Essay

The Afro-Asian Silk Road: Chinese Experiments in Postcolonial Premodernity

TAMARA T. CHIN

> + zubben/zuban: "of this word," writes Neel, "I can find no evidence in any of my dictionaries. But I know I have heard it often used, and if it does not exist, it should, for no other expression could so accurately describe the subject of the Chrestomathy."
>
> —Amitav Ghosh, "The Ibis Chrestomathy"

During the aspirational decade following the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, a Peking University professor proposed a change to the modern Chinese dictionary. He suggested that the entry for *olive* (*ganlan*; 橄榄) should henceforth be *zidun* (梓橐), a phonetic transcription of its Arabic equivalent, *zaytūn*.[1] The new loanword *zidun* would become "a memorial to the history of friendly interactions and cultural exchange between China and Arab countries" (Ma, "Qitun"). For, as Professor Ma Jian (also known as Muhammad Makin) argued, the Arabic term *zaytūn* commemorated a two-way traffic in loanwords. Another, now forgotten, Chinese homophone (*qitun*; 齊暾) for the Arabic *zaytūn* had already circulated as a ninth-century Chinese term for olive. The medieval Arab geographer Ibn Battuta later used this same *zaytūn* to transliterate the name of China's port city of Citong (刺桐), now Quanzhou. From Zaytūn (Citong) Arab traders ferried China's silken exports as the eponymous *zaytūni* ("satin") into European languages.[2] The existing Chinese dictionary entry for *olive* came primarily from modern European and Japanese lexicographic studies that overlooked these ancient Chinese-Arabic loans.

Beyond its philological detail, Ma's parable of the postcolonial revival of forgotten friendship structured a much broader set of

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Afro-Asian literary, historical, and diplomatic discourses that circulated after the Bandung Conference. One might discern this plot in the founding document of the Afro-Asian movement, the final communiqué from the conference:

> Asia and Africa have been the cradle of great religions and civilisations which have enriched other cultures and civilisations while themselves being enriched in the process. . . . Unfortunately contacts among Asian and African countries were interrupted during the past centuries. The peoples of Asia and Africa are now animated by a keen and sincere desire to renew their old cultural contacts and develop new ones in the context of the modern world. ("Final Communiqué" 97)

This watershed manifesto by the leaders of twenty-nine Asian, Arab, and African nations called not simply for a brave new world but also "to renew their old cultural contacts," which had been "interrupted" by modern colonialism and imperialism. Its transcivilizational outlook remained distinct from appeals to antiquity as the source of national or religious authenticity or as the nonmodern before the capitalist Enlightenment. Its historiography drew on that of its pan-Asian, pan-African, pan-Islamic, and pan-Arab constituents but spanned a more panoramic map.[3]

Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the multiple temporalities of the Bandung moment. At the time, it was variously celebrated and denounced as a revolution in diplomacy. The Afro-Asian cooperation it inspired across Cold War divisions included initiatives of trade and investment and conferences of trade unions, women, teachers, artists, and scientists. More recent projects, including Bandung+60, Bandung Humanism, and critiques of Bandung revisionism, have returned to the Bandung moment to better understand the history of the present and to reorient the future.[4] The collaborations of the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau (est. 1957), in particular, have come to serve as a corrective to Euro-American genealogies of modern world literature and comparative literature (Halim; L. Liu, "Eventfulness"; Yoon; Vanhove). This essay builds on such studies but asks: What happened to premodernity after Bandung? What did the Afro-Asian movement do to the global study of antiquity? If Oriental philology partitioned the past using taxonomies of language and nation, what did postcolonial philology do with its inheritance? The following offers a response that focuses on the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its Afro-Asian collaborations during the Cold War. It situates the significance of their reflections on ancient language contact (loanwords, translations) both in China's popularization of Afro-Asian "Silk Road" connections and in a longer history of the colonial and anticolonial study of contact.

Loanwords in an Age of Grammar

Language contact had a limited place in European comparative philology. The analysis of word roots (their inflection, derivation, etc.) dominated the reclassification of languages into ethnolinguistic families. In the eighteenth century, Sanskrit's newly discovered kinship with Latin and Greek provided the key to William Jones's effort to replace "conjectural etymology in historical researches" (12) with a scientific system of etymology based on true cognates. For example, when Jones discovered "pure Sanscrit" in Persian and hence Persian's place in (what became known as) the Indo-European family, he excluded the significance of Arabic loanwords: "in the pure Persian I find no trace of any Arabian tongue, except what proceeded from the known intercourse between the Persians and Arabs" (91; see Trautmann 47). Nineteenth-century comparative grammar made Chinese and Sanskrit unrelated and unequal languages. The perfection Jones once found in Sanskrit's rules of inflection helped demote (noninflecting) Chinese in Indo-European rankings of language morphology. Linguistics displaced philology by the mid–twentieth century, but the primacy of comparative grammar (and later generative grammar) continued to marginalize the study of contact. Historical changes in a language had intrasystemic causes. Borrowing remained one of the "external linguistic phenomena" ("phénomènes linguistiques externes"), knowledge of which was important but not essential to understanding the

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fundamental internal workings of any language (Saussure 43).[5]

Ji Xianlin's turn to loanwords exemplifies the relation of Afro-Asian philology to this European tradition.[6] Ji had spent a decade in Germany studying Indo-European and Indic languages. On his return to China in 1946, he published a manifesto entitled "The Importance of Oriental Philology" and helped establish a new department of Oriental philology (*Dongfang yuwen xue*; 東方語文學) at Peking University. This adopted the European scope of the Orient (*Dongfang*; 東方), spanning African, Middle Eastern, and Asian languages. Of particular importance to China was the discovery by early-twentieth-century European explorers of multilingual manuscript hoards dating to the first millennium CE in Northwest China, including a cave library in Dunhuang.[7] To participate in the embryonic subfield of Dunhuang studies (*Dunhuang xue*; 敦煌學), training in China's Confucian tradition of philology, known as "evidential learning" (*kaozheng xue*; 考證學), remained useful but inadequate.[8] Oriental philology would, Ji argued, train a new generation to address the astonishing entanglement of language families at China's frontiers (Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, etc.).

Within Europe, one of the most publicized discoveries from Northwest China had been that of hitherto unknown Indo-European languages. In 1907 and 1908, Ji's German mentor Emil Sieg helped identify two extinct languages in which excavated manuscripts were written as the easternmost members of the Indo-European family. The genealogy of these languages, which he called Tocharian A and B, came as a shock. Although found in China, Tocharian proved to be more closely related to the Indo-European family's western branch (e.g., Greek and Latin) than to its eastern branch (e.g., Sanskrit and Persian). As the French Dunhuang scholar Paul Pelliot pointed out, Tocharian shook up the field of Indo-European studies, which had otherwise seemed fairly settled by the end of the nineteenth century (see also Meillet; Benveniste).

Amid the rise of racialized linguistics, a debate about the ethnic identity of the Tocharian speaker rekindled older claims about the Western origins of Chinese civilization. The German explorer Albert von Le Coq's popular *Auf Hellas Spuren in Ostturkistan* (1921; *On the Traces of Hellas in East Turkestan*) identified the Tocharian-speaking Tocharians as the red-haired, blue-eyed men "mit ausgesprochnen Europäergesichtern" ("with distinctly European faces"; 74) depicted on China's Central Asian cave murals.[9] Before the Bandung Conference, Ji affirmed his European education. He published articles on Indic verb forms and promoted Tocharian's usefulness for the debate over the potential existence of a Chinese and Indo-European *Ursprache* ("proto-language"; see Ji, "Linguistics" and "Importance"). Even when welcoming Soviet historical materialist linguistics in 1950, Ji defended basic principles of the historical comparative method ("New Task"; see Gao and Liu 6).

