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Foreword by Mr. David Elwell
Director of International Students and Scholars Office, Brandeis University.

An Asian Perspective on our Global Community -- The Launching of Monsoon.

One of the joys of being part of Brandeis is the global perspective that permeates through all aspects of our daily lives. We "live" the world --- through our classmates, our professors, our staff, our curriculum, our activism, our "being" as active learners and teachers in this global community. There is no place like a university campus to become involved in activities that we have never chosen to pursue previously: to learn a language that may have previously been 'foreign' to us; to attend a lecture from a visiting Ambassador; to say "Hello" to a classmate who may have just arrived in the United States for the first time.

The opportunity we have at Brandeis is that the perspectives that we all bring to campus are unique. We may find shared experiences, shared values, shared goals. We may find those that are different from ours -- not wrong, not impractical, not easy, just those that we have not been exposed to because of where we live or where we have not had the chance to travel to --- yet. It is these opportunities that provide us with a new perspective. We are encouraged to think outside of the box, outside our comfort zone, outside of our own awareness -- to question all that we have learned in the past and see that maybe, just maybe, a different perspective can provide us with a greater understanding of ourselves and of others.

With the publication of "Monsoon", as its mission details, the Brandeis Community has an opportunity to learn more about world events (whether across the oceans or across our campus) from an Asian perspective. Through the collection of Asian viewpoints on a multitude of issues, "Monsoon" will provide an opportunity for students with or without Asian roots to explore Asian identity in our global community. Whether it be issues of political, social, economic, or religious importance, "Monsoon" will encourage dialogue and introspection as we challenge our assumptions and expectations.

It is with great anticipation that the Brandeis Community opens itself to the perspectives of "Monsoon".

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David C. Elwell
Director, International Students and Scholars Office
Brandeis University
Foreword by Mr. Sean McGuirk
Director of Student Development and Judicial Education, Brandeis University.

I was recently asked to write a forward for this publication, and I do so humbly and without hesitation. When I queried as to what I should write about, I was told to try and address the issue of diversity, and how a publication like *Monsoon* could contribute to the general sense of this issue on campus.

First let me say, related to diversity, that there have been but a few times in my life where I have found myself in the minority, so I can not pretend to know what it’s like to be of the under represented related to gender, ethnic background and so on. However, I can tell you that there have been “moments” that I have experienced a bias because of these issues. For example, I know that there have been times that I have not been offered a job because I am a white man. I also know that as a person of Irish descent, I have too often been told that I must be a fall-down drunk on the weekends. Even at Brandeis, as a Catholic, it has taken me a bit of time to accommodate myself to the campus.

So, with this said, what do I think diversity means? Good question. I think it could mean a lot of things, and is probably open to any number of definitions. Diversity is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as meaning diverse and differing from one another; composed of distinct or unlike elements or qualities. In my own words, I believe that this is true, but on a very broad scale. As I’ve said, I am a white, Catholic male. Still, I believe that I am “different” in many respects from other white, Catholic males because of some of my personal beliefs, my upbringing, my extended family, etc. You are probably very different from others who may be of the same race, gender and background because there is a difference between being diverse, yet maintaining similarities with another. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

And yet, I believe that as human beings, we are more alike than unalike. We all think, breathe the same air, learn (hopefully), are passionate about issues, can form opinions, rely on others for assistance.


It is our appreciation of differences and similarities in others that allows us to grow and thrive as individuals and in our communities. I believe that *Monsoon* takes a step in this direction, allowing for the sharing of thoughts, ideas and personalities so that we may become better human beings.

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Sean McGuirk
Director, Students Development and Judicial Education
Brandeis University
Foreword by Dean Elaine Wong

Associate Dean of Arts and Science, Brandeis University.

Congratulations to the editors and contributors of Monsoon! The Hewlett Pluralism Alliance is proud to contribute to the creation of another student-initiated project, which enables more voices and perspectives to be heard on the Brandeis campus. I hope that the articles in this publication will help members of our community learn about topics and issues with which you are not that familiar, and that your curiosity will lead you to explore these issues even further. This is another opportunity to learn from one another. Let’s think of ourselves as part of a world community; events in one part of the globe affect us all.

Elaine Wong
Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences

“From our Hewlett Pluralism Alliance Liaison”

Congratulations to Monsoon for receiving a Hewlett Pluralism Alliance grant! The goal of this grant is to foster communication and address issues of pluralism and unity throughout the Brandeis campus. Indeed, Monsoon’s goals are Hewlett’s goals. I hope that their magazine is a success in raising awareness of Asian current events and issues. This publication is significant, as it will open people’s eyes to the issues and concerns of Asians, thoughtfully articulated by students and faculty. I am optimistic that it will be widely read on campus by a diverse group of students and will help people understand more about the Asians on campus and the issues and current events that they deal with on a regular basis. Best of luck to Monsoon for sparking dialogue with its thought-provoking articles.

Jennifer Nelligan, ‘06
Hewlett Pluralism Alliance Steering Committee, Liaison
From the Monsoon Editorial Board

Robert Marquand, a New Delhi columnist of the Christian Science Monitor, describes the annual monsoon at the Indian subcontinent as “a gray cloud mass, a sniff of damp, a barometric tingling - then suddenly a silvery, thick deluge that redefines the Western concept of a ‘soaking.’” During such times, Indians love to muse on a particular metaphor that depicts the monsoon as representing a natural affirmation of something desirable and soothing, pouring down without limit. Marquand also points out how a former Indian foreign secretary says that early in the monsoon each year, he takes off his business suit, puts on pajamas, and walks in his garden engaging in an intimate conversation with nature. “It is a wonderful, soothing feeling that I can’t describe,” he says. Indeed, if Indians could marvel time and time again on the beauty of the monsoon, Westerners have a lot to miss.

It is the sincere hope of a group of students here at Brandeis University to bring forth a refreshing and educational experience to the community at large. The founding of Monsoon, an Asian affairs journal that seeks to bring Asia to Brandeis, serves to fulfill this purpose. Through the exploration of Asian issues covering the political, economic and cultural realms, Monsoon aims to foster a more holistic understanding of Asia and its relations with the rest of the world within the Brandeis community. Whether it is the North Korean crisis from an Asian perspective, the rapid economic rise of China, or the global economic evolution of sushi, the famous Japanese snack, Monsoon shall be your platform to engage in the Asian voyage. We at the editorial board believe that there is a substantial level of interest here at Brandeis to learn more about Asia and the alternative perspectives on world issues that the journal would bring, in comparison to other publications on campus.

We stress that Monsoon will cease to attain its aforementioned goal without your article contributions, whether you have an Asian background or not. Monsoon stands firm in the belief that mutual education is most effective when dialogue is held under a safe environment. If you have Asian roots, you shall certainly find your niche in the journal. If you do not, but have a passion in learning and writing about Asia through your own experiences, you are more than welcome to join the Monsoon family. We actively encourage students, faculty and other friends from all backgrounds to explore Asia and by extension the world through Asia. In the end, it is mutual exchange between people who have Asian roots and those who do not that Monsoon, and by extension the Brandeis community, stand to benefit in an increasingly small world we all live in today.

