



Building A Bridge of Hearts

Yunus Emre and Cultural Cooperation in the Belt & Road

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Cultural Journey
Along the Silk Road

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That Will Transcend Time and Space

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BOOK REVIEW
VICTOR MANUEL ISIDRO LUNA
Belt and Road:
A Chinese World Order

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Graphic Design • Mustafa Titiz

Editorial Office • Aksaray Mah. Cerrahpaşa Cad. No: 5 D: 9 Fatih-İstanbul +90 (212) 586 72 31
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Principles of Publication

At a time when US ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Turkey has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Turkey is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Turkey's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Turkey through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners -including Turkey- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.



Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com. Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA) style, 6th edition, <https://www.apastyle.org> and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

EDITORIAL

An International Bridge of Hearts and Souls

When evaluating the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), much emphasis is placed upon economic partnership and mutual gains in international trade. Developing world countries seek to achieve sustainable development through partnerships developed within the scope of the BRI. All this is true, but too much focus on this aspect alone means underestimating the true potential of the Initiative.

The spirit of the BRI lies in the concept of “sharing”. The principle of “shared development”, which is at the core of the Initiative, devises a brand new understanding of partnership in the age of imperialism. In the meantime, it also offers clues for an alternative system of international relations that challenges imperialism.

Asia’s call to share, as the heart and soul of the Silk Road, comes from our common history and is powered by the historical roots of Asia, the cradle of civilizations.

The Silk Road peoples, who have been intertwined and mixed for thousands of years, stand up for harmony, which will pave the way for a brand new civilization, not for a “clash of civilizations”.

Yunus Emre, whom we commemorate on the 700th anniversary of his death, is the representative of a conception that permeates the genes of Asian peoples. Our great poet Yunus Emre, who represents the common philosophy of Asian peoples, is the coryphaeus of the spirit of humanity, sharing, and solidarity coming from the Anatolian geography, where all nations are blended. In the relationship between different cultures, the BRI is based on a threefold understanding that the culture of a nation is neither superior nor inferior to that of other cultures, that all these cultures represent the common value of humanity, and that cultures develop as they share. The BRI approaches differences with tolerance and understanding. This is a completely different understanding from the Western-imperialist approach that has derogated other cultures and their peoples for the last four centuries. The BRI’s understanding is also the key to establishing the “heaven on earth” that Yunus Emre heralded about 700 years ago. The strongest structures made by human hands can be destroyed, but it is not easy to erase or destroy the culture that the people have accumulated throughout history. From Sumerian poets to China’s Confucius, from Anatolia’s Yunus Emre to India’s Kabir, to Arabs’, Persians’ and Turks’ Fuzuli, the breath of many more folk sages continues to ignite hearts all over the world. Sharing requires the siblinghood and companionship of societies that have common problems and the unity of heart. The hearts should be one so that they can produce together and share. It is a common struggle that requires the societies, which have common sufferings, to share the challenges ahead.

In the BRI, there is a need to build bridges not only to connect seas, highways, and railways but also between hearts and souls. A bridge of hearts and souls for the civilization that will materialize a real harmony between human beings and the nature, where all the peoples of the world will be siblings/comrades, starting from the developing world...



We are saddened to announce the passing of Selim Yaşar, one of Turkey’s most prominent businesspeople. As a highly creative representative of the business world and an outstanding intellectual bringing solutions for Turkey’s problems, he had joined the BRIQ family since the earliest days of its establishment. We convey our sincere condolences to his family and friends!

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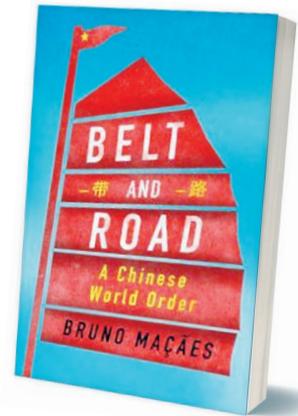
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Cultural Journey Along the Silk Road: Turkish Sufi Humanism from Ahmet Yesevi to Yunus Emre



LATİF BOLAT

Turkish Singer, Composer and
Scholar of Turkish Music and Folklore

Latif Bolat was born in Mersin. After receiving his degree in music at Ankara State Conservatory and Gazi University in Ankara, Turkey, he received an additional degree from Ankara University and an MBA programme from San Francisco State University. In this way, he enlarged the scope of his research area from music to politics, culture, and history. His soundtrack and film works include soundtrack music for George Lucas Studios TV series “Young Indiana Jones”, PBS documentary “Mohammed: Legacy of a Prophet” and partial soundtrack for “Burn Notice” TV series in the USA. He attended conferences and appeared in concerts in many countries such as USA, Canada, England, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Scotch, Spain, Philippines, Singapore, Tunisia, Dubai, Sweden, Ireland, India, Romania, Macedonia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Estonia, Latvia, Italia, Croatia, Georgia and Turkey. He is co-author of the Turkish mystic Sufi poetry translations and anthology, “Quarrelling with God: Mystic Rebel Sufi Poems of the Dervishes of Turkey”. He also released 5 CDs distributed worldwide. (www.latifbolat.com)

Email: lbolat@aol.com

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ABSTRACT

Although the Silk Road is named after the product that generated its economic value, its greatest contribution to human history is how it enabled the mutual interaction of civilisations. Despite its economic importance being stuck at its lowest in history for a long time, its value is beginning to be re-evaluated, and it is necessary to reflect upon the impact of the Silk Road on cultural change. In this short study, we will consider the long journey of Yunus Emre on the Silk Road and his excellent humanism from the Fergana Valley to the Anatolian steppes in the “2021 Yunus Emre and Turkish language year”. First, we will outline the Silk Road’s place in Asia’s cultural world and its present influence. Finally, we will put Yunus Emre and his philosophy in this framework. In order to understand the inner and outer world of Yunus, a great son of the Silk Road, let us briefly review the reasons for the Silk Road’s existence and the historical interactions of cultures on the road. In this way, we will consider the conditions that made Yunus Emre through historical, economic, and cultural dimensions whilst uncovering the secrets of the land that created him and brought his work to the present day.

Keywords: music, philosophy, poetry, Sufi, Turk

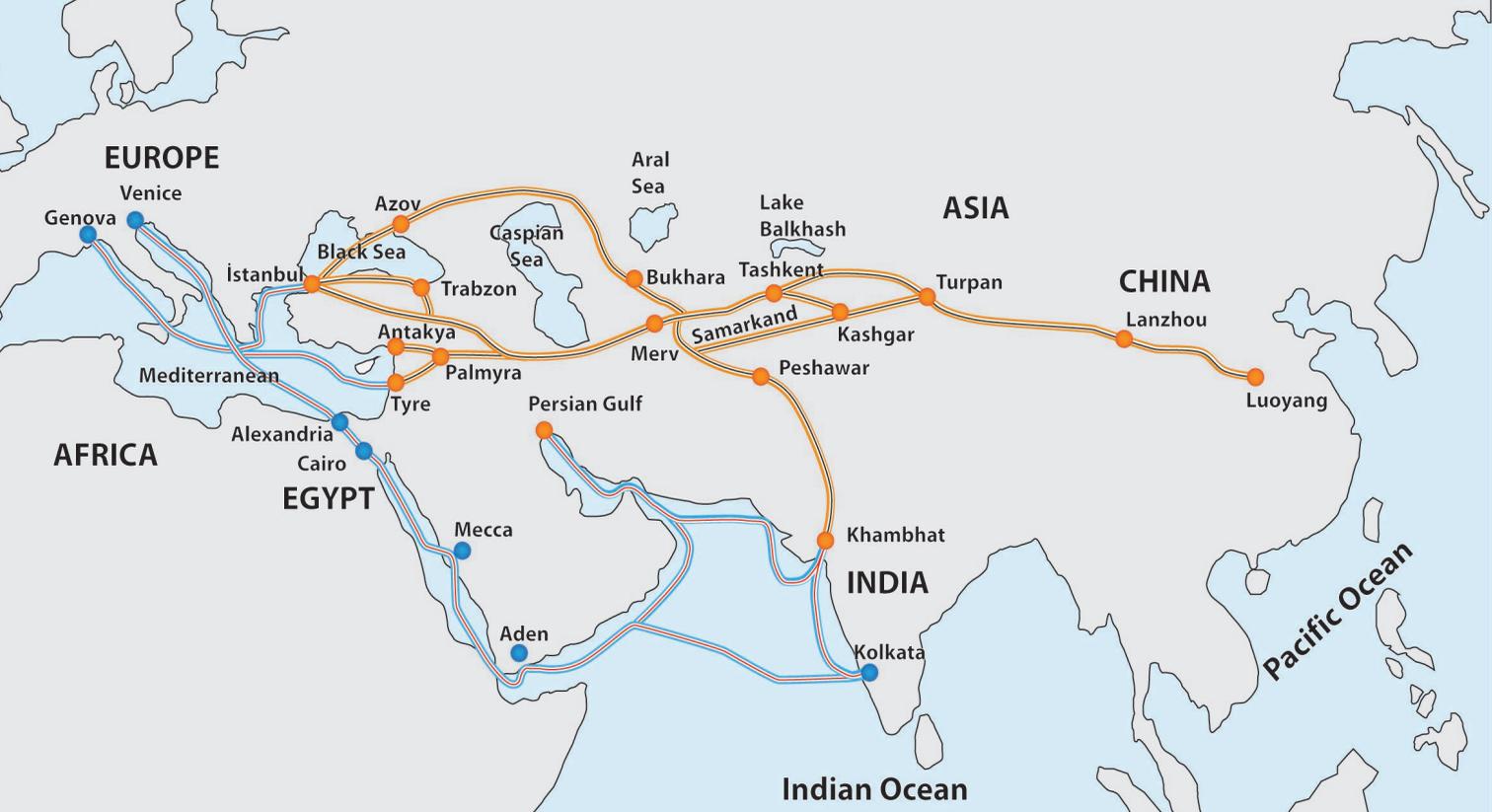
Past and Future on the Silk Road

DOZENS OF NATIONS WITH LITTLE CULTURAL connections have lived on this historical road, from China to Venice and Istanbul to Samarkand. Of course, even if the Silk Road had not existed, these cultures had the possibility of being able to relate to each other in one way or another. However, like the carotid artery in the human body, the Silk Road, which came curling up from the depths of China and reached European territory through the canals of Venice, has extraordinarily accelerated this process of interaction and change. Perhaps the most interesting indicator of this may be spaghetti, which began somewhere in China, found its way into Venice’s gourmet restaurants, and has been a symbol of Italian cuisine for millennia. We can leave aside culinary culture, which is one of the most important issues of culture, with its record for now to consider the adventure of the music-dance-poetry-religion compositions of culture, which are the main subject of our article on the Silk Road.

It would be right to think of the Silk Road as perhaps the largest festival site in human history to make an entrance into our topic. Reflect on how all kinds of products produced by countless countries and cultures have flowed between East and West for almost two thousand years on this carotid artery with the speed and patience of turtles. No war or epidemic could completely stop this flow, though the Silk Road was the main route that helped these to spread.

Silk Road Gathering Places: Caravanserais

On the route of the Silk Road, for two thousand years, thousands of caravans have carried silk, gold, ceramic goods, and materials such as paper and leather with endless patience. Given that camel caravans can only travel up to 35 kilometers a day, approximately every 35 kilometers, there have been caravanserais and small oases created through these centuries. These islets were places for caravans to stop on trade routes between oases as a respite from the boiling sun or the freezing cold of the winter desert.



Map 1: Ancient Silk Road (BRIQ 🌸)

As soon as the caravan lowered its load to the caravanserai, the cultural ambassadorship of tired caravan travelers began.

In the cold of night, gathered around a fireplace in the middle, these people, who were not even physically alike, would play the role of honorary ambassadors of cultural exchange through heated discussions until they fell asleep or heard the warning of the guard. A Buddhist priest from China would fervently discuss the topic of “nafs” or “reincarnation” with a Sufi dervish from Fergana. A playful musical discussion would emerge between a Kashgari dutar musician and an Udi who had just arrived from Baghdad. There would be cross-cultural impromptu “duets” and evening concerts to comfort the exhausted travelers.

Differentiation of City and Village Cultures

On the other hand, when caravans on the Silk Road reached city centres on roads such as Kashgar, Urumqi, Hotan, Samarkand, or Bukhara, they could also be invited to “garden concerts” in the homes of rich nobles. These would be more developed, with large orchestras, dance groups, or dancers that

reflected the culture of the city. The organizations, presentations, and cultural aspects of these concerts served as schools for foreign guests. Foreign traders were likely to enter into heated discussions with local music and dance groups that would influence traditions in the home countries when they returned. For this reason, cultural presentations in “the garden enclosures” of the local noble palaces were very famous in the wealthy merchant houses of Mumbai, Chennai, the Bosphorus-facing gardens of Istanbul, the palaces of cities such as Granada and Cordoba of Andalusia, and in the Abbasid palaces of Baghdad. Despite the thousands of miles between them, similar cultural presentations spread continuously.

This can be observed in Pondicheri, India, in the garden of the Tomb for the famous poet Hafez in Shiraz, Iran, and in Tarsus, Turkey. Similarly, the famous “sira geceleri” nights of Urfa and the “oturak” nights in the historical Meram vineyards of Konya continue to exist today as an extension of the musical culture of Has Bahce in Anatolia (Kennedy, 2005: 187).

The cities of the Silk Road had a more organized and developed culture of music and dance, of course.

The palaces of the rich merchant class or local rulers also served as cultural centres. In these local palaces, musicians, singers, poets, storytellers, and dancers were also present as part of the cultural competition between rulers. At large-scale celebrations, both regional and religious commemorations, these artists were assigned and performed important tasks as a way to ensure the adoration of the people to local government. Since these artists entirely focused on their own disciplines, they could go very deep into the theoretical and practical dimensions of their form. As a result, mutual artistic communication on the Silk Road had very profound effects on the local dimension. For example, in the field of music, the “raga” music system of India, the “dasgah” music theory of Iran, and the “maqam” structures of Turks and Arabs developed clearly recognizable similarities over the years.

The physical Turkish presence in the region, from the Mediterranean coast to India and the Great Wall of China, would also play an adhesive role.

Of course, it would not just be travelers on the Silk Road. The physical Turkish presence in the region, from the Mediterranean coast to India and the Great Wall of China, would also play an adhesive role. All cultures in this region would create their own unique identities in mutual interaction, and music would play an integral part in these interactions. Just as musical instruments spread from country to country in this process, the musical theories and traditions of these cultures were influenced by each other and contributed to the formation of their respective musical theories. For example, Raga Kerwani in India and Nihavend Maqam in Turkey would have almost the same musical character.

These and similar interactions went further than artists from different cultures becoming aware of

each other's existence, of course. Let's think back to that night, where the Baghdadi musician at the caravanserai meeting we mentioned above could add a melody he heard and loved very much from the Kashgar singer to his repertoire, he would then add Arabic words to it and turn it into a Baghdadi song that would enter his nation's musical culture. That is exactly what happened historically. In our musical conversations with our Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Greek musician friends, we have witnessed numerous melodies exchanged and sung in various languages with local interpretations over the years.

Travels of Religious Cultures on the Silk Road

Religions, as social organizations that occupy the most important place in civilizations and cultures, have also played a very important role in the history of the Silk Road. It can even be said that since the famous expedition of Alexander the Great in 300 BC, many religions have caused the creation and destruction of new states in this geographical region. For example, Buddhism extended into China via the Silk Road; Nestorian Christianity was to be able to reach into China and Central Asia through the Silk Road; and the Turks and Islam also travelled on the Silk Road to influence the history of Europe. In this way, not only did the method and goal of worship change, but each religion would bring with it literature, language, poetry, music, and social organization to the new land. Thus, the hymns of Buddhist monks would pass through Central Asia as far as China. Statues of Buddha and temples found in caves on mountain slopes along the Silk Road clearly exemplify this fact. In this region, Catholic missionaries, like the previous Nestorians, followed the same path and entered the region in the 13th century, spreading to the farthest corners of China.



A medieval painting showing the 13th century caravan of Niccolo Polo (father of Marco Polo) and Maffeo Polo (uncle of Marco Polo) crossing Asia. (CGTN, 2017)

The mystical dances and ceremonial music of the Sufis in the Arabian deserts and mountains of Iran would also mix with the dance and music of the Turks in shaman ceremonies in the Central Asian steppes, leading to the creation of a mystical culture unique to the Turks.

We can decipher this from the presence of thousands of very important poets and bards, including giant mystical poets such as Yunus Emre, Mevlana, Niyazi Misri, starting with Ahmed Yesevi and continuing to this day. As the greatest witness to this change, we can find this influence in the presence of the “saz” instrument, which is the cornerstone of Turkish folk music. Before the Turks became acquainted with the Islamic religion, the ceremonial instrument of shamans in the steppe, the “saz”, was the most important musical instrument for shamans to communicate with the “great spirit”. However, in the

period that began with the acceptance of the Islamic religion, the Turkish shamans, who were no longer needed, with great creativity turned the “saz” into an instrument of the travelling Sufi “ashiks-bards” and made it the cornerstone of the new mystical culture of the Turks. We can easily see this by looking at the “ashiks” who have lived through the last thousand years and left us thousands of works in the form of sayings, lamentations, folk songs, and hymns.

Silk Road Determines Religion: Example of Khazar Turkish State

One of the exemplary contributions of the Silk Road to the change and spread of cultures can be found in the story of the transition from shamanism to Judaism in the Khazar Turks living in the steppes, north of the Caspian Sea.

By the middle of the 9th century, the Khazar Turks,

who worshipped “Tengri”, had become the rulers of the branch of the Silk Road that passes through the north of the Black Sea. During the expansion of Islam that followed the death of Muhammad, the Khazar Turks, who showed the greatest resistance to the Arab armies, never accepted Islam. As a result of the spread of religious culture on the Silk Road, in 860, the Khan decided to accept either Islam, Christianity, or Judaism as the state religion, which he decried as suitable for his “Tengri” monotheistic religions. To decide, he started a contest between the representatives of these three religions.

The Silk Road concretely demonstrated the role of economic realities in the formation of religious culture in the Caspian Turks.

A discussion ensued between Cyril of Constantinople and a Muslim cleric from Baghdad, as well as Jewish rabbis already in Attila, the capital. In the discussion, in which Khan was present, Christian and Muslim clergy fought each other, leading Khagan to accept Judaism as the official religion, which he found more suitable, causing it to spread throughout the Caspian region. Of course, Jewish merchants who dominated the mercantile system of the Silk Road played a big role in this conversion. In other words, the Silk Road concretely demonstrated the role of economic realities in the formation of religious culture in the Caspian Turks (Frankopan, 2015: 110-114).

