“Asia as Method” Now and Then:

Investigating the Critical Concept of Inter-Asia Referencing

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Abstract

This master’s thesis pursues the conditions of knowledge production in Asia by critically investigating the emerging framework of Inter-Asia Referencing as formulated by Chen Kuang Hsing in 2010 and further developed by other intellectuals such as Chua Beng Huat, Ong Aihwa and Roy Ananya. The focus of this thesis is on two levels: first, the theoretical one, namely how Chen claims intellectual ancestry for Inter-Asia Referencing in Japanese thinker Takeuchi Yoshimi’s 1960’s essay “Asia as Method”, which is related to possibilities of analyzing Asia with “Made in Asia” concepts that Inter-Asia Referencing opens; this is exemplified by an analysis of the Yakuza. The second level emerges against the backdrop of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), that is to say, it focuses on the intellectuals themselves and the networks that back them up, in an attempt to understand how theories gain support and circulate. This is exemplified with regard to Inter-Asia Referencing’s crossing into the field of urban planning (in addition to its initial field of cultural studies), its use to analyze practices of quotation between cities in Asia with particular reference to sustainable eco-models. Lastly, the thesis looks at Inter-Asia referencing as part of a larger endeavor of Asian intellectuals to claim agency and empowerment with respect to the conditions of knowledge production in a world paradigmatically dominated by the “West.”

Keywords: Asia, knowledge production, Inter-Asia Referencing, Asia as Method, political society, Yakuza, urban planning
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1. As far as the material I used is concerned, I read the main texts such as the 5th chapter of “Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization” in Chinese, and Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method” and “What is Modernity?” in Japanese. The rest was read in English.

2. For the purpose of facilitating switching from Chinese and Japanese, I romanize Chinese and Japanese words without the tones and macrons, respectively, while using Hanyu Pinyin for Chinese and the Revised Hepburn system for Japanese.

3. The names of Chinese authors are written in either Simplified or Traditional Chinese characters, depending on the author’s origin being in mainland China or outside of it, respectively.

4. All the emphases in the quotes are mine.

1. Revisiting East Asian Studies through Inter-Asia Referencing

The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other’s point of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. (Chen, 2010:212)

In 2010, Chen Kuan-Hsing (陳光興), the Taiwanese public intellectual and professor at National Chiao Tung University, as well as one of the editors-in-chief of the quarterly *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* journal, published *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization*. In it, using Japanese intellectual Takeuchi Yoshimi’s article “Asia as Method” (1960) as a starting point, Chen is advocating for shifting the debate of “Asia” now mainly conducted in Europe and North America to the academic peers in the geographical site called Asia and take into account the specific conditions of the local histories in the region. As Chen admits, the newly proposed “Inter-Asia referencing” framework attempts to influence the knowledge production in Asia as well as how Asian studies are being conducted worldwide.

The need for Inter-Asia referencing, Chen argues, is, on one hand, the regional integration that is lagging behind economic cooperation, delayed by the cold war period that severely segregated the region. On the other hand, there is the fact that Asian academics are educated in Europe and North America, then return home and apply tools suitable to assess the conditions in Europe and North America. Both aspects call for “Inter-Asia Referencing,” which may contribute to regional integration and correct the vertical relationship between the Western scholar and the Asian one: the Asian academic scholar would no longer be the local informant that supports or denies paradigms born in the West, but regain agency in articulating concepts and paradigms that are best suited to reflect his or her environment.

As Chen points out in the 5th chapter of his book, “ASIA AS METHOD: Overcoming the Present Conditions of Knowledge,” the novelty about Inter-Asian referencing is that it doesn’t
engage in a negative polemic with the “West” unlike previous models of contesting the Western paradigm, such as “disrupting the Other by deconstructing it” (ibid.: 217), provincializing the West, or third world nativism. It is neither idealizing nor demonizing, but “normalizing” the West making it one point of reference among many in conceptualizing Asia.

However, “Asia as Method” that Chen closely associates his proposed framework with is an essay written by the widely-known Japanese intellectual Takeuchi Yoshimi in 1960. Takeuchi re-established Chinese studies by introducing Chinese literature in post-war Japan, at a time when Chinese studies were mostly undervalued. He became fascinated with the literary works of the Chinese writer Lu Xun, arguably the father of Chinese modernism. Inspired by Lu Xun’s works, Takeuchi advocated that Japan should take China as an example for its modernization instead of the West.

The way Chen understands Takeuchi’s “Asia as Method” in his Inter-Asian Referencing seems to be nothing more and nothing less than a call for action to quest a theoretical “beyond” the prevalent dichotomy West/East. While a number of scholars have taken him up on his initiative, either debating the frame itself or using the frame for their own debates, little attention has been paid to the genealogy of the concept, and if it can be truly understood as Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method.”

1.1. Objectives and Research Questions

This thesis doesn’t aim at finding universalist definitions for the ample questions of Asian modernity, identity, or even Asia, but rather at showing how they are mitigated and represented in a dialogical relation between different intellectuals from different parts of Asia. This thesis aims to present and critically investigate the emerging framework of Inter-Asia
Referencing in terms of what theory claims and what practice allows in the intellectual circles in Asia. As a result, a dual focus will be maintained, on the one hand, on the possibilities that Inter-Asia Referencing holds as theory, and on the support that it enjoys in intellectual networks, on the other hand.

Since Chen uses Takeuchi’s “Asia as Method” essay as a conceptual starting point, seeing in what ways the former’s concept intersects with Inter-Asia Referencing is a main concern throughout this thesis. This topic is underrepresented in East Asian studies and one of the outcomes this thesis could lead to would be attracting more interest to what might as well be a new type of jointly coordinated reflexivity in Asia. In order to attract interest in the potential of such reflexivity in Asia, I will focus on three issues:

1. What is Inter-Asia Referencing, and how does it reflect Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method”?
2. What are the actors involved, and what networks do they belong to, through the perspective of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory?
3. How do these actors interpret “Inter-Asia referencing” differently?

1.2. Methodology

There is an undeniable meta-dimension to this thesis, as it traces how Inter-Asia Referencing accommodates paradigms and analytical concepts (that of the “political society” among others) across fields such as intellectual history (Takeuchi), cultural studies (Chen), subaltern studies and, last but not least, urban studies. The conditions for knowledge production constitute the main object of interest though. Accordingly, the research design is a combination of textual analysis with a focus on actors/networks involved in the circle of knowledge production. The timeline for the material considered is 2008 – when Chen began
writing *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* – to the present day, with a retrospective of Takeuchi Yoshimi’s 1960 essay.

1.3. Structure

This thesis identifies five perspectives of Inter-Asia Referencing and discusses each at length in a separate chapter:

1. its institutional dimension, how it has been serving as the “ideational program” of a loose network of intellectuals that has become institutionalized;
2. its possible intellectual relation to Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method”;
3. Chen’s implementation of Inter-Asia Referencing, namely through dialogue, quotation and translation;
4. an application to the case of the Yakuza in order to reveal its workings, and
5. its “translation” into urban planning.

The primary sources used are Chen’s *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (2010) and *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (2011) coordinated and edited by Ong & Roy. They represent major sites where Inter-Asia Referencing is enunciated and developed, and are also most frequently quoted in secondary sources. In addition to this, I will use Takeuchi’s essay “Asia as Method” (1960) in Japanese.

2. Inter-Asia Referencing as an Intellectual Enterprise

“Inter-Asia referencing,” as it was formulated by Chen Kuang-Hsing in 2010 in his book, titled *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization*, makes the main study object of this thesis.
However, there are a few pragmatic considerations to be made before attempting to answer the question what Inter-Asia referencing is and trace it back to Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method”, as well as attempting to see where it is going.

Chen’s book, published in 2010 by Duke University Press, was written by the author starting in 1989 as a result of his engagement with the journals *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* (or Taishe) and *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements*, the latter being co-edited by Chen and Chua Beng Huat.

Thus, Inter-Asia referencing is intrinsically linked to the *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements* journal, as Chen himself admits: “As a theoretical proposition, Asia as method is a result of practices growing out of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements journal project” (Chen, 2010:213).

In the joint editorial statement of Chen Kuang-Hsing and Chua Beng Huat of the April 2017 issue of “Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements,” the journal, “also known as the Movements project,” is defined as:

A transborder collective undertaking to confront Inter-Asia cultural politics. [...] *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* has emerged as part of a movement for the ongoing construction and reconstruction of critical Inter-Asia subjectivities. It gives a long overdue voice to the intellectual communities in the region and recognizes its own existence as an attempt to continue critical lines of practices. The journal’s aim is to shift existing sites of identification and multiply alternative frames of reference: it is committed to publishing work not only out of “Asia” but also other coordinates such as the “third world.” Its political agenda is to move across: state/national/sub-regional divisions, scholarship and activism, modalities/forms of knowledge and rigid identity politics of any form. (Chen, Chua, 2017:1)
Moreover, the *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements* journal is closely associated with the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society, that, as described on its website, “was formed in response to meet the growing demand of younger intellectuals to expand the scope and scale of IACS activities,” being officially institutionalized in 2011 by registering members, electing a board, thus “marking the Society’s transition from a loose network of intellectuals to an institutionalized international society” (IACS website). The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society also claims that their project, ever since the late 1990s, has been working “towards the imagination and possibilities of diverse forms of intellectual integration in Asia”.


For example, one of the four units that made the main body of the coursework in the 2014 Summer School was “Asia as Method”, that “pinpoints the shifting concerns of the mode of knowledge from Takeuchi Yoshimi to Mizoguchi Yuzo”; the remaining three units were “National cultures,” focusing on the thought of Lu Xun and Tagore; “Gandhism and Maoism”; “Division and its overcoming,” questioning “the shaping and the lingering of the Cold War division system in the postcolonial configuration of the Asia region, as formulated in the work of Paik Nak-chung and Chen Yingzhen.”
A new International Master’s Programme in Inter-Asia Cultural Studies has been established at the University System of Taiwan\(^2\) in 2012 (IACS-UST). The program “seeks to advance new forms of interdisciplinary knowledge that connect academic learning to inter-Asian as well as global problems and contexts” to “promote the use of inter-Asian cultural connections as a novel framework for approaching world history and global cultures” (IACS website). It consists of four corpuses: Critical Theory and Asian Modernity, Contemporary Thought-trends and Social Movements, Gender/Sexuality Studies, and Visual Culture Studies.

Considering its institutional development from mere networking among intellectuals, it becomes easier to understand why Chen keeps referring to “Inter-Asia referencing” as an “on-going project.” It is relevant to understand “Inter-Asia referencing” as evolving from a justification or means of collaboration between a “loose network of intellectuals” to becoming the “ideological program” of an academic journal and even an institution, a master degree program, etc.

3. Anchoring Inter-Asia Referencing in Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method”

Chen repeatedly declares Takeuchi’s essay as a primary conceptual departure point in establishing Inter-Asia Referencing. However, the main ambiguity in Chen’s comparison of Inter-Asia Referencing with “Asia as Method” lies in the fact that he doesn’t clearly define how he understands “Asia as Method”, neither in its original context as Takeuchi formulated

\(^2\) The University System of Taiwan (US, 台灣聯合大學系統) is a research-led university alliance in Taiwan between National Tsing Hua University (NTHU), National Chiao Tung University (NCTU), National Yang Ming University (YM), National Central University (NCU) formed in 2008.
it, nor in the new, “present day” context in which it allegedly equals the Inter-Asia Referencing framework.

Furthermore, he seems to take for granted the fact that “Asia as Method” and Inter-Asia Referencing are two sides of the same coin, referring to them interchangeably, as it seems, without taking the time to elaborate on the theoretical content of “Asia as Method,” and more specific places of convergence or divergence (if any) with Inter-Asia Referencing, as if they were to completely overlap. As a result, terms such as “Asia as method”, “inter-referencing” and “Inter-Asia Project” appear in a tacit, mutual reference to one other (also indexed in the same referential manner at the end of the volume):

As a theoretical proposition, Asia as method is a result of practices growing out of Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movement journal project […] In this context, Asia as method can be considered a self-reflexive movement […]. The Inter-Asia project is not new. An earlier generation of intellectuals paved the way. (Chen, 2012:212-213)

In the current chapter, I will briefly review Takeuchi Yoshimi’s importance as a 20th century Japanese thinker, and then explore how Chen understands one of Takeuchi’s pivotal essays, “Asia as Method” (1960), on two separate occasions: first, in the 2010 monograph bearing the namesake of Takeuchi’s essay, “ASIA AS METHOD: Towards Deimperialization”, and second in 2012, when Chen publishes another interpretation of “Asia as Method” in the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies journal, meant to supplement his interpretation of 2010.