For more than 5,000 years, South Asian artists have captured the refreshingly vibrant feeling of the monsoon rains by building on top of maharajahs palaces special viewing decks for royal families to sit and take in the magnificent intermingling of the monsoon thunder, clouds and lightning in the horizon. The rains also bring out the best colors of India, be it at the desert festivals of Rajasthan or the backwaters of Kerala. We at Monsoon may not be able to deliver such exoticisms to Brandeis. We will however, do our best to provide you a glimpse of how things are like at the other side of the globe, in a global context. Asia is a complex entity, and it is only through looking from the inside and outside together that we can paint the most complete picture of an increasingly important region of the world today. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your interest.
Message from Professor Richard Lyman
Chair of the East Asian Studies Department, Brandeis University.

Professor Richard Lyman on Appreciating Asia

The editors of Monsoon have asked me to write a short piece “about [my] feelings on how students here at Brandeis could learn to appreciate Asia and an alternative perspective on things”. Of course there is no universal formula for accomplishing all that, so I will largely draw on my personal experiences.

As a product of my generation, I thought I was being rather exotic in college (Bowdoin) by studying European history, migrating eventually to the medieval period. Nowadays, this would mark me as hopelessly afflicted with DWMS (“dead white male syndrome”), but back then, it earned me admission to the doctoral program in history at Harvard. There I concentrated on medieval English law, with a subset in classical history. The necessity of earning a living in some of New England’s smaller excellent colleges pushed me to broaden these skills and interests in a number of ways.

In 1988, looking for an adventure, my wife and I went to Japan to visit a brother-in-law. There my camera broke, and was prohibitive either to repair or replace. How can you be an American tourist without a camera? So I started to keep a journal, became obsessed with it, wrote it up into a manuscript when I got home, and made sure my superiors had copies. Thus, I was able to catch the wave of globalization in academia at an early stage. Six grants later, with many fine experiences behind me, I had somewhat reinvented myself as a student of Japanese history. Over time, I was able to co-found and become the director of an East Asian Studies program at Simmons College, help hire eight faculty, and take an early retirement package. Five years ago I started work at Brandeis, and now here I am writing this little column.

What does all this demonstrate?

First of all, it is never too late to start something. Once you learn how to learn, how to break a cultural and linguistic code, you can do it over and again throughout your life.

Second, it is a humbling experience for a senior professor to put himself back into the position of a neophyte learner. I still vividly remember my nightmares before Japanese language tests. In one dream, I could only produce the first 74 strokes of a 77-stroke kanji character (of course, it looked like a porcupine), but I couldn’t remember the last three let alone figure out how to crowd them into the limited space. Bad way to awaken.

Third, I had to learn how to respect and even have strong emotions for cultural expressions that had not been in my previous frame of reference. One day, sitting at the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto in the presence of the famous rock garden, it dawned on me that this was as worthy an expression of human genius as Michelangelo’s David, although organized around almost entirely different principles.

Fourth, and not for the first time in my career, I had to learn how to interact with individuals who saw me as a symbol of, even if not an actual instrument of, their personal or group oppression.

Fifth, I needed to make progress in avoiding “mirror imaging”, that is, the tendency to see the world through one’s own eyes, standards, experiences, and expectations. One aspect of this tendency is to find the “other” either exotic (“Orientalism”) or hostile (cf. General Boykin’s recent unfortunate comments about Islam). Rather, there are many ways to be fully human and to have rich cultures, and no one has exclusive claim on virtue or truth.

Sixth, I needed to readjust my sense of time-depth. I remember a lovely spring morning decades ago when I stood at the oldest monument in the Roman Forum. This crude stele before me was 2800 years old! Three years ago I wandered, mesmerized, in the brilliant Shanghai Museum, enchanted with jade objects and artifacts some of which went back thousands of years earlier. In contrast, even the Roman Forum was a latecomer to world civilization.

You can learn these lessons in many places and ways. For fifteen years I have chosen to learn them in an Asian context. I have had a wonderful time, met terrific new friends, and learned perhaps as much about myself as about Asian cultures in the process. I would certainly encourage you, the Brandeis student, to expand your horizons too!
Another Space Race? - The Pitfalls (and Potential) of the Shenzhou 5  
- by Elliott VELOSO

With the launch of the Shenzhou 5 spacecraft on October 15th, 2003, China has become the third nation in the world to launch a human being into orbit. Its launch was met with mixed reactions amongst the world community. To many, the launches represented a great achievement in the realms of space travel and a sign of China’s growing presence and importance in the international community. To others, the launches represented a propaganda coup by a government attempting to unite a fragmenting society through glorious achievement as well as a waste of resources that would be better spent improving working conditions and social institutions. Most troubling is the growing sentiment among political observers in China and the United States who believe that a new “space race” will begin among the superpowers of the Earth, with the established space programs of the United States and Europe competing with the upstart programs of China and India. Such sentiments, although understandable given the potential parallels, are short sighted and, if valid, would only serve to undermine human exploration of the cosmos.

The apprehension regarding the Chinese space program is understandable, given the potential for military applications that the US and Russia have monopolized since the inception of their space programs. As The Economist noted in their Oct 16th 2003 issue, “Like the original manned space efforts of America and Russia, China’s has a military component (though America’s and Russia’s military activities in space are now almost exclusively unmanned)...earlier, unmanned Shenzhou missions have carried photo-reconnaissance equipment and probes that could spy on military-radar transmissions.” This desire to employ space exploration for military purposes is coupled with mutual suspicion between China and the US regarding this endeavor. China is distrustful of the US’s “monopolization” of space explorations, accusing it of employing it for exclusive military means, such as through the development of spy satellites and missile defense. The US respond that the Chinese Space program, with its lack of civilian oversight and secrecy, does little to promote the image of China employing space exploration for peaceful scientific purposes. As Toshi Yoshihara of the Boston Globe notes, “It is no secret that the Chinese military controls the resources and the direction of China’s space program. From the program’s inception, China’s space ambitions have been couched in strategic terms. And the dual-use nature of space technologies means that most advances in the civilian space sector -- about 95 percent -- can be converted for military purposes... As such, even if China does not pose a credible threat to the United States, perceptions that the Chinese may eventually challenge US space supremacy could spur Washington to view Beijing as a future rival in space. In other words, Chinese apprehensions of US space dominance might easily be reciprocated.” Thus, it is clear that China has full intention to employ its space program for military and espionage purposes, like the United States, Russia, and Europe have done since the 1960’s.

Does China’s presence in the exclusive club of nations with viable space exploration programs indicate the coming of a new space race comparable to the Cold War? Given the huge technological leap the west has over the Chinese program, this seems unlikely for the time being. It is clear, however, that a Chinese space program rivaling NASA could have the potential of destabilizing international relations between the two countries, undermining a period of economic development and growing ties between China and the west. Toshi Yoshihara recognizes the danger, noting that while “America’s current technological lead ensures that a Cold War-style competition will not likely transpire, in the short term at least.... as mutual apprehension and threat perceptions heighten, both sides could seek to undermine each other in space. The resulting efforts to outdo each other could prove costly and destabilizing to international security.” The potential for a dangerous escalation...
of competition is compounded by the fact that other nations, most notably India, are already developing space programs of their own. In an international climate of growing suspicion, envy, and fear, a new and potentially disastrous “space race” seems inevitable.