In China, the largest state and oldest culture on the Silk Road, it is also possible to see early artistic influences from the west of the country. In Chinese palaces, especially from East Turkestan and Central Asia, musicians, dancers, and performers were very popular thousands of years ago. We can tell this from the depictions in the works of art that remain

to this day. There are many figures of musicians and dancers with Central Asian appearances in the pottery decorations and grave remains. Artists from Kashgar, Bukhara, and Samarkand enjoyed great popularity by performing their art in palaces and cultural centres in China. It is even possible to see that these artists were also well-known in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, from the impressions of historians of the time.

Change and Spread of Musical Instruments in the Silk Road

The influence of the Silk Road on musical cultures is also very clear and dominant in musical instruments. For example, the “violin”, thought to originate from southern India, has travelled the Silk Road for centuries and has become the most popular instrument, going as far as Europe in Irish dance music, entertainment songs of Romanian gypsies, and Vienna’s concert halls. Likewise, the “qanun” became an indispensable instrument of Middle Eastern music and its similar sister instruments are called the “koto” in Japan, “qin” in China, “kayagum” in Korea, “yathka” in Mongolia, “chatkhan” in southern Siberia, “santur” in Iran, “santuri” in Greece, and “dulcimer” in the United States, with some differences. The “shakuhachi” in Japan, “bansuri” in India, “nay” in Iran, and “ney and kaval” in Turkey have also shown continuity and interaction.

As an expression of a similar reality, the “dutar” of Kashgar spread throughout Central Asia over the centuries, spreading as far as India through the Mughals. Even today, when you board any train leaving Calcutta, you can come across Indian “baul (bards)” who accompany you on your journey with poems and songs with instruments called “dutar” that have made a living for centuries through donations from listeners.



All cultures in this region would create their own unique identities in mutual interaction, and music would play an integral part in these interactions. (CGTN, 2020)

This, in turn, takes its place in history as one of the products and results of the Silk Road. We saw this in person during our train journey from Calcutta to Shantiniketan, and we had some very interesting conversations with these Bauls during the three-hour journey.

The Central Asian instrument, “dutar”, mentioned above, becomes “saz” in the hands of the nomadic Oghuz Turks in the steppes and again follows the lines of the Silk Road, spreading from the Mediterranean to Siberia. The Turkish “saz” becomes “balalaika” in the hands of the Russians, “bouzuq” in the hands of the Lebanese and Syrians, “bouzuki” in the hands of the Greeks, “tambura” in Bulgarian and other Balkan cultures, and “sarod” in India through these centuries-old Silk Road cultural exchange process (Levin, 2002).

As for the “zurna”, the indispensable instrument of weddings, military send-offs, and Ottoman mehter bands in Turkish towns, it appears as “suona” in China, “shehnai” in India, “surnai” in Central Asian cultures, “kernai” in Iran, and later as the “oboe” in Europe. These, with some technical changes, are called indispensable instruments (Levin, 1996).

Long before the Crusades of the Middle Ages, thanks to those who travelled the Silk Road, musical cultures from Japan to England were spread bilaterally. For example, in addition to string instruments, wind instruments, and percussion instruments, drums were a common presence on the Silk Road line, seen from Chinese to Spanish palaces. Furthermore, the short-stemmed “barbat” of Central Asia is cited by historians as the source of the “lute” in the Middle East, the “lute” in Europe, the “biwa” in Japan, and the “pipa” in China (Levin, 2002).

The instrument played by the nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribes in Central Asia, the “iklig”, is made of a horse skull wrapped around with horsehair and rubbed with a “bow” also made from horsehair. It was used as a means of communication between the “Supreme Spirit” and the shaman in the Shamanic ceremonies of the Turks for centuries. This instrument would be called “kemenche and gijak” in the Middle and Near East, “rebab” in Indonesia, “sarangi, sarinda” in the Indian subcontinent, and would be adapted to local cultures after travelling on the Silk Road over the years.

Musical Synthesis on the Silk Road

Music on the Silk Road has never been monopolized by a single clan of religions or beliefs. It is created through a new synthesis of influences from either the previous or enduring cultures on the Silk Road. It is possible to see this most clearly in the musical styles and contents of Indian travelling bards, the “Baul”, songs. The Baul has existed for centuries as a musical genre that is the product of the creative fusion of Hindu and mystical Islam, that is, Sufism. When we look at these Baul songs, we can clearly observe this versatility both in the lyrical content and in the instruments used. The Sufi traditions that have already undoubtedly influenced them are also decorated with elements inspired by the ceremonies and philosophy of “shamanism” from centuries ago.

The Silk Road, of course, did not carry a uniform population and cultural structure. On the one hand, while the nomadic tribes migrated from the mountains to the plains, there were also rich cultures in the large cities established on the mainline.

In fact, the political and cultural history of the Silk Road has also manifested itself as a struggle between these two main forces. While the nomads were naturally less involved in cultural interactions on the Silk Road, the population in cities was more easily able to keep up with this change and create new syntheses. The main music representatives of nomads were “shaman-ashik-bard”. Alone, they travelled from the mountains to the plains with their instruments and sang songs with epics, lamentations, or praise. Musicians in the city, on the other hand, played pieces that were previously composed and created for performance, mostly in orchestras. For this reason, these musicians had to undergo a very strict education to become competent. Musicians and composers, who usually received financial support from Sultans in palaces or rich nobles, could

also be seen as the first representatives of professional musicianship on the Silk Road. Therefore, their music would have been more advanced and arranged. Thus, musical theories and musical instruments of different cultures on the Silk Road developed with certain differences.

Through such a heritage, Anatolia looks like an open-air museum where past traditions of the Silk Road are alive.

As a land that still sustains this nomadic culture of Central Asia in the mountains and plateaus of Anatolia, Turkey will make a significant contribution to this restructuring. Our Karacaoğlan is an exact reflection of the Central Asian Kam-bard shamans of a thousand years ago on the Taurus Mountains. The “abdals” of our Silifke and Kırşehir, the villagers of Tarsus playing “mengi”, and the masters who carved the mulberry tree to make Saz as our ancestors did a thousand years ago embody this influence. The village women had woven “rugs-yolluk” in the Highlands. Through such a heritage, Anatolia looks like an open-air museum where past traditions of the Silk Road are alive. Turkey has the potential to play an important role in the creation of the New Silk Road by recognizing this and revealing and protecting this culture to the most detail.

Interaction of Languages on the Silk Road: An Example of the Urdu Language in India

The Silk Road, which runs from China to Venice in an east-west direction, has also dotted the south-north Line with numerous intermediate roads. In addition to the musical instruments and their economic effects mentioned above, they have had important effects on the formation and development of regional languages.



The Silk Road has also had visible effects on architectural traditions. (CGTN, 2021)



Of course, the linguistic effects of multicultural Central Asia and the Russian steppes are very clear. Here, though, we will draw attention to the relationship of the formation of the Urdu language, which has become one of the most important official languages in India, with the Silk Road.

Arab merchants carried Islam to the Indian subcontinent via Iran and the Arabian Gulf as far back as the 8th century. Through their interactions with the local populations, a new language called Urdu was created by borrowing from these more established old languages. In India and Pakistan today, hundreds of millions of people use this Urdu language. The word “Ordu” (Orda) in Turkish, has a direct relationship with the formation of this language.

The Urdu language can be considered as a language created to manage the multi-national and multi-lingual military structure in the armies of the Turkish States of Central Asia, which established power in India in 1000. The state of the Mughal Chagatai

Turks, starting from Mahmud of Ghaznavid, continuing with the Delhi Sultanate and eventually being called the Mughal Empire, continued its existence until the rebellions of 1857. Amir Khusrev (1253-1325) is considered the greatest Bard of this new language. Under such a multicultural environment, important steps were taken in the field of unification of local Indian and Muslim cultures, especially during the time of the greatest Sultan, Akbar. Therefore, it should not be surprising that a Turkish traveler visiting India or Pakistan constantly hears Turkish words.

Architecture’s Adventure on the Silk Road

The Silk Road has also had visible effects on architectural traditions. In fact, this architectural influence continues to have an impact on the creation of new cities and the planning of existing cities. The palaces, mosques, and gardens in Samarkand and Bukhara have great similarities to those in Isfahan and Agra.

For example, on returning from his expedition to the Middle East, which affected the Ottoman state at a level that almost eliminated it, Timurlenk took hundreds of artists and artisans from Anatolia and Iran with him back to Samarkand.

For this reason, the effects of the Middle East and Iran are clearly visible in the structures of Samarkand, which we admire today. The hands that make these memorable buildings and the brains that design them are physically the same in some examples.

For approximately 2,500 years, the caravans, armies, and migrants of the Silk Road have spread their genetic variations through the lands.

In addition, Shah Jahan, who built the unforgettable Taj Mahal, entrusted the realisation of this monumental work to the architects and craftsmen he brought from Iran. Even according to a legend, Shah Jahan cut off the hands of his architect so that he would not make a similar Taj Mahal to other sultans. In cultures on the Silk Road, this legend is a very interesting historical note that captures the depth of the cultural competition.

Such architectural syntheses have taken their place in the history of architecture as masterpieces, where Turkish, Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Armenian masters, who differ greatly with each other, have combined their knowledge and experience in some of the finest works of human creation.

The Journey of Genes on the Silk Road

For approximately 2,500 years, the caravans, armies, and migrants of the Silk Road have spread their genetic variations through the lands. By this,

we are talking about the changing effects of human genes from the Silk Road. It is possible to understand this in its most obvious form by looking at the facial contours of the people living today on the Silk Road from China to Venice.

Even the physical appearances of the Uighurs and the Turks in Izmir, which are in the Turkish territory starting from the west of China, show certain differences. Related Turkish communities living today in the Gobi Desert and Tianshan mountains, which are also considered the homeland of the Oghuz Turks, are separated from the modern Turkish people living in Izmir or Canakkale, at least by their eyes and body structures. Starting from the 10th century, we can find traces of their migration to the west and their arrival in Anatolia by following the Silk Road.

From the land of Iran, where it has been a homeland for about 200 years, it is impossible to think that our genetics have moved to Anatolia without changing.

Looking at the population in India, we can see the role of the Turkish sultanates and the Chagatai Turkish Mughal Empire, which have ruled for almost 1,000 years, especially in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent.

In parallel with the creation of the Urdu language mentioned in the above section, North India demonstrates the extent of the change in human genes. In consequence, we can easily see that the most influential actors in Bollywood, the famous cinema centre of India, have lighter skin and a Turkish-Iranian appearance. Famous actors such as Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, Prianka Chopra, Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone, and others have lighter skin compared to those in the south of India. In our opinion, this is a direct result of the migrations and interactions between genes caused by the Silk Road.



Two Bright Stars at Both Ends of the Silk Road: Ahmed Yesevi and Yunus Emre

When we consider the importance of the Silk Road, it is necessary to remember the struggles and cultural assets of the Turkish nation on this unforgettable route. Through this vast culture formed on the Silk Road, one can trace the lively Turkishness in the cultures starting from the Balkans and going as far as Xinjiang, China.

From east to west, from south to north, almost all of Asia was a product of the Silk Road route.

The two most important elements of this cultural presence are the strong prevalence of the Turkish language and the unforgettable stamp that Yunus Emre, the most important master of it, has left on the Turkish language and Turkish folk culture. The most important branch of the Turkish nation was formed through the Oguz's journey to Anatolia over the Silk Road and lasted two hundred years. The poet Yunus Emre became the most beautifully synthesized result of this in the 13th century. In Yunus, we find the crystallized expression of an ocean growing from a Thousand Springs during migrations from Kashgar and Urumqi to Bukhara, and from Isfahan to Konya. His poems perfectly reflect Turkishness, humanism, folklore, history, politics, and nature. It is possible that we can learn everything about the 13th century from his words, even 700 years after his time.

Yunus's Silk Road Links

Our great bard, Yunus Emre, is, of course, a son of the Silk Road. He came out of the bosom of Anatolia, lived there, and still lies there. However, his Silk Road connection cannot be explained and un-

derstood with this level of superficiality. In the time of Yunus, hundreds of thousands of people lived in Anatolia, of all races and colors, but there were some features that made the Yunus different, making them stand out like a shining star, illuminated even today.

As can be seen from the long explanations above, 13-14th century Anatolia, which was the time when Yunus lived, had a very lively and fertile cultural life much earlier than these centuries. From east to west, from south to north, almost all of Asia was a product of the Silk Road route. Between the forests of India and the Russian steppes and between the rivers of China and the plains of Anatolia, a continuous cultural life has prevailed on the Silk Road. For this reason, we will have to take into account this mobility and multiculturalism when looking for sources for Yunus's philosophy and poetry.

Saintly Teacher of the Fergana Valley: Ahmed Yesevi

In the history of the development of Yunus Emre's philosophy and humanism, one must first look at another humanist Sufi poet who grew up on the Silk Road in the 12th century - Ahmed Yesevi.

How can this great Turkish personality, who lived between 1093 and 1166 in the Fergana Valley in the middle of present-day Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan, be such a key influence for another Turkish holy man named Yunus Emre, who was born 100 years after him thousands of kilometers away in Anatolia?

Cultural heritage is usually connected by silsile (lineage) and is embodied in subsequent generations. Although it cannot be stated decisively, the silsile connection between Ahmed Yesevi and Yunus Emre happened also in the same fashion. In almost all research (Gölpınarlı, 1992; Toprak, 1982) on this subject, more or less, a valid silsile can be revealed as follows:

Ahmed Yesevi-Lokman Perende-Haji Bektas-Sari Saltuk-Barak Baba-Tapduk Emre-Yunus Emre.

In such a philosophical chain, we can find the traces of Shamanism, sky-god worshipping, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hindu, and of course the recently accepted Islam. This, in turn, became Turkish Sufism in a very short period of time. It was a vast stream stretching from Yunus Emre to Mevlana, from Niyazi Misri to Ashik Veysel, that stretched over the past seven centuries. Turkish Sufism, thanks to the philosophical and ceremonial traditions it inherited from the Silk Road, will flow in a much different medium than both Arab-Persian and Indian mysticism in the coming centuries, by carrying impressions of them in it.

Different Mystical Tendencies of Islam

In fact, Sufi philosophy and ideology, which we can call the interpretation of the mystical essence of Islam, have gained a wide range of shapes and views in the Islamic world over the centuries. This was determined mainly by the characteristics of the culture and lands from which the local Sufis came from. Thus, Tijanism in North Africa, Chistism in India, and Mevlevism and Bektashism in Turkey differ considerably in both their ceremonial practices and their ideologies. Perhaps that's why there is a rivalry between Sufi communities. Even some organizations have even accused others of being "un-Islamic"

The humanist tradition of original and true Turkish Sufism - starting with Ahmed Yesevi, continuing to Haji Bektash, and developing from there to Tapduk Emre and Yunus Emre - has also had characteristics that cannot be found anywhere else in the world because of this source. For example, the idea of Reincarnation, which was also directly reflected in Yunus's poems, easily found a place in Turkish Sufism, probably as a result of the Hindu influence on the Silk Road. Even such philosophical poems were called "devriyye-circle" and became quite common



Yunus Emre. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism website)



Ahmed Yesevi. (Wikimedia)

in Anatolia over the centuries. In the same way, very obvious shamanistic elements are manifested in Yunus's poems. A very significant number of Yunus's poems, which we can call love or even worship of nature, have survived to this day. In our opinion, such philosophical trends were formed as a result of the philosophical traditions of the Turks from when Central Asian influences reached Anatolia through Ahmed Yesevi and the subsequent silsile.

As a result, the cultural treasure of the Silk Road, with the dough kneaded by Ahmed Yesevi from Central Asia, acquired a presence in the master hands of Yunus Emre in Anatolia to give us a humanist tradition of almost 1,000 years.

Epilogue: From Far Asia to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean

The Silk Road has taken its place on the historical stage as a perfect metaphor for the last three thousand years of human development and it still occupies a very important role. In particular, the People's Republic of China is trying to revive the Silk Road against American sovereignty in the Pacific and Indian Ocean and to minimize the damage that this could do to China's economic future.

We believe that it is necessary to study the political, economic, and cultural consequences of this and its consequences for Turkey to create a future in accordance with it. Especially in the field of culture and music, which is the subject of our article, we believe that it is necessary to examine its examples in history and bring them to the future.

We believe that it is necessary to study the political, economic, and cultural consequences of this and its consequences for Turkey to create a future in accordance with it. Especially in the field of culture and music, which is the subject of our article, we believe that it is necessary to examine its examples in history and bring them to the future.

In the reintroduction of the historical Silk Road by the People's Republic of China under the name of the "Belt and Road Initiative" project, there are

many opportunities for Turkey to strengthen its hand. In this new road and Road-Belt project consisting of both land and railways, Turkey is in a very important geographic position. Keeping in mind that the Turkish nation came to Anatolia from the Central Asian steppes a thousand years ago and that there are also solid central Asian Turkic roots, we are right to think that Turkey can have a very important role in this new Silk Road. Turkish culture is already a historical part of the Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Indian, and Iranian cultures. Even in any song from Kashgar, Isfahan, Samarkand, and Astana, it will be very easy to recognize this historical cultural connection and heritage. It is imperative to establish a solid role in such a solid foundation, through conscious and programmatic reflection on the past and consideration of the future.

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Collaboration for A New Civilization That Will Transcend Time and Space*

To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role played by economy, science and technology. The Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations has convened to create a new platform for civilizations in Asia and beyond to engage in dialogue and exchanges on an equal footing to facilitate mutual learning.



*Editor's Note: The Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations began in Beijing on May 15, 2019. Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the opening ceremony under the theme of Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations for an Asian Community With a Shared Future, which he used to address the special place that Asian civilizations have in the annals of world civilizations. The following is an edited excerpt of his speech:***

Today, the world moves ever closer towards greater multi-polarity, economic globalization and cultural diversity, becoming increasingly information orientated in the process. This progress suggests promising prospects for the future. However, in the face of mounting instabilities and uncertainties currently faced by many people

around the world, countries need to unite and respond to these adversities.

To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role played by economy, science and technology. The Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations has convened to create a new platform for civilizations in Asia and beyond to engage in dialogue and exchanges on an equal footing to facilitate mutual learning.

Asia is one of the earliest human settlements in the world, which makes it an important cradle of human history. This vast and beautiful continent covers a third of the earth's land mass and has two-thirds of the world's population. It has more than 1,000 ethnic groups living in 47 countries.

* The text is titled by BRIQ.

** The text is retrieved from http://www.bjreview.com/Beijing_Review_and_Kings_College_London_Joint_Translation_Project/2019/201906/t20190626_800171719.html



President Xi Jinping delivers a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations at the China National Convention Center in Beijing, May 15, 2019. (Xinhua, 2019)

As we review our past and look beyond Asia, we should have greater confidence in our civilizations. We may build on the rich heritage of our forefathers, stay engaged with other civilizations and increase mutual learning. By doing so, we will add new glory to Asian civilizations.

Aspirations of Asian People

We Asian countries are closely connected and share a natural bond of affinity because of our shared experience of the past and our shared anticipation of what the future holds for us. Going forward, we need to see where the world is going, ride on the trend of the times and turn our people's longing for a better life into reality.

