Chapter 18

China's Southern Borderlands and ASEAN Higher Education: A Cartography of Connectivity

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The traditional Chinese aphorism "The Mountains are High and the Emperor Far Away" (*Shan gao*, *huangdi yuan*; 山高皇帝远) pithily illustrates distinctive qualities of regionalism in China's southern borderlands, including in higher education. The two provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou, for example, together with the Guanxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (GUAR),[1] adjoin Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, such as Viet Nam and Myanmar. Long considered fringe dwellers in more than the geographical sense by both imperial and postimperial Chinese rulers, these borderlands have recently been accorded much greater prominence and are now seen as a *qiaotoubao* (bridgehead) to the South China Sea and Southeast Asia, notably in higher education. Indeed, the fact that ASEAN now arguably constitutes China's highest regional priority (Wen, Luo, & Hu, 2014) accords a much greater prominence to China's southern borderlands, notably its universities. This greater prominence, together with several major pillars of China-ASEAN relations, many of which are of long standing but evolving, comprises thickening cross-border relations, including in higher education. Nonetheless, these same borderlands continue to display distinctive qualities, which are argued to be reflective of their peripheral geography and distance from political centers of power. In some respects, it is argued, the emperor is still far away. In the following sections I examine the context for China-ASEAN regionalism, with illustrations of regional relations in higher education relations. In light of thickening

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[1] The first two are provinces, the third is designated an autonomous region, a status equivalent to other border regions of China, such as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in China's Northwest.

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relations in the region, notably between universities, I then outline the overall state of China-ASEAN relations in higher education, as well as finally posing the question of how far China-ASEAN may be considered as a region, especially in higher education.

Regionalism and Borderlands

The following analysis both highlights and problematizes the conventional view of regionalism. There are a number of elements to this. Several analysts have recently argued that the more embryonic quality of ASEAN regionalism differs significantly from the more well-developed and longstanding regional architecture of the European Union (Jayasuriya, 2003, 2010; Robertson, 2008). This certainly includes higher education where, as seen below, regional mobility schemes are much less well developed and less well funded. As argued below, this more embryonic quality of higher education regionalism is in part the legacy of colonialism, which has led to reluctance by national authorities in higher education to cede authority to regional initiatives (Wen, 2016; Zhao, 2011). In part too, as other authors have pointed out, this is due to the sometimes substantial gap between expressed ASEAN aspirations and declarations; and the more limited range of actual achievements (Welch, 2012b). As part of his significant work on regulatory regionalism, Jayasuriya, for example, has pointedly criticized the triumphalism of ASEAN regionalism, pointing to its focus on "formal regional institutions . . . to the detriment of the understanding of the domestic political mainsprings of regional governance" (Jayasuriya, 2003, p. 199). This, he has argued, has limited the reach and capacity of regulatory regionalism within ASEAN. The not uncommon incidence of nationalist resistance to regional undertakings among several ASEAN member states has been seen by some as constituting a further brake on progress (Pesek, 2012), including in higher education.

As Gregory, Meusburger, and Suarsana (2015, p. 1) pointed out, Foucault underlined the link between region and (the reach and mechanisms of) political power. Foucault pointed out that regime and region both stem from the same Latin verb *regere*, to rule, (from which, for example, in English, the terms regiment, regime, and regulate all derive). In a discursive disquisition on geography and power, in which he acknowledged his spatial obsession, he argued that "Region is a fiscal, administrative, military notion" (Foucault, 1980, p. 68). He went on to point out the substantial implications for power-knowledge relations:

> Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination designated by such notions as field, region and territory. And the politico-strategic term is an indication of how the military and the administration come to inscribe themselves . . . on a material soil. (p. 69)

Effectively, Foucault is highlighting here the relationship between geographic space and administrative power and control. Given this thesis, borderland regions—

by definition peripheral—can be seen as a good litmus test of the (limits of) regionalism. The notion of limit here is arguably inherent. Cogent arguments have been made that borderland regions serve dual roles: both as markers of the limit of state sovereignty—"the boundary which marks the name of the state" (Chan, 2013, p. ix)—and also as sites that test and at times defy the power and authority of the state. Borderlands regions, where quotidian realities commonly include cross-border currents of people, languages, concepts, cultures, and currencies, are sites where ways of life collide and interweave. In what follows, the southern provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou, and the GUAR, and their relations with ASEAN higher education systems and institutions, are deployed as a test case of the limits of regionalism, illustrating both the tensions and options that borderlands spaces occupy (Chan, 2013; Eimer, 2014; Scott, 2009). The porous, liminal quality of borderlands regions evokes earlier eras characterized as "territorial nonchalance in the peripheries of states" (Chan, 2013, p. 90). This porosity of relevant borders, which as seen below are routinely breached, as well as the extralegal forms of much transnational trade and commerce, challenges conventional views of regulatory regionalism, and might better be characterized as instances of irregular regionalism. The implications for understanding relations between space and knowledge are significant.

The following section outlines the character and limits of China-ASEAN regionalism, more particularly Viet Nam and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), also alluding, where appropriate, to Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. Several examples of China-ASEAN higher education relations are provided, both historical and contemporary. An analysis is then made of regional relations in higher education, illustrating the relationship via examples from a regional university within China's southern borderlands that for the purposes of this chapter is referred to as *Borderlands University*. It is an institution of substantial significance in building and sustaining relations with higher education in the ASEAN region.

The Limits of Regionalism

China's southern borderlands, selected as an illustration of wider China-ASEAN regionalism in higher education, reveal a rich and complex tapestry of relations extending over more than two millennia, and which crucially embrace forms of higher learning and knowledge mobility. Six pillars of China-ASEAN relations are sketched below—economics, knowledge mobility, historical background, Chinese regional diaspora, regional perceptions of Chinese minorities, territorial disputes—before a specific focus is placed on China's southern borderlands region, which has long featured close relations with Viet Nam, for example. This might be considered an asymmetric relationship, yet Chan has argued that, while Viet Nam has maintained its independence, China will have to buy its way into Southeast Asia, via Viet Nam ("Asia on Alert," 2015; Chan, 2013, pp. 121−122; Kwok, 2015).

Given the intensity of current regional territorial disputes between the two, as outlined below, the ease with which this might be accomplished should not be taken for granted ("Hanoi Anger," 2016). The reestablishment of formal diplomatic relations after the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979, and the reopening of the border in 1991, together with the increased priority accorded Southeast Asia by China, was paralleled by an intensified regionalism, including in higher education. Despite a series of obstacles outlined below, some of which are intensifying, the last three decades or so of "Reform and Opening," initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, and its equivalent *Doi Moi* in Viet Nam from 1986, has, inter alia, deepened and widened cross-border flows of knowledge, students and academic staff, and educational personnel, enriching and extending the character of regionalism.

Yet it remains the case that China-ASEAN relations are conventionally viewed through the prism of economics and trade, a biased perspective that is misleading in at least two senses. Even within the trade portfolio, the emphasis is conventionally on goods, obscuring swiftly rising service-sector trade across a wide range of areas. This notably includes higher education, which now contributes billions to regional economies, including China's (Wen, 2016; Wen, Luo, & Hu, 2014). This error may well become even more important, as China deliberately moves from an emphasis on production of goods, to a more service-based economy, in which financial services, tourism, and education services assume a larger part. In 2015, for the first time, for example, China's service sector comprised more than 50% of the total economy (Wildau, 2015). The second error consists of the emphasis on trade itself, which is misleading, in that China-ASEAN relations are far richer, longer, and more varied than mere trade relations indicate.

As illustrated below, for example, the concourse in trade and ideas between China and Viet Nam is more than a millennium old. But since the end of the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979, and more particularly since the implementation of structural economic reforms of each economy from the late 1970s in China and late 1980s in Viet Nam, and the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two "sisters in socialism" in 1991, relations have mushroomed, especially in the three abovementioned provinces and/or regions, where border crossings—literal and symbolic, legal and illegal, regulated and irregular—have become ever more routine. As illustrated below, this embraces various forms of higher education relations, including student mobility, staff mobility, language learning, and growing research collaboration.

Within China more broadly, the increased priority accorded Southeast Asia has seen a process of revalorizing China's southern borderlands. Seen until relatively recently as "backward" (*luo hou*, 落后), with intimations of danger, remoteness, and of primitiveness, the central government moved to renominate Yunnan province, for example, as a bridgehead (*qiaotoubao*, 桥头堡) to Southeast Asia of great strategic significance (Sigley, 2014). This includes higher education, where Yunnan's universities compete vigorously for ASEAN students and broader regional influence with their peers from both Guanxi and Guizhou.

