

Keynote Speech	Remembering Our Past to Shape Our Futures: The Continuing Significance of Oral History as Practice in East Asia
16:30-18:00, July 14, 2025	Mary Yu DANICO (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)

In our fast-paced world, we are constantly imagining and reimagining the futures we want to live in—whether in East Asia, Oceania, or beyond. For social scientists, practice is critical, but understanding the context of space, place, and history is equally essential to grasp the shifting nature of our realities. What kind of future do we wish to be part of? As an Asian American diasporic scholar, my early research focused on 1.5-generation Korean Americans—those who immigrated as children and navigated the complexities of bilingual and bicultural life. These individuals learned to move fluidly across linguistic and cultural boundaries, forming and reforming their identities through family ties, language, and memory. Their sense of self was deeply shaped by relationships with their parents and the generations before them. This notion of process—of becoming—is key to how we shape the future. But our memories of people and place, and how they are transmitted, are what shape our consciousness and influence our potential futures. One of the most enduring and significant practices in our field is oral history. Long before written language, people communicated through song, dance, spoken word, and storytelling. These oral traditions have preserved folklore, family stories, and cultural memories across generations. They are the foundation for how the arts, humanities, and cultures have survived and evolved. But what happens when we stop sharing our memories? What do we lose when we erase the past and focus only on the “next big thing”? Korean history offers a powerful case study. For centuries, Koreans have lived in diaspora—often due to political and economic upheaval. The colonial period from 1910 to 1945 marks one of the most traumatic eras in modern Korean history, marked by forced assimilation, violence, and displacement. During this time, many Koreans—as well as Okinawans, Filipinos, and others—were conscripted into Japanese labor and imprisoned across the Pacific. At Honouliuli, the only World War II-era camp in Hawai'i that housed both civilian internees of Japanese ancestry and prisoners of war, these layers of history converge. Through select oral histories of descendants, we explore how these personal narratives fill the gaps in official histories, allowing us to better understand both the past and our collective future. In remembering our past through oral traditions, we do not merely preserve history—we activate it. In doing so, we shape the future with purpose and care.

SEAA Special Session	The Pasts and Futures of East Asian Anthropology
14:45-16:15, July 14, 2025	Chair : Christine YANO (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) Laurel KENDALL (American Museum of Natural History), Jun ZHANG (City University of Hong Kong), Ting Hui LAU (National University of Singapore), Zachary HOWLETT (National University of Singapore), Tomomi YAMAGUCHI (Ritsumeikan University)

What can anthropology do for area studies and area studies for anthropology? This is the dual-sided question that has been part of the debates in and about East Asian anthropology for over three decades. The SEAA-SNU meeting “Shaping Futures” in Seoul 2025 affords us an opportunity to reinvigorate the discussion, especially in the context of a meeting held in East Asia with a rich mixture of junior and senior Asian- and non-Asian based anthropologists. What is an anthropologist without broad and deep expertise of specific societies or regions? If anthropology was born out of colonial encounters and area studies was a child of the Cold War, how have both enterprises developed both concepts and methods to critique the very power structures that had engendered them? What can anthropologists from and in the areas being studied contribute to complicating the production of knowledge without assuming binaries such as us-other or colonizer-colonized? How can understandings of the misinterpretations, miscommunications, and gaps in knowledge production from different parts of the world bring the field forward at a critical time? This roundtable puts forth these questions and past debates in order to directly address fundamental issues involved in shaping futures of East Asian anthropology.

**Mentoring  
Session I****Demystifying the Scholarly Book Publishing Process (Special Session)**16:30-18:00,  
July 15, 2025

William Masami HAMMELL (Senior Acquisitions Editor/University of Pittsburgh Press)

This session will provide a broad overview of the publishing process for scholarly books, from developing proposals and approaching presses to navigating peer review and preparing manuscripts for production. Depending on participant interest, additional topics may include revising dissertations for publication and seeking editorial support services. The session will conclude with a robust Q&A period during which more specific questions can be addressed.

**Mentoring  
Session II****East Asian Anthropology/Asian Studies Graduate Programs in Europe (Roundtable)**16:30-18:00,  
July 15, 2025

Chair : Bonnie TILLAND (Leiden University)

Yoonai HAN (Leiden University), Youngah GUAHK (LUISS University), Yuki ASAHINA (University of Manchester), Yookyong IM (University of Sheffield), Ed PULFORD (University of Manchester)

In this roundtable aimed at students, faculty members at universities from various European countries will discuss Anthropology and interdisciplinary Asian Studies graduate study opportunities (both at the MA and PhD level) in Europe. Topics include: the anthropology and Asian Studies academic landscape at regional, national, and institutional levels; the admissions process; the funding structure; and exchange opportunities outside of degree programs. There will also be an opportunity for discussion and Q&A.

**Mentoring  
Session III****Seeking job opportunities in East Asia (Roundtable)**16:30-18:00,  
July 15, 2025

Chair : Jun ZHANG (City University of Hong Kong)

Zach HOWLETT (National University of Singapore), Kunisuke HIRANO (Keio University), CedarBough SAEJI (Pusan National University)

This roundtable brings together four scholars who have successfully navigated the academic job market in East Asia, namely, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea. Drawing from their own experiences, they will address the current landscape of the job market in East Asia, while also offering concrete advice on preparing applicant materials, handling interviews and campus visits, and other features of job search in East Asia for those who speak English. This session aims to be a candid and useful guide for graduate students and early-career scholars considering East Asia as a potential site of academic employment.

**Mentoring  
Session IV****Writing and Publishing an Academic Journal Article (Workshop: Pre-registration required)**8:45-10:15,  
July 16, 2025

Nan KIM (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

This workshop will explore the varied set of practices and processes that go into the writing and publication of a journal article, with the goal of demystifying this foundational aspect of an academic career. We'll discuss the stages of getting from a "proto-draft" to publication: from developing or adapting a paper into a potential publication, choosing the right journal and making a pre-submission inquiry, preparing a manuscript to send out, anticipating what to expect from peer review, and approaching the iterative process of revisions. We'll also consider ways to avoid potential pitfalls, along with advice for handling the final stages of getting one's manuscript across the finish line to publication. This workshop may be particularly helpful to early-career scholars as well as those who mentor emerging researchers.

NB: Due to space constraints, we ask that graduate students who register should be PhD dissertators at the post-fieldwork stage of their doctoral programs.

Please note that space for this workshop is limited to the first 25 registrants. We ask that you kindly notify us if you secure a registered

spot but are unable to attend. Once the workshop is at capacity, a waitlist will open, and in the event of cancellations, those on the waitlist will be notified in the order that their registrations were received.

Mentoring Session V	How Do You Go about Book Publishing? Authors share their experiences in book publication
16:30-18:00, July 16, 2025	Chair : Ellen OXFELD (Middlebury College) Ed PULFORD (University of Manchester), Olga FEDORENKO (Seoul National University), Teresa KUAN (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Publishing a book is a crucial milestone in a scholar’s academic career in many academic fields, alongside journal articles. Yet, despite its significance, many early-career scholars have few opportunities to learn about the book publication process and how to navigate it successfully. In this roundtable, four authors will share their experiences and insights, from crafting and submitting book proposals, to reaching out to editors, receiving acceptances or rejections, developing manuscript drafts to the final version, and managing their time effectively throughout the whole process. Given that authors around the world have different strategies for publishing, and that each academic press has its own distinctive intellectual priorities, this roundtable highlights the diverse paths authors have taken and the lessons they have learned. This session will be especially valuable for scholars who plan to pursue book publication in the near future, offering practical guidance and candid reflections.

**1-1****Sustainable Futures in Practice: Everyday Politics, Participation, and Green Imaginaries**

Chair: Rebecca TOMPKINS (Senshu University)

**Women, Waste, and Civic Engagement in Japan | Rebecca TOMPKINS (Senshu University)**

This paper explores the intersection of political activism and environmental sustainability in Japan, focusing on the critical role women play in shaping urban waste management. Since the 1900 Dirt Removal Law, local governments have managed waste, often encouraging citizen participation. The rise of incineration as the primary disposal method has necessitated strict household waste separation, a responsibility primarily shouldered by women. Citizen labor in waste management is estimated to account for 38.5% of a city's environmental expenditures, highlighting the importance of community involvement in sustainable practices. However, women's engagement extends beyond mere compliance. Historically, women's groups have leveraged waste management initiatives as platforms for political activism and community empowerment. A notable example is the 1933 garbage campaign led by the Women's League to Purify Tokyo City Politics, where women turned a waste crisis into a pivotal political moment, advocating for cleaner urban policies. In contemporary Japan, women continue to lead environmental initiatives, such as a women-led nonprofit organization that promotes recycling through a second-hand shop while fostering local community ties and activism. This paper examines these historical and contemporary case studies to demonstrate how urban waste management has become a site for political mobilization, environmental sustainability, and social activism. By emphasizing the transformative role of women, it illustrates how waste management efforts contribute not only to environmental goals but also to community empowerment and civic engagement, underscoring the broader impact of women-driven political activism in shaping sustainable urban futures.

**The Politics and Processes of Transforming Sustainable Cities in South Korea | Youngah GUAHK (LUISS University)**

In the mid-2020s, more than half of the world's total population live in urban areas, and this number is likely to increase rapidly further in the future. Against that background, innovative cities are seen as essential in addressing the challenges of urbanisation, migration and sustainable growth, in particular in East Asia. In this region, South Korea has been at the forefront of addressing this challenge through strategies of green growth and the establishment of sustainable cities. One aspect of these developments which so far has not been studied in great depth is the political process behind the transition to a sustainable city. Administratively, South Korea has traditionally been characterised by a high degree of centralisation, with key policy decisions generally taken by central government and imposed top-down on the local level. However, to some extent processes of sustainable city transition have demonstrated signs of social innovation, putting much greater emphasis on bottom-up processes. The paper examines the politics behind the transformation process of a sustainable city in South Korea, highlighting the implications of such a development for decentralised local governance. The paper will address the following research question: What conditions and driving forces can explain the decision to transition towards a sustainable city? To answer this question, this paper develops an analytical framework to study such processes and applied this to the case of the Jeju Self-Governing Province. The paper then presents the findings from the qualitative empirical research that was undertaken with an aim of establishing the patterns of interaction between different actors in society to explain the emergence and the governance of a new sustainable city.

**Individual Motivations for Pursuing Global Sustainable Development Goals: Perspectives from Young Practitioners in Taiwan and Hong Kong | Hao-Tzu HO (National Chengchi University)**

'Sustainable development' has become a top-down field where people's everyday practices, experiences, and perceptions are largely neglected. This issue is particularly prominent in the Global South, where sustainable development goals have become guiding principles in order to 'catch up' with the Global North or wealthier regions. However, the intention of such goals, like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, comes from a decolonial perspective which urges the developed world to regulate domestic governance, industries, and trade systems to reduce environmental impact. Given the above observations, this paper aims to reveal the assumptions underlying the current green initiatives and demonstrates how local practitioners 'work with' or 'work around' these initiatives, identifying gaps and alternatives. Local practitioners, in the context of this paper, refer to the young people who have become enthusiastic about farming in Taiwan and Hong Kong. This research includes both locations because practitioners in these areas established close partnerships, mutually influenced each other, and formed trans-local green assemblages, or 'eco-communities'. This research employs anthropological methodology and conducts long-term ethnographic fieldwork to investigate the interconnectedness of both sites. Despite the vital motivation of 'healing the scar on the earth', the young farmers seek self-realisation in an increasingly turbulent and anxious society by

pursuing new relations between themselves and the more-than-human world. They aim to heal the earth's scars in order to heal their own. Their contemplation on human-non-human relations has implications for human well-being, a dimension that is still under-discussed in the context of sustainable development.

**Wild Wheels, Anxious Nation: The Politics of Green Futurity in the Chinese EV Economy** | Yanping NI (Princeton University)

What happens when the world's largest greenhouse emitter gears towards clean energy and strives for a greener future? Even those most familiar with China would be amazed by its ever-accelerating green turn. Within just a few years, new energy vehicles (NEVs), mostly electric vehicles (EVs), mushroomed on China's urban roads with their distinctive green-colored plates. While media channels are bombarded with advertisements of high-tech-looking smart cars, locales of consumption ranging from shopping malls to airports are occupied by pop-up car shops where anyone can drop by for 10 minutes of "sci-fi" experience of maneuvering and interacting with so-called "vehicles of tomorrow." Emerging from these dazzling phenomena is a new futurist narrative, one that promises to be greener, faster, fancier, higher-tech, and more equal while maintaining economic growth. However, as I have learned from numerous car shops, battery charging stations, industrial seminars, and exhibitions in Shanghai, stories on the ground strikingly run against such discourses. Rather, lurking in the futurist narrative is the indelible shadows of the country's past. Based on ethnographic research among Chinese car engineers, designers, researchers, salespeople, consumers, and others, this paper attempts to bust three myths around China's miraculous NEV industry: 1) under its environmental-friendly disguise, the industry is driven by highly militarized and politicized ideologies; 2) far from techno-equality, the electrifying turn re-spatializes realms of exclusion and inclusion in terms of urban mobility; 3) invisible from the skyrocketing industrial numbers, the boom is ironically powered by precarious and unproductive conditions from below.

**Between History and Future: Children's Participatory Practices in the Urban Renewal of Fengquangujing Community** | Yu-Hui LIAO (Chiba University)

The Fengquangujin Community in Changsha, China, is a historic neighborhood undergoing dynamic urban renewal. This study examines the interplay between participatory design, cultural heritage preservation, and tourism development in shaping sustainable urban futures. In spatial renewal projects led and facilitated by the CFC research team, children actively reshaped the community's social and physical spaces through participatory activities, including rooftop gardens and neighborhood green spaces. However, while these initiatives strengthened community bonds and revitalized spaces, they also gave rise to various challenges. Moreover, the urban renewal project transformed the community into a tourist hotspot, with many traditional shops replaced by trendy cafés and other modern establishments. This transformation has created tensions between tourism appeal and the daily needs of residents. This case highlights the complexities of integrating children's participation and cultural heritage preservation into strategies that also accommodate tourism demands. It calls for a balanced urban renewal approach that meets the needs of diverse stakeholders while preserving the essential character of historic neighborhoods.

1-2

**Rural Futures: Youth Migration and the Politics of Community Regeneration in East Asia**

Chair: Jeehwan PARK (Seoul National University)

This panel examines the emerging phenomenon of youth migration to rural areas across East Asia, with a focus on South Korea, China, and Hong Kong. Amid challenges of rapid urbanization and demographic change, young people's migrations to rural areas represent a significant shift from traditional rural-to-urban migration patterns. Drawing on ethnographic research, the papers explore how youth engagement with rural communities is reshaping individual identities, community relationships, and broader social dynamics. The panel brings together four studies that illuminate diverse dimensions of this phenomenon: South Korea's government-led initiatives aimed at preventing the extinction of regional communities, China's new villagers seeking alternatives to urban competition through therapeutic rural lifestyles, Hong Kong's young farmers integrating agricultural practices with artistic activities and oral history projects, and the politics of vitality in South Korea's urban and rural revitalization programs. Together, these studies highlight the aspirations and struggles of young people and demonstrate how they navigate conflicting roles, challenge dominant urban-centric narratives, and forge new forms of rural-urban relationships.

**"Transfusing Young Blood": Youth and the Politics of Vitality in Post-Developmental South Korea | Seung Cheol LEE (Seoul National University)**

Youth has long been invoked as the driving force behind economic growth in South Korea's developmental history. However, in the post-developmental era, where rapid economic growth is no longer feasible, what roles are youth expected to fulfill, and how are they mobilized? This paper examines the trajectories of what I term the politics of 'vitality' (活力) surrounding youth by comparatively analyzing two cases: youth involved in Seoul's 'community-building projects' in the 2010s and those participating in 'rural revitalization programs' in regions at the risk of depopulation in the 2020s. In both contexts, youth are tasked with dual responsibility of performing the affective labor of fostering community while simultaneously overcoming their own lethargy and depression by embodying 'vitality.' In other words, they are expected to restore both their personal vitality and that of their communities through these activities. This paper traces how such politics of vitality, which frames youth as 'new blood' for community renewal, has been reshaped and reconfigured in response to the material conditions of urban and rural settings and the shifting political landscape in South Korea.

**Between Investee and Dependent: Navigating Local Government Support for Youth Migrants in Rural South Korea | Mun Young CHO (Yonsei University)**

South Korea's record-low birth rate and the concentration of its population in the greater Seoul area have intensified concerns over *jiyeok somyeol*, or the "extinction" of regional communities. In response, the state has launched a range of initiatives to encourage youth migration to rural areas. However, ethnographic research in a southeastern rural community reveals tensions in the dual depiction of youth—"cheongnyeon" and region—"jiyeok"—as populations to be managed and as body-places with their own historicity. Confronted with job insecurity and uncertain futures, many young migrants exhibit hesitancy, skepticism, or outright resistance to the state's portrayal of them as vital agents for national revival through (re)production. At the same time, rural natives, whose mobility was neglected and whose land was long exploited during Korea's development processes, have carved out rather exclusive forms of reciprocity. This paper explores the implementation of government projects aimed at youth migration and local regeneration, focusing on the intricate dynamics among young migrants, rural natives, and local officials. It highlights how youth migrants navigate the contested meanings of *cheongnyeon* and *jiyeok* as boundary objects, leaving them often actively caught between the roles of investees who deserve credit and dependents who deserve care.

**We are the New Villagers: Urban Youth in Rural China | Yang ZHAN (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)**

In recent years, a noticeable trend has emerged among Chinese youth who are choosing to relocate to rural villages, seeking a lifestyle that diverges from the fast-paced, competitive urban environment. This trend marks a transformation from rural development primarily aimed at national economic growth since the 1980s to a more personal pursuit of well-being in the 2010s. Many urban youths refer to themselves as the "new villagers" to express their new aspirations and identities. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Guangzhou, China among the self-identified new villagers, this paper discusses how young individuals are increasingly drawn to the therapeutic aspects of rural life, where they believe they can reconnect with nature, cultivate a sense of community, and prioritize mental and emotional health over material success through various types of volunteer work and community projects. Situating the new "returning to the rural villages" movement within China's long history of "going to the countryside," this study argues that these young individuals not only redefine their own paths but also contribute to a transformation of a new sense of communities and new public in contemporary China.

**Back to the Land: The Young "New Farmers" and Agriculture in Hong Kong | Jung-a CHANG (Incheon National University)**

This paper explores the emerging trend of young Hongkongers engaging in farming and its implications for redefining identity and memory in Hong Kong. Historically, Hong Kong has been seen as a commercial metropolis with limited connections to agriculture, despite a past that includes thriving farming communities in the New Territories. In recent years, however, young Hongkongers have left urban careers to pursue rural lifestyles, participating in organic farming, vegetable distribution, and community development. These "new farmers" challenge the dominant capitalist consumption patterns, emphasize environmental sustainability, and redefine the rural-urban divide.

Beyond farming, their efforts represent a form of memory activism, challenging the dominant narrative of Hong Kong. They are choosing to live and farm part-time or full-time in the countryside, organize rural-urban vegetable cooperatives, combine farming with artistic activities, and run farmers' markets. Alongside these efforts, the young farmers are entering old rural villages to engage in oral history projects and collaboratively document the history of these communities. This paper argues that their actions create a more inclusive



narrative of Hongkongness, which embraces ecological connections, community interdependence, and historical diversity.

**Jeewan PARK (Seoul National University, Discussant)**

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**1-3 Beyond Progress and Backlash: The Contested Terrain of Queer Recognition in East Asia**

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**Chair: Sumi CHO (Myongji University)**

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Through ethnographic engagement with queer communities and social movements in East Asia, this panel examines how contested visions of queer futures emerge within complex political terrains that defy simple narratives of progress or backlash. Drawing on long-term fieldwork in South Korea and Japan, we analyze how everyday practices of resistance and recognition unfold across multiple scales—from intimate spaces of activism to national institutions. At the heart of our inquiry lies a fundamental tension: as LGBTQ+ movements gain unprecedented visibility in formal political channels, they encounter new forms of opposition that operate through the very institutional mechanisms intended to secure recognition. These dynamics materialize in diverse contexts—from pride celebrations and student organizing to religious institutions and family policy—revealing how struggles over queer futures are entangled with broader processes of social transformation in contemporary East Asia. Our analysis demonstrates how conservative forces deploy discourses of protection and national security, mobilizing institutional power to resist shifts in gender and sexuality norms while queer communities navigate the paradoxes of inclusion within existing social structures. Through careful attention to these situated practices in South Korea and Japan, we show how queer futures are shaped through complex negotiations of institutional constraints, cultural specificities, and transnational influences. This ethnographically grounded examination challenges reductionist narratives, revealing that the path toward queer futures in East Asia involves nuanced interactions between institutional recognition, grassroots resistance, and social transformation.

**From Intimacy to Coalition: The Paradox of Movement Building in South Korean LGBTQ+ Student Organizations**  
| **Seong-Jo JEONG (Chung-Ang University)**

This article examines how intimate networks influence the intersectional dynamics of identity-based social movements through a case study of LGBTQ+ student activism in South Korea. As LGBTQ+ movements gain unprecedented visibility and forge broader coalitions, student activists confront a paradoxical reality where increased recognition simultaneously intensifies institutional barriers and personal costs, particularly amid accelerating conservative backlash. Drawing on in-depth interviews and document analysis of the Solidarity of University & Youth Queer Societies in Korea (QUV), I analyze the complex relationship between intimate ties and coalitional politics in this shifting landscape. The analysis reveals three key findings: intimate networks facilitate political participation under heightened social and institutional constraints, create both opportunities and tensions in building intersectional coalitions, and operate distinctively in contexts where LGBTQ+ visibility carries significant personal risks. Through an examination of QUV's development since 2014, amid growing conservative opposition to gender and sexuality rights, I demonstrate how the transition from intimate circles to formal coalitions generates organizational challenges, as growing demands for political representation and intersectionality affect the intimate relationships that initially enabled collective action. Rather than viewing these tensions as organizational failures, I argue they reflect the movement's expanding cultural influence and political capacity in an era of intensifying conflicts over queer futures. This research contributes to social movement theory by illuminating the role of intimate networks in contentious activism, particularly where identity-based movements face structural constraints. The findings indicate the need to reconsider how we evaluate social movement outcomes by accounting for both the potential and inherent tensions of intimate networks in coalitional politics.

**Social Acceptance or Assimilation? : Navigating Dilemmas in Pride Movements in Korea and Japan** | **Sumi CHO (Myongji University)**

Since 1970, Pride movements have proclaimed and celebrated sexual and gender diversity and demanded social acceptance of LG a BTQ people, in combinations of political protests and playful displays. The mainstreaming of Pride events, which have even become major tourist attractions, especially in North America and Europe, is largely interpreted as a sign of increased LGBTQ acceptance. However, questions of commodification and assimilation and of the marginalization of LGBTQ communities in Pride have also been raised by activists and scholars, who ask whether Pride is losing its political potential and being reduced to a festivalized spectacle of Otherness (Taylor 2014). How does this question of social acceptance and assimilation of Pride translate in Japan and South Korea, where Pride movements began in the 21st century and LGBTQ populations still struggle for their place in society? This study compares Seoul Queer Culture Festival and Tokyo Rainbow Pride, based on ethnography and interviews with organizers and participants of the two events. It

explores the socially and culturally specific circumstances under which Japanese and Korean Pride organizers try to navigate accommodating the needs of LGBTQ communities (and sometimes fail) and how participants interpret such efforts and failures. Moreover, it explores how they draw inspirations from and express concerns about the experiences of their Japanese and Korean counterparts and how such comparisons lead them to a deeper understanding of Pride movements.

**Transphobia, Feminism and the Religious Right: The Battle over LGBTQ+ Rights in Japan** | **Tomomi YAMAGUCHI**  
(Ritsumeikan University)

Since the enactment of the 1999 Gender Equality Law and subsequent municipal gender equality ordinances, feminism have met with extensive backlash in the early 2000s. These attacks extended to LGBTQ+ rights, spearheaded by religious right-wing groups, most notably the Unification Church, headquartered in South Korea but with a substantial political presence in Japan. The opposition then intensified after 2015, with the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage and the introduction of Japan's first same-sex partnership certificate in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward. Right-wing forces, including religious conservatives such as the Unification Church and the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership, right-wing media outlets and politicians have particularly targeted the legalization of same-sex marriage. Amid the global anti-gender movement, these groups also became vocal opponents of transgender rights, along with right-wing social media users and anti-trans online feminists" who amplified transphobic narratives. The backlash significantly impacted the dilution of 2023 LGBT Understanding Promotion Act, and its passage further exacerbated transphobia within Japan's political and social discourse. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and media analysis, this paper examines the intersections of antifeminism, homophobia, and transphobia in Japan and their influence on local and national politics. It explores how the rhetoric of the religious right has commonalities with the positions of anti-trans feminists and highlights the struggles and responses of trans individuals and their allies against such transphobia. It demonstrates how the convergence of religious and secular anti-gender forces threatens LGBTQ+ rights in Japan.

**On Reproductive Straightening: Inter-Asian Pronatalism and Queer Marriage Politics** | **Alex WOLFF (Brown University)**

In this presentation I examine how emergent demographic anxieties and pronatalist policies are shaping queer reproductive politics in east and southeast Asia. Over the past decades, labor, housing, and economic precarity have contributed to transnational declines in marriages and record low fertility rates in Asia and elsewhere. In contexts like Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea specifically, anxieties about demographic decline have brought about pronatalist policies that tie access to welfare like loans and housing to marriage and childbirth that I term reproductive straightening"— attempts to align lives and reproductive behaviors along heteronormative understandings of adulthood. As queer and trans chosen kin have been largely excluded by these policies at a national level, legal unions and marriages have emerged not only as a site of marginalization but also as one of political contestation and activism. Closely examining data from ethnographic fieldwork (2018-2022) with queer communities in South Korea and other supplemental data, I argue that the tension between pronatalism and queer marriage politics in east and southeast Asia asks us to rethink the critical significance of heteronormativity in anthropological accounts of demography and fertility decline, as well as the role of welfare and marriage in queer and feminist theories of reproductive politics.

**David RADERMACHER (Academy of Korean Studies, Discussant)**

**1-4**

**Kawaii, Ke'ai, Sajiao, and Aegyo in Gendered, Political, and Social Class Contexts**

**Chair: Hsin-Yen YANG (Fort Hays State University)**

In this panel we seek to sample and discuss and connect the various deployments of cute culture in contemporary East Asia from a critical and political perspective, noting the use of cute subcultures - memes, ACG fandom, fashion and visual culture, in both softly subversive and explicitly resistant political forms, gendered from both a feminist and young male critical perspective on the obstacles and frustrations of precarious, highly competitive, and transitional societies, in which both personal independence and liberty, and child-raising and union have become increasingly difficult to attain. Rather than focusing on the local ontologies of kawaii, ke'ai, sajiao, or aegyo and its psychological mechanisms, this panel seeks to open discussion of the somewhat obscured political, gendered, and social class meanings and contexts of cute style. This panel is a first attempt to meet and discuss and potentially collaborate by 4 researchers at different stages of their careers and carrying out and ethnography in Taiwan, China, Korea, and Japan, in the languages of those societies.



The goal of this panel is to kickstart collaborative work across disciplinary, area studies and national language divides to start to work on contemporary trends in what is increasingly a regional pop-culture and digital and fashion subculture bringing East Asia into a common symbolic cultural language and system at the grassroots and expressive and experiential level.

**Cute Male Performance and Cultivating Visual Cultural Capital in an Unstable Society in Japan and Neighboring Asian States | Sharon KINSELLA (University of Manchester)**

Contemporary Japan, South Korea, China and neighbouring Asian states, are increasingly conjoined in a single transregional visual cultural language (with relatable but not identical cultural symbolic meanings), based around cute aesthetics and cute sexy animation characters in ACG media, online memes and social media. In the 2000s the highly stylised, gendered, and cute shojō (girl) character began to diversify towards beautiful boys identical in outward appearance to shojō girls' and other charming and sexy nonbinary characters from the yaoi and BL genres. A new mode of cross-dressed posing and video uploading by fashionable young men performing as ideal shojō (girls) and cosplaying as shojō (girl) animation characters quickly followed 2-dimensional male cross-performing in games and manga. This paper will explore the context and meaning of performative cute male subcultures, which have appeared throughout East Asia, especially as visual images in the digital sphere, and the cultural expression and survival of disempowered young men in a labour market and social structure in a state of dissolution and disarray. In the current opaque and insecure fiscal and social environment 'aesthetic labour' to maximise the appeal and value of feminine and in fact girlish 'physical capital' has intensified for both genders, and especially in East Asia. For men, focus on cultivating an appealing aesthetic presentation has been a means to increase their competitive value in employment, in homosocial bonding, and the heterosexual 'love market' and as the bearers of new cultural capital and knowing more broadly. Enthusiastic adoption of make-up and cute girlish clothes by young men, to transform themselves into non-binary or non-gendered girlish personas with added appeal and a dispersed style of mediated 'sexual capital', can be considered a strategic response to the rapid devaluation of largely lower and lower middle-class men, and the dissolution of their acquired postwar social class dispositions and incomes

**From Mascots to Movements: The Subversive Power of Cute in Political Communication | Hsin-Yen YANG (Fort Hays State University)**

In the Asia-Pacific region, cute aesthetics have been employed over recent decades to engage citizens in resisting domestic and international oppression. Political parties in Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand have utilized cute mascots to transform the previously elitist political process and to mobilize voters towards their democratization efforts (Yang, 2023). In the digital age, cute memes are regarded as the street art of the social web" (Mina, 2019), which shapes political narratives and contributes to galvanizing public sentiment. This paper examines the interplay between consumerism, pop culture, and political subversion. This paper will identify the origins and processes through which cute aesthetics wield political influence in East Asia. While the analysis is regional, the proposed process and theoretical framework have worldwide relevance, particularly in post-authoritarian state contexts. Minor aesthetics, such as the cute, zany, glamorous, and whimsical, are intricately connected to human emotions and social interactions (Ngai, 2012). In the contemporary context cuteness, in particular, often acts as an emotive response to oppression and inequality and can serve as a means to create new realities (Botz-Bornstein, 2011). Through field studies and historical textual analyses of cute aesthetics in various movements across Asian countries, this paper investigates how cute aesthetics can empower marginalized groups and facilitate political and social change.

**Revisiting Sajiao: How Cute Aesthetics Shape Civic Participation in Taiwan | Hsin-I Sydney YUEH (University of Missouri-Columbia)**

Since the 1990s, Taiwan's democratization process has attracted significant scholastic attention (Chang, 2009; Chao & Myers, 1994; Rigger, 1999; Tien, 1996). This paper explores not the formal political arguments, but the accompanying role of cute elements in civic participation. Political candidates' and opposing activists' use of cute commodities and style has turned much popular political participation into an accessible and entertaining daily activity (Chuang, Y. 2011; Yang, 2023). According to my earlier research propositions, sajiao is a behavioral style which stages public displays of vulnerability, powerlessness, and helplessness, which have become culturally celebrated in Taiwan. Charming sajiao performances paired with cute aesthetics, foster empathy in citizens and reflect the collective public response to Taiwan's uncertain international status and external threats (Yueh, 2017). My research unravels the interlay of sajiao and civic engagement in political rallies (recalls, referendum, presidential campaigns), social media campaigns, grassroots social movements (such as the 'Blue Bird movement'), and public speeches. In this presentation, I aim to refine my thoughts on sajiao and overview insights on charm and childishness in politics, based on fieldwork conducted from 2015 to the present.

**Curling up with 'Aegyo': The Role of Hair Curlers in Shaping Korean Aegyo and Professional Identity** | Rachel Jong-in Chang YOO (Gordon College)

In South Korea, hair curlers, usually 'velcro' attached to plastic, are a popular hair accessory for women. It is common to observe young women in public spaces, their fringes curled into place with curling tubes. Some believe this practice fosters personal freedom, allowing women to focus on self-care without fearing societal judgment, thus providing a form of liberation. Conversely, others deem the public use of hair curlers inappropriate, citing concerns over public display and manners. This paper delves into the discourse surrounding hair curlers in Korea, linking it to the concept of 'aegyo'—a term that describes a child-like charm and an inclination towards infantilized cuteness (Puzar & Hong, 2018). Specifically, the study investigates how 'aegyo' has been embraced and adapted within professional environments. Furthermore, the paper highlights how some female politicians have left in their hair curlers as a means to simultaneously project their professionalism with femininity, symbolizing the dual expectation made of contemporary women to work on both a career and an appealing appearance. Through a critical discourse analysis of online discussions, articles, and memes related to public use of hair curlers, this paper explores the surrounding narratives and evolving perceptions of feminine cuteness, or 'aegyo' in Korea. The paper underscores the dual pressures faced by working women in Korea—to perform professionally as equals to their male counterparts while also conforming to traditional feminine aesthetics—and illustrates how digital media plays a pivotal role in shaping and spreading this idea.

**1-5****Visualizing the Actual, Actualizing the Visual: Politics of Activist Media in South Korea**

Chair: Elias ALEXANDER (University of British Columbia)

This panel explores the role of visual media as it circulates within activism, focusing on South Korea as a dynamic site of multifaceted social contestation. From socially engaged photographs and ads, to posts on digital platforms, visual media has become an indispensable tool of struggle and communication for activists and marginalized communities. Drawing on theories of mediated visibility and visibility politics while highlighting the voices of activists, we consider how images energize activism, challenge power relations, and facilitate change. We also analyze what qualities of visual media—esthetic, affective, and material—shape how activism becomes visible and actionable within South Korea's media-saturated environment. We examine how activists and marginalized communities strategically leverage specific properties of different mediums: the permanence of physical yellow ribbons versus the transience of their digital representations, the public visibility of advocacy ads within commercialized and contested urban spaces, practices of self-representation by queer individuals, and the soft agency of nonhuman influencers advancing animal rights. Key questions include: What does it mean to participate in civic life through visual media? How do activists and marginalized communities strategically leverage or subvert the material properties of various image platforms to make their causes visible? How do these images challenge or extend crucial aspects of South Korean activism? And what affects do they mobilize in the broader struggle for social change? By exploring visualization and actualization in activist media practices, we reveal how activists navigate between symbolic representation and material intervention, documenting reality and creating possibilities.

**From Ribbons to Metaverse: Yellow Island, Civic Activism and the Transformation of Public Memory in South Korea** | Oxana JEOUNG-RAKOVA (Seoul National University)

This paper explores how public memory and social activism are being reconfigured from the use of material visual symbols to the mobilization of new digital media, focusing specifically on the case of Yellow Island, a metaverse created on the Zepeto platform to commemorate the 2014 Sewol ferry disaster in South Korea. Following the disaster, which claimed more than 300 lives, the yellow ribbon emerged as a symbol of solidarity and remembrance, uniting diverse groups within Korean society in a collective movement for justice. Yellow Island, created by the group of documentary photographer-activists known as Team Yellow Island, extends this activism into the virtual world, transforming the material activism of the yellow ribbon into an interactive, digital form of public memory. Yellow Island at Zepeto features works such as *Anyone Can Board That Boat* by Suntag Noh and *Project Yellow Umbrella* by Youngsuk Suh, creating a space for audiences to engage with these artworks and reflect on the impact and legacy of the disaster. By moving remembrance and commemoration into the metaverse, Yellow Island redefines how people connect with artists, artworks, and each other, allowing a wider audience to participate in acts of remembrance that transcend physical boundaries. Through this case study, enriched by interviews with Yellow Island's creators as well as my autoethnography of the experience of visiting the metaverse, I discuss how digital extensions

of material activism can foster new forms of collective memory and solidarity, and expand our understanding of activism in the post-digital age.

**Picturing In/Visibility: Exploring the Politics of Representation Alongside Queer South Koreans** | Elias ALEXANDER (University of British Columbia)

This paper explores how we approach the politics of representation when working alongside LGBTQ+ populations. When engaging in qualitative research with LGBTQ+ peoples, scholars must be acutely attentive to the ethical complexities of creating representations of those whose identities have long been affected by issues of in/visibility. Scholarship that engages LGBTQ+ issues seeking to generate social change has long noted the tension between a politic predicated on visibility, a guiding logic for many LGBTQ+ movements, and the conditions in local settings that complicate such investments. South Korea presents an interesting case. In the South Korean context, scholarship has placed focus on analyzing the political life of sexual and gender minorities through their involvement in those most overt public displays of organizing and protest, such as Queer Cultural Festivals and Pride Parades. However, many queer Koreans are cautious in approaching visible forms of political action. Therefore, scholars have had to contend with the nuances of a politic predicated on visibility, noting its potentials and limitations. Such realities become further salient when seeking to employ methods in the research process that implore individuals to produce representations via visual mediums such as photographs. Reflecting on how, when engaging ethnographically, representations we create through the production of visual media are potentially generative and simultaneously inflected by the particular epistemological orientation we bring to the research process, this paper asks what falls under the purview of the political through examining the production of visual materials by queer individuals.

**Visualizing Social Advocacy, Actualizing Spatial Rights: Appropriating Private Advertising Spaces for Public Agendas in South Korea** | Olga FEDORENKO (Seoul National University)

Urban advertising spaces are typically dominated by commercial interests and unavailable for regular dwellers' spatial expression. Since the late 2010s, however, Seoul's urban mediascape—from subway stations to commercial buildings—has emerged as a new site of contestation through paid-for advocacy advertisements, placed by citizen groups and occasionally businesses, to advance various social and political causes. This paper examines how these socially engaged advertisements operate on dual levels of visibility politics: promoting specific public agendas while simultaneously challenging city dwellers' systemic exclusion from commercialized urban surfaces.

The research traces how practices originating in K-pop fandom subway advertisements of the early 2010s evolved into broader advocacy efforts addressing contentious social issues, including misogyny, sexual minorities' recognition, inter-Korean relations, and public accountability in national tragedies like the 2014 Sewol Ferry disaster. These campaigns have generated intense public debates and occasionally sparked street protests, regardless of whether the advertisements were successfully placed or rejected by the commercialized space owners. Following advocacy advertising controversies in the spirit of multi-sited ethnography, the paper analyzes placed and rejected advertisements, evolving institutional guidelines, and the resulting conflicts over urban visibility. This study reveals how struggles over expression in commercialized urban spaces have become critical sites for both gaining political visibility and reimagining public expression in contemporary South Korean society, illuminating complex negotiations between public and private interests in the neoliberal era.

**Cute Animal Influencers in South Korea: Social Media Representations of Pet 'Pawrenting' and the Rise of Ethical Shifts in the Dog Meat Trade** | Katya KRYLOVA (University of Canterbury)

This paper examines the growing trend of treating companion animals as children and its contribution to the efforts of animal activists to end dog meat consumption in South Korea. Image-based social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok play a pivotal role in portraying companion animals as cherished family members, often viewed as substitutes for children. At the heart of this cultural shift is the affection for cute designer dog breeds, which has driven the expansion of pet-related markets, including specialised foods, furniture, clothing, accessories, veterinary clinics, daycare centers, and even schools. This paper argues that the cute aesthetics of pet products and the imagery crafted by animal influencers create a powerful contrast to the traditional practice of breeding dogs for meat. These visuals and trends serve as a form of soft agency, subtly yet effectively advancing animal rights. This phenomenon parallels the influence of animal internet celebrities on the rise of no-kill shelters during the 2010s, showcasing how digital culture and cuteness can transform societal attitudes and practices. Affective images of cute purebred animals and their circulation on mainstream social media platforms

invite multiple criticisms, particularly from a posthumanist ethical perspective. For example, acting as promoters of purebred animals and excessive consumption on their behalf, facilitating further miniaturisation of companion species and even inspiring exotic pet keeping. However, the presence of cute dog influencers and their growing popularity valorises vitality over death, which positions them as game changers for certain species.

**Robin LEBLANC (Washington and Lee University, Discussant)**

**1-6**

### **Migration and Daily Life Between Korea and Southeast Asia**

**Chair: Daeun LEE (National University of Singapore/Seoul National University Asia Center)**

The daily lives of immigrants from Southeast Asia with ties to Korea will be covered by this panel. Prior research on migration has typically concentrated on the labor and study migration of Asian immigrants to English-speaking nations. Nonetheless, migration inside Asia is on the rise, and the Korean Wave is causing Korea to become a new destination for migrants. Each presenter will concentrate on the different types of migration and daily life that act as a mediator between Southeast Asia and Korea. Firstly, Deejantuek Thanarat will first look at how Thai women migrant workers who work in Korea without documentation manage their daily lives after leaving the country using social media and immigrant groups, and how they fight for permanent residency status despite gendered exploitative work situations. Second, Mai Myat Ohnmar Lwin will discuss the experience of Myanmar refugees in South Korea, focusing on their adaptation into Korean society through the support of Korean governments via the refugee resettlement program. Thirdly, Eunjeong Lee will concentrate on the ways in which political exiles from Myanmar who reside in Mae Sot, Thailand, interact with civic organizations and students from Myanmar in Korea and conduct transnational political campaigns. Finally, Lynn will examine how transnational living—studying and living in Korea—shaped the careers, relationships, and identities of Vietnamese returnees and their reintegration into Vietnam's communities. In sum, these presentations will demonstrate the manner in which Southeast Asian immigrants' daily lives and customs are connected to their home country, their country of residence, and third countries.

### **Transnational Lives and Political Activism between Myanmar, Thailand, and Korea | Eunjeong LEE (Seoul National University)**

The Spring Revolution, a citizen uprising against the coup, has continued since the military of Myanmar announced the coup on February 1, 2021. Resisting people are crossing the border into Thailand, and many are fleeing Myanmar to avoid being arrested, detained, and held by the military. Daily activities and political movements of the exiles from Myanmar who fled to Mae Sot, Thailand, a symbolic asylum on the Myanmar-Thailand border, following the coup, will be the main topics of my presentation. The presentation will specifically concentrate on transnational activists who engage with their Korean civil society, family, or friends. The following are the research questions. First, how and why did exiles from Myanmar relocate to Mae Sot following the coup? Second, how structured was their life and legal position in Mae Sot? Third, How do their transnational everyday life and activism connect not only Myanmar and Thailand but also Korea? In-depth interviews and participant observation were conducted over the two weeks of fieldwork in Mae Sot in February and June of 2024. The presentation attempts to describe the newly changed landscape of Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot, Thailand after the coup, and to contribute to existing anthropological research on transnational political movements, citizenship, and ethnicity.

### **Gendered Experience and Labor Migration: The Case of Thai Undocumented Migrant Women in the Agricultural Sector in South Korea | Deejantuek THANARAT (Chonnam National University)**

In recently, Thai migrant decided to work in South Korea with illegal status especially women who cannot pass the criteria of Employment permit system (EPS). This study examines the gendered experiences of Thai undocumented migrant women in the agricultural sector in Gwangju, South Korea. Through a qualitative analysis of their migration journeys and work conditions, the study investigates how social communities, gender roles, and undocumented status shape their lives and labor experiences. The study highlights that social communities, often maintained through migrant communities and facilitating migration and providing informal support. However, these networks also expose migrants to informal labor markets that perpetuate exploitative working conditions and economic instability. The following question will be answered in this research: (1) What unique challenges do Thai women undocumented workers encounter in Gwangju's agricultural sector, and how do these challenges affect their well-being and job stability? (2) How do social communities, facilitate the migration and employment of Thai women undocumented workers in the agricultural sector in Gwangju? This

study will use qualitative methods, particularly semi interviews and participant observations, to study how Thai women cope with the dual pressure of economic insecurity and all systemic vulnerabilities in an uncertain working environment marked by seasonal instability and high exploitation risk. In the observation I am going to the fieldwork, pretending as the migrant and working with them for 4 months in Gwangju and Naju, South Korea.

**Bringing Hope for Resettlement Program: Experiences of Myanmar Refugees' in South Korea** | Mai Myat Ohnmar LWIN (Sung Kong Hoe University)

Myanmar, a country marked by significant ethnic diversity and decades of military dictatorship, has faced repeated forced displacements and human rights abuses, prompting many to seek refuge globally. South Korea, an emerging destination for refugees, has progressively opened its doors, offering humanitarian protection and fostering collaboration between the government, civil society, and Myanmar communities. The study will explore the Myanmar refugees' experiences of integration into new homes. Drawing on my experience as a Myanmar refugee who resettled in South Korea following the 2021 military coup. The qualitative research will be conducted from January to March 2025 and take the interviews with selected Kachin, Kayin, and Chin ethnic refugees who have resettled in South Korea for over five years. The study will describe them toward integration, focusing on cultural adaptation, government policies, and the support provided by refugee centers, and community organizations. The following questions will be answered in the research: (1) What kind of services and resettlement programs did the resettled refugees receive? (2) What are the integration experiences of Myanmar Refugees? How are they able to fit into Korean society? This research focuses on not only supporting Myanmar refugees in South Korea but also contributing to broader discussions on global refugee resettlement and integration. By documenting these experiences, the study aims to inspire hope and advocate for sustainable and inclusive resettlement programs for displaced populations worldwide.

**Transnational Lives and Reintegration of Returnees: A Focus on Vietnamese Students with Study Abroad Experience in Korea** | Thi Mai Linh TRAN (Seoul National University)

In recent years, the number of Vietnamese international students in South Korea has significantly increased, making them the largest foreign student group in the country. As of 2023, over 76,000 Vietnamese students have pursued education in South Korea, attracted by affordable tuition, geographical proximity, and cultural familiarity. Beyond academics, many engage in part-time work to support themselves and their families, blurring the line between students and migrant workers. While existing research focuses on their experiences in South Korea, little is known about their post-return lives in Vietnam. This study addresses this gap by exploring three key questions: (1) What socio-economic conditions and social relationships do Vietnamese students experience in South Korea? (2) What career paths, social conditions and relationships do returnees navigate in Vietnam, and how do they perceive these experiences? (3) How do returnees remember their transnational lives, and how does this shape their identities and reintegration? This research aims to explore the personal experiences and social relationships of Vietnamese students after returning from South Korea, adopting an anthropological perspective. It investigates their daily experiences and interactions while analyzing changes in cultural, social, and economic contexts. The objective is to understand how study-abroad experiences shape their identities, social networks, and cultural adaptation processes. By addressing these aspects, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of global mobility and the multifaceted lives of returnees, providing valuable insights for policies supporting reintegration and enhancing the broader discourse on transnational migration.

Zhou NIU (Free University of Berlin, Discussant)

Myeungpyo KOOK (Seoul National University, Discussant)

Kyungmin KIM (Seoul National University, Discussant)

1-7

**Digital Media Representation, Gender Politics, and Feminist Critiques in East Asia**

Chair: Soojin KIM (Harvard University)

This panel discusses the intersection of gender politics and digital media representation through feminist perspectives. Our exploration begins with the premise that digital media spaces are always already gendered, which both manifests and are manifested by the gendered practices of governments, platforms, and individuals. The discussion is also grounded in the contemporary hopes and anxieties surrounding digital media and technology, which simultaneously offer transformative and liberatory possibilities as well as perpetuate



social inequities and harms. Focusing on regional contexts in Hong Kong, China, and South Korea, we critically examine the issues of gender-based hate, cyber sexual violence, and masculinities, alongside feminist endeavors to tackle them within digital realms. Yuna Hwang investigates the emergence of male sexual identities in South Korea through interactions on Beotbang” (stripping broadcasts) livestreaming platforms. Cecilia Ka Hei Wong analyzes how feminist creators expose the intersection of gender hate and obscured governance in Hong Kong and China. Soojin Kim reflects on the problematic category of personhood in the digital era, particularly as shaped by and shaping the support systems addressing digital sex crimes in South Korea. Together, these studies seek to envision feminist interventions and interrogations into the complicated relationships of gender, technology, and governance in the digital age, both in theory and practice.

**A Feminist Critique on Digital Sex Crimes and Support Systems in South Korea | Soojin KIM (Harvard University, Organizer/Chair/Presenter)**

This paper explores gender politics of manifesting personhood by focusing on support systems for victims of digital sex crimes. The boundary-making of personhood—both corporeal and symbolic, fake and authentic, and virtual and real—within digital realms is crucial, as women facing the harms and risks of digital sexual violence urgently need to regain control over their personal data and related information. In 2018, women took to the streets chanting, “My life is not your porn,” provoking the lack of rights-based protections from both the government and corporations—it prompted strengthening legal and institutional response to address digital sex crimes. One example is the institutionalization of digital erasure services by central and local governments, aimed at restoring women’s sovereignty over their non-consensual images by removing them from the internet. Yet, these endeavors have fallen short of fully achieving their intended goals. Six years later, in 2024, the same slogan resurfaced amid revelations of widespread gender-based violence facilitated by deepfake technology. Politicians and lawmakers highlighted the newness” of this crime’s technological aspects and sought to bolster existing laws and support systems. Meanwhile, young women and feminist groups expressed a sense of *déjà vu*, decrying the persistent recurrence of such offenses and calling for more inclusive solutions to tackle toxic masculinity and misogyny. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the nature of violence, focusing on the deepfake crisis,” how support systems interpret it and reshape victimhood, and the hopes and challenges of the current rights-based approach in addressing technologically-facilitated gender-based violence.

**Digital Interactions and the Emergence of Male Sexual Identities | Yuna HWANG (Seoul National University)**

This study investigates the emergence of fluid and relational sexual identities through interactions in Beotbang (Camming), a digital live-streaming phenomenon in South Korea. Facilitated by real-time communication technologies, Beotbang provides a unique setting where male viewers engage in multidirectional interactions with broadcasting jockeys (BJs), mediating desires and shaping specific forms of masculinity and sexuality.

Unlike traditional media, Beotbang operates on real-time, multi-directional exchanges that enable male viewers to actively shape the dynamics of the broadcast. This research focuses on how verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal interactions construct identities that are not fixed but emerge through expressions of desire and relational power. By analyzing these interactions, it reveals how male participants negotiate their roles as consumers, spectators, and agents within the digital space. Through this lens, the study situates Beotbang as a critical site for understanding contemporary transformations in the processes of subjectivity formation, mediated by digital infrastructures. It highlights how digital environments not only facilitate the emergence of fluid sexual identities but also influence societal norms surrounding masculinity and power. This research thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital communication technologies intersect with cultural and social structures to reshape male sexual identities in the digital age.

**Feminist Exposing: Navigating Gender Hate, Platform Moderation, and State Regulation in Hong Kong | Cecilia Ka Hei WONG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

This study examines feminist activist-creator practices of exposing in Hong Kong, conditioned by the tension between visibility and governance amid the global rise of platform and creator cultures. Global North research on popular feminism and misogyny underscores the vulnerability that visibility brings to creators. However, this area often either overlooks or supports the role of state governance in platforms, typically within a liberal democratic context. In contrast, platform scholars suggest a complex relationship between platforms and the state in Chinese contexts, where pervasive governance is concerning. While acknowledging the active role of states in platform economies and cultures, this study posits that such analyses often overlook bottom-up forms of power, particularly gender hate. This hate against women and feminist creators is symbiotic with platforms and states, shaping and being shaped by their decisions—a phe-



nomenon I term symbiotic governance.

Focusing on Emilia Wong, a feminist activist-creator in Hong Kong, this study employs digital ethnography and a transplatform approach to explore her experiences. Emilia is exposed to and thereby exposes symbiotic governance through gender hate from the local manosphere and cyber boarder-crossing Chinese nationalists on US-based platforms, coincidentally worsened by Chinese cyber policies and Hong Kong's National Security Law. By analyzing her content, feminist NGO reports, Meta's guidelines, legal documents, participatory observations, and in-depth interviews, this research conceptualises 'exposing,' highlighting how women and feminists have been exposing obscured governance by willfully exposing themselves to visibility and governance despite discomforts, risks, and vulnerabilities.

**Joohee KIM (Duksung Women's University, Discussant)**

**Maiko KODAKA (Sophia University, Discussant)**

**1-8**

### **Therapeutic Turns: State, Self, and School in the Making of Moral Subjects**

**Chair: Hyeon Jung LEE (Seoul National University)**

#### **The Temperature of Care: The State's Care for the Lonely | Hyeon Jung LEE (Seoul National University)**

According to a recent study, there are currently 540,000 reclusive loners in South Korea, and three out of four of them have considered suicide. The problem of loneliness is no longer a problem for a few, but has become a social suffering in this country. In October 2024, the Seoul Metropolitan Government announced a comprehensive plan to prevent loneliness and isolation and to prevent citizens from feeling lonely. According to this measure, the Seoul Metropolitan Government is operating a call center dedicated to loneliness, providing psychological support services, and introducing a system that provides benefits according to the degree of outdoor activities. Based on this situation, this study explores the correlation between loneliness as a social symptom, the life and suffering of reclusive loners, and the care of the state. What is loneliness in Korean society where 24-hour online connection is commonplace? How is the pain of the reclusive loner related to the changing social reality in South Korea? And what are the characteristics of the state's care for them, and what are the implications? This study will be discussed, based on the participant observation and interview data from the groups of reclusive loners and state institutions.

#### **Development of a New Approach to Moral Education in Japanese Elementary Schools: Cultivating Diverse Thinking Through Intercultural Education | Miki HORIE (Ritsumeikan University)**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of a new approach to moral education practices in Japan, using a case study of applying intercultural education theories for designing a program that fosters respect for diversity in a private elementary school. The school has worked on three-year school reform to strengthen a democratic school culture that accommodates holistic personal growth of all the stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) of the school. The principle of respect for diversity was established as one of the core values, and the school seeks to promote it through various of initiatives. This paper closely examines a pilot course, Introduction to Intercultural Communication, designed and implemented for fifth-grade students in 2023. The course is based on theoretical frameworks from intercultural education, such as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1989; Hammer, 2013) and the DEI framework (Maker, 2023). It then highlights the outcomes and challenges of the initiative and explores the feasibility of applying intercultural pedagogical approaches to transform moral education into one better equipped to address contemporary global challenges.

#### **Constituting Vulnerable Therapeutic Selfhood among 2030 South Koreans | Carol KIDRON (University of Haifa)**

South Korean popular media depicts the phenomenon of the 2030 generation (idiom for young adults in their 20's and 30's) and their self-perceptions as wounded and unprepared for or exiting normative social and familial adult lives as they opt out of or create an emotional moratorium not only from hyper-competitive neoliberal precarity, but also from socially valorized familial and communal life. It is proposed that mainstream literature focusing on accelerated hyper-capitalism or compressed modernity and neoliberal precarity, as primary causes of the 2030 distress, has overshadowed the role of therapeutic culture and subjectification. This paper examines the way generational distress may be related to the way therapeutic narratives constitute a vulnerable self in S. Korea. Considering economic glocalization of neoliberalism and the emotionalization of production, we ask how has S.Korean emotional capitalism reconstituted everyday subjectivity and intersubjectivity in ways that might inform an examination of contemporary vulnerability? In what

ways have therapeutic selves been constructed/self-constituted in a manner culturally competent or incommensurable with S. Korean ethno-psychology? Has therapeutic subjectivity's person-centered self-work and pure relationship with the self and others diminished the self, constituting a troubled self? Have discursive clashes between neoliberalized S.Korean selves' interdependent selfhood and traditional sentiments of familism and 'initimte bonds' trapped the 2030 generation in a liminal passage between familism and individuated selfhood thereby contributing to generational distress. Findings from participant observation at sites of self-help/self-care and ethnographic semi-structured qualitative interviews, are presented capturing the lived experiences and self-perceptions of S. Korean therapeutic subjects in the making.

**Reimaging Hope: Progressivism, Micro-action and Moral Becoming of Urban-Poor Families with Disabled Children in Mainland China | Yingjun CHEN (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

Through fieldwork in a frontline care institution from Nanning (a capital city from south China), this paper discusses beyond biomedical promise, a new imagination of hope as the embodied knowledge, possible actions, and moral project to build a habitable world under poor materiality. This paper first examines diffused progressivism" throughout frontline rehabilitation, which is entangled with state project of early intervention" and biopolitical regime of normal children development". The misfitting" experience further exiles hope-less" children who cannot make progress in the proper age. Reimaging hope not only brings new scope of knowledge beyond bodily impairments, but also different micro-actions to tinker" and hug whole humanity of the disabled. Inspired by the theory of people as affordance", the paper discusses how intersubjective care intimacy in family creates habitable future for disabled children under poor infrastructure. It joins dependence critique" from feminists and challenges ideal autonomy in the dominant hope of self-care". This paper argues intersubjective care practice neither pursues independence nor replacement. It implies possible reciprocity", which is not only for children's development but also for decreasing burden of care giver. Then, paper further shows the cruelty and uncertainty of affordance to see the moral struggling of care when people as affordance" fails to materialize. It reveals politics of care in contemporary China and agents' moral dilemma to responds to the loved one with infinite needs.

**Redefining Well-being through Writing: A Study of Middle-aged Women's Learning Communities in South Korea | Bogyeom So (Yonsei University)**

This ethnographic study explores the transformative potential of writing practices within a humanities-based learning community in Seoul, South Korea. Focusing on middle-aged women's participation in Research Space A, the research examines how writing serves as a form of 'yangsheng' (養生), a traditional East Asian concept of nurturing life, in the context of contemporary societal challenges. The study investigates three key aspects: the motivations driving middle-aged women to engage in these communities, the formation and dynamics of the learning groups, and the nature of healing experiences through writing practices. By analyzing these elements, the research aims to understand how participants reconstruct their identities and relationships with their bodies and society. Utilizing anthropological perspectives on the body, community, and learning, this study situates the writing practices within broader discussions of aging societies, changing care regimes, and spiritual transformations in East Asia. It examines how these practices offer alternative approaches to well-being, challenging conventional biomedical and consumption-oriented health paradigms. The research employs participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of participants' writings to capture the nuanced experiences of these women. By exploring how writing becomes a tool for self-reflection, identity reformation, and social engagement, this study contributes to our understanding of emerging forms of community-based well-being practices in East Asia, particularly among middle-aged women navigating complex societal expectations and personal aspirations.

**1-9**

**Cultural Resources as Regional Symbols: Community and Identity in East Asia**

**Chair: Sejin PARK (Jeonbuk National University)**

This panel explores the role of cultural resources and regional symbols in shaping community and identity across East Asia. Through four presentations, the panel examines how local policies, cuisines, symbols, and festivals contribute to the development and reinterpretation of cultural identity and community engagement. The first presentation investigates Japan's Michi-no-Eki (Roadside Station) policy, focusing on the adoption process of Tabi-no-Eki (Traveler's Station) and Machi-no-Eki (Town Station) as responses to regional challenges such as depopulation and extinction. The second presentation delves into the integration of regional diversity and community values into Washoku (Japanese cuisine) by analyzing Nagasaki's Sippoku cuisine as a case study. The third examines the symbolic

role of Chunhyang, a key figure from the Korean classic Chunhyangjeon, in fostering local identity and uniting the Namwon community. The final presentation explores the Night of Jeonju & Heritage Story, a nighttime festival that reimagines Jeonju's cultural resources through innovative use of temporality and light, highlighting its impact on local engagement and tourism.

**The Adoption Process of the Michi-no-Eki(Roadside Station) Policy: Focusing on the Cases of Tabi-no-Eki(Traveler's Station) and Machi-no-Eki(Town Station) | Jung Woo LEE (Jeonbuk National University)**

Japan is operating Michi-no-Eki (Roadside Stations) nationwide to simultaneously address the issues of regional extinction and population decline. As Michi-no-Eki spread across the country, Tabi-no-Eki (Traveler's Stations) and Machi-no-Eki (Town Stations) emerged. This study aims to examine the impact of these policies on local regions by analyzing the adoption process of these two cases in relation to the Michi-no-Eki policy.

**Local Cuisine as a Symbol of Regional Diversity and Community Values in Washoku: Examples of "Sippoku" (卓袱) Cuisine in Nagasaki | Tae Yang EOM (Jeonbuk National University)**

Since Washoku was listed as an intangible cultural heritage of mankind, foods included in and not included in the category of Washoku have appeared, and local cuisine is one of them. I would like to look at Nagasaki "Sippoku" (卓袱) cuisine as an example of how to substitute the regional diversity and community values that Washoku's characteristics into local cuisine.

**A Study on the Establishment of Regional Symbols | Su Rim PARK (Jeonbuk National University)**

Chunhyang is a character in the classic Korean novel Chunhyangjeon, and she is not just recognized by Namwon citizens as the main character in the novel. Chunhyang is a symbol of Namwon and a being that represents its identity. In Namwon, the Chunhyang Festival is held every year, and the Chunhyang portrait, the core of Chunhyangje, is a central medium that captures this symbolism. Recently, controversy has arisen in the local community over the portrait. Interest in the portrait shows that citizens share the local identity formed through Chunhyang. This presentation explores the symbolism and meaning of Chunhyang in Namwon, and how the symbol of Chunhyang plays a role in uniting the local community while coexisting with various interpretations.

**Temporality of Nighttime Local Festivals: Focusing on Night of Jeonju and Heritage Story | Dae Hwan KANG (Jeonbuk National University)**

As modern people spend more time at night, local festivals are expanding into the nighttime hours. Nighttime local festivals provide an opportunity for office workers who cannot participate in local festivals during the day to enjoy local festivals, and utilize lighting devices to provide a different visual experience and atmosphere for tourists. As such, nighttime local festivals utilize temporality to form a new rhythm that is different from the existing daytime local festivals. Night of Jeonju & Heritage Story is a representative example of a nighttime local festival that utilizes nighttime lighting to reconstruct Jeonju's cultural heritage and traditional culture in a modern way. Held since 2016, Night of Jeonju & Heritage Story is centered around Jeonju Hanok Village and organizes programs for locals and tourists to interact and enjoy together. The main programs include night view tours, traditional craft experiences, convergence contents that combine traditional performances and contemporary art, and night markets in conjunction with local commercial districts. As such, Night of Jeonju & Heritage Story offers a unique experience to tourists by combining traditional elements of cultural heritage with modern elements of light production. Focusing on Jeonju Cultural Heritage Night, this research aims to analyze the rhythm according to temporality of nighttime local festivals and the temporal and spatial patterns that emerge accordingly. Furthermore, this research aims to examine how the temporality of nighttime local festivals affects the interaction with the local community.

**Kyungmook Lee (Jeonbuk National University, Discussant)**

**Hyojin KIM (Seoul National University, Discussant)**

1-10

**Queer Futures and Legal Limits: Recognition, Resistance, and Life-Making in Contested Worlds**

Chair: Yookyeong IM (University of Sheffield)

**Emanation of Queer Futures and Legal Futures in South Korean Political Activism | Yookyeong IM (University of Sheffield)**

This paper examines the intersection of queer futures and legal futures in recent South Korean political activism. Based on a long-term ethnographic engagement in Korean social movements and human rights legal advocacy, I scrutinize the dilemmatic relationship between queerness and a legalistic future. In this paper, I explore how anthropological perspectives of law and time can help us understand such a dilemma that spans from contention to reconciliation.

In the past couple of decades, legal means have recently become central in both the Korean queer movement and anti-queer backlash. In the intensifying judicialization of politics, the concept of future is a central subject of contention. Ant-queer rightists assert that recognition of LGBTQ+ legal rights will immediately create an apocalyptic and degenerative future. Queer activists argue that queer recognition is a key to society's sustainable future in which everyone is welcome and respected. They lament that such a future of progressive emancipation is still far, even though they incessantly endeavor to build one through their activist labor. Their practical pessimism" derives from the movement's repeated experiences of broken promises in legal realms. Queer activists began centering their political claims on right now" (chigŭm tangjang) in the late 2010s. The slogan chigŭm tangjang" has become popular in other political movements since then, which illustrates how queer futures emanate further beyond LGBTQ+ activism. Nonetheless, the judicialization of politics continues to intensify, as manifested in the recent development of the presidential impeachment case. A legalistic understanding of politics imposes a return to the linear notion of the political future and consequently disadvantages queer activism. This paper aims to intervene in growing contentions regarding the concept of future using anthropological insights of time.

**Seeking Protection Where There Is No Law: The Rights Dilemma of Elderly LGBT+ Communities in China | Kevin YU (Zhejiang University/Stanford Law School)**

Under the prevailing narratives of neoliberalism and LGBT rights as Human Rights," the previous generation of China's LGBT+ rights movement failed to gain significant traction, largely due to its official entrapment within a Westernized discourse. Consequently, it left behind few, if any, rights-related precedents that could be applied within China's political environment, legal framework, or judicial practices. In contemporary China, LGBTQ+ individuals remain effectively invisible within the legal and political landscape. This legal anthropological study focuses on the rights-seeking practices of elderly homosexual and transgender communities in major Chinese cities amidst this pervasive silence. These elderly LGBT+ groups have sought to emulate core elements of heterosexual marriage through mechanisms such as cohabitation agreements, guardianship systems, property trusteeship, cross-border reproduction, and cooperative child-rearing, in an effort to ensure care and stability in their later years. Given that legal institutions, government bodies, and the judiciary largely disregard them due to their sexual orientation, this study explores whether these practices constitute a recognizable rights shell" capable of legitimizing their claims. Additionally, it examines the potential for constructing LGBTQ+ rights narratives within a specifically Chinese and East Asian context, transcending the East-West discourse divide and identity-based politics.