3.1. Why Takeuchi Yoshimi?

Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹内 好, 1910-1977) was among the first public intellectuals to promote Chinese studies during a time when China was academically approached with restraint in Japan as a result of Japan’s imperialist past and the derogative positioning of
Chinese studies as shinagaku (支那学). He is mainly known for speaking openly on political issues in Japan in the post-war era, criticizing Japan’s process of modernization. In general, Takeuchi was denouncing Japan’s Pan-Asianism in the 1930s and 1940s as fundamentally misrepresenting the Eastern Spirit by “shedding Asia” as a consequence of misguidedly emulating the West. Takeuchi was a controversial figure, speaking harshly against Japan’s invasion of China but concurrently supporting the Pacific War, even after the war. Takeuchi saw a dual character in the Pacific war: “The Pacific war’s dual aspects of colonial invasion and anti-imperialism were united, and it was […] impossible to separate these aspects” (Takeuchi 1959 in Calichman, 2004:125). His advocacy of using China as a reference (along with other third world countries) while firmly believing Japan should resist the West, is what made his ideas hold appeal for both right and left-wing intellectuals.

In this sense, Simon Avenell’s analysis of New Asianism after the 1980s – although limited to the case of Japan – is worth taking into account. Some of the examples he mentions point to how Japanese intellectuals claim conceptual ancestry in Takeuchi’s “Asia as Method.” According to Avenell, Okura Kazuo’s Japan-as-Asia is to assimilate everything the West has to offer, reconfigure it based on the “Asian love” Asians allegedly have for nature, and then subsequently return it so that the West-as-U.S. can re-incorporate it, in an “Asianization” of the West (mainly understood as the U.S.) (Avenell, 2014:1606); and Shindo Eiichi, in agreement with Takeuchi’s thought, considers that civic Confucianism should be complimentary to Western theory and practice (ibid., 1612). As Avenell himself concludes:

Takeuchi’s disassociation of wartime Pan-Asianism from authentic Asianism, combined with his recognition of a sense of Asian solidarity and a role for Asia in world history, have made his thought a convenient reference point for contemporary New Asianists in Japan in search of legitimate sources of Asianist thought in their country. Moreover, […] because Takeuchi’s thought is ambiguous it has been profitably mobilized by New Asianists with remarkably divergent agendas. His ideas
have been fodder for those committed to a culturally-driven regionalism as well as those who reject identity for functional integration. (Avenell, 2014:1601)

As such, Asia as Method is an incredibly potent and versatile slogan, able to carry a wide array of political and intellectual messages. It allows Chen to clearly situate his political agenda: “a political motive of Asia as method” is to “use Asia as an emotional signifier to call for regional integration and solidarity” (Chen, 2010:213).

Known for essays such as “What is Modernity” (1948) and “Asia as Method” (1960), Takeuchi first began publishing with his seminal study of Lu Xun, *Rojin*, in 1944. Genealogically speaking, much of Takeuchi’s revelation regarding the achievement of “Asia as Method,” inspired by China’s modernization process, revolves around his discovery of Lu Xun’s literary works. Takeuchi considers literature to be more than ‘mere text’, a mirror of people’s lives and a main site for the Chinese revolution. It comes as no wonder that Takeuchi heralds Lu Xun as its fundamental hero. Therefore, the commitment to translating Chinese literature, especially Lu Xun’s works, becomes Takeuchi’s lifelong project.

Leo Chan Tak-Hung (2016) attempts to investigate how Takeuchi sought to “reconstruct the Japanese identity” (Chan Tak-Hung, 2016:3) through translation of Chinese literature, by comparing to each other Takeuchi’s two translations of Lu Xun’s *Madman*, the first of which he did in 1956 and the second twenty years later, as well as to those of Inoue Kobai (1932), Oda Takeo and Tanaka Seiichiro (1953). *Madman* (狂人日记, *Kuangren riji*, 1918) – where the main character suspects everyone around him of being cannibals plotting to eat him – is most often regarded as the first modern Chinese short story. In his translation, Takeuchi stands out “in his naturalization strategy” (ibid., 7) through his “preference for ‘translating’ (into hiragana) rather than ‘copying’” (ibid.). Unlike other translators such as Yoshikawa Kojiiro, Takeuchi made frequent use of Japanese onomatopoeia rather than
choosing to transfer the same combination of Chinese characters from the original into Japanese (ibid., 6), a challenge often faced by Chinese-Japanese translators.

An example of his attempt to adapt Chinese literature to the Japanese context is his grapple with the translation of “resistance”, or “struggle” (挣扎 zhengzha), a keyword throughout Lu Xun’s literary works that became a leitmotiv in Takeuchi’s critical thinking as well. Resistance/struggle (挣扎), a combination of Chinese characters that doesn’t exist in Japanese, appears in Takeuchi’s translations as: agaku, mogaku (both agaku and mogaku are usually written in hirgana), or mimodae (身悶え) suru, and he eventually settles for teiko (抵抗) suru when referring to it in his academic writing (ibid., 8). Takeuchi’s “resistance” shows, in Chan Tak-Hung’s opinion, a situation where “the translational replicates the political” (ibid). Chan Tak-Hung sees Takeuchi’s translation from Chinese to be just as important as his polemic essays, arguing that Takeuchi “was also a pivotal figure in introducing modern Chinese literature to a Japanese readership,” while at the same time “radically reconceptualizing Sino-Japanese translation for an entire generation” (Chan Tak-Hung, 2016:2).

3.2. Chen’s Understanding of “Asia as Method” Part One

In his 2010 monograph, Chen gives an extremely rushed account of Takeuchi Yoshimi, of the sociocultural and political context in which Takeuchi wrote “Asia as Method,” as well as of what Takeuchi means by “Asia as Method.” As if trying to excuse himself from undertaking such a task, he opens the nominal 5th chapter of the monograph “Asia as Method: Overcoming the Present Conditions of Knowledge Production” – which may well be considered its center piece – with the concluding sentence from “Asia as Method” in
Calichman’s translation: “This I have called ‘Asia as Method,’ and yet it is impossible to definitely state what this might mean” (Takeuchi cit. in Chen, 2010:211). Instead of elaborating on this, he focuses on emphasizing the potential outcome of “Asia as Method”:

The potential of Asia as Method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other’s point of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuild. On this basis, the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia may be mobilized to provide alternative horizons and perspectives. This method of engagement, I believe, has the potential to advance a different understanding of world history. (Chen, 2010:212)

Though Chen himself admits that “for those of us living in Asia, Asia as method is not a self-explanatory proposition”, he rudimentarily explains it as follows: “At its most basic, Asia as method means expanding the number of these meeting points [New York, London, Paris] to include sites in Asia as Seoul, Kyoto, Singapore, Bangalore, Shanghai and Taipei” (Chen, 2010:212). At best, Chen seems to define “Asia” and “method” separately, rather than expounding the philosophical meaning that “Asia as Method” has in Takeuchi’s vision. While Chen warns of the dangers of representing Asia as only East Asia or Southeast Asia, he does not indicate the physical and conceptual delimitations of “Asia”. For example, if geography were the only basis for defining “Asia”, there is no reference in the monograph to Russia or Turkey or other places that might constitute the controversial geographical site of Asia, to name just a few. Sun Ge, professor of Chinese literature at Jilin University and at the Institute of Literature in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as well as Takeuchi Yoshimi’s biographer, considers Asia to be “more than a spatial concept, which is to say, it is more than a geographical concept, and it is also more than a political-historical-geographical concept” (Sun Ge, cited in Lin, 2015: web). This being said, Chen provides conceptually vague definitions of Asia such as it being “a pervasive structure of sentiment” (Chen, 2010:214), and that it “refers to an open-ended imaginary space, a horizon through which
links can be made and new possibilities can be articulated” (Chen, 2010:282). As far as “method” is concerned, Chen sees it as “an attempt to move beyond existing limits, and as a gesture towards something more productive, my notion of method [emphasis added] does not imply an instrumentalist approach, but is imagined as a mediating process [emphasis added]” (Chen, 2010:282). As will be shown in the following chapters, Chen frequently mentions Inter-Asia Referencing as consisting of dialogue with the frameworks and concepts of other intellectuals in Asia. As it turns out, the only one with whom Chen doesn’t have a direct “dialogue” with in ASIA AS METHOD: Towards Deimperialization is Takeuchi Yoshimi.

3.3. Chen’s understanding of “Asia as Method” Part Two: Takeuchi Yoshimi Gives a Talk

From the very beginning of the article Chen published in the 2012 issue of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies journal, Chen admits not probing deeply enough into the meaning of “Asia as Method”. He considers his second, complementary article to be an “exercise […] to fulfill a delayed will to supplement what Asia as Method could not engage with, and therefore dialogue with Takeuchi’s ‘Asia as Method’ is an attempt to remove a deep psychic and intellectual regret.” (Chen, 2012:317)

Takeuchi’s “Asia as Method”, written in 1960 and published in 1961, is characterized by an essayistic style, largely assuming the form of a stream of consciousness, punctuated by Takeuchi expressing his qualms about being unqualified to talk about such a topic. In order to deal with the vagueness that arises from such an essay, Chen approaches “Asia as Method” as a lecture that Takeuchi gives to “presumably members of the critical intellectual circles in Tokyo, around January 1960” (ibid.). As Chen argues, “the advantage to read the text of a
lecture is that it is more straightforward than fully developed writing, and hence may well be
easier to understand; and the disadvantage is that the problematic spoken about tends to be
briefly touched upon and is not gone into depth.” (ibid.)

However, it is worth remarking that Takeuchi wrote mostly outside of the academic
world, at a time when rigorous-academic research was not in place. In other words, it could be
said that today’s critical writing about China (and Japan) in Japan had its debut with
intellectuals such as Takeuchi Yoshimi. As a result, rather than being simply ambiguous,
Takeuchi’s style should be regarded as marking an initial phase in Sino-Japanese studies.

Once Chen situates “Asia as Method” in orality, he proceeds to reviewing the main
points of the “lecture”.

Takeuchi begins by reminiscing about his first encounter with China, his interest in
Chinese studies, and how this meant that he had to overcome his own bias about China. “The
problematics Takeuchi encounters [in China] are a widely shared mental condition of the
Third World people” (ibid., 320). Takeuchi advocates for Japan to look at the countries with
which it shares the same experience of being faced with a so-called “invasion of the West,”
such as China. Takeuchi states the importance of literature, his field, as well as Lu Xun’s
literary works, and his mission of translating and introducing Chinese literature in Japan.
Taking literature as an entry point, Takeuchi employs the case of China as a tool for
introspection, trying to understand where Japan went wrong with regards to its modernization
process. That’s why Takeuchi appreciates Dewey’s insight into the two types of “revolution”
that took place in China and Japan, respectively. The one in China (1911) which was driven
from the inside, in a bottom-up fashion, happened as an inherent necessity, and qualifies as
being genuine, despite China appearing to be more chaotic than Japan; on the other hand, the
Meiji Restoration (1868), implemented in a top-down manner, which means that the revolution lacked true roots, and was, as a consequence, shallow.

Any discussion about the original “Asia as Method” is incomplete without referring to the “What is Modernity?” essay Takeuchi wrote in 1948, and Chen refers to it by indicating the two examples that synthesize Takeuchi’s conception of modernization as it occurred in China and Japan respectively: China has a “centrifugal” model of running towards its “center,” while Japan has a “centripetal” (ibid., 322) model that involves running away from its “center”.