From the other side of the border, Vietnamese borderlands minorities in Viet Nam's Northern Mountain Region are also still widely perceived as backward by lowlands Vietnamese (Tran, 2003). This includes universities in the Northern Mountainous Region, for example, such as Thai Nguyen, which although wellregarded domestically, is much less well known within the Asia Pacific region, and more broadly, than leading national universities such as Viet Nam National University (VNU) Hanoi and VNU Ho Chi Minh City[2]. Through much of its history, China's southern borderlands were considered marginal and problematic. In fact, Yunnan, which borders Viet Nam, and whose universities are actively engaged in cross-border collaboration, was only brought under China's dynastic system after the Mongol conquest, during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) and subsequent Ming dynasty (Crossley, Siu, & Sutton, 2006). Even thereafter, Yunnan remained unstable: The former Dai kingdom of Sipsongpanna[3] was only gradually incorporated into the Qing dynasty, and the last Dai king was only finally compelled to abdicate by the Chinese Communist Party, in 1953 (Atwill, 2005). Yet another instance of the emperor still being far away.

These particular qualities of regionalism have significant implications for the quality of China-ASEAN higher education relations (Welch, 2014). As detailed below, China's preferred form of transnational higher education is via partnerships; the greater priority currently accorded to relations with Southeast Asia means that universities in the borderland regions of Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan assume greater importance in establishing relations with ASEAN neighbors. This is seen as an example of the Chinese principle of *yu lin wei shan, yi lin wei ban* (be good to one's neighbors, turn one's neighbors into partners) and includes specific frameworks, such as ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 and equivalent structures within the ASEAN University Network (AUN) (Welch, 2011a; Wen, 2016). At the same time, however, ASEAN's preferred mode of regional relations in higher education conforms to the wider ASEAN way, in which dialogue and consensus are accompanied by the principle of noninterference in the affairs of individual member states. Influenced by the historical legacy of colonialism in the region, in effect, this principle manifests itself as a reluctance to cede authority beyond the bounds of the nation state, and acts as a brake on more substantial regional initiatives in higher education (OECD 2003; Welch, 2012b; Wen, 2016; Zhao, 2011).

The Six Pillars of China-ASEAN Regionalism: Implications for Higher Education

Economic Relations

The first pillar comprises economic relations: China's dramatic economic rise over the past three decades, as well as growing China-ASEAN industrial and commercial complementarity, helped stimulate deeper relations, significantly including higher education (Jarvis & Welch, 2011; Welch, 2011a, 2011b), although by 2015 China's slowing economy was causing significant problems for a number of ASEAN member states (Gough, 2015). But more than China's stellar GDP growth was responsible ("More Chinese," 2014; State Council, 2015). China's growing regional engagement and notable support for her ASEAN neighbors each helped strengthen regional relations. Repeated assurance of "China's peaceful rise," endorsement of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN, and the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, in 2003, cemented closer relations (Cheow, 2004; Osborne, 2006; Vaughan & Morrison, 2006; Whitney & Shambaugh, 2008). Soft loans to ASEAN member states and substantial funding for key development projects, as well as the recent One Belt, One Road (Yi Tai Yi Lu) initiative, have further strengthened regional relations ("Chinese Outbound," n.d.; Hirono, 2010; Laksmana, 2011; "Outbound Tourism," 2014).

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[2] Formerly Saigon.

[3] The Chinese term *Xishuangbanna* reflects the Dai name, meaning 12 rice fields, or 12 pieces of land. It stems from Ming dynasty times.

The signing of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement in early 2010, subsequently upgraded at the November 2015 protocol meeting in Kuala Lumpur, accelerated trade in both goods and services, a trend that has been boosted by the spectacular growth of the Chinese middle class in recent years, now estimated to total between 110 and 160 million, (depending on the measure used) (Goodman, 2008; Hodge, 2016; Tomba, 2011). Latest analyses project that almost 90% of the next billion to join the middle class over the next decade will come from Asia, including 350 million Chinese and 210 million from "other Asia," especially Southeast Asia, notably Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia (Kharas, 2017, p. 13).[4]

With intraregional tourism only set to expand (Tong & Chong Siew Keng, 2010, p. 7), notwithstanding some of the issues sketched below ("Guangxi Ready," 2014; State Council, 2015), the implications of a rising Asian middle class are particularly important for regional higher education. Growing regional prosperity is increasing demand for both Chinese higher education and Chinese language services in the region, as well as student flows in both directions. Indeed, Malaysia deliberately markets its universities to the Chinese middle class, while Singapore has well-established training programs for Chinese officials ("Singapore's NTU," 2009; Yi, 2015). This increased demand also includes the burgeoning number of Confucius Institutes, (the Chinese equivalent of Germany's Goethe-Institut and France's Alliance Française), now numbering more than 30 within Southeast Asia (15 in Thailand alone), despite some local resistance in Viet Nam ("Chinese Premier," 2013; Omi, 2017; Wen, 2016; Yang, 2012). But Confucius Institutes, which are always based within local universities and always involve a partnership with a Chinese university, are by no means the whole story. As detailed below, numerous analyses reveal that rising intraregional service sector trade embraces a substantial rise in international student mobility. The growth of the middle class in both China and Southeast Asia, is evident in a much greater disposable income, which is often spent on sending their children abroad for university study. Fueled also by traditionally high aspirations for their children's education among Chinese and Southeast Asian parents and a willingness to incur the additional costs of an overseas degree, the growth of student flows between China and ASEAN, underpinned by supportive policies on both sides, is a clear outcome of the spectacular growth of the Asian middle class (Hodge, 2016; Illeva, Killingley, Tsiligiris, & Peak, 2017, p. 10; Kharas, 2011, 2017, pp. 2, 20).

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[4] As well, an added 380 million will come from India.

The regional dimension of this growth is important, and sustains greater intra-regional mobility in higher education. ASEAN-China trade overtook that with Japan in 2011, to become China's third largest, after the European Union and United States (Chang, 2012), while major Chinese investment in the region proceeded, despite a history of some local "ambivalence" ("China Faces Resistance," 2017; Kwok, 2015; Laksmana, 2011; Lo & Leng, 2017; "Philippines Accuses," 2015). Trade with ASEAN is predicted to surpass that with the United States and the European Union in the next few years, "Thanks to zero tariffs, preferential trade policies, and geographic advantages." (Chang, 2012; China-ASEAN 2013). Two-way trade reached US$480 billion in 2014, and a target of US$1 trillion has already been set for 2020. Ongoing China-ASEAN discussions regarding implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership would further boost regional trade, including service sector trade such as higher education (Lo, 2014; "Singapore to Give, " 2012; Wu & Mealy, 2012). Most recently, the announcement of the *Yi Tai Yi Lu* (One Belt, One Road) initiative (most particularly the Maritime Silk Road), as well as the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, both designed to accelerate and deepen regional connectivity and associated infrastructure, should significantly extend existing regional trade and further boost the size of the Asian middle class, upon which much transnational higher education trade depends (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, n.d.; Hofman, 2015; Tiezzi, 2014).[5]

But increased regional dependence on China is something of a two-edged sword for ASEAN economies. Are there too many China eggs—which contribute as much as 80% of developing East Asia's GDP—in ASEAN's basket? (Rahardja, 2012). If so, a rebalance towards service sector trade, notably including trade in higher education services, could potentially mitigate such effects.

Regional Chinese Diaspora

Regional trade and closer cultural ties are further deepened by the significant mainland Chinese diaspora spread throughout Southeast Asia, a pattern that began centuries ago. Zheng He's voyages (see Fig. 18.2) and active regional trade by

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[5] The U.S. proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, which excluded China, is an alternative regional framework, with significant implications for ASEAN member states (Boudreau, 2015; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015; Williams, 2013). It was formally rejected by incoming U.S. President Donald Trump, in 2017.

Table 18.1 The dragon and the tiger cub

	China	Viet Nam
Population in Millions (2011)	1,346	87.9
Percentage of Chinese in Population	100*	1.5
GDP per Capita, (PPP, US$), 2011	8,400	3,300
Development Status	Developing	Developing
Status, HDI Rating, 2011	.687	.593
FDI to China,(US$ million), 2008	-	2
FDI from China, (US$ million), 2008	-	120
GDP Growth, 2011	9.24%	6.24%

Note. PPP = Purchasing Power Parity. HDI = Human Development Index. FDI = Foreign Direct Investment. *Approximately 8.5% of the population is from China's 55 designated minorities. Sources: CIA, Country Comparison: GDP per capita; Population Reference Bureau, 2011: World Population Data Sheet.

