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Dellios, Rosita

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# Missing mandalas: Development and theoretical gaps

Rosita Dellios

*Bond University*, [rosita\\_dellios@bond.edu.au](mailto:rosita_dellios@bond.edu.au)

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### ***Chapter Summary***

*The mandala is a fitting metaphor to act as a model for a more balanced conception of development, one that recognizes culture as central to human resource development. A globalising world can be understood as a unity, in which cultural and material divisions - as well as connections - are more readily discerned. The mandala exhibits three key attributes necessary for a more balanced world. They are the integrating elements of the relational, the educational and orientational - whereby cultural and ethical direction serves to bestow meaning in people's lives. In the opposite direction, a disintegrating world scenario would feature a loss of relationships and hence alienation, a reeducation process that serves prevailing ideologies, and the subsequent disorientation that comes from losing one's sense of place, direction, and self. The mandala model of development in a globalising world is both missing and missed. It needs to be more fully theorized if it is to make a conceptual contribution to the pressing tasks of the day - not least of which is the desperation of terrorism, involuntary migration and a loss of cultural capital.*

## **Missing Mandalas: Developmental and Theoretical Gaps**

*By Rosita Dellios*

### **Introduction**

Consideration of development issues in a globalising world may be fruitfully considered through the employment of a mandala metaphor. To appreciate such an application, it is helpful to begin with the meanings of 'mandala' and 'metaphor', both of which are seductively simple. Upon closer inspection, it will be found that their potential for interpretative depth increases to match the cross-impact complexity of the contemporary world. That mandala-based thinking is missing from such a world might well be adding to the severity of 21<sup>st</sup> century problems, such as people smuggling and terrorism. To say that mandalas are missing, and that they are missed, is also to say that they are needed. This chapter therefore aims at being both investigatory and prescriptive. It traverses the development studies-international relations disciplines as key repositories of theorising about the contemporary world's condition - and how it might best be improved. Both disciplines are essentially concerned with security. The mandala metaphor is presented as a way into formulating notions of multi-level security.



Fig. 16.1 The Tibetan Kalachakra (*Wheel of Time*) Sand Mandala

### What is a Mandala?

A mandala represents an inter-relational whole, a cosmogram composed of concentric forms. The word itself has entered the English language from its Sanskrit origins to denote a sacred circle. The Macquarie Dictionary typically defines mandala as 'a mystic symbol of the universe, in the form of a circle enclosing a square; used chiefly by Hindus and Buddhists as an aid to meditation.' (See Figure 16.1.) While the Sanskrit meaning is given as 'circle', further investigation will reveal that mandala is a compound word made

up of 'manda' meaning 'essence', and 'la' meaning 'container', 'possessor' or 'signpost' (Grey 2001: 2). It is thought to derive from ancient Indian beliefs in cosmic power entering the figure at the centre of a sacred space. The artefacts of such beliefs are to be found in presentday practice for, as Tucci (1961: 24) observes: 'A vase remains an indispensable adjunct to all those Hindu ceremonies designed to bring down the divine essence (*avahana*) so that it may be projected and take up its abode in a statue or other object.' The sacred space idea carries with it connotations of integration with a higher consciousness and protection against disintegrative forces (the demons of ignorance, greed, and other unhelpful human qualities). Thus the mandala can also be viewed as a 'psychocosmogram' (*ibid.*: 25) in which humans become 'centred' and diffuse that state-of-being outwards into action.

While the word comes from Sanskrit, the appearance and experience of mandala is universal - *and universalising*. Integrated patterns that are symmetrically inclined, directional, and centred may be found in nature (the flower and the snowflake) as well as in cultural expression (as illustrated by the Tibetan and Navaho sand-paintings; the Aztec Sunstone and Stonehenge in England; and the 'rose windows' of Gothic cathedrals as well as the Chinese *bagua* symbol with its *yin-yang* centre, see Figure 16.2).