One of the first instances where Chen explicitly mentions Inter-Asia Referencing overlapping with Asia as Method is his call for comparative studies in Asia:

Comparative studies of China, India and Japan (with reference to each other) still don’t really exist. […] For instance, the most comparable country for China is India. Both are agriculture-based countries with large peasant populations. But most intellectuals in China do not have an interest in India, for India is a ‘backward’ country, not worthy of ‘comparison’. Trapped into the logic of ‘catching up’, an important reference point is thus lost. The result is clear: the normative-evaluative plane distracts from the analytical problematic and thus Euro-America remains the reference system in binary opposition to China, Japan or India. (Chen, 2012:322)

This strongly echoes Takeuchi himself:

A great deal remains to be known about China. Yet such knowledge is not to be gained by studying China alone; rather this nation must be situated within a larger framework such as would exceed the efforts of any single individual. There must thus be collaboration. (Takeuchi cited in in Chen, 2012: 322)

As a result, Chen considers Asia as Method as a prototype for “Inter-Asia”. Reviewing Takeuchi’s “Asia as Method,” Chen stops short of mentioning the “rollback” (巻き返す) of cultures, based on which a true “Asianism” can be reached according to Takeuchi and which sums up Asia as Method. Drawing near the conclusion of the current chapter, I would like to
integrate Chen’s quotation of Takeuchi – “This I have called ‘Asia as method,’ and yet it is impossible to definitively state what this might mean” – in the last paragraph, which I consider to be quintessential for understanding “Asia as Method,” and for revealing that Takeuchi’s message, while ambiguous, does ascertain a clear pedagogical content:

Risky the Orient must re-embrace the West, it must change the West itself in order to realize the latter’s outstanding cultural values on a greater scale. Such a rollback of culture or values would create universality. The Orient must change the West in order to further elevate those universal values that the West itself produced. This is the main problem facing East–West relations today, and it is at once a political and cultural issue. The Japanese must grasp this idea as well. When this rollback takes place, we must have our own cultural values [emphasis added]. And yet perhaps these values do not already exist, in substantive form [emphasis added]. Rather I suspect that they are possible as method, that is to say, as the process of the subject’s self-formation[emphasis added]. This I have called “Asia as method,” and yet it is impossible to definitively state what this might mean. (Takeuchi 1960 in Calichman 2005:165)

Takeuchi’s argument for achieving an Asian solidarity that could lead to Asia’s active participation in the universality of knowledge production and, inherently, world history, is clear. As Calichman observes, “the realignment with China and, by extension, with Asia signifies a desire for modernity that can be achieved through a collective sense of Asian identity that would be capable of disrupting, or disfiguring, the West’s monistic view of civilization” (Calichman, in Chan Tak-Hung, 2016: 3).

As concluded by Takeuchi, Asia as Method is committed to a long-term agenda. Risking oversimplification due to the limited available space of this thesis, Asia as Method can be regarded as consisting of the following three-stage plan:

1. Re-embracing the West
2. Creating own values
3. Changing the West by enriching its values through an Asian experience.
Consequently, it must be concluded that Inter-Asia Referencing as conceived by Chen stops at the critical second stage of creating the Asia-specific cultural values that did not exist in “substantive form” (Takeuchi 1960 in Calichman 2005:165) in Takeuchi’s time, but that are illustrative of “the subject’s self-formation” (ibid.). Of course, Chen entertains the long-term potential for “Asia” to create region-specific knowledge, the “method” with which “Asia” can contribute to “the universal” now monopolized by “the West”; but such a statement looms like an abstraction overshadowed by the urgency of multiplying the points of reference in order to create a fertile, common ground for knowledge production that might well be the missing condition for regional integration.

However, there is a fourth stage that “Asia as Method” does not account for, and implicitly, Inter-Asia Referencing does neither: what happens to Asia, with all its spatial and sociocultural delimitations, once it penetrates the paradigmatic structure of the West? Do Chen and other intellectuals, by Inter-Asia Referencing aka Asia as Method expect “Asia” to retain the form it had prior to its dissemination Westwards, or do they anticipate a hybridization of Asian values by fusing with Western ones, in a process similar to the assimilation of Western values in Asia?

Does Chen with his Asia as Method anticipate, on the long run, a back-and-fourth bouncing of an “Asian-enhanced Western paradigm,” or does he expect a “grand finale” in an End of History (Fukuyama, 1992) manner, where “further elevating those universal values that the West itself produced” (Takeuchi, ibid.) is seen as the ultimate goal of the knowledge production circuit in Asia? Do such frameworks as Asia as Method and Inter-Asia Referencing account for “Asia’s” turn at being hybridized by entities such as Europe and North America, or from the other end, Africa? This set of questions will be dealt with at more
length in the 5th chapter of this thesis under the title of “Where is Inter-Asia Referencing going?”

4. “Asia as Method 2.0”: Inter-Asia Referencing as Conceptualized by Chen Kuang-Hsing

In his book *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (2010), Chen proposes Inter-Asia Referencing as a framework for a larger endeavor encompassing three stages, which he deems long overdue in overcoming the colonial legacy in Asia: decolonialization, de-cold war and deimperialization, each of which is elaborated in the second, third, and forth chapter of his monograph respectively. The framework of Inter-Asia Referencing is dealt with in the 5th chapter, “Asia as Method: Overcoming the Present Conditions of Knowledge Production,” which appears to be the overarching theme of the monograph.

In the context of deimperialization, Inter-Asia referencing can be seen as an immediate answer to overcoming the “anxiety of the colonized” that arose from the “politics of representations […] where Asia is seen as primarily a colonial imagination” (Chen, 2010:223).

As a result, one of the main narratives that consistently run through Chen’s body of work is decolonialization. The reason for the lack of a unified, coordinated effort in reclaiming the knowledge conditions in Asia, Chen maintains, is that the colonized regions did not undergo proper “reflexive cultural decolonialization” (Chen, 2010:65) and still rely on Western theories to decipher local conditions at home. For the questions posed by colonialization, Chen adds, “a methodology specific to the colonized third world is needed” (Chen, 2010:66).
In one of the many instances in which he refers to Asia as Method and Inter-Asia referencing interchangeably, Chen advocates for internalizing the West in order for the colonized subject to successfully distance itself away from it:

Rather than being constantly anxious about the question of the West, we can actively acknowledge it as a part of the formation of our subjectivity. In the form of fragmented pieces, the West has entered our history and became part of it, but not in a totalizing manner. The task for Asia as method is to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and world-view, so that our anxiety over the West can be diluted, and productive critical work can move forward. (Chen, ibid)

In addition to spelling out the necessity for such a framework, Chen also sets the task(s) that Inter-Asia Referencing should assume by possessing the quality of Asia as Method: that is, to lead the intellectuals in the region to engage in productive dialogue. This being said, Chen does not theorize Inter-Asia Referencing any further; he does not provide a rigid outline *per se*, but focuses instead on *exemplifying* the framework with regards to three modes that prove to be emblematic of the inner workings of Inter-Asia Referencing. As illustrated by Chen, Inter-Asia Referencing finds itself at the node where quotation, dialogue and translation intersect.

While his minimalist theoretical layout – that possibly upholds the ambiguity Chen sees in Takeuchi – may be considered incomplete and slightly daunting, the waiver of clear-cut delimitations proves itself to be thought-provoking and effective by giving plenty of leeway for carrying out associations, which is the main purpose of the Inter-Asia Referencing framework. In turn, I shall present how Inter-Asia Referencing can be pinpointed by quotation, dialogue and translation à la Chen.
4.1. Inter-Asia Referencing as Dialogue and Quotation

To begin with, I will not focus on distinguishing dialogue from quotation, since Chen himself does not do so, but instead regard them as inseparable, with quotation acting as a premise for an evolving productive dialogue; more specifically, through its dialogic encounter with different conditions, quotations may undergo new adaptations or give way to new critical interpretations.

In order to illustrate his understanding of Inter-Asia Referencing as both quotation and dialogue with analytical concepts enunciated by different intellectuals in the cultural landscape corresponding to the geographical site that is Asia, Chen provides two examples:

1. he refers to Partha Chatterjee’s concept of “political society” (2004), and then he examines the compatibility between what Chatterjee describes and the situation in Taiwan; and
2. he engages with Mizoguchi Yuzo’s concept of “China as Method” (1989), which is in itself an application of Takeuchi Yoshimi’s “Asia as Method.”

4.1.1. In Dialogue with Partha Chatterjee’s “Political Society”

For the purpose of ensuring the consistency of this thesis, I will limit my focus to the dialogue-with Partha Chatterjee’s analytical concept of “political society.” I will do so, on the one hand, because it is an example that features extensively in Chen’s analysis, as will be later shown, even when further discussing the matter of its translation, with relevant implications, and on the other hand, because it is a straightforward enough concept to be appropriated to match the Inter-Asia Referencing framework and shed light on the merits of employing it.
Together with other notable scholars, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gayatri Spivak, Partha Chatterjee is a prominent Indian scholar belonging to the postcolonial school of subaltern studies. Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, Partha Chatterjee has authored, among others: *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993), *The Politics of the Governed* (2004) and *Lineages of Political Society* (2011) and was the recipient of the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize for outstanding achievements in the field of Asian Studies in 2009.

Chatterjee defines “political society” as groups of “population,” that despite being in an unofficial, inferior and illegal position, do manage to inflict “political” change on a governmental level. In Chatterjee’s own words, such “populations” are organized into “associations, transgress the strict lines of legality in struggling to live and work. They might live in illegal squatter settlements, male illegal use of water and electricity, travel without tickets in public transport” (Chatterjee, 2004:36). Chatterjee uses the term “populations” in denoting such groups. Unlike *citizens, population* “is wholly descriptive and empirical; it does not carry a normative burden” (Chatterjee, 2004:31). By using it, Chatterjee avoids early on subjecting the “population” to a predetermined relation to the state, thus anticipating the proposition of a particular social breed, present enough but yet undefined, right in between the civil society and the state. Although the so-called “political society” consists of illegal or borderline individuals, they are socially highly visible. While the civil society may find itself in an antagonistic relation to the state, an elite percentage of it, motivated by its political ambitions, crosses into the realm of the state and assumes political power, proving to be quite
fluid. Unlike it, the “political society” stays static, stagnant\(^3\) and apolitical, only concerned with its survival, and by lacking political means, it successfully mobilizes the civil society (NGOs, civilian protest, etc.) to negotiate with the establishment on its behalf and ensure its survival.

One of the examples Chatterjee gives to support his reasoning (and the one that Chen later uses in his book) is that of a community of squatters settled along the railway in Calcutta. The squatters have been facing eviction since the 1990s. They successfully managed to organize themselves and used slogans, public speeches, mediatic strategies in order to mobilize civil society in fighting on their behalf. As a result of the ongoing struggle, NGOs negotiated on their behalf with the state (the social-welfare division) and ensured their survival. Instances such as this, Chatterjee argues, are not isolated, but part of a large trend, which although is not conceptualized in the “civil society vs. the state” relationship as posited in the West, it exists nonetheless. Therefore, a new concept is needed to position the so-called subaltern class and explain the social tensions that arise from its struggle.

In full agreement with Chatterjee that the “state vs. civil society” model is in fact a reductionist representation (Chen, 2010:232), Chen \textit{quotes} Chatterjee’s concept of a “political society” and applies it to the social conditions in Taiwan in a subsequent dialogue. By doing so, Chen illustrates the principle that lies at the basis of Inter-Asia referencing – quoting “Asian concepts” elaborated in certain parts of Asia in order to explain phenomena occurring

\footnotesize{3. By “static” and “stagnant” I mean that the political society does not disperse neither into the category of the civil society, nor into that of the establishment; it is not a presence that will disappear by being assimilated into either groups, but a constant part of the (democratically unrepresented) demographics; it being apolitical, either by choice, necessity or lack of opportunity, is another reason that keeps it insulated; by not devolving, nor evolving, the political society is a group that, in lack of a progressive change regarding status, remains stagnant.}
in other parts of it, in a joint reflexive effort that could led to a comprehensive understanding of Asia from *within* which replaces an understanding of Asia from *outside*, namely from the West.

Chen sees similarities between the struggle of the squatter community analyzed by Chatterjee and that of the squatter community in No. 14/15 Park in Taipei or the struggle of licensed prostitutes, who found themselves backed by feminist groups when the Taipei mayor tried to put a lock down on their activity from 1997 until 1999.

*Dialogue* seems to resolve another of Chen’s concerns: “Discussing the issue of ethnic politics in Taiwan with Indonesian activist intellectuals, am I still a native informant? The hierarchical positioning is suddenly turned into a horizontal one” (Chen, 2010:227). In Chen’s view, such a change in position has the potential of bringing empowerment with respect to the conditions of knowledge production.

