

## **Benefits of Processes of Cultural Interaction**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article we intend to show that, after a long period of the United States cultural domination through a practice of soft power, the world is witnessing very interesting changes. Similarly to politics, the cultural world is becoming multi-polar and intercultural influences can be noticed everywhere. But what is even more noteworthy is that the world is not heading towards a kind of potpourri without any flavor and generalized, but that we are witnessing a real diversity and a richness of our own cultural heritages and of future endeavors. After remembering the famous trade routes of the past which brought different countries in contact, now new cultural routes are built. Indeed quite a few countries have realized the importance of such a new approach. By culture we mean that a lot of applications can be made in several forms such as art, literature and so on. Thus South Korea, which is a real economic powerhouse, started to invest a lot in soft power practices such as King Sejong Institutes which have been set up in many countries. Not only South Korea but other Asian countries including Japan and China have launched new cultural projects. This paper intends to present a few examples of these intercultural links and observe how they are adopted in our countries as well as how they enrich our different societies. Obviously such influences did occur in the past, but we have noticed that at present, in particular among the younger members of our societies, there is a keen interest for these new cultural forms and approaches. Is it not our duty and our desire to answer such demand and to make the world more open and more tolerant for the benefit of all of us?

**KEYWORDS:** trade links, intercultural processes, soft power, youth initiatives, literary influences, cultural gains

**RÉSUMÉ:** Dans cet article nous voudrions montrer qu'après une longue période de domination des États-Unis par le pouvoir culturel, le monde est témoin de changements très intéressants. De même qu'en politique, le monde culturel est en train de devenir multipolaire et des influences interculturelles peuvent être remarquées dans le monde entier. Mais ce qui est encore plus spectaculaire, c'est que le monde culturel ne se dirige pas vers un potpourri mondial sans saveur et uniforme, mais qu'on assiste à une véritable diversité et une richesse de nos héritages culturels et des productions à venir. Après avoir rappelé les célèbres routes commerciales du passé, qui ont mis en contact des pays différents, on remarque que de nouvelles routes culturelles sont construites. Un grand nombre de pays ont réalisé l'importance de cette nouvelle approche. La culture pour nous peut se manifester sous différentes formes telles que l'art, la littérature etc. Ainsi la Corée du Sud, qui est en passe de devenir une puissance économique redoutable, s'est engagée en investissant beaucoup dans des projets culturels tels que les Institutes King Sejong. En fait, non seulement la Corée du Sud mais d'autres pays asiatiques ont inauguré de nouveaux projets culturels, tels que le Japon, la Chine etc. Lorsque de tels projets sont lancés, des liens interculturels apparaissent et le monde devient plus global. Nous voudrions donc présenter quelques exemples de ces liens interculturels et observer comment ils s'intègrent chez nous et comment ils enrichissent nos différentes sociétés. Évidemment de telles influences ont eu lieu dans le passé, mais nous avons constaté qu'actuellement, en particulier chez les jeunes membres de nos sociétés, il existe un réel intérêt pour ces nouvelles formes et approches culturelles. N'est-il donc pas notre devoir et notre désir de répondre à cette demande et de faire que le monde soit plus ouvert et plus tolérant pour le bien de tous ?

**MOTS-CLÉS:** liens commerciaux, processus interculturels, pouvoir culturel, initiatives des jeunes, influences littéraires, gains culturels

## 1. Introduction

We are all aware that since man started to move around the globe, when he left his cave or came down from his tree, he met fellow or inimical human beings and encounters occurred. Exchanges, confrontations, influences, barter trade appeared. Therefore man had to face other human beings who

were different in the past as they are still different at present. What was he supposed to do? Fight, fraternize, keep away? Many options were left to him. Yet we have learnt that he tried to communicate with the person he had in front of him and intercultural processes started to take place.

