

CCC 9.2 Editorials

1. Lilliputian Geopolitics 小人国地缘政治

During the very first weeks of this year, a general feeling of lassitude and deception was widely spread in public opinion around the world. The lingering violent conflicts in not a few Arab countries disfigured what was hailed as a Spring full of new hopes for the next generations. In other parts of the world, the social consequences of the banking, financial, economic and trust crisis was at the same time generating a contagious dissatisfaction: people of variously affected European nations were forcefully submitted to austerity recovering plans. Heads of states and governments were gathered in meetings upon meetings in what seemed to be a desperate up-hill battle against the “sovereign debts” accumulated in recent past. Like a modern Janus having two masks, the globalization of the new era was now revealing the ugly face it had previously hidden under technological advances.

These advances, more particularly in means of communication through Internet and television, had had at the same time the great merit of fostering a global conscientisation: the cruel realities of insurrections, the slow and sterile diplomatic debates open to compromises through which humanitarian or military interventions were launched, the impossibility to control collateral damages, the vision of destructions and of their victims, all these help public opinion to realize the gravity of topics which otherwise remain often purely academic: what is the sovereignty of a state or a nation? What does it cover? In the « global village » where people tend more and more to share the same moral standards, is there any way to respect human values in order to help those in need? Is there any duty or a globally recognised right to do so, and under what conditions? These are important questions addressed in the first pages of this issue. More often than not, geopolitical considerations motivate the obstructive right of veto against a global consensus on measures aiming at compelling the cessation of human suffering.

These repeated failures at the highest level of the “international community” contribute to undermine the trust that the member nations should have in their common institutions. Locally circumscribed internecine conflicts should not adumbrate the fact that, united or not, nations are all “in the same boat”. It has now become common knowledge that many aspects of this shared predicament on Earth include not a few mutually contradictory factors: the demographic growth of humankind is accompanied by technological and economic development which has already reached such a level that it is threatening the ecological and climatic balance of the environment and facing the nearing depletion of natural and energy resources needed in order for them to be fairly available to all. These projected prognosis’s will remain at the horizon of world leaders for ages to come: they should awaken them to realize the petty dimensions of their Lilliputian¹ disputes.

In this projected context, Chinese presence will no doubt be felt. Demographers and economists are already calculating the foreseen consequences. Just take for instance the growth of the Chinese middle class already so important for the economic growth of the national consumption destined to balance the decreasing world demand of Chinese exports. According to the recent census, the 600 million of today’s urban settlers will, due to the fast pace of urbanisation in China, grow in 2025 to be around 1 billion. This progression will certainly affect the “face of the earth” in food and energy consumption, collateral pollution and other cultural impacts. All the more so that if “to become rich is glorious” as the motto went in recent years, it has also carried with it some deception: what to live for? as many new urbanites are now realizing. A spiritual quest is at work.

Using a wide angle lens that encompasses the world of arts, any effort that helps youth rediscover Chinese cultural roots, be that pictorial or literary traditions, remains in this regard as important as the economic development through which the Chinese presence in the world is generally if not first militarily measured. Two contributions in this issue deal with this factor of “China’s peaceful rise” through art market and the influence of literature translations.

¹ Lilliputian: from Lilliput and Blefuscu, two fictional island nations imagined by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) in the first part of his 1726 novel *Gulliver's Travels*. Very tiny people inhabited them. The political disputes between the two are meant to be a caricature of petty rivalries between nations.

1. World

The first decade of this century has been marked by many natural catastrophes. Nearly each year, just to mention a few that have affected this part of the world, there was in December 2002, the SARS epidemic spreading world wide; then on 26 December 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, causing 250,000 victims in 14 countries; on 17 July 2006, the Java (Aceh) earthquake; on 12 May 2008, the Great Sichuan Earthquake, causing approximately 69,000 deaths and 18,000 missing persons; in Spring and Summer 2010, several floods and landslides in China, particularly in Gansu (Zouqu); more recently in Japan, the Great Tohoku Earthquake of 11 March 2011 and tsunami dangerously damaging the Fukushima nuclear power reactors and its surrounding region. In several cases, natural phenomena and human responsibilities were intrinsically connected in causing losses of lives and material destructions. This can not be said about recent world news: since 18 December 2010, in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi immolated himself in protest against police corruption and ill treatment. How such a despair like a spark has ignited the Arab Spring will remain a question for historians to resolve: successive insurrections like the waves of a tsunami in six countries and other incidents in 10 others, have followed all along 2011, and other “aftershocks” have not finished in 2012 to shake the world. The international community continues to debate what “damage control” measures are to be adopted, as it had to be said, “to stop the killing”. Perhaps the following contributions could foster some insights on important related topics. Facing natural disasters or political turmoil, states advocate the sovereignty of their nations: You Mingqing, Associate Professor at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, offers “A Sketch Survey” on the concept of Sovereignty, its origin, its scope, its developments. These include, in the contemporary context of globalization, some new questions, like: “Intervention for Humanitarian Reasons: Right or Duty?” Roderick O’Brien, based on his practice of Law, presents his reflections.