After the Bandung Conference, however, Ji participated in China's establishment of "Asia-Africa" (*Ya-Fei*; 亚非) as a new division of area studies.[10] Asia-Africa presented a restylization of the Orient (*Dongfang*). Although made up of geographically commensurate units, Asia-Africa distributed a distinctly postcolonial geopolitical awareness into its social science and humanities projects. The study of living languages displaced the antiquarian priorities of Oriental philology.[11] Dead language texts nonetheless remained useful for elaborating Afro-Asian historical relations. In this context, Ji defamiliarized Tocharian studies and China's place within it. "So-called 'scholars'" (所谓 '学者')—including Le Coq—had exploited China's "semi-colonial" (*ban zhimindi*; 半殖民地) period in taking the Tocharian manuscripts and others to Europe (*Collected Essays* 190). The task of Tocharian research now lay in explaining "what kinds of role Tocharian played in China-India cultural exchange" (吐火罗语在中印文化交流中起过些什么作用; 196) rather than in tracking the inching of Hellenism and the Indo-European race eastward into China.[12]

Ji essentially turned the spotlight from cognates to loanwords. A loanword, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "a word adopted or borrowed from another language," is understood here in both its limited and broader senses ("Loan"). In its strict sense, a loanword imports the sound of the foreign word along with its meaning (a transference of "phonemic

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shape" into "native phonemes" [Haugen 213]—e.g., the Arabic *Zaytūn* for the Chinese port *Citong*), unlike the loan translation or calque that literally translates the constituent parts of a foreign word (a substitution in "structural pattern" [Haugen 214]—e.g., the English *Silk Road* for the German *Seidenstraße* [*Seide* means "silk" and *Straße* means "road"]). In its most casually capacious usage, the loanword serves as "the prototype, and also the most widespread and extensively documented form of what happens in contact-induced language change," which encompasses loanwords, loan translations and other hybrid forms (Grant 431; see also Haugen). Thus, Ji distinguished the early Buddhist tendency to phonetically "transcribe" foreign words (*yiyin* [译音], *yinyi* [音译], or *duiyin* [对音]) from the later item-by-item translation of meanings (*yiyi*; 意译), but he and other Chinese scholars tended to subsume both products under the rubric of loanwords (*jieci* [借词] or *wailaici* [外来词]).[13] In this context, Ji argued that many of the earliest Chinese loanwords from India came initially from Tocharian and not directly from Sanskrit, as was formerly assumed. The earliest extant Chinese term for India's Ganges River, for example, used the character 恒 (*heng* in modern Mandarin), which in ancient times approximated the pronunciation of the Tocharian *Gaṅk* and not the Sanskrit *Gangā*. Similarly, the ancient Chinese name of India's sacred Mount Meru, 須彌 (*Xumi* in modern Mandarin), was originally a phonetic transcription of Mount Meru's Tocharian name *Sumer* and not the Sanskrit *Sumeru*. The Chinese encounter with foreign generic forms such as Indic drama similarly began with Tocharian before Sanskrit (Ji, *Collected Essays* 126). These studies embedded Chinese language and literature in transnational history and made Tocharian a "bridge" (桥梁) between China and India, not China and Greece (200).

Ji's empirical research explicitly challenged the dominant model of "one-way exchange" (一边倒的买卖; Ji, "Foreword" 199) that structured studies of India-China relations and Indo-European expansion. In Republican China (1912–49), westernizing reformists had commonly celebrated ancient India as the predecessor of the modern West. China's debt to Indian Buddhism was well known. The large-scale medieval Chinese project of translating Sanskrit Buddhist texts did not, however, have a clear counterpart in India. This East-West axis of history—prevalent in China as well as Europe—made India the influencing West, not China's Afro-Asian brother. For example, in 1931 the linguist Luo Changpei demonstrated that China's ostensibly indigenous rhyme-table tradition used for poetry depended on knowledge of an Indian phonetic principle. Unlike the random order of the English alphabet (a, b, c), the phonetic order of the Sanskrit alphasyllabary (ka, kha, ga) followed the place of articulation in the mouth (gutturals, palatals, etc.). A medieval Dunhuang manuscript used this Sanskrit phonetic principle to sequence a set of Chinese characters by their initial sounds, as later rhyme tables would (Luo, "Notes"). Luo's *Outside Influence on Chinese Phonology* began with ancient India and culminated in modern Europe.[14] Ji's mentor Chen Yinque (also known as Chen Yinke), who was trained in Germany and the United States, similarly focused on the beneficial effects of Eurasian encounters on Chinese culture. In a startling 1934 article, he argued that the Buddhist encounter with Sanskrit verse made Chinese scholars aware of the four tones (i.e., levels or modulations of pitch) they used to speak their own language. Chen suggested that this encounter had precipitated China's tradition of tonal prosody, which had been assumed to be indigenous.[15]

Ji selectively drew on this scholarship on the soundscape of contact. The units of analysis here were not simply words (loanwords and calques) but also segmental and suprasegmental elements such as a character's initial sound or tone. To introduce a multivector map of linguistic exchange, Ji focused on loanwords—specifically those that indexed China's exports of material goods. If the inflection of verbal roots lay at the heart of comparative grammar, the transcription of nouns preoccupied the study of contact. Two-way traffic appeared, for example, in a Sanskrit lexical distinction between *kauśeya* (a native Indian silk that Chinese pilgrims transcribed as *jiao hao ye* [憍豪耶]) and *cīnapaṭṭa* (imported Chinese silk, as indicated by its

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etymology: *cīna* ["China"]; *paṭṭa* ["cloth"]).[16] Ji's *History of Sugar* (糖史), based on a 1957 essay, explicitly noted his departure from both traditional Chinese philology and his mentor Chen by approaching language from the perspective of "the history of cultural exchange" (文化交流史; *History* 11; see also Ji, "Preface"). His approach reoriented the Indo-European study of genetic word roots (e.g., *sugar*, *Zucker*, and *sucre*, from the Sanskrit *śárkarā*; and *candy*, *Kandis* from the Sanskrit *khaṇḍaka*) to focus on historical word routes across language families. It revealed a multistage, multiregional transfer of sugar and sugar-production technology across India, Egypt, Iran, and China that served as a testament to their ancient Afro-Asian friendship.

The choice of case studies was not arbitrary. Until the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962, Indians celebrated diplomacy with China as evidence of *Hindi Chini bhai bhai* ("Indian-Chinese brotherhood"). In an article entitled "India-China Relations: Sweet and Silky" in *The Times of India*, an Indian government minister observed of modern Hindi: "There were two words in common use in India which reminded its people of China. . . . The one was 'cheeni,' which meant sugar, and the other was 'cheenamsuka' or 'cheenambar' which was the Sanskrit word for silk" ("India-China Relations").

Contact Philology

Afro-Asian philology did not arise ex nihilo at Bandung. The prompt for the study of Chinese language contact came from the historical study of cultural exchange not grammar. It drew on a global scholarly network that included Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as Europe. Scholarship on the modern reception of antiquity has emphasized the partitioning of the past into distinct nations, races, language families, and grammars over and above this minor tradition devoted to the study of connection.[17] The post-1980 field of contact linguistics has only just begun to trace the history of modern reflection on language contact. This field has thus far focused on Western scholarship and on issues still germane to linguistic science (e.g., the degree to which grammar can be borrowed, creoles, and pidgins).[18] What one might call, for heuristic convenience, "contact philology" instead refers not to a recognized discipline or field but rather to an overlapping set of commitments, methods, and debates that gave competing social meanings to ancient language contact. Constituted in part by a reflexivity to the shape of philology before its eclipse by linguistics, these shadow practices were more interdisciplinary—and more institutionally scattered—than the practices of either philology or linguistics (the two were often interchangeably termed *yuyan xue* [语言学] in China).[19] Recent scholarship has analyzed discrete cases of modern research on ancient contact but has not conceived them collectively and historically as discursive products of modern contact zones.[20] A historical sociology might clarify within these discourses the entanglement of individual strategy with regulatory mechanisms of institution, discipline, and state power (à la Bourdieu), or their departure from the West's modern episteme (à la Foucault). At stake for literary analysis here, however, is what Afro-Asian philology—as one instantiation of contact philology—did with loanwords to revalue connected history. The specific rhetorical form that this revaluation took sheds light on Bandung's inheritance from earlier networks.