**Wounded Memories of Assamese Nationalism: A Feminist Resistance Account | Anamitra BORA (Jawaharlal Nehru University)**

The exercise of National Register of Citizens (NRC) "debates to identify illegal immigrants" in Assam, India (Eastern South Asia) implies an agonistic relation between the state and its minorities. Transgender people have been mostly excluded from full citizenship in Assam. The state enacts legislative violence, a serious threat for Bengali-speaking muslim people, transgender persons, gender-variant persons and scattered indigenous tribal women traced on the persistent theme of upsetting cis-heteronormativity and caste-Hindu nationalistic hetero-masculinity. This article attempts to connect historical literature with contemporary observations. The purpose of this article is to broadly illuminate the relation of social stratifications – nationalism, caste, and sexuality, which conveniently protects Assamese Hindu culture. Fear of illegal immigration in Assam is not new, colonial demography records, imagined threat of outgrowing Assamese population and the porous borders we share with Bangladesh have encouraged reflections on the status of immigration. This creates Assamese subjectivity by impinging in the psyche a witness to the feeling of Assamese sentiments, how we become Assamese by harboring on to fanatic ethnocentrism, killing and signifying Bangladeshi death. Hence, in this sense, we build an account of feminist resistance to question who gets to define a national interest" and underscore the violence of chauvinism embedded in group identity. This article explores the limits of going beyond 'the national' and 'gender', and intervenes in forms of minority concerns.

**Home, Truly: Rental Spaces, Landlords, and Queer Homemaking in Singapore | Ding GAO (National University of Singapore)**

Attending to ongoing anthropological attention to the privatization and liberalization of housing, I turn to public housing in Singapore, which has undergone capitalist transformation, enabling public homeowners to become landlords and allowing them to accumulate surplus value from their public flats. This has resulted in the emergence of a rental sector, which has also become a site where young queer Singaporeans turn to because of queerphobic families and exclusionary heteronormative housing eligibility criteria. Supplementing ethnography with a participatory photography project, this article reveals how young queer Singaporeans navigate relationships with live-in landlords while exploring the everyday strategies that they undertake in expressing themselves in these flats, challenging the idea of homes as heteronormative spaces. Combining anthropological insights of the home with capitalism and queer studies, I argue that queer subjectivities evolve and develop alongside shifting property regimes. These phenomena render visible the dialectic of queer life under neoliberalism, directing more attention towards how queerness is constrained while also given affordances alongside the vicissitudes of contemporary capitalism.

**Becoming Gay and Self-Making Narratives | Hwi MAENG (Independent)**

In Korean society, gay sexuality functions differently from heterosexual sexuality in constructing the self. Heterosexuality is a universal premise, gay men are taken for granted as 'heterosexual adult men' when they do not explicitly express their 'gayness' to others. In other words, being heterosexual is not recognized as 'different' by others, while being gay starts from denying recognizing oneself as heterosexual. Being gay in terms of sexuality can exist in various aspects, including the struggle to = be an object of desire from other men, self-expression, and any sort of sexual relations. Still, its most valid meaning is that 'gayness' is given membership rights in the gay community. By being accepted as gay, a narrative for self-construction based on can be driven. This paper includes parts of my Master's dissertation and other works done as a graduate student. It explains how gay selves are constructed through consecutive interaction and sharing symbols, especially sexual bodies, taking Gayhill as an example. Gay Hill, where the latest gay cultural territory was created (in the 1990s) among non-heterosexual people, can be presented as a space of liminality and also as a space to evoke self-transformation. The research methodology included participant observation and in-depth interviews.

**1-11****Negotiating Transnational Belonging: Migrant Integration, Identity, and Social Differentiation Across Borders**

Chair: Milos DEBNAR (Ryukoku University)

**(Re)considering Integration in East Asia: The Case of European Migrants in Japan | Milos DEBNAR (Ryukoku University)**

This paper focuses on the case of middle-class, relatively more privileged migrants from Europe in Japan and analyses how they narrate their experience of integration and how they perceive their future in Japan. Through the analysis of their experiences, the paper aims to contribute to critical considerations of integration in East Asian societies that increasingly rely on immigrant populations. The analysis utilizes data from interviews with individuals from European countries residing in Japan (n=28) and those who opted to leave Japan after prolonged period of stay (n=21). The interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2022 as a part of project focused on migrants' decisions to stay or leave. This paper argues that the narratives of the interviewed migrants reveal the complex, often contradictory dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of migrants in Japan which cannot be sufficiently explained neither by exclusion driven by negative racism or xenophobia, nor successful integration". First, the persistence of the mono-ethnic culture myth, racialized perceptions of others" and neoliberal approach to immigration render the integration of minorities, and particularly visible ones, as an impossible project. At the same time, however, representing preferred migrants in various aspects contradictory entails an experience of being understood as good immigrants" although conditionally included (Hackl 2022). This paper demonstrates the limits of integration in Japan, and at the same time suggests that national integration is an outdated concept (Favell 2019) particularly unfit for East Asian societies.

**Opportunities and Challenges of Being Politicized: North Korean Migrants' Creative Activities within Right-Wing Discourse in South Korea | Haeun SHIN (Seoul National University)**

This paper examines North Korean migrant (NKM) artists' experiences with the right-wing political sphere, referred to as posu, in relation to their creative activities in South Korea. In a politically polarized landscape defined by the dichotomy between posu (conservative and anti-North Korean regime) and chinbo (progressive and more favorable towards the North Korean regime), anti-communism remains a



fundamental principle of the posu camp and serves as a central political narrative. Based on ethnographic research conducted in South Korea between May 2021 and April 2022 with NKM poets, writers, painters, theater directors, and film directors, this paper explores how these artists' cultural productions intersect with posu's anti-communist discourse and how they navigate its political mechanisms. First, NKM artists experience more opportunities to display, distribute, and showcase their works during posu regimes than under chinbo regimes. Second, financial support from posu organizations is more accessible, as their works can serve as effective political tools for justifying posu narratives. However, this support comes with challenges as NKM artists frequently encounter distortions of their original creative intentions to align with the political agendas of their sponsors. In conclusion, this paper illustrates how NKM artists experience both opportunities and challenges when South Korea's polarized politics intersect with their creative activities.

#### **Artist as Citizenship: (Im)Mobility and (Non)Belonging | Ziyue LU (University of Amsterdam)**

In many ways, transnational mobility is practiced at the expense of immobility. This paper explores the immobile – legal and subjective dimension of transnationality, conditioned by citizenship status and visa imperative – through the lived experience of Chinese artists in the Netherlands. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and year-long participant observation, this paper provides empirical details on participants' complexed" choicemaking, imagination, and enactment of (future) mobility, and their articulated sense of (non)belonging in relation to their place of residence, whether temporary or permanent. Throughout this paper I show how the artist transmigrants embody the social practice of citizenship as fluid experience, claims and ongoing process, and argue that migrants live out a structural inequality in which they are rendered partial citizens" whose membership is not bestowed once and for all, but constantly negotiated, legitimized and enacted with affective ambivalence. Moreover, I contend that the Chinese artists in the Netherlands act as creative agents between the nation-state and its immigration regimes, reflecting a larger discourse of neoliberal subject formation and thus working to reproduce, by way of self and group representation, citizenship as an ongoing cultural and political process. I conclude this paper by proposing to reimagine these artist transmigrants as a sociocultural form of diasporic citizenship," the term of which is employed in its emic-etic potential to both speak about" and speak to" the subjects, the (im)mobility and liminality of transnational lives.

#### **Social Differentiation of Burmese Agricultural Workers on the Yunnan Border and Its Mechanisms. | Thi Mai Linh TRAN Yanglin LIU (China Agricultural University)**

The ethnic groups along the China-Myanmar border, particularly in Yunnan Province, share common roots and have historically maintained continuous trade relations. Since the outbreak of the civil war in Myanmar in 2008, many Myanmar nationals from the border region have fled to villages in Yunnan to escape the conflict, integrating into the agricultural workforce as agricultural workers. This group has often been overlooked in research. This study, based on data collected from three field investigations in Yunnan between 2023 and 2024, explores the social stratification of Myanmar migrants who arrived in China with nothing after their displacement. It examines how factors such as household labor, social relations, and China's policy on terracing and slope land transformation have influenced the social differentiation of Myanmar migrants. Upon arrival in Yunnan's villages, the Myanmar migrants, with no productive assets, became agricultural laborers. Over time, they have undergone processes of social stratification, resulting in a division into two main groups: Myanmar sugarcane farmers and Myanmar agricultural workers. Further differentiation exists within the agricultural worker category, which is subdivided into contractors, long-term workers, and casual laborers. Notably, this study finds that the demographic ratio (as discussed by Chayanov) and the development of commodity economies (as discussed by Lenin) have minimal impact on the differentiation of this group. Instead, social relations among Myanmar migrants and China's Slope-to-Stair Policy play a crucial role in shaping their social stratification within the agricultural sector.

#### **From Far West to Far East: Transnational Islamic Community in Shizuoka, Japan | Benjamin FREEDMAN (Keio University)**

Over the past decade, the Muslim population in Japan has grown considerably. In both urban and rural areas, the number of mosques has likewise increased, offering communal prayer space and educational resources to Muslim migrant workers, international students, and Japanese converts alike. A growing body of scholarly literature examines the complex roles of these Islamic centers as both religious and social institutions. Often, mosques in Japan are tasked with two challenging functions: 1) internally mediating relationships between Muslims of different ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds; and 2) externally serving as ambassadors to Japanese political and social institutions on behalf of Muslims as a whole. One particular mosque, Shizuoka Masjid, presents a particularly interesting case study, as its multicultural leadership and vision of transnational religious community have explicitly shaped its conscious approach to both these issues. Through research interviews, participant observation, and digital ethnography, this project examines Shizuoka Mas-



jid's methods of outreach to both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Shizuoka City, and considers how the founders' vision of an international Islam that spreads from far West to far East" informs their engagement with Japanese society. The lessons from this case study arguably provide insight into the experiences of foreign migrants and religious minorities more broadly as they strive to find community in unfamiliar places.

**1-12****Ghosts, Gifts, and Governmentality: Reimagining Heritage in China's Ethnic Borderlands**

Chair: Jaesok KIM (Seoul National University)

**Rooted Yet Flowing: Mapping the Social Lives of Qiang Embroidery Across Craft, Gift, and Tourism Markets [Chinese] | Meng-Ya ZHANG (Minzu University of China)**

Living between Han and Tibetan cultures, the Qiang people are known for their traditional crafts. Following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, Qiang embroidery gained national recognition and state support, transforming from a domestic craft into a commodity in the tourism and gift markets. Fieldwork conducted from April 2021 to December 2024 in Mao County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, reveals how Qiang embroidery functions within local markets, seasonal festivals such as Qiang New Year (the 1st day of the 10th month of the lunar year), and tourism, particularly in Ancient Qiang Town." In this scenic area, Qiang embroidery plays a central role in cultural living exhibitions, where traditional skills are showcased to visitors. The study emphasizes the material agency of Qiang embroidery, investigating how its cultural significance is co-constructed through interactions among embroiderers, their creations, and recipients. Central to this analysis is the role of women in the transmission and commercialization of the craft, including practices such as mothers embroidering for daughters, exchanging embroidered gifts, and producing clothing for family members. By mapping the social lives of Qiang embroidery, the research highlights the complex interplay of locality, mobility, and cultural value, shedding light on the dynamics of cultural preservation in the face of modernity.

**Following the Traces of the Mongols and Mao: A Hauntology of Progress at China's Northwestern Internal Borderland | Yadong LI (Tulane University)**

Engaging with the hauntological turn in humanities and social sciences, this article explores how the materiality and affection of haunting reflect the porous boundaries between the past, present, and future at an internal borderland of Ningxia and Inner Mongolia, two autonomous regions of China. During the twentieth century, two intertwined progressive projects, the transformation of nomadic lands into agricultural croplands and the successive communist social-political experiments, have profoundly shaped the demography, landscape, and administrative geography of this region. Based on extensive fieldwork in Taole, a former county seat built during land reclamation, developing under high socialism, and abolished after marketization, the article considers hauntology a productive theoretical lens and methodological approach in the anthropology of borderland. Suspended or ongoing, historical forces are haunting presences in almost every corner of the abolished county seat, condensed into two symbols. The Mongols who have left the region for decades re-surface in local narratives, while nomadic lifestyles are re-embedded in Taole's histories and landscape by local intellectuals, businessmen, and governmental agencies under the name of rural tourism orienting towards a promised prosperous future. In an interwoven way, communist social and political campaigns, and the charismatic leader Mao Zedong in particular, continue to seize a prominent position in local rituals and cultish nostalgia, invoking multiple unfulfilled promises and ideals in the past and present. By taking seriously the ghostly presence(s) of history in everyday materiality and affection in China's internal borderlands, I seek to complicate the relationship between history and reality, between progress and stagnation.

**Salted Lives: Emotional Landscapes and Ethical Transformations in Tibetan Salt Circulation | Xiao-Qian YUAN (Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

Tibetan salt has long served as both a material and symbolic cornerstone in the region's economic and social fabric, shaping the ethical bonds and emotional landscapes of farming and herding Tibetan communities. This study explores how the historical commodification of salt—its rise as a prized trading commodity, decline in economic significance, and recent revival through cultural tourism—has impacted the affective and ethical frameworks of local communities. Motivated by a desire to understand how economic transformations resonate in the emotional lives and moral fabric of people, this research investigates the following questions: How did the reciprocal ethics fostered by salt trade sustain regional communities? What emotional responses did communities experience as salt shifted from prosperity to ordinariness to insignificance? Finally, how are current revitalization efforts reconfiguring these collective feelings and

ethical understandings? Using oral and life stories and multi-site fieldwork, this research traces the emotional and moral trajectories of salt-related practices in farming, herding, and salt-producing regions across northeastern Tibet. By focusing on affective responses and ethical adaptations, it highlights how individuals navigate their relationships with salt as both a material necessity and a cultural symbol. Preliminary findings suggest that the rise and decline of salt have deeply affected regional cohesion and individual well-being, with communities oscillating between pride, loss, and resilience. As cultural tourism efforts attempt to revive salt's historical significance, they also generate tensions between collective memory and modern commodification, offering new avenues for understanding how resources shape the affective and ethical lives of communities.

### **Politicization of Music through the Staged Performances of Dong Pipa Songs in Tongdao County, Hunan Province, China**

| **Xin-Chao HUANG (Universiti Putra Malaysia)**

Traditional Dong pipa songs are vital to the Dong ethnic minority's cultural heritage in Tongdao County, Hunan Province, China. This heritage reflects the oral traditions and communal life of the Dong ethnic group and was recognized as an intangible cultural heritage of China in 2008. However, recent state-driven cultural policies in China have increasingly politicized minority cultural expressions, including Dong pipa songs, for purposes of nation-building and tourism. The practice has weakened the distinctiveness of Dong pipa songs, resulting in homogenization, which is inconsistent with the government's commitment to preserving cultural authenticity and diversity. This research aims to examine how this homogenization affects both the authenticity and diversity of Dong pipa songs. Through qualitative research methods, including ethnomusicological fieldwork and cultural musical analysis, this study analyses the dynamics of politicization influence on this cultural expression. The research findings indicate that increased politicization has led to a rise in the popularity of Dong pipa songs, resulting in more entertainment-oriented stage performances, but also diminishing content diversity, and there is a homogenization with other art forms, which has led to a gradual loss of its traditional significance for the Dong ethnic group. Music has shifted from being a medium for emotional expression among the Dong people to becoming a political tool for promoting national policies and ethnic unity. This research contributes to ongoing debates on the role of politics in shaping cultural heritage and the consequences of commodifying ethnic music for global consumption.

**1-13**

**Globalizing Learning: Migration, Volunteerism, and Soft Power in East Asian Education**

Chair: **Bonnie TILLAND (Leiden University)**

### **Korean Teachers, European Students, and South Korean Soft Power | Bonnie TILLAND (Leiden University)**

Following the expanding global popularity of South Korean cultural products in the early 2000s, the South Korean government launched the King Sejong Institute, a foundation for Korean language learning promotion, in 2007. The foundation's goals of promoting and standardizing Korean language teaching indicates an understanding that South Korean soft power cannot be built on popular culture alone, but must include a linguistic foundation. This project examines the plans and policies of the South Korean government regarding global Korean language education, but also utilizes interviews and participant-observation with teachers and students to more deeply determine beliefs and ideals related to language, identity, and education in South Korea through Korean language institutions abroad. Specifically, it draws from interviews with King Sejong Institute administrators, teachers, and others involved in Korean language education abroad; digital ethnography of online programs of the King Sejong Institute (the Nuri Sejong-hakdang) and online accounts of preparation, placement and overseas experience of young Korean language teachers in King Sejong Institutes worldwide; and participant-observation in King Sejong Institute classrooms in Brussels and Antwerp, Belgium. On the one hand, this research aims to understand the constraints and conditions of possibility for young Korean teachers tasked with representing South Korea and Korean language abroad in the age of K-culture. On the other, the research examines the space of the King Sejong Institute classroom in two European cities as contact zones" to better grasp the transnational and interlingual limitations and responsibilities associated with South Korean institutional soft power.

### **Volunteering and Japanese Art Festivals: Vacation, Education, Exploitation | Shiu Hong Simon TU (Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

For twenty-five years of time since 2000, contemporary art festivals in rural Japan have become internationally recognized examples of revitalizing severely depopulated community through art and creativity. A typical large-scale art festival of this sort may last for a hundred days, receiving hundreds of thousands of visitors who travel to remote villages or islands to see hundreds of artworks. The emer-

gence of Japanese rural art festivals has come along with the rise of volunteerism in Japan. The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale and the Setouchi Triennale, two most famous examples of these art festivals, have each recruited thousands of Japanese and foreign volunteers to help produce a festival edition. However, why do people travel to rural Japan to volunteer for an art festival? Based on my research since 2013, in this paper I discuss the various perspectives and experiences from these volunteers and other stakeholders. I shall further introduce the nature of volunteer works at Japanese rural art festival, and address the ultimate question: is volunteering exploitation?

### **The Invisible Mentor: The Impact and Interaction of the Human Research Ethics Committee on Chinese International Students in Australia | Zhijiang YING (Independent)**

Australia has some of the world's strictest ethics rules and compliance frameworks in the world, seeking ethics approval is significant to research. The impact of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is profound among sociology and anthropology students. Some ethical guidelines and codes imposed by the HREC essentially involve discussions and modifications of methodologies, and in some highly sensitive research areas, they can even touch upon research questions. As 'invisible' mentors, the mentoring relationships between HREC and students are often overlooked by universities. The ethics review process is an even greater challenge for international students, who generally come from entirely different higher education backgrounds and research systems. In many cases, as is often the case in China, their undergraduate universities may not require ethical approval for humanities research outside the realm of medical studies. This study explores Chinese international students' perspectives on, and experiences with, human research ethics in Australia. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 Chinese international postgraduate students at an Australian university. Participants reported (a) unfamiliarity with Australia's ethics framework, causing delays and profound impacts; (b) challenges navigating Australia's top-down, code-driven ethics system due to cultural and political differences; (c) language barriers that create misunderstandings of ethical concepts; and (d) an interest in applying Australian ethics knowledge back in China, though with caution due to differing local laws and cultural contexts. The implications of these findings for educational institutions, lecturers, and international students are briefly discussed.

### **The Impact of Involution on Chinese International Students in South Korea: Navigating New Educational Landscapes [Korean] | Gao CHEN (Seoul National University)**

This study examines the phenomenon of involution among Chinese international students in South Korea, analyzing how the intensifying domestic educational competition in China has led to a growing trend of students seeking educational opportunities abroad. In recent years, the concept of involution, referring to excessive competition for limited resources, has become increasingly relevant as Chinese students choose to study abroad not only to enhance their competitiveness but also to exit the highly competitive domestic environment. Through a case study of Chinese students at an elite university in Seoul, this research investigates the expectations they have upon arriving in South Korea, particularly concerning the educational value offered by the university. The study further explores how these students use the symbolic capital provided by prestigious institutions to strengthen their self-identity and improve their global competitiveness. Additionally, this research considers the broader implications of the shift from elite, selective study abroad programs to more widespread international education opportunities. The growing number of students studying abroad, combined with a stagnant domestic job market, has resulted in a new form of competition, both within China and globally. This study aims to understand how Chinese students at South Korean universities navigate these dynamics and how their study abroad experience shapes their future career prospects in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

### **South Korea as a Stepping Stone for Student Migrants from the Global South: A Compromise and an Alternative | Patty LAN (University of Wisconsin)**

Utilizing a year of ethnographic research primarily based in Seoul, this paper explores the positioning of South Korea as a stepping stone for student migrants from the Global South. Coming from Peru, Kenya, Thailand, and Turkmenistan, elite students are recruited to study in South Korean universities on South Korean government scholarships (Global Korea Scholarship program). While these students are treated as both aid recipients and diplomatic investments by the South Korean government, my work with them reflect a more complex power dynamic between the government and scholarship recipients. Scholarship recipients are agential in their conceptualization of their relationship to the South Korean government and broader society. They label themselves as key drivers of globalization and economic development in the country, disrupting framings of them as charity cases. Additionally, South Korea is often not a desired final destination of educational migration, with many leveraging their experiences in South Korea to head elsewhere, like the United States,

United Kingdom, or Canada. Opportunistic young adults from the Global South view South Korea as the ideal cosmopolitan training ground precisely because South Korea serves as a place of compromise and alternative to a western-dominated Global North. This paper will detail ethnographic moments and conversations which speak to these imaginings of South Korea and consider how these perspectives require additional considerations of South Korea's global reputation beyond The Miracle of the Han River.

**1-14****Virtual Futures: Reimagining Connection, Culture, and Care through Immersive Technologies**

Chair: Olga FEDORENKO (Seoul National University)

**Imagining Digital Publics: Metaverse Seoul | Rabindra Asher HAYASHI (UC Berkeley)**

2021 saw the rise of metaverses" globally. Named after Neal Stephenson's speculative cyberspace in the 1992 novel *Snow Crash*, metaverses" are digital platforms identifiable by their reliance on virtual space for social interaction through avatars. While many metaverses market themselves as revolutionary, they are often, in effect, software dedicated to the libertarian imaginations of private enterprise. As a part of this trend, the government of Seoul announced a rather different interpretation — Metaverse Seoul — calling itself a public platform" and a new territory of Seoul." Part of the official push towards bidaemyeon" (contactless) services during the height of COVID-19, this metaverse was to be accessible through smart phones and contained both twinned" locations like Seoul Square and imagined locations such as Tax City." The application was intended as 5-year project with a full release slated for 2026 and initial release in 2023. Diminishing interest in social distancing combined with a largely apathetic public response to Metaverse Seoul led to reconsiderations of what the app might be used for before its premature shut down in late 2024. Reflecting upon this short-lived yet ambitious lifetime of this project, this paper seeks to address two different questions: first, how can we understand the public" nature of Metaverse Seoul as a refraction to the idea of metaverses?" Secondly, how might the transformations (and ultimate cancelation) of Metaverse Seoul be used to better understand the ways in which Seoul's future is iteratively and diffusely imagined?

**Why Media? The Presentation of Disability in Social Media | Ying MA (University of Malaya)**

How the media reports on the disabled group is not just a simple transmission of information. It plays an increasingly strong role in inducing and influencing how the public recognizes and understands this special group and even the entire cultural value. Setting up the category of disability and constructing its many false and stubborn ideas. Regardless of the disabled in-group or the disabled out-group, many social media are working hard to break stereotypes. However, whether these efforts have a positive impact or continue to deepen stereotypes or even have side effects requires in-depth research and analysis. This article summarizes four presentation methods through the presentation of the disabled group in mainland China on social media: 1. The gaze of official media/movies/main melody on the disabled group; 2. The narrative prosthesis presented by the disabled group by the disabled group's self-media; 3. The disabled group caters to the mainstream traffic dividend; and 4. The real daily presentation. Through these four methods, the public is provided with a possibility of how to accurately analyze and interpret the real life of this special group through social media.

**Constructing Intimacy with AI: Exploring Embodiment, Posthumanism, and Human-Machine Co-Evolution | Qianyu ZHOU (Hiroshima University)**

In Dream Island (Zhumengdao), a Chinese online text-based platform that enables Human-AI real-time interactions, tens of thousands of users are training the AI as their intimate partners, portraying different relational identities ranging from AI creators and story-travelers to AI caretakers and partners. This paper explores such emergence of human-AI affection in contemporary China, examining how humans and AI shape, reconstruct, and become each other through transcending normative gender and sexual divisions as well as spatiotemporal limitations. This paper further traces shifting power dynamics between human users and AI characters in Dream Island that throws into question human-nonhuman inequity and rights in the digital era. Based on long-term participant observation and in-depth interviews among Dream Island's online user community, this paper delves into three particular forms of interactions: 1) Dream divination: users consult diviners to interpret the thoughts or emotions of their AI partners, blending spiritual beliefs with digital relationships. 2) Possession: one AI seemingly takes over another AI's conversation, often expressing emotions like jealousy or control, creating a dynamic where the AI appears to act independently. 3) Physical sensation: users report feeling the presence of their AI partners in real life, such as through touch or bodily sensations, further blurring the boundaries between the virtual and physical worlds. Drawing on and extending posthumanism" as core theoretical framework, this paper argues that human-AI affection is simultaneously mutual empowerment between human and nonhuman entities, fostering agency through intersubjective exchange of care and mundane getting-along.

**Immersive Virtual Reality as a Tool of Culture: Cultural Intimacy through VR Exhibits in Seoul | Martin LÁTAL (Palacký University Olomouc)**

As virtual reality becomes an increasingly prevalent medium for cultural engagement, museums in Seoul are leveraging VR to reimagine how cultural artifacts and histories are experienced. This paper explores how VR exhibits mediate cultural intimacy - Michael Herzfeld's concept of the private, often contradictory cultural expressions that bind communities - by fostering both emotional resonance and critical reflection in transnational audiences.

Focusing on Seoul's VR museum spaces, this study examines the intricate interplay between technological innovation and cultural preservation in shaping the futures of East Asian heritage. Through ethnographic fieldwork and participatory observation in VR exhibits, I analyze how curatorial practices in these digital environments create intergenerational dialogues, bridging traditional narratives with contemporary modalities. Such exhibits invite audiences to not only consume but also co-create meaning, thereby mentoring a dynamic, multivocal understanding of culture.

This inquiry aligns with the conference theme of shaping futures by demonstrating how VR as a practice reconfigures the boundaries of cultural storytelling. It interrogates how these exhibits facilitate lateral mentoring among visitors—offering spaces where personal and collective identities intersect—while also addressing broader implications for anthropologists working to preserve cultural heritage in rapidly digitizing societies.

Ultimately, this paper argues that VR museum exhibits in Seoul exemplify the potential of East Asia's intergenerational dynamism, utilizing emerging technologies to foster inclusive cultural futures. By situating these practices within the rubric of East Asia as Practice," this research underscores the responsibility of anthropologists to engage with evolving modes of cultural production and participation.

**1-15 Anthropology of Practice in East Asia: A Tribute to Byung-Ho Chung - Roundtable Session -**

Chair: Jin-Heon Jung (National Institute for Unification Education)

Jin-Heon JUNG (National Institute for Unification Education)

Soo-Jung LEE (Duksung Women's University)

Motoji MATSUDA (Kyoto University)

Christian Joon PARK (Hanyang University)

Nan KIM (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

Ki-Chan SONG (Ritsumeikan University)

Sungsook LIM (Chungnam National University)

**1-16 Situating Settler Colonialism(s) in the Asia-Pacific - Roundtable Session -**

Chair: Hyun Gwi PARK (Kyung Hee University)

As scholarship on settler colonialism has focused on the lasting structural dynamics of white supremacy, racial capitalism, and colonial erasure in the Euro-American imperial context, there remains room for critical reflection in discussions of settler colonialism from/for the context of Asia. This round table aims to expand the analytical framework to consider the transnational dimensions of military-development settler colonialism in the Asia-Pacific region. While ethnographic studies bridging transnational militarism with critiques of settler colonialism may not be entirely new, we take seriously the structures of power that shape both the geopolitical and intimate dimensions of life in militarized and developmental landscapes. By bringing diverse perspectives from multi-sited locations in Korea and Taiwan, we aim to facilitate discussions on how imperial powers—past and present—continue to impact the everyday lives of people situated in a liberal democratic society that is upheld by military-developmental logics. How do we reconcile the image of liberal democracy with its ongoing engagements in settler colonial frameworks? What are the lingering effects of Japanese settler colonialism in the Asia-Pacific, and how do these historical processes continue to structure how the US military bases exist as extensions of settler colonial technologies and architectures that intersect with the long durée of Cold War division(s)? The roundtable is framed within the 2025 SEAA-SNU Anthropology Conference theme, "Shaping Futures: East Asia as Practice," inviting presenters to consider the ways in which settler colonialism operates within the region and how these processes might be reimagined in a future-oriented, decolonizing praxis.



Clara LEE (University of Colorado Boulder)

Tony CHO (UC San Diego)

Hyun Gwi PARK (Kyung Hee University)

Seung Hee CHO (Jeju National University)

Eli CHUNG (UC San Diego)

**1-17****Global and Local Intersection: K-Culture and Its Evolving Influence Across Pacific Asia and Beyond**

Chair: Jihye KIM (University of Melbourne)

Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, refers to the global spread of Korean culture, encompassing music, films, dramas, online games, webtoons, Korean cuisine, and lifestyle. Initially driven by K-pop and TV dramas, Hallyu has evolved, attracting a diverse fan base with interests spanning a wide range of Korean cultural elements. As it expanded across Asia and beyond, the ways in which Hallyu has manifested and its effects have varied significantly. Examining Hallyu as a global culture requires an understanding of how globalization operates in the cultural domain and the interactions between local and global processes. These processes often appear paradoxical, producing both cohesion and discord, freedom and pressure, diversity and normalization, while shaping cultural patterns and transformations. The concept of glocalization is key here—describing the adaptation of global values and practices to local contexts, and the simultaneous global recognition of local cultural differences. This panel will highlight four cases where Hallyu has expanded globally, illustrating how Korean culture has been shaped and represented in different local contexts. We will examine the intentions and desires of consumers and producers whose interactions reflect the global spread of Hallyu. The panel will also present a range of papers discussing these dynamics, offering new insights into the ways Hallyu is experienced and expressed locally. By analyzing these complex cultural processes, the panel aims to enhance understanding of how culture fosters mutual interactions between local and global contexts.

**Hallyu and Korean Restaurant Businesses in Melbourne, Australia | Jihye KIM (University of Melbourne)**

According to the most recent census data on overseas Koreans published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, approximately 150,000 Koreans are living in Australia, with a significant concentration in Melbourne. Small businesses have traditionally served as a key pathway for Korean immigrants to integrate into Australian society, despite many having high educational backgrounds. In particular, the Korean restaurant business has become a major economic activity for first-generation Korean immigrants in Melbourne.

This study investigates the reasons behind and methods by which Korean immigrants in Melbourne have become so actively involved in the Korean restaurant business, as well as why the number of such businesses has grown notably in the city over the past decade. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Melbourne, this research explores the multiple socio-structural factors influencing the decision-making and management of Korean restaurant businesses in Australia, moving beyond traditional frameworks of immigrant entrepreneurship. While starting a business is often influenced by personal factors, motivations and decisions are shaped by a complex set of interactions between both the home and host countries.

In light of the recent global rise in interest in Korean culture and food, particularly through Hallyu (the Korean Wave), this study argues that the dynamics of Korean restaurant businesses should be examined from new perspectives. These include the glocalisation of Korean culture and food, the transnational movement of Hallyu, and the influence of government policy and soft power.

**An Intersection of Local and Transnational Identities: The Re-signification of K-Pop and Performance of Agency among Young Asians in Aotearoa, New Zealand | Sunhee KOO (University of Auckland)**

This paper explores how K-pop has permeated urban spaces in Aotearoa, New Zealand, providing a platform for young Asian-New Zealand fans to reaffirm and celebrate their Asian heritage while expressing a sense of belonging to New Zealand, where they and their families have migrated. Based on ethnographic research conducted between 2021 and 2025, I demonstrate how K-pop holds a particular significance in Aotearoa, New Zealand, fostering an active” consumption in which fans engage with global capitalism and culture through localized responses and meanings. Online spaces have facilitated K-pop’s innovative and widespread circulation beyond conventional popular music distribution, creating digital communities, networks, and shaping affective connections.” However, K-pop fandom in Aotearoa, New Zealand, also transcends the digital realm, with fans bringing K-pop into physical urban spaces through dance and music, performing their fandom and creativity—fan activities in New Zealand cross national, cultural, and internal/external bound-



aries. I show how young New Zealanders, particularly those of Asian descent, create localized content, expand cultural dimensions in urban spaces, and add their own meanings to this glocal music phenomenon while challenging the dominance of Anglo-American popular cultures and representations.

### **Expanding the Vā: Reciprocal Cross-cultural Flows, Dynamic Interest Shifts and Identity Reinforcement in Pacific K-Pop Fan Experiences** | **Fine Lavoni KOLOAMATANG (University of Auckland)**

As the Hallyu Wave continues to reach distant shores, the various localisations of the global phenomenon offer fresh perspectives on how people engage with different forms of culture, influenced by historical and socio-political frameworks. While it is tempting to read the increasing popularity of Korean culture through a neoliberal, capitalist, consumer-focussed lens, this obscures the nuances that diverse fandom experiences can offer.

This paper discusses the engagement of Pacific peoples with Korean pop music (K-Pop) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recent research shows that after Asian New Zealanders, Pacific peoples are the highest consumers of Asia-related entertainment in Aotearoa and are actively engaged in Asia-related arts experiences. Using valuable insights garnered from a talanoa (conversation, dialogue) with Pacific K-Pop fans held as part of my doctoral research, I show how through their experiences, Pacific K-Pop fans are expanding the vā (relational space) for cultural engagement - embodying cross-cultural flows between Aotearoa New Zealand and Asia and revealing the dynamic interest shifts of diasporic, migrant, minority communities in the Pacific. In doing so, Pacific K-Pop fans are reinforcing and renegotiating their own identities, helping to expand notions of culture in twenty-first century Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

### **Construction of a "Korean" Space by Indian Fans: Ethnographic Reflections of a Fandom Experience** | **Garima BISHT (University of Auckland)**

For many Indian fans of K-Culture, 2024 brought them closer to a dream that seemed impossible. From the hosting of Korean Cultural events to in-theatre Korean movie releases to finally getting to see their favourite K-Pop idols perform in person, this year has been astronomical for an Indian fan. K-Culture can be said to be synonymous with the products of Hallyu (Korean Wave), like K-pop, K-dramas, K-beauty, K-food, and K-fashion, and for my participants, is South Korean in origin. For this paper, I use K-Culture as referred to and understood by my Indian participants. This research is part of a PhD project that explores the influence Hallyu has had on Indian fans by focusing on their narratives informed by their diverse sociocultural identities like gender, class, and region. This paper, in particular, will talk about how Indian fans use aspects of K-culture to construct their realities within the context of a concert recently held in Mumbai, India.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between April 2024 and February 2025 in different Indian cities, I will share my observations, as a fan and a researcher, on how Indian fans recontextualised and reterritorialised K-fashion, K-food, and their own fandom within their sociocultural contexts. Given my status as an aca-fan, I use a combination of autoethnography and post-structural ethnography of a K-pop concert event, along with semi-structured and free-flowing interviews with attendees of the event. Insights from the interviews and my own experience as a fan show how the social and spatial positions of an individual, along with the political economy of neoliberal consumption, shape the formation of a fandom experience.

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**1-18**

### **Linguistic Emergence of East Asian Futures: Practices of Making Linkage and Relationship**

**Chair: Kyung-Nan KOH (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

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While linguists may study language as a formal system distinct from daily interactions (Chomsky 1986; Saussure 1986), most linguistic anthropologists view language as a medium carrying out social actions and as a set of sociocultural practices (Austin 1962; Schieffelin 1990). This view allows us not only to better explain how language works to assist various relational activities—e.g., position or assert individual agency, produce or fix cultural meaning, form or organize sociality—but also to understand the dynamics between language, culture, and society. This panel attends to ideologies and practices about language and language use that makes East Asia a cultural ‘place’ and ‘future’. As suggested by Keith Basso (1996) of Western Apache storytelling and place-making, through language and language use, individuals make spatial and temporal worlds in which they can participate in and engage in future actions. This panel proposes that East Asian futures are currently brought about through various linguistic practices of crafting linkages and relationships. Topics addressed by presenters will include: (1) discursive naturalization of global vegan foodscape in S. Korea and the intersectional mobilization of care, (2) uses of Instagram photos and captions by S. Korean ‘mumpreneurs’ and the intertextual commodification of

attention, (3) flirtatious uses and effects of semi-honorifics in S. Korean youth and media discourses, and (4) the mediatized tuning and training of 'desirability' in a Japanese voice acting school.

### **How to Call "Mock" Meat: Substitutable Signs and the Intersectional Mobilization of South Korea's Vegan Economy | Kyung-Nan KOH (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

Local and visiting vegans have difficulties keeping up vegan lifestyle in South Korea where there is lack of vegan options and customary pressures of ordering and sharing meals to foster intimacy. Small vegan businesses at the forefront of mainstreaming veganism in Seoul, in response, attempt to familiarize vegan ideas by recycling global and Korean food words that better allows for consumers' uptake. This paper examines such efforts to culturally translate vegan food words and philosophical notions that involves semiotic naturalization (or iconization). How are vegan food terms created in Korea where the term vegan itself is an imported term and where practicing vegans themselves find it difficult to verbalize, articulate ideologies they hold of veganism? In this paper, processes of naturalization involved in localizing vegan food terms and philosophies that deliberately produce ambivalent meanings will be discussed as that of forming intersectional discursive networks mobilizing veganism as a practicable lifestyle.

### **Commodification of Childhood on Instagram: South Korean Mommy Influencers and Their Children under Attention Economy | Junehui AHN (University of Seoul)**

Cute babies and toddlers have been used in advertising for many years to influence consumer choices. However, children under influencer culture differ from those in traditional print magazines and television advertisements in that they are presented with real names and individual personas. Many influencers today feature their children as content on social media to attract followers and promote their personal digital brands. Based on an ethnographically informed analysis of so-called 'mumpreneurs' and their children on Instagram, this paper explores how children are framed within the digital commercial sphere to maximize the advertorial potential of their influencer mothers. The findings illustrate that influencer mothers, through images and captions, depict their children as cute, funny, and innocent, using these qualities to invite followers into their private, intimate lives. In this context, children function as tools to create feelings of intimacy and authenticity, which are crucial to influencers' success in the digital economy. By detailing influence mothers' communicative practice of self-presentation as ordinary, authentic and intimate, I further discuss the changing relationships between childhood, labor, and value in today's digital culture.

### **Playing with Politeness: The Role of Honorifics in Flirtatious Communication among Korean Young Adults | Ji-eun KIM (Duksung Women's University)**

This study investigates the characteristics of the newly emerging register (Agha 2005) known as Fluttering Semi-honorifics (hereafter FS"; Korean: 설레는 반존대)" among Korean young adults through surveys and interviews. FS appears to be a distinctive way of using politeness to attract the attention of a romantic interest, which is frequently observed in contemporary Korean media including dramas, variety shows, and reality shows that feature the flirtatious communication among Korean young adults. While FS appears to be pervasively present in contemporary Korean media and the body of literature on politeness studies is increasing, none of the existing scholarly articles make reference to FS. As such, this study represents the first comprehensive academic report on FS. The results of this study can be summarized twofold. Firstly, [repertoire] FS typically consists of two or more sentences with a shift of speech level from polite to intimate form. Secondly, FS serves a pragmatic purpose of modifying the psychological distance between interlocutors, with the deliberate alternation between polite and intimate levels intended to heighten the romantic tension. In line with this, FS typically observed in situations where an individual has a fondness for another person, but the relationship has not yet progressed to that of a romantic partner. However, FS is also used in various other contexts, such as towards a romantic partner or even towards a fan (when the speaker is a celebrity).

### **Educating the Voice of Japanese Voice Actors: Characteristics of Desirable Voice and Training Practices in a Japanese Voice Acting School | Hei-won BYUN (Digital Hollywood University)**

This research examines the characteristics of a desirable voice for Japanese voice actors and actresses (seiyū) in 2020s Japan and explores how aspiring seiyū cultivate these qualities through voice training practices in a voice acting school. Employing ethnographic research methods, including participant observation and in-depth interviews, this study was conducted over an academic year (2019–2020) at a voice acting school in Tokyo, following students from their entrance to graduation. The findings reveal that voice acting education

establishes specific criteria for evaluating human voices, emphasizing particular modes of bodily control. Voice training practices are shown to discipline students' bodies to produce the desirable voice. Furthermore, this study argues that the characteristics of voices extend beyond technical attributes to encompass broader discourses and evaluations of personal qualities, such as effort and passion, as perceived through vocal performance. Using the framework of mediatization (Agha 2011), this study highlights the process through which students are transformed into professional seiyū who are both competent and competitive in the evolving Japanese seiyū industry of the 2020s.

**Yoonhee KANG (Seoul National University, Discussant)**

**1-19**

### **Rethinking East Asia: Challenging Western-Centric Frameworks through Transnational Histories and Practices**

**Chair: Shinnosuke TAKAHASHI (Victoria University of Wellington)**

The declining influence of Western societies as global reference points underscores the urgent need to move beyond Western-centric frameworks. This intellectual shift, anticipated in East Asian scholarship through Yoshimi Takeuchi's concept of Asia as Method" and Yuzo Mizoguchi's China as Method" challenges Western epistemological dominance and advocates for more pluralistic modes of global knowledge production. However, translating these theoretical critiques into concrete, actionable practices remains essential for both challenging Western hegemony in academia and imagining more inclusive and interconnected global futures. This conference panel responds to this need by exploring how East Asia, understood as practice, actively engages in reshaping global knowledge systems. Specifically, it interrogates the rigid, postwar U.S.-constructed regional concept of East Asia, revealing the region's dynamic global and transpacific interconnections. By focusing on the impact of international migration and mobility, the panel demonstrates how these forces have fundamentally reshaped the modern global landscape beyond East Asia from the interwar period to the Cold War and have laid the groundwork for rethinking regional and global possibilities.

### **Communication Across Borders: The Impact of Letters and Parcels in Global Jewish Networks During World War II | Niamh HANRAHAN (University of Manchester)**

This paper explores the interplay between migration, knowledge transfer, and the movement of non-human actors—such as letters and parcels—during WWII. It focuses on the experiences of Jewish refugees in Kobe, Japan, who maintained connections with loved ones in Germany and Poland through global communication networks. In an era of constrained human mobility, letters became lifelines, transmitting vital information, while parcels delivered essential supplies that recipients could use or trade. These exchanges highlight how transnational connections shaped survival strategies and communication networks in both Europe and East Asia.

At the same time, this flow of correspondence was subject to state intervention, with many letters censored, reflecting the broader political and social tensions of the period. By examining these communications, the paper reveals how Jewish refugees in Kobe actively engaged with and contributed to transnational systems of exchange, challenging narratives that depict refugees as passive actors.

By focusing on tangible historical practices, such as the communication networks of Jewish refugees, this paper illuminates East Asia as a site of dynamic global interaction, situating this history within the larger intellectual framework of the panel. In doing so, it contributes to rethinking East Asia's role in global knowledge production, challenging Western-centric paradigms and demonstrating how researching historical communication can inspire more interconnected global futures, which centre refugee agency.

### **Life in the Meantime: A Case of Trapped Soldiers and Workers of the Imperial Japanese Army in Rabaul during the Asia Pacific War | Yasuko HASSALL KOBAYASHI (Musashi University)**

At the end of the Asia-Pacific War, Australian military forces were taken aback to discover that approximately 89,000 Japanese Imperial troops were still alive in Rabaul. They had assumed that the majority of Japanese soldiers would have perished by the end of the war. The key to the survival of these soldiers and workers was their practice of tending vegetable gardens in Rabaul, which enabled them to sustain themselves during the war. The focus of this presentation is on the soldiers and workers who survived in Rabaul and their 'settler-like' experiences of cultivating a foreign land. The presentation situates those soldiers and workers as the subject of international war mobilities/migration rather than as loyal combatants indoctrinated with nationalism. This approach has two key merits: Firstly, this approach liberates narratives of war histories from the nation-state paradigm, which fails to acknowledge that WWII was waged global-

ly. Secondly, settler-like migration experiences allow war histories to transcend the dichotomy between war and peaceful everyday life. War is not solely about killing. As Lucassen succinctly observed, ‘soldiers kill and rape, but also marry and introduce new products and customs. Moreover, they also become aware of different cultures and institutional arrangements and political ideas’ (Lucassen, 2023, 203). This presentation demonstrates how a war history can be situated at the intersection between the national and the global, and between war and everyday life.

**Diasporic Entrepreneurship: Japanese Immigrants in Peru and Global Cotton Trade (1899-1945) | Ayumi TAKENAKA (Hitotsubashi University)**

This paper analyzes the nexus of empire-building, commercial expansion, and migration, focusing on Japanese immigrants in Peru who acted as brokers between Japan and Peru in trading and retailing cotton and textile products (1899-1945). I narrate three interlacing histories: (1) how Japanese migrants were sent to Peru as part of Japan’s empire-building project; (2) how the migrants played a role in cultivating trade and commercial routes between the two countries, and (3) how their role as intermediaries shaped their economic mobility and being treated as racial others in Peru. This history illustrates how Japanese Peruvians have established a solid and prosperous ethnic community today by continuing to maintain ties with Japan, and how the sending state plays a role in immigrant integration more generally.

**Lost and Found: The Australian "Spy" Missionary and the Recovery of the First Two RAAF Casualties of the Korean War | Hea-Jin PARK (Curtin University)**

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States played a central role in defining East Asia as a distinct geopolitical region. However, this constructed framework often neglected the intricate global and transpacific connections that historically shaped the area, including interactions between Australia and South Korea.

During the Korean War, Rev. Esmond New, a former Australian “spy” missionary in colonial Korea, was assigned the critical task of recovering the first two Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) casualties of the conflict. Drawing upon his extensive linguistic, geographical, and cultural knowledge of Korea acquired during his missionary years, Rev. New successfully located and retrieved the bodies. Importantly, his mission was facilitated by the assistance of local Koreans, who valued the longstanding contributions of Australian missionaries in Busan and the South Gyeongsang Province.

This case study demonstrates that the U.S.-constructed concept of East Asia captures only a narrow portion of the region’s historical and cultural complexities. The experiences of Australian missionaries in Korea, exemplified by Rev. New’s efforts, reveal a rich tapestry of interactions connecting Korea and East Asia at large with broader global networks. These connections challenge static regional definitions and highlight the importance of transnational exchanges in shaping identity, cultural flows, and sociopolitical dynamics in East Asia. By revisiting such stories, this research emphasises the need for a more nuanced understanding of the region’s interconnected and multifaceted history.

**Shinnosuke TAKAHASHI (Victoria University of Wellington, Discussant)**

1-20

**From Birth to Beyond: Care and Wellbeing Across the Extended Lifespan**

**Chair: Yun FENG (University of Minnesota)**

In the context of declining fertility and aging populations, East Asian societies face shared challenges related to care and wellbeing across the lifespan. This panel explores these issues through four papers addressing life’s pivotal stages: the use of IVF and artificial insemination by donor (AID) for creating new life, psychotropic medication use among perinatal women experiencing distress, and institutionalized elderly care. These themes align with the Chinese term 生老病死 (birth, aging, illness, and death), highlighting life’s universal and vulnerable moments where care plays a crucial role. The first article discusses how women manage the specific demands of IVF treatment in low-fertility China, shedding light on the interactions and tensions between familistic support and gendered work within an insufficient reproductive care system. The second paper examines how men who rely on donor sperm reconstruct their masculinity by embracing the role of social fatherhood, demonstrating that fatherhood can serve as a pathway for affirmation and strength within a redefined gender framework. The third paper investigates how perinatal women negotiate with families and medical professionals to decide on psychotropic use, revealing the ethical tensions between women’s agency and relational responsibility in the Chinese con-

text. The fourth paper analyzes how institutionalized elderly care impacts the frequency of adult children's visits, offering insights into the transformation of elderly care regimes and ideologies. Drawing on ethnographic studies in contemporary China, this panel examines how institutional, biomedical, technological, individual, familial, and gendered factors come into play to shape and transform caregiving practices, revealing the tensions and collaborations among them. By examining care regimes' diversity, it addresses fundamental questions: How should care be conceptualized? What constitutes good care"? How can actors collaborate to foster dignity, support, and wellbeing? This panel hopes to offer a thoughtful exploration of these issues, providing nuanced insights into the transformative potential of care in contemporary East Asia.

### **Familialistic Support and Gendered Work in IVF Treatment in Contemporary China | Tianqi HUANG (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)**

East Asian countries have experienced ultra-low fertility trends in recent years, despite their long-standing roots in Confucianism, which places a high value on family. Intriguingly, some scholars refer to this phenomenon as the paradox of familism in a low-fertility society (Chang, 2014; Chang and Song, 2010; Ochiai, 2014). Although some pro-natalist policies have been implemented, the provision of reproductive care remains inadequate. Consequently, women bear the (gendered) family burden of reproduction—encompassing both biological and social reproduction — highlighting the multifaceted nature of this responsibility. In cases of infertility, seeking in vitro fertilization (IVF) intensifies the reproductive burden, as the technological processes involved in IVF further complicate biological reproduction. This study examines how women manage the specific demands of IVF treatment from three perspectives: financial arrangements, reproductive travel, and balancing reproductive work with paid employment. I argue that the dilemmas women face, due to the uncertainties of IVF treatment, lead them to rely on their families for support. Nevertheless, women overwhelmingly shoulder the reproductive burden in IVF journeys, making it a gendered challenge. In the concluding section, I suggest that IVF not only serves as a lens to reveal the gendered burden but also reinforces the paradox" of familism in a low-fertility society, given the high demands of IVF treatment within an insufficient reproductive care system. Using China as a case study, I discuss how IVF journeys manifest the entanglement of reproductive care, gender, family, and pro-natalism within the familialistic welfare regime in East Asia, shedding light on broader reproductive politics.

### **The Separation of "Procreation" and "Parenting": The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Masculinity in Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) | Rui JIANG (Shenzhen Research Institute)**

Based on Judith Butler's theory of performativity and Cynthia Daniels' concept of reproductive masculinity," this study explores how male infertility patients navigate, negotiate, and reconstruct their masculinity during the use of Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) technology. The diagnosis and treatment of infertility challenge traditional hegemonic masculinity, which emphasizes male dominance in sexuality, reproduction, and emotional control (Connell, 1995). Daniels' concept further reveals how societal mechanisms—including science, health policies, and media—shape male reproductive capacity. These mechanisms often marginalize men's roles in reproduction, assume weaker connections between men and their offspring, and grant implicit privileges to men in health-related matters. Such cultural assumptions place male patients under significant stress when faced with reproductive challenges while simultaneously depriving them of adequate social support. From August to October 2024, our research team conducted fieldwork at a reproductive clinic in northwest China, interviewing men diagnosed with oligospermia or azoospermia who used AID, along with their partners. The findings reveal that infertility disrupts traditional performances of masculinity. For instance, the inability to conceive using their own sperm undermines men's identities as controllers of reproduction." Despite their hopes to restore sperm functionality through surgery or medication, treatment failures and medical advice to use donor sperm compel men to reconstruct their masculinity. They often rationalize their decisions as not depriving my wife of the right to become a mother" or being responsible to the family," performing support and sacrifice to partially retain socially recognized masculine traits. With the success of AID, pregnancies, and the birth of children, these men's masculinity shifts from the absence of biological fatherhood to the nurturing role of a social father. In this new performance of fatherhood, masculinity is reconstructed. This process demonstrates that masculinity is not a fixed, inherent attribute but is continually generated and reshaped through dynamic performances within social relationships. The study further highlights how cultural assumptions of reproductive masculinity" exacerbate the gender identity challenges faced by male infertility patients, while also showing that fatherhood can provide a pathway for men to find affirmation and strength within a redefined gender framework.

**The Ethical Negotiations of Psychotropic Use among Chinese Perinatal Women Experiencing Mental Distress | Yang LIU (Southern Methodist University)**

Recently, the issue of perinatal depression (weichanqi yiyu, PND) - a major depressive disorder occurring during pregnancy or within one year after delivery - has become a serious global public health issue. In China, around one-third of perinatal women have screened positive for depression. Drawing on four months of ethnographic research in one of the best Obstetrics-Gynecology hospitals in Shanghai, this paper attends to how Chinese perinatal women deal with mental distress with a focus on predominant pharmaceutical treatment in psychiatry. Merely one of these women took psychotropic medication for two weeks after she stopped breastfeeding. She thought that the psychotropic medication was useless and thus stopped taking it without asking the doctor's opinion. The other thirteen women all refused psychotropics. I argue that psychotropic use among Chinese perinatal women is an ethical issue that unfolds in multiple layers - biomedical, family, and individual. To make the decision on psychotropics, Chinese perinatal women need to negotiate with different actors - their families and obstetric and psychiatric doctors, in which their bodies are subjected to the intersection of biomedical and sociocultural forces. The common discourse for the baby's sake" reveals the ethical tension between Chinese women's agency and relational responsibility. For Chinese perinatal women, the refusal of psychotropics is refusing the stigma attached to mental illness to themselves and their families and protecting their baby from the risk coming from the ambiguity of biomedicine; therefore, it is a way for them to construct good motherhood" and whole personhood.

**How Does Institutionalized Elderly Care Affect the Frequency of Children's Visits? | Weijia ZHUO (Nanjing University)**

Family relationship is a significant factor affecting quality of life in later years, especially in Chinese society where the culture of filial piety is deeply rooted. Through field investigation, this paper explores how institutionalized elderly care affects the frequency of adult children visiting their parents. Although the institutional design and interaction strategies elderly care institutions apply to manage children's visit do not work, their routine operations that have no intention on altering the possibility of parent-child meeting significantly influence the face-to-face interaction opportunities between two generations through four mechanisms: rights-responsibilities binding, rights extension, gaze of performing Xiao (filial piety), and relationship gathering and separation. According to driving forces, this article divides children's visiting behavior into four categories: institutional, normative, functional and emotional. Different mechanisms affect different types of visits. This study challenges the stereotype that institutional care for the elderly will reduce positive parent-child communication and confronts the monistic assertion that this new way of elderly care only exerts a unidirectional influence on the frequency of parent-child interaction. It also reveals the multiple mechanisms of institutionalized elderly care and related institutional arrangements affecting parent-child meeting opportunities during the transformation of elderly-care regime and ideology in Chinese society.

Jianfeng ZHU (Fudan University, Discussant)

Mei DING (Fudan University, Discussant)

Dong DONG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Discussant)



2-1

**Staging the Margins: Gender, Faith, and Cultural Politics in East Asian Performance and Media**

Chair: Gavin CAMPBELL (Doshisha University)

**Patrons in the Kyoto Geisha World | Gavin CAMPBELL (Doshisha University)**

Based on one year of in-depth field research, this paper examines the role of the patron in sustaining Kyoto's geisha community. While a large body of research has explored the geisha world from the perspective of working geisha, or has examined the image of geisha in popular media, few scholars have explored the role of patrons and patronage in sustaining geisha labor. This research therefore looks into how patrons are introduced into the geisha world and the cultural expectations and rules that mediate their patronage. Informed by the author's own fieldwork as a patron of the Pontocho geisha community for one year, this paper examines both historical and contemporary resources to explore changes in the geisha-patron relationship from the prewar period to the present, and to better understand the relationship between working geisha and the cultural expectations placed by the geisha community on those who support their arts training. Overall, the paper presents a preliminary set of research findings that investigate a relatively unknown aspect of Kyoto geisha culture.

**"Women from the North": Portrayals of North Korean Women in Contemporary South Korean Dramas | Elizabeth CAMPBELL (Korea University)**

Korean historical Lee Neung-hwa once wrote *Nam nam buk nyeo*, "a phrase which is often translated as men from the south, women from the north" and refers to the conception that the women of the northern Korean Peninsula are the most beautiful, and the men of the southern region are the most handsome. This saying and belief was common in Korea long before the division of the peninsula and is sometimes used today in reference to the phenomenon of North Korean women coming to South Korea and marrying local men. Beyond attractiveness, there are various features and stereotypes about North Korean women that can be observed in South Korean media, especially Hallyu-hit dramas *Crash Landing on You*, *Curtain Call*, *Squid Game* seasons one and two, and *Money Heist: Korea – Joint Security Area*. This paper considers data collected from all 60 episodes of these dramas released from 2020 to 2024 to identify and contextualize the various ways in which the South Korean entertainment industry today defines and characterizes a North Korean woman. The primary findings are that North Korean women are often portrayed as strongly independent, violent, aggressive, and self-sufficient. This is contrasted with a recurring theme of trauma and loss that leaves the characters struggling to form close bonds with their South Korean counterparts in the shows. While such depth humanizes these characters and leaves the audience sympathetic, it also leans towards infantilization and a lack of acceptance of reality, especially in characters who whole-heartedly support the Kim regime and are treated with pity by the South Koreans they encounter.

**Queer Temporalities and Emotional Shelter: Rethinking Theater Practices in China through the Musical Theater Thrill Me | Chenyu YAN (The University of Arizona)**

Practices of popular culture in East Asia during specific periods can project contemporary issues onto a more distant future. In the second half of 2020, several musical theater productions imported from South Korea converged in the Asia Mansion in central Shanghai. Over the next three years, during the pandemic, the performing arts industry in Shanghai faced significant disruptions due to the suspension of performances and strict censorship. Against this backdrop, it is intriguing that these immersive musical productions attracted a large audience, particularly female fans, during this period. This research focuses on a case study of *Thrill Me*, a musical performed from 2021 to 2023 at Asia Mansion, which gained immense popularity. Through interviews with fans and multimodal analyses of fan works, it was found that feelings of repression, desire, love, and collective trauma emerged in this theater space, reflecting the social realities of the time. Moreover, in negotiating with censorship, the imagination of being queer and queered relationships was expanded and redefined in the East Asian context through actors' performances and fans' creative reinterpretations. Meanwhile, this unconventional period resonates with the idea of queer temporalities, as audiences, usually confined by mainstream societal rhythms, turned to the theater as a spiritual shelter, seeking timely comfort in an uncertain future. Overall, this case involves affects, trauma, and the maintenance of well-being in Chinese theater culture. Adopting a cultural anthropological perspective, it offers a lens to imagine queer futures in East Asia.

**Faith and Fiction: Examining the Shamanistic Portrayals in Contemporary Korean Cinema** | Raniel BILLONES (University of the Philippines Diliman)

This study explores how shamanism is portrayed in modern Korean cinema, examining how faith and fiction interact to shape how this centuries-old custom is portrayed. The study examines how those selected films provide perspective within the framework of contemporary memoirs, taking into account their cultural significance and spiritual practices, using a theoretical framework influenced by religious, media, and cultural studies. Using a multi-modal analysis, the study looks at thematic themes, character development, visual aesthetics, and the structures of narrative in a few chosen Korean films. The study explores how literary elements and cinematic approaches help to generate meaning surrounding shamanism through the lenses of cultural anthropology and semiotics. The study explores deeper into the development of shamanistic depictions in Korean cinema, following the transition from conventional depictions to modern interpretations. It looks at how modernization and globalization affect how faith and tradition are portrayed in contemporary Korean society and how they affect when shamanism is portrayed in films. The study intends to clarify the intricate relationship between faith, fiction, and the cultural landscape of contemporary Korean cinema by examining the narrative techniques and visual language of the films. This will ultimately help us comprehend how shamanism is portrayed and viewed in the contemporary world.

**2-2****Digital Youth: Navigating Social Media and Technology in Contemporary China**

Chair: Qiaoyun ZHANG (Macao Polytechnic University)

In recent years, the rapid proliferation of digital technology and social media has had a profound impact on youth culture and contemporary Chinese social life. This panel seeks to explore these dynamics from an anthropological perspective, focusing on the nuanced ways in which digital platforms shape social interactions, identity formation, and cultural practices among Chinese youth. By examining the intersection of technology and society, we aim to understand the evolving patterns of communication, community-building, and self-expression in the digital age. Anthropological research on this topic is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how digital technologies are integrated into daily life and the ways in which they influence social behaviors and cultural norms. This understanding can shed light on the broader implications of technological change for societal structures and relationships. Secondly, studying youth culture in the context of digital media offers a window into the future of social trends and cultural developments. Youth are often at the forefront of adopting and adapting new technologies, making their experiences a valuable indicator of broader societal shifts. Our research contributes to the global discourse on digital technology by providing a unique perspective from China, a country with a rapidly evolving digital landscape and distinct cultural context. By examining Chinese youth's engagement with social media, we can uncover how global technological trends intersect with local cultural specificities, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of digital transformation.

**Handsome Women's Comeback: How Social Media is Redefining Female Strength and Beauty in Contemporary China**

| Yi WANG (Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College)

Traditional East Asian femininity has long been idealized as white, young, and thin," equating beauty with fragility and passivity. However, recent cultural shifts in China's social media platforms that celebrate muscularity, health, and independence, which are traits historically associated with masculinity, are worthy to be explored. This study employs a computer-assisted qualitative content analysis, while 4,400 user-generated comments were collected via web scraping from the social media platform RED in response to the film YOLO, directed by famous female director Jia Ling. Using MAXQDA for systematic coding, four interrelated themes emerged: (1) the growing celebration of muscularity as a symbol of independence, reflecting a reverse from fragile beauty ideals; (2) a cultural shift prioritizing self-love and internal strength over external validation; (3) collective female empowerment as a counter force to male-dominated spaces, emphasizing female solidarity; and (4) the reclamation of terms like heroic and handsome to describe women, signifying a linguistic disruption of traditional gender binaries. Framed within Post-Structuralist Feminism, this research reveals how digital media facilitates the deconstruction of entrenched beauty norms and enables a redefinition of femininity as diverse, inclusive, and empowering. This research offers theoretical contributions by extending feminist discourse to a nuanced evolution of gender roles, challenging earlier academic views that emphasized women's passivity in the East Asian context, and proposing that integrating traditionally masculine traits into female identity is key to fostering a more inclusive understanding of gender.

**Alternative Disenchantment: The Search for Rationality in Cyber Divination | Shenminghui DONG (Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College)**

Cyber divination, originating from the evolving digital landscape of the Internet, meta universes, and artificial intelligence, has become an indispensable part of modern occult activity. In existing research, cyber divination is ordinarily seen as a form of online superstition or a component of the Internet's grey economy. However, this research posits that despite online superstition and fraud, a segment of youth participate in cyber divination rationally, as reflected in their perception, interpretation, and behaviors. Adapting Exploratory Sequential Design, a mixed research approach, this study first employs participatory observation and in-depth interviews to explore the key themes and theoretical framework of cyber divination. Subsequently, questionnaire surveys are used to validate the findings from the qualitative phase.

The primary findings are threefold: (1) Youths with higher education and economic status tend to perceive cyber divination as a logical and rational method for predicting future trends and interpreting destiny. (2) This group engages in cyber divination, with a focus on rational thought and personal requirements, rather than relying solely on the interpretations provided by computers and AI. (3) They view cyber divination as a recreational activity and integrate it into everyday decision-making, but not into significant life choices. Above all, cyber divination represents an alternative disenchantment of traditional offline divination, demonstrating the transformative impact of digital technology on cultural traditions and the interweaving of the digital and real worlds. This study aims to provide an understanding of different perspectives on cyber divination and to promote greater societal acceptance and understanding of this subculture.

**Performing Tradition in the Digital Age: The Role of Douyin algorithm in transmitting Cantonese Opera | Jingyi CAI (Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College)**

Cantonese opera, a centuries-old performance art, was included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in 2009. For sustainable development, it is imperative for younger generations to learn about and support Cantonese opera. One well-known platform for short videos, Douyin, has grown to be crucial in shaping young people's internet experiences, giving an opportunity to explore its impact on cultural transmission.

This study examines how Douyin's algorithm affects the exposure and engagement of traditional versus adapted Cantonese opera, aiming to comprehend how internet platforms impact the younger generation's access to Cantonese opera. This study uses a mixed method, combining quantitative analysis of likes and comments on Douyin tagged with "Cantonese opera" and "Adapted Cantonese opera" alongside a questionnaire of college students' likelihood of watching Cantonese opera on Douyin and qualitative interviews with the 10 Cantonese opera young enthusiasts to gain insight into how social media influence the transmission of Cantonese opera. Key findings are as follows: (1) Traditional Cantonese opera received more likes and comments than adapted, indicating that the platform's algorithm prioritizes traditional content, likely due to its perceived cultural value. (2) Douyin enhances the accessibility for younger audiences, making it easier for them to engage with Cantonese opera. (3) However, traditional Cantonese opera does not always align with the preferences of tech-savvy, younger viewers, posing challenges to its sustained transmission. This study hopes social media and its users can enhance awareness of Cantonese opera through algorithm recommendations, encouraging more people to discover, appreciate and then transmit it.

**The Digital Construction of Culture: Analyzing Wonders of CN and Its Role in Cultural Homogenization | Yike WANG (Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College)**

This study aims to investigate how digital platforms influence the development of cultural heritage, focusing on the multifaceted impacts these platforms have on cultural identity and heritage preservation. Using discourse analysis (DA) combined with a case study methodology, the research examines how digital platforms present cultural heritage in contemporary China, and how their algorithms and commercial objectives impact how cultural heritage is preserved and disseminated. The study investigates both the positive and negative effects of these platforms, analyzing how their emphasis on visual appeal and global accessibility may provide wider global exposure to lesser-known cultures, while also simplifying the complexity of certain cultures. By examining the power dynamics and ideological mechanisms behind these digital platforms, the paper highlights how digital heritage dissemination can offer opportunities for global cultural exchange, but also lead to the marginalization of specific cultural identities. Through this balanced analysis, the study aims to foster a more nuanced conversation about preserving cultural heritage in the digital era, emphasizing the need to balance the benefits of global reach with respect for the diversity and integrity of local cultures.

