

## Asianisms in the 20th Century – Asia as Reference for the (Re-) Definition of Spaces, Identities and Power Orders

### 1.2 Principal Investigators

Prof. Dr. Marc Frey  
Bundeswehr University Munich  
[marc.frey@unibw.de](mailto:marc.frey@unibw.de)

Prof. Dr. Nicola Spakowski  
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg  
Institut für Sinologie  
Werthmannstr. 12  
79098 Freiburg  
[nicola.spakowski@sinologie.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:nicola.spakowski@sinologie.uni-freiburg.de)

### 1.2 Topic

Asianisms in the 20th Century – Asia as Reference for the (Re-) Definition of Spaces, Identities and Power Orders

Subprojects

1. Sinocentric Asia? Concepts of Asia in Chinese Historiography (1895-1949) (Nicola Spakowski/Stefanie Jürries)<sup>1</sup>
2. The Asian Games (1913-1978): Sports and Representation between Transnational Experiences and Constructions of the Nation (Marc Frey/Stefan Hübner)
3. "Critical Asia": Transnational Discourses of an Alternative Asian Modernity, 1990 to the Present" (Nicola Spakowski/Torsten Weber)

### 1.3 Time Frame of Report, Duration of Funding

1 September 2009 – 30 April 2013

### 1.4 List of Major Publications

2009

1. Marc Frey/Nicola Spakowski, eds., *Asianismen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag (= *Comparativ* 18.6 (2008))
2. Marc Frey/Nicola Spakowski, „Einleitung: Asianismen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert. „Asien“ als Gegenstand nationaler und transnationaler Diskurse und Praktiken“, in: [1], 7-15.
3. Torsten Weber, „‘Unter dem Banner des Asianismus’: Transnationale Dimensionen des japanischen Asianismus-Diskurses der Taisho-Zeit (1912-1926)“, in: [1], 34-52.
4. Nicola Spakowski, „Regionalismus und historische Identität – Transnationale Dialoge zur Geschichte Nord-/Ost-/Asiens seit den 1990er Jahren“, in: [1], 69-87.

2011

1. Torsten Weber, "Remembering or overcoming the past? 'History politics', Asian identity, and Visions of an East Asian Community", in: *Asian Regional Integration Review*, 3 (2011), 39-55.

2012

1. Stefan Hübner, "The Fourth Asian Games (Jakarta 1962) in a Transnational Perspective: Japanese and Indian Reactions to Indonesia's Political Instrumentalisation of the Games." In: *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29.9, 1295-1310.
2. Torsten Weber, "Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit in Ostasien: Das Nanking-Massaker als chinesisch-japanisches Geschichtsproblem", in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 7/8 (2012), 402-419.

---

<sup>1</sup> This report does not cover this sub-project, as it is still being funded.

3. Torsten Weber, „Wer und was spricht für „Großasien“? Chancen und Grenzen eines transnationalen Diskurses im Interbellum Ostasiens, 1919-1931“, in: Sönke Kunkel/Christoph Meyer, eds., *Dimensionen des Aufbruches: Die 1920er und 1930er Jahre als Experimentierfeld des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt: Campus 2012, 145-167.

2016

1. Marc Frey and Nicola Spakowski, eds., *Asianisms. Regionalist Interactions & Asian Integration* (NUS Press: Singapore).

## Manuscripts

### Monographs

1. Stefan Hübner, *The Early Asian Games and their Predecessors (1913-1974). Sport and Media Orchestration between Transnational Experience and Representations of the Nation* (Dissertation)

### Edited Volumes

1. Stefan Hübner/Torsten Weber, eds., *Identity and the Nation in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Asia*. (Special Issue of *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* (expected to be published in fall 2013))

### Articles and Chapters

1. Nicola Spakowski, „Asia as Future – The Claims and Rhetorics of an ‚Asian Century‘“, in: [1 above]
2. Stefan Hübner, „‘Making the Weak and Degenerated Races of East Asia ready for Self-Government.’ American and East Asian Views of Sport and Body in Early Twentieth-Century East Asia“, in: Walter Demel/Rotem Kowner, eds., *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia. Vol. 2: Interactions, Nationalism, Gender and Lineage*. (In print; Leiden: Brill Publishers)
3. Stefan Hübner, „‘Asianizing Western Sports’: The American YMCA in East Asia, Asianism, and the Far Eastern Championship Games of 1927 and 1930“, in: [1 above]
4. Stefan Hübner, „Muscular Christianity and the ‘Western Civilizing Mission’. Elwood S. Brown, the YMCA and the Idea of the Far Eastern Championship Games,“ accepted for publication in *Diplomatic History*.
5. Torsten Weber, „Lighter Shades of the Past: History Politics in the Struggle for Historical Reconciliation in Contemporary China and Japan“, in: [in 1 above]
6. Torsten Weber, „Utopias of ‘One Asia’: Visual Portrayals of ‘Asia’ in the Age of Nationalism“, to be published in co-edited workshop volume „Identity and the Nation in Asia“ [in 2 above]