We Asian people hope to see peace and stability across Asia. Upholding peace is the responsibility of every country. When strife breaks out in the forms of conflict or war, economic growth, social stability and mutual exchanges will break down with it. We the people of Asian countries wish to live and work in content and security free from fear. We hope that all countries will respect and trust each other, live in harmony, and inter-

act with each other in a way that transcends national boundaries, time and space, as well as the difference between civilizations. We should work together and jointly safeguard peace, something that is even more precious than gold.

We Asian people hope to see common prosperity in Asia. Economic growth sustains a civilization, and prosperity underpins the progress of a nation. However, in some parts of Asia, people, women and children in particular, still suffer from the plight of poverty, hunger and disease. This must change. We Asian people long for decent lives free of poverty. We hope that countries will collaborate in promoting economic globalization and make it more open, balanced and beneficial to anyone regardless of their background. Doing so will enable us to eradicate poverty and backwardness that still plague people in some countries. It will make life carefree for our children and bring happiness to all families.

We Asian people hope to see an open and better-connected Asia. Asia's rapid development over the past decades shows that it is important to open one's door to the outside world and ride on the trend of global economic development.

If countries choose to close their doors and hide behind them, human civilizations would be cut off from each other and lose all vitality. We Asian people hope that all countries will reject self-exclusion, embrace integration, uphold openness and promote policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity. This way, we can jointly foster a community with a shared future for both us Asians and all humanity.

Exchanges and Mutual Learning of Civilizations

Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations, which in turn promotes mutual learning and their further development. We need to promote exchanges and mutual learning among countries, nations and cultures around the world, and strengthen popular support for jointly building a community with a shared future not only for Asians but for all people.

To realize this goal, we need to respect each other and treat one another as equals. All civilizations are rooted in their unique cultural environment. Each embodies the wisdom and vision of a country or nation, and each is valuable for being uniquely its own. Civilizations vary from each other in this way, just as individuals differ from each other in skin color and language, but this does not imply a cultural superiority. The thought that one's own race and civilization are superior and the inclination to remold or replace other civilizations are just stupid. To act out a superiority complex would only bring catastrophic consequences. If human civilizations are reduced to only one single color or one single model, the world would become a stereotype and too dull a place to live in. What we need is to respect each other as equals and say no to hubris and prejudice. We need to deepen understanding of the difference between one's own civilization and others', and work to promote interaction, dialogue and harmony among civilizations.

Each civilization is the crystallization of human creation, and each is beautiful in its own way. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

Furthermore, we need to embrace the beauty of each civilization and of diversity in the global community. Each civilization is the crystallization of human creation, and each is beautiful in its own way. The aspiration for all that is beautiful is a common pursuit of humanity that nothing can hold back. Civilizations don't have to clash with one another; we need eyes that can see beauty in all nations in the world. We should keep our own civilizations dynamic and create conditions for other civilizations to flourish. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

We also need to stay open and inclusive and draw on each other's strengths. All living organisms in the human body must renew themselves through metabolism; otherwise, life would come to an end. The same is true for civilizations. Long-term self-isolation will cause a civilization to decline, while exchanges and mutual learning will sustain its development. A civilization can flourish only through exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations, which is conducted in a reciprocal, equal-footed, diversified and multi-dimensional manner. They should in no way be coercive, imposing, one-dimensional or one-way. We need to be broad-minded and strive to remove all barriers to cultural exchanges. We need to be inclusive and always seek nourishment from other civilizations to promote the common development of Asian civilizations through exchanges and mutual learning.

Lastly, we need to advance with the times and explore new ground in development. For a civilization to endure, efforts must be made to keep it alive and build on its heritage from one generation to the next.



We need to embrace the beauty of each civilization and of diversity in the global community. (CGTN, 2019)

More importantly, a civilization needs to adapt itself to the changing times and break new ground. World history teaches us that taking advantage of the opportunities available and advancing with the times is fundamental to development. We need to come up with new ideas to add impetus and inspiration to the development of our civilizations. With these efforts, we will deliver achievements for our civilizations to transcend time and space and have a lasting appeal.

Inclusive Chinese Culture

Being an inseparable part of the Asian community, Chinese civilization has, since its early days, evolved and grown by drawing on its past achievements, exploring new ground and adapting to changes. It represents the profound pursuit of the Chinese nation and provides a rich source of strength for its lasting development. Chinese inventions such as paper-making, gunpowder, printing and the compass as well as China's astronomical knowledge, calendar system, philosophy and the people-centered doctrine have all had a global impact and propelled the development of human civilizations.

Chinese civilization, as an inclusive and integrated whole, has become what it is today through constant interactions with other civilizations. It has been enriched by the introduction of Buddhism and the confluence of Islam and Confucianism, and by the introduction of Western learning, the launch of the New Culture Movement and the introduction of Marxism and socialism in modern times. All-round opening up of the country, starting with the reform and opening-up program, has added to its vitality today. Amity and good neighborliness is the principle guiding our interactions with other countries; and to deliver prosperity and security to the people is the overarching goal, to keep pace with the times through reform and innovation the abiding commitment, and to achieve harmony between man and nature the underlying philosophy.

China today is more than the country itself; it is very much a part of Asia and the world. In the time to come, China will open its arms wider to embrace the world and contribute the dynamic achievements of Chinese civilization to a better future for the whole world.

The Development of China-Arab Cultural Exchanges: Opportunities and Challenges in the Belt & Road Era



DEGANG SUN*

Prof. Dr.
Institute of International Studies, Fudan University,
Shanghai, China

AML ALI ABDRABOU**

Dr.
Product operation manager at Beeto
Arabia Company, Egypt

**Degang Sun is a Professor of Political Science at the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai, China. He was Professor and Deputy Director of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, China. His research interests are Middle Eastern politics and International Relations, great powers' strategies in the Middle East and China's Middle East diplomacy. His articles have been featured in journals such as Mediterranean Politics, Journal of Contemporary China, and Africa Spectrum.*

Email: sundegang@fudan.edu.cn

***Aml Ali Abdrabou is a young sinologist. She got her Ph.D. degree from the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China in 2020. Her research interests are China-Arab cultural relations and the Belt and Road Initiative.*

Email: 1502110336@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the scope and features of China-Arab cultural relations and its implications on their bilateral political and economic partnerships. These bilateral relations have evolved from strategic cooperation in 2010 to strategic partnership in 2018. Political cooperation, economic development, and cultural exchanges represent the three pillars of the contemporary China-Arab strategic partnership. China's cultural exchanges with Arab countries are implemented by different agencies. Education, publication, tourist, and religious exchanges have become the main pillars of cultural exchange. In this process, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Xinhua News Agency, the State Administration of Radio and Television, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Press and Publication Administration, the State Administration of Religion, the Ministry of Education, the China Center for Language Education and Cooperation, the China-Arab Friendship Association, and other departments have formed a portfolio to participate in cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries. Their cultural exchanges are driven by Chinese and Arab officials. The two sides have set an example of South-South cooperation for exchanges of hearts and minds. Through the process, strategic cooperation between China and Arab countries has been enriched, which is an important means to enhance China's soft power in the Arab world. On this background, in this study firstly, it is introduced what the Chinese tools for cultural cooperation and which organizations are used, then the intellectual cooperation between China and Arab countries, the role of public opinion, the ways for improving mutual understanding, interactions between religious groups will be analyzed. It is also questioned the prospects of China-Arab cultural exchange. Finally, these issues will be evaluated in conclusion.

Keywords: Belt & Road Initiative, China-Arab relations, China's Middle East diplomacy, cultural exchange, soft power

Introduction

THE ARAB WORLD, AS THE CORE AREA OF the Middle East and the Islamic population, stretches from West Asia to North Africa. Surrounded by the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, the Arab countries cover an area of 13 million square kilometers and have an approximate population of 400 million (Sun, 2020: 37). Chinese and Arabs have a long history of people-to-people exchange, being the co-founders of the ancient Silk Road, that stretches back approximately 2,000 years. Standing at the East and West ends of the Belt and Road, China and the Arab countries are all developing countries that were marginalized after the post-First World War Western domination of Eurasia and Africa. In the present day, political exchanges, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges are the three driving forces of China-Arab relations, and cultural exchan-

ges stand out as lacking sufficient study.

While cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries have fluctuated in quality through the past, they have continuously improved with the implementation of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). This paper probes China-Arab cultural exchanges in the era of the BRI. It highlights how cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries require both top-down guidance and bottom-up participation. It aims to mobilize the enthusiasm of social organizations, enterprises, and non-governmental organizations, and form a "government-guided and society-driven" interactive pattern where "officials set the stage while society makes the performance". Beijing pursues practical results in cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries for the construction of the "China-Arab community of common destiny", as raised by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries include various official and non-governmental interactions, involving exchanges on culture, education, art, science and technology, health, sports, religion, tourism, press and publication, radio, film and television, academic research, as well as other fields (Ding & Chen, 2018:30). These exchanges involve a total of 23 sovereign states, as well as local governments and supranational regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League. The focus of these cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries is on education, tourism, media, and religion. Additionally, such cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries take place on both digital and physical platforms, including personnel exchanges, translation and publication of classic books, and media and new media exchanges. Cooperation forums such as the Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations, the China-Arab Friendship Conference, the Tourism Conference, and the Press Cooperation Conference as part of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum are also important.

The focus of cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries is on education, tourism, media, and religion.

Cultural exchange between China and Arab countries primarily relies on top-level government action. A case in point is the 8th Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF), which was held in Beijing in 2018. President Xi Jinping announced at the opening ceremony that China would invite 100 youth leaders from Arab countries, 200 youth scientists,

and 300 scientists and technicians to visit China. In addition, it is announced that 100 Arab religious leaders and 600 Arab political party leaders will be invited to visit China, while 10 thousand training positions will be provided and 500 medical teams will be sent to Arab countries (Xi, 2018a).

The 9th Ministerial Conference of CASCF was held online in July 2020 due to COVID-19. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister, and Ayman Safadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, co-chaired the meeting. Foreign ministers and ministerial officials from all members of the League of Arab States (also called Arab League) and Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League, attended the meeting, to which Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter (Xinhuanet, 2020).

China and the Arab countries issued a joint declaration on fighting COVID-19, the Amman Declaration, and the implementation document of the Forum 2020 to 2022 was adopted by the ninth Ministerial Conference of CASCF.

These developments provided a framework for deepening cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries under the BRI.

According to the strategic plans of China and Arab countries, the China-Arab News Exchange Center was officially established, the China-Arab e-library portal project was officially launched, and the fourth “Arab Art Festival”, jointly held by China and Arab countries, was officially launched in China as part of the BRI (Xi, 2018b). As such, one could argue that the BRI has enriched China’s cultural exchanges with Arab countries and improved their cooperation mechanisms.

Through top-level government cooperation, 10 cooperation mechanisms have been formed (see Table 1).

As of 2020, the two sides have held seven seminars on China-Arab relations and dialogue between China and Arab civilizations, three Arab art festivals and three Chinese art festivals, six China-Arab countries friendship conferences, two China-Arab countries women’s forums, two China-Arab count-

ries tourism and businessmen conferences, and two China-Arab youth friendship and ambassador projects (Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University and Research Center of CASCF, 2018). By 2021, China has established 26 pairs of sister cities with nine Arab countries.

Table 1 : Mechanisms and departments for cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries

Cultural Exchange Mechanisms		Responsible (Leading) Department
1	China-Arab Radio and Television Cooperation Forum	Central Propaganda Department, Xinhua News Agency, Radio, Film and Television Department
2	China and Arab Cooperation for Art Festivals and Cultural Industries	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
3	China-Arab Tourism Cooperation Forum	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
4	China-Arab Civilization Dialogue Conference	State Administration of Religion, China Islamic Association
5	China-Arab University Presidents’ Forum; and cooperation between China and Arab think tanks	Ministry of Education
6	China-Arab Friendship Conference	China-Arab Friendship Association
7	China-Arab Women Cooperation Forum	All China Women’s Federation
8	China-Arab non-governmental organizations and social organizations	Ministry of Civil Affairs
9	China-Arab youth friendship and ambassador project	Youth League Central Committee
10	China-Arab Expo, and China-Arab Cities Forum	Local provincial and municipal governments

Source: (CASCF, n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, n.d.)



Cultural exchange between China and Arab countries primarily relies on top-level government action. (Feng Yongbin /China Daily, 2018)

China-Arab cultural exchanges consist of educational, media, tourist, and religious interactions. The first focuses on elite and intellectual exchanges; the second aims to influence public opinions of the target countries; the third aims at better understanding between the mass; the fourth attempts to influence religious groups between Chinese and Arabs. The following are the operations and cooperation areas for cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries.

Intellectual Interaction: China-Arab Educational Exchanges

Educational exchange is an important sub-field of cultural exchange between China and Arab countries. In July 2018, the eighth ministerial meeting of the CASCF jointly formulated the action plan of the CASCF for 2018-2020. The two sides agreed to “continue to strengthen cooperation in the field of education and scientific research, encourage exchanges between educational and research institutions of the two sides, strengthen and support exchanges between Chinese and Arab universities, gradually increa-

se the number of scholarships” (Action Plan of the CASCF for 2018-2020, 2018: Article 12). This is a steering document for China-Arab educational cooperation in the new era.

By 2020, 541 Confucius Institutes and 1,170 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 162 countries (regions) around the world (“China has established”, 2019). Among them, there are 135 Confucius Institutes and 115 Confucius Classrooms in 39 Asian countries, and 61 Confucius Institutes and 48 Confucius Classrooms in 46 African countries (Center for Language Education and Cooperation, n.d.). Confucius Institutes are non-profit educational institutions established by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (originally Hanban) with Chinese language teaching as the main activity content. Its mission is to promote the Chinese language and culture to the world and strengthen cultural exchanges between all ethnic groups (Zhou, 2010: 213-214). Worthy of note here is that the Arab world is one of the core regions with the fastest growth in the number of Confucius Institutes in recent years.

Table 2: Confucius Institutes/Classrooms in the Arab world

Host Countries	Confucius Institutes or Confucius Classrooms	Year of Founding	Chinese Counterparts
Lebanon	Confucius Institute at Saint Joseph University	2007	Shenyang Normal University
Egypt	Confucius Institute of Cairo University	2008	Peking University
Egypt	Confucius Institute of Suez Canal University	2008	Beijing Language and Culture University
Jordan	Amman TAG Confucius Institute	2009	Shenyang Normal University
Tunisia	Sfax Broadcasting Confucius Classroom	2009	China Radio International
Sudan	Confucius Institute of Khartoum University	2009	Northwest Normal University
Morocco	Confucius Institute of Mohammed V University	2009	Beijing International Studies University
The United Arab Emirates	Zayed Üniversitesi Konfüçyüs Enstitüsü	2010	Beijing Foreign Studies University
The United Arab Emirates	Confucius Institute of Dubai University	2011	Ningxia University
Jordan	Confucius Institute of University of Philadelphia (Jordan)	2012	Liaocheng University
Morocco	Confucius Institute of Hassan II University	2012	Shanghai International Studies University
Bahrain	Confucius Institute of Bahrain University	2014	Shanghai University
Comoros	Confucius Classroom of Comoros University	2014	Dalian University
Egypt	Nile TV Confucius Classroom	2015	Beijing Language and Culture University
Morocco	Confucius Institute of Abdul Malik al Assad University	2016	Jiangxi Normal University of Science and Technology

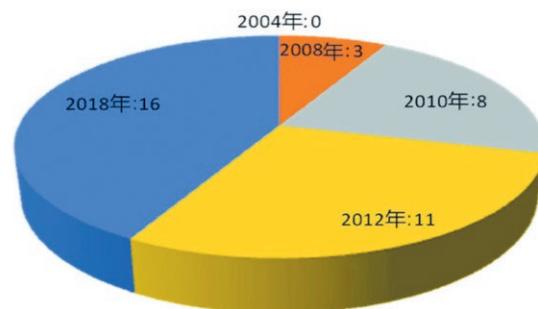
Source: Center for Language Education and Cooperation, n.d.; Dingz& Chen, 2018: 34-35.

Among African countries, Egypt has won the most scholarships from the Chinese government, and the students who have won the Chinese government's scholarships are mainly students in applied disciplines, such as science and engineering. The professional fields of study for foreign students include modern science and technology such as aerospace, life science, marine science, mechanical engineering, and information technology (Xinhuanet, 2019a). In West Asia, to promote educational exchanges between China and Arab countries, the Silk Road College of China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) was officially launched in 2017, laying the foundation for the "China Jordan University" jointly built by the two countries. China Jordan University is the first university led by the Chinese government to go abroad. Its campus is in Amman, the capital of Jordan. It is supported by the China University of Geosciences (Wuhan). After being completed, it will recruit students locally and regionally ("China and Jordan jointly", 2017). In 2018, the Chinese ambassador to Jordan, Pan Weifang, and Jordanian Minister of Culture, Nabih Shuqum, signed the agreement on the establishment of a Chinese cultural center in Amman, the capital of Jordan.

Educational exchanges between China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are also flourishing. In July 2019, during President Xi Jinping's visit to the UAE, the headquarters of the Confucius Institute and the Ministry of education of the UAE, he signed the memorandum of understanding on the inclusion of Chinese in the UAE primary school education system, which promoted Chinese in the UAE (Sky News Arabia, 2019). At present, both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are part of China's comprehensive strategic partnership. Both countries include the Chinese language in the primary and secondary education system. Dubai

Chinese School, opened in July 2020, is the first example of these attempts and this school is the first full-time Chinese school successfully established overseas (Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Dubai, 2020). The UAE has become a model of educational exchanges between China and the Arab States.

Diagram 1: Cumulative number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in Arab countries from 2004 to 2018



Source: (Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University & Research Center of CASCF, 2018: 19).

In recent years, King Saudi University has opened a Chinese major. In 2019, during the visit of crown prince Mohammed bin Salman to China, the Saudi government announced that the Chinese language would be included in the curriculum of all education levels in the kingdom. In addition to Saudi Arabia, Palestine also actively supported the founding of Confucius Institutes. In 2019, Al Quds University of Palestine celebrated the launch of the Chinese Confucius Institute, the first of its kind in the Palestinian territory. The university is important because it meets the growing needs of Palestinians to learn Chinese, enhances the Palestinian people's understanding of Chinese culture, and develops the traditional friendship between the two populations (Xinhuanet, 2019b). Despite the long-term unrest in Palestine, young students have great enthusiasm for learning Chinese.

With the joint efforts of China and Arab countries, steady progress has been made in educational exchanges between them. The number of Arab students in China increased from 1,130 in 2004 to 18,050 in 2016, with an average annual growth rate of 26%. The number of students studying in Arab countries increased from 242 in 2004 to 2,433 in 2016, with an average annual growth rate of 21%. From 2019 to 2020, 364 Egyptian students won Chinese government scholarships, including 126 doctoral students (Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University & Research Center of CASCF, 2018: 27-28).