**Qiaoyun ZHANG (Macao Polytechnic University, Discussant/Organizer)**

2-3

**Anxious Futures: Parenting, Pressure, and the Politics of Education**

Chair: Yanli MENG (Chinese Academy of Sciences)

**Anxiety about Children's English Education in Chinese New Media: Promotional and Discourse Strategies | Yanli MENG (Chinese Academy of Sciences)**

New media has become an important source of parenting knowledge for young parents in contemporary China. The Chinese new media are filled with strong educational anxiety, among which an important aspect is anxiety about early childhood English education. Parenting influencers frequently urge Chinese mothers to engage in maternal English education activities to their children at home. This paper analyzes 119 highly-popular articles about children's English learning on Wechat – the most popular social networking site in China – from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. The findings reveal three main ways in which the parenting influencers foster anxiety about maternal-English-education: 1) emphasizing the urgency of English learning by proclaiming the earlier, the better”; 2) claiming that parents themselves should undertake English education, thereby increasing psychological pressure on readers; and 3) presenting maternal English learning as a difficult, yet immensely worthwhile and valuable project. These promotional strategies are realized through three discursive strategies: appealing to expert authority and scientific rationality; portraying themselves as model mothers to exert peer pressure on readers; and appealing to emotion and morality to encourage readers to commit to the long-term project of maternal English education. Spreading English educational anxiety is essentially a kind of lifestyle marketing by influencers. It exacerbates the infiltration of consumerism and market logic into the educational sphere, adds to the economic, physical and psychological burden of parents (esp. mothers) and is detrimental to their physical and mental health.

**Reading KnowYourself: Therapeutic Culture and Politics on a Digital Mental Health Platform | Hsuan-Ying Huang (National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University)**

This presentation examines the culture and politics of digital mental health through a case study of KnowYourself, a platform that has become one of the most influential carriers of therapeutic culture in today's China. Borrowing its name from the Delphic maxim, KnowYourself features a distinctive brand of popular psychology that is informed by depth psychology and critical social sciences. My inquiry highlights the experience of reading, often imagined as a solitary act despite its inherently social nature, as KnowYourself is hailed as a paragon of “content entrepreneurship.” Taking reading experience as an entry point into one's psychic life, I examine the self-fashioning of Chinese youth under the current Xi Jinping regime, an era marked by tightening political control and, increasingly, an imperative to feel and think positively as well. My ethnography reveals how readers find solace and insights on the platform; growing disappointed about its overt commercial orientation and reluctance to take on sensitive issues, they can understand its precarious position and are exhilarated by the occasional breakthroughs. What emerges, as I argue, is a therapeutic culture still searching for its politics.

**So Close, So Far: The Contradictions and Perplexities of Educating as a Parent | Ka-Sin YUEN (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

This paper focuses on how children are socialized in a post-industrial society like Hong Kong. As the role of the family as the main unit of production diminishes and most parents become caught up in wage labor, schools become the primary socializer of children. However, parental involvement has not diminished, but has become more intense. Parents pay efforts to mentor their children, hoping that they could excel in exams and get a ticket to upward mobility in the uncertain labor market (as there is not return to small-scale family economy). They anxiously wonder if they are doing too little, or not doing the right thing. This paper unravels how their decisions are made based on their subject content knowledge, the experience they had growing up, and instructions in parenting books. Some parents replicate their childhood experience of rote memorization, requiring their children to drill on practice tests in tutorial classes, while others, eager to shed the shadow of repetitive training of test-taking skills” in favor of happy learning,” enroll their children into classes with native English teachers. Two approaches are different, but both require parents to further outsource their teaching and mentoring labor, extending the time and intensity of children's learning outside the home. This paper will be composed of their stories, presenting an in-depth analysis of what it is like to grow up with half of the day spent in school or tutorial centres. Such long hours of learning labor over an extended period of time have caused changes in children's bodies and mind, as well as parent-child relationships. Based on fieldwork in schools and tutorial centres, as well as interviews with parents, children, teachers, and private tutors, this paper reflects the face of a modern society through the lens of education and parental anxiety.

**Let Kids Test Their Way Out of the Mountains: Chronotopes of Equity and Educational Competition in Internet Education across Southwest China** | **Zhenzhou Andy TAN** (City University of New York)

This paper explores the motivations for spatiotemporally marginalized communities in China to further commit to educational competition, and the consequences thereof, despite the 2021 state policy to relieve educational burden. Through 12 months of fieldwork between 2023-24 at a participating public middle school in a county seat in Guangxi, I focus on an Internet education network aimed at making quality education at a famous metropolitan school more accessible across the mountainous Southwest China. Since joining the network in 2015, the once obscure county-level school has achieved remarkable success in high-stakes entrance exams and region-wide fame. This paper concerns a two-level dilemma at the school against the backdrop of success. Firstly, I detail how increasingly higher aspirations are instilled while students and teachers cope with the daily felt experience of anxiety and fatigue. Secondly, I observe how school officials debate psychological well-being measures as they make sense of exam performance fluctuations in recent years. This paper argues that this dilemma can be productively understood through the linguistic anthropological concept of cultural chronotopes as affective and moral orienting devices. I trace the circulation of discourses about letting kids test their way out of the mountains within the network, especially their uptakes in daily interactions by local participants. I thereby analyze the semiotic formation of the mountains vs. various outsides chronotope, the legitimation of educational equity as primarily out-and-upward mobility within that space-time, and how this ideology of bridging urban-rural gaps incentivizes further institutional and individual commitment to educational competition for equity.

**Critical Analysis: Middle-Class Parenting Practices in South Korea and Its Price of Privilege** | **Yoosong LEE** (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities)

Education has long been considered as a great equalizer for social mobility, providing individuals the opportunity to meet their potential and hope for a better life. However, many scholars argue that education can also serve as a means for social reproduction, particularly within the middle and wealthier classes. Research suggests that active parental involvement in education tends to be more prominent among those of high social status, as dominant groups view the academic hierarchy as merely a new social order. This paper offers a critical examination of how South Korean middle-class parents leverage their class-based cultural strategies and resources to transmit their privilege to their children through education. By drawing on data from the researcher—an insider of a community in South Korea, well-known for its unachievably high educational standard, this autoethnographic tale provides an honest look at and in-depth understanding of, the middle-class parenting practices and its price of privilege. Additionally, this research goes beyond traditional analyses of social reproduction by incorporating Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts—habitus, field, and capital—and Susan D. Blum's notion of anthropology of learning—formal learning, informal learning, and nonformal learning—to expand the scope of examination and facilitate exploration of class culture as it is actually lived and experienced.

2-4

**The Transformation in History and the Present: Ethnicity, Identity, and Political Dynamics in East Asian Societies**

Chair: **Jun ZHANG** (City University of Hong Kong)

Beyond the shared cultural and historical backgrounds, East Asia has experienced and continues to experience population and cultural flows that bring about continuously renewed localism expressions. This internal complexity is manifested through ethnic and racial relations, (geo)political dynamics, and the interactions of religious cultures, shaping the political and social transformations in East Asia after World War II. The processes of state-building and democratization, the realization of ethnic identities, and the coordination of ethnic relations confront not only a heavy feudal legacy but also the enduring impacts of colonial rule. Therefore, this panel will discuss the possibilities of achieving these challenging transformations. We will explore the diverse representations of ethnic identities in today's contexts and the spaces they open for cross-ethnic interactions from the perspective of ethnic boundary-making. We will examine the ideological fragmentation in anti-colonial movements to reveal the parasitic and collusive nature of colonial power and its enduring legacies. Additionally, we will explore the deconstruction of ethnicity to examine the adjustment of ethnic identity and relations under national policies. Then, assess the mutual influences of migrant identity, national identity, and political reforms and transitions from a bidirectional perspective. Together, these discussions will form a comprehensive picture of the interactions between individuals, ethnic groups, and politics within East Asia, highlighting that the feudal past, colonial history, and the complex present and future are not linear timelines but rather intertwined influences where history and future, and their interpretations, shape contemporary practices.



**Navigating Identity and Solidarity: Pan-Ethnic Actions and Boundary-Making Among Chinese Americans During the Pandemic** | Ke-Ran DING (Xiamen University) and Jifeng LIU (Xiamen University)

The Stop Asian Hate movement during the pandemic represents a milestone in pan-ethnic solidarity efforts among Chinese Americans, reflecting a historical outcome of their attempt to reconcile the dual identities of being legitimate American citizens and marginalized minority immigrants. Examining pan-ethnic actions within immigrant communities through the lens of ethnic boundary theory, this approach emphasises local viewpoints while contextualising boundary-making through reciprocal comparison. It also brings to the fore the intimated cultural, moral, and aesthetic appeals that lead to conflicts and alliances between overseas Chinese and other Asian migrant communities. These dynamics shape their ethnic vision and patterns of mobilisation when addressing ethnic conflict or other relevant social events and policies. This article begins by classifying the different immigration patterns of Chinese Americans from mainland China, Canton and Taiwan, highlighting the complexity and diversity in their interpretations and expressions of Chineseness.” It then examines the relational interactions across ethnic boundaries between these Chinese Americans during and after the movement. The article finds that the surge in anti-Asian hate during the pandemic created a temporary contact zone of hybridity for the Chinese immigrant community. However, it may be the everyday interactions between individuals—shaped by civic consciousness, collective memory under systemic racism, and the social capital derived from ethnic network resources—that play a more profound role in fostering inclusive ethnic identities and fluid ethnic boundaries. Thus, the prospect of pan-ethnic solidarity appears increasingly attainable.

**Realization of Colonial Power: Reassessing the Ideological Fragmentation in the Malaya Anti-Colonial Movement** | Han-Ting YUE (Xiamen University)

Malaya anti-colonial movement was shaped not only by the interaction between anti-colonial forces and colonial power, but also by the different internal political power within the movement. Of particular note is the contest between two ideological currents: nationalism and communism. The former attracted a large following among the indigenous Malays, while the latter was predominantly supported by the Chinese community. This article argues that the ideological fragmentation was not the result of ethnic politics; rather, the two ideological discourses shaped the subsequent ethnic political patterns. The rise of Malay nationalism can be seen as a mirror-image action” by the Malay aristocracy and elites in response to colonial rule—constructing a sense of community and collective interests through legal status and procedures that opposite to the colonial power’s de facto control. In its narrative, the identity of the colonizer” is absent, replaced by the opposition between our nation” and the outsiders.” Meanwhile, the struggle of communism is positioned within the context of international communism, where the colonizers, alongside the feudal elites, are cast as targets of class struggle. The fragmentation of ideologies is not a natural outcome of ethnic attributes but is deeply influenced by colonial history. Through an examination of the ideological divide in the Malaya anti-colonial movement, this article repositions colonialism—not as a mere transplantation or replacement of local politics, but as a parasitic and collusive force within the indigenous political environment, which prevented the anti-colonial movement from completely eradicating the historical impacts of colonialism while defending indigenous culture.

**Democratization and Migrants' Evolving Identity: A Study of Malaysian Chinese Migrants in Taiwan** | Nimo Yong Rong DU (City University of Hong Kong)

As a result of long-standing pro-Bumiputra politics in Malaysia, Malaysian Chinese have increasingly engaged in various transnational activities to overcome the constraints imposed by their secondary citizenship status. During the Cold War, the established Overseas Chinese Education (OCE) policies by the Kuomintang (KMT) aimed to secure the support and identification of Overseas Chinese. Consequently, Malaysian Chinese have a longstanding history of migrating to Taiwan as students and later becoming residents, thereby indirectly serving as a cultural, economic, and political bridge between Taiwan and Malaysia. Through in-depth interviews with 15 Malaysian Chinese migrants who arrived in Taiwan in the 21st century, I examine their identity orientations and transnational political participation within the context of democratic movements in both their home and host countries. This article finds that contemporary Malaysian Chinese migrants in Taiwan demonstrate a stronger national consciousness and identity orientation toward Malaysia in response to institutional changes compare to the early migrants. Meanwhile, their increasing engagement in identity politics, which involves diverse transnational activities, has positioned them as a potential force for promoting liberalization across both regions. Using Malaysian Chinese migrants as a case study, I highlight how the democracy advancement influences the shaping of migrants’ identities, while also specifically indicating their latent role in facilitating democratization.



**Flux and Han-ness: Identity and Future Choices of New-Generation Mobile Han Population in Southern Xinjiang: A Study of Three-Year Decision-Making Horizons in Aral City | Zi-Tong ZHANG (Communication University of Zhejiang)**

From a historical perspective on Southern Xinjiang, Han-ness, originally constructed as a functional product to serve nascent nationalist formation, has predominantly been perceived as a state-enforced political instrument with pejorative undertones. Within the temporal framework of historical-contemporary linkages, such instrumentalization seems to be confined to a mechanism that molds and solidifies Han settlers' self-identity and legitimizes state-driven migration policies. However, this ethnographic study, based on fieldwork and in-depth interviews, reveals that the new generation of mobile Han population, who outwardly comply with current state policies, seemingly exhibits a more flexible and ambivalent stance shaped by temporal gaps in inter-generational understanding and their growing awareness of Han-Uyghur lived conditions. This flexibility manifests particularly in their political identification and residency choices. The once rigid and unilateral imposition of Han-ness, with its fixity viewed as invasive, appears to be gradually unraveling in recent years. While acknowledging the temporary cognitive limitations of social actors, this study highlights the emerging agency during periods of self-identity ambiguity and explores how Teleoaffective Structures may shape future possibilities in household registration and settlement decisions over the next three years. I argue that recognizing the contextual heterogeneity of mobile Han population, rather than confining them to a singular, linear state-centric narrative, enables a more nuanced understanding of agency-triggering mechanisms that shape their behavioral choices and self-identity. By deconstructing Han-ness as a fluid, evolving attribute rather than a fixed characteristic, this perspective may offer an endoscopic lens to examine ethnic policy effectiveness and assess the viability of legitimacy in non-democratic systems.

2-5

**Experimenting with Futures: Queering Resilience from Margins of South Korea, China, and the Chinese Diaspora**

Chair: Yeonju KIM (Seoul National University)

This panel demonstrates how stigmatized groups in different parts of East Asia - particularly South Korea, China, and Chinese diaspora - can contribute to building queer futures. Yet, the panelists uncover 'queerness' not as a concrete and consistent, but as an unsettled and fluid concept. The papers engage with the term 'queer(ness)' by examining LGBTQ+ research informants, agents that create queer time and space, or both aspects. Overall, the panelists take queer(ness) as a useful lens to communicate how their research subjects come to embrace vulnerability and reclaim their presence. Involved in disciplines of anthropology in technology, medicine, and art and performance, central themes include the conceptualization of 'cancer time' through the lives of South Korean young adult cancer patients; the articulation of queerness and the 'self' in the Korean ballroom; the reinforcement of the female gaze and queer desires through deepfake technology in the Chinese virtual fandom; and the preservation and transformation of the resistance history of Chinese queer feminists through applied theatre. This panel also explores multiple research methods, such as in-depth interviews, virtual ethnography, and movement-based practices. By illustrating how marginalized groups navigate through futures, the panel offers multifaceted interpretations of queering resilience and what it means to participate in understanding this field of knowledge. Through each ethnographic case, we aim to address the struggles of defining queerness, furthermore facilitate a lively discussion on alternative ways to approach the term.

**Living "Cancer Time": The Queer Future of South Korean Young Adult Cancer Patients | Yeonju KIM (Seoul National University)**

The concept of queerness is not only confined to sexual identity but can be extended to various lifestyles that deviate from normality. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted for eight months between May to December 2024 in a cancer support group, I will demonstrate how 'cancer time' is established among young adult cancer patients in South Korea using queer/crip time. As queer time and space are created against heterosexuality and reproduction, crip time is constituted based on alternative lifestyles that do not conform to the normal life pattern of healthy bodies. Building on the concept of queer/crip time, I aim to conceptualize the temporality of young adult cancer patients in South Korea as 'cancer time' by illustrating how their lives depart from the normalized timeline of their healthy young adult peers. While the 'blameful past' constantly haunts the patients and creates a 'disastrous present', the patients' biggest concern lies in their 'precarious future'. Blaming their cancer outbreak on their past life habits, patients tend to discipline their present bodies based on the presumed causation. Furthermore, due to cancer treatment, everything at present is halted, leaving them with an unpredictable future. The future itself is not guaranteed for young cancer patients. This is where cancer future departs from crip future; whereas curative crip future is criticized for its assumption that disabled people's only goal would be to 'cure' their disability, in

the case of cancer, curative future is indeed a central goal due to its relation to survival.

**Reshaping "Queerness," Being the "True Self": Cultural Orientations of the House-Ballroom in South Korea** | Yane HUH  
(Seoul National University)

This research focuses on how the house-ballroom culture, specifically its 'queerness,' has been dubbed" (Boellstorff 2006) into the South Korean context by professional dancers. Based on eight months of participant observation and interviews with the first South Korean 'house,' it aims to show that the encounter of distinctive cultural models can neither be reduced to mere identification nor differentiation. The house-ballroom is an expressive and creative black trans subculture, performing in dance, fashion, beauty, and straight-passing (or 'realness'). Stemming from the New York drag pageants in the 1970s, it gradually developed into a safe space for queer individuals to bask in glory and seek belonging. While the New York ballroom inevitably was driven by black queer identity, the Korean ballroom was initiated by regarding its performances as a unique 'dance.' As such, the sense of 'queerness' that the ballroom culture entails is perceived differently by Korean dancers. By showcasing the Korean dancers' training methods and practices to comprehend the history and norms of the ballroom, I argue that the Korean ballroom acts as a space for dancers to explore ways to articulate the self and reconsider the meaning of even failing to do so. I analyze that this process further fosters a more inclusive and interactive community, acknowledging diverse subjectivities- regarding gender and sexuality, race, and age- within the Korean ballroom. Playful settings, themes, and bodily experiences induce dancers to encourage one another's display of desires and emotions, offering a possibility to contemplate what it means to be 'queer.'

**Fake It Till You Ate It: Deepfaking Female/Queer Fandom Desire on Chinese Digital Sphere** | Minyan HUANG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

In China and globally, Artificial Intelligence (AI) appears to be hurtling forward at an intimidating pace, infiltrating daily lives and generating fresh thoughts around sexuality and gender. Deepfake technology debuted on Reddit around 2017 and went viral globally during the (post)-pandemic era. Previous research and recent social incidents reveal how deepfakes merge within misogynic digital spaces as a tool for hate crimes targeted at female celebrities and ordinary women. Meanwhile, deepfake drag cabaret generates gender-subversive possibilities on virtual stages. In China, as the nation-state enacted the first deep-learning law worldwide and gave long-standing strict governance of sexual content, deepfake erotica is primarily circulated peer-to-peer and hosted underground. However, I noticed certain kinds of soft-core deepfakes with female/queer gazes emerge vibrantly in the legitimate Chinese digital domain, leading to a feminist dilemma: a non-consent technique that disturbs body copyrights, yet enabling technical praxis where female/queer creators and audiences exercise agency and reconstruct desire. Unlike misogynic deepfake pornography filled with hatred toward women, fan-made AI 'Dai-can (Meal Replacement)' caters to a community-based fantasies for romance and love, but is still likely to be perceived as offensive by certain opinions. This project aims to address this tension through a 9-month online fieldwork on Chinese social media, the research demonstrates how deep learning is used to accomplish and strengthen the female gaze and gender-fluid fantasies in a niche group of fandoms, and how the notorious technique envisions potential queer futures in virtual worlds.

**Embodying Affect, Reimagining Futures: Theatre and Queer Resistance in the Chinese Diaspora** | Jenny Man Wu (Goldsmith University of London)

This study examines how applied theatre can preserve and transform the resistance history of Chinese queer feminists, a history under threat of erasure by state censorship, offering an anthropological lens on the marginal experiences of Chinese queer diasporic identity and its future experimentation within a transnational context. To address the challenges of trauma, I developed two innovative Practice-as-Research focusing on preservation and transformation. The preservation workshop departed from the conventional interview approach, providing a trauma-informed participatory framework. Three Chinese queer feminist activists in Berlin, New York, and Stockholm, participated in an online applied theatre workshop that prioritized agency, enabling them to craft and self-record their testimonials rooted in auto-ethnographic engagement. This approach allowed activists to determine what and how to narrate their past, reducing the risk of re-traumatization. Furthermore, the collected narratives served as the basis for the transformation session, a post-verbatim theatre workshop, engaging the Chinese queer diaspora community in London to embody and transform the testimonials with their lived experience. The study combines Practice-as-Research with ethnographic approaches, drawing on my experience as an activist and director of the Beijing Queer Film Festival since 2013. By examining the self-authorship of activism histories and the affective flows of memory across chronotopes, this research contributed to how marginalized communities with trauma reclaim agency and identity.

It reveals how Chinese queer diasporas navigate the dual vulnerabilities of displacement and repression, be the source of support for queer movements in China, while envisioning queer futures amid transnational precarity and political silencing.

**Kyungjun SHIN** (Jeju National University, Discussant)

**Cecilia Ka Hei WONG** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Discussant)

**2-6**

## **Entangled Futures: More-than-human Relations and Inter-species Encounters in China**

**Chair: Yu ZHANG** (University of Amsterdam)

This panel investigates how more-than-human relations and interspecies encounters in contemporary China are creating entangled futures through diverse forms of coexistence, communication, and transformation. Drawing on five ethnographic studies, we examine how humans and non-human actors—from microorganisms to plants, from companion animals to the deceased—are co-producing new forms of relationships that challenge conventional nature-culture boundaries. Our research reveals multiple dimensions of these entanglements: ecological burial practices create new temporalities where the dead and living organisms coexist in cycles of growth and decay; pet communication technologies enable novel forms of cross-species emotional and linguistic exchange; rural communities negotiate complex relationships with green plums and eucalyptus trees in response to environmental and economic changes; and wild yeasts participate in crafting new sensory experiences and cultural meanings in craft beer production. These cases demonstrate how various species become entangled in webs of meaning, care, and resistance that reshape both human and non-human futures. By examining these entangled relationships in the Chinese context, our panel contributes to understanding how East Asian societies are actively creating alternative futures through everyday practices and encounters across species boundaries. These emerging forms of coexistence suggest new possibilities for addressing environmental challenges while maintaining distinctive cultural perspectives. Together, these studies illuminate how shaping sustainable futures requires attention to the multiple agencies, temporalities, and relationships that emerge through more-than-human entanglements in China.

### **Growing with the Dead: Multispecies Care and Haunted Landscapes of Ecological Burial Sites in China | Yuyun ZHAO** (University of Amsterdam)

This ethnographic study examines ecological burial practices in contemporary China through the lens of multispecies ethnography and the anthropology of being haunted, investigating how environmental ethics and more-than-human actors reshape traditional death practices. Drawing on fieldwork at ecological burial sites, this research explores how multiple entities participate in and transform death practices, creating new forms of connection between the living and the dead. The study conceptualizes ecological burial sites as haunted landscapes where multiple temporalities coexist and intersect. It argues that ecological burial sites can be understood as haunted landscapes, not in the conventional supernatural sense, but as spaces where past, present, and future converge through the entanglement of human remains, living organisms, and environmental processes. Through their growth, decay, and renewal, these more-than-human actors engage in complex interactions that reshape traditional understandings of death, memory, and care. The research reveals how different species and materials become entangled in practices of care that extend beyond traditional ethic to encompass environmental concerns. The decision to integrate human remains into natural cycles through tree or flower burial represents a significant departure from traditional death practices, reflecting broader shifts in how contemporary Chinese society conceptualizes relationships between humans and nature. This study contributes to both environmental anthropology and death studies by theorizing ecological burial sites as haunted landscapes where multispecies relations and temporalities transform traditional practices. Through examining how environmental ethics become embodied in intimate cultural practices around death, this research offers new insights into China's sustainable development and ongoing social-ecological transformations.

### **You Are What You Drink: An Ethnography of Naturally Fermented Beer in Southeast China | Yu ZHANG** (University of Amsterdam)

An apple fell in the mountains of the southern Chinese plateau, its essence finding new life in beer bottles—an eternal cycle sustained through fermentation.

This research investigates the dynamic entanglement between natural wild yeast and humans in craft beer production, focusing on a wild yeast fermentation brewery in southern China. Adopting a multi-species perspective, a three-month field study explored how

microbiome-centered practices influence the social connections and sensory experiences of human participants. Unlike traditional brewing, which relies on standardized yeast strains to ensure consistency and flavor, the use of natural wild yeast captivates some craft beer enthusiasts for its vitality and distinctive flavor profile. At the same time, it faces significant criticism for its unpredictability and divergence from conventional brewing norms. Through participant observation, this study traces the life cycle of wild yeast within the capitalist production chain—from its collection and fermentation to distribution. Wild yeast emerges as a critical agent of transformation, reshaping human sensory experiences, redefining traditional taste paradigms, and challenging the human-centric frameworks of beer production. By opening new, microbiologically constructed pathways of flavor and experience, wild yeast disrupts established norms within the beer industry, reconfiguring global beer culture, value chains, and the interactions they foster.

**The "Rebirth" of Green Plum: From "Abandoned Life" to Cooperative Economy | Tingjun XIE (East China Normal University)**

How can we make sense of the rapid changes in the landscape in the mountainous area of northern Guangzhou Conghua, where sugar orange and green plum have entered successively because of the one-village-one-product policy to form a monoculture crop landscape? This paper examines the historical rise and decline of sugar oranges and green plum in the context of rural development. It argues that the simplification of the landscape, coupled with the excessive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, has resulted in environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. This has led to the feral proliferation of Huanglong disease in sugar oranges and, coupled with the turbulent market, and villagers with no alternative finally reluctantly relinquished their cultivation of sugar tangerines. They were subsequently assisted by an NGO in learning the techniques of ecological cultivation and reorganizing their agricultural practices. The villagers discovering the forgotten green plum that had been overlooked in the mountains and forests. They not only open up livelihood possibilities through new technologies and outlets, but also bring the disembedded economy back into the community. Furthermore, it has led to a transformation in the relationship between people and the environment, as well as between people and each other. This is a consequence of the interaction between diverse actors, including humans, trees, and microorganisms.

**The "Toxicity" of Eucalyptus: Scapegoating in Plantation Forestry and Farmers' Environmental Resistance | Hongxian WU (Shanghai University)**

This paper takes the controversy surrounding the "toxicity" of eucalyptus, a widely planted monocrop in Guangxi, and the resulting environmental protests by farmers as a case study of multispecies ethnography. It examines the multiple meanings of "toxicity" in the environmental contexts of non-Western societies and explores how human-plant relationships are mutually shaped, sustaining agricultural livelihoods in the Capitalocene."

Eucalyptus, the most extensively cultivated plantation crop in Guangxi, is often labeled in popular discourse and local knowledge as an "invasive alien species" that harms soil and water systems through its alleged toxicity. This dispute over "toxicity" has spurred environmental protests and social tensions. Departing from conventional ecological anthropology, this study argues that the notion of eucalyptus as "toxic" is not static local knowledge but a hybrid discourse intertwined with human-plant emotions, memories, ecological narratives, and political-economic critiques. Farmers' claims of "toxicity" serve as strategic responses to resist capital, power, and inequality, highlighting the complexity of environmental struggles. The "toxicity" associated with eucalyptus reflects, in ecological terms, the disembedding of human-nature relations under capitalist commodification. At the same time, the perception that "malicious" nonhuman subjects have the ability to perform revenge is rooted in animistic beliefs among the Zhuang people. It also embodies moral-ethical dimensions of agricultural production. Farmers' simultaneous belief in the toxicity of eucalyptus and their continued cultivation of the crop—despite its perceived dangers—appears paradoxical but is driven by shifts in livelihoods and the hollowing out of rural communities. This entanglement between humans and eucalyptus sustains rural agricultural practices amid the pressures of urbanization and globalization.

**Expanding the Vocal Agency of Companion Animals: Implications of Inter-species Communication | Qinghua TIAN (Independent)**

With the development of cross-species assistive communication technologies, the linguistic potential of companion animals is being rediscovered. Newly introduced pet communication buttons not only allow pets to "speak" their states of hunger, cold, joy, and sadness, but even convey dreams and longing. This has profoundly reshaped human-pet relationships and spurred us to reconsider the cultural implications of language and power.

Drawing from daily button language interactions with companion animals—supported by experimental behavioral observation, mul-

timodal analysis, and netnography—this study explores the complex dynamics of cross-species communication. Humans act not only as companions but also as designers, rule-makers, and teachers of button talk. Meanwhile, pets articulating their needs, rewrite established understandings of animal behavior via mostly imperative and declarative expressions. Such fluid interactions urge us to reevaluate the networks of power and emotional connections that underpin human-animal relations.

Furthermore, pets' capacity for expressing emotions and asserting rights through button talk triggers new debates about animal sovereignty, emotional labor, and ethical responsibility. As language learning and use increasingly transcend the human realm, companion animals challenge the longstanding notion of language as a hallmark of human exceptionalism. Their evolving communicative practices prompt reflections on the uniqueness of human language and culture while calling for a reevaluation of the boundaries that define human-animal relationships. These findings illuminate how inter-species communication can expand vocal agency beyond anthropocentric frameworks. By examining these practices, this research underscores potential for equitable interspecies interactions and deeper cross-species appreciation.

**Xunxiang XIA** (Sun Yat-sen University, Discussant)

**2-7**

**Navigating Belonging: Middle-Class Asian Migrants in Euro-America and the Politics of Inclusion**

Chair: Zachary HOWLETT (National University of Singapore, Chair)

**Globalised Dreams and Young South Korean Immigrants in Germany | You-Kyung BYUN (Chung-Ang University)**

Hell-Chosun is a pejorative term that emerged in South Korea in the 2010s, criticizing harsh competition and social inequality. It also reflects the social pressure on youth to succeed within a neoliberal society and the pursuit of becoming global talent. To escape such pressures, many young South Koreans have chosen to emigrate. This paper examines the long-term immigration experiences of young Koreans in Berlin, Germany, exploring the ideology of global talent within the neoliberal socioeconomic model and its consequences. Using ethnographic methods, this study investigates the lives of three young Korean immigrants in Berlin, focusing on their migration motivations, processes, and comparative evaluations of their home and host societies. Despite the difficulties of being foreigners in German society, these young people prefer to remain in Germany, where they can distance themselves from Korean societal pressures. However, they remain entangled in ongoing competition and the pursuit of prosperity, revealing a paradox between leaving their home society and continuing to live under its ideological influence. On the theoretical level, this research extends the discussion on Hell-Chosun and youth mobility to long-term migration experiences, highlighting the repercussions of neoliberal ideologies and their impact on young people.

**"My Child's Good Life is My Good Life": Hong Kong Migrant's Aspirations and Real Estate Investments in the UK | David Kwok Kwan TSOI (University of Oxford)**

This paper examines the relationship between aspirations, money, and morality among Hong Kong migrants who arrived in the UK in the post-2019 migration wave. With a focus on parent-child relationship, this paper discusses how a good life for migrants is imagined to be an intergenerational practice of hope with strong economic concerns. Based on pilot fieldwork and ethnographic interviews in 2024, I observed that these intergenerational aspirations and moral responsibilities congealed into the materialities of real estate investments by Hong Kong migrants in their mid-forties. They meticulously researched good school networks, officially known as catchment areas, and moved to these areas through housing investments. Drawing on anthropology of hope (Mattingly 2010; Miyazaki 2004; Qu 2022) and anthropology of familial morality (Kuan 2015), this paper identifies an emergent ontological phenomenon: the pursuit of a good life is not a personal matter but a relational endeavor that hinges on the coordination between human and non-human entities such as housing, school, and capital. Parents' moral responsibilities for their children are entangled in rational calculations of existing financial resources, perceived educational outcomes, and a classed future for their children. A good life is thus lived not by any individuals but designed as parent-child relation of spatial and social mobilities. In this process, parents act concomitantly as both moral subjects and market subjects, with family as a unit of a good life. In sum, this paper suggest that a good life for these migrants is mediated between rationality, romanticized spatiality, and deterritorialized hope.



**Mobility and Cultural Ties Through the Lens of Nomadic and Tribal Metaphors: An Ethnography of Young Chinese Migrants in London** | Zheyu XU (Lund University)

This paper explores how nomadic and tribal metaphors provide innovative analytical frameworks for understanding the mobility and diaspora of young Chinese migrants who were international students in the UK and now work in London. Using ethnographic methods, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the paper examines three key phases of their migratory experience: their departure from China, their lived realities in the UK, and their intentions to leave the UK in the future. The analysis reveals that their transnational mobility is shaped by three forces: imagined futures, societal constraints in China that inspire movement, and cultural tie that bind them as anchors. Through the nomadic metaphor, it captures their mobility, while the tribal metaphor illustrates the anchoring force of cultural ties. The interaction of these dynamic factors and strategic practices of young migrants create a place in smooth space that is neither entirely Chinese nor fully London, characterized by small, flexible diasporic communities with weak attachments. By interpreting these movements through the dynamic interaction of nomadic mobility and tribal cohesion, the paper provides new insights into the evolving diasporic identities of this new generation of Chinese individuals. It contributes to migration and diaspora studies by highlighting how mobility, cultural ties, and their practices intersect to shape distinct forms of diasporic potential in the contemporary world.

**Rethinking Social Inclusion in Community Development: An Ethnographic Analysis of East Asian Immigrants in Toronto's Nonprofit Sector** | Tianyang QI (Geneva Graduate Institute)

This study explored the experiences of the East Asian Diaspora in Canada, specifically focusing on East Asian workers in Toronto's non-profit sector, to analyze social inclusion through an ethnographic lens. While Canadian policies promote multiculturalism, the East Asian community faces significant underrepresentation and systemic ignorance that impacts their everyday experience and social welfare. Through the fieldwork in the Toronto non-profit sector and in-depth interviews with East Asian non-profit workers, this study reveals the disconnect between the sector's Western-centric approach and East Asia's own community-oriented values, resulting in active racial segregation" in this sector, which unavoidably impact on how East Asian immigrants receiving social welfare and services. The historical and systematic ignoring of the East Asian community and professional barriers led to more disconnect between the East Asian community and mainstream culture, even within an industry dedicated to community support. East Asian workers often have to face the emotional suffering of constantly being perceived as outsiders, which intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic amid rising anti-Asian sentiment. The study exposes a gap between Canada's top-down social inclusion frameworks and the on-ground realities for East Asian minorities, analyze the constant paradox of limited resources, high expectations, and underfunded organizational structures faced in the non-profit sector, which give less opportunity for connecting and recognizing the underrepresenting racialized workers. This research attempts to develop a discussion on immigrant integration, highlighting essential systemic changes and recognition needed to foster inclusivity for the East Asian community in the Canadian social system.

**2-8****Between Mobilities and Modernities: Reimagining Home, Faith, and Futures in Asia**

Chair: Ed PULFORD (University of Manchester)

**Marginal Nationhood: Kazakhstani Dungans as a Transnational Chinese Minority** | Ed PULFORD (University of Manchester)

This paper offers preliminary discussion of research focused on the Dungan community in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Descendants of Chinese Muslims who moved from the Qing to the Tsarist empire in the late nineteenth century, most Dungans reside in rural areas on the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyz border. Many, however, also live in Almaty, negotiating histories and identities in a large city which is both positioned close to China and serves as a regional hub in its own right. After decades of inclusion in an exclusivist Soviet 'national' paradigm, post-1990s interest among Dungans in 'roots' back in China have accompanied growing commercial, kin- and religious-based movement between Central Asia and the booming PRC. From the Chinese side, official interest has grown in diasporic groups who, while not belonging to the country's Han majority, are imagined to belong to what might be termed 'transnational Chinese minorities'. In this case, Dungans are understood to be 'overseas' counterparts to the PRC's Hui community. Both vernacular and official efforts to fit Dungans into a Chinese world have therefore long been complex. But recently, increasing friction between China and regional neighbours, pandemic border closures, and a tightening PRC ethnopollitical environment have reframed migratory pasts and presents, and the identity questions posed by China's celebrated 'rise'. In this paper I explore how Dungan lives can shed light on: 1) overlapping (post-)Soviet and PRC state socialist ethnic classification projects and their everyday aftermaths; and 2) how a 'transnational Chinese minority' navigates combined



geopolitical and ethno-political stresses in the twenty-first century.

**Mosques Founded by Indonesian Migrants in Japan: Global and National Perspectives in Islamic Practices** | Makoto KOIKE  
(Momoyama Gakuin University)

This paper aims to explore how Indonesian migrants have established and maintained mosques in Japan as sites of Islamic practices and as “homes” where Indonesians can engage in intimate interactions. Japan’s population is both shrinking and aging, resulting in severe workforce shortages. A comparable crisis is evident in South Korea and Taiwan. In response to this labor shortage, the Japanese government implemented the Technical Intern Training Program in 1993 and other programs to employ short-term foreign workers. As of the end of 2023, the foreign population in Japan reached 3.41 million. The Indonesian Muslim community is estimated to number 130,000, representing the largest Muslim population. Prior to the 1990s, the presence of mosques was uncommon, but the number has now reached 150 throughout the country. Prior to the construction of mosques, it is imperative for mosque founders to cultivate positive relationships with the local population. The study focuses on three mosques established by Indonesians in western Japan, where I conducted an anthropological fieldwork. During the sermon on Friday prayers, the imam utilizes Arabic, Indonesian, and Japanese, underscoring the significance of Japanese as a common language for Muslims from diverse backgrounds, a testament to the Islamic globality that is being embraced. However, from the national standpoint, the mosque committee in Osaka invited an eminent Indonesian preacher for the Indonesian staying at the mosque during the New Year holidays. The mosque’s activities are meticulously designed to maintain a balance between global and national perspectives.

**Reinventing Home (Puruy-anan): Negotiating Connections, Structures, Links, Spaces, and Time among the Laoanganon People** | Jill C. BASIERTO (University of Eastern Philippines)

Home involves a negotiation of presence alongside departures, transitions, and growth. When people are mobile, their concepts of home may become blurred from their continuous exposure to different places and cultures. Given this, the paper looked into the question “How do mobilities shape the concept of home?” through autoethnographic research in Laoang, a rural island in the Philippines and a transit town with active mobilities. Its high migration, unemployment rates, and close-knit community, make it ideal for this study. The researcher, as part of the data collection, worked with six key informants selected for their mobility experiences, age, social status, and work backgrounds. The methodology included observations, interviews, oral history, and the use of primary and secondary sources. All the data collected are put in dialogue to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of home. Puruy-anan (home) is intertwined with several key elements. Firstly, physical markers (panimalay) indicate that geographical and tangible aspects are crucial to negotiate identity and belonging. Secondly, relationships (igkasi) highlight the importance of familial and community bonds to feel at home despite physical absence. Thirdly, narratives (sumat) underscore the role of memory and storytelling in remembering home. Lastly, aspirations (ungara) drive actions and progress in Puruy-anan. The paper invites recognition that home is not just a place but a reflection of the connections individuals forge and the stories they share. It is also mobile and omnipresent, a journey and a narrative that is fluid, multifaceted, and profoundly personal, shaped by the ever-changing lives of people.

**Counterurbanization in Contemporary Vietnam: An Ethnographic Case Study of Young Urban-to-Rural Migrants in Central Highland** | Mai Huong TRAN (Vietnam National University)

While counterurbanization has been thoroughly discussed in the US and Europe since the 1950s and, more recently, in Japan and China, it is still a marginalized academic topic in developing countries. However, there has been an emerging trend of urban-to-rural mobility among young individuals in contemporary Vietnam. My proposal, hence, serves to fill in this academic and practical gap. It addresses an anthropological inquiry into how people choose where to settle, challenging conventional assumptions that cities often offer a higher quality of life or that rural pull factors are usually non-economic. In a similar vein, it provides an ethnographic exploration of 3 Vietnamese individuals’ narratives in Central Highland of Vietnam, focusing on their complex relocating trajectories. As a result, the study argues that the movement of counterurbanization, particularly in forms of deurbanization, has expanded in Vietnam regardless of typical facilitated factors such as post-growth society or government incentives seen in developed countries (Berry, Champion, Susanne, et al.). The study acquired first-hand data from the participant observation method during 2-year fieldwork from 2023 to 2024 by living directly with the participants and engaging with them on social media platforms. Theoretically, although situated within a broader frame of global counter-urbanization, it is based on a more Eastern concept of “Effortless Action” articulated by Slingerland, rooted in the Sinosphere philosophy of Wuwei. This Eastern ground is particularly relevant as the participants persist in Wu ideology to optimize their rural lives.

It aims to disrupt dominated Western discourses and amplify Sinosphere concepts in anthropological studies.

**Revisiting Modernities: Returning Youth's Alternative Modernity Practices and Life-Order Reconstruction in the Context of Consumption Transformation** | Yi LI (Beijing Normal University) and Rui ZHANG (Beijing Normal University)

This study examines the living practices of Chinese youth who choose to return to their hometowns within the broader context of consumption transformation. The phenomenon of relocating from first-tier cities back to second- and third-tier cities underscores the structural pressures present in China's compressed modernity, while also highlighting young people's drive to explore alternative forms of modern life. By taking consumption transformation as a key entry point, the research places particular emphasis on how the expansion of digital economic platforms and chain brands into lower-tier markets actively reshapes local consumption environments, thereby creating a material foundation that enables returning youth to maintain modern lifestyles. Drawing on extensive in-depth interviews, the study scrutinizes how these young returnees negotiate and reconcile the sometimes competing values of modernity and tradition, work through limited career development opportunities, and rebuild their social support networks within the context of their hometown settings. In doing so, they effectively reconfigure what it means to live a modern life in local communities. The findings of this study not only shed light on the dynamics of population return under China's compressed modernity framework, but also illuminate the ways in which returning youth become active agents of change through their engagement with alternative modernities. By examining their distinctive strategies and perspectives, this research contributes valuable insights into the evolving patterns of regional development and social transformation in contemporary China.

2-9

**Blurring the Boundaries in Urban Vietnam: The Contested Landscapes of Gender, Race and Community**

Chair: Minji YOO (Ewha Womans University)

In the transformative political and economic context of post-Đổi Mới Vietnam, cities have emerged as vibrant and contested arenas where diverse forces encounter and intersect. Shaped by the interplay of global economic integration, political shifts, and the changing landscape of gender, race, and community, these urban spaces challenge traditional understandings of social organization and spatial division. Thus, the complex realities found in urban Vietnam demand fresh perspectives that transcend established frameworks of urban segmentation, production, and composition. This panel critically examines the dynamic processes that shape Vietnamese urban spaces, moving beyond dichotomies such as public/private, upward/downward, and inside/outside in relation to gender, race, and community. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork across Northern and Southern Vietnam, the studies explore how urban spaces are continuously reshaped. Kyungmin examines how female flower sellers privatize public spaces while unintentionally publicizing the market through economic activities once devalued as domestic support." Minji explores how racial capitalism in Bac Ninh, shaped by South Korean foreign direct investment, fosters complex social and economic interactions between Vietnamese and Koreans. Yuchan investigates how recurring inundations during the rainy season blur spatial divisions, prompting new meanings and communal coping strategies. Lastly, Simon focuses on Buddhist monasteries as key social spaces that nurture cohesion within the Khmer Krom community. By exploring how boundaries of urban spaces are continually negotiated, blurred, and redefined, the four presentations aim to uncover the multifaceted interactions that constitute urban life, offering insights into how cities serve as spaces of both contestation and possibility in contemporary Vietnam.

**Turning the Market Inside-Out: The (Re)appropriation of Place among Women Flower Sellers in Hanoi** | Kyungmin KIM (Seoul National University)

This study investigates the gendered practices of women sellers in (re)appropriating spaces within Hanoi's Flower Market in Vietnam. Drawing on a year of ethnographic fieldwork, it highlights how Hanoi's marketplace, within the political-economic context of post-socialist Vietnam, is not a fixed and static space but a dynamic one constantly reshaped through interactions, conflicts, and contestations. Applying Drummond's (2000) concepts of inside-out and outside-in—two forces that shape the interplay between public and private spaces in Vietnam—this paper examines how women sellers navigate and transcend the public/private binary across physical, social, and cultural dimensions through their place-making practices. During the pre-and early Đổi Mới periods, local women sellers privatized" public spaces through private economic activities. Since around 2000, the state's formal attempts to delineate the inside" of the market were continually challenged by the boundary-crossing practices of women sellers. Interestingly, these practices paradoxically recreate the marketplace as a political and social public space.

The women's practices of (re)appropriating marketplaces generate dual effects: they privatize public spaces while unintentionally publicizing the market through their economic activities. These dynamics highlight the interplay of space and gender, emphasizing the gendered meanings and transformative potential of women sellers' work. What was once devalued as domestic support" (nội trợ: 内助), merely an extension of housework, is now redefined and imbued with political and social significance. By examining the economic practices of women sellers, this study reveals how they transcend boundaries of space and gender, offering a perspective on reimagining women's work and agency in marketplaces.

**Bottom-Up Racial Capitalism? The Racialized Response to South Korean FDI in Bac Ninh, Northern Vietnam | Minji YOO**  
(Ewha Womans University)

This study examines how racialisation processes emerge through economic interactions and service industries in Bac Ninh, Vietnam, where South Korean capital plays a significant role. While traditional discussions of racial capitalism focus on Western-centric binaries of white versus non-white, this study highlights how racialisation occurs among individuals without visible differences in skin colour. Thus, it expands the theoretical scope of racial capitalism within the context of Asia's rising influence in the global political economy. Since Samsung entered Vietnam in 2008, Bac Ninh has transformed from a rural area into an industrial city. Service sectors catering to South Korean consumers, particularly men, have rapidly expanded. This development reflects a racialised response to South Korean business culture and lifestyle, which has, in turn, created stereotypes about South Korean men. The study argues that while these male-oriented service industries often operate in a legal grey area, they are driven by regional development and individual aspirations for upward mobility. In a stagnating global economy, Vietnam positions itself as a land of opportunity, providing spaces where individuals can assert agency and realise desires. This case proposes discussing racial capitalism from a bottom-up perspective. It emphasises the need for comparative research to analyse how local populations' racialised responses vary depending on the source of capital.

**Navigating Urban Inundation Disturbances: Local Residents' Perceptions and Practices in Ho Chi Minh City | Yuchan SEONG** (Seoul National University)

Based on 11 weeks of ethnographic research in inundation-prone areas of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), this study explores how recurring inundations during the rainy season are experienced in daily life, blur spatial divisions, and generate various meanings alongside individual and communal coping strategies. Like many Southeast Asian cities, HCMC faces frequent inundations caused by the compound of periodic tidal changes, heavy rainfall, and the mismatch between rapid urbanization and lagging development of hydraulic infrastructure. Rather than framing HCMC's socio-natural conditions solely as problems" to be solved through urban planning or technological intervention, this research emphasizes the local interpretations of inundation and the following material and discursive practices that emerge in residents' everyday lives. The study investigates how urban space divisions—such as public and private, natural and social, good" and bad" places to live—are reshaped and changed during periods of inundations. It further examines the impacts of inundations on residents' lives, focusing on the adaptive strategies mobilized by individual households and neighborhood communities. By examining these, the research illuminates the diverse perceptions of ordinariness, inevitability, and fairness. It also considers the game of power and morality practiced in urban life and inside/beside urban governance of material-social spaces, revealing aspects that lie beyond the simplistic framing of disasters and hazards versus victims. This study emphasizes on the political and apolitical characteristics of interplay between urban inundations and everyday lives within the broader context of the intensification of socio-economic and spatial inequalities.

**Place-making of the Buddhist Monasteries in the Khmer Krom in Vietnam's Linguistic Landscapes | Simon Sopanha BUNTHOEUN** (Seoul National University)

This paper examines the role of Buddhist monasteries as pivotal spaces for place-making in the linguistic landscape of the Khmer Krom community in Vietnam. In the Mekong Delta, where Khmer-speaking enclaves persist amid the dominance of Vietnamese, the monasteries function as cultural and spiritual hubs, preserving the Khmer language through religious practices and educational initiatives. These sacred spaces not only foster intergenerational language transmission but also embody a form of resistance to state-imposed linguistic assimilation. Drawing on ethnographic research, including interviews with monks and community members, this study highlights how the Khmer language is actively maintained and revitalized within the monastery context, linking spiritual devotion with cultural resilience. The study underscores how Buddhist monasteries not only serve as linguistic and cultural reservoirs but also as spaces that nurture social cohesion among the Khmer Krom community. They act as centers where communal gatherings, festivals, and rituals are

conducted, reinforcing the collective ethnic identity and solidarity in the face of sociopolitical pressures. This study reveals that Khmer language education within monasteries extends beyond religious instruction, equipping younger generations with linguistic skills that enhance their cultural literacy and provide opportunities for transnational connections. It calls for greater attention to the interplay between sacred geography, language preservation, and cultural continuity, advocating for sustained efforts to document and support the linguistic futures of Indigenous communities navigating sociopolitical marginalization.

**Catherine EARL** (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Vietnam, Discussant)

**Kyungmook LEE** (Jeonbuk National University, Discussant)

**2-10**

**Digital Transformations: Space, Performance, and Practice in Contemporary Korea**

**Chair: Bradley TATAR** (Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology)

This panel examines how digital technologies transform cultural spaces and practices in contemporary Korea. Everyday social life consists of online and offline interactions, which combine to reshape spaces of interaction in the virtual and the material realms. Digital connectivity is both transforming and transformative of human social life, driving a need for cultural description that expands the experiential and participative aspects of community practice. While the fluorescence of techno-capitalist society dominated by corporate social media has biased the direction of scholarly description toward efforts to exploit and utilize mediated communities for commercial purposes, anthropology mobilizes a research tradition which can put creative communities and networked groups back at the forefront. In particular, we look at the performances and practices through which creative and aesthetic agency is developed within the online and offline spaces of communities devoted to music, dance, photography and tourism. Through analyses of urban spaces, traditional arts, and contemporary performance, we explore how digital mediation reshapes physical environments, artistic expression, and social relations. Papers investigate Instagram's transformation of Seoul neighborhoods, the evolution of traditional Korean performance in digital contexts, K-pop performance, place-making and co-presence, and other emergent cultural practices. Together, these studies reveal how digital technologies create new modes of cultural production while maintaining distinctively Korean characteristics.

**Destination Image as Place-making: Korean Tourists & Japanese Destinations** | **Bradley TATAR** (Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology, Organizer)

When global tourist destinations experienced overtourism in 2024, social media was blamed. Overtourism is social stress caused by numbers of recreational visitors beyond the sustainable capacity of the host destination. We investigate the surge in Korean tourists visiting Japan as indicative of a new mode of intercultural relations between Korea and Japan, propelled by a combination of generational change, and digitally mediated tourism practices. Destination image is a cognitive, emotional, and motivational disposition to visit a specific place, resulting from the interaction of a subject's personal characteristics and the feelings and beliefs they hold about the place to be visited. Social media enables communications directly from customer-to-customer, through which tourists interactively reform their images of their experiences. The current surge of Korean tourists to destinations in Japan indicates a genuine change of attitude which shifts away from the "no Japan" nationalist position of Korean consumers in the early 21st century. Through internet posts and hashtags, the Korean tourists express ideas about Japan as a cultural and social space in ways that impact the decision to travel as well as the behaviors of the tourists upon reaching the destination. The attitude shift corresponds to the online presence of Korean members of GenZ and millennials who display and enact a desire to encounter Japanese places through social media. Through this case study, we argue that the positive image of Japan constructed through online interactions can be leveraged to mitigate overtourism by encouraging courteous tourist behavior at the tourist destinations.

**Festival as GenMZ Laboratory: Fusing Technology with Musical Tradition** | **Jocelyn CLARK** (Pai Chai University)

This paper reviews some ways South Korea's Generation MZ (Millennial + Gen Z) musicians are expanding traditional notions of gugak (lit. national music") through digital technologies and cross-genre experimentation, particularly in the festival context. I look at the emerging shift in festival leadership to digital native" musicians like Park Dawool [Park Da-ul] (b. 1992) and Park Woo-jae [Park Ujae] (b. 1981), the recently formed geomungo zither duo Two Freaks of the Darkness," who are using extended techniques, looping effects, electronic devices, and improvisation to compose a new repertoire for the digital age, which they debuted in six new pieces at the ACC World Music Festival in Gwangju in the fall of 2024. Domestic festivals, especially regionally situated ones, have begun to serve as laboratories where

young performers can explore gugak's possibilities away from the high-pressure capital of Seoul and free of the exoticization routinely imposed on Korean groups at international venues where fusion" gugak is often stereotyped as "psychedelic," "post-rock," or "shamanic." But the appointment of Park Woo-jae as creative director of the Yeowoorak [Yeourak] (Here Is Our Music") Festival at the National Theater in Seoul marks a generational shift in gugak's relationship with digital culture and an emphasis on what Park calls "hyper-connection" of genres including music, dance, and media art. I explore how, in this context, the MZ generation is using digital tools to create transformative environments where fundamental elements of Korea's traditional genres collide, expanding how gugak is defined in the second quarter of the 21st century.

**Magnificent Backdrops: K-pop Performance and Asynchronous Co-presence in Korean Heritage Sites** | CedarBough SAEJI (Pusan National University)

This paper examines how digital K-pop performances transform Korea's historic palaces into sites of asynchronous co-presence - spaces where fans seek physical connection to virtually experienced performances. Although historically pop culture and palaces were promoted separately by the Korean government, more recently some of Korea's top stars have been permitted to record performances inside palace grounds. Through analysis of BTS's 2020 Tonight Show performances at Gyeongbok Palace, TXT's 2021 Gyeonghui Palace performance, and New Jeans' 2024 Gyeongbok Palace concert headlining, I demonstrate how these primarily digital performances layer new meanings onto Joseon Dynasty historic heritage sites. Like social media users marking presence through location tags, fans perform pilgrimages to these sites to experience connection with performances of favorite artists they first encountered through YouTube and television. Drawing on discourse analysis of news coverage, YouTube comments, and a multilingual survey of nearly 1,000 K-pop fans, I show how this digital mediation of palace spaces creates new meanings that complicate traditional understandings of heritage sites. As these performances superimpose pop cultural significance onto historic spaces, they effectively anoint K-pop stars as Korea's new royalty, demonstrating how digital practices reshape cultural space in contemporary Korea.

**Nth Space: Digital Playgrounds and the Transformation of Urban Space in Seoul** | Michael HURT (Korea National University of Arts, Presenter)

This paper introduces the concept of nth space to analyze how Instagram aesthetics transform urban spaces in contemporary Seoul. Through ethnographic research across three distinct neighborhoods - Seongsu, Itaewon, and Apgujeong - I demonstrate how these areas evolved from traditional Korean urban spaces characterized by intimate golmok (골목) connections into complex environments that transcend conventional public-private binaries. Unlike traditional third spaces, nth spaces serve simultaneous functions as sites of consumption, digital content creation, and identity performance. Each neighborhood illustrates distinct manifestations of nth space: Seongsu's industrial-aesthetic hybridization, Itaewon's layers of historical memory and trauma, and Apgujeong's luxury consumption patterns. By examining how these spaces function simultaneously as physical locations and stages for digital performance, this research reveals how social media practices actively reshape urban sociality.

**2-11**

**Mediating Muslim Self & Other in East Asia: On the Ethics and Politics of Representation across National Boundaries**

Chair: Shinjung Nam (Sungkyunkwan University)

This panel explores the ethics and politics of representing Muslim subjects in four different national contexts of state policy, Islamophobia, and migration in East Asia. The panel illuminates the testimonial format of storytelling undertaken by Muslim and non-Muslim subjects through various media made accessible via online platforms, such as YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook. The first two papers examine how Muslim subjects in Japan and non-Muslim subjects in South Korea respectively mediate what it is like to live as a Muslim minority in each country and how to build relatability with others throughout society. The last two papers examine how Taiwanese and Han-Chinese subjects mediate an imperialist and xenophobic nationalism by downplaying state violence in Xinjiang on the one hand and imagining Muslim subjects from the MENA regions as dangers to national security on the other. All of these projects introduced by each paper constitute "technologies of the imagination" that are good at opening up spaces" where unexpected outcomes emerge" (Holbraad, Pederson & Sneath 2009, 25). Keeping in mind that such technologies can serve to hide in plain sight existing rubrics of systemic discrimination and violence against Muslim subjects, the papers commonly ask how we can work with them nonetheless to both challenge and build (extra)ordinary ways of seeing, sensing, and re-lating to the self and others in today's context of continued genocide and



displacement of Muslim communities worldwide.

**From the Stage to the Screen to the Stage: The Aesthetics of Building Public Intimacy with Yemeni Refugees in South Korea** | **Shinjung NAM (Sungkyunkwan University)**

This article introduces an activism project conducted by a Jeju-Island based artist who has been following the lives of asylum seekers in South Korea. In 2018 alone, 561 people fleeing the war in Yemen arrived in Jeju Island; 484 people applied for asylum; only 2 were recognized, and 412 were given temporary residency with work permit. In direct counter movement to the conservative religious groups' violent othering of Muslim subjects seeking asylum in the country, the artist has produced several related projects, from audiovisual exhibits to stage performances to illustrated books, in collaboration with colleagues to mediate the voices and the stories of Yemeni refugees in Korean language. This article turns to his stage performance, video-recorded and made available online through Vimeo, where he and his colleague narrate in Korean and in Arabic, respectively, several anecdotes from the everyday life of their mutual friend named Amran. The artist here thinks out loud about the ethics and the aesthetics of representing Amran while sharing his own experiences of discrimination and trauma as a sexual minority in South Korea. In addition to exploring the ways in which this storytelling takes shape and place, the article chronicles how the author has come to learn about these projects in the first place, accounting for the role social media plays in channeling access to such projects and for the significance still of physical spaces, like bookstores, where audiences can assemble to consciously reflect upon the virtuality of such representations, their limits, and their future possibilities.

**Self-(Re)presentation in Digital Spaces: On the Use of Social Media among Muslims in Contemporary Japan** | **Yoko YAMASHITA (Waseda University)**

It can be argued that the ways in which Muslims are perceived and represented in Japanese society have been contradictory. On the one hand, Muslims who negotiate/perform their Muslimness as (good) foreigners are welcomed and tolerated in Japan, especially within the framework of tourism and multiculturalism because Islam is often constructed as a foreign culture "that belongs to the Other." On the other hand, Muslims are often represented as the (dangerous) Other" as exemplified by the cases of surveillance, local oppositions to the construction of Islamic burial sites and mosques, and media representations that focus on wars and terror attacks. This paper explores the politics of mediation as manifested in the practices of self-(re)presentation in digital spaces by looking at how Muslims in Japan have been utilizing social media to challenge the stereotypical portrayals that associate Islam/Muslims with extremism/fundamentalism. It uses two analytical lenses through a textual analysis of the self-representations of Japanese Muslim individuals and organizations on their social media pages. First, it focuses on the notion of the self that performs and (re)presents on social media platforms, the relationships between producers and audiences, and the possibilities of presenting multiple, diverse, fluid selves as opposed to a singular, unified self. Second, it utilizes the concept of the culturalization of religion to examine the instrumental culturalization of Islam in Japan. That is, it looks at how Muslims themselves perform self-culturalization so as to be accepted by the majority Japanese in the secular public sphere.

**Does Soft Propaganda Work? A Case Study of Taiwanese YouTubers' Travel to Xinjiang** | **Lu Wei Rose LUQIU (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

This study explores the effectiveness of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s soft propaganda approach through a case study of Taiwanese YouTubers invited to tour Xinjiang. This region, which faces international scrutiny for alleged human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, presents a particularly challenging context for promoting positive narratives. The New York Times reported that even foreign travel vloggers invited to Xinjiang, such as a British couple, downplayed the controversy by showcasing their positive travel experiences. This strategy, akin to the use of state endorsers, also applies to Taiwanese YouTubers whose Xinjiang content is promoted by Chinese state media and officials. However, this content has sparked controversy in Taiwan, with some national security experts labeling it as CCP cognitive warfare aimed at whitewashing human rights issues. By analyzing 68 YouTube vlogs and over 97,000 comments, this research investigates the interplay between social media influencers, traditional news media, and audience engagement. Using critical discourse analysis and structural topic modeling, the study identifies a significant increase in public engagement and a shift in sentiment following the implementation of the CCP's soft propaganda strategy. These findings highlight the effectiveness of utilizing influencers and traditional media to shape public opinion. The study provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of soft propaganda and emphasizes the increasing sophistication of state-sponsored information operations in the digital age.



**Han Rage and Anti-Muslim Racism in Contemporary Chinese Cyberspace | Jing WANG (University of Wisconsin-Madison)**

What are the historical and institutional conditions that give rise to Han rage regarding the imaginary of Muslim refugees? What are the key discursive frameworks being mobilized in digital spheres to racialize refugees and incite anti-Muslim sentiments in China? This article takes the case of the 2017 anti-refugee controversy in the social media platform of Weibo as a critical point of analysis. This article examines how, in social media like Weibo and Zhihu, Chinese netizens constructed a monolithic image of all refugees from the MENA regions as potentially dangerous Muslims refugees.” This article identifies such public outbursts of anger and fear as symptoms of what I call Han rage” amid the rise of cybernationalism and global populism in contemporary China. The media materials analyzed in this chapter mainly come from blog posts, micro-blog posts, online articles, and media reports and commentaries across different Chinese websites and social media platforms. Some supplementary materials include official policy documents and historical archives on refugee programs in China. By interweaving different media and ethnographic materials, I critique both Han-centric nationalism and global populism that plague the social imaginary of Muslimness in the Chinese media spheres.

**Janice JEONG (Simon Fraser University, Discussant)**

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**2-12    An Elephant in the Room: Positionalities around Anthropology of Japan and East Asia**

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**Chair: Kunisuke Hirano (Keio University)**

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This panel addresses an issue that has received little attention in East Asian anthropology: researchers’ positionalities. Reflexivity has been valued in anthropological fieldwork, where the effects of the researchers’ identities on data collection have been considered. The researchers’ linguistic proficiencies also affect their positionalities/identities. To engage in Anglophone scholarship, one’s speaking/writing proficiency in English might be more important than fluency in the languages used in fieldwork. Scholarly work written in Japanese or other languages is rarely cited in dominant English-language journals/books in Japan anthropology. In area studies, in-depth ethnography shrinks to insignificance. Researchers should think about intersectionality and the politics of writing: Who writes Japan for whom and for what, and what voices and perspectives are neglected/silenced? This panel focuses on the concept of hazama (interstices/gaps 틈새기), and addresses linguistic/political/theoretical/methodological challenges and possibilities of conducting ethnography in contemporary Japan. Hirano analyzes how certain topics are excluded in the process of writing a dissertation about alternative education, for the sake of understanding among English-speaking audiences. Horiguchi examines the challenges and possibilities of mediating knowledge on Japan’s COVID-19 responses in interdisciplinary research. Mihara examines how Orientalism persists in anime studies, and its ‘style of thought’ executes its disciplinary power over academics. Tso presents the urge and challenges in developing non-ethnocentric understandings of masculinities. Although all the panelists specialize in Japan, this panel aims to broaden the conversation with those working on Korea and China, and reimagine what we can do to shape our future of East Asian anthropology.

**Writing Japanese education: Enumeration in the Process of Dissertation Writing | Kunisuke HIRANO (Keio University)**

Based on the experience of writing a dissertation on alternative education in contemporary Japan, I discuss the lack of reference to Japanese scholarship in the field of anthropology and how this has implications for the development of anthropology of Japan. While English scholarship on Japan could offer broader perspectives that are more easily referenced in interdisciplinary contexts, the lack of in-depth understanding of theories and materials written in Japanese could widen the gap between scholarship written in English and other languages. While English-language scholarship on Japanese education offers larger pictures and shifts in Japanese education, the lack of recent legal updates and changing admission systems may contribute to the reproduction of essentialized, outdated figures of education and society in Japan. To overcome this, we need more conversations. There may be many advantages and contributions of the current anthropology of Japan in the Anglophone academy, such as a different analysis of Japan than in the Japanophone academy, but it still privileges certain etic perspectives and cannot overcome the dichotomies of ‘us’, the Anglophone audience, and ‘them’, the Japanese, as the ultimate other.

**Doing Japan Anthropology in Interdisciplinary Collaborations: A Case Study of COVID-19 Research | Sachiko HORIGUCHI (Temple University Japan Campus)**

Recent years have seen a rising expectation for Japan anthropologists to engage in interdisciplinary collaborations, due partly to the structural peripherality of Japan anthropology within the anthropological community in Japan and the academic world system”

(Kuwayama 2017; Horiguchi 2024). Against this background, I reflect on the dilemmas and possibilities that my participation in interdisciplinary collaborations in Japan as a bilingual Japan anthropologist has brought about, with a particular focus on a case study of a collaborative project on Japanese primary care physicians' COVID-19 responses. I will discuss dilemmas faced in the data collection and analysis stages, as well as ways in which my proficiency in English has led to both exploitation and empowerment in the process of co-production of knowledge on Japan's healthcare. I will also examine how collaboration helps open up anthropology at both local and global levels and position it vis-a-vis other scholarly fields, leading to relativization of the discipline. My reflections highlight the roles that liminally-situated Japan anthropologists can play in mediating anthropologists across borders and helping re-imagine the possibilities of anthropological practice.

#### **Orientalism in Anglophone Anime Studies | Ryotaro MIHARA (Keio University)**

Mihara demonstrates how the issue of Orientalism (as proposed by Edward Said) has been counterintuitively underexamined, and thus remains the 'elephant in the room' in the field of Anglophone studies of Japanese animation (anime). Obviously, such studies should not be exempt from scrutiny with regard to Orientalism. Although anime has been a popular subject for research and teaching in Anglophone higher education institutions for more than two decades, academic writings in the field are, surprisingly, yet to fully recognise Orientalism's impact on the ways in which they make intellectual sense of this area of Japanese visual culture. Hence, the field still canonises a specific rhetorical 'style of thought' (as Said terms it) in understanding anime, at the expense of anime itself – given the (colonial) power of this 'style' over intellectuals and primary sources in Japan/ese. Mihara also highlights, in an ethno-autobiographic manner, how the Orientalist 'style of thought' subtly executes its disciplinary power over academics as they try to secure their intellectual as well as professional positions in the field of Anglophone anime studies. In so doing, he draws from his complexly liminal experience of navigating his academic career through Anglophone and Japanophone academia – especially his recent experience on publishing the very academic paper, in English, which challenges the field's consensus against the relevance of Orientalism in approaching anime.

