

"SOUTHEASTERN CHINA"

Source and transformation point for Indo-Pacific and World History.

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Day One Friday Nov. 15: Dynamics of inclusiveness

Distinguished Commentator: **Harry Harding**, *Dean, Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia*

Panel One: Taiwan, China, Asia: inclusive identities?

Chair/discussant: **John Shepherd**, *Professor of Anthropology, University of Virginia*

Taiwan Inclusive:

Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges

The Miller Center, University of Virginia

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I. Introduction

Brantly Womack has asked me to speak about the macro-anthropology of identity in Asia as it pertains to our area and I am delighted to do so, delighted to participate in this dialogue of distinguished persons and interests for this quite extraordinary place. I believe this region is one of the most dynamic centers in the world and has been so for 6,000 years. I should warn this audience, however, that anthropologists tend to think the places where they have been are the most interesting if not the most important in the world. Although I remain a novice in East Asian studies, I have spent 7 months of this year in and around Quanzhou in Fujian Province; the marvels of our current communication system allow me to be in nearly daily contact with my friends there since leaving in early August. To say that I am taken with the place is an understatement.

My claims for the importance of this region are full of passion; and some real knowledge. I intermix this region's deep history—a very dynamic field all its own—with the present which, for me, begins in 1973; I mix what seems like religion with regional trade; and I mix aesthetic fascination with anchored speculation. So bear with me... I am having fun learning and presenting this material

II. The Place's Claims to Fame

From an anthropological point of view why a conference focusing on the relationships between Beijing, Taipei and Washington DC. would wish to begin with Quanzhou and Fujian Province is clear. For me it begins with my first real visit to the area, though my second time there. Then, 2007, the now former director of the Quanzhou Maritime Museum told me how much they resented always being told what to do by “Beijing,” since ‘they’ were the real centers

of innovation and creativity for China. This man has great knowledge of and passion for Quanzhou in general but by “they” he includes the arc that runs from the Pearl River Delta, i.e. Hong Kong, to Ningbo and Hangzhou, i.e. close to Shanghai. He considers Confucius a southerner.

Then there is the matter of language, an exceedingly complicated topic. However, my Quanzhou friends are straightforward about this. For them there is something called MinNan Hua, Southern Min language that is spoken, with lots of dialect variation, throughout most of southern Fujian stretching into eastern Guangdong Province; they assert that this language is the basis of what some people call Taiwanese. They say there is no coherent Northern Min Language, but they know that many of the “Chinese” in what we call Southeast Asia are from the greater Quanzhou region, still speak Min Nan Hua, as well as Chinese; one of the Philippines’ great presidents is from Quanzhou (Jinjiang) and every year his family members visit their ancestral hall to honor and reconnect to his origin place. Altogether there are at least 60 million speakers of what is broadly considered Minnanhua. Most assuredly these matters are combinations of localized claims to identity as well as the complicated and very real linguistic history that is a matter of continuous sorting. Sort here is pun. The matter concerns how linguists sort languages and how language speakers sort themselves by means of their differentiated speech. As is well known Chinese culture is among the few that sought to unify, certainly in writing but also in speaking, its language practices. But the further south one moves away from the various centers of Chinese civilization the more that pattern is eclipsed by a process of continuous differentiation. One of my friends said Min Nan Hua was largely an academic construction and that really there was a Quanzhou hua, AnXi hua, Dehua Hua, Hui’An Hua...as many as you’d like to list. This is

a process probably related to what some call “the China trade,”¹ a pursuit designed to combine differences. But in order to be combined, in order for yin and yang to go together, there first have to be real differences. When I began to realize how complicated Fujian Province’s linguistic map really was what came to my mind was the proverbial 700 languages of Papua New Guinea, a “region” with, now, only some 5,000,000 people.

One dividing point in the language history is approximately the 3rd century of the common era when Min speakers entered the area from central China.

We will take a step closer to the present before returning to 6000 years ago.

Two recent books about the way I define this area begin similarly, with historical analogies. Billy So begins Prosperity, Region and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946-1368 comparing Quanzhou² to Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s and Hong Kong since 1970s—in both cases one of the major ports in the world. In her almost desperate account of people struggling to leave Fuzhou for, mostly, the United States, Julie Chu in Cosmologies Of Credit Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China,³ begins invoking Marco Polo’s excited descriptions of the region, what he called Zeitun, an early name for Quanzhou. Presuming that in fact Marco Polo actually went to China—there is a dispute about that but note that if he did not somebody else did and told him about it—he said the place was the most cosmopolitan city in the world. A resident of Venice, he knew whereof he spoke. I don’t know when the name changed from Zaitun to Quanzhou, but there is a major street – Citong lu (刺桐路) --that goes by this name as well as a now old but renowned hotel that draws

¹ “Epilogue: Seafaring in the Pacific, Past and Present,” Ward H. Goodenough and Richard Feinberg in Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands, Studies in Continuity and Change. Edited by Richard Feinberg. 1995 DeKalb, IL. Northern Illinois University Press.