Fig. 16.2: The Basic Chinese Mandala: *Bagua* Diagram with its *Yin-Yang* Centre

The experience of mandala is implied in its expressive form. Whether as a mystic tool for enlightenment in the East, such as the Tibetan Tanka, or a Jungian therapeutic technique to integrate the personality in the West, mandala has been recognized as a potent spiritual technology. At its most basic level it is present in the solar system, the body (represented, for example, in the Hindu and Tibetan Chakra systems, Chinese T'ai Chi, and Da Vinci's 'Vitruvian Man'), and the birth-death cycle of human existence. The latter underscores the mandala's temporal enactment and not only its more commonly understood spacial manifestation. Moreover, there is a mandala of sound in the Hindu and Buddhist mantras, most notably OM, in the Hebrew and Moslem names of God, and in the Christian Orthodox chants.

The mandala therefore may be found in the natural world, may be culturally constructed or psycho-spiritually experienced; it may manifest in space, time or sound. All the while it is a dynamic process, as can be expected of the mandala's relational features, with experiential or practical applications. True to its name, the mandala is as all-encompassing as the circle and provides a platform of experience, within a symbolic form. This capability endows it with metaphorical value.

### **Metaphor as Meaning**

A metaphor is the figurative, as distinct from the literal, use of language. Poets are adept at this level of communication - 'The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes'.<sup>1</sup> Spiritual texts, too, are typically dependent on metaphors to express their meaning: for example, 'the *wheel* of life and death', 'God, Our *Father*'; while 'the wine of love' in Sufi poetry combines the poetic with the spiritual as 'wine' represents intoxication with the divine. For all its emphasis on the use of precise, observational, language, science is not immune (to use a metaphor) from metamorphicity. It speaks of the 'animal kingdom', uses the 'man-machine' analogue, and posits the 'big bang theory', 'black holes' of the universe and even transfers the macro to the micro world of science by describing the atom as a 'solar system'. Thus, contrary to popular and classical Western thought,<sup>2</sup> metaphors are not deceitful disguises of a presupposed 'reality' or 'truth'. Figurative language might, in fact, provide a better appreciation of 'reality' or 'insight' into truth, when (literal) words fail us. Far from being superfluous or erroneous, metaphors are cognitively significant by extending the repertoire of thought through which the world is apprehended (see Radman 1997: Ch. 4). Thus in viewing 'something in terms of something else', one is not diverting away from that something, but illuminating its meaning - 'to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A' (Burke cited in Radman 1997: 117).

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<sup>1</sup> An implied cat in T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

<sup>2</sup> From Plato through to the scientific tradition, metaphors have been deemed suspect, the enemies of rationality (see Radman 1997: Ch. 4; and Haack 1994).

A metaphor, it may be concluded, is a device for exploring, explaining, constructing and hypothesising the world. Its 'deceit' might well arise, however, not so much from a lack of the literal (as if literal language is unproblematic), but from the ideologies embedded in the use of 'B as a perspective upon A'. Such a 'deceit', depending on one's perspective, could well turn out to be a problem-solving technique or (metaphorically speaking) a 'bridge' to better worlds.

For example, at the global, national and personal levels, there are different popular metaphors - the village, the ship and the garden, as in the 'global village', 'ship of state' and 'self-cultivation' or the cultivation of friendships. Well known in development studies is the 'trickle down theory' (introduced in Rostow 1960), depicting development like water trickling down from the top to the bottom. The ideological implication here is that development occurs from the top down, from big to small, from rich to poor. Large construction projects, international loans and multinational companies are the first and foremost beneficiaries. Those who did not believe in 'trickle down' wealth creation, preferred structural explanations for development or the lack thereof. The structure of the international 'system' (see below) was seen as exploitative, along the lines of a society that allows the strong to exploit the weak.<sup>3</sup>

