kira Ackermann stellte die japanische Transfrau Mitsuhashi Junko und ihr (sein) Schreiben vor, die gegen gesellschaftliche Tabus verstoße. Ihre Nutzung der Internetressourcen biete eine interaktive und aktuelle Art der Kommunikation für soziale Randgruppen.

Peter Bernardis Beitrag befasste sich mit dem Autor Silvio Sam, der auf Japanisch und Portugiesisch schreibt. Bernardis zufolge verflüssigten sich die Identitäten von Sam und seinem Schreiben in einem transnationalen und transkulturellen Zeitalter.

Jessica Imbach verortete das „Kleinsein“ in der literarischen Figur des Müßiggängers im Roman „White Night“ von Jia Pingwa. Der Müßiggänger begegne der Stadt Xi'an und deren traditionellen Kulturpraktiken aus einer Randperspektive, die die Vergangenheit und das Ländliche als Artikulationsmöglichkeiten der Erfahrung der chinesischen Moderne problematisiere.

Rui Kunze stellte den chinesischen Dichter Haizi vor, der in den 1980er Jahren gegen das dominierende literarische Kriterium des „Realismus“ schrieb. Seine Dichtung, das meiste davon ein literarischer Ausdruck des Kulturnationalismus, ermögliche die gängige Kanonisierung des Dichters, da Kulturnationalismus nach dem Jahr 1989 zur Staatsideologie geworden sei. Hier stellte sich die Frage, ob nicht sowohl der Rand als auch das Zentrum ständig neu definiert werden müssten.

Rui Kunze

Identity and the Nation in 20th Century Asia

Jacobs University Bremen, 20.–21. July 2012

Sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG)

The formation of group identities in 20th century Asia has been a complex process of interacting phenomena which was not only driven by nation building forces but also by interactions between Asians as well as between Asians and non-Asians. The workshop “Identity and the Nation in 20th Century Asia,” which took place on 20 and 21 July 2012 at Jacobs University in Bremen, sought to unravel the nexus between identity and the nation in Asia.

Torsten Weber (Freiburg) outlined the research agenda and encouraged the search for alternative concepts and theoretical approaches to studying identity, nations, and nationalism beyond the Eurocentric canon. Taking a critical position towards the professional production of academic knowledge about foreign societies he emphasized the need to de-nationalize approaches to studying Asia by including transnational dimensions of interactions. An important topic of the conference was how sport was used by states to promote certain identities. Stefan Hübner (Bremen) discussed the Far Eastern Championship Games (1913–1934) which were created by the American branch of the Young Men's Christian Association in the Philippines. The YMCA aimed to promote Western amateur sports values to “uplift” Asians and to bring them up to Western standards of “civilization.” From the 1920s onwards, Asians used the Games to demonstrate their level of modernization. Martyn Smith (London) demonstrated how the Japanese government staged Japan as a modern power, capable of competing with the West during the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, and at the same time aiming at reintegrating

Japan into Asia. Meanwhile the popular media criticized the American consumption culture and favoured European identity and soundness. By comparison, the Chinese government in the 1950s and 1960s used sports events to strengthen pan-Asian relations and to promote socialism, Amanda Shuman (Santa Cruz) pointed out. After the Bandung conference the Chinese used “*tǐyù*” (sports, physical culture) as a means of diplomacy in order to leave behind Russian and American influences and to become an Afro-Asian leader.

Another subject was the relevance of ideology in shaping identity. Ivan Sablin (Heidelberg) introduced a method of geographical map-based history and outlined approaches which were developed between 1917 and 1923 aiming at the creation of a national identity for the Baykal region. He concluded that in order to find transcultural entanglements it is more effective to analyze spaces than borders. Boris Niclas-Tölle (Bremen) explained the parallelism of India’s foreign policy with the political idea of Asian socialism formulated by the Asian Socialist Conference during the 1950s, which aimed for socialist unity in Asia built on common roots of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism.

Conflict and violence resulted also to have significant impact on identity formation. Konrad Lawson (Harvard) examined war and treason trials which were held after the defeat of Japan in WWII as politics of retribution, especially the trials against the Indian National Army, rape trials in the Philippines and trials on the Shandong peninsula in China. William Harman (Chattanooga) analysed the Tuyilam Illam, the sacred shrines of the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers that commemorate Tamil “Martyr Bombers.” The shrines offered not only consolation for surviving family members but also nourished a cult of radical militant nationalism, fortifying the Tamil identity within its community.

Dominic Sachsenmaier (Bremen) reflected on global historic perspectives of Chinese nation building and Chinese migration at the turn of the twentieth century. He portrayed how global connectivity intensified nation building and how the elites were torn between radical west-ernization and traditional Confucian principles.

Frauke Scheffler (Cologne) demonstrated how colonial and local elites in the Philippines conceptualized the perfect citizen between 1900 and 1940. US policy was directed towards negative eugenics, aiming at the limitation of birth-rates, while Filipino elites turned to the French *péculture* which propagated infant health programmes. Xin Fan (Berlin) showed that *Zhanguo* (“Warring States”), an ancient period in Chinese history, was conceived by Chinese historians and politicians in the 20th century as a universal, recurring stage in world history. They argued that history is a circle and that each civilization follows the same trajectory of development, thus providing lessons for modern politics.

The conference revealed common themes and problems in the processes of identity formation across different societies and times in 20th century Asia. Despite the impact of nationalism and anti-colonialism, the nation remained but one point of reference. In addition, shared common historical experiences also triggered the development of a positive Asian consciousness among peoples throughout Asia. Eventually, however, national identity politics proved to be only partly and temporally compatible with other ideological or supra-national agendas. As many parts of Asia have experienced continuous borders shifts over the past century, the nation in many cases appears to be a political reference rather than a daily experience. The significance of ethnic or social identities and rivalries put the assumed predominance of nation-building and the hegemony of nationalism during the 20th century into perspective.