"World philology" has recently been introduced as a comparative framework with which to appreciate distinct national or regional traditions of "the discipline of making sense of texts" (Pollock 22). Disaggregated practices of contact philology commonly emerged within, between, and beyond these traditions, often as the result of transnational encounters (e.g., colonial outpost; study abroad). China's inheritance from Europe is most visible in three conjunctures. First, European research institutes in colonial Asia remapped the zones of ancient contact. Most notably, French Indo-China established in 1901 in (what is now) Vietnam the *Bulletin de l'école française d'Extrême-Orient* "devoted to the philological study of. . . the Far East" ("consacré à l'étude philologique de . . . l'Extrême-Orient"; "Avertissement" I). Its manifesto expanded the definition of the *Extrême-Orient* to include India and demanded a new Oriental

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philology, "Indianists becoming sinologists to write the history of India, and sinologists engaging in study of India to explain Chinese antiquities" ("les indianistes se faire sinologues pour écrire l'histoire de l'Inde, et les sinologues se mettre à l' étude de l'Inde pour expliquer les antiquités de la chine"), because India and China constituted a distinct system "unified to a certain extent by the spread of Buddhism; connected by the incessant to-and-fro of travelers, pilgrims, ambassadors, merchants" ("unifiés dans une certaine mesure par la diffusion du bouddhisme; reliés par un va-et-vient incessant de voyageurs, de pèlerins, d'ambassadeurs, de marchands"; I). This *Extrême-Orient* or "Indo-China"—understood both as a transhistorical contact zone and as a method—helped erode the traditional philological division of labor by language family. Its pioneers included those who worked on Dunhuang materials such as Pelliot, Henri Maspero, and Sylvain Lévi. Second, colonial geography elevated the study of loanwords. Histories of trade and so-called world transport by geographers (e.g., Henry Yule and Ferdinand von Richthofen) gave modern networks of connectivity a *longue durée* past by synthesizing ancient linguistic, textual, and archaeological data. Their amateur antiquarianism provided professional philologists with a more coeval and connected vision of the ancient world. Third, Dunhuang's astonishing archive fostered new interest in contact (e.g., translations, bilingual and biscriptic texts, loans, and hybrid dialects). The interimperial rivalry behind what the anticolonial British scholar Arthur Waley called "the sacking of the [Dunhuang] library" invested this otherwise obscure pursuit with international prestige (238).[21]

Networks of Afro-Asian exchange had also existed before Bandung. China's interactions with India and the Arab world, in particular, show the earlier refashioning of the meaning of language contact.[22] The Indian international journal *Sino-Indian Studies* (1944–57) reflected both the heightened significance of language contact and the broader Indian influence on Afro-Asian thought. Its editor, Prabodh C. Bagchi, was trained by French Dunhuang scholars but visited Dunhuang and Peking University (in 1947–1948 and 1952) under the auspices of India-China diplomacy. Bagchi's linguistic scholarship included the study of "non-Aryan" loans in "Indo-Aryan" (Bagchi et al., *Pre-Aryan*) as well as Sanskrit-Chinese contact.

Bagchi, as Ji noted, celebrated a two-way relation between their countries, including the influence of Chinese thought on medieval Indian mysticism ("Introduction"). Bagchi had also invoked what he called "Serindian [China-India] inspiration" ("l'inspiration sérindienne"; *Deux lexiques* 351) in his study of medieval Buddhist lexicography. For example, the monk Yijing's (635–713 CE) Sanskrit-Chinese lexicon included Chinese (*zhi*; 紙) and Sanskrit (*śaya*; शय) equivalents for *paper*. China's invention of paper had yet to reach India at this time, so Bagchi explained the Sanskrit term as a likely phonetic loan from the Chinese word (i.e., *śaya* from *zhi*). Since the lexicon also included for Chinese learners of Sanskrit the Chinese pronunciation of the Sanskrit (*she ye* [舍也] for *śaya*), the entry preserved an echo chamber of equivalents.[23] Bagchi served as the director of the Cheena Bhavana (China Hall) at Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati University near Calcutta. Its stated mission was to "not only revive our old cultural relationship [with China] but also create a new fraternity between our two nations" (Tan 27). *Sino-Indian Studies* offered a new gloss on this revival, taking as its main aim "a systematic study and translation of ancient Indian texts that are lost in original but preserved in ancient Chinese translations" ("Sino-Indian Studies"). This included Sanskrit mantras that Buddhists had phonetically transcribed into East Asian languages. Like a magic spell, the mantra or *dhāraṇī* was effective only when correctly pronounced (not interpreted). Therefore, the task of what medieval monks called "not to translate" (*bu fan*; 不翻)—i.e., to transliterate or transcribe—lay in the painstaking imitation of the sacred sounds of the original. Because of the importance of mantras to Buddhist practice, East Asia's often overlooked tradition of Sanskrit pedagogy, "Siddham studies" (悉曇學 [*xitanxue* in Chinese; *shittangaku* in Japanese]), was originally grounded in phonology—and not grammar as in the modern West.[24] This ancient attention to phonetic sound enabled modern scholars to use the

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"old cultural relationship" to reconstruct from Chinese works of Sanskrit literature.

India's preindependence trope of reconnection anticipated that of the Bandung Conference. In the 1920s Tagore had described his watershed visits to China as just such a revival: "My friends, I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communion which I hope is still there" (64). Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the co-organizers of the Bandung Conference, had since the 1930s celebrated India and China's ancient cultural connections.[25] Before and after Bandung, India-China academic exchanges and publications self-consciously reopened the connection.[26] K. M. Panikkar, India's first ambassador to the PRC, broadened this bilateral figure. His early research on India's place in Indian Ocean history included the globally influential *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498–1945* (1953) (invoked in Said's *Orientalism*). Panikkar's subsequent *India and China: A Study of Cultural Relations* (1957) historically situated the interruption of maritime and overland ties between India and China in the rise of Portuguese colonial sea power. In so doing, Panikkar extended eastward to China (and to overland ties) a pre-Bandung figure of connected history.

Ma's studies of Chinese-Arabic loans represent a different inheritance. Unlike his European-educated colleagues, Ma had studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in the 1930s. Part of a global network of Muslim intellectuals, he drew on a tradition of Arab and Islamic scholarship. His translation work included not only the Qur'an and the modern *Arabic-Chinese Dictionary* but also early-twentieth-century scholarship by Philip Hitti (Ma, *History* and *Arabs*) and Khalil Totah (Ma, *Contribution*) that addressed the influence of premodern Arab and Islamic science and arts on Europe. Hitti's scholarship included evidence drawn from European loanwords from Arabic (e.g., *zero*, and *algebra*).[27] The insistence of this scholarship on two-way influence—like that of Bagchi and Ji—remained foundational to the Afro-Asian rhetoric of antiquity.

Ma extended this Middle Eastern and North African tradition of anti-Eurocentric scholarship to Chinese philology. The Syrian historian Kamil Ayad's "The Historical Relations between China and Arabia" (translated into Chinese as 中国与阿拉伯之间的历史关系) had already given the Arabic source for the English word *satin* before Ma addressed the Chinese-Arabic loan. Both Ayad and Ma made loanwords part of a larger narrative of Middle East–China reconnection. Although Ma primarily worked as a translator of modern Arabic, his studies of individual loanwords (e.g., tamarind, rosewater, henna) self-consciously mapped out a multivector Afro-Asian antiquity. His account of China's Muslim Hui minority (to which he belonged) enlarged the notion of shared roots or etymons (*gen*; 根):

> Arabs introduced many of the Chinese medicinal materials long grown in Chinese soil. Many of the Chinese names of spices and precious stones are transcriptions or translations of Arabic words. For example, "*ruxiang*" [frankincense; lit. "fragrance of the breast"] translates the [Arabic] meaning[s] of *lubān*. "*Moyao* 没药" and "*moyao* 末药" [myrrh] translate the sound of the [Arabic] *murr*, whose original meaning is "bitter." "*Huluba*" [fenugreek] is a transcription of *hulbah*. . . . The names of Chinese goods imported into Arab countries have also taken root [*sheng le gen*] in the Arabic language, for example *shāi* (tea leaves [*cha ye*]) is the most common of such nouns. Arabs call China *al-Sin* (Qin), and for this reason the magnet is called *sini* (Chinese; Chinese man), and a [chinaware] platter is called *siniyyah* (Chinese; Chinese woman). The Arabic dictionary also contains *junk* (ship [*chuan*]), *dārsini* (Chinese medicine; refers to cinnamon), *khār sini* (zinc) and other such nouns. From linguistic studies we can also see the friendly relations between China and Arab countries.
>
> 阿拉伯人输入中国的许多药材已在中国的土地上繁殖起来。许多香料和珠宝的中国名称是阿拉伯名称的译音或者译义。例如，"乳香"是译 lubān 的义。"没药"和"末药"是译 murr 的音，本义是"苦的"。"胡芦巴"是 hulbah 的译音. . . . 输入阿拉伯各国的中国货物的名称也在阿拉伯语文里生了根，如shāi（茶叶）就是最常用的名词。阿拉伯人称中国为 al-Sin（秦），故称磁器为 sini（中国的、中国男人），称托盘为 siniyyah （中国的、中国女人）。阿拉伯文字典里还保存着

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> junk（船）、dārsini（中国药，指桂皮）、khār sini（锌）等等名词。我们从语言学上也可以看到中国与阿拉伯国家之间的友谊关系。
>
> ("China's Hui")

Like Ji, Ma proposes an affective history of language. Chinese terms "have taken root" in Arabic. *Al-Sin*, the Arabic loanword for China, provides the Arabic etymon for a range of historical Chinese commodities, including the magnet (*sini*) and cinnamon (*dārsini*; literally "Chinese medicine"). Conversely, exported medicinal plants that literally took root in ancient Chinese soil generate Chinese loanwords and calques from Arabic. Whereas contact linguistics commonly addressed loanwords within language families, Ji and Ma focused on borrowing across language families (Indo-European, Semitic, Sino-Tibetan). They did so not in the name of linguistic theory—say, to challenge linguistic classifications or to distinguish processes of adoption versus imposition—or as part of a polarizing older debate over the virtues of sinicization (*Han hua*; 汉化) versus foreignization (*hu hua*; 胡化). Rather, they formulated their nonquantitative studies of loans as parables that illustrated the historical truth of precolonial Afro-Asian "friendly relations."

