

China Connections

India-China Links

Tansen Sen

China's connections to South Asia date back to the first millennium CE, when itinerant Buddhist monks, the circulations of ritual objects and commodities, and the rendition of Indic texts into Chinese led to the creation of unique linkages across the Asian continent. These connections and linkages continued, albeit transformed through commercial expansions and the spread of European colonial domination, during the second millennium. The opium trade and the wars that ensued triggered the formation of new networks of intellectual exchanges and the publication of a wide array of Indian and Chinese writings about each other in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.



THE VISIT OF THE NOBLE LAUREATE Rabindranath Tagore to China in 1924 provided a significant impetus to these writings that were often framed within the context of pan-Asianism. New sites of interactions between Indian and Chinese intellectuals, such as Santiniketan, near Calcutta in India, and Shanghai in China, emerged during this period. It was also at this time that Chinese migrants started settling down in larger numbers in Calcutta and Bombay, and Indian traders expanded their businesses in Shanghai, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

These exchanges persisted into the 1950s with the establishment of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China as two new nation states. The catchphrase 'Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai' [Indians and Chinese are brothers] was created to mark the end of imperialism and celebrate the beginning of decolonized brotherhood. Unfortunately

though, territorial disputes and issues of national integration resulted in the India-China war of 1962, the trauma of which continues to define the contemporary relations between the ROI and the PRC. And it is within this context of unease, that many innovative projects aimed to foster people-to-people connections have been launched, or older programs revived.

This issue of *China Connections* reports on some of these initiatives. They include the visit of the Indian author Amitav Ghosh to China, the establishment of new centers of research, and the training of young scholars from the two countries. These initiatives are examples of new linkages and global connections of the twenty-first century.

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Left: Traveling monk, ca. 851–900, Mogao Grottoes Cave 17, Dunhuang, Gansu Province



上海纽约大学
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**Center for Global Asia
at NYU Shanghai**

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information on the contexts for the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

**Asia Research Center
at Fudan University**

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Throughout the years, the center has been working tirelessly to promote Asian Studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with the ARCs in mainland China and many institutes abroad.

China-India Academic Programs

The China-India Studies Program at the Harvard-Yenching Institute

THE HARVARD-YENCHING INSTITUTE has recently developed a joint doctoral fellowship program that seeks to bring together and train the next generation of scholars of Indian studies in China and scholars of Chinese Studies in India. This new program, facilitated by the participation of the Institute for Chinese Studies in Delhi and four partner institutions in China (Fudan University, Peking University, Sichuan University, and Yunnan University), is open to those in all fields of the humanities and social sciences.

Chinese Studies in India & Indian Studies in China

Each year a small number of promising doctoral candidates in Chinese Studies at Indian universities will be selected for the joint doctoral fellowship program. In addition to their doctoral studies in India, funded by the Indian side, participants are eligible for two years abroad, funded by the Harvard-Yenching Institute. One year of HYI support will be spent at a host institution in China to receive advanced Chinese language training and interdisciplinary training in Chinese Studies. After the year in China, program participants will be eligible to spend one year in residence at the Harvard-Yenching Institute for dissertation research and writing.

The program's host institutions in China will also be invited to nominate a small number of outstanding doctoral students or younger faculty members in Indian Studies to come to HYI as Visiting Fellows or Visiting Scholars. Selected candidates will join their Indian counterparts at the Harvard-Yenching Institute for a one-year stay. For more information about the program visit the HYI website: <http://www.harvard-yenching.org/china-india-studies-program> and the ICS website: <http://www.icsin.org/ics-hyi-multi-year-doctoral-fellowship-in-china-studies>

For more information contact: Lindsay Strogatz, Program Manager of the Harvard-Yenching Institute (strogatz@fas.harvard.edu).

The Center for Gandhian and Indian Studies at Fudan University

THE CENTER FOR GANDHIAN AND INDIAN STUDIES established at Fudan University in 2015 is a platform for comprehensive and interdisciplinary Gandhian and Indian Studies. It aims to integrate the strength and resources of Gandhian and Indian Studies throughout the university, and communicates with scholars from China and abroad. It focuses on studies about Gandhi's ideology and social practices, Indian economy, politics and foreign relations, as well as Indian language, religion and culture, including studies related to Buddhism and historical contacts between India and China in this context.

