

## Call for Papers

### Situating the Periphery

### Temporal and Spatial Dimensions of Memory in contemporary China

Editors: Marc A. Matten and Valentina Punzi

#### Topic

The master narrative produced by the Chinese state in 20th century has – as argued by Prasenjit Duara – monopolized the nation-state as the primary or even exclusive form of political order. Since the foundation of the Republic in 1912 school textbooks, academic writings and mass media all adhere to a single message that is constantly reiterated by attentively selecting and glorifying certain events and silencing politically cumbersome topics. This monolithic history has neglected or suppressed memories of those groups that reside at the periphery. It has further relegated to the margins those memories that coincide with a range of peripheral collectives whose integration into the nation-state is historically far from clearly known.

It is the intention and the purpose of the edited volume proposed here to provide a more complete picture of the ethnically, geographically and culturally heterogeneous space called China by taking periphery seriously and introducing it as a heuristic principle when writing memories. As a matter of fact the concept of periphery cannot be defined by univocal criteria. It includes different kinds of social, geographic and ethnic peripheries that individuals are simultaneously identified with (i.e., social class, geographical location, or ethnic classification). The historical and contemporary presence of blurred borders and transition zones outwardly absorbed by the Chinese nation-state further contributes to the continuous shifting of centers and peripheries according to perspectives and intentions. The periphery is here however more than just an aberration from the center. For this reason, we see the concept of China's peripheries understood as far too superficially in existing scholarship and thus propose to rethink its theoretical definition.

By choosing to specifically introduce memories from the peripheries to the history and politics of contemporary China we aim to challenge the assumed dichotomy between center and periphery rather than reinforcing it. Peripheral identities are more than an obvious result of resistance or quest for alterity. Our purpose is therefore not limited to redeem alternative or silenced memories of the period between 1940s and 1980s but is also oriented towards the critical exploration of the complexities and contradictions inherent to peripheral mnemonic practices and narratives in China that maintain a multifaceted and unpredictable relationship with the history produced by the central state.

### **Invitation to contributions**

In addition to a previous volume entitled *Places of Memory in Modern China* edited by Marc Matten (2011/2013, see <http://www.brill.com/places-memory-modern-china>) that primarily focuses on memory and identity construction by the center, the book proposed here shall address the construction of cultural and historical memory at and from the periphery. Contributions are welcomed from the fields of history, anthropology, ethnogeography, cultural studies, subaltern studies, and literature. The articles may focus on a particular region or ethnic group, on a specific historical event or period between the 1940s and 1980s. Moreover, authors should visibly contribute to the theoretical understanding of historical and/or cultural memory in the periphery, how memories create local/ethnic/cultural/gender/subaltern identities, and situate these identities in national and global contexts.

We seek contributions exploring peripheral memories during the Maoist period which are not necessarily at odds with the official history of the state-center but rather present a polyphony of local versions produced and reiterated at the peripheries of China, broadly understood as the plurality of geopolitical and socio-ethnic and symbolic peripheries, and reflected in multiple constructions of memories. Possible contributions should consider that memories from the peripheries might also partake in memories from the center, i.e. a clear-cut divide between them should not be forcefully introduced. Moreover, while acknowledging that a history told from the political and symbolic center of the Chinese state deliberately chooses its geographic focus, relevance, and narrative modes, it should also be recognized that peripheral memories are also selective and that their utterances convey specific meanings and interpretations. In this regard, we want to enhance a reflection on the different selection criteria that position central and peripheral memories in the local and national contexts, without reducing them to sterile and uncritical dichotomies.

We hope that the individual contributions will present a broad picture of those continuities and discontinuities that characterize the relationship between master narratives and peripheral memories from the different angles, and – when possible, – look at how they reciprocally define each other, and how their respective epistemology is often relationally defined. Whose memories acquire a peripheral status and why? How peripheral memories contribute to the formations of centers and their versions of the past in China? To what extent do memories and peripheries, as respectively time and space categories, affect and contribute to shape their counterparts, i.e. the present and the center?

**Time schedule and deadlines**

If you are interested in submitting an article for this edited volume please send an outline of your proposal (max 400 words) along with a working title by August 1, 2015. The deadline for the papers will be 1 May 2016. The article length should be 20-30,000 words. Send your submission via email to either Marc A. Matten ([marc.matten@fau.de](mailto:marc.matten@fau.de)) and Valentina Punzi ([valentina.punzi@yahoo.it](mailto:valentina.punzi@yahoo.it)).

We hope to hear from you soon.

With best wishes,

Marc Matten and Valentina Punzi