Influencing Public Opinions: China-Arab Media Exchanges

China-Arab media exchanges have various forms and rich contents including radio, film, television, online media, press and publication, and more. In July 2018, China and Arab countries jointly issued the Declaration on Cooperation, which stressed that the two sides would deepen cooperation in education, sports, health, art, publishing, training, and the establishment of cultural centers (CASCF, 2018). On October 25, 2018, the fourth cultural ministers' meeting was held in Chengdu. The representatives of China and Arab countries shared experiences and discussed development strategies on the theme of cultural exchange and cooperation under the framework of BRI international cooperation (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China, 2018).

Radio communication between China and Arab countries is a form of public diplomacy, which helps Arab people better understand the real image of rising China. China aims to spread the cultural value of "benevolence, humanity and tolerance". At the same time, radio communication is a media channel for China to understand Arab culture. In exchanges of films and television programs, Chi-

na has translated many of its films and television series into Arabic. Some of the films also use Egyptian and North African dialects. In 2013, Kim Taro's *Happy Life*, which depicts China's modern life, was on the screen in the Arab world (Wu & Tang, 2019). Furthermore, a documentary on China's Sala ethnicity, still living on the Qinghai Plateau, won the first prize in the documentary program of the Arab Radio and Television Festival.

In China, many important public information websites and television stations have set up Arabic websites, such as the People's Net, China Network Television, Xinhuanet, International Online, Chinese network, and other media.

Due to the extensive use of digital satellite TV, 4G and 5G technologies, and mobile phones, the original single pattern of media communication is moving towards diversification and intelligence. In China, many important public information websites and television stations have set up Arabic websites, such as the People's Net, China Network Television, Xinhuanet, International Online, Chinese network, and other media. In addition, Arabic and Chinese bilingual media, such as the "Arab Information Exchange Center" and the "China-Arab network", are increasingly popular. Local customs and practices in China are included in news coverage WeChat, Today's Headlines, micro-blog, and so on. Promoted by Chinese and Arab leaders as an important part of media exchanges, the CASCF will hold art festivals and exchange visits of literature and artist groups following The Action Plan of the CASCF for 2018-2020, which clearly stated that China would hold the fourth "Arab Art Festival" in Beijing and Chengdu, and host the Forum of Chinese and Arab Ministers of Culture under the framework of the bilateral art festival.



Hundreds of Chinese classic and modern books have been translated into Arabic and exported to Arab countries. (CGTN, 2017)

China invited Arab artists to participate in the “Silk Road International Art Festival”, the “Maritime Silk Road International Art Festival”, and the “Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo”. China invited the Arab counterparts to attend the “Silk Road International Theatre Alliance”, the “Silk Road International Art Festival Alliance”, the “Silk Road International Museum alliance”, the “Silk Road International Art Museum Alliance”, and the “Silk Road International Library Consortium”. The translation of classic literature is a cornerstone of cultural exchange between China and Arab countries.

In 2010, China and the Secretariat of the League of Arab States signed a memorandum of cooperation on the “project of mutual translation and publi-

cation of Chinese and Arab classics” and launched the “project of joint translation and publication of Chinese and Arab classics”. By 2018, more than 30 kinds of Chinese and Arab classics had been translated and published. Professor Zhong Jikun of Peking University and Professor Zhu Weilie of Shanghai International Studies University successively won the “King Abdullah World Translation Award” in Saudi Arabia (Ding & Chen, 2018: 34).

The mutual translation of Chinese and Arab classics helps to strengthen cultural understanding between the two populations. Since 2016, many Chinese books have been published in Arab countries, introducing China’s economic development, diplomatic strategy, reform and opening-up, China’s rise, China’s poverty-lifting, and the BRI.

Table 3: Major Chinese books published in Arab countries since 2016

Titles of the Chinese Books	Publishers	Years of Publications
China Phenomenon: China's Experience and the Development of Diplomatic Relations during Reform and Opening up (1990-2015)	Tripoli: Modern Writers Press	2016
The Coming Oriental Giant: Will China Rule the World?	Cairo and Damascus: Arab Writers Press	2016
Political Socialism and Market Capitalism: China's Economic Development	Amman: Writers Academic Center	2016
China's Rise and Energy Challenges	Amman: Writers Academic Center	2016
Sudan-China Relations: 1956-2011	Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies	2016
We and China: Responding to the Second Leap-Forward	Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center	2017
Development Strategy, Economic and Trade Relations between China and the United Arab Emirates	Amman: Amjad press	2017
China's Poverty Eradication Policy: A Case Study of Algeria and China	Algiers: Banner Press	2017
Belt & Road Initiative and the Future of China Model	Ruth: Beirut Press	2018
New Journey of China's Economic Reform	Riyadh: King's University Press	2018
Chinese Dragon: A Global Economic Empire	Amman: Time Press	2018

Source: It is based on the open sources see (Ajang, 2021).

Through a series of foreign translation projects (such as that of Ningxia People's Publishing House), China has promoted the publication of Chinese classics in the Arab world. The "Project of Translation of Chinese and Arab Classics", the "Chinese Academic Translation Project", the "Chinese Book Promotion Plan", the "Classic China International Publishing Project", the "Silk Road Book Project", the "Chinese

Cultural Works Translation and Publishing Project", and the "Contemporary Chinese Works Translation Project" were established, which all became important platforms for the translation of classics (Bao, 2019: 140-160). For instance, Professor Wang Youyong of Shanghai International Studies University has been committed to the translation of Chinese classics into Arabic for a long time.

In recent years, he has successively translated Arabic versions of *Xunzi* and *Liezi*, which have been published and distributed in Lebanon by the Arab Thought Foundation and have had an influence in the Arab world.

Bettering the Mutual Understanding of the Mass: China-Arab Tourism Cooperation

The tourist market in Arab countries has great potential for development. For example, the Gulf Arab countries have become the fastest developing region. In 2014, the outbound tourism consumption of Arabian Gulf countries reached US \$40 billion, accounting for 31% of global Muslim tourism consumption (Pivac, 2015). Due to long stays, high per capita consumption, and high demand for tourist services, tourists from the Arabian Gulf countries have become the flashpoint. Strengthening China-Arab tourism cooperation is of great practical significance in promoting the upgrading of China's existing tourism industry, optimizing the source structure of inbound tourists, promoting the diversified development of China's cultural tourism industry, and further improving the internationalization level of China's tourism industry (Pew Research Center, 2011).

From 2005 to 2015, the number of Chinese tourists to the Emirates increased by 98% and is expected to reach 540 thousand by 2030.

By 2020, 13 Arab countries have become outbound tourism destinations for Chinese citizens, and tour businesses in nine countries have been officially set up (Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University & Research Center of CASCE, 2018: 17-18). Fifteen Arab countries boast 61 world natural and cultural heritage sites recognized by UNESCO (Wang, 2018). In recent years, the number of Chinese tourists to Arab countries has increased

significantly. This is due to its stability and how the UAE attaches particular importance to developing the tourist industry. As a result, Dubai has become the tourist hub of the Arab world with the fastest-growing number of Chinese tourists in recent years.

In 2013, at least 270 thousand Chinese tourists visited the UAE for leisure and business tours; from 2005 to 2015, the number of Chinese tourists to the Emirates increased by 98% and is expected to reach 540 thousand by 2030. According to the 2014 China Luxury Tourist White Paper, Dubai has become the third-largest overseas tourism destination that attracts rich Chinese tourists. In November 2016, the UAE announced that it would grant visa-free treatment to Chinese citizens. According to the statistics of Dubai Tourist Administration, the number of Chinese tourists exceeded 764,000 in 2017, an increase of 41%. On February 24, 2019, according to statistics released by the Dubai Tourist Bureau, the number of international tourists entering Dubai overnight was 15.92 million, with the number of Chinese tourists reaching 875 thousand, an increase of 12%. China surpassed Oman and became the fourth largest tourist source market of Dubai (Xinhuanet, 2019d). Emirates is a leading passenger service provider of China, operating 38 flights to and from China every week. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism of the UAE, the number of Chinese tourists in 2019 represented about 6.04% of the total number of UAE tourists. In the first five months of 2019, the number of Chinese tourists to the UAE reached 433 thousand, an increase of 5% (about 401,000) over the same period in 2018. In the past five years, Dubai has attracted 3.06 million Chinese tourists in total.

On June 10, 2018, the UAE contractor, Nakheel (Nasir group), announced in Dubai that it had signed a contract with the Chinese company "Beijing Zhongke Co., Ltd." worth 66 million dirhams (US \$17.97 million) to design and build the fountain project on the Palm Island of Dubai (Business Office of the Chinese Consulate General in Dubai, 2018).

In May 2018, the Etihad Aviation Group of the UAE signed a memorandum of understanding with the China Jiangsu Overseas Cooperation and Investment Corporation (JOSIC) to establish a strategic partnership. Accordingly, due to its investment in the China-UAE Industrial Park, Etihad Airlines of the UAE can enjoy preferential air transportation and freight prices on flights and services between China and other destinations through the Group's network. Etihad Airlines has also become the preferred airline for all operating companies in the China-UAE Industrial Park (Ne-tease Airlines, 2018).



President Xi Jinping (L) holds a welcoming ceremony for King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Beijing, May 11, 2016. (Xinhua, 2016)

In addition to the UAE, other Gulf countries have had a significant increase in Chinese tourists. For example, since Oman signed a memorandum of understanding on tourism with China in 2006, the number of Chinese tourists to Oman has increased by more than 30% every year, next only to the UAE. Between 2013 and 2017, Oman has had a significant increase in the number of Chinese tourists.

China's tourists to Arab countries can be divided into three categories in terms of purpose: business, Hajj, and leisure. Chinese tourists can choose their own tourist routes both online and offline.

With the development of tourism in China and Egypt, which is primarily for leisure, the exchanges and cooperation between China and Egypt's civil aviation industry are also increasing. There are two direct flights from China to Egypt (from Beijing and Guangzhou to Cairo). According to the data provided by the Egyptian Embassy in Beijing, about 150 thousand Chinese citizens visited Egypt in the first five months of 2017. During this period, Chinese tourists booked 850 thousand nights in Egyptian hotels, an increase of 116% over the same period in 2016 (Egyptian Embassy in China, 2017). According to the 2018 Chinese Citizens' Africa Tourism Report released by CYTS travel.com, Egypt has become one of the five most popular destinations for Chinese citizens in Africa (CYTS Travel Network, 2018). Egypt regards China as its main source of tourism and thus has successfully formulated projects to promote Egyptian culture in the Chinese market that has doubled the number of Chinese tourists to Egypt.

Morocco was the first Arab country that implemented a visa-free policy for Chinese tourists.¹ In May 2016, King Mohammed VI visited China following this success and the country has since become a primary destination for Chinese citizens to travel to (Wang, 2017: 67).

¹ Tunisia subsequently announced the implementation of the landing visa policy for teams with more than 10 Chinese tourists.

Song Yu, Secretary-General of the World Tourist Cities Federation claimed that the total number of Chinese tourists to Morocco in 2017 exceeded 100 thousand and that Morocco has become the country with the fastest growth of Chinese tourists in Africa (Xinhuanet, 2018). There are many reasons for the increase in Chinese tourists to Morocco. First, with the rise of China's national strength, the national disposable income has increased; second, Morocco promoted visa exemption for Chinese tourists during Chinese Ambassador Sun Shuzhong's tenure; and third, in recent years, direct flights between Morocco and China have been opened, which is one of the key factors that has enhanced Morocco's attraction to Chinese tourists.

In 2018, 9,453 Chinese tourists visited Lebanon. In 2019, the number of Chinese tourists to Lebanon reached 12 thousand, an increase of 22.4%.

Lebanon is particularly rich in tourism resources. On October 12, 2015, Lebanon held a tourist promotion activity for China in Beirut, its capital, to strengthen the cooperation between travel agencies of the two countries and customize tourism projects and routes for Chinese tourists. In 2018, 9,453 Chinese tourists visited Lebanon. In 2019, the number of Chinese tourists to Lebanon reached 12 thousand, an increase of 22.4%. Lebanese travel agencies had plans to receive 20 to 30 thousand Chinese tourists in 2021 if it were not COVID-19 (Xinhuanet, 2019c).

On November 19, 2019, the China-Arab Tourism Cooperation Forum opened in Beijing. China held discussions with 19 Arab countries including Algeria, the UAE, Egypt, and Morocco on China-Arab cultural and tourism cooperation, and all parties reached a consensus on establishing tourism cooperation mechanisms at government and enterprise levels (People's Net, 2019). Tourism cooperation has become a central

concern for the BRI between China and Arab countries in the new era.

Interaction between Religious Groups: China-Arab Religious Exchanges

From the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Egypt on May 30, 1956, to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Saudi Arabia on July 21, 1990, China has established diplomatic relations with all 22 member states of the Arab League. Over the years, friendly relations between China and Arab countries have been developing continuously, and religious exchanges are an indispensable part of it. In 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony of the eighth Ministerial Conference of CASCF, China would invite 100 Arab religious leaders to visit China for exchange with different religions ("Jointly promote China-Arab", 2019). Religious exchanges help to enrich the cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries.

After the Arab world became an epicenter for COVID-19, the Muslim community in China responded pro-actively to the call of the Chinese government on struggling in unity against the pandemic with Arab countries. On February 2, 2020, the China Islamic Association's website released the "Wāz" (sermon) entitled "carry forward the fine traditions of Islam and contribute to overcoming the epidemic", which clarified the importance and necessity of suspending collective religious activities and implementing various measures from the perspective of religious doctrines, and called on the Islamic world to carry forward the spirit of science and strengthen their faith (China News Network, 2020). The China Islamic Association took the lead in donations for the Arab world and Chinese Muslims took the initiative as well. By February 14, 2020, Islamic associations in China had donated a total of more than 86.09 million RMB to fight the pandemic (China News Network, 2020).

A united front against the pandemic has become an extension of religious exchanges between China and Arab countries.

Exchanges between religious groups in China and Arab countries have gradually established mechanisms (Fjnet, 2009). China has established a fixed mechanism for sending religious students to Arab countries and incorporated it into the national agreement on foreign cultural exchanges. Every year, the Chinese Islamic Association sends graduates from 10 Islamic schools across China to study in colleges and universities in Arab countries. Young Chinese Muslim chanters also participate in the international recitation competition of the Holy Koran held in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other countries. At present, 24 colleges and universities in China have opened Arabic majors (Fjnet, 2009). Such religious exchanges between China and Arab countries contribute to the dialogue of civilizations, which directly reverses the “clash of civilizations” theory put forward by Samuel Huntington.

Since the BRI was established, increasing amounts of Arab students have come to study in China. In 2008, 1,127 Chinese students were studying in Arab countries and Arab Muslims also actively aided China’s education.

Since the BRI was established, increasing amounts of Arab students have come to study in China. In 2008, 1,127 Chinese students were studying in Arab countries and Arab Muslims also actively aided China’s education. Since 1978, the Islamic Development Bank under the Organization of the Islamic Conference (now renamed “Organization of the Islamic Cooperation” and has 57 Member States), has provided \$10 million for the

construction and restoration of China’s Islamic colleges, etc. (Fjnet, 2009).

China’s local governments are also engaged in China-Arab religious exchanges. On November 6, 2015, at the invitation of the China Islamic Association, led by Sheikh Mohamed Bada, Secretary-General of Egyptian Azhar Supreme Missionary Committee, and a delegation of eight Islamic celebrities from six Arab countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan, visited China (Guangzhou Islamic Association Network, 2015). Guangdong is one of the earliest provinces where Islam was introduced into China. With famous historical sites such as Huaisheng Mosque and ancient Muslim tombs, Guangzhou has witnessed the development of Islam in the southern province. At present, many Muslims from South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa are engaged in business activities in Guangdong. The Mosques in Guangzhou have allowed Chinese and foreign Muslims to gather and connect in harmony (Guangzhou Islamic Association Network, 2015). China’s BRI is conducive to the establishment of a good cultural environment through the exchange of religious doctrines.

In 2019, the Chinese Muslims that made pilgrimages to Mecca provided training service for the staff of Saudi Arabia in daily Chinese language to facilitate their communication with Chinese pilgrims (China News Network, 2019). This demonstrates how encouraging religious exchanges and educational cooperation can promote understanding of both parties on each other.

In the future, religious exchanges between China and Arab countries will continue to play its unique and irreplaceable role as an important part and powerful supplement to the country’s overall diplomacy and the friendship between Muslims in China and in Arab countries will continue to deepen (Ma, 2015:31).



Prospects of China-Arab Cultural Exchanges

Although the overall design of cultural exchange between China and Arab countries has essentially been completed, there is still a long way to go to consolidate it. Especially since 2020, the scramble of the great powers' geopolitical struggle has escalated, COVID-19 has been wreaking havoc on the world, the world economy has been sluggish, and the "fragmented" Arab world has faced challenges for cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries.

First, cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries are still subordinate to political and economic exchanges. Although China has established diplomatic relations with all Arab countries, such diplomatic ties are mainly reflected in political, economic, and trade relations. Due to the differences between ethnic and religious beliefs, the people of Arab countries have not been monolithic, making it hard for China to implement unified cultural diplo-

macy (Zhao, 2012: 23). Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has established relatively mature cultural exchange mechanisms with the United States, Europe, Great Britain, and the Association of South-East Asian Nations, but the institutionalization level of cultural exchange between China and Arab countries is still limited.

Second, neither China nor Arab countries give priority to each other for cultural exchanges. Both sides focus on cultural exchanges with their respective neighboring countries on the one hand, and with Europe and America on the other hand. For Arab countries, their key partners for cultural exchanges are European countries; for China, their focus in cultural exchanges are Eastern and South-Eastern Asian countries, meaning Arab countries are secondary. Therefore, China-Arab cultural exchanges should be pragmatic starting with small steps.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to Arabic education and Chinese education is also highly valued by Arab countries.

Many universities in China have successively opened Arabic majors and trained a batch of excellent Arabic talents. These talents and scholars who are proficient in Arabic have become the pioneers to promote the development of China-Arab relations. However, if China and Arab countries do not seize the opportunity to improve teaching materials, teaching methods, talent training modes, and formulate medium and long-term development plans, the outstanding talents of China and Arab countries may flow to Europe and America, resulting in the 'brain drain' of Chinese and Arab talents. As a result, both China and Arab countries face an asymmetric dependence on European and American countries in education. China and Arab countries have long been marginalized with the backdrop of strong Western discourse, so they still have a long way to go to prioritize cultural exchanges between each other.

Cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries need to mobilize non-governmental organizations.

Finally, cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries need to mobilize non-governmental organizations. In recent years, cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries have been more official than non-governmental, resulting in "hot official ties while aloof non-governmental communication". There are few exchanges between local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities, think tanks, and citizens of China and Arab countries. Although tourism between China and Arab countries is grassroots, it is formidable to achieve the goal of "connecting the hearts of the people" put forward by the leaders of China and Arab countries.