**4.1.2. The Yakuza as a Political Society?**

For the purpose of this study, I believe it is worth thinking about the case of the Japanese Yakuza in relation to Chatterjee’s concept of “political society”. First of all, this will be for the reasons enunciated by Chen himself, namely to analyze conditions in Asia with in-house, “made in Asia” analytical tools, and to signal the need for such a reversal of perspective in Europe and North America, assuming that there is a “unmapped” group of people, by so-called “Western standards,” in Asia. Secondly, this will be in line with how Chen appropriated Chatterjee’s concept of “political society.” As I already mentioned, Chen *exemplifies* Inter-Asia Referencing rather than choosing to provide a stricter theoretical guidance. By doing the same, and operating from within the logic of Inter-Asia Referencing, I
hope to shed some light on the merits of employing Inter-Asia referencing as a theoretical framework.

Without dwelling too much on the concept of the subaltern class for reasons regarding the economy of this thesis, it can be safely stated that the Yakuza represent the subaltern class by being unambiguously situated in the underworld. It can also be said that they have been historically dwelling in the subaltern class, since over 70% of the members of the Yamaguchi-gumi, the largest Yakuza syndicate by far, are in fact burakumin (部落民). Literally village or hamlet people, burakumin are outcast communities that have traditionally been living on the fringes of societies and have long been stigmatized, despite regulations now forbidding it.

The conditions to be met in order to position the Yakuza as a “political society” between the civil society and the state would be their high visibility despite their illegal status, and the success with which they mobilize the civil society into negotiating with the state on their behalf and ensuring their survival. Therefore, in order to decide if Yakuza can be labeled “political society” in an inter-referential effort, there are three parameters to be considered: their social visibility, their relation with the state and their relation with the civil society.

As for the first condition, far from being covert, the Yakuza are highly visible and relatively easy to reach. For example, “a bronze nameplate on the door helpfully identifies the Sumiyoshi-kai, another large criminal organization. Full gang members carry business cards and register with the police. Some have pension plans” (D.M., 2015: web). Furthermore, Yamaguchi-gumi has an office in Ginza, the upscale shopping district in Tokyo.

In addition to their high visibility, the Yakuza dwell in the informal economy, with most of them conducting business at large both through, and behind, their front companies. While it is hard to argue that the Yakuza are poor, being poor was never a prerequisite in
belonging to the political society and the subaltern class, belonging to the informal economy, was. Without trying to deny that the direct connection between their precarious living conditions and dire economic situation is what situates the squatter communities (India, Taiwan, etc.) into the political society, or to venture into making estimates of a sex worker’s salary, it is worth pointing out that for Chen, the political society (when attempting to translate it into both Chinese language, and the sociocultural context of Taiwan) is not limited only to squatters and sex workers; on the grounds of informal economy, it also includes street vendors and (Chinese) migrant workers, but also religious sects, groups which “the modernizing state […] uses words like ‘superstition’, ‘feudalism’, ‘antiquated’ and ‘wasteful’ to legitimize its attack on” (Chen, 2010:240). An example that Chen gives is that of the followers of the sea goddess Mazu, between 80,000 and 100,000 worshipers that are controversially known for “not recognizing national borders” (ibid.) and having attempted to “bring together believers and temples in Taiwan with those in mainland China’s southeast coastal provinces, where, according to legend, is where the goddess is originally from.” (ibid.)

On the other hand, the Yakuza themselves are a very large, heterogeneous group, comprising of approx. 80,000 people. In addition to being split into more syndicates, regardless of the group they belong to, the Yakuza follow a very strict hierarchy, where the material gains differ significantly from top to bottom. Furthermore, as will be shown, many young delinquents adhere to the organization for the securities that the oyabun protectorate gives, so it is unclear whether this reason supersedes, or not, the financial incentive. The financial situation is even more dire for the ex-Yakuza members that wish to abandon their life crime and re-enter civil society, but conspicuous markers of their past (such as tattoos, yubitsume, etc.) drastically hinder their chances of finding a job or housing.
Therefore, with this ambiguity taken into account, I will proceed to determine if, indeed, the Yakuza are part of the political society in Japan in Chatterjee’s (and Chen’s) sense, by looking at the Yakuza’s relation to the state and to the civil society, respectively.

4.1.3. The Yakuza’s Relationship with the State

The Japanese Yakuza is, without doubt, a criminal organization. Unlike the direct crackdown on the mafia undertaken in U.S. and Italy respectively, the Japanese Diet has not criminalized Yakuza membership. Rather, the Japanese legislation that is currently in place aims at curbing the business of the members, and, as will be shown later, pushing the responsibility of standing up against the Yakuza on the civil society instead.

The main “persecution” that the Yakuza has faced from the state takes the form of the “Anti-boryokudan law” (暴力団対策法, boryokudan taisakuho, lit. designated violence groups). The Anti-boryokudan law was first enacted in 1991, and since then has undergone a series of provisions, most notably in 2007 and 2012. The law consistently did not prohibit Yakuza membership throughout all its modifications, did not target companies directly or indirectly owned by the Yakuza, and it had little impact on their businesses.

A relatively late regulatory effort when compared with the U.S. RICO Act (The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) enacted in 1970, the 1991 law specifically targeted Yakuza by labeling them “designated boryokudan” (指定暴力団, shitei boryokudan). There were 22 Yakuza syndicates that are “designated boryokudan” in Japan as of 2010.

The 1991 law increased the investigative capabilities of the police force, allowing it to subject Yakuza groups to on-the-spot inspections and issue cease-and-desist orders on the
pre-supposition that extortion has been reported by civilians. The cease-and-desist orders, in addition to its general vagueness, are one of the main factors that classify the Anti-boryokudan law as an administrative law: it is rarely respected and almost never leads to punishment.

The 2007 revision was designed as a countermeasure to how the Yakuza had adapted to the provisions of the 1991 law. While it offered no new criminal enforcement measures, it affected the ways in which Yakuza recruited new members. The coercion of family members, as well as yubitsume, the practice of amputating the tip of one’s finger as an apology to a superior, were prohibited; the Prefectural Public Safety Commission had the obligation to provide support to individuals wanting to leave the organization; most notably, in Article 15, Section 2, the 2007 revision introduced the Civil Liability Clause, which meant that the Yakuza heads were to be held responsible for criminal offences carried out by their underlings that result in civilian casualties or losses. Liability in civil compensation claims has had a dramatic impact on the structure and activities of the Yakuza. The 2007 revision extended the provisions of the 2004 revision stipulating a damage liability clause in 2004 to “all damages incurred during turf wars or fundraising activities, including criminal acts, by underlings” (Reilley, 2014:814).

The 2012 Revision came as a result of the mounting international pressure from the U.S. that saw Japan as falling behind in the “War on Drugs”, after the 1988 UN anti-drug convention. It was considered that “Japan lacked specific countermeasures against organized crime” (Reilley, 807). The 2012 revision makes it possible for police to make instant arrests without a cease-or-desist order but still remains largely dependent on civilian reporting.

Faced with the “persecution” from the state in the form of the Anti-boryokudan law, the Yakuza members did not mobilize groups from the civil society, nor did they engage
human rights layers, but they protested themselves. Around 130 Yakuza members protested in Ginza, claiming that the new law would infringe on their human rights and lead to abuses by the police (ibid., 809). The Yamaguchi-gumi, Aizu-Kotetsu, and Kusano-ikka eventually brought forward a lawsuit against the government challenging the constitutionality of the Anti-boryokudan law. On September 29, 1995, the Kyoto District Court dismissed the challenge (ibid., 810), admitting that the law would interfere with the gangster’s daily life and businesses, but that this was its whole purpose. If anything, the law drew a clear distinction between citizens and Yakuza members, and the Yakuza did reorganize in an attempt to appear more legitimate.

The Anti-boryokudan law fosters an ambiguous relation that the Yakuza have with the police task. While it has been said that there is a certain “division of labor” between the Yakuza and the police regarding security issues that only the Yakuza can solve, it has also been pointed out that the Anti-boryokudan law causes wide-spread corruption. “Police members have been known to accept bribes from Yakuza members in exchange for overlooking shipments of illegal goods or providing alerts of impending police raids” (ibid., 812).

Another aspect of the direct relationship that the Yakuza have with the state can be seen in the support that right-wing politicians receive from Yakuza syndicates, in particular with regards to how their election campaigns are funded by the Yakuza. But also, historically speaking, the Yakuza have been connected with Japan’s ultranationalist movement ever since the movement’s inception, due to their shared ideologies, including xenophobia and the belief in the deification of the emperor. Moreover, the Yakuza syndicates as they are now have been strongly influenced by the Dark Ocean Society (玄洋社, Genyosha), which was joined by more than 300 Yakuza members and police officers to intimidate anti-government opponents
and promote the election of conservative politicians during Japan’s first national election in 1890 (Siniawer, in Reilley, 804). Furthermore, it was the members of Genyosha who were responsible for the assassination of the Queen of Korea that eventually led Japan into World War II (ibid.).

As such, it can be easily understood that the Liberal Democratic Party, which has ruled Japan for 54 of the last 58 years, has documented links to the Yakuza. The first LDP Prime Minister and grandfather of the current PM, Abe Shinzo, Kishi Nobusuke, was heavily involved with Yamaguchi-gumi. At least four other Prime Ministers have been linked to the Yakuza, most notably Takeshita Noboru, who came to power in 1987. In 2012, Japan’s justice minister, Tanaka Keishu, was forced to resign when it was revealed that he was connected to the Yakuza. Yet having these links has not always been so damaging for Japanese politicians. An Abe cabinet member, Yamatani Eriko, head of the Public Safety Commission, which oversees the National Police Agency, was suspected of consorting with a racist right-wing group that has ties to the Yakuza (Adelstein, 2015:web).

4.1.4. The Yakuza’s Relationship with the Civil Society

The main ambiguity regarding the Yakuza is that it is still prosecuted under the civil law, thus illustrating the government’s reluctance to take full responsibility. The sheer increase of the liability concerning the criminal acts committed by Yakuza members paired with the heavy reliance on civilian initiative increasingly puts forward the civil society as the main site where the Yakuza receives retribution for its deeds.

The liability clause stipulated in the 2007 revision became a powerful tool for civilians to keep the Yakuza in check. A significant example is that of the notorious Yakuza boss, Goto
Tadamasa, also one of the largest shareholders of Japan Airlines. In 2012, Goto Tadamasa, founder of the Goto-gumi Yakuza group, as well as a member of the Yamaguchi-gumi headquarters, agreed to pay $1.4 million to the family of a real estate agent that his men had killed in 2006. He was never convicted in a criminal court (Adelstein, 2012:web). This was the first time Japanese Yakuza bosses have been sued for crimes pre-dating the 2007 revisions to the Anti-Bryokudan Law.

One of the main reasons for which the Anti-Boryokudan Law functions as an administrative law subjecting Yakuza bosses to the liability clause is that the Yakuza syndicates are essentially seen as companies. Former National Police Agency officer and lawyer Shiba Akihiko says that “since it is very difficult to prove the criminal responsibility of the top Yakuza bosses, lawsuits are one way of seeing that justice is partially served. The Organized Crime Countermeasure Laws are administrative laws, not criminal laws. The 2007 revisions made it clear that designated organized crimes groups function like a Japanese company, and therefore the people at the top have employer liability” (使用者責任, shousa sekinin) (Adelstein, 2012:web). Another possible interpretation for the Japanese government treating the Yakuza syndicates as companies can be traced to the corporate culture of Japan that provides a wide-spread model of dealing with litigations.

It comes as no surprise that the Yakuza are extremely concerned with their public image and put considerable effort into PR campaigns. In addition to Yakuza fan magazines (Jitsuwa Jidai, Jitsuwa Jiho, Jitsuwa Document, etc.) being distributed at newsstands (Reilley, 2014:805), the Yakuza Magazine is distributed among the Yamaguchi-gumi 27,700 regular members. Meant to boost morale amid tougher anti-gang laws implemented in 2012, it was also hoped that the magazine would leak therefore conveying and promoting a positive image of the Yakuza towards the general public (McCurry, 2013:web).
On the other hand, the Yakuza have consistently carried out disaster relief activities in the aftermath of both the 1995 Kobe earthquake and the Fukushima Disaster, managing to mobilize themselves faster than the government. In contrast, the government got criticized for its slow response.