Africa-China relations showcased the limits of philology. They also revealed regional discrepancies in the Afro-Asian historical imagination. Much of Africa did not gain independence until the decade after the Bandung Conference. China's ensuing diplomacy in 1965 was accompanied by new scholarship on maritime contact with East Africa in particular. The new Afro-Asian historiography, grounded in state-sponsored "Histories of China-Foreign Connections" (*Zhong-wai jiaotong shi*; 中外交通史) relied primarily on archaeology and travel records (Xia, "L'amitié," "Age-Old," "China," and "History"; Zhang Tiesheng; Xiang).[28] Zhang Tiesheng, head of Peking University's Institute of Asian-African Studies, published the earliest Chinese book monograph dedicated to China-Africa historical relations.[29] It emphasized the nonviolence of the (Muslim) Chinese navigator Zheng He (1371–ca. 1433) in his encounter with East Africa before the arrival of Vasco da Gama. In this book, linguistic evidence remained largely confined to classical Chinese transcriptions of African toponyms.

Tanzania's and Somalia's respective presidents prominently celebrated relics of East African trade with China.[30] Tanzania's postindependence historians did not, however, find ancient trade with China to be as meaningful. The University of Dar es Salaam became an international hub for the rewriting of East Africa's connected history (Kimambo, *Three Decades*; Ranger; Sheriff, *Slaves*). Scholars there focused on the devastations of the Indian Ocean trade in enslaved people and on differentiating the ancient (Arab-dominated) slave trade from the modern (Euro-American-dominated) slave system (Alpers; Rodney).[31] They also used archaeology and oral history to reconstruct the coast's inland relations with continental Africa. Postindependence Tanzanian scholarship by I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu, among others, appeared in Chinese translation (Kimambo and Temu, *History* [1969] and *History* [1973]). This helped reshape Chinese representations of East African history.[32] Soon after 1965, the figure of China-Africa connected history largely disappeared from East Africa and China. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76)—and the rise of conflict among Bandung nations and more authoritarian "Bandung regimes"—academic scholarship on a shared antiquity broadly declined.[33]

China's Afro-Asian philology ultimately comprised a set of small-scale collaborative experiments that brought far-flung non-Western scholars together to study the suppressed historical relations between their ancestors. For a short period (ca. 1955–65), they endowed the study of language contact with an ideologically Non-Aligned significance.[34] This was coherent as part of the PRC's support for the Non-Aligned Movement that emerged from the Bandung Conference as a geopolitical alternative to the Cold War division of communist and capitalist blocs. Contra Republican-period philology, Afro-Asian philology made China's ancient encounter with India the first Afro-Asian epoch, not the first East-West one. Contra mainstream Marxist-Maoist historiography, it looked beyond the nation's progressive economic stages (e.g., feudalism and the "sprouts" of capitalism) to synchronize Afro-Asian

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antiquity. Ji and Ma essentially adopted the historicist methods of Orientalist philology and its assumption that the written text has a formative place in historical consciousness. However, they grounded language in cultural relations, not in national identity per se (routes, not roots). The Afro-Asian movement refashioned the epistemological distinction between Occident and Orient. Within this movement, contact philology itself became a historical act. The loanword chrestomathy, as it circulated in print media abroad, helped renew ancient ties.

One might compare this antiquarian scholarship with the study of modern Chinese language contact in the 1950s. The study of modern loanwords emphasized the unprecedented scale of linguistic borrowing from Europe and Japan, not Afro-Asia (Gao and Liu). Lydia H. Liu's scholarship has since illumined the asymmetrical conditions through which this transformation of Chinese literature and language happened (*Translingual Practice*). The term *Silk Road* (*sichou zhi lu*; 丝绸之路) was one such modern loan from the West that came under scrutiny after Bandung. Distinct usages of the term emerged across the geopolitical fractures of the Iron Curtain and the Color Curtain. These Cold War Silk Roads—found primarily in political and imaginative discourse—further clarify the stakes of postcolonial premodernity.

Term and Trope

It has largely been forgotten that the now ubiquitous term *Silk Road* (*sichou zhi lu*) first became idiomatic in Chinese only after the 1955 Bandung Conference. For a brief period (ca. 1956–72), the Silk Road belonged to the lexicon of Afro-Asian solidarity.[35] This Afro-Asian Silk Road was distinct from the Europe-to-Asia or East-West notion of the Silk Road that circulated in the humanities in the Cold War West. The earliest Chinese monograph to include *Silk Road* (*sichou zhi lu*) in its title, *The Silk Road—Han and Tang Dynasty Textiles* (1972; 丝绸之路—汉唐织物), offered a genealogy of this semantic split:

> During the period spanning over a thousand years from the Han [206 BCE–220 CE] to the Tang [618–907 CE] dynasties, these two roads [across Central Asia] were the main thoroughfares for the commercial transport of silk fabrics. Later, Chinese and foreign historians would call them the "Silk Road" [*sichou zhi lu*]. . . . The "Silk Road" was originally a road for friendly intercourse, a road for cultural exchange. However, beginning in the eighteenth century, the claws of western aggressors began to extend toward there. From the mid–nineteenth century on, so-called "explorers" and "archaeologists" from certain imperialist countries began to endlessly appear on these roads, doing an unclear number of the most criminal deals possible. In the first half of the twentieth century they used more cunning to make seizures and undertake major illegal excavations. The "Silk Road" was transformed into their shortcut to invasion and plunder. Almost none of the important sites [in Northwest China] east of Kashgar and west of Dunhuang was fortunate enough to escape. Many precious historical relics, including a large number of ancient fabrics, were forcibly seized. We firmly believe that there will eventually be a day when these relics return again to their native country.
>
> 在从汉到唐的千余年间，这两条路都曾是运销丝织物的主要通道，后来中外历史学家称之为"丝绸之路"....."丝绸之路"本是友好往来之路，文化交流之路，　但自十八世纪起西方侵略者的魔爪开始伸向这里。十九世纪中叶以来一些帝国主义国家的所谓"探险家"，"考古家"就不断出现在这条路上，干尽了数不清的罪恶勾当。二十世纪前半叶，他们更巧取豪夺，大事盗掘，"丝绸之路"变成了他们侵略掠夺的捷径。自疏勒以东，敦煌以西的重要地点几乎无一幸免，许多珍贵的历史遗物，包括大批古代织物被他们抢劫霸占。我们深信，这批遗物终有一天是会重归祖国的。
>
> (Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu bowuguan 1–2)[36]

The account initially gestures toward the political climate in which the term *Silk Road* first entered Chinese as a modern European loan translation. The German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen is universally credited with coining the term *die Seidenstraße* ("the Silk Road") in 1877 (Richthofen 506). Combining geological fieldwork with classical Chinese and Greco-Roman records of silk trade routes, Richthofen mapped out an ambitious China-to-Europe railroad, as well as

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a new German colony in China—Qingdao, in the coal-rich province of Shandong (Wu; Chin). Richthofen's own teacher, Carl Ritter, had actually as early as 1838 invoked *die Seidenstraße* as the path by which the Chinese word for silk (*si*; 絲) entered Greek and Latin (σῆρ; *sēr* and *sericum*) as an ancient loanword and root for modern European terms like *Seide* and *silk* (692). However, Richthofen's infrastructural plans lent *die Seidenstraße* new geopolitical significance, and others subsequently attributed the neologism to him (Herrmann 10; Hedin 226).[37] Richthofen's student Sven Hedin popularized the Silk Road in multiple European languages through his Sino-Swedish surveys for roadways from China to Europe. The term *Silk Road* entered East Asian languages in the 1920s and 1930s through the Richthofen-Hedin tradition of transport geography. Unstandardized Chinese (*si dao* [絲道], *si lu* [絲路], and rarely *sichou zhi lu*) and Japanese (*kinukaidō* [絹街道] and later *Shiruku Rōdo* [シルクロード]) loan translations, loanwords, and paraphrases first appeared in reports of European geography that had limited circulation before Bandung.[38]

In the passage quoted above, something called the Silk Road becomes visible only at the moment of its obsolescence. The modern event of scholarly naming coincides with—and implicitly participates in—the transformation of an ancient Central Asian "passage of friendship" into an imperial Great Game scene of plunder. Foreshadowing Edward W. Said's indictment of the complicity of Orientalist scholarship with imperialism, the anonymous authors tie Dunhuang's "so-called 'explorers' and 'archaeologists'" to violent geopolitical encroachment. Above, the postcolonial return of precolonial loot (manuscripts and antiquities) promises to restore both the original Silk Road friendship and the correct use of the term itself. Thus, the narrativity of the ancient Silk Road is inseparable from the history of the term itself. Simultaneously belated and proleptic, the Silk Road encodes a nonprogressive temporal mode of reconnection. The term remained in denaturalizing quotation marks, as it appears in the quotation above, throughout the Bandung period. Like Ma's renamed olive (*zidun*, *zaytūn*, *satin*), China's Silk Road reaffirmed an Afro-Asian trade relation. Unlike Ma's loanword, however, the newly standardized and classically balanced four-character formulation *sichou zhi lu*—and its short form, *si lu*—gained official and widespread recognition.

