

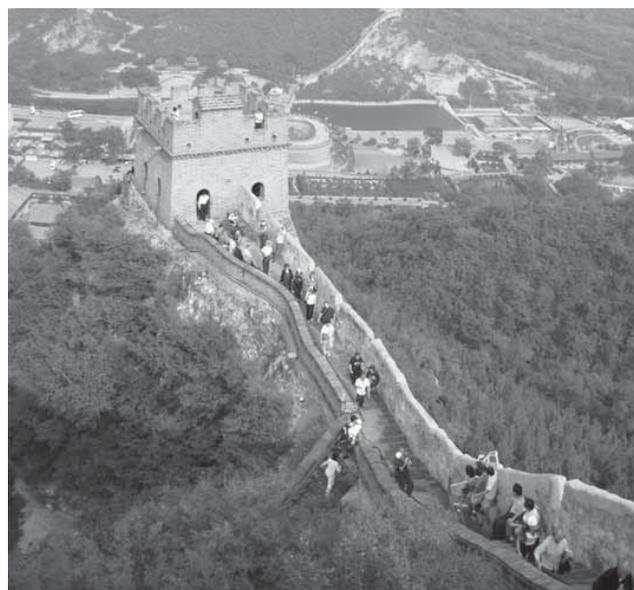
Thoughts on the History Curriculum of a Waldorf School in Asia – in particular, China

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When I was the History tutor in Taruna College (Hawke's Bay, NZ) for the Diploma in Rudolf Steiner Education in the late 90s, the first students from Asia started to come to Taruna to do their teacher preparation, I began to ask myself how history might be taught in Pacifica and Asian Waldorf Schools? Until then, my teaching had been mainly Euro-centred. How could I do justice to the history of Asia? Students came from many different Asian countries: Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand and Japan.

The next impulse came when I was asked to help with the history curriculum of the Foundation Stone High School in Yi-Lan, the first high school based on the Waldorf principles in Taiwan. For me there began, a journey into the history of the Asian continent. I have only travelled a short way on this journey, but what I have found I would like to share with readers in the hope a dialogue can start with other teachers. This topic is as relevant for us here in New Zealand and Australia, as it is in Asia. I welcome your responses.

Dr. Steiner gave a new way of looking at history. "...from the standpoint of spiritual science what is usually called history must be seen as a complex of symptoms."¹ "...turn our attention especially to the real and fundamental changes in human evolution, to those decisive turning-points in history when the life of the soul passes from one stage of development to another stage."² What we see in history is a change in consciousness out of which a new impulse arises in mankind. This impulse can be seen everywhere in the world but is at its strongest in that part that carries the



The great wall of China

name of the cultural Age.

First of all how do we get to the dates of the Ages?

Every culture has its own moment or point in time when it starts counting time. A point before and after which all other events were related. In the western world it is the birth of the Christ [1CE]. In the Muslim world it is the Hagira of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina [in 622CE], in Roman times the founding of the city [in 747BCE³], in the Greek world the first Olympic Games [in 786BCE].

The Platonic or Cosmic Year

Dr. Steiner showed how we can see time in terms of cosmic rhythms. For that the key is the sun's vernal equinox. This is the point in the zodiacal circle where the sun rises at the 21st of March, the Northern spring [or Southern autumn] equinox. Each day through the year the sun moves about 1 degree against the background of

1 Steiner, Rudolf From Symptom to Reality in Modern History – History as Symptomatology. London: Rudolf Steiner Press 1976 ISBN 978-0854402984 GA185 (1918, Oct.18 to Nov.3, Dornach) http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA185/English/RSP1976/SymRea_index.html

2 *ibid*

3 The calculation of the founding [date is] given by Rome's first native historical writer Quintus Fabius Pictor, who wrote that Rome was founded in the first year of the eighth Olympiad, 747 BCE (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Book 1, ch. 74,2). [from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_of_Rome]

the zodiac returning to virtually the same point a year later. In our time the vernal equinox occurs in the constellation Pisces. But this point also moves ever so slightly every year – totalling about 1 degree in a human lifetime [72 years] and so it takes 25,920 years to go completely around the zodiac of 360 degrees. This duration has been called a Platonic or Cosmic Year. The zodiac is made up of 12 constellations, it therefore ‘takes’ the sun 2160 (=25 920/12) years to pass through one constellation of the zodiac (or: 1 zodiacal sign). This time of 2160 years, a Cosmic Month, equates to a cultural period or Age. It is interesting to note that when one calculates the number of times we breathe in a day it is about 25,920 [=18 breaths/minute]. This number is also approximately the number of days in a human lifetime of “three score years and ten” [=70 years].