The Chinese and Arab governments have taken the lead in designing several mechanisms, such as the China-Arab civilization dialogue, the China-Arab

Art Festival and cultural industry cooperation, the China-Arab Tourism Cooperation Forum, the China-Arab Radio and Television Cooperation Forum, the China-Arab University Alliance, the China-Arab Think Tank Cooperation, the China-Arab Friendship Conference, the China-Arab Women's Cooperation Forum, the China-Arab Forum for non-governmental organizations and social organizations, the China-Arab Youth Friendship and Ambassador Project, the China-Arab city forum, and more. However, ordinary people are "stand-by", making it difficult to align the feelings of Chinese and Arab civilians.

While these forms of cultural exchange between China and Arab countries are relatively active, sometimes the content is "vague", meaning Chinese and Arabs are like "familiar strangers". The purpose of cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries is to promote mutual cultural identity and promote the construction of a "community with a shared future for mankind". In addition to the existing top-down cultural exchange mechanism, it is necessary to promote exchanges between the two sides from bottom to top, with ordinary Chinese and Arab people as the predominant players.

To begin with, China and Arab countries need to explore the cultural elements of the ancient Silk Road to improve interactions between peoples of both sides. To this end, the two sides support the joint archaeological work in the Al-Serrian port of Saudi Arabia and support the operation of the international fund for the protection of endangered cultural heritage jointly established by China and the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Kuwait, and other countries ("Action Plan of the CASCF for 2018-2020", 2018).

Next, China and Arab countries need to expand the field of cultural exchanges. So far, the cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries are mainly in the four fields of education, media, tourism, and religion.

It is also necessary to expand to the “new frontier” of cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries, such as the exchange of traditional Chinese medicine and cultural heritage protection.

In 2019, China and Arab countries held a forum on public health. In it, two sides stressed the need to strengthen cooperation and exchange of experience in the medical field, to pay attention to the elderly, disabled, and people with special needs, to prevent infectious diseases, to encourage the transfer of medical technology, to strengthen the exchange of information between governments on public health laws and policies, to carry out medical research and experiments, to enhance cooperation between Chinese and Arab treatment institutions, and to promote cooperation in medical research and traditional medicines (“Action Plan of the CASCF for 2018-2020”, 2018). Both China and Arab countries have a rich traditional medical culture that needs to be inherited and protected properly.

Moreover, cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries need to keep pace with the times by incorporating new technologies and platforms. With the rapid development of technology, especially with the continuous emergence of social networking sites that affect people’s views and positions, China and Arab countries must pay attention to the role of the internet in non-governmental exchanges. In China and the Arab world, hundreds of millions of citizens are using the internet, including social networking sites that influence public opinion, such as micro-blogs, WeChat, Facebook, YouTube, etc. The number of Arab citizens using WeChat to communicate both with their Chinese friends and each other has been increasing. The Embassy of China in Egypt and other Arab countries began to build a WeChat official account while some embassies opened micro-blog accounts. New media will become a key platform for cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries in the future.



With the development of tourism in China and Egypt, the exchanges and cooperation between China and Egypt’s civil aviation industry are also increasing, Beijing Daxing International Airport. (Zou Hong /China Daily, 2019)

Conclusion

The friendship between the countries is expressed by the affinity between their peoples. In recent years, China and Arab countries have carried out dialogue and exchanges in the cultural field. The exchange of visits between Chinese and Arab artists has flourished, the number of exchange students has increased year by year, the project of mutual translation and publication of Chinese and Arab classics has been actively promoted, the joint translation training program has been carried out smoothly, and there are many highlights in the fields of civilization dialogue, de-radicalization cooperation, and youth and women exchanges.

First, China-Arab cultural exchanges have a profound historical accumulation. Research shows that the historical heritage of cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries is the ancient Silk Road. The Silk Road reminds both China and Arab countries of their respective glorious national histories and cultures and serves to enhance their national pride. When the Arab Empire and the Chinese Tang Empire were the most powerful in the 7th century, their interactions began. During this period, Chinese papermaking, silk, tea, and other products were introduced into the Arab world, while blue porcelain technology and galaxy science were introduced into China by the Arabs. In recent years, joint archaeological expeditions

between China and Arab countries, the revival of each other's ancient medicine, and the protection of cultural relics have all helped to promote the connection between the two people.

Second, cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries are integrated. Their cultural exchanges play a "fundamental" role in deepening and developing strategic relations and help to cultivate an affinity and friendship between the two sides. Both China and Arab countries are developing countries with underdeveloped social groups. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, the Xinhua News Agency, the Ministry of Health, the Friendship Association, and more than a dozen other departments, as well as provinces and cities, have promoted cultural exchanges between them. Thus, coordination and unity between different departments will be developed and overall cooperation with Arab countries within the framework of the CASCF will be developed.

Third, Cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries are divided into three different mechanisms: multilateral, collective and bilateral cooperation. Multilateral and collective cooperation is carried out under the framework of the CASCF, which has the advantage of higher efficiency because it can cover 22

Arab countries. Since the BRI was raised, China and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Algeria have formed high-level joint committees to promote cultural exchanges under bilateral relations.

Fourth, China-Arab cultural exchange needs to be pragmatic. Although the current cultural exchange mechanism between China and Arab countries has been established, led, and promoted by the government, the key to its effectiveness is in non-governmental exchanges. In other words, the government can only play a leading role while specific affairs need to rely on social and non-governmental sectors. Exchanges between ordinary people and enterprises are grassroots and fundamental. It is far from enough to rely on several cooperation mechanisms and platforms such as the CASCF to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation at the official level. China and Arab countries should respect each other's cultural differences.

Therefore, China and Arab countries need to adhere to pragmatism and steadily promote cultural exchanges. After China put forward its BRI, Arab countries started "looking East" and China-Arab relations turned from "back-to-back" to "face-to-face". Cultural exchanges between China and the Arab countries will enable the two forces at the two ends of the BRI to revitalize the spirit of the Old Silk Road and develop a mutually beneficial and harmonious relationship.

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Heartbeats of Belt & Road*



HÜSEYİN HAYDAR
Poet

Hüseyin Haydar was born in 1956 in Trabzon. He studied economics and finance. He worked as a member of the editorial board and as a technical director in YAZKO's (Writers and Translators Co-operative) Literature and Translation magazines. His first poetry collection, Acı Türkücü, won the 1981 Academy's First Prize for Poetry. Later, many of his books were published and won national awards. He served as a member and visual director of the Ulusal Kanal Broadcasting Board and as a member of the Turkish Writers' Union (TYS) Board. He prepared and presented the TV program titled Literature Front at Ulusal Kanal. He is a member of Patriotic Party Central Ruling Board and National Science Strategy Center. He has been publishing his poems every week in his column titled Poet's Toil in Aydınlık newspaper for ten years.

Email: hhaydar@hotmail.com

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*Translation: İlgin Nehir Akfırat

In today's world, humanity is going through a phase of social collapse and ascension like those we have encountered throughout history. While capitalism in the 21st century is collapsing in its globalist imperialist phase, the emerging Asian Civilization paves the way for humanity with publicist principles. In such a period, Yunus Emre's teaching of love is much needed. This points to the need for revisiting his teaching in today's light with the aim of producing solutions to countless spiritual problems arisen from Asia's ascent.

If there are no heartbeats in your ideas, think again.

Introduction

WITH TODAY'S CONFLICTS AND TURBULENT environment, when humanity needs peace, tolerance, and love more than ever, the UNESCO Turkey National Commission has fulfilled an important responsibility by declaring 2021 as the Year of Yunus Emre, coinciding with the 700th anniversary of his death. Thus, a multi-faceted contribution has been made to the world's spiritual and cultural accumulation and the expectations of universal rapprochement and solidarity. However, with these activities being in the same scope as the decision of the Presidency of the "World Language Turkish Year", the roots of Turkey's magnificent culture have been brought to the agenda by integrating with the love of Yunus Emre.

With national and international celebrations, the universal values of Yunus Emre's philosophy were brought to the forefront. The blessed presence of Yunus Emre, the great poet of our beautiful Turkish, who advises "to look at seventy-two nations with the same eye" and seeks salvation in developing the essence of man, once again had the opportunity to fill hearts with love, goodness, and virtue.

In today's world, humanity is going through a phase of social collapse and ascension like those we have encountered throughout history. While capitalism in the 21st century is collapsing in its globalist imperialist phase, the emerging Asian Civilization paves the way for humanity with publicist principles. In such a period, Yunus Emre's teaching of love is much needed. This points to the need for revisiting his teaching in today's light with the aim of producing solutions to countless spiritual problems arisen from Asia's ascent.

In the meantime, the exploitative system led by the USA and the solidaristic and sharing publicist system led by China have come to the front in the lines of fire. The "Belt & Road Initiative" (BRI), built against the Atlantic front, which is increasingly becoming aggressive with the mood of collapse, offers a strong opportunity for resistance, solidarity, cooperation, and liberation to nation-states targeted by imperialism. This great breakthrough has brought the oppressed world together with immense hope.

For the success of the BRI, Yunus Emre's philosophy of divine love, which also integrates with the people, comes to the rescue just in time:

“The heat is in the fire, not in the tin plate;
The miracle is not in the cloak or headgear,
Whatever you are looking for, search it in yourself,
It is not in Mecca, Jerusalem or in the pilgrimage.”

In order to strengthen the social immune systems of nations in their difficult days and create the will to resist together, to survive together, they must resort to the universal legacies of great poets such as Yunus Emre who re-enshrine these supreme values against hostilities. More importantly, it is imperative to ensure an Asian integration that will deter and repel imperialist forces against the possibility of a nuclear global war that threatens the survival of humanity itself. The full legacy of classical poetry, especially Yunus Emre's, as well as today's patriotic and revolutionary poets are assigned the urgent task of helping to prevent war and work towards the great victory of humanity. Hearing human heartbeats in the ideas Yunus Emre puts forward in society will ensure unity of heart and make things easier.

Wise Poet of All Times

Yunus Emre's work was created amidst the difficult times that spanned the 13th and 14th centuries, when peace was disturbed by great wars, destructions, and rebellions. Our great poet, who originated from Asian traditions and was connected to the climate of Turkish and Islamic thought, formed his own philosophy that always fought for the unity and integrity of the people through the turbulence of his time.

The primary influence of the hymns of Yunus Emre is the idea of Universal Love, which comprehends the truth fundamentally. In his poems, he addresses good with evil, cruelty with oppression,

death with life, anxiety with joy, absence with being, darkness with light, bravery with cowardice, and more. Opposing emotions provide the inner movement with vitality through imagery in dialectical unity. The power of his poetry should be sought in a spontaneously developing divine but human-substantive acceptance, where the material and spiritual worlds do not clash with each other.

700 years ago, endless Mongolian attacks were decimating Anatolia, causing the material and spiritual values of humanity to weaken and social life to turn upside down. Devoted to the struggle of the people for existence, Yunus nurtured the spiritual world of the Anatolian people with his love, philosophy, and poems. While sectarian conflicts, invasions, tribal clashes, and throne struggles shattered the unity and integrity of the society, Yunus Emre, like other great poets of classical Turkish poetry, resisted these threats with his immortal work and life. Anatolian Erens¹ dedicated their entire selves and assets to the unity and survival of man on the path of truth. They encouraged fraternity against enmity and unity against segregation in order to ensure peace and security. For this purpose, they wore the power of the word like swords as they went on the roads. The virtuous word, with the deep knowledge and emotion it carries, showed its constructive spiritual influence and directed the development of events on the path of reality.

“There is word which ceases a war,
There is word which causes decapitation,
There is word which is like poisonous food.
And there is word which makes things smooth and sweet”

1 The words “er” and “eren” are used in the sense of “saint and wise-men” in Turkish mysticism and folklore. In this sense, er and eren are virtuous, self-sacrificing and generous people who have gained the friendship of Allah and can guide people. These people, who are sometimes referred to as “Horasan saints, Anatolian saints” according to the regions they belong to, are considered to be perfect human beings and are respected with great respect. In his poems, Yunus Emre describes them as perfect mentors who guide people, meet their needs and strive to achieve happiness. Email: u0559410@uofutah.onmicroso.com <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1571-9387>



President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is at the opening ceremony of "Our Yunus" Year. (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey website, 2021)

Deadly Struggles between Those in Decline and Those on the Rise

As the globalist imperialist system collapses, it seems intent on inflicting more destruction and deadly troubles on humanity. Such a "bloody force" that has lost its share of humanity and is hostile to society and nature can only be stopped by the combination of spiritual forces in the rising Asian civilization.

The tyrants of this imperialist system, who have always ended up withdrawing from the stage of history, do not feel any responsibility towards humanity and never hesitate to drag even their own nation into poverty and disasters.

Today, the BRI emerged at a time when humanity is under existential threat faced with uncertain disasters. Global imperialism, which colonized the world for 200 years and then turned the free market system into a "free oppression" system, will not hesitate to endanger the whole humanity and the Earth itself.

On the other hand, we see that Asian civilization is gradually uniting the oppressed and developing countries to challenge US global hegemony. All our efforts are to reduce the suffering that will be caused by the deadly struggle between those in decline and

those on the rise.

Undoubtedly, for this to happen, the unity of the leading Asian nations is necessary, regardless of language, religion, race, or colour. We must roll up our sleeves with Yunus' words of wisdom to build unity in the face of this destructive force that will lead our planet to total disaster.

A Century of Walking with Love on the Belt & Road

In the present century, humanity is faced with a global collapse and upheaval of greater scale than what happened in the era of Yunus. As the Atlantic exploitation period ended and the Asian sharing period began, the threat to humanity is still increasing.

At a time when the oppressed of the world are looking for ways to escape from the brutal grip of US imperialism, which is rapidly collapsing, China, as a pioneer of Emerging Asia, launched the BRI. This initiative is the largest and most comprehensive civilization project of the last 70 years led by a community of nations. It presents a sound solution to the economic, political, social, and cultural problems of the world that has reached a dead end on a global scale.



At the same time, this historical departure, which declared the end of imperialist hegemony, has generated hope for the oppressed and developing nations with its material and spiritual dimensions. The BRI will be strengthened primarily by the convergence of Asian nations with the love, tolerance, and peaceful feeling that they have accumulated throughout history.

This initiative, which forms the basis for the rise of civilization in Asia and takes development by sharing as a model, has been advancing rapidly despite many difficulties over the last couple of years. Undoubtedly, despite the deterioration of material life, we need humanity's spiritual heritage to ensure the success of the Asian new civilization. Yunus Emre shows us the right direction, the right path, and calls for friendship for all.

“Yunus Emre tells wisdom
To the wise one.
He is on the path with the initiated
Not with the one without the path.”

It is an urgent task to bring together the Belt & Road community with the same spiritual values as the ancient road paved by the great prophets who spoke to so many hearts throughout history. All the artists, writers, and poets of today should take on this responsibility. Making this path of love a path of solidarity and love to be entered voluntarily should be the goal of all poets.

Heartbeats in Ideas

If your ideas do not have heartbeats, think again! Ideas that do not have the warmth of heart and do not stimulate emotions will have a weak effect on action processes. It is only possible to hear a heartbeat when people get closer. See how Yunus Emre expresses this fact in wise words:

“Come, let us all be friends for once,
Let us make life easy on us,
Let us be lovers and loved ones,
The earth shall be left to no one.”

Evidently, the CCP's success is primarily based on its trust in the people, its integration with the people, and its commitment to popular culture. As in the case of the CCP, great revolutionary struggles are also great self-organizations in themselves. In the bloody, dark days of the age of Yunus Emre, he calls out to the public as follows:

“Yunus Emre says to you, pharisee,
Make the holy pilgrimage if need be
A hundred times-but if you ask me,
The visit to a heart is best of all.”

The great revolutionary leaders of humanity expressed this fact at every opportunity. For example, Chairman Mao Zedong stresses the need for literature and poetry for the success of the revolution: “To defeat the enemy, we must first rely on the armed army. But this army alone is not enough. In order to unite our ranks and defeat the enemy, we must necessarily have an army of culture.”

“Let us spread righteousness, goodness and humility,” says President Xi Jinping, a pioneer of the generational Road Initiative. Can Xi's ideas hear the heartbeat of unification? Yes. The Chinese leader says that, for success, it is necessary to win the people first.

Yunus Emre, from centuries ago, sends the following message of support to President Xi with wise words:

“Leave the duality and come to the unity.
The united souls do not wander in separation.”



Evidently, the CCP's success is primarily based on its trust in the people, its integration with the people, and its commitment to popular culture. (CGTN, 2019)

Dreaming of a “common future for all living beings”, Xi Jinping decries the virtues of unification instilled by Deep Chinese culture, saying, “the sublime mountains are the piling of Earth grains on top of each other, the raging rivers the gathering of drops.” Xi, the son of China, who describes his troubles to humanity in this form, feeds on 4,000 years of Chinese wisdom.

Revolutionary politics throughout history have achieved success commensurate with the strength of their bond with spiritual culture, especially in literature and poetry. Today, a revolutionary devoid of the spiritual energy created by art, literature, poetry, and music is unthinkable. The masses get their strength to stand and walk on the road from Yunus Emre.

The heartbeats in our thoughts are fed by our joy of living, our revolutionary simple life, and a vast world of love. At the age of 19, while giving “Revolutionary Culture and Art Seminars” to the youth, I used to talk about Yunus Emre as well as Nazım Hikmet. As I read the following lines of Yunus, which I wrote on the wall of my study room among the rug patterns, my admiration for the beauties of the world

increased and I was filled with the joy of living:

“This world is a young bride
dressed in bright red and green;
Look on and on,
you can't have enough of that lass”

Heart Leads Ways to Unity, Unity to Liveness

“I love you in depths beyond my soul” said Yunus Emre. “Whoever breaks a heart, breaks Allah” said Ahmet Yesevi. “Come, come again, whoever, whatever you may be, come!” said Mevlana Jaleddin Rumi. “Do not condemn any human being or any nation” said Hadji Bektash Veli. “My Kaaba is the human!” said Pir Sultan Abdal. Like many others, poet Erens and today's revolutionary poets walk the same path of love, the same reality, and the same struggle that humanity is heading towards. Like all the sages, Erens, dervishes of Anatolia, Yunus Emre finds the Salvation he seeks and the cure for the problems of society in the possibilities of humankind in great humanity itself:

“I searched and yearned a lot.
I sought the land and the sky.
I looked for and could not find,
I found it within the human soul.”

The essence of man is formed in the integrity of the material and spiritual existence of society. In this way, humanity transcends the difficulties of the material world through its feelings of solidarity, based on its spiritual world. The great spiritual values that societies need in difficult times are created by their own wise poets.

As I felt the light rising from Asia in my travels from Baku to China, and to the Philippines, I kept our Yunus Emre in mind. I had his dervish shadow everywhere. His wisdom and advice rang in my ears:

“Whatever you wish for yourself,
You wish the same for the strangers.
If there is any meaning in the four books,
This is what they denote.”

