Japan, China, and the construction of history

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discrepancy between the interests of the firms, which engaged in cross-border trading, and those perceived by the local society was evidenced by the papers as an issue to be developed in future history writing. One means to overcoming the resulting tensions was discussed by Kuo Hua-Ying (Johns Hopkins University), namely the building of cross-border business networks through the cultivation of hometown ties; such was the case with Myanmar business tycoon Aye Boon Hian’s Hakka network, and the Hikkon network of Aoi’s competitor in Singapore, Tan Kah Kee.

Similarly, the papers by Leo Douw (University of Amsterdam and VU University Amsterdam) and Shaolian Liao (Academia Sinica, Taipei) discussed the social position of the Taiwanese who migrated to China and Southeast Asia during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). The predicament of these “Registered” Chinese was partly caused by the claims laid on them both by the Chinese and the Japanese governments during that period: being Taiwanese, but registered as Japanese nationals, they were subject to Japanese rules and restrictions, but they also profited from that status, especially when they worked and resided in China and South East Asia. The resulting jealousies and accusations of non-patriotic and even criminal behavior, which were largely justified, were forgotten during the Cold War period, but were again remembered during the late 1980s, when in Taiwan the indigenization movement emerged and the issue of multiple nationalities and identities was posed once more. Lin maintained that no understanding of this rift “mainlanders” and “native Taiwanese” in Taiwanese society is possible without remembering that many Taiwanese during the colonial period cooperated with the Japanese against China’s interests. Forgetting and remembering as major motives in the construction of historiography were already noted in the forgetfulness by Chinese nationalists in Dihl’s paper; these were also present in the argument made by Ethan Mark (Leiden University) on the project reveals how the Japanese have taken the lead in overcoming the repressed identities of those that status, especially when they worked and resided in China and Southeast Asia during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945).

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