The civilisations associated with each Post-Atlantean Age described by Steiner are:

Age	Vernal Equinox	Region/Civilisation	Dates range	Focus of Human Development
1 st PA.	Cancer	India	7230 to 5070 BCE	Etheric Body
2 nd PA.	Gemini	Persia	5070 to 2907 BCE	Astral Body
3 rd PA.	Taurus	Egypt-Babylon-Chaldea	2907 to 747 BCE	Sentient Soul
4 th PA.	Aries	Greece-Rome	747 BCE to 1413AD	Comprehension Soul
5 th PA.	Pisces	England-Germany	1413 to 3573 AD	Consciousness Soul

In contrast, in China the cycles are counted in sixty years x 5 elements [Earth, Metal, Water,

Wood, Fire] x 12 animals of the Shēngxiào [Chinese zodiac]⁴. Then a new cycle is started.

This could be connected to a smaller approximately 7 century rhythm in history [12 x 60 years = 720 years - a third of a cultural Age].

When we look at history we can see that there is a renewed interest in the history of 720 years ago. At the end of the last century there was a great renewed interest in Cathars⁵ and Templars⁶, which now seems to have sunk away again. If we deduct 720 years from our time [2011] we come to the year 1291. This was the end of the time of the crusades. Are we seeing this again in a metamorphosed form? The memory of the crusades has stayed in the collective memory of the Middle Eastern world. Could this be playing a role in the current troubled conditions of the region?

The Atlantean Epoch

Our present Age, Rudolf Steiner calls the 5th Post-Atlantean Age, which implies that there was once an Atlantean Epoch.

Dr. Steiner describes for us that there were also 7 Ages of development in the Atlantean Epoch⁷ as there will be for us in Post-Atlantean times. We are today in the 5th Age, the ancient Indian Age being the first with two more to come.

The culture of Atlantis had 7 mystery centres: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Sun and Vulcan each led by the priests of that centre. When they foresaw the sinking of Atlantis they sent out from each mystery centre leading priests who took the knowledge of that mystery centre to a

- 4 *“In Chinese astrology the animal signs assigned by year represent what others perceive you as being or how you present yourself. It is a common misconception that the animals assigned by year are the only signs, and many western descriptions of Chinese astrology draw solely on this system. In fact, there are also animal signs assigned by month (called inner animals) and hours of the day (called secret animals). To sum it up, while a person might appear to be a Dragon because they were born in the year of the Dragon, they might also be a Snake internally and an Ox secretly. In total, this makes for 8,640 possible combinations (60 year cycle (5 elements x 12 animals) x 12 months x 12 times of the day) that a person might be. These are all considered critical for the proper use of Chinese astrology.”* From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_zodiac#Four_Pillars
- 5 **The Cathars** of the Languedoc were dualist heretics who probably presented the greatest doctrinal challenge faced by the Catholic Church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The word Cathar comes from the Greek katharos, meaning pure. They Cathars professed a neo-Manichaeism - that there are two principles, one good and one evil, and that this world, the material world, is evil. [Dr Karen Ralls]
- 6 **The Knights Templar** are one of the best-known military Crusading orders of the Middle Ages. The Order of the Temple was founded in 1118 with the initial aim of protecting pilgrims going to and from Jerusalem. They developed into one of the richest and most powerful organizations in the medieval world – bankers to kings who originated our modern-day concept of a letter of credit. Their suppression was sudden and brutal - in the early hours of Friday, 13th October 1307, the French Templars were arrested tortured, charged with serious heresies, and brought to trial by the officials of King Philip IV in the name of the Inquisition and their property was confiscated. [Dr Karen Ralls]
- 7 Rudolf Steiner: “The Apocalypse of St. John”

new place on earth where they eventually settled.