No matter how solid the economic and political foundations of this great initiative of the 21st century are, the established structure will not be strong enough unless there are strong artistic and cultural values in its mortar. Due to this necessity, there is a vital need for the art of Yunus Emre, the greatest poet of the Turkish language, which appeals to the hearts today as it was yesterday:

“I didn’t come to create any problems,
I’m only here to love.
A Heart makes a good home for the Friend.
I’ve come to build some hearts.”

In this area of great struggle, if the feelings of love in hearts, tolerance in consciousness, and solidarity in society are decimated, the work will become diffi-

cult and the obstacles laid between people in the past will block the path. To prevent this, Yunus’ poems will go on an expedition in the Belt Road:

“Come, o my brother, emulate the unity.
This unity breaks all the ill yearnings.
Could a cauldron boil by itself,
Unless there is fire all around it?”

No matter how strong the intellectual dimension of the Belt Road breakthrough is, the emotional dimension must also be strong. This, in turn, necessarily requires the convergence of nations in literature, fine arts, and all other cultural areas.

Yunus’ Walk Together on the Belt & Road

It is the responsibility of the bearers of humanity’s spiritual heritage to ensure that things go smoothly against all kinds of strife that can cause confusion, chaos, unrest, and divergence between leaders and countries in the Belt Road.

Yunus’ philosophy is robust enough to give no opportunity to those who target completely different religions and beliefs, those who work to disrupt peace and security, those who despise the beauty of the world and the wealth of the source of life, and those who provoke imperialist aggression. Yunus’ teachings are a cure for all kinds of corruption in the Belt Road. For this reason, Yunus Emre will always be needed on the long path of humanity towards a classless society.

“Our name is ‘squalid’,
Our enemy is hatred,
We hold no hate for anyone,
All the people are the same to us!”

Yunus Emre addresses and warns humanity from within the deep culture of the Islamic religion against

the loveless, the disrespectful, the darkened, the selfish, the separatists, the despised, and the alienating:

“Work, earn, eat and give away,
Reach a soul for yourself,
Since visiting a soul,
is preferable to a hundred visit to Kaaba.”

Yunus knocks down the selfishness that capitalism has turned into a “virtue” with an ingenious move of words. Yunus, the poet of immortal verbal wisdom that embraces human beings with human beings, reconciles humanity with nature, and brings human beings to universal justice, expresses with a high morality on how to share the worldly life and worldly blessings with all. Yunus reclaims the world and humanity as a whole:

“The world is my true ration
Its people are my nation”

“Here we are leaving this world:
To all who stay there, greetings”

Look how kindly Yunus chooses his words: he does not say, “The world is my property,” he says, “The world is my sustenance,” and integrates the personal share of sustenance offered to him with the public share. In his worldview, no one has superiority over anyone. In a way, this is the message of the future classless society.

Conclusion: Let’s Hug Each Other

In this fiery process, the vital importance of the generational Path Initiative, which China offers to humanity, stems from the need for unification. If the material and spiritual energy of the Belt and Road is to be active for the oppressed and developing countries, this initiative should also have a spiritual pile beyond



Fortunately, this heartbeat is Yunus Emre’s. Let our path be clear with poems, folk songs, and hymns. (CGTN, 2021)

its economic development feature.

It is clear that globalist imperialism, led by the United States, is trying to overturn the tables since it is the losing party in the global economy. For this reason, the oppressed and developing states must pile together with the combined material and spiritual power necessary to deter the aggressor. Our duty will be to postpone or stop this great danger of war in the name of humanity.

As the world shakes violently in the process of collapse and ascension, it is imperative that humanity sticks together to stay afloat. Nations that hold on to each other will not be destroyed; they will survive. On the BRI’s paths that cross Asia and Eurasia, yesterday’s Yunus and today’s Yunus should set out arm in arm.

On this path, there is cooperation, sharing, and solidarity. This is the path of permanent revolutions in the Asian Age. In this way, the language of tolerance, love, and heart is being spoken. It is the path towards the salvation of great humanity. Listen with your heart and you will hear the heartbeat of the Belt & Road. Fortunately, this heartbeat is Yunus Emre’s. Let our path be clear with poems, folk songs, and hymns.

“My Soul Has Caught Your Scent”: Verses By Yûnus Emre, (Anatolia, XIII-XIV Centuries)



GIAMPIERO BELLINGERI

Prof.Dr.

Giampiero Bellingeri is a retired scholar from Venice, Italy. The lines of research followed by G. Bellingeri are: Turkology, Turkish literature in Iran and Transcaucasia (16th-20th century); the Turkish-Venetian cultural relations in the 18th century; Turkish-Russian literary relations, in the Caucasus and in the Central Asian steppes, in the Tsarist and Soviet times; investigations into the literary texts in Ottoman Turkish present in the libraries and archives of Venice (the Turkish glosses of Alexander's novel from the Hellenic Institute of Venice; the Turkish-Venetian cordiform globe by “Hajji Ahmed” from the Marciana National Library); the descriptions and news of the Turkish peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia in Venetian sources after Marco Polo and until the fall of the Republic of Venice (all reflected in his publications); as well as contemporary Turkish literature, of which among other things he has translated and made known in Italy authors such as Orhan Pamuk, Yahya Kemal, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Orhan Veli, Mario Levi, Sunay Akın, Oğuz Atay, Tezer Özlu, Sait Faik Abasiyanık.

Email: giambell@unive.it

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3015-7522>

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ABSTRACT

The year 1321 was the date of the departure of two giant poets from this world at the two most important points of the Silk Road. Dante Alighieri in Italy and Yunus Emre in Anatolia said goodbye to this problematic world together, after a long and fruitful lives. Both were poets with deep feelings about the meaning of life, what it means to be human, and the afterlife. The year 2021 is the 700th anniversary of their farewell to this world. While the Italian nation celebrates the life of Dante, Turkey is busy with the celebrations of Yunus Emre and the Turkish Language. Playing an important role in bringing these celebrations together, Prof. Giampiero Bellingeri is an important academic who has spent a lifetime on Turkish culture. We hope that this essay, submitted by Prof. Bellingeri at the event organized by Yunus Emre Institute in Rome in 2019, comparing Dante and Yunus Emre will greatly enrich the Yunus Emre special issue of BRIQ. (BRIQ )

YÛNUS IS A TURKISH VARIANT OF THE name ‘Jonah’/‘Jonas’, the prophet who finds himself out of divine goodness on the shore of a landing between one sea and another, after a journey and a stay in the belly of a whale. “Our Yunus” (Yunus Emre), according to the most widespread rumour about his origins, was born in central Anatolia, in Sarıköy / Eskişehir, in the second half of the 13th century and died in 1321. He is known for always finding himself on the “lip” between one coast and another. On the lip between the opposite shores of two worlds, but, specifically, on the land of Anatolia that in his time suffered so many upheavals: the disruptive coming of the Mongols (1243), the weakening of the Seljuk Turks (who arrived from the south-eastern shores of the Caspian, through Iran, 11th-12th centuries), and the collapse, now begun, of the Byzantines.

For the Turks/the Turkmen, it was a troubled time. Arriving in Anatolia, they imposed a demanding presence on the local populations, who were based there for centuries as subjects, first to the emperors of Byzantium, then to new local princes. In the process of settlement, the Turks suffered the shocks and consequences caused by raids and invasions. They were dominant, of course, during the process of Turkishization and Islamization of that area, but still found companionship through misfortune with the

local people and Christians.

Yunus Emre, the “troubadour”, believed in God and was agitated by passion. To remedy this, he sung with the passion of his own wanderings through the territories and through the itineraries of his faith. According to the custom of the adepts, he carried out humble tasks for the brotherhoods at the convent of Taptuk Emre. After forty years of service at the convent, he evolved and got emancipated by the master Taptuk. Freed from the service, his language melted, disseminated sounds and grains of poetry, until everything became fixed on paper sheets. According to the tradition, these sheets were set on fire by jealous rivals. Conceivably, it is in that thick smoke of his own burnt verses that Yunus finds himself immersed, as he sighs in one of his verses:

“(…) Let me burn in a thick smoke, and that in that smoke I sing like a nightingale,

And let me appear in the friendly garden, always open, and never faded, never ...”

(Toprak, 1960: 67)

There are two works attributed to Yunus: a *Divân* / “Canzoniere” and a “Book of Advice”, *Risâletü'n Nus-khiyye*, which can be placed around 1307. From this last work we quote the opening and follow it with an essay elaborating on how the formal and expressive setting differs from that of the hymns chosen below:

“In the name of God, the Clement, the Merciful:
See the arcane prodigy, it is the work of the Lord,
To fire and water and earth and air he said “be!”
In the name of God he ruled, and land is ready there,
And behold the mountain erupts and immediately
rises.

Of earth and water he kneads a rudiment at the base,
And he names him, he imposes the name of Adam
on him.

A breath of wind, a shiver runs through the dough,
From there comes, you know, the offspring of Adam.
And He comes, places it to cook, and when
It is cooked well, the spirit is infused into that body,
With the injunction that the soul penetrate it:
Supreme order is that, ethereal care!

The soul takes on an effigy, it is filled with light,
And the semblance proclaims itself grateful, and de
ferential.

Praise be to that majestic Power:
You know and you can do a thousand others just
like me.

There are four intrinsic qualities of clay:
Firmness, good disposition, trust in God, and benefit.

Four states that came with water:
Purity, profusion, grace in unity ...”
(Tatçı, 1991: 27-29).

The “Book of Advice” is didactic by nature and by genre, and in it we do not find those thrills so abundant in the hymns to Love. Both are composite books, open to continuous insertions, variations, and external “contributions”. It is a corpus that is poetic, physical, ardent, indefinite, and leavening. We can see a kind of mysticism animated by Neo-Platonism, which receives and captures the reflections, the Light of God in creation, in the phenomenal world. From here, the poor dervish, cultivating himself, is seeking himself in an inner journey under the guidance of the Master and aspires to divine Beauty and Love as mirrors to each other. He is always obeying the Law and



Prophet Jonah/'Jonas' finds himself out of divine goodness after a journey and a stay in the belly of a whale. (Flickr, 2018)

proceeding on the Way, the one that leads to Knowledge and draws on the mysterious supreme Truth with immersion and self-forgetfulness.

Yunus’ journey takes place among the disasters, events, and general struggles of the Turks and populations who live and suffer in those places he travelled. He embraces the pain and sorrow of human beings: creating a universal drama rather than an exaltation of Turkishness and Islam, at that time surely victorious and fighting for expansion.

“Travails” are a polysemous concept that in some hegemonic idioms means “journey”. Similarly, a Turkish exhortation says, “the traveller must set out on his way”, on such a journey where the only companion along the hard way is fatigue, which remains faithful until the loss of one’s own shadow. The way is not drawn straight, it is traced in a tortuous way and the destination is reached by narrow paths.

Along those rough paths, one could meet other people, equally lost and disoriented. The verses speak as if they were disoriented themselves – they embody an existential and human condition expressed in verse, in lines, in stylistic registers, in human languages. Languages differ in words, but not so much in the foreshortening of language, which follows curves, road sections, which are by fate and mind summoned to touch and cross each other. Finally, the meanings convey into common furrows:

“We now were going over the lonely plain
as one who to a road he lost returns
and, till he find it, seems to go in vain.”

(Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, Part II-Purgatory, line:118-120, see Dante, 2013: 426)

In those times, poets shared more than a few analogies. Thus, the images of Yunus and Dante can be compared and (depending on the parameters, alignments, and weights attributed, with the measures applied to the judgments on their personalities) projected onto each other as earthly and sanguine human beings, at least for this verse that articulates the breakthrough between asceticism and moralism.

Both wander in exile on a mission. They are pilgrims, sharing tensions and intentions of the terrestrial and earthly language, which provides life and meaning to the soul, allowing them to physically furrow it by marking and marking it. They teach the soul to speak a language that is alive and “vernacular”.

Yunus’ humanism does not and must not resemble Western humanism, in which love for man is limited to man, making it blasphemous and incomplete through its failure to recognise the true Love for the Friend, the Lord, the Truth!

Yunus’ language can appear simple, but it is not deprived of concepts or imagery capable to perceive precisely sensitive figures. He is not only conceptual either, for he is an interpreter and a composer of prayers, poems, and invocations. He avoids euphemisms, the flattening of discourse, by using rough-spoken language infused with precise terminology, technicality, and philosophical conceptuality. His high hymns are raised on a harsh path leaning towards doctrinaire models already made solemn in Arabic and Persian, standing alternative to them and able to thrive, fluent-

ly, in their own lexicon, the Turkish linguistic lineage that dates back to saint Ahmed Yasevi’s (Central Asia, 12th century) textual and poetic applications.

Our Yunus Emre is quite modern in this sense; he gathers and welcome other “Emre” under his cloak, following a practice of Islamic propaganda of religion, but, even more, of a faith. In recent Turkish history, Yunus has become a flexible bow, bent to different directions of the arrow: nationalistic, republican (for the “pure” language, not corrupted by Arab-Persian formulations, which were once thought to be “foreign” to authentic Turkishness), secular, humanistic, and Islamic.

For the supporters of this essential religious aspect, Yunus’ humanism does not and must not resemble Western humanism, in which love for man is limited to man, making it blasphemous and incomplete through its failure to recognise the true Love for the Friend, the Lord, the Truth! In fact, Yunus dissolves the literary language of Western Turkish, of Rûm / Rome (the second Rome, once Byzantine, then Ottoman, Rûm; Anatolia was renamed Rûm from Arabs and Persians, neighbours of the Greek-Roman “Romei”, and later of the Turkish-Ottoman “Rûmîs”), and the affectionate references, the tributes of gratitude, of immediate sympathy expressed to him by the greatest contemporary poets that are symptomatic, explicit.

On our side, we remain fixed to observe the sign, or the omen of a new celestial vault, compared to this one here, as old as the mutable, treacherous, and elusive earth. The sky, even in these Turkish verses of Yunus, protects and envelops in faith, redemption, and remission the derelict bodies of pilgrims, orthodox, tinged with heresy or linked to Haji Bektash-i Veli (mystical master of the 13th century). In that great flowing of good, ideas of the “kavşak” - a word that has its roots in “reuniting” after the detachment - there are many lost and stunned dervish-singers.

At the crossroads of journeys where thoughts take off, where plenty are the meetings and gatherings, and where perhaps a woman appears to help the needy (“moon that rises from the earth,” says Yunus) -the image of the moon rising from the earth translates Yunus’ yearning for a higher love.

“Give me a love, oh my Lord, that where I am, my sense will kidnap me, on the spot,

Let me lose myself, let me go round and round looking for myself, without being able to find myself again,

To me, take myself away, make me empty, and in the meantime fill me with yourself ...”

(Toprak, 1960)

This we read in one of his vows, expressed between purification, intoxication, and reward. Now, could it not also be that in this portentous transmutation of semblances, invoked by certain poets, mystics or not, we end up increasingly resembling each other, men and God, earth and heaven? In short, when that heavy and now cleansed “I” comes out of itself, does it lighten so much it is able to join the other “I” of purified brothers to stand together on the steps of a Staircase?¹ Once the ancient, decrepit, and worn-out features have been lost and transmuted, wouldn’t it be possible to find oneself under, or with, longed-for shared features? Those that would be found in the confusion and bewilderment of minds?

That would be a clumsy approach, almost an imitation of Yunus’ language in the echo of a very high Dante: both “unable” - mixed with a multitude of followers and self-styled aphasics - to express the metaphysics of divine light, made blessed through their inability to express “vulgarly” or popularly the metaphysics of divine light:



Dante Alighieri. (Pixabay, 2020)

“Even such was I at that new apparition;
I wished to see how the image to the circle
Conformed itself, and how it there finds place;
But my own wings were not enough for this,
Had it not been that then my mind there smote
A flash of lightning, wherein came its wish.
Here vigour failed the lofty fantasy:”

(Dante, Paradise, Canto XXXIII, line: 136-142, see Dante, 2013: 1007)

Therefore, Dante’s height and Yunus’s poetic impulses demonstrate the qualities of humility and humbleness required when dealing with the divine revelation: they both belong to a monotheistic inheritance. Just when the weakening of the imagination is declared, the strength to approach the most difficult expressions related to the contemplation of the essence of God take place:

“O how all speech is feeble and falls short
Of my conceit, and this to what I saw is such
'tis not enough to call it little!”

(Dante, Paradise, Canto XXXIII, line: 121-122, see Dante, 2013: 1007).

¹ This is a reference to the Book of the Ladder of Mohammed (Kitab al-Miraj), a well-known work for the questions that its discovery raised decades ago among scholars of Dante, Arabists, and philologists. It is a famous and popular Arabic tale with great implications for the culture, the troubadour, and the mystical, religious, and literary expressions of southern Europe. The Book narrates the journey of the Prophet Mohammed, led by the archangel Gabriel, to Heaven and Hell. The work, translated from Arabic into Spanish by the Jewish scientist Abraham Elfaquim, was then rendered in Latin and French by Bonaventure of Siena, secretary of King Alfonso X, “the Wise”. Dante could have known this book thanks to Brunetto Latini. Hence possibly the analogies between “La Scala” and “the Comedy”, and between the accents of Yunus and Dante, who was never foreign to Muslim culture, or to that culture that has been revisited and enriched by Muslims.

After all, even though Dante paints a murky picture of the Prophet of Islam, he knew, in that cultural climate, how to outline his own discourse by following and considering the thoughts of the philosophers and Muslim poets who return to the tested sensibilities and reworked what they borrowed from Christians and the first Jewish monotheists. In this case, as already mentioned, we refer to the path traced of the nocturnal ascents to heaven, to Paradise, on the Staircase structured by the steps on which the angels stand out in order. Yunus' leaps of love move along the air streams of this earthly climate where moral re-education takes place from the very modest yet shiny sod.

They are poetic leaps towards God who fills with immensity the meaning of the inadequate word, the meaning of the language of love spoken down here on earth, from the earth. His poetic raving, sensible even in his raptures, is never in vain: for they flow like an intricate path, troubled, leading far away. The meeting of the dazzling thoughts, of the enlightened essences of such individuals (who walk on the thin and sharp bridge that connects the journey to exile and climb the ladder that rests on the ground, on the rock, rising to the sky), would have occurred along the lines of the vision of poets. With fixed gaze, they aimed at God and, when struck by lightning, resembled and blended in with the divine.

"That Circle which appeared to be conceived within Thyself as a Reflected Light,

when somewhat contemplated by mine eyes, within Itself, of Its own very colour,

to me seemed painted with our Human Form; whence wholly set upon It was my gaze"

(Dante, Paradise, Canto XXXIII, line: 127-132, see Dante, 2013: 1007).

Immersed in the light, which is colouring them with its own uniquely composed colour, the poets were transfigured by its own essence, as they continued to talk to each other about Love, calling us to listen.

