20th Annual Conference on Asian Studies

Department of Asian Studies
Faculty of Arts
Palacký University Olomouc

Denial Exclusion Absence

EXPLORING THE NEGATIVE SPACE IN ASIA

Conference Guide

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WELCOME TO ACAS 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the **20th Annual Conference on Asian Studies (ACAS)**, organized by the Department of Asian Studies at Palacký University Olomouc. The theme of this year's edition is **"Denial, Exclusion, Absence: Exploring the Negative Space in Asia"**.

The conference consists of **31 sessions**, an exhibition opening, and a dance performance. The organized panels and individual papers scheduled to be presented at these sessions explore various questions related to the conference theme, as they are reflected in cultures, societies, languages, and histories of Asia, using various theoretical, methodological, and (inter)disciplinary approaches.

Nine of the sessions are planned as **Student Sessions**, i.e., sessions dedicated to papers presented by graduate and doctoral students. Papers in these sessions are characterized by high topical diversity, as they do not need to deal with issues related to the conference theme.

The conference takes place in the Faculty of Arts building at **tř. Svobody 26, Olomouc**, where the **Department of Asian Studies** is located. Apart from Session 7A and the dance performance, the **sessions will be livestreamed** via Zoom, allowing audience to access the conference for free from anywhere in the world. Please do not hesitate to invite your colleagues, students, and friends to join us. All they need to do is register using the form available on the conference website (or p. 10 in this guide).

There are **over 100 active participants** taking part in the conference this year. About two thirds of participants will be present on site, while the rest will join us remotely. We hope that the conference will serve not only as an occasion to present one's research and learn about others', but also as a time filled with fruitful exchange, critical engagement, and serendipitous encounters for scholars and students from all corners of the Asian Studies field and beyond.

If you wish to **explore the city** while you are here, consider joining a free guided walking tour of Olomouc on Friday evening (remember to register using the link sent to you by e-mail).

We look forward to thoughtful discussions and appreciate your participation. We also hope to see you at ACAS again next year!

The Organizers

ORGANIZER

The **Annual Conference on Asian Studies** (ACAS) is organized by the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc. The first conference in this series took place in 2006. Originally called the Annual Conference on Cultural and Social Anthropology of East Asia, it changed its name in 2016 to reflect its broadening span in terms of both regions and disciplines.

We issue the Call for Papers every year in spring, while the conference takes place in November. Each year we dedicate the conference to a different general theme.

Annual Conference on Asian Studies: www.acas.upol.cz
Department of Asian Studies: www.kas.upol.cz/en
Palacký University Olomouc: www.upol.cz/en
Instagram/Facebook: @kasffup | Katedra asijských studií FF UP

Palacký University Olomouc is a university with a long-standing tradition. Founded in 1573, it is the oldest university in Moravia and the second-oldest university in the Czech Republic. Nowadays, it is a modern higher education and research facility with about 23,000 students enrolled at its eight faculties. It offers a wide range of study programs as well as copious scientific and other academic and community engagement activities.





The **Department of Asian Studies** at Palacký University Olomouc, established in 1993, specializes in the area studies of Asia. Its teaching and research activities focus on the languages, cultures, and societies of China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The Department offers undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate degree programs, and it is one of the largest departments in the Faculty of Arts, with over 600 students currently enrolled. While it remains one of the youngest departments at Palacký University, interest in Asia at the university dates back to its founding by the Jesuit order in the 16th century, when Jesuits recruited talented individuals for missionary work in Asia and the New World.



Organizing Team of the 20th ACAS

Halina Zawiszová (chair)
Martin Lavička
Giorgio Strafella
Vít Ulman

Assisted by student assistants and colleagues from the department.

Scientific Committee

Alfred Gerstl
Andreas Schirmer
Daniel Berounský
Elizabeth Rhoads
Filip Kraus
Filip Šebok
František Kratochvíl
Georges Saad
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Musokhib
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Richard Turcsanyi
Rune Steenberg
Tabita Rosendal
Tereza Nakaya
Tereza Slaměnikova
Vít Ulman
Youngran Baštanová Kwak
Zbyněk Mucha

VENUE

The conference takes place in **Olomouc**, Czech Republic.

Olomouc is the historical capital of Moravia and the administrative center of the Olomouc Region, often considered one of Europe's hidden gems. With a population of about 100,000, it is the country's sixth-largest city. Olomouc is also widely known as a student city due to its high proportion of students relative to the local population.

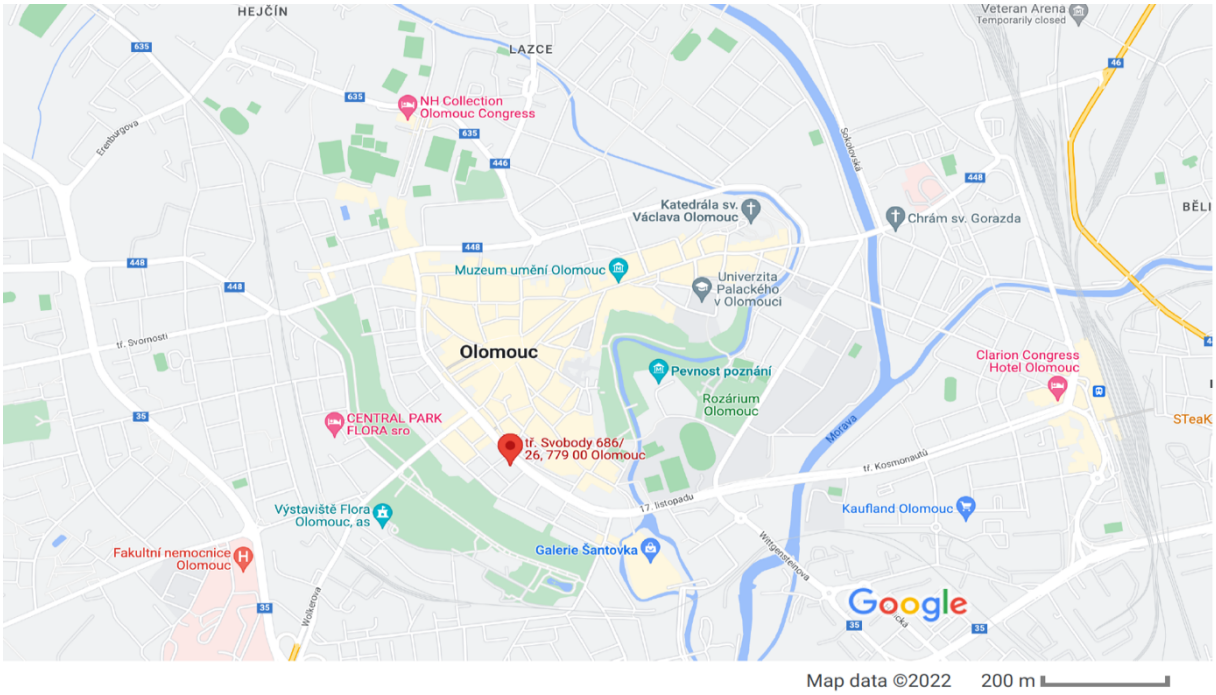
Known for its magical atmosphere and abundant greenery, the city boasts the second-largest concentration of well-preserved historical monuments in the Czech Republic. While here, make sure to visit at least the Lower Square and the Upper Square, which are located close to the conference venue.

For more information on the city, see: https://tourism.olomouc.eu/en/.

You can join a **guided walking tour of Olomouc** on **Friday 20 November**. If you are interested, please register using the form that was sent to you by e-mail and meet your guide in front of Room 2.40 at 5:15 PM.



The conference takes place on the university grounds at **tř. Svobody 26, 779 00 Olomouc** (Google Maps: https://goo.gl/maps/Bq3QTB4Grjm4wLt98). After you enter the building, take the stairs to the **2nd floor**. If you require accessible access, please contact us at acas@upol.cz.



The conference venue is located within walking distance from the historic center of the city, with its many cafes, restaurants, hotels, and monuments. The nearest tram and bus stops are **Tržnice** and **Okresní soud**. Find out more on travel to/ within Olomouc on our website (http://acas.upol.cz/practical_info/transport/).



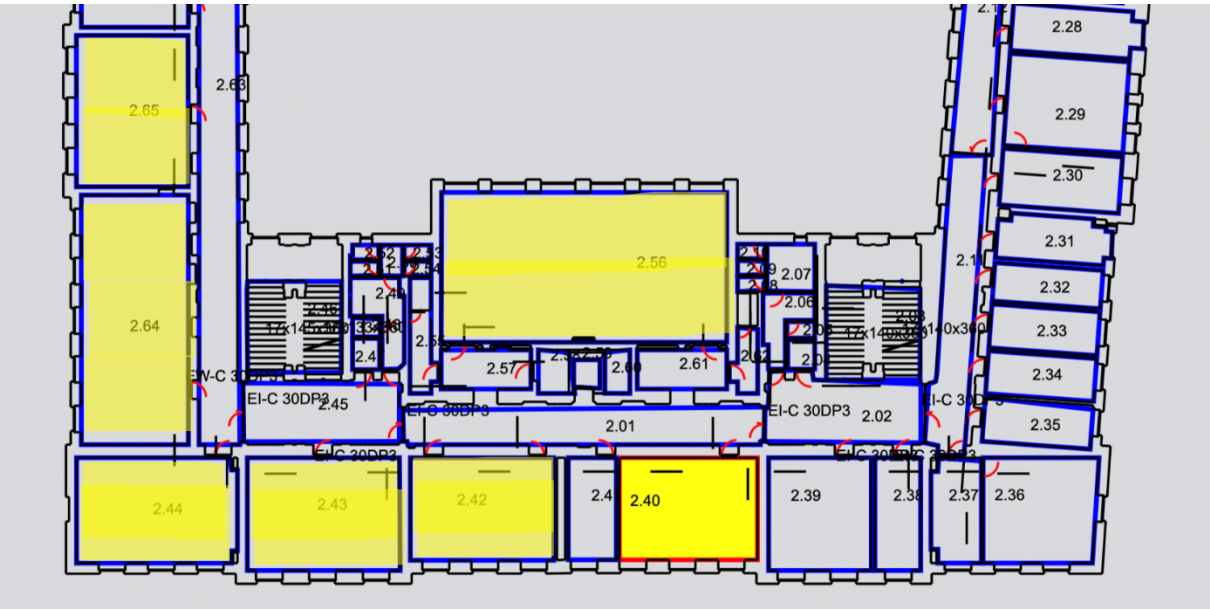
ROOMS

All rooms are located on the **2nd floor**. The room numbers are listed in the program and correspond to the session numbers (i.e., Session 1A takes place in Room A, Session 3C in Room C, etc.).

Room A: 2.56
Room B: 2.43
Room C: 2.44
Room D: 2.64
Room E: 2.65

The **Registration Desk** and **Book Table** will be located in **Room 2.40**.

The **refreshments** will be served in **Room 2.40**, but please use also **Room 2.42** as well as any other conference room to enjoy your breaks and lunch time.



WiFi is available via Eduroam network as well as a university guest account.

Links to the Zoom livestreams are provided to all active participants via e-mail. Online **audience is asked to register** to receive the links (see p. 10).

There will be five simultaneous livestreams taking place, corresponding to the five Rooms at the conference venue.

PRESENTING

There is 30 minutes scheduled for each paper. This should ideally include **20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for Q&A and discussion**.

Onsite presenters

Please **come to the room about 10 minutes prior** to the time when the session you are a part of is scheduled to start to **upload your presentation onto the computer** in the room and check that everything works. There will be a Student Assistant and a Chair present to help you.

Please note that because of technical reasons we do not allow speakers to connect their own notebooks to the system.

Online presenters

To ensure that everything goes smoothly, **we require all online presenters to pre-record their talk** (e.g., using a Zoom meeting) **and send us the video by 18 November**. Please remember that the talk should be up to 20 minutes long to leave about 10 minutes for the Q&A and discussion.

Please **join the livestream of the Room in which your talk is scheduled about 10 minutes prior** to the time when the session you are a part of is to start to test your microphone, camera, and the recorded talk together with the Student Assistant and the Chair who will be present in the Room.

Please remember that **the times provided in the program are in CET (Central European Time, Prague, UTC+1)**.

Tell the Student Assistant and the Chair whether you will present life or have your pre-recorded talk played by the Student Assistant. As organizers, we consider the video the safer option. If your internet connection is unreliable, please do opt for **having your pre-recorded talk played**.

After the presentation, there should be about 10 minutes left for the Q&A and discussion.

AUDIENCE

Anyone can join the conference as an **online audience member**. Invite your friends, colleagues, and students to participate! The conference will be streamed via Zoom.

The links to the livestreams will only be shared with those who register. The **registration form** is available here: https://forms.gle/885kehPbDGwyXdh28. It will close on 18 November. Please remember that the times provided in the program are **in CET** (Central European Time, Prague, UTC +1).





PROGRAM

The times are in the event time zone, i.e., in **CET (UTC+1)**.

Friday 20 November

Welcome Remarks
8:45–9:00 | Room A | 2.56
Halina Zawiszová, Ondřej Kučera

Exhibition Opening
9:00–9:15 | Room A | 2.56
Monika Arnez, "Absences and Exclusions: Sand, Coal, and Trees in Maritime Southeast Asia"

Session 1A Language and (Mis)Communication
9:30–11:00 | Room A | 2.56

- Dukkeum Sun, "Chronotopic Dissonance and De-romanticization: Agency-Driven Identity Reconstruction in a Polish University KFL Classroom" (online)
- Hanna Jaśkiewicz, "Dialect Shift in Contemporary Japanese Fiction"
- Marcin Nowacki, "'Điu diu me ri mi?': Interlingual Spellings in Vietnamese Social Media Comments" (online)

Session 1B Student Session: Gender and Race
9:30–11:00 | Room B | 2.43

- Yirong Chen, "Absent Women, Visible Ethics: Sexual Violence, Historical Silence, and the Reconstruction of Female Chastity in Korean History" (online)
- Pavlína Prošková, "Seeing the Unmarked: Racial Normativity in South Korea"
- Jinbo Huang, "Visible, but on What Terms? Platformed Recognition of a Tibetan Female Creator on Douyin" (online)

Session 1C Spatial Transitions and Interactions
9:30–11:30 | Room C | 2.44

- Nikolay Ternov, "Digital Absence and Platform Exclusion in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Spatial Diffusion of OLX.kz" (online)
- Zhengji Ju, "Exclusion and Influence: German–Soviet Competition in Xinjiang during the Mid-1930s"

- Rita Padawangi, "'Biang Macet'? Smart City, 'Becak', and Exclusionary Urban Spaces of Indonesia"
- David O'Brien, "Other Spaces and Spaces of Otherness: Virtual Xinjiang and digital territorialization"

Session 1D Gendered Erasures
9:30–11:30 | Room D | 2.64
- Kamini Sharma, "Negotiating Rights in Trilokpuri: Gender, Informal Governance, and Access to Justice in Urban India" (online)
- Ramóna Kovács, " 'Inside-outside rule' – space and roles of female family members in the narratives of graphic novels"
- Marian Olech, "Man-Made Script: Revisiting Gender Markedness in the Chinese Writing System"
- Sabrina Ardizzoni, "Present in Practice, Absent in History: Tan Yunxian and the Gendered Erasure of Medical Knowledge in China" (online)

Session 1E Student Session: History in Writing
9:30–11:30 | Room E | 2.65
- Ruei Jhe Luo, "Weather, Ritual, and Royal Decision-Making: Meteorological Divination in the Cunnan Oracle Bone Inscriptions of Late Shang China"
- Xiaoli Liu, "How to Read a Massive Military Treatise: Reading Practices Surrounding the Wubei Zhi in Premodern East Asia" (online)
- Zijian Xia, "The Rift between Testimony and Verdict: The Detailed Exposition of Kang Youwei's Reform Program and the Paradox of Villain-Narration in Kang Liang Yanyi"
- Kun Meng, "Present Absence: The Non-Place and Persistence of the Beimang Parish, a Daoist Sacred Site" (online)

Lunch Break
11:30–13:00 | Rooms 2.40, 2.42

Dance Performance and Scholarly Dialogue
12:15–12:45 | Room A | 2.56
Danyang Huang, "Soliloquy of the Void: A Somatic Inquiry into Negative Space through Contextual Presentation"

Session 2A Historical Absences and Ambivalences
13:00–14:30 | Room A | 2.56
- Arden Chao, "The Forgotten 'Middle European Ideal': Weimar Germany as a Present Absence in Chinese Political Thought, 1919–1925"
- Ferenc Takó, "Tracing an Absence: Max Weber and Maruyama Masao on the Lack of Historical Progress in China"
- Iqra Anugrah, "A Restrained Opposition? Conservative and Democratizing Characters of Islamic Politics in New Order Indonesia"

Session 2B Student Session: Identities
13:00–14:30 | Room B | 2.43

- Thu Huong Pham, "Partner Choice of Second Generation Vietnamese in the Czech Republic: Patterns and Impact Factors" (online)
- Zhenghua Jiang, "Boundaries Between Formal and Informal Workers in Public Spaces: A Case Study of a University in Beijing"
- Xuanming Huang, "The Other Without Difference: Identity, Misrecognition, and Boundary-Making among Sichuanese Migrants in Chongqing" (online)

Session 2C Censorship and Amnesia
13:00–14:30 | Room C | 2.44

- Joanna Wardęga, "Aftershocks of Power: Earthquake Memory and Dark Tourism in China"
- Yin Zhang, "From State Censorship to Fandom Judgment: Translation and the Re-Silencing of a Danmei Author" (online)
- Fabrizio Massini, "Sensitive Matters: Rethinking Censorship in Contemporary China"

Session 2D In/visibility and Dis/appearance: Voices of East Asian Authors and Artists (Organized Panel)
13:00–14:30 | Room D | 2.64

- Kurtis Hanlon, "From Strivers to Achievers: The Disappearance of Women from Heian-period Japanese Poetry Matches"
- Giorgio Strafella, "Disappearance and Disguise in Zhu Fadong's Art"
- Zhian Zheng, "Visible Bodies, Absent Identities: Male Nudes and Queer Desire in Fu-sheng Ku's Paintings Exhibited at Spectrosynthesis (2017)" (online)

Session 2E Student Session: Narratives in Art
13:00–14:30 | Room E | 2.65

- Yiqi Du, "Reconstructing Reproductive Narratives: A Cross-Media Study of The White-Haired Girl"
- Fangni Li & Li'an Ji, "Making Absence Present: Liubai, Non-Action, and Negative Space in Chinese Ink-Wash Animation" (online)
- Giacomo Cacciaguerra, "Can the Sinophone Female Body Speak? Silence as Tactic in Liang Lisha's and Qi Yafei's Artistic Practices"

Coffee Break
14:30–15:00 | Rooms 2.40, 2.42

Session 3A Media and Institutions
15:00–17:00 | Room A | 2.56

- Zhengjia Lu, "From 'Knowing How to Use' to 'Choosing Not to Participate': Selective Non-participation in Livestream E-commerce among Middle-aged and Older Micro-entrepreneurs on Beijing's Rural Periphery" (online)
- Igor Prusa, "Corporate Denial, Victim Exclusion, Absence of Accountability: Exploring the Fuji TV Scandal"
- Enrico Beltramini, "Exclusion in India: Christianity and the FRCA" (online)
- Wangmu Zhaxi, "Withdrawing the Label, Retaining the Category: The Negative Space of Anti-Americanism in North Korea"

Session 3B Student Session: Politics
15:00–16:30 | Room B | 2.43

- Olha Pavlenko, "The Practical Limits of South Korea's Global Pivotal State Vision: The Case of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine"
- Riko Shibuya, "How the Undocumented Recognize "the State"
- Muhammad Anugrah Utama, "Can We Imagine 'Queer Security Studies?' The Making of Queer Communities as 'Non-Military Threat' in Indonesia"

Session 3C Nature's Absences: Displaced Knowledge, Contested Claims, Lived Frontiers (Organized Panel)
15:00–17:00 | Room C | 2.44

- Natalia Ryzhova, "Collecting Diversity, Producing Absence: The Fate of the Dungan Soybean in Soviet Central Asia"
- Iuliia Koreshkova, "The Absent Forest in Eastern Siberia: Commodification, Access, and Invisible Relations"
- Rucitarahma Ristiawan, "Normalised Dispossession, Tourism Land Rushes and the Paradox of Non-Resistance in Gunungsewu UNESCO Global Geopark, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta"
- Ramayda Akmal, "What They Don't Write When They Write about Nature: Narrative Practices as Countermovement in Indonesian Travel Writing"

Session 3D Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (1)
15:00–16:30 | Room D | 2.64

- Meghan Cai, "What the Canon Could Not Explain: Southern Song Scholars' Discussions of Dialects and Local Customs in Poetry"
- Vít Ulman, "A Man Down on His Luck: Sesson Yūbai's Ill-Fated Journey to China"
- Juntao Lin, "Negative Space and Limit of Knowing of Post-Socialist China : A Reading of Wang Anyi's Anonymous"

Session 3E Community
15:00–16:30 | Room E | 2.65

- Gurumayum Sharma, "Self-rule and Negative Consciousness in India's North Eastern Region: Resistance, Recognition and Alternative Politics"

- Pavla Putrová, "Neither Hidden nor Recognized: Kejawén and Religious Visibility in Contemporary Java"
- Cecile Medail, "Solidarity in Myanmar's Spring Revolution: practices, meanings and tensions"

Saturday 21 November

Session 4A Absence and Exclusion: Ethnographies of Access, Inequalities and Knowledge Transmission (Organized Panel)
9:00–11:00 | Room A | 2.56

- Muhetaer Mukaidisi, "Naturalized Hierarchy: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Uyghur Craftsmanship System of Rural Southern Xinjiang"
- Mai Thi Thu, "Intimacy on the Margins: Vietnamese Migrants' Everyday Lives in Taiwan's Industrial Zones"
- Azim Malikov, "Absent Shrines: Lost Sacred Geography of Samarkand and the Politics of Memory"
- Valentina Gamberi, "The Negative Space of the Ethnographer: Post-Fieldwork Considerations"

Session 4B Student Session: Politics and Philosophy
9:00–11:00 | Room B | 2.43

- Tanisha Paine, "Who Belongs in Heritage Space? Government Discourse and the Reconfiguration of Citizenship in Tapgol Park" (online)
- Suyu Wei, "Between "Thought" and "Philosophy": Reconsider the Legitimacy Crisis of East Asian Philosophy through Kuki Shūzō"
- Yuxiang Zhang, "Beyond "I Have Lost Myself" — Retaining the Subject or Abolishing the Self?" (online)
- Agnieszka Czyż, "The concept of 亡國 wangguo and the Birth of the Modern Concept of the State in Late Qing China"

Session 4C States and Other (Dis)Orders
9:00–10:30 | Room C | 2.44

- Jerome Samraj Chandrasekar, "Panchama Lands, Administrative Inaction and Violence: Limits of Judicial Intervention in Tamil Nadu"
- Jiří Krejčík, "Cockroaches and Encroachers: Two Registers of Exclusion in India's Political Society"
- Yuhong Li & Jinghong Zhang, "Tianxia Meets Sovereignty: Macau as a Contact Zone and the Endogenous Unmaking of Tianxia Thought in Late Imperial China" (online)

Session 4D Death and Non-Doing
9:00–11:00 | Room D | 2.64

- Xing Lan, "Souls Come Back: The Communication between the Living and the Dead in Chinese Folk Literature" (online)