In a striking pattern after Bandung, diplomats, journalists, and writers formulated China's new economic and cultural collaborations with Afro-Asian nations as the resumption of an "ancient friendship" (*gulao de youyi*; 古老的友谊). The Silk Road was but one China-centered fragment of that Afro-Asian friendship. Bilateral diplomacy coordinated and adapted its political usage across international state media. This restricted the term *Silk Road* to China's transcontinental Afro-Asian relations with Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey.[39] Crucially, China, Southeast Asia, and East Africa also celebrated their premodern maritime trade connections (via China's Southeast [*Nanyang*] and the Indian Ocean) using the same narrative plot as the overland Silk Road (via China's central Asian Northwest) but without using the actual term. Thus a *Pakistan Times* editorial entitled "Silk Route" introduced the 1969 opening of the Karakorum Highway linking Pakistan and China as "at once an affirmation of the old values that bound the people of the two regions—values that were shattered by alien rule" ("Silk Route"; see Xia, "Sino-Pakistan Ties"). However, Tanzania and Zambia's TAZARA Railway became the PRC's largest Cold War–era international development project (1970–75) following a shared rhetoric of maritime—rather than Silk Road—renewal.[40] As Tanzania's first president Julius Nyerere put it: "When, after independence Tanganyika—and later—Tanzania [1964]—began to establish contact with your country, we were not really doing anything new. We were merely resuming a connection which had been broken off!" (qtd. in "We Have Much in Common").[41] For politicians, Silk Road and Indian Ocean revival most meaningfully comprised trade and transport. For writers, translation became the sign of renewed connection.

The trope of reconnected history resonated across the first Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent, in 1958. The two hundred writer-delegates included the Ghanaian poet Efua Theodora

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Sutherland, who called the conference "a step toward the unification of the disrupted soul of mankind" (qtd. in Parker). The African-American writer Shirley Graham Du Bois (the partner of W. E. B. Du Bois) recalled: "In ancient times, along a road not far from the present city, traveled caravans of merchants bearing silk from China and ivory from the Congo. Over this road scholars from Timbuctoo met scholars from Peking. . . . The centuries of separation have been long and bitter, but now that separation has ended" ("Letter").[42]

The Chinese writers Bing Xin, Ge Baoquan, and Mao Dun echoed Graham Du Bois's call for Silk Road reconnection. Mao's account made literary translation part of the historical plot. His plenary speech appeared in China's *People's Daily* and, in translation, in the popular Soviet *Literaturnaia gazeta* and Peking Radio's Arabic-language broadcast.[43]

> As we meet today in this beautiful city of Tashkent, we first of all cannot but begin to recall the world-famous "Silk Road" that passed through Uzbek territory. . . . In the second century BCE the Chinese explorer Zhang Qian visited central and western Asian countries via the "Silk Road." He opened up cultural relations between China and the countries of western Asia. Subsequently, the Chinese people also used maritime transport to establish cultural exchange and peaceful friendly relations with almost all Afro-Asian countries and peoples. . . . During the first century CE, we translated the Indian Buddhist classics into Chinese. . . . Contact between China and Egypt began as far back as the sixth century BCE. . . . This friendly contact fostered mutual influence in culture and art, making our friendship one of mutual understanding and mutual trust. . . .
>
> We all know that from the sixteenth century on, the specter of colonialism arrived in the East. Peaceful and friendly cultural relations between our countries began to be destroyed. . . . After the eighteenth century, many nations among us were forced to accept other people's so-called "civilization" and to vilify our own peoples as "backward." Our own literary treasures were cast outside the treasury of world literature. . . . Thus, the work of introducing and translating for each other these treasures was obstructed, to the extent that at today's conference, we still need our new friends to more or less introduce for each other their own literary history—this cannot but be our greatest sorrow!
>
> 我们今天在这个美丽城市塔什干集会，首先不能不回忆起举世闻名的、在乌兹别克境内通过的"丝绸之路". . . . 公元前二世纪，中国探险家张骞经由"丝绸之路"访问了中亚和西亚各国。开辟了中国和西亚各国间的文化交流关系。后来中国人民又通过海上交通，和亚非的所有国家、民族几乎都建立了文化交流的和平友好关系. . . . 公元一世纪间，我们就用汉文翻译了印度的佛经. . . . 中国和埃及的往还远在公元前六世纪就开始了. . . . 这些友好往还，使得我们在文化艺术上相互影响，使得我们在友谊上相互了解，相互信赖. . . .
>
> 我们都知道，自从十六世纪以后，殖民主义的魔影来到了东方，我们各国之间和平友好的文化交流关系就开始被破坏了. . . .十八世纪以后，我们中间许多国家被强迫着接受别人的所谓"文明"，而硬被诬蔑自己的民族为"落后"，我们自己的文学宝藏被摈弃在世界文学宝库之外. . . . 因此，我们之间相互介绍翻译这些宝藏的工作就受到阻碍，以至于到今天的大会上，我们还要新朋友似地相互介绍自己的文学历史，这不能不是最大的遗憾！
>
> ("Chinese Literature's Task")

Here "world literature" (*shijie wenxue*; 世界文学) does not arise with cosmopolitan capitalism, as it does in *The Communist Manifesto* (or with Soviet "world progressive literature" [*shijie jinbu wenxue*; 世界进步文学]).[44] Instead, it emerges in precapitalist antiquity, disintegrates under colonial capitalism, and reemerges after decolonization across the socialist and capitalist worlds. In this ideologically Non-Aligned account, "the work of introducing and translating" constitutes world literature's signature activity. Silk Road–era world literature is exemplified by the large-scale translation of Sanskrit Indian texts into Chinese. (In this China-centered framework, China opens up both the Silk Road and maritime connections.) In the aftermath of the West's epistemological intervention as "so-called 'civilization,'" Afro-Asian translation work repairs the breach. This account revised Mao's earlier *Talks on Masterpieces of World Literature* (1936; 世界文学名著讲话), which had spanned Homer, Boccaccio, and Tolstoy without addressing any Asian or African writers.[45]

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Mao's speech singled out the importance of the Chinese translation (1956) and the Beijing performance (1957) of Kalidasa's *Śakuntalā* in the renewal of Afro-Asian "friendship." Ji had produced the first direct translation of the Sanskrit play. From the perspective of European world literature, this belatedly ushered China into a well-known modern global tradition of *Śakuntalā* translation. Jones's English translation in 1789 had a singular influence on European Romanticism as well as on Goethe's and Tagore's notions of world literature. Postcolonial critics have since argued that Jones's *Śakuntalā* "helped to establish Oriental translation as a distinct mode of action in and on the colonial world, as an asymmetrical mode of cultural transmission" (Mufti 104). Jones's various translations codified Hindu and Islamic law for British India. Together with his work on language classification, they helped establish the "colonial foundation" of Europe's new philology and world literature (Ahmed).

The Afro-Asian rhetoric of colonial disruption anticipated aspects of just such a critique.[46] Although literature was still romantically understood to be the expression of the spirit of the nation, translation itself was recoded as a symmetrical act of solidarity between nations. The Beijing theater program noted that a thirteenth-century Tibetan translation of Kalidasa's poem "Meghadūta" ("Cloud Messenger") actually represented the "first translation into a foreign language of Kalidasa's work," appearing centuries before translations into English ("Kalidasa"; see Ji, "Commemoration"). Others observed that Kalidasa's fourth- to fifth-century CE world coincided with the dawn of India-China cultural relations (Guha). Mao calculated that the PRC had already published five million copies of 267 new translations of African and Asian classical and modern works—a trend that would accelerate after the Tashkent Conference. This implicitly restored the more inclusive Silk Road translation zone that Europe's *Śakuntalā* era had displaced.

