

# Postcolonial Asian Cities (2014)

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## Goals and Purpose:

This project aims to create an interdisciplinary network of scholars researching the topic of postcolonial Asian cities. Specifically we are interested in exploring the ways in which colonial and imperial pasts are used to justify or challenge urban development schemes, heritage politics, and issues of urban identity in the growing urban centers of Asia. Globalization and the city in Asia is fast becoming an established scholarly sub field, and we would be interested in refining this scholarship by examining the extent to which a city's colonial past aids or hampers its global aspirations. At the heart of such inquiry is a more nuanced picture of the complex relationship between global forces, nation-states, and local society in an era of rapid urbanization.

One of the most exciting aspects of this subfield is its interdisciplinary potential. Real opportunity exists for meaningful intellectual dialog between historians, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers and urban studies specialists. The project will contribute to this growing interdisciplinary scholarship by including participants from various fields and working at institutions in Japan, China, US, UK and Australia. The initial activity will focus largely on Chinese cities (including Hong Kong) with the aim of bringing in more comparative cases from Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and the Philippines in subsequent years.



## **2014 Activities:**

During the 2014 academic year the research unit secured internal funding for a Sophia symposium “Empire and Aftermath: New Perspectives on the Legacies of Japanese Imperialism”. This will be a one-day symposium bringing together scholars from the US, Australia, China and Japan who are working on groundbreaking studies of the legacies of colonialism in East Asia. A particular focus of the symposium will be on urban experiences of the transition from the colonial to postcolonial condition. This interdisciplinary symposium brings together scholars from the fields of Sociology, Anthropology, History and Political Science whose research focuses on the Japanese empire and its aftermath in Asia. Existing studies of postcolonialism and decolonization processes tend to exclusively explore the dissolution of European empires, with an emphasis on nations in the Global South. A major goal of this symposium is to expand the field of postcolonial studies to include East Asia as a central point of inquiry and comparison. To begin to achieve our goal, we plan a one-day symposium which will allow a diverse group of scholars to come together at Sophia and present detailed case studies with the aim of seeking patterns and comparisons for further study.

## **Research, Publications and Conference Participation:**

Christian A. Hess, “Revolutionary Real Estate: Envisioning Space in Communist Dalian” in J. Cook, J. Goldstein, and S. Schmalzer, eds., *Visualizing China: Image, History and Memory in China, 1750-Present* (Lexington, 2014).

Dr. Hess travelled to Dalian, PRC in early March to conduct research for several article-length projects: the first deals with heritage preservation and colonial legacies as Dalian rebrands itself as a globalizing city, and the second examines the enduring militarization of space and society in the port town of Lüshun (Port Arthur) under Russian, Japanese, Soviet, and Chinese military control.

Dr. Hess presented a paper “Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Foreign Presence in Postcolonial Dalian, 1945-1955” at the conference “Rethinking Imperialism in China: the influence of foreign countries, 1945-55” held at Fudan University, Shanghai, December 13-14, 2014.