- Rui Hu, "Revisiting Laogui ('Old Demon'): An Overlooked Southern Trajectory in Early Daoist History" (online)
- Pan Tome Valencia, "(Wo)men Spaces: Death, Gender, and Transitions in Early Medieval Japanese Texts"
- Anthea Hei Yee Cheung, "Decoding Wuwei in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism: Between Asaṁskṛta and Anābhoga"

Coffee Break
11:00–11:30 | Rooms 2.40, 2.42

Session 5A Specters, Silences, Secrets: The Production of Absence in Socialist Afterlives of China and India (Organized Panel)
11:30–13:00 | Room A | 2.56
- Zhongxiao Hu, "The Dialectic of Secretization and Exposure: Historicizing Third Front Projects' Transformation in China's Post-Socialist Archives"
- Meng Shao, "Planted Silences: Chronicling the State Farm on Yunnan's Burma Borderland" (online)
- Hanzhang Ding, "The Specter of Inqilab: Haunting, Inheritance, and the Contested Justice of Bhagat Sing"

Session 5B Student Session: Linguistics
11:30–13:00 | Room B | 2.43
- Xuyun Lei, "Negation in the She Language of Jingning: A Typological-Descriptive Study" (online)
- Monika Hálová, "Omission of selected case markers in spoken Korean"
- Hsin Ju Shih, "The Political Life of the Tibetan Script: Language, Exclusion, and Cultural Persistence under Chinese Governance" (online)

Session 5C Non-Places, Misplacement and Virtuality
11:30–13:00 | Room C | 2.44
- Cui Yi, "Can the "Nanyang Style" Explain Modern Ink? Singapore, Regional Canon Formation, and Chinese Artistic Lineages" (online)
- Xurong Kong, "Remapping India and Mongolian Plateau Through Classic Chinese Poetry"
- Fangni Li & Jiaqin Chen & Zijie Liu "Where No One Remains: Negative Space, Anxiety, and Reflective Nostalgia in Chinese Dreamcore" (online)

Session 5D Exclusion and Representation
11:30–13:00 | Room D | 2.64
- Ravneet Param, "Changing Caste Dynamic in Indian Elite Educational Institutions" (online)
- Lindsey Stirek, "Visibility without Sovereignty: State-Sanctioned Perception and Indigenous Exclusion in Golden Kamuy"
- Tomáš Vitvar, "Exploring Absence: The Case of Premodern Japanese Mathematics"

Lunch Break
13:00–14:00 | Rooms 2.40, 2.42

Session 6A Post/Coloniality
14:00–16:00 | Room A | 2.56

- Ewa Rzanna, "Benefits of hindsight: the varying fortunes of the imperial architecture in the former colonial capitals: colonization as a success or failure in Taipei, Seoul, and Changchun"
- Esther Xie; "Poetics of the In-Between: Ruins, Koxinga, and Imperial Dawn in Mori Ōgai's Travel Kanshi"
- Ádám Stempler; "Competing Revolutionary Legitimacies: Tan Malaka's Thesis (1946) and Alimin's Analisis (1947)"
- Chris Tsui-Shuen Lau, "Maneuvering Between Exclusion and Inclusion: Japanese Empire-Building and the Imagining of Mountainous Space in Hokkaidō, 1910s–1930s"

Session 6B Student Session: Individual Papers
14:00–16:00 | Room B | 2.43

- Ying Sun, "Transforming Salt into Medicine: The History of Endemic Goiter Prevention and Control in Twentieth-Century China" (online)
- Tomáš Kacbunda, "Manufactured Absence: Auditing Japan's "Vanishing Municipalities"
- Kexuan Li, "Beginning Again: Imagining a Restarted Life in China's Digital Temporalities" (online)
- Jingyuan Jing, "Two "Death" and One "Tomorrow": Understanding the Recollection of Memory Fragments in the God of Small Things" (online)

Session 6C Migration and Culture Change
14:00–15:30 | Room C | 2.44

- Yilin Hu, "Unbelonging and the Struggle for Authenticity: Urban-Born Youth with Migrant Parents in Guangzhou" (online)
- Zbynek Mucha, "Waiting without Leaving: Intermediaries and the Problem of Non-Migration in Bangladesh"
- Musokhib, "Exploring the Negative Space in Contemporary Wonosobo Lengger Mask Dance"

Session 6D Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (2)
14:00–16:00 | Room D | 2.64

- Laura Kääntee, "Towards a Minor Literature of Koryo-saram: Identity in Pages of the Lunar Calendar" (online)
- Jeongwoo Lee, "What Is Left Unsaid in History: Narrative Absence and the Construction of Foundational Memory in the Shiji" (online)
- Ryan Choi, "No Sakura, Only Kuso: Lu Mengshu's 'Shit Realism' in Japanese-Occupied Hong Kong (1941–1945)"

- Joanna Gruszewska, "From Social Margins to Spiritual Eminence: Portrayals of Socially Marginalised Women in Early Buddhist Literature"

Coffee Break
16:00–16:30 | Rooms 2.40, 2.42

Session 7A Documentary Film Screening and Discussion with the Producer
16:30–18:00 | Room A | 2.56
- "Ingatan dari Timor" ("Memories of Timor"), produced by Rita Padawangi

Session 7B Student Session: Society in Narratives
16:30–18:00 | Room B | 2.43
- Ming Liu, "Displacing Responsibility through Care: Japanese War-Orphan Narratives and the Negative Space of Postwar Memory in Chinese Screen Media" (online)
- Dou Jin, "Speaking through Silence: Self-Censorship in Textbook Translation and Compilation by Chinese Female Students in Japan in the Early 20th Century"
- Anna Kovářová, "The Voice of Seijun: Modal Exclusion of His Character in Gobanchō Yūgirirō"

Session 7C Invisible Others, Fragile Selves: Concentric Circles of Othering and Negative Space in Japanese Identity Construction (Organized Panel)
16:30–18:00 | Room C | 2.44
- Alexander Rotard, "The Invisible Imperialist: Zumoto Motosada and the Propaganda War for Korea"
- Taku Tamaki, "Mind the Gap Between Confidence and Anxiety: Railway Technology as Japanese Identity" (online)
- Carmina Yu Untalan, "Empire's constitutive outside" (online)

Session 7D Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (3)
16:30–18:00 | Room D | 2.64
- Lilia Chapon, "Contemporary rewritings of Taiwanese Folklore: a new way to reclaim a mostly erased heritage?"
- Ziwei (Jade) Xuan, "Architectures of Silence: Erasure and the Counter-Archive in Murakami Haruki's Recent Fiction"
- Heejeong Sohn, "Hypervisible Island, Invisible Voice: Jeju as Korea's Negative Space" (online)

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are ordered by sessions, from Session 1A to Session 7D. The texts as well as names and affiliations are reproduced here as they were submitted by the authors.

Exhibition Opening

Absences and Exclusions: Sand, Coal, and Trees in Maritime Southeast Asia

Monika Arnez (Palacký University Olomouc)

This exhibition reflects on the causes and consequences of absences and exclusion in resource extraction, drawing on images collected during fieldwork in maritime Southeast Asia and complementary CC-BY material, including satellite images. The natural resources zoomed in on are sand, coal, and trees. The exhibition examines the paradoxes that have informed the author's field research. For example, in research about land reclamation in Malaysia, where sand dredged from the seabed is used to create new land, although land appeared to be plentiful and "empty," new artificial islands were being created in the immediate vicinity (Arnez 2022). In "Forest City," a large-scale land reclamation project in Johor that has since become a ghost town, the very thing that defines the essence of the new city in terms of its branding was missing: the forest. The exhibition reflects on who is excluded in resource extraction, for instance, in coal mining, and how resistance against these exclusions evolved, drawing on a local resistance movement (Arnez 2017). Given the challenge of depicting something "absent" or "excluded," the exhibited images are accompanied by written explanations setting out how "absences" and "exclusions" are embodied and expressed in each image.

Session 1A: Language and (Mis)Communication

Chronotopic Dissonance and De-romanticization: Agency-Driven Identity Reconstruction in a Polish University KFL Classroom

Dukkeum Sun (SWPS University in Warsaw)

European As Korean language education expands across Europe, university learners increasingly engage with Korean not only as a foreign language but as a medium for complex identity negotiation and internal development (Kida, 2020). This study explores how university learners of KFL in Poland navigate internal conflicts and develop linguistic internalization through classroom learning. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope, Woolard's (2013) chronotopic language ideologies, and Dovchin's (2020) framework of de-romanticization, this study expands the classroom micro-chronotope framework (Author, 2023) to examine authentic interactions during a year-long KFL course. Data include student reflective journals, teacher's field notes, and communication logs collected from 31 KFL majors, documenting the interactive dynamics between the teacher-researcher (Burns, 2010) and learners.

The analysis demonstrates that learners become active agents of their identity transformation. By confronting the deep friction between traditional drills and authentic communicative interaction emerging within the KFL course during data collection, they construct new meanings through agency-driven internalization. The findings illustrate how the teacher-researcher's pedagogical disruptions to traditional deductive learning and declarations of academic responsibility encourage learners to critically reflect on both romanticized images and learning assumptions, fostering de-romanticization (Shin, 2022) amidst productive dissonance.

The study argues that KFL classrooms function as dynamic micro-chronotopes where learners reconstruct identities across spatiotemporal boundaries, offering implications for establishing KFL education as a humanistic discipline promoting the learners' meaning making and inner growth.

Dialect Shift in Contemporary Japanese Fiction

Hanna Jaśkiewicz (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)

Language shift is a well-studied sociolinguistic process in which a speech community adopts a variety with higher social prestige. In Japan, the establishment of hyōjungo as the linguistic norm reduced the use of local dialects (Yasuda 1999: 292–295). Since the 1980s, this has resulted in ongoing dialect attrition, with local varieties losing their distinctive features (Inoue & Kibe 2016), even as new phenomena such as neo-dialects (Hanzawa 2016: 70-72) or dialect cosplay have emerged (Tanaka 2011: 86).

This paper examines how these sociolinguistic developments are reflected in contemporary Japanese literature. Based on a thematic analysis of fourteen novels featuring the Kansai and Tōhoku dialects, it identifies instances in which characters partially or completely shift to another language variety and explores the circumstances, motivations, and consequences of these shifts.

The analysis shows that contemporary writers often portray language shift as an individual process, with characters adopting more prestigious varieties through contact with Standard Japanese, for example after moving to bigger cities. Thus, the loss of a local dialect is linked to struggles over identity and belonging. In the case of stigmatized varieties such as Tōhoku dialects, however, language shift is also presented as a community-level process shaped by social and economic factors. Some works also portray characters who resist homogenizing linguistic norms and affirm the value of dialect diversity.

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"Điu diu me ri mi?": Interlingual spellings in Vietnamese social media comments

Marcin Nowacki (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan)

Interlingual spellings are 'phonetic spellings of loanwords according to native orthographic rules', e.g. "äktschn" in German for "action" borrowed from English (Androutsopoulos 2000, Jaffe 2012). Vietnamese online also displays similar respellings, referred to in the Vietnamese literature as 'phonetic imitations' (Ngô 2024), which include the following examples: sẹc xy 'sexy', si i ô 'CEO', đẹt ti ni 'destiny', among others.

This study investigates interlingual spellings in Vietnamese in social media comments, namely comments posted under YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook posts. Its goal is to identify and analyse interlingual spellings within a dataset comprising 10,393 tokens representing approximately 1,174 respelled dictionary entries identified in the data.

Preliminary results show that interlingual spellings constitute 155 tokens and 82 distinct lexical items in the dataset, which are mostly proper and common nouns (e.g., cáp sừn for 'caption'), interjections (e.g., ỏ for 'aww'), but also verbs and entire utterances (e.g., Hép pi niu dia for 'Happy New Year'). The strategies that Vietnamese users employ to represent English loanwords and phrases include vowel and consonant substitutions in all parts of the syllable, tonogenesis, vowel insertions in consonant clusters, syllabisation, as well as apocopes.

Session 1B: Student Session: Gender and Race

Absent Women, Visible Ethics: Sexual Violence, Historical Silence, and the Reconstruction of Female Chastity in Korean History

Yirong Chen (Seoul National University)

This study investigates the impact of collective sexual violence against women and the subsequent reconstruction of female morality on evolving perceptions of women in Korean history. Instead of viewing wartime sexual violence as an isolated incident, this paper explores how women's bodies became arenas for negotiating and redefining social order, kinship ideology, and moral authority.

The research concentrates on two historical periods that have been relatively overlooked in dominant historical narratives. The first period is the tribute women system (gongnyeo) under Mongol rule during the late Koryŏ period (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), where thousands of women—from royal households to commoners—were sent to the Yuan court and integrated into imperial structures as wives, servants, concubines, and reproductive subjects. Although existing records are fragmentary, this absence itself highlights the structural marginalization of women in historical memory.

The second period pertains to women's experiences following the Imjin War (1592–1598) and the Manchu Invasion of 1636–1637. Women who survived abduction and sexual violence did not necessarily regain social belonging upon their return home. Many faced suspicion and exclusion under Neo-Confucian ideals of chastity and lineage, with some being pressured into divorce, seclusion, or death. These women were later categorized as "returning women" (hwanghyangnyŏ).

In this context, the paper examines how state-sponsored didactic imagery, particularly the Dongguk sinsok samgang haengsildo (1617), transformed women's experiences of violence into moral narratives of chastity and virtuous sacrifice. It questions why female chastity was valued above life itself in postwar Chosŏn society.

Seeing the Unmarked: Racial Normativity in South Korea

Pavlína Prošková (Sogang University)

South Korean society is diversifying, yet this has not translated into greater inclusivity: the social order remains organised around an ethnic core while migrants' growing presence and contributions do not translate into equal membership. In some ways, this resembles Western systems organised around whiteness: a normative identity against which Others are positioned. Critical whiteness studies in the US or the UK have shown how members of the white majority categorise Others as 'races', while their own position appears unmarked, invisible. In Korea, Koreans occupy a comparable position of dominance. Where the case differs, however, is that this normative position is racially marked, with ancestry and phenotype among the defining features of Korean collective identity. Furthermore, diverse Others are here rarely discussed as 'races' – euphemised terms such as tamunhwa ('multicultural') are used instead. Rising migration to Korea, which prompted the turn to 'multiculturalism', has thus rather solidified the boundaries between Koreans and immigrants instead of helping to dissolve them. This paper highlights the absence of racial conceptualisation within the Korean system – paradoxical, given how tangible the racialisation patterns affecting migrant groups are. Even as Koreans see themselves as a distinct 'race', what goes unacknowledged is that racialisation is, by definition, a relational mechanism. Even if the racial idioms used by Koreans are presented as inward, Koreanness is crucially defined against the identities of Others on whom the population now increasingly relies. The system's normativity has thus become a kind of negative space surrounding all residents, rarely described but unevenly affecting those at the margins. The paper's contribution lies in pointing this out from a position outside the core, echoing how the normativity of whiteness and its systemic influence were first identified in more established sites of racial studies.

Visible, but on What Terms?
Platformed Recognition of a Tibetan Female Creator on Douyin

Jinbo Huang (Chongqing University)

Digital visibility is often treated as evidence of cultural recognition. Yet visibility does not determine the terms on which a creator is recognized or whether her different identities receive equal attention. This paper examines these terms through the case of Yangxiaoyang, a family-based Tibetan female creator on Douyin. Drawing on one year of digital ethnography and social semiotic multimodal analysis of 408 public videos, comments, hashtags, cover texts, music, and engagement indicators, it asks how self-presentation, audience response, official-cultural framing, and platform feedback shape which versions of Tibetan womanhood become recognizable and sustainable. The analysis identifies three mechanisms. First, affective authenticity links pastoral scenery, Tibetan dress, sisterhood, and family labour to audience vocabularies of simplicity, purity, and distinctiveness. Second, praise, advice, complaints, and highly liked comments make preferences for ethnically marked, pastoral content visible and operate as soft governance. Third, identity capital is unevenly convertible: Tibetan-region and pastoral videos receive substantially greater engagement than Nanjing, campus, and metropolitan videos, while urban, educated, and translocal womanhood circulates less efficiently. The paper interprets these patterns through platformed internal Orientalism, not as an external imposition alone but as a distributed process involving creator agency, viewer affection, visible metrics, and official-cultural vocabularies. In relation to the conference theme, the negative space lies not in complete absence but in identities that remain present while receiving more limited recognition and circulation. The study argues that platformed visibility can expand minority women's public presence while narrowing the terms on which it is recognized as authentic and valuable.

Session 1C: Spatial Transitions and Interactions

Digital Absence and Platform Exclusion in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Spatial Diffusion of OLX.kz

Nikolay Ternov (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University)

This paper examines uneven spatial diffusion of Kazakhstan's largest classifieds platform as a case of digital exclusion in Central Asian urban systems. Using a scraped dataset of several hundred thousand listings, the analysis documents a two-phase diffusion process: an initial hierarchical stage spreading downward through the urban hierarchy, followed by a contagion phase driven by spatial proximity, with a structural break in 2020 marking the transition.

The central finding concerns absence rather than presence: smaller cities and peripheral settlements are systematically last to gain platform access, and niche product categories disappear first, leaving residents a thinner version of the marketplace. Cox survival models with weighted spatial network exposure and Moran's I spatial autocorrelation show that entry and growth barriers operate through distinct mechanisms, with a platform scaling exponent of β=1.52 consistent with superlinear urban scaling.

The paper contributes to platform urbanism and digital exclusion literature by reframing diffusion not as eventual universal access but as a process producing spatial inequality. In Central Asia, where digital infrastructure intersects post-Soviet urban hierarchies and BRI-driven connectivity, this absence is structurally embedded rather than incidental.

Exclusion and Influence: German–Soviet Competition in Xinjiang during the Mid-1930s

Zhengji Ju (Xi'an International University)

The detention of a German aviation technician in Xinjiang during the mid-1930s triggered a prolonged diplomatic dispute involving German commercial representatives, the German Foreign Office, diplomatic missions in China and the Soviet Union, Chinese central authorities, and the Xinjiang provincial government. Drawing on newly examined German diplomatic archives together with Chinese historical sources, this paper reconstructs the negotiations surrounding the case and places it within the changing political landscape of Xinjiang.

Rather than treating the incident as an isolated consular dispute, the paper argues that it reflected a broader reconfiguration of political and economic influence under growing Soviet involvement in the region. The restriction of German personnel, commercial activities, and transportation networks formed part of a wider process through which Soviet influence expanded while the fragmented sovereignty of Republican China limited the National Government's ability to intervene effectively.

By connecting a microhistorical case with wider transformations in borderland politics, the paper demonstrates how exclusion became an important mechanism through which political and economic influence was reshaped in modern Inner Asia. It contributes to current discussions of borderlands, transregional interaction, and Sino-German-Soviet relations in Xinjiang during the Republican period.

'Biang Macet'? Smart City, 'Becak', and Exclusionary Urban Spaces of Indonesia

Rita Padawangi (Singapore University of Social Sciences)

With traffic jams as one of the main challenges in cities of Southeast Asia, transportation management becomes a staple feature in 'smart city' implementations in the region. Featuring applications of digital technology to prioritise optimisations of resource efficiency and service delivery, 'smart city' paradigm offers technical solutions as recipes for efficiency and sustainability to address traffic problems. In this paper, I discuss the extent to which urban spaces that are presumed in and are emerging from technical 'smart city' transportation plans generate inclusion-exclusion dynamics that shape the everyday urban life. Specifically, I examine the development of urban spaces as practices of inclusion and exclusion through the case study of 'becak' (pedicab/trishaw) in Indonesia. 'Becak' are often pitted against newer means of transportation, and 'becak' received stigmatisation as backward, unfit to the modern city, and 'biang macet' (culprits of traffic jams). There have been relatively recent modifications of 'becak', namely motorisation and electrification, but 'becak' remains excluded from any 'smart' transportation plans. Using spatial perspectives from the lens of 'becak', their historical role in urban transportation vis-à-vis field observations of becak's current situation amidst smart city transitions in Jakarta and Surabaya, I critically analyse the notion of 'biang macet' as urban exclusion in parallel with the making of 'smart' cities in Indonesia.

Other Spaces and Spaces of Otherness: Virtual Xinjiang and digital territorialization

David O'Brien (Jagiellonian University)

Like many of China's 'borderlands', Xinjiang is a space of contestation. Not only does it have a history of ethnic, ideological, and political conflict, it has become a space symbolic of these tensions, and their remediation. In response to allegations of crimes against humanity, the CCP has promoted a heavily idealised depiction of the region, described as the 'real Xinjiang'. This paper explores how this has not only rested on physical transformation of the region, but its creation as a virtual place – imaginatively and abstractly constituted in part through its depiction online. We explore this virtual Xinjiang as an ambivalent heterotopia (vis-à-vis Foucault's concept of spaces of otherness). This virtual Xinjiang is an integral part of the actual region's Sinicization, an extension of the CCP's cyber-sovereignty as a kind of digital territorialisation, capitalising upon the power to constitute reality via digital media. Exploring different circulating images of 'Xinjiang' within and beyond China's borders, from foreign news coverage, CCP propaganda, tourism promotion, vlogs, as well as the work of Han photographers from the region, this paper explores how this is an oscillation between Xinjiang as a real, physical, inhabited, and traversed place with different meanings to different people, and its abstraction as a highly idealised imagined space. While the virtual Xinjiang is a space of digital territorialisation, is also a space of visual vulnerability: tourist photographs, state media videos, satellite imagery, have all been used by scholars, journalists, and activists, as evidence of the repressiveness of the CCP's policies in the region. The virtual Xinjiang is thus itself a space of contestation, over the meaning made visible in images of Xinjiang.

Session 1D: Gendered Erasures

Negotiating Rights in Trilokpuri: Gender, Informal Governance, and Access to Justice in Urban India

Kamini Sharma (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Post-colonial democracies are often characterised by the coexistence of formal institutions of governance and informal structures of authority. Fred W. Riggs conceptualised such societies as "prismatic", marked by heterogeneity, formalism, and functional overlapping, where constitutional norms and legal frameworks coexist with parallel systems of power and dispute resolution. While this framework has traditionally been used to explain institutional and administrative dynamics in developing societies, its implications for gendered citizenship and access to justice remain underexplored.

Drawing on a case study of Trilokpuri, a low-income neighbourhood in Delhi with a history of communal violence and dense networks of local political mediation, this paper examines how overlapping formal and informal institutions shape women's access to rights and justice. It argues that the coexistence of multiple authorities, including elected representatives, community leaders, kinship networks, religious actors, and state agencies, creates a gendered governance structure in which women's claims are often filtered through collective identities and patriarchal intermediaries rather than recognised as individual rights-bearing citizens.

Based on qualitative fieldwork, the paper explores how disputes relating to domestic violence, family conflict, property, mobility, and welfare entitlements are negotiated within this plural institutional environment. It demonstrates that while informal mechanisms may provide accessible avenues for dispute resolution, they often reinforce hierarchies of gender, religion, and community, limiting women's autonomy and constraining direct access to formal legal remedies. Consequently, the constitutional promise of equal citizenship is frequently mediated through local power relations. The paper suggests that prismatic arrangements in urban India can simultaneously expand participation while reproducing gendered exclusions.