One might clarify the formal structure of this Non-Aligned imagination shared by writers (Graham Du Bois and Mao), philologists (Bagchi and Ji), historians (Xiang Da and Panikkar), and politicians (Nyerere and Zhou Enlai).[47] Precolonial contact was not abstracted into a mere symbol in the way that, for example, the Bandung Conference used Picasso's dove to emblematize the Bandung Spirit. Instead, more akin to Erich Auerbach's literary-historical notion of figural time, both ancient and modern events belonged to the same plane of historical reality. Distinct from allegory or causal progression, figural time linked two otherwise unconnected events as "figure" and "fulfillment."[48] Here, precolonial and postcolonial solidarity simultaneously signified the other, the latter a fulfillment of the prefiguring promise of the former. For East Asian participants, this temporal mode may have resembled the Confucian notion of "return to antiquity" (*fugu*; 復古), which framed future ethical action in relation to a disrupted golden age. Both traditions offer an aesthetic—rather than ideological—language with which to describe the new experience of the maritime and Silk Road past. This temporal mode also helps explain the sudden rise, after the Bandung Conference, of historicist inquiry into the somewhat arcane study of ancient contact, the dusty variorums of dead language texts thrust into literary manifestos and newspaper headlines.[49]

Fieldnotes

The mission of the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau gains sharper definition when juxtaposed with that of another supranational translation program—namely, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values (1957–66).[50] This Paris-based UNESCO project was conceived in Delhi and also involved collaboration across the Color Curtain—and to a lesser extent across the Iron Curtain. The United States, France, India, and Japan actively participated, but most African countries and China (which did not join the United Nations until 1971) did not. It began as an Arabic-translation program that expanded to include all Asian literary works, sponsoring the translation of around one hundred major works, the majority "literatures of India, China, Japan, the Arab countries, and Iran" (*Appraisal* 54). The project supported the Afro-Asian Conference and also addressed the

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language and legacies of colonialism: "'Orient' and 'Occident' . . . are not entities in themselves but are definable only as the two halves of a whole and in terms of the ideas they hold about each other," as its joint declaration put it in 1958 (UNESCO, *Orient* 5). However, the UNESCO list primarily comprised translations of Asian classics into English and French (many becoming staples of Asian Civilization classes in the United States) and included little African literature.[51] The East-West translation project presented a postwar means to deparochialize Europe's notion of "civilization." The Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau, by contrast, actively included African literature, remapped deparochialization (e.g., between Chinese and Arabic), and resignified translation as an old transcivilizational practice, not a new one.

In the Cold War West, the term *Silk Road* bore no trace of the anticolonial figure.[52] This Europe-to-Asia or East-West Silk Road gained new popularity in the arts, literature, and Central Asian studies, but not in diplomacy. As a symbol of East-West harmony, it generally lacked the temporal mode of reconnection.[53] Although Japan had participated in both the Bandung and the Tashkent conferences, the *Shiruku Rōdo* ("Silk Road") remained distinct from the Afro-Asian form. Japanese curators and art historians unironically celebrated the documents and materials dispersed from Dunhuang as Silk Road art and archaeology. Whereas the Afro-Asian Silk Road remained largely theoretical, circulating primarily in literary manifestos, writers in Japan and the West gave it flesh. In the United States and Great Britain, fiction, film, and travel writing depicted European adventurers, spies, and medieval heroes journeying to Asia across an exotic "Silk Road."[54] Japanese novels and travelogues like Inoue Yasushi's *Roof Tile of Tempyo* (1957; 天平の甍), *Tun-huang* (1959; 敦煌), and *Loulan* (1959; 楼蘭) gave the Silk Road conventionalized plot events (e.g., Buddhist pilgrimage), recurring backdrops (e.g., Dunhuang, Nara, and Central Asia) and character types (e.g., monk and archaeologist).[55] The Silk Road thereby became a chronotope—that is, a specific configuration of time and space for literary representation that later developed across newer forms of media (e.g., animation and video games).

After China's rapprochement with the West in 1972, three trends emerged in the conceptual history of the Silk Road. First, in cultural diplomacy, there was a globalization of the East-West Silk Road that had already been circulating in the West. China showcased this cosmopolitan past to millions across the world through several media: a touring exhibition of Chinese archaeology (1973–74), the critically acclaimed Sino-Japanese documentary series *The Silk Road* (1980s), and the Gansu Provincial Troupe of Song and Dance's "Along the Silk Road" (1979–; 丝路花雨 in Chinese).

Second, the Silk Road continues to be competitively "revived" through transnational infrastructure projects. The United States' Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 called for the "restoration of [local] historic relationships and economic ties" in Central Asia and south Caucasus to promote democracy, market reforms, and oil pipelines (*Silk Road Strategy Act* 10). Xi Jinping's Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road (also known as the One Belt One Road or Belt Road Initiative [2013–]) proposes a trillion-dollar alternative (Sidaway and Woon; Wang and Zang). Hailed as the largest geoeconomic initiative in history, this New Silk Road plots out railways, shipping routes, and financial agreements to facilitate "unimpeded trade" (*maoyi changtong*; 贸易畅通; Wei and Zhou 8) and information exchange across Asia, Africa, Europe, and even the Arctic. The Afro-Asian Silk Road, in its anticolonial consensus, had resisted the tendency to reduce the history of contact to the history of capital.[56] The New Silk Road by contrast insinuates *homo geoeconomicus*—that is, "economic man" taken to a globalizing extreme—into our past. It puts it already there, trafficking with rationally cosmopolitan self-interest, in global antiquity.

Third, two forms of "Silk Road studies" have begun to acquire institutional recognition. Silk Road humanities involves the interdisciplinary study of Central Asian or Afro-Eurasian premodernity, including Dunhuang studies. Something called Silk Road studies found early sponsorship in UNESCO's The Silk Roads Project: Integral Study of the Silk Roads (1988–97)—the successor to UNESCO's Cold War–era Major Project on the

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Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values (Elisseeff). The Silk Roads Project sponsored translations, academic conferences and publications, and popular cultural events. It drew heavily on Japanese conceptual paradigms from the earlier East-West Project, but its participants this time included the PRC and parts of Africa and the Middle East.[57] During the 1980s, their cultural and scientific collaborations helped introduce the phrase "maritime Silk Road" (*haishang silu*; 海上丝路) to the global vocabulary. More recently, the digitization of thousands of dispersed premodern Arabic, Bactrian, Chinese, Hebrew, Kharoṣṭhī, Khitan, Khotanese, Latin, Parthian, Persian, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Syriac, Tamil, Tangut, Tibetan, Tocharian, Uyghur, and bilingual documents and inscriptions from both Northwest China and coastal Quanzhou (Zaytūn) has aided the collective project of translation. The provincialization of classical Chinese within Silk Road studies invites comparison with that of Greco-Roman classics.[58] An enlarged Mediterranean studies that includes Aramaic, Syriac, and Ethiopic alongside Greek and Latin presents an overlapping multilingual constellation at the other end of the continent (Selden and Vasunia).[59] Classical reception studies now includes colonial, postcolonial, and East Asian afterlives of Greek and Latin literature (Vasunia; Orrells et al.; Renger and Xin). A more inclusive field of the reception of global antiquity might in the future further clarify the intersections of Greco-Roman reception with Silk Road studies, and of world philology with contact philology and archaeology.

In the social sciences, Silk Road studies refers to the geoeconomics and geopolitics of contemporary transnational infrastructures (primarily China's New Silk Road). Outside China, it also encompasses the ongoing politics of China's ethnic minority Uyghurs in Northwest China. Both humanistic and social science Silk Road studies help us reimagine area studies divisions (compare Subrahmanyam). On the surface, their strangely doubled form—visible in Peter Frankopan's recent best sellers—simply attests to the persistent openness of the Silk Road to redefinition.[60] From the perspective of a history of disciplines, however, it recalls a longer series of conjunctions wherein economic geography and philology endowed modern connectivity with meaning and history.