The Saturn mysteries went to America; the Mars mysteries to Mongolia, the Venus mysteries to SE Asia, the Jupiter mysteries to Europe, the Mercury mysteries to Africa. Can we find traces of this in our oldest stories? We read in the Vedas of Manu about his influence on the ancient Indian Age – it speaks of an inward dreaming consciousness as it was on Atlantis. The story of Manu is connected with a flood from which he and seven Holy Rishis and all the seeds of plants were saved. Interesting is this mention of all the plants. In Atlantean times the people had a great capacity to work with the etheric life forces of the plant kingdom. Is this somehow connected? Not only do we have the flood story of Manu, there are also the stories in the bible, in the Gilgamesh epic, among the Hopi Indians⁸.

As well as the initiates of the mystery centres leaving Atlantis, we also hear of Manu leaving Atlantis. Where did he go? He went to the Gobi desert where he lived for a long time before going to India.

The Gobi desert is one of the mysterious places on earth to this day and it is not far from China. Did his influence also radiate into what is now China?

Steiner indicates that this leaving of Atlantis by groups of people took place many times, not just once.⁹

In the fourth Atlantean Age those who would later become what we now call the Chinese left Atlantis. [Those who inspired the European stream of history left in a later Age.] They took with them what had been developed in Atlantis until then, and a very strong memory, ancestor worship and the ability to work with life forces. The sound that sounded through nature in Atlantis was called the Tao. Tao sounded out of the depths, Tao sounded out of the heights, and Tao sounded in their own being¹⁰.

Dr. Steiner speaks of Tao as having “both a deeply hidden basis of the soul and an exalted future”¹¹.

We have here different beginnings; at least two streams [Europe and the Orient] with their own characteristics at their birth.



A pupil from Chengdu Waldorf School by the local statues of 1000 Buddhas

Symptoms of Historical Ages

How can we work with these thoughts? For that I would like to look at the characteristics or symptoms of each Age.

Consider the change of consciousness with each new Post-Atlantean Cultural Age (as described by Steiner (1990). Each Age receives influences from the cosmos – the spiritual hierarchies. We can then ask ourselves the question: ‘How does this influence manifest in those parts of the world that do not carry the name of the Age?’ To give an example: We are now in the 5th post-Atlantean or European (Anglo-German) Age beginning with the Renaissance.

From 1413 AD we can recognise the first indications of a new consciousness in Europe. But when did similar changes come to Asia - or to New Zealand or Australia?

As a personal example, some years ago, when discussing the question of the Ages in an Asia

8 According to the Hopi, the earth has been wiped clean 3 times already: first by FIRE, next by ICE, most recently by the FLOOD. ... Approximately 11,000-12,000 years ago. [www.crystalinks.com/hopi2.html]

9 Steiner, R (1990) Cosmic Memory – Prehistory of Earth and Man. Steiner Books, 1990. ISBN: 0893452270; GA011 (written 1904): also http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA011/English/HR1981/GA011_index.html

10 ibid

11 ibid

Pacific conference, a participant, Ha Vinh Tho, a Buddhist monk from Vietnam, remarked that in his view, the ‘consciousness soul’ awareness¹² came to Vietnam with the American war - a comment on the fact that Buddhist monks and other Buddhists are now taking on social tasks whereas in the past they never did that - now called “Socially-engaged Buddhism” - a representative of this is Thich Nhat Hanh who resettled families left homeless during the Vietnam War (and later, in exile, founded Plum village in France.)

I offer the following thoughts – ways of connecting Steiner’s Cultural Ages with events in Chinese pre-history and recorded historical events.

Waldorf History Curriculum

Class Five (11 year olds) and Ancient History: India to Greece

The ancient Indian or 1st Post-Atlantean Age.

Ancient India is so far removed in history that we would not know anything about it if the Vedas had not been written and this wisdom preserved for later generations. Incorporating Manu’s stay in the Gobi in history studies could connect this Age for Chinese students.

The ancient Persian or 2nd Post-Atlantean Age.

What are the characteristics of that time? Many of the aspects of the Persian Age flow into the Egypto-Chaldean times: the battle between light and dark; the battle between the Turanians

and Iranians; the coming of agriculture and the domestication of animals; the search for immortality (Gilgamesh seeking his dead friend Enkidu); city building.