## 2. Report on Project Work and Results

### Acknowledgments

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to those who contributed to the success of the project: Ca-Man Kong, Shiyang Peng, Noah Turner, Karin Hagen, Craig Taylor, Christopher Shaw, Patience Bonsu and Leonoor Cornelissen were involved as student assistants at Jacobs University Bremen. Professors Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zürich), Amako Satoshi and Terada Takashi (Waseda University), Prasenjit Duara (National University of Singapore), Sven Saaler (Sophia University Tokyo) Dominic Sachsenmaier (Jacobs University Bremen) and Corinna R. Unger (Jacobs University Bremen) gave invaluable advice. Rebecca E. Karl (New York University), Judith Schlehe (University of Freiburg), Tim Epkenhaus (University of Freiburg), Birgit Mersmann (Jacobs University Bremen), Carolien Stolte (University of Leiden), Jürgen Rüländ (University of Freiburg), Tani Barlow (Rice University, Houston), Mikko Huotari (University of Freiburg), Fabio Lanza (University of Arizona, Tucson), Matsuura Masataka (Hokkaido University), Takashi Saikawa (University of Heidelberg), Sven Matthiessen (University of Heidelberg), Silke Martini (University of Konstanz), and Tessa Morris-Suzuki (Australian National University, Canberra) shared their insight on Asianisms with us. Paul Kratoska (National University of Singapore) of NUS Press encouraged us to collect our combined ideas about Asianisms in a volume to be published in 2014 with NUS Press. We also wish to thank the following institutions for their support: the DFG generously funded the project over three years. Partial funding for research associate Stefan Hübner

came from the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC., and the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo. Finally, archivists and librarians from various archives and libraries in Switzerland, the United States, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, the Philippines, and India offered their invaluable support.

#### *Aims and Scope of Project*

The central concept of „Asianism“ employed in this project relates to discursive constructs of Asia and associated political, cultural and social practices. More concretely, we applied the concept to define common and entangled traditions beyond national cultures and to political-cultural visions geared to integrate diverse regions of Asia. We also looked at political projects which propose(d) an integration of states. The concept of “Asianism” relates to current widespread interests in Asia and to processes of integration within the region. It emphasizes the plurality and historical contingency of constructs of Asia as well as practices of regionalism. Asianisms manifested themselves in a variety of forms in different periods of time and in different spaces. They caught on different dynamics and were characterized by ambiguities and plural meanings. This project sought to de-construct two major problems: the tension between Asianisms as transnational horizons and the virulent persistence of nationalisms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the relation between Asianist discourses and practices vis-à-vis specific national, regional and global structures. The aim of the project was to research the variations of Asianisms throughout the 20th century. In order to do so, the project looked at the following three areas:

- Sinocentric Asia? Concepts of Asia in Chinese Historiography, c. 1895 to 1949;
- The Asian Games (1913-1978): Sports and Representation between Transnational Experiences and Constructions of the Nation;
- “Critical Asia”: Transnational Discourses of an Alternative Asian Modernity, 1990 to the Present

Early on, we had formulated three overarching research questions: 1. How was/is Asia represented at various times/constellations/actors in the various sub-regions of Asia and in individual countries throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the present? 2. To what degree were/are these representations used as projects of political and/or cultural integration? 3. And what was/is the relation between the transnational conception of “Asia” to the various nationalisms? These three research questions were taken as points of departure for a research design which identified discourses, practices, and the tension between the transnational and the national.

#### *The main results of the project and its subprojects can be summarized as follows:*

As definitions of the concept `Asia` are instable, they can easily be used to signify rivaling agendas. The most explicit and frequent contradiction regarding differing conceptions of `Asia` refers to the tensions between regionalist and nationalist agendas. In most Asian countries under research, nationalist conceptions of `Asia` played an important role in public political discourse, either as the main narrative (“from above”) or as the counter-narrative to be overcome (“from below”). The main aim of Asianist discourses was to envisage an Asia as an interconnected and independent continent. This continent encompassed, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, East, Southeast and South Asia. In the post-world war two decades, it gradually extended to Western Asia. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Asianist discourses served two main objectives: they challenged images of inferiority to the ‘West’, and they legitimized Japanese Imperial ambitions. Both objectives served to focus attention on the power asymmetry between the ‘West’ and Asia and were meant to deflect power asymmetries between different Asian countries. Nationalisms emerged in the context of nation building, anti-colonialism, decolonization and the Cold War, and they continuously undermined ideals of an Asian integration. In more present times, civil society groups seek to overcome tensions and rivalries that are based on national divisions. But they tend to avoid controversies that may increase conflict. This strategy, however, is also political in nature and constitutes yet another dimension of history politics. Of course, history politics are not absent from the discourses of political decision-makers and government-funded think tanks. But here, discourse on Asia remain closely linked to national(ist) agendas; that of the

“peaceful rise of China” to its assumed rightful place as a regional and global world power, of Korean unification and mediation in East Asia, and of Japanese revisionism of the post-World War Two order and its fear of China as Asia’s next leader.

## **2.2 Report on Progress and Findings: Sub-Project “The Asian Games (1913-1978): Sports and Representation between Transnational Experiences and Constructions of the Nation (Marc Frey/Stefan Hübner)**

The most problematic issue was the variety of countries that had to be travelled to, since neither the Far Eastern Athletic Association nor the Asian Games Federation had a headquarter where it stored its documents: The United States, Switzerland (International Olympic Committee), Britain, the Philippines, Japan and Singapore.