This article has approached the Silk Road as part of a history of contestatory discourses about China's connected past and not as a natural fact. If Orientalism refers to "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and . . . 'the Occident'" (Said 2), then what one might call Silk Roadism denotes the concomitant pursuit of historical connections between and within the two. In the case of Oriental philology, a minor tradition of contact philology developed alongside the main project of partitioning antiquity into East and West and into distinct language families, national grammars, and races. Orientalism and Silk Roadism provide alternative lenses, not oppositional ideologies.[61] China's Afro-Asianists challenged the overemphasis in European contact studies on Occident-to-Orient influence and made Afro-Asian connections consequential for world history. To do so, they self-consciously looked to anticolonial scholarship from South Asia, the Middle East, East Africa, and Europe. Because of Cold War divisions, these Chinese collaborations never circulated in the Cold War West (including Japan and Taiwan). In China, the post–Cold War restoration of an East-West model of Silk Road studies further obscured this scholarship, detaching the term—and to a lesser extent the field—from lingering traditions of anticolonial historiography. Recovery of the Afro-Asian Silk Road is crucial especially in the West in helping explain why global antiquity looks and politically feels so different to people in different parts of the world, even when they ostensibly use the same terms or methods.

The Afro-Asian Silk Road represents a short-lived heuristic. During the Bandung moment, the Silk Road performed two kinds of work. First, it introduced into political discourse a new narrative with which to give meaning to long-distance solidarity. The call for reconnection that echoed from the Bandung Conference in 1955 and the Tashkent Conference in 1958 invited its far-flung audiences to experience their partnership (mutual aid and translation) historically and not just sympathetically.

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It stylized Afro-Asian cooperation for socialist and nonsocialist imaginaries by giving it a distinctive temporal mode (figural or *fugu*), timescale (antiquity to future), spatial framework (Silk Road, Indian Ocean, and Afro-Asia), emplotment (romance), and affective and conceptual lexicon (friendship, trade, and redevelopment). Second, Bandung brought a critical consciousness to antiquarian scholarship. It elevated the study of antiquity but tethered it to the history of its modern apparatus (à la Nietzsche and Gu Jiegang). To privilege the external life of language, Afro-Asianists drew on global traditions of contact philology. However, to unstitch the timelessly "textual" Orient, they strategically looked to archaeology and displaced Greece and Rome as the pivot of connected history.[62] As a transcultural formation, this Afro-Asian Silk Road bears comparison with Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* or Isabel Hofmeyr's "Indian Ocean as Method." The mode of collaboration was in this case not creative poiesis (e.g., Black music or Indian Ocean print culture) but rather historicist scholarship. Coauthorship of modernity entailed critical coauthorship of a premodernity that was idealized as an already globalizing world before colonialism.

Bandung left in its wake a transnational premodernity constituted by several contradictions. The caesura between pre- and postcolonial synchronized regionally distinct temporalities but unequally distributed this shared past. The priority given to Afro-Asian connections displaced Eurocentric periodization (ancient, medieval, etc.) but marginalized parts of the non-West alongside the West, obscuring the politics of localization. Historical accidents of recorded contact disproportionately benefited specific regions (especially China) and specific sets of relations (e.g., India-China, male homosocial). Precolonial trade also held varying significance for distinct historiographic projects (e.g., in Tanzania versus in China). In Bandung's sovereignty-based paradigm, the heritage of modern nations subsumed those of subnational polities, displaced peoples, religious networks (e.g., the Islamic Indian Ocean), and ethnic minorities (e.g., Uyghurs and Tibetans).[63] This made precolonial time homogenous but discrepantly experienced. It also anchored affective relations in ancestral time. Genetic notions of patrilineal descent and ethnicity overshadowed the sometimes nonreproductive and nonsecular imagination of multiethnic Silk Road communities (e.g., Buddhist community and rebirth). Finally, the recognition of connection through amicable acts of trade and travel marginalized ancient Afro-Asian imperial and communal violence as well as revolutionary narratives of capital, threatening to transform precoloniality into a condition of perpetual peace.[64]

Bandung's unfinished critique thus reminds us of the ongoing need to denaturalize the conceptual frameworks and rhetorical tropes with which we narrate the connected past. It bids us ask: Whose ancient entanglements do both East-West and Afro-Asian Silk Roads exclude? What desires animate the definition and pursuit of contact? Which theories of kinship govern our affiliation with the ancients? Under what conditions can we encode trade and transport—or indeed loanword transcription—as nonviolent?

Notes

This article benefited greatly from the feedback of many whom I will thank properly on another occasion.

1. Following convention, I reserve the term *transliteration* for phonetic transcription using letters (e.g., English or Arabic transliteration of Chinese characters) and use the more inclusive term *transcription* to refer to the phonetic use of either Chinese characters or letters (e.g., Chinese or English transcription of Sanskrit). I have not standardized the use by different authors of simplified or traditional Chinese characters.

2. *Satin* and *atlas zaitūnī* ("textile from *Zaytūn*") are not loanwords proper since they do not go back to the Chinese word for the satin material (see Sybesma). I discuss definitions of the term *loanword* in the next section of the essay.

3. The Bandung trope of reconnecting lost precolonial ties was extended to other parts of Africa that later gained independence but not to tricontinental relations between Asia, Africa, and Latin America (*Ya-Fei-La*; 亚非拉).

4. See *Bandung+60*; Hofmeyr; Hong and Zhou; Lee.

5. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

6. I define Afro-Asia geopolitically not linguistically.

7. On Dunhuang studies, see Rong. Dunhuang here synecdochically refers to Northwest China. There is a vast secondary scholarship on Qing and Republican antiquarian scholarship. Most relevant here is Chang.

8. On Chen's coining of Dunhuang studies and the early field, see Jiang; Chang.

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9. Many artifacts from Le Coq's expeditions were destroyed during World War II (Marchand 416–26).

10. Asia-Africa Institutes (*Ya-Fei yanjiusuo*; 亚非研究所) were set up by the Chinese Communist Party in 1961 and at Peking University in 1964. These institutes also established the journals 亚非译丛 (*Translations on Asia and Africa*) and 亚非资料 (*Data on Asia and Africa*).

11. In 1950 Peking University's Oriental philology department was renamed "Oriental Languages and Literatures" (*Dongfang yuyan wenxue*; 东方语言文学).

12. Ji's post-1970s scholarship returned to Tocharian's place in ethnic and Indo-European studies ("Guide"). His essays on philology do not address Indo-Aryan ideology as his memoirs of his time in Nazi Germany do. On continuing interest in the Tocharian race, see Mallory and Mair.

13. On terminology, see Miao; Gao and Liu; Luo, "Language"; Liu, *Translingual*; Haugen; Haspelmath. The important issue of graphic loans (the adoption of the written form of words) in contacts between China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam lies beyond the scope of this essay.

14. This unfinished work largely comprised published work from the 1930s. Luo's *Language* included a chapter on loanwords that largely ignored ancient loans into Chinese. Chinese historical phonology was bound up primarily with reconstructing ancient Chinese pronunciation and modern script reform (see Tsu; Zhong; Elman; Xu and Ye), not with connected history.

15. For the ongoing debate about tonal prosody, see H. Zhang. Jin Kemu implicitly uses both Luo's and Chen's work to illustrate Indian influence on China in his popular history of India-China relations (22–24).

16. Monier Monier-Williams's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* does not make this distinction between *kauśeya* ("silken") and *cīnapaṭṭa* ("a sort of cloth").

17. E.g., Said; Trautmann; Handel; Mair 327–52.

18. Most cite Hugo Schuchardt, Franz Boas and Uriel Weinreich as early pioneers and take Thomason and Kaufman as a recent point of departure (compare Goebl et al. 1–11). One might further include the modern study of Buddhist Hybrid Chinese (e.g., Oda; Zhu) and of Sino-Tibetan (formerly Indo-Chinese) language classification. Those working on the latter acknowledged the unusual longevity of language and script borrowing across Asia and had to establish genetic relations based not on shared morphology but on whether similar-sounding words were cognate or loan (Ding and Sun; Jacques).

19. On this translation, see Chang. I provisionally differentiate a field, understood to be an academic specialty that may take on the name "*x* studies," from a discipline that brings a set of intellectual practices under a named institutional framework (see Chandler). In traditional Confucian classicism, the limited interest in historical language contact included bilingual lexicography with Mongolic and Tungusic languages—e.g., *Imperial Glossary*.

20. E.g., Mair 449–98; Xu and Ye; Saussy; Chang.

21. For a different verdict, see Jacobs.

22. Also important here is Chinese engagement with Japanese scholarship on China's connected history, especially at Kyoto Imperial University (Chang).

23. Bagchi, *Deux lexiques* 351–52. For simplicity, I give the modern Mandarin pronunciation.

24. See Mak; Chaudhuri.

25. E.g., Nehru, *Glimpses* 1; *Discovery* 192–95. Parts of both were translated into Chinese. See also Sen, *India* 374–91.

