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Introduction: Cosmopatriots: On Distant Belongings and Close Encounters

Jeroen de Kloet and
Edwin Jurriëns

Asian Crisis?

Since the last *fin de siècle*, the East and Southeast Asian region has undergone turbulent events and developments: regime changes, economic crises, natural disasters, terrorism attacks. Some of these experiences have directly affected peoples' notion of the nation-state – such as Hong Kong's "transfer," to use but one of the many euphemisms employed to describe that rainy Tuesday on 1 July 1997, from British back to Chinese hands; but also the 1998 fall of Suharto and subsequent calls for *Reformasi*, decentralization and regional autonomy in Indonesia. Although groups in society have expressed their disappointment or anger about their governments, this has not always – surprisingly perhaps – reduced their "patriotism," or love for their country. The Asian financial crisis at the end of the 1990s was paralleled by an increase, rather than a decrease, of different tropes of patriotism.

Perceptions have changed not only due to developments or events within the boundaries of the nation-state, such as tendencies towards regional autonomy (strengthening a love for the region rather than the nation), but also because of altered international configurations. For instance, under the influence of the highly increased globalization of trade, media and education, different groups in different Asian societies have become real or virtual travelers, engaging in multiple cultural experiences. The "cosmopolitanism" of these groups may and does feed into their patriotic belongings, and vice versa. This book will analyze mediated articulations of what we have coined "cosmopatriotism" in popular cultures and arts of East and Southeast Asia. But why, one may ask, did we opt for this neologism?

Cosmopolitanism in the age of intense globalization

With the perceived rise of global terrorism, which may well be interpreted as one of the symptoms of our risk society (Beck), or as a quite sinister manifestation of a profoundly networked world (Castells), the academic and social quest for ethical alternatives or answers has rapidly increased. Religious fundamentalism, vibrant nationalism and global terrorism are intricately embedded in processes of intense globalization. Over the past years, a more cosmopolitan take on our globalized world has been proposed as one possible answer to the crises we are facing today (Appiah; Beck; Nussbaum; Turner). In the words of Beck: “after communism and neoliberalism, the next big idea is needed – and this could be cosmopolitanism” (20–21). It is a term that can be traced back to the Cynics of the fourth century BC, where it signalled “a rejection of the conventional view that every civilized person belonged to a community among communities” (Appiah xiv). More than 200 years ago, Immanuel Kant, who, ironically, never left Königsberg himself, referred to cosmopolitanism as being a citizen of two worlds – *cosmos* and *polis* (Beck 18).

With Kant, the term became intrinsically associated with the Enlightenment, probably also adding to its potential imperialistic undertone, as the terms of condition for world citizenship seem to be set by the West. Consequently, as Van der Veer states, it is a trope of colonial and secular modernity: “Cosmopolitanism is the Western engagement with the rest of the world and that engagement is a colonial one, which simultaneously transcends the national boundaries and is tied to them” (10). Indeed, also today, the term evokes the image of the affluent world citizen, who in his (rather than her) Italian hand-made suit flies elegantly across the globe, attending business meetings or conferences, equally at home in Jakarta as in New York. In this view, the cosmopolitans are those who hold passports, have jobs and are fervent collectors of air miles. These are, indeed, mostly white men.

But, in our view, the term can and ought to be rescued from its elitist connotations. In his book “Cosmopolitanism – Ethics in a World of Strangers,” Appiah forcefully argues for the ethical need, if not obligation, to feel responsible to strangers, one that necessitates us to operate from a logic of “universality plus difference” (151). In his lucid story, in which he points at the risks of cultural preservation and its underlying belief in purity and essence, a position that he shares with Sen, Appiah presents a deeply global, interconnected perspective on our contemporary world. It is relevant that Appiah writes of ethics, rather than idealism. The colonial and secular trope of cosmopolitanism may well be called an ideal, referring to an idealism, “in the sense of idealization, of valorization; but also in the sense of turning-into-an-idea” (Chow xxi). Yet, as Chow aptly remarks, history shows that idealism is always anchored in violence (xxii). The move from cosmopolitanism as an ideal towards an ethics of cosmopolitanism implies a move away from an authoritative moral discourse.