This leads to the study of international relations, in which the common metaphors are the theatre, the system, billiard balls, the jungle, and society. States, IGOs (international governmental organisations), NGOs (non-government organisations), the global media and any other influential unit are 'actors' that play a 'role' on the world 'stage'.<sup>4</sup> The international stage (or arena) and its actors are often represented in systemic terms: a key feature of the international system is that it is anarchic, in that there is no higher authority than the sovereign state, and the foreign policy of states is pursued through bilateral and multilateral relations, international law, diplomacy, alliances, trade, aid and even war. That war is still deemed a valid avenue with which to pursue state interests raises the billiard ball metaphor and the jungle metaphor. The anarchical structure of that stage or system dictates that states 'are like billiard balls, obeying the same laws of political geometry and physics' (Harris quoted in Kegley and Wittkopf 2001:13), while the pursuit of power for survival and advantage in the anarchical system has called forth the jungle metaphor of 'struggle for power'. This is a standard phrase in political Realism, which emerged as the dominant paradigm in the Western study of International Relations after the Second World War. The Realists' intellectual ancestor was Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), a political philosopher who presented the pessimistic view of human nature and society which he characterised as predatory. He wrote (in the English of the time) of a "generall inclination of all mankind" toward a "perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death" (Hobbes 1928: 49).

However, if 'jungle politics' alone were to prevail, there would be little left to call civilisation. Hence the normative systems of ethics, mores and law are employed as a corrective (see Morgenthau 1985: 243-247). This corrective is seen by many as the reality

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<sup>3</sup> Such structuralist approaches may be found in Marxism, dependency theory and world-system theory.

<sup>4</sup> The world as theatre is one of the more familiar metaphors. Shakespeare employed it in *As You Like It*.



of international politics and not just a restraint on 'jungle' instincts. Sometimes it is used as camouflage for the naked pursuit of state interests at the expense of others. Few states go to war without a pretext to justify their actions in the face of 'international opinion'.

However, *international society* and *system* have been merged into the 'complex interdependence' theory, which stresses the mutual dependence and vulnerability of transnational actors. This perspective focuses on *global system* or *society*, and hence is not primarily concerned with state survival. Ecological and humanitarian issues are often paramount. However, while the structure of the system may be blamed for malfunctions, as it is by economic dependency theorists, and the inequities of global society for its inhumanity, it is still the case that the concept of *international society* is analogous to human society at the personally experienced level. Thus the metaphor makes intelligible the world in its own idiom: one takes heed of 'international opinion' from the 'international community' and hopes to 'socialise' through 'engagement' some states like China while punishing other, 'rogue', states like Iraq. Yet these are foreign policy decisions, often made by powerful and wealthy states (like the USA) and their 'clubs' (like the IMF, NATO, OECD or the UN Security Council).<sup>5</sup> 'Global village' shares the society metaphor, but with the implication of ease of communication and mutual awareness, made possible by the latest technological developments. Ironically, as the world becomes a 'village', real villages in the countryside are dying out or being museumised (see Dellios 1999). One therefore needs to appreciate the power of metaphor in world-making - and unmaking.

If metaphors transact meaning and purvey habits of thought, then choice of metaphor becomes crucial in conceptualising the world. The question must then arise as to which metaphor best serves the development of global life in all its cultural diversity within a unifying humanity - or *ren*-consciousness, to use the Chinese term. Why use *ren* to describe the condition in search of a metaphor? This is a Confucian concept of co-humanity as well as of *becoming* human through realising our nature within Nature. *Ren* comes closest to expressing an idea of humanity that is dynamic and ever-engaging rather than a distant ideal. *Ren* is about development of cultural humanity. Economic development, which represents the mainstream understanding of development, is not mentioned directly by name as it is part of the culture-humanity/diversity-unity experience. To quote a report by the World Commission on Culture and Development (1996: 15):

Economic development in its full flowering is part of a people's culture . . . development embraces not only access to goods and services, but also the opportunity to choose a full, satisfying, valuable and valued way of living together, the flourishing of human existence in all its forms and as a whole.