The Center for Gandhian and Indian Studies endeavors to establish the discipline of Indian Studies at Fudan, to cultivate talents of Gandhian and Indian Studies, to promote exchange and communication between Chinese and Indian academic circles as well as people from all walks of life to enhance mutual understanding between Chinese and Indian people.

The Center has already commenced publication under the book series entitled *Indologia et Studia Indica*. Recent books include Zheng Weihong's *Studies in Buddhist Logic* and Tang Mingjun's edited volume *Nyāyamukha, Festschrift for Prof. Weihong Zheng*. On 10-11 December 2016, in collaboration with the International Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in India, the Center organized the international conference 'Indo-Chinese Cultural Relations: Through Buddhist Path of Transcendence'. The Center invites global scholars for long and short-term visits to Fudan University.

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The India China Institute at The New School

ESTABLISHED IN 2005, the India China Institute (ICI) at The New School supports research, teaching and discussion on India, China and the United States, with special focus on making comparisons and understanding interactions between the three countries as well as their joint impact on the rest of the world. ICI is the hub of an international network of scholars, leaders, and opinion-makers. Through fellowships, courses, public events, publications, and collaboration with a wide range of institutions around the world, ICI promotes academic and public understanding of issues of contemporary relevance to India-China studies.

Sacred landscapes of India and China

For the past three years, the ICI has been conducting research across India, Nepal and China as part of its 'Sacred Landscapes and Sustainable Futures in the Sacred Himalaya Initiative', supported by the Henry Luce Foundation. ICI has been exploring the complex relationships between Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash – two sacred sites in Western Tibet – and the diverse faith communities from across South Asia who undertake pilgrimages to visit and worship these sites. The project has tried to better understand how local communities are adapting to a range of issues, from climate change and new economic pressures brought about by globalization to the changing geopolitical border realities. This new work will be presented later this year at the 'Mountains and Sacred Landscapes Conference' (20-23 April 2017) in New York City.

Fostering scholar-leaders in India and China

Another exciting project ICI is leading is our recently launched 'China India Scholar-Leaders Initiative', which will bring together emerging young scholars from India, China and the US focused on the theme of 'Prosperity and Inequality in China and India'. By combining advanced academic capacity-strengthening with fieldwork and research-mentoring, this new initiative seeks to deepen the field of India-China Studies and provide much-needed academic and organizational support to young scholars. Fellows will spend 18 months developing new research for publication while expanding their professional networks across India, China and the US.

The great urban transformations of China and India

In addition to these two important projects, ICI is also establishing a unique research and policy collaboration on urbanization, 'The Great Urban Transformations of China and India: Implications for Equity and Livelihoods'. In the first three-year phase (2017-2020) of a larger project, ICI and partner institutions in Shenzhen and New Delhi will collaborate to develop a transnational (India, China, and United States) network of urban scholars and practitioners whose research and policy dialogues can evaluate the ways that urban policies and practices in these two metro-regions can address more closely the problems of urban inequities and the proliferation of precarious urban jobs and livelihoods. To learn more about these and other India-China related efforts visit the India China Institute's website: <https://www.indiachinainstitute.org>. You can also follow us on Twitter @india_china.

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'Little India' in China

Ka-Kin Cheuk

LOCATED IN EASTERN ZHEJIANG PROVINCE as a district under Shaoxing municipality, Keqiao is not only a global trading hub, but also a 'Little India' in China. Its wholesale market accounts for one-third annual turnover of a bewildering variety of fabrics: the semi-finished, lightweight textiles that are industrially woven, knitted, dyed, and printed in China before being exported to over 180 ports around the world. In the local market, around 5000 Indians have established intermediary trade businesses in Keqiao. Together with other foreign traders, these traders have brokered a large amount of fabric trade for their buyers in different parts of the world, mostly in the Global South.

Drawing on long-term fieldwork in Keqiao (2011-2012; 2016-2017), this ethnographic study explores the everyday work experience of Indian traders in the local fabric market. It unpacks the economic niche that they have created through local market engagements, as well as the transnational trading networks that have sustained this niche in the global value chain of textiles. As such, it aims to explore the significance of Indian-Chinese fabric trade in Keqiao in the global economy.

