

Gambling culture in China as compared to that of India.

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Contextualization

I was Born in Brazil, South America and retired there as a professor in Comparative Literature (translation of Sacred Texts), having been visiting Professor in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India (2003-2005), I joined the Dept of Portuguese-University of Macau in January 2011.

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Contextualization

As newly arrived in Macau, I had to come to terms with the massive presence of casinos:

Exclusion by a third party (Macau SAR government), as civil servants can only enter gambling area in casinos during the Chinese New Year festival.

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This is sort of an opinion-based paper, coming from the area of comparative literature/ cultural studies.

Published as : *O JOGO DE VIDA E MORTE NO MOSAICO INDIANO-CHINÊS / THE GAME OF LOVE AND DEATH IN THE INDIAN-CHINESE MOSAIC* in *ALETRIA*, Journal of Literature

<http://www.periodicos.letras.ufmg.br/index.php/aletria/article/view/2214/2149>

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My objective is to share with you this perplexity:

Why the literature on therapeutic approaches to problems resulting from excessive gambling in China does not show a more 'inculturated' approach?

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Studies /Comparisons with ancient cultures are few in number.

For example:

... a brief comparison between two ancient civilizations, China and Rome, in order to gain better understanding about gambling among Chinese people.

TSE, Samson et al. (2010)

Examination of Chinese Gambling Problems through a Socio-Historical-Cultural Perspective, TheScientificWorldJournal(2010)10

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”startling similarities between the Chinese and Roman histories of gambling”

In both cases there were antigambling laws from time to time, which “failed to contain the gambling-related harms”.

TSE, Samson et al. (2010)

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*FACT: MUCH CULTURAL EXCHANGE
BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA FOR 2000
YEARS*

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*BUT, WHEN IT COMES TO STUDIES ON
GAMBLING*

ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OF INDIA...

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Empirical studies about problematic gamblers in India are almost non-existent:

”(...) there is surprising lack of contemporary curiosity and scholarly literature on pathological gambling from the region [of the Indian subcontinent]

BENEGAL V. *Gambling experiences, problems and policy in India: a historical analysis* (Addiction, 2012 .)

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Even though India has known how to deal with gamblers:

Be gracious, Dice, we now implore ;

Bewitch us with your spells no more.

From us withdraw, to us be kind,

**And others with your fetters bind (RgVeda X,34
-1700 BCE)**

(see DEKA, Pranabjyoti. A Note on RgVeda X,34
in the modern perspective. *The Clarion*,
International Multidisciplinary Journal, 2(2012).)

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(2) Even though India has known how to deal with gamblers:

“Ways to cure gambling addiction: 1) Addiction is all in his mind. Gamblers are under a trance and they need to be woken up from it (...) Take him away to a peaceful place and let him take up meditation lessons...”

(How Handle Gambling Addiction. August, 2010)

<http://www.boldsky.com/health/wellness/2010/cure-gambling-addiction-240810.html>

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**India may have its own way of dealing with
problems such as excessive gambling**

BY MEANS OF ILLUSTRATION...

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The ritualization of gambling

In the board game *Pachisi* (number 25, in Hindi), the goal is for players to move pieces all around the spaces of the board according to the rolling of the dice, until the position of the kingdom of the heavens is reached. This is “*to illustrate the point that all life is constantly being shuffled through the revolving door of birth, death, and rebirth.*”

(GABRIEL, Kathryn. *Gambling and Spirituality, A New Anthropological Perspective*, 2000:8.)



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The ritualization of gambling

In the ancient Hindu Epic, The Mahabharata, two cousins play dice to decide who is going to inherit the throne. One of them, Yudhisthira, loses everything, including his wife (bad gambling). He is then sent into a prolonged sojourn in the forest, to undergo certain tests (right gambling). At last, he returns home to take his place as ruler of the universe.

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Gambling addictions as a form of spiritual seeking

“The gambler, unbeknownst to him or herself, is looking for divinity. Sure, on the surface they are seeking economic fortune, but they are also seeking a personal transformation, for that feeling of invincibility and liberation, even if for only in the moment of exhilaration. The moment is indeed transitory and the seeking of further moments is what can sometimes throw the individual out of integrity, causing addictive cycles.”

(GABRIEL, Kathryn. *Gambling and Spirituality, A New Anthropological Perspective*, 2000:8.)

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Snakes and Ladders originated in India.



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“Four things are necessary for one or more to play Leela: the Leela book and gameboard, a die (of karma) and a significant object that belongs to the player, such as a ring, to serve as the player’s symbol during the game.

Each of the seventy-two squares on the board of Leela represents a virtue or vice, an aspect of human consciousness or a plane of being. The players’ progress is dictated by the fall of a die corresponding to the forces of karma”

JOHARI, Harish. *The Yoga of Snakes and Arrows.*

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“The saints who invented this game used the game-board to recognize the present state of their own being. By playing the game time and again they consciously observed which snake brought them down and which arrows took them up. Observing their own innerself, they could tell whether they had understood what it is to be not involved.”

JOHARI, Harish. *The Yoga of Snakes and Arrows.*

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I feel like I am carrying coals to Newcastle

AGAIN, MY PERPLEXITY:

Could therapeutic approaches for Chinese gamblers take more into account the wisdom of Buddhism, for example?



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“The teaching of The Five Aggregates or The Five Skandhas, is an analysis of personal experiences and a view on cognition from a Buddhist perspective. The teaching also provides a logical and thorough approach to understand the Universal Truth of Not-self”

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“Form

Sensation

Perception

Mental Formation

Consciousness



They are called aggregates as they work together to produce a mental being”

(see WU, Jhang, 2006. Knowledge for what? The Buddhist Concept of learning in the Suramgama Sutra)

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Concluding Remarks

India may have its own way of dealing with problems such as excessive gambling. There is evidence of that in the literature from the past.

In the field of therapeutic measures against excessive gambling should also China take a new look at ancient traditions from her past?



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THANK YOU

OBRIGADO