Thus, Jonah / Ionas, the prophet who finds himself out

of divine goodness on the shore of a landing between one sea and another, after a journey and a stay in the belly of the whale, would come to colour himself of the same light that colours Yunus and Dante.

For "That Circle which appeared to be conceived within Thyself as a Reflected Light,

when somewhat contemplated by mine eyes, within Itself, of Its own very colour,

to me seemed painted with our Human Form; whence wholly set upon It was my gaze"

(Dante, Paradise, Canto XXXIII, line: 127-132, see Dante, 2013: 1007)

Now let's move on to some Choices from the Songbook. (Mini-Antoloji)

Give Me A Love

Give me a love, oh my Lord, that where I am, my wits steal me, on the spot,
Make me lose myself, go round and round looking for me, without being able to find me again,
To me, take myself away, make me empty, and in the meantime fill me with yourself,
So dazed you have to reduce me, confused to the point that I no longer distinguish the night and the day,
I will nourish only one desire of you, until the appearance is lost and transmuted,
The soul has caught your scent, from now on it turns its back on the world,
Your place is never clear, and here I am wandering among the flames,
My liver drowns in my blood, how could I calm the whine ?!
Let me burn in a thick smoke, and that in that smoke I sing like a nightingale,
And let me pop up in the friendly garden, always open, and never faded, never.
If I express that state of mine to others, there are those who insult me, and there are those who laugh, insolent,
At least I burn in the pains, without humiliating myself to tell,



Martyr I am, lift me up that gallows, and there you
manifest yourself,
I sacrifice this soul, my love I never deny,
Love is the cure for this pain, on the way of love
I pour out life,
Such is the story, always, of Yunus, a single instant
never devoid of love.
(Toprak, 1960)

Around the Tombs

Around the tombs in the morning, fragile I have seen
At dawn those bodies all mixed in black earth.
The limbs are undone, they lie dark in those holes,
The vein dried up, the blood ran away, and a rotten
shroud.
Ruined tombs, full of rubble, knocked down walls,
Far from pity, I have seen very crude and miserable
scenes.
Deserted mountain pastures in spring, desolate shelters
in winter,
I have seen tongues rusted, and silent, heavy in the mouth.
Who I have seen sunk in pleasures, who delighted in
feasts,
And endless suffering, and the days twisted into the night.
Those black eyes I saw, frozen, faces of bloodless moon,
Ghostly hands, stretched out from underground to
pick roses.
Twisted garments, meats thrown to the bottom of the pits,
I have seen mothers offended and necks fooled.
Those who cry and raise complaints, imprint torments
on the soul
The demons, and the graves, fire around, and the
gushing smoke I saw.
And here is Yunus, announcing when and where he
saw this,
I was steadfast in mind, now I falter at what I saw, at
that horror.
(Gölpınarlı, 1943: 119)

Love of You Took Me Away From Me

Love of you took me away from me,
For me I feel the need for you,
A fire burns me day and night,
For me I feel the need for you.

I do not rejoice in abundance,
Nor am I disheartened by misery,
In your love I console myself,
For me I feel the need for you.

Love of you loses lovers,
Drown them in the sea of love,
He imbues them with his presence,
For me I feel the need for you.

I will drink some wine of passion,
I will be Mechnun, that Fool in the woods,
You are the cure, night and day,
For me I feel the need for you.

Sufis need a meeting,
To the confreres from the afterlife,
To the crazy darkness of Leyla,
For me I feel the need for you.

If one day he comes and I fall killed,
Spread my ashes in the sky,
The earth will then invoke:
For me I feel the need for you.

It is said Empyrean and Paradise,
Scattered pergolas and a few Huri,
Take them as well whoever wants them,
For me I feel the need for you.

So Yunus is my name,
Higher and higher the fire blazes,
And between the two worlds I aspire to you,
For me I feel the need for you.
(Gölpınarlı, 1943: 98)

Does It Ever Exist in This Country

Does it ever exist in this country
A bewildered equal to me?
Burned in the chest, eyes in tears,
A bewildered equal to me?

I wander down to Syria, to Anatolia,
I go around the districts higher up there,
How much I have searched, and how much in vain,
A bewildered equal to me!

That no one is ever lost,
Never nostalgia has to burn it,
That nobody, my Lord,
You are as lost as I am!

The language speaks, the eye cries,
The hearts of the petty ones light up,
And I would also be a star in the sky:
A bewildered equal to me!

I ignite, I consume myself in the embers,
The end will come, one day I die,
And I find myself in the chest, in the sepulcher
A bewildered equal to me!

They will say: - he's dead, poor fellow!
In three days they will know,
They will wash it in cold water,
A bewildered equal to me!
(Masala, 2001: 80-81)

(Here are some examples of "absurd" expressions of Yunus and the dervishes, capable of shaking, rippling, and undermining flat logic; perhaps in the sign of the changing, elusive divinity?)

Hixed on the Branch of the Plum

Hixed on the branch of the plum
I eat grapes in bunches,
The master yells at me:
Why are you eating me nuts?! (...)

I dropped a nice brick into the pot
That cooks in the fresh breath of the bora,
Who then asks me: -What is it?
I hasten to immediately say why (...)

The wing of a sparrow I posed
Above forty wagons all lined up,
Pair of oxen pull them not know:
Such a decree of fate.

The fly, you know? an eagle shakes you,
On the ground he slams it well, and replies,
It's not a lie, it's all true:
I saw that whirlwind rise in the air (...).

Yunus arcane words pronounced,
They accept a comparison with no other,
Among the pedantic / hypocrites gathered in the
Grand Council
Your face keeps the meaning secret.
(Gölpınarlı, 2006: 354)



The poor dervish, cultivating himself, is seeking himself in an inner journey under the guidance of the Master and aspires to divine Beauty and Love as mirrors to each other. (Pixabay, 2015)

Vain Those Days Are Gone

Vain those days are gone, my life, what will I ever do with you?

I have not made myself rich with you, my life, what will I ever do with you?

As soon as I arrive I am, and I run away, unaware, without a worry,

Not a thought for that eternal goodbye, my life, what will I ever do with you?

Evil acts and good deeds, let loose and finally tear the thread of existence,

Distorted facial features, counterfeit, my life, what will I ever do with you?

Without a return you will pass, and if you ever return, you will not find me,

Here it is, vain, the patrimony of my self, oh my life, what will I ever do with you?

I trusted so much in you, in an overwhelming trust, Is that all that's left to me, my life, what am I ever going to do with you?

Yunus petty, you will leave, bewildered, the departure very miserable,

You'll be left alone in regret, my life, what will I ever do with you?

(Gölpınarlı, 1943: 433; Masala, 2001: 100-101)

Comes as This Life Passes

Comes as this life passes, a breath, a rush of
wind,

And it seems to me equal to that throb of the eye
and eyelid that goes down.

God knows this saying, guest is the soul in the
body,

One day she comes and she comes out, the bird
flits from the cage.

The child to man, poor man, believes himself to
be a great sower,

One sprouts it, the other is lost, when you sow
the seeds to the earth.

In this world for something I feel that I am bur-
ning inside a stake;

Young man that death crushes: I think of the
blade, of the green stem.

When you approach some sick person, if you
give them a sip of water,

A day will come of reward, divine juice to your
lips.

And if you see a beggar, and if you cover him
with a rag,

Tomorrow he certainly reciprocates, heavenly
stole cut out for you.

Yunus Emre, in this world, there are two left,
apparently,

It will be the saints Elijah and Hızır: They have
drawn the Water of Life.

(Gölpınarlı, 2006: 75)

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China's Cultural Communication with the Middle East under the BRI: Assessment and Prospects



LIANG YINGYING

Department of History, College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University

Liang Yingying is a PhD candidate in Global Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and a research assistant of the Center for Turkish Studies at Shanghai University. From 2021, she will be a visiting scholar of Kapadokya University with the support of the China Scholarship Council. Her research field is Turkey's Democratization, Party Politics, and Transcultural Communication.

Email: LiangYingying39@163.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7739-0356>

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ABSTRACT

Since China put forward the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the BRI has achieved significant progress, especially in the Middle East. China's cultural communication with the Middle East is the emotional glue that brings both sides together by building trust and dispelling doubts. Evidence in the statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, the communication by the media, the development of Confucius Institutes, and the cooperation between different NGOs, China shows the fact that the BRI is being built jointly with the Middle East. Moreover, the Middle East's unique geopolitical situation and cultural differences require China's cultural communication with states in the region to be done with Chinese characteristics. With descriptive case study methodology, this article revolves around these questions: How do China's cultural communication mechanisms work? Why does China's cultural communication play an essential role in the Middle East under the BRI? What is its characteristic? To answer these questions, the article is structured in three parts. The first part will outline the role of cultural communication in Chinese diplomacy, based on cultural communication, to jointly build the BRI. The second part will focus on Chinese communication with the Middle East through cooperation related to the pandemic, tourism, Confucius Institutes, and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. The third part will highlight China's cultural communication with Chinese characteristics in the Middle East.

Keywords: BRI, Chinese diplomacy, Chinese characteristics, cultural communication, Middle East.

Introduction

HISTORICAL CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE East have long complicated matters. Especially after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the fundamental interests of the region became more complex and changeable, reflecting the differences between religious sects and cultures as well as the power competition between global and regional powers in the region. All these situations have challenged the smooth implementation and development of the BRI in the Middle East. From 24-30th March 2021, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, visited six countries in the Middle East to put forward a Five-Point Initiative to achieve security and stability. Wang Yi emphasized

the need to change traditional thinking, observe the Middle East from the perspective of weakened geopolitics, strengthen partnerships, and respect the Middle East's characteristics, models, and roads (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021). The Chinese media also alleges that the hour hand of China's diplomacy now points to "Middle East time" (Qin, 2021). China adheres to cultural communication as a link to other regions and strives to promote the exchange and integration of different civilizations in the Middle East. It has contributed much to reducing geopolitical and economic factors, and increasing the dialogue between civilizations through its commitment to the in-depth development of the BRI in the Middle East.

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中国·北京
بجين الصين



Ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in Beijing, capital of China, July 10, 2018. (Xinhua, 2018)

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The Position of Cultural Communication in China's Diplomacy

The formation and development of culture are inseparable from the practice of communication. Culture, in a broad sense, not only refers to spiritual products but also material products. Historically, in Alexander the Great's eastern expeditions, the expansion of the Roman Empire, the Arab Empire's "jihad"

and Crusades, Zhang Qian's mission to the Western Regions, Marco Polo's eastward journey to the discovery of the New World by Columbus, and Zheng He's voyages to the West, exchanges were the driving force and motivator in forming culture (Ran & Hong, 2018). Human history is a magnificent picture of mutual exchange, mutual learning, and integration of different civilizations. China upholds the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits and insists on building the BRI into a civilized road. China advocates the notion that exchanges should transcend the barriers of civilizations, that mutual learning should transcend the conflicts of civilizations, and that the coexistence of civilizations should transcend the superiority of civilizations (Ping, 2017). In recent years, China has focused on improving cultural exchange and cooperation mechanisms and platforms, building cultural exchange brands, promoting the prosperity and development of cultural industries, and improving cultural trade cooperation. A community with a shared future will promote the high-quality construction of the BRI (Liang & Hong, 2018) Under the BRI, China's foreign cultural exchanges benefit the overall diplomatic strategy. China's overall diplomacy includes public diplomacy and government diplomacy.

Government diplomacy represents official exchanges between state leaders, between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which represents national sovereignty, and the corresponding departments of foreign governments. Public diplomacy refers to various ways for foreign exchanges to take place in addition to government diplomacy. The most significant difference between public diplomacy and government diplomacy is whether the participants can handle foreign affairs on behalf of the country. Public diplomacy actors include governments, civil organizations, social groups, social elites, and the public at multiple levels. Although there is no internationally accepted definition of public diplomacy, there are three points in common:

- The government leads it.
- It targets foreign governments and the foreign public.
- It aims to improve the image of the country (Zheng, 2011).

The BRI runs through Asia, Europe, and Africa, and its scale of construction framework and investment strength reveals the fact that relying on any diplomatic method alone is not the best choice. Only by being good at combining the two forms of government diplomacy and public diplomacy can we achieve political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural tolerance through the BRI and create a community of interests, destiny, and responsibility.

Friendship, which derives from close contact between the people, holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. People-to-people connectivity is the social foundation and public opinion foundation of the BRI. In March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission of China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce of China jointly “issued a white paper entitled, *Joining Hands to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt and a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road – Vision and Actions*. It

calls for policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people ties (a five-pronged approach)” (The State Council Information Office the People’s Republic of China, 2020: par. 2). The smooth implementation of the first four-pronged approach cannot be realized without the people’s support. China strengthens friendly exchanges between people and expects to enhance mutual understanding and traditional friendship by laying a solid social foundation for regional cooperation. These people-to-people ties have attracted widespread attention from domestic and foreign media and scholars.

Culture is the carrier of people-to-people communication, which is why cultural communication is an effective way to promote people-to-people communication

Culture is the carrier of people-to-people communication, which is why cultural communication is an effective way to promote people-to-people communication (Xiu, 2020). At the Opening Ceremony of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, China’s President Xi stated that “We need to build bridges for exchanges and mutual learning among different cultures, deepen cooperation in education, science, culture, sports, tourism, health, and archaeology, strengthen exchanges between parliaments, political parties, and non-governmental organizations, and exchanges between women, young people and people with disabilities to facilitate multi-faceted people-to-people exchanges” (Ping, 2021). As of April 2021, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents for the joint construction of the BRI with 140 countries and 31 international organizations (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2021).

The BRI has become a popular international public product and the largest cooperation platform.

The Practice of China's Cultural Communication in Middle East Diplomacy

The Middle East was once a civilization highland in human history, but it has turned into a “safe depression” in the world's eyes due to long-term regional conflicts and turbulence. Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2010, this change has not only led to political upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, but also from West to East, from Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan in North Africa to Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine in West Asia. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, and more than 20 countries in the Arab world in the Middle East, except Qatar and the UAE, all have different degrees of social and political turbulence (Hua, 2018). Such widespread social and political change will profoundly and extensively affect internal and external politics in regional countries, thereby reshaping international relations in the Middle East and even the world. Seeking change and governance amidst chaos has become the urgent desire of the governments and people of Middle Eastern countries.

China's Middle East diplomacy in the new era requires an understanding of the Middle East's issues to shift from emphasizing conflicts and contradictions in the past to the emphasis on governance and development nowadays (Jian, 2016). China's Middle East diplomacy targets are directed primarily towards 23 countries in West Asia and North Africa, of which 19 are Arab countries. Arab countries make up the main body of the Middle East countries. The BRI is highly compatible with the development strategies of Arab countries, such as Morocco's “Economic Takeoff Plan” and “2014--2020 Industrial Revitalization Plan Development Strategy”, Saudi Arabia's “Vision 2030”, the UAE's “2030 Industri-

al Development Strategy”, Qatar's “2030 National Vision”, Bahrain's “2030 Economic Development Vision”, Egypt's “2030 Vision Sustainable Development Strategy”, Kuwait's “2035 New Kuwait”, Oman's “2040 Vision”, and other national mid-term or long-term development strategies. They are all committed to solving the “governance deficit” plaguing Arab countries, such as a single economic structure, lagging industrial development, and high unemployment of youth (Zhang, 2019)



The Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building in the UAE, displayed encouraging slogans such as “Come on, Wuhan!” (Wūhàn jiāyóu!). (Xinhua, 2020)

First, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China and the Middle Eastern countries joined hands to fight the pandemic, deepening their friendship in response to the public health crisis. It not only enhanced mutual trust but also opened up new areas of cooperation, culminating in China and the Middle Eastern countries reaching an agreement on vaccine research and development cooperation. King Salman of Saudi Arabia was the first foreign head of state to call President Xi Jinping to support China's fight against the pandemic. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Zarif, was the first foreign minister to support China's fight against the pandemic openly.

The Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building in the UAE, displayed encouraging slogans such as "Come on, Wuhan!" (WUhàn jiāyóu!). Turkey was one of the first countries to provide medical assistance to China, and President Erdogan even broadcasted the vaccination process on live television. These actions deeply moved the Chinese people during their most challenging moments.

After the outbreak of pandemic in the Middle East, China promptly provided a large number of anti-viral materials to regional countries and dispatched more than one hundred medical expert teams to 9 countries in the region. More than 60 video conferences with health experts have been held in countries in the same region. According to the information released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Administration of Customs, China has provided more than 500 million doses of vaccines to more than 100 countries and international organizations around the world, equivalent to one-sixth of the total global vaccine production. In addition, the Chinese government also supports Chinese vaccine companies in technology transfer to developing countries. Currently, they have launched cooperative production with Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey, the UAE, and Egypt (Feng & Lin, 2021).

In response to Western accusations of China's "vaccine diplomacy", Turkey's Ambassador to China, Abdulkadir Emin Önen, said Turkey strives to maintain a close dialogue with China on vaccine production and supply. He also highlighted that every country should carry out vaccine cooperation, and diplomacy should be contributed to a global fight against the pandemic. Turkey's President Erdogan has also repeatedly emphasized that political and commercial interests should be put aside from vaccine affairs and that vaccines should be regarded as human public property (Feng & Lin, 2021). To promote the availability and affordability of vaccines in developing countries, China is now

taking concrete actions to promote the fair and reasonable distribution of global vaccines and earnestly implements its solemn commitment to make vaccines a global public product.

Tourism plays a unique role in promoting unimpeded trade and people-to-people bonds in countries along the route.

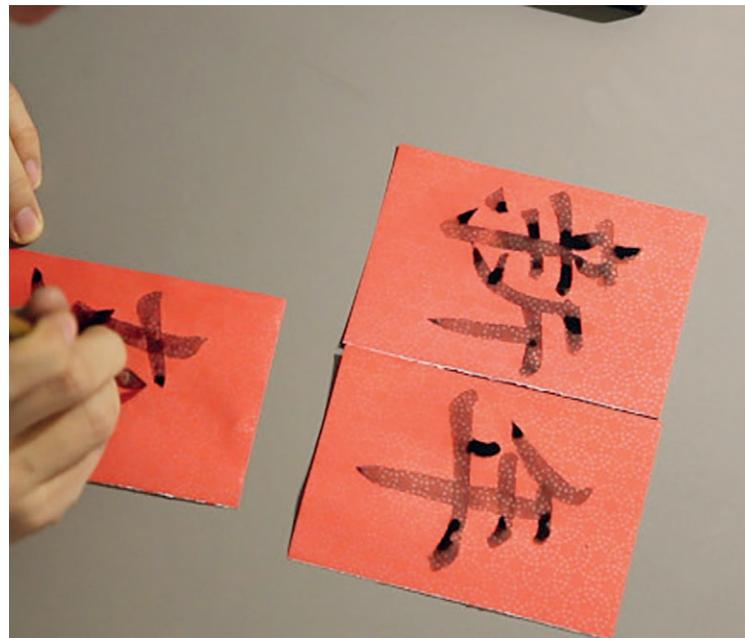
Second, tourism is a leading industry for China to promote the BRI's establishment. It plays a unique role in promoting unimpeded trade and people-to-people bonds in countries along the route. At the tourist source markets, both China and the Middle East countries have great potential for tourism development. According to the China National Tourism Administration, during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, China would transport 150 million Chinese tourists and 200 billion U.S. dollars into tourism consumption to countries along the BRI (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Moreover, the cooperation between China and the Middle East in the Islamic tourism industry has also enhanced both side's cultural awareness. By strengthening cooperation with multinational tourism groups in Middle Eastern countries, China is steadily improving domestic Islamic tourism infrastructure. In addition, China and the Arab countries cooperate in tourism with information technology, which mainly includes two major areas: Tourism cooperation on the internet and the joint construction and sharing of tourism information (Xiao, 2016). Internet technology has an important impact on the tourism industry, and internet-based tourism information services have become an essential means of global tourism business development and tourism marketing, especially in the pandemic period.