As we know intercultural communication is to understand what happens when people communicate with one another. Several skills are consciously or unconsciously required such as self-awareness, empathy, respect and so on. Of course what was different was strange or may even been seen as dangerous, but man has always been curious and made a point to apprehend the person he was meeting for the first time. He soon realized that the main differences between him and the individual or individuals he was facing concerned habits, practices, behavior and values. There was obviously a huge gap between him and the persons or persons he was meeting for the first time. So what did he do? It seems that often during these first encounters things did not go smoothly. Actually wars were waged as these persons did not want to share the same territory, or could not accept the presence of others in their neighborhood. Therefore they did fight, and wars were launched. As a matter of fact, men still disagree and start fighting for similar reasons as at the moment we are typing this article, a war is happening in Eastern Europe.

Later, contacts happened when traders and businessmen left their home countries to peddle their wares and import items which could not be found where they lived. One main magnet for Westerners to start long voyage at sea was to collect the famous spices especially cloves and nutmegs which only grew in Celebes (now Sulawesi) and the Moluccas. For instance, over one century, that is to say the whole of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company, or the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), had a kind of monopoly on such trade (Van Reybrouck, 2022, p. 44). In other words if the European cuisine had been less plain at that time, not too many traders would have made the long journey from Western Europe to what is known at present as Eastern Indonesia. The situation drastically changed in early 1700s when European cuisine found new ways to attract customers switching from spices to several sauces (Van Reybrouck, 2022, p. 48).

For a long time from the 20th century onwards, the influence of one country has been overwhelming. It is the power of the United States. There was a time we could not enter a shopping mall—and shopping malls have sprouted up all around the globe in imitation of what happened in the United States—without hearing an American song being played through the sound

system. The so-called soft power of that country was not so gentle after all. Were we supposed to follow blindly that foreign culture? Were we bound to accept lock, stock, and barrel different behavioral practices as if they were supposed to be superior? For a long time nobody seemed to question such approach. However lately many have come to realize that other cultural forms and norms could be practiced instead of the commonly accepted ones. In fact we seem to follow the political approach as the world is no longer bipolar as it was during the Cold War and not unipolar, but rather multi-polar.

## 2. Language Constitutes the First Intercultural Process

When man met other human beings he had to find a way to express himself and to be understood by his counterpart. Gestures and body language helped, but in order to have a more elaborate conversation, language bridges had to be built and cultural interactions developed. Indeed there is a huge number of words and terms of foreign origins which have been accepted in all our languages. Linguists call them 'loanwords' but can we be satisfied with such names? Usually when we borrow something from somebody we are supposed to return it to him sooner or later. Are we going to start returning words and terms to the original languages they were taken from? I sincerely doubt that. So, instead of calling them 'loanwords', we should find another term. For instance in French, some linguists call them 'xenisms' as they are of foreign origins. Such xenisms can be noticed in almost all languages, even when such languages are very different and use different scripts. Let us consider several clear examples. For instance in Japanese, computer is written 'コンピューター' and it is pronounced 'konpyuta'. In Chinese we can also find words imported from other languages such as '雷达' [lédá] which is taken from the American-English term 'radar' and '贝雷帽' [bèilémào] from the French word 'béret' which is a kind of simple hat. Once in a newspaper in London we noticed the word 'rendezvousing' which is based on the French word 'rendez-vous' together with the suffix 'ing'. In Indonesian we can find the word 'kudeta' which comes from the French 'coup d'état'. Which means power seizure (usually by military personnel). All these examples show that intercultural processes occur when two languages are in contact. Such contacts happened when traders sailed from their home country either to seek fortune abroad or to sell their goods and import new ones from the harbors they reached. Western

