

The Launch of 谈 (Tan2 Pan4)

Kluwer Mediation Blog

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Author's Note: For those readers who do not speak or read Chinese, the words and numbers in brackets indicate how to pronounce and intonate the Chinese characters indicated

I was recently given the honour of launching 谈 (Tan2 Pan4): The Chinese-English Journal on Negotiation at the 3rd Asian Mediation Association Conference held in Hong Kong on 3-4 April 2014. This journal was a themed edition titled "Who says you're a mediator?"

Not having launched anything (apart from paper aeroplanes) in my life, I was initially at a loss for what to say. As I thought about this journal and what it hoped to achieve, I realized that there was quite a fair bit to say. I would like to introduce this journal to readers and share some of the thoughts I came up with.

I have been involved in the field of Negotiation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution for over twenty years (a fact which, to my chagrin, I was forced to determine and face recently) and in that time, I have been struck by the sheer amount of talent in this field. This is not surprising considering the multi and inter disciplinary nature of this grouping of subjects. Apart from the fundamental models of conflict resolution that exist, we have drawn from a myriad of disciplines such as psychology, theatre, therapy, linguistics and marketing, just to name a sampling. While this multi and inter disciplinary nature has been a strength, it has also led to a very fragmented field.

The discourse of Negotiation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution has also been dominated by the western voice. Modern thought, writing and practice in this area has originated from the West. Yet, it is widely believed that Asian history is filled with examples of negotiation and mediation and some would even suggest that mediation had its roots in Asia. This point was not lost on the former Chief Justice of Singapore who, when the mediation movement in Singapore was starting off, commented that it was ironic that Singapore had to relearn mediation from the West. This thought, writing and practice from the West, is by virtue of the language it is presented in, inaccessible to some parts of non-English speaking Asia. The converse is also true. There is also a body of thought, writing and practice that exists in Asia, specifically China and presented in Mandarin, which is presently inaccessible to academics and practitioners outside of China.

谈 (Tan2 Pan4) seeks to achieve two commendable and unifying goals. First, it seeks to make a real attempt at bringing experts from different fields together to collaborate and produce pieces that define, enhance and expand the field. Secondly, it seeks to be a bridge between East and West. As the first peer-reviewed bilingual journal of Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, its articles will be accessible to academics and practitioners from both the East and the West. It will also give Asian thought leaders and practitioners a voice to contribute to and influence discourse in the field. I also understand that the long term goal is for editorship of 谈 (Tan2 Pan4) to shift to the East.

Looking ahead, the near future looks very bright indeed. First, the editors are finalizing arrangements with Wolters Kluwer CCH to publish 谈 (Tan2 Pan4). Secondly, the editors are in discussions with the Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALS) at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore to bring in CALS as an Asian partner in 谈 (Tan2 Pan4). Both these will raise the profile of 谈 (Tan2 Pan4) and enhance its future contributions.

I congratulate the editors Professors Chris Honeyman, Jim Coben, Nadja Alexander and Wendy Lui for embarking upon this ambitious endeavor and commend 谈 (Tan2 Pan4) to readers.