

Call for contributions

3. International Symposium on Cultural Inclusion

Minorities in Their Own Lands. Cultural security among ethnic and cultural minorities across Asia

8.-9.12. 2017 Prague, Czech Academy of Sciences

Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are terms often used to characterise the societies in Asian countries. The use of these terms in an official context should evoke a positive impression of a colourful and tolerant society with open-minded governments supportive to the traditional customs, values and beliefs of the various ethnic groups sharing the lands in one country.

Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity should stand for a cultural richness inviting people such as researchers or tourists to observe, admire or study the different traditions of the individual ethnic and cultural groups and their intermingling. In this context the multiculturalism and ethnic diversity represents a large cultural heritage and an economic resource, which deserve to be protected and preserved. Therefore, they are meant to describe a social and political environment of both integration and differentiation, i.e., cultural inclusion, and to ensure that both the majority and minorities of a nation develop a sentiment of cultural security and cultural confidence.

On the other hand, in many cases multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are deemed to be a threat to the state stability and/or its territorial integrity, and to the hegemony of a dominant regime or society. They can even be perceived as threat to cultural purity of a local ethnic majority. In this context, the influence and visibility of minority culture is sought to be limited and, in some cases, even integration or assimilation is encouraged. The question of preservation or elimination of traditions and expressions representative for an ethnic or cultural minority appears also in the everyday life of the minority group members themselves. Should they seek preservation and emphasise their cultural differences in order to distinguish themselves from the majority? Or should they seek to emulate the majority and the global influences in order to improve their social status or economic situation and adapt their lives, values and beliefs to the dominant environment? Which strategy brings the most economic, political or strategic benefits? These are the questions that influenced the decision making concerning education, clothing, diet, occupations and other life strategies of many members of ethnic minorities throughout Asia in the history, when political struggles restructured Asia and remained an important issue until today, when economic development rules all spheres of state administration or people lives.

This conference will discuss the importance of cultural attributes to define an ethnic or cultural group as perceived by the members of the minorities themselves, as well as from the point of view of the members of ethnic majority, the state apparatus or external observers. It will discuss the diversity of situations, reasons and solutions leading to promotion of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity as well as to the erasure of cultural differences and assimilation of minority groups. It will show the changes of state attitudes towards the question of ethnic diversity from denying multiculturalism over accepting it to the definition of certain states through their ability to a co-existence of diversified ethnic and cultural entities. Understanding how processes in a society lead to assimilation or ethnic and cultural diversity and how such processes are addressed in national contexts can help identify the major factors safeguarding cultural inclusion and defining cultural security.

The conference further aims to develop the concept of and the discussion on the interpretation of cultural security within the framework of the ISCI. Particularly it will focus on the perception of cultural security and cultural identity from outside as well as from within an ethnic community.

In case you feel addressed by this topic and would like to participate, please send us a title of your talk together with an abstract by **July 15th 2017**.

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We look forward to meet you in Prague.

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