languages are not immune from such linguistic imports. For examples we can mention the Japanese word ‘tsunami’ in most European languages although it is often incorrectly pronounced as the ‘t’ is rather silent in such a word in Japanese. The meaning of such a word is interesting, for in Japanese it means the ‘wave that engulfs the harbor’ as the story goes: some Japanese fishermen went out to sea and when they returned, their harbor had disappeared. Other natural phenomena have foreign words such as ‘typhoon’ which is an import from the Chinese ‘台风’ [taifeng], meaning ‘strong wind’, or ‘hurricane’ in English and ‘ouragan’ in French which come from a Caribbean language. It is also worth noting that there is a geographical distinction as hurricanes are happening over the Atlantic ocean while typhoons occur in the Pacific and Indian oceans. Actually the local population in the Caribbean islands called cyclones ‘huaragan’. Other noticeable linguistic imports are ‘pajama’ from Hindi, which is found in European languages as well as in Indonesian ‘piyama’ and ‘caoutchouc’ which in French means ‘rubber’. We have to admit that the French import is nicer as it is a direct word taken from the Quichua language. The meaning of such a word is truly beautiful as it is ‘the tree which is crying’ and such a name is appropriate as latex does flow out of the bark of the tree once it has been tapped. These few examples of linguistic imports is a clear proof of intercultural processes which happen when languages are in contact.

### 3. Traders and Businessmen as Intercultural Agents

When the Westerners came to exchange goods in Asia, they had to have a common language in order to barter with the local traders. In Southeast Asia it seems that the language they used from the 16th century onwards was Malay. This is stated in travel books written by Europeans who visited that region and it is still noticeable in some place names. For instance off the Southern coast of present day Vietnam lie a few islands which bear the name ‘pulau’ [island] in Malay such as Pulo Condore. In Southern Thailand another island bears a Malay name; it is Phuket which comes from the Malay ‘bukit’ [hill]. Modern day traders and businessmen are also aware that they have to adjust to their counterparts if they want to have fruitful negotiations. We usually recognize that these businessmen have to go through three stages: First they have to realize that the local people may not share the same habits and practices as them, then they have to learn what is indeed different in

the two cultures, their own and the local one<sup>1</sup>. Finally they have to apply their skills according to what they have just learnt (Hofstede, 1994, p. 230). Actually at present private companies or even university programs are set up precisely to help traders, businessmen or future expatriates to learn how to adjust in the new country they are going to live either for a short stint or for a few years. It has been acknowledged that if the Westerner has been fully briefed on the country and the people he is going to meet over there, he may be successful, or at least he will avoid the several mistakes one may do when visiting a foreign country. This means that cultural interaction is relevant and has to be reckoned with<sup>2</sup>. Several studies have been conducted on that subject. A fairly recent is *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead and Get Things Done Across Cultures* by Erin Meyer (2016).

After the traders, or rather, together with them at present, can we ask whether tourists produce cultural interactions? “Tourism represents the most superficial form of intercultural encounter” (Hofstede, 1994, p. 215). Tourists may believe that they have discovered a country and its culture after staying a couple of weeks in such a place. But we all know that this is not enough.

#### 4. Intercultural Processes at the Individual Level

It is not even necessary to look for others to notice intercultural processes as such phenomenon which can happen within one individual alone. In the past we were surprised to count so many polymaths, that is to say individuals who could excel in more than one field. Such persons were numerous in Baghdad under the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258). For instance, we can name Yaqub Ishak al-Kindi (801-873). He was not only a great philosopher but

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1 When people have been kept completely apart, it is not easy to assimilate into another culture. That was what happened to Jihyun Park who escaped from North Korea and finally settled in Britain. “It’s very complicated to recover from having been brainwashed for decades.” Thus she expressed herself in an interview with *Le Monde* (Cojean, 2022). She had to learn everything Western. Even her name is now written the other way as Westerners write the first name before the family name. By the way, her name is similar to a Korean singer brother of one of the BTS group. Jihyun Park has told her story together with Seh-Lynn, under the title *Deux Coréennes* (Two Korean Women) published in Paris, by Buchet-Chastel in 2019. An interview of her has been published in Britain (Clynch, 2022).

2 Even gestures have to be paid attention to. For instance when greeting someone some rules are to be followed, as well as when and how to give and receive presents, etc. Even sitting may lead to confusion as often Westerners sit cross-legged and this is considered rude, especially if you are sitting in the first row on a stage in front of the audience.

also a famous mathematician. The same feature can be found in Europe at the time of the Renaissance (14th to 16th century). Among the several famous individuals who were the leaders in more than one subject, we can of course mention Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) who was indeed the famous painter we remember and praise, but also an expert in quite a few other fields such as engineering, architecture, and literature etc.

