

CALL FOR PAPERS

VILNIUS CONFERENCE ON ASIA “CULTURAL MEMORY AND CULTURES IN TRANSITION”

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
CENTRE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
MAY 11–13, 2006

The conference aims to bring together scholars from different countries for an inter-disciplinary discussion of various aspects of cultural memory and cultures in transition. We are particularly interested in the problematics surrounding the production of memory on an individual, communal and state level, with attention to cases that center on issues of dislocation, modernity, globalization and rapid cultural transition. The conference is most interested in cases pertaining to East, South and Southeast Asia, but welcomes a limited number of papers focusing on non-Asian cases where the theoretical focus of the paper is central to the themes of the conference. The organizers invite papers from literary theorists, historians, anthropologists, philosophers, art and religion historians that are based on original research in specific cases and that fall into any of the proposed panels listed below, or which raise related issues:

- critical studies of cultural memory and its production and replication;
- cultural memory and its treatment of a past which is too painful;
- the role of literature genres and film in confronting cultural dislocations;
- diaspora communities and collective memory;
- responsibility and recognition of events: the role of public memorials and museums in creating, shaping and maintaining cultural memory;
- conflict and reconciliation: models of reconciliation;
- the modern city as a locus for cultural memory construction;
- symbolism of disjuncture in literature and film (trains, train-tracks, public spaces, etc.).

The location of the conference

The University of Vilnius, one of the oldest and most famous establishments of higher education in Eastern and Central Europe, was founded in 1579. Functioning for a long time as the only school of higher learning in Lithuania, it was a preserver of cultural and scientific traditions, and has played a significant part in the cultural life not only of Lithuania, but the neighboring countries as well. The Center of Oriental Studies at Vilnius University, originally founded in 1810 as The Chair in Eastern Languages and housed on the historic main campus in the Old Town of Vilnius, was re-established in 1993, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the re-emergence of Lithuania as an independent state. The center offers undergraduate courses in the literature, religion and societies of Japan, China, India, Iran, Arabic speaking countries, and Tibet. We offer four specializations: Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, Indian Studies and Arabic Studies. We are in the process of developing a program at the Master's Degree level and are engaged in the long-term work of curriculum and program development as Lithuanian intellectuals enter a broader arena in which to conduct our research. The faculty and staff of the Center of Oriental Studies welcome international collaboration on this project.

Why this conference and why in Vilnius?

The issues of cultural memory and cultures in dramatic transition are pertinent not only in various parts of Asia but also of course to Lithuania. Lithuania was briefly independent as a country from 1918 until 1940, under National Socialist control from 1940-1944 and under Soviet occupation from 1944 until 1990. Lithuania became a member of the European Union in 2004 and is currently being phased into the full European economy. The social transitions of Lithuania in the 20th century were enormous, often violent, frequently covert, and fast-paced, and the issues addressed in this conference can be readily seen in the cultural context of contemporary Vilnius. The city of Vilnius provides the setting for a series of conversations in a unique moment in time in Eastern Europe. While originally noted for its tolerance and mutual respect of its diverse ethnic population through the 1930's, predominantly as the center of Jewish learning in Europe, Vilnius and other areas on Lithuania were also the location of atrocities of the Holocaust, and later the subjugation of Lithuanian people under the Soviet regime. Emerging from the twentieth century, the city of Vilnius is a venue where heated debates on coming to terms with the past while looking toward a future as part of the European Community are part of our daily discussion. Our center of Oriental Studies is interested in foregrounding this theme precisely because we feel that area specific cases from other places in the world have a great deal to contribute to the ongoing debates and discussions here at home. We are interested in inviting scholars who work on these issues in other contexts to come to Lithuania.

Paper and Panel Submissions

The working language of the conference is English. We are accepting both individual paper and whole panel proposals and ask that all proposals be submitted electronically, via e-mail to Valdas Jaskunas at valdas.jaskunas@cr.vu.lt and oc@cr.vu.lt.

Individual paper proposals must include: 1) a working title of the presentation; 2) a brief abstract of the paper (not to exceed 250 words); 3) the full name, affiliation and CV of the presenter and 4) a detailed description of any audio-visual needs required for the presentation. Panel proposals must follow the same guidelines as those for individual papers, but must also include: 1) a working title of the panel; 2) a description of the issues addressed in the panel as a whole and the rationale for the panel; 3) the full name, affiliation and CV of the panel coordinator and respondent (if not a paper presenter).

Transportation and conference fees

The full conference fee is €250 and includes all local transportation to and from the airport and within Lithuania, hotel fees for the nights of May 10, 11, 12 and 13, and all meals, provided at the conference venues. We have included as part of the conference an opportunity to visit three museums reflecting moments in the cultural memory of Lithuania: the Holocaust Museum in Vilnius, the KGB Detention Center Museum on Gedimino Street in Vilnius, and the famous Grutas Park, a theme park created after the Soviet era to de-contextualize and display Soviet era public ideological sculpture and memorials located in the Lithuanian countryside. Travel and admission to all three sites is included in the conference fee. All conference presenters must be registered. The deadline for registration is March 30, 2006. Registration materials will be sent upon request.

Transportation to and from Vilnius is the responsibility of the participant and travel can be arranged directly into the city of Vilnius. For additional information, please contact the conference directors, Dr. Valdas JASKUNAS, Assoc. Prof. Audrius BEINORIUS, or Dr. Dalia SVAMBARYTE at +370 5 2687 256 or by e-mail at valdas.jaskunas@cr.vu.lt and oc@cr.vu.lt.