In the teachings of Zarathustra the battle between light [Ahura Mazda] and dark [Ahriman] in the spiritual world has on earth its echo in the battle between the Turanians and the Iranians, between the settled farmers and the nomads. This is a theme that can be seen in many periods in China and leads eventually to the building of the Chinese great wall

For example:

The coming of agriculture

The Sage Emperor Shennong¹³ brought agriculture and herbal medicine. The Yellow Emperor Huang Di fought a monster and fixed the sun, moon and stars in their place in the heavens. Huang Di is a supremely powerful deity. He had sent down to the great plain of China a dark bird. The bird laid an egg that was eaten by a lady and she gave birth to the first ancestor of the Shang dynasty.

The domestication of plants and animals

In China we hear of Yangshao culture¹⁴ where the plough was used and pigs, fowl, cattle, sheep and goats were domesticated. Cultivation of the silk worm began around 2600BC. Whereas in Persia we see the knowledge of irrigation develop, in China we hear the story of the wise Emperors Yao and Shun (around 2300BC), in a golden age

12 Editor: ‘Consciousness Soul’ awareness = spectator/onlooker consciousness – the ability to detach from events and see them as from outside. “The kernel of human consciousness, that is, the soul within the soul, is what is here meant by consciousness soul. The consciousness soul is thus distinguished as a member of the soul distinct from the comprehension soul, which is still entangled in the sensations, impulses and passions. Everyone knows how a man at first counts as true what he prefers in his feelings and desires. Only that truth is permanent, however, that has freed itself from all flavour of such sympathy and antipathy of feeling. The truth is true even if all personal feelings revolt against it. That part of the soul in which this truth lives will be called consciousness soul.” Steiner ‘Theosophy’ Chap 1.4.

13 **The Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors** (Chinese:三皇五帝; pinyin: Sānhuáng wūdì) were mythological rulers of China during the period from c. 2852 B.C.E. to 2205 B.C.E., which is the time preceding the Xia Dynasty.

The Three Sovereigns, sometimes known as the Three August Ones, were said to be god-kings or demigods who introduced important aspects of Chinese culture, such as agriculture, fishing, herbal medicine, writing, and the drinking of tea, and in some cases created men and animals. They were known variously as The Heavenly Sovereign, The Earthly Sovereign, and The Human Sovereign; or Fuxi, Nüwa, and Shennong. Because of their lofty virtue they lived to a great age and ruled over a period of great peace.

The Five Emperors were legendary, morally perfect sage-kings. According to the Records of the Grand Historian they were: The Yellow Emperor (黃帝, Zhuānxū (顓頊), Emperor Ku (帝嚳), Emperor Yao (堯), and Emperor Shun (舜). Yao and Shun are also known as the “Two Emperors,” and, along with Yu the Great (禹), founder of the Xia dynasty, were considered to be model rulers and moral exemplars by Confucians in later Chinese history. From: <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/46History5031.html>

14 The Yangshao culture (Chinese: 仰韶文化; pinyin: Yǎngsháo wénhuà) was a Neolithic culture that existed extensively along the central Yellow River in China. The culture flourished mainly in the provinces of Henan, Shaanxi and Shanxi.

of peace and prosperity, taming the wild floods by building canals and draining marshes.

The battle between light and dark



The contrasts implicit in duality or polarity. In China, could this be seen as the coming of yin and yang¹⁵?

City building

One could look at the ancient city of Anyang, one of the 8 ancient capitals¹⁶. In 2,000BC the Sage King Zhanxu and Emperor Ku had built mausoleums, 7 palaces and 15 temples. There had been 12 kings and it stood strong for 8 generations. In the 14th century BC King Pangeng (Shan dynasty) built his capital on the banks of the Huan River. He named his city Yin. It was the first stable capital in China. Much of this information comes from the 150,000 oracle bones¹⁷ found there.

The Egypto-Chaldean or 3rd Post-Atlantean Age.

For the study of early agricultural societies one could look at the SanXingDui culture in west China (5000-3000BC). It was also a river culture like Egypt around the Nile, Mohenjo-Daro around the Indus, and Mesopotamia around the Euphrates. Here archaeologists found gold masks and many jade ornaments. The masks portray the human being with very big ears and protruding eyes. The main sacred object found was a golden tree with many birds on its branches. Birds were thought to be the messengers between the earth and the heavens – as are Angels in the west.