In our time the same approach can be seen as we can mention several writers who are at the same time artists. For example in Malaysia we can name a few poets who are also well known for their paintings. In the 20th century Latiff Mohidin, born in 1941, and Ghafar Ibrahim, born in 1943, were clear authors able to express themselves both in poems and paintings. More recently, in the same country we can mention Zakaria Ali, born in 1946<sup>3</sup>. Such ability from these individuals tends to prove that interaction can occur within one person and such person benefits from his or her two creative talents. In such cases we can even speak of intracultural interaction as these writers are able to draw the particularities of one art onto the second one and vice-versa.

In Indonesia we can also find such dual creativity. For instance the famous female author Nh. Dini (1936-2018) not only wrote over 20 books of fiction, but could paint landscapes as well<sup>4</sup>. We can mention the exhibition titled *Rekreasi Visual Nh. Dini. A Solo Exhibition* which was held at the Oudetrap Gallery in Semarang on the Northern coast of Java from 11-18 May 2013. A catalogue of this exhibition has been published under the same title.

Another interesting writer who can successfully handle two crafts is Orhan Pamuk (born in 1952), the Turkish author of at least 11 novels who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2006<sup>5</sup>. He recently published a very unique book which contains his sketches of Istanbul as well as his notes, all compiled when wandering in that fabulous city (Pamuk, 2022). That book contains a free translation into French of the notes. Therefore we have colorful drawings of that town which spreads over the Bosphorus, notes handwritten in Turkish and the French version of the notes. It is truly a real cultural interaction.

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3 From a personal conversation with him in Kuala Lumpur, Zakaria Ali indicated that he devotes his mornings to writing while the afternoons are reserved for artistic activities (Zakaria Ali, personal communication, May 2022).

4 As far as I know I have been the first European to translate one of her novels into French: *Le départ* (from *Keberangkatan*), published in Paris by L'Harmattan in 2013 (Hardini, 2013).

5 Most of his novels have been translated in several languages and, apart from the Nobel Prize for Literature, Orhan Pamuk received many literary prizes from France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, UK, USA, etc.

## 5. Connections Between Writers

Another question which is often raised concerns how writers get their inspiration. When anyone chooses a topic or a theme, he or she has to get the idea from a source, from someone, or from an event, a book, etc. Most of the time, writers are avid readers as well. Therefore they do get some inspiration from what they read, up to the point that some writers have been accused of plagiarism. One famous case occurred in Indonesian literature when the famous Sumatran author Hamka (1908-1981) was criticized by the magazine *Lentera* of having written his novel *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* [The Sinking of the van Der Wijck] based upon a novel titled *Majdouline* [نيل و دجام] by the Egyptian author, al-Manfaluthi (1876-1924)<sup>6</sup>. More recently Muhiddin M. Dahlan seems to have confirmed that allegation, but this was rejected by a Dutch scholar (Dahlan, 2011; Maier, 2004). To sum up the controversy, we can indicate that there is some similarity between the French novel and the Indonesian one in that the protagonists, Zainuddin and Khadijah, exchange love letters to convey their feelings. But to state that it is an obvious case of plagiarism is too farfetched according to us, as writers have to start their writings from a source or another<sup>7</sup>.

Orhan Pamuk, whom we mentioned earlier, clearly informed us that his first novel *Cevdet Bey ve oğulları* [Mr. Cevdet and His Sons], published in 1982, was inspired by the writer's reading of Thomas Mann (1875-1955) *The Buddenbrooks* which recounts the decline of a family. The original title in German is *Buddenbrooks Verfall einer Familie* published in 1901.

Another scholar, Claudine Salmon, managed to trace back an Indonesian novel *Lawah-Lawah Merah* [Red Spiders] published in Java in 1875, written by an anonymous writer, to a French novel, which had been translated afterwards into Dutch<sup>8</sup>. Actually in the past, it was frequent to find such imports of novels or adaptations of novels from one literature into another. So

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6 As a matter of fact, it can also be indicated that al-Manfaluthi also imitated another writer. It has been claimed that he borrowed from the French writer Alphonse Karr, who wrote *Sous les tilleuls* (Under the Lime Trees).