After the Kobe earthquake in 1995, the secretary of the Yamaguchi-gumi syndicate said in a telephone interview that the group was handing out 8,000 meals a day from a parking lot next to its headquarters (Strengold, 1995:web). The food included bread, powdered milk, mineral water and fresh eggs. He said the group was using motor scooters, boats and even a helicopter to move goods into and around the city, which has been nearly paralyzed by the earthquake. The secretary stated that Yamaguchi-gumi’s operation, involving handouts of food to all comers twice a day, at 11 A.M. and 5 P.M., would be expanded to a second site, adding that “We will keep this up until the Government can handle it,” (ibid.). In addition to distributing supplies to the stricken residents, the Yamaguchi-gumi even “patrolled the streets to keep down looting” (Adelstein, 2011:web).

Japan-based journalist Jake Adelstein reported that a few hours after the earthquake had struck the Tohoku region of Japan on Friday, March 11th, 2011, Inagawa-kai, the third largest Yakuza group, sent “25 trucks bearing 50 tonnes of supplies arrived in front of the City Hall in Hitachinaka, in the east-coast Ibaraki prefecture,” (ibid.) that were unloaded by a hundred men careful to conceal their affiliation after the toughened 2008 Anti-oryokudan law; in the wake of the disaster, the Sumiyoshi-kai, the second largest Yakuza syndicate, has collected over a million dollars from senior members and was distributing goods to Miyagi, Ibaraki, and Fukushima prefectures via front companies and associated members. In some areas, Yakuza front offices have been converted to temporary shelters. (ibid.); according to Reuters, various groups of Yakuza dispatched at least 70 trucks to the quake zone loaded with
supplies worth more than $500,000 in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster (Jones, 2011:web).

Moreover, the Yakuza have reportedly been involved in assembling the “decontamination troops” (Yamaguchi, 2016:web) responsible for the Fukushima nuclear clean-up. They managed to gather approximately 5000 decontamination workers consisting of homeless and jobless men, as well as the so-called “nuclear gypsies” that have been involved in the construction and maintenance of the nuclear sites even prior to the Fukushima disaster. Such unqualified workers are being hired under a government-funded subcontractor system that grants $100-a-day per worker. The decontamination industry has a strong appeal for the Yakuza because the programme doesn’t have a proper oversight. As a result, the workers are more often than not subjected to human rights abuses and drastic wage cuts, seeing that they receive less than half of the prescribed quota (McCurdy, 2015:web).

Such crises as the Kobe and Tohoku earthquakes are opportunities for the Yakuza to display their chivalry, the code of honor (任侠, ninkyo), to which the Yakuza claim to abide. The general consensus that Yakuza are profit-minded contradicts the very core of their humanitarian ideology; however there are also voices that acknowledge that the mobilization of the Yakuza in times of need is truly selfless. But more importantly, providing disaster relief is essentially an opportunity of belonging and being useful to the society.

To sum up, the conditions that the Yakuza must fulfill in order to be considered “political society” in Chatterjee’s sense are: they have to be static, stagnant, apolitical, and successful in mobilizing the civil society to negotiate with the state on their behalf and ensure their survival. In light of the intricate relations that the Yakuza have with the state and the
civil society respectively, it must be concluded that the Yakuza fulfill none of the above-mentioned conditions.

As far as staying apolitical is concerned, the elite factions of the Yakuza tend to have consistent political goals; even if they do not publicly engage themselves in politics, they have documented ties to the right-wing political class.

As for staying stagnant, a faction of the low-ranking members seems to be willing to rehabilitate and re-enter the civil society. However, the extent to which this is possible is subjected to debate, since the room for social mobility is severely hindered by prejudice as well as unfavorable laws, that do not allow Yakuza members to rent a flat or open a bank account (Jozuka, 2016:web). A consequence of this is the boom in prosthetic fingers industry, which many Yakuza members turn to in order to remove the social stigma of a yubitsume.

Another argument against the Yakuza belonging to the “political society” is that despite being a group of highly visible illegals belonging to the subaltern class, the Yakuza are not successful in mobilizing the civil society to negotiate with the state on their behalf. On the other hand, it can be argued that there is no need for the civil society to negotiate with the government on the Yakuza’s behalf since there are backchannels by which the Yakuza can communicate directly with the state: either by being in contact with corrupt politicians or police officers, or by taking advantage of the leeway that ambiguous regulations open for them, such as the subcontractor system designed to recruit personnel for unwanted jobs on the nuclear plant sites or even the, by Western standards lenient, Anti-boryokudan law.

The government’s apparent reluctance to engage in a firm crackdown on the Yakuza has significant implications for the mapping of the “state-civil society” relation, as well as for localizing where the social tensions in Japan lie. Firstly, the Yakuza seem to have acquired
certain derivative social functions. It has been argued that Japan lacks a comprehensive infrastructure for young juveniles that the Yakuza takes in. Also, if the Yakuza were to dismantle its approx. 80,000 members would be left on the streets with no hierarchy or system to adhere to and nobody to control them. It should be also considered that the government turns a blind eye on the Yakuza recruiting manpower for work on nuclear sites. These situations indicate a certain “division of labor” between the Japanese Government and the Yakuza. Secondly, despite toughening the Anti-boryokudan law in 2012 at the pressure coming from the West, the Japanese government fears pushing the Yakuza underground and obtaining an American-style, covert criminal organization that would be much more difficult to monitor than the current overt one. Doing so would also disturb the existing social order which the government seems keen to preserve. All in all, the government seems to provide a semi-protectorate for the Yakuza as a result of its apparent desire to maintain the status-quo where the Yakuza is concerned.

This is most significantly illustrated by the way the state imposed, in a top-bottom manner, the responsibility of dealing with the Yakuza on the civil society. In addition to the Yakuza being prosecuted under civil law, the state empowers citizens who choose to challenge the Yakuza, by means of the Anti-boryokudan law which relies heavily on civil reporting for it to be effective. Being pushed onto the civil society but clearly not a part of it, and having an ambiguous relationship with the state, grants the Yakuza a “no man’s land” sort of space in-between the state and the civil society; however, such an in-between space does not translate into “political society” as envisioned by Chatterjee, not unless the concept itself is loosened up by reconsidering the relationship between the state and the civil society in Japan, as well as determining where the civil society positions itself regarding the Yakuza.
Moreover, on June 15th, 2017, Japan’s Diet enacted the pre-emptive Anti-conspiracy Law (共謀罪法, kyóbozaiho), also called the Anti-terror Law (テロ等準備罪法, terotojimbizai), despite approximately 5,000 people protesting against it. Placed in the framework of the 2000 U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the legislation criminalizes plotting to commit 277 of so-called “serious crimes”, especially ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. However, despite the claim that the law will only target organized crime, the Anti-conspiracy/terror law exposes the civil society rather than criminal organizations to abuses, by making it vulnerable to assaults on its civil liberties, especially since citizens can be detained up to 29 days if they are suspected of “plotting a crime” (Yoshikawa, 2017:web).

The result would be an increase in police surveillance that would deter grassroot opposition to the Government’s policies (McCurry, 2017:web) and lead to self-censorship in a “not so vibrant civil society”, as it is referred to by Nakano Koichi, a political scientist at Tokyo’s Sophia University (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017:web). This takes place amid growing concerns regarding diminishing speech freedoms in Japan’s democracy as they are voiced by David Kaye, the U.N. special rapporteur on freedom of expression (ibid.), and Joseph Cannataci, the UN special rapporteur on the right to privacy (McCurry, 2017:web).

4.1.5. Inter-Asia Referencing the Yakuza with the Chinese Mafia: Open Questions

After concluding that the Yakuza does not constitute a “political society” in the way that Chatterjee formulated it, there are two possible pathways that Inter-Asia Referencing opens: 1) either subjecting other social groups, or “populations,” in Japan that are better fitted for being analyzed in dialogue with Chatterjee’s concept, such as burakumin, or even the
nuclear gypsies, or 2) analyzing the Yakuza in relation with the Chinese Triads, for example. Instead of comparing the way that the Japanese government deals with its mafia by holding it up against the U.S. and Italy – the way Reilley (2014) does – comparing it with how the Chinese or Korean mafia is dealt with by their respective governments might prove to be more insightful for shedding light on what commonalities might exist in the relation between mafia-government-civil society in Asia.

For example, Wang Peng, Associate Professor at the University of Hong Kong, gives a socioeconomic and historical account of how the Chinese Mafia developed, in his book entitled “The Chinese Mafia: Organized Crime, Corruption and Extra-Legal Protection” (2017). Wang illustrates how the Shanghai Green Gang (青帮, Qing Bang), one of the most powerful criminal syndicates in Chinese history, acted as a pseudo-government in the period of warfare in China (1912-1945), to support his claim that the Chinese Mafia appeared where the state failed to offer its citizens protection.

Although he does not situate the debate in the Inter-Asia Referencing framework, he grounds his study in the need for investigating how the Chinese Mafia (or the Triads) developed against the specific sociocultural background and conditions in China. As such, Wang remarks on the social embeddedness of the Chinese Mafia, and he differentiates between the “Red Mafia” of the corrupt public officials of the Communist Party, and the “Black Mafia,” the local gangs, and dedicates a chapter of his book to analyze guanxi (关系), a Chinese form of social network as a phenomenon that is distinctive from the social networking in Western countries.

There is great potential for future research in using the Inter-Asia Referencing framework to investigate how the mafia or criminal organizations came into being in the
Chinese and Japanese contexts, from what their relationships with their respective governments and citizens might be, to how the Asian governments subsequently deal with the mafia.

For example, one of the many possible departure points could be that, historically speaking, both Chinese and Japanese governments found themselves backed by gangster groups during the modernization period in which their respective empires were overthrown. A relevant example is the fact that Chiang Kai-shek (蔣中正), the Kuomintang leader and Head of State of Taiwan between 1928–1975, was backed by the heads of the Shanghai Green Gang, Huang Jinrong (黃金榮), Du Yuesheng (杜月笙), and Zhang Xiaolin (張嘯林), otherwise known as Shanghai’s ‘three tycoons’. Wang notes:

The development of the Shanghai Green Gang was inseparable from the support given by Chiang Kai-shek, the military and political leader who served as Chairman of the National Military Council of the Nationalist government of the Republic of China (ROC) from 1928 to 1948. Meanwhile, Chiang was the most influential member of the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party. Chiang joined the Shanghai Green Gang […], and became a ‘pupil’ of Huang Jinrong in 1922. Huang Jinrong rescued Chiang from a debt crisis and provided financial support for Chiang to join the movement fighting against the northern warlords. The relationship between Huang Jinrong and Chiang Kai-shek was a private teacher–student friendship, and the collusion between the Chiang Kai-shek government and the Shanghai Green Gang did not begin until 12 April 1927. The Shanghai Green Gang functioned as the key enforcer in both Chiang Kai-shek’s seizure of state power in the April 12 Incident of 1927 and Chiang Kai-shek’s move to gain financial control of the Commercial Bank of China (中国通商银行 Zhongguo Tongshang Yinhang). (Wang, 2017:44)

To sum up, the fact that Japan’s government passed the latest Anti-terror law doesn’t necessarily mean that it will protect civil liberties, the same way that passing the Anti-boryokudan law doesn’t necessarily mean that the government will crack down on the Yakuza directly, but rather has the implication of involving the civil society. Such a situation
contradicts the orthodoxy of the relation between state and civil society as it is traditionally understood in Europe and in North America.

4.2. Inter-Asia Referencing as Translation

For Chen, translation is not just a means for dialogue. It becomes a medium for reconciling cultures, harmonizing heterogeneities, and therefore facilitating regional integration. As Chen puts it, “Translation gives us a way to conduct reinvestigations that allow the organic shape and characteristics of local society and modernity to surface [emphasis added]. In this sense, translation is not simply a linguistic exercise, but a social linguistics, or an intersection of history, sociology, and politics” (Chen, 2010:244). As an example of engaging in translation, Chen discusses the possibility to translate Chatterjee’s concept.

4.2.1. Translating “Political Society” in East Asian Countries

Translating “political society” to the countries in East Asia calls for mapping the relationship between state and the civil society as it is rendered in translation, and as such, Chen uses the translation of the term civil society as a departure point.