„Inside-outside rule" – space and roles of female family members in the narratives of graphic novels

Ramóna Kovács (Eötvös Loránd University)

Changes of family structures, social dynamics and gender roles are currently actively researched topics since recently numerous versions of social units appeared. Narratives like magazines, and publications of Na Hyesok describe a lot about the new way of thinking at the beginning of the 20th century, while more and more Korean female authors attempted to communicate their ups and downs after the miracle of the Han river, alongside with the new waves of feminism. At the same time, the tradition of graphic novels also celebrates already more than 100 years in Korea, and their themes has been and still are helping their readers to cope with everyday life's hardships and challenges. Even though nowadays printed media is losing its popularity, moving to other platforms helps these narratives as well to match the need of the current reading generations. Jin Dal-yong especially discussed the trends of the latest consuming habits, where basically a huge amount of new information is demanded in a rather short time period.

Graphic novels, or their online versions, webtoons, match the current requirements to provide information in a spectacular way in the time frame chosen by the reader. Topics of graphic novels vary, and each consumer can find contents to relate. Latest publications of Ancco, Soo Shinji and Song Aram among others deal with the topic of the personal conflicts of female family members, usually wives and mothers and allows to look into their thoughts in their perspective: how an average Korean women still has to handle partly the mechanisms of the inside-outside rule rooted in the strict Joseon society.

The paper investigates the conflicts described in the manhwa's of the above-mentioned authors with a special focus on the gender roles within the family, compared to the previously demanded conventional forms.

Man-Made Script:
Revisiting Gender Markedness in the Chinese Writing System

Marian Olech (National Sun Yat-sen University)

The issue of androcentrism in language has attracted considerable attention across different theoretical frameworks; it has been discussed in terms of, e.g., the normativity of male-gendered forms or the semantic pejoration of feminine forms (Bodine 1975; Spender 1990). In Chinese script, characters containing the 女 "woman" component and associated with negative lexical meanings have often been posited as "misogynist mirrors" reflecting the past gender bias towards women exhibited by men, the main cultural/linguistic actors and sculptors of script (Cherng et al. 2009).

This article focuses on another facet of androcentrism in language - the markedness of the feminine gender. The author applies the gender markedness theory to the phenomenon of 專字 zhuānzì, i.e. the addition of semantic components to existing characters in order to represent specific subordinate meanings (Jin 2003). The study first revisits the emergence of the female-specific pronouns 她 tā and 妳 nǐ in modern Mandarin, then surveys analogous, historical examples, including 嫐 (孟) from the Spring and Autumn bronze inscriptions, 娭 (孩), 娒 (佛) attested in Dunhuang manuscripts, 奾 (仙) (single usage from the Qing dynasty) and 娣 (弟) attested in transmitted texts (Xie 2017; Zhāng 2023; Wú 2004).

The study argues that gender markedness in these cases operates solely at the level of writing: it is only the written form that carries the gender marker, without affecting lexical meaning. Such graphic markedness also follows an androcentric pattern, as the marked category is almost invariably feminine. However, an aspect exclusive to the graphic level is the interaction of competing, semantic components; pairs such as 佛/娒, 仙/奾, 他/她, and 你/妳 may imply the symbolic exclusion of women from the category of humans (an early argument against 她; Huang 2015). Such script-specific problems illustrate the need to incorporate also the grammatological tools into the study of gender issues within the Chinese writing.

Present in Practice, Absent in History: Tan Yunxian and the Gendered Erasure of Medical Knowledge in China

Sabrina Ardizzoni (University for Foreigners of Siena)

The history of Chinese medicine has long been narrated through male physicians, canonical texts, and scholarly lineages, creating the impression that women played only a marginal role in healthcare. Yet this absence conceals a different historical reality. Combining an original Italian translation with historical and textual analysis, this contribution examines the fifteenth-century physician Tan Yunxian (1461–1554), whose Nüyi zayan constitutes one of the rare surviving medical texts authored by a woman in imperial China. Drawing on Gramsci's reflections on subaltern cultures and Ginzburg's microhistorical methodology, rather than presenting Tan as an isolated exception, I read her work as an archival trace of a much wider, yet obscured, tradition of female medical knowledge. As shown also in the scholarship on gender and medicine in late imperial China (Furth 1999: Leung 1999, Unschuld 1985, among others), women played a central role in the transmission of knowledge concerning childbirth, gynecology, childcare, and domestic therapeutics. Their expertise, however, was largely excluded from official historiography and circulated primarily through oral traditions and family networks. I further contend that the scarcity of female-authored medical texts reflects mechanisms of historical exclusion rather than women's marginality in medical practice. By reading Tan Yunxian against the silences surrounding her, I propose absence itself as a productive historical archive, thereby contributing to broader debates on denial, erasure, and the recovery of marginalized voices in Asian history.

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Session 1E: Student Session: History in Writing

Weather, Ritual, and Royal Decision-Making: Meteorological Divination in the Cunnan Oracle Bone Inscriptions of Late Shang China

Ruei Jhe Luo (National Chengchi University)

This paper examines meteorological divinations preserved in the Cunnan-group oracle bone inscriptions of Late Shang China. The Cunnan corpus, including the Shili Jian, Li, Licao, Li Wuming Jian, and Wuming groups, contains numerous divinations concerning weather alongside records of ritual activities, hunting, and warfare. These materials provide important evidence for understanding Late Shang conceptions of weather and the role of meteorological knowledge in royal decision-making.

The study first defines the scope of meteorological divinations within the Cunnan corpus and classifies the inscriptions according to weather types, including rain, wind, snow, qi (clearing weather), and yi ri (weather change). It then analyzes the distribution of these categories across different inscription groups to identify recurring patterns. The paper further investigates the syntactic structures of meteorological divinations, including direct weather inquiries, divinations linking weather with royal affairs, positive–negative paired charges, and sequential divinations, thereby clarifying their grammatical characteristics and divinatory logic.

Finally, the study explores the relationship between meteorological divination and ritual sacrifice, royal travel, agriculture, and military activities, demonstrating the practical significance of weather forecasting in Late Shang political and religious life. It argues that divinations concerning rainfall and yi ri occur most frequently, reflecting the Shang royal court's close attention to changing weather conditions. Through a systematic analysis of the Cunnan corpus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of meteorological knowledge, divination practices, and the operation of royal affairs in Late Shang China.

How to Read a Massive Military Treatise: Reading Practices Surrounding the Wubei Zhi in Premodern East Asia

Xiaoli Liu (University of Zurich)

Traditional scholarship on Chinese military texts often assert their value by claiming that they "spread overseas and influenced other countries." Yet they rarely define or substantiate this influence, and they have largely overlooked the process through which the textual world of military writings encountered communities of foreign readers—that is, the process by which readers sought and produced meaning from these texts. Seeking to avoid the Sinocentric assumptions implicit in this approach, this article investigates the reading practices surrounding the Wubei zhi 武備志 (Treatise on Military Preparedness), a large-scale military compendium compiled during the Ming dynasty, among readers in Chosŏn Korea and Edo Japan. Praised by the Chongzhen emperor of the Ming as "comprehensive and erudite," the Wubei zhi was later placed on the list of prohibited books by the Qianlong emperor of the Qing. This study asks: Who read the Wubei zhi? Why did they read it? And how did they approach a military work comprising more than two million Chinese characters? This article argues that readers in the two countries adopted broadly similar modes of reading, shaped both by the enormous length of the Wubei zhi and by Confucian methods of textual study. Nevertheless, the readership of Edo Japan displayed greater social heterogeneity, and its purposes for reading were more diverse. The article further argues that readers in both countries selected and discarded material from the Wubei zhi according to their own assessments of the utility of knowledge. Although Korean and Japanese readers employed different criteria and hierarchies in selecting military knowledge, they shared one important tendency: in both countries, the Wubei zhi gradually became detached from its original context of practical military application and was transformed into a form of cultural capital and an intellectual resource embedded within a broader cultural sphere.

The Rift between Testimony and Verdict: The Detailed Exposition of Kang Youwei's Reform Program and the Paradox of Villain-Narration in Kang Liang Yanyi

Zijian Xia (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg)

Kang Liang Yanyi, composed in the early twentieth century and published in its first critical edition by Shanghai Guji Press in 2025, is an anti-reform political novel that represents Kang Youwei through the conventions of the classical fictional villain. A demonic star descends to earth, commits a sequence of unrepentant crimes, and is eventually suppressed by heavenly decree. This narrative pattern recalls Fengshen Yanyi and, more directly, Dangkou Zhi's demonization of the Liangshan bandits. At the same time, the novel reproduces memorials and imperial edicts at considerable length and presents a systematic, largely accurate account of Kang's reform program. Its documentary record can therefore appear to support the reformist position even as the narrative condemns Kang himself.

This paper interprets that tension as a structural feature of villain narration. It could be argued that the arch-villain, or shuzei, requires a stature proportionate to the severity of the final condemnation. Also, the term "prosecutorial narrative" is introduced to describe this structure. A detailed account of the antagonist's program supplies the evidence through which condemnation becomes legible as a judgment rather than mere abuse.

Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia helps explain why the quoted documents retain a degree of discursive autonomy from the narrator's ideological position. The historian's concept of "unwitting testimony" further clarifies how a hostile source may preserve valuable information beyond its intended argument. Milton's Satan provides a comparative example, since the rhetoric designed to establish his damnation also enabled Blake to portray Milton as unconsciously aligned with the Devil. Similarly, this Late Qing "vilification fiction" emerges as a subgenre in which documentary fidelity and ideological hostility are structurally entangled.

Present Absence: The Non-Place and Persistence of the Beimang Parish, a Daoist Sacred Site

Kun Meng (Sichuan University)

The twenty-four parishes (zhi) of Daoism—early dioceses, enduring theological concepts, and precursors to the grotto-heavens —are recognized sacred sites in Chinese society. Among these, Beimang's location is the most controversial, with theories placing it in Shaanxi, Henan, or Sichuan. Existing scholarship has largely sought to identify the "authentic" site through historical-geographical verification.

This paper combines textual criticism with historical geography to examine the contexts of these divergent claims. The coexistence of contradictory narratives, and the sustained uncertainty between the parish's physical "absence" and its narrative "presence" across centuries, has enabled Beimang to carry multiple layers of historical memory and theological meaning. Its shifting geography reflects the succession of core deities sanctifying the Twenty-Four Parishes and the continuous regeneration of political theology through dynastic transitions. This very ambiguity allows it to preserve "silenced" histories while maintaining ties to shifting orthodox narratives. Esoteric ritual texts, maintained through internal transmission, preserve the sacred narrative's core, ensuring theological stability regardless of locational change. Publicly circulated hagiographies and sacred geographies continuously reinscribe new locations into public knowledge, adapting the sacred landscape to contemporary administrative realities. Local gazetteers, literary works, and temple spaces provide material anchors and cultural memory for these narratives. Knowledge stratification and differentiated production thus enable the sacred site to persist across multiple discursive domains.

Beimang demonstrates how sacred space sustains vitality through reconstituted relationships, rewritten narratives, and stratified knowledge reproduction. In Asian religions, a sacred site's power may lie precisely in its elusiveness—and thus its availability to be reimagined and reinhabited across generations.

Dance Performance and Scholarly Dialogue

Soliloquy of the Void: A Somatic Inquiry into Negative Space through Contextual Presentation, On-site Dance Performance, and Scholarly Dialogue

Danyang Huang (Shenzhen Opera and Dance Theatre)

This Soliloquy of the Void is a solo dance work that inhabits a delicate space where inner psychology and external reality intertwine. The choreographic gestures trace the invisible boundary between the self and the outer self. Through this tension between fragility and rupture, Soliloquy of the Void asks: When external echoes fade, how does the self listen to its inner voice? And in that listening—what remains? This proposal presents the work in three parts: an introduction framing the somatic approach, the 10-minute performance, and a concluding dialogue with the audience.

The performance directly addresses the conference's concern with negative space in Asia. The void I embody is not a lack but a plenitude of what has been denied, silenced, or excluded—precisely the forms of absence that the conference seeks to examine. Central to this proposal is the integration of somatic practice, which approaches the body as a site of knowledge production. Through somatic practice, the performance investigates how denial, exclusion, and absence register in muscular tension, breath patterns, and postural habits—phenomena often overlooked in textual discourse.

Session 2A: Historical Absences and Ambivalences

The Forgotten "Middle European Ideal": Weimar Germany as a Present Absence in Chinese Political Thought, 1919–1925

Arden Chao (MF Norwegian School of Theology)

This article argues that the Chinese reception of the Weimar Constitution between 1919 and 1925 was a process in which moderate intellectuals abandoned the principle of representation. From 1920, the Research Clique (Yanjiu xi) around Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai presented the constitution as combining socialism with constitutional order. The article calls this discourse the "Central European ideal," the reference point omitted from Hu Shih's 1927 division between Eastern and Western European ideals. The discourse ended after the Ruhr occupation of 1923, as the Weimar Republic entered a period of relative stability. Existing studies trace Weimar provisions in Chinese constitutions up to 1947; this article asks why the discourse ended while the provisions remained. It defines "over-translation" as a cumulative displacement of borrowed concepts in a direction set by the earlier rejection of competitive elections and of hierarchical organisation. Using Hunan provincial constitution records, the 1922 National Affairs Conference draft, and the proceedings of the Constitutional Conference of 1922 and 1923, the article traces two provisions. The referendum, a supplement to parliament in the Weimar text, was redefined as a vote of no confidence in parliament and then replaced by electoral colleges of legally recognised associations. The advisory economic councils of Article 165 were reinterpreted as a second representative system, and occupation became a franchise qualification. Texts of 1920 citing no foreign constitution show that these premises came first. After 1923, Communist writers used the Ruhr crisis to argue that Weimar socialisation had failed. Direct democracy, social legislation, and occupational representation reappeared without reference to Weimar in the 1931 National Convention, whose delegates were elected by associations reorganised under Nationalist Party control. The discourse ended with Chinese debates on representation.

Tracing an Absence: Max Weber and Maruyama Masao on the Lack of Historical Progress in China

Ferenc Takó (Eötvös Loránd University)

The thoughts of Max Weber (1864–1920) and Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) possess certain attributes that have stimulated joint and comparative examinations of their concepts since the latter half of the 20th century. Scholars including Robert Bellah (1959), Takimura Ryūichi 滝村隆一 (1987), Higuchi Tatsuo 樋口辰雄 (2003), and more recently, Tobias Weiß (2021), have examined Weber's and Maruyama's works through a common framework from diverse viewpoints. These analyses, although providing significant insights, typically employ either an external framework for examining the ideas of the two thinkers or utilise specific concepts from one thinker to interpret the other. In my presentation, I will conduct a systematic comparative analysis of Weber and Maruyama, grounded in a 'smallest common denominator' of their worldviews, utilising the method of 'comparative reception history' as informed by their interpretations of China. I will demonstrate that, notwithstanding the principle of 'objectivity' advocated by both, the ideas of Weber and Maruyama were fundamentally rooted in specific philosophical beliefs about historical progression. In this context, they examined historical events and periods, including ancient China, in relation to their contemporary eras, relying on Eurocentric concepts derived from early 19th-century philosophies of history to address the issue of 'Chinese stagnation' in contrast to the advancement of their own time. Thus, they both determined that China can be negatively characterised by the absence of progress (refer to Maruyama's [1974] acceptance of Hegel's assessment of Asia and Weber's [1951] analysis regarding the absence of the 'central force of a salvation religion conducive to a methodical way of life' in China). Using the examples of Weber and Maruyama, I will illustrate how an analysis focused on identifying the 'absence' of specific characteristics may allow subjective judgements to distort historical research.

A Restrained Opposition? Conservative and Democratizing Characters of Islamic Politics in New Order Indonesia

Iqra Anugrah (University of Turin)

Much has been written about the many variants and trajectories of Islamic politics under the New Order dictatorship (1966-1998) in Indonesia. This study is a preliminary attempt to make sense of the ambivalent characters of Islamic politics of the period and how it constituted a moderately conservative, democratic vision of politics. While various proponents of Islamic politics shared the same anti-Communist, conservative politics with the New Order elites and other regime supporters, the mass mobilizing nature of Islamic politics inevitably came into conflict with the corporatist, disciplining ambition of the New Order. By examining major, competing variants of Islamic politics of the period – confrontational Islamists, moderate Islamists, and mainline Islamic organizations – I try to show how the analytical arguments and political moves made by these variants contributed to both the strengthening and weakening of the dictatorship. Despite the democratizing impacts of these variants, especially in challenging state authority and mobilizing the masses, they retained a conservative ethos not only in social and familial norms but also in the defense of class privileges of Islamic elites, leaders, and intellectuals. The oscillating strategies of Islamic politics vis-à-vis the state – from full-blown legitimization and partial support to critical engagement and complete rejection – throughout the New Order period reflect its ambivalence.

This made Islamic politics of the period, unlike social movements of the popular sectors, a restrained opposition. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Indonesia. In fact, one can argue that Islamic politics under the New Order echoed and prefigured trends of conservative politics in the West. Some comparative reflection between this Islamic opposition with Christian Democracy and New Right in the West will be offered to illustrate such echoes and prefiguration.

Session 2B: Student Session: Identities

Partner Choice of Second Generation Vietnamese in the Czech Republic: Patterns and Impact Factors

Thu Huong Pham (Palacký University Olomouc)

This paper examines the complex relationship between identity formation and partner choice among second-generation Vietnamese in the Czech Republic (CR). Applying an ethnographic case study approach, the research draws on participant observations and 27 semi-structured interviews conducted in Prague and Brno. The study identifies that identity is a dynamic, multi-stage process. While the "banana" (hybrid) identity is most prevalent, individuals also exhibit Czech or Vietnamese identity. The research also reveals a significant interplay between identity and mating preferences: individuals with a "banana" identity often prefer partners with similar bicultural experiences, whereas those with a strong Vietnamese identity lean toward co-ethnic union.

Partner choices are further shaped by impact factors. At the macro level, schools and workplaces serve as primary partner markets, while the meso level is dominated by parental influence, which strongly favors endogamy to preserve cultural values and family cohesion. At the micro level, gendered negotiations play a vital role, with women often pursuing exogamy to seek autonomy and resist traditional patriarchal norms.

Regarding patterns of partnership, although endogamy is the most preferred pattern, exogamy is the most common actual partnership. Additionally, cohabitation has emerged as the dominant union form, with formal marriage often delayed as individuals prioritize personal autonomy and socioeconomic stability. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that partner choice is a negotiated process where inherited cultural expectations meet the realities of bicultural social life.

Boundaries Between Formal and Informal Workers in Public Spaces: A Case Study of a University in Beijing

Zhenghua Jiang (University of Basel)

Beijing has developed rapidly as the capital of China, but the working conditions of informal workers have not improved accordingly. In fact, an increasing number of employers are avoiding formal employment in order to lower labor costs and evade direct employment responsibilities. In this paper, formal workers refer to those who sign labor contracts directly with their employers and have access to social security system, whereas informal workers are those who do not have labor contracts directly with their employers and are lack of social security. In practice, they are often employed through labor dispatch or outsourcing arrangements. At the university under study, informal workers include security guards, janitors, canteen workers, while formal workers include faculty members and administrative staff. This paper adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining doctrinal legal research of labor laws and related institutional arrangements with empirical evidence from government reports and international studies. The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 reviews the relevant literature on formal and informal employment. Section 2 presents the institutional boundaries between formal and informal workers. First, it provides a brief overview of changes in the structure of formal and informal employment. Second, this part further focuses on the structure of formal and informal employment practice at University X. Section 3 examines how the functional zoning of buildings reinforces the boundaries between formal and informal workers. Section 4 concludes that regulations define the boundaries while the functional zoning of buildings reinforces these divides. The study highlights the architectural planning denies the legitimacy of unproductive time through functional zoning and produces inequitable workstation arrangements.

The Other Without Difference: Identity, Misrecognition, and Boundary-Making among Sichuanese Migrants in Chongqing

Xuanming Huang (Sichuan International Studies University)

Traditional migration studies often premise group distinction on salient cultural or ethnic variations. However, how is the other constructed in a context of near-total cultural homogeneity? This study examines the case of Sichuan migrants in Chongqing in which two regions sharing profound cultural, linguistic, and historical roots, separated by the state-level institutional cleavage of the hukou (household registration) system since 1997.

Drawing on saturated interviews with 27 Sichuan migrants in Chongqing's urban core, this research moves beyond the cultural difference paradigm. It argues that the hukou system serves as the important mechanism for producing alterity. I demonstrate that institutional status acts as a structural lever that necessitates, and subsequently produces, a perception of otherness. The purported cultural divide between Sichuan and Chongqing is, in essence, an instance of misunderstanding: actors selectively amplify minor personal variations and reify them into collective cultural markers to rationalize the power dynamics embedded in the institutional hierarchy.

Crucially, this research reveals that the other is not a unilateral imposition. Migrants employ a strategy of identity suspension, a reflexive practice that resists the tendency of difference. Thereby obstructing the transmutation of rigid administrative boundaries into internalized cultural barriers. By reviewing the Sichuan-Chongqing dynamic, this study challenges the over-reliance on cultural frameworks in migration studies. Instead, it offers an analytical lens centered on how administrative boundaries are negotiated, enacted, and contested through everyday embodied practice. These findings provide new insights into how institutional governance shapes identity perception and agency within the complex, state-led migration regimes of contemporary China, contributing to a broader understanding of how the other is manufactured in the absence of cultural divergence.

Session 2C: Censorship and Amnesia

Aftershocks of Power: Earthquake Memory and Dark Tourism in China

Joanna Wardęga (Jagiellonian University)

The paper examines how state sponsored memorialization and the emergence of disaster tourism in China produce a political negative space – forms of denial, exclusion, and selective remembrance that shape public memory and constrain accountability. Focusing on the Tangshan 1976 and Sichuan 2008 earthquakes and their associated memorial sites, I argue that official commemorative practices and the commodification of catastrophe transform sites of loss into instruments of state legitimacy and patriotic education, while marginalizing contested narratives about governance failures and structural vulnerability.

The main research question is how do memorial practices and disaster tourism in China create spaces of exclusion that depoliticize responsibility and reframe catastrophe as a site for state led narratives of resilience. The study uses qualitative content analysis of museum exhibits, inscriptions, and official narratives; field observations and photographic documentation of memorial sites; and secondary analysis of tourism statistics and media coverage to trace shifts in meaning from 1976 to the present.

By linking dark tourism to memory politics, the paper contributes to debates on denial and absence in Asian studies, showing how tourism sites and curated narratives produce political silences.

From State Censorship to Fandom Judgment: Translation and the Re-Silencing of a Danmei Author

Yin Zhang (University of Geneva)

Queer translation studies treats translation as an agentive queer practice: crossing linguistic and cultural borders, it can generate, amplify, and transform a text's queerness (Baer 2020; Harvey 2000). Studying the English-world circulation of Mo Xiang Tong Xiu's danmei novels and adaptations, this paper argues that translation, while producing queer meaning, can also become a hidden site where several silencing mechanisms intersect.