To paraphrase Chow once more:

to propose a kind of ethics after idealism is thus not to confirm the attainment of an entirely independent critical direction, but rather to put into practice a supplementing imperative – to follow, to supplement idealism doggedly with non-benevolent readings, in all the dangers that supplementarity entails. (xxii)

Yet, while Appiah points at the importance of acknowledging differences, and thus provides a space for the local and the national within the cosmopolitan, his sole focus on the ethics of cosmopolitanism runs the danger of reinstating its assumed opposition to patriotism. Martha Nussbaum strongly opposes patriotism to cosmopolitanism, devaluing the first for its narrow-mindedness while celebrating the latter for its ethical righteousness (Nussbaum). Also Ulrich Beck, in his plea for a methodological cosmopolitanism in the social sciences, seemingly falls into the trap of juxtaposing the national with the cosmopolitan when he writes that:

the national perspective is a monologic imagination, which excludes the otherness of the other. The cosmopolitan perspective is an alternative imagination, an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the other. (23)

For Beck, the national is no longer the national, instead, it has to be rediscovered as the “internalised global” (23). But on observing the passionate intensity with which citizens relate to “their” country, one may wonder if this theoretical globalization of the local resonates with everyday realities. Rather than trying to insist on globalization – as indeed, at this juncture in time, the global is located within the local (Fabian 5) – it may prove more helpful to acknowledge and unpack the dialectics that exist between the local, the national, the regional and the global.

What, in the age of a new political order of globalization that has been so aptly described as one of Empire by Hardt and Negri (2000), remains of the nation-state? Already in 1927, Sun Yat-sen argued that nationalism is, in fact, the necessary basis of cosmopolitanism:

[Western colonial powers] are now advocating cosmopolitanism to inflame us, declaring that, as the civilization of the world advances and as mankind’s vision enlarges, nationalism becomes too narrow, unsuited to the present age, and hence, that we should espouse cosmopolitanism... We must understand that cosmopolitanism grows out of nationalism; if we want to extend cosmopolitanism we must first establish strongly our own nationalism. If nationalism cannot become strong, cosmopolitanism certainly cannot prosper. (Cheah 30)

This is not to say that nationalism is without its dangers, both official nationalism that helps to legitimize the power of the nation-state’s government, as well as unofficial nationalism that stirs up fierce popular sentiments, are strong forces of exclusion and aggression. But to juxtapose nationalism to cosmopolitanism ignores the intricate mutual dependencies between both structures of feeling.

Here we follow Van der Veer’s assertion that “instead of perceiving cosmopolitanism and nationalism as alternatives, one should perhaps recognize them as the

poles in a dialectical relationship” (10). Beck, somehow contradicting his earlier assertion, also warns against this juxtaposition when he explains his concept of methodological cosmopolitanism, which

rejects the either-or principle and assembles the this-as-well-as-that principle – like “cosmopolitan patriots,” patriots of two worlds. What the cosmologic signifies in its thinking and living in terms of inclusive oppositions (including nature into society etc.) and rejecting the logic of exclusive oppositions, which characterized methodological nationalism and first modernity sociology. (Beck 19, italics his)

It may all boil down to a rather simple observation: we need roots in order to have wings (Beck 19). It is not a question of either roots or routes – to paraphrase Clifford – but more so of the balancing between both, if not their mutual cannibalization. Rather than searching for the truly globalized cosmopolitans, we are looking for the postcolonial, rooted cosmopolitans. Two terms reign when it comes to conceptualizing the roots: patriotism – which stands for love for the country – and nationalism – referring to respect for the state (Turner 49). Since our primary interest lies in the affective, passionate sense of belonging to a certain locale, we opted for patriotism in the book’s title. But, in practice, throughout this volume, both terms – patriotism and nationalism – more often than not overlap profoundly.