² Harvard University Press, 2001. So uses the Wade-Giles system for writing hence Quanzhou, which is the Pinyin rendition, is Chu’üan-chou.

³ Duke University Press, 2010.

on this city of fame. The word citong designates a tree (*Erythrina variegata*) whose sap formed an important ingredient for the boatworks that made the city famous.

Taken by itself Julie Chu's rich if disturbing depiction of people desiring to leave Fuzhou for elsewhere misses a major dynamic in this area. This dynamic, I think, Ken Dean captures in the extraordinary landscape reconstruction he produces in his recent work RITUAL ALLIANCES OF THE PUTIAN PLAIN: Volume I, Historical Introduction to the Return of the Gods.⁴ What these images show is that social action on this landscape has drastically increased the amount of arable land for cultivation...and undoubtedly other productive uses (The same dynamic is evident in the Pearl River delta...). After tracing the flow of wealth back to Putian from Southeast Asia Dean (the subject matter of this two-volume study) has been following the movement of people from there throughout Southeast Asia (mostly by means of the temples they have constructed throughout the region) since, roughly, the 16th century. He has reported that virtually every family he has studied either goes up—literally or figuratively to Beijing—or out.⁵ Although this out is mostly to Southeast Asia, that is not entirely the case. The young man more or less assigned to keep me alive from this last January to August grew up in eastern Guangdong but is from a Putian family that fled to Guangdong in the 19th century. People from Putian have a particular reputation: one of my friends noted their peculiar language and said they were the “Jews of China.” Another fears they are the principal agents behind much of China's consumption of the world's resources.

Yet I believe the landscape and ritual transformations Dean illustrates are at best an intense version of what typifies this extraordinary region. When I was in Dehua, one of Fujian Provinces' old but continuing porcelain centers, my friends thought I needed to visit the West

⁴ Brill 2010.

⁵ In other conferences. Liang Yongjia, personal communication, April 2014, recalling various presentations he has heard Dean give.

Heaven Temple (My translation of 西天寺). We started driving north from the newly sprawling city until the modern road turned into a one track lane that carried two lanes of traffic whence it seemed we were going almost straight up. The temple, newly reconstructed as were many, many of the temples throughout the region, had recently been remade, but it was intensely used, its new *shan mu* timbers already coated with smoke from burnt offerings. My hosts told me it was put there during the Ming dynasty (roughly 14th-17th century), but the temple's own records stated that it was from the Tang Dynasty. I marveled, and wondered, why anyone would put an important temple on the top of a high mountain...then realized that that was of course the point, the effort. I was told people climbed to the place by foot, horseback, or, if rich, they were carried there—intense effort indeed.

That effort is part of the region. And the landscape transformations Dean illustrates are the norm. In his account of Quanzhou Billy So mentions that before what we currently understand as the city, more or less centered by the famous Buddhist temple Kaiyuan Si, the area's center was a few miles up the Jin Jiang at a place called Fengzhou. On a hill overlooking the city is a famous spot, about where the yellow mark appears, 九日山, Nine Day Mountain by my literal translation, where captains would go to observe the winds and waters and pray for good sailing conditions. From there today, marked by this reconstructed temple the sea is barely visible. But it would seem that the city still serves one of the region's centering functions for, if my experience is correct, it seems to hold the Lantern Festival for the whole region; my young Fengzhou friend is pictured here inside her ancestral hall which we visited with hundreds of other people after the parade was over. A month or so after this picture was taken back in Quanzhou we went for a run to a standing stone near the Jin River. Still long from understanding this region's history I asked her about some things—when did her family become a part of

Fengzhou? “3rd century.” Why was that place the center and not Quanzhou? “Because Quanzhou wasn’t there yet.” What is now the city was made by the same action that made the Putian plain.