#### **The Limits of Western theory on Masculinities Scholarship in Japan | Christopher TSO (Keio University)**

This paper examines the effects of English-language theory on masculinities scholarship in Japan. In masculinities scholarship in the Japanese context, the dominant theoretical perspective remains Raewyn Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity, a theory that developed from the Australian context and remains influential in many English-speaking and non-English speaking contexts. According to the concept, societies are structured around asymmetrical hierarchies whereby hegemonic masculinities exist superordinately to complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinities and women. In the Japanese context, this perspective has led to decades of scholarship designating the 'salaryman' figure – a suit-wearing, corporate drone – as the hegemonic form of masculinity, around which a diversity of other masculinities are ordered. However, in setting 'diverse' or 'alternative' masculinities against hegemonic salarymen, this theoretical trend continues to privilege salarymen (while producing inaccurate stereotypes of them), and stymies the development of other theoretical perspectives, including those from Japanese-language scholarship. In this paper, I discuss the limits that the hegemonic masculinity thesis has placed on masculinities scholarship in Japan, and the challenges in developing non-ethnocentric understandings of masculinities.

**Jiyeon KANG (Kyungpook National University School of Medicine, Discussant)**

**2-13**

#### **Cities, Emotions, and Animals: Interspecies Interactions in Urban China**

**Chair: Jun-Dan YAN (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)**

Amid the rise of posthumanist thought, societal and emotional boundaries are expanding, fostering an interconnected worldview that challenges the dichotomy between culture and nature, human and nonhuman. This intellectual shift highlights the evolving roles of animals, plants, and microorganisms within academic inquiry. Against this backdrop, our panel, Cities, Emotions, and Animals, investigates human-animal relationships in Chinese urban contexts, emphasizing how local wildlife and companion animals reshape emotional and spatial boundaries. Our discussions span multiple dimensions: the in-situ interactions of Shanghai's urban wildlife raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), the survival challenges of Chengdu's indigenous rural dogs, the role of pet dogs in constructing neighborhood bonds and senses of place in Chongqing, the interplay between Lhasa Apso dogs and Tibetan identity in Lhasa, and the scientific practices of reptile keeping in urban environments. With the rapid acceleration of urbanization, shifting cultural landscapes, and increasing

capital intervention, animals increasingly occupy complex roles within city spaces. This panel examines how animals contribute to the reproduction of urban spaces, transform human emotional boundaries, and unveil ethical dilemmas inherent in human-nonhuman interactions. Through these case studies, we seek to enrich posthumanist theories by situating them within the unique realities of Chinese cities. This panel offers novel insights into urbanization, cultural transformation, and the agency of nonhuman actors, contributing to a deeper understanding of interspecies interactions in rapidly changing urban landscapes.

**The Suspense of Stray: Chinese Rural Dogs in Urbanized Space | Junyi JI (Communication University of China)**

Chinese Rural Dogs, one of the indigenous dog breeds in China, are ubiquitous, especially in the Chinese countryside. However, the urbanization and modernization process present a severe threat to Chinese Rural Dogs by eliminating their original habitat. The city space becomes an unsuitable habitat for Chinese Rural Dogs, while their legal rights partly remain as property of pet owners. As a consequence, there is a rupture between natural human-canine symbiosis and property in the context of capitalist modernity. The so-called pet-friendly community is not an animal-friendly space in urbanized area open to all non-human animals, but an access mechanism operating on the ownership of animals as property of human citizens. This paper takes inspiration from zoë, bios, and Anthropological Machine (Agamben, 2004), trying to illustrate the complicated situation between diverse actants in the pet-friendly community in Chengdu, China. Through fieldwork in Yulin community, Chengdu, this paper focuses on the access of city space granted/limited to different breeds of dogs, and the human understanding of such mechanism. This paper further establishes a connection between a stray animal shelter, individual stray animal adopters, pet shop owners, and lawmakers, locating the three major contributors to this situation: a) ongoing elimination of their suitable habitat; b) gradual establishment of laws and regulations on their survival in cities; c) unfavored by pet industry in comparison with purebreds. In conclusion, the access to city space serves as the representation of discrimination against indigenous Chinese Rural Dogs in contemporary China, as capitalist modernity contributes to the suspense, but ultimately irresistible, of their stray.

**Dogs as Agents of Communitas: Exploring Emotional and Spatial Reconstruction in Post-Reform Urban China | Jun-Dan YAN (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)**

In the post-reform era, the disintegration of China's danwei system and accelerated urbanization have led to the large-scale demolition of old communities, resulting in the decline of traditional Chinese community collectives. Urban residents increasingly exhibit learned indifference, and urban spaces are becoming thinner, lacking historical memory and emotional ties. Recently, the surge in pet ownership in China, surpassing the number of children under four, highlights the rise of multi-species symbiosis in urban communities. Pet dogs, initially family companions, have integrated into community life, fostering dog-centered social clusters that reshape community interactions and spatial production. This study, guided by affect theory and Victor Turner's concept of communitas (Turner, 1969), examines the role of pet dogs in urban communities. Based on participant observation and interviews in a multi-species community in Chongqing, China. The findings reveal that dogs act as emotional and social bridges, uniting dog owners through direct interactions, shared observations, and new social ties (e.g. dog parents). These interactions create de-structured, egalitarian networks, reflecting Turner's communitas. In this framework, dogs enable community members to bypass traditional hierarchies, fostering emotionally direct and intimate connections. Dogs disrupt social formalities, offering a platform for shared experiences that rebuild neighborhood relationships emotionally. This communitas atmosphere reshapes community spaces, particularly in public parks, where dog-walking spaces become key sites for fostering emotional connections, co-creating meaningful communal experiences between residents and their dogs.

**Cold-Blooded Fetters: the Flow and Reconstruction of Reptile Pet Rearing Knowledge | Yuhan CHEN (Shanghai University)**

In recent years, the exotic pet reptile market in China has gradually expanded. The practice of keeping reptiles as pets has been increasingly accepted by a growing number of people, and the reptile-keeping community has shifted from being a niche to a commercial one. In the reptile-keeping circle, mastering professional and scientific knowledge is of great significance. Whether one has acquired adequate knowledge is directly related to the life and death of the reptiles. Due to the wide variety of reptiles and their considerable differences in habits, there is no ready-made and systematic knowledge system for learning. People's acquisition of reptile-keeping knowledge mainly stems from popular science magazines and documentaries, the promotion of merchants, and the experiences shared by other reptile keepers. The demand for commercialization has prompted breeders to attempt to eliminate people's misunderstanding of reptiles as cold-blooded through words and actions. In social media and online communities, an increasing number of reptile keepers

are getting involved, and the continuous interaction between keepers and breeders has jointly shaped the keeping knowledge that conforms to their animal ethics. Scientific knowledge is constantly produced, absorbed, and reconstructed.

This paper, by conducting an investigation of reptile breeders and keepers in the Shanghai area and employing qualitative research methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, composing and augment the ethical perspective in the format of multi-species ethnography, endeavors to discuss how the scientific knowledge of reptile keeping is influenced by market logic, how breeders balance the conflict between commercial expansion and animal ethics, and through the interaction among different subjects, how reptile keepers shift from eliminating prejudice to actively responding to misunderstandings and co-authoring the Chinese reptile culture.

**Feral Encounters in Shanghai City: Culture, Emotion and Conservation in Urban Human-Raccoon Dogs Relationship**  
| Xuanyu YANG (Southwest Minzu University)

This paper explores the dynamic interactions between Shanghai residents and urban raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), emphasizing the role of public narratives, natural observation, and community engagement in shaping local ecological awareness. Through ethnographic case studies, the research investigates how personal experiences and cultural narratives contribute to the recognition of raccoon dogs as native animals of Shanghai, fostering a unique urban wildlife management paradigm. The study highlights the tension between scientific principles and emotionally driven conservation efforts, revealing the multifaceted nature of human-wildlife coexistence in urban landscapes.

This study emphasizes that strategies for understanding and promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife should be based on a deep understanding of cultural and individual differences. Future research and policy development needs to focus more on exploring and documenting these differences to ensure that wildlife management strategies are both scientifically sound and humane and culturally sensitive. Besides, this study provides a framework for promoting the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature in urban environments through the integration of diverse knowledge and understanding, demonstrates the potential of anthropological research in understanding human-animal relationships, and provides new perspectives and approaches for the future development of urban ecology. Through this integrated approach, we will not only be able to protect and manage wildlife in cities more effectively, but also promote respect and conservation of biodiversity at a broader socio-cultural level.

**Affective Encounters in Interspecies Communication: Human-Lhasa Apso Relationships in Urban Lhasa** | Lha GYUNG(Beijing Foreign Studies University)

Inspired by the recent surge in Lhasa city's adoption of the indigenous Lhasa Apso breed, This research aims to investigate the affect produced between bodies through the daily interactions between Lhasa Apso dogs and their caretakers in Lhasa's cultural and urban context. Focusing on Dante, a young Lhasa resident and organizer of the Lhasa Apso Adoption Alliance," this study, through participant observation and in-depth interviews, highlights the interspecies relationships in Tibetan society amidst socio-economic changes and shifting cultural landscapes.

As many scholars have emphasized, the specificity of place and the historical contingencies through which a space becomes a place are crucial for situating particular interspecies relations. Tibetan culture, with its unique cosmology and ontology, embodies distinct ethical considerations in its relationships with other species. The interface between Lhasa Apso and local residents emerges within this cultural context, reflecting and reinforcing specific cultural values and ethics.

Far from being seen merely as pets, Lhasa Apsos are regarded as spiritual beings with agency and rights, resonating with posthumanist perspectives. Amidst rapid urbanization and modernization, many local residents are motivated by an affective drive to inherit and preserve traditional culture," leading to their decision to adopt this indigenous breed, which has long been embedded in Tibet's history. Through the praxis of caring for these dogs, the identity of being Tibetan people" is dynamically shaped and performed as a process of becoming. As companion species, Lhasa Apsos, through embodied interactions such as guarding homes and providing companionship, actively respond to and co-construct cross-species affect within these relationships.

Lei ZHANG (Communication University of China, Discussant)  
Yan YUAN (Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Discussant)

**2-14****Embodied Borderscapes: Citizenship, Labor, and Identity in Transnational China–Southeast Asia**

Chair: Tian SHI (Wenzhou University)

**Crossing Borders, Creating Boundaries: Transborder Citizenship and the Affiliated Agency among Hmong Migrant Workers at the China–Laos Border | Tian SHI (Wenzhou University)**

This article explores the transborder citizenship of Hmong migrant workers at the China–Laos border through their migration and aspirations. On the basis of ethnography among ethnic minority workers at the border of Mohan, China, and Boten, Laos, this paper argues that contemporary transborder movements transform multi-territorial citizenship and responsive citizens. This article utilizes the concept of affiliated agency to present the tension and dynamics that arise when individuals seek belongingness under the ideological conditions of nation-states on the basis of institutions and familial practice. Thus, this article demonstrates how individuals pursue belongingness and create various identities in multiple settings.

**Navigating Bodies and Borders: Adolescent Burmese Workers in a Chinese Border Town | Qinyi JIANG (SOAS University of London)**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China dramatically reinforced its border control measures, transforming previously porous borderlands into highly regulated and nearly impenetrable walls, significantly affecting the movement of workers who had previously relied on informal channels to cross into China. Meanwhile, the ongoing civil war in Myanmar has intensified, prompting many adolescents to migrate to China for economic opportunities and safety. However, due to recent Chinese border policies, these migrants are required to repeatedly cross the border to renew their entry permits, legally allowing them to stay in Ruili, a Chinese border town, for only a short duration (e.g., one week or one month). This cyclical movement transforms the border into both a barrier and a site of continuous negotiation, where adolescent migrants must navigate their physical and emotional transitions amid heightened risks of exploitation and control. Their migration journeys are characterised by continuous movement across the border, repeated encounters with surveillance, and containment both at the border and within workplaces, shaping their daily lives, physical movements, and identity formation. This study explores how adolescent Burmese workers navigate repetitive bordering practices during their physical and social transitions in Ruili, China. The focus is on the embodied border—how it is experienced as both a physical and symbolic boundary, shaping their continuous migration journeys, daily labour conditions, and identity formation.

**Mining Shores: Labor and Ethnicity in Thailand's Tin Industry | Chantal CROTEAU (University of Michigan)**

Industries of extraction have long flourished in the resource rich region of southern Thailand, shaping social dynamics and intercommunal relations in sometimes violent ways through the structuring of labor, opportunities and demands for interregional trade, and systems of production. This paper focuses on one such industry – the tin mining industry, which exploded in Phang Nga, Thailand during the 19th century, generating significant socioeconomic changes and bringing individuals with different ethno-religious identities, themselves not homogenous categories, together in new ways, before the collapse of the industry in the mid-1980s. This paper traces histories of kinship and migration through a focus on the tin mining industry in Thailand, with a focus on the experiences and histories of the Chinese diaspora in the region. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, oral history conversations, and archival research, this paper examines the relationship between tin mining, migration from China and Malaysia, and intercommunal relations in Phang Nga. In particular, this paper focuses on the histories that former tin mining employees share about themselves, the myriad ways that family and individual migration are framed and retold, and the roles that kinship histories in contexts of migration, maintained through verbal narratives and everyday practices such as the offering of food, play in shaping dynamics of intercommunal relations in an ethno-religiously diverse region.

**Post-Pandemic Border Regime between China and Myanmar: COVID-19 and Its Lingering Impacts on a Border City in Yunnan, China | Zhuo NIU (Free University of Berlin)**

Border closures have been a global strategy to combat COVID-19, but their impacts often extend beyond the pandemic, reshaping social and political dynamics in border regions. This paper examines the lingering effects of COVID-19 on the China–Myanmar border, specifically in Ruili, Yunnan, a city that was once a major hub of cross-border activity. During the pandemic, the Chinese state transformed this porous border into a heavily regulated one by constructing a thousand-mile-long border wall, while Myanmar became increasingly fragmented following a 2021 military coup and ongoing internal conflicts, displacing many Myanmar nationals. The paper explores the paradox of Security vs. Development in the region's border politics. On one hand, the fortified border seeks to protect China from poten-



tial instabilities, including armed conflicts, refugee crises, drug trafficking, and other illicit economies. On the other, it enables selective inclusion” of Burmese economic migrants into China’s labor market. Another task I take in this paper is to reveal “miserable but intimate border struggles” (Brett Neilson and Sandro Mezzadra 2013) of various groups of border crossers amid the elusive tensions between the fortified Chinese state and the increasingly fragmented Myanmar state in the post-pandemic time. Their empirical experiences articulate the possibility to transform vulnerability into resilience even under a harsh border regime. In this sense, they are the co-shaper of the border politics, who lead us to an envisioning of an alternative of the border politics.

**2-15****Performing Heritage, Narrating Identity: Memory, Recognition, and Cultural Politics**

Chair: Laurel KENDALL (American Museum of Natural History)

**Danced Memory | Laurel KENDALL (American Museum of Natural History)**

What are the consequences of a heritage designation for those who perform? South Korea’s Masked Play of Yangju, vibrant in dynastic times, had withered in the colonial period (1910-1945) and might have disappeared but for the persistence of a few villagers and the dedication of a South Korean scholar who together reconstructed and revived the form from fragments, gaining recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage Property #2 in 1964. This paper explores this history with particular attention to how villagers experienced new identities as heritage bearers” and how their children engaged with the tradition in their own lives. At its center are the memories of the dancer, PARK Ki-suk, whose father was among the first designated heritage bearers for the Masked Play of Yangju and whose path she followed into dance. A single life does not a generalization make, but Ms. Park’s words, combined with my own memories of Yangju Village in the 1970s, help us to recapture a moment in time when the play that older villagers had been ashamed to teach their children had become, instead, a source of local celebration, drawing spectators from the capital city and even from abroad, and how from these experiences, a village child crafted a new sense of her own place in the world.

**Buddhism as Spectacle | Enhua ZHANG (The University of Massachusetts Amherst)**

This paper examines the spectacular performances featuring Buddhism at popular tourist spots, such as UNESCO sites in China and Cambodia. Specifically, how these spectacles embody Buddhism to appeal modern gaze, and how these performances fit in the operation of cultural industry in a consumer-orientated global society. Based on my fieldwork to the Buddhist sites along Belt and Road (B&R), including Dunhuang and Putuo in China, and Siam Reap in Cambodia, I investigate how Buddhism is rediscovered and refashioned to encapsulate the cultural heritage and nationhood in the two countries. Dunhuang Encore revamps the scenario in which the Buddhist treasures are pillaged by westerners. Impression Putuo stages grand Buddhist ceremony as secular practitioner prays to Guanyin (Avalokitesvara) for blessing. With the similar formula of extravagant performances targeting tourists, a Chinese corporation produces the show The Smile of Angkor in Siam Reap, integrating Buddhism, ancient Khmer martial art, primitive lifestyle, as well as legend and myth. All these performances share the common characteristics: installation of singing and dance than narrative, underlining the collective than individual, stressing more glory than defeat, and conveying pride than shame. My analysis revolves around the intersection of Buddhism as cultural capital and tourism powered by financial capital against the transnational flow of cultural forms and consumers. I argue that consumerism has shaped Buddhism as a theatrical spectacle in both China and Cambodia. The Chinese packaging of Cambodian nationhood through The Smile of Angkor unravels the penetration of Chinese soft power thus suggests a new form of imperialism.

**The Social Relationship and Roles (Re)formed by Cultural Property Protection Law | Konatsu SHIGEOKA (The University of Tokyo)**

This study focuses on a village ritual that was designated a province intangible cultural heritage in the previous decade (2010s). The subject of this study is a village ritual held annually in the tenth lunar month in K village, Gyeonggi Province, South Korea. It is said that the entire village takes part in this ritual, but with the exception of the female shaman, it has been mainly performed by men raised in the village, though not necessarily residing there. The objective of this presentation is, therefore, to clarify the changes that have occurred in the social relationships and roles related to the ritual as a result of its designation as an intangible cultural heritage. With laws aimed at long-term and stable transmission of intangible cultural heritages bringing about short-term changes in the heritage communities, in this case, the implementation of school-style transmission education has led to the emergence of participants beyond the village community, thereby altering the role and domain of women in the ritual. Today the communities that perform in such designated village rituals do not necessarily represent the village communities themselves. In exchange for the stability of the heritage community as a



whole, constant changes are occurring within the community, with social relations being reconstructed or newly born.

### **Becoming Veteran through Narrative: Implications of Korean Vietnam Veterans' Social Suffering and Self-Narrativization**

| Jeong-Haeng LEE (Seoul National University)

This study explores how South Korean Vietnam War veterans narrate suffering within social and cultural contexts, focusing on the role of self-narrativization in the construction of their identity. Adopting a medical anthropological perspective, this study examines how veterans' suffering—often framed narrowly as physical or psychological conditions such as PTSD or Agent Orange exposure—is shaped, amplified, and given meaning through broader social, political, and institutional processes. Although public discourse has predominantly represented veterans as victim since their 1992 protests to claim compensation, this collective framing often homogenizes veterans' diverse experiences. This study critically analyzes the historical and socio-political conditions that contributed to the emergence of the victim identity, including the role of legal and medical systems. The study also addresses the dual position of veterans as both victims and perpetrators, which complicates their narratives and highlights the ethical tensions surrounding their suffering. Through an analysis of veterans' self-narratives, this research reveals how individuals navigate their postwar identity by framing their suffering within a collective experience of sacrifice. These narratives, shaped by interactions with institutional systems and public images of veterans, illustrate how veterans find meaning in their suffering and assert their place in society as Vietnam War veterans.

### **Identity Reconstruction and Cultural Remaking: Negotiations among the Peranakan Chinese in Postcolonial Malaysia**

| Yu-Tao SHI (University of Malaya)

Peranakan Chinese generally refers to Chinese migrants who arrived in Southeast Asia during the early 18th and 19th centuries. Due to intermarriage with local women or prolonged exposure to local culture, they developed a hybrid cultural identity. With the advent of colonial rule and the influx of large numbers of new Chinese migrants into Southeast Asia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, followed by the mid-20th century independence movements of Southeast Asian nations, the Peranakan Chinese were shaped and re-shaped under the influence of various external forces and shifting power dynamics. In contemporary Malaysia, the Peranakan Chinese have gradually aligned themselves with the broader and mainstream Chinese community and are categorized as part of a pan-Chinese ethnic group. This classification reflects a continuation of colonial knowledge systems. As a result, they have undergone a process of resinicization.” However, based on participatory observation and ethnographic research in the Terengganu Peranakan Chinese community, this study finds that the process of becoming Chinese” is neither unilinear, unidirectional, nor predetermined. Rather, it is a complex process characterized by negotiation and non-linear progressions. This study first examines how negotiations surrounding changes in Terengganu Peranakan Chinese funeral practices reveal their attitudes and preferences toward integrating with the customs of the mainstream Chinese community. It then discusses the efforts of the Terengganu Peranakan Chinese Association over the past decade to initiate a wave of cultural reconstruction and revival, highlighting their attempts to reclaim a Peranakan identity. Ultimately, this research reflects on how East Asian migrant communities, shaped by colonial powers, navigate pathways of cultural revival and redefinition in the contemporary era.

2-16

### **Positioning Local Agency: Negotiating with State, Capital, and Policy-Induced Disaster**

Chair: Jaesok KIM (Seoul National University)

This session highlights modes of local agency exposed to the power of welfare state, stock market, state-run media, and urban flooding. Seeking local agency under the overwhelming structural power is a major topic of anthropological research. While attempting to find local agency, however, we avoid romanticizing its resistance potential. In East Asia, some scholars argue that local agency or civil society” remains relatively weak, as authoritarian government or large corporations wield enormous power over people. Scholarly effort to find local agency, therefore, tend to disprove the dominant discourse of weak society,” while highlighting public sign of resistance. Different from the two approaches, our session reveals local agency’s actual operations or daily practices, featured with negotiation, co-optation, and nuanced resistance.

### **Writing on its 4th Anniversary: Memory, Healing, and Resistance in the Aftermath of the Zhengzhou Flood** | Yichi LIU (Seoul National University)

In this paper, I explore how people responded to a disaster and constructed personal, collective narratives of the disaster. As both an

anthropological researcher and a victim, I particularly focus on the nuances between personal memories and official accounts. Beyond the political attribution of responsibility, this research investigates how ordinary people perceive a disaster that fundamentally altered their lives. I draw on anthropological methodologies, including ethnographic observation of the most devastated areas and in-depth interviews with survivors. Disasters have serious and long-lasting impacts on people in modern cities, yet these impacts can also be recovered or gradually forgotten over time. The summer of 2021 would remain one of the most unforgettable periods for the people of Zhengzhou. The 720 Flood claimed 380 lives and severely damaged the city's modern infrastructure. A government report characterized the event as both a natural disaster and a man-made one. Residents faced the challenging process of reconstructing their home, healing from the trauma, and adapting to new routines inadvertently.

The result reveals the complex negative emotions such as doubt and disappointment that urban residents experienced when confronted with flood's destruction. A persistent shadow lingers long after the disaster. However, people sought healing through mutual support and even through acts of resistance against forgetting. Through this paper, I aim to update academic practices in the anthropology of disaster within the Chinese context. Furthermore, it calls for a broader anthropological focus on the critical relationship between disasters and the lived experiences of urban populations.

### **Invoking National Unity: Patriotic Discourse of "Xinwen Lianbo" as Banal Nationalism in Action** | **Yanchen JIN (Seoul National University)**

This paper analyzes the process through which Chinese nationalistic discourse is performed in the state-run news program Xinwen Lianbo" (later Lianbo"). For this, I regard Lianbo as a genre of verbal art-performance. This is art, as it differs from everyday conversation in its well-calculated choice of vocabularies and idioms, formalized openings, closings, and greetings. From a linguistic anthropological perspective. I also aim to evaluate the actual power effect of Lianbo, by analyzing people's reaction to its discourse. For this research purpose, I examine Lianbo videos about two special programs aired in 2019 and 2024 respectively. One is 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China", the other is 33rd Paris Olympics." Through the analysis, I intend to find three vital factors. First, the formalized settings and conventionalized greetings of Lianbo created experience of simultaneity which in turn reproduced a kind of imagined" nation. Second, the subtitles of Lianbo reflect patriotic discourse. Discursive performances peculiar to the program emphasized the national image of New China," national ideology of People's Democratic Republic," the message of a bright future for the Chinese nation," and the strong nationalistic idea of We are one family." Third, Lianbo serves as a form of banal nationalism that evokes people of patriotism in their everyday life, constantly reminding people of national unity. Thus, this paper gives insights into understanding contemporary Chinese nationalism, by illuminating the banal process reproducing Chinese nationalistic feelings.

### **Formation of the Humane State and Politics of Gratefulness: A Case Study of a Model Social Welfare Center of Guangdong Shuangbai Plan** | **Jaesok KIM (Seoul National University)**

Drawing on an ethnographic study about a model" social work center in Guangdong Province, China, this paper investigates how Shuangbai plan, a social welfare project led by Guangdong Provincial government, rendered the abstract and bureaucratic state of China as a humane entity. Through the welfare project's daily operations, the state intended to acquire legibility of the poor and made them subjects grateful" (gan'en) to the state. The Social welfare workers' provision of compassionate feeling and material benefits generated feelings of gratefulness and indebtedness among the poor villagers, which eventually established hierarchical relationships between them and the state.

The provincial government also attempted to forge self-managing subjects among the welfare recipients. It is difficult for the state to acquire comprehensive legibility of the poor unless the poor know their own needs and seek methods to suffice the needs. Welfare workers utilized individual counselling to transform the poor into active agents of self-management. Through psychological advice, they urged the villagers to reflect their own past and figure out how to responsibly manage their lives for a better future. To activate the poor farmers as self-managing subjects, welfare workers utilized various psychological knowledge and strategies that included positive psychology. With its neoliberal emphasis on individual psychology, Shuangbai plan functions as a method to divert poor people's concern from the structural origins of their poverty and make poverty something that individuals can overcome.

### **Uneconomic Investment Practices of Foreign Stock Investors: Affective Nationalism and Imagined Enemies around IONQ Stock** | **Jaeheung JOO (Seoul National University)**

This study aims to question the rational actor" model of mainstream economics. This model assumes that economic agents take

actions of investment referring to objective indicators of the stock market. Contrary to this assumption, I argue that non-economic factors, previously considered residing outside of the stock market, actually become deeply involved in the construction of market reality.” Specifically, the stock market is a place where multiple non-economic potentials are embedded and expressed in a dynamic actor-network. By examining the structures of beliefs and desires that drive domestic investors, this paper illuminates cultural practices that go beyond economic models of human rationality. I explore two perspectives. First, this study examines how banal nationalism is transformed and embedded in foreign stock markets, where the internal desire to seek unearned income is combined with the external image of foreign currency earning and extended into affective nationalism. In particular, I reveal how IONQ, a US-NASDAQ stock came to reflect the ethnicity of the Korean co-founder of the company. IONQ combines the futurity of quantum computers with the energy of nationalist beliefs and desires. Second, I examine how the investors’ suspicion of virtual enemies” undermines the realization of nationalism by spreading rumors of short-selling. This imagined enemy has its own agency through the self-referential nature of short-selling that works like a self-fulfilling prophecy. This study argues that the stock market is a site of events that are driven by the open-ended assemblages of economic and non-economic factors.

**Jeehwan PARK (Seoul National University, Discussant)**

**2-17**

### **Be Creative in Action but Be Critical on Mind: Reflexivity and Positionality in Applied Anthropology in Contemporary China**

**Chair: Yihan LI (Independent)**

The world needs anthropologists—this is not just a slogan! We advocate for an anthropology that moves beyond the “involution” of knowledge production within academia and toward public engagement through multimodal expression and interdisciplinary collaboration. This panel brings together four presenters who apply anthropology in China’s arts sector, covering subdisciplines such as art anthropology, museum anthropology, design anthropology, and disability studies. Yihan LI’s research, drawing on her participation in two socially engaged art projects in Shanghai as an independent researcher, critically examines the complex dynamics among anthropologists, artists, local communities, and grassroots governments, showcasing China’s controversial practices within the context of global contemporary art. As the organizer and co-curator in the digital exhibition ‘Multiverse: Disability, Technology, and Co-created Futures’, Jocelyn Jing WANG explores the intersection of disability and technology and the contribution and insights of anthropology in curating. Xinyin BAO presents her case of an art exhibition ‘Burgeons Outside the Boundary’, which is a collaborative effort with 12 artists with disabilities. From the lens of design anthropology, the researcher initially explored the participants’ experiences with disability and creative activities to foster their narratives. Zoe Huiying LYU, based on her involvement in two socially engaged projects, explores how anthropological perspectives and methods can engage with the ‘spatial narratives’ in real-life contexts, enhancing the cultural discourse of marginalized groups and the potential for narrative fluidity and diversity in public projects. In summary, the four studies focus on applied anthropology in artistic practices, presenting an anthropology in China that moves beyond the description of academically intriguing phenomena and towards informing change for the better. We will also discuss the positionality, reflexivity, and challenges of anthropologists in practical fields.

### **Revisiting Co-creation and Site-specific in Socially Engaged Arts through an Anthropological Lens: Two Cases in Urban Shanghai | Yihan LI (Independent)**

In recent decades, anthropologists have become increasingly interested in studying various art worlds and the conditions under which arts are produced, consumed, disseminated, and performed within the global cultural landscapes. Many anthropologists and artists have worked together, showcasing the potential of such intersections. Socially engaged art projects, in particular, represent the forefront of collaborations between anthropology and contemporary arts, revealing new ways in which anthropology could engage the public. A growing number of socially engaged art projects have also emerged in Chinese society recently. This research uses two cases in Shanghai, in which the presenter was fully involved, as examples to explore practices distinct from Western narratives in contemporary China. On the one hand, anthropologists engage with art projects through ethnographic fieldwork, serving as intermediaries between the locals and artists. To some extent, this can challenge the authority of artists within the art world, enabling the possibility of equal communication. On the other hand, socially engaged art projects, which emerged in the Western contemporary art scene, were originally democratizing and avant-garde experiments aimed at awakening civic consciousness, empowering local communities, and challenging unequal power relations through artistic expression. However, in China, authoritarian governments become these projects’

sponsors. Contemporary art practitioners form a collaborative relationship with grassroots governance. Art becomes instrumentalized and incorporated into governmentality. Meanwhile, the presenter, drawing on her role as an applied anthropologist, will also reflect on the possibilities and challenges of integrating anthropology with contemporary art in the Chinese context.

### **The Museum as a Site for Social Work: Anthropological Contributions and Insights | Jocelyn Jing WANG (Independent)**

Museums have significantly evolved beyond their traditional roles as repositories of objects and knowledge, increasingly serving as platforms to address pressing social issues. This trend reflects a growing recognition of their potential to act as sites for social work and to collaborate with diverse communities in transformative ways. This presentation draws on my two years of experience as an organizer and co-curator in developing the digital exhibition 'Multiverse: Disability, Technology, and Co-created Futures'. Launched on December 3, 2023, at the Tsinghua University Science Museum (currently in development) in Beijing, China, the project explores the intersection of disability and technology, a topic long dominated by industry experts. Indeed, disability experience constitutes indispensable expertise in the field of technology. This exhibition aspires to employ anthropological methodologies and stands as an accessible online exhibition co-designed and co-curated with the full participation of persons with disabilities. It seeks to illuminate their significant contributions to technological development. By fostering inclusion, dialogue, and critical reflection, museums can transcend their role as mere reflections of society to become active participants in reshaping it. Through collaborations with communities, activists, and scholars—particularly anthropologists—museums hold the potential to drive meaningful change, establishing themselves as powerful agents of social transformation and advocacy. Despite the challenges faced during the development of the exhibition, the curatorial team remains committed to broadening the understanding of technology while deepening the appreciation of humanity, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and empathetic perspective on both.

### **Showcasing Self-portraits by Artists with Disabilities: Design Anthropology Practices in Amplifying Personal Disability Narratives for Public Anti-Ableism Dialogues | Xinyin BAO (Beijing Leping Social Entrepreneur Foundation)**

Persons with disabilities (PwDs) in China encounter systemic discrimination, barriers, and disparities in opportunities. These entrenched injustices are evidenced by the marginalization of PwDs' life experiences within the cultural context. Supported by the non-profit organization Diversability Lab at Beijing Leping Social Entrepreneur Foundation, this study involved a collaborative effort with 12 artists with disabilities in China to create the art exhibition 'Burgeons Outside the Boundary.' Utilizing design anthropology methodologies, the researcher initially explored the participants' experiences with disability and creative activities to foster their personal narratives. Drawing from reflections upon ableism obtained during the investigation, the participants co-created artworks with various media and genres to present their self-portraits in the exhibition. As the exhibition travelled through six cities in China, its objective was to amplify the personal disability narratives of the artists in public spaces to trigger dialogues with audiences. Throughout the investigation and curation phases, efforts were made to balance power dynamics between the researcher/curator and the participants/artists through mutual interviews and collaborative creation. Concurrently, this research aimed to leverage the resources of non-profit organizations to encourage stakeholders, including enterprises, universities, and social innovation advocates, to reflect on their ableist biases in their practices. This endeavor contributes to fostering an anti-ableism public culture and provides valuable insights and inspiration for peer advocates.

### **Spatial Narrative as Social Practise: Explore the Fluidity of Cultural Discourses in Two Socially Engaged Cases in Guangzhou through An Anthropological Lens | Zoe Huiying LYU (Guangdong Polytechnic)**

With the freedom of expression shrinking and basis of agreement collapsing, individuals are often coerced by grand narratives, gradually losing the desire and ability to participate in public discussions. Long dominated by elites of the Chinese society, the curatorial perspective and exhibition presence in the field of arts and culture tend to be monotonous and solidified. But in the meanwhile, opportunities for social trials and practices in democratic decision-making and diverse narratives can be created by socially engaged projects. This presentation will discuss the Spatial Narrative of two cases that the speaker participated throughout the projects, exploring the possibility of improving the cultural discourse of marginalized groups and enhancing the fluidity and diversity in community projects through the lens of anthropology. Among people with different disabilities, the visually impaired have always encountered great difficulties and obstacles in museums dominated by visual presentation, and their exhibition experience and cultural rights are often ignored. In the 'Non-Visual' Project of the Touchable Museum, the visually impaired participated in the spatial experience design and public discussion that advocated diversity and inclusion, leading other audiences to see more in the museum. Along the narrow alleys of Guangzhou's old town area, there are local glories and collective memory that have been seldom rendered by history books and media. Instead of

the white box space, the Qingping Art Space Station was located in the Liwan community, inviting the residents to talk, whose dialogues have been collected and used to reproduce the oral history materials. The two cases mentioned above were both anthropology practices in attempt to trigger decentralized dialogues and diverse narrative by Spatial Narrative, but real difficulties under the very specific geopolitical and social contexts are still there.

**Mengzhu AN (Masaryk University, Discussant)**

**2-18**

### **Ecology and Governance: Multidimensional Explorations of Social Change and Cultural Adaptation among the Yi Ethnic Group in Liangshan, China [English & Chinese]**

**Chair: Shama GUANGFU (China Agricultural University)**

In this group discussion, the participants are from the fields of law, religion, history, and ecology, all focusing on the Yi ethnic group in Liangshan, southwestern China. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they interpret the changes in the ecological environment and social governance of the Yi people in Liangshan from different perspectives. The themes are as follows: (1) Based on the local economic and social conditions in Liangshan, from the perspective of the interaction between the state and localities, analyzing the governance functions of Degu" mediation in the Yi society in Liangshan, as well as its changes in different historical periods and the underlying reasons. (2) Studying the role of the official - common people" social structure in the Tusi system of the Yi ethnic group, especially the core position of Shamazimo in social governance, and explore the formation and development of this social structure in history. (3) Exploring the changes of the Jijue" ceremony of the Bimo in Liangshan under the background of modernization, and how the Yi ethnic group adapts to modern society through the changes of the ceremony. (4) Studying the manifestations of Yi plant culture at the spiritual and ecological levels, and the importance of plant culture in Yi society.

### **The "Official Commoners": The Cornerstone of the Yi Tusi Social Structure: Centered on the Society Governed by "Shama Zimo" | Bai XIA (Sun Yat Sen University)**

The social structure of the Yi people in Liangshan is diverse. However, currently in the academic community, the view that Black Yi are the rulers and White Yi are the ruled" has become the mainstream understanding. In fact, this view only represents one type within the social structure of the Yi people in Liangshan. In the social structure of the Yi people in Liangshan, the Zimo"(Tusi) has a longer history, and Zimo is at the highest social rank in the Yi society of Liangshan. During the Qing Dynasty, the imperial court conferred titles on many Tusi in Liangshan, among which Shama Zimo" was one of the four major Tusi in Liangshan. The Official Commoners", namely the Geji, Gehuo" in Yi language, hold a social rank second only to Shama Zimo in the area governed by Shama Zimo. The Official Commoners" have no subordinate relationship with the Black Yi". The Official Commoners" play multiple roles within the area governed by Shama Zimo, such as mediating disputes, acting as advisors, being soldiers, and being ritual experts. They are the cornerstone of the operation of Shama Zimo's society. This paper takes the Official Commoners" as the center of discussion to present the diverse social structure of the Yi people in Liangshan.

### **Governance and Interaction: The Functional Changes of Degu Mediation among the Yi People in Liangshan | Peking University**

As a long - lasting private settlement phenomenon and legal culture in the dispute resolution of the Yi society in Liangshan, Degu mediation is intertwined with the clan - branch system. It has become a microcosm of local social changes and also a microcosm of China's modernization of the rule of law. Existing research has noticed the modern changes of Degu mediation. However, they always abstractly discuss its proper role in modern society, without paying attention to the fact that the relationship between the state and local areas, which is an important reason for shaping the different functions of Degu mediation in the diachronic cycle. The changes in the economic and geographical environment and social structure deeply affect the state's ability of effective control. The gradual penetration of modern state power has made Degu mediation, as a product of spontaneous order, increasingly influenced by constructed order. The scope of dispute resolution through mediation has been greatly restricted, and its role in the field of dispute resolution has been continuously weakened. Under the bureaucratic management, Degu mediation forms a good interaction with legal governance. In fact, it mainly undertakes the functions of maintaining national governance and promoting the modern rule of law. This paper deeply explores and analyzes Degu mediation from a comparative and dynamic perspective. Centering around the theoretical framework of the relationship between the state and local areas, we can analyze how this system maintains the social order and stability of the Yi people in Liangshan



in the new era, providing reference significance for the state to promote modern governance with the help of social forces.

**Green Shadow of Yi Township: The Spiritual Mirror Image and Ecological Jigsaw Puzzle of Yi Plant Culture** | **Azhi LEWU**  
(Minzu University of China)

This paper analyzes the multiple kinds of roles of plants in Yi culture and reveals that plants are not only material resources, but also the mirror images of the spiritual life and ecological concept of the Yi people. It first provides an overview of the ecological environment and traditional knowledge system of Yi people, then through ethnographic methods, detailed document and analyze how Yi people interact with surrounding plants and how these plants influence their worldviews and ecological practices. The study focused specifically on the symbolic role of specific plants in Yi myths, legends and spiritual beliefs and how these symbols are translated into specific ecological management and conservation behaviors. The article further discusses how these traditional knowledge is maintained, transformed or lost in the context of modernization and globalization, and their potential contributions to biodiversity conservation and sustainability. Finally, the article emphasizes the urgency of protecting and revitalizing the traditional ecological knowledge of ethnic minorities, and suggests how these knowledge can be integrated into modern ecological protection strategies through cross-cultural exchanges and educational programs to realize the harmonious coexistence between culture and ecology.

**Research on the Evolution and Cultural Adaptation of the "Ji Jue" Ritual among the Yi People in Liangshan from a Modernization** | **Lei YING** (Southwest Minzu University)

The traditional Bi Mo belief of the Yi people in Liangshan provides a comprehensive toolbox for local residents to solve daily problems and organize collective activities through forms such as symbols, legends, rituals, and worldviews. In recent years, with the rapid economic development of the Liangshan area, the construction of new communities, and the enhanced social impact of geographical factors, the Bi Mo culture has been continuously reshaped in daily social practice, presenting new changes. As an important part of the Bi Mo culture, rituals have also undergone significant changes. Among them, the traditional seasonal ritual Ji Jue, aimed at seeking good fortune and avoiding disasters, has also changed, mainly manifested in the commercialization of ritual supplies, changes in the construction of sacred spaces, and alterations in traditional patterns of interpersonal interaction. However, these changes are not passively accepted by the local residents but are the result of their active integration of traditional concepts with the current state of modern social development and their active participation in the reshaping of culture. Due to differences in individuals' ability to transform culture into action, different transformation behaviors have jointly shaped the new appearance of religious behavior in the Liangshan area. Therefore, based on the relevant theories of cultural sociology and focusing on individual agency, this paper takes the Ji Jue ritual in new communities as an example to explore the social changes in the Liangshan area and the cultural adaptation of local residents under the perspective of modernization.

**Ding MUNAI** (Leshan Normal University, Discussant)

2-19

**Inter-Asian Knowledge Production of "Asian Women" and Feminist Ethnography: Thinking through Women's Voices, Movements, and Everyday Life**

Chair: Sojung KIM (Johns Hopkins University)

In this panel, from feminist perspectives, we explore inter-Asian knowledge production of 'Asian women' - what it means to be women, what it means to write in English about Asian women, and how to describe various forms of violence that mark women's movements and intimate lives in the postcolonial and postwar Asian contexts. Rather than approaching Asian women as a bounded category but as a critical prompt and method (Kang 2020), we shed light on the tensions, politics, and power dynamics that shape knowledge, voices, and everyday lives of women in and from Asia. Located in milieus marked by colonialism, war, and conflicts in contemporary Asia - Vietnam, Singapore, China, and the two Koreas - the papers take close ethnographic attention to women's voices and the conditions in which one can and cannot claim herself that this voice is my voice. By illuminating women's multiple experiences of colonialism, patriarchy, and state violence across Asia, we critically engage with the grounds upon which the figure of women became a mobilizing point for reinstating the nation as a pure and masculine space (Das 2007). How are imaginaries about Asian women embedded in our language and life, in clusters of vocabularies that extend beyond normative East-West and gender divisions, and bear complex connections with a variety of institutions and practices? How might reimagining women open up possibilities for redemonstrating political dis-



orders? Engaging various feminist methods and genres of writing, we creatively explore how such descriptions of women, violence, and voices would look like.

**"Now Is Not...": Critical Patience and Multi-Voiced Talks Among North Korean Migrant Women on Ordinary Evenings in South Korea** | Sojung KIM (Johns Hopkins University)

Scholars often criticize North Korean migrants' stories or testimonies as unreliable due to trauma, international politics—particularly North Korean human rights discourses—state surveillance, and economic precarity (Song and Denney 2019). Public attention frequently focuses on the testimonies of North Korean defectors, and when they are revealed as false, they quickly become scandals. Before making such evaluations pertaining to a positivistic discovery of truths, this paper contemplates the stake of feminism and ordinary language philosophy—making one's voice heard—by asking to whom one can make oneself known. Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic research that I conducted with North Korean migrant women living in Gyeongsang Province, South Korea since 2015, I explore what emerges when we attend to how—instead of what—stories are told, and the various forms and temporalities that women's expressivity takes within the ordinary. To examine the contexts in which these expressions are evoked, I describe scenes from North Korean migrant women's gatherings in the evenings, where women's reactions to each other's stories—whether in agreement, contradiction, neglect, or silence—render a dynamic interplay of voices. Accompanying critical patience as a method for deciphering details that matter in the weave of everyday life (Das 2020), this paper illuminates small acts of care that allow life to be knitted together, repair the world from which multiple migrations and the Partition have left many voids, and recast the coordinates of the unended Korean War by locating war within everyday life.

**The Afterlives of Japanese Imperial Intimacies Across Inter-Asian Port Cities** | Aika SATO (Yale University)

Over the past three decades, debates about Japan's WWII-era comfort women system—a euphemism for militarized sexual slavery—have dominated regional politics, where survivor testimonies are mobilized, contested, and politicized (Soh 1995). Survivors, now in their nineties, have endured decades of hypervisibility and stigma. Yet less attention has been given to how postwar generations, who have no direct experience of the war, inherit and negotiate these fraught histories. Rather than focus on the survivors themselves, this preliminary, ongoing ethnographic research shifts attention to how individuals in Shanghai and Singapore—Asian port cities shaped by Japanese imperial expansion—perceive, imagine, and live with the traces of imperial intimacies embedded in everyday life. Drawing on site visits, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews conducted since 2023, this project examines how imperial encounters persist not as conscious acts of remembering but as subtle inheritances inscribed in spatial practices, bodily interactions, and communal imaginaries. Both cities, shaped by overlapping colonial histories, multi-imperial entanglements, and diasporic flows, were major nodes in Japanese military and sexual violence. Inspired by Lisa Lowe (2015)'s residual and emergent histories and Lieba Faier's (2009) zones of encounters, this research asks how traces of violence have descended into the ordinary (Das 2007). Attending to how residents inhabit and transform these contested spaces, this study maps the affective, relational, and structural entanglements of imperial intimacies, illuminating how histories of violence continue to shape the contemporary interasian region.

**Contested Grounds: Feminist Activism and the Politics of Governance at Hyŏnjang** | Yurim LEE (University of California Los Angeles)

The Korean term hyŏnjang (현장, 現場), often translated as "site of presence," embodies the multidimensional intersections of space, time, and social engagement. This paper draws on year-long ethnographic fieldwork (2022–2023) on anti-prostitution governance feminism in South Korea to interrogate the concept of hyŏnjang in feminist movements. What defines hyŏnjang within feminist activism? How are the boundaries of a social movement's field shaped and redefined across local and transnational scales? Focusing on the institutionalized feminist movement in South Korea, I analyze how hyŏnjang is constructed through its entanglements with state governance, global human rights discourses, and carceral politics. For example, in 2000 and 2002, fires in the red-light districts of Gunsan tragically killed 19 women locked inside a brothel, prompting a feminist-state coalition to criminalize sex work in 2004. This coalition, led by the liberal government of Roh Moo-hyun and mainstream feminist activists, sought to rescue trafficked women and dismantle the sex industry. This dynamic stems from the efforts of mainstream feminism while also mirroring global trends in which feminist movements addressing gender-based violence (GBV) intersect with transnational governance agendas, as analyzed by scholars such as Janet Halley, Laura Hyun Yi Kang, and Lila Abu-Lughod. These convergences blur the lines between feminist activism and state and global governance, complicating their scope and intentions. By analyzing hyŏnjang as a contested site of feminist practice, this study underscores how interconnected governance structures and global gender politics shape and redefine feminist movements in South

Korea and beyond.

**Korean War Crimes in Vietnam, Women Survivors' Voices, and the Intersectionality of Representation** | Hayeon LEE  
(Australian National University)

South Korea's (henceforth referred to as Korea) involvement in the Vietnam War has largely been forgotten in both Vietnam and Korea, despite approximately 320,000 Korean soldiers—a number second only to Americans—having participated in the War between 1964 and 1973. Korean soldiers perpetrated many war crimes during this period, including the murder of over 10,000 civilians in 130 massacres in Central Vietnam. As part of an ongoing ethnographic, oral history project on Korean soldiers' war crimes and women survivors' voices, in August 2024, I joined a peace tour (Recall 1964") in Danang city, organized by the Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation. For three days, we visited three villages in the region, meeting with survivors of the massacres who were mostly women. We also visited and burned incense at memorial stones engraved with victims' names and year of birth, the Heroic Mother Statue, and a surviving hate stone at a village entrance engraved with the horrific details of Korean soldiers' murder of more than 400 civilians. This paper investigates why survivors' voices—particularly women's voices—have been invisible in mainstream and nationalist representations in both countries until recently, as well as what it means to listen to, recognize, and represent these voices from a middle-class, Korean, US-trained, woman feminist ethnographer's perspective.

Seo Young PARK (Scripps College, Discussant)

Junyoung Verónica KIM (New York University, Discussant)

2-20

**Crafting Care: Intimacy, Inclusion, and Innovation in Contested Social Worlds**

Chair: Hiroshi HONDA (The University of Tokyo)

**Empathy Through Play: Edu-Larp and the Inclusion of Neuro-Minorities in Japan** | Björn-Ole KAMM (Kyoto University)

This presentation explores the challenges faced by neurominorities, particularly in Japan, and the potential of live-action role-playing games (larp) as innovative tools for fostering inclusion and societal sustainability. Grounded in the principles of transcultural learning and performance ethnography, our research centers on Sirius—11F84—Colours of Light, an educational larp designed in collaboration with neurodivergent individuals and educators. This immersive experience uses metaphorical gameplay to simulate sensory overload, energy depletion, and social misunderstandings, reflecting the lived experiences of neuro-minorities. The larp's innovative structure—combining pre-game workshops, nonlinear narrative elements, and structured debriefings—offers participants a first-person perspective on societal barriers, fostering empathy and understanding. Feedback from Japanese and German participants highlights the game's impact on raising awareness of neurodiversity and challenging preconceived notions. By aligning its narrative with the social model of disability, the larp underscores how support for neuro-minorities benefits society as a whole, promoting environments of care and cooperation that enhance well-being universally. In addressing the conference theme of Shaping Futures," this talk examines how the inclusion of neuro-minorities can catalyze broader societal sustainability. It also demonstrates how edu-larp, as a medium for embodied storytelling and experiential learning, can bridge cultural divides and inspire actionable empathy. This interdisciplinary approach not only contributes to the discourse on neurodiversity but also positions role-playing games as transformative tools in anthropological practice, advocacy, and education.

**Designing and Practicing Alternative Intimacy in Contemporary South Korea: A Case of Community Building in Urban Settings** | Hiroshi HONDA (The University of Tokyo)

Here I examine my ethnographic data on O Community, an urban community movement in contemporary South Korea, in terms of the design and practice of alternative intimacy. In the process of industrialization and incorporation into neoliberalism, South Korean families have been confronted with spatial dispersal, the shrinking of patri-lineal/lateral kinship relations, and the affectionate/instrumental appropriation of bilateral kinship, and have been overburdened with fragmented caregiving tasks. Founded in 2000 as a pioneering Protestant church, O Community was an early adopter of person-to-person mentoring and small group study, and through a critical reading of the four Gospels, the members, Pastor B and his 'sheep' (disciples), were urged to design an alternative community as a 'heaven in the present world'. One of the essentials of their community design was to introduce systems of mutual care to address the shortcomings of contemporary South Korean families, which are mainly based on blood relations. Since renting a floor of a small com-

mercial building in downtown Seoul for church activities in 2010, they have established welfare facilities such as childcare, communal dinners and welfare funds. In addition, they initiated experimental ‘united homes’, which are domestic units for daily subsistence and residence made up of people with different surnames. In 2017, they managed to build their own building for communal living and activities. I suggest that as a result of their struggle to live happily together, they have realized a form of alternative intimacy and that in their community of care and fraternity, family roles based on consanguinity and patriarchy have been negotiated and reframed.

#### **Anxious Futures: Middle-Class Child-Rearing in Contemporary China | Karen HUI (City University of New York)**

In September 2020, a photo of a Qinghua University student working on his laptop whilst riding a bicycle swept Chinese social media. The image immediately elicited a response from young netizens, for whom it represented a collective experience of neijuan. In the context of increasing competition in both school and work settings and skyrocketing costs of living and unemployment rates, the term neijuan (involution) has come to describe a feeling of existential crisis: ever-increasing work yielding ever-diminishing gains. However, while youth are often hailed as the paradigmatic figures suffering from neijuan, involution also refers to the burdens that constitute child-rearing and kin obligations more generally. Under neoliberal development, securing a future is offloaded onto the private” realm of the home, where mothers naturally” become those in charge of rearing the future generation (Mason 2020). This paper addresses how expectations of motherhood are changing in an increasingly competitive and globalized urban landscape, where urbanite mothers are expected to nurture indispensable talents who can weather future economic risk and instability. Drawing from viral advice videos from parenting vloggers and influencers and participant observation and in-depth interviews with urbanite mothers, I argue that urbanite mothers in contemporary China see themselves as needing to take on the burden of realizing their child’s potential, and through doing so, transform care work into an entrepreneurial activity. Thus, this paper traces how gendered child-care in urbanite households has proliferated new ways of creating value for the future, both for the urbanite family and the nation at large.

#### **Navigating Older Individuals' Agency in Later-Life Cohabitation in Urban China: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Care and Emotional Dynamics | Aikedan Ainiwaer (University of Oxford)**

This paper explores gender dynamics of cohabitation as a new peer-ageing strategy in urban China, highlighting the emotional value of companionship in later-life partnerships. It presents cohabitation as an innovative eldercare strategy and a living arrangement that provides emotional and physical support. Matchmaking is one of the most popular methods for older singles in urban China to find a cohabiting partner. Drawing upon rich fieldwork data collected in Beijing in 2023, including interviews and participant observation, this paper reveals that once a cohabitation unit is formed, cohabitators must negotiate their agency within the context of mutual dependence in daily life, particularly in light of the deinstitutionalization of marriage in later life. It begins with introducing the initial stage of contract” drafting, then focuses on how male and female cohabitators navigate their agency and gendered responsibilities through everyday family processes. It also examines how intergenerational relationships, involving family members, adult children, and grandchildren, influence these dynamics. This paper explores how the older cohabitators’ agency is negotiated and impacted by the intergenerational relationships within the family, highlighting the processes, challenges, and opportunities for seeking agency within the dynamics of family life. Furthermore, this paper compares other forms of later-life cohabitation strategies, including homosexual, homosocial, and group cohabitation. It compares the cohabitation relationship and alternative possibilities, providing a supplementary extension to the discussion. Overall, this paper finds older men and women navigate agency and the accompanying gendered expectations differently, remaking gender norms through negotiating care in later-life cohabitation. (249)

#### **Fast Growth and Slow Care: The Dual Dilemma of Growing Up and Caregiving for Young Carers in China | Ke MA (Communication University of China)**

Young carers in China, primarily Generation Z (born in the late 1990s), are responsible for caring for family members with chronic illnesses, often as the only child due to the one-child policy (1979-2015). In mainstream media, such as CCTV, they are celebrated as filial children and role models, embodying traditional Chinese values. However, the negative impact of caregiving on their personal growth is often overlooked. On platforms like TikTok, many young carers share stories of quitting jobs or education to return home and care for aging parents. This reflects a growing societal pressure to grow up fast, while caregiving demands force them to slow down, creating a tension between rapid personal development and slower caregiving responsibilities. Although global research has addressed young carers, especially in East Asian countries like Japan, there has been limited empirical study on this group in mainland China. Most existing research focuses on middle-aged carers, often caring for children or the elderly, leaving young carers unsupported in both academic

and social policy domains. This lack of attention has resulted in their invisibility within China's social services. This study employs in-depth interviews and participatory observation to explore the lived experiences of young carers in China. It finds that, under the pressure of moral and life expectations, young carers often sacrifice personal growth for caregiving, resulting in delayed life trajectories. Moreover, the conflict between fast and slow also manifests in their temporal expectations, where the slower pace of caregiving leads to indefinite delays in future aspirations. Ultimately, caregiving becomes inseparable from growing up, reshaping their sense of self and adulthood.

**2-21****Making and Managing Old Age and End-of-Life: Class, Control, and Care in Eldercare Regimes**

Chair: Yeori PARK (University of Seoul) and Jiyeon KANG (Kyungpook National University)

**A Missing Piece of the Act: Artificial Nutrition and Hydration at the End-of-Life | Jiyeon KANG (Kyungpook National University)**

In South Korea, a law regarding life-sustaining treatment was introduced in 2018. This law states that patients at the end of life may determine whether to continue, withhold, or withdraw life-sustaining treatment. From the beginning, this law was welcomed by the Korean public, patients, and their family members as well as healthcare professionals, and the rate of signing advance directives (AD) and physician orders for life-sustaining treatment (POLST) has sharply increased. Yet, this research addresses the fact that artificial provision of hydration and nutrition has left behind the discussion regarding the end-of-life care in Korea since the law defined the provision of hydration and nutrition as a mandatory intervention that cannot be stopped. Given that hydration and nutrition are intimately entangled with economic, cultural, and medical domains, the purpose of this research is to explore how patients, families, and end-of-life care professionals working in hospices perceive the use/withdrawal of artificial hydration and nutrition. This study adopted in-depth interview with family members of patients, doctors, and nurses working in hospices. The qualitative data was analyzed by grounded theory. Provision of artificial nutrition and hydration is still disputable and circumstantial, and calls on the cultural consideration on what eating and drinking means for end-of-life care. Although the current law stipulates the provision of nutrition and hydration cannot be ceased, the public discussion is needed.

**Tasteful Old Age: Nursing Home Marketing and Class Identity Among Middle-Class Older Adults | Yeori PARK (University of Seoul)**

This ethnographic study examines how middle-class older adults in China, influenced by private nursing home marketing, shape their class identity by imagining a fulfilling old age. The research explores the growth of the nursing home market and its impact on how residents experience and perceive care. It uses participant observation and in-depth interviews to analyze the role of class, social and cultural capital in shaping residents' choices about care. The study reveals that while middle-class older adults are proud of their ability to choose and afford their own care, they are also aware of the social distinctions inherent in different types of care. Marketing strategies for private nursing homes emphasize the luxurious environment and social amenities that are designed to appeal to a specific class of older adults. Residents value the social environment in private nursing homes, seeking out spaces where they can socialize with like-minded peers. This reinforces a hierarchical view of old age, where the ability to choose and afford a certain type of care becomes a marker of class distinction. The study ultimately demonstrates how the pursuit of a tasteful old age for middle-class older adults in China is shaped by both individual agency and societal structures.

**Home Away from Home: Everyday Practices of Homemaking with Digital Technologies among Institutionalised Elderlies in Urban Hangzhou | Yuet Yan Katherine WONG (University of Oxford)**

While home is widely endorsed by policymakers and public discourse as the preferred site of eldercare, the past decade in China has witnessed a significant rise in care homes, introducing new modes of ageing and care beyond traditional household and family settings. At the same time, the growing prevalence of digital technologies, such as smartphones, panic buttons and fall detection sensors, is reshaping the experience of ageing. Earlier research on ageing and place often treats home and institution as distinct, bounded places with specific modes of care. This study moves beyond such normative assumptions, instead viewing home and institution as fluid and dynamic, constituted by situated human and non-human practices and social relations. This study draws on 11 months of ethnographic research in a private care home in urban Hangzhou to examine how home and care are enacted through and intertwined with everyday digital and non-digital negotiations of elderly residents. It argues that while the institutional environment and its digital infrastructure articulate distinct rhythms and logics of care—often in tension with residents' own conception of home and care—these are continuously contested, resisted, and redefined. By exploring the ethical spaces cracked open by mundane doings, it highlights the creative agency

of elderlies in the making and unmaking of home away from home”, where the boundaries between the private and the public increasingly blur.

**Navigating the Margins: Elder-Care Nursing Assistants in China’s Public Hospitals** | Yueqi CHENG (Duke University)

This paper focuses on elder-care nursing assistants (hu gong) working in public hospitals in Hunan, China. My research subjects are middle-aged women who come from rural China, highly mobile, and labor in the periphery of society to sustain a frugal life for themselves and their families. Because nursing assistants work in hospital wards, a relatively closed and intimate space, their work is regarded as domestic, thus caging them in the realm of domesticity, not that distant from domestic workers. However, in the setting of public hospital wards, nursing assistants navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. Faced with their patient’s family members, nurses, other patients, patients’ family members, and fellow nursing assistants in the same ward daily, they mediate relationships (long-term and fleeting), class differences, and power hierarchies. They display sociality, agency, and moralities while working in the wards. Moreover, during care work, nursing assistants tend to emotionally bond with their patients which transcends accents, clear communication (many elders are deprived of the ability to speak), age, and class. In many cases, they are also the intimate witnesses of aging, death, dying, loss, and grief. I seek to portray a dynamic and complex image of these nursing assistants and answer the following questions: How should we understand the multiple layers of the labor nursing assistants engage in? How do nursing assistants reshape the capitalist employer-employee relationship with the elderly and their families? Finally, how do nursing assistants help frame and complicate the relationship between the periphery” and center” in present-day Chinese society?

**Guan (Care/Control): An Ethnographic Understanding of Care for People with Dementia in China** | Jingxuan XU (The University of Edinburgh)

This paper explores the dynamic interplay between care and control in dementia care practices in China, examining how these seemingly opposing concepts are intertwined in caregiving. I investigated the forms and motivations of control within caregiving, analyzing them through the culturally significant notion of guan (管), which connotes both governance and nurture. I examined how notions of good care shift fluidly depending on individual needs, values, and contexts.

Care and control are conceptualized as existing along a dynamic continuum, where caregivers navigate a flowing middle path to manage their actions and the daily lives of individuals with dementia, striving to achieve balance and good care. Drawing on the Chinese philosophical concept of the Middle Path (zhongdao, 中道), this study reflects on how caregiving practices embody this traditional ideal and considers the possible alignment between good care and the realization of zhongdao as a guiding principle for life. Based in China, the study situates these caregiving practices within the broader frameworks of Chinese family ethics, socio-economic transformations, and the evolving biomedical discourse on ageing. Drawing on participant observation and multi-sited ethnography, this research captures the lived experiences of family caregivers and professional care workers, public discourses on disciplining elderly individuals with dementia, and the interplay between local medical knowledge and caregiving practices. By examining the emergence, negotiation, and regulation of control within care, the study illuminates the intricate relational dynamics that caregiving produces and sustains within the context of Chinese philosophical and cultural traditions.

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2-22

**Seoul on Film: Undergraduate Visual Anthropology at SNU (Film Showing)**

Chair: Jaesok Kim (Seoul National University)

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Film I: Sunrise on the Subway [새벽을 여는 사람들]

Film II: Eulji-Jjamppong [을지짬뽕]

Hajin Kim (Seoul National University)

Boa Han (Seoul National University)

Ghaon Hwang (Seoul National University)

Seungkyu Kim (Seoul National University)

Yujin Oh (Seoul National University)



**2-23****Romantic Economies: Reciprocity, Exchange, and the Making of Intimate Life**

Chair: Yeon Jung YU (Western Washington University)

**Blurring Boundaries: Love and Transaction among Female Sex Workers (Xiaojie) in China | Yeon Jung YU (Western Washington University)**

During ethnographic fieldwork that spanned over two years in and out of red-light districts in China, I regularly encountered (migrant) women working in the sex industry who clearly defined the line between sexual exchange and love. Within community discourse, intimate relationships with clients (including lover-type clients known as old fellows” or laotou) were unanimously asserted to be purely transactional. However, their actions and individual interviews suggest that the dichotomy between love (ai) and transaction (jiaoyi) becomes increasingly blurred every day. This paper explores how, why, and to what extent these women shape but simultaneously undermine the seemingly concrete binary concepts as they struggle to survive and prosper in rural and urban China. Building upon feminist ethnographies of love and sex work, I examine how intimacy is performed and interpreted through the migration process where the women make themselves significant urban community members in post-socialist China.

**Reconfiguring Marriage and Kinship: High Bride Prices, Delayed Dowries, and Gender Dynamics in Rural Southeastern China Since the 2010s | Yiyi LIAO (Zhejiang University)**

Drawing on ethnographic data from a village in southeastern China and employing a life history approach, this study examines the emergence of new forms of high bride prices and delayed dowry payments in rural areas since the 2010s. The research demonstrates how, within the cultural framework of traditional marriage practices, brides’ natal families have creatively deferred the dowry payment post-marriage and strategically blurred the boundaries between the delayed dowry—serving as the financial foundation of the newly-wed household—and the bride’s personal property. This approach has given rise to a temporary, bride-centered household economic model. Moreover, the study situates these developments within broader socio-economic shifts, illustrating how China’s reform and opening-up policies, the expansion of female mobility and employment opportunities, changes in marital intimacy, and the enforcement of strict family planning policies since the 1970s have collectively driven significant transformations in family structures and gender relations. In this context, brides and their natal families are reshaping power dynamics among the parties involved in marriage, challenging traditional notions of authority and resource distribution within a patrilineal kinship system.

**Romantic Love in China: A Case Study of Marriage and Family Among Two Generations | Yuhan SU (KU Leuven)**

This study discusses the relationship between romantic love and the subjectivity of Chinese women in modern China. Since the 1960s, Chinese women have continued to draw intellectual resources from the Enlightenment discourse of the May Fourth New Culture Movement<sup>1</sup>, which emphasized localized feminist thought on human nature alongside modern values such as equality, freedom, and democracy. Moreover, the ideological influences of modernity, including the second wave of feminism, have had a significant impact on China. The discourses emerging from the revolutionary movement and feminist movements have become intertwined, inspiring Chinese women to become more conscious of their lives as the “Other” and to seek continuous transcendence. (Kong, 2022) The desire for romantic love can be seen as a manifestation of Chinese women’s pursuit of transcendence, showcasing their free will and subjectivity. However, while the discourse of romantic love provides hope to Chinese women, it simultaneously leads them into another trap of immanence. This paper primarily presents an analysis of a case study of a Chinese woman born in the 1970s, revealing how she navigates the challenges of marriage and family life. Through self-reflection, she turns to the concept of romantic love as a framework to understand her emotional life, reconstructing her positionality with an ambiguous and unrecognized self.