So what, then, does this vague abstraction “a certain locale” mean? Is patriotism necessarily linked to the nation-state? According to Arjun Appadurai, “patriotism – like history – is unlikely to end, but its objects may be susceptible to transformation, in theory and practice” (416). Patriotism does not necessarily refer to the nation-state as its object of belonging, but can also point at either more specific locales, such as the Global City (Sassen), or more globalized spaces, such as “the queer nation” (Berlant and Freeman). This latter globalized or cosmopolitan trope of patriotism provides a more displaced logic of social organization – with its particular materializations in, for example, bars, cruising parks and dancing halls, coupled to a global imagery of cult icons, pop stars and role models, ranging from *The Sound of Music* and the *Eurovision Song Contest* to *Madonna* and the *Weather Girls* (“It’s raining men!”). But also the queer nation has its specific, indeed national, articulations. Queer patriotism hence thrives on a double articulation, one related to locality, the other to sexuality. After all, being queer in Hong Kong remains profoundly different from being queer in Amsterdam. Kylie Minogue, for example, is both a global queer icon as well as an Australian national celebrity – and for that reason is being read and used differently by Australian queers than by, say, Dutch queers. But precisely such double articulations hold the potential, as the chapters in this book will show, to trouble a univocal, uncritical love for one’s country. Cosmopatriotism thus refers to forms of patriotisms that go beyond the singular love for a locality, just as it moves beyond the, by now saturated, formula of hyphenation, such as Asian-American (Appadurai 413). Instead, it searches for the double articulation that is placed and displaced, territorialized and deterritorialized, at the same time.

To insist on the mutual relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism raises the urgent question of what kind of local belonging may feed into cosmopolitanism. A thin, playful and at most lukewarm belonging, one that is inherently critical and that resists a univocal celebration of the local, seems to come closest to our understanding of the patriotism within cosmopolitanism. To engage with “the Other” requires a certain distance from oneself, an ironic distance. According to Turner,

irony may only be possible once one already has an emotional commitment to a place. Patriotism, in this sense, may not only be compatible with irony, but its precondition. Irony may not be comfortable with hot nationalistic commitments, but patriotic love of country is compatible with both the capacity for ironic distance and regard for others. Perhaps irony without patriotism may be too cool or thin to provide for identification and involvement with place and with politics. (55)

But cosmopolitan citizenship will be characterized by predominantly cool loyalties and thin patterns of solidarities, though ones that are neither too cool nor too flimsy (Turner 59). Consequently, for Turner, “the principal component of cosmopolitan virtue is irony, because the understanding of other cultures is assisted by an intellectual distance of one’s own national or local culture” (57). This arguably essentialist call for self-reflexivity does point, in our understanding, to the urgency to couple rather than de-couple patriotism to cosmopolitanism. It is our contention that art and popular culture, in particular, provide the ideal playground or stage for cosmopolitanism. Cosmopatriots are flexible citizens (Ong) who navigate – in some cases voluntarily, in other cases forced by circumstances – between their ironic loyalty to the state and their sense of longing for and belonging to the world. The mediaspace, being at once local and global, provides ample opportunity, as we hope to show in this volume, to unfold – that is: perform, construct and interrogate – contemporary cosmopolitan articulations in East and Southeast Asian cultures.

It may come as no surprise that we are deeply inspired by the acclaimed volume of Cheah and Robins, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. While we agree with, if not admire, the arguments presented in that volume, we aim, first, to insist on thinking and feeling simultaneously beyond and *within* the nation. Second, we will focus on art and popular culture, domains that, in our view, are crucial vehicles for scrutinizing contemporary Cosmopolitan structures of feeling. Our third choice, to focus on East and Southeast Asia only, adds to a relatively stronger empirical grounding of this volume.

Cosmopolitan sites: Sex, Space, Body and Race

The authors in this book provide reconceptualizations of cosmopolitanism, patriotism and globalization on the basis of the in-depth analysis of particular embodiments of cosmopolitanism in specific cultural contexts. They discuss such diverse cultural sites as Hong Kong, Indonesia, China, Singapore, the United States, South Korea and Australia,

and such diverse media as film, literature, the fine arts, radio, music, television and mobile phones. Their contributions show that the media, at both sides of the arbitrary divide between high art and popular culture, are crucial vehicles for the creation and expression of, or reflections upon, cosmopolitanism. At the same time, they demonstrate that the media obtain different shapes and fulfil different functions in different cultural spaces. In this way, the chapters do not just repeat, but bring alive and problematize theoretically informed debates that produced concepts such as “glocalization” (Robertson), and contribute to a new type of ethnography, which underscores the role of the media in contemporary reconfigurations of the relations between time, place and identity.