Chinese merchants, principally Fujienese and Hokkienese, laid the foundations for a contemporary regional diaspora now estimated to total between 16 and 20 million (Chang, 2008; Welch, 2012b). Although proportions of Chinese ethnicity vary considerably across ASEAN, from as little as 1.5% in Viet Nam, to 25% in Malaysia, and around 60% in Singapore (see Table 18.1), the ubiquitous presence of a Chinese community forms a bridge to China throughout the region. Research suggests that Chinese identity among its worldwide diaspora remains strong, at least among the current generation, and that increasingly highly educated overseas Chinese (*hua qiao*) communities retain a keen interest in China's development, and largely wish to contribute (Da & Welch, 2016; Wang, 2000, 2005; Wang & Wang, 1998; Welch & Cai, 2011; Welch & Hao, 2013; Welch & Zhang, 2008; Yang & Welch, 2010).

Now, China's growing importance—including in higher education (Yang & Welch, 2012)—and rising disposable incomes in Southeast Asia, as well as a growing sense of Chinese identity among its Southeast Asian diaspora, means that increasing numbers of such families choose to enroll their children in Chinese universities to deepen their knowledge of Chinese language and culture and to avail themselves of related job and business opportunities. Malaysia's decision to recognize 820 Chinese universities for degree purposes, in 2012, was also instrumental in giving greater legitimacy to study sojourns in China (Hu, Wotipka, & Wen, 2016; "Malaysia Recognises," 2012).

Despite differing proportions of Chinese within ASEAN member states, the disproportionate economic weight of ethnic Chinese minorities is relatively common (Chang, 2008; Yeung, 1999). Moreover, as the character of Chinese migration has changed, more and more overseas Chinese are highly educated, commonly with university degrees, and many with postgraduate qualifications ("China's Diaspora," 2015; Welch, 2017). This is the case in ASEAN, where it is no longer uncommon to see Chinese researchers and teachers working in universities in the more developed higher education systems, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (Fredrickson, 2013; Krishna & Sha, 2015; Omi, 2017). As seen below, some will return to Chinese universities, lured by China's proliferating foreign talent schemes (Lu & Zhang, 2015; Welch, 2010a; Welch & Cai, 2011).

Across ASEAN, however, it is not merely proportions of ethnic Chinese that differ significantly within national populations. Of all ASEAN member states, Viet Nam, with perhaps the most minuscule proportion of ethnic Chinese, persistently reveals the most troubled relationship. This includes Vietnam's claims to islands claimed by China and some cultural resistance to learning Mandarin ("China Gets," 2012; Pak, 2012).

Epistemic Routes

But flows of ideas, also centuries old, are just as important as trade in goods. The unification of China (ca. 220 BCE), including territory now part of Viet Nam, entailed the spread of Chinese poetry, astronomy, medicine, and arithmetic through much of current northern Viet Nam. Confucian education became the major framework for higher learning in the region, (Gelber, 2007, p. 52; Welch, 2010a, pp. 197−199). The *Four Books* and *Five Classics* became the centerpiece of the temple curriculum in what is now Viet Nam as early as the Tang dynasty (618−907): "examinations based on Confucianism, as applied in China, were organized . . . for more than eight centuries (from 1075 to 1919) in Viet Nam" (Yang, 1993, p. 217).

Scholarly mobility was a notable feature, with scholars from current Viet Nam and elsewhere traveling particularly to centers of higher learning in China. Scholarly centers of Confucian higher learning were established in parts of what is now ASEAN. A prominent and venerable example was the *Quoc Tu Giam* (Imperial Academy) established in Hanoi by Emperor Ly in 1070: Open for the next 700 years, it educated not merely bureaucrats, but also scholars and nobles. A new academy was founded in Hue (seat of Nguyen Dynasty emperors and the national capital from 1802–1945) in 1802, after which the Hanoi academy fell into decline. Restored recently, it is still possible to see the names of major scholars inscribed in Chinese on the stelae within the temple garden. Confucius is traditionally revered in Viet Nam as the Teacher of Ten Thousand Sovereigns and some scholars in Viet Nam feel the Confucian doctrine of "managing state affairs and bringing peace to all under heaven" (As cited in Welch, 2011b, p. 133; see also Welch, 2010a; Welch & Cai, 2011, p. 11) is still very significant for Viet Nam:

> As for the recruitment of officials, examinations based on Confucianism as applied in China were organized . . . for more than eight centuries (from 1075 to 1919) in Viet Nam. . . . southern Viet Nam (before the reunification of the country) remained particularly faithful to his thought, especially in the domain of moral education. (Yang, 1993, p. 217)

Religion formed a further epistemic bridge. Buddhists in China and current Southeast Asia were in contact from the sixth century CE, while Islamic scholars in what is now China and ASEAN were also in contact (Chang, 1988; Gelber, 2007; Welch, 2012a, 2012b). The terrestrial and maritime Silk Roads (each of which, as seen in

Figure 18.1, has now been revived) both contributed to intellectual concourse between Muslims throughout the region (Somers Heidhues, 2001).

Longstanding Regional Relations

Clearly, both intellectual and commercial concourse sit on ancient and substantial foundations. Beginning in the third century BCE, regional trade grew during the Three Kingdoms period, and further during the Tang and later dynasties (Wang, 2000). Chinese voyages of exploration to Southeast Asia took place in the third century CE, significant contact between Buddhists in China and counterparts in Southeast Asia occurred during the fifth and sixth centuries, as also later concourse among Muslim communities in China and what is now Indonesia (Chang, 1988; Gelber, 2007; Welch, 2012a; 2012b). Growing regionalism included both Kublai Khan's expansionism during the Yuan dynasty (1297–1368), as well as increasing bilateral trade and exploration, although massacres of Chinese settlers also occurred, in Manila and Batavia (now Jakarta) during the Ming dynasty (Reid, 2008).

But Admiral Zheng He's[6] voyages to the region (1405–1433) remain the most potent example, with the clearest implications for higher education regionalism. (see Fig. 18.2; "China Beat," 2006; National Geographic, 2005). Himself a Muslim, Zheng He included a number of Muslim scholar-teachers on his ships, and although the region now comprising Indonesia and Malaysia had already been influenced by Islam the Indonesian scholar Hamka (1908–1981) has argued that "the development of Islam in Indonesia and Malaya is intimately related to a Chinese Muslim, Admiral Zheng He" ("Zheng He," n.d.a.; see also Wu, 2004). This has specific implications for higher education. It is not drawing too long a bow to argue a connection between Zheng He's deliberate inclusion of Muslim scholar-teachers among his crew, and his propagation of Islam within the region, and the existence of current higher educational institutions, such as the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), which over the years 2013–2015 increased its international enrollments from China from 136 students to 275. Although Malaysia currently attracts over 10,000 mainland Chinese students annually to its universities, IIUM's cohort of Chinese Muslims is both distinctive and an underanalyzed element of higher education regionalism.

