Japan, China, and the construction of history

Douw, L.

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discrepancy between the interests of the firms, which engaged in cross-border trading, and those perceived by the local societies, was evidenced in the papers as an issue to be developed in future historical writing. One means to overcoming the resulting tensions was discussed by Kuo Hsing-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 Aw Boon Hock’s Hakka network, and the Hokkien network of Avo’s competitor in Singapore, Tan Kee Hooi.

Similarly, the papers by Leo Douw (University of Amsterdam and VU University Amsterdam) and Shao-Lin 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 Taiwanese” was 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 “mainland” 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 remembrance as major motives in the construction of historiography were already noted in the forgetfulness by Chinese nationalism in Dirlik’s paper; these were also present in the argumentation made in Yin’s lecture in Amsterdam.) and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, and the Faculty of Arts at the VU University Amsterdam; Peter Poot (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation), Willem van Schendel (University of Amsterdam), Sikko Visscher (University of Amsterdam), and partly also in the Chinese version of the book Byung Ahn (Saimang Valley State University, Michigan) presented his research on the contemporary position of Korean migrants of Chinese descent in the US, and traced much of their predicament back to exactly this history of repression after the war. Just as in most South East Asian countries, big Chinese business families had increasingly dominated domestic and international business matters in the post-war period. Junghee Kim (University of Oregon) argued that the notion of “China” or “Zhongguo” was subject to change over the long period of its use, and had begun to propagate a Chinese cultural exceptionalism by the late nineteenth century, after a centuries-long interaction with Western ideas about the nation state. In doing so, the term as used by Chinese nationalists makes us forget about the diversity of China’s society and the acquisition over time of foreign territory by the Chinese state.1 This brings us finally to the question of how a historiography of East Asia may be created that understands such a regional East Asian identity. One recurring motif during the workshop was the issue of emergent nation-oriented loyalty and the related