

Cosmopolitan China

An international conference convened by
Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS) and Confucius Institute (CI)
Pathways to Cosmopolitan PhD Program (Manchester and NUS)
Research Institute for Cosmopolitan Culture (RICC)
Manchester Architecture Research Centre (MARC)
To be held at the University of Manchester on 17 and 18 May 2012

Questions of ethnic diversity and multi-culturalism lie at the heart of debates on cosmopolitanism. To what extent can the case of China help to deepen and widen this debate? How does the case of China challenge the theoretical foundations of cosmopolitanism? Is there a Chinese or Asian kind of cosmopolitanism?

Mark Lewis has called the Tang dynasty (618-906) a “Cosmopolitan Empire”, and China has variously been ruled by Jurchens (1115-1234), Mongols (1279-1368) and Manchus (1644-1911). The Treaty Port Era (1842-1949) was extraordinarily cosmopolitan as well as colonial, as China and Northeast and Southeast Asia were home to sizeable foreign populations of Europeans and Americans. In today’s China, Han Chinese, themselves a multicultural, multilinguistic group, dominate an ethnically diverse nation-state. Post-Mao municipal authorities have reclaimed cities’ semi-colonial past to bring in foreign investment and drive economic development. Skyscrapers and Western-style shopping malls today dominate the Chinese urban landscape. Global and regional multimedia exchanges occur at a constant rate.

We welcome scholars of China and Southeast and Northeast Asia to participate in a multi-disciplinary conference that tackles the issue of “cosmopolitan China”. Topics could focus on the following questions/issues, but we are open to a range of ideas:

1. Historical cosmopolitan cities, peoples, cultures and practices
2. Treaty Port / post-Mao urban re-structuring and socio-cultural regeneration
3. Contemporary cosmopolitan cities/peoples/cultures, new/hybridising trends
4. Chinese/Asian religious and popular trans-nationalism and internationalism
5. Comparative studies and theories on Chinese-Asian cosmopolitanism

Inquiries and abstracts of no more than 200 words, with 5 lines of biographical information, should be sent to: David.Woodbridge@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk before 30 January 2012. Only those accepted to present at the conference will be notified by 6 February 2012. Accommodation and food will be provided during the conference but paper presenters should look for their own funding for travel.