This scenario, however, is far from inevitable. Healthy and friendly competition between nations is not necessarily a bad thing. NASA, plagued by poor regulatory oversight and mismanagement, has fallen into a stupor, plagued with a lack of drive since the Challenger disaster of the 1980’s. Faced with the development of “rival” space programs in China, India, and elsewhere, the US could be forced to make its programs more economical and competitive. This competition, however, could easily slide into destructive rivalries, with nations competing to outdo the other at the cost of safety and providing scientific data to the world. Given this danger, it is imperative that the US reiterate their insistence that space be used by the international community as a whole and not be carved into spheres of influence. This would do much to allay the fears of new international space agencies as well as provide America with an opportunity to repair its image with the international community. Toshi Yoshihara advocates this view, insisting that “the United States, for its part, should welcome China’s entry into the exclusive space club as a responsible member of the international community and give Beijing a stake in the global space endeavor in order to reinforce the value of cooperation while satisfying Beijing’s quest for national pride. But this will not happen unless governments on both sides acknowledge the potential dangers of competition and gains from cooperation. As such, the Bush administration should view the first launch as a strategic opportunity to engage the Chinese.”

In addition, the growth of new space agencies like China and India’s holds the potential for the development of a truly “international” endeavor to explore the cosmos. This notion seems wholly idealistic and naive, given the fact that China and India were denied major roles in the construction and funding of the “International” Space Station. However, with the development of new space programs, there is great potential for joint efforts to explore space. It is clear that China has the potential for creating a viable space agency. Whether its creation marks the resumption of negative competition between rival nations or the start of a global initiative to explore the universe and promote international cooperation remains to be seen.

Elliot Voleso ('05) is a third year student at Brandeis University majoring in History.

One Man, One Rocket, and One Billion People: China’s Space Program and It’s Implications

- Co-authored by Tak-Hin Benjamin NGAN and Rongrong ZHANG

“As our country’s valiant pioneer in space exploration, you shoulder the great expectations of the motherland and the people to realize a dream we have cherished for thousands of years. We look forward to your triumphant return.” These words from Chinese President Hu Jintao to astronaut Yang Liwei, quoted by CNN prior to the launch of China’s first manned space mission, speak the heart of a billion Chinese people.

October 15, 1934, marked the day that changed China’s course of history. Maurice Meisner, in his book Mao’s China and After, documented the day as the beginning of the celebrated Long March – an “extraordinary year-long journey” where the Chinese Communists were forced by Chiang Kai-Shek’s “encirclement and annihilation campaigns” to abandon their base in Jiangxi and to undertake a 6000-mile march under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong. Edgar Snow called the Long March “an Odyssey unequaled in modern times,” but the Long March was far from a romantic epic.

Meisner notes that the survivors of the Long March “celebrated little more than the sheer fact that they had managed to survive.” In the black and white films captured by the documentary China Yellow, China Blue, the horrible scenes of the Long March were simply unbearable. The Communists were so poorly equipped that the men had to turn themselves into substitutes for trucks and donkeys, and exhaustion cost many of their lives. The spirit of the Long March, nonetheless, was carried through by Mao and his comrades during their struggle of survival in the many later years to come. In 1949, the Mao-led Communist Revolution ended in triumph – a victory that was walked by the Chinese people.
Sixty-nine years later, October 15 marked the beginning of another legendary Odyssey of the Chinese people. China’s first ever manned space mission proclaimed its triumph when astronaut Yang Liwei became China’s Yuri Gagarin. Sixty-nine years ago, the Chinese people had to travel 6000 miles by foot in more than a year; sixty-nine years later, they saw their hero travel a multiple of 6000 miles by flight in less than a day. The successful launch of Shenzhou V conveyed a simple yet stunning message to the world – the poor and ruined country whose people could not even afford to travel by wheels has turned itself into one of the three only nations that has ever sent an astronaut into space.

While the Chinese celebrated the huge breakthrough of their nation’s space program, many criticisms were voiced – and voiced particularly from the other side of the globe. CNN quoted Dean Cheng, a research analyst with Project Asia at The CNA Corporation, commenting on China’s purpose of having launched a manned space mission as “a matter of prestige.” “It’s a crown in a lot of positive benefits that a technological breakthrough may bring to a developing economy. In fact, the celebrated economist Robert Solow has concluded that the only way to achieve economic growth in the long run is through technological advancements (Solow-Model, 1957).

Even though in the short run or even in the medium run, China’s success in its space program is not likely to benefit too many of its people, it is nevertheless a vital step to boost China’s economic growth in the long run. Although it is not incorrect that hunger and poverty remain still big concerns in rural China and that the launch of Shenzhou V has not dropped any rice or bread from the sky, China’s space program is nevertheless going to benefit those who remain in hunger and poverty in the future.

Some of the potential benefits of China’s space program have, in fact, surfaced quietly and are providing the Chinese economy with positive boosts. Professor Joan Johnson Freese of the Naval War College in Rhode Island estimated that around 300,000 people are now working on China’s manned space program. As the program expands, it will definitely create numerous job vacancies that shall help to ease China’s rising unemployment rate. On a higher level of the labor market, China’s continuing success in its space program will prove critical as an attraction to stop “brain drain,” a common phenomenon in the past few decades as Chinese scientists and technicians have left the country to seek job opportunities overseas. With more productive labor being attracted to stay in the country because of its technological success, economic growth in China shall grow in an increasing rate as its labor-input quality rises.

Another significant contribution of China’s space program to its long-term economic growth is the idea of positive technology spill-over. Other sectors of the Chinese economy such as heavy industries and information technology will become the beneficiaries of Shenzhou V in the long run. One typical spill-over phenomenon is that the experiences learned by the pioneering industry (in this case the space program) are modified to fit into the growth process of other sectors. Another possible channel
for spill-over comes from the complementary relationships among the pioneering industry and other sectors of the economy. For instance, an expanded space program may result in an increase in demand to certain materials or human capitals that are produced in other industries; in economic terms, the growth of the pioneering industry will result in increases in the derived demands for capitals that are produced in other sectors of the economy. In this sense, the Chinese government’s huge spending on its space program is more of an investment in its economy’s future productivity than an extravagant consumption at the present time.

In a social sense, moreover, the success of China’s space program also contains a deep meaning to the Chinese population alongside its promising economic potential. President Hu Jintao denoted Yang Liwei’s successful mission as “the glory to our great motherland,” and his thought is shared by more than a billion Chinese people. More than glory, still, is the hope that the successful launch of Shenzhou V has brought to the Chinese population. Since the Industrial Revolution, China was turned from one of the world’s greatest powers into a nation that was associated with poverty and backwardness. Western exploitation during the Ching Dynasty as well as the pre-WWII period had imposed the image of a weak nation on China. Japan’s invasion during World War II and the Chinese Civil War that followed further pushed Chinese society toward ruin. Arguably, what happened in most of the last century was one of the most demoralizing experiences that the Chinese ever had in their two thousand years of civilization since China’s first unification under the Qin Dynasty.