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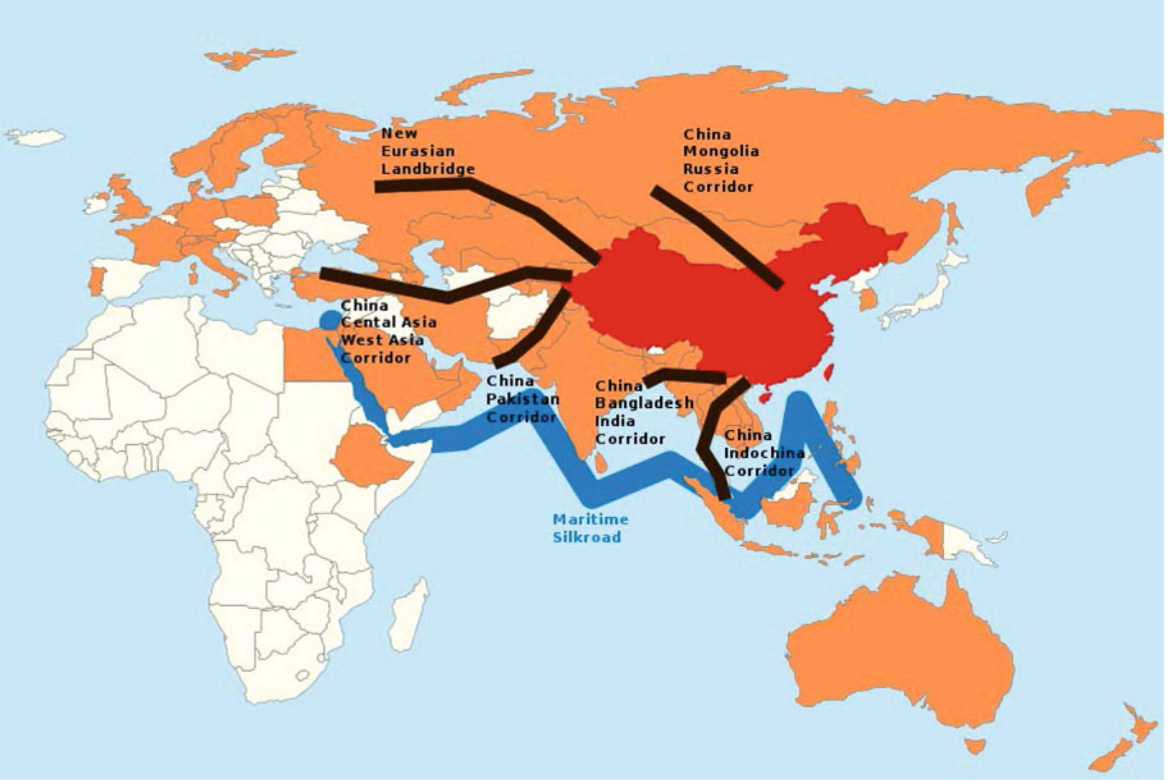
[6] Originally known as Ma Sanbao (Ma Ho; 馬三保), Zheng He was given his more well-known name by the Yongle emperor, as a reward for his loyalty.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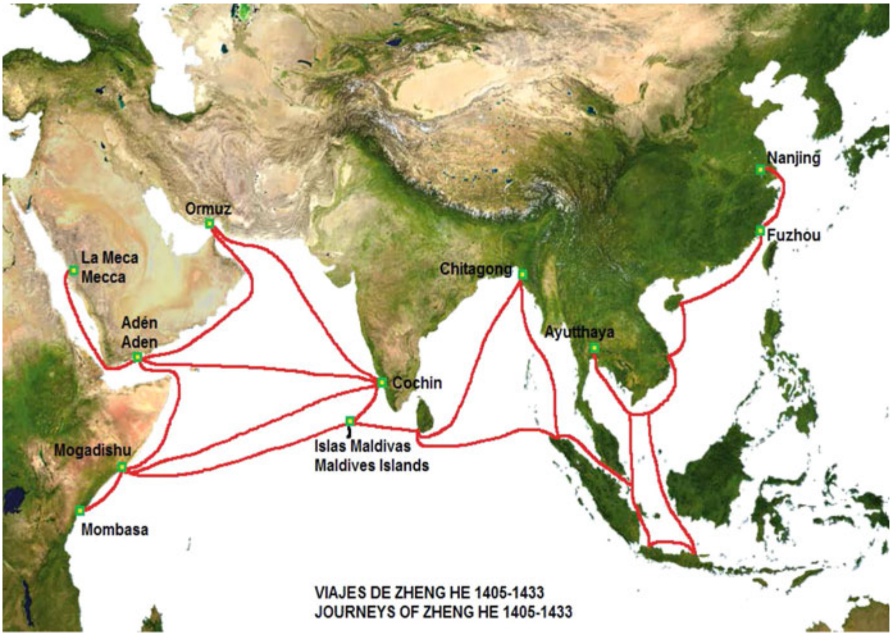
Bangladesh
India
Corridor
China
Indochina
Corridor
Maritime
Silkroad

Fig. 18.1 One Belt, One Road Initiative. The Terrestrial Silk Road is marked in black.
Source: © Lommes (2017), via Wikimedia Commons. Used under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0). Retrieved from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/One-belt-one-road.svg.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Mogadishu
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Maldives Islands
Mombasa
VIAJES DE ZHENG HE 1405-1433
JOURNEYS OF ZHENG HE 1405-1433

Fig. 18.2 Voyages of Zheng He, 1405–1433. Source: Continentalis (2013), via Wikimedia Commons. Used under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 3.0). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zheng_He.png.

Territorial Disputes

While regional relations in higher education continue to grow, spreading territorial disputes between China and several ASEAN neighbors (maritime and terrestrial) may constrain regional relations (Bowring, 2012; Hayton, 2017; Prantl, 2012; Severino, 2012; Tiezzi, 2014, Welch, 2014). Ongoing differences over territorial ownership of minor shoals, reefs, and islands in the South China Sea have proven stubbornly resistant to resolution. As late as mid 2017, only an agreement to commence consultations on a code of conduct (begun in 2002) had been reached, a fact ascribed both to China's muscular diplomacy, and ASEAN's inability to achieve a common negotiating position (Buckley, 2015). Further disputes with the Philippines and Viet Nam in the South China Sea in 2011, that involved sovereignty over *Hoang Sa* (the Paracel Islands, known as in Chinese as *Xisha*), *Quần đảo Trường Sa* (the Spratly Islands, known in Chinese as *Nansha*), and Fiery Cross Reef (*Yongshu Jiao)* provoked sharp Chinese criticism (Bowring, 2012; "Hanoi Anger," 2016; Li, 2012; "Subs Keep," 2016; Torode, 2011). Viet Nam, Malaysia, and the Philippines all scrambled to boost their defense capabilities and ties, including with Japan, the United States, and India ("Asia on Alert," 2015; "Beijing Downs," 2016; Conelly et al., 2016"; "India Will," 2015; Nguyen, 2012; Nicholson, 2015; Parameswaran, 2015; "Philippines Security," 2016; Thayer, 2015).

Hence, despite enhanced regional economic integration, and a perception by several ASEAN states that China's rise may offset their dependence on the United States, China's assertiveness in the region has led to some hedging on the part of ASEAN neighbors (Kwok, 2015; Osborne, 2006; "Philippines Security," 2016; Taylor, 2012; Wang, 2005; Whitney & Shambaugh, 2008). Despite this, China announced in November 2014 that it "ranked relations with its neighbours higher in priority than relations with the United States and other great powers" (Beng, 2015). While still robustly asserting its territorial claims, China now emphasizes win-win diplomacy, further trade, and cultural cooperation, including in higher education (Sutter & Huang, 2012; Tiezzi, 2014).

Overall the effects are mixed: Hedging against China is balanced by concerns that the promised U.S. "pivot to Asia" is more rhetorical than real, which is leading several ASEAN states to explore closer links with the Middle Kingdom (Callick, 2016). Such strategies, together with supportive policies at national and regional levels in China, are only deepening higher education relations by universities on both sides of China's southern borders ("2016 Guizhou," 2016; "Vietnamese Students," 2016; Yi, 2015).

Anti-Chinese Sentiments

The disproportionate importance of Chinese minorities on national economies has erupted into violence against local Chinese groups at times, as seen most recently in Viet Nam ("Vietnam Stops," 2014). Earlier examples include the murder of many *Partai Komunis Indonesia* members in Indonesia in 1965, numbers of whom were killed simply because of their Chinese origin (Farram, 2010, p. 392; Pramudatama, 2012; Suryadinata, 2003; Wang, 2005). Diplomatic relations were only restored in 1990, while anti-Chinese riots broke out again in 1998, in Jakarta, Medan, and elsewhere (Conboy, 2002; Laksmana, 2011).

Such sentiments also resulted in incidents directly affecting higher education, including, for example, attacks on Res Publica University, in Jakarta, in October 1965. On the pretext that it was a headquarters for training communists, anti-communist youths invaded the campus. Res Publica students barricaded themselves inside the College of Technology, which was then burned to the ground by the mob. In response, the minister of education decreed the establishment of a new private university (Trisakti) on the site, while also banning one third of former students from reenrolling, allegedly due to their communist sympathies. While ethnic Chinese enrollments remained substantial, enrollments by ethnic Indonesians rose significantly in the years following (Welch, 2011b, pp. 33–34).