China's strict regulation of queer content forces the source author into a defensive self-censorship, grasped here through Dotson's (2011) testimonial smothering: a hedged, withholding self-presentation formed in anticipation of a hostile reception. A "translational infrastructure" (O'Connor & Tanasescu 2025) in the target language then flattens this self-protective rhetoric through three mechanisms. First, pursuing fluency, a culturally weighted term such as 'renyao' is smoothed into the most idiomatic English word t-slur, levelling its connotations (connotation flattening). Second, editorial normalisation reshapes a character's guarded voice into a sentence that reads as the author's own direct statement (voice collapse). Third, and most crucially, the original's hedges are cut, erasing its survival silence outright (hedging erasure). By deleting these hedges, the withholding self-presentation vanishes: self-protection under oppression is recoded as suspect evasion, as if the author were deliberately avoiding any acknowledgement of the work's queerness.This textual distortion breeds downstream censorship. Anglophone fandom "purity culture" treats the normalised translation as a transparent window, measuring an author already bound by censorship against a Euro-American moral standard: MXTX's interviews, novels and subtitle translations are taken as evidence that she is personally homophobic, misogynistic, and transphobic, completing a relay from institutional censorship to transnational fandom judgement: Dotson's testimonial quieting.

Sensitive Matters:
Rethinking Censorship in Contemporary China

Fabrizio Massini (University of Vienna)

It is a common assumption that, although taking different forms and following cycles of relaxation and tightening, censorship has been a constant feature of the CCP governance since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Generally understood as an instrument to restrict debate and sanitise history, censorship has been significantly enhanced in the 21st century through Internet and digital technologies, effectively reducing most dissenting voices to silence (-or so it is assumed). Moreover, it has been suggested, this impressive apparatus contributes to establishing a surveillance climate that makes self-censorship the default behavioural setting. This reconstruction is not so much incorrect as it is partial, in that it conflates observable behaviours with inferred inner processes while also portraying the (already formidable) power of the party-state to virtual invincibility. As a result, the nuances of lived experience become obscured and individual agency is reduced to a single possibility: (futile) resistance. In line with the conference's theme, this paper revisits these established paradigms by focusing on the contemporary notion of mingan (敏感 "sensitive"). Drawing on Lydia Liu's Translingual Practice (1995), it first demonstrates that insufficient analysis of expressions such as "sensitive word" and "sensitive issue" produced a faulty linguistic/conceptual equivalence whereby mingan has come to be understood solely through the lens of censorship. Second, based on ethnographic research, it considers why independent performance-makers in postmillennial China explore "sensitive topics" despite the risk of triggering censorship and facing serious repercussions. Third, bringing these two lines of inquiry together, it demonstrates that mingan has been articulated both as an ability to detect aspects of social reality that are deliberately obscured and as a commitment to producing artworks that render these aspects visible and intelligible to others.

Session 2D: In/visibility and Dis/appearance: Voices of East Asian Authors and Artists (Organized Panel)

The three papers included in this panel address the conference's topic of "negative space in Asia" by confronting the issues of dis/appearance and in/visibility in visual art and literature from Japan, China, and the wider Sinophone world. While examining a diverse range of cultural phenomena, the papers connect those issues with such topics as gender and queerness, desire and sexuality, identity, as well as the disguised and erased representation of bodies and faces. As a result, all the papers in this panel shed new light on the societal and cultural contexts of the creative phenomena they investigate.

From Strivers to Achievers: The Disappearance of Women from Heian-period Japanese Poetry Matches

Kurtis Hanlon (Palacký University Olomouc)

The Heian period Japan (794–1185) saw the rise of a particular type of poetry match that was popular among the aristocracy, known as uta-awase. Early on, these games were lavish in-person events, with men and women gathering in venues like the inner palace to show off not only poetic prowess, but also material wealth in the props and costumes they used while playing and the gifts they gave each other afterward. However, by the end of the eleventh century, these games were predominantly played on paper with only men participating in the composition and judging of the poems, raising the question: why did women disappear from uta-awase, a cultural practice they were instrumental in building in the early tenth century?

This paper will examine elements of game design of poetry matches spanning the eleventh to twelfth centuries to track the changes to how the game was played. Using C. Thi Nguyen's theories of striving play and achievement play, the pattern becomes clear that the cultural practice changed in such a way that the cultural purpose of playing the game merged with the lusory goal. Once the game transformed from striving to achievement play, the disappearance of women from the record of poetry matches will make sense as part of broader gender dynamic shifts in the Heian period.

Disappearance and Disguise in Zhu Fadong's Art

Giorgio Strafella (Palacký University Olomouc)

In 1993 Zhu Fadong realised one of the first publicly performed works of performance art in China, Announcement of a Missing Person — the "missing person" being Zhu himself. For this work, the artist wandered the streets of his native Kunming, putting up signs with his photo and a description of his appearance; signs were realised by means of collage, with text by Zhu glued on pages of Elle magazine and advertisement for brand-name beauty products. The performance immediately caused a stir in the Chinese art world and critic Wang Lin, writing in Jiangsu Pictorial (July 1993, p. 52: "Performance of Criticism and Critique of Performance"), interpreted it as confronting the disappearance of the (idea of) "self" in contemporary Chinese art under the effect of anti-humanistic materialism. This paper takes this performance artwork as the starting point for an exploration of disappearance and disguise of the (artist's) self in Zhu Fadong's art, including later performances and large-scale photographic artworks. In these works, Zhu explores dis/appearance and in/visibility not only through staged concealment and public performance, but also through corporeal effacement and by blending into a crowd. If Chinese performance art in the late 1980s and 1990s foregrounded the artist's body—often naked and frequently tortured or modified, it also addressed the tension between the rediscovery of artistic subjectivity and anxieties arising from urbanisation, globalisation and the two-fold, intertwined roles of state ideology and cultural commodification. Thanks also to the analysis of previously overlooked works by this artist, this paper contributes a new perspective on Zhu's pioneering art that reveals the centrality of the themes of disappearance, in/visibility, and disguised identity, while shedding new light on performance and public art in post-1989 China.

Visible Bodies, Absent Identities: Male Nudes and Queer Desire in Fu-sheng Ku's Paintings Exhibited at Spectrosynthesis (2017)

Zhian Zheng (Palacký University Olomouc)

This paper examines how male nudity becomes a site of queer desire through visual absence in two paintings by the Sinophone artist Fu-sheng Ku (1935–2017), exhibited in Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, in 2017. Focusing on Poppy Dream (1969) and The Room at the Top of the Stairs (1983), it asks how exposed male bodies can remain detached from stable identities, explicit erotic action, and legible social relations. Through close formal and iconographic analysis, the paper considers the erasure or obscuring of faces, bodily distortion, repetition, spatial separation, and suspended contact. In Poppy Dream, the faceless, dark-toned nude appears both intensely visible and resistant to ethnic, sexual, or personal identification. In The Room at the Top of the Stairs, two back-turned male figures generate homoerotic tension through proximity, duplication, and the unoccupied space between their bodies. I argue that absence in Ku's paintings is not simply a sign of repression or invisibility, but an active visual structure through which desire is produced without being fully named. Recontextualized by Spectrosynthesis, these ambiguous bodies become queerly readable while continuing to unsettle assumptions within visual culture that visibility necessarily produces identity, recognition, or liberation.

Session 2E: Student Session: Narratives in Art

Reconstructing Reproductive Narratives: A Cross-Media Study of The White-Haired Girl

Yiqi Du (East China Normal University)

The cross-media evolution of The White-Haired Girl from opera and film to revolutionary modern ballet reflects not only changes in artistic forms but also changing representations of bodily experiences. Focusing on Xi'er's reproductive narratives, this study argues that female experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing were not simply erased but recoded through adaptation, contributing to the need to construct the female subject across different eras.

In early versions of The White-Haired Girl, Xi'er's child connected sexual violence, blood relations, and maternal ethics, making Xi'er a subject marked by trauma and motherhood. Changes in the child's gender across adaptations reveal shifting understandings of female identity and revolutionary subjectivity: the daughter figure emphasized maternal bond, while the male descendant foregrounded issues of lineage and revolutionary belonging. As adaptations progressed, however, the child's presence was diminished. The film uses miscarriage to symbolically cut the landlord's bloodline and reintegrate Xi'er into a socialist familial order. The ballet further erases reproductive experience at its origin—the sexual violence that caused Xi'er's pregnancy—transforming her into a revolutionary subject beyond family ethics. The disappearance of reproductive narratives thus accompanies the reconfiguration of female identity from a victim, a mother to a revolutionary actor.

The adaptation history of The White-Haired Girl reveals a politics of absence. Canonization preserves certain memories while determining, through omission and transformation, which bodily experiences enter public narratives. The reconstruction of Xi'er's reproductive experience demonstrates how revolutionary narratives reorganized female life experiences while negotiating among class discourse, gender relations, and media forms. Tracing these absences offers new perspectives on female bodies, revolutionary subjectivity, and socialist cultural memory.

Making Absence Present: Liubai, Non-Action, and Negative Space in Chinese Ink-Wash Animation

Fangni Li (Communication University of China) &
Li'an Ji (Communication University of China)

Negative space is often understood in Western formalist accounts of composition as a lack: an area left unfilled, an image withheld, or an absence awaiting completion. This paper rethinks that assumption through the Chinese aesthetic practice of liubai (留白) in ink-wash animation. Focusing on Little Tadpoles Look for Their Mother (Xiao kedou zhao mama, 1960) and Feeling from Mountain and Water (Shanshui qing, 1988), two landmark works of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, it uses comparative close reading of composition, ink gradation, sound design, and shot construction to examine how blankness, diluted ink, pauses, silence, and off-screen space organize perception and narration. The paper argues that liubai functions on three interconnected levels. Spatially, it structures relations among figures, landscapes, and movement rather than merely surrounding visible forms. Temporally, it slows action and allows disappearance, suspension, and transition to become perceptible. Philosophically, it resonates with non-action (wuwei, 无为): not the refusal of action, but an aesthetic restraint that avoids overdetermining the image and leaves room for things, materials, and viewers to participate in meaning-making. In the former film, emptiness makes water, mobility, and searching visible without fully depicting them; in the latter, it gives form to silence, distance, farewell, and transmission. Chinese ink-wash animation therefore turns absence into an active medium: its blank spaces do not signify that meaning is missing, but generate movement, atmosphere, and emotional depth precisely by withholding completion. That this tradition itself largely vanished after 1988 lends the analysis a second layer of absence. By treating emptiness as a mode of presence, the paper offers an Asian aesthetic reinterpretation of negative space and shows how omission can become a productive form of narration.

Can the Sinophone Female Body Speak? Silence as Tactic in Liang Lisha's and Qi Yafei's Artistic Practices

Giacomo Cacciaguerra (Ca' Foscari University, Venice)

Can the Sinophone female body speak? It is through this question that this paper explores the artistic practices of Liang Lisha (1994) and Qi Yafei (1987). Living in Italy and Norway, respectively, these Chinese-born diaspora artists use silence as a practical tactic to challenge dominant narratives about migrant, Chinese, and female bodies. Absent from both Western and Chinese art historical frameworks, their work reclaims "negative space" to transform silence into a tool for addressing sexual repression, family trauma, and commodified social roles.

Liang Lisha's performance practice takes the migrant, female, Chinese body as a site of inquiry, exposing the trauma of unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions while demanding sex education within the Chinese family. Her practice enacts Butler's public dimension of the body, making visible the social vulnerabilities that silence Chinese women. Qi Yafei similarly uses video to manifest the generational rifts and crushing social expectations within the domestic sphere, specifically challenging the "leftover woman" (剩女) stigma. For her, spato-temporal displacement becomes a tool to dismantle societal lies from the periphery.

Ultimately, Liang and Qi demonstrate that silence is not just absence of voice, but a pragmatic strategy of emotional resonance: such negative space of absence is reclaimed for artistic agency both on the level of identity – from Chineseness into Sinophone – and gender, reminding us that "the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own" (Butler 2004, 26).

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Session 3A: Media and Institutions

From "Knowing How to Use" to "Choosing Not to Participate": Selective Non-participation in Livestream E-commerce among Middle-aged and Older Micro-entrepreneurs on Beijing's Rural Periphery

Zhengjia Lu (China Women's University)

Basic digital use does not ensure livestream participation. This study asks why middle-aged and older micro-entrepreneurs who use WeChat, mobile payments, or delivery services avoid or minimally participate. It draws on 20 interview records and participant observation from May–June 2026 fieldwork in Pingyuan Village near Beijing's Tanzhe Temple Scenic Area and Haizi Village in Jinhaihu Town. Rather than a skills deficit, non-participation is examined as a negative space within digital inclusion (Scheerder et al., 2017). Two risk patterns emerged: Pingyuan operators emphasized evaluative visibility through price exposure, hostile comments, and uncertain returns, whereas Haizi farmers stressed transaction risks involving errors, failed payments, and fraud. Work and care, small production volumes, nonstandardized supply, and weak traceability also constrained participation. "I cannot learn" combined literacy or operational difficulties with concern about learning costs and failure. Some participants accepted AI-generated virtual presenters only when the project team handled operation and costs; this does not demonstrate intervention effectiveness. Consistent with research on constrained rural engagement with e-commerce livestreaming (Huang et al., 2024), platform absence is neither simply technological exclusion nor passive lack, but a selective digital practice shaped by capability, anticipated risk, and livelihood conditions.

Corporate Denial, Victim Exclusion, Absence of Accountability: Exploring the Fuji TV Scandal

Igor Prusa (Ambis University Prague)

This paper examines the 2024–2025 Fuji TV scandal, in which an allegation of sexual violence against celebrity host Nakai Masahiro escalated into a crisis of corporate governance, media legitimacy, and gendered workplace culture in Japan. Based on press coverage, corporate communication, apology performances, investor interventions, and the third-party committee report, it reconstructs how a case framed as private "trouble" became a public indictment of Fuji TV's institutional culture.

The paper argues that the scandal developed through three linked failures. First, Fuji TV's response was shaped by corporate denial: the company rejected weekly-magazine reporting, minimized the incident, and treated reputational risk as more urgent than victim protection. Second, the victim was excluded from accountability processes. While Nakai continued to appear on TV, Fuji TV failed to investigate the allegation, activate compliance mechanisms, or provide adequate support; the third-party committee later identified this neglect as secondary harm and a human-rights violation. Third, accountability emerged only under pressure from tabloids, foreign media, social media, advertisers, and activist investors.

Situated within Japanese scandal theory, the paper shows how the Fuji TV affair disrupted the familiar ritual of apology, resignation, and reintegration. The press conferences did not contain the crisis but intensified it, triggering advertiser withdrawal, independent investigation, and legal action against former executives. The scandal also exposed the "tribute culture" surrounding female announcers and catalyzed testimony resembling a sector-specific #MeToo moment.

The paper concludes that the scandal was not simply a celebrity scandal or isolated corporate failure. It was a stress test for Japan's media system, revealing how sexual violence can be privatized, victims institutionally erased, and accountability deferred until market, legal, and public pressures converge.

Exclusion in India: Christianity and the FRCA

Enrico Beltramini (Notre Dame de Namur University)

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill of 2026 represents the most significant expansion of central government power over foreign-funded civil society organizations in India since the FCRA was first enacted. For the Church in India — whose schools, hospitals, and social welfare organizations have historically depended on foreign funding — the consequences could be severe and potentially irreversible. This article examines the history and provisions of the FCRA and its 2026 amendment, assesses their specific consequences for Christian minority institutions, and advances four reflections on the ecclesial dimensions of the crisis: the difficulty of discerning the signs of the times with sufficient clarity and courage; the challenge of institutional foresight and the virtue of prudence; the structural tension between the Church's global operational model and the realities of an age of resurgent political and economic nationalism; and the absence in Indian theological reflection of an adequate theology of economic self-sufficiency. It concludes by examining three ecclesiological scenarios for the Church in India in the event that the Bill is enacted — a diminished and fearful Church that turns inward under institutional pressure, a leaner and more prophetic Church that rediscovers its mission through the experience of loss, and a virtualized Church that replaces physical infrastructure with digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) — and argues that the theological choices the Church makes in response to this crisis will be as consequential as the legal and political ones.

Withdrawing the Label, Retaining the Category: The Negative Space of Anti-Americanism in North Korea

Wangmu Zhaxi (University of Cambridge)

Before the 2018 Singapore summit, North Korean official media named the United States almost daily as mije ("American imperialists"). The term appeared on 306 of 363 KCNA publication days in 2017. After the summit, that routine vanished: KCNA used mije on just two days in 2019 and almost never through 2021. What had changed: the enemy category, its American label, or the relationship between them? This paper analyzes that silence as negative space by comparing the label's disappearance with changes in the broader enemy category.

Evidence combines a 145,381-article KCNA corpus (1998–2025) with Rodong Sinmun's domestic education reporting (2015–2025). By 2020–2021, explicit anti-US education language had fallen to 2 percent of its pre-summit article rate. Broader class-education discourse, however, remained above 80 percent of its own baseline. Within that continuing discourse, the American label and South Korean "puppet" terminology receded together.

Rhetorical moderation toward negotiating counterparts is unsurprising. Less expected was partial referential substitution within the broader enemy category. The share of class-education articles invoking Japanese imperialism without US or South Korean labels rose from 3 to 41 percent. These opposing movements constitute label-category decoupling. An authoritarian system can accommodate diplomacy by withdrawing specific labels while the broader enemy category contracts far less. Anti-US language's partial return after 2022 demonstrates the pattern's reversibility.

The paper links scholarship on authoritarian messaging and political socialization by tracing how public labels and domestic enemy categories diverge. This divergence explains why visible rhetorical restraint can overstate ideological retreat. Beyond North Korea, the distinction helps identify when diplomatic accommodation changes public language while domestic enemy categories remain comparatively stable.

Session 3B: Student Session: Politics

The Practical Limits of South Korea's Global Pivotal State Vision: The Case of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine

Olha Pavlenko (Kyiv National Linguistic University)

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has become an important test of the Republic of Korea's ambition to act as a "Global Pivotal State" (GPS). While Seoul aligned with the West through sanctions, export controls, and humanitarian assistance, the deepening partnership between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also reshaped its regional security environment. As a result, South Korea faced growing tension between its global commitments and regional security priorities. Using the war in Ukraine as a case study, this paper examines the practical limits of implementing the GPS vision. It argues that the conflict exposed the tension between South Korea's expanding global role and the constraints imposed by its regional security environment. Although South Korea's overall foreign policy does not fully correspond to the classical understanding of hedging, its policy nevertheless reflects elements of balancing and engagement, helping explain how Seoul managed competing strategic pressures. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of the practical constraints that middle powers face when pursuing more ambitious global roles. The South Korean case shows that, under growing geopolitical polarization, even states with a clear strategic alignment may incorporate elements of hedging into their foreign policy to navigate competing global and regional security demands, offering a basis for future comparative research on middle-power responses to major geopolitical crises.

How the Undocumented Recognize "the State"

Riko Shibuya (University of Tokyo)

The field work and the interviews toward the undocumented living in Japan revealed very interesting insight on how they recognize "the state." "The state" here means not as an already constructed structure such as a traditional form of government agency, but as the state which appears through people's interaction and the discourse (Gupta 1995).

In this study, I focus on the undocumented asylum seekers who are in the condition of "Karihomen. " Karihomen are undocumented but their existence is recognized by the immigration. They have many opportunities to interact with immigration officials because they are required to go to the immigration office from once a month to every three months. About how to treat karihomen, immigration bureau is given broad discretion, ranging from how often karihomen are required go to immigration office, to whether karihomen are granted the lega status.

Looking closely into how they interact with immigration officials and how they go through the immigration officials' discretionary decisions informs us how they recognize "the state." For example, they sometimes try to convey the improvement of their treatment to power holders such as high-rank officials or politicians. This means that they take advantage of the discretionary structure of the immigration bureau and they even strengthen the discretionary structure.

The existing literature have mainly focused on what difficulty the undocumented have in daily lives. Few studies have focused on how they interact with immigration bureau. This presentation fills this gap and adds new insights on how they experience and resist the immigration officials' discretionary decisions. In addition, this presentation also contributes to the literature on the state from the perspective of the undocumented, who experience strong suppression.

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Can We Imagine 'Queer Security Studies?' The Making of Queer Communities as 'Non-Military Threat' in Indonesia

Muhammad Anugrah Utama (Palacký University Olomouc)

Since Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, 'Queer security studies' has become a growing area of study. Earlier conceptualisation such as Hagen, which focus on queering the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, and the more recent literature such as Moran, Luciani, and Edenborg focus on war- and conflict-time (in)securitisation of the LGBTQ+ communities as existential threat, to the state and its society. This proposal presents a queer critique to the critical security studies which have failed to account the experiences of the queer community in the Global South by emphasising the binary distinction of wartime and peacetime contexts, as during the latter, queer community tends to be valorised in the absence of the 'symbolic other.' Using a systematic literature review and framing analysis, the proposal will scrutinise executive-level government statements related to the socio-political representations of the queer community and LGBTQ+ rights in Indonesia. Recently, the Presidential Regulation No. 111 of 2025 classifies "the spread of LGBTQ+ culture" as a "non-military threat" alongside terrorism, radicalism, and separatism. In recent years, Indonesia has witnessed increasing public contestation over LGBTQ+ rights, where exclusion is framed not only as a moral or religious concern but increasingly as a matter of national security "coming from outside" to destabilise the (heteronormative) order. The proposal contributes to the discussion of integrating queer perspective into (critical) security studies by demonstrating how prevailing notions of 'security' have embedded heteronormative assumptions by focusing on binary genders and the binary distinction of wartime and peacetime, thus marginalising the experiences of everyday queer (in)security in the Global South.

Session 3C: Nature's Absences: Displaced Knowledge, Contested Claims, Lived Frontiers (Organized Panel)

Nature becomes most "visible" when it does not "obey" humans - when heatwaves or floodings cause casualties or when crops fail despite technological interventions. In such moments, we are forced to recognise forces and relationships that are otherwise often ignored. Nature is often made invisible. This does not happen by accident, but through ongoing struggles over knowledge, law, and meaning. Power asymmetries matter for nature's voids; what is legitimized and what is ignored in the process? For example, local knowledge is often displaced, overlooked, or sidelined. However, it doesn't simply disappear; it may be amplified elsewhere and find new ways and places to last (Li, 2014). This panel explores how these absences are produced and embedded in struggles across different sites and fields in Central and Southeast Asia. This interdisciplinary panel critically examines empirical and textual material, focusing on how absences in nature are produced, with particular attention to trees, agriculture, and tourism. It addresses how scientific and legal practices often marginalise nature's agency, but also how alternative worldviews may sustain different relationships with the environment. Travel writing, meanwhile, can serve as a critical lens for examining what is neglected in encounters with humans and the more-than-human (Kerridge, 1999). In critically engaging with tourism, we can shed light on how exclusions are "made" over time. We ask: How are absences contested and in flux? How does absence itself become a force that shapes both people and the places they call home?

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Collecting Diversity, Producing Absence: The Fate of the Dungan Soybean in Soviet Central Asia

Natalia Ryzhova (Palacký University Olomouc)

The expansion of Soviet soybean cultivation in the 1930s relied on an ambitious scientific campaign to identify, collect, and incorporate locally adapted varieties into centralized breeding networks. This paper examines the discovery of the so-called Dungan soybean in southeastern Kazakhstan by researchers at the Almaty experimental station. The Dungan soybean attracted scientific attention because of its adaptation to local ecological conditions and was incorporated into Soviet collections and scientific publications.