Today, however, the table has turned for this “weak” nation. The success of China’s space program is one of the many signs that demonstrate China’s potential to become once again a great power in the world – not just because of the one man and the one rocket that were launched into space, but because of the huge potential and the promising future that Shenzhou V can bring to China. Thirty-four minutes after Shenzhou V was launched, Yang Liwei’s message back to earth was “I feel good.” Perhaps this was not simply the message from the Chinese hero, it represents the deepest sentiment in the heart of one billion people – we all feel good.

**A Beautiful Mirage - Democracy not the best fit for China**

- by Tak-Hin Benjamin, NGAN

Since the First Emperor (Shi Huangdi) of the ancient Qin Dynasty succeeded in unifying China, it was not until two millennia thereafter that the idea of democracy landed on one of the world’s longest and greatest civilizations. Doctor Sun Yat-Sen and his United League (Tung Meng Hui) brought the hope for a democratic republic to the much-oppressed Chinese population during the late Ching Dynasty; and the Republican Revolution of 1911 initiated by the Wuchang Uprising put an end to China’s two thousand years of imperial era.

It took more than two thousand years for the idea of democracy to come close to the verge of realization, yet it was only four years after Sun Yat-Sen proclaimed the formation of the Republic of China when the hope for a democratic China ended in jeopardy. In 1915, warlord Yuan Shi-Kai restored a monarchic regime in China and proclaimed himself the emperor. Yuan’s monarchy did not last long, but it turned China into a battlefield of warlords. Sun Yat-Sen and his later-formed Kuomindang held on, for a while, to Doctor Sun’s doctrine of the Three Principles of the People (San Min Zhu Yi), in which democracy was stated as one of the central principles of Doctor Sun’s republic. The hope for democracy, however, began to fade rapidly during the warlord era and it was completely doomed when Chiang Kai-Shek, whom Professor Thaxton of Brandeis University called “something of a super-warlord,” assumed power of the Kuomindang and began transforming Doctor Sun’s China into his own dictatorial state.

The Republican Revolution of 1911, if a “revolution” at all, was simply a successful rebellion and a revolution in jeopardy. The overthrow of the last Chinese emperor Pu Yi was technically the “rebellion part” of the Republican Revolution,
whereas the “revolution part” of it simply has never been fully realized. World War II and the communist victory in 1949 put an end to the Chiang Kai-Shek era, and the Chinese appetite of democracy never returned as a significant force until 1989.

The Tiananmen Incident on June 4, 1989, marked one of the two most significant calls for democracy from massive domestic opinions in China. The “Goddess of Democracy,” an imitation of the Statue of Liberty, was displayed in front of Chairman Mao Zedong’s portrait with an estimated one million crowd of students, workers, intellectuals, and civil servants gathering in and outside of the Tiananmen Square calling for democracy. In his book The United States and China: Into the Twenty-First Century, Michael Schaller recalled protesters holding up posters declaring “Give Us Democracy or Give Us Death.” The choice of the Chinese government was clear – they did not give ground to establishing any sort of democracy; instead, they sent soldiers and tanks to end the demonstration and to restore order.

The failure of both the Republican Revolution of 1911 and the Tiananmen Incident to instate democracy into the Chinese political system owes much to their respective incidental circumstances. For the most part, however, the lack of participations from the massive public had doomed their potential success in the first place. A successful “revolution” requires the support and the participation of the general public, and both the aforementioned “democratic revolutions” lacked the active participate of the Chinese general public – the peasantry.

If there was any successful “revolution” in the history of China after Qin Shi Huangdi’s overthrow of the Zhou feudal system, it was Mao Zedong and his comrades of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s revolution in 1949. The dramatic victory of the CCP against Chiang Kai-Shek’s American-supported and well-equipped army owed much not to anything else but the overwhelming support and participation of the Chinese peasantry, which made up for over 70 percent of the Chinese population at the time. By contrast, the lack of such enthusiastic support from the peasant-class would simply doom the effort of any kind of revolution – including the call for a democratic China.

This is not to suggest, however, that the failure of the Republican Revolution of 1911 and the Tiananmen Incident protest to instate democracy in China could have been prevented. Both calls for democracy would likely have succeeded if the peasant-class were included in their “revolutions,” but the unfortunate fact for any lovers of democracy is that the participation of the peasantry in a “democratic revolution” in China could not have happened at any rate. The absence of active participation of the peasant-class in calling for democracy was not incidental; rather, it was a behavior which economists call “maximization under constraints.” The mere fact that the majority of the Chinese population did not even attempt to create a successful “democratic revolution” implies that the choice of fighting for democracy would not “maximize” the peasants’ well-beings – that is, democracy is not the best fit for China.

To say so is not an attempt to rule out the virtue of a democratic polity but rather to justify the inexistence of any major democratic features in Chinese politics. The unique social and political structures of contemporary China are the products of two thousand years of history and tradition; and such structures are rigid, inelastic, and irresponsible. Attempts to instate democratic elements into Chinese politics require tremendous effort to destroy and to overturn China’s rigid social and political structures – a more or less impossible task for the time being.

Traditionally, China has been and still is an agrarian society. According to the Food and Fertilizer Technology Center of the Asian Pacific Region, China’s peasantry made up 63.8 percent of its total population in 2000. With a good portion of the peasant-class living under poverty, it is not hard for one to imagine the political “inactivism” or passiveness of the Chinese peasantry. For the past two millennia, in fact, political participation of the peasant-class in China has been, if one excludes the communist revolution under Mao, more or less negligible. Farmers and their families care about their livelihood over anything else, as an old

Did you know...
The People’s Congress System forms China’s fundamental political structure. It “follows the principle of democratic centralism” by guaranteeing that "state power is exercised in a centralized and unified way" while the rights of the people are represented and protected via the system.

*source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*
Chinese idiom puts it: “Food means heaven to the people.” To achieve their goals of well-living, the peasants would simply neglect anything but a good environment for harvesting.

This is not to imply that Chinese peasants are totally unresponsive to political suppression. In fact, some successful rebellions in history that overthrew their antecedent dynasties were initiated by unrests of the peasant-class. The peasants’ effort, however, were limited to “rebellions” only, and never did one see any attempt of “revolution” in China until 1911. The hope of such rebellions of the peasant-class was simple: they wished to overthrow an oppressive emperor and to restore a new and able one to take the emperor’s seat in the Forbidden City. A new and able emperor meant stability to the Chinese peasantry, and stability alone has been the main, if not only, concern of Chinese farmers.

For that reason, the communist revolution in 1949 was more of a social revolution than a political one. The peasantry did not join the revolutionaries based on their political agenda but rather because of what the CCP could have contributed to their better livings. They wanted a “revolution” that could have saved them from the oppression of the corrupted Kuomindang and the landlords (di zhu) backed by the opportunist Chiang Kai-Shek. The CCP’s land-reform programs and its “anti-feudal” agenda succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry to join their revolution, not because the farmers themselves favored the political ideals of communism, but rather because the CCP could have protected them from the exploitations of Chiang and the di zhu. The victory of the communist revolution yields not to its political ideals but rather to its reform programs that favored the peasantry.