The spread of ‘modern’ mega events like world expositions and sports events since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is a global phenomenon. It originated in the West and was embedded in power asymmetries due to colonialism, racism and ‘Orientalism’. Based on an analysis of the Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG, 1913-1934)<sup>2</sup>, the Western Asiatic Games (WAG, 1934) and the early Asian Games (1951-1974)<sup>3</sup>, new methodological approaches such as transnational history and the ‘multiple modernities’ were used to interpret entangled transfers of values both between Asia and the ‘West’ and within Asia.<sup>4</sup> New insights into ‘Western’ and Asian perspectives on ‘modernization’, civilization and identity as well as on the public orchestration of shifting power relations in Asia and between Asia and the ‘West’ were gained.<sup>5</sup>

Linked to the so-called ‘Western Civilizing Mission’<sup>6</sup>, which justified colonialism as a necessary means to bring ‘backward’ peoples up to ‘Western’ standards of civilization, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) begun to engage in missionary and education activities in Asia. The most important person in the founding of the Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG) was the YMCA’s physical director in Manila, Elwood Stanley Brown. His relocation to the Philippines in 1910 resulted in a large-scale transfer of white American Protestant norms and values first to the American colony and later to other Asian countries. The YMCA’s intention was to educate and ‘uplift’ Asians through muscular Christianity, not to entertain them and to produce spectators.<sup>7</sup> But the discourse of ‘apolitical sports’ ignored that the sportive ‘Civilizing Mission’ was a political means of supporting an egalitarian civil society, ‘progressive’ economic thinking and internationalism. The YMCA perceived these aims to serve the remodeling of East Asian societies according to its interpretation of Christianity and especially

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction see for example: Ikuo Abe, “Historical Significance of the Far Eastern Championship Games: An International Political Arena,” in *Olympic Japan. Ideals and Realities of (Inter)Nationalism*, ed. Andreas Niehaus and Max Seinsch (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2007), 67-87; Kō Takashima, “Kyokutō Senshūken Kyōgi Taikai to YMCA [The Far Eastern Championship Games and the YMCA],” in *Chūgoku Higashijia gaikō kōryūshi no kenkyū* [Research on the History of Chinese Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange in East Asia], ed. Susumu Fuma (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2007), 461-505.

<sup>3</sup> For an introduction see: Fan Hong (ed.), *Sport, Nationalism and Orientalism: The Asian Games* (London: Routledge, 2007). The quality of the edited volume is all in all very poor.

<sup>4</sup> Margrit Pernau, *Transnationale Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); Dominic Sachsenmaier, Jens Riedel and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (eds.), *Reflections on Multiple Modernities. European, Chinese, and Other Interpretations* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Wolfgang Knöbl, *Die Kontingenz der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> On the ‘Civilizing Mission’ and resistance against it see for example: Adas, Michael, ‘Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology.’ In: *The Journal of World History* 15,1 (2004), 31-63; Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> On muscular Christianity in the United States see: Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity. Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001).

Protestantism. *Christian egalitarianism* was to bring together people of different nationality or ethnicity and from different social strata in order to ‘civilize’ their interaction through amateur sports norms and values such as self-control, fair play and respect for duly constituted authority.<sup>8</sup> The same is true for *Christian internationalism*, which focused on ‘civilizing’ interaction between different peoples or states and supported regional integration through a common (Christian) sports ideology. A sports based ‘*Protestant Work Ethic*’ encouraged hard work / training and competition instead of a belief in luck or fate (as in the case, for example, of gambling). It was also designed to foster better health, practical efficiency, discipline, and putting community / team interests above family and individual interest.

In Japan, in contrast to China, the Games met with partial resistance. Kanō Jigorō, President of the Great-Japan Amateur Athletic Association, who considered team sports an inefficient training method for shaping better soldiers and workers for the Emperor and the Japanese nation, had already developed his own Bushido-based physical education ideology and did not want to have Americans put Japan on the same level with China and the Philippines. Nonetheless, Elwood Brown and Franklin Brown, YMCA physical director in Tokyo, as well as public pressure, convinced Kanō to host the Third FECG in Tokyo in 1917, which became an important turning point and which spurred a process of hybridization and internationalization in Kanō’s thinking.

In the late 1910s and 1920s, American YMCA officials such as Elwood Brown and Franklin Brown increasingly assumed that should they hand over responsibilities for the Games to Asians, the existence of the FECG and their values would be jeopardized by animosities between Japan and China. Therefore, the American YMCA tried to keep control over the Games until (re-)education and assimilation of their Asian pupils had reached a degree that sportive self-government would not jeopardize the (American YMCA defined) aims. However, anti-colonial nationalism, in particular in China and in the Philippines, as well as anti-Western sentiments in Japan, led to an ‘Asiatization’ process. Eventually, by the mid-1920s, the Games were (almost) completely organized by Asians. Since then, the leading role of Asian officials gave the Games further authenticity, symbolizing Asian ‘kinship’ instead of power asymmetries between American teachers and Asian pupils. Many of these Asian sports officials also began to integrate ‘Western’ amateur sports norms and values into cultural-religious concepts such as Bushido (literally: Way of the Warrior) or the ‘spiritual East’, which served to resist claims of a superiority of ‘Western civilization’.

The staging of the later FECG, too, can be seen as a rejection of ‘unequal’ power relations between Asia – or at least the individual Asian countries – and the ‘West’. It culminated in Japan convincing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to be awarded the 1940 Olympic Games. Japan was the first ‘non-Western’ nation to receive this honor and recognition of its international importance. In terms of symbols, hybridization processes took place by reinventing Asian cultural and religious elements along ‘modern’ lines. On medals, for example, Asian ‘sports gods’ substituted Christian angels. The Western Asiatic Games (WAG), hosted only once in India in 1934, followed along the lines of the FECG, but their impact was significantly smaller.