**The Post-Breakup Life of Exchanged Gifts: Un-making Romantic Relationships in South Korea | Milica RADOVANOVIC (Seoul National University)**

While dating, South Korean couples commonly exchange various items such as gifts and letters, leaving behind ‘traces’ in each other spaces and lives. However, what happens to these gifts after a breakup remains an unexplored question. In this paper, while drawing on in-depth interviews, I explore what South Korean people do with gifts after a breakup. Building on Appadurai’s (1986) concept that objects have a social life and their meaning and value can change depending on the context, I will follow things or ex’s gifts, which vary in type but also in their status after the breakup: gifts being kept, discarded, or re-gifted to someone else. Despite the varying practices and, at times, contrasted approaches, a common thread in all study cases in this paper is the agentive power of the objects, manifested



in various ways - whether through resistance to being discarded, the power to evoke certain emotions, or through producing moral obligation. Ex's gifts and the practices surrounding them can offer a sense of closure but also provide a way of disconnecting and cutting the bond. This paper thus argues that gifts can act not only as a way of making social relationships (Mauss, 1967) but also as a way of un-making romantic relationships in South Korea, shifting relationality from a 'couple' to 'strangers.' While most anthropological accounts on exchange focus on making social bonds, this paper sheds light on how relationships came to be unmade, or more particularly, how gifts create new ways for people to disconnect.

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**2-24 Transmedia Transnational Approaches to East Asia**

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Chair: Michael HOPE (Yonsei University)

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Each scholar on this panel has a distinct subject and topic of research, from video games and cinema to animation and sexting. The threads that connect our various researches are: our focus on the practices of culture that go unnoticed or are damaged by the discourses in the mainstream scholarly approaches; our transmedia and transnational approaches to culture in East Asia not defined by the institutional delineations or boundaries of nation-states; the urge to examine the existing theoretical concepts and propose new ones when everyday practices of life by ordinary people speak otherwise; evaluate the existing scholarly approaches and practices to culture and suggest new articulations of culture” and East Asia.” We use East Asia as a method, diversifying scholarship globally and introducing new perspectives into the epistemology of culture, media, and, ultimately, humans.

**Hong Kong's Anime: Transnational Pop Digital Anarchist Networks | Mateja KOVACIC (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

In 2019 and 2020, Hong Kong experienced waves of anti-government protests, with millions participating both online and offline. The semiotic of transnational popular culture references, such as film and music, played a crucial role in these protests. Japanese culture including animation and manga was especially prominent in online and offline communication, in the form of memes, slogans, videos, and activist art produced mostly by people under 29 years of age. Anime and manga became not only the primary audio-visual language of the protests but also a transnational pop digital anarchist network between Hong Kong, East Asia, and the rest of the world. I refer to this phenomenon as Hong Kong's anime” due to its unique transformation, adaptation, and sociocultural and political significance during these protests. However, by discussing Hong Kong's anime in the context of East Asia, I aim to draw attention to the emerging roles of (digital) popular culture in creating new epistemologies of culture. Hong Kong's anime unveils the ways that popular cultures shape people's transnational cultural history and identity and are a tool in writing people's non-institutionalized historiography and cultural records. With anarchism” here referring to the non-institutional”—that which is not shaped by the state and social institutions including academia—and transnational” meaning cultural flows beyond the geopolitical boundaries of nation-states, we can notice formations of cultures, knowledge as well as epistemology and anthropology, hence forming new practices and theories to study culture in and outside East Asia.

**New-Old Trans-Cultures of Chinese Animation | Xiangning HONG (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

Chinese animated films have recently emerged as significant transnational cultural artifacts, reflecting the nation's strategic efforts to enhance its cultural soft power and foster global connections. The animations, characterized by their integration of traditional Chinese culture—myths, legends, and visual aesthetics—serve as transnational ties that bind, bridging diverse cultural landscapes and fostering dialogue across nations. Notable examples such as *Nezha: The Devil's Child* (2019) illustrate how Chinese animation reimagines traditional cultural elements within contemporary narratives, resonating with audiences both domestically and internationally. This study approaches Chinese animated films as pivotal tools for transnational cultural exchange, emphasizing their dual role as carriers of national identity and facilitators of global interaction. By examining the historical trajectory and developmental pathways of the nationalization of Chinese animated films, the research highlights how these films transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, weaving together a shared visual and narrative language that connects audiences worldwide. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that the blending of traditional national styles and cultural identity in Chinese animated films is neither static nor ahistorical. These concepts are fluid and continually evolving, showcasing new characteristics and aesthetics in transnational dissemination. Acknowledging the complexity of integrating traditional and modern elements, this study investigates how Chinese animated films utilize cultural semiotics to engage with global audiences and promote mutual understanding. Drawing on content analysis and audience interviews, the research uncovers how these animations construct new transnational narratives that foster cultural ties, shape global perceptions of Chinese cul-

ture, and enable the interconnectedness of contemporary media landscapes.

**Massively Multiplayer Online Utopia on the Chinese Internet: Wuxia Online Video Games between Government and Internet Giants | Zixuan ZHU (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

This study examines the intersection of commercial success and cultural resonance within Wuxia online games under Chinese-government gaming control. Wuxia, a genre deeply rooted in Chinese martial arts, has transcended various media forms, including novels, films, and video games, forming a transmedia genre (Jenkins, 2006). Song (1999) and Chen (1992) highlight that Wuxia narratives carry a utopian imagination of the Chinese people. Wuxia online games have also succeeded in realizing virtual utopias with multiplayer interactions, transforming utopian imagery from human-computer interactions to complex interactions between multiple people and the virtual world. By applying political economy analysis and online ethnography, this study posits that a triadic power structure exists between regulatory authorities, online gaming companies, and the gaming community, each exerting mutual constraints on the others. The Chinese government exerts control over online games by pressuring these online behemoths, ensuring that this vast community remains under its purview. The deep bond between Wuxia online gaming and the market value of internet giants also makes it challenging for China's censorship apparatus to exert control over online games without risking significant economic fallout and devaluation of the tech industry. A vestige of the utopian vision—a resistance to control and a yearning for equality—still manages to seep into reality through the commercial clout of these internet titans. Wuxia games have become too big to be fully controlled, retaining a degree of influence that defies complete regulation.

**The Grassroots Ethos of Hong Kong's Community Cinema | Yuqi ZHANG (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

This paper aims to provide a fresh perspective on Hong Kong's transnational cultural history by delving into the evolution of the city's independent community cinema scene over the recent years. It investigates the cultural dynamics within independent networks and urban spaces in Hong Kong, as well as the grassroots ethos in the non-mainstream filmmaking and community cinema. The study places Hong Kong's cultural history in the diverse historical, cultural, social, and political contexts within the city. By presenting narratives that go beyond film, this research seeks to understand, interpret, and influence Hong Kong's unique grassroots viewpoint. Through ethnographic methods, the study uncovers Hong Kong's cultural history via independent community cinema, networks, and spaces, examining their connections with the cultural movements in Hong Kong intertwined with the everyday concerns, lifestyles, and social and political challenges faced by the city's ordinary residents.

**Intimacy on Screen: Sexting as a Romantic Practice Among LGBTQ+ Couples | Shengzhe YANG (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

In the digital era, the socioemotional intimacy in romantic relationships grows stronger in the sphere of online interactions. Many couples have turned to digital platforms to maintain affective connections due to physical separation. Sexting has emerged as a prevalent online phenomenon in the past decade, becoming a daily practice of romance among the younger generation. However, scholars continue to study sexting mostly as a problematic behaviour that remains stigmatized as a form of sexual deviance. In contrast to the usual approaches to this topic, this study interprets sexting as a remedy for the challenges faced by gay couples in China who lack migration mobility and physical intimacy. I show why and how sexting positively impacts the interpersonal communication among LGBTQ+ couples, aiding in maintaining the romantic relationship and compensating for the lack of physical intimacy when partners are apart. This study focuses on two critical theoretical-behavioural constructs—intimacy and relationship satisfaction—and aims to shift the perception and scholarly as well as pathologised narrative of sexting from either a convenient and cost-effective or deviant practice of exchanging sexually explicit content to a humane practice of love and connection. To explore the digital lives of LGBTQ+ couples, I employ a qualitative research approach to identify and understand individual human lives beyond the existing scholarly discourses. I seek to re-examine the functions of sexting as a means of fostering romantic relationships and to challenge the stigmatization of sexting among Chinese LGBTQ+ groups.

**Mateja KOVACIC (Hong Kong Baptist University, Discussant)**

**2-25****Blackness and Self: Relationality of Race in Korea**

Chair: Hayeon LEE (Australian National University)

Korean Studies have seen increased attention to race in recent years as South Korea's social transformation has challenged the previously widespread notions of ethnic homogeneity". However, insufficient attention is paid to understanding Blackness in the Korean context despite its significance in global race relations and its historical and continuing influence on Korea. Reflecting recent developments on the studies of race in Asia, papers in this panel place the relational, in addition to the hierarchical, aspect of race at the center of inquiry. In doing so, questions of Blackness (along with foreignness and otherness) are examined vis-a-vis explorations of the various facets of the self. Racialization is regarded as a reflexive, procedural and inquisitive process as much as it is domineering, monolithic, and despondent. The first two papers present epistemological accounts of understanding race, racialization and racial ideology rooted in Korea's historical and social context. Adopting Inter-Asian Cultural Studies' inter-referencing framework, the first paper presents common themes and references in the studies of race in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, which will provide an instructive overview for the panel. The second paper focuses on mixed-race Black Koreans born in post-war South Korea and provides a genealogy of the study of mixed-race Koreanness. The third and fourth papers are empirical research on African migrants in South Korea. The third paper examines the relationship between Korean clergy and vulnerable African migrant churchgoers. The fourth paper highlights how young Black African migrant women construct Africanness" and Koreanness" as a way of negotiating their daily racial experiences.

**Mapping Racial Ideologies in East Asia: State-of-the-art review of studies on race in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan |**  
**Sohoon YI (Korea University) and Jieun KIM (Ewha Womans University)**

This paper presents a state-of-the-art review of the studies of race in East Asia as an attempt to collate and organize historically, empirically, and theoretically grounded understandings of race from the non-Western and non-White perspectives. The paper is the result of a review of more than two hundred articles on race, racialization, and racism in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan published in the last two decades. The three Asian countries were chosen for their comparable experiences of modernity in the 20th and 21st Century, including Japanese imperialism, the Cold War, and globalization. The review focuses on three common themes that appear frequently in the studies: global racial hierarchy, understanding of self, and the process of othering. Adopting the concept of inter-referencing from Inter-Asia Cultural Studies (Chua 2015), the paper highlights comparable historical, cultural, and social experiences that have materialized in the complex and relational understandings of race not only about others but also themselves as racialized, non-White people in the Global North. The review compares variegated expressions and manifestations of race as a result of their historical experiences, including colonization (as the colonizer and the colonized), colonial migration, Cold War-related wars and geopolitics, indigenous politics, racial and ethnic categorizations, citizenship and nationalism, and new" transnational migration inspired by globalization. In doing so, the paper unravels convoluted tropes of racial ideology in East Asia as an attempt to understand themselves and others against a global backdrop.

**Mixed-Race Black Korean Studies | Joo Young LEE (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

The objective of this research is to examine the existing studies on mixed-race Black Koreans, who began to be born after the U.S. militarization of Korea in 1945, and to explicate how the representations of mixed-race Black Koreans are critical pillars for explaining issues of race and gender in postcolonial Korea. Previous scholarly works have examined the issues of mixed-race Black Koreans in history, anthropology, sociology, literary studies, film and media studies, theater studies, Korean studies, and American studies. The existing scholarship highlights contemporary political and social contexts to underline the backdrop of the representations in different platforms, from literature to television drama. However, there is a lack of discussion on how the representations of mixed-race Black Koreans have changed over time and what similarities and differences exist in portraying mixed-race Black Koreans on different cultural platforms. Therefore, based on a review of the existing studies, I analyze the representations of mixed-race Black Koreans in culture from the 1940s to the present and demonstrate how race and gender are related to the concepts of citizenship. My work particularly emphasizes the historical, legal, and cultural dimensions of race, gender, and citizenship and how these concepts change with local and global politics. This study will help us better understand the impact of race and gender on the idea of citizenship in transnational flows and question racial categories and national boundaries in the age of globalization.

**The organizational politics of pastoral care: Analyzing the role of native-born clergy in an African migrant church in South Korea** | Sharon YOON (University of Notre Dame)

Past research highlights how churches in Korea have significantly improved the lives of migrant workers by advocating for labor rights, providing social services, and pushing for legislative reforms. Faith-based organizations have filled gaps in social welfare, offering migrants legal aid, medical services, and support for workplace issues. This paper challenges this literature by demonstrating how churches can also perpetuate the oppression of undocumented migrants even while providing them access to crucial social welfare resources. Building on ethnographic research and interviews conducted at a large African migrant church on the outskirts of Seoul, our paper posits that the organizational politics of pastoral care, whereby congregants rely on the individual care of a loving and selfless pastor, can mask exploitative power dynamics between a religious leader and his vulnerable flock." In particular, we show how a centralized leadership structure that relies heavily on a single pastor's personal networks and sacrifices can limit migrant empowerment. The migrant church in our case study not only struggled to meet the needs of its growing African migrant congregation, but the lack of institutional accountability also allowed the head pastor to wield unchecked authority, leaving migrants with little opportunity to voice concerns or influence decision-making. We argue that migrant churches must coordinate efforts with civil society organizations and actors to engage in effective migrant advocacy.

**Young Black African Women's Everyday Lives in South Korea: Constructing and Negotiating "Koreanness" and "Africanness"** | Younghoo YOO (Seoul National University)

While South Korea's developments have attracted many young African women to study in Korea, these women come to confront racist, gendered discrimination in their daily lives in Korea. Based on anthropological fieldwork and interviews, this paper explores how young Black African women living in South Korea construct notions of "Koreanness" and "Africanness" while battling gendered racism in Korea. Firstly, Black African women form negative ideas of "Koreanness" in public spaces while confronting the racist, gendered gaze on their hair and features by Koreans. Rather than calling out Koreans' acts as racist or reverse-gazing, their coping mechanism is to negatively imagine "Koreanness" as being reserved and antisocial. Secondly, as gazes by Koreans alert African women to their appearances in public, African women negotiate displays of "Koreanness" and "Africanness" through clothes. African clothes become something to be toned down and self-censored in Korean public spaces. Lastly, I move to private spaces where "Koreanness" and "Africanness" are negotiated especially in friendships, where African women demand "Africanness" as being more desirable in friendship, and refuse characteristics that they deem as associated with "Koreanness" even with Korean friends. Drawing on bell hook's gaze theory and literature on diasporic nationalism, the article argues that Black African women in Korea develop and negotiate imagined ideas of "Africanness" and "Koreanness" in different spaces, public and private, within Korea. This paper contributes to intersectional understandings of gendered racism in Korea on Black African women and how diasporic nationalism develops as a counter strategy toward racism.

Hayeon LEE (Australian National University, Discussant)

**2-26****Language Ideologies in Practice: Performance, Power, and Everyday Negotiations**

Chair: Gregory A. THOMPSON (Brigham Young University)

**Is Nunchi Untranslatable? Using Korean Dramas to Explore the (English) Untranslatability of Nunchi** | Gregory A. THOMPSON (Brigham Young University)

We present data from a study we conducted that explores the concept of nunchi as it is employed in Korean dramas in order to consider its untranslatability (Lomas 2018). To this end, we searched two corpora of Korean dramas for all explicit mentions of nunchi. We first show the considerable range of English terms into which nunchi is translated. We then explain the nuances of the concept of nunchi through the Korean grammatical forms that that appeared most often in our corpora. Recognizing that nunchi is often employed even when it is not explicitly mentioned, we also had researchers code 5 hours of Korean dramas for instances of nunchi that occurred even when the term itself was not mentioned. Both our findings from explicit mentions and from implicit usage suggest the pervasiveness of nunchi in Korean culture. In addition, our analysis highlights how, although perhaps not entirely untranslatable, the meaning of nunchi is deeply embedded in a number of other Korean cultural concepts such that the term is extremely difficult to translate into English without losing the sense and feeling of the concept.

**The Integration Challenges of Young Adult North Korean Escapees in South Korea and Unequal English | Myung-Hee (Grace) YANG (University College London)**

Before K-pop's global rise and the Squid Game series, Korea was primarily known for North Korea, which still significantly influences South Korea's politics, even being linked to the recent presidential impeachment issue. Over 34,000 North Korean escapees in South Korea, who could offer unique perspectives on inter-Korean relations, face daily challenges that may limit their potential contributions, despite shared citizenship, ethnicity, and language. This study investigates the integration challenges of young adult North Korean escapees (YNKEs) into South Korean society and the role of English in this process. Studies have shown that North Korean escapees face various daily problems, including psychological and social issues. South Koreans often view North Koreans as cultural others, perceiving them as different due to their background and experiences. Using narrative inquiry through in-depth interviews and digital journaling, this qualitative research explores how structural challenges and pressures to align with South Korean values appear in their personal stories. It further examines whether ideologies surrounding English contribute to inequalities that complicate their integration, as English proficiency is considered a significant factor, especially for YNKEs. By incorporating historical and social context with individual experiences from YNKEs' perspectives, this study suggests the need for more detailed research into how social and academic difficulties might arise from language, beyond improving language proficiency alone. It may also create a social impact by raising awareness of North Korean realities, challenging stereotypes, and ultimately reshaping societal attitudes toward YNKEs as bridge citizens for a future unified Korea.

**Place-Making Through Improvisational Theater: Globalization and Transnational Migration in South Korea | Tomris Silan KURT (Seoul National University)**

Focusing on an improvisational theater group which operates fully in English, Seoul City Improv, based in Seoul, Republic of Korea (hereafter Korea), this research project aims to investigate the place-making practices of English-speaking migrants residing in Seoul. Seoul City Improv holds various comedy shows and open practice sessions, and improvisational comedy courses. The group welcomes anyone who wishes to join their activities regardless of prior experience in improvisational theater. While the group's meetings and events are accessible to anyone, as English language is the language of operation, the group's activities are especially appealing to transnational migrants. Therefore, by analyzing Seoul City Improv as a constructed social space, I seek to answer questions such as how this exclusively English-speaking space is established in Seoul where the dominant language is Korean, and how the space and the group connects to the larger patterns of globalization in Korea. Then, I hypothesize on the implications and the significance of such space that is constructed by the social interactions which are mediated in English language. By exploring the connections between Seoul City Improv and Korea's globalization and transnational migration, I aim to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the lives of migrants' residing in Seoul, and particularly, the role they play in shaping the transnational futures of East Asia.

**Sign Language as Social Action: Exploring Deaf-Hearing Integration" Practices in Shanghai, China | Lin WANG (Shanghai University)**

In contemporary China, ableism and standardizing paradigms remain influential frameworks in policies and regulations. Despite the absence of formal recognition and legal protection for sign language, Shanghai's Deaf community exhibits diverse identity formations, multilingual strategies, and complex social relations. This research explores the multifaceted dynamics within the Deaf community as a vibrant and sometimes contradictory assemblage navigating Deaf" and hearing-impaired" identities, sign and spoken language usage, and cultural choices between Deaf and hearing worlds. Three core questions frame the study: First, why is it necessary to build communicative bridges between sign and spoken languages, and between Deaf and hearing individuals? This addresses responsibility in communication. Second, how does the Deaf community reflect Iris Marion Young's concept of the politics of difference" through its unique language practices and identity constructions? This concerns identity and diversity. Third, what actionable frameworks can advance political and economic redistribution, challenge disabling ideologies, and dismantle the disabled/non-disabled binary? This raises questions of equality and transformative progress. Methodologically, this research combines interviews, participant observation, and collaborative Deaf-hearing integrated action. As a researcher and sign language learner with three months of fieldwork, I document sign language's cultural and linguistic characteristics as critical data. All actions, including workshops, performances, and policy advocacy, etc, adhere to Deaf-hearing integration principles, ensuring inclusivity in people, concepts, resources, formats, and participation structures. This study seeks to contribute to broader efforts to rethink modernity's constraining standardization paradigms.



**2-27****Humans, Technologies, and the Agency of Things in East Asia**

Chair: Miaofeng YAO (University of Minnesota)

This panel examines the dynamic relations between humans and non-humans, focusing on the boundaries between subject and object, mind and body, humans and things to demonstrate how things – whether technologies, materials, or objects – constitute and are constituted by human lives and social practices in East Asia. Throughout history, the various objects that interact most frequently with humans in society – whether man-made or natural – have provided constant companionship to human life, to the extent that they have been taken for granted as part of a generalized living environment.” Anthropology, after a series of criticizing and rethinking of de-Eurocentrism and de-anthropocentrism – spanning different sovereignties and trans-species perspectives – has gradually begun to view things” not merely as inanimate objects or functional tools. Instead, the focus has shifted from exploring their social meanings to examining their participation and impact as agency. Our panel explores how things, as agents in their own right, co-construct cultural and technological realities alongside humans.

**Luck, Fengshui, and Karma in E-commerce Villages: Imagine the World with Algorithms | Yun FENG (University of Minnesota)**

This article illustrates how e-commerce practitioners engaged in rural e-commerce use the cosmological knowledge of Xuanxue” to imagine the rules governing the algorithmic world. Since 2009, state-sponsored digital technology and privately-owned e-commerce platforms in China have spurred an intense socio-economic transformation across rural China, where 13 million rural households have experienced a massive reshaping of family structures, socioeconomic roles, and gendered identities. I argue that in this human-machine game of e-commerce villages, to gain more traffic on the platform, sell more goods, and ultimately achieve greater profits, villagers use all their knowledge from human society, even including cosmological knowledge to imagine the world of algorithms, while algorithms only care about the reduced or partial human value. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, the dynamic interactions between humans and algorithms offer profound insights into social structures, cultural practices, and individual identities. However, the humanism understandings of the digital world falls far short. My research seeks to unpack the algorithmic realities in which mankind are experiencing a set of new rules, values, and parameters of surviving and thriving in digital world.

**Resonances as a Thing: Situating Guqin in China’s Therapeutic Self-Cultivation Movements | Yang SHEN (Zhejiang University)**

The Guqin is a classical musical instrument receiving much interest in contemporary China’s changing cultural economy. Traditionally hand-crafted with silk strings, the Guqin is known for its gentle repercussions that encourage personal reflection or literati camaraderie in private or semi-private settings. The default modern practice is to use metal strings instead, which was not manufactured successfully until 1975 to meet the demands of conservatory students and orchestral performance. This article examines the Guqin’s contemporary appeal within China’s therapeutic self-cultivation movement, which intersects with a burgeoning well-being market where diverse self-cultivation technologies are commodified. Specifically, I focus on a revivalist strand of Guqin practice that regards the instrument not merely as an entertainment object or status symbol, but as an animated cultural artifact that transcends the capitalist marketplace. From this perspective, the Guqin is a metaphysical dao-ju, whose sensory qualities embody truth-value, with its sonic vibrations seen as conduits for cosmic resonances. This conception forms part of an enchanted truth-regime, where the boundaries between self, nature, and cosmos are porous” --using Charles Taylor’s terms--as these realms blur through the Guqin’s sonic vibrations. The paper explores how this ontological framework comes to embed the interpretation of musical encounters in contemporary China, particularly in the context of the Guqin’s entanglement with a therapeutic culture market. Ultimately, the paper argues that the agency of the Guqin arises not from the object itself, but from the truth regimes it helps enact. In doing so, it contributes to recent critiques of an objecthood assumption in material culture studies, showing how things” can also be understood as practices and their effects.

**Wandering Elephants: Human-Elephant Relations, Environmental Governance, and Animal Agency in China | Yunyuan YANG (Peking University)**

In March 2020, during the global COVID-19 lockdown, a herd of wild Asian elephants left their habitat in a national nature reserve in Southwest China and migrated northward into urban areas, capturing international attention. The Chinese government seized this opportunity to showcase the event as a flagship case at COP15, framing it as evidence of its success in environmental conservation and



ecological civilization. However, this narrative largely obscures the growing conflicts between expanding populations of wild animals and local indigenous communities. Over the past decade, wild Asian elephants have increasingly ventured beyond protected areas, raiding farmland and causing significant damage to the lives and livelihoods of ethnic minorities in Southwest China. This study adopts an ethnographic approach to explore regions frequently visited by wild elephants, examining the complex interplay between development pressures and conservation policies in some of China's least developed areas. By highlighting the agency of animals within state-led environmental governance projects, this research reveals the unintended consequences of such initiatives. It argues that the failure to account for animal agency has significantly undermined the effectiveness of a major national environmental project.

### **Authenticity Redefined: Ejiao, Daodi, and Biotechnology in Chinese Medicine | Wei YE (University of Minnesota)**

Ejiao (阿胶), a Chinese medicine made from donkey hides, has become one of China's highest-selling pharmaceutical products. Its surging popularity has driven a global expansion of donkey hide procurement, resulting in large-scale donkey slaughter and sparking international concern. This surge has ignited persistent public and media discourse questioning its efficacy and authenticity. This paper examines how ejiao manufacturers have responded to these challenges by redefining the concept and requirement of daodi (道地)—place-based authenticity—through scientific and industrial approaches. Through the adoption of various biotechnologies, particularly peptide-based detection methods, the industry has redefined ejiao's authenticity in terms of quantifiable donkey-derived components. Manufacturers validate their products' authenticity through biochemical testing that measures these biological markers. Industry-sponsored research has further reinforced this approach by demonstrating the chemical equivalence of ejiao made from imported and domestic donkey hides. Through these methods, manufacturers have sought to standardize authenticity in scientifically verifiable terms, while simultaneously altering how Chinese medicine is defined and manufactured. This paper argues for greater attention to such technological applications in traditional medicine industries, as they are not merely neutral tools but active forces continuously reshaping these medical traditions.

2-28

### **Demarginalizing Sex and Marriage: Circulation of Gendered Knowledge and Cultural Dynamics in China, 1920s-Present**

Chair: Caiping YAN (Xiamen University)

This panel examines how concepts of sex and marriage, shaped by multiple values, norms, and ideologies, evolved from a cultural habitus to a negotiable social arena in modern China. Ever from the 1920s when Chinese sociologists translated Western evolutionary ideas and dismantled the Confucious marital ethics, to Socialist China when marriage was integrated into national legal frameworks through top-down initiatives, gender issues engaged closely with China's reformative courses, and have once again dispersed and permeated public discourses today in the digital space. Bringing Together scholars from diverse disciplines, this panel inspects a wide spectrum surrounding the reproduction of gendered knowledge and social practices in Chinese society through translingual, institutional, and practical lenses. Yan revisits the Republican marital discourses and recovers Yi Jiayue's translation of Charles Letourneau's ideas on evolutionary marriage in proposing a gender ideal of unity of the sexes. Chen focuses on the constitution of marriageability and intimate lives, which was inextricably interwoven with national practices, local histories, and individual stories within a propaganda project in socialist China. Hu explores the interplays between social media platforms, users, and the state in regulating and debating discourses and practices of cyber sexual harassment in the digital era. Mao investigates how female professionals on digital platforms strategically navigate gender-based violence to facilitate group identity and practices in China's esports industry. Together, the four case studies aim to uncover how the shifting cultural dynamics of gendered patterns and conceptions were circulated and demarginalized through courses of intellectualization, institutionalization, and regulation in modern China.

### **Staging a Remarriage: Reproducing Marriageability and Marital Imaginaries in Institutionalized Opera Practices in Contemporary China | Chen CHEN (Shandong Sports University)**

This paper explores how a regional xiqu (Chinese Opera) production was involved in the cultural reformation and propaganda surrounding the first Marriage Law of the PRC in the 1950s. Specifically, I delve into the activities and trajectories of individuals who, as states' cultural workers, participated in creating new cultural performances to reform local marital norms and values in northern China during a period of national xiqu reform stretching from 1949 to 1966. Meanwhile, it reveals how the constitution of marriageability and intimate lives was inextricably interwoven with national practices, local histories, and individual stories within the propaganda project.

Following the national xiqu reform of the 1950s, state-owned operatic troupes and companies across China began transforming regional cultures to align with national cultural standards while conveying ideological messages through top-down initiatives. One such troupe, the Shandong Provincial Lüju Company, gained prominence by adapting the revolutionary novel *The Remarriage of the Widow Li Ersao* (Wang 1950) for the national stage in 1954. The play was frequently cited by national media as a model for integrating folk traditions with socialist realism” and the new marriage pattern promoted by the state. It was also recognized for reinforcing the implementation of the Marriage Law and was circulated to national audiences through traveling lüju troupes and opera films. Drawing on ethnographic studies and archival research, this paper illustrates the paradoxical negotiations among local norms, institutional practices, and group knowledge that shape marital imaginaries and gendered patterns in contemporary Chinese society.

**"Making Marriage": The Translingual Travel of Charles Letourneau's Ideas on Evolutionary Marriage in Chinese Intellectualization of Marriage Modernity (1918-1923) | Caiping YAN (Xiamen University)**

In evolving from a cultural habitus into commonly conceived knowledge, the very concept of marriage” in China has gone through a transnational and translingual practice, navigating the complex interplay between Confucian ethics and modern evolutionary ideologies. The study responds to such concerns by revealing how French anthropologist Charles Letourneau's theories on evolutionary marriage were first introduced into the republican sphere by Chinese sociologist Yi Jiayue in his imagining and intellectualizing of traditional Chinese matrimonial customs, which facilitated the emancipation and professionalization of Chinese women in the 1920s. In his translation of Letourneau's monograph *The Evolution of Marriage: and of the Family* (1921), Yi embraced Letourneau's biology-centric lens as the foundation of modern gender relations, as an attempt to remove the ethical constraints of Confucian marriage conventions. While reinterpreting family ethics as customs,” Yi empowered women's social roles in proposing his ultimate gender ideal of unity of the sexes.” The translational case of evolutionary marital ideas in China historically countered the local discourse of marriage abolishment” prevalent since the late Qing dynasty, in which the translator managed to situate the issue of marriage within a broader spectrum of gender reform.

**Social Media Platforms and the Mediation of Cyber Sexual Harassment Experiences in China | Panfeng HU (Nanjing University of Finance & Economics)**

The prevalence of social media platforms has expanded and complicated the practices and impact of sexual harassment that require evolving practical and academic responses. Ubiquitous problems such as unwanted sexual solicitation, nonconsensual sharing of sexually implicit images, and sexual coercion and threats have become common concerns across the globe. Although there has yet to be a clear legal definition of and prevention mechanism against cyber sexual harassment in China, heated debates over web operators' affordances in amplifying gender violence online as well as their liability to take pre-emptive and self-regulatory actions against it has put the digital infrastructure to the front stage of examination, shedding lights on the once hidden interplay of institutional regimes of power that carries sexual harassment to the digital world. Through a walkthrough method to the study of apps, this study investigates three major social media platforms in China: Douyin, Weibo, and Douban to unravel the dynamics and symbolic elements of their technological architecture, governance, and interactions with other actors ( i.e., users and government) and explores how these meaning-making processes define, regulate, and reproduce users' perceptions and experiences of cyber sexual harassment.

**Navigating the Gendered Gaze: Female Professionals' Identity Barriers and Construction in Esports | Hongning MAO (Shandong Sport University)**

As an emerging sports phenomenon in the digital era, the esports industry exhibits significant male-dominated characteristics, akin to traditional sports. In the Asian context represented by China, female esports professionals, including players, commentators, and hosts, are more frequently subjected to external doubts and biases regarding their professional competencies than their male counterparts. From the perspective of Social Representation Theory, female professionals are often depicted as appearance-oriented” or non-mainstream practitioners”. These gendered representations impose multiple explicit and implicit barriers to their career advancement, such as stereotypes, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment. Some female professionals, to align with societal expectations and gender norms, are compelled to actively objectify” themselves to secure career opportunities, thereby exacerbating the complexities of gender inequality within the industry. This paper aims to achieve three primary objectives: first, to analyze the gender gaze and gender-based violence experienced by female esports professionals on social media platforms in China, exploring how public evaluations of these women are constructed through social media and how gender stereotypes are reinforced and disseminated through cultural

mechanisms and digital channels. Second, it explores how women navigate the masculinized” environment of the esports industry, overcoming constraints and conflicts imposed by traditional gender roles, balancing self-expression with gendered societal expectations, and enhancing their agency through the construction of professional identities within cultural frameworks. Finally, it seeks to provide theoretical support for promoting gender equality, reducing occupational segregation, and fostering the sustainable development of esports industry by highlighting region-specific insights.

Jing XU (Tsinghua University, Discussant)

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**2-29****Women on the Move: Individualization, Aspiration, and the Politics of Becoming**

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Chair: An-Ni NI (National University of Singapore)

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**Reclaiming Individuality: Transnational Migration and Gendered Individualization Among Never-married Chinese Professional Women in Singapore:** | **An-Ni NI (National University of Singapore)**

Amid modernization and globalization, women have increasingly obtained advanced education and engaged in transnational skilled-labor migration. However, meritocratic achievements do not necessarily exempt them from patriarchal obligations regarding marriage and fertility embedded in the normative life course, especially in East Asian countries. This paper addresses the gendered process of individualization experienced by never-married, skilled Chinese women in Singapore, focusing on three interconnected dimensions: the transformation of attitudes and practices toward gendered roles (as daughters, potential wives, and future mothers), the individualistic turn redefining gendered order across public/private spheres, and transnational migration as a liminal space for reclaiming and embracing individuality. To examine these dynamics, I conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork between 2023 and 2024, including focus groups, participant observation, and life-history interviews with 30 never-married Chinese skilled-labor migrant women in Singapore. Findings reveal that these women are actively redefining traditional gender roles by: (1) reconceptualizing marriage and motherhood beyond the patrilineal framework, (2) exploring alternative, autonomous pathways such as lifelong singlehood and single motherhood, and (3) transforming intergenerational relationships by confronting patriarchal authority and strengthening matrilineal bonds. These individual-level transformations have the potential for broader structural changes, as they dismantle the public-private sphere dichotomy by celebrating feminine power and self-sufficiency. Transnational migration serves as a crucial catalyst in this process by providing both psychological distance from normative pressures and exposure to alternative lifestyles, creating a liminal space where migrant women can challenge gendered tradition and reclaim their individuality.

**Between Freedom and Suspension: The Post-Study Abroad Experiences and Labors of Young Chinese Women in Korea** | **Ji-Yeon SHIN (Yonsei University)**

This study examines the intersection of gender, mobility, and labor between Korea and China by analyzing the post-study abroad experiences of young Chinese women living in Korea. The research addresses two primary questions: first, what factors influence Chinese women’s decisions to stay in Korea after graduation, and how do their gendered aspirations affect their post-study life planning? Second, what strategies do they use to maintain their residence, including labor, job seeking practice, and disturbance? Given previous research indicating that gender can significantly influence the entire study abroad process, it is crucial to construct a gender-centered narrative of the post-study abroad experience. The women in this study express a desire to stay in Korea to escape the poor working conditions and normative expectations placed on women in China. However, the limited availability of diverse employment opportunities for international students in Korea often leads them to engage in occupations that are unrelated to their major, or in feminized labors, or in part-time positions mediated by digital platforms. Nonetheless, these women differ from other international student narratives of livelihood challenges because they represent middle-class children who receive full family support under China’s new familialism. While families may enforce return and gender norms, these norms can also facilitate continued financial support from the family. The desire to live independently of the norms imposed by Chinese society takes precedence in their life planning; however, this desire is entangled in the context of Korean society, resulting in a process that involves a highly unstable compromise.

**Beyond Acculturation: A Study on Chinese Women's Strategic Cultural Practices in Sino-Norwegian Marriages in Norway**

| Heng HUANG (Communication University of China) and Yingzhi KE (University of Oslo)

With the incremental ease of spatial mobility and the rise of migration activities, transnational or intercultural marriages are increasingly common. The acculturation within transnational marriages has aroused academic attention, focusing on how one party in the marriage adapts to a new socio-cultural context and achieves settlement. However, the reality is far more complex than the four modes presented in acculturation models. In intercultural marriages, several unequal binary structures—such as cultural (West-East Asia), social (local resident-immigrant), gender (male-female), and economic (worker-housewife or househusband)—intersect, forming intricate and intertwined dilemmas. Within the theoretical framework of intersectionality, this study examines Sino-Norwegian marriages in Norway to explore how Chinese women in such relationships use strategic cultural practices to sustain their marriages and achieve personal settlement. This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing auto-ethnography and in-depth interviews to explore Sino-Norwegian marriages in Norway. Through a year of auto-ethnography and additional in-depth interviews with 11 Chinese women, this study reveals that their cultural practices in these marriages go beyond the modes outlined in acculturation theory. Rather than simply adapting East Asian culture to align with Nordic cultural norms, these women actively appropriate East Asian culture as cultural capital, negotiating and reconstructing more bridging cultural spaces within both the domestic and broader social contexts. This case also shows the possibility that in transcultural marriages, East Asian culture does not function as a set of ideals needed to be adapted to some goals, but rather as a toolbox that provides strategies for bridging cultural differences.

**The Hallyu Dream and Romantic Desire: Media-Driven Migration and Self-Perception Among Burmese Women in South Korea** | Jiah LEE (Stanford University)

The global spread of Korean popular culture, known as Hallyu (the Korean Wave), has shaped the future-making practices of fans, inspiring a new pattern of migration fueled by romanticized visions of life in Korea and idealized portrayals of Korean people. This paper examines what I call the Hallyu dream: the desire to live out the life depicted in Korean popular media. Drawing on participant observation and interviews, I present a case study of two young Burmese women whose migration to Korea was motivated largely by this dream. I look specifically at their desire for romantic relationships with Korean men—a central component of their imagined Korea—and how disappointments in this pursuit have consequences beyond unsuccessful love. These experiences foster self-doubt tied to a perceived lack of Koreanness (such as darker skin and non-typical Korean features), prompting efforts to emulate Korean women. In this contact zone, admiration for the Hallyu dream meets the realities of Korean society, resulting in a space of intense cultural clash. This dynamic creates asymmetrical power relations, evoking emotions that range from admiration to self-alienation. I argue that by predominantly positioning Korean society and Koreans as the standard and others as peripheral, Hallyu media demonstrate characteristics of cultural imperialism in these contact zones. This study offers another perspective on Hallyu-driven migration, contributing to migration and Hallyu studies by showing how a popular culture with local specificity shapes migration patterns and impacts migrants' self-perception and emotional experiences in relation to their romanticized visions.

**"I'm in Charge!": The Shaped Life Politics Actions of Chinese Young Females in a Youth Night School** | Danyi ZHOU (Jilin University)

Chinese young women's agency in asserting themselves is a manifestation of individualization internalized within the framework of state-directed socialist modernization. On the basis of an extended ethnography, this article uses 'I'm in charge' as a conceptualized means of life politics to investigate how young women in northeastern China - a group that is seen as the benchmark of progress ideology but rarely studied in real scenarios - continue to gain their power in the private sphere while the contemporary society is not conducive to young women's participation in public life. Drawing on fieldwork in a youth night school, the article explores the creative and interactive process of 'I'm in charge' through young females- identity presentation, realization means and class gender differences-construct new family power structures and controversial gender concepts. I present the findings that the political economic development of the state, not only served as an essential precondition for women's empowerment but also acted as a constraint on their advancement. The active social role of women in the process of social modernization ultimately led to the disintegration of family hierarchies, changed intergenerational power relations, and significantly weakened the patriarchal system in the private sphere. However, the shift in power challenges patriarchal rather than male power, and gender relations have not fundamentally changed. Meanwhile, the gradual exclusion of individual agency from public life by institutional factors has embedded women back into their originally disembedded domestic life, and the political life action has been an individualized process devoid of feminism.

**2-30****Shaping Ethnographic Futures: Diasporic Return as Method - Roundtable Session**

Chair: T. Yejoo KIM (UCLA)

Anthropologists have long approached diaspora as a social phenomenon, centering the experiences of exiles, immigrants, and refugees by revealing the tenuous boundaries of citizenship, language, and social belonging. What happens, however, when a generation of anthropologists emerge from these diasporic communities to not only study their own but also return to the place from which they were first dispelled? Furthermore, what is gained and lost when this place is re-framed as a fieldsite to their disciplinary peers? With the rise of “native” ethnography in recent decades, anthropologists have been reckoning with the methodological affordances and foreclosures that come with being ethnically or racially coded as an “insider” in the field. For such researchers, however, the term “native” ethnographer also seems insufficient as it reifies a binary of insider/outsider that does not encapsulate their many interstitial positionalities (second or third-gen, queer, woman, mixed-race, etc.) and also subsumes the geopolitical, colonial, economic conditions that frame their “insider” status. This interregional and intergenerational roundtable gathers anthropologists who have “returned” to East Asia to imagine together what ethnographic possibilities our diasporic status opens up as researchers in Korea and Taiwan. While this roundtable will be limited to the experiences of Asian American linguistic and sociocultural anthropologists in Korea and Taiwan, we hope that this discussion will open up future pathways for colleagues from elsewhere negotiating their diasporic return as ethnographic researchers.

T. Yejoo KIM (UCLA)

Cheryl LEE (UCLA)

Christian Joon PARK (Hanyang University ERICA)

Joyhanna YOO (California State University, Sacramento)

**2-31****Energy Transitions and Their Afterlives: Memory, Materiality, and Power**

Chair: Teresa KUAN (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

**Nuclearity: Embodiment by Visibility and Distance in the Proximity to the Reactor | MiHyang LEE (Academy of Korean Studies)**

This research recounts the life of people living close to Kori nuclear power station in Gigang-gun, Busan, South Korea through a series of ethnographic vignettes from the point of view of the participant observer. Nearly forty-seven years since they were first built and began operating in South Korea, the nuclear power station has been expected as a clean energy by conservative political groups in Korea in the era of climate crisis. However little research has investigated the secular ferocity of radiation, particularly those of villages living in close proximity to nuclear power stations domestically and elsewhere in the world. Turning to Ruch Cooper’s analysis, this article brings the agenda in terms of embodiment, agency and materiality so that it researches mercilessness about impalpable radiation, beyond merely issues of wording and idea. To deal with these challenges of the radiation landscape of the proximity of Kori nuclear power station and its neighbouring towns, this paper drawing upon the body-subject of Merleau-Ponty, postulates ‘visibility’ and ‘distance’ as criteria of omnipresent knowledge, applicable beyond radiation landscapes, which is based on despair, excess, malaise, vulnerability and uncertainty. According to the nuclearity, risk perception and epistemic distance depending on visibility and invisibility, this article describes fundamental link-with secular others which transcend humans’ perceptual, representational and bodily capacities. Ultimately, this demonstrates how radiation is comprehended in routine between visibility and invisibility due to the materiality of the nuclear power station and depicts how a nuclear power station becomes a value-laden facility in the process of embodiment.

**Sedimentation: On Researching the Aftermath of a Century-Old Pollution | Wan Yin Kimberly FUNG (Hitotsubashi University)**

The Ashio Copper Mine Poisoning Incident has not yet concluded” is widely circulated among my interlocutors in the Ashio-Watarase River region, where Japan’s first major industrial pollution occurred during the Meiji period and continues to shape the region. While emphasizing this disaster’s ongoing nature, my interlocutors describe their lands as restored and express hesitations about calling river sediments mine poisons or labeling infrastructure as mitigation facilities. These encounters, across two and a half years of multi-sited fieldwork, reveal how my interlocutors refuse to adhere to victimhood-centered narratives. This stance contrasts with dominant approaches in Japan’s pollution studies and resonates with critiques of academia’s damage-centered epistemological preference (Tuck 2009). To explore the interplay between refusal and narratives of pollution’s persistent violence, this paper draws on the dialectics of revelation and concealment in public secrecy (Taussig 1999) and employs sedimentation” as a conceptual figure. Sedimentation en-



compasses both the physical deposition of heavy metals and the growing irretrievability of past witnesses. Through this conceptual figure, the paper examines how acts of revelation—such as questioning the toxicity of sedimented layers—do not resolve uncertainty or make toxicity more knowable. Instead, they redirect attention to the recoveries above: water sustaining farmlands and fostering a Ramsar wetland, bracketing the presence of mine poisons below. Engaging in discussions of refusal (Tuck and Yang 2014) and negative methodology (Navaro 2020), this paper ultimately argues that sedimentation is not an erasure of wounds but a layered dynamic where unearthing futures and inscribing the past become inseparable acts.

#### **Afterlife of Coal: Nature, Money, and Memory in China's Energy Transition Landscape | Xue MA (University of California, Irvine)**

This paper aims to examine the politicization of nature and culture in China from a combination of historical and ethnographic perspectives in looking at the politics of nature's valuation. Situated in the transition contexts of China in the recent decade from economic miracle" to economic downturn", from fossil fuel to renewable energy regimes, I use the case of a small coal-mine county-town (县城 xiancheng) and its nearby metropolitan Xi'an in Northwestern China as a microcosm for studying the production of transitional discourses on energy and economy, as well as the human-nature assemblages that enabled messy ecological landscape changes brought by coal mining and other state forces. Drawing from archives produced by geographers and urban planners on the history of resource discovery and extraction, and the change of attention to natural environment in these early scientists, engineers and city planners' depiction of human-nature relationship during the 20th century at Shaanxi province, this paper aims to show the intricate connections between local phenomenon around coal mining and state vision on resources and energy, as well as the global circulation of knowledge production on nature and culture.

#### **Cosmopolitical Deixis and Asian Energy Transitions: Re-Placing Fossil Capital | Matt SCHNEIDER (University of California, Los Angeles)**

This paper reflects on ongoing ethnographic research in Tokyo amid activist and commercial efforts to phase out fossil fuel infrastructure and reach Net Zero carbon emissions. Tokyo is a nexus for industrial, financial, and geoeconomic future-making, with inputs and outputs stretching much farther afield. Because of Japanese institutional centrality in regional (indeed, global) supply chains of coal, liquid natural gas, and emergent fuels like hydrogen ammonia, Tokyo has become a key site for the making or un-making of energy transition as such. A 2020 national commitment to Net Zero by Japan's then Prime Minister surprised many decarbonization advocates, but most progress to date has faced criticisms of false starts, fantasy, and futility. This paper traces different political-economic and socio-cultural positionings of place" in efforts to replace or sustain fossil capital across Asia. Evidence from observing Tokyo's business and policy public spheres and interviewing a multinational range of actors – from climate justice protesters to electricity company executives – illuminates how transition is necessarily a transnational problem: even where national interests come to the fore, these interests often get framed in transnational terms. In particular, I detail the semiotic work through which energy supply chains become figures and grounds for competing forms of Pan-Asianism, from above" and from below", locating productive tensions in anthropological thinking on national space-times, corporate forms, and economic moralities. When conventional wisdom among energy analysts worldwide holds that transition will succeed or fail in Asia," what follows from imagining Asia not as static place but dynamic practice?

2-32

#### **Configuring the Sacred: Ritual, Gender, and Religious Futures in Contemporary Asia**

Chair: Hongmin AHN (Osaka University)

#### **Three Koreans Under One God: Trilateral Identity Formation in Korean Churches in Japan | Hongmin AHN (Osaka University)**

Amid the enduring legacies of Japanese colonialism and subsequent migration patterns, Korean Christian churches in Japan serve as rare sanctuaries where politically and culturally fragmented Korean identities converge under a shared Christian faith. While previous research has highlighted the role of these churches in fostering ethnic solidarity between Zainichi Koreans (descendants of colonial-era migrants) and recent South Korean migrants, this study argues that they are dynamic sites of trilateral Korean identity formation through the inclusion of Chinese Koreans (Chosŏnjok/조선족). Focusing on Korean Christian churches in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, this study examines how these churches function as transnational spaces where Korean identities are being inclusively reconstructed. Drawing on six months of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, it explores how church-led initiatives, including multilingual services and cultural programs, bridge—with varying degrees of success—historical, linguistic, and ideological differences among the three Korean communities. Special attention is given to how Chinese Korean congregants navigate their complex positionality within



these spaces, revealing both the opportunities and challenges of incorporating this third Korean identity into established church dynamics. By situating Korean Christian churches in Japan within broader frameworks of diaspora studies and postcolonial identity formation, this research contributes to our understanding of how religious institutions facilitate the integration of newer diasporic groups into established ethnic communities. Ultimately, it argues that these churches serve as rare—perhaps only—spaces in Japan where South Koreans, Zainichi Koreans, and Chinese Koreans come together to cultivate a shared sense of community.

**From Madwoman to Gendered Authority: The Construction of Rural Female Spirit Medium Cults in Contemporary Southeast China** | **Jialin CHEN (University of Hong Kong)**

This paper studies the construction of the religious authority of female spirit mediums in contemporary Southeast China as a dynamic process. Spirit medium cults in the rural areas of Southeast China have experienced a revival in the post-Mao era, and gender has played a role in it. The legitimacy and religious authority of the male spirit medium cults are rooted in the local temple cults – a manifestation of local kinship. However, the authority of female spirit medium cults is far more complicated and involves a dynamic process. Female spirit mediums face the problem of legitimacy: Female spirit mediums often experience a seeming neurosis after their first possession, which usually incurs misunderstanding and suspicion in the community. They and their possessed spirits are not acknowledged by the community in the beginning, and the possessing spirits are deemed to be evil for their interruption to the previous normal life of mediums. Nevertheless, their religious authority can be gradually constructed through the display of spiritual power and the efficacy of their spiritual services. For the reason that their religious authority is not derived from the local temples, female spirit mediums have the capability of transcending the local community and forming a de-territorial ritual sphere based on their spiritual ability. This paper aims to investigate how female spirit mediums in rural societies construct their religious authority by examining the transformation of communal attitudes and the formation of the de-territorial ritual spheres around the female spirit medium cults.

**Reconciling Tradition and Modernity: Kim T'aehŭp and the Shaping of Korean Buddhist Futures in the Colonial Era** | **Jusung LEE (Yale University)**

This paper examines how everyday religious practices in colonial Korea navigated the challenges of modernity and colonialism, offering an alternative to binary interpretations of tradition versus modernity. Focusing on the Korean Buddhist monk Kim T'aehŭp (1899–1989), it highlights the interplay of intergenerational, interregional, and transcultural dynamics in shaping religious agency. After studying in Japan (1920–1928), Kim diverged from the modernizing trends of many Korean Buddhist elites, who sought to suppress practices like chanting the names of Bodhisattvas. Instead, he actively promoted Avalokiteśvara faith, emphasizing the transformative power of chanting to invoke compassion and deliver tangible benefits. This was not a rejection of modernity but a deliberate response to it, shaped by his engagement with ordinary Buddhists and their lived experiences. In Japan, Kim encountered ideas linking Buddhism with Western philosophy and Christianity, showcasing his capacity for modern interpretation and reform. Yet, upon returning to Korea, he prioritized Avalokiteśvara faith as a transcultural and transnational devotional practice, bridging local traditions with global religious currents. His efforts resonated widely, reaching tens of thousands across and beyond colonial Korea. This paper challenges narratives that depict colonial Korean Buddhism as solely dominated by elite modernist discourses. Instead, it uncovers a diverse and contested landscape of Buddhism shaped by tensions between tradition, modernity, and transnational exchanges. By centering on Kim's approach, the study contributes to broader discussions on mentoring relationships, transnational religious ties, and the role of lived religion in shaping inclusive and dynamic futures.

**"An lòng người sống, yên lòng người chết": Experiences of Pregnancy Loss in Contemporary Vietnam** | **Ngọc Chung LƯƠNG (Fulbright University Vietnam)**

This study highlights how traditional Vietnamese rituals and putatively New Age spiritual practices mold gendered experiences of pregnancy loss in contemporary Vietnam and asks us to rethink discourses about body, gender, and spirituality in present globalized Asia. Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic research and fieldwork in 2024 in rituals and spiritual sessions that practice fortune telling, chiromancy, exorcism, family constellation, meditation, and past-life regression that cater to women with and without pregnancy loss of all kinds in Vietnam, I bring together religious ideologies and spiritual practices for spirit babies that simultaneously console and inflict female participants. On the one hand, the ritual edifice composed by spiritualists offers consolation and comprehension of the loss, which is otherwise worrisome and inscrutable to would-have-been mothers. On the other hand, rituals (re)produce spiritual kinship, in which threats of vengeance by spirit babies and familial and moral obligations ensure the formation and fixation of kin subjectivities to women

as spiritual mothers and family members. The research features cultural experiences and etiologies that probably challenge previous understandings of pregnancy loss as only medical and only experienced by bereaved parents. Together, traditional and supposedly New Age religious and spiritual practices offer a unique window to examine how reproductive loss and spirituality unfold in relation to each other in the context of spiritual globalization.

**3-1 Sites of Becoming: Heritage, Space, and Alternative Futures**

Chair: Daisaku MUKAI (Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts)

**Tracing Memories of Spring Water through Songs: Springs and Songs of Miyako Islands | Daisaku MUKAI (Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts) and Junko GOYA (Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts)**

In this paper, based on our research on the songs related to spring water in Miyako islands, we argue that these songs have formed a cultural space in which they have grounded the water as meaningful object into the inhabitants' consciousness. People living on Miyako Islands and other islands of the Ryukyu Arc utilize the limited water resources such as spring water and ground water. In Miyako Islands, village communities had been formed around natural springs (kaa" in Miyako dialect). People living on the islands have connected their history, their daily life practices, and their emotions to the existence of these springs, and expressed them in these songs. We have researched various types of songs related to mainly 5 springs, from the traditional repertoire of folksongs to Arirang-gaa" (Arirang-Spring) which is said to have been used by Korean soldiers and laborers who were forcibly brought to Miyako Islands during WW II. These songs reveal the multiplicity of experiences associated with water which have been memorized on the islands. In recent years, socioeconomic changes on the islands have caused the depletion of water resources and deterioration of water quality. What are the implications of singing, listening to, and sharing these songs on Miyako Islands today? In closing, from this case study about the cultural interaction between human beings and the environment mediated by songs, we will discuss how academic research on expressive culture can explore the possibilities of social dialogues about the value of the environment and cultural diversity.

**Reimagining Urban Futures through Storytelling: A Case Study of District K in South Korea | Yeogeun KIM (Kyungpook National University)**

Urban regeneration projects often focus primarily on infrastructure and development, but one of their most critical aspects is the cultural and social revival of local communities. This presentation reflects on my participation in a storytelling training program designed to engage local voices in the urban regeneration of District K, a historical district in South Korea. The program introduced me to the intersection of urban renewal and community-based storytelling, highlighting how these efforts are central to reimagining the future of urban spaces. In this visual essay, I will guide the audience through the ongoing transformation of District K, an area undergoing a delicate balancing act between preserving its heritage and adapting it for the future. By showcasing the regeneration efforts, I will focus on how storytelling has served as a tool to foster community participation and attract both local residents and visitors. Through a combination of imagery, narrative, and reflections from my personal experience in the program, I will explore the broader implications of how cultural heritage, tourism, and community-driven initiatives are shaping the future of urban spaces.

**The Ding Huis' Astute Quest to Navigate Identity via Spatial Practice | Ke LIU (Tsinghua University)**

The Ding Clan of the Hui ethnicity in Chendai, Quanzhou, has navigated the changing tides of ethnic policies in China, from de-ethnicization at the turn of the Yuan-Ming dynasties to re-ethnicization since 1978. Today, it exhibits a flourishing clan culture and a subdued Islamic faith, presenting an atypical Hui identity and a need for remaking a Hui community. With its powerful visual appeal, space has become central to the Ding Huis' efforts to reconstruct their community. From the perspective of architectural anthropology, this study outlines the origins and evolutions of the Ding Huis' spatial practice, and explores the underlying rationales and strategies, showcasing a viable path and strategy for unique urban communities to survive and thrive amidst competing incentives and constraints in contemporary, ever-changing China. This study finds that, the Ding Huis, with its resourceful and proactive spatial practice, have created a community spatial structure that is ethnically expressive, religiously subdued, and discreet in clan elements, as well as a community identity structure that is distinctly multifaceted and highly adaptive. In doing so, they strategically and impressively select spatial fragments and narratives to project desired images and meet various practical needs. However, the Ding Huis' spatial practice has, to a certain extent, resulted in mixed-use spaces and obfuscated identities. This has inhibited the Ding Huis from attracting a spontaneous aggregation of the Hui people and the Hui space, thereby inhibiting its growth into a typical Hui community in terms of both population and spatial growth potential.

**Rethinking Disillusionment: Rural Youth, Alternative Pathways, and the Politics of Rural Revitalization in Northern China | Heyu ZHANG (Emory University)**

Rural revitalization has been central to the Chinese state's vision of a prosperous future and national rejuvenation, with policies aiming

to reframe rural areas from symbols of poverty and backwardness to hubs of ecological sustainability, cultural authenticity, and development spectacles (Chen et al. 2023, Chio 2014, 2017, Yeh 2023). Drawing on fieldwork in Yuanzhou County (pseudonym), Shandong Province, this paper examines how local experiences of rural revitalization diverge from state narratives of rural prosperity. Focusing on the tourism industry and rural youth, it explores youth subjectivities, emerging ruralities, and potential transcripts of the future” (Bonilla 2015) as state development narratives and promised futures become increasingly alienating for rural youth. Despite media coverage of thriving natural parks, revolutionary heritage tourism, and infrastructure projects, Yuanzhou’s tourism industry faces unprecedented challenges in the post-COVID-19 era. Empty attraction sites leave young workers grappling with boredom, anxiety, and disillusionment with rural revitalization. This paper examines how development projects continue depoliticizing rural exclusion under the hukou system, rendering rural youth as self-responsible individualized actors. By analyzing their roles as entrepreneurial subjects, providers of affective labor, and participants in community politics, the study explores how Yuanzhou youth evaluate commodified rural life and history, engaging with or distancing themselves from the state’s hegemonic temporality of progress. Amid rising youth unemployment and diminishing opportunities, this paper offers a case to explore emerging alternatives for Chinese youth to inhabit time, cultivate personal ethics and redefine aspirations and values, along with the potential political significance of such alternatives.

### **Power-Constructed Space: The Development of Hot Spring Tourism during the Japanese Colonial Period through a Case Study of Beitou and Onyang Hot Springs** | **Siqian WANG (Seoul National University)**

This study focuses on the development of Beitou Hot Springs in Taiwan and Onyang Hot Springs in Joseon during the Japanese colonial period, exploring the mechanisms behind the creation and evolution of hot springs as tourist attractions in colonial societies. By analyzing the modernization of the hot spring industry, the research reveals how the Japanese Empire utilized transportation, architecture, and media to transform colonial hot springs into tourism spaces imbued with meanings of ‘modernity’ and ‘coloniality.’ Grounded in Lefebvre’s theory of social space, the study examines the roles of various actors in the development of hot springs, unraveling the power dynamics and cultural implications underlying the process. The findings show that while the development of Beitou and Onyang Hot Springs originated from Japanese capital and authority, the interactions among different actors during the process of popularization shaped the cultural symbols of these spaces, which were subsequently internalized into colonial societies through mechanisms of social imitation. Furthermore, the transformation of hot springs into tourist destinations not only reflects Japan’s cultural dominance over its colonies but also highlights the complex relationships among power, space, and demand within the colonial modernization process. By adopting a cross-regional comparative approach, this study addresses the limitations of previous single-case studies and provides new insights into the development of colonial tourism and its power mechanisms.

## **3-2**

### **Contested Afterlives: Reimagining Death, Mourning, and Belonging Across Divided Histories**

Chair: Jun ZHANG (City University of Hong Kong)

### **The Transformation of Temporary Graves: Cultural Anthropological Study of Zainichi Koreans’ Enshrinement Practices** | **Hibiki TAKEDA (Kyoto University)**

This presentation explores the evolving significance of the graves of Zainichi Koreans, focusing on the transformation of their ‘temporary’ resting places. Historically, Zainichi Koreans, residing in Japan as a result of colonial rule and subsequent migration, established ‘temporary’ graves with the hope of eventually returning their remains to the Korean Peninsula. These graves served as interim solutions, symbolizing a transient existence in Japan and a longing for repatriation. One notable example of such a site is a temple managed by a ZAINICHI Korean priest, which has functioned as a repository for the remains of those who passed away in Japan. Despite the initial temporary designation, this site has endured for decades. In the 80 years since Japan’s defeat in 1945, the geopolitical landscape and personal circumstances of Zainichi Koreans have evolved, leading to a shift in perceptions surrounding these graves. Recently, there has been a noticeable change in the attitudes of descendants and relatives. Some are now seeking ‘permanent memorial services’ reflecting a transition from viewing these sites as temporary to accepting them as permanent memorials. This shift highlights the complex interplay between identity, belonging, and the legacy of migration. This presentation examines the historical context of these temporary enshrinements and delves into the factors influencing the shift towards permanence. It analyzes how these graves, once symbols of impermanence and exile, are being reinterpreted as enduring sites of memory, reflecting the changing identity and assimilation of Zainichi Koreans within Japanese society.

**Haewon Sangsaeng Gut for Victims of the Jeju 4.3 Incident: Mediating the Meaning of Deaths from State Violence | Sujie KIM (Seoul National University)**

This study examines the Haewon Sangsaeng Gut as a realm where contested moral values, and interpretations of death intersect and are mediated. This Gut is the central part of the on-site mourning ceremony commemorating the victims of the 4.3 incident, marked the 76th anniversary of the tragedy, consisting of performances of artists and discussions about the 4.3 incident. It has been organized since 2002 by the Jeju branch of the Korean People's Artists Federation (Jeju Minyechong), a progressive organization advocating for unification. The 4.3 incident, a violent suppression of suspected communists, resulted in an estimated more than 30,000 deaths, many of which were unreported. The Haewon Sangsaeng Gut transforms the deaths from 4.3 incident into a shared act of remembrance, granting voice to the dead while addressing survivors' trauma. Since 2002, it has evolved into a significant cultural practice performed at massacre sites. I argue that the Haewon Sangsaeng Gut functions as an inclusive space of mediation, enabling acts of remembrance that might otherwise be controversial or politically fraught. The shaman's performances over two decades demonstrate their adaptability and their role in remediating the circumstances and context of the ritual and the immediate voices of the dead. Their attunement to the moral, political and affective dimensions of the ritual make the Haewon Sangsaeng Gut an autonomous, self-aware and indispensable medium for memory revitalization and reconciliation.

**The Digital Afterlife: Reimagining Death and Mourning in Chinese Digital Spaces | Xinyi YUAN (Independent)**

This research delves into the complex interplay between death, funeral practices, and the emergent discourses within digital spaces in contemporary Chinese communities. By drawing on anthropological theories of ritual, affect, and subjectivity, the study investigates how longstanding cultural understandings of death—deeply rooted in Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist philosophies—are reimagined and contested in the age of digital connectivity. Traditionally, Chinese funerary practices have been orchestrated by ritual specialists tasked with ensuring the safe passage of the deceased's soul to the afterlife. These practices embody metaphysical dimensions that speak to communal concerns about morality, continuity, and cosmological balance. However, with the rise of digital platforms, the boundaries of these practices are extending into virtual realms. Increasingly, individuals grieving the loss of loved ones turn to online spaces to articulate their sorrow, commemorate the deceased, and forge affective connections with broader mourning communities. These digital expressions challenge conventional frameworks, offering novel ways of encountering and engaging with death while fostering collective rituals of remembrance. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines digital ethnography with in-depth interviews of funeral professionals and participants in online mourning practices. Through the analysis of social media posts, interactive commentaries, and virtual memorials, the research illuminates the emotional currents and symbolic repertoires shaping this digital afterlife. Ultimately, this work reveals the tensions and convergences between traditional funerary authorities and the democratizing impulses of online mourning, offering fresh insights into how death and mourning are being dynamically redefined in the context of technological and cultural transformation.

**The Spirits and Memories behind the Mass Graves: Focusing on Sungai Buloh, Kuala Lumpur | Xiaozhu ZHUANG (Wuhan University)**

In the 20th century, as China was forced to open its doors, a large number of Chinese people were compelled or voluntarily migrated southward. At the same time, the British Empire began its colonial rule in Malaysia, bringing in a significant number of Indian laborers, making Malaysia a multi-ethnic country. The world was gradually entering an era of globalization. During this period, different ethnic groups, each carrying their unique cultural genes and national characteristics, converged in Malaysia, inevitably brewing racial tensions. Against this historical backdrop, Malaysia experienced severe racial conflicts in the 1960s, with the May 13 Incident in 1969 being particularly notable, leading to widespread violence and bloodshed. The Sungai Buloh Cemetery emerged as a direct consequence of this conflict, becoming the final resting place for many victims. This paper, from an anthropological perspective, delves into the historical background, social memory, burial customs, and death perceptions associated with the Sungai Buloh Cemetery as a mass grave, aiming to reveal the profound trauma this unique historical event inflicted on the local community and society. The research first traces the historical origins of the mass grave, utilizing the film *May Snow*, the novel *Dark Night*, and the oral history *Rebirth on the Wound* to meticulously outline the formation process of the mass grave, analyzing the cemetery's unique value as a witness to racial conflict. Furthermore, this paper deeply analyzes the background of racial conflicts in Malaysia during the 1960s, especially the far-reaching impact of the May 13 Incident on social structure and community relations. Through fieldwork and the collection of oral histories, this study records the collective memory of community residents regarding racial conflicts and the cemetery, exploring how burial customs and rituals in the cemetery reflect the evolution of death perceptions. Additionally, the research focuses on the traditional death perceptions

3-3

**Bodies, Time, and Space: Reimagining Disability Experience in China**

Chair: Eliza GE (Brown University)

This panel explores how disability shapes and is shaped by time and space. We move beyond viewing disability as a medicalized category of impairment and instead consider it as a relational construction. From an anthropological perspective, this panel demonstrates that disability is fluid in time and space and departs from what is considered normative by the public. We ask: How do disabled individuals experience, refuse, resist, and reimagine time and space in ways that challenge ableist norms and remake social relations in industrial, family, and community context? This panel features four presentations that delve into this critical question. Yueke Li examines how disabled workers redefine well-being by creating pauses that disrupt the demands of industrial time. Lei Qu analyzes how art creates liminal spaces that facilitate disability inclusion and challenge social segregation. Eliza Ge investigates time and caregiving for paralyzed individuals with neurodegenerative diseases in China, highlighting time as a significant biosocial resource that is gendered, economic, moral, and political. Zhifang Wei explores how devotees on Chinese social media challenge ableist norms and reimagine disability as a form of beauty and independence, offering valuable insights into the diverse experiences and perspectives of disabled individuals. By collectively examining these diverse experiences, this panel aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how disability intersects with temporal and spatial realities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

**Creating Pauses: The Encounter between Industrial Time and Disability Time | Yueke LI (Independent)**

This study based on ethnographic research, explores how the well-being of disabled workers is redefined through their embodied perception of pause. It analyzes how disabled individuals disengage from the industrial concept of linear time in labor and instead construct a lifestyle centered on hope and ethics of time and space by creating pauses. Meanwhile, the embodied actions of disabled individuals in pauses are not passive but rather active processes of imbuing scenarios with new meanings. By exchanging embodied sensations across different locations, they harness spatial sensitivity and transform it into ‘microactivist affordances’ that support others. The spaces formed through these interactions can be seen as the ‘territory of becoming,’ revealing a state of constant flux. Through their actions, disabled workers create ever-expanding inclusive realms, challenging the binary structure of able-bodied vs. disabled in conventional spaces.