There are many similarities between the Chinese King/Emperors and the Egyptian Pharaohs. Both were considered to be the connection between heaven and earth. The Egyptian Pharaoh was a God, the Chinese King/Emperor had the mandate of heaven and through the right rituals and sacrifices he had to maintain the right balance between the two. In Egypt the Pharaoh had to sustain *ma'at* (harmony, balance). In both civilizations there were elaborate burial customs. Society was shaped like a pyramid with the Pharaoh/Emperor at the top. The importance of the river: while the Nile was a life giving river and revered as a God, the Yellow river was a river of sorrow, with its wild floods causing great destruction. In Egypt all administration was done by the scribes – the priests of Ptah, in China by the Confucian scholars who had passed the state examinations – the mandarins.

The Greco-Roman or 4th Post-Atlantean Age.

Ancient Greece is the time of the great philosophers. When we look on a global scale we see in this same Age the Buddha [563-483BC] in India and Confucius [551-479BC] and Lao Tzu [570-490BC] in China. It is the time called by Karl Jaspers: the axial age¹⁸. Never before or after was there such a change in the consciousness of the people. While Socrates [470-399BC] brought the thinking and the Buddha the feeling and compassion, Confucius brought how we can have the right relationship to our fellow human beings. Karl Jaspers says of the axial age: “The axial age can be called an interregnum between two ages of great empire, a pause for liberty, a deep breath, bringing the most lucid consciousness.”¹⁹

15 Yin and yang are complementary opposites that interact within a greater whole, as part of a dynamic system. Everything has both yin and yang aspects, but either of these aspects may manifest more strongly in particular objects, and may ebb or flow over time. Many natural dualities—e.g. dark and light, female and male, low and high, cold and hot— are thought of as manifestations of yin and yang (respectively).

16 Beijing, Xi'an, Luoyang, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Kaifeng, Anyang. Zhengzhou

17 Oracle Bones is an ancient script carved on tortoise shells or animal bones. Having emerged during the Shang Dynasty (1600B.C.-1000B.C.), Oracle Script is considered the oldest script in China. During the Shang Dynasty, the ancients reckoned the natural elements as the exertion of some mystical power. When there were floods, drought, lightning and thunder, or some big events, like royal hunts, journeys and military campaigns, through divination, ancients would predict the future by “reading” the messages of nature. The divination performer first drilled holes on tortoise shell or a piece of bull scapula then put it over fire. Since the shell or bone would crack irregularly under heat, the diviner could supposedly interpret these cracks as good or bad omen. All the dates and results of the divination were written down on the shells or animal bones, which became the earliest historical document with writing symbols. <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/51History2941.html>

18 Jaspers distinguished four ages: the Neolithic age, the age of the earliest civilizations, the age of the emergence of great empires, and the modern age. www.religioustolerance.org/tomek26.htm

19 Jaspers, 1953, p.51 quoted in Armstrong, p. 367

So how can we place the axial age between two great empires? In China: it was after the collapse of the Zhou Empire but before Qin unified the warring states. In India: after the Harappa civilization but before the Mauryan empire and in Greece between the Mycenaean kingdom and the Macedonian empire.

Looking at Chinese history, we may consider the first Confucian empire during the Han times. And just as Greece influences the western world to this day, so it is with the Han in China. So the Han gives more the cultural aspect of this Age whereas the Qin more the military, legal and construction aspects. Like Greece and Rome for European civilisation.

At the same time: in the west was the Roman Empire while in the east the first emperor of China. He unified the warring states and standardized Chinese characters, currency, and units of measurement; built great buildings, the great wall, and had terra cotta soldiers guarding his mausoleum.

Both the Roman and the first Chinese Emperor waged war against the invading nomadic Mongol tribes coming from central Asia.

Some comparative statistics: the first emperor had 600,000 men under arms; Hannibal 6,000, Alexander the Great 40,000 and Napoleon 100,000.

Was there any contact between Rome and China? It is known that the ladies of the Roman high society wore silk garments which met with disapproval by the more conservative Romans as they (the garments) were translucent!