3. Arts & Letters

As the articles presented in the World section of this issue have examined, it is worth noting that the increasing intensity of globalisation affecting the whole world is at the root of new international problems. Globalisation by itself does not prove to be the hoped for refreshing source of harmony between the states or the nations they have to serve. Refreshing overtures towards such an harmony would not be found in the present troubled practices of businesses nor in the political or diplomatic milieu, as two recent discordant vetos in the community of nations have resounded the world over. But human communities have other means the world over to express their hopes and search for harmony: arts and letters are some of them. This section is fortunate to associate two essays which, by their mutual contrasted approach, might offer some new insights on the arts’ contribution in a globalised world. Based on his long experience of Fine Arts Department Head at Wah Yan College, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Tam Zhicheng, presently expert advisor to the Hong Kong Museum of Arts, narrates and illustrates how his efforts helped many young pupils develop their creative hidden talents, not by imitating western oil painting techniques, but by rediscovering the creative and original ways of Chinese ink painting, which remains a gem in the pictorial world of art. As far as letters are concerned, there is no doubt that contemporary Chinese literature is equally in great demand not only in China but in the Western world. In the second contribution, Bertrand Mialaret, based on his wide reading of Chinese literature in translation and book review experience of Chinese novels for many years, shares the result of his research: what can be learned from the “Reading of Chinese Novels in the West”. Many questions remain at stake!

4. History and Culture

Two different personalities are introduced in the following pages. First, an unsuccessful intellectual who lived at a time when China Ming dynasty was still at the height of its glory, yet closed unto itself after the far reaching maritime expeditions of admiral Zheng He (1371-1433): Chen Xianzhang (1428-1500), presented by Zhao Yutian, Associate Professor at the Xijiang History and Culture Research Institute of Guangdong Zhaoqing College. Second, Karl Gützlaff (1803-1851), German “adventurer, British Army spy, merchant in disguise, current affairs writer”, and controversial missionary, known in particular for his book in three volumes entitled “Opening China”, as brilliantly sketched in his paper by Yao Darui, from the Sun Yat-sen University, Chinese Literature Department and Harvard-Yenching Institute visiting fellow. Both presentations offer a vivid contrast between two unrelated “individual histories”. They may resonate differently into the heart of the reader: Chen Xianzhang, despite his repeated failures to pass the Imperial Examinations and serve at the Court where he was called, preferred to sacrifice his possible career by mere filial piety for his ailing mother; he embarked in and was known for a spiritual quest through cultivation of the heart. On the contrary, the exuberant polyglot Gützlaff is rather remembered for his erudite yet fully negative appreciation of China at his time, and for his campaign to force it open. The contrast deserves reflection by many.

5. Thought and Humanism

Diplomatic discourses at the occasion of official visits by foreign leaders usually focus their message of good will for cooperation and exchange on economy and trade statistics and figures. World media which day by day report on the development of the so-called “crisis”—financial, economic and social—all focus their attention first on these figures that can give a measure of the global situation East and West. But they do not manifest how it is experienced and lived by the people. It is a matter of many facts — and of the reflection by anyone who is not deaf or blind — that in many countries, be they “developed, emergent or under-developed”, people are looking for more than first to improve their daily living condition and finally to get “rich” (something that even in China Deng Xiaoping would have difficulty to disprove). This quest goes beyond what political leaders, economists, bankers, industrial CEO the world over can ever offer: it does not belong to their agenda as themselves, if only they wanted, are to join in the quest. Human reflection can open the door to various degrees of awareness that we are looking for what is right and good, true and beautiful. In a modern video version of the 西游记 *Xiyouji*, the great novel on the Buddhist monk 玄奘 Xuanzang’s pilgrimage to India in a “spiritual quest”, a modern poem has such a verse: “敢问: 路在何方? 路在脚下。” *Gan wen: lu zai he fang? Lu zai jiao xia*. “May I ask where is the road? The road is at your feet.” In the quest for spiritual values, the road is open, but inside one’s heart. Here is the challenge in modern life. The contribution of this section is offered by a Catholic monk, Paul 高豪 Kao Hao, from the Trappist Abbey of “Our Lady of Joy”, Hong Kong. The author has chosen to present the witness and experience of Thomas Merton (1915-1968) in his spiritual quest and its fruits. As the Bible says: “The word which I urge you to keep is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

6. Feature:

Matteo Ricci In Memoriam



History, Analysis, Commemoration

A Macau Ricci Institute Workshop held on 10th November 2011 in Macau

The funeral mass for Matteo Ricci's eternal repose was celebrated at the Zhalan compound on All Saint's Day (1st November) 1611, more than a year after his death on 11 May 1610. At the occurrence of this event the Jesuit missionary community in Beijing opened anew the restored buildings of the Zhalan site, at that time outside the city walls and beyond the Fucheng Gate (阜城門). The Fathers consecrated the Chapel in the centre of the complex. According to those who were present, this requiem mass was accompanied "by organ and other musical instruments" in "the highest possible style". Four hundred years later, the Macau Ricci Institute has sought to re-enact, so to say, what is known of the event and organized a workshop followed by an interpretive performance which presented something close to what might have been realised at the time, musically if not liturgically. This special section offers the four presentations delivered at the workshop. It was fitting that, to start with, Matteo Ricci historian Gianni Criveller present the first narration in Chinese of Fr. Ricci's demise: it is reported by his confrere and early biographer Giulio Aleni in a work published in Fuzhou (1630). Comments on the history, context and meaning on the music performed during Ricci's solemn funerals follow, in the second erudite communication by Professor David Francis Urrows, initiator of "The Pipe Organ in China Project" at Hong Kong Baptist University. Then the troubled history of Ricci's resting place at the Zhalan Cemetery was narrated and documented by Professor Yu Sanle, from the Centre of Chinese Western Cultural Exchange, Beijing Administrative College. Finally, as if it were through some travelling back in time, Liu Jingjing, assistant researcher at the Macau Ricci Institute, concluded the workshop by summarizing with quotes Ricci's preaching on the afterlife.

The Macau Ricci Institute