The implication of history is simple – that the Chinese peasantry is politically inactive. They pay more attention to the weather than to who sits in Zhong Nan Hai, to prices of their crops than to foreign policies, and to harvesting more than voting. Democracy, therefore, will most likely be unable to flourish in China because the majority of the people simply would not spare the time to participate. As long as the current government is able to maintain social stability, there seems to be no reason why democracy should be at all a political appetite of the Chinese peasant population. On the flip side, a “democratic revolution” may even prove to be unpleasant to the Chinese peasantry; as Wang Dan, a student leader himself in the Tiananmen Incident who spoke on a forum hosted in Boston by the Global Alliance for Democracy and Peace in 2003, said that the worries of social unrests aroused by a rapid democratization of China are not unreal. In other words, the pursuit of democracy in China symbolizes a trade-off between democratization and the risk of instability – which makes a “democratic revolution” less appealing to those who value stability more than political agendas, namely, the peasant-class.

Implicitly, Chinese traditions and values furthermore justify the existence of a non-democratic society. Confucianism provided a moralistic hierarchy which states the five basic relationships among people, and Confucius’ idea of the “ruler to the ruled” certainly crafted the shape of Chinese politics throughout history. The Confucian value of loyalty and respect from the ruled to the ruler have contributed much to the kind of political passiveness as demonstrated by the Chinese peasantry. The submissiveness of the Chinese people to their rulers (or governments) has guided the Chinese society to hope for rather than to create their own social justice. As an old Chinese idiom puts it: “The able ones take the lead,” and hence the rest of the people should follow. Such values and philosophies implanted in the Chinese heritage further demonstrate that democracy and China are not the best fit for one another.

Nevertheless, the dream for a democratic China, at any rate, must not be seen as a naïve one. Many westerners portray the democratization of China as a solution to many of its social problems such as human rights violations and political corruption. Such an ambition is certainly beautiful and admirable, yet, it is simply impractical. Neglecting, for a while, the previous justification of why democracy and China do not complement one another, democratizing China is still a near-impossible task because its execution is basically impractical. In rural China, such as the Guang-Xi countryside, even children have to travel to school with bare feet every morning for hours; of those who cannot even afford their children a pair of shoes, then, how many would even bother to leave their farms and travel through mountains and rivers so as to cast a vote? Even if they did, how are they supposed to cast their votes and voice their opinions when they have never learned about any candidates on the voting-ballots because they have never had the luxury to “afford” information from outside their villages? If
not political agenda or social structure, poverty, illiteracy, limited education, lack of information and connection between the urban and the rural areas, and the cost of gathering a 1.3 billion population to get involved simply shut the idea of democracy out of the door of Zhong Nan Hai based on the question of practicality.

From a more realistic point of view, China does not need and would do well without democratization. As a developing country aimed at raising the living standard of its people to the fullest extent, the Chinese government bares the historical burden of leading its country through the era of modernization. The key task of the central government, as ex-President Jiang Zemen declared in his report at the 16th Party Congress in November 2002, is to ensure stability and to make it “a principle of overriding importance.” Democratization of China, if not a de-stabilizer of the country, does not seem to be the right way to go under such circumstances. Lessons from most developing countries lead many to believe that a strong and centralized government is the key to its success, and democratizing China simply would accomplish the opposite of that.

Besides, China is doing just fine on its road to “socialism with Chinese characteristics” anyway. President Hu Jintao’s cabinet succeeded its antecedent peacefully and the succession marked the first peaceful leadership change in China since the CCP assumed power in 1949. Nevertheless, President Hu’s government is showing signs of becoming a more open and transparent CCP leadership than ever before. If such signs continue and that Hu’s regime is going to, in Jiang’s words, “carry forward the people’s cause into the future” and to make China a well-developed and strong country, then perhaps even a mirage of a democratic China is not going to exist anymore.

Did you know...

“Although the Korean War Armistice Agreement stopped the fighting in 1953,” wrote William Drennan, “it has yet to be replaced by a permanent settlement.”

*source: The United States Institute of Peace*

In early October, South Korean prosecutors are considering pressing charges on Song Du-yul, a former dissident who has been accused of spying for the North. With the growing international concern over the North Korean nuclear situation, this particular case reflects the widening political divisions between liberals and conservatives in South Korea, as well as illustrating underlying tensions between the two Koreas and the United States since the end of the Korean War 50 years ago.

Song, who fled the Seoul military regime in the 1970s and 1980s, was encouraged by the political atmosphere surrounding the election of the left-leaning president Roh Moo-hyun. He returned to his native South Korea last month and immediately faced accusations by the South’s intelligence agency of being an agent for the North. Conservative elements demand that Song should be prosecuted while liberal circles maintain that the dissident should be welcomed by his motherland. In the meantime, Song’s fate remains unknown.

This episode represents only a miniscule picture of the clash between the left and right, which include issues from how to engage the North to future relations with America. Following the global military redeployment of the US in the wake of September 11th, 2001, Washington has indicated that the South should bear more responsibility for its own security. The US decision to withdraw its 37,000-strong force from frontline positions along the North-South border coincides with the South’s plan to increase its military spending by 8.1 percent next year. These developments seem to suggest that the security framework of the Korean peninsula laid in the aftermath of the Korean War is on the verge of a marked transformation, especially with the prospects of a nuclear-armed North looming near.

A Financial Times editor highlighted a conversation between the North’s leader Kim Jong-il, and then-US Secretary of State Madeline

Tak-Hin Benjamin, NGAN (‘05) is a third year student at Brandeis University majoring in Economics, Politics, and minoring in Mathematics.
Monsoon

Monsoon

Kim explained how Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leader in the 1970s, concluded that China faced no external security threat and could accordingly focus the country’s resources on economic development. The editor suggests that if the US today could offer security reassurances to North Korea and provide economic aid, the North would take steps to dismantle its nuclear program and embark upon the development of its economy. Indeed, during the six-nation talk in Beijing this past August, the North Korean delegate made explicit the above offer. However, the Bush administration is split on how to tackle the North Korean issue. With presidential elections coming soon, the US will continue to put off the day of reckoning with Pyongyang, unless the Stalinist state does carry out nuclear tests in the near future.

Whether North Korea would decide to flex its seemingly nuclear muscles remains to be seen. With prevailing political uncertainties over the Korean peninsula, hundreds of people made an emotional 200 km journey from Seoul to Pyongyang less than a week ago. The group was the largest to cross the world’s most militarized border since the end of the war. Despite accusations by international critics that this reunion between the Korean peoples was made possible by the huge sums paid by the South to its neighbor, the event was nonetheless a comforting sight to behold, in light of the many other inevitable Song incidents, political clashes within Korean society and frictions between the US and the Koreas in the foreseeable future.

Kassian POLIN ('05) is a third year student at Brandeis University majoring in Economics, and in International and Global Studies.