This contribution explores the following question: What disappeared in the very process of scientific collection? Drawing on archival materials from the All-Union Institute of Plant Industry (VIR), experimental station reports, published agronomic research, and contemporary evidence on soybean cultivation in Kazakhstan, I argue that Soviet agricultural science was remarkably effective at transforming landraces into standardized scientific objects, yet far less capable of preserving the social and ecological relationships that had produced them. The Dungan soybean largely vanished from subsequent breeding trajectories, while the farming knowledge embedded in Dungan communities became increasingly invisible within centralized scientific practice (see Shurtleff & Aoyagi, 2010, for historical context). This paper argues that the most enduring legacy of Soviet agricultural science was the gradual displacement of local breeding traditions. Rather than treating absence as the disappearance of an object, the paper conceptualizes it as an unintended product of scientific ordering – the active production of absence through technical standardization (see Li, 2014).

The Absent Forest in Eastern Siberia: Commodification, Access, and Invisible Relations

Iuliia Koreshkova (University of Zurich)

Industrial forestry is commonly understood as a process through which forests become timber and nature becomes an economic resource. This transformation often involves the physical disappearance of forests through logging. This paper argues, however, that commodification produces another, less visible form of disappearance. It transforms the ways forests are perceived, accessed, and inhabited, producing a particular regime of visibility in which timber becomes increasingly present while many of the relations that constitute the forest gradually recede from view. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Eastern Siberia, argue that access provides the key to understanding this transformation. Industrial forestry does not simply reorganize timber production, it reshapes relationships with the forest by privileging certain forms of access while marginalizing others. As industrial access becomes dominant, long-established practices such as hunting, gathering, fishing, and other locally embedded ways of inhabiting the forest become constrained. At the same time, the practical knowledge sustained through these activities is reproduced less frequently across generations, while public discussions of forests become dominated by narratives of logging, environmental degradation, and resource exploitation. These interconnected transformations change not only how forests are used but also what the forest becomes. As one particular version of the forest - as an industrial resource - comes to dominate, the forest as a socio-ecological world gradually disappears from public visibility. Rather than asking simply how forests become commodities, the paper asks how commoditization produces a particular way of seeing nature (Kopytoff, 1986; Tsing, 2015). It suggests that modern forest economies produce not only timber, but also a particular ontology of the forest, making one version of the forest increasingly real while rendering other ways of knowing, accessing, and inhabiting it progressively absent.

Normalised Dispossession, Tourism Land Rushes and the Paradox of Non-Resistance in Gunungsewu UNESCO Global Geopark, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta

Rucitarahma Ristiawan (Gadjah Mada University)

In critical political ecology (see, for example Robbins, 2014), nature becomes most visible when its limits are breached through ecological crises, yet the processes through which nature's agencies and communal ecologies are rendered invisible remain highly contested. This presentation critically examines how exclusions and structural displacements are actively made over time within a tourism-driven frontier. Focusing on the coastal resort boom and resultant land rushes within the Gunungsewu UNESCO Global Geopark in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, we investigate a profound paradox by questioning why rural communities voluntarily liquidate their ancestral lands and spatial heritage to outside investment power. Drawing on Neil Smith's rent gap theory, this presentation will show how an explosion in land prices has transformed vulnerable karst landscapes into lucrative financial assets where capital accumulation relies on a state-sanctioned mechanism of normalised dispossession. Grounded in two series of ethnographic fieldworks (2023 & 2024) in Saptosari, Girisubo, and Tepus, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, this study exposes how patrimonial governance structures use the rent gap to turn environmental precarity into what has been framed as "local economic desire." This study demonstrates how the material absence of water, welfare, and agricultural viability in Southern Yogyakarta forces class fractionalization. Furthermore, this study uncovers a "dispossession elsewhere" paradox: core-zone non-resistance triggers an invisible water rush, drying regional aquifers and disrupting neighbouring agriculture. This research challenges binary orthodoxies by conceptualising rural non-resistance not as passivity, but as a calculated strategy to resist structural exclusion that hides within a capital-law entanglement.

What They Don't Write When They Write about Nature: Narrative Practices as Countermovement in Indonesian Travel Writing

Ramayda Akmal (Gadjah Mada University)

This research examines a countermovement of critical Indonesian travel writers who seek to disrupt and reframe the tendency in "humanistic" travel writing to position Indonesian nature as merely passive settings, objects, and resources. More specifically, these writers attempt to challenge the excessive dominance of human consciousness and emotion in travel writing on Indonesia, which tends to render nature and nonhuman consciousness through human-centred worldviews (Kerridge, 1999).

This alternative form of travel writing is examined through the works of three prominent travel writers who represent this countermovement: Fatris M.F., Agustinus Wibowo, and Titah AW. These authors specialize in addressing ecological issues in Indonesia, such as land conversion, land grabbing, the extinction of certain species, environmental degradation, and the effects of mass tourism on nature and local communities. By focusing on these issues, this research explores how this countermovement creates alternative narrative strategies to portray Indonesian nature beyond human-centred travel writing.

Drawing on the framework of material ecocriticism by Iovino & Oppermann (2014), this research argues that these critical travel writers attempt to make the agency of nature and nonhuman agents visible in their narratives by making them the centre of the storytelling. They use their narratives as spaces for reflection on human-centred biases. This research shows that this countermovement has become an integral part of understanding environmental issues in Indonesia in the way nature is narrated as an active and powerful agent rather than as a passive object only rendered through discourse.

Session 3D: Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (1)

What the Canon Could Not Explain: Southern Song Scholars' Discussions of Dialects and Local Customs in Poetry

Meghan Cai (Grand Valley State University)

This project examines a body of 12th-13th century Chinese prefaces, colophons, and biji (miscellany) that foreground the role of local dialects, regional experience, and native-place identity, which had been marginalized within classical scholarship, in the annotation of major poets such as Su Shi, Huang Tingjian, Du Fu, and Yang Xiong. Whereas previous scholarship has incorporated annotated poems into their research, this study focuses on discourse about the annotation process by Southern Song men who increasingly recognized the regional origins and regional linguistic features embedded in their work. Understanding these texts therefore required not only classical erudition but also familiarity with local vocabulary, pronunciation, and customs.

By bringing together literary analysis and intellectual history, this project shows that annotation in the Southern Song was imagined as a collaborative, social enterprise dependent on expertise beyond the traditional scholarly hierarchy. Reflecting a broader intellectual shift in the Southern Song that emphasized broad learning (boxue) and evidential inquiry (kao), this discourse acknowledges that local sounds are entering, challenging, and enriching classical domains. Scholars began to see local informants—regardless of status—as essential mediators of regional linguistic and cultural knowledge. Thus, they reconceptualized annotation not simply as philological recovery of textual allusion but as a socially embedded practice shaped by networks of regional specialists.

Recognizing this shift opens onto larger questions about absence, exclusion, and recovery in literary culture. How did recognition of regional dialect features shape perceptions of authorial intent? How did scholars attempt to

transform localized knowledge into sharable, authoritative commentary? And what does this reveal about changing definitions of expertise, the circulation of knowledge, and the boundaries between elite and local intellectual life?

A Man Down on His Luck: Sesson Yūbai's Ill-Fated Journey to China

Vít Ulman (Palacký University Olomouc)

Sesson Yūbai 雪村友梅 (1290–1347) was a prominent Japanese Zen monk of the officially sanctioned Gozan 五山 temples, known for his Chinese-language poetry. While traveling in China to advance his religious studies, political misfortune led to his imprisonment, torture, and near-execution. He subsequently endured nearly twenty years of house arrest across various Chinese monasteries, becoming possibly the first recorded Japanese person to enter Sichuan.

The poetry of this period, compiled in his collection Mingashū, captures a striking tension: on one hand, it records his profound physical suffering; on the other, it reflects an enduring admiration for Chinese culture, natural beauty, and the benevolence of strangers. As Yūbai endeavors to uphold his monastic vows, the juxtaposition of these elements renders him deeply human. This paper focuses on the aforementioned topics and explores Sesson's attitude towards the vicissitudes of life, on his unique experience, analysing the material from his own poetry and various secondary sources such as his official hagiography Gyōdōki.

Negative Space and Limit of Knowing of Post-Socialist China: A Reading of Wang Anyi's Anonymous

Juntao Lin (New York University)

This paper examines Wang Anyi's Anonymous (Niming 匿名, 2016) as a meditation on language, cognition, and spatial reproduction in post-socialist China. The novel begins with mistaken identity. A retired Shanghai accountant is abducted under the wrong name and abandoned in a mountain region. As he loses memory, speech, social identity, and name, he passes through marginal spaces, including an abandoned settlement, an isolated town, and a welfare institution inhabited by disabled and undocumented people. I argue that these spaces constitute a negative spatiality produced through disappearance, misnaming, aphasia, suspended action, and incomplete administrative recognition.

My argument develops in three parts. First, Shanghai appears as an epistemic order organized by names, archives, household registration, classification, and data. The protagonist's disappearance exposes the instability of this order, as administrative records repeatedly fail to coincide with lived existence. Second, as he moves away from Shanghai, linguistic and bureaucratic forms of mediation give way to bodily and environmental perception through sound, injury, hunger, weather, topography, movement, and objects. As language recedes, thought disperses across the body and its surroundings, unsettling the Cartesian image of a self-conscious subject at the center of the world. Third, I read this process as an inverted narrative of Enlightenment. The protagonist undergoes a form of de-enlightenment as social identity, historical orientation, and linguistic mastery dissolve. The decline of naming and meaning opens a negative space within post-socialist modernity, where existence finally exceeds the names, archives, and identities through which it is governed, in an utterly naked way.

Session 3E: Community

Self-rule and Negative Consciouness in India's North Eastern Region: Resistance, Recognition and Alternative Politics

Gurumayum Sharma (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

This paper critically engages with the thought and consciousness process underlying the collective subjectivity of the people, particularly the Nagas, Kuki-Zo, and Meitei in India's Northeast region. It engages with the situated and contrary subjective experiences of the resistance movement, contesting autonomy/statehood and irreconcilable collective thought and consciousness. The study engages with the community's intellectual writings that underly the self-identity formation and consciouness.

In our context, the community is characterized by loss, denial, indignity, discrimination, repression, and the urgency to change or challenge the structure of statist or majoritarian power relationships. Cultural ways, ethnic roots, migratory history, and linguistic and geographical affinities are not naturally given things but the societal attributes actualized by the community intellectuals and civil society groups to compensate for indignity and denial. In this regard, the study considers the cases of resistance movements such as Naga nationalism, Kuki-Zo nationalism, and Meitei Nationalism in the region. This paper complicates the idea of an insurgent community underlying these nationalisms, primarily because communities that fought against the loss and indignation of their civilization and identity within the larger subcontinental civilizational idea of India also irreconcilably contest each other for constitutional recognition of autonomy and statehood. The critical issue is not just about how a community experiences a state: resist and revere.

The paper argues that the critical problem with identifying oneself is the reduction of self-identity into an essentialized and coherent category, which lacks theoretical integration with the concept of reconciliation and an active questioning of the derivative self. Alternative popular politics must be able to share a common concern for equality, freedom, and justice.

Neither Hidden nor Recognized: Kejawén and Religious Visibility in Contemporary Java

Pavla Putrová (Oriental Institute Czech Academy of Sciences)

This paper examines how practices associated with kejawén continue to exist in contemporary Java amid pressures toward more orthodox forms of religious expression. Based on ethnographic research conducted during multiple fieldwork visits in Malang, East Java, between 2016 and 2024, it explores how people selectively conceal, limit, or reframe spiritual practices associated with kejawén in response to anticipated social judgment.

Rather than being simply prohibited or entirely hidden, practices linked to kejawén occupy an ambiguous social position. Their meaning shifts across contexts: what may be understood as spirituality, local tradition, or protection in one setting may be regarded as superstition or as religiously problematic in another. Interlocutors described limiting discussion of certain practices, keeping them private, or carefully managing who could witness them.

The paper argues that the position of kejawén cannot be understood solely through formal recognition or religious criticism. Instead, it shows how the visibility of practices associated with kejawén is shaped through everyday social interactions, different audiences, and expectations surrounding legitimate religious life.

By focusing on this ambiguous public presence, the paper contributes to discussions of religion and visibility in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Solidarity in Myanmar's Spring Revolution: practices, meanings and tensions

Cecile Medail (Palacký University Olomouc)

The post-coup revolution in Myanmar has evolved into a self-sustaining struggle, continually renewed through the participation of diverse actors across social, ethnic, and generational lines. Rather than a unified movement, it is shaped by a multiplicity of initiatives and political imaginaries, raising questions about how solidarity is produced, experienced and contested under conditions of repression and violence.

This paper explores practices of solidarity within and across groups in revolutionary Myanmar. It asks: What practices of solidarity are activists and grassroots actors engaging in? How do they understand and define solidarity in their own terms? And what are the possibilities and limitations of solidarity under conditions of conflict? Empirically, the paper examines how solidarity is enacted thorugh everyday practices of mutual support as well as coordinated actions. It also analyses how actors reflect on the moral, political and strategic meaning of solidarity and how they imagine relations of mutual obligation and collective struggle. In doing so, the paper shows that solidarity emerges in multiple, sometimes contested forms, which contribute to reshaping power, belonging, and exclusion.

Session 4A: Absence and Exclusion: Ethnographies of Access, Inequalities and Knowledge Transmission (Organized Panel)

In line with the conference theme "Denial, Exclusion, Absence: Exploring the Negative Space in Asia," this panel sheds light on how knowledge is transmitted, by whom, for what purpose, and who is excluded from this process. The "negative space" is not primarily understood in spatial terms but in social terms; inclusion-exclusion dynamics are fluid and subject to change. However, knowledge also implies ignorance (see, for example, Dilley 2010); the question then is who evaluates both, and on what basis. Grounded in ethnographies conducted in different areas across Asia, the panel contributors draw on analyses of everyday life at their respective field sites, both within Asia and beyond. The panel also critically engages with how material culture is remembered, forgotten, or sidelined. The questions to be addressed in this panel discussion include, for example, the following: To what extent do social hierarchies determine who is included in work processes and the community, and who is excluded from them? How do members of Asian diasporas resist structural inequalities? How do shifting understandings of the past transform how cultural heritage, such as shrines, is remembered and forgotten? What are the material processes by which "absence is understood and commemorated" (Bille et al. 2010, p. 7)?

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Naturalized Hierarchy: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Uyghur Craftsmanship System of Rural Southern Xinjiang

Muhetaer Mukaidisi (Palacký University Olomouc)

Craftsmanship, or hüner, is woven deeply into the social, cultural, and religious life of the Uyghur community. In the rural areas of southern Xinjiang, local craftsmanship forms a complex ecosystem governing community roles, knowledge transmission, and social status (Bellér-Hann, 2008; Eyferth, 2009). This paper investigates the structural dynamics of this craftsmanship system, Bellér- examining how access to specific craft knowledge has been historically transmitted, maintained, or foreclosed, and asking what the rules for inclusion and exclusion among the craftmanship hierarchy in the local level were. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork and oral history among Uyghur felt-makers, I trace how craftspeople themselves developed their own mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion — through guild membership, apprenticeship lineage, marriage practices, and notions of ritual purity attached to different materials and trades. I argue that the process by which social stratification within craft communities is accepted as tradition, rather than being recognised as contingent and historically conditioned, constitutes a form of "negative space" within Uyghur craft knowledge itself: a lack of recognition which has rendered certain groups vulnerable in a way that is not the case for "more visible" heritage-sanctioned trades.

Intimacy on the Margins: Vietnamese Migrants' Everyday Lives in Taiwan's Industrial Zones

Mai Thi Thu (Palacký University Olomouc)

Through the lens of intersectionality, this paper examines how Vietnamese marriage migrants and labor migrants residing in Taiwan's industrial zones navigate layered social hierarchies, build socioeconomic networks, and (re)define intimacy and gender norms within diasporic contexts. Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork, the study draws on in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observation with 37 Vietnamese labor migrants and 26 marriage migrants. The findings suggest that the spatial and social formations of the Vietnamese diaspora are shaped by structural inequalities and processes of social exclusion in the host society, while simultaneously serving as sites of everyday resistance. Diasporic spaces function not only as zones of economic survival but also as arenas where migrants assert agency in shaping their intimate lives. Within the context of Taiwan's industrial zones, alternative forms of kinship, such as temporary or extramarital relationships, reflect migrants' fluid negotiations of intimacy and survival strategies amid precarious transnational conditions.

Absent Shrines: Lost Sacred Geography of Samarkand and the Politics of Memory

Azim Malikov (Palacký University Olomouc)

This paper examines the transformation of the Islamic sacred landscape of Samarkand between 1868 and 1991, focusing on shrines (mazars) and cemeteries whose functions, meanings, or physical presence changed over time. Drawing on archival documents, oral histories, and contemporary fieldwork, the study reconstructs the evolution of the city's sacred topography over more than a century. The transformation of Samarkand's Islamic sacred topography began after the city's conquest by the Russian Empire, whose colonial policies reshaped the relationship between religious sites and the urban environment. During the Soviet period, policies of secularization, anti-religious campaigns, urban redevelopment, and changing patterns of religious practice further transformed the city's sacred landscape. While some shrines and cemeteries disappeared from the urban fabric, others survived, adapted to new circumstances, or continued to exist in local memory and informal religious practice. By tracing the changing fate of these sites, the article explores the relationship between material absence and cultural memory. It further examines how different discourses of Islam (Asad, 2009) and the specific features of religious policy in Uzbekistan (Khalid, 2014) have shaped the ways communities remember, reinterpret, and transmit knowledge about sacred places that are no longer visible in the contemporary city. Finally, it considers how the disappearance or transformation of these sacred sites has affected local religious practices and historical consciousness.

The Negative Space of the Ethnographer: Post-Fieldwork Considerations

Valentina Gamberi (Palacký University Olomouc)

Anthropologists, especially in their early careers, have increasingly emphasised the incompatibility between funding bodies and ethical boards' requirements and the unpredictability of ethnographic fieldwork (Whitty 2024). In some cases (Pollard 2011; Schneider 2020), they argue that the ethnographers' vulnerability is seldom explored in ethical and methodological reflections on ethnography. How do the negative spaces of ethnographic subjectivities, works, and discourses shape how fieldwork is understood and represented in ethnographic writings? This work builds on these reflections from my ethnography of deconsecration rituals among practitioners of popular religion in Taiwan. Deconsecrating rituals, whilst fundamental steps for an appropriate handling of unworshipped sacred matter, are usually considered taboo practices as associated with cosmic and moral disruptions. Knowing about deconsecrating rituals is thus important for researchers to access museum collections of popular religious items from the Sinosphere, but it can also disrupt ethnographic relationships. The delicate balance between my moral concerns and epistemological needs was often further complicated by the institutional requirements of my MSCA-CZ postdoctoral fellowship. This work asks whether reflecting on the ethnographers' negative spaces can help reconsider academic research.

Session 4B: Student Session: Politics and Philosophy

Who Belongs in Heritage Space? Government Discourse and the Reconfiguration of Citizenship in Tapgol Park

Tanisha Paine (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

This study examines the 2025 ban on janggi (Korean chess) and baduk (Go) in Tapgol Park, Seoul, to analyze how government discourse reconstructs the relationship between citizens and national heritage. Tapgol Park is both a site linked to the Ten-Story Stone Pagoda of Wongaksa Temple and the March First Movement and a social space where disadvantaged older men have gathered since the late 1990s to play games, receive free meals, and maintain social ties. In 2025, the Jongno District Office prohibited these activities in the name of heritage protection and public order and designated the park as an alcohol-free zone.

This study argues that the ban did more than regulate park use; it redefined which users and practices could be regarded as legitimate within a national heritage space. Official discourse presented Tapgol Park as a protected historical site and an "open park for all citizens," while recasting elderly users' leisure practices as disorderly and harmful to the park's dignity.

Drawing on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Laurajane Smith's concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse, the study analyzes official statements and press releases, signs and prohibition notices in the park, and semi-structured interviews with elderly users, merchants, and residents. It asks how official language and imagery frame janggi and baduk as incompatible with heritage space and how affected users interpret, negotiate, or challenge these representations.

Rather than judging whether the ban was justified, the study investigates how "heritage protection," "public order," and "a park for all citizens" normalize certain forms of public use while marginalizing others. It shows how national memory, urban publicness, elderly leisure, and heritage management intersect within one space and how government discourse reshapes citizen–heritage relations in contemporary Korea.

Between "Thought" and "Philosophy": Reconsider the Legitimacy Crisis of East Asian Philosophy through Kuki Shūzō

Suyu Wei (Peking University)

This paper approaches the conference theme of exclusion through a conceptual problem at the heart of modern East Asian philosophy: the contested boundary between "thought" (shisō) and "philosophy" (tetsugaku). Following East Asia's encounter with European modernity and the introduction of modern academic institutions, tetsugaku (哲学)—the Japanese Kanji translation of "philosophy"—gradually acquired a restricted and institutionalized meaning. As a result, various pre-modern intellectual traditions were excluded from the category of philosophy and relegated to the ambiguous domain of shisō (思想, thought). Yet such exclusion was not merely externally imposed; it also became a condition through which East Asian intellectual traditions reconfigured their own relation to philosophy.

Rather than treating the distinction between "thought" and "philosophy" as a purely disciplinary issue, I argue that it constitutes a mechanism through which philosophical legitimacy has been negotiated in East Asia since the late 19th century. This paper first examines three major responses to this crisis, each of which reveals unresolved difficulties arising from both the ambiguity of the definition of philosophy itself and the affective dimension of modern East Asian trauma experience, especially the anxiety concerning cultural and civilizational identity. Against this background, the paper turns to the Japanese philosopher Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941). Kuki's work has often been interpreted as representing a rigid separation between "philosophy" and "thought." Through a reconsideration of the continuity across Kuki's writings, this paper examines how he transforms an inquiry into Japanese cultural experience into an ontological inquiry, demonstrating that East Asian experience can become a source of philosophy rather than merely local knowledge. This reconsideration also reveals that texts difficult to accommodate within existing frameworks challenge us to rethink the boundaries of philosophy.

Beyond "I Have Lost Myself" — Retaining the Subject or Abolishing the Self?

Yuxiang Zhang (Tsinghua University)

The opening statement of the "Qiwulun" (On Equalizing Things) in the Zhuangzi, "I have lost myself" (wu sang wo), initiates a profound Chinese philosophical contemplation of the self, the subject, and the realm of existence. Intense debate has persisted among scholars regarding whether the "I" (wu) that remains after "losing myself" (sang wo) should be understood as a "state of being" (jingjie) or as a "subject" (zhuti). Analyzing the semantic and existential dimensions of the concepts wu (the primordial "I") and wo (the empirical "self"), this paper critically examines the compromise of retaining wu as an ultimate subject. It argues that the logical culmination of "losing myself" is "losing the wu" (sang wu)—the complete dissolution of wu as a latent subject—thereby achieving the ultimate wandering of "selfless" (wu ji). Through an intertextual reading of the "piping of nature" (tianlai), "dual walking" (liangxing), and "Zhuang Zhou dreaming of a butterfly," this study demonstrates the necessity of "abolishing the self" as a form of high-level objectification (wuhua) and natural existence. Finally, it offers a normative rescue from the potential crises of cynicism and nihilism inherent in this path through the horizon of the "distinction between the heavenly and the human" (tianren zhi bian).