7 Moreover the accusation of plagiarism by *Lentera* appears more political than literary as *Lentera* scorned all what was not written according to its leftwing policies in Indonesia in the early 1960s.

8 The original French novel is entitled *Laraignée rouge* (The Red Spider) by Ren de Pont-Jest (1829-1904). The research about such book and its subsequent translations and adaptations has been conducted by Claudine Salmon and her findings can be found in Salmon (1979).



intercultural activities did take place then. We could mention numerous other examples of such cultural interactions. A rather interesting one among them is the detective stories written by the French writer Ponson du Terrail (1829-1871), who wrote about 200 novels, among which 11 which made up the Rocambole cycle and which were published in weekly serials. In Malaya some of these French novels have been translated and adapted through Arabic as the Malay author, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, spent quite a few years in Egypt and the Middle-East<sup>9</sup>. The seven volumes of *Cerita Rokambul* [The Rocambole Stories] have been published by Jelutong Press in Malaya, in 1928-1934. The same writer is better known for having written *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* [The Story of Faridah Hanum], published in Malaya in 1925 which is also suspected to be a translation or at least an adaptation of the Egyptian novel *Zaynab* by Muhammad Hussain Haykal (1888-1956), published in Cairo in 1914 (Bahjat & Muhammad, 2010)<sup>10</sup>.

As a matter of fact, Ponson du Terrail influenced not only writers in Asia as novelists in Latin America also drew inspiration from the Rocambole cycle. We can name, for instance, the Brazilian author Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953)<sup>11</sup>.

Two more points need to be added to show the influence of Ponson du Terrail. First, not many adjectives are taken from writers' characters, but Ponson du Terrail's works have contributed one of the rare ones. In this case "rocambolesque" is often used in French to qualify an adventure, an event or a situation rather strange and hard to believe. Second, Ponson du Terrail not only inspired writers in many parts of the globe, but also indirectly helped produce the famous Brazilian telenovelas. They have been well received for instance in Malaysia at the beginning of the 21st century, replacing the American traditional series such as *Dynasty* and *Friends*.

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9 See Samat (1992, pp. 91-92).

10 Muhammad Hussain Haykal was a journalist, a writer and a politician. He wrote *Zaynab* in Paris where he was studying law.

11 See Coutinho (2017).

## 6. The Role of Youngsters in Cultural Interaction

Even if we have stated that many individuals both in the past and in our time have shown an interest in taking part in intercultural actions, it seems nowadays that the younger generation is indeed more open to accepting such interactions and are indeed involved in such processes. As we have stated earlier, the cultural world does not follow blindly one culture but tends to be open to all sorts of additions, exchanges, and benefits from other cultures into their mainstream background.

At one time India became a magnet for disenchanted Western youngsters who were keen to discover new ways of life, new ideas to promote, new thinking to embark on. So for instance yoga became very popular and many, usually young, Westerners accepted such new practices. Afterwards, martial arts and gymnastics from several parts of Asia became fashionable in the West and remain so to this day. We can mention Judo and Aikido from Japan, Taekwondo from Korea, Silat from Malaysia and Indonesia, Tai Chi and Qigong from China. Classes in those martial arts and gymnastics can now easily be found in many European cities. Often violent movements are not appreciated, so human beings prefer a gentler approach to martial arts. At the beginning of the 20th century a new fashion appeared. It is the interest in reflexology. Yet such a practice has been seen for a long time before that in China as it was considered important for good health and body equilibrium. So another cultural import from Asia made its way into Western way of life.