In 1998, the first Indian came to open a trading office in Keqiao. But Keqiao's fabric market existed long before that. It proliferated in the late 1970s, when a large part of Zhejiang Province was still plagued by poverty and underdevelopment. Many local Chinese peasants and fishermen became peddling traders selling fabrics, while others converted their houses into household factories supplying fabrics to the traders. The local traders organized a fabric bazaar along the main canal area. It later became the central marketplace accommodating over 20,000 wholesale shops and distributing more than 10,000 types of fabrics. The continuous inflow of Chinese migrant traders, particularly those from the rural areas in Wenzhou and Sichuan, has further enhanced the local supply chain, as they have connected Keqiao to a sales network across the whole nation.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, such developmental dynamics from below have received institutional support from the local government, in a time when state's support was not



common in the local market economy. The local government, for instance, played a crucial role in improving the infrastructure of Keqiao, facilitating the robust growth of its fabric trade economy. In recognizing the economic achievement and national importance of Keqiao's fabric industries, in 1992, the central Chinese government named the marketplace area 'The China Light Textile City' (中国轻纺城).

Indian-Chinese connections

In Keqiao, it is well-recognized that the arrival of many Indian traders drastically transformed the local trade landscape. The first wave of Indian migrants to the city coincided with its exponential growth of fabric exports in the early 2000s. Since then, the value of fabric exports has overtaken that of the domestic trade, thereby making international fabric trade indispensable to the economic development of Keqiao. From the perspective of the Indian traders, their relocation to Keqiao was largely a market choice. These Indian traders usually operate their transnational business on limited budgets. Most of them specialize in the intermediary trade of low-grade fabrics for the price-savvy buyers, particularly those frequenting the re-export market in Dubai. Living in Keqiao

Above: Fabric marketplace buildings along the main canal in Keqiao. Photo by author.

enables the Indian traders to establish stronger networks with suppliers. It allows them to negotiate better prices and higher commission fees for the trade orders. In so doing, the Indian traders capitalize on the unique market structure of Keqiao's fabric industries: over 80 per cent of Chinese suppliers are running small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Keqiao, most of these suppliers only manage to supply cheap and low-quality fabrics, which is a crowded market that inevitably faces intense price competition. The local price competition, however, turns out to be a market strength in the low-end export sector, given that the Indian traders are also extremely price-sensitive in their purchases. With both sides being so much strained on the price factor, their everyday encounters in Keqiao tend to be fraught with tension and conflict. Nevertheless, holding to a dual commitment of cutting cost and maintaining partnership, Indian-Chinese trade in Keqiao is a resilient force in sustaining the grassroots connections between China and the Global South, especially so in the time of on-going global economic uncertainties.

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Sanskrit Studies at Peking University

THE ORIGINS OF SANSKRIT STUDIES at Peking University can be traced back to 1921, when the German scholar Alexander von Stael-Holstein created a Sanskrit course for PKU students. After him, Walter Liebenthal, also a German, taught this course in the 1930s. They helped train a number of Chinese students in Sanskrit; this included the noted intellectuals Lin Likouang and Wu Xiaoling. In 1946, after returning from Göttingen, Germany, Ji Xianlin established the Department of Oriental Languages at Peking University, marking the beginning of the discipline of Indology in modern China. Two years later, Jin Kemu joined Peking University and worked together with Ji Xianlin to promote India Studies in China. Due to their reputation in the academic community, and because of their excellence in teaching and scholarship, the 1950s witnessed a rapid development of Sanskrit Studies at Peking University.