In Malaysia, too, bloody riots occurred between Chinese Malaysians and ethnic Malays (known as *Bumiputras*), in 1969. Preferential policies for Bumiputras, including university quotas that effectively forced many Chinese-Malaysians into private sector higher education, or overseas for study, were subsequently introduced to redress the comparatively weak position of Bumiputras in society, economy, and universities. The measures, which included limiting senior appointments for Chinese-Malaysian academic staff, continue to discriminate against ethnic Chinese, despite being formally abandoned in 2003.

Irregular Regionalism and the Southern Borderlands

The above sketch of the six pillars defies the conventional wisdom that views Sino-ASEAN relations simply through the prism of economics. History, culture, ethnicity, security allegiances, nationalism, and domestic political agendas, including those of the great powers, all help shape both the quantity and quality of regionalism, notably in higher education.

Regionalism is by no means uniform, however, and borderland universities represent a test case of the limits of Sino-ASEAN regionalism. The liminal quality of borderlands regions continues to resist and at times defy the regulatory architecture of both state and regional authority, including in higher education, with borderland universities, more remote from central authority, pursuing more specifically regional agendas (Chan, 2013; Eimer, 2014; Yang, 2012).

This is clearly the case in China's southern borderlands of Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, where much of cross-border flows is both irregular and illegal (Chan, 2013, pp. 89–105, 108–115; Chinese Jade Miners," 2015; Eimer, 2014, pp. 186–188, 200, 225–231; Evans, Hutton, & Eng, 2000; "Guangxi Ready," 2014;"The Plunder," 2015). In addition, for borderlands minorities such as the Dai, Wa, Kokang, and Chuang, ethnicity still transcends nationality: "Borderlanders cross state boundaries daily and conduct everyday cross-cultural interactions" (Chan, 2013, p. xi; see also Barrett, 2012, pp. 183–191; Eimer, 2014, pp. 163, 175, 188–189; Fuller, 2015; Moe, 2015; Sigley, 2014; Tiezzi, 2014).

Although locating precise data is difficult, common ethnicities influence cross-border student flows. Hence, in order to understand such flows, researchers, too, must enter that same liminal world, suspending conventional perceptions of borders and themselves becoming border-crossers engaged in transgressive, disruptive modes of thinking. Geopolitics—also complicit in blurring borders—matter, including in cross-border university links. For such universities, the emperor may still remain far away.

But Beijing's view that the local minorities on its southern borderlands are no threat also led to fewer resources for regulating cross-border flows. Accusations have been made of Han orientalism, with which locals may be at least superficially complicit—while lamenting in private the loss of their language and culture: "None of the schools teach Dai now, . . . You have to become a monk to learn how to read and write it" (Eimer, 2014, pp. 175, 181).

China-ASEAN Relations in Higher Education

How do these intertwined elements play out, in current China-ASEAN relations, in higher education? Clearly, while ASEAN can be seen as a region, including related higher education architecture such as the AUN,[7] it is internally highly diverse, rendering generalizations perilous. Equally, higher education relations embrace far more than trade in education services, however important. The following section charts both trade in higher education services, as well as wider higher education relations.

Although data is not precise, service sector trade between China and ASEAN has clearly been growing for some time; this certainly includes higher education, (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2004; Welch, 2011a). Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to service sector industries in ASEAN accounted for around half of total ASEAN FDI in 2008 (ASEAN, 2009, pp. 12−13). Global estimates of total worldwide trade in education services were around US$2.2 trillion. Growth has been faster in developing Asia, where the service sector accounts for a lower proportion of total GDP than in the OECD (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Ng & Tan, 2010). The move to list education as part of service sector trade under the Global Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is also enabling the more precise tracking of transnational delivery of higher education (Welch, 2011a).[8]

International branch campuses (IBCs) are one index of growth in transnational education. By June 2016, there were 232 IBCs worldwide, with a further 25 under development (Hu & Willis, 2016). A significant proportion are situated in Asia, and while transnational education has been traditionally dominated by Anglophone countries, there has been a pronounced shift to Asia in recent years. A recent Asian Development Bank study underlined that earnings from trade in higher education services still favored the wealthier and English language systems; but that much faster growth was evident in Asia. Although earnings from trade in higher education services still favored traditional exporters, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, newer Asian competitors, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and China, were making substantial inroads (Asian Development Bank, 2012, pp. 37–38; Welch, 2011b). China alone has more than 400,000 international students enrolled in its higher education system, of whom an ever-increasing number stem from ASEAN (see Fig. 18.3).

Although China's priorities for transnational education, which is formally controlled by the ministry of education,[9] are more concerned with extending knowledge of Chinese culture and language, as compared with the more entrepreneurial

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[7] As seen below, AUN includes a component that includes a number of Chinese universities, within an ASEAN+3 framework.

[8] Although this should not be taken as endorsement of education as a tradable commodity, or a denial of its importance as a public good.

[9] At least for degree level programs. Subdegree levels are monitored by provincial or municipal governments.

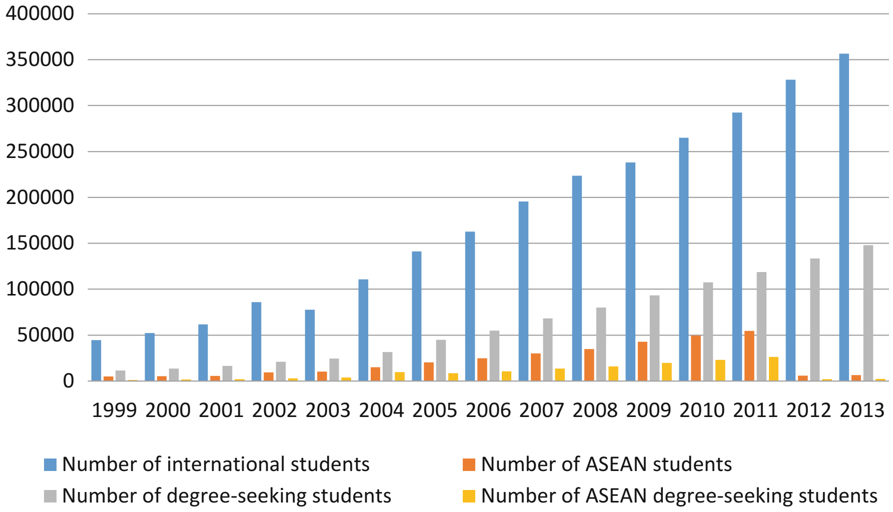

Fig. 18.3 International students, ASEAN students, and degree-seeking students in China (1999–2013). Source: Ministry of Education statistics (1999–2013), cited in Wen (2016, p. 177). Reprinted with permission.

approach of traditional Anglophone providers, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, early estimates that China earned around US$2.3 billion from international students may well be conservative (Wen, 2016; Wen, Luo, & Hu, 2014). China emphasizes partnerships in domestic transnational education initiatives. Requirements include partnerships based on collaboration between foreign and Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs) or providers. This involves mutual investment from both Chinese and foreign HEIs in capital, land-use rights, intellectual property rights, institutional brand, curriculum, and administrative systems (Hu & Willis, 2016; Welch & Cai, 2011). Although China acceded to the GATS in 2001, its limited commitments to the agreement effectively prohibit foreign HEIs/providers from providing education services in China, unless partnering with a local Chinese HEI. The general principle is as follows:

> Foreign corporate, individuals, and related international organizations, in cooperation with educational institutions or other social organizations with corporate status in China, jointly establish education institutions in China, recruit Chinese citizens as major educational objectives, and undertake education and teaching activities. (McNamara, Knight, & Fernandez-Chung, 2013, p. 13)

Overall China data show that by the end of 2015, 590 Chinese HEIs were engaged in collaboration with over 400 foreign HEIs/providers, operating a total of 2,376 cooperative programs and institutions. Approximately 55,000 Chinese students were enrolled on campus and a further 1.5 million students were already graduates of such programs (Hu & Willis, 2016).

Most recently, Chinese HEIs have moved to establish both programs and IBCs, including a number within the ASEAN region. Overall, by 2015, 98 transnational education programs had been established, as well as 4 IBCs, of which 3 were based in ASEAN. Each formally approved by the Ministry of Education, the 3 ASEAN IBCs were, in chronological order of establishment:

- Suzhou University, Laos: founded in July 2011, offers undergraduate programs in international economy and trade, international finance, Chinese language, and computer science and technology
- Bangkok Business School, jointly established by Yunnan University of Finance and Economics and Thailand's Rangsit University in December 2013, offers six programs in economics and administration at both undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Xiamen University Malaysia, founded in July 2014, and the most substantial example, with a major new campus, offers 12 undergraduate programs including Chinese studies, traditional Chinese medicine, marine biotechnology, new energy science and engineering, and international business (Bevins & Phillips, 2017; Foon, 2016; Hu & Willis, 2016).