Third, the Confucius Institute, as a language institution, cultural institution, and scientific research institution, carries the task of introducing the Chinese language to the world, disseminating Chinese culture, and enhancing exchanges between different cultures. It plays an essential role in Chinese cultural exchanges with the Middle East.

The first Confucius Institute to open in the Middle East was at St. Joseph's University in Lebanon in 2007. In 2018, the development of Chinese in Turkey had moved from a niche to the public. The Turkish Ministry of Education decided to offer optional Chinese courses in Turkish junior high schools in the 2018 academic year; Turkey's Ankara University and Erciyes University even established a Department of Sinology (Yang & Chun, 2018). In the 2020-2021 academic year, the UAE Chinese Language Teaching Program offers Chinese courses in 119 public schools, with 210 Chinese teachers on the job and 31,538 Chinese learners, accounting for 10% of the total number of students in public schools. The UAE became the first Arabic-speaking country to incorporate Chinese into its national education system. 70 countries worldwide have included Chinese in their national education systems (The Centre for Language Education and Cooperation, 2020). In 2002, the Confucius Institute established the first "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign College Students. It has run continuously for almost 20 years, and tens of thousands of contestants from more than 70 countries participate in the competition.

"Chinese mania" is sweeping the world. Although the development of the tourism industry has not fully recovered from the pandemic, the "mania" driven by the considerable tourism market potential has not been affected by this. At present, there are approximately 25 million people outside of China who are learning Chinese, and the cumulative num-

ber of people learning and using Chinese is nearly 200 million (People's Daily, 2020). On 25th January, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced that Chinese had become the official language of the organization. This further enhanced the authoritative effect of Chinese as an official text in international communications and the credibility of international communications (The Centre for Language Education and Cooperation, 2021).



At present, there are approximately 25 million people outside of China who are learning Chinese. (CGTN, 2015)

Fourth, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum is a platform to increase diverse cultural activities that effectively promote the overall development of China-Arab cultural exchanges. Since the establishing of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in 2004, it has organized the Sino-Arab Civilization Dialogue Symposium eight times, Arab Arts Festivals four times, Press Cooperation Forums four times, Radio and Television Cooperation Forums four times, and the Think Tank Forum two times.

The ever-increasing political mutual trust and the increasingly close economic and trade exchanges between China and countries of the Middle East have also injected a strong impetus into the cultural exchanges between the two sides. The China-Arab Friendship Conference is an essential non-governmental exchange platform under the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. It plays a vital role in deepening the traditional friendship between China and Arab countries and promoting the people-to-people bond between the two sides. Moreover, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum should play an effective role in strengthening exchanges and dialogues, in deepening mutually beneficial cooperation, and in working together to build a community with a shared future, making new and more remarkable contributions to the peace and development of humankind.

Although the BRI originated in China, the opportunities and fruits belong to the world.

Although the BRI originated in China, the opportunities and fruits belong to the world. Just like President Xi said, “The BRI is a sunny avenue for everyone to move forward hand in hand, not a private path of one party. All interested countries can join in, participate, cooperate and benefit together” (Ping, 2021). After 40 years of reform and development, China and the Middle East have focused on mutual support in politics. In the mid-term, emphasis was placed on developing energy-centric economic relations and expanding the current political, economic, security, cultural, and other all-around cooperation in multiple fields (Jian, 2018). The performance of China's Middle East foreign policy has changed from overall detachment to operational performance. Among them, the use of cultural exchanges as the glue has

dramatically expanded the depth and breadth of cooperation between China and Middle Eastern countries in building the BRI and has contributed Chinese strength and wisdom to the peaceful development of the Middle East.

The Characteristics of China's Cultural Communications with the Middle East

In the new era, China's cultural exchanges with the Middle East must change its traditional thinking, remove the prejudices of Orientalism and the absolutism of the conflict of civilizations theory to apply the BRI to find ways of cultural exchanges suitable for itself. In exchanges between different cultures, cultural identity is formed through mutual learning. Mutual learning is the prerequisite for realizing people-to-people bonds and the significance of cultural exchanges. A peaceful and civilized future ultimately depends on the understanding and cooperation between the politics, spirits, and intellectual leaders of the world's major civilizations. In 2014, President Xi Jinping proposed that “China must have its characteristics of major-country diplomacy” (Ping, 2017). Under the BRI, the geopolitical and cultural differences in the Middle East determine that China's cultural exchanges with the Middle East must also be unique.

First, China must adhere to mutual learning between different civilizations. In 2014, President Xi Jinping mentioned at the 60th Anniversary Meeting of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, “We must respect the diversity of civilizations, promote different civilizations' exchanges and dialogues, peaceful coexistence. We must not stand alone or belittle other civilizations or nations. Human history tells us that attempting to establish a single civilization to dominate the world is just unrealistic.” China is a multi-ethnic country, and no one knows better than China how important it is to maintain the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures to the stability of a country.

The Middle East is a place where all the major civilizations of the world gather and blend. The interaction, integration, and symbiosis between different nations, cultures, and religions represent the historical tradition of the Middle East. In cultural exchanges with the Middle East, China attaches great importance to the mutual learning and coexistence of different civilizations and supports Middle Eastern civilizations' inheritance, development, and innovation. Moreover, China disagrees with cultural hegemony and prejudice and insists on making joint efforts with countries of the Middle East to promote diversity within civilizations. Only through drawing on the outstanding achievements of civilizations created by different countries and nations can civilization advance with the times to continuously increase the driving force for development

Second, China must actively shoulder the responsibility of being a great power. As China's international status and influence gradually increase, the international community and Middle Eastern countries hope China will play a more proactive role in the Middle East. In this regard, China must respond to these expectations by taking responsibility for peace and development. Actively taking on responsibility is an important symbol of China's practice of great power diplomacy (Xiang & Han, 2020). Democratization in the Middle East has experienced a slow course of exploration for decades after World War II. With the fierce confrontation between strengthening the authoritative regime and advancing democratic politics, the process has been interrupted from time to time, and there have repeatedly been setbacks and bumps. Relative to the pace of global political evolution, democratic politics in the Middle East are behind other developing areas (Hua, 2018). Especially after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the conflicts in the Middle East have become more complex and changeable.



Confucius Institute carries the task of introducing the Chinese language to the world, disseminating Chinese culture, and enhancing exchanges between different cultures. (CGTN, 2018)

In this regard, China has put forward Five-Point Initiatives to realize security and stability in the Middle East:

- Advocate mutual respect and respect for the Middle East's characteristics, models, and roads.
- Persist in fairness and justice to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issue.
- Achieve nuclear non-proliferation, encourage the United States and Iran to reach an agreement on the nuclear issue as soon as possible.
- Jointly build collective security, accounting for the concerns of all parties.
- Accelerate development and cooperation to achieve long-term peace and stability in the Middle East (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2021).

China will stick to abandoning the zero-sum game and become a defender of peace and stability, a promoter of joint development, and a defender of fairness and justice in the Middle East.

Third, China must commit to developing partnerships in diplomatic relations. China's Middle East diplomacy has always adhered to the idea of partnership and non-alignment.

China adopts these three principles in the Middle East: China does not find agents but persuades peace and promotes talks; China does not engage in spheres of influence but encourages everyone to join the Belt and Road circle of friends; and China does not seek to fill the “vacuum” in the region but weaves mutually beneficial and win-win partnerships throughout (Tai, 2018). China’s partnership in the Middle East has two forms: multilateral and bilateral. The multilateral form refers to the League of Arab States (22 Arab countries), the African Union (10 African Arab countries), the Gulf Arab States Cooperation Council (the six Gulf Arab countries), and the Arab Maghreb Union (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania (5 countries), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (57 member states). Bilateral form refers to China’s bilateral partner diplomacy with Middle Eastern countries, such as Algeria (2014), Egypt (2014), Saudi Arabia (2016), Iran (2016), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (2018) (Gang, 2019).

Seeking common ground while reserving differences, maintaining mutual benefit, and applying a win-win approach represents the hidden logic of Chinese diplomacy.

The creation of this partnership network has placed China without a historical burden in the Middle East and has demonstrated neutrality, fairness, and non-interference in internal affairs as a good partner (Kemal, 2018). China’s partner diplomacy with the Middle East focuses on the future, firstly integrating the countries in the Middle East into a community of interests, forming a security community through the community of interests, and finally evolving into a community of values. Seeking common ground while reserving differences, maintaining mutual bene-

fit, and applying a win-win approach represents the hidden logic of Chinese diplomacy. China’s partner diplomacy in the Middle East has objectively weakened the influence of the alliance of major powers in the region and played as the soft check and balance against hegemony and unilateralism.

Conclusion

Cultural cooperation plays a vital role in promoting high-quality development of the BRI, attracting more countries, regions, and international organizations to participate, forming a greater international consensus, and other visible achievements that benefit more countries and people. Eight years have passed since Chinese President Xi proposed the BRI in 2013. There are uncountable problems in a world composed of different cultures, races, skin colors, religions, and social systems. However, differences can coexist peacefully and develop jointly, which is the answer given by China’s cultural communication and China insists on using actual actions to prove it. Conflicts between civilizations are not absolute. Promoting the coexistence of diverse cultures is the prerequisite and basis for China’s foreign cultural exchanges under the BRI.

The development of the BRI as a glue that connects different civilizations in the Middle East is a concrete manifestation of China’s insistence on abandoning blind admiration of national nihilism, narrow-minded national xenophobia, and self-conceit centralism. The five-thousand-year Chinese “和” (He) tradition determines the principles of extensive consultation, joint construction, and sharing to build the BRI. Although the BRI is not enough to solve all the problems, it represents China’s response to the challenges. The BRI is an open and inclusive platform for cooperation and an international public product jointly created by all countries in the world.

As a latecomer to global governance, under the background of the BRI, China looks forward to developing and broadening its cultural exchanges with China persists in answering the “Question of the Middle East” with practical actions and has contributed Chinese experience and wisdom to building a more open, inclusive, fair, and just Middle East. In

this era, when peace and development are still main themes, China needs to develop itself by maintaining world peace and maintain world peace through its development. Acknowledgement: This article is supported by funding from the “Key Project of Philosophy and Social Sciences of Ministry of Education of China” (17JZD036).

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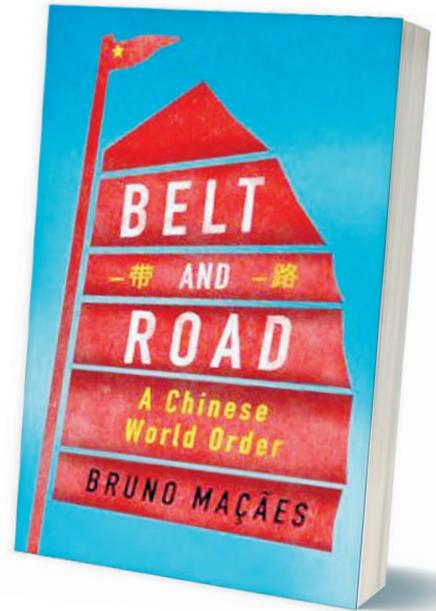
London: Hurst & Company



VICTOR MANUEL ISIDRO LUNA*

THE PURPOSE OF THE BELT AND ROAD initiative is to create a new financial, political, cultural, and economic order from Lisbon to Jakarta. With its epicenter in China, it aspires to reshape the existing world order in the short to medium term. Although some richer countries like the United States will retain part of their old power, more countries in this new world order will become prosperous and interdependent. Methodologically, this book uses aspects of world-system analysis: countries participating in chains of value-added market economies, with the help of the state, are going to produce a more prosperous and coordinated world.

Chapter 1 outlines the political initiatives that led to the Belt and Road Initiative and highlights the gaps that it must address to generate development in Eurasia, Latin America, and Australia. First, it explains how the policies of Deng Xiaoping made China's development possible: by negotiating with the United States during the 1970s,



China was able to obtain fixed capital and technological capabilities. Second, it explains how China's capacity production must supply the demand of other countries, for the development of peripheral economies will maintain external demand for Chinese products and supply China with raw materials such as oil and gas. Third, the new world order will be established according to the command of global chains of value-added exports with China retaining, in the future, the central chains.

Chapter 2 outlines the main roads, ports, and economic corridors that the Belt and Road will target, suggesting some possible conflicts that the initiative may face, such as national debts. The key debate of the chapter is whether the market or the state will lead the Belt and Road initiative. Maçaes asserts that, though the market will allocate resources and the private sector will have the primary role, the state will maintain an integral economic role in all countries.

* Victor Manuel Isidro Luna is an instructor in the School of Economics at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He obtained a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Utah (2013) and has numerous articles in journals such as *Journal of Economic Issues*, *World Review of Political Economy*, and *Ecos de Economía*. His main areas of interest are development banks, BRICS, and the role of money in development.
Email: u0559410@uofutah.onmicroso.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1571-9387>

Different types of loans (interest-free, grants, and commercial) and foreign direct investment made by China will finance the projects; the role of the state, therefore, will be to control the allocation of financial resources.

Even though China is a productive and financial superpower, the author recognizes that it lags behind the United States and India in the spread of its cultural values, what he calls “soft power”.

His ideas are controversial and a deeper discussion of market-led economics with state participation should be entertained if the goal is to have a more cooperative and coordinated world order in the future.

In chapter 3, Maçães acknowledges that China is soon going to transition from a middle-income country to a world power by 1) controlling the supply of energy sources such as oil and gas and some key minerals such as cobalt, 2) occupying the central value-added chains, and 3) organizing these value-added chains with global participation. In terms of the production and distribution of commodities, China will be positioned at the top of world power, though knowledge will be its main product. Moreover, world development, not one-state development, will be the result of China’s organizing role in these value-added chains. Theoretically, this chapter rests on world-system analysis (including some of Immanuel Wallerstein’s ideas). However, many of the ideas from world-system analysis are not incorporated, such as the role of the state and monopolies.

Chapter 4 describes the future of China, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the role of other countries in the potential new world order. Some of the key players include the United States, India, Japan, and the European Union. The author notes that the United States is the only country that can confront China, but it does not have the strength to launch an investment

plan to restructure the existing value-added chains. Additionally, Japan may have the will to cooperate with China and launch investment plans in peripheral countries; same with the European Union, assuming both economic giants share control of the value-added chains. India, however, may not because its leaders view the initiative with suspicion and fear the possible development of countries such as Pakistan.

Even though China is a productive and financial superpower, the author recognizes that it lags behind the United States and India in the spread of its cultural values, what he calls “soft power”. In the final chapter, the author sketches several scenarios for China’s future: Chinese integration into the capitalist system, convergence with the United States; China surpassing the United States’ wealth and slightly modifying liberal principles; a clash between the United States and China; and a new world order organized by China with different values: amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness.

Overall, the book has interesting and engaging material. Specifically, Chapter 4 highlights the role of India in the new world order to suggest that this order should be accomplished through alliances among countries. Furthermore, the book explains the likely difficulties for countries defaulting on their loans from China in the future.

Despite this, I want to highlight several aspects that need more explanation: 1) the role of Russia in the new world order; 2) the author uses theoretical aspects of world-system analysis but does not explain why the market should lead the new world order; in some paragraphs, he mentions that China’s values are different from those of Western society, but, if the values are different, the market must be embedded in some specific institutions, which he does not provide a further explanation of; and 3) the author needs to explain why he thinks that a new world order led by the market will produce a fairer situation for other countries.

İbrahim Balaban



İbrahim Balaban was born in Seköy/Bursa in 1921. He was imprisoned when he was young. While in prison, he devoted himself to painting, by doing so, he realized his ability to paint. In 1941, he was imprisoned for the second time, he met Nazım Hikmet, a Turkish poet and they became friends. Nazım Hikmet introduced Balaban to his friends as “A Painter Yunus Emre”. He took lessons on art, history, philosophy, political economy from Nazım Hikmet for incessantly seven years. In 1950, he was released from prison by taking advantage of an amnesty. He opened his first personal exhibition in Istanbul in 1953. He has opened more than 50 solo exhibitions and participated in many group exhibitions by producing more than 2,000 paintings and several times as many designs. His works have been exhibited in many countries. His publications include 11 books consist of memoirs, essays (on painting), stories and two novels.

BACK TO THE SILK ROAD



This photo shows a piece of the performance, entitled “Back to the Silk Road” at the Grand Theater close to Urumqi on May 14, 2017. The show aiming to bring different cultures closer together was performed at the Grand Theater which has a capacity of 2,000 people, and a large area, 4,000 square meters. There are 360 international dancers coming from different ethnic groups. The performance consists of 6 chapters and 40 scenes. The main theme of the performance is “Back to the Silk Road”. Chinese, Russian, Caucasian, Mongol, Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmen, Arab, Pakistani, Afghan, Turk, and all Asian people can find themselves on the stage. There are also animals in the show. Riders on their camels and horses are going up to audiences and then, dancers involve audiences in the performance. Towards the end of the performance, all audiences become a performer, the stage enlarging and become the whole stage.

Turhan Selçuk



Turhan Selçuk was born in Milas/Turkey in 1922. Selçuk's first drawings were published in 1941, in the newspaper Türk Sözü. His drawings appeared in various journals and newspapers such as Akbaba, Milliyet, Akşam, Yön, Yeni İstanbul and Il Travaso which is an Italian humor magazine. In 1957, he created his famous comic character Abdülcanbaz. His cartoons rely on contradictions, solidarity and misunderstandings in human life. While he criticizes people, he tries to educate them by showing the good and truth. Thought is the main point of his cartoons and humor has the second priority. His illustrations are brief, clear and stunning. In 1992, Turhan Selçuk celebrated his 50th year in the world of art with an exhibition. Between 1993 and 1997, his graphic art exhibition, "İnsan Hakları" (Human Rights) visited major cities of the World, and in 2005, a selection of his original prints was exhibited in various cities in Germany. He died in 2010 in Istanbul/Turkey. He was one of the founders of the Turkish Cartoonists Association and he was also granted numerous awards.

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