There are legends that a Roman legion of the army of Crassus, after the battle of Carrhae against the Parthians, was taken prisoner and founded a city on the border of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. According to the Chinese historian Bau Gau, a Chinese war leader defeated a group of soldiers drawn up in Roman fashion. These soldiers were then moved to the eastern region of Gansu to help with the defences. Here they

founded the city of Liquian.

In Rome the 12 tablets of the law were central; they made everybody a Roman citizen with rights. The first Emperor also was interested in law, but the stream of the legalists drew up laws that were very repressive and harsh. Under the first Emperor there was a big burning of all the books of the earlier philosophers, especially Confucius. Luckily some were saved.

The Han times (206BCE to 220CE) reflect another aspect of the Class 6 curriculum. In Europe it was the age of faith, in China it was the age of the coming of Buddhism. *"The Journey to the West"*²⁰ is a wonderful picture of this.

It is also the time of the opening of the Silk Road out of the travels of Zhang Qian who travelled for 12 years and came as far as Bactria to find horses. In all Chinese history the supply of horses is very important. They could not breed their own as the soil lacks selenium, so they were dependant on import. The most famous horses were the Fergana horses. The biography of the Silk Road could be taken in this context.

Waldorf History curriculum

Class 6 (12 year olds) Roman Empire and Middle Ages

The Tang Dynasty (618 to 907), the golden age of China rounds off this period. They had vast territories under their rule, the arts flourished. The most famous emperor in Chinese history lived in this time: emperor, Tai Zong (ruled from 626 to 649), a wise and compassionate politician. He brought stability to the country.

As Greece influenced Rome so the Tang period influences Japan.

The three mirrors of emperor Tai Zong:

"Look into a copper mirror and you will check your dress and hat;

"Look into the mirror of antiquity and you will know the ups and downs of an empire;

"With the people as a mirror, you will know right from wrong."

²⁰ is a household legend and myth throughout East Asia. It is based on the real life monk Tang San Zang's pilgrimage to India, to fetch back some Buddhist scriptures

Waldorf History Curriculum

Class 7 (13 year olds) and Renaissance and world exploration

The next Age and the content of class 7 curriculum covers the start of the ‘consciousness soul’ in Europe, including the Renaissance and voyages of discovery.

In China before the 15th century: the Yuan dynasty [1271-1368] ruled, well-known for fabled Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan – a Mongolian dynasty that soon took on all the characteristics of the previous Chinese dynasties. Here we see the incredible ability of the Chinese to make ‘Chinese’ whatever comes in from the outside. Kublai Khan did bring new aspects; he promoted agriculture, communication and transport and also fostered the sciences. Printing was refined in his reign and gunpowder used for cannons. Also the study of astronomy was seen to be important and many connections to the world outside China were made. It was to his court that Marco Polo came.

In the following dynasty, the Ming [1368-1644], we see their long sea voyages. Their ships were huge, much larger than any of the European ships ever were. The knowledge of astronomy had led to good navigational skills. The leading admiral Zheng He, a Muslim led his fleet of 63 ships on 7 voyages to demand tribute from the countries he visited: Vietnam, Java, Sumatra, Ceylon, India, Ormuz, Somalia, Aden, Jeddah and even Mecca. He also collected rare spices, plants and animals.

Yet, when he came back from his last voyage, he discovered that the Ming emperor Zheng Hong had stopped all contacts with the world outside China. And not only did China close itself off but also Korea and Japan. Why? If we look on a world wide scale we see periods of opening up and contracting everywhere. In the European Middle Ages Europe was closed, no interest outside Europe apart from Jerusalem. In that time China reaches out to the world under Kublai

Khan. Then Europe opens up and China closes. As if a worldwide breathing is taking place, in and out.