Malaysia’s Mahathir: Revisited and Retiring

On October 31st, 2003, Malaysian prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohammed, bows out of public office. By that time, he will have been at the helm of Malaysian politics for twenty-two years. This milestone has put Dr. Mahathir, 77, in the same ruling longevity club as Mr. Fidel Castro of Cuba and several African Leaders. A man of multiple identities, Mahathir has inspired both admiration and contempt from people within and beyond his country. He has been labeled as ultra Malay, anti-Chinese, anti-West, anti-Jewish, dictatorial, autocratic, and worse. He is the man who has lambasted the West for its imperialistic tendencies, condemned George Soros for attacking the Malaysian dollar in the late 1990s and, as a result, imposed capital controls on the flow of currency in and out of Malaysia. Yet, this is the man who also preaches ethnic tolerance in his own multi-racial country, cracked down on Islamic schools or madrasahs in Malaysia, and championed the use of English as the language of an increasingly digitized and inter-connected world. Who, indeed, is Dr. Mahathir?

Mahathir Bin Mohamad was born on December 20th, 1925, in the northern Malaysian state of British-ruled Kedah. His Indian father, a teacher at an English-medium school, was a strict disciplinarian, which might explain Mahathir’s authoritarian stance on many issues. Having received his entire pre-college education in Kedah, he went on to gain admission into King Edward VII College of Medicine (later known as The University of Malaya), Singapore, in 1947. He then served as Medical Officer before setting up a private practice back in his home state in 1957.

Mahathir ventured into politics in 1946, becoming a member of the United Malays’ National Organization, which subsequently became the de-facto ruling party in Malaysia when independence was granted by Britain in 1957. He was made a senator in 1973, education minister in 1974, deputy prime minister in 1976 before being made the prime minister in 1981. His political ascendancy to premiership sent shockwaves throughout the Malaysian Chinese community. This was the man who, back in the 1960’s, had told the first prime minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, that he was too accommodating to the Malaysian Chinese community. This was the man who had penned and cataloged the plight of the disadvantaged Malays in The Malay Dilemma, in which he mentioned how the gentle and self-deprecating Malays were economically exploited by the more aggressive Chinese. Indeed, the book was seen as the Malays’ version of Mein Kampf and was so controversial that it was banned for many years. But as is often the case with politicians, what is preached is often not what is practiced. As Prime Minister, Mahathir was intent on industrializing Malaysia and joining the ranks of the then-emerging Asian tigers like Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. He began with the “Look East” policy of learning from Japan...
and South Korea, and embarked on Malaysia’s first car-manufacturing project. As the economy took off, the Malays became richer and, subsequently, more secure about their socio-economic position.

The “Look East” policy gradually included emulating Chinese thrift and industry as well, qualities which he associates with the Chinese and which he extols to this very day. From the 1980’s to the 1990’s, Malaysia went on from exporting rubber, petroleum, and tin to microchips, air-conditioners, and even automobiles. Today, Malaysia is one of the most developed countries amongst the developing nations in the world. Although not ranked as a fully developed country yet, Malaysia is currently the world’s 17th largest trading nation and a major exporter of electronic products, surpassing some of the 20 fully developed countries in the world in spite of its relative smallness in size. From a relative backwater in Southeast Asia, Malaysia now boasts a few world superlatives; from the tallest twin-towers in the world (The Petronas Twin Towers) to the biggest shopping mall in Asia (Berjaya Times Square). These are but some of the superficial fruits of Malaysia’s economic success, and this fact has not escaped both Malayans and the Chinese. Yes, along the way, Malays were given an extra helping hand; special educational scholarships and business incentives were given to them, not all of which have been put to proper use. But the general outcome is that both groups have benefited from Malaysia’s increased prosperity, and this fact has not escaped both Malayans and the Chinese. Yes, along the way, Malays were given an extra helping hand; special educational scholarships and business incentives were given to them, not all of which have been put to proper use. But the general outcome is that both groups have benefited from Malaysia’s increased prosperity, and this fact has not escaped both Malayans and the Chinese. Yes, along the way, Malays were given an extra helping hand; special educational scholarships and business incentives were given to them, not all of which have been put to proper use. But the general outcome is that both groups have benefited from Malaysia’s increased prosperity, and this fact has not escaped both Malayans and the Chinese.

As Malaysia’s economy grew in the 1990’s, so did the voice of Mahathir. Mahathir championed the rights of the southern nations (a loose umbrella term used to denote the developing world) against exploitation from richer nations. In a parting shot at the West at what was to be his last Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meeting this month, he riled out at those who advocated imposing economic sanctions on Myanmar (Burma), saying they would only succeed in punishing the people of the country rather than its rulers. Domestically, his own Malay community has not been spared either. He has hit out at the Malays time and again for their complacency and over-dependence on the government, saying that the Chinese in Malaysia, who form less than one third of the population, would have been ahead in terms of educational and economic attainment had they been given the same perks and incentives that were accorded to the Malays; as it stands, the Chinese are already ahead of the Malays in these two areas. In fact, Mahathir is said to be more popular among the non-Malays than he is among a significant number of the Malays, particularly the Islamists and pro-Malay nationalists whose vision of Malaysia is parochial and Malay-based rather than cosmopolitan and Malaysian-based.

Mahathir has also become a leading figure in the Muslim world, lamenting the misinterpretation of his religion, which he views as the most perfect religion in the world, albeit one that is proselytized by imperfect people. He regards himself as a fundamentalist Muslim, while simultaneously labeling all extremists as un-Islamic. He claims to be a fundamentalist by going back to the fundamental teachings of Islam, which preach tolerance and love rather than bigotry and hatred. This stance, however, has done little to quell criticism regarding his apparent anti-Semitism and anti-western position. This issue could be seen when Mahathir addressed the delegates convened at the tenth session of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In his speech, he called on the Muslim world, 1.3 billion strong, to unite and defend their religion against various assaults and threats from other parts of the world, which, according to his views, included certain Western powers and Jews. The remarks were quite controversial, and drew condemnation from many parts of the world. In Asia and the rest of the Islamic world, though, Mahathir’s speech was seen very differently. To the media, his statements were more a call for Muslims to emulate the organizational and economic development of Israel and to seek

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**Did you know...**

Under the rule of “Dr. M,” Malaysia’s gross domestic product was $12 billion in 1980, and it skyrocketed to reach $210 billion in 2002, giving the country the third highest income per capita in Southeast Asia.

*source: Business Week, September 29, 2003*
peaceful and non-retaliatory means to solve the Palestinian issue. The nine-page speech, however, did contain such statements that 1.3 Muslims cannot be defeated by the Jews and that Muslims need to face a people who have survived for 2,000 years since the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora by thinking rather than hitting back. Although he was quick to say that not all non-Muslims are against Muslims and that violence and retaliation will not solve the plight that certain Muslims face, his statements were regarded by many as the latest in a series of virulent attacks on Jews. He insists that he is not anti-Semitic, however, and reiterated this position in an interview with the BBC after the OIC: “We must not antagonize everyone. We must win their hearts and minds. We must win them to our side, not by begging for help from them but by the honorable way that we struggle to help ourselves. We must not strengthen the enemy by pushing everyone into their camps through irresponsible and un-Islamic acts. Remember Salah El Din and the way he fought against the so-called Crusaders, King Richard of England in particular. Remember the considerateness of the Prophet to the enemies of Islam. We must do the same. It is winning the struggle that is important, not angry retaliation, not revenge.”