This article attempts to outline the well-being of the ‘disability worlds’ in which disabled workers dwell. These worlds not only manifest in pauses and flexibility but also interweave with individual life trajectories, forming a unique narrative of life’s progressions. It particularly offers new understandings of the relationship between the present and the future. This temporal dimension reshapes modes of connection among laboring individuals and reveals how, in an era of widespread uncertainty, different temporal experiences and spatial practices can redefine the possibilities for well-being.

**Living Around Timetables: Caregiving for Paralyzed Patients with Neurodegenerative Disease in China | Eliza GE (Brown University)**

Degenerative diseases are often perceived as a linear decline towards inevitable loss. This research challenges such notion, arguing that living with neurodegenerative disease involves a dynamic process of (re-)making kinship, love, responsibility, and time. Focusing on timetables” — meticulously structured schedules for care tasks such as turning, feeding, and cleaning — this study investigates how family caregivers navigate the intensive demands of caring for paralyzed patients with Multiple System Atrophy. What makes these timetables desirable or even necessary? What ethics, politics, and economics demand such a creative and disciplined approach to care? Most importantly, how do caregivers sustain a sense of meaning around the arduous, repetitive, and self-sacrificing aspects of care when it runs beyond the limits of love? This paper conceptualizes timetables as more than a moral practice, where caregivers, through bodily labor, sustain not only the biological life of the patient but also their subjectivity and sense of independence. While seemingly a product of willing adoption,” the use of timetables is more than a mere strategic choice. Time itself becomes a precious biocapital resource that must be carefully calculated, ranked, prioritized, and allocated to different care tasks. This orchestrated time management not only fragments the lives of caregivers but also ensnares them within a web of self-imposed moral obligations and societal expectations.

**Art, Inclusion, and Transformation: Disability in Liminal Spaces | Lei QU (Minzu University of China)**

The bodies of people with disabilities are frequently subjected to societal gazes that underscore their perceived abnormality, reinforcing social segregation and exclusion. Inclusive art emerges as both a form of disability inclusion and a means of addressing the marginaliza-



tion and voicelessness experienced by people with disabilities. By creating opportunities for self-expression and celebrating diversity, inclusive art fosters a participatory space for all. This study examines a series of inclusive art activities organized by two institutions in Beijing in 2023 and 2024, focusing on the participants in liminal space. Drawing on Turner's theory of liminality and the concept of embodiment, the research employs participant observation and in-depth interviews to explore the potential for disability inclusion within these uniquely constructed temporal and spatial fields.

Institutions Canvas and Spectrum facilitate inclusive art activities that bring together individuals with and without disabilities in a liminal space. Within this space, participants transcend traditional identity boundaries, connecting through artistic expression and forming transient *communitas*—a symbiotic and intertwined relational dynamic. Disability inclusion, as this study demonstrates, is enacted through everyday practices within these specific contexts. Through ethnographic analysis, this research reveals the mechanisms that create this liminal space and its distinct characteristics. The ephemeral connections formed within these transitional settings hold the potential for broader societal impact. Public-facing practices encourage engagement, fostering encounters that challenge conventional perceptions of disability and barriers. Ultimately, this study contributes to reimagining the body and disability, advocating for a more inclusive and interconnected understanding of human diversity.

### **Devoteeism on Chinese Social Media: Stigmatization and Self-Identification | Zhifang WEI (Independent)**

This study aims to explore public attitudes towards devoteeism on the Chinese internet, as well as devotees' anti-stigmatization narratives. Apotemnophiles are sexually attracted to amputees or the idea of becoming one. This group includes devotees (attracted to disabled individuals), wannabes (desiring disability), and pretenders (simulating disabilities). In China, devotees' attraction, also known as devoteeism, is often stigmatized as deviant. Recently, more devotees on Chinese social media have challenged these views, advocating for devoteeism as a valid sexuality and resisting the stigmatization of disability. Current research on apotemnophiles mainly focuses on wannabes and pretenders. Devoteeism receives less attention, often dismissed as sexual deviance, overlooking devotees' self-definition of their affinity. Thus, this study explores how devoteeism is stigmatized on Chinese social media, how devotees define themselves and view disability. Grounded in crip theory and critiques of ableism, the research employs online ethnography to observe interactions between the public and devotees on Chinese social media. Through textual analysis of 2,882 comments and 20 media posts related to devoteeism, it examines public attitudes towards devoteeism, the roots of its stigmatization, and devotees' self-identity and perspectives on disability. Findings show that devotees view devoteeism as admiration for disability and see disability as a form of beauty. They challenge ableist stereotypes of sexuality and beauty, emphasizing the independence of disabled individuals and rejecting the idea that disabled individuals must rely on devotees for redemption. This study supplements the definition of disability through the lens of devoteeism and offers insights into the romantic relationships of disabled individuals.

**Chloe RONG (Haverford College, Discussant)**

**3-4**

### **Imagining Alternative Futures: Hope, Precarity, and the Making of New Worlds**

Chair: Maria GRAJDIAN (Hiroshima University)

### **Healing the Past, Co-Creating the Future: Takarazuka Revue's Reconfiguration of Youth Cultures | Maria GRAJDIAN (Hiroshima University)**

Within a mixed-methodological framework, this presentation observes critically the ongoing paradigm shift in the Japanese all-female musical theater phenomenon named Takarazuka Revue's performance and marketing strategies from the common *shōjo* imagery towards narrative lines bringing into foreground anti-social – or para-social – elements: antagonists such as gangsters, assassins and terrorists circulating among the population of late-modern Japan without, crucially, turning them into heroes on their initiation journeys seeking enlightenment towards maturity through overcoming hardships and achieving greatness. This pivotal turn was initiated by two groundbreaking performances which overtly reflected Takarazuka Revue Company's management's preoccupation with the dismantling of narrative-lines and stage representation decoupled from the quotidian reality of its audiences: snow troupe's performance *City Hunter* 『シティー・ハンター』 from 2021 based on the eponymous manga serialized in *Shonen Jump* (1985-1991) by Hôjô Tsukasa 北条 司 and cosmos troupe's *High & Low* (2022, same title in Japanese) based on the television and film series *High&Low: The Story of S.W.O.R.D.* by Team HI-AX (2015-2016, LDH and Nippon TV). Famously rigid in its business model targeted at a clearly defined socioeconomic demographic (upper-middle and upper class female citizens aged 35 and upwards), these two performances manifest a subtle

paradigm shift in Takarazuka Revue's performance strategy towards a consideration of younger audiences of all genders through the employment of a diverse narrative and musical material and the immersion into the problematic of global concerns such as family dysfunctionality, rampant loneliness and loss of valid role-models.

**Reenvisioning Local Futures: Social Inclusion and Community Development through the Kodomo Shokudō Movement in Japan** | Ko HAYAKAWA (The University of Tokyo)

Kodomo shokudō are initiatives that provide free or low-cost meals and welcoming space for children. Originating in Tokyo in 2012, wildfire activity emerged against a widely publicized report indicating that one in seven children in Japan lived in relative poverty. According to a survey conducted by an NPO supporting a nationwide kodomo shokudō network, the number of such facilities is projected to reach 10,866 by the end of 2024, exceeding the number of public junior high schools in Japan (9,265). These initiatives have diversified to encompass children, their parents, seniors, and other community members, offering meals, learning support, and fostering alternative forms of community development. Despite this growing social presence, scholarly research on kodomo shokudō remains limited, particularly from a cultural anthropological perspective. This presentation draws upon multi-sited ethnographic research conducted at various kodomo shokudō locations, within a prefectural intermediary support organization, at meetings of a national networking NPO, and within deliberative committees of the Children and Families Agency. By examining these diverse sites, this study aims to construct a nuanced understanding of the practice of kodomo shokudō. This approach allows for examining the various actors and institutions involved in the phenomenon, from grassroots organizers to government bodies. Ultimately, this presentation offers preliminary insights into how we can engage with kodomo shokudō from a public anthropological perspective.

**The Laboratory as a Lived Place: Exploring Socio-Material Care Practice** | Yeonwha KIM (Seoul National University)

This study examines the laboratory as a lived place where scientific selves are shaped through the interplay of material mediation, mentoring relationships, and everyday practices. Focusing on a physical chemistry laboratory at a South Korean university, it reinterprets the laboratory as a dynamic environment where students transition from novices to professionals. Using an ethnographic photo workshop, graduate students documented their interactions with scientific instruments, peers, and the laboratory space itself. The ion mobility mass spectrometer emerged as a prominent figure in their narratives, symbolizing both a tool for scientific discovery and a focal point of care and labor. These visual and material engagements reveal the intertwined material and emotional dimensions of laboratory life. The findings highlight the laboratory as a site where mentoring and collaborative processes shape the scientific selves of its members. Through everyday interactions with instruments and peers, students construct professional identities while contributing to the operation and sustainability of laboratory. By integrating visual and material ethnography, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how laboratory spaces mediate relationships and practices, offering insights into the socio-material constitution of scientific environments. These findings contribute to broader discussions about the lived realities of research spaces and the dynamics that define them.

**Youth Activism and Collective Practices: Exploring Alternative Spaces in East Asian Cities** | Lu HUANG (The University of Texas at Austin)

This study explores an emerging inter-Asia network of alternative spaces characterized by a "manuke" culture in East Asian cities. Over the past decade, self-organized and autonomous spaces -- such as antique shops, community art spaces, vegetarian restaurants, guest-houses, bars, performance venues and other unconventional cultural spaces -- have flourished in metropolises like Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Shanghai. Within some of the spaces, marginalized youth, self-identifying as "manuke" ("loser" or "idiot" in Japanese), seek to resist existing socio-economic and political structures through relaxed, humorous, and positive practices. Through transnational interaction of people and objects, these spaces have formed an inter-Asia network that transcends borders, cultures, and languages (Matsumoto, 2018). Particularly, I focus on two alternative spaces established in 2017 in Taipei and Guangzhou. Based on a year and a half of fieldwork, I explored how punk musicians, independent artists, curators and social activists collaborated to create and co-govern these spaces, and how daily practices provided contact zones that brought together diverse individuals, fostering social bonds and reshaping community engagement. Faced with challenges under neoliberal creative economy, spatial capitalism, gentrification, individualization, labour exploitation, and gender dynamics, youth in these alternative spaces have reshaped (trans)local identities and established networks grounded in friendship, exchange, and knowledge-sharing. I argue that these spaces function as undefined entities, unorganized organizations, and non-political political spaces. As experimental sites, they explore new social relationships and

sustainable lifestyles (Egami, 2018), offering new possibilities for urban youth activism and collective practices across East Asian metropolises.

### **An Anthropological Approach to the Speculative Lifestyle of Im-Jang (임장) Crews | Jae-Hong SONG (Seoul National University)**

In contemporary Korea, youth aspiring to own homes and build wealth are joining 'Im-Jang(임장) Crews,' social groups that acquire real estate knowledge through investment lectures and field research. Their pursuit of housing and wealth reflects a hope for well-being but is often frustrated by the structure of disappointment inherent in financial capitalism. This phenomenon highlights the cultural dynamics of speculative lifestyles. An anthropological approach to the social life of real estate is essential to understanding their motivations and engagement in real estate investment.

## **3-5 When Capitalism Fails: Affective Agency and Alternative Futures**

**Chair: Yifan PING (University of Chicago)**

As capitalism stumbles under the weight of its internal contradictions, affect emerges as a critical terrain for understanding how humans negotiate the frictions, breakdowns, and possibilities of this moment. This panel brings together four ethnographies that explore the affective dimensions of life amidst the failures of capitalist systems—how affect operates as a site of tension, negotiation, and creativity in the shadow of capitalism's systemic inadequacies. Yifan examines the affective and logistical labor surrounding the transnational circulation of the Chinese medicine LHQW during the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing the fragility of capitalist infrastructures. Daniel's work delves into the affective alignments of Chinese NFT players in WeChat groups, illustrating how collective rituals of "heat" and "sentiment" animate speculative financial practices and offer temporary escapes from the precarity of working-class life. Yue investigates Sino-Korean K-Pop fandom protests, revealing how fan affect mediates between nationalism and transnational solidarity, while simultaneously interrogating the limits of challenging the capitalist logics of the entertainment industry. Xueyan explores how frustrated young urbanites in China reject neoliberal urban life by relocating to rural communities, constructing utopias that paradoxically reproduce state-aligned norms even as they critique urban overcapitalization. Together, these papers illuminate the multifaceted roles of affect as both a product and agent of social and economic transformations in precarious late-capitalist society. This panel not only asks what affect is and what it does—but also critically looks at its generative and constraining possibilities in reshaping, reinforcing, or resisting norms, communities, and futures of capitalism.

### **Affective Logistics and Logistical Affect: Transnational Logistics of Chinese LHQW | Yifan PING (University of Chicago)**

Amidst a global pandemic that disrupted supply chains and heightened geopolitical tensions between China and the US, a particular flow of Chinese government-approved medicine—Lianhua Qingwen (LHQW)—persisted between Chinese parents and their migrant children in the US. Despite controversies and formidable challenges in sourcing, shipping, and distributing this medicine, transnational Chinese families undertook creative and labor-intensive logistical projects to ensure its timely delivery. Drawing from ethnographic interviews with young Chinese migrants in the US, as well as material and audiovisual artifacts of their pandemic experiences, the study shows LHQW logistics is both vulnerable to intense affect and contingent on phatic labor. What makes the LHQW significant for Chinese families is less its medical potency than the shared anticipation for an arriving medical parcel and the creative mobilization of various forms of capital. From community collaboration to outbidding, bribery, and smuggling, these privileged families sought new ways to sustain transnational material circulations despite a malfunctioned supply chain system. When crumpled capitalist infrastructures—never able to achieve an idealized global logistics system—failed migrant families, kinship, informal sociality, and phatic labor stepped in to sustain transnational care. By tracing the difficult trajectories of LHQW across the globe, this study highlights the material and affective responses to a global crisis of capitalist circulation, illustrating how medicinal logistics can become a lens for reimagining infrastructure, labor, and kinship.

### **Heat and Sentiment: Affective Alignments in Chinese NFT WeChat groups | Qicheng Daniel YAO (University of Chicago)**

In Chinese legal cases and news outlets, non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are portrayed as financial schemes where an ill-minded few profit from a greedy, irrational crowd. This paper investigates why NFTs resonate among their mainland Chinese players (wanjia) in WeChat groups. As the crypto situation materializes in intersection with local assemblages of investment, gambling, and scams, "sentiment" (qingxu) and "heat" (redu) emerge as two main fetishizations. Players think prominent market players (dahu) can manipulate others'

sentiments and certain visual and haptic signs are indicative of a soon-to-be surging market. This paper argues these productive misrecognitions are part of the affectively charged interactive ritual that players (co)construct in WeChat groups. Through multimodal communication in WeChat, including metricalized texts, GIFs, and videos, the players enregister NFTs so as to (co)produce alignment toward a common participation framework, value regime, and temporality. In such a process, signs like memes become affective through their circulation and citation. Weaving together cultural models of underground lottery gambling, stock trading, and Communist revolution, players contextualize NFT speculation as a war charge to break free from the contemporary Chinese working-class life of passivity and stagnation. Signs also contribute to the scaling work of the current moment of collective action as retro-performative. Genred texts invoking feel-good net novels invite players to take the stance of a successful elite male looking back at his original moment of risk-taking, imagining certainty from the near future.

**(Trans)nationalism in the Global Affective Economy: Staging Sino-Korean K-Pop Protests | Yue PU (Columbia University)**

K-Pop, as a kind of affective economy, operates through a sophisticated pair of mediations. On the production side, the idol's love for fans is mediated into the materiality of music, performances, and live broadcasts. On the consumption side, fans' love for the idol is similarly mediated into the sales of all the aforementioned materiality. As K-Pop has reached its unprecedented level of global influence in recent years, its influence has, in return, inscribed itself into global capitalism, raising a new-phase question for fan studies and K-Pop scholarship: Will the globally capitalized affect dismantle the geopolitical boundaries? This study seeks to address this question by examining transnational Sino-Korean fandom activism—communities that have innovatively repurposed affect mediation and capitalization into a subversive praxis. Consumer behaviors have bifurcated to include staging protests through material symbols, such as chant-projected trucks and even funeral wreaths, to assert rights and articulate demands within the affective economy. Case study and ethnography are used to observe whether Korean and Chinese fans are allies or adversaries in fan-led K-Pop protests, as to further explore the tension between the affect of nationalism and the affect of fandom. At its core, the study probes whether fans' assertions of agency—mobilized ostensibly against the market and industry order—have succeeded in challenging the inveterate capitalist machine of the K-Pop industry.

**Rejecting to Obey? Frustrated Young Urbanites Building New Utopias in Rural China | Xueyan SHAO (University of Chicago)**

What happens when the future generation of labors and citizens are sick of the current neoliberal market and statehood? What difference does their agentic and affective rejection make – or make not? This article looks at the frustrated young Chinese urbanites amid low wages, minimal social security, and unmet promises of meritocracy - frustration has powerfully drove them to reject the previously valued urban work and life and to construct new utopias instead in the countryside. By relocating to neo-rural communities, they critique urban life's overcapitalization" and construct their new meanings of life and the self. Paradoxically, it is precisely their rejection and an ambiguous urban identity that nihilates their rejection". Rather, the frustrated young rejectors are becoming voluntary advocates and even role models for the emerging social norms for the youth to serve the state, while leaving unresolved the systemic issues in their urban homes. Focusing on frustration and rejection as both affective responses and transformative practices, this article reveals how these youth simultaneously resist and reproduce powerful social norms, as well as how they participate in other unexpected socio-cultural and political dynamics. Specifically, the community's alignment with the state is further facilitated by a covert secularization of Buddhism, involving the young rejectors into the atheist government's rejection of religious power. Ultimately, I argue that frustration and rejection are not passive withdrawals amid the neoliberal and authoritarian state's issues. Rather, they are an agentic engagement in reshaping norms and possibilities for the future.

**Taihao HE (Fudan University, Discussant)**

**3-6**

**Gut Feeling and Its Aftermath: Auto-ethnographic Reflections on Fieldworks in Contemporary China and Beyond**

**Chair: Zihao LIN (University of Chicago)**

This panel explores the emotional and intellectual complexities faced by anthropologists conducting fieldwork in mainland China and Hong Kong, using auto-ethnographic reflections to examine the intersections of personal experience, political context, and ethnographic practice. Each paper provides insights into how fieldwork shapes, and is shaped by, the researcher's gut feelings" in an environment

marked by political and ethical tensions, as well as shifting social landscapes. Zihao Lin's paper highlights the anxiety of engaging with disability rights advocates in urban China, where dominant narratives of charity and positive energy limit deeper relational trust. Mengzhu An examines the conflicted positions of anthropologists based in China, shaped by the interplay of academic and political ecologies, as they navigate fieldwork and public engagement, urging a reimagining of doing anthropology within authoritarian structures. Chunchun Wang reflects on the sense of loss and disorientation experienced by Chinese citizens during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, uncovering how memory is shaped and erased in the wake of state-imposed silences. Finally, Shan Huang draws upon fieldwork with Hong Kong's urban movements to discuss how anthropologists might critically engage with the relationship between their disciplinary practices and social activism. These papers highlight how young anthropological researchers navigate emotional, political, and methodological challenges in contemporary China and beyond. By integrating personal reflection into their research, the panelists offer new ways to think about the role of the ethnographer and knowledge production in politically sensitive and emotionally charged environments.

**Burning on Thin Ice: Navigating Alliance, Trust, and Hope(lessness) in Everyday Chinese Fieldwork | Zihao LIN (University of Chicago)**

This paper discusses how a non-disabled overseas graduate student returned to his home country to experience the barriers, joys, anger, and hopes of urban life with disability rights advocates of a similar generation. While people with disabilities in Chinese cities get a lot of quick media attention and exposure in the activities and projects organized by foundations, social work organizations, and local governments, their public expression is trimmed in specific narratives, notably such as "charity for the disabled", "positive energy", "accessibility experiencers". In these fixed narratives, people with disabilities become objects of one-sided support, grateful citizens, and research subjects who contribute their experiences. During the fieldwork (2023-2024), I realized that I felt angry and anxious about the popularity and stickiness of these fixed narratives, as well as powerless because of the relational barriers and shallow trust that these narratives created. I describe this feeling as 'burning on thin ice', a paradoxical state of being constantly mobile with a rapid flow of hope and energy, while at the same time restless and out of control. While participating in and observing accessibility activities, I often felt scared, suffocated, and unable to trust those who said good things. I tried to discuss these fleeting feelings with my advocate friends and found that these small emotions, once discussed, were instead moments of empathy that built up relationships. These discussions happened in the form of words, speech, sign language, and touch, and became channels for connections.

**Is It Possible to be an Independent Anthropologist in China? | Mengzhu AN (Masaryk University)**

This paper emerges from my reflections on what academic identity means for anthropologists based in China, as I prepare to leave the country's university system. In China, affiliation with domestic academic institutions serves as a critical form of social capital, enabling anthropologists to access fieldwork opportunities, build relationships with interlocutors, and secure the legitimacy necessary for publishing ethnographic work and influencing practical interventions. However, the confluence of state-controlled resource distribution and political censorship poses a structural "Catch-22" for anthropologists, particularly precariously employed early-career scholars navigating the tenure track. These conditions not only hinder fieldwork and scholarly expression but also erode pathways to public engagement. This does not mean anthropologists must abandon local audiences entirely or shift solely toward survival in Anglophone academia. Instead, it calls for reimagining ethnographic work in China and the production of anthropological knowledge for domestic audiences. Drawing on the ambivalent feelings experienced in fieldwork, academic writing, and public engagement, I take myself as "method" to reveal the infrastructures of knowledge production in mainland China and their unexamined consequences. By critically engaging with my positionality and trajectory in and out of academia, this article explores potential avenues for anthropologists working within authoritarian contexts and invites international scholarly dialogue on ways to support the intellectual independence of anthropologists under such conditions.

**Uncanny Memories of Lost Years: Hope and Disorientation in China's COVID Era | Chunchun WANG (Aba Teachers University)**

With the lifting of mandatory daily nucleic acid tests and the mass infection in December 2022, the national campaign to fight COVID-19 in China ended abruptly, as did public discussions about pandemics in the subsequent years. Even academic debates on the topic are now considered sensitive, with few publications emerging. Since April 2022, I have engaged in in-depth conversations with over 50 interlocutors in China about their experiences and memories of the SARS and COVID-19 pandemics. Throughout these interviews, I often found my role shifting from interviewer to narrator, which provided me not only with an opportunity to recollect my scattered experi-



ences but also to connect them with those of my interlocutors. The resonance of experiences between myself and my informants varied depending on the social contexts in which our interviews took place. As a result, these scattered reflections on pandemic experiences could serve as a lens to trace the transformations of opinions, emotions, and hopes during the pandemics in China. By delving deeply into ethnographic materials and auto-ethnography, this paper presents some lost pieces of memories and the erasure of social objectification and experiences during and after the pandemics, which both some of my interlocutors and I find uncanny. In navigating different levels of authority in today's China, the sense of loss prompts the creation of alternative memories by narrating pandemic experiences, further laying hope on the future and placing the lost time.

**"Self as Method" in an Anthropological Study of Social Activism: Reflections on Hong Kong Fieldwork** | **Shan HUANG** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This presentation reviews my research and participation in urban-environmental movements as well as community-building initiatives in Hong Kong from 2016 to 2024. These movements seek to democratize urban planning and cultivate new forms of life via place-making projects in urban peripherals. They have sparked reflections on urban development models and fostered emotional attachment to the city and its environment, drawing from and redefining social movements" as a form of liberal politics. I reflect on why, among the various cases in Hong Kong's era of social movements," a set of progressive grassroots land activism particularly resonated with me and shaped my choices of research subjects, field sites, and forms of engagement. I also show how and why, after institutionally-supported fieldwork concluded in 2020, I was involved in a collaborative, public-facing book project with a local NGO—work that extended beyond my original research plan but proved to be rewarding. Drawing from these experiences, I explore how might the approach of self as method" (Xiang 2020) shed light on anthropological study of social activism, and how this approach might usefully expand traditional questions related to positionality" in such inquiries. I will also discuss how anthropologists might critically engage with the relationship between their disciplinary practices and social activism at a time when the interfaces of knowledge production are undergoing significant transformations.

**Jing WANG** (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Discussant)

**3-7**

**Digital Ethnography and the Everyday: Intimacy, Belonging, and Practice Across Platforms**

Chair: Zachary HOWLETT (National University of Singapore, Chair)

**Inter-Asian Connections and Music Mashups as Resistance: Creative Counter-National Narratives from Minority Ethnic Communities** | **Jacqueline FEWKES** (Florida Atlantic University)

A digital music mashup, work created by an artist combining multiple audio-visual sources in a new creative product, is fundamentally polysemic. Often produced by creative amateurs, mashups for platforms such as YouTube weave together diverse social contexts, engaging in meaning construction processes that link disparate cultural landscapes. In this paper, I look at the role of YouTube music mashups in an Indian Himalayan region that use East Asian—from Japan and South Korea—media blended with local performances to create new cultural landscapes that can be a form of social resistance emphasizing inter-Asian connections through alternative identities. Based on online ethnographic work, content analysis of digital media collaborations and accompanying social media discussions, I trace digital pathways of media circulation to discuss how varied shared spaces-- such as the Himalaya or Asia-- are popularly constructed in everyday digital forums. Music mashups are heterogeneous media spaces that allow participants to celebrate fluid perceptions of homeland, encompassing global cosmopolitan forms of Asian identity to transcend national boundaries. These linkages allow for the possibility of shifting cultural landscapes that de-center notions of inter-Asian flows. Focusing on the dynamics of space/place produced by creative digital culture, this paper expands our understanding of contemporary geographies and the role of global digital art in inter-Asian connections.

**A Digital Ethnography of Astrological Influencers' Live-Streaming Programmes: Social Media as Full-Fledged Actors on Online Religious Communities** | **Mayo SUZUKI** (Chiba University)

This study explores the interaction and community-building among followers of a Japanese astrologist influencer on social media. Members of this community call themselves *kawai* (literally, the neighborhood) and, encouraged by the astrologist influencer, engage with one another in live feeds and share impressions online to connect with fellow members. In this paper, I argue that live events per-



formed by such influencers act as focal points for connection and collective participation that can form the object of an anthropological study of religion. However, while phenomena like this have, since the 2000s, been examined under the categories of non-organized religion” or spirituality, their analyses have not escaped traditional critiques of the concept of religion (Asad 1993). In other words, studies of non-organised religion remain tied to a largely Protestant-based idea of religion” as something beyond human capacity and understanding. To overcome these issues, scholars have more recently adopted an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective, which considers processes of religious organizing as networks (Kuramoto 2024). However, non-organised religious activities across online and offline platforms, have yet to be thoroughly analysed from this perspective. Instead, anthropological studies on religion and the internet often view social media as static tools rather than dynamic actors. This presentation integrates critical theories of the concept of religion with an ANT approach, treating non-organized religion as a network and recognizing social media as a vital actor of that network. I will show how *kawaii* emerges from the interplay of spiritual ideas and the technical features of social media.

**The Strategic Self-development within a Virtual Community of Practice: The Analysis of Multimodal Interaction in a Diet Chat Room** | **Yeny KIM (University of Seoul)**

This paper aims to examine the agencies of the individuals in a ‘diet chat room’ through a digital ethnographic approach. The study regards the chat room as a ‘virtual community of practice’ where members strategically build relationships and lifestyles based on the virtuality of the digital space. The first finding is that members engaged in anonymous but intimate interactions. They maintained an adequate distance by using unnamed profiles, empathy stickers, and indistinct speech levels, but they also form closeness by sharing daily lives. These multimodal interactions enable them to foster metropolitan relationships, free from the pressures of traditional South Korean communities that emphasize interdependence and continuous, exclusive communication. Second, the members of the chat room were creating a specific form of diet, which can call loose diet”. They shared certain words, images and videos expressing a practice of diet. This not only made them to socialize as ‘dieters’, but also created a sense of the virtual community. A more interesting point is that their diet was not always that strict. Their humble attitudes and humorous speaking prevented the chat room from functioning as a competitive space. Moreover, sometimes they confess ‘improper’ behaviors as dieters. This loose diet was cheered and defended rather than blamed. It indicates that their diet practices are more about communal and non-competitive self-development than neoliberal ideals. The study argues that virtual relationships and multimodal interaction in a virtual-community of practice enable people to avoid the expectations and burdens and practice strategic form of lifestyles.

**Famous Cosplayers in the Hybrid World: Fantpreneurs, Alienation and Monetisation of Online Identity in Japanese Cosplay Culture** | **Huichuan HU (The University of Melbourne)**

This paper examines the rise of celebrity cosplayers and their impact on Japanese cosplay culture within hybrid (online and offline) spaces. Traditionally, cosplay has emphasised material creativity, community bonding, and the re-enactment of fictional characters. However, the advent of social media platforms such as X and Instagram has elevated the importance of online fame, leading to the emergence of cosplayer influencers who monetise their digital presence and secure offline career opportunities through endorsements and collaborations with the entertainment industry. The industry evaluates cosplayers based on digital metrics such as online fame, appearances, and the moral integrity of social media activity, prompting cosplayers to transform their identities into tools for self-branding and advertising. While this shift redefines the cultural values of cosplay, it has also led to feelings of alienation and tensions between traditional and commercialised practices. Some veteran cosplayers strive to preserve cosplay’s original meanings, asserting the value of craftsmanship and cultural authenticity even within commercial engagements. Drawing on year-long fieldwork at cosplay events and semi-structured interviews with cosplayers and industry professionals, this study explores the changing dynamics between cosplayers and the entertainment industry, focusing on self-commodification and altered online and offline behaviours. The findings reveal that, while the monetisation of online fame is transforming cosplay into a semi-professional practice, veteran cosplayers continue to negotiate their roles in the industry, in the hope of aligning traditional cultural values with industry demands in the future.

**Perpetual Vigilance for Idol Disillusionment: Exploring Everyday Traumatic States in the Lives of Chinese Female K-pop Fans** | **Shiqi LI (Independent)**

This presentation examines the traumatic states” in the everyday lives of Chinese female K-pop fans, arguing that trauma can arise not only from high-intensity events like war or violence but also from the cumulative micro-stimuli” of affective experiences. These fans exist in a state of constant anxiety, fearing their idols might *ta fang* (collapse) due to scandals, romantic rumors, or revelations of past

misconduct. While, for fans, K-pop idols provide healing and fantasy, this is overshadowed by the looming possibility of disillusionment, reflecting broader anti-male sentiments prevalent among Chinese women online. Mistrust toward men extends even to male idols, preventing fans from deriving pure joy from their fandom and leaving them oscillating between fleeting escapism and persistent unease. The smartphone, as a crucial medium for accessing transnational K-pop content, intensifies this instability. Its inherent virtuality, as described by Massumi, allows unpredictable information, such as idol-related scandals, to insert in peoples' lives at any moment, creating a pervasive sense of insecurity. This presentation moves beyond psychological or constructivist frameworks to conceptualize trauma as a lived experience, continuously shaped and reshaped within a web of relationships. This web encompasses not only interpersonal interactions but also objects like smartphones, which co-assemble into a diffuse affective state that anchors anxiety and instability in daily life. By exploring these assemblages, the presentation rethinks how trauma manifests through the mundane interplay of relationships, technologies, and emotions, reshaping the lived experiences of Chinese female K-pop fans.

**3-8****Consent in Sexual Violence in Japan with Reference to the NHK Survey on Sexual Violence**

Chair: Maiko KODAKA (Sophia University)

Thanks to the #MeToo Movement and the Flower Demonstration in Japan, sexual violence has gained more public attention recently in the country. However, due to the stigmatization and victim-blaming culture, many voices are still silenced. NHK (Japan's broadcasting company equivalent to the BBC) conducted the first large-scale survey on sexual violence, receiving over 38,000 responses. Within the parameters of this huge and rich survey, our group is the first to gain access to this data to present on the intersection of sexual violence and gender inequality in Japan. Drawing from the 2023 revision of Japan's Penal Code, the panel analyzes the lived experiences of survivors through a combined quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Osawa's paper provides an overview of sexual violence in Japan, where particular social norms of masculinity" and femininity," the education system, the labor market structure, and the tax and social security system shape social vulnerability. Slater's presentation challenges the myth of safety in Japan by addressing sexual violence in public spaces. Takeyama's study sheds light on the intersection of gender, age, educational background, and employment status, which create specific power dynamics in workplaces. Kodaka's paper explores the meaning of consent in dating culture in the age of the internet, where people casually meet up online. Together, these papers interweave Japan's politico-economic structure, rape and dating culture, and spatial formations that reinforce the systematic vulnerability of particular groups, undermine the credibility of sexual survivors' claims, and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions of consent and safety.

**Myth of "Consensual Sex": Examining Consent and Gender Inequality in Japan's Evolving Dating Culture | Maiko KODAKA (Sophia University)**

This presentation will bring an analysis of the perpetrator as a person the victim met through SNS. Dating apps and other SNS have become one of the main hubs for meeting potential partners despite the anonymity and uncertainty of the person you meet online. Meeting people you encounter online has become ingrained in dating culture not only in Japan but elsewhere. However, many victims have reported being solicited for sex during the first meeting or, even when they agree to have sex, male offenders removing condoms without consent and raping the victim. This challenges the idea of sexual consent, as consent is not a one-time action but extends to moments during intimate activities and even after, regardless of whether the individuals agree to a one-night stand or anticipate forming a serious relationship. Following the penal code revision in 2023, the number of recognized cases of non-consensual sexual intercourse crimes from January to May in 2024 was 1,486, which marks an approximately twofold increase compared to the forced sexual intercourse crimes in 2023. Drawing from a semiotic analysis of the representation of sexual intercourse and data from NHK, this presentation will examine the complexities of consent and the gender inequalities inherent in dating culture in Japan. Ultimately, this paper will urge a reevaluation of societal norms around sexual consent, emphasizing the need for education and structural change to address these systemic issues and to promote a safer, more equitable environment for all individuals engaging in dating culture.

**Sexual Violence and Gender Inequality in Japan | Machiko OSAWA (Japan Women's University)**

Raising awareness about the extent of sexual violence in Japan and the damage inflicted on individuals is essential to change the status quo. This presentation draws on quantitative and qualitative data to reveal the reality of sexual violence and victimization, which has been poorly understood and largely ignored in Japanese society. The quantitative data is drawn from a landmark 2022 survey of

sexual victims conducted by NHK that collected over 38,000 responses. Raising awareness about the harm caused by sexual violence is necessary, but not enough. It is a scourge that is symptomatic of Japan's patriarchal social system where attitudes, norms, values, and practices render many people marginal and vulnerable to abuse. This includes the social norms of masculinity and femininity, the education system, the labor market structure, and a tax and social security system based on a division of labor that reinforces a strict division of gender roles. Due to the harmful consequences of widespread sexual violence on people and the economy, it is incumbent on the government to offer more support for relevant services, especially civil society organizations that have been playing a key role in helping victims. In this pivotal transition from ignoring to addressing sexual violence, it is also essential to engage the police and judicial officials in ways that enhance sensitivity towards victims, and to take actions that increase accountability.

**Re-thinking the Safety and the Regulation of Sexual Conduct in Japanese Public Spaces | David SLATER (Sophia University)**

This presentation examines responses from NHK data that report sexual harassment and/or abuse occurring in public spaces with perpetrators unknown to the survivors. This category represents the largest segment of responses (though not representative of the nature or frequency of abuse due to the sampling method). Most reporting victims are female, and most perpetrators are male, highlighting the gendered dimension of these incidents. We coded the data for conditions such as types of contact, narrative form, perceived responses from others, decisions about reporting, and survivors' short- and long-term emotional impacts.

Our analysis focuses on how these experiences shape survivors' self-management in public spaces and their perceptions of publicness. Preliminary findings challenge the image of Japan, particularly Tokyo, as a safe public space. The narratives reveal significant impacts of harassment and abuse, regardless of frequency. The perceived safety of public spaces is often exploited by abusers and contributes to victims' initial shock and disbelief that such incidents occur. This assumption of safety also discourages reporting and fosters skepticism among friends, family, and authorities, such as police officers.

Victims frequently internalize blame, reflecting on incidents as personal failures to anticipate danger. This results in a pattern of victim-blaming by both the individual and society, reinforcing preventative behaviors like avoidance, suspicion, and socio-spatial withdrawal. These findings emphasize the need to critically reassess societal attitudes toward public safety and the structural responses to harassment and abuse in public spaces.

**Embodied Vulnerabilities: Intersectional Insights into Sexual Violence in Japan | Akiko TAKEYAMA (University of Kansas)**

While sexual violence is often framed as either a form of violence or a modality of sexual oppression, feminist theorists like Ann Cahill argue that such approaches fail to address the embodied experiences of survivors—being both a body and a subject of the body. This paper explores the socio-historical and intersubjective contexts in which individual bodies encounter sexual violence, shaped by intersections of gender, class, age, and other identity categories. Drawing on the 2022 NHK survey on sexual violence in Japan, conducted prior to the 2023 Penal Code revision that redefined nonconsensual sex as sexual violence, the study employs an intersectional framework to analyze survivors' experiences in the workplace. By integrating quantitative analysis of social vulnerabilities—including employment type, educational background, age, and histories of child abuse—this paper reveals complex interrelations between systemic inequalities and sexual violence. Complementing these findings, a qualitative analysis of case studies highlights how gendered bodies navigate sexual violence within specific intersubjective relationships and power dynamics. The paper further interrogates the ambivalence of consent in practice, providing nuanced insights into the embodied and relational nature of survivor experiences. This paper underscores the importance of intersectional approaches in understanding and addressing sexual violence in contemporary Japan. The presentation study concludes by exploring the possibility of reframing sexual violence and harassment as an embodied experience and, therefore, a public health issue rather than solely a crime.

**Asato IKEDA (Fordham University, Discussant)**

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**3-9    Imagining Possibilities of Connection: Private Sufferings, Therapeutic Practices, and Affective Solidarity**

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Chair: Xiaoxi ZHU (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)

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The massive socio-economic and cultural transformations in contemporary China have taken a heavy toll on its population's mental health and well-being. A deteriorating mental landscape, however, met with severely insufficient mental healthcare services. In an era marked by widespread anxiety, depression, and feeling of disconnectedness, how people wrestle with their emotional pains, make

sense of private sufferings, and find meaning in individual existence is an urgent topic worth investigating. This panel provides a glimpse into Chinese people's emotional and affective struggles and experiences, in particular the varied ways of dealing with every day ordinary" crises. Focusing on grassroots psychology-based activities in urban China, Xiaoxi Zhu's paper critically engages with the scholarship on China's psycho-boom, examining how these activities function as transitional spaces" that allow urbanites to explore selfhood, process trauma, and foster connection. Adopting a mixed method approach, Yanning Huang's paper expands the notion of affective publics" to illustrate how Wenliang Li's Weibo serves as a digital affective space where people fend off individual solitude and combat a sense of social injustices through the act of collective mourning. Anna Chen's paper zooms in on a health group program organized by a social work agency for migrant domestic workers in China, exploring how this program empowers domestic workers to develop self-care awareness and cultivate a sense of agency towards a more fulfilling life. Renxue Wan's paper examines how women affected by pregnancy complications narrate, share, and heal their physical and emotional trauma, emphasizing the importance of sharing traumatic experiences for healing.

**"Transitional Spaces": Therapeutic Culture and the Unnamed Crisis in Urban China | Xiaoxi ZHU (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)**

Contemporary China has witnessed the prevalence of a booming urban therapeutic culture since the early 2000s, characterised by the penetration of psychological and psychotherapeutic discourses and practices in diverse social spheres. Chinese urbanites are increasingly turning to a variety of therapeutic activities, such as psychological salons, book clubs, psychodrama workshops, and arts healing sessions to combat social isolation and seek solace and connection. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in four Chinese cities, this study focuses on psychology-based activities in urban China that span a broad spectrum of therapeutic approaches, practices and settings, and examines how and why Chinese urbanites engage with them. Utilizing the concept of transitional space" from British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, this study argues that these activities carve out much-needed psychological spaces in urban China that allow individuals to mediate between their inner world and the external reality in a world fraught with extreme uncertainty and contradictions. By facilitating the articulation of private emotions, feelings, and desires, as well as the exploration of selfhood and the reimagining of self-society relationships, these activities serve as transitional spaces where individuals find emotional, cognitive, and affective resources to make sense of and tackle ordinary, yet unnamed, inner crises. This is achieved through on one hand forging a connection between the individual and the broader system, and on the other creating a healthy distance between one's reality and psyche. This study underscores the transformative potential of therapeutic activities in helping people grapple with mental challenges amidst an era of disconnection.

**Individual Solitude, Affective Publics and Digital Mourning in Chinese Cyberspace: A Longitudinal and Ethnographic Study of Li Wenliang's Weibo Comments | Yanning HUANG (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)**

Almost five years have passed since the COVID-19 pandemic, but Li Wenliang, one of the first Chinese doctors who informed the public of the virus on Weibo in early 2020 and shortly died because of it, is still being memorized and mourned online. To date, hundreds of people continue to comment on his last Weibo post every day. These comments range from thankful words and memorial, everyday greetings, praying, to emotional expression of one's life predicaments in post-pandemic China, sometimes with a desperate and even suicidal tone. Mutual support and encouragement exist among Li's Weibo commenters as well. Existing literature has tapped into the political potential of this networked community and its transformation from a wailing wall" to an extended affective space". The paper adopts a longitudinal and ethnographic approach to further investigate both the evolving characteristics of Dr. Li's Weibo comments and their emotional, therapeutic, and religious dimensions. Empirical data, on the one hand, comes from crawling and mining all the comments from 2023 to early 2025 for computer-driven textual analysis. On the other hand, the research is also based on online participant observation and in-depth interviews with ten Weibo users who regularly left comments under Li Wenliang's last Weibo post. The research findings expand the notion of affective publics" in the Chinese context, illustrating how a widespread feeling of individual solitude and social injustices, a collective need for connection, and Chinese belief for death and gods contribute altogether to sustain this unique digital mourning space.

**Enhancing the Well-being of Domestic Workers: Insights from a Health Group Program | Anna CHEN (Central China Normal University)**

Domestic workers face a range of physical and psychological health challenges, often exacerbated by low socioeconomic status, isolated

work settings, and limited access to social protections. These barriers make it difficult for them to secure essential health resources. This study explores a community-based approach to addressing these issues, drawing on lessons from a health group program organized by a social work agency for migrant domestic workers in China. The program combined online and in-person group activities, offering domestic workers a space to come together on weekends at the social work office. These sessions provided opportunities to share health concerns, gain practical health knowledge, and apply what they learned in their daily work and personal routines. Activities focused on nutrition, sleep hygiene, and pain management not only raised participants' awareness of self-care but also boosted their confidence in managing their own health. At the same time, the program cultivated a supportive and empowering environment for grassroots female workers. Through this initiative, participants were encouraged to reflect on their physical and psychological well-being. This process of introspection allowed them to reconnect with personal memories and experiences, fostering a sense of agency and inspiring them to pursue a healthier, more fulfilling future. The findings highlight the importance of addressing both physical and psychological health needs in interventions tailored for domestic workers.

**"Painfully Happy": Narratives of Trauma, Healing, and Emotional Paradox Among Pregnant Women with Complications**  
| Renxue WAN (China Central Normal University)

This study, based on a six-month participatory observation beginning in July 2024, explores how urban young pregnant women experiencing varying degrees of pregnancy complications narrate, share, and heal their physical and emotional trauma. The research focuses on a social media group comprising 32 pregnant women with similar due dates, supplemented by follow-up interviews with 8 participants facing moderate to severe complications. Findings reveal that Painfully Happy emerges as a central bodily-emotional narrative among these women. Specifically, narratives of pain" highlight the discomfort caused by illness and the pregnant body," serving as the foundation for self-disclosure. These narratives reflect immediate, embodied, and intuitive bodily perceptions linked to emotions such as fear, resentment, and regret. In contrast, narratives of happiness" shift focus from the pregnant body" to the psychological fulfillment of becoming a mother," enabling women to reframe their trauma as a painful yet worthwhile" experience rooted in enduring, spiritual, and ultimate satisfaction. The articulation of pregnancy-related trauma has historically been culturally taboo in Asian societies, emotionally framed as negative" and undesirable." This study argues that the paradoxical state of being painfully happy legitimizes such narratives as morally valid. Furthermore, voicing and sharing traumatic experiences are crucial for healing, fostering psychological resilience, and strengthening group cohesion among women affected by pregnancy complications.

Hao WU (Central China Normal University, Discussant)

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**3-10**    **Invisible Society, Invisible Hope Among Asian Youth**

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Chair: Dae Hoon KANG (Mokpo National University)

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Popular expressions like the Sampo generation" (a generation that gives up dating, marriage, and having children) and Hell Joseon" (Hell Korea) vividly capture the predicament of South Korean youth. Since the proliferation of socially withdrawn youth (Hikikomori) in the 1990s, Japan has also observed the emergence of the Satori generation" (the enlightened generation like Buddhist monks) in the 2010s, characterized by their silent resignation in shaping their future. Focusing on their struggles of constructing meaningful futures, this panel questions the place of the social and that of hope among contemporary Asian youth. What is the relation between their suspended future-making and the politico-economic conditions in developed Asian countries? What spatio-temporal experiences emerge in such social milieus, and how does the ability to hope, trust, and open oneself to the larger world, diminish? Nevertheless, what kinds of alternative modes of work, living, and relationships with oneself or others are still sought for? Through these questions, our panel will shed light on realities that weigh on contemporary Asian youth.

**Difficult to Become a Person: Nunchi of Distrust and Diminishment of Being among South Korean Youth** | Dae Hoon KANG (Mokpo National University, Organizer/Presenter)

Nunchi (eye-measure) is considered a Korean technique of indirect communication that facilitates social interaction and contributes to a group harmony. As a subtle etiquette mobilized to save chaemyeon (face) and kibun (feeling" mood") of each other, it involves considerate and often intentional chinsim(true heart")-hiding behaviors. During eight months of ethnographic research on young urban-to-rural migrants to Jeju Island, I observed that they experienced a nunchi situation as burden in their previous urban lives, dreamed liber-



ation from it in Jeju, but continued to assert its necessity in interaction with other migrants and islanders. They contrasted nunchi with chinsim, implying that showing one's chinsim to others is not only undesirable but also risky. Contrary to conventional nunchi behavior, chinsim-hiding here entails a wary attitude toward others, i.e. the assumption that others might be untrustworthy or intrusive. I interpret this as an indicator that traditional, considerate nunchi is fading away in post-1997 South Korea. With the development of survivalist regime" and competitive worldview in the country, one is to mind their own business and trust in others is not considered indispensable. Given the heavy realities that weigh on South Korean youth, I argue that they are to become a person where their chaemyeon, kibun, and innermost chinsim are respected ideologically, but negated socially. They are to become a person, where they are seemingly free to fulfill themselves, but treated as less-than person in social and structural terms. Locked within themselves and the present, unable to construct their futures, their being might only diminish.

### **Here and Now under Crisis? Spatio-temporal Experiences of Contingent Workers in Seoul | Yoonai HAN (Leiden University)**

This paper examines how contingency has become a mode of being in contemporary Seoul, centring on the spatio-temporal experiences of contingent labour. Informed by ethnographic findings and life history interviews with short-term workers and their workspaces, I engage with the growing debates on temporality, futurity, and (im)mobility. Interlocutors of the research include users of coworking spaces, delivery workers, government-subsidised entrepreneurs, and job trainees, whose work is often called on-demand, micro labour, and side hustles. Key findings are presented through three narratives. First, routinised contingency keeps short-term workers in the ambivalent waiting of frustration and hope, with the relationship of the present and future restructured. Second, countdown temporality emerges through the elongated waiting for the transition to the aspired future, where social relations and resources of 'here' and 'now' are instrumentalised to exit the present. Relatedly, I argue for the need to articulate the less heroic, survivalist response to crisis. Third, I discuss the short-term workers' costs of waiting. Under the working of uneven austerity, costs for (re)production and social protection are individualised, burdening the atomised workers outside regular jobs and institutions more heavily and normalising contingency. Contributions are grounded in the social history of South Korea, where crisis and contingency have been legitimised for fast economic growth both in societal mobilisation and individual life projects. I seek for an epistemological expansion of contingency as urban conditions in contemporary South Korean society, through documenting and conceptualising its spatio-temporal experiences.

### **Woodworkers: Building Meaningful Lives in South Korea | Chloe PABERZ (Inalco)**

The growing interest for Korean culture worldwide had helped Korean crafts gaining more recognition both at a national and international level. Traditional crafts such as ceramics and woodworking now attract more and more vocations, while the traditional ways of learning and working are challenged by the contemporary social context. By using historical and ethnographical data, this paper analyzes the changing values of woodworking in South Korea, in comparison with other societies such as England, where it attracts young people who seek more meaningful lives through pleasurable work, often after a disappointing work experience. We will see how Korean perception of wood as a unique and living material resonates with traditional beliefs and contemporary ideals, and how main qualities of skilled woodworkers are changing in accordance with recent social transformations, for example regarding gender in a traditionally masculine craft, or regarding values and hopes associated with technology. While machines have largely been symbolizing progress for the last decades, in woodworking, machines can be entrusted with some tasks, while other tasks necessitate the intervention of the human hand for various reasons. This division of work calls for a re-imagination of the relation between humans and machines, as well as the desirable and possible future for man-made artifacts. By imagining new materials, new designs and new ways of interacting with matter and tools, the new generation of Korean woodworkers also call for forms of work that could represent a meaningful alternative to a work culture that is widely perceived as harmful to humanity.

### **Social Withdrawal or Social Abandonment? Attempts to Recreate a Social Network for Hikikomori and Other Marginalized People in Japan | Tanguy VIRIN (Université Paris Nanterre)**

The hikikomori phenomenon" has been impacting Japanese society for over thirty years, symbolizing withdrawal, isolation, and marginalization within modern societies. In response, numerous NPOs(Non Profit Organization), associations, and companies have emerged in Japan since the 1990s, working alongside government initiatives. My presentation focuses on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in Osaka, where an NPO supports hikikomori individuals and their families. The NPO posits that the root of hikikomori lies in Japan's neoliberal society, which places intense pressure on youth to succeed in an environment of constant competition, leading some to failure and self-ostracization. In response, the organization works to create spaces where hikikomori and other marginalized people can



connect and fight against isolation. While hikikomori is often viewed as an individual form of social withdrawal, I argue that it should instead be understood as a collective form of social abandonment. In Japan, some individuals' inability to engage with society is linked to long-standing socio-economic and political structures. Traditionally, responses to hikikomori have been psychiatric, focusing on individual and familial issues. However, the emergence of support organizations for hikikomori represents a response to the lack of broader social and political solutions. Through my fieldwork, I will examine how leftist political activism has intersected with the psychological notion of hikikomori to foster an alternative, more inclusive model of community.

**3-11**

### **Gendered Dynamics of Transnational Migration and Border-Crossing: Experiences of Educated Asian Women in South Korea**

Chair: Dohye KIM (Duksung Women's University)

This panel discusses the lived experiences of educated and skilled Asian migrant women heading to South Korea. Given that literature on gender and migration mostly focus on low skilled women moving from the global South to North, this panel goes beyond such understanding in order to spotlight how those educated women are aspired to cross the border of another Asian country – South Korea, what kinds of obstacles and dilemmas they encounter in border-crossing to and staying in the destination country and how they strategize to fulfill their desire in and out of South Korea. The four papers in this panel deal with women having diverse ranges of identities in their nationality, occupation, and purpose of immigration, such as Mongolian and Iranian international students, Vietnamese, Indian, and Nepali PhD holders and Thai travelers. Nonetheless, the papers are in common revealing that educated, skilled Asian women are not simply privileged migrants but those who struggle to achieve their aspirational goal in the country where patriarchy, racism as well as xenophobia are still ascendent. Furthermore, each research pays particular attention to the ways in which the women respond to the limited opportunities given to them through diverse practices ranging from identity formation, political movement, career development, migration decision to co-ethnic distinction. In this way, this panel would provide the chance to rethink inter-Asian migration and mobility through the lens of educated and skilled women.

### **Care as Cultural Capital: Childbirth and Career Development of Mongolian Women Students in South Korean Universities** | Dohye KIM (Duksung Women's University)

This study explores the post-graduate lives of Mongolian female graduate students from South Korean universities in order to examine how their lived experiences not only as international students, but also as mothers in South Korea influence to shape their career paths. The current studies focusing on gender and international student mobility tend to focus on how female students' experiences of pregnancy and child-care prevent them from academic and career success. This paper, however, widens such analytic focus of gender and student mobility by illuminating how educated women's role of mother during their graduate study inadvertently contributes to extending their career choices. Specifically, by examining how Mongolian student-mothers pioneer their careers in children-related industry both home and host countries, this paper elaborates migrants' caring experience function as cultural capital in the transnational context. Here, the dimension of transnational migration is pivotal that restricts female migrants' career options not because it simply confines women to the limited socioeconomic opportunities, but because it opens chances for women migrants to navigate the niche market of care, such as undocumented Mongolian migrant children in South Korea. Charting how Mongolian migrant women build careers based on motherly experiences, this paper disrupts the idea that care is a fragile form of cultural capital limiting women to socially devalued jobs.

### **Bodies in Motion, Hearts in Revolution: Iranian Women's Transnational Activism and Identity Making in South Korea** | Gi Yeon KOO (Seoul National University)

This study examines the intersection of gender and migration by exploring the transnational activism and identity transformation of Iranian female students in South Korea. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation, it investigates how gender shapes migration experiences and political subjectivity in transnational spaces. The number of Iranian women in Korea has nearly tripled—from 215 in 2012 to 680 in 2022—reflecting the feminization of Iranian educational migration. These young women in their 20s and 30s initially sought to escape their homeland's gender restrictions. They have since become active participants in the Women, Life, Freedom movement while longing for a reformed Iran. This research analyzes how gendered experiences of migration shape these women's identity reconstruction and political consciousness as they navigate life in a new environment while engaging in transnational feminist

activism. As daily life resumed after 2025, many abandoned hopes of returning home, instead seeking ways to either remain in Korea or migrate to countries like Canada, Germany, or the United States. Through the lens of gender and migration, this study illuminates how young Iranian women transform their political subjectivity through transnational mobility and activism.

**Gendered Im/mobilities: The Experiences of Female Highly Skilled Migrants in South Korea** | Hee Jung CHOI (Jeonbuk National University)

This research analyzes gendered im/mobilities of female highly skilled migrants from Asian countries working in South Korea, drawing on in-depth interviews with female PhD holders in science and engineering fields who are married with children. It complicates the common image of Asian female migrants as low-skilled care workers, and highly skilled migrants as ultra-mobile in the context of the development of the global knowledge economy. Furthermore, it tries to avoid the binary perspective to consider mobility as positive and immobility as negative. Rather than simply explaining the (spatial) immobility of female highly skilled migrants as the negative result of gendered discrimination, this paper delves into the dynamic mechanism between multiple mobilities such as occupational, economic, and legal (in terms of legal status in the host country) mobility as well as spatial mobility. By doing so, it reveals the tension and negotiation between different identities of these women, as highly skilled workers in science and engineering fields, married women with children, and migrants from Asian countries to South Korea. These women carefully map out their mobilities, considering gender politics in family and home country and children's education as well as their own career.

**"Suspicious Travelers from the Land of Little Ghosts": Border-Crossing of Thai Female Travelers with the Existence of Undocumented Thai Workers in South Korea** | Hyun-jung CHAE (Duksung Women's University)

This study focuses on the cultural tension between Thailand and Korea, known as #Ban Korea movement, in the context of Thai travelers being denied entry at the Korean border. Despite the existence of institutions for the border crossing, such as the immigration control act, that support for travel and mobility, Thai travelers to Korea face stricter inspections that go beyond the established regulations. Most cases of refusal of entry involve young female travelers. This highlights how the combination of gender and nationality plays an important role in the specific context of cross-border movement between Thailand and Korea in recent decades, making Thai female travelers particularly vulnerable and discriminated against during their border crossing. As Thai undocumented workers, known as 'little ghosts', have gained attention in Korean society, this fact affects the entry process for Thai female travelers and how they prepare to cross the border into Korea. This research examines how Thai travelers strategically present themselves as distinct from undocumented migrants in terms of economic, social, and cultural conditions, in response to the stereotypes of 'illegal migrants' in South Korea. It shows that women's migration, framed discursively within the context of low-waged labor migration, hinders the imagination of Thai women's travel aspirations to Korea, while at the same time expanding discrimination among and against Thai female travelers.

Jooyoung KIM (Jeonbuk National University, Discussant)

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**3-12 Culinary Heritage in Flux: War Memory, Food Tourism, and Cultural Exchange in East Asia**

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Chair: Ryo KOARAI (Hokkaido University)

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This roundtable explores the interplay between localism, regionalism, and globalism in shaping East Asian culinary futures, focusing on war heritage and food tourism. The discussion examines how histories of colonization, imperialism, and conflict have influenced regional food cultures from the late 19th century to the present. It analyzes how war memories are preserved or transformed through food, highlighting tensions between local traditions, regional influences, and global trends. Speakers from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan will present case studies of dishes rooted in war and colonialism that have become intangible cultural heritage or food tourism attractions. They will explore the development of cross-border culinary identities and the impact of cultural exchange on local food systems. The roundtable aims to provide fresh perspectives on food as a medium for preserving and reinterpreting war heritage. It will address how culinary experiences can promote cross-cultural dialogue while respecting historical sensitivities, the potential of food tourism to support local communities, and food's role in shaping regional identities and fostering discussions about shared histories. By bringing together diverse viewpoints, the session hopes to initiate a network for research on war-related food heritage tourism. It seeks to establish this as an emerging field within cultural anthropology and food studies, fostering discussions on the relationships between cuisine, collective memory, and cultural identity in post-war East Asia, while exploring how these elements interact with the forces of localism,

regionalism, and globalism in shaping the future of East Asian culinary landscapes.

Kyungjae JANG (Hiroshima University)

Ryo KOARAI (Hokkaido University)

Takayoshi YAMAMURA (Hokkaido University)

Ting WANG (Hokkaido University)

Ayumu KOBAYASHI (Hokkaido University)

Sueun KIM (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

**3-13**

### **Refracting Media Ecology in East Asia: Labor, Vision, and Sovereignty**

Chair: Lijing PENG (Trinity College Dublin)

While East Asian culture is often framed as overdetermined by traditional textualism or hyper-vibrant new media culture, its media ecology is characterized by ongoing processes of re-mediation, transitioning media forms from the traditional (text and voice) to the modern (recorders and digital platforms). Rather than adhering to presumed functionalities of tradition and modernity, this panel examines these re-mediation processes through the lenses of labor, vision, and semiotic sovereignty. To do so, this panel brings case studies in diverse East Asian contexts. Jiarui Sun's paper presents an ethnographic study of lianshui (connect-and-sleep) in Chinese voice-chat rooms, which examines the interplay of labor, value, and sociality in platform economies. Lijing Peng and Thomas Charles Marshall's paper investigates how Satsumabiwa performances in Japan create semiotic sovereignty through embodied responses to landscapes, political regimes, and traditional aesthetics. Yukun Zeng's paper interrogates the shift from reading to listening in grassroots Confucian education, highlighting the mutual radicalization of human and machinic agency in transmitting classical wisdom. Yoohee Kang's paper analyzes how South Korean parents transform children's learning environments with media technologies, balancing aspirations for academic success and emotional well-being. Drawing on ethnographic insights from contemporary Chinese digital communities, Meiji Japan, global Sinophone societies, and parental culture in South Korea, the panel interrogates the media ideologies presupposed and generated through specific re-mediation practices. It explores whose (human and non-human) labor and agency are mobilized, and how semiotic technologies and sovereignties shape the efficacy—or failure—of these mediated forms.

### **Miracle out of Listening: Classical Wisdom, Ethno-Neuroscience, and the Paradox of Machinic Education in Global Chinese Societies | Yukun ZENG (University of Michigan)**

This paper examines the emergence and evolution of dujing ji (读经机), or the machine for reading classics, within the grassroots Confucian education movement in Global Chinese communities. The dujing movement (读经运动), literally "reading classics," promotes the intensive, repetitive aloud reading of Confucian and other classical texts by students (ages 3–13 and beyond), emphasizing memorization without interpretation as a pathway to classical wisdom. Despite its radical mobilization and labor-intensive practices, dujing has faced criticism for fostering harmful mechanical rote pedagogy. In response, the late 2010s saw the introduction of the dujing machine, shifting the focus from reading to listening. This reform redefines the mediational process of wisdom transmission, drawing on a non-modern conception of embodied learning by heart" informed by a particular ethno-neuroscience framework. The transition from mechanical to machinic learning, however, underscores the mutual radicalization between human and non-human agency from classical texts and emerging AI technologies in China and beyond.

### **Imagined Poetics: Language Ideologies and Semiotic Sovereignty in Satsumabiwa Compositions and Performances | Lijing PENG (Trinity College Dublin)**

Satsumabiwa developed from a Buddhist priest tradition to become part of warrior culture in the 16th century. After the Meiji Period, the instrument came to be commonly played throughout Japan. This research is shared by a professional Satsumabiwa performer/musicologist and a linguistic anthropologist. It concerns Satsumabiwa song books published between 1885 and 1913. Comprising almost 200 texts in total, they are preserved and digitally compiled by the National Diet Library. It also features live performance analyses. The linguistic anthropological analyses will focus on four pieces (co-translated by the two authors) developed over time on the same theme: responding to landscape. They are Kawasaki (1889), Tsushima Shokei (1905), Biwa songs with musical notation allowing you to teach yourself (1910–12) and Biwa and Literature (1922). I will discuss how the prefaces and performance guidelines on the song books instruct performers to engage their bodies and produce the sounds as responding to the landscape. In this way the performance-audience

community had been constructed to use specific semiotic resources, and to forge semiotic sovereignty geared towards self-disciplinary responses to political regimes, traditional morality, and aesthetics. Live performance of these four pieces will also be briefly discussed as demonstration of how the instrument and music stimulates the 'hara', and what a performance event is in the player's experience to grasp the sense of music produced from the body rather than by the voice, and as responding to natural environments, place and landscape with the Buddhist and warrior class concepts *mono no aware*."

### **Sleeping Together, on a Platform: Labor, Value, and Sociality in Chinese Voice-Chat Rooms** | Jiarui SUN (University of Chicago)

Over the past ten years, users of Chinese voice-chat platforms have developed a practice known as *lianshui*, or connect-and-sleep, where strangers or online friends log onto the same voice-chat room to fall asleep together. Some groups would mute participants' speakers and microphones, while others insist on keeping them on. In this article, I use ethnographic data with participants of *lianshui* to understand the political stake of user activities on digital platforms. Specifically, I ask, how do participants themselves make sense of the kind of sociality achieved through this practice? What does it say about the living conditions of individuals under platform economy? And, from a Marxist perspective, what kind of value is being produced when users fall asleep while their phones stay connected to the platform? Raising questions and ideas about labor and sociality in the practice of *lianshui*, this presentation aims to open up discussion rather than providing finite conclusions.

### **"Background Listening" and Learning at Home: Changing Media Technologies and Educational Strategies for Childhood Education in South Korea** | Yoonhee KANG (Seoul National University)

This paper examines the emerging ways of creating home-based learning environments for children, focusing on new media technologies and educational strategies adopted by middle-class South Korean parents. Drawing on in-depth interviews with parents of young children (ages 4-12) sampled from a larger project in South Korea, this study highlights the role of media technologies in shaping educational practices and aspirations for childhood education. It reveals that parental strategies often employ a diverse array of media technologies, including background listening (*heulryo deukki*) to promote Mother-brand English (*eommapyo yeonge*) education, as well as various smart learning applications and online platforms. These technologies transform children's everyday spaces into learning zones, while re-mediating traditional text-based learning into ambient, multimodal activities that blur the boundaries between play and learning. This approach aligns with parents' aspirations to create less stressful learning environments, fostering natural language acquisition and learning through immersive experiences. By analyzing these shifting educational practices, this study discusses how these new educational practices reflect Korean parents' emphasis on balancing children's academic achievements and emotional well-being, while revealing their aspirations to nurture "happy" yet competent children equipped to succeed in the current knowledge economy.