In the Mandarin speaking circles (including Malaysia and Singapore) and the countries that are using the Chinese characters script, such as Japan – “society” is rendered by shehui/shakai (社会), while the word “civil” has various renditions.

In Japan (and in general in the academic spheres), civil becomes shimin (市民), an “urban resident or, literally, ‘city people’” (ibid., 237).
In Hong Kong, civil is rendered as *shijing* (市井), which refers quite directly to a marketplace, or to the *bustling street* (街市), which becomes a pertinent measuring unit when considered in the context of the urban milieu of a city-state.

Chen observes that in mainland China, *gongmin* (公民), lit. a public citizen, that was introduced in early 20th century, was soon displaced by *guomin* (国民), lit. the people of the state. Chen argues that such a rendering denotes a “subjugation” (ibid., 237) of the people by the state, “where the nation therefore becomes the only agent of modernization, and the guomin are reduced to being those who are to be mobilized for the project” (ibid.).

At this point, Chen makes the important distinction that in the Chinese tradition, the civil society as it is understood in the “West” doesn’t necessarily oppose the state. Moreover, he traces this fact to imperial China, where the official, *guan* (官), was not in an antagonistic position towards *min* (民), the people, a relation rooted in *jiahu zhangzhi* (家户长制), a paternalistic system (distinct from patriarchy), in which the head of the family is entrusted with the safety of the entire family. Such metaphor of the family is subsequently extrapolated to the level of state, whose legitimacy is ensured not by a legally binding contract, but by the underlying faith that the state will act in the best interest of its people.

Chen draws the parallel between this formula of the “benevolent government” and what Chatterjee calls “the pastural function of the state” (Chatterjee in Chen, 2010:238). However, in addition to this, I would argue that such a paternalistic attitude can be noticed in the Communist Party of China (CPC) under several occasions. The most obvious would be the way in which the CPC employs public media to carry out educational campaigns for its *laobaixing* (老百姓), the common people. To name just a few examples, the CPC appealed to taxi drivers to bathe and brush their teeth before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and it directed
massive public campaigns against food waste right after the inauguration of Xi Jinping as president in 2013.

Slightly opposed to the different renditions of the “civil society” shown above, Chen identifies minjian (民间) to be the closest to “political society”. Without any governmental ties whatsoever, “Minjian roughly describes a folk, people’s, or commoners’ society […] while min means people or populace, jian connotes space and in-betweenness” (ibid., 237). The traits of minjian that Chen puts forwards, in addition to belonging to the informal economy and incorporating tradition, are that minjian are being under attack from the government for their feudalism, backwardness, superstition, etc. In addition to this, Chen notices that in the wake of the 21st of September earthquake in Taiwan in 1999, “Minjian groups moved in to help the victims much more quickly and effectively than the state” (ibid., 239), in a similar way as the Yakuza did in the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake and Fukushima disaster.

Without going into how much Yakuza might converge with the minjian groups, if it repeats or opposed the convergence/divergence with political society, translation, in this case, reveals two important issues: on the one hand, that regardless if civil society is rendered as shimin (市民), shijing (市井), gongmin (公民) or guomin (国民), such a “linguistic fluidity” as Chen calls it, indicates a very diverse understanding of the concept in East Asia, different from the “universal” understanding that “civil society” enjoys in Europe or North America; and on the other hand, that translation, in this situation, requires a reinvestigation/remapping of the relationship between civil society and the state in countries in East Asia, a necessity shown by Chen when pointing out the relation between state and civil society in China, and also suggested by the ambiguous nature that Yakuza have with both the state and the civil society in Japan.
As Chen puts it, translation underlies the significance of using the Inter-Asia Referencing framework:

This alternative mapping is impossible without shifting the frame of reference. If the points of reference remain within the old colonial framework, the process of translation will never be undertaken, and we will be blind to forces operating outside civil society and the state. However, once the dialogue is shifted and local and regional referents become the focus, unnoticed translation problems are necessarily brought to the fore and have to be confronted. (ibid., 244)

Translating “political society” signals the same issue when trying to think of the Japanese Yakuza in relation to Chatterjee’s concept: namely, that investigating the relationship between state and civil societies in parts of Asia such as Japan, China and Taiwan deserves a renewed attention, since previously unrepresented demographics and denominations in existing (Western) research may be uncovered by shifting the focus on “Made in Asia” research.

5. Where is Inter-Asia Referencing Going?

A significant development regarding the use of Inter-Asia Referencing as a theoretical framework is that it started being used to analyze urban planning, crossing into the disciplines of postcolonial urbanism and urban and human geography from its initial field of cultural studies.

In 2011, Ong Aihwa, Professor in Sociocultural Anthropology at UC Berkley, and Roy Ananya, Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs (and Professor at UC Berkeley until 2015), edited Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global. The volume was first conceived within a workshop at the “InterAsian Connections I” conference in Dubai in 2008 which inaugurated
the InterAsia Program of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and was organized in partnership with the Dubai School of Government (DSG). The workshop, titled “Interreferencing Asia: Urban Experiments and the Art of Being Global”, was also chaired by Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy.

The slogan of the inaugurated InterAsia Program is “Reconceptualizing Asia for a new generation of scholarship”. The keynote speaker of the 2008 “InterAsian Connections I” debut conference from Dubai, was Prasenjit Duara, a prominent Chinese historian, who opened the conference with a lecture titled “Asian Century.”

While undeniably similar to Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing, it must be stated from the very beginning that Ong and Roy’s Inter-Referencing, which from the conference to the volume lost “Asia” from its title, is a slightly different beast than the framework Chen proposes, with a different network of intellectuals supporting it. Until proving that Ong and Roy’s model moves from Chen’s “Inter-in-Asia” referential model to an “Inter-with-Asia” one in the concluding chapter where I will return on the issue of the terminology, I will refer to the version dealt with in Worlding Cities as Inter-(Asia) Referencing to operate the distinction from Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing from the very outset of this chapter. This is for the following reasons:

1) Ong and Roy’s “Inter-(Asia) Referencing doesn’t follow an “Asia” that stays confined to an “Asian space”, but frequently exists it and is constantly exposed to global influences.

2) Neither the editors nor the authors involved in the compilation of Worlding Cities directly reference Chen’s work.

3) The only obvious link between Chen and intellectuals involved in the compilation of Worlding Cities is Chua Beng-Huat, co-editor of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies
journal. I will not consider this fact as constituting a sufficient basis for assuming that the Inter-(Asia)Referencing, as it is formulated in Worlding Cities, has been built directly on Chen’s framework, nor for dismissing their similarities as mere coincidences. Instead, I will focus on presenting Inter-(Asia) Referencing as motivated by the same agenda of searching for an alternative circuit for knowledge production.

5.1. Urban Planning as “World Conjuring”

In the volume Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global, Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy set the tone for analyzing Asian urbanisms by monitoring practices of inter-city comparison, referencing and modelling in order to decode the spatializing practices in Asia, understood “in the dual senses of the gathering and the dispersing of circulating ideas, forms, and techniques, constitutive of emerging globalized spaces” (Ong, 2011:10).

In the introduction to the volume, Aihwa Ong identifies two main standpoints that are prevalent when analyzing modern urbanization in social sciences: the “political economy of globalization” and the “postcolonial focus on subaltern agencies” (ibid. 2011:2). Such approaches, Ong argues, either rest on a Marxist understanding that favors capitalist justifications for the development of a cosmopolitan milieu, or tend to focus too heavily on the politics of resistance of the subaltern class, obscuring the agency of the native individuals, otherwise understood as the “subject-power.” The downfall of belonging to either of the above-mentioned categories is that they risk being reductionist, since there are inevitably more intricacies beyond political and economic models only, to how “the global” is negotiated with “the local”. As Ong remarks:
Cities rise and fall, but the vagaries of urban fate cannot be reduced to the workings of universal laws established by capitalism or colonial history. Caught in the vectors of particular histories, national aspirations, and flows of cultures, cities have always been the principal sites for launching world-conjuring projects [emphasis added]. (Ong, 2011:1)

Simultaneously with being “world-conjuring projects,” Ong defines cities as imaginaries, being “by definition aspirational, experimental, and even speculative” (ibid, 12). Regarded by Ong as the sites for experimenting with the global, cities constitute, at the same time, the primary site for overcoming colonization.

Ong and Roy attempt to put forward a third alternative analytical pathway by returning to Gayatri Spivak’s concept of “worlding” (1985). An important postcolonial critic, Spivak argues for making “the subject-power” more visible:

Worlding’ is employed here […] to identify the projects and practices that instantiate some vision of the world in formation [emphasis added]. […] Rather, a non-ideological formulation of worlding as situated everyday practices [emphasis added] identifies ambitious practices that creatively imagine and shape alternative social visions and configurations – that is, “worlds” […] linked to the idea of emergence [emphasis added] […]. In sum, worlding practices are constitutive, spatializing, and signifying gestures that variously conjure up worlds beyond current conditions of urban living [emphasis added]. (ibid., 11-13)

Worlding, which sums up how global trends blend in with the local Asian contexts, also facilitates monitoring the diverse actors involved in spatializing processes in the urban milieu. Ong admits that while practices of worlding are not restricted to Asia, they seem to revolve around Asia in particular. Ong identifies three fashions in which worlding can be carried out: modelling, inter-referencing and new solidarities. While the concept of new solidarities is concerned more with modes of governance in East as well as South East Asia, it will not be dealt with within this master thesis. Of interest for this thesis are only the first two practices of quotation and inter-city referencing that explicitly target Asian urban space in a
global context, coined as “modelling” and “inter-referencing” respectively, and how they might refer to the framework of “Inter-Asia Referencing”. Modelling and inter-referencing allow, at the same time, for exploring the modelled/inter-referenced urban forms in relation to their respective originals.

5.1.2. Modeling

Modeling, in Ong’s view, refers to a replicable model that does not find its reference in the West, and is best instantiated as experiments to achieve sustainable Asian eco-models:

Modeling refers to actual urban projects that have been dubbed “garden,” “sustainable,” “livable,” or “world-class,” that planners hope to reproduce elsewhere in a bid to rebrand their home cities […] Urban modeling can be conceptualized as a global technology that is disembedded from its hometown and adopted in other sites [emphasis added]. (Ong, 2011:14)

The first example of an eco-model replicable model is that of Singapore, analyzed by Chua Beng Huat, co-editor of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies journal, and it pursues how Singapore attempts to promote its brand of environmentally friendly city-building consultancy within the region of Asia. The most prominent example of modelling Singapore is that of the on-going Tianjin Eco-City project, located 40 km away from Tianjin and 150 km away from Beijing. A Sino-Singaporean joint program that started in 2008 and is scheduled to be completed in 2020. It is expected to host approximately 350,000 residents, and it is planned in the framework of 26 Key Performance Indicators (Ambient Air Quality, Quality of Water Bodies, etc.). It has the most favorable predictions for not becoming one of China’s ill-fated “ghost cities”, due to Singapore’s heavy investment, as opposed to investment made by Chinese State-Owned Companies.
Another relevant example is the modelling of the “green urbanism” Dalian. Lisa Hoffman looks into how the port-city at the tip of Liaodong Peninsula, Dalian, became a model of environmental city-building and green urbanism under Bo Xilai, a Politburo high official, who was the acting mayor between 1992 and 2000. With no favorable circumstances for change at the moment he took office, Bo Xilai capitalized on the city’s Japanese legacy in order to attract thousands of Japanese investments (K.M., 2013:web). Bo Xilai even resorted to controlled population movements in order to avoid congestions such as those in Beijing and Shanghai. Most notably, Dalian achieved the status of a national eco city model in China, also called “the Hong Kong of the North” in 2005, by employing sustainable development models of Singapore and Dalian’s sister city, Kitakyushu, Japan. The success of Dalian is what helped Bo Xilai become the Governor of Liaoning Province in 2001, and he kept the position until 2012, when he became the mayor of Chongqing, where he implemented the “Chongqing Model” characterized by economic and political reforms such as a newly enforced “red cultural movement.”