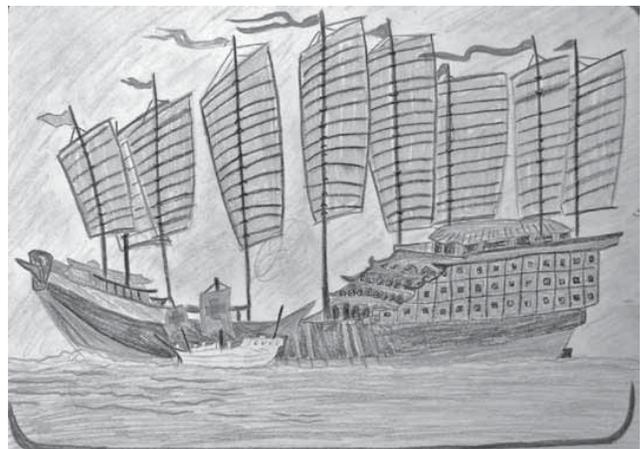
Looking at this time one can then ask the question: how did the voyages of discovery influence China or Japan or New Zealand and Australia?

The voyages of discovery were followed by trade and the main trade with China was tea. The Chinese demanded payment in silver, but there was not enough silver to pay for the huge quantities of tea Europe demanded. So the English started to bring in opium from India to pay for the tea. This led to the opium war that China lost. To protect their trade the western nations demanded Treaty Ports after the opium war and this led to the Boxer rebellion and the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

Did China influence Europe in those days?

There were Jesuit priests at the court of the Emperor. When they were expelled, they brought back to Europe their knowledge of China. Could it be that the absolute monarchs, like the French Louis 14th “the sun king” had modelled himself on a Chinese Emperor? Or that Rococo art²¹ echoes the ornate Chinese way of embellishment?

And most importantly, our civil service is directly shaped on the Chinese system to appoint



Admiral Zheng He exploration – grade 7 pupil.

21 Also referred to as “Late Baroque”, is an 18th-century style which developed as Baroque artists gave up their symmetry and became increasingly ornate, florid, and playful. Rococo rooms were designed as total works of art with elegant and ornate furniture, small sculptures, ornamental mirrors, and tapestry complementing architecture, reliefs, and wall paintings. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo>

to administrative positions only those who had studied the Confucian classics for many years and had passed the state examinations. Everybody could sit these examinations, not dependant on birth but on capacity – namely ‘meritocracy’.

Waldorf History Curriculum

Class 8 (14 year olds) and the Industrial Revolution.

Here the question can be asked: when did the industrial revolution come to China? Or Japan? Nowadays most everything is made in China. When did that begin? In Europe there is first an agricultural revolution, which brings the workers to the cities, then the industrial revolution.

In China we see first the change from small, family run farms to communal farming; followed by the “Great Leap Forward” to industrialize China. This failed but was followed by a very rapid industrialisation of China in the late 20th Century.

Some suggested biographies and stories through the classes in a Waldorf School.

In class 5 (11 year olds):

The stories connected with the “Yellow Emperor” and his wife who started the silkworm rearing. The three august ones and the five lords. The mythical cultural heroes. The yin and the yang. The coming of agriculture and the San Xing Dui civilization. The importance of the horse in China; the domestication of animals (the Yangshao civilization).

In Class 6 (12 year olds):

In the Han time: the journey to the west, the coming of Buddhism to China. The life of Confucius. In the Tang time: Emperor Tai Zong,

the most famous emperor in Chinese history.

In Class 7 (13 year olds):

Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. The Silk Road, admiral Zheng He, emperor Zheng Hong (Yong Le) who built the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven – a born ruler, vigorous and energetic, excellent military and scholarly education. Beijing was his capital to defend the empire against the Mongols. The Forbidden City burnt down soon after it was finished. This could have had an influence on the decision to withdraw from contact with the world outside China. In his time the Yong Le encyclopaedia of 11,095 volumes was created.

In Class 8 (14 year olds):

The Empress Dowager Ci Xi and the last emperor Pu Yi, the longest reigning emperor of the Qing dynasty, KangXi. He sent for western teachers to learn mathematics, geography, astronomy and Latin.

The agricultural change in China and the “Great Leap Forward” with Mao Zedong (also Mao Tze-tung).

This is as far as I have been able to develop these thoughts on the curriculum. It is by no means complete as it has only just started. The journey has been fascinating and I hope to come to a greater understanding in the time to come.

So what decision was made in the school in Taiwan after having looked at a possible history curriculum? They decided to take the European-centred curriculum as given by Dr. Steiner in a shortened form and then look at the same theme in the Chinese and Taiwanese history.

I welcome readers’ responses, further thoughts and correspondence. Please address via the editors. ♦

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