When East Asian politicians and physical educators set up their new working relationship after the ‘Asiatization’ of the Games, they de facto based it upon power relations between their countries. The Japanese, for example, substituted the former asymmetry between ‘Westerners’ and ‘East Asians’ with ‘Japanese’ and ‘East Asians’. This did not mean that the ideal of a more egalitarian regional order necessarily had to be given up. However, following Japan’s conquest of Manchuria in 1931/32 and the dissolution of the FECG in 1934, internationalism lost its universal dimension and became adjusted to an increasingly ‘anti-Western’ regionalism now defined by Japan.

---

<sup>8</sup> On sport as a part of a ‘civilizing process’ see: Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).



The founding of the Asian Games Federation (AGF) after the Second World War, which eventually brought together East and West Asia (including South Asia), was directly linked to questions about the shape and image of Asia. It was also strongly influenced by decolonization. Amateur sports norms and values again served as a means for citizenship training and as an internationalist 'spiritual' bond for creating a more peaceful and egalitarian regional order.

The First Asian Games (New Delhi 1951) were a strong symbolic orchestration of peace between many newly independent or allegedly 'reborn' Asian countries such as Japan. This has to be seen against the background of Asian wars for independence (Indonesia, Indochina) and civil wars (China) following the Second World War, as well as large-scale international wars (Korean War). Simultaneously, the founding process was characterized by debates about organizational skills, management competence and infrastructure development as part of the 'material' dimension of 'civilization'. The East Asians had demonstrated their competence via the FECCG, while the Indians (representing the South and West Asians), had only been able to host one dubious WAG. The founding of the AGF and the hosting of the First Asian Games therefore were directly linked to perceptions of India as a 'backward' country, especially on the part of the East Asians, and the attempt of 'free' Indians to challenge, though in the end not being able to overcome, that image. The infrastructure in New Delhi was insufficient, even after a stadium was built.

The Second Asian Games, hosted in Manila in 1954, continued the 'Civilizing Mission' through amateur sports norms and values. Filipino politicians characterized the Games as supporting an American-style democratic 'modernization' process, and they linked them, not always convincingly, to anti-communist practices. This was supported by the participation of Israel and the Republic of China (Taiwan), which significantly changed the regional framework of the Games to that of neutral and pro-American countries during the early Cold War. The People's Republic of China and many Arab countries would not join the AGF until the 1970s. All in all, the organizing of the Games was, due to the experience gained through the FECCG, significantly better than in India, while the Games were another signal of Asian peace and cooperation, showing an alternative to 'communist warmongering' in Indo-China.

The Third Asian Games (Tokyo 1958), too, followed the idea of amateur sports as a means to establish egalitarian, internationalist and economically progressive civil societies. General Douglas MacArthur, a former president of the American Olympic Committee, had personally supported Japan's reintegration into the Asian and Olympic sports world in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, an important new dimension of the Games was the growing importance of ceremonies and cultural programs, which served to illustrate a certain national identity and the nation's position vis-à-vis other countries. Japan not only staged its reintegration into the Asian sports world, but also attempted to link the Tennō and its Self-Defense Forces with peace and international exchange and cooperation. To be awarded the 1964 Olympic Games was another aspect which affected both the staging and the increasingly important (and expensive) infrastructure development programs.

The Fourth Games in 1962 in Jakarta, Indonesia, would be the first of several Asian Games to take place in authoritarian countries. This influenced the norms and values as well as the staging of the Games. In terms of foreign policy, the Games were to serve as a 'sportive' successor to the Bandung Conference (1955), which had brought together many Asian and African nations which later would join the Non-Aligned Movement. In Indonesia, the ideal of egalitarian internationalism was confronted with a significantly stronger 'anti-Western' and 'anti-colonial' internationalism than ever before. As one might expect, the confrontation of the two sports ideologies ended in disaster after the Indonesians decided to exclude two strongly pro-American member countries of the AGF from the Games, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Israel. Soon afterwards, Indonesia was banned by an IOC still convinced of its 'Civilizing Mission' of egalitarian internationalism. After several setbacks the Indonesians in this way realized that the adjustment of the regional character of the Games to the region of the Non-

Aligned Movement could not be realized within the AGF. The Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEF) they subsequently founded were characterized by the spirit of becoming 'truly' independent from the egalitarian 'Western' sports ideology. Israel and Taiwan were excluded from these Games.

In terms of domestic policy, Indonesia was more internally divided than any previous host of the Asian Games. As a result, the project of nation building pursued by the Sukarno administration gave the Fourth Asian Games a touch of an '(ultra-)nationalist rebirth'. This included mass mobilization, the generation of 'anti-Western' nationalism (and internationalism), a very strong visual-theatrical dimension and the idea of shaping physically and spiritually 'stronger' human beings in a semi-democratic environment. The hosting of the Asian Games also became entangled with the authoritarian version of a 'high modernist' ideology.<sup>9</sup> The Fourth Asian Games were directly linked to the Indonesian government's large scale development projects, which included a stadium complex, motorways, hotels, shopping malls and other buildings. This aimed at staging – and realizing – national 'progress' and catching up with the 'developed countries' as soon as possible. The focus shifted away from the ideal of low-cost games intended to teach Asians 'Western' norms and values of 'civilized' behavior and interaction.