Of course one of the main interests of Western youngsters nowadays seems to be the K-Pop culture coming from South Korea. We all know that South Korea is a strong economic powerhouse. But recently Korea has developed a new approach—soft power—which has made an impact on younger generations of Westerners who were first attracted to Japanese Manga as they were much sought after up to the point that youngsters in the West decided to learn Japanese in order to better understand those Japanese cartoons. At present Korea seems to have taken over and the same trend has been noticed. For instance Korean classes in French universities have witnessed a huge increase in their enrolments. This indicates that K-Pop has been accepted as a new feature in Western culture. “La K-Pop, une fièvre qui n'en finit pas de monter” [The K-Pop, a fever still rising], such is the title of an article published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* (Nasi, 2022). In this article, which covers a whole page of that newspaper, it is indicated, among

other features, that youngsters seem to have found the grail in K-Pop. For example one young French business woman decided to save as much as she could in order to have enough money to go to Korea and to settle there. Western youngsters are fans of the Korean BTS group and they try as much as possible to resemble their Korean counterparts. One *Le Monde* article explained, “Earlier on the star leaders were supposed to embark on legitimate causes but nowadays the fans are the leaders in such a trend” (Cicchelli & Octobre, 2022). We also notice that this attraction to such cultural display is common in most Western youngsters. K-Pop is appreciated in France but it is also popular in Switzerland: As the title of another *Le Temps* article goes, “La Corée pop en fête à Lausanne” [K-Pop from Korea is celebrated in Lausanne] (Veillon, 2022). The article relates the event HallyuCom-On in Switzerland which took place for the fourth time at the Multicultural and Social Centre in Ouchy (a district of Lausanne) under the leadership of Liz Yoon who lives in Lausanne. The competition took place on 22 October 2022. It was not only a feast for the eyes and ears but also a food festival as many Korean dishes were served.

If youngsters in the West do appreciate K-Pop, they also tend to watch Asian films, as do other Western age groups. At one time Bollywood motion pictures were popular but now the main source of Asian films enjoyed in the West seems to come from East Asia. At present, the four main sources of Asian films in Europe are China, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea. For Western audiences these films bring new ways to entertain and to showcase social problems.

Among the numerous examples we could mention, there has been an interesting festival of Korean films at the King Sejong Institute in La Rochelle, France in early December 2022, where two films directed by Park Chan-wook, recipient of the prize for directing at the Cannes Film Festival in 2003, were shown: *Lady Vengeance* and *Mademoiselle*.

Indeed, beyond K-Pop and films, South Korea gives the impression of offering a complete cultural package to Westerners. As I have pointed out earlier on in this article, the trend is not to replace Western culture but rather to offer an alternative or additions to what can be seen, heard and tasted in the traditional culture of Western nations. Even different cuisine is appreciated by youngsters in the West. Therefore *bibimbap* (a bowl of rice with toppings) and *kimbap* (Korean sushi) have become fashionable among some young members of Western society. Most of the time youngsters are keen to

discover, to experiment, to enjoy new trends, new aspects of life, new habits and K-Pop and all everything connected with it offers them a new approach. So they easily join the bandwagon.

In the art field South Korea has made a distinct impact, and the Frieze Seoul was held in September 2022 in the Gangnam district of the Korean capital (Azimi, 2022). Just as we have seen earlier that writers can simultaneously be artists, we can also state that artists can benefit from one another. For instance it has been said that impressionists in France learnt from the British painter J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). More recently an exhibition was held at the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris to display, side by side, two painters: Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Joan Mitchell (1925-1992), allowing a kind of dialogue can take place between the French and American painters.

Similarly, Asian culture can interact with its Western counterpart. Quite a few writers and artists have successfully mastered a combination of the two different cultures. One of them is François Cheng who is completely bicultural. He can write on Tang poetry as well as on French Romantic poets<sup>12</sup>.

Several artists who had been first trained in their home countries left them because they did not experience the freedom they needed in order to express their talent. So a few of them moved and settled in the West. We can name Fujita (1886-1968), Zao Wu-ki (1920-2013) who had been inspired by Paul Klee (1879-1940) and who experienced a fruitful collaboration with the French writer Henri Michaux (1899-1984). An exhibition was held at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris in 2016 to show the links between these two creators.

Japanese *mangas* have attracted a lot of attention in the West as they were different and creative. Some Western artists have been influenced by them. This phenomenon can be seen in Carlo (2022).