We have organized the chapters into four main categories, which represent cultural fields that have had impact on, and been affected by, mediations of cosmopolitanism. These fields are sex, space, body and race, each of which provides specific ways of mediating interactions between cosmopolitanism and patriotism, as the case studies will make clear. Our categorization is anything but solid; most chapters fit easily into more than one category. Nevertheless, we believe that certain chapters are more suitable for the exploration of a certain category than others, because of their specific emphasis or creative approach.

The chapters in the “sex” section address the assertion that cosmopolitanism is not synonymous with universalism, but “rooted” in time(s) and place(s), and that patriotism cannot be traced back to cultural essences, but depends on contemporary contextual circumstances. For instance, in her discussion of three recent Hong Kong films, Helen Hok-Sze Leung argues that the films represent a love for the harbor city that cannot be reduced to Chinese patriotism, but is, rather, similar to the queer-erotic feelings as depicted in the films, which embody

an affect that sustains bonds between people that are not premised on pre-established common identities, [but] arises out of our everyday dependence on each other, a need for mutual service in time of crisis, and a shared knowledge that the “future” may never arrive and that the spontaneous present provides the real basis on which community may be forged. (30)

This type of love for Hong Kong also exemplifies a “rooted cosmopolitanism,” as it is “borne not of detachment from places but from entangled roots that spring from multiple locations and temporalities” (32).

Tom Boellstorff explains that the patriotism of *lesbi* and *gay* Indonesians is not based on tradition either (in this case: the cultures of ethnic groups such as the Javanese and Balinese), but in a process in which they “dub” the “Western” sexual subject positions they are introduced to by the national and international mass media. In this dubbing process, the subject positions remain shaped by the international discourse, but are also filtered through an Indonesian nationalistic lens, as a result of which Indonesian *lesbi* and *gay* “imagine themselves as one national element in a global patchwork of lesbian and gay national subjectivities” (64).

Discussing “Chineseness” in Singapore, Song Hwee Lim demonstrates that the process of roots-searching itself is highly politicized and governed by capitalist imperatives. He proposes a queer reading of Singaporean Chineseness, which deconstructs roots-searching as an “anxiety of castration,” or fear of the discontinuation of the officially propagated, single version of Chineseness. It allows for alternative versions of Chineseness by encouraging Singaporeans to be “rootless” and “unreproductive,” and to “come out of the closet,” no longer be ashamed, if they are not willing or not able to follow the official demand to speak Chinese and adhere to Confucianism.

The chapters on “space” in this volume provide concrete illustrations of how alternative physical or virtual environments shape alternative cosmopolitan subjectivities. In his essay, Yiu Fai Chow describes his dilemmas in “performing” his nationality in the context of the political hand-over of Hong Kong to China. Both as a student and as a songwriter, he has been faced with the problem of negotiating a tradition of *minzu gequ* popular songs, which express a Chinese nationalistic pride of “common descent, common destiny, common enemy” (101). With his song “Yellow People,” Chow, now living in the Netherlands, attempted to create his own space and present his own story, which was supposed to include “more histories, more possibilities and ultimately, more me, instead of us” (101), although he could not foresee his intentions would become reversed in the further production process of the song.

Writing on developments in radio journalism of the late- and post-Suharto period in Indonesia, Edwin Jurriëns demonstrates that commercialism does not necessarily exclude the creation of cosmopolitan subject positions, and that these subject positions transcend distinctions between “high art” and “popular culture,” as they can also be mediated through cheap and widely available mass media such as radio. He analyzes how commercial and community stations, partly basing their formats on the examples of international broadcasters, have enabled the reversal of roles in on-the-air communications, and allowed audiences to play a role in radio production and management. In this way, Indonesian radio creates a space for ordinary citizens that “lives up to, contradicts, alters or abuses the ideals of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere” (106).

Jeroen de Kloet focuses on artists working in three different localities: Beijing (hip-hop band Yin Tsang), New York (visual artist Xu Bing) and Hong Kong (movie director and actor Stephen Chow). Coming from different artistic and ethnic directions, and working with different media, these artists all negotiate interactions between cosmopolitanism and Chineseness. According to De Kloet, these negotiations involve acts of cultural translation – similar to the “dubbing” practices described by Boellstorff – “in which both the assumed ‘original’ and its alleged ‘copy’ are being polluted” (135). These manifestations of “banal cosmopolitanism” contain ambiguities and ambivalences, but also open up “avenues to rethink (and poke fun at) Chineseness and its alleged others” (151) by resisting cultural essentialisms.