The concept of 亡國 wangguo and the Birth of the Modern Concept of the State in Late Qing China

Agnieszka Czyż (Jagiellonian University)

This paper examines how the late Qing rearticulation of wangguo 亡國 ("perished state") became a crucible for the modern Chinese concept of the state. In the classical lexicon, guo meant in practice the ruling house; after 1895, as fears of colonial erasure condensed into the slogan wangguo miezhong 亡國滅種, this vocabulary collapsed. To fear losing a state, one first had to possess the concept of a state that was one's own. The paper argues that this concept was worked out largely within the reformist essays and compiled "histories of perished states" which counted Poland, India, Egypt, Vietnam, and Korea in this category. Poland will serve as my principal example: the earliest case in the corpus (Liang Qichao's account in Shiwubao, 1896; Kang Youwei's memorial-history of the partitions, 1898) and the one most intensively rewritten, with three Chinese translations of a single Japanese history of Poland's fall appearing between 1901 and 1904. It was also the corpus's most instructive anomaly: a state that vanished from the map without dynastic succession, while its nation — partitioned yet insurgent — visibly outlived it. In my presentation I will analyze how the diagnosis of national perishing redefined the state through participation, and how the Polish case detached the nation from the state, recasting the state as something a nation possesses, loses, and may regain. The genre of absence thus proved generative: by naming what China must not become, it furnished the concepts of guojia, guomin, and minzu through which a modern China could be thought at all.

Session 4C: States and Other (Dis)Orders

Panchama Lands, Administrative Inaction and Violence: Limits of Judicial Intervention in Tamil Nadu

Jerome Samraj Chandrasekar (Pondicherry University)

In 1892, the British colonial state conditionally granted cultivable wastelands to the Depressed Classes (Dalits), prohibiting transfer to other castes via sale, mortgage, or gift. Violations would trigger revenue department resumption and reassignment to Dalit families. From 1926, one acre per family was allotted, benefiting many households. Despite these safeguards, dominant castes gradually usurped the lands, and institutional memory of the assignment and its conditions faded among beneficiaries and their descendants.

In 1994, Tamil Nadu witnessed a major Dalit movement to reclaim these Panchama lands. It was violently suppressed by police, resulting in two Dalit youths killed and sixteen injured. Though short-lived, the struggle generated widespread awareness among Dalit communities, civil rights organizations, and NGOs.

Since then, descendants, supported by NGOs and civil society, have made repeated reclaim attempts. Some succeeded, but in most cases, Dalits failed to regain possession. However legal and substantiated with documentary evidences, the administration seldom acts on issues relating to Panchama lands, which compels the Dalits to approach the court of law. When Dalits assert their rights even through judicial intervention, they are frequently denied de facto possession due to administrative lethargy and procedural delays in implementing the court order, forcing the Dalits to initiate contempt proceedings. When they succeed in this, the dominant social groups resort to violent attacks—including murders and life-threatening injuries—to physically prevent Dalits from reclaiming their property.

This paper presents recent evidence to argue that legal legitimacy, judicial orders, and state authority prove to be inadequate in ensuring Dalits' land rights. Despite a century-old protective framework, Dalits continue to face systemic exclusion, bureaucratic inertia, and extra-legal violence in their pursuit of land justice.

Cockroaches and Encroachers: Two Registers of Exclusion in India's Political Society

Jiří Krejčík (Metropolitan University Prague)

This paper examines how the contemporary Indian state produces negative space through both structural and symbolic mechanisms, and how recent protest movements and the state's response expose the difference. Drawing on Partha Chatterjee's distinction between civil society (the domain of rights-bearing citizens whose claims the state recognizes as given) and political society (the terrain where governed populations negotiate recognition through informal claims outside the legal-constitutional order), this paper argues that recent Indian protests reveal at least two distinct registers of exclusion.

The first is structural: populations pushed outside the legal and material boundaries of full civic standing. This is examined through the recent Ken-Betwa river-linking protests, where tribal communities face displacement without adequate compensations, the 2020–21 farmers' protests, whose Delhi encampments placed the protesters in the position of Chatterjee's "encroachers," and the Shaheen Bagh sit-ins against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019–20, where legal belonging itself was contested.

The second is symbolic: exclusion enacted through language rather than law. The Cockroach Janta Party, which reclaimed India's Chief Justice's 2026 comparison of unemployed youth to "cockroaches" and "parasites", involved a constituency of documented, legally secure citizens performing recognizably civil-society tactics.

Together, these cases not only illustrate the various forms of negative space in India, demanding nuanced vocabularies for its structural and symbolic forms. The reach and relative success of the CJP protests can also be interpreted as a result of the fact that its participants occupy the position that Chatterjee reserves for civil society – an advantage largely unavailable to political society's structurally excluded populations.

Tianxia Meets Sovereignty: Macau as a Contact Zone and the Endogenous Unmaking of Tianxia Thought in Late Imperial China

Yuhong Li (Nanjing Normal University)
& Jinghong Zhang (Independent Scholar)

The unmaking of the tianxia (All-under-Heaven) order has long been framed by the "impact-response" paradigm, which locates the Opium War (1840) as the decisive turning point. Challenging this linear causal narrative, this paper foregrounds the active agency of Chinese intellectuals during the late Ming and early Qing period in their engagement with Jesuit-introduced Western learning. Drawing on the theory of "contact zones" and the framework of Western political theology, we reconceptualize tianxia as a cross-civilizational competitive discursive space. Within this framework, Macau emerges not merely as a geographical periphery but as a contact zone where Eastern and Western civilizations encountered and negotiated with one another. Through sustained dialogue with Jesuits, Chinese intellectuals gradually redefined their subjectivity and ideological orientation, thereby laying the groundwork for the eventual transformation of the tianxia order. This study contributes to the decentering of Eurocentric narratives in global intellectual history and illuminates the protracted, multi-directional dynamics of early modern Sino-Western intellectual exchange.

Session 4D: Death and Non-Doing

Souls Come Back: The Communication between the Living and the Dead in Chinese Folk Literature

Xing Lan (Sichuan University)

In Chinese folk literature, communication between the living and the dead assumes distinctive forms that stand in marked contrast to Western necromantic traditions. Unlike the elaborate and systematic necromancy found in works such as Homer's Odyssey and Lucan's Pharsalia, Chinese practices remain relatively underdeveloped and unsystematic. This stems largely from the limited doctrinal support and frequent discouragement provided by the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism).

Paradoxically, this study argues that the absence of a rigid necromantic system in China has fostered a fluid and ambiguous boundary between the realms of the living and the dead. This permeable divide enables frequent and spontaneous interactions of the two realms, often without the need for elaborate rituals or specialised techniques. This study seeks to classify and analyse the main types of such communication and to examine the motivations behind them. The first part investigates the earliest available sources of necromancy in Chinese literature and clarifies how the Three Teachings constrained its development. The second part proposes a systematic classification of cross-realm communication into two primary categories: the living visiting the dead, and the dead visiting the living. The former is subdivided into three types: active, passive, and accidental. While the latter is divided into two: returning to help or seek revenge; visiting individuals they admire or disapprove of. Drawing upon extensive examples from Chinese folk literature, the study illuminates the cultural logic, emotional drivers, and moral functions of each type. The final part argues that communication between the living and the dead constitutes a near-universal cultural necessity. Even in Chinese civilisation where formal beliefs and rituals supporting such contact are relatively scarce, these interactions play a vital role in negotiating mortality, morality, filial piety, and cosmic justice.

Revisiting Laogui ('Old Demon'): An Overlooked Southern Trajectory in Early Daoist History

Rui Hu (Sichuan University)

The term Laogui 老鬼 ("Old Demon") is attested only in two Southern dynasties daoist tomb-purchase contracts (maidiquan) and in scattered references in buddhist polemical writings. Scholarship remains divided over three related questions: whether Laogui is a daoist term, whether it designates Laojun 老君 (Lord Lao), and whether it originated within the Sichuan-based Wudoumi Dao. The recent identification of a Laogui miao 老鬼廟 ("Old Demon" Temple) in Chengdu—traceable to a period prior to the Ming—invites a re-examination of these issues. Drawing on early daoist scriptural sources, excavated burial materials from Sichuan, and the spatial framework of the southern transmission of the Wudoumi Dao, this article reconsiders the meaning and historical context of Laogui. It suggests that gui 鬼 ("demon") functioned as an important theological category in early Daoism, within which Laogui may at times have served as a designation for Laojun. Although later daoist orthodoxy marginalized such usages, the conceptual and ritual frameworks associated with Laogui appear to have continued to circulate along the southern dioceses (zhi) of the Shu–Sindhu Route (running from the Sichuan Basin to India), where they became intertwined with the route's economic functions and embedded in local practices over the long durée.By situating Laogui within this broader temporal and spatial context,this study argues that the case of Laogui demonstrates how certain early daoist conceptions could persist and be reconfigured outside the canonical framework. In doing so, it highlights a southern trajectory of the Celestial Masters tradition that has received relatively little attention in narratives shaped by Zhang Lu's northward migration, and offers a reconsideration of the received narrative of daoist history.

(Wo)men Spaces: Death, Gender, and Transitions in Early Medieval Japanese Texts

Pan Tome Valencia (University of Oxford)

Some Buddhist sacred spaces in Japan, like temple mountains, have historically, and in some cases to this day, exclude living women from their premises based on arguments of pollution born from "the five hindrances" (itsutsu no sawari) all women possess. However, this exclusion does not always apply to their mortal remains, in the form of relics; hair, bone, and ashes. This change of state is described, both in sutras employed for women's funeral practices and in personal accounts in medieval memoirs as justified through the notion of henjō nanshi (transforming into a man to gain Buddhahood). What this means socials consideration of women's enlightenment.

This paper will look at the exclusion and acceptance of gendered bodies in such sacred spaces through henjō nanshi as an embodied process in the Heian period (794-1185) and after, through discussions of death and re-embodiment, but also through Buddhist anecdotal literature justifying this exclusion through descriptions of female bodies attempting to enter and being refused entrance. I interrogate these stories as potential platforms for alternative readings, as a negative answer to a question that has been posed about particular cases that push at the limits of the rule. In this way, I problematise previous work on the topic that has understood the problem of what this transformation signifies through a sex/gender divide not applicable to physical, medical, and cosmological understandings of gender in the Japanese pre-modernity.

Decoding Wuwei in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism: Between Asaṁskṛta and Anābhoga

Anthea Hei Yee Cheung (City University of Hong Kong)

In classical China, the term wuwei was widely used to refer primarily to the Daoist ideal of governance. However, its usage and meaning were far from uniform, even within Daoist texts. In the Laozi, it denotes minimal interference by the ruler. In the Zhuangzi, it implies 'co-existence' and 'co-becoming' among individuals, and 'shared governance' between the ruler and the ruled. In the Huang-Lao tradition, wuwei represents a clear division of labor between the ruler and his ministers. Interestingly, wuwei also appears frequently in Chinese Buddhist texts. But the concept, as reflected from Pure Land Buddhism (PL), was the result of a collision and integration between Indian Buddhism and Chinese culture. The first task of the paper is to identify its distinctiveness. The second task is to reevaluate the contribution of geyi (conceptual appropriation between Confucian/Daoist terms and Buddhist concepts), a makeshift exegetical strategy employed by eminent Buddhists to spread Buddhism upon arrival in China. This method was once very popular but then faced sharp criticism from Buddhist masters, prompting scholars to claim that geyi had vanished during the medieval period - a claim we find invalid. By tracing the evolution of the PL wuwei through the controversial, consolidated Infinite Life Sūtra as a primary source, the paper demonstrates how geyi underwent transformations, becoming a driving force in the construction of Chinese Buddhism. Specifically, this paper demonstrates how the indigenous Daoist concept of wuwei served as a conceptual bridge for PL masters to connect and to synthesize two distinct aspects of Indian Buddhist thought, namely, asaṁskṛta and anābhoga. And by collapsing the two into one, a fully domesticated PL notion of wuwei, which is now at once ontological and soteriological, was ultimately formulated.

Session 5A: Specters, Silences, Secrets: The Production of Absence in Socialist Afterlives of China and India (Organized Panel)

Across contemporary China and India, socialist legacies are subject to a paradox: the more institutionally visible they become—in heritage sites, state chronicles, films, and digital platforms—the more systematically their content is selectively presented. Drawing on Trouillot's (1995) account of how silences enter the production of history and Derrida's insight (1994, 1996) that commemorative acts are haunted by what they foreclose, the three papers in this panel read practices of preservation and representation as selective erasure—tracing the negative space that authorized remembrance produces.

The first paper investigates two military projects and their heritagization in China—Project 816 in Chongqing and the Eastern Suburban Industrial Zone in Chengdu—to show how declassification and negative exposure alike re-secretize the Maoist past by reducing it to an asset serving local entrepreneurial agendas. The second paper reads the chronicles of state farms on Yunnan's Burma borderland alongside county gazetteers and zhiqing memoir literature, tracing how deliberate excision and structural inarticulability interlock across two seemingly opposed writing regimes, leaving ethnic minority dispossession without syntactic position. The third paper examines the contested legacy of Bhagat Singh in India across party documents, films, a video game, and AI-generated images on digital platforms, arguing that successive layers of competitive institutional mourning have produced a specter of his specter—a symbol stripped of its radical content circulating as an empty vessel for ideological repurposing.

Together, the papers propose that denial, exclusion, and absence name not a lack but an operation that the negative space of socialist legacies is constitutive of, not incidental to, their political appropriation.

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The Dialectic of Secretization and Exposure: Historicizing Third Front Projects' Transformation in China's Post-Socialist Archives

Zhongxiao Hu (University of Westminster)

From 1960s to 1970s, Maoist China relocated a large number of military industries to inland mountainous areas, built on the foundations of institutional and geographical secretization, namely Third Front project (Meyskens 2020). Since the 2000s, many of these sites were transformed into industrial heritage sites. A frequent authorized heritage discourse (AHD) within this context describes the transformation of these sites as an essential change from Maoist secret to public tourism attraction. This paper examines this discourse by investigating the historical production of two Third Front sites: Project 816 (was a nuclear engineering project in Fuling, Chongqing and is a heritage site now), and the Eastern Suburban Industrial Zone in Chengdu (now the Eastern Suburb Memory heritage park). The analysis points out that the declassification of the Maoist past within the authorized heritage discourse serves precisely an agenda of re-secretizing that past, in which the Maoist era is simplified, absent, and reduced to an asset serving local entrepreneurial agenda.

Specifically, the declassification of Project 816 in 2002 is narrated by the AHD as a transformation from Maoist secrecy to a mass tourism site; however, the site's visibility in archives was never tied to its classified status, and whether or how it was documented depended on local government interests unrelated to secrecy. Furthermore, the declassification narrative erases more specific records, namely the appropriation of state-owned assets within the context of state-owned enterprise reform. In the case of the Eastern Suburban Industrial Zone, both officials and local gazetteers exposed the area as backward and economically obsolete, narrating its relocation as a radical, decontextualized rupture. However, this negative exposure does not subvert the authorized discourse; rather, it is the authorized discourse operating in a more nuanced manner. This rupture allows the Maoist past to become a clearly demarcated linear historical stage, thereby allowing 1) the development of a new entrepreneurial agenda, and 2) the memorialization of the Maoist past while declaring its end.

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Planted Silences:
Chronicling the State Farm on Yunnan's Burma Borderland

Meng Shao (London School of Economics and Political Science)

The state farms lining Yunnan's border with Burma have chronicled themselves twice: first in locally published volumes from the 1980s, then since 2019 through a national compilation mandated to "preserve truth and seek facts" (存真求实). Alongside these chronicles, zhiqing ("sent-down" youth) memoirs of frontier farm service constitute another major corpus claiming the same landscape.

This paper argues that these two writing regimes are not opposed but complementary registers of a shared memory ecology in which the borderland's ethnic minority communities are recorded yet structurally unnarrated. Drawing on farm chronicles from Xishuangbanna, Lincang, and Dehong alongside county gazetteers, the local press, and zhiqing memoir literature, the paper reads both corpora against and along the archival grain for their shared grammar: miasma and swidden figured as wasteland awaiting reclamation; "farm-neighbourhood relations" (场群关系) as the sole category through which ethnic presence enters the text; nation-building and ethnic unity as coordinates within which dispossession finds no syntactic position. What neither corpus can articulate is what the farms replaced—livelihoods that the wasteland framing had already written out of legibility.

Analytically, the paper distinguishes two manoeuvrings that tend to be theorised separately: amnesia (Li 2020)—the deliberate excision of the recordable, visible in classified chronicle sections and the erasure of the 1979 return from official farmhistories—and aphasia (Stoler 2016), the naming apparatus's structural inability to articulate dispossession even where no concealment is intended. By tracing how these two silence-making operations interlock across chronicles produced within and beyond the farm system, the paper opens a dialogue between critical agrarian studies and plantation-focused scholarship in post-socialist China.

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The Specter of Inqilab: Haunting, Inheritance, and the Contested Justice of Bhagat Sing

Hanzhang Ding (SOAS University of London)

In 1931, Bhagat Singh, socialist, atheist, and radical pioneer of India's revolutionary movement, was executed by British colonial authorities on charges of murder. Known to posterity as Shaheed-e-Azam, this figure has seen his historical image and ideological commitments continuously inherited, appropriated, overwritten, and transformed across party documents, community cultures, social institutions and digital traces in India. This essay draws on the hauntological framework introduced in Derrida's Specters of Marx and the anthropological hauntology developed by scholars including Marouda(2013), and Good et al. (2022) to read the contested inheritance of Bhagat Singh in contemporary India. The essay first examines the political practices through which different political entities—the Indian National Congress, BJP/RSS, and the Aam Aadmi Party—have deployed Bhagat Singh's texts and image. Drawing on Derrida's (1994) theorization of mourning and Langford's (2016) concept of deliberate remembrance, it analyses the justice that Bhagat Singh as specter calls for, and the ways in which this injunction is released and displaced through the disjoint of competing inheritances. The essay then turns to the invocation of Bhagat Singh in contemporary digital practice, examining how successive layers of appropriation produce what it terms a specter of his specter. Specifically, this section attends to the 2002 3D video game bearing his name, multiple biographical films, and the short video clips and AI-generated images currently circulating across video platforms and social media. Analysing these digital traces from the perspective of grassroots affective projection and depoliticized cultural consumption, the essay argues that these invocations respond to Bhagat Singh's injunction in form while remaining disengaged from it insubstance—producing a figure whose circulating image has passed through so many successive layers of institutional mourning that what is invoked is no longer the original specter, but a symbol already stripped of its most radical demands.

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Session 5B: Student Session: Linguistics

Negation in the She Language of Jingning: A Typological-Descriptive Study

Xuyun Lei (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales)

The She language is used by the local She community in Jingning She autonomous county in China. Adopting a typological and descriptive approach, this paper investigates the negation in the She language of Jingning autonomous county and examines whether its negation system is organized through semantically differentiated negative forms. Drawing on data from natural discourse and elicitation, the research first identifies the negators and distinguishes phonological variants from forms with distinct semantic functions. In addition, the research investigates the syntactic distribution and grammatical functions of negators, including preverbal, postverbal, and prenominal positions. The study further proposed a classification of standard negation into general, perfective and irrealis negation, while examining the syntactic restrictions associated with each category. It then focuses on the existential and possessive negation, asking whether it functions as a negative verb, and whether its use has extended to perfective negation. Imperative negation is also analyzed, with particular attention to different negators and their specialization in prohibition, lack of necessity, and dissuasion. Overall, the study describes the negation system in the She language in Jingning and determines whether Jinging She displays a relatively restricted negation system comparable to Standard Chinese or a more highly differentiated system resembling the Sinitic languages.

Omission of selected case markers in spoken Korean

Monika Hálová (Palacký University Olomouc)

The Korean language uses a complex case marking system. Its acquisition has been a prominent topic in SLA research showing challenges involving case marking due to its complexity (Kim, 2002). Korean permits the omission of case markers under certain conditions (Sohn, 1999; Yeon & Brown, 2011). However, the rules governing case marking omission are not clear and have not been properly investigated. This research examines and identifies the various conditions under which case omission occurs. According to preliminary research, case marking omission can be related to factors such as verb transitivity (i.e. the number of core arguments in a sentence) and discourse structure (i.e. the unfolding of the text/speech). Discourse structure further interacts with sentence patterns, as omission tends to occur when the grammatical roles of the noun phrases (i.e. subject/object) or their thematic roles (i.e. agent/patient) are clear from pragmatic context. Despite these observations, existing literature does not elaborate on the specific rules governing omission but merely emphasizes the importance of contextual clarity. This study explores the various factors influencing the use and omission of case markers in Korean by analysing data from a spoken corpus as omission mostly occurs during casual speech. The corpus was annotated for selected case markers and its omissions, verb transitivity, and other contextual factors. The findings aim to contribute to linguistic theory of case as well as Korean language acquisition by exploring licensing conditions of case marking usage and omission and provide pedagogical insights for designing materials that align with real-life language.

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The Political Life of the Tibetan Script: Language, Exclusion, and Cultural Persistence under Chinese Governance

Hsin Ju Shih (Tulane University)

The Tibetan script occupies a distinctive position among the minority writing systems of Asia. Created in the seventh century and closely connected to the translation of Buddhist scriptures, it has remained in continuous use for more than a millennium despite profound political, religious, and social transformations. Unlike many minority languages that have experienced script reform, language shift, or declining literacy under modern state-building projects, Tibetan writing continues to function as a central marker of cultural, religious, and collective identity.

This paper examines the historical development and contemporary political significance of the Tibetan script through a historical-documentary case study. Drawing on historical records, policy documents, and existing scholarship, it traces the script's emergence within the context of early Tibetan state formation, its institutionalization through Buddhist translation networks, and its role in preserving religious and intellectual traditions following the decline of Buddhism in India. The paper further analyzes contemporary language policies in Tibetan regions of the People's Republic of China, including educational reforms, boarding school systems, and the expanding dominance of Mandarin Chinese.

Rather than viewing Tibetan solely as a linguistic system, this study argues that the resilience of the Tibetan script derives from its unique embedding within religious institutions, cultural memory, and transnational communities. The Tibetan case demonstrates how writing systems can become sites of political contestation and cultural persistence, revealing the complex relationship between language governance, identity formation, and state power. More broadly, the paper contributes to discussions of minority language survival and the politics of cultural continuity in contemporary Asia.

Session 5C: Non-Places, Misplacement and Virtuality

Can the "Nanyang Style" Explain Modern Ink? Singapore, Regional Canon Formation, and Chinese Artistic Lineages

Cui Yi (Zhengzhou Shengda University)

The "Nanyang Style" has become a foundational framework for narrating modern art in Singapore and locating Singapore within Southeast Asian modernism. Yet can it adequately explain modern ink? This paper examines how a regional canon can make an artistic tradition visible while misrecognising its intellectual and cultural foundations.

The paper situates the "Nanyang Style," first systematised by Redza Piyadasa and T. K. Sabapathy, within Singapore's development from a cultural crossroads into a centre for collecting, exhibiting, researching, and narrating Southeast Asian art. It analyses exhibitions, publications, museum displays, archival documents, video footage, and photographic documentation that repeatedly privilege tropical subjects, local encounters, stylistic synthesis, and national or regional identity. Through selected works and writings by Cheong Soo Pieng and Liu Kang, together with related visual records, it asks how Chinese artistic lineages were translated, reclassified, and repositioned within this framework.