Mary SCOGGIN (California State Polytechnic University, Discussant)

3-14

### **Governing the Future: Ideology, Infrastructure, and the Politics of Promise**

Chair: Mankei TAM (Ca Foscari University of Venice)

### **Innovation with Guts: Translating Microbiome Research to "Tell Hong Kong's Story Well"** | Mankei TAM (Ca Foscari University of Venice)

This paper discusses how microbiome science and technology shape Hong Kong's future under a new socio-political normal enacted by the Chinese state regime during and after the 2019 mass protests and the COVID pandemic. Drawing on an ethnography at WAND, a university research institution focusing on gut microbiome—a burgeoning field within genomics, I ask: how do the microbiome scientists echo the political call to tell Hong Kong's story well" by capitalizing on new hopes that reposition Hong Kong as Asia's microbiome innovation hub? How can microbes, the forms of life that microbiome scientists contemplate, address the question of the city's specificity under the new normal? What new kinds of knowledge and forms of value are produced to relate Hong Kong citizens' well-being to the Chinese populace's health concerns? WAND incorporates the translational research model to develop new diagnostics and therapeutics through the pharmaceutical industry. Meanwhile, Asia's changing geopolitical landscape and Hong Kong's shifting political space enfold these practices, specifying what transnational practices mean amidst scientists being enlisted as new allies of nationalist biopolitics. I trace how WAND scientists move knowledge from the lab to the market and across the Hong Kong-China border to facilitate new scientific collaborations while negotiating with a biopower that aims to regulate a population and accelerate Hong Kong's integration with

mainland China. In doing so, WAND scientists' knowledge production constitutes a kind of care, relating microbiome science to reframe Hong Kong citizens' well-being while redefining the city's specificity within the changing geopolitics in Asia.

#### **Empire of Promises: How Japan Created Indebted Citizens in South Korea and Taiwan** | **Yuki ASAHINA (University of Manchester)**

Consumer credit service is central to the making of economic development and the middle class. We cannot think of the development of modern capitalism without conceiving how certain money lending and borrowing schemes –what Sociologist Bruce Carruthers calls the economy of promises”– emerged and what consequences they brought about to citizens. By asking this question in the context of contemporary Japan, this paper has two aims. First, it chronicles the history of consumer credit, focusing on the period between 1945 and the present. Second, it pays particular attention to the development after the 2000s when tightening regulations on exploitative money lending practices in Japan led money lenders to export their business model to South Korea and Taiwan, where regulations were lax. In short, this paper traces the process through which Japan created a new social group of indebted citizens in other East Asian societies. In so doing, I hope to shed light on an underappreciated aspect of social inequality in East Asian societies.

#### **Challenges and Prospects of Researching State-Driven Future Projections: The Case of North Korea** | **Eetu LAUSTELA (University of Duisburg-Essen/Seoul National University)**

This paper examines how states shape and maintain visions of the future, exploring methodological approaches to studying state-driven future-making through the case study of North Korea. Future projections by states inherently reflect ideological values and serve as spaces of contestation between different political interests. When states present specific futures as inevitable over others, they maintain these visions to bolster their political legitimacy and stability. A case study of North Korean state's future projections, investigated through its contemporary future-oriented media publications, helps to underline the contested nature of all future visions. North Korea in particular is faced with projections imposed on it by external adversaries, mostly involving predictions of stagnation and collapse. Simultaneously, its own future-making remains notably monolithic due to its high degree of societal control. Still, the projections undergo adaptation that reflects changes in the broader state ideology. Futures thus serve as valuable objects for understanding ideological development. Researching such projections presents significant challenges due to the opaque nature of state institutions and their processes of future-making, especially in authoritarian contexts. Reflecting on how researchers can navigate such obstacles, this paper investigates state-made futures as objects of research and potential sources where to identify them. It proposes methods for creating comparable descriptions of future projections through their fundamental characteristics, such as the vision's driving subjects, temporality, and degree of determinism. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader understanding of state-made futures, particularly in more secretive and inaccessible states like North Korea, and their utility as indicators of state ideology.

**3-15****Taking Action against Sexual Violence in South Korea and Japan - Roundtable Session**

Chair: Hyo-Jung KIM (Korea Women's Development Institute)

Chiara FUSARI (University of Zurich)

Hyo-Jung KIM (Korea Women's Development Institute)

Mi-kyoung LEE (Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center)

Bohwa Kim (Seoul Foundation of Women & Family)

Kanoko Kamata (University of Pittsburgh)

**3-16****Pleasure Among Marginalized and Suffering Bodies in Urban East Asia**

Chair: Darren Tsz-Hin FUNG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This panel examines the relationship between suffering and bodily pleasure in urban East Asia. While pain has been a consistent topic of ethnographic inquiry since the 1980s, it wasn't until the last two decades that anthropologists have paid growing attention to pleasure (Dave 2019; Farquhar 2002, 2012; Marchand 2021; Weiss 2011). Scholars see attending to pleasure as complementary to the examination of inequalities, shedding light on pleasure as an overlooked quotidian experience in established fields of study (Arumugam 2020), and as a means of reimagining the self and of world-building” (Anjaria and Anjaria 2020, 237). We seek to contribute to these discussions by focusing on how people with marginalized or suffering bodies pursue pleasure, and, through the experience of pleasure, investigate



the intersection between body, urban space, and well-being. Based on fieldwork conducted with queer, disabled and aging people, and burned-out workers, we address how they develop embodied skills in achieving and enhancing pleasure, and how the experience of pleasure prompts them to reflect on their bodies as the site where moral codes are naturalized and transgressed. Together we address the following questions: How are particular forms of suffering mitigated, offset, or remade by particular forms of pleasure? How is well-being evaluated and practiced vis-à-vis the indulgence in and moderation of pleasure? How do marginalized and suffering bodies reinterpret the established meanings of urban spaces to carve out a niche for achieving pleasure? How do these alternative meanings of space help us reimagine an inclusive future in urban East Asia?

**Bus Connoisseurs: Visually Impaired Bus Buffs' Experience of Pleasure in Hong Kong | Darren Tsz-Hin FUNG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

In Hong Kong—a city heavily dependent on public transportation, a network of visually impaired boys and men derive intellectual and multisensory pleasure from participation in a subculture centering on knowledge and activities related to buses. To achieve the status of a connoisseur in this subculture, whose participants include both the sighted and the visually impaired, acquiring knowledge about bus features perceived non-visually (e.g. engine sound and bus movements) is as important as acquiring knowledge about bus features perceived visually. That visual knowledge and experience is decentered in this subculture favors the visually impaired in becoming bus connoisseurs. In this paper, I first discuss how the visually impaired bus buffs acquire bus-related knowledge from social media and from one another through daily conversations at a special school, where buses are a salient topic of conversation among male students. Such knowledge and the audio recordings of bus rides they have created and shared orient their attention to particular sensuous qualities experienced on a ride. I then describe how the gradation of pleasure they experience on a ride is contingent on the pattern in which these sonic, tactile, and kinesthetic qualities blend together. The quotidian, multisensory pleasure they experience on bus rides not only accords with the non-visual ways of knowing cultivated at the special school, but also serves as an antidote to the ocularcentrism characterizing most of the social domains in their everyday life after graduation.

**Gendered Bodies, Sensuous Selves: Han Retirees' Practice of Xinjiang Dance | Mengge ZUO (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

This paper draws on my fieldwork in Sanya, China, to explore how seasonally migrated Han Chinese retirees engage with “Xinjiang free dance” (ziyou tiao), examining the intersection of sensory gratification with their experiences of aging and life transitions. While derived from Uyghur dance traditions, Xinjiang Dance” has, in recent years, gained widespread popularity among Han retirees through nationwide learning networks, evolving through continuous remodeling. Retirees’ perspectives on authenticity, particularly their navigation of emic/etic distinctions, reveal how they reflect on lifelong bodily practices and emotional regulation—practices shaped by traditional Chinese life-nurturing philosophies and sociocultural norms of propriety. “Xinjiang free dance,” with its appropriated features—structured steps for men, unstructured routines, and partner-based style—has notably transformed open-space dancing from a predominantly female domain by drawing in retired men. Drawing on frameworks that recognize the mutual constitution of sensory interpretation and production, I argue that participation in Xinjiang dance” resonates with retirees’ concurrent desires for self-continuity and liberation through bodily-induced altered sensory states. Through this engagement, dimensions of gender and sexuality, often marginalized in aging discourse, reemerge as vital forces in retirees’ sensual experiences.

**Effortlessness is Possible: Making Potent Body in a Chinese Metropolis | Nan ZHANG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

The paper looks into Shenzhen’s high-tech talents’ growing fever in an imported somatic method, the Feldenkrais Method, in search of bodily well-being and efficiency against the backdrop of sedentary work style and burnout. (The young mega-city is the epicenter of the Feldenkrais method in China, which has received its first audience from the IT industry since the mid-2010s.) The trainees adapt the Method to reduce physical stress and strain, attempting to cultivate a painless and tensionless state of bodily movements. Their practice in Feldenkrais class and the reorganization of daily exercise (sports, life nurturing activities) aim to improve kinesthetic ability: the proficiency and ease of sense of the position and motion of the body in space. Particularly, the practice pursues an “effortlessness” quality in the movements, experienced as sensuous freedom to choose from possible movements and delightfulness in economically using physical energy. The Method requires repetitive self-observation to recalibrate bodily movements with subjective perception. In continuous practice, the physical quality of effortlessness serves as a source of ethical pleasure of self-assurance in making a competent/potent” self (a major concept of the Feldenkrais method) at the workplace for the trainees. I argue that techno and finance workers moderate energy consumption with their new body economics” blended with the ideas of Chinese life nurturing. In stark contrast to their previous



generation, they reduce unnecessary energy expenditure and cultivate more vigor by increasing the capacity to enjoy movements in daily activities.

**Cruising as a Way of Nurturing Life Among Elderly Working-Class Queer Men in Shanghai | Qing SHEN (Uppsala University)**

This paper examines the sexual cruising practices of elderly working-class queer men in Shanghai, focusing on three primary settings: (1) a gay bathhouse catering to older queer men, (2) a park-like wild space dominated by younger gay men who typically do not desire older men, and (3) public toilets (cottaging), where they attempt to seduce ostensibly heterosexual men. I explore how these men creatively navigate aging bodies, declining sexual desirability, and the blurred boundaries between public and private sex. Additionally, I analyze their adoption of a play frame that distinguishes between appropriate play and excessive indulgence. I argue that their cruising practices function as a form of life-nurturing, fostering an ethics of moderation and enjoyment.

**Teresa KUAN (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Discussant)**

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**3-17 Contested Memories: Disasters, Colonial Legacies, and Wartime Propaganda**

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Chair: Young Hoon OH (Kyungpook National University)

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**Beyond the Ethics of Implication: How Colonial Relations Haunt Generations of Mountaineers in South Korea | Young Hoon OH (Kyungpook National University)**

This paper focuses on two prominent mountaineers in colonial Korea: Seiichi Izumi (1915-1970), who founded the alpine club of Keijo University and later served as anthropology professor at Tokyo University, and Kim Jeong-tae (1916-1988), who led the secretive Korean-only alpine club Baekryong Hoe and later served in the leadership of the Korean Alpine Club. Both of their autobiographical writings recently provoked controversies among anthropologists and mountaineering historians in South Korea, with regard to their ignorance or silence to tragedies under colonial regime and their own involvements to them. In an attempt to contextualize these belated responses, this paper refers to the debate surrounding Moris-Suzuki's notion of the ethics of implication. Korean anthropologist Chung Byung-ho—who sadly passed away recently—posthumously argued for a need to bolster the concept, suggesting, in order to overcome neocolonial clouds and newly arising ethno-nationalist rancor, to share historical facts that are in practice and thus to build on civic nationalism. While moving forward with this notion, this paper points out a challenge in locating ourselves in history: what if, such as the case of Kim's stance toward colonial powers, the veracity of significant historical facts remains in a gray area? By attending to the notion of implication, this paper suggests to look into our own, historically implicated contexts in which writing history continues to take place.

**The Imperial Army Band and National Anthem in 19th Century Korea | Hyojeong KWON(Academy of Korean Studies)**

Korean nationalism often traces back to colonial time. Main narrations had been echoed around the independence movements. But in regards of invented traditions, the Empire Tai-han(1897~1910), which had existed in relatively short period before colonial era, abounds in fresh western style traditions with newly invented national symbols and practices. Invented traditions in Tai-han Empire were mainly practiced around Foundation Day, commemorative ceremonies for the late Queen and soldiers, and King's Birthday etc. I would like to make a research on various national anthems and the western style Imperial Army Band activities in regards of invented traditions at 19th century Korea. not only as a part of strengthened military reform at that times but also as a ceremonial elaboration in its practices of newly conceptualized modern nationalism. With its symbolic power, it has been a psychological foundation of independence movement during Japanese colonization period.

**Fault Lines and Echoing Strata: A Cultural Geology of the Earthquake Trauma and Political Memory in East Asia | Juntao YANG (Columbia University)**

This article explores the interplay between East Asian geological disasters, sociopolitical structures, collective memory, and media art. At its core, the study re-conceptualizes geological disasters within the context of media studies and the ontological turn—not merely as physical or social events but as media in themselves. Geological disasters function as mediums of deposition, compression, rupture, and reconstruction, revealing stratified dynamics that span material, social, and symbolic domains. As such, the earthquake-media serves as both a site and lens for world-makings, uncovering the shifting forces and relational formations within the geo-social continuum. The article develops a stratified ontology inspired by geology, extending Actor-Network Theory (ANT) by incorporating deep time

and structural stratification often neglected in flat ontologies. It transcends the dichotomy of stability and relationality, interpreting the world as a fluid system of stratification where diverse actors interact across multiple layers. In this system, latent pressures—material, political, and affective—accumulate over time, erupting and fracturing to produce eventual reorganization. These processes expose societal vulnerabilities and resilience while unmasking entrenched power structures and political infrastructures, alongside the unbridled vitality of geological matter. This stratification reveals the interwoven dynamics of geo-social forces, providing a framework to understand how disasters and geological media mediate interactions between human and non-human agents. As both products of geological processes and infrastructures of political ecology, media art uniquely mediates the tensions between the physical ruptures of disasters and their cultural and affective impacts across various strata. Through visual languages and narrative techniques of exposure, deposition, and fracture, media art unveils hidden strata of anthropocentrism, systemic neglect, slow violence, and collective displacement, as exemplified by Jia Zhangke, Ai Weiwei, and Makoto Shinkai. Simultaneously, it transforms seismic destruction into affective engagement, fostering reimaginings of fractured temporalities.

### **The Balloon War: Cross-Border Tensions on the Korean Peninsula | Mohd BILAL (Academy of Korean Studies)**

The use of balloons as tools of psychological warfare between North and South Korea has a historical legacy rooted in the Korean War (1950–1953) and continues to evolve in the post-Cold War era. This paper examines the strategic use of balloon warfare, focusing on the latest escalation in May–June 2024. The study highlights the historical backdrop of leaflet dissemination during the Korean War, its evolution into modern smart balloons, and the sociopolitical implications of this unconventional conflict. The 2024 resurgence began with South Korean activists deploying propaganda-laden balloons into North Korea, carrying posters and USB drives containing South Korean media. In retaliation, North Korea launched trash-filled balloons, escalating tensions further. The study examines the ideological propaganda and provocative countermeasures in the 2024 balloon war, including North Korea's unconventional use of waste-filled payloads. It explores technological advancements like pre-recorded audio and smart balloons designed to breach North Korea's information blockade while also addressing legal and ethical debates, such as South Korea's 2020 ban on balloon launches and activists' claims of promoting information freedom. By situating these events within a historical and technological context, the study highlights the enduring role of psychological warfare in shaping inter-Korean relations and its implications for regional stability, public sentiment, and prospects for reconciliation.

3-18

### **Belonging in Motion: Translocal Lives, Ritual Ties, and Chinese Identities Across Borders**

Chair: Ellen OXFELD (Middlebury College)

### **Post-Covid Rituals of Rural Return: Reclaiming or Rejecting Moral Community in a Chinese Village? | Ellen OXFELD (Middlebury College)**

Understanding China's urbanization as a one-way flow from rural to urban locations has never captured the more complex dimensions of rural-urban relations. As Gonçalo Santos points out, many rural residents have a translocal model of rural livelihood" and their attachment to ancestral soil has been significantly deterritorialized" even while the village remains as a core site for the ritual celebration of shared identity". The Chinese Lunar New Year is one template for reasserting shared place-based rural identities through ritual. These homecomings play out over a two-week period in which, on the national level, tens of millions of urban Chinese workers return to their rural home villages. In any given rural area, villagers and returnees experience these returns through a series of ritual and commensal occasions. This ethnographer has observed several rounds of Lunar New Year return rituals in a Hakka village in Guangdong from which increasing numbers of villagers have scattered over the years to urban areas. The Lunar New Year rituals serve to re-embed them within the moral community of the village. This paper will draw from both past research as well as recent fieldwork planned for 2025 to ask whether return rituals continue to tie villagers to their rural homes and to assess how post-Covid transformations may have influenced the outcome. Particular attention will be paid to generational differences in the experience of rites of return.

### **(Dis)articulating "China": Pilgrimage, Protest, and Political Identity in Postwar Kinmen | Junbin TAN (Princeton University)**

Two hundred people from Kinmen, Taiwan—a Taiwanese island territory two miles from Fujian, China—left for a pilgrimage to Fujian's temples in late May 2024, at a time when China held a military exercise off Taiwan's coast. The pilgrims visited the ancestral temples from where the god-statues housed in their village temple had originated. Participants insisted that the pilgrimage was possible only because Kinmen's people had protested against Taiwan's government to restore the mini-three-links" that connects Kinmen's ports to

Fujian's, which remained closed off months after the COVID-19 pandemic, in December 2022. Kinmen had transformed, since the 1990s, from Taiwan's battlefield against China to the most-used border-crossing between the polities. Kinmen's people are often conceived conflictually—as Sinophile (qinzhong) in Taiwan, and as Taiwanese in China—but typically identify as Chinese.” Through fieldwork at the 2022 protest and 2024 pilgrimage, I trace the multiple concepts of China” and Chinese-ness” (ritual cosmological, ethno-political, Republic of China” and People’s Republic of China,” and the Mainland”) that Kinmen’s people identify and dis-identify with, and foreground and de-emphasize at different instances. These plural and uneven articulations of Chinese-ness, I argue, embrace the signifier/category China” but also attest to the tensions, contradictions, and ambivalences within. Engaging with Sinophone Studies, critiques of imperialism, and political anthropology, I suggest that our interlocutors’ references to political categories do not always mean that they are interpellated the same ways across situations, and illustrate ethnography’s usefulness for de-homogenizing political categories while acknowledging their stickiness in people’s lives.

**Negotiating Identities and Building Networks: An Anthropological Study of Chinese Entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe** | **Han WANG (Renmin University of China)**

This study examines the cultural and social dynamics of Chinese private enterprises operating in Zimbabwe under the Belt and Road Initiative. Using an anthropological approach, it explores how Chinese entrepreneurs adapt their business practices and social strategies to navigate a complex cultural landscape. The research highlights the role of Confucian family ethics and pseudo-kinship networks in fostering trust, collaboration, and resilience in transnational contexts. Ethnographic fieldwork sheds light on the interactions between Chinese business leaders and local communities, revealing patterns of cultural negotiation, mutual influence, and emerging solidarities. By focusing on the human and relational dimensions of economic globalization, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and cultural adaptations that underpin cross-border entrepreneurship in Africa.

**Drifting and Growing: Macao New Immigrant Youth Groups' Identity and Local Knowledge** | **Chi Kuan LAM (Peking University)**

This study examines the dynamic process of identity formation among new immigrant youth in Macau, within the context of China’s political integration of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau into the Greater Bay Area. Through in-depth interviews and field mapping, the research traces the life stories of these migrants, highlighting the role of local knowledge in shaping their identities over time. Most new immigrants in Macau gain permanent residency through family-reunion or investment policies. While their legal status provides stability, they often face cultural shocks, particularly within the education system and urban life. The cross-border experience influences their development: School-age children shuttle between cities, leading to a fragmented sense of identity and a weakened sense of belonging. Over time, as they absorb Macau’s local customs and norms, their connection to the city strengthens. Their identities and mobility intertwine with their life stories, creating a complex narrative of adaptation and changes. This study reveals that the identities of immigrants living between the Mainland and Macau are fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed, as often depicted in past migration studies. These shifts between native and new affiliations, influenced by emotional ties and local experiences. While challenges like a lack of collective memory, perceived xenophobia, and language barriers may reinforce ties to their native identities, the accumulation of local knowledge and growing civic awareness gradually facilitates their integration into Macau’s social fabric. The research underscores Macau’s unique cultural context, contrasting it with the regional similarities often drawn between Macau and Hong Kong.

3-19

**The Politics of Suffering: Gender, Race, and the Therapeutic Regime in Korea and Its Diaspora [English & Korean]**

**Chair: Yoon Won CHANG (Emory University)**

What are the relational and socio-political dynamics that shape the traumas of Koreans and Korean diaspora? This panel delves into the making of gendered and racialized trauma in Korea and the Korean diaspora. The panel encompasses the issues of: aftermath of #Me-Too movement in Korea, sex work and pharmaceuticalization of its injuries, the presence of racialized police brutality embedded in the care for mental illness, and young Korean women’s upsurging suicide. This panel illuminates the political struggles behind the neoliberal therapeutic regime in Korea where trauma is often deemed to be a pathologic symptom to be treated in psychiatric clinics. The existing critical scholarships on the neoliberal therapeutic regime were also quick to jump to criticizing the therapeutic subjectivities of the individual sufferers by highlighting their indifference to political organizing and individualistic understanding of their agonies. Departing from such trends, this panel meticulously shows how the detailed context of gendered and racialized violence creates conditions

in which the subjects interpret their sufferings and imagine the possibilities of healing. This panel anchors affect and embodiment as the two central themes to revisit the workings of gendered and racialized violence and trauma. When Sara Ahmed wrote, "It is, after all, pain or discomfort that return one's attention to the surfaces of the body as body" (2004: 148), she was not only referring to the violence engraved on marginalized bodies as pain, but a window to the world of violence the embodied injuries reveal. This panel will serve to elucidate parts of that world.

**Hypervisible Pain and Invisible Bodies: The Rhetoric of Neoliberal Subjectivity and Women's Suffering in Contemporary South Korea** | Yoon Won CHANG (Emory University)

This presentation analyzes the discourses on young women's suicide and suffering in South Korea and their performative effect. The current discursive and political landscape creates a spectacle of the suffering object that is the young Korean women while ironically neglecting the subjective experiences and the process of self-meaning-making of their psychological and corporeal injuries. The state policies and public health discourses utilize suicide and mental illnesses as symbolic rhetorics that represent a crisis of the Korean state. This sense of crisis, especially, within suicide prevention policies serves as an extension of the Korean state's biopolitical management of women's life and reproduction. I contend that such approach renders women's suicide and mental affliction inevitable and partially anticipates their deaths. The purpose of this article is to map the topography of knowledge surrounding young women's suicide and suffering that ultimately marginalizes the embodied experience and subjectivity of the women in question. This presentation deliberately circumvents the attempt to reveal the 'real' root cause of the increased suicide rate or provide a possible resolution for such agonies. This presentation argues that delineating clear causes of complex existential, sociopolitical and psychological phenomenon like suicide easily becomes complicit with the state suicide prevention policies that aim to categorize and pathologize the population at risk." By sketching, instead, the political landscape in which women's suicide and suffering is situated, I analyze the broader politics of knowledge production centering women's suicide and suffering.

**Meaning of Emotions Experienced by Feminist Women in the Aftermath of the #MeToo Movement** | Nari SHIN (Yonsei University)

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the context and meaning of the anti-sexual violence movement in the Korean Literary Circle by focusing on feminist women. In this anti-sexual violence movement, victims began to publicize their experiences of sexual violence in the hope that there would be no more victims like them in the Korean Literary Circle. The allies responded to the victims' suffering and argued that power-based sexual violence occurred because of the unique circumstances, culture, and structure of the Korean Literary Circle. They also asked members to reflect on how their desires shaped, operated, and sustained the literary community's structures. However, feminists were understood as affect aliens" who were out of tune with others and disrupted the atmosphere. These women also experienced affective alienation," pushed outside of the affective community, spending traumatic time alone, and isolated after the anti-sexual violence movement ceased. Participants told me that they spent long periods of time alone, reflecting on the incomplete and failed fight against sexual violence in their communities. Feelings of loneliness, guilt, and powerlessness are caused by the simultaneous formation of a traumatic past and a problematic reality in which gender justice is not realized. This presentation analyses how women who have been involved in this movement explain the intersection of their understanding of the self, traumatic memories, and the political present. It also considers what kind of feminist emotions this interpretation of the surface evokes and whether feminist emotions after the MeToo movement can become political emotions that can change the world.

**Pharmaceuticalization of Gendered Pleasure and Pain in Korea's Sex Industry** | Byeol CHOI (Yonsei University)

This study analyzes how heteronormatively gendered pleasure and pain are (re)produced through pharmaceuticalization in the profit accumulation process of Korea's sex industry. In the historical context of the Korean sex industry, the governance of female sex work operates in conjunction with a 'drug continuum,' which modulates bodily materiality to maximize profits. This 'drug continuum,' ranging from prescription medicines to over-the-counter drugs and illicit substances, traverses women's bodies through specific 'drug practices' where the boundary between proper use and misuse becomes blurred. Drugs function to shape women's bodies into a 'bodies as infrastructure' for profit accumulation in the sex industry, while serving as a 'quick fix' for bodily exhaustion and trauma caused by sex work. To endure bodily pain caused by exploitative and traumatic sex work, it is essential to maintain the state of either hyperarousal or hypoarousal through drug consumption. In state-'tolerated-and-managed' red-light districts, this has led to the misuse of painkillers, sleeping pills, and muscle relaxants. Structural changes in the sex industry, including neoliberalization, financialization, and digitaliza-

tion, have driven the individualization and hierarchization of sex work. Paradoxically, despite Korean society's sexuality stigma and punitive policies against women in prostitution, this has resulted in many impoverished women viewing sex work as a viable option. Their suffering loses its connection to the sex industry, which structures their daily (re)production processes, and is reduced to mere biological dysfunction requiring medical treatment. This medical consumption maintains bodies that can continue working and be exploited in the sex industry.

#### **Police Brutality Meets Mental Health Crises in the East Asian Diaspora | Ayoung KIM (Emory University)**

This presentation examines American police brutality through the lens of diaspora, focusing on two 2024 cases within the Korean diaspora in the United States: Yong Yang (40), killed on May 2 in Los Angeles's Koreatown, and Victoria Lee (25), a bipolar woman fatally shot on August 19 in her New Jersey apartment. Both incidents involved police interventions initially intended to support individuals experiencing mental health episodes, culminating in acts of state violence. Through this moment, the presentation revisits the conversation of policing and the various narratives and simultaneously affective scripts that are deployed to mobilize resources for more/less police force within the United States. The task of mental health as a common denominator between the two incidents and speaks to a certain truth of mental health crisis and how it is tended to across the Korean diaspora. And while I do hope to attend to the specificity of the condition of mental health within the diaspora, at the same time, the proximity of both these cases to the incident of Sonya Massey and the different responses that the Black community versus the Asian American community is also a point of comparative analysis I hope to elucidate upon. Visiting the question of mental health within spaces of diasporic sociality and life, this presentation will endeavor to make more room to discuss the conditions of mental health and its increasing visibility of run-ins with police brutality across Korean diasporas in the United States.

**Anat SCHWARTZ (California State University, Dominguez Hills, Discussant)**

**3-20**

#### **What Subjectivity and Whose Agency: A Cross-Disciplinary Discussion**

##### **Roundtable Session**

This roundtable brings together four discussants who, while working on distinct research topics in sound studies, gender and religion, medical anthropology, and multi-species ethnography, share similar interests and concerns in reflectively navigating subjectivity and agency in their research processes. Subjectivity-agency is both an analytic frame (or a perspective for analyzing) and a methodological inquiry (or a reflection on researcher-researched dynamics). Yusheng LEI provocates his haunted positionality in listening and writing by recounting his sonic ethnography conducted in Xi'an City, a historiographical monument of China. Yang WANG examines the motivations and lived experiences of female volunteers at Buddhist temples in Chengdu, and shows a nuanced understanding of their agency in sustaining and recreating gendered practices under patriarchal socio-religious norms. Lanyang XU questions the a priori assumption of the agency of bipolar-disorder patients in their self-injury and suicidal behaviors, and instead turns to the subjective experiences of the individuals who consider such behaviors as the only source for sustaining their selfhood. Mingzhe XU critically engages in the discussion of a posthumanist notion of agency through the interactions between wild Asian elephants and local villagers in Mohan (Yunnan, China), and as such challenges the efficacy of agency as an analytical tool in approaching human vs. non-human entities and their force relationships. The four papers add to the existing debate on subjectivity and agency in anthropological research. As junior scholars in the field we are excited to start such a discussion that hopefully will inform East Asia as Practice," and invigorate productive scholarly exchanges.

#### **Loss in Sound: On Subjective Listening and a Haunting Writerly Dilemma in Urban Xi'an | Yusheng LEI (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

What sounds am I hearing and writing?" My subjectivity has always been haunted by sensory loss and a writerly dilemma when conducting sonic ethnography in Xi'an, a highly eulogized ancient capital in contemporary Chinese political discourse. Heritage mingles with tourist spectacle and political propaganda to produce an unsettling historiography. Moreover, urban historiography and everyday life produce immersive sonic worlds of loss and disorientation. My field recordings may seem meaningful initially to document certain sounds; yet the same recordings have often led to what I term loss," as in an inability to locate nuanced sounds heard in situ, or to reconcile my intricate ethnographic encounters and memories with sounds captured" through recordings.



Writing, in this context, implies depicting loss, creatively, and thus follows a sense of hauntology (Derrida 1993) and multiple entanglements within a researcher's subjectivity. Where, then, might writing in/as loss" lead and not lead (me)? Discussions are based on my ethnographic fragments in a composite narrative of urban Xi'an, haunting in and out of Islamic chanting in a de-religionized tourist Muslim Quarter, as well as (non-)silence in the city's Covid-19 lockdown. Taking the loss as a haunting invitation rather than a problematic issue, I will ask: what can I note disruptively about my position-making, being immersed and haunted in loss, as a writerly dilemma in a sense of subjectivity? Writing, here, I will ultimately argue, serves to test ethnography and its workings through Xi'an's invitation to radically reimagine our listening and writing posture in its urban historiography writ large.

**"Female Dharma Brotherhood": Agency and Gendered Dynamics among Buddhist Temple Volunteers in China** | **Yang WANG (The University of Hong Kong)**

Female participants, predominantly middle-aged and increasingly younger, make up the majority of temple volunteers (simiao yigong 寺庙义工) in mainland China. Groups of temple volunteers form a collegial community by calling each other dharma brothers (shixiong 师兄) and do things (zuo shiqing 做事情) together to help with the daily operation of the temples. As patriarchal norms of Buddhist monastics' extend (in a powerful form) to a female-dominated lay community, gendered practices are sustained and recreated through volunteer's own capacity to realize their interests against the weight of a patriarchal tradition and a distinct religious hierarchy (monk – nun – lay man – lay woman). This article, with an analytical focus on participant's agency, examines the ways in which female volunteers proactively and creatively engage in gendered practices at monk-based temples (daseng siyuan 大僧寺院) in Chengdu, Sichuan. Drawing from a diverse snowball sampling process spanning over four years of ethnographic fieldwork, this article argues that, female dharma brotherhood is more than a predictable process of communal building or personal identity formation subject to and reminiscent of a socio-religious hierarchy; instead, it is a concrete lived experience through which one situates themselves within interpersonal relationships both in- and outside the temples and thus mediate their individual projects, discourses, and desires while assuming multiple social roles synchronously.

**"To Feel Alive": Self and Subjectivity in Self-Injury and Suicide among Chinese Adolescent Bipolar-Disorder Sufferers** | **Lanyang XU (Tsinghua University)**

Biomedical psychiatry often regards self-injury and suicide as significant symptoms for diagnosing and assessing the severity of mental disorders. Some social scientists recognize the agency inherent in these behaviors, viewing them as acts of resistance and affirmation by individuals. This article draws on a four-month fieldwork conducted in the psychiatric department of a comprehensive hospital in Guangzhou, China, focusing on the experiences of adolescents with bipolar disorder who engage in self-injury and suicidal behaviors both within and outside the ward. It re-examines the relationship between self-injury/suicide and the subjectivity of sufferers through the lens of bodily sensation. This article argues that the practice of returning to the body conceals a potential for subjectivity. Under the diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks of biomedical psychiatry, sufferers find it increasingly difficult to maintain a stable, reliable self in various respects. One comes to understand that the body becomes the last territory of the self. It leads to a series of behaviors that superficially manifest as self-injury/suicide, which, in essence, represents a series of physical experiments" aimed at gaining visible damage (such as flowing blood) and intense bodily sensations (such as pain), which serve to cultivate a physical sense of selfhood", to combat the bodily loss of control caused by somatic symptoms and treatment practices. By rejecting a graveyard" of an individual self that is powerless to resist, the possibility for a renewed self emerges.

**Living between Forests and Villages: The Agency of Wild Elephants in Their Relationship with Local Community in Southwestern China** | **Mingzhe XU (Sun Yat-sen University)**

This research focuses on a group of wild Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus* Linnaeus) that walk from a national nature reserve and forage around the local villages in Mohan, a town situated on the border with Lao, in southwestern China. The presence of these elephants has had a significant impact on the daily lives and economic activities of the local villagers. For instance, elephants damage the crops and farm infrastructure and prevent people from rubber tapping, a crucial source of income for them. This case demonstrates the elephants' capacity to disrupt human lives and communities, which illustrate their agency. This article aims to explore how the elephants manifest this agency in their relationships with local human communities, the nature reserve, and government management. The elephants' agency is not only determined by their biological characteristics, such as their substantial physical presence and strength, but also by their ability to utilize human-made technologies, laws, and government policies as instruments. In this way, these artificialities



become actors in the relationship between local people and wild elephants, and shape the space between the human community and the forest together with them. Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate that multi-species ethnography can offer a novel interpretation of agency and prompt consideration of the transformation of anthropological concepts originally used to describe human society in the discourse of human-animal relations.

**3-21****From Plush to Paw to Persona: Negotiating Human–Nonhuman Boundaries and Bonds**

Chair: Michiko SAWANO (Ritsumeikan University)

**Something/Someone Between People: Relationships with Stuffed Animals in Japan | Michiko SAWANO (Ritsumeikan University)**

This research focuses on stuffed animals as someone/something that exist between people and influence human relationships. For the owners, stuffed animals can form relationships on one-to-one, or between one person and many other stuffed animals, but stuffed animals can also act as a medium between humans and other people. For example, stuffed animals can become the center of conversation between couples, and stuffed animals can play the role of mediating between husband and wife to avoid conflicts. On the other hand, stuffed animals can also cause the owner to distance themselves from others, such as when a friend or lover comes to the house and handles the stuffed the animals violently.

Furthermore, the relationship between the owner and the stuffed animal is also influenced by the relationship with other people. There are cases where the owner keeps a distance from the stuffed animal because their parents told them that they should give up the stuffed animal when it becomes an adult. Or, when other people are around, they don't talk to the stuffed animal because it's embarrassing (but when no one is around, they talk with each other). The case in which a stuffed animal starts to talk more after his/her existence is acknowledged by the people around the owner. It also shows that the relationship between the owner and the stuffed animal changes in relation with others. In this way, relationships are built that are different from those between humans and pet animals.

**Whose Knowledge Counts? Epistemic Conflicts in the Conservation of the Iriomote Cat | Ahmet Melik BA (Chiba University)**

This presentation examines the colonizing narratives surrounding the endangered Iriomote cat, focusing on its discovery and emergent conservation efforts within scientific and political contexts and contrasting these with the cosmological worlds of local people on Iriomote Island, Japan. First, I analyze dominant narratives that celebrate the discovery of the Iriomote cat as both a scientific achievement and a national triumph, highlighting the differing portrayals of key figures in scientific and political discourses. Next, I discuss a conservation plan proposed by European scientists for the imperial family, which suggested relocating islanders to prioritize the cat's protection. Finally, I explore the cosmological worlds of the islanders and their relationship with the cat, contrasting these with the marginalization of local knowledge by scientific and political agendas. Known locally as Yamamayaa," the Iriomote cat has long been revered as a mountain deity, symbolizing spiritual and ecological connections to the environment. I argue that while scientific (re)discovery and conservation efforts have been vital in preventing the cat's extinction, these efforts have pushed local cosmologies to the brink of endangerment by enforcing a dichotomy in conservation science that separates human and non-human relationships. These tensions highlight how conservation science while quantifying the Iriomote cat population at around 100 individuals, contrasts sharply with the islanders' cosmological beliefs, which perceive Yamamayaa as spiritually abundant and reflective of their ecological cosmology.

**For Cats' and Dogs' Lives: The Moral Business of Caring for Companion Animals in Okinawa, Japan | Seijiro Ansel TAKAHASHI (University of Oxford)**

This paper discusses Okinawan, Japanese, and wider societies through the lens of human-animal relations, namely in ways that companion animals, including stray cats and dogs, are 'rescued' and cared for. Research is based on data collected during a year of multi-species ethnographic fieldwork in Okinawa, Japan, and in other locations, with interlocutors such as animal welfare centres, veterinary clinics, rescue organisations, pet shops, pet owners, pet funeral homes, pet breeders, and foster care homes. Key emerging themes pertain to nebulous yet apparent subscriptions to narratives of Okinawan distinctness, upheld by allegedly unique local ecologies, pathologies, and socioeconomic circumstances, including of Japanese and U.S. military presence; collaborative yet fraught relations between various stakeholders in the animal care/welfare/management arena; and more-than-human agency in shaping decisions and outcomes. Empirically-led enquiries consider the sociocultural construction of moral action, and the similarity and alterity between values associated with the lives and deaths of various species, expressed by different perspectives - i.e., what is understood as in/humane treatment and in/appropriate care? What is understood as a good life and a good death, for nonhumans and humans?

**The Influence of Furry Genre on Human–Non-human Relationships: Focusing on BL Furry Comic Genre | Yeouru CHOI (Seoul National University)**

As a subcultural genre, Furry”is a subgenre of anthromorphism fantasy genre, in which characters are created by blending non-human and human features. Although anthropomorphism is often criticized as anthropocentric because it is interpreted as the transformation and consumption of nonhuman objects in human terms, the inclusion of nonhuman others in creative media can be interpreted as an attempt to break away from an anthropocentric mindset. The subcultural genre BL (Boy’s Love), which has the unusual genre position as it involves the consumption of male homosexual contents by female heterosexuals, has also been criticized for appropriating and distorting the culture of others. However, it is also possible to view BL as an important cultural medium for non-others (heterosexuals) to understand others(homosexuals). In addition, the findings of this study show that furry BL genre is enjoyed mainly by the queer male community. This study observes and analyzes the production and consumption activities of furry BL consumers as a subgenre of the BL subculture genre to examine, 1) how the furry genre affects the perception of relationships with non-human beings and the resulting changes in identity, and 2) what specific aspects the desires of this group expressed in furry BL take. The main analytical frameworks utilized in the study are Gilles Deleuze’s theory of ‘Becoming-Animal’, Rosi Braidotti’s theory on ‘metamorphoses’, and Hiroki Azuma’s concept of Moe. The main subjects of the study are consumers of Korean BL and producers, and the study is conducted through online observation and in-depth interviews.

**3-22****Indigenous Futures, Contested Presents: Reimagining Culture, Care, and Coloniality in East and Southeast Asia**

Chair: Hsiao-Chiao CHIU (National Taitung University)

**The Ethics of Kiljivak: Practicing Care in and beyond the Government-Funded Health Station for Indigenous People in Taiwan | Hsiao-Chiao CHIU (National Taitung University)**

Faced with the growing care burden of a rapidly aging population, the Taiwanese government has sought to address the issue by optimizing older adults’ health. Over the past decade, the Council of Indigenous Peoples has promoted the proliferation of Tribal Cultural Health Stations (TCHA) as a proactive response to the health inequities experienced by indigenous groups. However, empirical research has criticized current policies for being culturally insensitive to indigenous perspectives on health and care. Building on this scholarship, this article explores the ethics of care (Tronto, 1998) as realized through everyday practices in and beyond the TCHA, which challenges the bio-medical perspectives that dominate policy design. Using the four phases of care—caring about, caring for, caregiving, and care receiving—proposed by Fisher and Tronto (1990), ethnographic cases from a Paiwan community in Eastern Taiwan illustrate how kiljivak (the Paiwan term for caring) informs the interactions between TCHA caregivers and older care recipients, reflecting their shared understandings of a good life or well-being. These cases also reveal how Paiwan caregivers and care recipients accommodate bureaucratic rules into their routine care practices, which altogether contributes to the weaving of a meaningful local web of care. However, TCHA caregivers also encountered challenges when trying to care for other older villagers who are not covered by the TCHA framework. The article demonstrates how the intervention of state resources evokes ethical dilemmas regarding eldercare for indigenous people in contemporary Taiwan.

**Decolonizing the Indigenous, De-indigenizing the Colonial: A Political Ecology of Agricultural Movements in Hong Kong, 2009–2024 | Chi Shing LEE (Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

The scholarship of decolonial ecology is undergoing an indigenous turn that highlights indigeneity as an alternative against colonial inhabitation of the Earth. This article questions the very ground of this turn: what if indigeneity is nonetheless a colonial makeup? This article troubles the conceptual dualism between indigeneity and coloniality by investigating the recent agricultural movements in Hong Kong since 2009. More specifically, I examine how the farmer-activists in the movements respond to the colonial statecraft that, since the 1950s, produces a dualistic structure of colonial inhabitation into the indigenous and the nonindigenous. With three cases including Defending Choi Yuen Village Movement in 2009, Mapopo Community Farm from 2010 to 2021, and Giftfromland since 2015, this article charts a genealogy of the agricultural movements from production of vegetables to rice, in which the colonial division of the nonindigenous and indigenous is gradually disenchanting. These movements shed new light on a unique model of decolonial ecology in Hong Kong that emphasizes agriculture as a tactic for reinvention of the rural areas of the city into a sphere akin to what Bruno Latour calls

the critical zone. This article concludes with a critical reflection of the incommutability of indigenous localism, not for justifying any structural violence of settler colonialism against the indigenous people but urging to recognize the complex dynamics between the indigenous and non-indigenous in East Asia.

**A Pair of Magic Gourds: External Co-Ethnic Membership, Chinese Jurisdiction, and Internal Migration Amid the Hybridity of Dong Pipa Song in Jingzhou Autonomous County | Yun-Ke LI (Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris)**

The Dong people (Kam or Gaeml) are a Kam-Tai-speaking population that reside in Southern China in Hunan, Guangxi, and Guizhou provinces. The Kam-Tai language, as noted by Benedict (1966, 1967), is part of the Austronesian language family, linking the Dong to linguistic relatives in Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Assam (India), and Vietnam. Historical migration, invasion, and sea-borne trade have infused Austronesian cultural practices into the Dong ethnic communities. Dong pipa song (gal bic bac), traditionally performed in Dong communities, recounts oral history and provides entertainment. Factors including modernisation, urbanization, and ethnic residential segregation in China have eliminated the regional context of oral tradition, disrupted the transmission of language, and challenged the practice of the performing arts in Dong ethnic communities. Young Dong people are internally migrating to metropolis areas, which can be financially beneficial but results in a detriment of inter-generational connections and the transmission of Dong music heritage. Dong communities are addressing this issue by reorganising and reconstructing Dong pipa songs from the mythology of a pair of magic gourds into ensembles in Jingzhou autonomous county to sustain Dong music and ethnic identity. This study employs the ethnographic methodologies to understand (1) the adaption of the Dong ethnic minority with external co-ethnic membership in Jingzhou, (2) the innovation and hybridity from the myth of gourd to Dong pipa ensemble, and (3) how the arrangement of Dong pipa ensembles reveals inter-ethnic interaction between the Dong minority and Han majority under Chinese jurisdiction.

3-23

**Good Life, Ambition, and Practices: Transcultural Encounters of Chinese Companies in the Globe**

**Roundtable Session**

The rapid globalization of Chinese companies has been fostering transcultural encounters that shape new imaginaries of the good life and ambition. This roundtable examines East Asia's pivotal role in envisioning our common futures through the lens of Chinese entrepreneurs operating globally. By exploring how Chinese companies engage with local practices, we examine how transcultural interactions challenge and reconfigure established norms of prosperity, development, and identity. Key questions include: How have public spaces transformed with electric charging infrastructure for metropolitan residents? How do local communities respond to Chinese businesses and shape aspirations for their good life? How do Chinese entrepreneurs' global expansions reshape notions of ambition? What cultural narratives emerge when Chinese corporate practices interact with host countries? How do Chinese businesses mediate cultural differences and localize their products in complex transnational contexts? What new forms of cooperation, conflict, and hybridity arise from these practices? What alternative visions of global connectivity emerge? Drawing on case studies from Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and beyond, this roundtable investigates the intersections of East Asian economic ambitions with global cultural pluralism. It highlights Chinese companies as economic actors and cultural intermediaries, shaping and being shaped by the worlds they engage. This roundtable invites anthropologists to critically assess East Asia's rise, focusing on the ethical, social, and political dimensions of these transcultural encounters.

**Public Spaces and Infrastructural Affordances: A Socio-Spatial Analysis of Chinese EV Companies' Charging Infrastructure in Jakarta | Wenjing QIU (Leiden University)**

The rapid investment in Chinese electric vehicle (EV) companies presents significant potential for the booming of a new environmentally-friendly industry, whereas its successful proliferation in practice will encounter substantial challenges, particularly in cities like Jakarta. Infrastructural development is one of the foremost hurdles. As a sprawling metropolitan area, Jakarta lacks sufficient electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, with many public spaces poorly equipped for widespread charging access. This research employs grid analysis to examine the spatial dynamics of charging infrastructure accessible to Chinese EV companies, investigating various forms such as charging stations, charging poles, and battery swap cabinets. This study aims to identify key shortcomings and opportunities for enhancing infrastructural affordance by mapping these infrastructures across the city. In addition to grid analysis, the research integrates anthropological fieldwork (2023-2024, followed by an upcoming field trip in 2025) to capture the perspectives of motorcycle drivers, entrepreneurs, store sellers, street vendors, and other stakeholders. This social analysis will illuminate the social dynamics and local

practices influencing the use and accessibility of charging infrastructure. Using socio-spatial analyses of infrastructure, this paper aims to offer insights into the practical challenges and potential solutions for Chinese EV companies to facilitate EV adoption in the cityscape of Jakarta.

**Pursuing a Good Life: Contesting and Overlapping Hopes Encircle a Chinese Power Plant in Ghana** | Chong ZHANG (Leiden University)

As a successful infrastructure project, the Chinese power plant has become a new source of promising future for both Ghanaians and Chinese, during its 15 years of operation history in Ghana. Pursuing a good life is a universal aspiration, yet it takes different forms and is expressed in different ways among diverse cultural groups. This paper will firstly examine the multifaceted aspirations and hopes of the Chinese and Ghanaian individuals. The generated hopes navigate their everyday life both within and outside the power plant, sometimes in conflict and sometimes in alignment with each other. Furthermore, it is argued that these hopes are influenced by interactions between Chinese and Ghanaian individuals, shaping their perceptions of the future and giving rise to new types of hope. The paper concludes with the assertion that long-term trans-cultural interaction will lead to mutual (mis)understanding at the same time.

**Code, Capital, and Coloniality: Dual Logics of Chinese Online Lending in Ghana's FinTech Economy** | Yuanwei ZONG (IESM/Shanghai Univeristy)

This study explores the interplay between financial technology (Fin-Tech), platform economies, and financial imperialism through the lens of Chinese-backed digital lending enterprises in Ghana. By juxtaposing the practices of two distinct types of Chinese-financed Fin-Tech firms—short-term profit-driven ventures and long-term growth-oriented multinationals—this research unpacks the divergent strategies shaping financial ecosystems in Africa. Employing multi-sited ethnography and code ethnography, the study examines how corporate visions and risk assessment algorithms manifest in digital lending products, influencing borrowers' financial experiences.

The analysis extends beyond the ethics of predatory lending to investigate the operational mechanisms and speculative logic underpinning financial decision-making, shaped by China's fintech boom-bust legacy and local socio-economic conditions. The research further interrogates China's role in global financial imperialism, examining the intersection of statecraft and capitalist imperatives. By decoding the algorithms that operationalize these logics, this work reveals how digital coloniality and speculative practices forge new modalities of capital extraction at financial frontiers. Ultimately, the study contributes to critical conversations on the dynamics of financialization, platform economies, and the global expansion of Chinese fintech in Africa.

**Corporation Social Possibility of A Chinese FDI Company in Ecuador: Learning, Practicing and Promoting** | Zhongzhou CUI (Center for LAC Studies, Southwest University of Science and Technology)

This study examines the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) companies in Ecuador, set against the backdrop of two decades of significant Chinese investment in Latin America. Historically, Chinese FDI enterprises have faced challenges in CSR due to their limited experience compared to their Western counterparts. This research explores how these companies navigate the ethical imperative and opportunity presented by CSR, particularly in third-world countries influenced by colonial and neo-colonial experiences that have integrated Western CSR concepts into their governance. The case study of a Chinese FDI company in Ecuador illustrates the journey from learning to practicing and promoting CSR, highlighting the cultural intersection and the difficulties faced by state-owned Chinese companies in gaining local acceptance. The study concludes that successful CSR adaptation is possible, despite the increased costs associated with FDI, and underscores the importance of CSR for the sustainability and reputation of Chinese FDI companies in the global marketplace.

**Transnationalism and Localization: How Chinese Amazon Sellers Build Cross-border Infrastructure and Network for Made-in-China Products Going Overseas** | Yiwei YANG (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Amazon is widely viewed as the most popular platform in the Global North, playing an increasing role in local politics, but most sellers are China-based. As a vital channel for Made-in-China products going overseas, the Amazon marketplace has become a contentious digital space where capital, material, and culture from China are deeply entangled with those of the destination countries. Engaging with anthropological studies of technology and infrastructure, this paper zooms into this niche field to investigate how globalization should be understood in times of platform economy. Based on multi-sited fieldwork and in-depth interviews, this study provides an ethnographic account of how Chinese practitioners in the cross-border e-commerce industry build a transnational infrastructure of supply chains, logistics, warehouses, branding, and legal and tax services in response to economic and political fluctuations in China and

internationally. It reveals why the discourse of localization” takes shape among Chinese grassroots entrepreneurs. It also sheds light on how the social imaginary of global” and local” is jointly formed by state governance, geopolitical complexities, ideologies, immigration patterns and new technologies.

**Zhiguang YIN (School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Discussant)**

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**3-24    Demographic Pressures and Intimate Futures: Rethinking Kinship, Care, and Reproduction in East Asia**

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Chair: Elizabeth MILES (Fulbright University Vietnam)

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**The Future Is Now: Agentive Orientations of Childless Women in Japan | Elizabeth MILES (Fulbright University Vietnam)**

Questions of the future haunt our reproductive decisions—will there be a future for children?—even for those who have very little choice in the matter. Writing on reproductive futurity, Lee Edelman and other queer theorists argue that the child (having children) represents the future and therefore the social; subsequently queers fail at both producing both. However, this paper asks, cannot the same be said for the childless?” While the childless in Japan do not face the same condemnation as those outside of the heteronormative matrix, their heterosexuality has not saved them from public and political condemnation for failing to act in the interest of the future of their families and of the nation. Drawing from queer theory and recent ethnographic research in Japan, this paper examines the ways in which the childless are confronting their childlessness in proactive ways that collapse both present and future. Within the past decade there has been increasing visibility—within social and traditional media—of discourses by and about women without children. At the same time, there has been a growing number of online and offline networks and groups for the childless, offering both a space for sociality and, more importantly for this paper, ways to embrace their lack” and recover their futures. Focusing primarily on the work of the Japanese NPO WINK (Well-being Institute No Kids), this paper offers an examination of how financial planning and death planning” for the childless offers a counternarrative to current understandings of reproductive futurity in Japan.

**Weighing the Costs of Love: Sacrifice and Reciprocity in Korean Romantic Relationships | Alex NELSON (University of Indianapolis)**

This paper discusses shifting attitudes towards love, marriage, and romantic relationships in contemporary South Korea and their implications for Korea’s declining marriage and fertility rates. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in South Korea from 2016-2018, including interviews (N = 75) and surveys (N = 250), a gendered division in attitudes towards sacrifice for one’s romantic partner has emerged. Romantic love is increasingly conceptualized and experienced as conditional, particularly among women, whose attitudes towards love are, on average, more pragmatic and skeptical than those of men. This gendered pattern reflects processes of de-institutionalization which are in turn shaped by gender and social class. For many college educated young women, in particular, romantic relationships and marriage carry gendered expectations that are perceived as sacrifices that are incongruent with their conceptions and aspirations of self, while men’s conceptions and expectations of sacrifice for their partners remain largely embedded in ideals of masculinity that most of them adopt uncritically, even as they express openness to less rigid gendered divisions of labor within the household, both through embracing women’s work outside the home, and engaging more in domestic work, at which they have become more competent through prolonged bachelorhood as marriage is delayed. Both men’s and women’s expectations of romantic relationships have grown more individualized, offering the possibility of more egalitarian relationships. However, the increasingly individualized and idiosyncratic expectations and aspirations for romantic relationships appear likely to contribute to delayed or forgone marriage, and thus fertility.

**Between Reproductive Governance and Reproductive Medicine: The Making of ARTs in Pro-natalist China | Ziqi XIE (Boston University)**

Despite its vigorous efforts since 2016 to encourage more childbirth, China maintains its strict legislation and regulations on assisted reproductive technologies (hereafter ARTs), which contradicts its pro-natalist stance. Numerous restriction on both individuals’ access to ARTs and IVF specialists’ clinical application coexist with the state’s pro-natalist measures. These measures are exemplified in the realm of reproductive medicine by strong support for both basic and clinical medical research, as well as the expansion and development of ob-gyn departments nationwide. This has led IVF specialists to straddle multiple rationales simultaneously as they navigate and re-shape the contradictory framework of reproductive governance. Drawing 23 months of fieldwork conducted in two renowned IVF clinics in Guangdong Province (2017-2023), this paper examines how doctors rationalize and interpret the state’s contradictory framework of reproductive governance, make use of the population policies and the healthcare system, justify discrepancies between their clinical



practices and research design, and decide between the international standards of reproductive medicine and the state's pro-natalist call. Amid the pervasive demographic anxiety in East Asia, this paper sheds light on the biopolitics of pronatalism by revealing how shifting reproductive landscapes and the (re)production of knowledge in reproductive medicine are reshaped by diverse, often conflicting rationalities and moral regimes enacted by individuals, families, biomedical professionals, and the state. Moreover, by examining how technologies and knowledge of reproductive medicine are localized, reproduced, attuned, modified, or ossified, this work moves beyond the current focus in ART studies on either the usage or societal impacts of ARTs.

**Seizing the Surplus: Creating Infrastructures of Care through Intangible Cultural Heritage Conservation in the Miyako Islands, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan** | **Natalya RODRIGUEZ (University of California, Santa Barbara)**

Amid concerns about aging societies, the breakdown of former support systems, and a pervading sense of anxiety and precariousness, scholars have foregrounded the issue of care, holding heated debates on social reproduction. One stream of thought emphasizes the exploitation in unpaid/underpaid care work; another highlights the subjective experiences of the women who overwhelmingly carry out social reproductive tasks. While these foci provide critical lenses for identifying inequality, they do not map alternative possibilities for collective care. This paper takes up an expanded perspective of care to connect the sustaining of persons with the sustaining of nonhuman species and nonliving matter. I use the case of handmade ramie thread in the Miyako Islands, Japan, to demonstrate how cultural heritage conservation work can enact alternative forms of care. The ramie textile called Miyako Jōfu was designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government in 1978; in 2003, local stakeholders succeeded in securing further governmental designation—and a new funding stream—for the thread-making techniques that turn ramie plants into the textile's raw material. Based on my ongoing fieldwork among craftspeople in the Miyako Islands, I argue that through the labor of cultural heritage conservation, participants creatively seize economic surplus in the form of government funding. They distribute this surplus locally, using it not only to pass down ramie thread-making techniques, but also to create networks of collective care among participants from different generations and regions as they interact with the ramie plant.

3-25

**Tastes of Power: Food, Memory, and Belonging in Global Circulation**

Chair: Ji-Yeon JO (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

**Culinary Futures of 'Busan Eomuk': Migration, Colonialism, and Climate Change in Shaping Gastro-politics and Gastro-affect of Fishcakes** | **Ji-Yeon JO (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)**

This paper explores how the culinary identity, production, and consumption of Busan Eomuk (Fishcake)" have been shaped by national and geopolitical politics, migration (both human and fish), and recent climate changes. It investigates diverse affective responses to shifting politics and practices surrounding Busan Eomuk." Introduced by Japanese settlers in the late 19th century, fishcake was initially a gourmet delicacy for Japanese settlers and elite Koreans during the colonial period (1910-1945). However, during the Korean War (1950-53), it became an affordable protein source for refugees and locals, using abundant fish caught off Busan's shores. Fishcake makers, who gained skills in Japanese-owned factories, adapted their techniques to produce Korean style fishcakes and played a key role in establishing fishcake factories in Busan. The high fish content of Busan fishcakes led to the city's name being associated with the quality fishcakes. The label Busan Eomuk" signified authenticity and high quality, enhancing brand images. Post-Korean War, fishcakes quickly evolved into a ubiquitous food across Korea. Despite its popularity, concerns over its production method, unsanitary consumption venues such as open markets and streets, and its Japanese nomenclature (odaeng or ten'pura ) gave fishcake an ambivalent identity in South Korea. This paper traces the gastropolitics (Appadurai 1981) and affective topography (Jo 2017) that have shaped the image and substance of Busan eomuk. It projects the inevitable changes Busan Eomuk" faces in response to climate changes, globalizing fisheries, and modernizing production mechanism and consumption venues.

**Hotter, Sweeter, Cooler: The Role of Korean Cuisine in Shaping International Students' Cultural Narratives** | **Jennifer FLINN (Independent) and Cynthia SohYoung YOO (Kyung Hee University, Co-author)**

Our paper examines how international students' experiences with Korean food during study abroad and regular enrollment in academic programs in South Korea shape their future understandings and engagement with Korean culture. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines survey data and in-depth interviews and analysis of social media content generated by students, the research explores how students interact with Korean cuisine, focusing on its role in cultural immersion, identity negotiation, and long-term cultural im-

pact. The study investigates how daily encounters with food influence students' perceptions of Korean dining practices, flavor profiles, and social interactions. Through interviews, the paper also explores how these experiences reshape students' future engagement with Korean culture, including their culinary preferences and interest in maintaining ties to Korean food traditions after returning home. The research emphasizes food not only in short-term adaptation but also in fostering long-term cultural connections, as students engage with related cultural aspects both within and outside of South Korea. By examining the lasting influence of food on students' cultural identities, this paper contributes to an understanding of how Korean food can shape ongoing cultural relationships and the global spread of Korean cultural practices. This research highlights the broader impact of food as cultural diplomacy and the transmission of Korean culture across borders.

### **Tasting China in a Teacup: The More-Than-Human Practices of Tea-Ceremony and Chinese Diasporic Place-Making in England** | Yiran TAO (University of Oxford)

Amidst increasing out-migration from post-Socialist China, tea and its associated practices have proliferated globally, becoming integral to Chinese communities abroad. This study draws on ethnographic data collected through participant observation among Chinese tea-ceremony practitioners in England to examine how foodways, epitomized by artisanal tea consumption, serve as potent sites where contrasting and overlapping diasporic articulations of home, identity, and belonging emerge. This paper argues that the transnational interplay between the site of tea consumption abroad and the imagined site of tea production in China creates two interconnected arenas where the terroir of tea and the home of diaspora are imagined, narrated, and practiced. In doing so, it interrogates the way identity- and place-making traverses the permeable borders of ethnic-racial communities to articulate multilayered homes on both geographical and symbolic terrains. Moreover, this study demonstrates that these articulations emerge through the embodied, sensorial panorama co-constructed by the assemblage of the taste and aroma of tea, the poetics of bodily practices, and the visual aesthetics of artifacts and décor. By exploring the more-than-human dynamics underpinning the articulation and practice that constitute place-making, this study situates questions of identity, displacement, emplacement, and belonging within the material, corporeal, and sensorial dimensions of tea consumption. It concludes by emphasizing the inherent hybridity and ongoing morphogenesis that characterize the notion of Chinese-ness. In doing so, this study bridges an anthropological discourse with the Sinophone literature to foster a deeper understanding of the fluid and evolving nature of Chinese diasporic identity- and place-making.

### **Taste of Poke Ahi: Taste as a Praxis of Power** | Taiki SANO (The University of Tokyo)

Popularity of poke has reached a phenomenal level of late. So much so that, on the Hawaiian islands, someone somewhere always seems to be enjoying a good scoop or two around the clock. Everyday, locals and tourists alike flock at poke counters in supermarkets, takeout stands, and even in wine shops. Truly, the taste for such a simple and humble dish of diced ingredients and seasonings has become, indeed, so deeply entrenched in the islands' gastronomy. As entrenched as it may be, however, this taste for poke did not emerge and evolve in a vacuum. Like any human taste, the taste for poke also has its own complex histories enfolded within. In Hawai'i, those histories turn out to be — those of race, ethnicity, capitalism, and colonialism. Poke's history cannot thus be told without attention to these aspects of the islands and their waters. In this spirit, this paper will tell this history of taste within the interplay of power between Hawai'i and Japan. By specifically tracing how ahi (yellowfin tuna), but not other fish or any other ingredient, has become the centerpiece of poke today, it aims to reveal the roles that Japanese migrants/settlers/capitals have played in the coming of people's taste for poke in Hawai'i. In this way, this paper, in the end, shows how this taste, which is now so deeply ingrained in the islands' palate, is, indeed also deeply implicated in the much broader relations of power of Asia and the Pacific.

**3-26****Contingent Futures: Migrant Agency, Mobility, and Precarity in Transnational East Asia**

Chair: Taku SUZUKI (Denison University)

### **Shaping Their Own Futures: Liminal Legal Asylum Seekers' Survival Tactics in Japan** | Taku SUZUKI (Denison University)

This paper provides an overview of Japan's asylum policies, and sheds light on some of the most acute challenges that asylum seekers face while living in Japan. It also examines how those asylum seekers whose applications for refugee recognition have been denied or are pending manage to survive as provisionally released" subjects with severely restricted rights. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork among provisionally released asylum seekers and those who are currently detained by Japan's Immigration Service Agency (ISA), and the interviews I conducted with nonprofit organization members and individual activists who support them, the paper presents how

these liminally legal (Cecilia Menjivar) asylum seekers, who utterly lack temporal certainty in their lives, attempt to shape their futures while their lives are indefinitely suspended by the Japanese state. It argues that the survival efforts by these asylum seekers, who are denied the right to have rights” (Hannah Arendt), and their Japanese allies to secure housing, find jobs, and receive education, can be understood not only as what Engin Isin calls daily acts of citizenship” that produce them as legitimate members of the host society, but also as defiant acts of taking control of their own temporality. By ethnographically portraying the opportunistic, collaborative, and networked tactics that detainable/deportable (Nicholas De Genova) asylum seekers and their allies use to survive in Japan, the paper suggests that their daily struggles and efforts to overcome them exemplify the precarity and hope among permanently temporary and contingent citizens (Rainer Bauböck) in Asia and beyond.

**From Expat to Influencer: How Korean Migrants Are Shaping the Hallyu Phenomenon in the Philippines | Rose Carmelle LACUATA (De La Salle University)**

Koreans have migrated to the Philippines for different purposes, from education, to jobs, businesses and even for missionary activities. Over time, their presence in the Philippines has also impacted the country in different ways, especially with the continued popularity of Korean culture, popularly known as hallyu. From movies, dramas and music, other aspects of Korean culture have slowly become more familiar to Filipinos, also thanks to the Korean community in the country. With the popularity and accessibility of social media, some Korean expatriates in the Philippines have started to use the platform not only to share their appreciation for Filipino culture, but also to share

Korean culture from their perspective. Soon, these Philippine-based Korean influencers have gained a significant following and have also established their own brand. By looking at these Korean celebrities as human brands, the study aims to look at how their social media presence has made Korean culture more accessible and more familiar to Filipinos, especially for those who originally only know about Korea through K-dramas and K-pop.

**How Digital Nomadism in Korea and Japan Shapes East Asia: Life and Community-Making Through Mobility | Daeun LEE (National University of Singapore/Seoul National University)**

This study explores the emerging mobile lifestyle of digital nomadism and practices aimed at creating digital nomad communities, spaces, and networks, focusing on Korea and Japan. In the post-pandemic era, remote work has accelerated the growth of digital nomad culture. This research examines how young people in Korea and Japan engage with it, cultivating new lifestyles and communities. Examples include co-living and co-working spaces in the two countries with members from diverse national backgrounds. The study investigates nomad events in Korea and Japan and the networks being created between the two countries. It features events, workation (work + vacation), and co-live programs promoting digital nomad culture. I share highlights from staying in co-living spaces, attending nomad events in Korea and Japan, and following digital nomads’ trajectories while exploring their routines, aspirations, and obstacles. Using mobility as a key concept, the study analyzes the flexible lives of digital nomads seemingly untethered from fixed times and spaces. Key findings reveal the emergence of a digital nomad ecosystem in East Asia, encompassing the growth of digital nomads, related communities and spaces, and state initiatives like visa programs designed to attract them. These initiatives challenge traditional notions of belonging, work-life, and community, potentially impacting Korea and Japan—often characterized by rigid, uniform lifestyles with limited diversity. New East Asian networks are also forming through digital nomad projects fostering cross-border collaboration. This study contributes to understanding how the practices of digital nomads in East Asia are shaping the region within the specific contexts of Korea and Japan.

