Global Challenge and Regional Response –

Twentieth-Century Northeast China: Its Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural Encounters with the World

From
June 17th until June 20th, 2009
at Heilongjiang University, Harbin China

Northeast China first became the focus of global attention in the early twentieth century, when Japanese and Russian imperialism made it the crossroads expansions and for commercial trade between Asia, Europe, and North America. Exploited by its powerful neighbors, Russia and Japan, this peripheral area was transformed by the construction of major railways as well as the contests waged over its mineral and agricultural resources by the Soviet Union, Imperial Japan, the United States and other countries. This region, known to Western historiography as Manchuria, is thus a rich example of “glocalization”, a phenomenon in which global and local interests converge. These interests are rarely if ever harmoniously balanced or static. On the contrary, their interactions are both dynamic and complex, and it is this ongoing negotiation that is the theme of our conference.

Research questions to be addressed could include: How was the transfer of commodities connected with migrations, and how did those migrations in turn lead to processes of cultural and social exchange in strategic cities such as Harbin? In what ways did the diversity of nations, cultures, and ethnicities shape the space and its global character? What effects did the heterogeneous population have on these manifold processes? And, what contribution the global political negotiations had on the area? Analyses of the asymmetric power relations and economic oppression in this area are welcome.

The conference organizers are also interested in studies of how Western technologies, practices, and customs were transmitted and adapted locally. How did exposure to cosmopolitan ideas and new political philosophies affect Northeast China? What internal forces may have promoted the globalization of this region? What influence did Manchuria exert on the West as a result of these global entanglements?

We especially encourage methodological approaches that do not rely on ethnic, cultural, or national narratives and which instead concentrate on the numerous interdependencies and reciprocities that existed in Manchuria during the first half of the twentieth century. It is of our interest to combine theories of transculturality with empirically substantiated research. By doing so this conference should make a contribution to the international academic discussion on the va-
lidity and practicability of existing concepts and terminologies such as “globalization”, “cosmopolitanism”, “bordercity”, “global city”, “culture’s in-between”, or “beyond culture”.

Other possible topics or areas for investigation are:

- Colonial entanglements—the flow of commodities and the development of major transportation networks
- The development of transculturality
- The Russo-Japanese War and its political, economic and social impacts on Manchuria
- The role and function of banks and trade
- The role of mass media; information flows from Europe, North America and Japan to Manchuria and vice versa
- Dynamic conditions of power and its administrative challenges
- The organization of civil society; areas of exchange and conflict in Manchurian societies
- Global conflicts – Japan, Manchukuo, and the League of Nations
- Manchurian intersections with North America, Europe, and Japan

Presentations should not exceed 25 minutes. The conference language is English.