The Cold War as well as the Vietnam War had a significant impact on the Fifth and the Sixth Asian Games (Bangkok 1966; Bangkok 1970). The authoritarian administrations of Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963), under whom Thailand applied for the Fifth Games, and his successor Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973) also held 'high modernist' visions similar to the ones promulgated in Indonesia. Through a large-scale 'modernization' and development process based on Thai values and Buddhist religion, which was to increase Thailand's wealth and international importance, popular support was to be generated, the regime's stability to be guaranteed and a communist revolution to be prevented. At the same time, relations with Cambodia slowly deteriorated as a consequence of the growing communist influence there. The First Asian Games of the New Emerging Forces, hosted in Phnom Penh in 1966 about one week before the Fifth Asian Games as a rival event, received massive support from China. In contrast, the Sixth Asian Games were initially not welcomed by the Thanom regime after South Korea had declared it could not host them due to financial difficulties and the threat of North Korean terrorism. Rising military spending in connection with the war in Vietnam during the late 1960s allowed the Thais only to host a small-scale version of the Asian Games of 1966. The two Asian Games held in Bangkok were nonetheless similar to the First Asian Games, a peaceful gathering of (this time non-aligned and Western aligned) Asian countries. They symbolized an antidote to 'communist insurgencies' in Vietnam and its neighboring countries.

In terms of the staging, the Fifth and Sixth Asian Games supported the personality cult of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who lighted the torch, was depicted on posters, placards and stamps, opened the Games and made public his personal interest in sports. This was in line with Sarit's effort to emphasize the monarchy as a symbol of national unity. Moreover, large-scale construction programs of stadia and

---

<sup>9</sup> Elwood Brown's activities can already be described as social engineering; they thus had a very strong high modernist touch, aspiring to a large-scale change in social norms and values. The American YMCA as a non-governmental organization nonetheless was limited by the support it received from governments, not having the manpower (or authoritarian power) to bring the changes about on its own. The later FECG, the WAG and the Asian Games in India, the Philippines and Japan also were inspired by high modernist thinking. In Indonesia (1962), Thailand (1966, 1970) and in Iran (1974), however, all of James Scott's criteria are fulfilled. The governments intended to administratively reorder society, had the unrestrained power of a 'modern' state on their side and, most importantly, were not restrained by a civil society. One can even argue that all three of them declared themselves revolutionary governments, assuming (or initially really having) a popular mandate to "bring about enormous changes in people's habits, work, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview". See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Conditions to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), chapter 3 (especially 88-92; quotation: 89).

other facilities took place, highlighting Thai development aims. To further increase national and international attention, the Games were held only days after the birthday celebrations of the king, while Asia's first international trade fare was hosted in Bangkok shortly before the Games began and Apasra Hongsakula ('Miss Universe' of 1965) participated in the staging. Finally, the increasing amount of foreigners, mostly American soldiers, visiting the country in the 1960s resulted in efforts to improve the tourism industry. The hosting of the Games and the infrastructure programs were directly linked to this aim.

The Seventh Asian Games (Tehran 1974) were another event taking place in an authoritarian country; this again had a strong impact on the norms and values as well as the staging of the Games. The hosting of the Asian Games in Western Asia changed the composition of participating countries dramatically. For the first time, many Arab countries finally joined the AGF. In terms of foreign policy, the Tehran Games served to support the government's plan to establish an 'Asian Union' as a means to increase its influence in the Indian Ocean region following the British decision to withdraw all troops to the east of Suez (1968) and the Oil Crisis (1973). A second aim was to improve Iran's relations with China as a counterweight against the Soviet Union, and the Iranians managed to get the IOC accept the admission of China as a member of the AGF. The Asian Games once again were linked to a proclaimed 'national rebirth' that took place in a non-democratic and quite militaristic setting. Like in Indonesia and Thailand, the Games were the outcome of an ambitious authoritarian 'high modernism'. The Iranian organizers, who were very close to the Iranian government, saw the Games as one important step on the road of turning their country into a great power. With hundreds of millions of petrodollars spent on them, the Tehran Games significantly outclassed all the previous games. Hosted on an Olympic scale, they were meant to support Iran's aspiration of bringing the Olympic Games to Tehran and thus becoming the second Asian country – following Japan – to receive this honor and recognition as an important country. Simultaneously, the Games served the project of Iranian led region building. Iran could put itself symbolically into the lead within Asia, showing both 'largesse' and economic superiority; for instance, the visits to Tehran of teams from poor Asian countries and of various Asian dance and culture groups were sponsored. The torch lighting, images on the score board or on colored placards used during the opening ceremony, commemorative coins, the name of the sports complex ('Aryamehr Stadium') and official reverence during the ceremonies put the royal family into the centre of the Games. These symbols and practices supported a personality cult which portrayed the Monarch as the one who would (re-) create a powerful Iran that would even overtrump the ancient Persian (Achaemenid) Empire and (re-) gain parity with the 'West'.

All in all, the founding of the FECG was the result of the YMCA's aim of transferring white American Protestant ideals of Christian egalitarianism, Christian internationalism and a 'Protestant Work Ethic' to Asia. While the religious connotations were often rejected in the course of secularization or hybridization processes, the norms and values themselves were embraced by many Asians. Growing anti-colonial nationalism, however, drove American YMCA officials out of power in the 1920s, leading to an 'Asiatization' process of the Games that affected both the rhetoric and the staging of the Games. It eventually led to the breakdown of the Games after Chinese and Japanese officials were unable to further cooperate following Japan's conquest of Manchuria in 1931/32. After the Second World War, the Asian Games were founded as a symbol of a more peaceful and interdependent Asia. While a sense of 'Asianness' was reinforced by decolonization, the persistence of wars tended to fragment an 'Asian community'. The 'Civilizing Mission' continued in Japan and the Philippines, but was increasingly challenged in more authoritarian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Iran. Visual demonstrations of 'modernization', development and 'nationalist rebirth' replaced the aim of sportive education and citizenship training. At the same time, the spacial dimension of the Games was strongly affected by different visions of Asia and especially by international developments and events such as decolonization, the Cold War and the Oil Crisis.