A last example that finds itself under the modelling label, whose referent is ultimately not in Asia, is the Huangbaiyu China–U.S. Sustainable Development Model Village that is documented by Shannon May in the fourth chapter of “Worlding Cities”. Opened in 2006, in the countryside of Liaoning province, the Huangbaiyu Eco-village was conceived by William McDonough and Partners in conjunction with Tongji University in Shanghai, the Benxi Design Institute, and the China-U.S. Center for Sustainable Development (CUCSD) in order to “leapfrog past limitations and accelerate sustainable development” (May, 2011:100). Now a failed project by consensus, Huangbaiyu was seen as a model for an ecologically driven rural urbanization. Although environmentalists and media outlets had heralded the Huangbaiyu Eco-City project to be critical in the fight to stem global climate change, the project failed due
to poor implementation: there was little awareness among the residents regarding the purpose of the project and of their relocation (the first inhabitants of Huangbaiyu Model Village not understanding the word “ecology”) (May 2011:101), and many buildings were below the enunciated standards that drove the project to begin with. Thus, Ong identifies the poor understanding of local conditions as the main reason behind the failure of the emulated eco-models. An upside of this, despite happening at the expense of displaced populations, is that “modelling” green and sustainable technologies facilitates bilateral collaborations:

*Because the eco-city model ignores social and economic conditions on the ground [emphasis added], the infrastructural change results in the (unintended?) dispossession and outmigration of local peasants. At other scales, however, the eco-city may not be considered a “failure,” as the project enhances American corporate access to government contracts, and the eco-city provides support for Beijing’s claim to be a serious player in environmental urbanism. Modeling an eco-city in this case appears to be less about sustainability than about two different but convergent political goals; that is, bringing Chinese peasants under a mode of global environmental governance on the one hand, and allaying global fears about China’s mammoth carbon footprint on the other. (Ong, 2011:16)*

By analyzing urban forms, modelling, similar to Inter(-Asia) Referencing, brings about an increased visibility that factors in when *tracing* and *mapping* the territorialization/deterritorialization of Asia-specific information and technologies.

### 5.1.3. Inter-(Asia) Referencing

Reminiscent of Chen’s own Inter-Asia Referencing consisting of *dialogue, quotation and translation*, Ong describes the Inter-(Asia) Referencing, as an aspect of “worlding” as follows:

While urban modeling is a concrete instantiation of acknowledging another city’s achievements, *inter-referencing* [emphasis added] refers more broadly to practices of *citation, allusion, aspiration, comparison, and competition* [emphasis added]. The practice of citing a “more successful city” – itself an unstable category – seems to stir
urban aspirations and sentiments of inter-city rivalry as well as standing as a legitimization for particular enterprises at home. (Ong, 2011:16)

Just like the practices of dialogue, quotation and translation through which Inter-Asia referencing is achieved in Chen’s view regarding the conditions of knowledge production, Ong’s Inter-(Asia) Referencing, through “practices of citation, allusion, aspiration, comparison, and competition” (ibid.) is also a negotiation of sorts in order to achieve the blending of local conditions with external influence in generating “worlds” with spatializing practices characteristic of “Asia.”

But while Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing stays confined to an Asian space by the necessity of ensuring a unity with regards to a “Made in Asia” knowledge production, Ong’s Inter-(Asia) Referencing is exposed to a truly global context, where not only “Asia” receives out of Asia foreign import, but “Asia” itself becomes deterritorialized and exported. What sets the Inter-(Asia) Referencing illustrated in “Worlding Cities” apart from Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing is that the former is marked by successive instances of entries, exits, and re-entries of “Asia” with regards to its own spatial confinement. From these series of exists and re-entries arises the main task of “Worlding Cities,” which is, according to Roy, studying “the making and unmaking of the referent: Asia” (Roy, 2011:309). And there is no example, in Roy’s view, that better shows the “making and unmaking of Asia”, as well as Asia’s itinerant nature, than Dubai:

Dubai is thus an unstable referent, an unmaking of the space of “inter-Asia” that has been constructed through numerous practices of reference, exchange, circulation, and reticulation. […] To ask where Asia ends and begins is thus a call to pay attention to the unstable space that is “inter-Asia,” to trace the ways in which Asia travels, to make note of how urban experiments rely on the citationary structure that is Asia. But iterations of Asia also generate a surplus that cannot be easily contained within familiar frames of urban success and globality.” (ibid., 330-331)
An interesting case of what passes for Inter-Referencing under the editing of Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy, and that documents the “extraterritoriality” of “Asian space” (Lowry & McCann, 2011:185), its de-territorialization and reterritorialization, is provided by Glen Lowry and Eugene McCann in the 7th chapter of the volume, “Asia in the Mix: Urban Form and Global Mobilities – Hong Kong, Vancouver, Dubai”. The chapter concerns the full-scale replica of Concord Pacific Place in Vancouver’s False Creek in Dubai Marina. However, Lowry and McCann point out that, before Mohammed Alabbar, chairman of Emirati developer Emaar, decided to transplant the seawall of Vancouver’s False Creek to Dubai, False Creek was developed by Hong Kong magnate Li Ka-shing. The most polluted area of Vancouver by the 1980s, Vancouver’s False Creek was subsequently purchased by Li Ka-shing in the late 1980s and developed into today’s iconic Concord Pacific Place that is in fact, Hong Kong styled. This, paired with a large influx of Asians in the wake of the Tiananmen incident, earned Vancouver the dubbing of “Hongcouver.”

What makes the case of “Vancouver in the Mix” even more relevant for this thesis is that it signals the schism between theory and practice. While Lowry posits Vancouver’s False Creek as an “extraterritorial Asian space” (ibid.) and raises the issue of an “Asianisation of Vancouver,” or a “Vancouverization of Asia” (ibid., 184), he does not mention his involvement in developing the Maraya art project from 2008 to 2015 in Vancouver together with artists Henry Tsang and M. Simon Levin. Maraya is an art project that focuses on the spatial relationship between Vancouver’s now canonized seawall of False Creek and its replica in Dubai Marina.

Unlike the Hong Kong-Vancouver-Dubai triptych that Lowry hints at in the “Worlding Cities” chapter, Maraya, assumes the form of a diptych by focusing not on how an “Asian” model (here Hong Kong style Concord Pacific Place in False Creek) returns to Asia (as Dubai...
Marina) via Vancouver, a non-Asian space, but on the direct and immediate spatial connection between Vancouver and its copy in Dubai. Moreover, Maraya-as-practice, through the modes in which it interrogates the connection between Vancouver’s False Creek and Dubai’s Marina indicate that it takes Vancouver’s False Creek to the original, instead of a secondary site that echoes an original Hong Kong aesthetics, and Dubai Marina to be its reflection, a relation established by Maraya’s meaning “mirror” in Arabic. Moreover, Maraya becomes a site for the artists to work through the “uncanny valley” feelings that a full-scale replica of False Creek in Dubai provokes. In the words of Henry Tsang, as artists, they “…wondered what happens to this reified relationship between the artist and the city when the specificity of place comes to be mass-produced, branded and exchanged on a global market” (Tsang, 2015:332). Alice Ming Wai Jim, Associate Professor in art history at Concordia University, calls Maraya’s object of investigation “the politics of co-location [and] co-presence” (Wai Jim, 2014:22).

The scope of Maraya should not be underestimated, neither in terms of capital, nor in terms of reach. Developed in partnership with Centre A (Vancouver International Centre for Asian Art) and with funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage’s Canada Interaction Fund, as an interdisciplinary, large-scale, through the way the art project conceived as a spatial investigation project where research overlaps with artwork, Maraya was dubbed by Wai Jim as “research creation” (ibid.). Far from being confined to just an exhibition room, Maraya combines an interactive platform that involves participants from both locations with making use of advanced surveillance technologies that research, acquire and then overlap and scramble images obtained from the same locations in both Vancouver and Dubai:

An initial configuration of the Maraya Project […] embed[ed] interactive portals or, more precisely, portholes, along the pavement of the twinned promenades to engage pedestrians from the respective cities. Using wireless networking and video-streaming
technology to create real-time links between the two seawall walkways, residents and tourists alike might ‘communicate’ with each other. When people gather at two or more locations simultaneously, the portal senses their presence and comes to life, streaming live video feeds that allow those in Dubai to see and interact with their counterparts in Vancouver, and vice versa. (ibid., 2014:21)

The portholes were later replaced by Zero Halliburton suitcases, adding an increased sense of mobility.

Retrofitted with a special high-lumen monitor, computer, sensor and router, the Maraya Halliburton prototype cases (two to date) are taken for walks along the two promenades and placed in locations where the artists have placed their own surveillance cameras overhead, switching between pre-recorded footage and a live video stream of passers-by who stop to peer into the cases. (ibid., 2014:23)

Therefore, one of the underlying themes and investigation methods that defines the Maraya Project is a combined pattern of both “sousveillance”, that as a portable recording technology, conveys the perspective of the pedestrians involved, and “surveillance”, the traditional, watching-from-above recording technologies. Another notable instance that makes use of “sousveillance” technologies is that of the Sisyphean Cart, where an automated pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) camera was mounted into a cart carrying miniaturized architectural forms covered in reflective surfaces that mirrored their surroundings; developed by Henry Tsang, two Sisyphean Carts were deployed along both waterfronts in Vancouver and Dubai between 2014 and 2015, inviting participants from both locations to pull the carts. The participants could reassemble architectural forms from the carts according to their interpretations (Henry Tsang, henrytsang.ca).

However, it is worth remarking that, in addition to arranging and rearranging the miniaturized architectural forms according to their own interpretation, the reflective surfaces that covered them were not necessarily flat, and as a consequence, they provided a distorted reflection of their environment. It can be safely concluded that one of Maraya’s purposes was
to also identify where the “sameness” (between Vancouver’s False Creek and Dubai Marina) became distorted, precisely in the process of attempting to enforce it. After all, true to its meaning in Arabic, as a mirror, Maraya does not only reflect, but also deforms.

In *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry* (2015), the artists in charge of Maraya, Henry Tsang, Glen Lowry and M. Simon Levin, place the investigation of the *Maraya* art project under the framework of the “Agency of mapping” (James Corner, 1999), that gives “distortion” a different connotation.

Landscape architect and theoretician, James Corner starts from the premise that no act of charting/mapping, understood here as a quest for genealogy, is exempt from arbitrariness. However, what is purposefully highlighted and obscured when “mapping” occurs, reveals new creative dimensions, or “ways in which mapping acts may emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds” (Corner, 1999:213), in a manner similar to what Ong calls “world conjuring”:

As a creative practice, mapping precipitates its most productive effects through a finding that is also a founding [emphasis added]; its agency lies in neither reproduction nor imposition but rather in uncovering realities previously unseen or unimagined, even across seemingly exhausted grounds. Thus, mapping unfolds potential; it re-makes territory over and over again, each time with new and diverse consequences [emphasis added]. Not all maps accomplish this, however; some simply reproduce what is already known. (ibid., 10)

The examples that are telling of Corner’s understanding of Agency of Mapping are that of the Mercator map projection and the Dymaxion one. Still in use today, the Mercator map projection, drawn in 1569 by the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator, has a ‘classical’ upwards North orientation, but it distorts the size of objects as the latitude increases from the Equator to the poles, showing Greenland to be more than twice the size of Australia, when in fact Australia has almost three times the size of Greenland. Corner sees this as locked
within the imperialist mindset of “Western political hegemony” (ibid., 217). The Dymaxion Airocean Map is the projection of world map onto an icosahedron (a polyhedron made of 20 triangular faces). It was reworked onto the icosahedron by Shoji Sadao in 1954 in collaboration with Buckminster Fuller, after the original that Fuller developed onto a cuboctahedron (a polyhedron with 8 triangular faces and 6 square faces) and patented in 1944. Unlike the Mercator projection, the Dymaxion Airocean map has no imposed North-as-Up/South-as-Down orientation, and can be unfolded and re-oriented into various ways, adjusted to one’s point of view, presenting different spatial relations (one ocean, one continent, etc.), while showing little to no distortion. The potential that Corner sees in this is that “each arrangement possesses great efficacy with regard to certain socio-political, strategic and imaginative possibilities” (ibid., 218).

Furthermore, Corner also gives the example of the Uruguayan artist Torres Garcia’s work “Inverted Map of South America” (1936) to show how the “North-is-Up” representation is contested. The “Inverted Map of South America” depicts a naïve drawing of South America topside down, with a capital “S” at the top of the map and Uruguay displacing the Equator. The map becomes a clear statement of “South being up” and of reclaiming the center.