At least three points are worth making here. As Hu and Willis underline, China's transnational education initiatives tend to cluster within the ASEAN region. Secondly, at the program level, there is a concentration on traditionally prestigious disciplines, such as Chinese language, culture, traditional Chinese medicine and martial arts. Lastly, and unsurprisingly, of the three examples above, one involves a Chinese higher education initiative from one of the borderlands regions that are the particular focus of this analysis.

Frameworks for China-ASEAN Collaboration in Higher Education

Certainly, regional plans to extend China-ASEAN collaboration in higher education are ambitious. As part of the Guiyang Declaration signed in August 2010, a target was set of 100,000 Chinese and ASEAN students enrolled in each other's universities by 2020: the Double 100,000 Plan. As seen below, significant progress has been made towards attaining that goal. The imbalance indicated above, in China's favor, however, is likely to persist. China is also generous with scholarships to students from ASEAN: Its plans are to raise the number of scholarships to ASEAN students to 10,000 by 2020.

Of China's major source countries for international students, several are ASEAN member states, as the following table illustrates:

Table 18.2 shows that, in aggregate, ASEAN students form a substantial proportion of China's top 15 source countries: over 50,000 students, and almost 15% of the top 15 total enrollments. Importantly too, for this analysis, it is precisely the borderlands regions and universities where most ASEAN students are located—

Table 18.2 Top 15 source countries, China's international education market, 2013

	Country	Enrollment	Market Share (%)
1	South Korea	63,029	17.68
2	United States	25,312	7.10
3	**Thailand**	**20,106**	**5.64**
4	Japan	17,226	4.83
5	Russia	15,918	4.47
6	**Indonesia**	**13,492**	**3.78**
7	**Vietnam**	**12,799**	**3.59**
8	India	11,781	3.30
9	Kazakhstan	11,165	3.13
10	Pakistan	10,941	3.07
11	France	9,649	2.71
12	Mongolia	8,054	2.26
13	Germany	7,058	1.98
14	**Malaysia**	**6,126**	**1.72**
15	United Kingdom	5,465	1.53
	TOTAL ASEAN	52,543	14.73

Note: ASEAN countries in bold. From the Chinese Ministry of Education statistics (1999–2013), adapted from Wen (2016, p. 178). Reprinted with permission.

the southwest provinces of Yunnan, Giuzhou, and Guangxi neighboring ASEAN (Wen, 2016; Yang, 2012).

But student mobility fits within wider China-ASEAN frameworks that govern higher education relations. Broad cultural ties between China and ASEAN were inaugurated by an ASEAN + 3 Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA+3) in Kuala Lumpur in October 2003 and separately endorsed by the ASEAN + China Summit that same year. The latter pledged to intensify cooperation in key areas, including education and human resource development, and the exchange of relevant personnel. In this sense, it broadly functioned within the expressed goals of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: to "nurture talent and promote interaction among ASEAN scholars, writers, artists, and media practitioners to help preserve and promote ASEAN's diverse cultural heritage while fostering regional identity, as well as cultivating people's awareness of ASEAN" (ASEAN, 2003). While enthusiasm exists on both sides to strengthen relations in higher education, major accomplishments are not always simple.

Trade Agreements and Consortia

One regional trade agreement includes cross-border higher education, while three principal higher educational consortia exist that either target promoting ties with China or already include Chinese universities as members.

From its inception, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) included an education component. Originally formed as the APEC Education Forum in 1988, it then became part of the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group, which includes China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Viet Nam (as well as several other countries). While APEC infrastructure to support regional initiatives in education remains modest, its ambitious aims included, notably, the attainment of free trade and investment within the Asia Pacific region for developed countries by 2010, and for developing countries by 2020. A relevant instrument consisted of an intergovernmental consultative group, the APEC Education Forum, while the Human Resource Development Working Group had wider aims (lifelong learning, capacity development, sustainable development, and labor and social protection). University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), which is seen by APEC as a vehicle to promote links in education, organizes one and two semester study abroad programs for undergraduates. Members include Singapore, Malaysia, and Viet Nam, while China's membership, discussed at a UMAP meeting in Japan in March 2003, was subsequently confirmed, notwithstanding difficulties arising from already having Taiwan as a member. Activities consisted of the further development of the existing UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme, while also leveraging the comparative advantage of member states, and regional language learning.

An early APEC publication focused specifically on identifying barriers to trade in cross-border educational services trade, as well as measures to promote it, included access and equity and the integrity of national systems. Several countries within the region voiced concern on this latter issue, noting the necessity to "retain the . . . sovereign right to determine . . . domestic funding and regulatory policies/measures" (OECD, 2003, p. 51), as well as the integrity of the public system and local standards.

The three regional consortia in higher education are:

1. The AUN, which in 2001 inaugurated the ASEAN-China Academic Cooperation and Exchange Programme. Members include University Sains Malaysia, University of Malaya, National University of Singapore, and Nanyang Technological University. Its activities include the ASEAN-China Rectors' Conference, the Round Table, and Joint Research and Training Grants, as well as the ASEAN-China Distinguished Professors and Lecturers Exchange Programme. One of the first actions taken was an ASEAN-China rectors' meeting in Bangkok, (2002), which was followed by a further round table in Beijing (2004) that took additional steps to advance ASEAN-China collaboration. Relevant strengths in both China and ASEAN meant marine science was selected as an initial vehicle for joint research and training grants. Chinese scientists from Qing Dao Maritime University were afforded opportunities to conduct research in tropical and equatorial water environments, while ASEAN scientists were able to take advantage of the temperate water environment offered by northeastern China. Researchers from each side received three-month grants to conduct maritime research. This framework agreement on research cooperation was confirmed at the Hanoi meeting in 2007.

   A further element of the agreement included a joint training activity, whereby some forty academics from ASEAN and China were selected for two training courses, one to be held in ASEAN and another in China. A final component was the ASEAN-China Distinguished Professors and Lecturers Exchange Programme, which aimed to strengthen relations between ASEAN and Chinese scholars via short-term academic exchanges (up to one month). Exchange activities included lectures, laboratory exercises, and demonstrations; advising research students; and collaborative development of curricular and teaching-learning materials.[10]

2. A second regional higher education consortium involving member universities in China and ASEAN is the Association of Pacific Rim Universities comprising 36 leading research universities from Singapore, China, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and elsewhere. Member universities from China are among its leading research institutions: Peking University, Nanjing University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong University, Tsinghua University, and Zhejiang University.
3. The third consortium is Universitas 21, which includes, inter alia, three major Chinese universities (Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and the University of Hong Kong), as well as a major research university from Singapore. Although Universitas 21 began with great fanfare—and ambitions—such aspirations soon needed to be tempered. Current initiatives include summer schools for member institutions, and student exchange programs, comprising both short-term programs and longer sojourns of one to two semesters, at partner institutions.

A further element supporting the architecture of Sino-ASEAN relations in higher education is the availability of an array of what are known in China as foreign talent schemes, which operate at both national and provincial levels. Designed to deploy overseas experts to work in China, either on a part-time or full-time basis, a wide range of such schemes exist, including the Hundred Talents, Thousand Talents, Yangtze River Scholars schemes, the Spring Light and Distinguished Overseas Scholar Programs, and the 111 Project. In practice, although several schemes are open to all overseas talent, the large majority of candidates selected are overseas Chinese. Such schemes provide a further plank in the intellectual bridge between China and ASEAN, and mean that Chinese academics working in Singapore, for example, may elect to return by taking advantage of such schemes, or may remain employed in Singapore, but travel back and forth to China, sustained by one or other of such programs. A major change in China's diaspora policy some years ago, from "returning to serve the country" (huiguo fuwu) to the more flexible "serving the country" (*weiguo fuwu*), meant that Chinese specialists based overseas could continue to serve China while remaining abroad (and visiting China often, for example, to teach, recruit Ph.D. students, or engage in collaborative research with Chinese peers). Examples exist of mainland Chinese researchers heading laboratories and departments in Singapore, while continuing to build bridges to China (Krishna & Sha, 2015, p. 407).

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[10] For a list of AUN members, including the three Chinese borderlands universities of Guanxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, see http://www.aunsec.org/membership.php.