26. Bagchi, "Geographical Catalogue" and *India*; Ji, "On the Oldest," "Preliminary Study," "Sino-Indian Ties," and *Collected Essays*. See also Luo, "Indian Influence."

27. Ma began translating Hitti's works before the Cultural Revolution. Hitti's examples of European loanwords from Arabic appeared in Ma's "Status." On Ma in Cairo, see Ben-Dor Benite. Ma served as China's Arabic translator at the Bandung Conference. See Ma, "Afro-Asian Peoples."

28. Historiography used a framework similar to that of philology. This framework implicitly displaced the ideological significance of modern capitalist "exchange" (*jiaohuan*; 交换) with ancient "connections" (*jiaotong*; 交通). On Mao Zedong's phrase "use the past to serve the present," see T. Chen.

29. On African studies in China, see Li Anshan.

30. "We Have Much in Common"; "Rapturous Welcome." *Somalia* quotes from Chinese medieval sources to narrate a two-way encounter.

31. This lies beyond the scope of this essay, but one might note that the focus of historical scholarship in Tanzania (and to some extent the PRC) during this period remained the independence struggle of the modern nation (Kimambo).

32. This is evident from state newspapers and Youyi.

33. See Lee; Editorial note. On Ji's persecution, see *Cowshed*.

34. The PRC had observer status in the Non-Aligned movement. On the significance of this decade, see Li Qianyu.

35. This time span includes the expansion of the Bandung group as more African nations gained independence—and the Afro-Asian movement's fragmentation during the Sino-Soviet split, the Sino-Indian War of 1962, and the division of the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau into Beijing and Cairo branches in 1966. The term *Silk Road* was not commonly used in diplomacy unrelated to China.

36. This is found in the 1972 book's insert (dated 1973). The term *Silk Road* became associated with Xinjiang ethnic politics largely after the Cold War.

37. This begins with Herrmann 10 and Hedin 226 and is repeated in Millward 4; Chin; Hansen 6; Frankopan, *Silk Roads* xvi and *New Silk Roads* x.

38. The Chinese loan seems to have come directly from European languages. The earliest instance is likely a 1929 Chinese translation of Owen Lattimore's "Caravan Routes of Inner Asia," which uses 絲道 (*si dao*) and 絲路 (*si lu*). On the Japanese term, see Esenbel.

39. Green dates the Persian translation of the Silk Road (*rah-e abrisham* or *jadeh-ye abrisham*) to the late 1950s or early 1960s. The Chinese phrase *sichou zhi lu* first became popularized in Afghanistan-China diplomacy (Akram; "His Majesty"). The

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abbreviated phrase *si lu* appeared in 1955 in China's diplomacy with Syria and the Middle East (Feng; "China and Syria's Traditional Friendship"). L. Liu addresses the dangers of keyword or conceptual histories ("Shadows").

40. Premier Zhou Enlai's Non-Aligned diplomacy popularized the trope. On Zhou's 1960s visits to Africa and the TAZARA Railway, see "Reactions"; Ogunsanwo; Monson.

41. This trope also appeared in Somalia and Tunisia (Xia, "L'amitié") and, without historical specifics, in Kenya (e.g., in the *Daily Nation*) and Ethiopia (e.g., in the *Ethiopian Herald*).

42. In her travelogue of China, Graham Du Bois invoked the term *Silk Road* for this disrupted past: "Last October in Uzbekistan . . . we drove along the Old Silk Road which once linked Timbuctoo with Peking-Tashkent" ("Peoples"). On her context, see Frazier. Unlike diplomats, writers extended the term *Silk Road* to Africa.

43. *Literaturnaia gazeta* used the phrase "Shelkovom puti" (Шелковом пути) for the Silk Road, resignifying a Russian term that had circulated since at least the 1940s (Mao, "Let Us Set an Example of Unity!"). On the Arabic transmission, see British Broadcasting Corporation. See also Shijie wenxue she.

44. On this distinction see Liu Hongtao. For studies of the Chinese rethinking of world literature at Tashkent, see Vanhove; Yoon; L. Liu, "Eventfulness." On Mao and the journal 世界文学 (*World Literature*), see Volland.

45. Mao's Tashkent speech discussed Chinese literature's development from classical poetry through Maoist literature but restricted "world literature" to the introductory framework of colonial history. For a helpful but different view, see Yoon.

46. Mao does not address Europe's veneration of Oriental classics like *Śakuntalā* or their dismissal from colonial education (e.g., in Macaulay's 1835 Minute on Indian Education).

47. On the narrativization of colonial modernity, see Scott; Lowe. On that of Chinese history, see Wang, *Empire*; Karl; Duara.

48. See White. On the stakes of figuralism for Auerbach, see Porter; Apter; Mufti.

49. The figure of reconnection coexisted with other forms of Afro-Asian internationalist or nostalgic thought. See, e.g., Desai on the "Afrasian imagination."

50. L. Liu reveals the CIA's Cold War translation project as another rival ("Eventfulness").

51. Many African nations did not join UNESCO until 1960, and the "study of Africa" became only a limited part of the project thereafter (*Appraisal* 82). Translation was one part of a multidisciplinary project.

52. Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* (1954–) is an important exception. Its multivector Afro-Eurasian Silk Road emblematized not Afro-Asian politics but rather the non-West's contributions to world civilization. See Needham; Abdel-Malek, "L'Orientalisme."

53. Japan Airlines advertised Europe-Orient flights in the 1960s (including flights to British Hong Kong but not to the PRC) as the "New Silk Road at almost the speed of sound" (Advertisement for Japan Airlines). Iran Air's "Silk Route" to China began in 1974.

54. Newspapers carried advertisements for Thomas Costain's 1945 novel *The Black Rose* (and the Hollywood film version released in 1950) that read "From Feudal Oxford by the Silk Road to Cathay: The Great Historical Romance that Sold 2,000,000 Copies in America" ("From Feudal Oxford"). Compare Simon Harvester's 1968 novel *Silk Road*.

55. The Japanese composer Ikuma Dan's *The Silk Road* (1955; *Shiruku rōdo*; シルクロード) and works by the artist Hirayama Ikuo popularized an East-West *Shiruku rōdo*.

56. Glimpses of the Afro-Asian Silk Road appear in Wang and Zang (invoking China's anticolonial past); Abdel-Malek, "Historical Initiative" (quoting Zhou Enlai); and even Xi's 2013 inauguration of the overland "Belt" in Kazakhstan and maritime "Road" in Indonesia, invoking ancient trade and the Bandung Spirit. On geopolitics, privatization, and securitization, see Karrar; Mekonnen; Lee et al.

57. The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO in 1957 did not employ the term *Silk Road*, but its geohistorical frameworks (sea, steppe, and oasis route [*Research in Japan*]) anticipated those of the 1988–97 Silk Roads Project (maritime, steppe, desert, and nomads route [UNESCO, *Silk Roads Project*]).

58. See the British Library's International Dunhuang Project: idp.bl.uk. On Silk Road humanities in the United States, see, for example, Millward; Rossabi; Mair et al.; Hansen.

59. Compare Shu-mei Shih's modern Sinophone studies (Shih et al.).

60. Compare the ancient focus of Frankopan's *Silk Roads* with the contemporary geopolitics of his *New Silk Roads*.

61. My aim here is not to reassess Said's account of orientalism's relation to empire (on which compare Ahmed; Marchand) but rather to propose that the Afro-Asian movement's rethinking of antiquity belongs to the prior genealogy of Said's work. On ahimsaic historiography, see Gandhi.

62. On Hellenocentrism, see Lopez; Postclassicisms Collective.

63. Amrith; Dirlik; and others have recently highlighted this.

64. For contrasting evaluations of Zheng He's expeditions, see Sheriff, *Dhow*; Sen, "Impact."

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Abstract: This essay approaches the Silk Road as a modern narrative of China's connected past, rather than as a historical fact. The Chinese term *Silk Road* (*sichou zhi lu*; 丝绸之路) first gained currency after the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung as part of the lexicon of anticolonial solidarity. During the Cold War, China's Afro-Asian Silk Road, different from the West's Europe-Asia Silk Road, prompted new interest in the linguistic dimension of connected history. Language contact traditionally held limited significance in European and Chinese philology because linguistic divisions were understood in terms of nation or language family. For Afro-Asian scholars and writers, however, precolonial language contact became a portent of postcolonial exchange. They shifted attention from genetic word roots to historical routes (e.g., loanwords). Within a longer history of what I call "contact philology," China's short-lived collaborations refashioned the Orient as Afro-Asia and presented an (unfinished) critique of the tropes with which we narrate the connected past.

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