In this context, by questioning the relationship between the modelled/ inter-referenced/ copied urban form and its “original”, Maraya is placed at the crossroads between art, research and mapping, in a hybrid category of its own. In light of Corner’s “Agency of Mapping” to which Henry Tsang and the other artists adhere, the fact that Maraya treats Vancouver’s exported False Creek as “the original” and distances itself from Hong Kong as the source of its urban aesthetics, is not necessarily erroneous. Under Corner’s “Agency of mapping”, deviation, distortion, deformation – even as omission – become a creative right of an individual’s freedom of interpreting the world around him.
What the “Worlding”, “Inter(-Asia) Referencing” and “Agency of Mapping” frameworks share is that they essentially represent different forms of the same endeavor, namely of laying out new, alternative, topographies that best convey the agency of the native people in a bottom-up manner in deciphering the world around them, and contest interpretations that do not account for the local contexts and are imposed in a top-down manner.

5.1.4. To Be or not to Be Inter-Asian: On the Conundrum of Dealing with Borders

In the concluding chapter of Worlding Cities, Ananya Roy relies on the example of Shenzhen to illustrate “the making and unmaking” of Asia. Premier Deng Xiaoping visited Shenzhen and called for the creation of “a few Hong Kongs” (几个香港 ji ge Xianggang) (Ong, 2011: 16) along the coast. “This urban process of learning from established Chinese centers sparked a phenomenon whereby Shenzhen is Hong Kongized, Guangzhou is Shenzhenized, and the whole country is Guangdongized” (Cartier in Ong, 2001: 242). The result of a repeated Inter-Asia Referential effort, “Shenzhen embodies an intense and volatile remaking of spatial arrangements” (Roy, 2011:317) – from a Hong Kong to the Economic Zone’s prototype – that puts forwards, along its speed of manufacturing, how the “Chinese Worker as composite figure marks a worlding practice.” (ibid., 319). Using the Inter(-Asia) Referencing framework, Shenzhen can be followed all the way to India, where China’s Economic Zones are being emulated, for example (Roy, 2011:262). However, Roy doesn’t raise the issue of what happens with a Shenzhen-style Economic Zone once it exits the Asian space and it reaches Africa, for example, along China’s OBOR Economic Zone route.
Relying on *Worlding Cities*, among other works, Ding Fei further problematizes the issue of Chinese-style Economic Zones in the article “Worlding Developmentalism: Chinese Economic Zones Within and Without its Borders” (2017), focusing on Chinese-style Economic Zones “in post-reform China and the recent export of zoning practices as a part of the country’s ‘going global’ strategy” (Fei, 2017:1). The Chinese-style Economic Zones (EZs) constitute spatializing practices, or in Ong and Roy’s words, acts of “worlding” representative for China. Not only did EZs “open up new political-economic spaces for market based activities, but also reconfigure the geographies of day-to-day living.” (ibid., 8) Furthermore, Fei presents the Chinese EZs as sites for the Party State to experiment with free market policies in a Maoist environment, “a buffer zone between the socialist China and the capitalist outside (ibid., 13)” in post-1978 era, designed to attract “transnational capital, technology and expertise to coastal EZs.” (ibid.). However, once this “morphology of China’s territorial configuration” (ibid., 8) reaches Africa, so do Chinese migrant workers. While Roy puts the Chinese worker forward, together with Shenzhen’s speed of manufacturing, as a the “composite figure [that] marks a worlding practice” (Roy, ibid.), she doesn’t further analyze it beyond its productivity.

Since concluding that the Yakuza are not political society, I have already mentioned that Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing would allow for comparing political society with other un(der)represented groups or “populations” from Asia, such as that of the Chinese migrant worker. The Chinese migrant workers would seemingly qualify at first due to their lack of *hukou* (户口), or registration permit, that constrains Chinese citizens to work in the place they were born in. As a result, the living standard of urban citizens varies greatly when compared to the one in rural areas, and the *hukou* registration system is considered the main factor behind the migrant workers’ social phenomena. Poor conditions at home and better job offers
are what drive the most workers from rural areas to cities, where, due to their illegal status, are subjected to rights abuses, precarious working and living conditions, and find themselves and their family cut from the social safety net. According to the Hong Kong based NGO China Labour Bulletin, there were aprox. 277 million migrant workers in 2015, one third of China’s working force (China Labour Bulletin, n.d.).

What Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing theoretically couldn’t do, since it is inherently regionally bound to “Asia”, namely, to analyze the Chinese migrant workers as a political society in Africa, the Inter-(Asia) Referencing from Worlding Cities, which is better equipped for dealing with global realities, refrains from doing that. Roy attempts to define “Asia” both “as an invented latitude” and “as a postcolony of multiple temporalities” (Roy, 2011:330). As of the geographical limits of “Asia”, Roy admits having “ignored the boundary-spaces of continental power such as Istanbul, Jerusalem, Moscow, and Beirut and their performance of competing continental claims: Europe, Asia, Phoenicia, Zion” (ibid.) and, as previously stated, she highlights Dubai as “a city often worlded through hysterical narratives of excess and crisis, at once Asian and Arab […] Dubai defies our commonsense geographies; it is simultaneously an Indian, Pakistani, Filipino, Malay, Egyptian, Palestinian, and a Kenyan city” (ibid.).

Being intent on localizing “Asia” in its “travels” allows Roy to call Sao Paolo’s attempt at emulating Singapore’s national housing programme “the displaced space of Inter-

4. Throughout her chapter, Roy designates Asia as ASIA; in order to avoid competing denominations, each differentiated by meanings assigned by their authors that would require a larger informational space than the one currently at disposal to elaborate on, I will still denominate Asia as “Asia”, mainly illustrating as the object of study than of definition.
Asia” (ibid., 332). However, presenting “Asia’s” dominant mode of being itinerant, and focusing on documenting “Asia’s” modes of travel, overshadows how “Asia” is contained.

### 5.2. Shifting Frames of Reference and Chua Beng Huat

Chua Beng Huat (蔡明发), Professor at the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and, together with Chen, co-editor of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements* journal, published an article in *The Social Sciences in the Asian Century* volume (2015) edited by Carol Johnson, Vera Mackie and Tessa Morris-Suzuki. In the article, titled “Inter-Asia Referencing and Shifting Frames of Comparison”, Chua – who has been involved in both Inter-Asia Cultural Studies project and published in the *Worlding Cities* volume – makes a succinct summary of Inter-Asia Referencing by mentioning both Chen’s concept, as well as its subsequent application in urban studies, without distinguishing between the two instances, nor clearly delimitating their individual occasions, or the intellectuals each of them involve.

Chua begins by repeating Chen’s main argument:

> Scholars in Asia, who are trained in the Euro-American academies, pluck ready-made concepts from existing literature generated in the latter contexts, and apply them to local conditions in Asia. Local complexities often have to be severely trimmed to fit ‘neatly’ into the selected Euro-American concepts. The richness of the local is sacrificed to reaffirm an idea for which its original context has been erased, abstracted and ‘universalised’. (Chua, 2015:67)

Chua further re-iterates Chen’s urge for intellectuals not to make a point from avoiding Western concepts, but maintain a critical distance from them:

> The point here is not to reject such concepts out of hand simply because they are generated in the West, nor to deny scholars in the West the right to theorise with
whatever empirical material they have to hand. The problem is one of adequate conceptualisation and understanding of the local. (ibid., 76)

Chua highlights one of the greatest merits of Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing: “[…]as Chen (2010) suggests, inter-referencing Asia shifts the frame of comparison to a temporally coeval, horizontal plane between locations in Asia—in contrast with the temporally and historically unequal comparison of Europe and Asia.” (ibid., 71)

Without directly referring to *Worlding Cities*, Ong or Roy, Chua observes:

A more recent development is in the area of urban and regional planning. One defining characteristic of cities in Asia is high population density, which, with a few exceptions, is way beyond the imagination of American and European city dwellers. Densities such as those of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Mumbai are seldom seen in Euro-America. In view of the rapid urbanization process in all Asian countries, the planning guidelines of European cities—where the old city is retained and new developments can maintain relatively low height and low density—hold no lessons for urban planners in Asia. Increasingly, urban planners in Asia have to turn to urban developments in other Asian locations as models. Singapore, for example, has served as a reference point for many Asian city governors and urban planners […]. (ibid., 69)

Chua sees instances of inter-Asian referencing as the harbinger of a significant epistemological shift in the generation of knowledge in Asia (ibid., 71). Without being limited to cultural studies or urban planning, Chua hopes that shifting frames of referencing will lead to a new comparative political economy. One that, for example, by interrogating why regimes in Southeast Asia, with the notable exception of India, are illiberal, or why do citizens like in China or Singapore accept autocratic regimes, might lead to unveiling an underlying structure specific for Asia.

If it will happen so, it remains to be seen. Meanwhile, in October 2017, a conference will take place at the National University of Singapore’s Asia Research Institute (ARI), titled *An Asian Turn? Research and Theorizing from Asia*. ARI is a partner under SSCR’s InterAsia
Program, and also hosts two of SSCR’s InterAsia Program’s Transregional Research Junior Scholar Fellows. Meaghan Morris, chair of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society Board from 2011 to 2015, who, among others, will attend the conference, mentions Chen’s “Asia as Method”. Whether the two networks will conjoin, remains to be seen.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Delimitations: Towards a Terminology

In this thesis I have attempted to heed Chen Kuang Hsing’s call for a reversal of perspective, to operate with Asian concepts conceived by Asian intellectuals, when it comes to investigating aspects related to Asia, as shown in my analysis of the Yakuza, and I have pursued its developments since 2010. After tracing it, it must be concluded that behind Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization and Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Going Global there are two distinctive networks, and it is hard to estimate to which degree they conjoin.

Chen’s Inter-Asia Referencing framework is affiliated with the network of intellectuals surrounding the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies: Movements journal project as well as the institutions and practices that surround it. There are many instances to Inter-Asia Referencing, from claiming ancestry in Asia as Method, to revising concepts such as dialogue and translation, in order to generate an epistemological shift regarding the production of knowledge in Asia, so that Asia may stand up and take control of the knowledge production regarding itself. Chen originally conceived the conceptual framework of Inter-Asia Referencing to reconcile heterogeneities in Asia. While Chen refers to a “third world”, like Takeuchi, he does not elaborate on Asia’s blending into the Global South (understood as the periphery, or the developing third world). Chen’s ultimate goal is reaching the “West” (and
not the third world) with an in-house “Asian” production of knowledge. However, the same question raised in relation to Asia as Method applies here: Is Asia contributing to the Western paradigm seen as the finality regarding universal knowledge production, or does a hybridization of “Asian knowledge” occur, an Asia as Method in reverse?

Also, while the political agenda of Inter-Asia Referencing is to organize a regional integration based on enunciating a wholesome cultural identity for Asia, the downside to it might be it becoming too exclusive to account for globalized realities that exceed inter-regional boundaries. As Chen formulated, Inter-Asia Referencing is an ambitious, larger-than-life project. But just like Asia as Method before it, it is versatile and transferable, marked by a provisional status that can always be turned into something slightly different.

What I have called Inter(-Asia) Referencing is implicitly Asia-centric and rather than carrying the concern for regional integration that might result from a coordinated intellectual movement, it follows the modes of distribution of an urban Asian particularism under the “franchising” of Singapore, HK, Shanghai, etc. As shown in the previous chapters both Inter-Asia Referencing and Inter(-Asia) Referencing, each in their own way, struggle with the spatial limits of “Asia”. None of them explain how they would reconcile a deterritorialized “Asia” in a global encounter on foreign ground, with subjectivities belonging to a different spectrum from the so-called Global South, such as “Africa” for example. To put it mildly, they exhibit disregard towards different cultural and national entities that share the same burden of de-colonialization.

At any rate, the dominance of Western paradigms, and the belief in their universality, should be acknowledged as a risk when it comes to considering a different perspective, and so should the tendency to approach Asian intellectuals as local informants that thicken the empirical data about Asia. Looking into how Asian intellectuals negotiate concepts in an inter-
referential manner, and accepting their agency and empowerment with regards to the conditions of their knowledge production is more important than making immediate evaluations of such analytical tools being right or wrong. First of all, it helps to correct such a bias.
Bibliography


**Websites**