The first undergraduates majoring in Sanskrit and Pali were enrolled in 1960, most of whom pursued academic careers after graduation. Among them Jiang Zhongxin and Huang Baosheng, who became celebrated scholars for their contributions to the field. Jiang was among the first scholars who paid attention to the study of Sanskrit manuscripts found in Tibet and he translated the Hindu text *Manusmṛti* (Laws of Manu) into Chinese. Huang played a vital role in completing the translation of the Indian epic *Mahābhārata* and made major contributions to the study of Sanskrit poetics. In 1978, shortly after the Cultural Revolution, Ji Xianlin became the vice president of Peking University and the director of the Institute of South Asian Studies, established jointly by Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Since then BA, MA, and PhD degrees in Sanskrit and Pali have been offered at Peking University. As of now, Peking University remains the only institution where a comprehensive program in Sanskrit and Pali is offered to undergraduate and graduate students. Additionally, minor options are available in Tibetan language and literature. In 2004, the Research Institute of Sanskrit Manuscripts and Buddhist Literature was established at the university. This expanded the disciplinary coverage to new areas, including Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscript studies, and the translation and interpretation of Sanskrit, Kharoṣṭhī and Khotanese documents found in Xinjiang. Three series of publication have been launched to disseminate the research outcome of the Institute, including the series on Sanskrit manuscripts and Buddhist literature and on Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese languages. In 2009, an MoU was signed with Dhammachai Institute in Thailand to jointly translate the Pali Tipitaka into Chinese. The main idea behind this project is to introduce the Pali Buddhist canon to the Chinese audience and to develop an educational program on the Pali Buddhist tradition at Peking University. This effort has resulted in the publication of the Buddhist text *Dīghanikāya* in 2012.

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West Heavens: India-China cultural exchange program

West Heavens is an integrated cross-cultural exchange program. It aims to untangle and compare the different paths of modernity taken by India and China, to facilitate high-level communication between the two countries' intellectual and art circles, and to promote interaction through social thoughts and contemporary art. Since 2010, the program has organized more than 100 events including forums, exhibitions, film screenings and workshops, and published more than ten books.

China has been in the grip of modernization for over a century. From Revolution to Cold War, and now capitalist globalism, China has been unable to shake off paradigms set by the West. Even Chinese discourse about modernity has so far been trapped by dichotomies of 'East/West' or 'China/West'. No wonder that efforts at developmental self-reliance have only led to increasingly Westernized economic and political institutions and lifestyles. Today the West that China emulates as the model of an 'advanced civilization' is no longer suitable for guidance, and yet access to China's own historical resources has been blocked by the framework of these models. To establish a position for itself outside of the two Western Cold War ideological paradigms, to develop historical resources beyond Western ideals, China must make connections elsewhere. Among Asian countries that have struck off on different paths of modernization, but still successful by the parochial standards of 'prosperity', India has much to offer its neighbors. For more than a century, challenges of imperialism and capitalism have forced India and China to develop political strategies that have profoundly transformed both societies. Sharing this experience is valuable for Indians and Chinese alike.

China had experienced one other profound cultural turn long before the seismic cultural shift towards the West. The Buddhist turn did not bring comparable destructive fervor as the past century of revolutions, but its influence was just as far reaching; Buddhist learning took many centuries before it was fully absorbed into Confucian scholarship in the Song dynasty (10-13 C). Today, after a century of revolutions, it is important to remember this history of cultural self-transformation. At this age of global change it is critical for China to remind ourselves that in our imagination of the world there is not just the West, but also the 'West Heavens'.



Amitav Ghosh at the Youth Round Table in Mingfu Library, Shanghai; photo by Zhou Shengjie, provided by West Heavens.

China tour with Amitav Ghosh

In Fall 2016, West Heavens curated a one month visit to China with Indian writer Amitav Ghosh, in collaboration with NYU Shanghai and the publishers of the Chinese editions of *In An Antique Land* and *River of Smoke*. Ghosh's travel covered major cities throughout China – including Kunming, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai – giving talks on the relation between history and writing, the Opium Wars and India-China trade relations. Ghosh also met with local authors, critics, press, and in particular with Chinese readers, and presented at two major book fairs, Beijing Book Fair and Shanghai Book Fair. In addition, West Heavens curated a Youth Round Table on history and writing, in Mingfu Library in Shanghai, with Amitav Ghosh and young writers, artists, and researchers from inside and outside of academia. During his talks and roundtables, Ghosh left the Chinese readers with a vivid impression of a contemporary Indian literature. Indian literature is not sufficiently translated into Chinese, and only those who won major Western literature prizes have so far attracted the attention of Chinese publishers. The question of how and why certain literature should be introduced to readers shall be further discussed among academics, critics, publishers and readers.

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