The paper argues that modern ink was not simply excluded but conceptually misrecognised. Chinese ink and calligraphic traditions were often reduced to stylistic sources within a narrative of cultural synthesis, rather than understood as living systems of knowledge, embodied practice, cultural memory, and transregional movement. This problem was reinforced by linguistic and epistemic asymmetries between Chinese-language materials and dominant English-language art-historical discourse. Absence, therefore, is produced not by the disappearance of modern ink, but by a regional canon that keeps it materially present while rendering its conceptual foundations secondary. Reconsidering modern ink as a Chinese diasporic and region-forming practice, the paper debates the explanatory limits of the "Nanyang Style" in Southeast Asian art history.

Remapping India and Mongolian Plateau Through Classic Chinese Poetry

Xurong Kong (Kean University)

The Indian subcontinent and the Mongolian plateau have been viewed as isolated and distant worlds. These two massive regions, however, were much closer and shared far more cultural exchanges than modern scholars realize. In this paper, I trace the ancient transmission of the konghou (harp/lyre) across Afro-Eurasia to challenge this static view of geography.

Konghou is a Chinese term referring to the harp family, which includes the lyre. Over four millennia, from the third millennium BCE to the first millennium CE, the harp dominated much of Afro-Eurasia, stretching from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean Basin, and spreading to modern Sudan in Africa, modern Germany in Europe, and even the Dunhuang region in northwestern China. Though known by varied names, these instruments shared a fundamental feature: a central open space, described in Classical Chinese as kong (空), that allowed them to be played from both sides. Even though the instrument largely disappeared by the tenth century, its modern revival preserves this defining spatial layout despite taking on new mechanical forms. The instrument's past and current revived lives together narrate a broader human story: how cultures connect, interact, and depend on one another to endure and flourish.

By matching third-century Chinese poems, early Buddhist texts, and recent archaeological discoveries unearthed along early trade routes, this study offers a creative remapping of traditional geography. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary evidence demonstrates that northern nomadic styles and South Asian spiritual traditions were deeply integrated, proving that ancient Asian cultures were not separated by mountains and deserts; rather, they were actively interacting on a far wider scale than previously thought.

Where No One Remains: Negative Space, Anxiety, and Reflective Nostalgia in Chinese Dreamcore

Fangni Li (Communication University of China),
Jiaqin Chen (Communication University of Zhejiang),
& Zijie Liu (Peking University)

Chinese Dreamcore (zhongshi menghe), a vernacular adaptation of global dreamcore aesthetics, has become a digital cultural form through which China's Generation Z articulates diffuse anxiety. Drawing on six months of non-participant observation on Bilibili, textual analysis of 20 widely viewed videos and their danmu and comment threads, and interviews with six creators and seven viewers, this paper examines how absence is aesthetically produced and collectively interpreted. It argues that prolonged freeze-frames, blurred or vanishing figures, desecrated lineage objects, and acousmatic sounds without visible sources — cooking noises in an empty kitchen, footsteps in a deserted corridor — transform turn-of-the-millennium childhood memories into three landscapes of anxiety: temporal stagnation, relational death, and pervasive crisis. These empty and inaccessible spaces are not simply objects of nostalgia; they are negative spaces in which lost futures, fractured relationships, and eroding social order become perceptible. Yet Chinese Dreamcore does more than repeat loss. By rendering nameless unease visible, audible, and shareable, it enables young people to recognize and name anxiety, connect private memories to collective experience, and reconsider their relationship to the past and present. The paper therefore conceptualizes Chinese Dreamcore as a practice of reflective nostalgia: a vernacular aesthetic that turns absence into both a diagnosis of social transition and a provisional resource for self-understanding and aesthetic repair.

Session 5D: Exclusion and Representation

Changing Caste Dynamic in Indian Elite Educational Institutions

Ravneet Param (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

There is a strong repository of literature delineating discriminatory nature of higher education in the Indian context. There is, however, an increased interest to look at the ways in which caste privilege gets reconstituted within elite educational institutions. Social relations within society get mapped onto the space of a university/college despite there being claims of social justice and equality. It is at this juncture that I place my work. In this paper, through empirical work in Delhi University, I look at how norms related to caste ascriptions have changed with increased scrutiny of Brahmanical norms/attitude within academia. Implementation of affirmative policies for Other Backward Castes in 2006 has further strengthened how upper castes view themselves as victims of affirmative politics, thereby changing the way they place themselves along the continuum of privilege and marginalisation [1]. Their understanding of themselves as rightful inheritors of merit and by extension achievement seems to be getting dissolved leading to, at times violent, panic. This work uses anti-caste scholarship and sociology of elites to understand notions of meritocracy and reproduction of caste privilege.

[1] In my empirical work, strong sentiment against affirmative policies could be seen, primarily amongst affluent upper caste students. Sentiment against marginalized students' trajectory from the margin to centre is merely an extension of a Brahmanical attitude emerging from Hindu religious order. Caste norms, like gender norms, dictate who is supposed to go to school and who is forced to be a manual scavenger. There have been cases where dalit students are forced to clean toilets at school, without any protective gear, because they come from communities (shudras, or ex-untouchables) which, according to Hindu social order, are dictated to clean human excreta.

Visibility without Sovereignty: State-Sanctioned Perception and Indigenous Exclusion in Golden Kamuy

Lindsey Stirek (University of Illinois)

This paper examines Indigenous representation in Golden Kamuy (2014–2022), a manga by Satoru Noda, through the lens of exclusion, visibility, and the politics of absence. Set in early twentieth-century Ainu Moshir, the series follows a Japanese war veteran and an Ainu girl in their search for hidden gold. Celebrated for its portrayal of Ainu language, culture, and lifeways, Golden Kamuy is one of the most influential representations of the Ainu people in contemporary media, renewing public interest in Ainu heritage.

In this paper, I argue that Golden Kamuy reveals a paradox of Indigenous visibility in contemporary Japan where increased cultural visibility casts Indigenous people as purely cultural and divorced from the political. The 2019 Ainu Policy Promotion Act evidences this dynamic as it expanded support for cultural preservation and tourism, but failed to address questions of land rights, self-determination, and political autonomy. Thus, this recognition centers heritage, but risks marginalizing contemporary Ainu identity and cultural expression outside of officially sanctioned traditions.

However, Golden Kamuy is not wholly complicit in this process. Toward the series' conclusion, the manga draws parallels between cultural survival and territorial sovereignty, presenting an alternative framework that positions Ainu culture as a living practice rather than a static heritage object. By exposing tensions between visibility and erasure, preservation and self-determination, the manga critiques forms of recognition that celebrate Indigenous culture but exclude Indigenous political futures.

Drawing on Indigenous studies in conversation with visual and literary analysis, I examine how the manga mirrors and challenges broader state and institutional approaches to Indigenous recognition, revealing how the "negative space" of contemporary Indigenous representation in Japan manifests in the absence of sovereignty concealed beneath the culture's increased visibility.

Exploring Absence: The Case of Premodern Japanese Mathematics

Tomáš Vitvar (Charles University)

How can historians study what mathematical methods and concepts developed in one tradition, but never developed in another? This question connects two major methodological problems. On one hand, it engages with discussions in the field of philosophy of mathematics while asking: How does mathematics develop? How can we understand and describe changes in mathematics? On the other hand, it encounters the same obstacles as the comparative historians face while trying to find differences and parallels in different cultures and traditions.

The proposed paper addresses both of those problems as it suggests a cross-cultural extension of Ladislav Kvasz's theory of linguistic innovations. By decomposing the definitions used by the theory and translating them into less culturally-specific terms applicable to Japanese mathematics and, even more broadly, to non-Western traditions, this methodology provides a systematic approach for studying the absence of specific mathematical concepts.

To demonstrate the analytical potential of this framework, I apply it to the development of wasan, traditional Japanese mathematics of the Edo period (1603 – 1868). First, I show a positive case while using it to describe the emergence of the Japanese algebraic tradition, tenzan jutsu. Second, I show a negative case while analysing the absence of a unified calculus theory in premodern Japan. Furthermore, I discuss the significance of this absence and suggest an explanation of this historical divergence.

Session 6A: Post/Coloniality

Benefits of hindsight: the varying fortunes of the imperial architecture in the former colonial capitals: colonization as a success or failure in Taipei, Seoul, and Changchun

Ewa Rzanna (Przegląd Polityczny)

The objective of the presentation is a comparison of the current narratives surrounding the architectural and urban heritage of the Japanese imperial period in the three former colonial capitals: Taipei, Seoul and Changchun. A hypothesis I wish to propose for consideration states that the diverse contemporary attitudes towards the vestiges of the colonial history, preserved in the architectural and urban features of the three cities, the interplay of affirmation, transformation and negation, might serve as an accurate criterion for evaluating the long-term success or failure of the modernization project initiated by the Japanese imperialists and carried forward by their local successors.

My project aims to address a certain bias in the existent body of research dedicated to the study of the colonial Taipei, Seoul and Changchun. Frequently overshadowed by the dominant interest in the original plans and objectives pursued by the imperial designers, the subsequent fortunes of their projects in the newly independent decolonized states seem to attract less attention. The most noticeable exception to this rule are the cases when a dramatic intervention in the architectural or urban tissue, as for instance, the demolition of the Governor Palace in Seoul or the reestablishment of the Daan Public Park in Taipei provoke widespread public debates. I argue that these spectacular and therefore much studied and discussed events merely punctuate less conspicuous processes of historical consensus building and memory work progressing in the background.

I construct a model for comparison of the colonial experience in Taiwan, Korea and the Manchurian part of Mainland China. The comparison of these three different modes of experiencing colonization, and by implication,

undergoing modernization allows me to indicate the reasons for varying evaluation of the colonization period observable in these countries at present.

Poetics of the In-Between: Ruins, Koxinga, and Imperial Dawn in Mori Ōgai's Travel Kanshi

Esther Xie (Columbia University)

During his journey to Germany in 1884, Mori Ōgai penned Diary of Sailing to the West (Kōsei Nikki), written solely in Literary Sinitic, featuring poems (kanshi) on renowned sites, historical events, and personal reflections. The accounts of the historical ruins in Taiwan related to Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong), in particular, have been discussed in scholarship as a signal of the colonial gaze and a prelude to Japan's colonial rule over Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

Instead of a rigid colonial reading, however, this project proposes a more nuanced approach to Ogai's writing on the Koxinga-related ruins in Taiwan, grounded in the perspective of Literary Sinitic Context (kanbunmyaku). Starting from historicizing Literary Sinitic, this paper positions Ōgai's writing within the long-running Japanese nationalist discourse around Literary Sinitic, highlighting the significance of this literary form as a deliberate choice. By closely examining the textual layers, especially the ambiguous image of Koxinga, this paper subsequently frames Ōgai's writing on ruins not as a definite, aspiring voice of a colonial empire, but as a revelation of unresolved tensions of fluctuating identities, historical narratives, the center-periphery paradigm, and cultural legitimacy. This paper thus argues that Ōgai's kanshi is a work of in-betweenness, caught between the established Europe and a transitioning Japan, between the Sino-Han-centric cosmology and the later military expansion of Imperial Japan, between the orthodox image and Japanese nationalist rendition of Koxinga, between the historical center and the fluid periphery. And Literary Sinitic, the scripta franca, is the embodiment of such dynamics within the Sinosphere, as well as a looking glass to the entangled literary conventions of Japan at the turning point of modernization.

Competing Revolutionary Legitimacies: Tan Malaka's Thesis (1946) and Alimin's Analisis (1947)

Ádám Stempler (Eötvös Loránd University)

Following Japan's surrender in August 1945, the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia became an arena of competing revolutionary projects. Among the most influential interventions were Tan Malaka's Thesis (1946) and Alimin's Analisis (1947). While Thesis defended Tan Malaka's political position, Analisis, issued under the PKI's Agitprop imprint ("AGIT-PROP CC. Partai Komunis Indonesia"), challenged his authority in the party's name.

Although the two works have frequently been discussed separately and have even been published together, they have never been subjected to a systematic comparative analysis. Drawing on conceptual history and Cambridge School intellectual history, this paper reads the texts as mutually constitutive attempts to define legitimate revolutionary politics through the contested memory of the failed 1926–1927 PKI uprising. Each author claims sole authority over its causes and its relation to Comintern policy, deploying "royeer" (expulsion) and "Trotskyist" as instruments of exclusion rather than description.

The paper further argues that the "negative space" of these texts lies not only in what they explicitly state but also in the alternatives they silence or render illegitimate. Absence thus emerges not merely as a product of later historiography but as a political strategy already at work in how the 1926–1927 revolts were remembered twenty years later. By examining denial, exclusion, and constructed absence in these two foundational texts, the paper contributes to broader discussions of anti-colonial political thought, ideological conflict, and the making of revolutionary legitimacy in modern Asia.

Maneuvering Between Exclusion and Inclusion: Japanese Empire-Building and the Imagining of Mountainous Space in Hokkaidō, 1910s–1930s

Chris Tsui-Shuen Lau (University of Tübingen)

This paper examines how the Japanese empire advanced its colonial project and legitimacy by reimagining the mountainous landscape of Hokkaidō. Drawing on newspapers, travelogues, and guidebooks, it centers on Mt. Asahidake 旭岳, the region's highest peak, and argues that this imagination worked as cultural and social engineering: it portrayed the mountain as an inclusive space welcoming all Japanese to admire its scenery and settle there, while rendering it exclusively Japanese by erasing the livelihood, memories, and symbolic meanings the indigenous Ainu attached to it. The Ainu's role in guiding early military and scientific surveys was likewise omitted.

Since Japan's annexation of Hokkaidō (formerly Ezo) in 1869, colonial authorities produced paradoxical narratives to justify their rule. The land was cast as terra nullius, an unclaimed wilderness open to Japanese settlement, denying generations of Ainu presence; at the same time, forced relocations and the reshaping of Ainu livelihoods and customs were framed as benevolent governance bringing civilization and saving the Ainu from extinction.

Mt. Asahidake illustrates this dynamic. For the Ainu it was both a practical space for hunting, foraging, and gathering resources to trade, and a sacred mountain embodying lore of ancestors rescued by the deities. As Japanese settlers arrived from the 1890s, they reshaped both mountain and meaning. The Hokkaidō government founded the Hokkaidō Alpine Club to publicize the peak's sublime beauty and lure immigration; local educators and businessmen coined the "Hokkaidō Alps" to rival the celebrated Japanese Alps; newspapers and alpine clubs marketed mountaineering tours as leisure open to all; and the Imperial Japanese Army recast its expeditions as arduous ascents to a sacred summit embodying the Japanese spirit. Through these overlapping claims, an Ainu mountain was remade as a Japanese one: inclusive to settlers, closed to those it displaced.

Session 6B: Student Session: Individual Papers

Transforming Salt into Medicine: The History of Endemic Goiter Prevention and Control in Twentieth-Century China

Ying Sun (Zhejiang University)

This paper traces the history of endemic goiter prevention in twentieth-century China, focusing on how salt changed from an everyday commodity into a tool of public health governance. It argues that China's success in controlling goiter was not just a biomedical achievement. More fundamentally, it depended on reconfiguring the traditional salt monopoly system. During the Republican period (1912–1949), local experiments—especially in Yunnan—pioneered the use of iodized salt and solved key technical problems. But fragmented administrative authority and weak state capacity kept these grassroots efforts from growing into a nationwide program. After 1949, the socialist state, guided by the idea of "prevention first," systematically integrated public health goals into the existing monopoly infrastructure. That made large-scale production, distribution, and strict supervision of iodized salt possible. Tracing this transition, the study shows how state power, bureaucratic structures, and technological intervention worked together to reshape disease control. It also argues that the nationwide universal salt iodization (USI) did suppress the endemic disease, but it also revealed a basic tension: applying a standardized technical solution to govern very different regional populations. This tension later surfaced as anxieties over excessive iodine intake, and unexpectedly pushed reforms in both China's salt industry and its public health policy. The case of iodized salt in China speaks to a wider question: how modern states use everyday commodities to manage populations, and why public health interventions are always shaped by specific institutional and historical settings.

Manufactured Absence: Auditing Japan's "Vanishing Municipalities"

Tomáš Kacbunda (Charles University)

In May 2014, a report by the Japan Policy Council declared that 896 municipalities, nearly half of Japan's total, were "at risk of vanishing" by 2040. The verdict based on a single benchmark: whether a municipality's population of women aged 20–39 was projected to fall by half between 2010 and 2040. The report reshaped national policy, entered everyday speech, and redrew the map of Japan as a cartography of foretold absence.

A decade later, the measurement was repeated and the list shrank to 744, an improvement authors credited in part to projected foreign in-migration, which they then declined to accept, turning instead to the Japanese population. "black-hole municipality," a metaphor from Matsuda's 2014 book, became a formal category for places that survive only by absorbing the young of others. This prophecy has been criticised (e.g. Yamashita, 2014) and revised. But, it has scarcely been audited, municipality by municipality, against the record it claims to foresee.

This paper performed that audit while reading current political situation. It uses census data (2010–2020) to establish which of the 896 are on their predicted trajectory, which have defied it, and which municipalities pronounced safe are declining regardless. It treats the designation as a performative prophecy of absence: a metric that defines a community's right to a future through the presence of young women alone, taking the old people who still live there, the men and the children statistically irrelevant to its survival. It also counts foreign residents, which is why, when their projected arrival improved the numbers, the 2024 report moved the frame rather than the style of measurement.

"Local extinction" the paper argues, is not a demographic destiny, but a manufactured negative space. It is an absence declared in advance, produced by a particular way of counting, and consequential for the places it names.

Beginning Again:
Imagining a Restarted Life in China's Digital Temporalities

Kexuan Li (National University of Singapore)

"Restarting Life" (chongqi rensheng) has emerged as a prominent discourse among young Chinese internet users. Across social media platforms, users imagine quitting their jobs, changing careers, returning to school, moving elsewhere, or simply "starting over." Rather than interpreting these narratives as individual fantasies or escapism, this paper argues that they reveal a collective response to the growing mismatch between institutionalized life expectations and lived experience.

Drawing on life course theory and the sociology of time, this paper conceptualizes "Restarting Life" as a form of temporal resistance to the normative social clock governing education, employment, marriage, and family formation in post-socialist China. The desire to begin again emerges precisely because meaningful second chances are largely absent from contemporary life trajectories. Through qualitative discourse analysis of discussions on Chinese social media, the paper examines how digital narratives construct imagined alternative futures while exposing the structural constraints that make them difficult to realize. By foregrounding the absence of socially legitimate opportunities to restart, this study contributes to broader discussions of temporality, youth, and the politics of possibility in contemporary Asia.

Two “Death” and One “Tomorrow”: Understanding the Recollection of Memory Fragments in the God of Small Things

Jingyuan Jing (Beijing Normal University)

The God of Small Things is the masterpiece of Indian author Arundhati Roy. It begins with the reunion of twins, and then recollects fragments of memory of their childhood, intertwining separate episodes while forming a whole. A close reading of the novel in the context of Benjamin's theories helps to understand the interweaving of memory fragments. Benjamin raised the difference between "voluntary memory" and "involuntary memory", inspiring the understanding of the small things omitted from official historical records. In the novel, Velutha's tragic death caused by police brutality reveals the cruelty of caste culture masked under the glorious "Kerala Model", while Sophie Mol's death reveals the subtle but pervasive infiltration of "the love law" into everyday relationships, replacing sincere affections and making people indifferent. Although it is not concerned by formal history, some images about the two deaths recur in the twins' memories constantly, affecting their lives. Through the recollection of fragments, Roy gives expression to the memory which "has no right to have", releasing the "permanent traces". She ends the novel on the eve of the deaths with Ammu and Velutha in the throes of their love, where the boundaries of time and body break down and the uncertainty of future transforms into the fullness of the present, realizing the messianic time.

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Session 6C: Migration and Culture Change

Unbelonging and the Struggle for Authenticity: Urban-Born Youth with Migrant Parents in Guangzhou

Yilin Hu (University of Chicago)

As China's urbanisation drives internal rural-to-urban migration, family becomes the crucible where rural and urban norms intersect for urban-born youth. This study explores how family practices like language, food, values, and rituals shape identity of urban born youth with migrant parents in Guangzhou.

Anchored in Vygotsky (1994) and Lin et al.'s (2022) adaptation of Berry's (1997) acculturation framework, ten interviews reveal diverse trajectories. While some show separation or assimilation, most experience cultural in-betweenness. This exposes a paradox conceptualised as "integrated marginalisation". Participants demonstrate active behavioural engagement with both urban and rural cultures yet feel psychologically excluded by both. This stems from a "perceived authenticity deficit," meaning participants feel unrecognised as authentic members of either group. Because their practices fail to fully internalise and satisfy either group's cultural standards, they sense a dual rejection that severely obstructs self-identification.

These findings extend integration paradigms by separating behavioural participation from psychological belonging. Authenticity struggles are theorised in transnational migration (Scully, 2012). This study extends this to internal migration and argues that perceived authenticity deficits structurally inhibit behavioural engagement from achieving psychological belonging.

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Waiting without Leaving: Intermediaries and the Problem of Non-Migration in Bangladesh

Zbynek Mucha (Czech Academy of Sciences)

Migration scholarship has focused mainly on people who successfully cross borders, while paying less attention to prospective migrants whose mobility is never realised. Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork in Bangladesh over three field visits totalling five months (2018, 2024, 2026), this paper asks what happens to migration projects that begin but do not culminate in departure and explores "non-migration" as a constitutive outcome of migration governance. It is based on observations and semi-structured and in-depth interviews with more than 60 prospective migrants, their families, recruiters, and experts.

The paper argues that prolonged waiting, procedural delays, high recruitment costs, restrictive visa regimes, and bureaucratic requirements create obstacles that make migration unattainable for many aspiring migrants in Bangladesh. Rather than treating them as failed migrants, I conceptualise them as occupying the negative space of migration governance: a position produced by systems that regulate international labour mobility, yet remain largely absent from policy, statistics, and scholarship. Their prolonged waiting and eventual involuntary immobility (Carling 2002) reveal how migration governance produces both movement and durable non-movement.

Where migration opportunities are limited and brokerage is prevalent, facilitation for financial gain may become an end in itself. Migration brokerage thus appears not only as a mechanism for producing mobility, but also as a practice that can reproduce involuntary immobility. By shifting attention from successful departures to prolonged waiting and unrealised migration projects, the paper contributes to debates on migration brokerage and governance. It concludes that immobility is not simply the opposite of mobility, but an outcome produced through migration infrastructure (Xiang and Lindquist 2014) and visa regimes, showing how denial, exclusion, and absence are embedded in global migration governance.

Exploring the Negative Space in Contemporary Wonosobo Lengger Mask Dance

Musokhib (Palacky University Olomouc)

This research explores transformative shifts in Lengger mask dance practices in Wonosobo, Indonesia by highlighting the "negative space" formed through rejection, exclusion, and the absence of traditional elements in the present day of the dance practice. Using an ethnographic approach on the fieldwork in 8th August – 19th September 2025, this research identifies three major shifts: (1) the transition from a history forced into forgetting to post-1965 cultural sanitization, (2) a shift from trance-based practices (ndadi) to non-trance formats, and (3) the disappearance of cross-gender dancers (lengger lanang), who have been replaced by women dancers. The research findings indicate that the rejection of "wild" elements and the exclusion of certain gender identities (cross-gender dancers) constitute an adaptive response to nationalist political pressures, Islamic religious norms, and state-imposed standards of high art (adhiluhung). Although these elements seemed to be "absent" from formal representations, artists in rural areas continued to negotiate at the threshold between preserving the spiritual roots of their ancestral heritage and accommodating the demands of modern public morality to ensure the survival of their traditions.