China Viet Nam Relations in Higher Education

While the Six Pillars sketched above represent a common framework for understanding Sino-ASEAN relations in higher education, in order to narrow the focus some selection is necessary. Given its proximity, and borderlands focus, Viet Nam was selected for further analysis. A sketch of similarities and differences in the two systems is followed by a case study of China's borderland regions' higher education relations with Viet Nam.

With a population of around 90 million, Viet Nam is still classed as a developing country, with significant economic growth rates, albeit substantially dependent on China. Almost 30% of Viet Nam's imports stem from China, while China is Viet Nam's third largest export destination (Boudreau, 2015; Tran, 2015). Its higher education system, while substantial, is much less well-developed than either China, or several other ASEAN member states. As sketched above, it has a particularly complex history of China relations: having fought a war as late as 1979, while also often following China's policies and programs, including in higher education. This includes a planned major increase in private higher education to the year 2020, as part of the Higher Education Reform Agenda (Welch, 2010a, 2010b). Although ethnic Chinese make up no more than 1.5% of the overall population, their influence on the economy significantly outweighs this modest proportion. Perhaps in part because of this, and despite the fact that Viet Nam is both a sister in socialism to China and of much smaller size and economic weight, deadly anti-Chinese riots broke out as recently as 2014. Viet Nam has long insisted on its independence (as French, Chinese, and U.S. and Allied military forces can attest). *Doi Moi*, the process of "reconstruction" instituted in 1986, is the most obvious example of Viet Nam implementing reforms broadly paralleling those of China, if somewhat later. Viet Nam's accession to World Trade Organization membership, six years after China, was another. Bilateral trade and investment were given further impetus by the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement of 2010. Some key major projects saw China's FDI to Viet Nam leap from 371 million U.S. dollars in 2012 to 2.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2013, according to Viet Nam's Ministry of Planning and Investment figures ("More Chinese," 2014). While bilateral trade and investment still strongly favor China, relations have been affected by the recent territorial disputes, while the anti-Chinese riots in Hanoi led to a fall of some 30% in China outbound tourism to Viet Nam in 2014, and perhaps, too, a plateauing in Vietnamese students at Chinese universities (Vu & Nguyen, 2014). Nonetheless, student flows strongly favor China: In 2011 13,549 international enrollments in Chinese universities stemmed from Viet Nam (a rise from less than 650 in 2000, and 7310 in 2006) (Clark, 2014; Welch, 2011b; Welch & Cai, 2011, p. 18; see also Fig. 18.3). By contrast, Viet Nam, with few international students enrolled at its universities, but at least 50,000 of its own enrolled overseas, remains a net importer of higher education services, including from China ("Vietnam to Send," 2013; Welch, 2010a, 2011a, 2011b).

Crossing Borders and Sino-Vietnamese Higher Education

In Asian higher education, hierarchy and stratification can never be ignored. Nonetheless, the above analysis modifies this key point significantly. While no Chinese university from the three borderlands areas of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi are listed among the ranks of the Project 985 universities (China's top tier), or in the authoritative Shanghai Jiaotong Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU),[11] they are critical in sustaining Sino-Vietnamese relations in higher education, as is true in some of China's other border regions (Welch & Yang, 2011). Some 11 universities in the North of Viet Nam offer Chinese language programs and take part in annual Chinese Bridge language competitions ("Vietnamese Students," 2016). Annual Chinese university expos held in Viet Nam to encourage Vietnamese students to enroll in Chinese universities often feature borderland regions and their universities. Examples included the Guizhou Education Fair in Hanoi in 2016, which featured 22 universities from Guizhou, and the Guangxi Education Fair of the same year, which traded on the extent of existing cross-border relations. Forty universities and colleges in Guangxi had already established ties with some 60 universities and colleges in Vietnam. This meant that over 3,000 Vietnamese students studied in Guangxi in 2015, while in the other direction nearly 1,000 students from Guangxi were studying in Vietnam ("China's Guangxi," 2016).

Nonetheless, hierarchy and status still differentiate the two systems. The ARWU ranking lists 35 Chinese universities among the top 500 worldwide. Viet Nam, like much of Southeast Asia, still has no HEIs listed. Its plans are to create "model universities," using loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and the expertise and resources of selected foreign partners to lift quality and act as a benchmark for domestic HEIs (Welch, 2010a). No Vietnamese university is yet a member of the Asia Pacific Research Universities (APRU) network (which includes five leading Chinese universities), or of Universitas 21, which includes two from China.[12] Viet Nam National University (VNU), Hanoi, and VNU Ho Chi Minh city, are, however, both members of the ASEAN + 3 network, which includes, of five Chinese universities, three key HEIs from the three abovementioned border provinces: Guangxi University, Guizhou University, and Yunnan University (ASEAN Universities Network, n.d).

Viet Nam's relatively less-developed higher education system and levels of infrastructure position it less well to leverage cross-border collaboration. China's

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[11] See http://www.shanghairanking.com/.

[12] For APRU members, see https://apru.org/members/member-universities and for Universitas 21, see http://www.universitas21.com/member.

Table 18.3 Key forms of Sino-Vietnamese cross-border higher education services

	Viet Nam	China
Mode I	--	--
Mode II	VNU and other HEIs' language courses for Chinese students Chinese students at Vietnamese universities	*Vietnamese students at Chinese universities`* *Training of Vietnamese civil servants and teachers*
Mode III	--	--
Mode IV	*Chinese consultants training Vietnamese*	

Note. Italics indicate Chinese exports; non-italics indicate Chinese imports. VNU = Viet Nam National University. Modified from Welch (2011a, p. 105). Reprinted with permission.

greater size and weight, and much more developed higher education system, leaves it in the driver's seat, to some extent, although as indicated above, Viet Nam's history is one of stubborn independence, while, as seen above, China also needs Viet Nam. Even relative to its more well-developed fellow ASEAN member states, Viet Nam's developing country status, including a less developed higher education system, confer fewer advantages. A further inhibitor consists of intermittently difficult relations with its large and troublesome northern neighbor (although recent steps have been taken by both sides to reduce bilateral tensions).

Viet Nam's long and complex history of China relations includes key higher education elements, notably an enduring Confucianism (Welch, 2010a, 2010b; Welch & Cai, 2011). Viet Nam's peripheral, if rising, status within the global knowledge network also translates into generally dependent relations with Chinese higher education (Welch, 2011a, 2011b). Many more Vietnamese students study at Chinese universities than the reverse, a situation broadly paralleled by scholarships. This however, does not do justice to the much closer relations between borderlands institutions, the "quiet achievers" in China's GUAR and Yunnan (Yang, 2012). Training of Vietnamese civil servants and teachers occurs in both Yunnan and Guangxi, which each enrolled several thousand students by around 2008, while several thousand students from Guangxi studied in ASEAN countries, notably Viet Nam. Yunnan links include 3+1 programs with ASEAN countries and joint degree programs with Viet Nam. Hundreds of Chinese language teachers, trained at Yunnan University and Yunnan Normal University, now work in ASEAN (Yang, 2012). Using the four GATS modes, Table 18.3 summarizes Sino-Vietnamese bilateral relations in higher education, albeit not indicative of scale (World Trade Organization, n.d).

Research conducted at Borderlands University in China's South, in 2014 and again in 2015, highlighted mutual, if unequal, patterns of cross-border cooperation. Recruitment of ASEAN scholars was the major feature, but some forms of research cooperation were also evident: "we would like to accommodate researchers from ASEAN countries to do their research here, in our university. Meanwhile, we plan to send out our researchers to the ASEAN countries." (I1, 2014).

Almost 90% of the 300 or so international students stemmed from ASEAN, notably from Viet Nam: "In recent years, a large number of Vietnamese students come to study at our Business school, majoring in international trade, business administration and accounting." (I1, 2014, see also I4). Table 18.4, following, shows that while international enrolments have declined in recent years within Borderlands University's business school, (which enrolls the largest number of international students), Vietnamese enrollments still constitute the largest country of origin).