Whether you like him or not, when he steps down from public office, Mahathir will be taking with him a tradition of patriarchal, no-nonsense leadership which has characterized some of Asia’s democracies for decades. Indeed, Dr. Mahathir is among the last survivors—if not the last—of a formidable pantheon of Asian strongmen like Suharto of Indonesia, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. As the last of such “strongmen,” it remains to be seen whether his tumultuous presidency and controversial views will either hinder or harm his fledgling nation.

Did you know...

Soong Ching-Ling, sister of Madame Chiang and wife of Doctor Sun Yat-Sen, was an alumnus of Wellesley College. Soong Ching-Ling eventually broke her ties with the corrupt Kuomintang and became a prominent figure in the history of the Chinese revolution. In 1981, the year when she passed away, Soong Ching-Ling officially joined the Chinese Communist Party and was named the Honorary Chairperson of the State.

*source: Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Poland*

Lay-Heon TAN has a M.A. degree from The University of Birmingham, a PCED degree from The University of Hong Kong, and a B.A. degree from Oberlin College. He is currently a teacher at Diocesan Boys’ School, Hong Kong.

The Death of a Legendary Heroine –
A Tribute to Madame Chiang Kai-Shek
by Su Ma

With the death of Madame Chiang Kai-Shek on October 24th, 2003, China has lost a towering figure in the nation’s modern history. Andrew Hsia, director-general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York, was informed that the passing away of Madame Chiang happened peacefully in her sleep with the presence of her family members in her Manhattan apartment.

Perhaps the death of Madame Chiang, which came at the age of 106, was not much of a surprise to anyone in the world. To the Chinese people, however, her death stands as a tremendous loss of one of China’s most prominent figures of the past century.

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, also popularly known by her given name Soong Mei-Ling, was an extraordinary person. Her extraordinary social background, together with her marriage to the Nationalist Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, has elevated her level of international prestige to the same level as any other “first lady” in the world.

Although born in China, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek was educated in the United States at Wellesley College and proceeded to earn her honorary degrees from Wellesley and other equally well-known institutions. Owing to her Western upbringing and educational background, her unique influence in bridging the diplomatic relationship between the Nationalist China (then the Nationalist Taiwan) and the United States was unmatched by most politicians.
and diplomats.

In her politically active years, Madame Chiang devoted most of her energies striving for a harmonious complimentary relationship between China and the United States. In her address to the US Senate in 1943, she expressed her wish for mutual understanding and cooperation between the people from China and the people of the United States as an “identity of ideals”. These ideals of the “four freedoms” which Madame Chiang stressed were the same ideas that both of the peoples shared. Even though the Nationalists were finally defeated in the civil war, and that Chiang Kai-Shek’s regime was no longer in position to advocate for the Chinese people, Madame Chiang’s devotion to serving the Chinese people is nevertheless widely recognized by people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Madame Chiang spent much of her elder years in seclusion at her family estate in New York as her influence in politics faded. She also spent much of her time painting. Even though Madame Chiang Kai-Shek exerted much less substantial influence in current politics after the 80s, she remained a true scholar in touch with the world. Her paintings may be treasured by those who adore her scholarship and unique contributions to the Chinese people. There is no doubt, however, that with Madame Chaing’s going down into the annals of China’s history, she shall remain in the hearts and minds of many for a long time to come.

Su MA ('07) is a first year student at Brandeis University.

APAs on the Rise
- by You-Jung Lisa, KIM

Asian Pacific American community empowerment lies in political action. Meaningful political action lies in having a populace educated in the problems and issues facing today's complex society. Even today, an American of Indian descent in Jackson Heights, Queens will be profiled for being suspected of terrorist activities. A Filipino American Silicon Valley professional will receive a paycheck giving him 30% less than his Caucasian counterpart. The son of a Chinese garment worker from New York’s Water St. projects will be overlooked for university admissions because affirmative action fails to acknowledge the socioeconomic complexities that exist in the Asian American community. A Vietnamese-American middle schooler will struggle to understand why John McCain - an individual striving to work on behalf of ALL Americans, would even think using the term “gook” to mean “North Vietnamese” during his presidential campaign. This is just the beginning of the list. In order for Asian Pacific Americans to get the justice due to our communities in this supposed land of opportunity, Asians must become a viable political voice and prevent such situations from being a daily norm.

Asian Pacific Americans must push for improved legislation on issues of immigration, hate crimes, workplace discrimination, affirmative action, and cultural awareness. These issues must be brought to the attention of government representatives on the city, state, and federal level. Asian Pacific Americans have yet to become a widely recognized lobbying and campaigning voice. Thus Asian Pacific Americans of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic regions, and countries of origin must strive towards pan-Asian solidarity in our struggle for political recognition. It is only when these issues are presented will political action will be taken. This community can no longer afford to fall victim to inaccurate census data, lagging voter registration, and even lower voter turnout. In order to receive funding for bilingual education, implement improved wage legislation, and receive better community services, this political voice of pan-Asian solidarity must cry for legislative change. Political cohesion must be used to put more Asian Pacific Americans in office. Asian Pacific American politicians from the varying levels of public service must commit to having these issues become topics of constructive debate and resolution as opposed to an agenda that can be tossed in the wastebasket as a result of

Did you know...

Governor Gary Locke (D) of Washington was the first Asian American to be elected governor of a state in the forty-eight contiguous states. He was inaugurated in 1997.

*source: National Governor Association*
being backed by insufficient civic participation and minimal voting power.

No one should ask why Asian Pacific Americans should be politically active. Political action should be internalized as a necessity. It is necessary for the community to fight the trend of the wealthiest percentage of Americans abusing the rules of campaign finance and monopolizing the agendas of politicians in order to benefit in a dollar-hungry culture. It is necessary to force politicians to look beyond the black-white dichotomy that exists in American race politics and bring some recognition for the new shades of minorities in America. It is necessary in today society to bring some color into the gleaming white buildings atop Capitol Hill.

John Adams claimed that liberty cannot be preserved without a genuine knowledge among the people. Henrik Ibsen proclaimed that in order to be of value to society, one must forge oneself into a vessel for its use. Asian Pacific Americans must be aware of the issues facing their communities. Work must be done to see that all peoples of Asian Pacific American decent in the United States are registered and active voters and clearly represent a constituent whose vote a politician will chase. Cultivate the next generation of Asian Pacific American political leaders and thinkers! No longer will this “model” minority community hit the glass ceiling. Asian communities encompass more than one shade of yellow and brown. These generations are not restricted to 2.0 and below. The Asian Pacific American diaspora is expanding and it is time for their voices to be heard.

You-Jung Lisa, KIM ('06) is a second year student at Brandeis University majoring in Politics.