In disposition, mandalas are self-contained and yet evocative, like the Japanese haiku. Their simplicity is their medium of meaning conveyance. In belief-system they are

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<sup>5</sup> These acronyms stand for the following: International Monetary Fund, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and United Nations.

holistic, pertaining to 'complex interdependence' more than any of the other prevailing perspectives noted above. However, the mandala is also related to 'system', with its centred values of attraction and diffusion; and to 'stage' in that a mandala can also be a platform upon which relationships are enacted. Indeed, one of the meanings of mandala in Chinese is platform or arena.<sup>6</sup> Thus the mandala as metaphor acts as a way of thinking about the massive and often emotionally-charged issues of the day - global development strategies and political relations. Theoretically it also carries the hallmark of 'elegance'. The simplicity of a cosmogram - with its embedded levels of complexity - lends itself to the diversity of the world without losing its intrinsic *ren*. That many parts of the world have experienced such loss of *ren*, provides a powerful argument for the mandala's return to 'centre stage' in academic and policy discourse. Examples of loss are:

- the 'global village' losing its villages;
- urban life as a lesson in alienation;
- the 'trickle down' of wealth drying up, so that there is a progressive widening of the wealth gap between rich and poor;
- the currently favoured development model of 'bottom-up' market-based economics replacing 'trickle down' theory, but with its own problems in a new world divide of 'information rich' and 'information poor';
- the law of the jungle dictating that political violence in urban America begets political violence in rural Afghanistan, just as it has long done between Israel and Palestine; and
- the literal jungles becoming the victim of the lawlessness and greed of commercial interests, or the self-interest of American politics *vis-à-vis* the Kyoto protocols.

The mandala has a number of properties or attributes, currently absent or only partially recognised in this world. They include:

### 1. *Relational*

True of tribal and traditional societies; true of international relations and of 'development' as a concept of dynamic, evolutionary change; true also of the 'planetised' potential of globalisation phenomenon. But not true of this historical era when 'extreme individualism' and 'market societies shape our views of what is natural' (Lerner 1996: 19).

### 2. *Educational*

In this era of specialisation, the 'Renaissance man' or woman is not regarded as possible or even desirable - to be called a dilatant is an insult. By the same token, an 'expert' cannot be 'all-knowing',<sup>7</sup> except in the narrow confines of an area of specialisation. To be

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<sup>6</sup> As Snodgrass (1985: 104) notes: 'In Chinese, when not simply transliterated as *man t'u lo* (Jap. *Mandara*), it is translated as *t'an* (Jap. *dan*), "terrace, platform, world, arena", or as *tao tch'ang* (Jap. *dojo*), "place of the way" and synonymous with bodhimanda.'

<sup>7</sup> According to Dove (1990: 7):

It is difficult for the typical, highly educated, and highly paid development planner to accept that the typical, poorly educated, and poorly paid villager knows far more about his own local economy and environment than

'all-knowing' of a small branch of knowledge but ignorant of its relational qualities misses the point of education in the broad sense. The expert unaware of his or her wider mandala of operations comes across as a 'know all', a more assertive version of the dilatant. This is why becoming habituated to interdisciplinary inquiry, even if from the standpoint of one's own area of specialisation, has much to commend it as an epistemological approach in mandala thinking.

### 3. *Orientalist*

Mandalas are centred and give direction. The centring is mediated through our own experiences, for the mandala can be approached from many entry points on its circumference and through alternative cultural and psychological 'gates'. This quality or orientation bestows meaning in the mandala, a property often absent from the lives of contemporary individuals (see Lerner 1996).

## **Mainstreaming the Sidestream**

The mandala metaphor is currently missing in the mainstream literature of development and international relations. It lives at the margins of recognition (at Bond University).<sup>8</sup> It is still difficult for a world based on the ideological primacy of economic power to accept that trade and economics belong to a larger schema of development. To again quote the World Commission on Culture and Development (1996: 15): 'Development and the economy are part of a people's culture.' Human development identified by socio-cultural and environmental indicators has gained recognition but not ascendancy.

The secular idea of the general progress of civilisation corresponds to the age of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries). However, there is cultural and temporal bias in the way progress along linear time is viewed. As pointed out in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) publication, *Reclaiming the Future* (UNDP 1986: 27): 'In past ages, in cultures such as Persia, Egypt, Iran and China, there was a sense of timelessness. The idea of progress being movement in time towards a better future is relatively recent . . .' Indeed, progress was more commonly viewed in these 'other' cultures in terms of spiritual consciousness, that often implied social harmony: for example, the above-noted Confucian concept of *ren*. Herein lies the domain of the mandala. By contrast, linear Western 'progress' is reaching proportions of such

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the expert knows or is likely to learn. This fact is threatening to those development experts who mistakenly interpret "expert" as "all-knowing," as opposed to the more modest but more realistic "all-resourceful" (viz., having access to special financial and technological resources).