### **2.3 “Critical Asia”: Transnational Discourses of an Alternative Asian Modernity, 1990 to the Present” (Nicola Spakowski/Torsten Weber)**

Mainly two challenges complicated the process of research and required some adaptations of the original planning. First, one of the great strengths of this project, its high degree of currency and political relevance, also turned out to pose a limitation on the production of the planned monograph. Eventually, the initial aim of producing a monograph was postponed and priority was given to the production of articles for journals and books whose timely publication may secure a higher degree of visibility. Secondly, the historicity of Asianist discourses necessitated a more nuanced and in-depth study of historical trajectories of Asianisms. Time and again we were confronted with the ideational and practical legacies of conflicts and wars. It was therefore deemed important to also do some research on the interwar period. This decision proved to be very fruitful, as it allowed a close cooperation between the two sub-projects especially in the initial phases of the project as a whole.

The two decades between the first and second world wars were a time of political visions also in East Asia. Often, they claimed to be internationalist and transnationalist; in practice, however, they served national and nationalist agendas. A principle example for this were ideas of a united ‘greater Asia’. These ideas entailed political and cultural distinction from the ‘West’, but contained elements of ‘Asian’ solidarity. In two papers, subsequently published articles, these ideas were analyzed. Emphasis was put on Japanese discourses and the interaction of Japanese with Chinese and Korean actors. They provided the basis for research on more current articulations of Asianist discourses.

The key question the project set out to answer was how historical concepts of Asian unity and Asianity are instrumentalized in public discourses on East Asian commonality and integration in contemporary Japan, PR China, and South Korea. By focusing on this research question the project sought to contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of history politics in East Asia and, more generally, the relation between historical and contemporary Asia discourse.

The discourse under investigation has been growing steadily in intensity since the implementation of various schemes of regional cooperation, such as the first ASEAN plus 3 informal summit (1997), the establishment of the East Asian Vision Group (1998), and the East Asian Study Group (2001). Following these and other initiatives “from above” which were basically driven by economic and strategic deliberations by the political leadership, a semi-official level was established both to provide expert information to the political decision-makers and to spread the idea of East Asian cooperation to the level of civil society. However, against the background of prevailing problems of historical reconciliation and diverging historical consciousness within East Asia, issues of integration and cooperation have inevitably been linked to the so-called East Asian “history wars” over the representation of modern history in the public spheres of Japan, China, and Korea. The acute currency of this link between “history” and “Asia” is prominently reflected in the founding of the Seoul-based North East Asian History Foundation (NEAHF). The foundation is officially dedicated to historical reconciliation and has become a major player in attempts to establish certain historical views based on Korean national interests.

Since the NEAHF is active in different countries throughout East Asia, sponsors events also outside of Asia, and publishes in different languages it has also contributed to establishing the issue of historical reconciliation on the international political and academic agenda. Scholars who were interviewed acknowledged the positive role played by the Foundation in providing platforms for transnational exchange. But they also criticized the highly political (rather than scholarly) nature of the Foundation’s activities. Both the direct link between historical research and politics, on the one hand, and the national agenda behind the transnational outlook of the Foundation’s activities, on the other hand, can be seen from the integration of the so-called “Dokdo Research Institute” into the NEAHF. Although the Dokdo Islands are disputed between Japan and South Korea, the Foundation has announced that

it will defend the Korean claim over the possession of the islands by all means. The Foundation is only little more moderate with regard to other disputes, such as historiographical conflicts with China ("the distortion of the history of Goguryeo by China") or criticism of the public history of Japan's annexation of Korea (1910-45) in contemporary Japan ("intolerant way of narrating history by Japan").

As the only Asian imperialist country in modern history Japan is the major opponent of both China and Korea in the history wars, although there are also various unsettled issues between China and Korea as well as between China and other East Asian countries. Anti-Japanese protests in both countries and new proactive stances of Korea and China towards the issues of historical reconciliation and regional integration have triggered increased activities since the early 2000s on the Japanese side. They included the founding of a Tokyo-based Council on East Asian Community (CEAC) in 2004, the publication of a "Draft Charter of the East Asian Community" by a government-sponsored research institute (2007), and peaked in the official embrace of the idea of an East Asian Community by Japan's Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio in 2009.