Session 6D: Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (2)

Towards a Minor Literature of Koryo-saram: Identity in Pages of the Lunar Calendar

Laura Kääntee (University of Helsinki)

Literary studies explore the relationship between literature and society, drawing attention to how texts negotiate cultural understandings of identity. Analysis of gender, ethnicity, class, and other social categories have demonstrated how narratives can both sustain and challenge dominant structures. Within this context, literature produced by minorities has become significant for its ability to articulate alternative histories, memories, and experiences of exclusion.

The research examines identity construction in Pages of the Lunar Calendar (1990), the first short story collection authored exclusively by Koryo-saram writers. The collection presents a multifaceted portrayal of Koryo-saram life on the eve of the Soviet Union's dissolution. Its narratives engage with themes such as deportation trauma, displacement, interethnic relations, and the negotiation of belonging within late Soviet contexts. Although rich in historical insight, Koryo-saram literature has remained overlooked.

The theoretical framework draws on the concept of Minor Literature, which examines how minority authors writing in a majority language – which in the case of Pages is Russian – mobilize narrative as a vehicle for collective expression and for articulating different forms of representation. The adaptation of this framework enables an analysis of how individual identities within the stories are intertwined with shared experiences. The present research argues that Koryo-saram authors' outlook on identity is a diverse expression of self-discovery – both belonging and exclusion.

In terms of methodology, the research combines close reading, historical contextualization, and thematic analysis. Together, these methods allow us to observe possible recurring narrative strategies, word choices, thematic patterns, and character constructions through which identity is created.

What Is Left Unsaid in History: Narrative Absence and the Construction of Foundational Memory in the Shiji

Jeongwoo Lee (Indiana University Bloomington)

Historical narratives are shaped not only by what they include but also by what they omit. Political communities construct meaningful pasts by privileging certain memories while marginalizing others. This paper examines this process through Sima Qian's portrayal of King Tang (Cheng Tang) in the Yin benji ("Annals of Yin") of the Shiji.

Previous studies have focused primarily on the chapter's textual sources and its relationship with the Shangshu, but they do not fully explain how competing traditions about Tang were shaped into a coherent historical representation. Rather than treating omitted traditions as its primary object, this paper uses them to illuminate the principles underlying Tang's portrayal.

By comparing the Yin benji with other Tang-related passages in the Shiji and with transmitted pre-Qin and early Han texts, the paper examines traditions that remained peripheral to the received account, including the Mulberry Forest drought story, the recluses Bian Sui and Wu Guang, and Tang's imprisonment at Xiatai. Their relative absence suggests that alternative ways of remembering Tang remained available. The Yin benji should therefore be understood not as the inevitable representation of Tang but as one arrangement among competing traditions.

I argue that the Yin benji foregrounds Heaven's Mandate, dynastic succession, and the founding of the Shang while downplaying competing images of Tang as strategist, reformer, self-sacrificing ruler, or object of philosophical criticism. Narrative omission thus serves not merely as a textual gap but as evidence of how foundational memory was constructed. This pattern was not unique to Tang. Traditions concerning Yao and Shun were likewise stabilized in the Shiji, though Tang's narrative remained more geographically stable because it was anchored in Shang dynastic memory. This paper shows how Sima Qian shaped foundational memory through the selective arrangement of competing traditions.

No Sakura, Only Kuso: Lu Mengshu's 'Shit Realism' in Japanese-Occupied Hong Kong (1941–1945)

Ryan Choi (University of Edinburgh)

Scholarship on cultural production under Japanese imperial rule in East Asia has primarily concentrated on Manchukuo, 'Solitary Island' Shanghai, occupied Beiping, and colonial Taiwan. The literature of occupied Hong Kong (1941–1945) has received comparatively little attention. This paper turns to that space, where a largely Chinese population, released from British colonial rule only to be subjected to the Japanese regime, belonged fully to neither empire. Its focus is Lu Mengshu 盧夢殊, a writer later condemned as a cultural hanjian 漢奸 (traitor to the Han Chinese). Lu represented Hong Kong at the 1943 Greater East Asia News Congress in Tokyo, and his 1944 short story collection, Rain Scenes of the Hilly City (Shancheng yujing 山城雨景), was the only book permitted into print during the occupation. The authorities put it to propaganda use, yet the stories resist the reading that this endorsement implies. Lu renders the occupation through kuso realism (kuso-riarizumu 糞リアリズム), literally 'shit realism', a term Japanese writers in colonial Taiwan coined in 1943 to deride Taiwanese nativist literature as crude and anti-Romantic. Much as his Taiwanese contemporaries turned the insult into a method, Lu sets the squalor of the occupied city against the idealized 'cherry blossom' aesthetics the regime favoured. Through recurring figures of abandonment and bodily decay, the paper traces the psychological cost of occupation and the hollowness of the promised 'unified East Asia'. What official narratives cast as a prosperous, pacified Hong Kong, Lu, a high-profile collaborator, returns as rot. Read in this way, his fiction unsettles the category of 'collaborationist' literature to which it has been assigned. It is ambivalent towards a departed British colonialism, alert to an emerging Hong Kong nativism, and quietly resistant to the imperial story it was licensed to tell.

From Social Margins to Spiritual Eminence: Portrayals of Socially Marginalised Women in Early Buddhist Literature

Joanna Gruszewska (Jagiellonian University)

This paper examines portrayals of female servants and women of low social status in selected early Buddhist texts composed in Pāli and Sanskrit. It analyses how their marginal status operates as a narrative strategy and explores their literary functions.

The paper argues that female characters who are socially overlooked function as important didactic figures in early Buddhist literature, as they are often described as attaining spiritual excellence and sometimes themselves become authoritative voices who teach others. Their presence within Buddhist narratives creates a powerful contrast between social status and religious achievement, demonstrating that wisdom and liberation are not determined by birth.

Examples from Pāli literature focus on female servants and women of low social status depicted in the Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (Commentary on the Dhammapada), namely the stories of Puṇṇā the water carrier, Khujjuttarā the servant, and the Weaver's Daughter, with references to related narratives in the Pāli canonical literature, including the Therīgāthā and the Jātakas. From Buddhist Sanskrit literature, the paper analyses the story of the conversion of the outcaste girl Prakṛti in the Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna, a narrative preserved in the Buddhist Sanskrit collection Divyāvadāna.

Finally, the paper examines how some of these characters were further reimagined by modern writers and social thinkers, including Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and Rabindranath Tagore.

Session 7A: Documentary Film Screening and Discussion with the Producer

Ingatan dari Timor (Memories of Timor)

Rita Padawangi (Singapore University of Social Sciences)

A 90-minute documentary film screening and discussion session, which starts with a documentary film screening for 70 minutes, followed by a 20-minute discussion session with the film producer.

Background:
Twenty-seven years after Timor-Leste's independence referendum, many Indonesian youths seem to have little awareness of the Indonesian occupation there for 24 years, during which 70% out of approximately 18,600 killings that have been identified was committed by the Indonesian security forces and their Timorese auxiliaries (CAVR, 2005). While youths of Timor-Leste learn about the violent history, Indonesia's youths might perceive Timor-Leste's independence as a blow to Indonesia's sovereignty. This film project is a manifestation of shared aspirations to foster solidarity among Indonesia's and Timor-Leste's youths.

Film synopsis:
An Indonesian student's capstone research project turned into a journey of a lifetime, as she explored the dark history of Timor-Leste that she had not seen before in textbooks. From visits to torture chambers to meeting the young generation of Timor-Leste, this film chronicles the effort to unearth memories. Not for revenge, but to prevent similar tragedies from reoccurring.

Session 7B: Student Session: Society in Narratives

Displacing Responsibility through Care: Japanese War-Orphan Narratives and the Negative Space of Postwar Memory in Chinese Screen Media

Ming Liu (Columbia University)

Japanese war orphans were Japanese children who remained in China after the Second Sino-Japanese War and grew up within Chinese families and society. Their identity is bound to wartime aftermath, ruptured kinship, transnational belonging, and unresolved responsibility. In Chinese screen memory, their suffering appears through displacement, foster-family life, family search, return, and identity crisis. This paper asks how such visible suffering is organized, and what forms of responsibility remain outside the central frame. It uses "negative space" to describe not silence about orphan suffering, but the backgrounding of structural responsibility within narratives that make such suffering emotionally accessible.

The paper argues that this negative space is produced through care. Chinese screen works often place Japanese orphans within relations involving Chinese foster parents, families, and rural communities. Care gives orphan suffering an affective and ethically acceptable form. Because the narrative centers on nurture, sacrifice, gratitude, and moral debt, war's consequences are primarily understood through ordinary Chinese people's ethical practice. The orphan's displacement and identity crisis are therefore not consistently linked to sustained questions of imperial aggression, state abandonment, or postwar redress.

By analyzing this displacement, this paper argues that Chinese screen narratives of Japanese war orphans do not simply avoid historical responsibility. They reorganize responsibility into an affective form that is easier to watch and accept. Their political significance lies in making orphan suffering visible while limiting its movement toward questions of perpetration, structural responsibility, and postwar accountability.

Speaking through Silence: Self-Censorship in Textbook Translation and Compilation by Chinese Female Students in Japan in the Early 20th Century

Dou Jin (Ritsumeikan University)

This paper examines self-censorship not simply as suppression, but as a productive strategy through which a marginalized voice entered official discourse. It focuses on Nüzi Shifan Jiangyi (Female Teacher Training Lectures, 1908), a ten-volume pedagogical series compiled by Sun Qingru after she graduated from Seijo Girls School in Tokyo and proofread by fellow Chinese female students. The series translated and reorganized Japanese educational knowledge concerning women for use in late Qing China. Although this series was largely overlooked in previous scholarship, it was submitted to the Qing Ministry of Education, which approved three volumes as textbooks for female teacher training schools and three others as reference works.

Drawing on Chinese and Japanese archival sources, this paper identifies three interconnected forms of strategic silence. First, Sun adapted the series to the Ministry's 1907 regulations and used familiar teachings on women's conduct to make new ideas acceptable, while downplaying Seijo's broader vision of women's social role. Second, by adopting a rhetoric of self-deprecation rooted in a gendered convention traceable to the Han dynasty female historian Ban Zhao, Sun used an indirect strategy to make her arguments more acceptable to her intended audience. Third, the selective submission and classification of the volumes established a hierarchy between knowledge authorized for women and knowledge left outside the official curriculum.

Approaching gender as an analytical category (Scott 1986) and translation as creative reorganization under constraint (Hu 2000), the paper argues that strategic silence was not merely an obstacle to women's expression, but a condition under which women could speak publicly and acquire institutional authority.

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The Voice of Seijun:
Modal Exclusion of His Character in Gobanchō Yūgirirō

Anna Kovářová (Charles University)

This paper examines the marginalisation and ostracism seen in the character of a young novice Kunugida Seijun in the work Gobanchō Yūgirirō (The House of Evening Mist in Gobanchō), a novel by the postwar Japanese author Minakami Tsutomu, written as a response to an earlier literary treatment of the 1950 arson of Kyoto's well-known Zen Buddhist temple Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavilion).

To analyse the exclusion of his character, this paper employs the theory of fictional worlds described by Lubomír Doležel, mainly in the book Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds. Through the modal systems of fictional worlds, and specifically by the proposed modal exclusions, it offers a closer look at the alienation of Seijun in the fictional world of the novel.

Struggling with stuttering, Seijun is repeatedly teased and laughed at by those around him, and desperately tries to find his place in the environment and society he is thrown into. This paper suggests that he is not merely a socially marginal figure, but also an outsider in a modal sense, unable to act according to society's expectations.

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Session 7C: Invisible Others, Fragile Selves: Concentric Circles of Othering and Negative Space in Japanese Identity Construction (Organized Panel)

How is negativity a constitutive feature of Japanese identity construction? This panel argues that Japanese identity is constituted through layered processes of Othering. We conceptualise negativity in two interconnected senses. First, negativity in the constitutive sense characterises the Japanese Self as an identity constituted through difference, whose apparent coherence depends upon the continual production of Others. Second, negativity in the pejorative sense refers to the marginalisation, trivialisation, invisibilisation, and construction of inferiority imposed upon those Others. To capture these dynamics, we propose a model of concentric circles of Othering centred upon an imagined Japanese Self. These circles extend across spatial and temporal scales, encompassing both external and internal constitutive Others. The papers show how Japanese identity is produced through multiple Others, revealing the fragility of the centre when their agency becomes visible. The panel also highlights invisibility as both a condition and product of Othering. Others are rendered invisible or peripheral, making the resulting Self appear natural and coherent. The first paper examines how Zumoto Motosada's imperial propaganda constructed Korea as a colonial Other while his later disappearance illustrates the invisibility of successful Othering. The second paper explores how Japanese railway expertise constructs technological Others, while Taiwanese agency exposes this identity's fragility. The third paper analyses Okinawa as an internal Other whose militarisation enables Japan's postwar identity, while Okinawan protest reveals its contingency. Together, the papers show that Japanese identity depends upon the continual production of Others while revealing the Japanese Self as an unstable centre sustained through concentric circles of Othering. Spanning imperial, postwar, and contemporary contexts, the panel shows the enduring role of negativity in Japanese identity construction.

The Invisible Imperialist: Zumoto Motosada and the Propaganda War for Korea

Alexander Rotard (University of Leeds)

This paper examines the overlooked role of journalist and propagandist Zumoto Motosada in legitimising the colonisation of Korea through international media networks from the 1890s to 1910s. Historical scholarship has shown the importance of media and narrative power in imperial consolidation. Building on work that moves beyond state-centred approaches, this paper foregrounds media complicity and aligns with studies emphasising transnational networks of journalists and intermediaries operating across imperial and international spaces. It also contributes to International Relations scholarship by historicising narrative power, showing that practices associated with soft power and public diplomacy have deeper imperial roots. While existing research on discourse and the colonisation of Korea shows how newspapers and official reports functioned as colonial propaganda, it often begins with the protectorate period, leaving earlier links to foreign-policy advocacy underexplored.

Drawing on archival sources, newspapers, diplomatic records, and interviews, the paper argues that Zumoto's career reveals a longer genealogy of Japanese narrative production on Korea emerging in the mid-1890s across Japan, Korea, and the U.S. As editor of The Japan Times and The Seoul Press and founder of the Oriental Information Bureau in New York, he developed strategies that shaped Western perceptions by embedding imperial policy within dominant languages of civilisation, progress, legality, and order.

The paper shows that legitimising discourse on Korea predated the protectorate, emerging through efforts to justify expansion to Anglo-American audiences. By portraying intervention as civilising and Korean resistance as backward, Zumoto rendered colonial rule intelligible and legitimate, mobilising Orientalist assumptions to make colonisation acceptable abroad.

Zumoto, however, remains largely absent from public memory or scholarly accounts. The paper contends that this invisibility is, paradoxically, the clearest measure of his success. His narratives were so effectively embedded within dominant Western frameworks that they ceased to appear as propaganda. In this sense, Zumoto functioned as an "invisible imperialist."

Mind the Gap Between Confidence and Anxiety: Railway Technology as Japanese Identity

Taku Tamaki (Loughborough University)

Japan is renowned for its railway technology, with its Shinkansen (bullet train) enjoying an international acclaim for its purported safety, reliability, and punctuality. Such an international reputation reinforces Japanese self-confidence in its own railway technological superiority. Can such railway technological know-how be considered a form of national identity construction? If so, how does such technological identity construct Asian- and Western Others? I apply Gabrielle Hecht's concept of techno-political regime to Japanese railway expertise to explore how the Japanese railway Self is constructed in opposition to the Asian- and Western railway Others. Here, I consider the Japanese government, the former Japanese National Railways (JNR) and its post-privatization successor, the Japan Railways (JR) group, along with the railway supply industry and railway engineers as comprising a railway techno-political regime engaged in enhancing Japan's geopolitical strategy. Using official pronouncements, interviews by Japanese officials, operators, and engineers appearing in vernacular publications, I look for narratives referring to the superiority of Japanese railway expertise along with indications of how the rest of Asia can purportedly learn from Japan. In a similar vein, I also look for Japanese depictions of Western railway engineering practice as potentially dangerous. These Japanese narratives represent the confident Japanese Self that is purportedly benevolent in helping technologically inferior Asian Others to realize railway engineering solutions. Yet, the moment the Japanese railway techno-political regime is exposed to the agency of Asian Others, the initial confident Self turns into an anxious Self perplexed at the competitiveness of the international railway market. This confidence-to-anxiety dynamic is particularly pronounced in the case of Taiwanese high-speed railway project in which the Shinkansen technology has to cohabitate with a European railway engineering practice. As such, the moment the confident Japanese Self encountered the agency of Taiwanese Other, the initial confidence turned into condescension towards the Taiwanese Other, which in turn exposed an anxious Japanese Self.

Empire's constitutive outside

Carmina Yu Untalan (New University of Lisbon)

This paper argues that Okinawa has been the invisible core to the postwar construction of the Japanese Self as peaceful, democratic, and distinct from its imperial past. Dominant accounts of the U.S.–Japan alliance portray Japan as a non-militarised power crucial to regional stability through its partnership with the United States. Yet this image depends on the spatial displacement of militarisation to Okinawa. By concentrating U.S. military bases, its risks, and problems of alliance management in the southernmost tip of the country, the Japanese state has been able to sustain a sense of Self in which "Japan" appears relatively demilitarised, pacifist, and territorially secure. This paper conceptualises this arrangement as a "delegated empire" where the U.S. retains strategic command and military access, while Japan, as an ally, mediates the legal, administrative, and political conditions under which the base regime persists as "imperial deputy". Okinawa, meanwhile, bears the material and ontological costs that enable both powers to present the alliance as consensual. This division of authority renders Okinawa peripheral to dominant narratives of the Japanese postwar Self, even if it plays a constitutive role in those narratives. Tracing Okinawa's incorporation into Japan, its "Othering" within Japanese imperial rule, the U.S. occupation after 1945, and the continuation of military basing after reversion in 1972, this paper shows that the Japanese Self is not produced solely through security agreements and constitutional pacifism. It is also produced through the managed invisibility of an internal periphery. Okinawan protest and political mobilisation disrupt this Self-image by revealing that Japan's postwar pacifism has been unevenly territorialised. Okinawa thus demonstrates how "delegated empire" constructs both an invisible burdened space and a national self that depends upon its exclusion.

Session 7D: Marginality and Erasure in Literature and Culture (3)

Contemporary rewritings of Taiwanese Folklore: a new way to reclaim a mostly erased heritage?

Lilia Chapon (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales)

Whereas in some other countries, such as Greece, China and Japan, mythology and folklore have been established as a big part of the cultural and literary heritage, it has not been the case in Taiwan. Throughout different immigration waves (from the 17th century onwards) and governance periods (the Japanese government (1895-1945), the Martial Law (1949-1987), etc.), oral literature – and more specifically folklore – has been silenced or erased. However, a group of young authors, composed of writer He Jingyao and the members of the Taipei Legend Studio, have taken it upon themselves in the last decade to collect, publish and diffuse Formosan folklore. Accordingly, they have writen several collections of Taiwanese folktales, in the purpose of spreading more widly this little-known part of Taiwanese literature. Furthermore, they have started incorporating these beasts, ghosts and monsters in their own literary works.

In this presentation, I will focus on three of He Jingyao's short stories from his collection, Port of Illusions (He, 2014) : Aunt Tiger, the Snake Husband and the Mo-sin-a. Through a thorough analysis of the historical context presented in those texts, I will show how the author uses Taiwanese folklore as a way to comment, and sometimes critisise, the various political evolutions the island has been subjected to since the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Secondly, I will study how the author builds a realistic – if not imaginary – city to root his stories in, as a way to better stage his interpretation of these three folktales. Finally, I will conduct a comparative and literary analysis to highlight the parts form the original folktales the author chooses to rewrite and develop, as well as emphasise the literary devices (such as fantastic and horrific elements) he uses to do so.

Architectures of Silence: Erasure and the Counter-Archive in Murakami Haruki's Recent Fiction

Ziwei (Jade) Xuan (University of Edinburgh)

This paper reads Murakami Haruki's Killing Commendatore (2017) and The City and Its Uncertain Walls (2023) through their spatial architectures of silence — the sealed attic, the walled town, the institutional library — arguing that these settings constitute a sustained poetics of erasure in which forgetting is not passive but structurally produced. Informed by Nora's lieux de mémoire and Faimberg's 'telescoping of generations,' this analysis examines the spatial conditions under which absence is engineered and, potentially, resisted.

In Killing Commendatore, suppressed wartime memory is entombed in an attic: a painting depicting an act of political violence, hidden by the artist-father who witnessed atrocity but could not speak it. The attic functions as a spatial seal, preserving the traumatic past precisely by removing it from circulation, rendering it invisible to the next generation. The younger protagonist accesses this silenced history not through speech but through re-enactment, physically engaging the painting's symbolic content to breach the space the father had closed.

In The City and Its Uncertain Walls, absence is engineered at institutional scale. The walled-in town, a literal ou-topos, strips inhabitants of their shadows at its gates and processes individual memory into contentless 'old dreams' within its dreamreading library. Against this architecture of erasure stands the uninstitutional Z** Town Library, a counter-archive resistant to the 'system,' where suppressed personal narratives resurface through dialogic exchange.

Together, these novels reveal that Murakami's architectures of silence such as the attic, wall and institutional archive are not merely settings but mechanisms: spatial structures through which systems familial, institutional, and national produce and administer forgetting in postwar Japan. The paper thus reframes Murakami's late fiction as a sustained interrogation of the spatial politics of historical amnesia.

Hypervisible Island, Invisible Voice: Jeju as Korea's Negative Space

Heejeong Sohn (Stony Brook University)

Jeju Island receives roughly fourteen million visitors a year and is South Korea's premier tourist destination, celebrated for its volcanic landscape, UNESCO heritage, and leisure. Beneath this hypervisible image lies another Jeju: the site of the April 3 Uprising and Massacre, a distinctive language and ritual life, ecological knowledge, and a political economy shaped largely by people who do not live there. This paper reads Jeju as Korea's negative space of dependency: a space produced through historical erasure and the internalization of political stigma.

The endangered Jeju language offers a revealing lens into this negative space. Under Korea's nationwide standard-language initiative, Jeju responded with unusual intensity, and its local speech underwent profound transformation. Unlike other regions, Jeju now has a strikingly large number of residents who cannot understand the language of their own parents and grandparents. This linguistic rupture captures a central paradox of Jeju's incorporation into the Korean nation.

The paper develops three arguments. First, colonial rule, anticommunist violence, Cold War state formation, and mainland-centered nation-building rendered Jeju peripheral while making it indispensable as scenery and strategic space. Second, tourism transformed Jeju's difference into a consumable landscape, reorganizing land, labor, and housing around external demand. Third, fluctuations in tourist visitation and property demand, alongside youth outmigration and stalled construction, expose the fragility of an economy organized around perpetual growth.

Reading Jeju alongside Okinawa, Taiwan, and Hawai'i, the paper argues that Jeju Island was selectively incorporated as scenery, heritage, and strategic space, producing a contradiction between hypervisibility and erasure. Yet the persistence of Jeju's cultural identity, ecological knowledge, and communal practices opens up alternative possibilities beyond dependency and growth-oriented modernity.

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