<sup>8</sup> Mandala research undertaken at Bond University may be found in:

- *The Culture Mandala*, Bulletin for the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, with most issues available online on the *International Relations Portal*: <http://www.international-relations.com>
- My own publications list, found on the Bond University Website at [www.bond.edu.au/hss/staff/rdelliospubs.htm](http://www.bond.edu.au/hss/staff/rdelliospubs.htm) and conference papers for the International Institute for Development Studies (see [www.bond.edu.au/hss/staff/rdelliosconf.htm](http://www.bond.edu.au/hss/staff/rdelliosconf.htm)).
- There are two Bond University PhD students working directly on the mandala concept, one in its application to international relations (by Maggie Grey), and the other for development (by M. Ruhul Amin).

extremity that its linearity precludes inter-generational equity: current environmental consumption and 'values disposal' is such that future generations will be left with a deficit.<sup>9</sup> In traditional Chinese *yin-yang* terms, extremes lead to their own negation. This is why equilibrium is sought between the *yin* and the *yang* elements of any situation. Only then does development proceed in a balanced, mutually-regarding way.

During the Cold War contention between rival ideologies, the objective was to win rather than to accommodate a middle path. While it is said that capitalism won, it also saw in the demise of communism its own future weakness: over-reliance on economic relations and the creation of economic classes. Global capitalism has not succeeded in winning the ideological battle for the 'hearts and minds' of those who are left out of its reward system. Hence the globalisation backlash, problems with and hardships for illegal immigrants, and terrorist attacks against the 'arrogant superpower' whose foreign policy is seen to be self-interested and culturally self-referential. This description could have easily applied to the expired superpower, the USSR.

As noted by Arfwedson (1995: 11) in *The Cultural Dimension of Development*, published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Western concept of development began ideologically with the Age of Enlightenment; materialised with the Industrial Revolution; was largely produced by capitalism and adopted by Marxist socialism.

It is interesting to see that both capitalism and socialism have been basically acultural in their approach to development processes. Liberal capitalism in its purest form tends to consider development processes as universal: things progress as a result of scientific discoveries and according to the laws of the market. In principle, attempts to intervene politically or otherwise are likely simply to disturb the process and generate problems.

Socialism in its Marxist form also considered that the principles according to which development should be pursued were scientifically determined and universal. Hence, there was no difference between developing a well-to-do European country, a nomadic central Asian province or a poor tropical island state. (*ibid.*: 11-12)

Lerner (1996: 38) concurs when he states: 'Paradoxically, the Marxists and other leftists who attacked the absence of social justice in the bourgeois world nevertheless bought into its epistemology and ontology.'

This state of affairs changed after the Cold War in the 1990s, when culture and the environment became central issues in development. Development within the cultural context was formulated much earlier, in the sixties during the heyday of 'economic' development, and formally recognised in 1975 at a conference in Africa, organised by UNESCO and the Organisation of African Unity.<sup>10</sup> The 1992 Rio Summit on

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<sup>9</sup> As noted in the previous chapter by R. James Ferguson.

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO (1975), *Final Report* of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa, Accra (UNESCO doc. SHC/MD/29), cited in UNESCO (1995: 41)

Development and the Environment turned 'environmentally sustainable development' into a familiar concept. The UN itself recognises 'the need for human resource development' - including women's role in development (*ibid.*: 12). Methodologies have since been developed and studies published (UNDP 1986, UNESCO 1995, 1996). That which has not appeared is a fitting metaphor to act as a model for this more balanced conception of development.