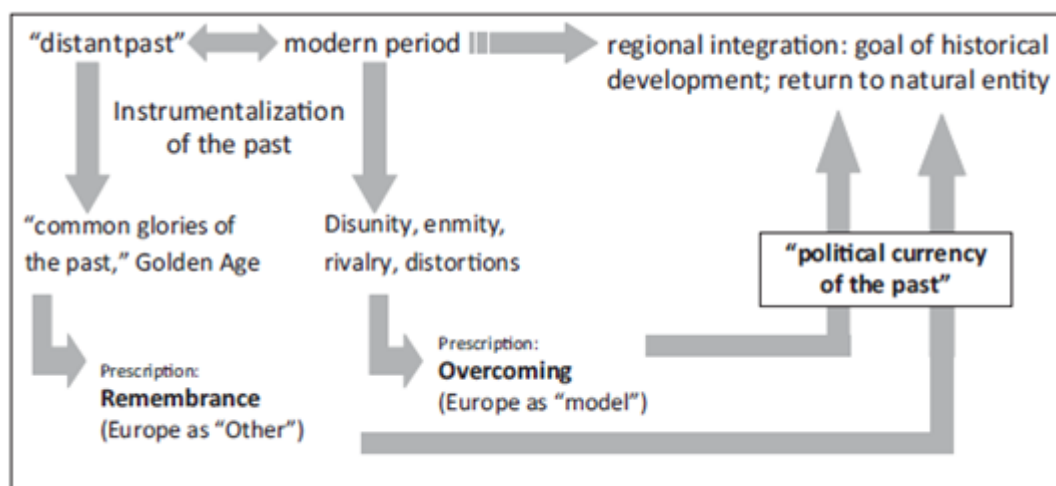
Hatoyama's writings and speeches on a future East Asian Community had a huge impact on the Asia discourse throughout East Asia and worked as a catalyst that fostered the public debate about Asian integration and Asian commonality. Also, it established the comparison of East Asia and Europe as an important feature of the debate. While Hatoyama was not the first to draw comparisons with Europe, he was one of few Japanese participants who openly linked Europe as a model of regional integration with 'Asia' in history and East Asian integration. This explicit comparison to the European experience is extremely ambivalent and potentially self-damaging in Japan, since it is used in other East Asian countries to criticize Japan for its assumed lack of coming to grips with its own history ("Vergangenheitsbewältigung") after its defeat in World War Two.

Hatoyama, however, largely omitted the modern past of rivalry and conflicts or the necessity to address disputed issues but, instead, focused on Europe to measure Asia's pre-modern civilizational achievements and to praise the assumed harmonious coexistence of Asia in a more distant past when Europe served as Asia's rival and its 'other'. This pattern of using Europe as Asia's formative opponent and, simultaneously, as East Asia's post-war model can be observed in many instances of official and semi-official discourse on Asian regional integration. A notable characteristic of Korean discourse is its relatively weak focus on the issue of regional integration in favor of priority given to Korean unification that is seen as a necessary first step towards regional integration.

The following chart<sup>10</sup> shows basic patterns of the uses of the past in East Asian discourse on regional integration:

---

<sup>10</sup> Self-designed chart, reproduced from Torsten Weber, "Remembering or overcoming the past? 'History politics', Asian identity, and visions of an East Asian Community", in: *Asian Regional Integration Review*, Vol. 3, 2011, 39-55: 52.



For this analysis of the uses of the past in contemporary public political discourse we drew on the theoretical framework suggested by Martin O. Heisler who has introduced the metaphor of the “political currency of the past” to describe certain strategies and qualities of history politics. According to Heisler, “the currency of the past” refers (a) to the omnipresence of the past, “its pervasiveness and intrusiveness”, in the sense that “it is current”, and (b) to history as a medium of exchange that, like real money, may be converted into different forms of capital, mostly moral capital, but also with economic and financial benefits (reparation payments, development aid, creation of foundations, etc.).<sup>11</sup> For the Sino-Japanese context, Yinan He has demonstrated that “ruling elites” are particularly influential in “the intentional manipulation of history..., or national mythmaking, for instrumental purposes.”<sup>12</sup> This “elite mythmaking,” she argues, involves “distorting of historical facts” but also includes the intentional – and often only temporary – neglecting of controversial historical issues.

A second metaphor frequently used in the analysis of history politics was adapted from the work of Aleida Assmann and others who have referred to the impact the past has on the present as “long (and/or dark) shadows of the past”. This metaphor is used to describe the lasting, dominant, and often destabilizing influence of the past which represents darkening and obscurity, may haunt people and leave them traumatized, especially when they appear unexpectedly or are omnipresent. In our work we propose to supplement the intimidating and negative character of these “dark shadows” of the past with that of more positively connoted lighter shadows or shades of the past. By this we suggest to understand how the past is employed still as a means of political partisanship but for the end of historical reconciliation in East Asia. These lighter shades of the past are intended to cool off the heated disputes of the “history wars” and to provide a forum for relaxation and constructive conversations over the past; they aim at using history to “open up a future” of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. One explicit aim of this discourse is the search for commonalities, broadly defined as anything ranging from pragmatic to essentialist features such as shared interests (strategic, economic, etc.) or joint cultural heritage (script, spiritual and material culture, etc.). In this sense, the past becomes a tool of reconciliation, transnational cooperation and exchange because it provides instances of the past as models for such interactions. Importantly, it also diversifies the otherwise nationalized (and nationalistically instrumentalized) perpetrator/victim narratives.