Flows to Viet Nam were smaller and only in certain areas: "in terms of student exchange, our students go to Vietnam . . . primarily for language study" (I1, 2014), although it was pointed out that this was to a major Vietnamese university: "they also went to very famous universities in Vietnam. And they sent 20 students from (Borderland) to Vietnam, for one semester" (I4, 2015). Another interviewee pointed to cooperation with Viet Nam in environmental studies. China's more developed higher education system meant that cooperation, while mutually valued, was unequal: "this is one-way cooperation, which means we help those ASEAN countries to train their talents in the field" (I1, 2014). "In terms of theory, we're relatively more advanced than Laos and Vietnam" (I5, 2014). Unsurprisingly, hierarchy was significant in accounting for student flows: "Few students from more developed members like Singapore, Malaysia and Philippine [*sic*] come to our institution for study. We don't have even a single student from Philippine, Malaysia or Singapore" (I5, 2014).[13]

Moreover, for ASEAN students in China, borderlands universities were not necessarily their first choice: "Even if they come to China for study; most of them will go to Beijing rather than (Borderland)" (I1, 2014). The highly stratified nature of Chinese higher education was cited as an obstacle for Borderlands University by I4: "What they know are only Peking University or Tsinghua," both of which, it was acknowledged, had academic strengths that Borderlands lacked (I1, 2015). An interviewee from the business school argued that Borderlands University held an interstitial position in its regional relations: "for our university, if we go to Singapore or Malaysia, we learn from them, and it we go to Laos and Vietnam, they learn from us" (I5, 2014). For another interviewee from the same school, however, the problem of hierarchy was a larger one: "We don't really know ASEAN countries, and we understand them in our respective way. But we treat them as inferior to us" (I6, 2014).

The less developed status of borderlands regions and ongoing border disputes were raised by an interviewee from an ASEAN research institute, as two barriers to further development:

> The first may be the economic and the economic development of (Borderland) is not very good, I mean our development level is lower. Second, there are many disputes between

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[13] A total of 14 interviews were conducted at the university in 2014 and 2015, with both academic staff and administrative leaders.

Table 18.4 Borderlands University Business School: International student enrollment, by country.

	Year and Level									
	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master
Vietnam	76	16	22	6	39	13	19		23	
Thailand	2	1		2	3	9	5		2	
Laos	2	1	1		1	2	2		1	
Cambodia	2		4		3		1		2	
Indonesia		2		6	1	10	2		1	
Myanmar		1		4	1	4				
Burundi	1									
Malawi			1							
Korea			1		1		1			
Taiwan					1					
Russia									1	
Congo-Brazzaville									1	
Central African Republic				1						
Total	104		48		88		30		31	

Source: Borderlands University data (compiled from personal communications).

> China and Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines [*sic*], because our country wants island [*sic*], there are a lot of troubles. (I1, 2015)

Other interviewees saw it differently, arguing that China's borderlands HEIs had advantages of regional proximity that enabled them to function as a *qiaotoubao*:

> First, the geographical advantage: (Borderland University) is proximate to ASEAN countries. Second, the geographical advantage will bring policy learning. Since we are close to ASEAN countries in terms of geography, the university may pay more attention to cooperation with ASEAN countries and develop particular policies to boost the cooperation. Second, . . . we could operate employment-oriented continuing education programs. . . . programs with internship opportunities will be more attractive to students. (I2, 2014, see also I5)

Other interviewees viewed transport linkages as a regional advantage for borderland institutions, pointing to the success of colleagues in securing a substantial research grant, to work on aspects of regional relations. Both central and regional Chinese governments provide substantial support for such projects. Ethnicity was seen as a further advantage, with a specialist in minority research pointing to cross-border links: "Among the minorities in the Northern part of Viet Nam, there are many descendants of Chinese Chuang. I have been to the villages in Northern Vietnam [*sic*]; people there are very hospitable to the Chinese Chuang". (I4, 2014). A number of 2015 interviewees, both staff and student, echoed these comments, highlighting issues of geography and culture, including similarities between the Zhuang minority language, Thai, and Vietnamese, as well as a history since ancient times of "people-to-people exchanges" (I1, 2015; I2, 2015; I5, 2015). China's *Yi Tai, Yi Lu* (One Belt One Road initiative) was seen as a further opportunity for Borderlands University:

> we have access to ASEAN countries on land and also on sea, whether in terms of the strategic layout on economics, this is the great opportunity for us. (Borderlands) should take advantage. (Borderlands) is the only way to the Philippines, to Singapore, to Indonesia and Malaysia. (I1, 2015)

Territorial tensions in the relationship between China and its neighbors were acknowledged, but "economic cooperation is used as a means to conciliate those conflicts" (I1, 2014). Higher education can play its role in such conciliation: "China has to do more work in promoting Chinese culture in our ASEAN members" (I1, 2014). Possible resistance on the part of some Vietnamese students was acknowledged: Unwillingness to integrate with local people was common and some students "will disseminate their negative attitudes towards China" when they return home (I4, 2014). Better communication was seen as a solution to differences between systems: "I think we don't know each other adequately. A regular communication mechanism has not yet been established" (I6). Overall there was still considerable optimism that disputes in the South China Sea could be insulated from student exchanges:

> The South China sea (disputes) does [*sic*] not influence our overseas communication because before we have very good relationship, but only the outside, America, Japan, they have something to provoke Vietnam to do something against China. Even (if) there is tension between China and ASEAN, it didn't influence our overseas students. During those days, they still played basketball with the Vietnamese. There is very good relationship between people and people. (I2, 2015)

Ideological affinities provided another axis of cross-border cooperation, as one interviewee highlighted: "the majority of international students come from Socialist countries such as Vietnam and Laos" (I6, 2014). Research collaboration, too, sometimes hinged around socialist ideology, with another interviewee pointing to a bilateral Borderlands program on Marxism in Viet Nam and China that was being conducted with selected Vietnamese universities.

The greater status now accorded current Vietnamese students was linked to Chinese efforts to enhance its regional influence:

> Before, in the 1990s, universities in China didn't want Vietnamese students since usually they were poor and couldn't bring financial benefits to our universities. But now things changed. They are welcomed now because we want to boost China's influence in those countries. (I4, 2014)

Higher Education, Irregular and Regulatory Regionalism

The above sketch of borderlands relations in higher education problematizes conventional conceptions of both region and regionalism. While ASEAN may generally be accepted as a region, the spread and increasing depth of cross-border flows across China's southern border, notably in higher education, raises the prospect of China-ASEAN as a region. At the same time, as illustrated above, the fact that so much of cross-border flows are both irregular and illegal problematizes conventional views of regulatory regionalism.

The changing, if still somewhat peripheral, status of both China's southern borderlands, and of Viet Nam, in the global knowledge network highlights the impressive range and depth of regional relations in higher education (Graham, Hale, Stephens, & Mayer-Schönberger, 2011; Yang, 2012). While more research is needed into borderlands regional relations in general, there is clearly considerable growth potential. Notwithstanding the substantial obstacles articulated above, common interests and joint practical priorities are able to proceed beneath great power politics and regional territorial disputes. This is particularly the case in higher education, where the diligence and determination of lesser-known borderlands universities, Yang's quiet achievers are continuing to build cross-border relations, in the face of the complex geopolitics of the region sketched above. A cross-border cartography of intellectual connectivity continues.

But the analysis above also problematizes the character and limits of regionalism. As indicated above, the more embryonic, emergent quality of ASEAN regionalism has been contrasted with the more established regional architecture of the European Union, including in higher education (Robertson, 2008). More than one author has pointed to the substantial gap between lofty ASEAN declarations and actual accomplishments (Welch, 2012b). This, it has been argued, limits the actuality of regulatory regionalism, as does persistent nationalist resistance to the actual extension of ASEAN regionalism, including ceding domestic control over university governance.

If this is the case for ASEAN, what of the case for China-ASEAN regionalism, which despite growing and thickening links, including in higher education, would not be commonly acknowledged to be a region? Even more so in the peripheries and borderlands, characterized by floating populations, mobility, and connectivity (Carney, 2009): a "cartography of connections" (Larsen & Beech, 2014, p. 207) that also embraces, in this instance, historical and contemporary, legal and illegal, fluxes and flows of ideas, people, timber, drugs and gems? In a context where significant progress has been made on the ground by borderlands quiet achievers in higher education (Yang, 2012), against a wider background of largely irregular flows of people, goods, and services (Evans et al., 2000), might this not be better characterized as irregular regionalism (Scott, 2009)?

Notwithstanding the complexities and even tensions of regional relations, the quiet determination of universities on both sides of China's southern borders, strengthened by supportive government policies on both sides, and the broader influence of regional strategies, such as One Belt, One Road, point to closer cross-border ties between Chinese borderland universities and their ASEAN peers into the future.

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