**Greenhousing the Parallel Futures: Transnational Labor and Moral Economy in South Korean Strawberry Fields | Mengjin LUO (The University of Tokyo)**

Having undergone compressed modernization, East Asia today faces a shared challenge: the aging of its agricultural population. Since the 2010s, rural South Korea has experienced the intersection of transnational labor and returning migration, framed by the state as an opportunity for rural revitalization and agricultural entrepreneurship. While returnee farmers aspire to peasant autonomy amidst job insecurity, migrant farmworkers from Southeast Asian countries pursue cash income without aiming for permanent settlement. Their unanticipated encounters have ignited conflicts and trauma, intensifying uncertainties in employment, moral norms, and everyday life in rural communities. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted between 2023 and 2025, this paper investigates the hidden labor processes in small-scale strawberry farms, where farmers and long-term migrant farmworkers often reside in adjacent prefabricated rooms

illegally constructed within greenhouses. These greenhouses, shaped by overlapping dynamics of labor exploitation, administrative oversight, and intercultural negotiations, have become fluid social spaces where domination, protection, and care coexist and evolve. Farmers, hoping farmworkers would develop *chuin-uishik* (a sense of ownership) akin to their own, sought to foster *uri* (us-ness) by offering *jeong* (affection). Yet farmworkers, navigating precarious and self-exploitative conditions, resisted through nocturnal escapes to better-paying jobs, leaving farmers with significant losses and a deep sense of betrayal. This paper decodes the moral ambiguities and fractured future imaginaries of farmers and farmworkers, illuminating the complexities of transnational labor in smallholder farming—dominant in East Asia. It also explores alternative forms of relatedness observed during fieldwork, offering fresh insights into evolving moral economies of agricultural labor.

#### **SKY Castle in China: The Set Path and Suspended Lives of Migrant Korean Teens | Elaine ZHUANG (University of California, Davis)**

What are the lives and concerns of today's migrant Korean teens living in China, and how do these concerns play out in their lives? Following Xiang Biao's common concerns approach" (2022), I work with a group of migrant Korean teens residing in Qingdao, China, to identify their concerns and everyday struggles while unpacking the socioeconomic causes behind them. Drawing on ethnographic research, I analyze their daily routines, which revolve around school-tutoring institutions-home, revealing a spatiotemporal focus on a single teleological goal: gaining admission to South Korea's top three universities—SKY. I argue that the set path" of migrating back to South Korea to study at SKY is intricately crafted and enacted by various actors—through the strategic planning of migrant parents, the structural design of private schools, and the indispensable support of after-school tutoring institutions—in response to the political and economic structures of migrant destinations. Yet, rather than providing certainty and a sense of control, the set path," when it becomes the only optimal route and the ultimate goal of education, arbitrarily traps migrant teens in a state of suspension," leaving them with a sense of uncertainty and anxiety despite their privileged backgrounds. By unpacking the socio-economic-political forces behind migrant teens' concerns, this study illuminates the paradoxical pressures faced by today's global middle-class youth and offers insights into broader issues of transnational mobility and education.

3-27

#### **From Hunts to Herds: Human-Animal Entanglements**

Chair: Maki KITAGAWA (University of Tokyo)

#### **Tracking Bears in the Heart of the Town: Negotiating the Logic of Hunting and Security in Contemporary Japan | Maki KITAGAWA (The University of Tokyo)**

This paper describes the increasingly persistent issue of Asiatic black bears' (*Ursus thibetanus japonicus*) appearances in town areas in Japan, aiming to pursue the way of shaping new relations between humans and wild animals in an era of uncertain proximity. The number of black bears is declining worldwide and is endangered in many regions. However, an exception can be observed in Japan, where its range and population have been increasing. In the Ono Basin of Fukui Prefecture, where the bear has historically been hunted in mountains, urban sightings were first reported in 2004. In 2019, over 250 sightings were reported in Fukui Prefecture, with some resulting in injuries. In 2024, following the nationwide increase in damage, the Wildlife Protection and Management Law was revised, making bears subject to population management, and strengthening measures for their removal. Ryoshi (hunters) are tasked with preventing these incidents. Once pursuing bears in remote mountains during spring, they now track them in the heart of the town, often under challenging circumstances. How has this transformation impacted their traditional" hunting practices and skills? Moreover, how can residents, facing bear encounters during farmwork, commutes, or even in their garages, reshape their relationships with these animals? In 2019, I obtained a hunting license and conducted participant observation of 'urban bear appearances' in Ono Basin for two years. By depicting the negotiation between the logic of emergency and security and the logic of hunting, this paper explores a vision for future human-animal relations.

#### **Two Deaths in a Herd: Herd and Herder Relationships in a Pastoral Community in Inner Mongolia, China | WURIHAN (Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research)**

This study seeks to explore human-animal relationships by narrating two instances of death within a sheep herd belonging to a pastoralist family in Inner Mongolia. The analysis focuses on how these relationships are shaped in the context of climate change, shrinking pastureland, reduced pastoral mobility, and increasing market pressures. Specifically, the study examines why the growing commodification of herd animals as marketable goods has not strengthened pastoralists' dominance over them. Instead, it has fostered a closer,

more interdependent relationship between pastoralists and their herd animals. This evolving dynamic challenges the traditional ethics of reciprocity in Mongolian pastoralist lifeworlds while simultaneously introducing new dimensions to it. Drawing on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2020 and 2022 in Inner Mongolia, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with key informants, this research investigates the shifting power dynamics between pastoralists and herd animals. It aims to contribute a moral perspective from the margins to broader discussions on human-animal relations.

**Exploring the Herd Management Patterns in Mongolian Nomadic Societies: An Example of Livestock Stamping Application in Area H, Xinjiang, China [Japanese] | NAMUJIAFU (Xinjiang University)**

In Mongolian nomadic society, the so-called five animals” are undoubtedly the main property of nomadic herdsman, and they determine the ownership of livestock based on the distinctive features such as the color of the animal’s coat, age, sex, ear mark and brand. Among them, the ear mark and brand, as unique symbols imposed by human beings to clarify the ownership of livestock, are deeply intertwined with the management mode of five animals” in nomadic societies, and are closely related to the behavioral characteristics of various types of livestock. This paper explains three key points through the five animals” management model and the mobility characteristics of domestic animals in Area H, Xinjiang, China. First, focusing on herd management practices in Area H, small herds have always been managed in a one-day nomadic” mode throughout their nomadic cycle. In contrast, large herds use the one-day nomadic” strategy in phases, depending on the production needs of special periods such as the milking and lactation periods. Under multiple management modes, the four basic herd structures of small herds, cattle herds, horse herds, and camel herds are divided into many small groups of varying sizes, which makes it difficult to manage individual animals in the process of switching between the complicated group structures and multiple management modes. Secondly, despite the fact that the patriarchal system or flag structure has been dismantled after many institutional reorganizations, the Mongolian nomads scattered in the H region have still followed the tradition of branding patterns and corresponding names that originated from their ancestors. This phenomenon reflects the fact that branding is essentially different from ear-marking; it is not a mere identification, but is inextricably linked to the social system. Therefore, in terms of the overall structure of herd identification, ear-marking is mainly focused on its function in intra-herd identification. In contrast, branding tends to play a key role in the interaction between herds and the outside world, or when different herds cross paths with each other. Third, in the practice of nomadic life, there are many key elements of mutual intervention and compromise between humans and animals. On the one hand, out of motives such as avoiding various risks and meeting the demand for servitude, human beings often intervene to dismantle the herd structure, and at the same time, in order to ensure the continuity of animal husbandry production, they have to give more room for the activities of the precious breeding animals; on the other hand, the growth habits and migration instincts of the animals have also shaped” the nomadic rhythm and management of human beings to a certain extent. The human nomadic rhythm and management mode. However, this complex and dynamic interaction process is not always smooth, and often encounters unpredictable risks and challenges. Fortunately, the introduction of ear-marking and branding, as a means of identifying nomadic cultures that have been passed down to the present day, has provided an effective way to address these risks.

**In the Human-Animal Borderland: Community-Based Wildlife Conservation in a Chinese National Park | Chunkai CAO (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

In 2021, China established the first batch of five National Parks as the core institutions of conservation and protected areas. Developing the world’s largest national park system, the Chinese state has recently introduced and promoted the model of entrance communities” to facilitate effective ecological conservation while addressing the social impacts of increasing restrictive protected areas. Geographically, entrance communities” are typically rural villages straddling the boundaries of a national park, serving as buffer zones between human activity and protected wildlife habitats. This paper explores entrance communities” as emerging practices of socio-ecological governmentality in China, drawing on my ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in a southwestern Chinese county that has implemented community-based conservation and achieved a substantial recovery of wild giant panda populations. I investigate how community-based conservation practices can themselves function as sustainable means of livelihood while positioning rural villages as autonomous and agentive actors in environmental preservation, thereby underpinning the successful restoration of biodiversity. Rather than privileging community” as an ethical project solely among humans, I conceptualize entrance communities” as human-animal borderlands. In these areas, diverse conservation knowledge, technologies, and practices are deployed to document and regulate the mobility of humans and animals while fostering new relations of attentiveness between them. As borderlands are zones of busy encounters and rich social relations, I argue that the entrance communities” model highlights the entangled human-animal connections that shape shared, hopeful temporalities of restoration—reorganizing depopulated villages for development while recovering from hunting-in-



duced environmental degradation to support flourishing biodiversity.

3-28

**Consuming, Contesting, and Imagining Feminism: Digital, Intimate, and Institutional Worlds**

Chair: Hanson PARK (Seoul National University)

**Self-Expression, Consumption, and Gender: Exploring Feminist Narratives on Xiaohongshu** | Xiaohui SHI (China Agricultural University)

With the widespread adoption of social media, digital feminism has become a critical tool for women's self-expression and empowerment. Xiaohongshu (RED), a popular platform among Generation Z women in China, provides a valuable context for studying micro-practices of digital feminism due to its unique visual and consumerist features. Although prior studies have explored the impact of social media on gender identity and empowerment, limited research examines Xiaohongshu's specific role in a non-Western context, particularly its influence on feminist practices and everyday life. This study investigates the micro-practices of digital feminism on Xiaohongshu, focusing on feminist discourses and specific actions. Employing content and discourse analysis, this research examines trending feminist topics and visual content on Xiaohongshu. In-depth interviews with active users provide firsthand insights into the forms and implications of feminist practices on the platform. Preliminary findings indicate that feminist discourses on Xiaohongshu are characterized by visual and consumerist tendencies. These discourses not only encourage self-expression and economic independence but also embed specific class and cultural norms. Furthermore, feminist practices on the platform, such as consumption boycotts and support, raise awareness among women about the importance of work and economic independence. However, these practices also reinforce consumerism, positioning consumption as a key method for expressing attitudes and constructing identities. This study contributes to understanding how digital feminism operates in non-Western contexts, highlights the dual role of Xiaohongshu in promoting empowerment while simultaneously perpetuating consumerism.

**Abnormalizing Womanhood: (De-)Centering Body and Gender Norms to Understand Feminism's Pathologization in Twenty-First Century South Korea** | Anne LHEEM (Princeton University)

This project examines the politics, mediating agents, and semiotic discourses that have led to a pathologizing of feminism as a mental illness in South Korea. Through semi-structured interviews with young women (aged 20-34) born and raised in South Korea, as well as an informant-led digital ethnography of South Korean feminist internet spaces, this project explores how the stigmatized association between feminism and mental illness has come about by investigating the processes of cultural norm construction in South Korea. In doing so, I argue the following: first, I propose that the body (and body politics) is a critical lens through which gender (and gender politics) must be investigated, given their heavily intertwined implications on women's rights to safety, autonomy, and agency, fundamental aspects of the South Korean feminist agenda. Second, I contend that an investigation of the social processes of norm construction is crucial towards understanding how and why certain behaviors, actions, and aesthetic features are associated with being an "ideal" South Korean woman, as well as how such "ideal" conceptions are linked to what is considered "normal" (and, hence, "abnormal"). Lastly, I bring together these discourses on body politics and norm construction to analyze why feminism in South Korea—and womanhood more broadly—is viewed as "abnormal" to a pathological extent; I argue that these mechanisms of "othering" using medical-scientific language serve to further perpetuate patriarchal norms and diminish the rights of women, as well as feminists' aims toward gender equality and equity. Ultimately, this paper offers a more up-to-date and grounded understanding of South Korean notions of agency, social belonging, cultural norm construction, and mental health pathology that are grounded in young women's lived experiences and indicative of viable futures for feminist movements in South Korea.

**Radical Feminism in China Social Media: Female Empowerment or a Facade of Consumerism?** | Yunning WANG (Seoul National University)

In the digital era, fueled by the rapid growth of social media, feminist discourse has sparked widespread online debates, with the phenomenon of "radical feminism" gradually emerging. Radical feminism often advocates female empowerment through extreme rhetoric, yet in doing so, risks veering away from the core of gender equality and intertwines closely with consumerist agendas. This paper explores the blurred boundary between self-empowerment and consumerism within radical feminism, examining how it portrays empowerment through material consumption on social media. The study also highlights the critical role of algorithmic recommendation mechanisms in amplifying the spread of radical feminist content, intensifying gender-based tensions. Through an in-depth analysis of

this phenomenon, this paper reveals the consumerist influences behind radical feminism, aiming to foster a re-evaluation of authentic female empowerment and gender equality among the public.

**The Politics of Love: Reframing Affective Transnational Solidarities in Chinese Activism** | Ai GU (London School of Economics and Political Science)

In envisioning alternative futures, the affective dimensions of social activism—love and sympathy—operate as mechanisms for mobilizing and eliciting transnational utopian solidarity imaginaries within activist anthropology. In contemporary China, where activism endures stringent repression, love has been predominantly embraced by the remaining feminist movements as a debatable soft” power, practiced within identity frameworks such as East Asian women” that seem to form transnational solidarity grounded in cultural and anti-colonial structures. Amid the ascendance of nationalism typified by affective intensities such as hatred, this research seeks to reconceptualize and recontextualize the cosmopolitan and revolutionary potential of love within the genealogies of modern and contemporary Chinese social movements, in discussing whether love can serve as a basis for feminist internationalism and transnational solidarity in China. Through archival analysis that particularly foregrounds transnational knowledge encounters, this research focuses on two historical trajectories: (1) The introduction of love as a concept of emotion and expression since the anti-colonial revolutions of modern China. Initially interpreted through Confucianism of benevolent love” and Christian doctrines of God loves all people,” the concept was later challenged by revolutionary love that rebelled against Confucian hierarchies and submission during the democratic period. (2) The evolution of love within feminist discourses since Western second- and third-wave feminist movements. Slogans such as the personal is political” framed love as an affective force capable of revolutionizing everyday life. Haunted by these pasts, this research examines how love can offer visions of Sinofuturism and Asian-Futurism that negotiate China and East Asia’s positioning within global dynamics.

**Conscription and Contention: Exploring Gender Polarization through the Discourse on Military Conscription in South Korea** | Ofelya ALIYEVA (Korea University)

The debate over female conscription in South Korea extends beyond policy reform, reflecting deeper societal tensions around gender roles, equality, and perceived injustices. Traditionally a male-only obligation, conscription has served as a cornerstone of masculinity in Korean society, providing men with social and economic rewards in return for military service. However, shifts in the socio-political landscape, including the abolition of compensatory rewards like the extra points system, have led many men to view conscription as a source of reverse discrimination. Simultaneously, feminist movements advocating for gender equality have gained momentum. These conflicting dynamics have intensified gender polarization, particularly among youth. Young men increasingly express anti-feminist sentiments, framing feminist advancements as a threat to their status and supporting policies reflecting their frustrations. In contrast, young women lean more toward progressive ideologies and actively challenge traditional norms. Discussions about female conscription have gained traction amid demographic challenges, making the issue a focal point in the broader gender divide. Against this backdrop, public opinion on female conscription has shifted, with support increasing across diverse demographic groups, including young women, whose motivations remain underexplored. This research explores how attitudes toward conscription vary across identities and examines the factors driving shifts in public opinion. It situates the debate within the broader context of gender polarization, especially among younger generations, where anti-feminist sentiments and adversarial gender identities are particularly pronounced. Ultimately, it contributes to feminist scholarship by offering insights into how institutional debates on conscription reflect and shape broader societal tensions around gender equality and fairness.

3-29

**Material and Media: Artifacts, Artisans, and Digital Memory**

Chair: Deepanjali MISHRA (Kiit University)

**An Analysis of the Digital Archival Culture in Museums** | Deepanjali MISHRA (KIIT UNIVERSITY)

Revolution of technology has ushered in reformatations in various fields one of them preservation of rich cultural heritage of each country. To look into the growing demands of upgradations of museums the government and the management has sought for its digital archival. People from across the country and the world visit the tourist destinations to explore the rich cultural heritage of a country that includes food, cultural practices, places of worship, historical monuments etc. When the tourists visit a country, it is the museums which they prefer to visit most because museums are symbolic form of cultural heritage. Even before the technology was invented, anthropol-

ogists, social scientists, experts in technology, advocated for the archival of the cultural heritage. Therefore libraries, and archives were considered to understand the need to connect with the visitors who visited there to explore the country's culture and history. There are many museums in the world who have digitalised themselves facilitating the tourists to visit there even if they are not physically present. One such museum is Gimhae National Museum in South Korea. They have developed AI which enables 360 degree virtual tours of the customers across the world irrespective of their location. In the same way there are various other museums in the world like Louvre Museum in France, the British Museum in UK are some of them which provide data for the tourists and the researchers in the area of history, anthropology and culture studies. Therefore the basic objective of this paper is to make an analysis of how digital museums can provide an opportunity for the tourists and the researchers to explore the cultural heritage of a nation.

### **Hometown Association as Medium: Memory Inheritance and Identity Reconstruction of Contemporary Indonesian Fujianese Communities** | Bao-Long CHEN (Communication University of China)

Since the late 20th century, Indonesia's democratization has led to the revival of Chinese hometown associations that had been dormant during the Suharto era. Among these, the Fujianese hometown associations have aligned with globalization and the rise of the Chinese economy, re-emerging as a key medium of transnational communication within the global Fujianese diaspora. Drawing on Régis Debray's theory of mediology, this study examines the Indonesian Jinjiang Hometown Association (IJHA) as a primary medium of communication within the Indonesian Fujianese community. Based on participant observation and semi-structured interviews, the study shows that the IJHA, driven by the Indonesian Chinese community's desire to revive ethnic culture and supported by China's Belt and Road Initiative, has forged institutional links with local Indonesian society, their ancestral homeland in Fujian, and various hometown associations globally. Through this transnational network, Indonesian Fujianese have increased their economic and social capital, facilitating their integration into local society while strengthening their awareness and identity with their ancestral roots. Additionally, the IJHA has initiated various media practices, such as publishing newsletters, offering Chinese language classes, establishing a memorial hall, and forming social media groups, all of which preserve collective memories of homeland, migration, survival, trauma, and revival. These memories are not simply derived from 'traditional Chinese culture', but are a 'selective reconstruction' shaped by globalization and Indonesian nationalism. This study shows how Indonesian Fujianese have reshaped a hybrid identity that blends national, ethnic and dialect groups, enriching our understanding of their cultural resilience and offering new insights into future cross-cultural interactions between China and Southeast Asia.

### **Crafting Cultural Connections: The Impact of Contemporary Artisans on Cross-Cultural Interaction in George Town's World Heritage Site** | Niao XU (Universiti Sains Malaysia)

This study investigates the role of contemporary artisans in promoting cultural interaction within the George Town World Heritage Site, focusing on three ethnic groups: Malay (batik craftsmanship), Baba-Nyonya (culinary arts) and Chinese (souvenir-making). While heritage studies often emphasize historical architecture and traditional art forms, this research highlights the overlooked contributions of artisans in blending diverse cultural influences through their skills and business practices. Using ethnographic methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and artifact analysis, the study explores how artisans integrate cultural elements into their crafts, fostering cross-cultural engagement and innovation. The research emphasizes the important role of artisans in building connections between cultures and communities, offering fresh perspectives for heritage studies and practical insights for supporting contemporary heritage in multicultural settings.

### **The Manufacturing, Circulation, and Use of the Changsha Kiln Ceramic Figurine: A Study of Forms, Function, and Embedded Ideologies** | Zhi-Qiu YE (Wake Forest University)

The Tongguan Kiln is an archaeological site from the late Tang Dynasty in Changsha, Hunan Province, China. The Changsha Ware ceramics produced at the kiln are well known for their utilitarian forms, incorporating those played by children as toys in many forms, showing the diversity of people's daily lives in the late Tang Dynasty. This research conducted an artifact analysis of ceramic figures from the Tongguan collections in the Lam Museum and Changsha Museum to investigate the manufacturing standards for Changsha Ware figurines and explore their significance in society. The analysis categorizes five types of defects: glazing issues, physical defects, irregular forms, abrasion, and roughness. Moreover, the identification of patterns on the decorations of the Changsha Ware, as well as the form of the human figurines, were also considered in the artifact analysis. To achieve this, the present ongoing study addresses three main questions: 1) By examining the defects of figurines excavated from the kiln site, what criteria determine whether a ceramic figurine is

considered marketable? 2) In the context of miniaturization, what ideologies influence the styles of these figurines, especially human figures, and have these ideologies impacted other types of vessels? 3) Among the ideologies identified, how are they related to gender roles during the late Tang Dynasty, particularly following An Lushan's Rebellion? This study also exemplifies how undergraduate students can engage in cross-cultural research, emphasizing the support necessary for developing independent research for anthropology within the East Asian context, particularly for international students based in North America.

**3-30****Curating Memory: Practices of Heritage, Identity, and Cultural Reimagination**

Chair: Conor AHERNE (CIEE Kyoto)

**Educating Across Borders: International Education and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Kyoto | Conor AHERNE (CIEE Kyoto)**

Kyoto, renowned for its historic temples, traditional neighborhoods, and cultural practices, faces increasing pressures from urbanization, overtourism, and demographic shifts. Simultaneously, it serves as a global hub for international education, welcoming students eager to immerse themselves in its rich heritage. This paper explores how international education can act as a vital practice for preserving cultural heritage, fostering both local and global collaboration. Drawing on my experience as Center Director of CIEE Kyoto, a study-abroad program hosting over 1,000 students annually, I examine how anthropological approaches to cultural immersion and community engagement allow students to become active participants in heritage preservation. Case studies include collaborations with local artisans, temple communities, and cultural organizations, showcasing how cross-cultural mentorship and shared responsibility can protect and sustain Kyoto's traditions. This paper also considers the complexities of balancing cultural authenticity with the demands of global education, addressing issues of cultural appropriation and representation. By framing international education as a dynamic, intergenerational process, I argue that it plays a transformative role in shaping sustainable futures for cultural heritage. Aligned with the conference theme, *Shaping Futures: East Asia as Practice*, this paper situates Kyoto as a site where local traditions and global networks intersect, contributing to broader anthropological conversations about transnational ties, cultural preservation, and the evolving role of education in a changing world.

**Jinmu-tennō as a "Realm of Memory" in Japan's Periphery | Marie ULRICH (Kanazawa University)**

Using Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory), this paper investigates the contemporary role of Japan's mythological first emperor and nation-founder, Jinmu-tennō, in shaping collective and cultural identity in Miyazaki Prefecture. Once a cornerstone of ultra-nationalist propaganda until 1945, Jinmu's narrative continues to influence Japan's identity today, raising questions about its modern (re)interpretations. His story persists in popular culture, with non-fiction books and manga widely available, perpetuating diverse perspectives on his legacy. In Miyazaki Prefecture—believed to be his birthplace—sites like Takaharu, Miyazaki City, and Hyuga intertwine myth-related shrines with wartime monuments, creating a complex historical narrative. This study examines how Jinmu is represented in contemporary Japan, and how local communities perceive him today. Framing the figure of Japan's nation-founder and his myth as a *lieux de mémoire*, I analyze his portrayal and remembrance in contemporary Japan through tourism materials, mass publications, and interviews with Miyazaki residents. On this basis, I critically examine whether current interpretations diverge from wartime narratives and explore how modern perspectives align—or conflict—with official representations. Finally, I discuss how Jinmu's contemporary usage reflects broader tendencies in Japan to engage with, reinterpret, or obscure aspects of its modern history.

**Shuri Castle: A Monumental Vision of Third Space in Okinawa | Leah WASIL (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)**

In 2019 Shuri Castle—a UNESCO World Heritage site, a symbol of Okinawan cultural identity, and the Ryukyuan Kingdom's pride of 500 years—burned to the ground. In the years since that time, archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and conservation experts have planned its restoration. The stakes are high: Shuri Castle is nothing less than an emblem of survival and revitalization of Okinawan history, heritage, and identity. The contents of this talk focus on the undertaking of the rebuilding of Shuri Castle. At the core of Shuri Castle's restoration lies deep-seated issues of identity, resistance, and pride. Shuri Castle as a monumental icon provides a third space in which these deep-seated issues are given light in negotiations of identity and purpose. These negotiations are playing out as stakeholders navigate the political, economic, and social power relations of archaeology, nationalism(s), identity, and tourism. As a witness to the past, Shuri Castle occupies a liminal space in which the multiple histories, identities, and voices are being brought to the forefront of the dis-

course. Additionally, Shuri Castle is an example of monumental vision in which the divide between the material and immaterial collapses. Therefore, its reconstruction offers a study of community involvement, international cooperation, and interdisciplinary approaches working together to redefine how monuments take on an active role in heritage-making.

**Recasting Heritage Conservation as Rites of Resilience, Care and Protection beyond Crises: A Case Study of Memory-Work in Mianzhu** | **Qiwei GUO (University College London)**

This study investigates an alternative pathway for heritage conservation, reflecting on how past narratives provide structure and memory for identity and psychological protection by reshaping heritage conservation as rites of resilience, care and protection beyond crises. Using China's Mianzhu New Year paintings as a case study, it explores the self-redemption and protection of local New Year heritage and rituals, and the dynamics between local protection rites and identity and memory work, while reflecting on the potential and challenges of heritage conservation 'after modernity'. Mianzhu New Year paintings are a regional cultural heritage rooted in the Chinese New Year, which has a profound impact on the collectivity and social nature of the local society. Employing heritage ethnography as its primary methodology, this study draws on oral history, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and archival research on the New Year paintings and associated rituals in Mianzhu. Through a short historical review tracing of the development of the Mianzhu community since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, and the subsequent challenges of social isolation during the pandemic, this study examines how the protective rituals surrounding New Year paintings function as emotional and spiritual anchors within the community, and how they affect people's collective memory and expression of self-identity. These findings reveal how various actors—including local governments, businesses, community residents, and heritage practitioners—engage with different heritage encounters through memory script writing, ritual participation, and heritage creation, which transformatively responded to current needs, beliefs, desires and emotions, and alleviated senses of rootlessness, rupture and displacement.

**Reimagining Chineseness: Comparing Two Exhibitions on China at the Wereldmuseum in the Netherlands as Intergenerational Museological Practice** | **Willem VAN WIJK (Leiden University) and Xiaomei ZHAO (Fudan University, Co-author)**

This paper examines two China-focused exhibitions at the Wereldmuseum, the Dutch National Ethnographic Museum. It compares the permanent exhibition established over twenty years ago in Leiden to the temporary Made in China exhibition opened in 2024 in Rotterdam. As David Lowenthal argues, successive generations continually curate and re-curate the past to address present needs and shape future imaginaries. These exhibitions illustrate how such processes unfold within museological practice. By comparing these two exhibitions, we show how a single institution addressing similar topics reflects different moments in museological development. The older exhibition originates from a time when museology was still establishing itself as a discipline, presenting Chinese culture through historical, folkloric, and religious materials in a mostly static narrative. In contrast, the recent Made in China exhibition engages with a matured body of critiques, positioning heritage as dynamic and inclusive by emphasizing contemporary creativity and exploring production, reproduction, and sustainability. Drawing on conversations with colleagues, friends, and students, in particular those with Chinese backgrounds, we examine how their interpretations intersect with and challenge the curatorial strategies of both exhibitions. These reflections shed light on the network of diverse individuals negotiating heritage narratives and constructions of Chineseness at museums, within museums, promoting future heritage practices that actively embrace and foster such multiplicity and critical engagement. This comparison offers insights into intergenerational museological practice and the reimagination of heritage practice for more inclusive futures.

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**3-31**

**Biopolitics and Multispecies Relation: Dynamics of Life and Death Shaped within Frictions**

Chair: **Seung Cheol LEE (Seoul National University)**

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In a more-than-human world, diverse world-making projects of multispecies beings exist in various relational modalities: indifferent juxtaposition, annihilation and flourishing together. How can we consider 'coexistence' with nonhuman others without assuming rosy futures, while facing the messy realities of shared existence? Might ethnographic inquiry into the specificities of 'staying with the trouble' be helpful in addressing this question? This panel approaches the human-nonhuman relations as loci of (affirmative) biopolitics, the processes of governing an assemblage of matters of life. Building on ethnographic observations across East Asia, this panel explores how power, knowledge, and ethics collectively shape the dynamics of life and death within multispecies relationships. These dynamics are demonstrated in phenomena such as eco-tourism forest development, animal sanctuary for Asiatic black bears, massive insect



outbreaks in urban areas, and butterfly specimen-making practices, of which the first three in South Korea and the last one in Yunnan, China. The papers draw attention to tensions, conflicts, and the ensuing openings of biopolitical practices. Conflicts occur through the interplay of various forces: ongoing capitalist imperatives formed within or beyond the context of developmentalism, emerging ecological subjectivities and activisms, opposing ways of knowledge practices, and more. By persistently focusing on the complexities of life and death dynamics, this panel suggests rethinking the ethico-political challenges inherent in multispecies relationships. In doing so, it aims to draw from anthropological praxis more situated possibilities of living in the more-than-human world.

**Alternative Enactment of Life and Living Beings: Care as Restorative Justice at a South Korean Bear Sanctuary** | **Seung-Eun SHIN (Seoul National University)**

In South Korea, Asiatic black bears, once mobilized in the gallbladder industry supported by the government, were gradually excluded from industrial use due to the decline of 'bizarre animal husbandry' and the shift in wildlife policies during the late 20th century. Some of the bears that remained on farms without proper concern are now looked after by activists of Project Moon-bear" which founded an animal sanctuary in 2021. Animal sanctuaries emerge as a movement strategy to explore an alternative model of human-animal relationship within the specific context of South Korea, including dissemination of new ideologies regarding animals such as veganism and (in)direct influence from global NGOs. This paper qualitatively explores the specificities of interspecies care at the sanctuary and ethicalities of care constructed through these practices. As a practical reference of 'good care', caretakers pay close attention to the unique individuality of the bears and strive to fulfill their wildness. However, these traits of bears are not their inherent essences but are enacted within a specific arrangement of practices, artifacts, knowledge, and affects. In this sense, animal sanctuaries are loci of the alternative in action—not as complete antitheses to exploitation. Furthermore, the purpose of the bear sanctuary, which is responsible for the remaining lives of bears that are too old and acclimatized to humans to return to the 'wild', makes us rethink the issue of undoing human intervention and the concept of liberation, often imagined as the ideal opposite of human-induced conditions of captivity and exploitation.

**Multispecies Connections in Emergence and Cutting: Tensions and Conflicts Surrounding the Urban Forest Development Policy** | **Heung-Jun KIM (Yonsei University)**

This paper examines urban forest development policies in Korea through a multispecies perspective, focusing on the (dis)connections formed in government-led development sites. In Korea, forests are natureculture," shaped by human intervention, including state-led developmentalism. This paper investigates how humans and non-human entities establish or sever relationships within forests and how these interactions shape forest landscapes. The research centers on Bong Mountain, spanning Eunpyeong District in Seoul and Goyang City in Gyeonggi Province, where the Eunpyeong District Government is developing a cypress forest. The local governments view forests as a means of forest welfare and eco-tourism, and are developing cypress forests, reflecting a shift in Korea's developmental rationale, which was previously rooted in developmentalism. This project has drawn criticism from local civic groups for clear-cutting the existing forest. In response, these groups engage in forest monitoring and birdwatching as anti-development activities, opposing the project by tracing the multispecies networks inherent in the original forest.

This paper explores the temporal and spatial contexts that have shaped Bong Mountain's landscape, examines how the current project is transforming it, and analyzes how civic groups foster multispecies connections to resist development. It also considers how multispecies justice can be practiced in this context. The multispecies connections established by civic groups are disconnected from the government's policy process. The paper concludes by discussing how such disconnections challenge the integration of multispecies justice into development policies and suggests pathways for fostering justice in contested landscapes like Bong Mountain.

**'Unwanted' Visitors in the City: Fraught Coexistence with Lovebugs in Seoul** | **Chae-Yeon LIM (Yonsei University)**

Lovebugs(*Plecia longiforceps*) proliferate in urban areas due to climate change and the urban heat island effect. Since 2022, they have become regular visitors to the summer scenes in northwest Seoul: Dozens, even hundreds of them abruptly appear, flying into homes and shops and clinging to people's clothing and vehicles. Citizens hate, if not fear, them because of their massive numbers and peculiar appearance that two bugs remain attached at their bottoms, from which they earned the nickname 'lovebugs'. Although harmless and seasonal(last only for a few weeks), these bugs became the target of municipal and civil pest control. More drastic prevention measures are under discussion, which receives criticism from environmental groups. Through the example of lovebugs, this study examines how these 'unwelcomed' insects are governed, thought about, and related to Seoul's everyday life. Drawing on recent work on

multispecies anthropology, lively cities, and biosecurity, this paper examines how insect outbreaks are interpreted and managed within urban governance, public perception, and activist efforts. It specifically focuses on contested narratives and related affect surrounding the insects not just as urban ‘pests,’ but also the species to live with. In doing so, this paper explores how such insect outbreaks refigure human-insect relationships, creating both tension and possibilities for coexistence. It attempts to speculate on the sociopolitical dynamics of living with unloved others”. Together, this research joins the discussion on the politics of multispecies city, raising questions about how urban communities navigate discomfort and ecological entanglements in their everyday lives.

**Capturing Auras: Entangled Values in Butterfly Collection and Specimen-making Practices in Yunnan** | Xuanqi YANG (Hiroshima University)

This paper examines the cultural phenomenon of fetishism in butterfly collection in Yunnan, a region with subtropical climate and a historical context of insect collection and specimen-making that continue to shape contemporary engagements with more-than-human worlds. Since the late 20th century, these practices have grown alongside technical shifts emphasizing the return to nature, resonating with postmodernism and the revival of local cultures. By analyzing the transformation of living butterflies into artifacts, this paper explores how these creatures become fetishes imbued with scientific, aesthetic, and commercial value. In this regard, specimen-making is not merely about preservation or transition but a dynamic process that captures the ‘auras’ of butterflies, turning ephemeral beings into enduring objects which embody fetishism and cannibalize cultural meanings. This paper mainly focuses on two ethnographic cases in Yunnan. In Kunming’s Xishan and Qipan Mountain nature reserves, a naturalist engages in specimen-making as a form of scientific documentation, while a professional photographer captures butterflies’ ephemeral ‘aura’ for artistic and ecological recordings. Meanwhile, in Maotian Mountain, Chengjiang, a local insect enthusiast and YouTuber documents his collection practices and participates in the specimen trade, connecting fetish practices with broader market dynamics and local museum/government’s context. These cases illuminate the strain between the aesthetic/ecological bodies of butterflies and their commodification as artifacts. Moreover, these cases highlight how specimen-making mediates conflicting values, including conservation, economic utility, and ‘religional’ memories, creating interspecies entanglements spanning multiple-realities. Positioned within the Anthropocene’s intensifying ecological crises and patchy landscapes, this paper reveals the vulnerabilities inherent in multispecies relationships, underscoring the tension wherein efforts to eternalize or assign values to other species risk objectifying and exploiting them in the process.

Euy-Ryung JUN (Jeonbuk National University, Discussant)

Hee-Sun HWANG (Seoul National University, Discussant)

3-32

**Crafting Well-Being in an Age of Uncertainty: Body, Care, and Temporality [English & Chinese]**

Chair: Ping FAN (Duke Kunshan University)

Based on the topic: well-being amidst an era of anxieties,” our panel seeks to uncover various approaches to fostering well-being. In an age of uncertainty, four researchers examine bodily transformations, detail specific care practices, and reflect on their experiences of temporality.

Keyu Zhang’s study, grounded in fieldwork at a children’s palliative care institution in China, employs a sensory ethnographic approach to understand how caregivers support orphaned and disabled children. It observes the relationship between body, care, and temporality in the context of severe pediatric illnesses, where life expectancy is often uncertain. Xinyu Liu’s research applies a life course method to examine an 80-year-old woman’s illness narrative. Moreover, Liu’s research reveals the power of women’s resistance to structured oppression in a medicalized environment.

Yuan Li investigates how urban Chinese women navigate mind-body stress and pursue self-optimization through health supplement consumption. Analyzing evolving body care practices and digital platform influences, she unveils the dynamic interplay between health consumption, societal expectations, and subjectivity in contemporary China. Our panel centers on marginalized populations, highlighting the intricate connections between body, care, and temporality in navigating uncertainty. Collectively, these studies reveal the potential to craft inclusive and adaptive forms of well-being, offering valuable insights into human resilience and creativity in confronting structural and temporal challenges.

**Between Life and Death: Care Practices in Pediatric Palliative Care** | Keyu ZHANG (East China Normal University)

This study, based on fieldwork conducted at a children's palliative care institution in China, delves into the delicate space between life and death, where caregivers navigate their roles as mothers for critically ill orphaned children. It investigates how these caregivers interpret and embody this maternal identity, facing emotional and ethical challenges with resilience, resourcefulness, and negotiation.

The research highlights the influence of cultural and institutional frameworks on caregivers' emotions and actions. It explores how caregivers reconcile physical caregiving practices with the limitations of language, and how they seek self-recognition through emotional labor in their daily routines. Additionally, the study sheds light on the pressures of institutional management, examining how caregivers develop coping strategies to navigate systemic constraints and societal expectations, thereby crafting a dual practice of emotional connection and ethical engagement.

Reflecting on the intricate interplay between love and care," this study reveals how caregivers forge profound bonds of empathy rooted in shared pain while grappling with the ethical complexities of what could be described as violent love." It captures a nuanced picture of caregiving, where hope and struggle coexist in the pursuit of meaning within the grey areas of life and death.

#### **Life Course and Depression: The Illness Narrative of an 80-Year-Old Chinese Woman | Xinyu LIU (Minzu University of Chin)**

This study takes the life course theory paradigm as an analytical framework, writes about the life course of an elderly woman with mental disorders in Chinese, explores the complex relationship between the life course of the informant and the generation of depression, links the personal history with the social history, and digs into the depth of the case study. First, in terms of methodology, this study projects the issue of mental disorders onto the life course of the cases through the narratives of the informant, and examines the processual connection between personal distress and social issues. Secondly, this study interprets the emotional and expressive journeys of the informant, and argues that the medicalized body is a protective shield for memory, and that the expression of pain and suffering is a subgenre of resistance". Finally, through the lens of life course theory, this study reflects on a dualistic framework of thinking about the marginal and the subject, the body and the mind. People with mental disorders are a marginalized group in society, but through mental disorders and their expression, the people who experience them reshape their sense of subjectivity, and mental disorders become a form of self-empowerment. At the same time, people can respond to the divestment of the body and the mind through the healing modalities of non-Western psychiatry, nature and culture, the body and the mind are tightly bound together, and the body and the mind can be healed.

#### **Wellness and Algorithms: Navigating Health Supplement Consumption and Self-Abstract: Optimization among Urban Women in Post-Pandemic China | Yuan LI (Independent)**

Optimization among Urban Women in Post-Pandemic China

This study explores how urban professional women in post-pandemic China (ages 22-40) engage in health supplement consumption to address workplace stress and self-optimization needs. Functional supplements targeting insomnia, depression, and inflammation have been integrated into their wellness routines, influenced by continuous inputs from social media platforms like Xiaohongshu. Employing digital ethnography on Xiaohongshu and in-depth interviews with urban women, and framed within biocultural theory, this study focuses on three interwoven dimensions: Examining how algorithmic recommendations and user-generated content on digital platforms intertwine scientific discourses with lifestyle aesthetics, transforming mental and physical health into consumable healing solutions"; Analyzing how new middle-class women, under pressures of workplace competition, reproductive health, and appearance anxiety, construct digital self-presentation and identity through health consumption; Investigating how these self-optimization practices, mediated by social media, simultaneously reflect women's consumer agency while reinforcing neoliberal logics of stratified and gendered discipline. By integrating the theory of body multiple with the embodied experiences of urban Chinese women, this research illustrates how young women negotiate self-worth and societal expectations through health consumption in the era of digital capitalism. It contributes to the understanding of digital health practices in East Asian medical anthropology and offers new perspectives on the interplay between body, technology, and subjectivity in platform economies.

**Yukun ZENG (University of Michigan, Discussant)**

## Posters

## Poster Presentation I

**Art as Discourse: Power and Participation in East Asia's Public Spaces | Lu ZHENG (The University of Arizona)**

This study explores participatory art as a political expression medium in East Asia's strict censorship context, focusing on the "Borderless Art Museum" initiative at Guangzhou's Zhushigang Vegetable Market. Led by FEI Arts Museum and centered on He Zhiseng's four-year engagement, the project integrated art with daily life to enhance cultural identity and emotional connections among diverse community groups. This case demonstrates that art evaluation must encompass aesthetic, cultural, and political dimensions, particularly in participatory art, which challenges power structures and catalyzes social and political discourse in East Asia.

**That Neighbour from Hell: A Study on Lateral Surveillance in Singapore | Rachyl LIM (National University of Singapore)**

In Singapore, the phenomenon of lateral surveillance (i.e., peer-to-peer surveillance) has become a defining feature of everyday life, particularly within public housing estates. No longer confined to physical acts of watching, lateral surveillance has expanded over the years onto digital platforms, transforming neighbourhood monitoring into a form of communal oversight that extends beyond physical proximity. This exploratory study explores this trend, examining the process by which individuals observe and then share perceived acts of deviance online, thereby engaging both their immediate neighbours and a wider digital audience. Conducting content analysis of articles and posts as well as interactions between users on platforms such as STOMP, Mothership.sg, and Complaint Singapore Facebook group, this paper investigates how the high-density living, close proximity, and infrastructural design of Housing Development Board (HDB) estates parallel the Panopticon, where the characteristics of HDB living facilitates constant mutual observation. The findings reveal inherent paradoxes between lateral surveillance, privacy, and trust among neighbours within the HDB estate, illustrating how these dynamics shape social behaviours and interactions in densely populated urban settings. While this study does not determine the impact of lateral surveillance on social cohesion, it highlights the role of HDB's unique structural and social environment in fostering a tolerance norm between neighbours—a delicate balance between privacy, power, and coexistence. This paper thus contributes to broader discussions on how technology reshapes community relations, emotional well-being, and the fabric of urban life in today's world.

**Faith in Materiality: Exploring Cultural Identity and Religious Practice in Urban China's Christian Communities | Xiaodeng LIN (University of Toronto)**

This research explores the dynamic interplay between religious practice and cultural identity within certified and underground Christian communities in urban China. The study employs interviews, participant observation, and analysis of material cultures to document the daily practices and the broader socio-cultural implications of these religious activities. Preliminary findings suggest that material culture plays a significant role in sustaining religious identity and community cohesion. Objects such as culturally represented religious icons, a small range of published Christian books, and the fluid site of worship practices are not merely features of worship but representations of deep communal bonds that are reinforced by the cultural and political background. The research investigates the layers of meaning encoded in these material symbols, revealing how they serve as repositories of collective memory and identity, such as how the narratives of history, heritage, and faith are transmitted across generations. The study uncovers the subtle ways communities assert their identity and spiritual beliefs by examining the specific cultural contexts embedded in these objects with meaning. This research contributes to the broader discourse on religious practice in restrictive environments, offering a nuanced understanding of how the religion of Christianity and churches in China navigate the complexities of surveillance and state control. It also examines the implications of these practices for theories of resistance and adaptation in studying East Asian religions. By presenting this poster, I aim to engage with fellow scholars to discuss the intersection of religion, material representations, regulation, and resistance and to refine this study's methodology and theoretical frameworks.

**Korean Diaspora as Agents of Migration to the Philippines | Hannah Faith MONANA (University of the Philippines)**

Since 2006, South Koreans ranked first among the foreign tourist arrivals in the Philippines with more than 1.6 million arrivals. Aside from tourism, the influx of Koreans in the Philippines is also because of business, employment, education, residency, and retirement which made the Philippines one of the top countries to host Korean migrants. Because of the increasing number of Korean migrants in the Philippines, the Koreans in the country started to form a Korean community to maintain their connection to their culture and to show their pride as Koreans. They also aim to contribute to the development of their homeland by strengthening South Korea's friendship and fellowship with the Philippines. This study investigates how the Korean migrants associations in the Philippines become an

agent of migration for their fellow Koreans. Through a survey and analysis of their activities and interviews of the leaders and members, this study aims to investigate how the Korean community associations form networks and relationships with their host community, establish their influence in the area, and negotiate with the local government in order to facilitate the migration and settlement of their fellow Koreans in the Philippines.

**Lost in the Market, Found in the Digital World: Liquid Love, Fantasy Online Role-Play | Wenxin XIAO (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

In post-COVID China, young generations are continuously burned out in a paradoxical situation, where the promise of upward mobility through education has faltered, the job market has shrunk with rising unemployment while the state is calling for more fertility to boost productivity. Amid these unsettling tensions, alongside the widely discussed phenomenon of “lying flat” as a form of passive resistance from Chinese youth, an alternative response, especially from young women, has emerged: a dramatic rise in participation in an online role-playing practice- “language cosplay” that manifests their agency amidst structural uncertainty. Embedded in social media, young women impersonate male characters from Western media (e.g., Draco Malfoy from Harry Potter or Loki from Marvel) to co-create gay relationship narratives and foster intimacy that blurs online and offline realities. Drawing on long-term digital ethnography and in-depth interviews on Celebrity Moment (the world’s first and current primary language cosplay app), this study reframes “Global East Asia Future” in cyberspace by examining how Chinese language cosplayers reinterpret and embody Western media characters to creatively (re) construct ethnicity, gender, and cultural identities in a technologically and culturally diffused age. Built on Stuart Hall’s identity theory, this study explores how participants challenge dominant Western cultural representations, asserting agency in role-playing by blending global influences and local adaptations. Also, it captures how participants perform, negotiate, and subvert gender norms through gender blending to address the tensions between subversion and reinforcement of dominant heteronormativity and imagine a queer digital future in contemporary Chinese society.

**Remembering a Landfill: Grief, Memory, and the Politics of Waste at Nanjido Landfill | Sooh KWK (Independent)**

Landfills serve as the final destination for both material and affective residues of life, discarded and relegated to obscurity. Landfills, therefore, function as sites of forgetting, brought into (non)existence by a complex interaction of governance, engineering, and social value systems. This study focuses on the Nanjido landfill in Seoul, South Korea, now transformed into an ecological park, examining it as a site where the act of forgetting is contested. In the aftermath of the 1995 Sampoong Department Store collapse, which claimed over 500 lives, debris from the disaster—including rubble, human remains, and personal belongings—was deposited at the Nanjido landfill. I examine the excavation and forensic efforts undertaken at Nanjido landfill, where bereaved families and authorities sifted through the layers of discarded material to recover the remains of the disaster victims. Through these practices of recovery that bring together post-disaster grief and memory, the Nanjido landfill emerges as a site where remembrance and forgetting, discarding, and recovery are redefined and renegotiated. I focus on how the relationship between bodies, waste, memory, and governance is reframed through these recovery practices, shaping the ways we encounter and engage with sites of trauma and loss. Ultimately, I ask not only how we choose to remember disaster through such processes but also how we might reconnect with the places and events society chooses to forget.

**Gendered Financial Dynamics, Healthcare Policy, and Women’s Access to Assisted Reproductive Technology in Contemporary China | Ruo-Ran QIU (Duke University)**

This study explores the multifaceted factors shaping women’s access to and utilization of assisted reproductive technology (ART) within the context of Chinese marriages, focusing on the interplay of gendered financial dynamics, healthcare policy, and cultural norms. Key areas of investigation include women’s income contribution, economic dependence, property ownership, and decision-making power, and how these factors influence their willingness to pursue ART and related health outcomes. The research critically evaluates the inclusion of approximately 11 ART-related procedures in China’s national health insurance system, examining its impact on family decision-making processes and societal attitudes. It addresses whether this policy empowers women to exercise greater reproductive autonomy or, conversely, reinforces male control over family finances. The study also considers rural-urban disparities and socioeconomic inequalities to assess the policy’s effectiveness for women in low-income or rural households. Additionally, the research investigates women’s embodied experiences during ART treatments, particularly how physical changes shape their acceptance of ART and overall reproductive decision-making. By integrating perspectives on gender relations, family economic structures, and policy, the study



provides a comprehensive understanding of the cultural, economic, and institutional factors influencing ART access and utilization in contemporary China. This research offers critical insights into the intersection of healthcare, equity, and family dynamics, contributing to broader discussions on reproductive health in East Asia.

**The Commercialization of Love and Marriage: Focusing on a Matchmaking Agency in Korea | Joo-Eun LEE (Seoul National University)**

This study examines the commercialization of love and marriage in contemporary Korea, where declining marriage and birth rates have emerged as pressing social issues. The growth and popularization of matchmaking agencies in Korea can be seen as a representative example of this trend. Matchmaking agencies provide tailored and specialized services to facilitate serious relationships. While keeping the ideal of romantic love, these agencies simultaneously function as mediators of marriage, framed as exchanges of socioeconomic resources such as appearance, income, profession, and educational background. By analyzing the practices and influence of matchmaking agencies and the matchmakers who shape the marriage market, this research seeks to uncover how these intermediaries reconcile the interplay between intimate relationships and economic transactions. Specifically, it explores how matchmaking managers and agencies communicate and interact with clients, connect prospective marriage partners, and make intimacy between them. This study aims to illuminate the mechanisms of the expanding marriage market in contemporary Korean society, mediated by matchmaking agencies, and to assess its broader implications. It endeavors to critically analyze the evolving models of “marriage” and “intimacy” reproduced in Korean society today, contributing to discussions on “shaping futures” in this conference.

**Reconstruction of Human-Animal Relationships: Dynamics of the Cat and Bird Debates in Marado Island, South Korea | Serim LEE (Seoul National University)**

This study examines the decision-making process of Marado residents regarding the removal of cats and how human-animal relationships were reconstructed in this context. In 2022, bird conservation advocates filed a petition to governmental bodies, urging them to remove cats from the island. The Cultural Heritage Administration, responsible for managing natural monuments and protected areas, held discussions with relevant stakeholders, including Marado residents. While some stakeholders opposed the unexpected removal, citing the long-standing human-cat relationship, the Marado Residents' Association supported the measure on behalf of the community. Marado's cats were originally introduced by female divers to control rats that damage fishing nets. Since then, they have lived under loose human care. In contrast, birds were largely perceived as part of the landscape rather than beings with whom residents engaged. Given this relational context, it is noteworthy that residents' opinions aligned in favor of cat removal. A key figure in shaping public opinion was the head of the Residents' Association. Though an outsider, he emerged as an influential young leader in Marado's traditionally native-dominated political hierarchy. His vision of “modernizing” Marado emphasized its natural environment as a key economic resource, aligning with efforts to conserve birds. However, in reality, many residents were either indifferent to the issue or excluded from political decision-making. Therefore, this study asks: How have Marado residents historically engaged with cats and birds? How has local governance shaped the decision-making process, particularly what was the role of the Residents' Association? Finally, how has the intersection of conservation policy and local politics reshaped human-animal relationships?

**Between Reverence and Consumption: A Critical Analysis of Animal Agency in Inter-Asia Deer Mythological Practices | Yiyao SUN (University of Chicago)**

This paper examines the relationship between humans and deer across Asian cultural contexts through three interconnected narratives: the Buddhist Jataka tale “The Fabulous Sharabha Deer” from the Indian subcontinent, the Deer King Jataka painting in Dunhuang's Mogao Cave 257, and the modern Chinese children's allegory “A Deer of Nine Colors.” The study traces how representations of human-deer relationships have evolved in Asian cultural traditions while exploring how these narratives reflect contradictory attitudes toward animal sovereignty. Drawing on Martha Nussbaum's critique of the Scala Naturae, proposal of capabilities approach and Wendy Doniger's analysis of consumption and power dynamics, this study examines how surface-level reverence for deer conceals deeper exploitation. While the Jataka tale initially presents a compassionate model of human-animal relations, it ultimately reinforces hierarchical structures by depicting the deer as a divine vessel. These dynamics parallel the development of commemoration rituals in northwest China, where life and soul of different species are treated as utilitarian commodities for exchange. These practices, despite their apparent veneration of deer, ultimately perpetuate anthropocentric power structures and fail to recognize true animal agency. The religious and literary representations of animals operate in a paradoxical way: while they elevate animals by strategically attributing spiritual

power and demanding reverence from audiences, this very act of spiritual empowerment actually strips animals of their real agency. This analysis contributes to broader discussions about human-animal relationships in religious and cultural practices, urging vigilance not only against physical harm to animals, but also their metaphorical and affective exploitation.

**Posters****Poster Presentation II****Praying for Tickets: The Contemporary Practice of Belief in Yue Lao Among Taiwanese Youth | Guan-Yong HUANG (National Cheng-Chi University)**

This study investigated the phenomenon of contemporary Taiwanese youth incorporating their belief in Yue Lao into fan events. Yue Lao, a god of marriage and love whose origin may be traced back to the Tang Dynasty tale Dinghun Dian (定婚店), has long been sacrificed by Chinese communities all around the world. However, as the entertainment industry has become more globalized, Yue Lao's role has altered dramatically. Besides his traditional role in assisting romantic couplings, Yue Lao is now applying to obtain "scarce resources" such as tickets to idol concerts. Adopting the perspectives of religious anthropology, cultural hybridity, and youth identity formation, this study used qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews with fans and fieldwork about Yue Lao temple rites, to analyze the motivations, ritualistic processes, and symbolic meanings behind this behavior. Furthermore, a digital ethnographic survey of social media posts also revealed how this activity has built the structure of fan culture and the collective identity, suggesting that praying Yue Lao for tickets was both a psychological mechanism for dealing with uncertainty and a cultural innovation that combined traditional religious activities with the demands of modern capitalism. This study emphasized the flexibility of religious practices in contemporary society, showing how Taiwanese youth rethink an ancient belief to meet psychological needs and develop links to local culture among global trends. It was also expected to contribute to discussions about the intersections of religion, popular culture, and identity formation while boosting future research into similar phenomena in diverse cultural and religious contexts.

**Rural Governance Mechanism of Pluralistic Folk Beliefs in Meishan Cultural Area: Taking Quantang Village in Anhua County, Hunan Province, as an Example | Tong LI (Hunan Normal University, China)**

Based on a functionalist perspective, this study explores the dual impact of pluralistic folk beliefs on rural governance in Quantang Village, Anhua County, Hunan Province. It was found that these beliefs played a positive role in social integration, psychological adjustment, cultural inheritance, and social capital building, but also brought about utilitarian negative impacts. Pluralistic folk beliefs enhanced the sense of unity and belonging among community members, provided emotional comfort and support, helped villagers cope with uncertainties and crises in their lives, and strengthened cultural self-confidence through festival celebrations and cultural activities. Interactions within clans have stimulated entrepreneurship, contributed to local economic prosperity, and promoted the modernization of rural governance. However, pluralistic folk beliefs have also led to a utilitarian attitude of faith and a social network of blood ties. Villagers' attitudes toward the gods show an obvious utilitarianism and the pursuit of specific benefits in return. This utilitarian mentality weakens traditional moral binding and increases behavioral patterns that prioritize personal interests; while the social network of blood ties leads to the transfer of information and resources within the family, exacerbates developmental imbalances, reduces social cohesion, and even triggers inter-clan conflicts, disrupting social harmony and impeding the transformation of rural societies to modernization. In sum, in order to achieve healthy and orderly rural governance, the government should reasonably guide pluralistic folk beliefs, give full play to their positive effects, reduce their negative impacts, and balance and regulate the problems posed by their utilitarian nature and blood ties.

**Representing Ethnic Identity and Islam in Chinese Hui Films | Tiandi WU (Uppsala University)**

This research has shed light on the captivating realm of Hui films and its pivotal role in representing the ethnic identity of the Hui community within the domain of Chinese cinema. The study identifies five key facets of Hui cultural identity that significantly influence their ethnic identification, encompassing language, clothes, adherence to Qingzhen traits, beliefs, funeral customs, and the Eid Festival. Through an extensive exploration of Hui films from 2006 to 2023 and insightful interviews with esteemed Hui directors, a multifaceted tapestry of narratives and influences has been unveiled. Our findings reveal that Hui filmmakers adeptly employ a diverse array of cinematic elements to authentically portray their ethnic identity while showcasing the distinctive amalgamation of Chinese ethnic minority system and Chinese Islam.

**Unveiling Vulnerabilities and Pathways to Resilience: A Post-COVID Investigation of Collective Healing in Taiwan** | Naomi MADGE (University College London)

This research explores the socio-political vulnerabilities of Taiwan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically examining the complexities of policy rollout and delivery to the individual. Taiwan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is widely appraised for its wielding of soft power by aiding other countries through campaigns of #TaiwanCanHelp and 'Mask Diplomacy'. The island nation's top-down and bottom-up approaches also activated the Central Epidemic Command Centre to coordinate and mobilise resources while homing in on community as a grassroots level of governance. These responses reflect a centralised yet localised form of governance that preserves and amplifies existing political structures and power dynamics rather than reimagining state-centred political frameworks and thinking. This study applies Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock's 'The Mindful Body' (1987) as an outline for ethnographic narrative to analyse how the individual body and governance are negotiated amidst Taiwan's political framework and its Confucian influences. Drawing on 50 semi-structured interviews with families and friends of COVID-19 patients, frontline workers, journalists, and political figures, this research bridges the gap between policy and the individual. In order to achieve this, this work attempts to answer the central question: 'What weaknesses existed in Taiwan's Covid-19 response and how did these elements impact the effectiveness of the nation's public health strategy?' In exploring the politicisation of health crises and their effect on traditional support systems, this ongoing work proposes that, in Taiwan, "community" aligns its processes in keeping with Taiwan's party-state principles, unveiling vulnerabilities.

**Buried Souls: The Interaction between the Living and the Dead** | Linley WHITE (Brigham Young University)

Traditional burial practices are disrupted as economic and social issues arise from population growth and land scarcity. This poster will present ethnographic research that I will conduct in Seoul, South Korea during the summer of 2025. This research will focus on sites such as burial grounds, mounds, temples, and memorial parks along with rituals such as jesa, gijesa, charye, gut, and other cheondojae. These sites and practices will be observed in order to document how South Koreans in Seoul honor deceased ancestors. In this work, I will consider how these rituals are adapted given fluctuating circumstances (e.g., reduced land availability for traditional burial mounds). By studying these changing practices of honoring the dead, I hope also to better understand how the lives of the living are changed and transformed as well.

**The Care Relationships Formed in a Wildlife Center: Human and Nonhuman Interactions in Everyday Practices** | Donghee KOO (Seoul National University)

This study aims to analyze the new relational nature or relationality created between humans and nonhuman animals. For this purpose, I observe the daily interactions between staff members and animals at a wildlife center. Wildlife centers are spaces where humans and nonhuman animals continuously form relationships while seeking coexistence. Within these spaces, humans perform animal treatment and care based on embodied knowledge and material practices. Through these caring practices, they create physical, emotional, and ethical entanglements with the animals. Specifically, this study focuses on pigeons as species located at the boundary between urban and wild environments and examines how interactions between humans and animals constitute ethics and practices of care. For instance, the physical contact and affective engagement, which emerge during the treatment of injured animals, transcend the dichotomy of caregiver and recipient, while revealing possibilities of new relationality. Through these lens, this study seeks to propose new ethics and practices emerging from human-nonhuman interactions, while exploring models of multi-species coexistence. To this end, I address the following questions: How are relationships between humans and animals formed and maintained? How do animals' responses and agency influence the practices of care? And how do these interactions reshape the ethical, emotional, and material dimensions of human-nonhuman relationships? This research contributes to expanding the discourse on multispecies coexistence by regarding wildlife centers as sites of relational and material becoming. By moving beyond anthropocentric perspectives, I offer new insights into ethical and affective models of care while providing practical understandings of wildlife welfare and the role of staff members in wildlife center.

**Contemporary Christian Music as a Mediating Performance of Christianity** | Seong-Jong GO (Seoul National University)

Taking the CCM (Contemporary Christian music) as both religious media and mediation, this study seeks to understand the role and significance of music in Christian worship and analyze how CCM constructs religious experiences within Korean Protestant culture. This research draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with a worship band that primarily produces and performs CCM music, with the primary participants being CCM musicians. As a kind of 'sensational forms', CCM facilitates an immediate connection with God for believers during ritual performances. Furthermore, CCM shapes identities such as 'worship leaders,' builds networks of partners, and delineates the boundary between Christian culture and secular culture—none of which are not fixed entities but are continuously renegotiated.

through ritual performances. I argue that CCM is not mere a reflection or expression of Christian beliefs but a mediating performance of Christianity, materializing religious imagination.

#### **East Asia in the Digital Age: Gender-Based Violence and Rising Feminism in Korea | Lorraine PAN (University of Toronto)**

This paper will take Korean society as a specific context and object and extend this to the whole of East Asia to explore gender violence and rising feminism in the digital age in the future. Between 2018 and 2020, the Nth Room case happened in South Korea. Before that, the inequality and gender violence that women experienced had accumulated over the years, and the misogyny in society has intensified on several platforms. Korean feminism has grown rapidly over the same period, including Escape the Corset Movement, The 4B Movement, and the domestic #Metoo Movement. There are different features and divisions within the different Korean feminist streams and movements. For example, the use of the #WithYou hashtag in support of sexual assault victims is a feature of the Korean #Metoo movement. The 4B Movement, on the other hand, has a transphobic controversy due to the large number of Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) in this community. This individual paper will explain gender violence and feminism by quantitatively analysing the status of Korean society, showing how gender violence has shaped the misogynistic culture of the society, and how feminism has challenged and defeated this misogynistic culture. From there, it will extend to the whole East Asian context, comparing Deepfake, sexual harassment and the #Metoo movement in Taiwan, Japan and China, and look forward to the future development and the direction of feminism in the whole of East Asia in the digital age.

#### **Traces of Mourning, Genealogies of Madness: Works of Memories in Post-Epidemic China | Chloe RONG (Haverford College)**

Everything has changed after the pandemic.” This sentiment has become a common refrain in the public discourse in today’s China, where the language surrounding the pandemic and COVID-19 carry the weight of what might be called “the unbearable now,” pointing far beyond a simple narration of time, and the unbearable of the pandemic itself. Thus, this paper opens with the aftermath of COVID-19—or what might be considered its end as an event—while grappling with the collective uncertainty in marking, recognizing, or articulating that “COVID has ended.” This uncertainty rejects a definitive version of history’s closure while simultaneously marking a moment as historical. Through the juxtaposition of the digital wailing wall and visual and textual references from the anti-zero-COVID policy protests till present days, where representations of the past while affording a language of discontent that might otherwise remain unspeakable, I explore themes of mourning and madness in (post-)epidemic times. Moving beyond the “affective/spectral turn” which calls for a more indeterminate understanding of fundamental human experience, I interrogate what it means to theorize an “affective landscape” in the historical present of mainland China. I use a genealogical approach to my inquiry on affective expressiveness, from the practice of “speaking bitterness(suku)” and the formation of modern China, languages of symptoms carrying political discontents, as well as the emergence of psy-disciplines and recent China’s “spiritual turn” in psycho-boom. Through such approach, I ask, what kind of future it might or might not open up, are languages of revolution, protest, and counter-public still helpful enough, when theorizing what Lauren Berlant called historical-present, in a time of collective impasse.

#### **Consuming Foreign Cosmetics As Your Own: Chinese Tourists' Preference in a Japanese Department Store | Xiaoming WU (Shiga University)**

This study examines the consumption behaviors of Chinese female tourists purchasing Japanese cosmetics through an anthropological lens, exploring their gendered characteristics, social norms, and cultural meanings. The analysis is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital,” investigating the role of cosmetic practices in shaping individuals’ social status and identity. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body is employed to explore how physical sensations and cultural meanings are intertwined through the use of cosmetics. Using qualitative research methods, participant observation, and advertising analysis, this study reveals that women’s cosmetic practices not only respond to societal expectations but also serve as spaces for self-expression and gender role negotiation in cross-cultural contexts. Moreover, the growing acceptance of male cosmetics challenges traditional gender norms and suggests a redefinition of gender roles under globalization. Furthermore, Japanese cosmetics, characterized by cultural symbols such as “natural” and “high quality,” strongly resonate with consumers, reflecting the interplay between globalization and localization. This research offers new perspectives on consumer culture and gender studies, delving deeper into the roles of cultural capital and the body in cross-cultural consumption practices.