As opposed to the discourse mentioned above, civil society actors are the driving force behind this stream of history politics. Despite numerous differences, the majority of debaters in both streams

<sup>11</sup> Martin O. Heisler, “The Political Currency of the Past: History, Memory and Identity,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (May 2008), Vol. 617, No.1, 14-24: 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> Yinan He, “Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950–2006,” *History & Memory*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2007), 43-74: 44.

share as basic assumptions a positively connoted conception of Asia and a re-appreciation of Asianist concepts that had, at least partially, been (ab)used in the war-time past as propaganda by and for the Japanese Empire. Activists, scholars, and networks have used certain key concepts, key figures, and key events from the past (a) to promote historical reconciliation in contemporary East Asia and (b) to replace nationalist by regionalist politics of the past. These key points of reference that facilitate debate between participants from different backgrounds and different nations within East Asia include: the “leaving Asia” (datsu A) versus “entering Asia” (nyū A) and *kaikoku* (opening country) versus *sakoku* (closing country) dichotomies; the “*wangdao*” (jp. *Ōdō*) versus “*badao*” (Jp. *Hadō*) opposition; Sun Yat-sen (and his conception of Asianism as well as his personal friendships with Japanese); Ahn Jung-geun (and his role as Korean national hero and Japanese traitor); the Nanking Massacre (as event, experience, and myth) .

The by far most prominently utilized binary in this debate is the concept of “leaving Asia” (datsu A) and its opposition “entering Asia” (nyū A). While most civil society actors and networks throughout East Asia criticize Japan’s lack of interest in and solidarity with Asia (both historically and today) to prescribe a new pro-Asian policy that “enters Asia” in a non-hegemonic way, conservative public intellectuals and think-tanks have emphasized the assumed positive results of Japan’s pro-Western orientation during the Meiji and post-war periods. This conceptual pair also serves as a rationale to overcome nationalized views of the past by extending its political to an epistemological scope. “Entering Asia”, in this sense, represents a view that overcomes the nationalized perspective to gain an insight view of the Asian `other`. This conception therefore suggests that, potentially, also the divide between victim narratives and perpetrator narratives in East Asia may be put into perspective through the adoption of de-nationalized perspectives. These would allow acknowledgement of victims in “perpetrator nations” and perpetrators in “victim nations” and, as a consequence, facilitate a more nuanced interpretation of history for reconciliation today and harmonious co-existence tomorrow.

In summary, the dynamics of history politics in public discourse in East Asia, including its persistence, omnipresence and usability, suggests that history politics will accompany political debate in the region for the coming decades as processes of regional integration within the economic, strategic, and political spheres increase. In addition, as more recent (re)emergences of history related problems, such as the quarrel over the Senkaku-Diaoyu islands or over the Nanjing Massacre have demonstrated, history itself remains an important factor in bilateral and regional relations that fosters conflict but also generates opportunities for exchange and interactions.

## 2.4. Workshops

1. „Asianisms“ and regional interaction and integration in Asia (late 19th century to present), International Conference at the University of Freiburg, 14-15 October 2011, co-organized by Nicola Spakowski, Marc Frey and Torsten Weber and sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (see appendix for program). Conference reports were published in *HSozKult*; *H-Asia*; *Asien* and so forth. See for example: *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 19.01.2012, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=4011>>.
2. “Identity and the Nation in 20th Century Asia.” International Workshop held at Jacobs University Bremen on 20-21 July 2012, organized by Marc Frey, Stefan Hübner and Torsten Weber (see appendix for program). Selected papers will be published in a special issue of *Comparativ* edited by Stefan Hübner and Torsten Weber (see above). Conference reports were published in *HSozKult*; *H-Asia*; *Asien* and so on. See for example: <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=4421>

## 3. Summary

From the above, it appears that it is difficult to generalize. Asianisms were employed by various actors at various moments in time for specific purposes. As definitions of the concept `Asia` are instable, they

can easily be used to signify rivaling agendas. The most explicit and frequent contradiction regarding differing conceptions of `Asia` refers to the tensions between regionalist and nationalist agendas. In most Asian countries under research, nationalist conceptions of `Asia` played an important role in public political discourse, either as the main narrative (“from above”) or as the counter-narrative to be overcome (“from below”). The main aim of Asianist discourses was to envisage an Asia as an interconnected and independent continent. This continent encompassed, in the first half of the 20th century, East, Southeast and South Asia. In the post-world war two decades, it gradually extended to Western Asia. In the first half of the 20th century, Asianist discourses served two main objectives: they challenged images of inferiority to the ‘West’, and they legitimized Japanese Imperial ambitions. Both objectives served to focus attention on the power asymmetry between the ‘West’ and Asia and were meant to deflect power asymmetries between different Asian countries. Nationalisms emerged in the context of nation building, anti-colonialism, decolonization and the Cold War, and they continuously undermined ideals of an Asian integration. In more present times, civil society groups seek to overcome tensions and rivalries that are based on national divisions. But they tend to avoid controversies that may increase conflict. This strategy, however, is also political in nature and constitutes yet another dimension of history politics. Of course, history politics are not absent from the discourses of political decision-makers and government-funded think tanks. But here, discourse on Asia remain closely linked to national(ist) agendas; that of the “peaceful rise of China” to its assumed rightful place as a regional and global world power, of Korean unification and mediation in East Asia, and of Japanese revisionism of the post-World War Two order and its fear of China as Asia’s next leader.

The research group is convinced that ‘Asianisms’ continue to be a fertile field of historical enquiry. As one example of an interest of a wider public we point to a long review of one of our early publications on the topic (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 29 July 2009), which featured the special issue of the journal *Comparativ* (Leipzig 2009) on ‘Asianisms’.

Projects such as our one as well as future projects on Asianisms face the challenge to do research about a multi-cultural and multi-lingual large region. We have been happy to assemble scholars who were not only fluent in a number of European languages but also in Japanese, Chinese and Korean. With the assistance of student assistants, we could also translate Indonesian and Thai language publications. This points to a vital characteristics of this and possibly other projects: joint research can be truly rewarding.