The Phenomenal A-Z-N in New York City

- by Yunyan Jennifer, WANG

When one thinks of popular culture in an urbanite setting, many young asians in New York have masterfully taken out every self-segregating aspect of many subcultures in New York City and synthesized them into one phenomenon referred to within the movement as "AZN" (pronounced A-Z-N). The stereotypical AZN is a hip Asian person usually in his/her teenage years. A female AZN dresses to accentuate her figure through the use of clothing and chemical treatments for her hair. These hair dyes, common with both males and females, can range from shades of red to deep brown. Males typically wear active-looking sports clothing from FUBU, Sean John, Eko and other name brands that are usually associated with particular music styles. Others mold their image like the styles worn in Japanese gangster movies dressy and sleek. Given the multiple styles within AZN, the only common feature that seems to unite them is the possession of a trendy cell phone.

Being an AZN is as much about looks as is about behavior. Although not all AZN's talk in a rapper-style accent, many proudly do so with their peers. In New York, many cliques of AZN's can be found loitering in any of the four Chinatowns situated in the New York City, speaking in this accent while playing the latest video games such as Dance-Dance Revolution or Pachinko. This "language" is often translated directly into their typing, which can be seen in all their glory in chat room accounts and forums on such popular internet services like Xanga.com or AsianAvenue.com.

To one not versed in AZN linguistics, AZN speak seems like a grouping of random capitalizations, with incomprehensible abbreviations and many z's thrown in for good measure. Instant messaging over the Internet helped brought forth an abbreviation system that is one of the hallmarks of the AZN community. The system involves AZN computer users typing numbers or homophones such as "u = you" to save time when chatting with friends online. Indeed, AZN web pages have taken this abbreviation to new heights, especially for pages on web-journal sites. For example, with pages written by AZN girls, the glaring pastel colors and collages of Sanrio thumbnails muddle the content that may seem...
completely incomprehensible to the outsider. Web-journal pages also vie against one another in a silent popularity contest to see who has the most web-friends listed on their page. A lengthy guestbook and numeral comments for entries also seem to gain ground in the online community.

The AZN subculture has developed into a phenomenon by absorbing the trends of inner city culture in New York City and molding them into their own, more innocuous overtures. From the "gangsters" they have taken the titles "God-sis(ter)" and "God-bro(ther)". Even though these youngsters are not real gangsters, a boy may take on a "God-sis" to look after in difficult social situations even if the girl is expected to do very little for the boy in return. From hip-hop and rap groups these young Asians assimilate the slang, accent, clothing, music, and dance styles to create something uniquely AZN. The million-dollar question is this: why has this subculture developed in the first place? Do these youngsters seek comfort and acceptance in the particular social scenes as described above? A plausible theory explaining this phenomenon may be that traditional Asian cultures are viewed by this new generation as oppressive. Asian kids may not seem be oppressed in daily life. In the home, however, pressures exerted by elders and authority figures may create stress that unsettles the younger generation. This serves to breed a desire to rebel. To the AZN's, their lifestyle serves as an outlet to displace tension in an environment in which they are expected to excel at almost everything they do.

Given the AZN's ready acceptance of technology and everything else that are considered "hip" by today's standards, Asian pop culture is definitely conducive to the rise of the AZN movement. On the surface, the philosophy of being an AZN may be to have fun and catch thrills whenever possible. When one reads between the lines, however, there may be deeper aspects in the AZN spectrum involving among others adolescence issues and difficult identity reconciliations between being Asian and being American. In the end, however, if something productive comes out of the experience of being an AZN, one can only suppose that "iTz All gOoD 2".

Yunyan Jennifer, WANG ('06) is a second year student at Brandeis University majoring in Neuroscience, and minoring in German.

Malaysia - A Microcosm of Asia
- by Hoong Chuin, LIM

Our starving stomachs could wait no longer. As my roommate and I were about to put our favorite Mamak crispy fried chicken into our salivating mouths, there was something in the atmosphere that made us pause. I looked around, and we immediately felt uncomfortable with what we were doing. It turned out that the people around us were fasting Muslims who were waiting for the end of the fasting period later in the day. My roommate and I decided that suppressing our immediate desires would be a good course of action, and we joined with the fasting crowd who were eager to engage in friendly conversation with us. Half an hour later, everyone was having a most sumptuous meal – a happy ending for all of us.

Being born and raised in Malaysia, I am sure that there are other non-Muslims like me who would in their lives go through experiences like this. In a country that is an Asian melting pot in itself, one could find people of different ethnicities (57% Malay, 30% Chinese, 7% Indian and other minorities) living in relative harmony with one another. During the month of Ramadan, non-Muslims would avoid eating and drinking in front of Muslims. Throughout the year, non-Indians would not serve beef when there are Hindu Indian visitors. There are no explicit rules regarding these customs, but most Malaysians happily abide by them. In a multiracial country such as this Asian island nation, mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance of different religious and cultural practices are crucial to the harmony and stability of the nation. In this regard, Malaysia is no different.

Did you know...
The official language of Malaysia is Bahasa Melayu, which is also known as Malay. As a diverse country, however, many Malaysians speak two or more languages with a great deal of fluency. These languages include English, Mandarin, Cantonese, as well as many other Chinese and Malayan dialects.
from other Western countries, especially the United States.

Malaysia has much to gain by being a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural society. The nation’s people enjoy a vast cultural richness through the presence of multiple languages, wide variety of cuisines and festivals, and of course, numerous public holidays. The three biggest annual festivals are Hari Raya Aidifitri, which is celebrated after the month of Ramadan; the Chinese New Year, which signifies the beginning of a new year in the Chinese lunar calendar; and finally Deepavali, which is celebrated on the Hindu month of Kartik. The celebration of the festivals is not restricted to the respective religious or cultural groups; in fact, they are celebrated countrywide. People enjoy participating in the random open house, which is a feast that welcomes people from all walks of life. The host, guests and visitors mingle with one another while enjoying delicacies such as the Mamak chicken. Through these festivities, Malaysians build and strengthen social bonds with one another.

A year before attending Brandeis, I went to a boarding school. My housemates and I called our small apartment “Truly Malaysia” because its inhabitants were Malay, Chinese and Indian. By the time I left the place, I have developed a strong camaraderie that crosses racial lines and have gained a most valuable understanding about Malay and Indian cultures. This, in turn, has led me to better cherish the diversity of the peoples in my society in all its Malaysian colors. My friends and I have also benefited from a larger vocabulary pool, including swear words that would most certainly enrich our experiences in various social occasions.

I feel proud to have grown up in a country where diversity is a most cherished pillar of society, where peoples of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds coexist in harmony with one another, and where the above qualities represent a microcosm of Asia, a mosaic of different peoples. In an increasingly globalized society we live in today, citizens of the world spread their values across the globe easier than ever before. Conflicts may arise, but it is my firm belief that mankind should value and accept unity of diversity in the 21st century. For those that have doubts as to how this should happen, just take a look at my home—Malaysia. The spicy taste of my favorite Mamak chicken is unforgettable, because the spice itself is comprised of many different ingredients. Malaysia, and by extension Asia, is a wonderful delicacy for the world to enjoy as well.

*Hoong Chuin, LIM ('07) is a first year student at Brandeis University.*
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