### **Mandalising Globalisation**

The mandala metaphor's relevance in a one-world scenario, as is currently being enacted, becomes obvious once the relationship is 'seen'. But it has been there all along in that 'there is already a clear sense of *mandala* as a world-model' (Thurman 1997-98, cited in Grey 2001: 3), particularly in the Hindu and Buddhist representations. Through globalisation the world is increasingly treated as a single entity. In this unity, cultural and material divisions - as well as connections - are more readily discerned. North-South, East-West represent cultural-economic vectors in global relations. Differentiation and integration into a global mandala - a circle of relationships - requires an awareness of the value of difference for the wellbeing of the whole. This may apply to smaller regional mandalas as well as the entire planetary mandala. Insofar as the macro enterprise of globalisation has permeated most regional environments, it too must be taken into consideration when working at the micro level. Again, the mandala is a fitting metaphor as a tableau of the unity of microcosm and macrocosm.

The mandala's symbolism should also strike a chord with the symbol-serving character of contemporary life, if only to show that symbolic life was once 'embodied', and hence 'balanced' (*yin-yang*). Thus while there is a 'land hunger' among the global poor who migrate to cities in search of employment, the postmodern state has lost territoriality as a factor of power. Value systems shift from the material to the symbolic in the information class, but the symbolic in the form of ceremony and ritual is removed from the global poor, along with the land that provides socio-spiritual as much as physical sustenance.

### **Disintegration Scenario**

If the macro manifestation of globalisation results in suppression of difference and negligence of the developmental needs of 'other' people, then the global age will tend toward disintegration, marked by outbreaks of terror, a constancy of depression across swathes of the world's 'poor' areas, and an alienation - including a fortress mentality (as displayed against the growing refugee phenomenon)<sup>11</sup> - among the materially rich. To quote Broad and Cavanagh (2000: 306): 'As job pressures grow across the South, many people leave for Europe and North America, where job markets are also tight. Violent acts of xenophobia and racism in the North are some of the ugliest manifestations of this current era of inequality and joblessness.'

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<sup>11</sup> Some 21.8 million people were identified as refugees by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2001 (website at [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch); see also Kegley and Wittkopf 2001: 343).

### *The attributes of a disintegrative model*

#### *1. Alienation*

Contrary to the relational attributes of a mandala, disintegration entails alienation from neighbouring sectors and the whole. Artificially sponsored tribalism emerges, as in its politicised versions of ethnic, nationalist, and sectarian affiliations that have resulted in such perennial atrocities as 'ethnic cleansing'. Relationships are framed in terms of the demonised 'other'. This demonisation, along with other devices, such as the manipulation of cultural or religious symbols to mobilise support, deployment of mythohistorical<sup>12</sup> claims in propaganda, and acts of intimidation such as terrorist bombings, are part of what Stanley Tambiah (1990) calls the 'anthropology of collective violence'.<sup>13</sup> International relations are increasingly adversarial and competitive; while 'development' is driven by ideological fashions among the bureaucratic elites. Globalisation leads to a disengagement between rich and poor, as income divergence becomes more pronounced.

#### *2. Reeducation*

'Expert' knowledge through formal education and politically endorsed programs of 'development' lead to the 'reeducation' of 'recalcitrant peasants' (Dove 1990: 25) and marginalisation of dissident intellectuals.

#### *3. Disorientation*

Disorientation is about being lost, without a sense of place, direction, or self. This constitutes, in effect, an absence of meaning, a mandala which is missing - and missed. According to Lerner (1996: 38-9): 'We live in a society that encourages us to treat one another as means to achieve our own personal satisfaction, and rewards us for our ability to accumulate wealth and power over others. . . . [In this way] our society universalises cultural and psychological misery.' He advises (p. 17) of the need to 'reverse the inward flow of caring energy [i.e. self-absorption] and begin to expand our circles of caring'.

### **The Requirements for a Productive Circle of Relationships**

A mandala which allows for the creative - rather than destructive - energies of development to occur is one which (a) re-establishes a sense of connectedness, (b) emphasises education of the whole person, and not just training of a technician who merely services (as distinct from serves) civilisation, and (c) reorients human endeavour so as to realise the above two factors, but also transform the micro-macro expressions of mandala into higher levels of comprehensive development. As this occurs the global mandala transforms into ever widening circles and interacts dynamically so that 'the particular is both determined and determines the whole' (Hall and Ames 1987: 208).