Move out towards the sea is an old pattern in this part of the world. As archaeologists now understand the history of the Pacific about 6000 years ago some combination of people, things, and languages moved from somewhere along the Fujian coast to Taiwan.⁶ Exactly where is not clear but recently Alex Chiu Hung-Lin (邱鴻霖) of the Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan, discovered bones dating to some 7000 years ago near Fuzhou that are a nearly exact match for our moving understanding of what is called the Austronesian population.⁷ While the movement from Fujian to Taiwan remains only partly understood, barring a few studies that remain outliers, the movement from Taiwan into the Philippines and then eventually as far west as Madagascar and as far east as Easter Island is quite well known. Certainly in the Common Era much of this region was in the orbit of the trading networks that connected the Indian Ocean to China. ANU’s Jim Fox tells me that Chinese people figure in genealogies he has collected on Timor from at least the 17th century; and he has told me that the Portuguese and Dutch were furious and mystified by the fact that they never succeeded in subduing the Timorese political system whereas the whole time they fought against it Chinese junks would sail to the coast and march straight into the center. The Chinese, presumably from the southeast, sailed to Timor for sandalwood, the world’s best source of that favored product. Timor is on the edge of what we once understood as the Spice Islands and it is not a great presumption to argue that much of this region was organized, ecologically and socially, to furnish South and East Asia with various forest products. The famous forests of Borneo were not wild, rather organized to produce various items for places to the north. I am stretching the data

⁶ This is part of the received wisdom in anthropology. I discuss its details, and partly organized my Quanzhou research intentions with ANU’s Peter Bellwood.

⁷ Details were confirmed on 11/12/13, personal communication.

but it is not unreasonable to suggest that the cutting of these forests now and the planting of oil palm, both largely for South and East Asian interests, is not so much a new pattern but the transformation of an old one.

Buddhist and Chinese influences are easy to identify throughout most of Southeast Asia deep into what is now understood as Eastern Indonesia. But east of there the fact of serious *direct* intermingling is lacking; only deep structuralist-inspired transformations – of horticultural practices as well as aesthetic productions—tie the Austronesian populations back to their origins at the limit of East Asia.

But that is not true of the present. When I first arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1973 it was obvious the country was a European and mostly British and Australian colony. By 1991 people of Chinese heritage –probably from Fujian Province but from families that had been in the area for much of the 20th century—increasingly dominated the buying and selling processes that connected these once distant parts of the world to the world as it is today. And by the mid-1990s various Chinese interests organized the extraction of ocean resources—shark fins and sea cucumbers—for the increasingly rich China. By 1998 it was evident that Taipei and Beijing competed for UN favors with respect to the votes of the small countries of the Pacific. And now, amidst mineral rushes all across the islands, Australian companies search for gold for markets defined by the pull of the Asias. An old pattern finds a new field of operation.

III. Changes in Time

One of the apparent facts that fascinates me about the history of the Indo-pacific region is that by the time the Austronesian expansion has reached its Western (to Madagascar, ca.500 CE) and Eastern (Easter Island, ca.1200+/-) limits the ocean side of the Silk Road is coming into its own. Billy So sees its peak during the Song and Yuan dynasties, and that may be so, but my tutor

in things about Quanzhou, Wang Mingming, directed me to a study of influences coming out of Buddhist South India that begin in the 6th century.⁸ By then these Buddhist missionaries are bringing massive land alterations as they lead the construction of bridges, monasteries and their pagodas and, I suspect, transplanted irrigated rice agriculture. Originally constructed by the Tang Dynasty, Quanzhou iconic Kaiyuan Si remains a moral center in the community and the center of a dazzling display of ritual and marketing activity on the 26th day of every lunar month. Its pagodas were originally constructed of wood but sometime during the Yuan dynasty they were made from the granite that stands to this day. The stone is from Fengzhou, the region's original center. Whether that is significant or not I do not know but this entire coastline is rich in marble and granite. Islamic, Persian and Arabic, influences are also profound, and from early on. In fact mosques appear so quickly in Quanzhou and Islamic influences are so much a part of the region's fabric—the Director of Quanzhou's Maritime Museum, my friend Ding Yuling, is of Persian heritage⁹—that I asked Wang Mingming if it was possible that that part of the world was connected to Quanzhou before Mohammed. Bits of evidence make this a possibility.

I went to Quanzhou so I could do research in China. As my time there progressed I've increasingly come to the conclusion that I'm experiencing a transformed India (now perhaps the bedrock; the current transformation is from the West). The temple buildings and gods inside the Buddhist Kaiyuan Si certainly look Chinese but the turtle a friend told me she delighted playing on when she was a child derives from the (South) Indian heritage; so too the lingas that adorn this and many other temples. This is part of that heritage that began by at least the 6th century. And seeing its evidence in the old bridges that increasingly adorn the countryside as historical

⁸宋元泉州石建筑技术发展脉络 Maritime History Studies 2009(1):73-112. By Yan Ai Bin, 闫爱宾.

⁹ Wikipedia discusses her family name and its ties to Iran. An anthropologist with a Ph.D. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong one of her fancies is to research her family heritage in Iran.

markers brought me to the conclusion that the fascination with mass, which is overwhelming across this land, is not a new phenomena in Fujian Province. Indeed there is a kind of continuity between the hundreds of tons of granite that went into the making of the Wu Li Qiao and the high rises springing up all over Quanzhou today.