In the domain of fine arts interaction does occur. Recall, for example,

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12 He was one of my Chinese literature professors in Paris long ago and he made me aware of the *dui zhang*, that is to say the parallelism which exists between some lines in a Chinese classical poem. Impressed by such feature I realized that there was something similar in Malay traditional verse, the pantun. So I presented a paper on such a topic during a literary congress in May 1996, Beijing which was subsequently published as the 24th Seminar Paper, by the Department of Malay Studies, at the National University of Singapore under the title *Keselarian di antara Pantun Melayu dengan Sajak Dinasti Tang* (Metzger, 1996/97) and subsequently translated into Chinese and published by the Zhong Guo Xue Bao in Singapore (25th issue in 1999, p. 51-53).

that the Austrian painter Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) often featured gold in his paintings, inspired by Byzantine or Egyptian Art forms<sup>13</sup>. Such paintings have been reproduced in the focus on “The Ideal Museum” of the art magazine mentioned above. Earlier on, Andr Malraux (1901-1976) intended to create an ‘Imaginary Museum’: “J’appelle Musée Imaginaire la totalit de ce que les gens peuvent connaitre, même n’étant pas dans un musée...” [I call Imaginary Museum everything that people can discover even if they are not in a museum...] (Manaranche, 2022).

Regarding fine arts, another point can be mentioned as an interesting experiment occurred in France when the son of a cattle raiser decided to turn his grazing meadows into a somewhat half natural, half artificial forest. He decided to plant a large variety of trees and to plant them not as is often the case on straight lines but rather haphazardly so that new planted trees will grow as well as natural bushes. From the newly grown forest which results, he draws inspiration for his paintings and he has been doing this for the past 30 years (Jardonnet, 2022).

After reviewing many fields where cultural interactions occur, we have to add another one: fashion. As we have noticed almost all cultural fields undergo some way or other influences, additions, transformations from other cultures. This also happens in the field of fashion. A whole page article entitled “Chanel à Dakar” shows us that the famous Parisian fashion house decided in 2022 to hold its yearly fashion parade in the Senegalese capital. The photo which appears with the article shows a display of colorful, locally designed patterns (von Bardeleben, 2022).

Obviously some challenges to the intercultural phenomenon arise from time to time. Recently new approaches have been adopted or noticed in Europe and they all originate from the USA, namely an emphasis on minorities at the expense of majorities. Should we blindly embark on such a trend? Is the method of insisting on gender studies, post-colonial teaching, and a strong affirmation of a feminist position the right way to create a more diverse and comprehensive cultural world?

Translators often face the problems of cultural differences. Should they adapt the cultural differences to the target audience or retain them in order to

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13 An impressive account of his paintings appeared in Issue No. 4 (November-December 2022) of the magazine *Geo Art Le Musée Ideal*, under the title “Le musée idéal” (The Imaginary Museum) (Geo Art Le Musée Ideal, 2022).

introduce new cultural forms, new ways of life, new trends to the readers of the translation? We tend to prefer the second approach as we need to discover new ways of seeing things, of thinking and of appreciating the world we live in.

All along this article we have strived to show that, apart from retaining our traditional values, we should be more open to new trends, new elements, new ways to enrich and develop our own cultures. This should not mean that we may end up with a tasteless cultural potpourri, but rather that we enjoy an expanded cultural background to make our lives wherever we live more interesting and fulfilling.

At present we can easily find products from all over the world in shops, malls, and supermarkets; it is therefore natural that we can also find cultural imports from abroad. Not only can we discover new ways of life, new habits, new customs but we can absorb them and make our lives more fruitful, more interesting. In doing so barriers may crumble, prejudices may disappear and better relationships may result.

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## Professional Profile

After having extensively taught in several universities in Malaysia, Singapore and France for over three decades, Laurent Metzger now works as consultant with the PrepAsia company dealing with Asia the headquarters of which is in France. Having received his PhD in Modern Malay Literature in 1977 at University Paris VII, he has produced six academic books, 10 translations from Malay to French and vice-versa, approximately 50 academic articles, and 50 working papers in international conferences.