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<sup>12</sup> This is the construction of mythical history to justify a group's exclusive claims. Lian Kwen and Ananda Rajah (1993, p. 257) give the example of Sri Lanka, where a 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD Buddhist text, the *Mahavamsa*, was used to glorify one group, the Sinhalese, in unifying Sri Lanka and expelling another group identified as the invading party, the Tamils.

<sup>13</sup> This work is discussed in *ibid*.

This chapter has endeavoured to identify the requirements for a productive circle of relationships, a mandala which allows for the creative - rather than destructive - energies of development to occur. Sources for such construction materials may be identified through extensive studies already undertaken in the cultural dimension of development (see UNDP 1986, Dove 1990, UNESCO 1995, 1996). Particular emphasis on societies with strong mandala associations would help to 'embody' or 'anchor' the mandala model in place and culture. These societies include India, China, Japan, and a number of Southeast Asian societies, most notably Thailand and Indonesia where mandalas are a naturally occurring cultural resource. Mandala meanings are highly evolved in the ritual and symbolic life of those nations which, in turn, represent repositories of vast untapped cultural resources in the present world system.

In this sense the mandala may be said to be both missing and missed, the yearning of which must represent the first step to its recovery. The alternative, in this sensitive time of transition, must surely be a missed opportunity. Out of subsequent disintegration, new and not always benign forms will emerge. This occurred when the Warring States period of China was resolved in favour of a cruel unifying emperor. He, too, did not last. The civilisational mandala returned under a dynasty that saw the importation of Buddhism from India and contributed to a cosmopolitan trading region that spanned Rome, Persia, Northern India, Central Asia, China and through to Korea and Japan. It might be viewed as a dharma road across which silk and civilisation were traded. There was also a maritime regionalism of the Indian Ocean, with strong Arab connections. Trading regions have returned in our own age.<sup>14</sup> However, without cultural and religious bindings they cannot be regarded as developmental for all. Rather they would perpetuate the free flow of capital and goods but not people. Hence as mandalas they are deficient, and even missed by those who recognise the importance of cultural values. To this extent, too, development studies and the discipline of international relations are theoretically impoverished.

## Conclusion

The mandala is a cosmographical diagram representing relationships. It is a graphic metaphor for interdependence in a globalising world. Its form is circular, like the cosmos, and *tian* (the Chinese Heaven or 'moral universe'). Its structure is concentric, across many levels of meaning and correspondence - such as that of macro-micro. Often it contains other geometric shapes such as squares (representing Earth, as the *yin* companion of Heaven's *yang*; bounded territories of nations; regions of cooperative nations) and triangles (found in many cultures, including the Chinese unity of Heaven-Human-Earth, the Christian trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the three Buddhist

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<sup>14</sup> Recent developments in Central Asia hold potential for the construction new 'dharma roads' - particularly with Afghanistan attempting to recover and renew itself after it served as a theatre in the 'war against terror'. As Ferguson (2001: 15) observes:

From the point of view of the regions of Europe, South Asia, and North-East Asia, Central Asia is a crucial linkage area of international contact, which can either result in division and conflict, as in the Cold War and the hot conflicts in Afghanistan, or in a new series of connections which allow more positive relationships.

refuges of the Buddha (the Enlightenment One), Dharma (the Teaching and Way) and Sanga (the religious community) - which are nested within the concentric mandala structure. The mandala's constant properties are a centre, symmetry and cardinal points (Arguelles 1995: 13). Out of these arise a centre-periphery connectivity, a balanced education toward one's comprehensive development, and orientation toward the transformation of the world into higher levels of consciousness. While not eliminating conflict and misery, such a disposition would increase the balance of global forces, between North-South, East-West, high-tech/low-tech, agrarian-urban, tribal-postmodern, producing a better equilibrium. In this respect it is worth remembering that: 'Social harmony, like musical harmony, emerges from the balanced complexity of similarity and difference' (Hall and Ames 1987: 296). Such are the preliminary considerations of development issues in a mandalising world.

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