Perhaps nothing illustrates these gathered points better than the goddess Guanyin. She adorns Robert Blumenfield's lovely discussion of Dehua County and its long tradition of porcelain production. Likenesses of her from this area are evident from at least the 14th century when the kilns of Dehua were distributed throughout the current county's countryside, undoubtedly better to harness controllable water power from smaller streams and keep mountainsides of wood fuel close at hand. But only a few dragon kilns are left, it seems mostly for historical and scholarly pleasure. And as people have been moved from the countryside into the city of Dehua so have the production works, using electricity generated from the larger river that divides the city into a northern and southern side. Inside Dehua city there are now 1400 factories producing porcelain products of all kinds and for all parts of the world. And although these factories gather kaolin from all over China for their primary raw material, south of the city there remains the mountain Guānyīn Qí from which the highest quality material is still thought to come, and it was at least one of the differences that made this place stand out. Porcelain, for example, was produced in the current city of Quanzhou from materials that were more or less local; the city also produced silk and a mulberry tree grows inside the Kaiyuan Si temple region harkening to that time. As for porcelain, my source for this information told me that the Quanzhou people tried to copy the appearance of the higher quality stuff that came from Dehua (and other more famous regions) ...It is the same with tea, which was produced widely across this region. However in the Quanzhou region one city in particular, Anxi, became known for its

product by the Tang Dynasty. Sometime in the Qing Dynasty it developed a new variety of the tree, from which is produced the tea called Teiguanyin, now ubiquitous in the teashops of Quanzhou. Only if you were really good could you tell the differences among these products. Various friends from Dehua showed me how to see their differences in porcelain. All the Guanyin statues are hollow and to test the quality a light is shined inside the concavity so you can examine the nature of the light outside the translucent material. One friend, a middle school teacher and president of a local historical association travels the world collecting and examining old Dehua products that have found their ways to Europe and America over the centuries.

Guanyin does not just appear from the Dehua porcelain works. HuiAn, another county at the northern extreme of Quanzhou, once primarily a boat-making and fishing region, is now the location for an enormous percentage of China's marble and granite stone works. There are dozens of factories in the area, many of them show-casing small and large statues—the largest several stories high—of this goddess. They were everywhere. So are other religious products which the region now exports to Tibetan, Taiwanese and Japanese temples—religion is a good business. Unfortunately when I was there in May I was more focused on the movement of raw materials, which laid about everywhere, than the finished products. And the fashioning that capture my fancy had to do with the extraordinary, and largely granite and marble composed houses going up everywhere, as well as this beautifully crafted boat. Moreover it wasn't until I was in Dehua in June and July when the significance of Guanyin struck me so I do not have any marble or granite likeness of her to show you. What eventually struck me, however, was the straightforward statement of some of my friends, some of whom beseech her for their desires, that the image is of the Buddha, who came to this part of China as a male, and was turned into a female goddess. I realize there is a vast scholarly literature on this relationship, but the one I give

you is what I was told by the people I met...and the Indian male to the Fujian female is what stands out.

India's presence is widespread. My first long time in Quanzhou in 2008 brought me to Ningbo where I visited its famous Ashoka Temple,¹⁰ one of many Buddhist temples in that region. An artist friend from Fujian Province but now residing in Beijing has a special association with another temple near Ningbo. It is not so much associated with India via Ashoka as tied to the passage of at least a certain strand of Buddhism that went from the Ningbo area to Japan. From sometime beginning in 2010 to early 2012 this friend wrote a poem for every monk associated with that temple over the last 1500 years.

When I returned home in August I started interacting with the Weedon Professor of Architecture, Shiqiao Li. He told me he was interested in going to Quanzhou to study Islamic influences in its architecture. I immediately wrote several Quanzhou friends about that. One wrote back and said he must go to Hui'an because so many of the people from there were from the region's Islamic heritage. As it turns out, on one of the days when I was walking with my friends to lunch an extraordinary beautiful tree-root carving was being unloaded from a truck to be put into the Zeitun Hotel next to the Quanzhou Maritime Museum. It was carved by some people from Hui'an. It depicted horses scampering up a mountainside.

This extraordinary carving exhibited a fashioning not unlike what people have been doing for millennia across the land of Fujian Province and the whole Indo-Pacific; like what people have been doing for at least 1500 years from the earth around Dehua; what they have been transforming into exquisite teas from Anxi; and with aesthetically constructed boats all along this

¹⁰ Honoring the 3rd century BCE Maurya Dynasty King whose unification of India parallels Han feats for about the same time.

coast line for long...But when I asked my artist friend about this particular style of carving, prancing horses, she said that was from the north; and so beyond what I could then really learn.

Thank you.