The contributions to the “body” section in this volume all discuss the human body as a specific site inscribed with the ongoing dialectics between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. In their photo essay, Stephen Epstein and Jon Dunbar present pictures of skinheads in South Korea. In the accompanying written essay, they explain how the Korean skinheads use the iconography of, and establish direct bonds with, skinheads elsewhere, but at the same time reverse and undermine part of the international skinhead ideology. For instance, what they take from “white power” music is “pride and attitude” (165), but not racist ideology.

Emma Baulch discusses an all-male rock band and a female pop singer from Indonesia, who have produced “self-images” in the form of video-clips and an autobiographical picture book, respectively. While the rock band’s video clips present the body as “a corporeal index of authenticity,” the female singer’s autobiography uses the body “to register transformative desires” (192). Transformation and authenticity are both realized through consumerism, which has cosmopolitan, leveling effects “by assuming that one can consume one’s way into, and become, the Other” (198), or: one’s real self; quite similar to the way in which the Koreans described by Epstein and Dunbar appropriate international skinhead culture for patriotic purposes. At the same time, Baulch observes, however, that consumerism – in media consumption as well as media production – excludes people, as it introduces “taste regimes” which only the Indonesian middle class with its bourgeois privileges can live up to.

Michelle Antoinette discusses how two visual artists from Indonesia, Heri Dono and Mella Jaarsma, have been represented in international art exhibition spaces. In Mella Jaarsma’s works in particular, the role of the body in negotiating processes of “deterritorialization” is accentuated. One of the works described by Antoinette consists of costumes made of animal skins, through which Jaarsma “urges us to consider how our encounters with strangers take place at the level of the body, as well as how skin performs a peculiar interplay of containing and exposing the subject” (218). Jaarsma also organized culinary performances, in which people were invited to digest different types of animal meats, thereby “consuming strangers” or “inhabiting the other” (223).

The three contributions under the caption of “race” recapture some of the main themes in the book, and illustrate that notions such as “Koreanness” and “Chineseness” can put high demands on what people consume and produce. Kyongwon Yoon argues that the way in which South Korean youth use mobile phone technology is determined to a large extent by *cheong*, which refers to a kind of affection and intimacy in relationships that is considered typically Korean. Yoon describes how the Korean youth, sometimes with nationalistic motives or in racist terms, deploy *cheong* to maintain “local boundaries” in their usage of mobile phone technology; in “humanizing” the technology; or in using the technology for extending relationship beyond the family. Thus the Korean case shows how a global technology is being reshaped in a local framework of ideological norms and imperatives.

Francis Maravillas argues that Chinese artists who have “gone South” and work in Australia are often haunted by “the specter of Chineseness” (255). This specter influences their choice of subject matter, style, technique and medium. At the same time, however, their works represent “cultural translations” in which the unique circumstances of each of the migratory trajectories of the artists is represented and reflected upon. These translations transform the notion of Chineseness by providing it with an “afterlife” that is similar to the cultural “dirt” analyzed by De Kloet.

Liwen Qin’s essay, finally, provides concrete examples of how Chinese artists participating in international exhibitions have to deal with, and are influenced by, the discourses of postcolonialism, anti-orientalism and nationalism as used by the art critics in their home country. Her account sums up some of the dominant ideological narratives that have also shaped the intersections between patriotism and cosmopolitanism encountered and undergone by other Asians in other contexts. She aptly asks the critics who have aimed “their vision and guns at internationally renowned artists,” whether they themselves have not adopted “the other’s vision” to look at themselves. (288–289).

Having compiled this collection of thought-provoking articles and essays, we believe that this question – about who is looking at whom with what kind of perspective or intention – needs to be asked over and over again in the analysis of any actor involved in any type of “cosmopolitanism,” although, by definition, the answer may never be free of ambiguities and uncertainties. In the closing essay of this volume, Rey Chow establishes a connection between cosmopolitanism and Said’s work on orientalism, and consequently pushes forward urgent questions of power, equality and global capitalism. With her, we share the wish that this volume may contribute to our understanding of contemporary articulations of cosmopolitanism, and their ethical and political implications, while at the same time provoking questions about the “discontents” of cosmopolitanism that remain to be answered.

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